



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y - S A V A N N A H

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION***“Planning the Future - Respecting the Past”*

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Jay Melder, City Manager

FROM: Melanie Wilson *MW*

DATE: December 20, 2023

SUBJECT: Recommendations by the Historic District Board of Review for a Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance Section 7.8, Savannah Downtown Historic District Contributing Resources Map

This memorandum serves as a recommendation from the Historic District Board of Review to amend the City of Savannah’s Downtown Historic District Contributing Resources Map. In accordance with City Ordinance Section 3.16.7, Amendments to a Contributing Resources Map, the Historic District Board of Review may initiate the process of amending the Contributing Resources Map for a local historic district.

On November 8, 2023, the Historic District Board of Review voted to submit a recommendation to the City Council for a Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance Section 7.8, Downtown Historic District Contributing Resources Map. The Historic District Board of Review desires to amend the Contributing Resources Map to include one (1) resource of exceptional importance (with regard to historic and architectural significance) that was built in the Downtown Historic District within the Period of Significance (1870-1923) but not previously listed as “contributing/historic.” The resource is located at 412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Savannah National Historic Landmark District was originally surveyed in 1966. In 1973, Section 8-3029 (Historic District) of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance was adopted. This section established the Historic District Board of Review and created the Historic Buildings Map. All structures within the Historic District were divided into two classes, “historic” and “non-rated.” Historic structures included all those buildings listed in Historic Savannah; the architectural survey book published by Historic Savannah Foundation in 1968.

In 1985 an MPC staff study was adopted, and the Historic Buildings Map was amended to include all those buildings listed in the 1979 second edition of Historic Savannah, as well as those buildings identified by a consultant working on behalf of the National Park Service. The Park Service had extended the period of significance for contributing buildings in the National Historic Landmark District to 1935.

Demolition of a non-rated historic structure in the 500 block of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and the attempted demolition of a non-rated historic cottage in the Beach Institute Neighborhood spurred the updating of the Historic Buildings Map. In April 2000 and September

2000, the Mayor and Aldermen approved the addition of a number of buildings previously omitted from the map in the eastern and western neighborhoods of the Historic District.

On April 20, 2000, the Building Map was amended to include buildings on MLK Boulevard and Montgomery Street, and the period of significance was extended locally to 1950 [File No. 00-103-S]. City Council Minutes from the April 20, 2000, meeting provide details of every building that was proposed to be added. Several of these are twentieth century commercial buildings on MLK Blvd, ranging from the 0-block through the 700-block, where only one from the 400-block was proposed (406). The buildings recommended for listing cover categories of significance such as 20th century commerce, local commerce, architecture, neighborhood business with living quarters above, early commerce on MLK, early 20th century business development of MLK, overall business development of the historic district, structures built by African American developers, and Black Heritage.

The Building Map was also amended on September 7, 2000, to include buildings in the Beach Institute [File No. Z-000524-55903]; on July 12, 2001 to include the Yamacraw Village Administration Building [File No. Z-10425-87171-2]; on September 5, 2002 to include carriage houses [File No. Z-010824-39270-2].

In 2010 the Historic Building Map was updated to include 112 new structures through a staff study. Buildings included carriage houses, commercial structures, residential buildings, mid-century modernism, and two buildings of exceptional importance [File No. Z-121213-36582-2].

During the updates to the Historic Building Map, at no point was 412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard noted to be added as a contributing resource. Georgia Historic Resource Survey sheets from 1994 exist for 412 MLK Blvd. Although three neighboring properties in the 400-block are considered contributing buildings, 412 was not included.

Prior to the adoption of the new zoning ordinance (NewZO) on September 1, 2019, it was not possible for resources outside the Period of Significance to be added as contributing; however, with the adoption of NewZO came the ability to add resources outside of the Period of Significance if they are of “exceptional importance.”

The City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, as adopted on September 1, 2019, provides for the evaluation of all non-contributing resources to be considered for contributing status. Resources outside of the Period of Significance are evaluated using the following standard from Sec. 3.18.8:

***Exceptional Importance.** Contributing buildings include a select group of exceptional resources constructed outside the district’s Period of Significance. These resources possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one of more of the above criteria.*

### **PROJECT HISTORY:**

At the Historic District Board of Review meeting of November 8, 2023, the following petition to demolish the non-contributing building at 412 MLK Boulevard was heard:

- Petition of Shedd Architecture | 23-005414-COA | 412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard| Demolition of a Non- Contributing Building

MPC Staff presented the petition with the recommendation to approve the request for non-contributing demolition because the staff evaluation found that building did not meet all of the

criteria for Exceptional Importance, particularly with materials and workmanship, as the original character defining features of the building have been lost due to various alterations. As the ordinance states, a building must meet all the criteria for Exceptional Importance. The staff recommendation included two conditions:

*Approve the demolition request for the building located at 412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard with the following conditions because the building otherwise meets the criteria for non-contributing demolition.*

1. *The building must be documented per the MPC Policy for Documenting Buildings.*
2. *Rather than traditional demolition, the building be deconstructed, and the materials salvaged for reuse.*

However, during the Board Discussion, HDBR members felt that all the Exceptional Importance criteria were met, citing the rehabilitation of several contributing buildings along the 300 block of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and the belief that the historic fabric of the building may still exist under the modern stucco. The Board decision was as follows:

*The Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review does hereby deny the demolition request for the building located at 412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard because the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master; and because the property possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.*

*Further, the Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review recommends that an application to become a contributing building is completed.*

The denial of demolition by the HDBR in effect requires the amendment of the Contributing Resources Map. Therefore, in accordance with Section 3.16.7, the HDBR is initiating the process of amending the map to include 412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard as a contributing resource.

