

Project Description:

The East Savannah Neighborhood Historical Markers project is a series of 5 interpretive signs that help convey the unique history of the East Savannah Neighborhood. Drawing from oral histories and historical research and documentation collected for the Eastside Neighborhood Documentation Project by historians Dr. Charles Elmore and Dr. Martha Keber (resulting in an archival collection preserved in the City of Savannah's Municipal Archives and the 2011 publication *Ebb and Flow: Life and Community in Eastern Savannah* written by Martha L. Keber and published by the City of Savannah Department of Cultural Affairs), and further supplemented by community input and engagement hosted by the Historic Savannah Foundation between 2022-2024, the series highlights the following themes:

- *Arts and Humanities:* The Savannah Sports Arena was a significant sporting and entertainment venue for Savannah prior to the Savannah Civic Center opening, hosting local and national athletes and performers of significance.
- *Social and Humanitarian:* The East Savannah Cemetery marker discusses the cemetery's history as a burial ground for formerly enslaved individuals and the organization of the Community Club of East Savannah to care for this sacred land.
- *Industry and Commerce:* The Latson Grocery marker touches on the many contributions of those who lived in East Savannah through their professions
- *Religious History:* First African Baptist Church of East Savannah, along with other neighborhood churches like Saint Mary's A.M.E. Church, East Savannah Church of Christ Holiness unto the Lord, and Holy Zion Church of God, have been cornerstones on the East Savannah community, encouraging not only a sense of fellowship within the church walls but within the larger neighborhood.
- *Local History:* The entire series of five markers help to identify the unique story of the East Savannah Neighborhood and draw attention to it, starting with Marker 1 which sets the tone with the story of its development.
- *Cultural and Ethnic Heritage:* East Savannah was settled by African American families starting in the 1880s. The neighborhood has a rich history and the entire series of markers touches on various aspects of the community from its early development, to religion, education, work, and fu

MARKER 1

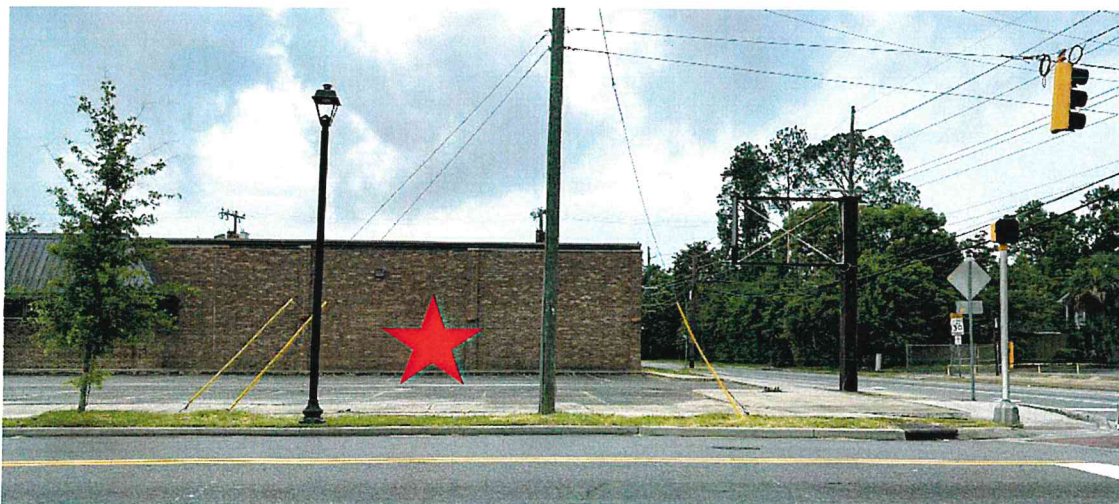
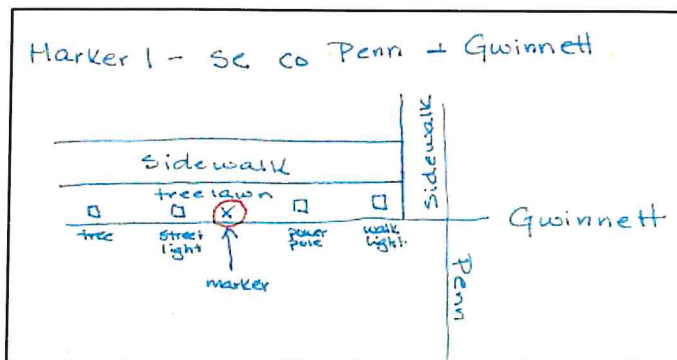
Text (word count – 106):

EAST SAVANNAH NEIGHBORHOOD

During the 1870s, Charles J. Hull, of Chicago, invested heavily in the area that would become the core of East Savannah, between Iowa and East Gwinnett streets. African American entrepreneur Charles Baker bought 38 lots in Hull's subdivision, leading the way as African American families purchased home sites and slowly established the neighborhood in the 1880s-1890s. East Savannah remained rural well into the 20th century with fields and unpaved streets. Many homes had no electricity, indoor plumbing, or mail delivery, relying on wood stoves and kerosene lamps. Early families that helped establish East Savannah included the Bakers, Browns, Greens, Mitchells, Morrells, Moultries, Robinsons, Smiths, and Wilders.

