



SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

MONUMENT PART I RECOMMENDATION

PETITIONER: First Bryan Baptist Church

FILE No.: 23-001824-MON

LOCATION: Yamacraw Square

DATE: May 4, 2023

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval for a monument application, Part I: Theme, Location, and Preliminary Design, for the creation and installation of a five foot eight inches tall bronze bust of Reverend Andrew Bryan to Yamacraw Square.

Per the applicant:

“The proposed bronze bust, rendered from approximately mid-chest up and positioned upon a pedestal, is to be located on the east side within Yamacraw Square, facing west into the plaza towards an array of narrative bronze plaques. Yamacraw Square lies directly in front of First Bryan Baptist Church.”

FINDINGS:

The following standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art apply:

***Evaluating Themes for Markers and Monuments.** New markers and monuments commemorate and honor people, places, and/or events.*

Proposed themes should fall into one or more of the following categories.

Arts and Humanities. Includes art, architecture, music, theater, literature, education, etc.

Science and Engineering. Includes technology, inventions, medical, communications, etc.

Civil and Institutional.

Social and Humanitarian.

Industry and Commerce. Includes economics, agriculture, transportation, etc.

Politics and Government.

Military History. Includes people, places, or events.

Religious History. Includes people, places, or events.

Maritime History.

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Colonial History.
Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.
Cultural and Ethnic History.
Education.

The standard is met. The monument falls into the categories of Religious History and Local History.

The proposed theme should have documented significant, clear and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County. The local focus should be the predominant theme of the monument.

The level of significance should be high enough to warrant a public presence.

The standards are met. The local focus is the significant and long-lasting contributions of Reverend Andrew Bryan to the founding of the First Bryan Baptist Church, which is among the oldest properties with continuous African American ownership in the United States, which warrants a public presence.

Per the applicant:

“The historic First Bryan Baptist Church is an African American church organized twelve years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, by Reverend Andrew Bryan, formerly enslaved, in 1788. Considered to be the Mother Church of Black Baptists, the site was purchased in 1793 and to date is one of the oldest continuous parcels of real estate owned by African Americans in the United States. Reverend Andrew Bryan was the founder and first pastor of the church until his passing and deserves significant recognition as such.”

The person, place or event commemorated should not have been sufficiently commemorated elsewhere in the County. The theme should be distinct and original, and not be duplicated in other existing markers or monuments.

The standard is met. There is no other such monument for Reverend Andrew Bryan in the County.

The theme should reflect a larger connection to the community as a whole, and not only to one distinct group.

The standard is met. Although Reverend Bryan’s connection is religious, his influence reached beyond that. As per the applicant:

“The proposed bust of Andrew Bryan is relevant to the Savannah community as a whole, and also specifically the Yamacraw community, because his legacy through the church has produced pastors, members of the congregation and members of the community as leaders in the Baptist religion, government, emancipation, education, and civil rights movements in Savannah and Georgia.”

Commemorated persons should have enduring historical significance and have been dead at least twenty-five years. Living persons should not be commemorated.

The standards are met. Reverend Bryan has enduring historical significance for the fact that the congregation he founded still exists today, on the same parcel of land where the current church building is located. The legacy of Reverend Bryan on congregation and community members

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continues through their descendants, whose impact is still relevant today. Reverend Bryan has been deceased for longer than twenty-five years.

There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place.

The standard is met. First Bryan Baptist church archives hold much of the primary source information about Reverend Andrew Bryan, but historical information about his life and work is widely available in other archival collections and published books about the history of African American Baptist Churches in America.

Evaluating Sites for Markers, Monuments, or Public Art. *Certain factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating whether a site is the appropriate location for a marker, monument or public art [hereto referred to as “object” to indicate the inclusion of all three types]. These factors include:*

The installation of an object should not cause overcrowding of the site, if there are existing objects. Objects should be sited far enough away from other objects as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually.

The standard is met. The placement of the bust within Yamacraw Square will be near other sculptures but in a way that does not cause overcrowding of the site.

The proposed object should not damage or disturb existing established vegetation on the site including low tree limbs, or significant tree roots.

The proposed object should not require the removal or alteration of existing above or below ground utilities.

The standards are met. The applicant has consulted with the City of Savannah’s Director of the Park & Tree Department, Gordon Denney, who advised that the proposed location looks to be clear of any underground utilities. The bust will be on a portion of Yamacraw Square that is paved and thus will not damage or disturb existing established vegetation or tree roots on the site.

The proposed site should be large enough to accommodate an object, and should not encroach on other existing object sites, buildings, or designated green space.

The standard is met. The proposed site is Yamacraw Square, where there is adequate space for this monument.

The proposed site should not be utilized for special events (such as sports, festivals, ceremonies, etc) on a regular basis which an object would disrupt.

The standard is met. Yamacraw Square is not used for special events on a regular basis where the placement of this monument would cause a disruption.

The proposed site should not be prone to frequent automobile accidents which could damage the proposed object.

The proposed site should be easily accessible to pedestrians and the physically challenged (excluding marker sites).

The proposed site should be visible and accessible from a public right of way.

The proposed site should have adequate parking nearby (excluding marker sites).

