

Status of HAS Proposed Yamacraw Village Demolition, Environmental Assessment, and Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement

From Jay Melder <Jay.Melder@Savannahga.Gov>

Date Mon 4/7/2025 11:49 AM

To xCity_Council <xCity_Council@Savannahga.Gov>; Bates Lovett <BLovett@Savannahga.Gov>; Mark Massey <MMassey@Savannahga.Gov>; Marty Johnston <MJohnston01@Savannahga.Gov>

Cc Executive Leadership Team <ExecutiveLeadershipTeam@Savannahga.Gov>; Martin Fretty <MFretty@Savannahga.Gov>; Tara Hicks <THicks@Savannahga.Gov>; City Manager's Office <citymanager@savannahga.gov>

 2 attachments (16 MB)

MEMO to Council_Yamacraw Village EA MOA_04072025.pdf; MOA_Yamacraw Demolition Environmental Assessment MOA_040725[1] copy.pdf;

Mayor and Council—

Please find attached updates and information related to the Housing Authority of Savannah's application to HUD for the demolition of Yamacraw Village. **To be clear, the decision to demolish Yamacraw Village is not the City's decision to make.** That is the decision of the Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

For our role, the City is required by federal law and regulation to act on HUD's behalf in overseeing the Environmental Assessment (EA) requirements, including the Section 106 Historic Preservation Review, for this Housing Authority of Savannah undertaking. The attached MOA is required to satisfy the Section 106 component of the EA.

The City's position on this undertaking is that Yamacraw Village always be named *Yamacraw*; that the site always be used for deeply affordable housing; that the needs of First Bryan Baptist Church be met; and that in the event of redevelopment that current Yamacraw Village residents be given the first right to return to new housing built on the site, and historic and culturally significant structures be preserved.

Furthermore, in the negotiation of this MOA, the City also sought to include provisions related to relocation of residents and right to return; however, the the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) deleted the provisions stating that “this document is solely regarding Section 106/cultural resources, therefore household make-up [and resident relocation], in the context of this document is moot.” City staff advocated that residents’ collective identify, and the neighborhood’s demographic character is of historical value and thus a cultural resource. The Deputy SHPO replied that “while it is great that the city is taking this into account, it is not related to the federal regulations this MOA is capturing and including it only serves to conflate separate process.” Nevertheless, rights of HAS residents are covered under federal regulations that HAS must adhere to concerning future housing whether it be on the Yamacraw site or elsewhere.

As the HUD designated Responsible Entity, the City of Savannah is required to oversee the Environmental Assessment process, including a Section 106 Historic Preservation component. Once completed, the City must also execute an MOA with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) to satisfy the Section 106 Historic Preservation component of the comprehensive Environmental Assessment for this undertaking.

Execution of this MOA does not conclude public input related to the comprehensive Environmental Assessment or proposed future actions. An enclosed memo provides additional details on the MOA, the process for completing the Section 106 requirements, and next steps.

Also for your awareness, Mayor Johnson submitted a letter of support to HUD regarding HAS’s application for demolition.

Please reach out to me of Chief [@Taffanye Young](#) with any questions, comments, concerns, or observations.

Sincerely,
Jay Melder
City Manager