Location: just east of the southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and East Gwinnett Street

- Installed in the tree lawn (City right-of-way)
- In front of PIN 20058 04014 (Upper Room Church International Inc)
- Double-sided with text facing both north and south so the text is visible from both the street and the sidewalk



MARKER 2

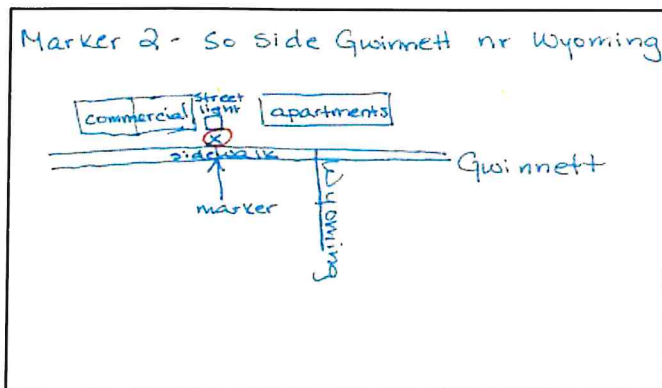
Text (word count – 114):

SAVANNAH SPORTS ARENA

In 1956 near this spot, Aaron Newman built the Savannah Sports Arena, establishing East Savannah as an entertainment and sporting center. For two years, the Arena hosted roller and ice skating, boxing, and wrestling, as well as musicians like Little Richard, Connie Francis, Loretta Lynn, and Elvis Presley. In 1957, Savannah's first ice hockey game was played here. Webster's Department Store rented the building for seven years before the Arena once again hosted musicians like James Brown and Percy Sledge, and nationally prominent athletes like boxer Sugar Ray Robinson and Bobo Brazil, credited with breaking barriers of racial segregation in professional wrestling. The Arena's heyday passed with the Savannah Civic Center's opening in the 1970s.

Location: southside of East Gwinnett Street, just east of the intersection of Wyoming Street

- Installed in the tree lawn (City right-of-way)
- In front of PIN 20058 04018 (Chatham County/City of Savannah Land Bank Authority, Inc.)
- Single-sided with text facing north with text visible from both the street and the sidewalk



MARKER 3

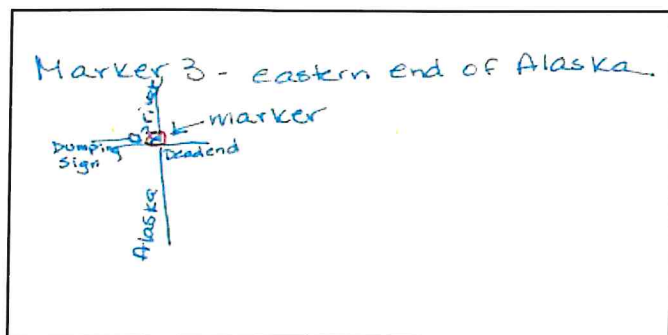
Text (word count – 113):

EAST SAVANNAH CEMETERY

It is believed East Savannah Cemetery was originally set aside as a burial ground for enslaved individuals. With headstones dating back to 1874, the cemetery has always been the heart of the community. In 1935, the Community Club of East Savannah (predecessor of the East Savannah Community Association) was established by Adam Morrell (known as the “Mayor of East Savannah” for his community leadership), Isaac Green, and John Brown to maintain the cemetery. Within its first year, the club grew to 17 members and enclosed the cemetery with a fence. Those whose life stories are intertwined with that of East Savannah are laid to rest here, including Morrell, Hamilton Mitchell, and Charlie Anderson.

Location: entrance to the driveway from the street to the cemetery, at the eastern end of Alaska Street

- Installed in City right-of-way of cul-de-sac
- Single-sided with text facing west visible from the end of the street



MARKER 4

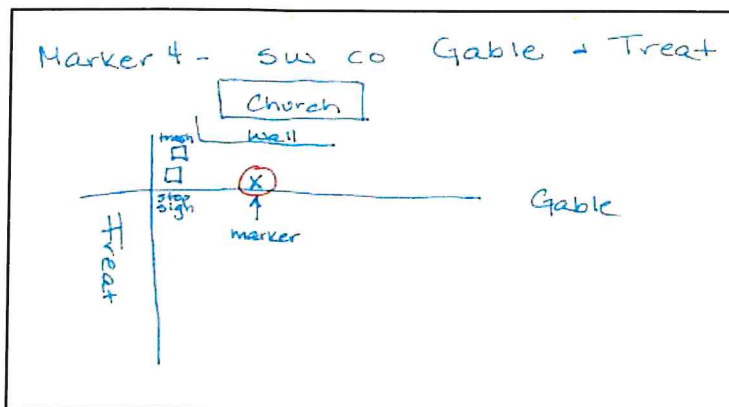
Text (word count – 110):

FIRST AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH OF EAST SAVANNAH
Churches in East Savannah

As East Savannah developed in the late 19th century, streetcars provided transportation for residents to attend First African Baptist Church in downtown Savannah. In 1897, with the church's blessing, First African Baptist Church of East Savannah was established with 42 charter members. In 1898, Deacon Edward C. Johnson was ordained as the first pastor. After the hurricane of 1940 destroyed the sanctuary, Saint Mary's A.M.E. Church on East Gwinnett Street provided a temporary location. East Savannah has a strong sense of fellowship and community nurtured by neighborhood churches like First African Baptist, Saint Mary's A.M.E., East Savannah Church of Christ Holiness unto the Lord, and Holy Zion Church of God.

