



## SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT COMMISSION

### HISTORICAL MARKER RECOMMENDATION

**PETITIONER:** Harriet Meyerhoff

**FILE No.:** 23-006345-HM

**LOCATION:** River Street near “A World Apart” WWII Monument

**DATE:** February 1, 2024

#### **NATURE OF REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting a recommendation for approval from the Historic Site and Monument Commission to City Council to install a 42”x 38” cast aluminum double-sided roadside historical marker within a garden bed area near the WWII Monument, “A World Apart” to provide greater interpretive context to the monument and to acknowledge the Monument Committee.

The proposed marker is to read as follows:

Initiated and funded through the efforts of the Veterans Council of Chatham County, the World War II Memorial was designed by local architect Eric Meyerhoff, sculpted by artist Kim Brandell, and dedicated on Veterans Day 2010. The Memorial’s theme, “A World Apart,” represents the global nature of World War II (1941-1945), which was fought on numerous battlefronts simultaneously. As an active port, Savannah supplied valuable war materiel, including Liberty ships and minesweepers built along the Savannah River. The Memorial honors the 527 fallen Chatham Countians, including 93 Merchant Mariners, and the over 407,000 Americans who died in World War II.

Erected in 2024 by friends of those who died in World War II from Savannah.

This is a vast improvement from the formerly proposed wording, which staff found to be too lengthy for the sign type, which the HSMC concurred.

#### **PROJECT HISTORY**

This application was first presented to the HSMC at the January 4, 2024 meeting. The Board had concerns about the length of the proposed text as well as relevancy to WWII. The HSMC Decision was as follows:

*The Historic Site and Monument Commission does hereby continue the application to install a historical marker on River Street in a garden bed adjacent to the monument, “A World Apart,” to the February 1, 2024, Historic Site and Monument Commission Meeting, to provide the applicant time to address the following:*

1. *Provide revised text for the marker.*

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The text of the previous submittal is included for reference and to compare to the more succinctly stated revision.

*The theme “A World Apart” represents the simultaneous global conflict of World War II (1941-1945) on opposite sides of the Earth and the substantial contributions of Savannah toward victory. The U.S. rapidly produced war materiel, planned worldwide logistics, and trained millions of military personnel. “A World Apart” is dedicated to that “Greatest Generation.” More than 407,000 Americans died in service, with 527 fallen from the Savannah area, including at least 93 Merchant Mariners from the Port of Savannah going down with their ships, including Liberty ships and minesweepers built in Savannah River shipyards.*

*Remember their sacrifices for our freedom.*

*“Freedom is a fragile thing and it’s never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people. And those in world history who have known freedom and then lost it have never known it again.”*

*Ronald Reagan, January 5, 1967*

*We thank our WWII Memorial Committee:*

*Eric Meyerhoff, Architect and Project Lead*

*Kim Brandell, Sculptor*

*Doug Andrews, US Army, Ret.*

*Jimmy Ray, US Marine Corps Veteran*

*Bill Quinlan III, US Coast Guard, Ret.*

*Joe Cetti, US Navy Veteran*

*Helen Stone, County Commissioner, District 1*

*R. Jim Vejar, US Army, Ret.*

*The Veterans Council of Chatham County produced the World War II Memorial, dedicating it for Veterans Day, 2010.*

*This plaque emplaced 2024, in the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of America’s longest war, which began with the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, continuing and including ISIS in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan*

### **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.*

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

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

*Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.*

The standard is met. The “A World Apart” historical marker illustrates themes of military history, humanitarian, local heroes, and local history.

Per the applicant, “The marker reminds us of both world and local history, and the humanitarian efforts by hundreds who were involved during the war. The marker is a tribute to those who

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served in combat, and to the many from Savannah/Chatham County involved in the shipyards at the Savannah Port.”

*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 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 standards are met. The theme has clear, significant, and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County, specifically of its citizens who fought for the U.S. in WWII. There is already a public presence with the actual monument “A World Apart,” where the proposed marker seeks to complement the monument with historical background information and provide recognition to the monument committee.

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

The standard is met.

*Commemorated events should have endured historical significance and have occurred over fifty years ago.*

The standard is met, as World War II took place between 1941-1945.

*Commemorated persons should have endured historical significance and have been dead at least twenty-five years. Living people should not be commemorated. There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place.*

World War II has endured historical significance. The existing monument, along with the proposed marker, deals more with the overall event, and it commemorates a group of people, rather than an individual.

***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 marker is proposed to be installed in a raised bed garden area adjacent to the monument.

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

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

The applicant consulted with Gordon Denney, Senior Director at the City of Savannah Parks & Tree Department about the appropriateness of the chosen location. The standards are met.

*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 proposed site is large enough to accommodate the marker. The standards are met.

*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.*

River Street is a busy area, but the proposed exact location for the historical marker is in a sectioned off garden area that is not part of the walkways, therefore the placement of the marker here would not disrupt the heavy flow of foot traffic.

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

The proposed site is a garden area not prone to frequent auto accidents.

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

The standard is met. The proposed site is within a garden area on River Street, near a sidewalk, and physically accessible.

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

The standard is met. The proposed site is visible from the public right-of-way and is accessible from the adjacent public sidewalk.

*The proposed site should be easy to maintain.*

The marker is proposed within a City-owned garden on River Street, which is typically easy to maintain.

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

The marker will enhance the space by providing a historic interpretation of the nearby monument which would add context to the monument and would enhance the visitor experience by providing more background information about the monument.

***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.*

***Marker.*** *A marker should be erected in as close proximity to the site to which it is related as possible and be clearly visible from a public right-of-way.*

The standard is met. The proposed marker will be located on River Street in close proximity to the monument.

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**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, the City of Savannah has historically enjoyed in its markers, monuments, and public art, the following guidelines should be observed.*

**Markers.** *Markers may be mounted on a freestanding pole, wall-mounted, or embedded in the ground. As the primary purpose is to inform the public about an event, place or person, the aesthetic significance of a marker is generally minimal.*

*Markers on a freestanding pole should be the standard Georgia Historical Society (GHS) Marker style: two-sided, cast aluminum with a 30” x 42” plate size.*

*The shape should match the GHS marker shape.*

*The marker should have a black background with white, silver or gold text.*

*Markers not erected through the GHS’s marker program shall not bear the GHS or state seal.*

*Except the marker title, the marker text should be not more than 1” in height, and not less than 1/2”.*

*Marker text should be created in a manner that, to the extent possible, prevents fading and erosion.*

*Markers should be made of an enduring, non-corroding material.*

*Markers should be considered permanent and designed accordingly.*

The above standards are met. The marker meets the design requirements.

**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 has provided budget details and assumes responsibility for all finances associated with the project.

**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 is aware of the escrow payment and accepts responsibility.

**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. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. No comments were received from the public.

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**RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:**

**The Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council to install a historical marker on River Street in a garden bed adjacent to the monument, “A World Apart,” as requested, to be docketed on a City Council agenda because the proposed work meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art.**

DocuSigned by:  
*Catherine Kostilnik, PhD*  
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**Catherine D. Kostilnik, Chair**  
**Historic Site and Monument Commission**

**February 1, 2024**  
**Date**

DocuSigned by:  
*Melanie Wilson*  
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**Melanie Wilson, Executive Director**  
**Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

**February 1, 2024**  
**Date**

DocuSigned by:  
*Jonathan Mellon*  
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**Jonathan Mellon, Director of Historic Preservation**  
**Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**

**February 1, 2024**  
**Date**

**MW: JM: CC**