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The standards are met. The area where Yamacraw Square is located is not prone to accidents and is pedestrian and ADA accessible. The square is visible and accessible from a public right of way. There is adequate parking on West Bryan Street in front of the square, including designated ADA parking spaces.

The proposed site should not have a high probability of significant archaeology unless an archaeological study is part of the proposal.

Since the bust will be installed over a paved area, no ground disturbance is expected.

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

The placement of this monument in Yamacraw Square will ensure that it is easy to maintain, as it is included in routine City maintenance of the squares. Further, the applicant's maintenance recommendations are based on the City of Savannah Monument Assessment completed by Landmark Preservation, LLC. According to this assessment, the applicant stated that this monument would be considered a Priority Level 1, which is categorized as needing minimal work and placed into a regular maintenance cycle from the outset.

The installation of the object should enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The installation of the Reverend Andrew Bryan bust will enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood because the surrounding neighborhood is also the location of First Bryan Baptist Church and is a highly relevant and appropriate location for this monument.

The installation of the object should not require the alteration or removal of existing signage (traffic, street, etc).

The installation of the object should not significantly affect automobile traffic sight lines.

The standards are met. No signage will be removed, and the installation of the bust will not affect automobile traffic sight lines. The monument is projected to be 5'8" within Yamacraw Square which will not cause any visual obstructions for drivers.

The installation of the object should enhance the design of the overall site.

The installation of the bust will enhance the design of Yamacraw Square, not only for its relevant history, but will expand the works created by Jerome Meadows in this square.

The installation of the object should not require the removal or alteration of existing sidewalks, unless it is part of a comprehensive redesign for the entire site (which is generally discouraged).

The installation will not require the removal or alteration of existing sidewalks.

If periodic memorial services are likely, the site should be able to accommodate them without causing undue disruption to the neighborhood, plantings, etc.

If periodic memorial services occur at Yamacraw Square, the addition of this monument will not affect the ability to accommodate a gathering in the square.

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Site in Relation to Theme for Markers or Monuments. The relationship between site and theme for a marker or monument is critical in determining the appropriate site for a particular theme.

Monument. *Monuments should be erected on sites to which the theme has relevance. The proposed site should not disrupt an established theme pattern. If the proposed theme falls into an existing theme pattern, the proposed site should also follow the corresponding site pattern.*

The proposed site does not disrupt an established theme pattern, but instead enriches the existing theme of local African American and Native American histories.

The proposed site should be the most relevant location available to the monument theme, as demonstrated through the documentation regarding the direct local relevance of the proposed theme.

The site of a bust of Reverend Andrew Bryan within Yamacraw Square, directly across West Bryan Street from the First Bryan Baptist Church, is a highly relevant location available to the monument theme due to the close proximity of the square to the church property. Although the current church building is not the same as it was in Bryan's time, the land itself is.

The context of the proposed site should be a major consideration in the mass and scale of the proposed object.

The location of monuments in the Landmark District should respect the Oglethorpe Plan, particularly in terms of historic viewsheds and sight lines.

The location of this monument within a City square is respectful of the Oglethorpe Plan.

Design. *The design of a marker, monument, or public work of art should be of the highest quality and caliber and enhance public space. In order to promote the high standards that the City of Savannah has historically enjoyed in its markers, monuments, and public art, the following guidelines should be observed.*

Monuments and Public Art. *Monuments may take on many forms including works of art, benches, statues, sculptures, obelisks, sundials, etc. Monuments are typically commissioned, site-specific pieces.*

The applicant may choose to commission a work of art or monument. The artwork or monument must be of the highest quality and should adhere to the guidelines.

The bust will be designed by the artist Jerome Meadows, who created an earlier art installation, including bronze sculptures, in Yamacraw Square.

Monuments should not be fabricated prior to approval.

The standard is met. The monument will not be fabricated until after approval has been granted through the Savannah City Council.

Monuments should be considered permanent and designed accordingly.

The standard is met. The applicant and the artist will ensure that the final product will withstand a permanent outdoor installation.

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Monuments and public art should be designed and constructed of materials suitable for outdoor display. All proposed materials should have performed satisfactorily in the local climate for a period of time long enough to assure permanence. Future maintenance and conservation requirements should be considered.

The proposed material is bronze, which is seen in other sculptures within Yamacraw Square. With an appropriate maintenance plan, as outlined by the applicant in the submittal packet, the bronze material of the sculpture will continue to perform satisfactorily in the local climate.

Monuments and public art should be designed to be reasonably resistant to vandalism.

The standard is met. The applicant outlines within the maintenance plan that routine inspections and cleanings will remove a variety of fouling agents, which includes graffiti. The plan also suggests adding a protective coating after cleaning.

Monuments and public art should be designed so as not to pose a danger to the curious public, such as the use of sharp objects or loose parts. Monument and public art design should include landscaping, paving, seating, drainage, lighting, fencing, or other protective measures which may be considered necessary.

The monument will be added to Yamacraw Square which already features the above elements. There will be no sharp objects or loose parts involved in the monument.

Monuments and public art should be of superior quality and craftsmanship.

