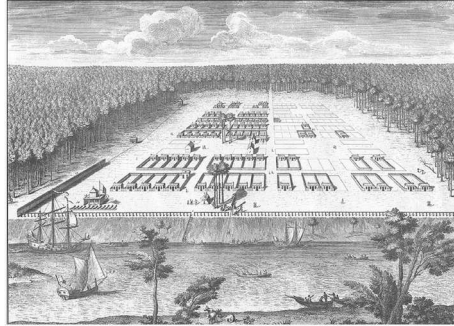


# OGLETHORPE PLAN COALITION, INC.



c/o Major John Berrien House  
324 East Broughton St.  
Savannah, GA 31401

November 6, 2023

Jay Melder  
City Manager  
City of Savannah  
2 East Bay St.  
Savannah, GA 31401

Re: 23-004742-PA - Proposed SAV Sign in City Market Is Not Permissible Under the Ordinance

Dear Mr. Melder:

This letter serves to bring to your attention that the proposed SAV sign for City Market is not permitted under the Section 9.9.17 Special Sign Districts rules for the City Market Sign District under Division II Part 8 Chapter 3 of the Code of Ordinances, Savannah, Georgia ("Ordinance.")

**Background.** Visit Savannah has proposed the installation of a large thirteen-plus foot by almost five foot sign on West St. Julian Street. The sign comprises three channel letters manufactured in aluminum. The letters are "SAV," representing the logo for Savannah. According to Visit Savannah, the logo was designed by their advertising agency. The sign will be manufactured by the Signature Sign Company, which calls itself on its Website "a leader in the sign industry." No artists were involved in this process.

**Signs and Public Art.** Visit Savannah calls the sign "public art" and submitted it for approval only to the Savannah-Chatham County Historic Sites and Monuments Commission, not the Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review ("HDBR"). We doubt that the sign constitutes "art," especially given that no artist was involved. Nonetheless, even if someone thinks this sign is so creative as to constitute "art," the sign nonetheless also remains a sign under the Ordinance.

**Definition of a Sign.** Section 13.4 of the Ordinance defines sign as "An object, device, display, or structure, or part thereof, which is used to advertise, identify, display, direct, or attract attention to an object, person, institution, organization, business, product, service, event, idea or location by any means, including words, letters, numbers, figures, design, pictures, symbols, fixtures, colors, illumination or projected images."

This proposal is an object used to attract attention to Visit Savannah and Savannah's status as a tourist destination by the use of letters, and the proposal therefore constitutes a "sign" under the Ordinance. Even the proposal describes the sign as a "sculptural sign."

Note that the Ordinance refers to "ground sign" and "public sign" in Table 9.9-5 in Section 9.9.17(e). The proposal is both a ground sign, being attached to the ground, and a public sign, serving to advertise the City and Visit Savannah.

**COA Is Required:** Section 9.9.17 of the Ordinance provides rules for Special Sign Districts, including the City Market Sign District, which specifically includes West St. Julian Street as shown in Figure 9.9-18 in that section of the Ordinance. Table 9.9-5 in Section 9.9.17(e) indicates that for a ground sign, such as a monument sign, a COA must be obtained, and that for a special public sign, a COA again is required.

**City Manager Sign Off:** Section 9.9.17(f) requires the City Manager to sign off on the sign permit after a COA has been obtained.

**Channel Lettering Is Prohibited:** Under section 9.9.17(g)(iii)(7), channel lettering, such as this sign, is prohibited. Thus, a COA is not appropriate because this sign as an impermissible sign. The applicant must resubmit its proposal with a redesigned sign that complies with the Ordinance.

**Negative Effects on NHL Integrity:** The proposed sign would have ill effects on the integrity of the Savannah Downtown National Historic Landmark District. Although it is closed off to vehicular traffic, West St. Julian Street remains a street under the Oglethorpe Plan, which is protected under section 7.8.10(a)(i) of the Ordinance. Permanently blocking the street with a large sign changes the discernability of the street and makes the Oglethorpe Plan hard to perceive.

You may reach me at (646) 248-2050 if you have questions. Please add this letter to the record for 23-004742-PA.

Respectfully,



Andrew Berrien Jones  
Chair, Oglethorpe Plan Coalition, Inc.

CC: Bates Lovett  
Melanie Wilson  
Leah Michalak  
Cynthia Walton  
David McDonald