

August 26, 2022

Leah Michalak  
Director of Historic Preservation  
Metropolitan Planning Commission  
110 East State Street  
Savannah, Georgia 31401

To whom this may concern,

As Chair of the Historic District Board of Review, and on behalf of the Board, I would like to request that the Historic Preservation Department of the Metropolitan Planning Commission begin the review process to revise Division 2, Part 8 – Planning and Regulation of Development, Chapter 2 – Subdivision Regulations as it relates to Savannah’s National Historic Landmark District. A text amendment would allow further elaboration under, but not limited to, both Section 8-2030. – Preservation of noteworthy features and Section 8-2045. – Minor Subdivisions.

Amendments to these sections could allow the Historic District Board of Review (HDBR) to review the minor subdivision applications as it relates to the alteration of the Oglethorpe Plan. As a result, what the HDBR reviews and criteria on how that is reviewed would need to be taken under consideration. Allowing HDBR review would also provide the public with adequate notice and allow the public to provide input on the proposed applications. Additionally, I would like to propose that following initial conversations, a committee with local stakeholders such as but not limited to: members of the Historic District Board of Review, Historic Savannah Foundation and the Downtown Neighborhood Association, be consulted for their thoughts and opinions on the language for the text amendments.

It is of the utmost importance, not only of this Board but of Preservation staff, to protect the integrity of the Oglethorpe Plan, otherwise known as the Savannah Town Plan. As quoted from the 2018 Integrity and Condition Assessment of the SNHLD on pages 61 and 62, “The assessment team and the majority of the survey respondents agreed that the Savannah Town Plan was the defining feature of the SNHLD. One respondent stated: “the Savannah Town Plan is the platform on which everything else sits, therefore its preservation is of paramount importance.” The density and scale of historic architecture from the period of significance within that plan was the second most important character-defining feature. Further threats to the district include the loss of archaeological remains, paving and historic infrastructure; construction of historic house additions removing courtyards set between carriage and main houses... Combined, these threats have had a profound effect on the district’s overall context and setting, and subsequently its location, design, feeling, and association.” It is due to these factors that the District is currently listed as a Priority 1 Threatened NHL.”

Thank you for taking this under consideration. I look forward to collaborating on this important effort.  
Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellie Isaacs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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