The monument will be of superior quality and craftsmanship which is seen in other similar works of art by Jerome Meadows, including previous sculptures in Yamacraw Square and the African Burying Ground Memorial in Portsmouth, NH.

Monuments should not resemble gravestones.

The proposed monument is a bust, which does not resemble a gravestone.

A monument should be of original design, and public art should be an original work of art (one of a kind) or reproduced in editions of less than 200. Monuments and public art should not replicate an original monument or work of art.

The bust of Reverend Andrew Bryan is an original design and will be the only one of its kind. It will not replicate already-existing monuments or works of art.

Monuments and public art should be designed to complement and enhance the site in which it is located. It should not compete with, dominate or encroach upon existing monuments, public art, or buildings.

The addition of the Reverend Andrew Bryan bust to Yamacraw Square will be a harmonious addition to the existing monuments and public art.

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Monuments and public art should be respectful of the architectural, historical, geographical, and social/cultural context of the site.

The standard is met. The monument is respectful and relevant to the context of the site for the reasons mentioned in above sections regarding the historical significance of the life and work of Reverend Andrew Bryan.

Monuments and public art should be compatible in scale, materials, and form with its context. Context includes the buildings, monuments, public art, landscaping and open space to which the monument or public art is visually related.

The standard is met. The 5’8” proposed monument is compatible in scale with the surrounding area. The material of bronze is compatible as well because it is the same material as the existing sculptures in the square.

The format of the monument should effectively convey the message of the monument to the public.

The standard is met. The format of a bust of Reverend Bryan with an area on the stone base for a plaque to provide some written context to accompany the bust will effectively convey the message of the monument to the public.

Donor names and monument sponsors may be incorporated into the design (such as inscribed on bricks or on a separate plaque) but should be discreet and not detract from or dominate the monument or artwork.

The artist’s name may be incorporated into the design but should be in a discreet location on the work of art.

This information was not provided. If this information is proposed to be added, it will be detailed in the application for Part II: Final Design and Funding.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should have completed projects of similar size and scale in the public arena and be able to provide appropriate documentation.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should have an excellent reputation and be able to provide verifiable references attesting to the quality of work.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should be able to provide images or samples of existing similar monuments or works of art.

The designer and/or fabricator (for a monument) and the artist (for public art) should be able to demonstrate the ability to meet the proposed timeframe.

The above standards are met. Jerome Meadows designed the existing artworks in Yamacraw Square and the African Burying Ground Memorial in Portsmouth, NH. Meadows has completed other works of art in Savannah and beyond, and has an excellent reputation. Photos of existing similar monuments were provided in the submittal packet for this application.

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Text. *The text for a marker, monument or work of art is considered part of the overall design concept. Placement of the text, font type and size, etc. should be included with the final design drawings.*

Text should be well-researched and based on historically accurate, documented facts.

The text should accurately and effectively convey to the reader the desired message.

Quotations should be noted accordingly and permission from the appropriate authority received.

Text should avoid offensive, obscene, or inflammatory language.

Donor names may be included provided the names are in an identical but smaller font than the rest of the text and that no slogans or corporate logos are included.

The text is not included within the Part I application, but these details will be provided within the application for Part II: Final Design and Funding.

Funding.

Budget. *The Mayor and Aldermen do not fund new markers, monuments, or works of art. The applicant is fully responsible for funding the design, construction, installation, and any necessary landscaping, paving, or lighting involved with a new marker, monument, or work of art.*

The applicant must provide a realistic budget in Part II Final Design and Funding. The budget should be based on cost estimates provided by the manufacturer, artist, installer and/or contractor, as appropriate. The budget should include funding goals and deadlines. Should funding goals and deadlines fail to be met, the HSMC may, at its sole discretion, reconsider the application. The applicant must be capable of raising the necessary funding. Construction of the monument or installation of the work of art will not begin until all of the funding has been secured.

The applicant will be responsible for securing funding for the project and has included a preliminary realistic budget. The final budget information, and any updates, will be provided in Part II: Final Design and Funding.

Escrow Payment. *All markers, monuments and public art erected on public property become the property of the Mayor and Aldermen. The Mayor and Aldermen assume responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of the marker, monument or artwork. Therefore, an initial Escrow Payment is required of the applicant subsequent to approval of the application. The Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, will determine the appropriate Escrow Payment and will notify the applicant. The Escrow Payment must be paid prior to construction/installation of the monument or public art. Any marker, monument or artwork erected on private property is the responsibility of the property owner.*

The applicant will assume the responsibility of the escrow payment, as determined by the Mayor and Aldermen, upon approval of Part II: Final Design and Funding.

Public Notice. *As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property.*

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The standard is met. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting and the letters mailed. No comments were received from the public.

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the application of Part I: Theme, Location, and Preliminary Design for the creation of a bronze bust of Reverend Andrew Bryan, to be installed in Yamacraw Square, as requested, to be docketed on a City Council agenda, because the proposed project meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art.

DocuSigned by:
Kristopher Monroe
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Kristopher Monroe, Chair
Historic Site and Monument Commission

May 4, 2023
Date

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Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
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May 4, 2023
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MW: LGM: cc