

For June 28, 2023

Ms. Leah Michalak
Savannah Historic Preservation Commission
PO Box 8246
Savannah, GA 31412

Re: Demolition of Non-Contributing Structures at Whitaker, Park and Waldburg

Dear Leah/HPC Board:

We bring to you today a truly unique opportunity for the City of Savannah. A group of major local employers and Greenline Architecture have been presented with a generation-spanning project. This proposal will correct a lapse in urban design judgment that occurred over 60 years ago.

The buildings proposed to be demolished in this submission are all considered “non-contributing” on the Victorian Historic District Buildings Map. There have been several surveys conducted in this area and these buildings have never been added to the historic resources map. Why? They are simply suburban buildings in an urban context, and they have no significant history. These facts have never been contested in the 40+ years of having a contributing buildings map/board review. An effort to develop the same buildings today would be denied by the provisions of the ordinance and interpretation of lack of visual compatibility. In looking at the attached Sanborn Maps, as well as the 1891 Augustus Koch, Bird’s Eye View of Savannah perspective drawing, it is clear these lots have historically been underdeveloped and underutilized for the density needed.

In January 2022, this project was brought to the MPC/HPC staff in an effort to move forward with a proposed underground parking structure and multi-building design. After consideration of community goals, the owners and staff (at the request of the City Manager) put the project on hold, for further investigation as to the significance of these buildings. We understand after additional reviews and many months later, these buildings are still considered “non-contributing.”



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Today, we request demolition approval of these structures, contingent upon a future design to be reviewed and approved by the HPC Board. This Board holds the cards. We simply must get over the hurdle that these “might” be “contributing” buildings. In the site section provided, it’s not hard to understand that these low, one-story buildings along Whitaker do not contribute to the density, rhythm and scale of the district and do not provide the best use of the site. If these buildings are allowed to stay, this area along Whitaker Street will continue to be an urban planning blunder, a missing tooth on the face of Forsyth Park. We hope today, the Board will put emotions aside, review this site as what it is - underdeveloped and incorrectly placed structures.

In 28 years of coming before the mid-city (or HDBR (downtown)) boards, this is one of the only times Greenline has petitioned a request for demolition. It is not presented without pause. The effort put forth here is to work collaboratively with the Victorian Historic District neighborhood, the City of Savannah and this Board - all for the greater good of the City of Savannah by:

- 1) Creating Class-A office space for local companies and their employees.
- 2) Alleviating parking issues in the Forsyth Park area and adding spaces available for public use.
- 3) Correcting the needed density these blocks should have, and
- 4) Improving the vibrancy of a crucial cornerstone of Forsyth Park.

This submission follows the provisions of the Ordinance. This application is accompanied by all required information specified on the application form. We trust that you and members of the Historic Preservation Commission will find our presentation acceptable, and we look forward to receiving your favorable comments. Thank you.

Sincerely,
GREENLINE ARCHITECTURE, INC.



Keith Howington
Senior Project Manager

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