



S A V A N N A H - C H A T H A M C O U N T Y
 HISTORIC SITE & MONUMENT COMMISSION

Petitioner: James Pomfret
File No.: 26-001233-HM
Address: River Street Waterfront
PIN: Various locations
Staff Reviewer: Caitlin Chamberlain
Date: March 24, 2026

NATURE OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting approval for an update to fifteen (15) existing Riverfront Maritime Interpretive Markers along the waterfront on River Street. The signs were originally installed in 2008 [approved by HSMC August 21, 2008- C-080625-50521-2], but due to age and condition, were removed in 2025. The panels have been reviewed and commented on by representatives from GDOT, US Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway Administration, City of Savannah, Historic Preservation staff from the MPC, GA Port Authority, The Savannah Riverfront Association, the Shawnee Tribe, and Georgia State Historic Preservation Office.

There are certain items which may be approved at the staff level, as per Chapter 9: Processes and Procedures within the Master Plan & Guidelines, as noted below. The items which apply in this situation are in bold:

Staff Level Reviews

The MPC staff person to the HSMC may make staff decisions in consultation with the Chairperson, on the following items, provided that they have been reviewed by the HSMC at a public meeting previously:

- *Any detail referred by the HSMC to staff at a public meeting;*
- *The design of a rotating mural after the location and theme have been approved by the HSMC;*
- ***Changes to the text of a marker or monument which do not involve any substantive change in meaning or interpretation of the text;***
- ***Updates to the text of a marker or monument such as adding the name of the officers of an organization to the list of previous officers of that organization;***
 - *Changes to the colors used in a mural;*
 - *Minor changes in the location of a marker or monument in order to avoid utilities, trees, or other infrastructure, in coordination with City Staff;*

Staff Decision - Riverfront Maritime Interpretive Markers Updates
File No. 26-001233-HM
Address River Street Waterfront
Date March 24, 2026

- *Minor changes to materials of a monument or public artwork which involve no substantive changes to the aesthetics, durability, or structural integrity of the piece; and*
- *The correction of any text which, after approval by the HSMC, was discovered to be incorrect, such as a date.*

There were some design updates that did not lead to a substantive change in meaning or interpretation of the text on each of the panels, and updates to the text based on research updates that have happened since 2008. The materials will change in the form of new panels being fabricated to be the same as what had been approved and will be placed into the same housing and the same locations along the waterfront.

The MPC staff person is not required to render a decision on any of the above-mentioned items and may, at his or her sole discretion, refer the item to the HSMC for review.

Staff finds the decision process for this case to be adequately handled because of the minor nature of the updates, and because staff were involved in the review committee for the panel updates over the last few years. This has been an ongoing conversation related to the updates and not taken lightly. This has been thoroughly reviewed and found to maintain the same themes and relevance to Savannah's maritime history.

The MPC staff person will inform the HSMC of the decisions at the next HSMC meeting. Appeals of staff decisions will be heard.

Staff consulted with the Chair and were in agreement with a staff level decision for this project which will be placed on the 'Other Business' section of the April 2, 2026, Historic Site and Monument Commission meeting.

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.

Colonial History.

Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.

Staff Decision - Riverfront Maritime Interpretive Markers Updates
File No. 26-001233-HM
Address River Street Waterfront
Date March 24, 2026

*Cultural and Ethnic History.
Education.*

The overarching theme of the panels is maritime history but also includes local history, Colonial history, cultural and ethnic history, and industry and commerce.

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 themes of the panels are existing and have been previously approved and save for a few revisions due to more recent research, the topics remain the same and all have relevance to local history.

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

With the revisions, the above standards are still met for the project.

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.

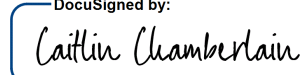
Text should avoid offensive, obscene, or inflammatory language.

The above standards are met.

Staff Decision - Riverfront Maritime Interpretive Markers Updates
File No. 26-001233-HM
Address River Street Waterfront
Date March 24, 2026

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Upon the provision of the City of Savannah Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art, Chapter 9, the Preservation Officer (MPC Executive Director designee) does hereby approve the updates and replacements to fifteen (15) existing Riverfront Maritime Interpretive Markers along the waterfront on River Street as requested because the work meets the standards in the Master Plan and Guidelines for Markers, Monuments, and Public Art.

DocuSigned by:

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Caitlin Chamberlain
Director of Historic Preservation & Urban Design

03/25/2026
Date

DocuSigned by:

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Melanie Wilson, Executive Director & CEO
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

03/25/2026
Date