### **FINDINGS:**

1. Currently, all buildings within the local design review area for the Downtown Historic District are reviewed for any exterior changes visible from a public right-of-way. However, only those buildings that are listed as contributing on the Contributing Resources Map undergo a more rigorous review process, particularly for demolition applications.
2. The resources listed as non-contributing on the Contributing Resources Map, outside of the Period of Significance but older than forty (40) years, were analyzed by the MPC Historic Preservation Department for "Exceptional Importance." Per Sec 3.18.8 of the ordinance, resources must possess integrity of location, design setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one of more of the following criteria:
  - a. Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
  - b. Are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
  - c. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

- d. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in historic or prehistory.

The Board has determined that in addition to possessing integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, the resource meets the following:

- Criteria A, B, C, and D.

3. The resource proposed to be added was originally constructed within the district's current Period of Significance but was altered during and after the Period of Significance, wherein the original character defining features have been lost. It is within the boundaries of the National Register and local Historic District.

### **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

1. Taking no action leaves this resource unprotected, especially regarding demolition. This neighborhood contains valuable resources of the former West Broad Street Corridor.
2. The state enabling legislation provides for the preservation and protection of historic buildings, structures, appurtenances, and places that are of basic and vital importance for the development and maintenance of Savannah's tourism industry, its culture, and for the protection of property values because of their association with history, and their unique architectural details. An on-going update of the Downtown Historic District Contributing Resources Map and the periodic comprehensive evaluation of all the district's resources (regardless of age) is vital to this mandate.
3. On November 8, 2023, the HBDR denied the petitions for demolition of these this resource, with the belief that it has exceptional importance that was overlooked in previous surveys.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Historic District Board of Review recommends that the City Council amend the Downtown Historic District Contributing Resources Map to include one (1) resource of exceptional importance, 412 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, that was altered outside of the Period of Significance (1733-1960) and not previously listed as "contributing/historic" with an immediate effective date.

We have attached a draft Ordinance for review and approval by the City Council. The property owner has requested that this matter be placed on the Council Agenda for review in February 2024. The Mayor and Aldermen shall schedule the public hearing and give public notice in accordance with Sec. 3.2, Public Notice.

The Mayor and Aldermen shall evaluate the request based upon the criteria in Sec. 3.16.4.b. After consideration of the review criteria required by Sec. 3.16.4.b., the Mayor and Aldermen shall take one of the following actions:

1. Approve the Contributing Resources Map as recommended by the Historic District Board of Review; or
2. Approve the Contributing Resources Map with modifications; or
3. Deny the amendment to the Contributing Resources Map.

**Berrien Ward**

Map Number	Address	Date Added	Date Built	PIN No.
940	402 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard	1973	1906	2-0031 -36-009
941	406-(406½) Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard	2000	1965	2-0031 36-008
942	408-410 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard	1973	1906	2-0031 -36-007
	<b>412 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard</b>	2024	<b>c.1900</b>	<b>2-0031-36-010</b>
	414 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard			
943	301 West Jones	2010	1900	2-0031 -37-001
	323 West Jones Street			
	401 A,B,C Tattnall Street			
944	403 Tattnall Street	1973	1878	2-0031 -38-002A
945	405 Tattnall Street	1973	1878	2-0031 -38-002B
	409-415 Tattnall Street			
	421 Jefferson Street			
946	311 Berrien Street	1973	1852	2-0045 -06-006
947	312 West Taylor Street	1973	1911	2-0045 -06-004
948	419 Montgomery Street	2010	1854	2-0045 -05-001
949	421 Montgomery Street	1973	1854	2-0045 -05-002
950	423 Montgomery Street	1973	1854	2-0045 -05-002A
951	427 Montgomery Street	1973	1855	2-004 -05-006
952	420 West Wayne Street	2002	1949	2-0045 -07-004
	409 Taylor Street			
	301-319 West Taylor Street		2004	
953	215-219 West Taylor Street	1973	1852	2-0032 -20-001
	419-423 Tattnall Street		2002	
954	425-431 Tattnall Street	1973	1902	2-0032 -20-003
955	434 Jefferson Street	1973	1853/1902	2-0032 -20-002
956	433 Tattnall Street	1973	1913	2-0032 -40-006
957	435 Tattnall Street	1973	1854	2-0032-40-004
958	437 Tattnall Street	1973	1854	2-0032 -40-001
	439 Tattnall Street			
	441 Tattnall Street			
	443 Tattnall Street			
	445 Tattnall Street			
	447 Tattnall Street			
959	308-310 Alice Street	1973	1900	2-0045 -10-010
	315 West Wayne Street			
960	302-306 Alice Street	1973	1852	2-0045 -10-002
961	443-445 Jefferson Street	2002	1852	2-0045 -10-002
	441 Montgomery Street			
	445 Montgomery Street			
962	458-460 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard	1973	1909	2-0045 -09-006
963	457-467 Montgomery Street	1973	1900	2-0045 -15-002
964	406-416 West Gaston Street	1973	1900	2-0045 -15-002
	462 Montgomery Street		2006	
	464 Montgomery Street		2006	
965	466 Montgomery Street	1973	1883	2-0045 -16-004
966	301-305 Alice Street	2010	1940	2-0045 -16-001
967	217 West Alice Street	1973	1846/1853	2-0045 -17-001