Location: just west of the southwest corner of Gable and Treat

- Installed in the tree lawn (City right-of-way)
- In front of PIN 20039 06001 (First African Baptist Church of East Savannah)
- Single-sided with text facing north with text visible from the street, positioned in the grass between the church property retaining wall and the street curb

**MARKER 5**

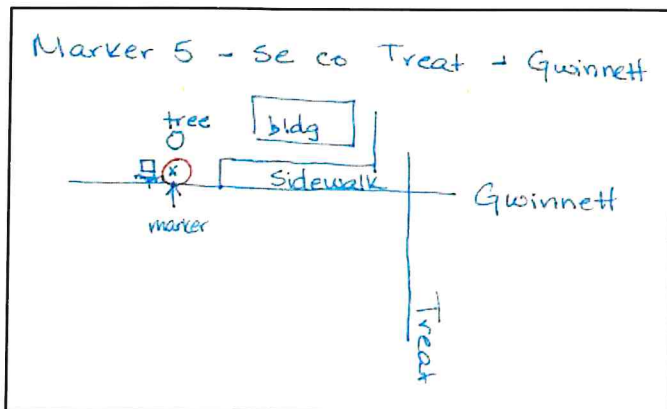
Text (word count – 104)

LATSON GROCERY
Working & Learning in East Savannah

Over the years, East Savannah has benefited from many talented craftspeople and entrepreneurs, including carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, electricians, seamstresses, and laundresses. At this site, Mrs. Melvenia Latson (later Mrs. Luke) operated Latson Grocery, both a general store and confectionary. Affectionately known as “Mrs. Sweet,” she often extended credit to customers until payday. The neighborhood was home to many educators, including several female principals, like Andrea Bowers Williams. Many East Savannah children got their start at Mother Emily’s Kindergarten, run by Mrs. Emily Snipes in her East Gwinnett Street home in the 1950s, or the Charles Moultrie, Jr. Memorial Kindergarten on Treat Avenue in the 1960s.

Location: just east of the southeast corner of Treat Avenue and East Gwinnett Street

- Installed in the tree lawn (City right-of-way)
- In front of PIN 20058 06018
- Single-sided with text facing north with text visible from street

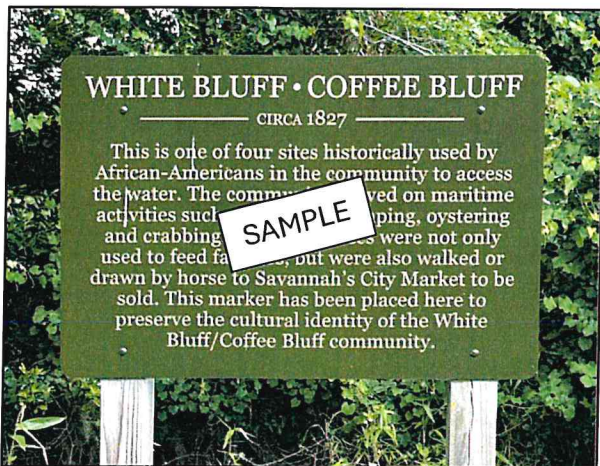




Marker Design:

All 5 markers will be identical (with the exception of Marker 1 being double-sided; all others will be single-sided). The design of the marker series will be based off the White Bluff/Coffee Bluff marker series (see photo below as an example). Once approved by HSMC and City Council the final designs will be updated with the approved text. The City's logo and the year will be added to the bottom corners. The image below is provided as an example of the style of the marker and does not depict the text.

- Size: 36" wide by 24" high (mounted 4 ½ feet above ground)
- Color: City of Savannah green (R34 G136 B72) background with white text
- Materials: 6 mm max metal (color matched tamper proof hardware)
- Installation: 4" x 4" pressure treated wood posts set in concrete
- Text Orientation: Centered
- City Logo: Lower left corner
- Year of installation: Lower right corner
- Font: Lato
- Font Size: Title 1.46"; Body .57"



Funding and Cost Estimate:

Full funding has been secured by the City of Savannah through the Municipal Archives and Transportation Services departments. This project is initiated by the City of Savannah and the escrow payment is waived as a City of Savannah project.

- Sign Fabrication: \$2,200
- Installation: \$1,350
- Escrow: Waived (City project)

Total: 3,550