

## Michelle Gavin

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**From:** Muwwakkil, Saudia <saudia\_muwwakkil@nps.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 2, 2018 7:06 PM  
**To:** Michelle Gavin  
**Cc:** Walton, Cynthia  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Savannah NHL Press release

Dear Michelle:

Thank you for your message today. We share your concern for ensuring that information is accurately communicated about the purpose, intent and status of the assessment. For our edification, can you please forward the release that you mentioned was disseminated by Lominack Kolman Smith Architects and New South Associates, Inc.? We are not aware of a public release of materials from them; only to the National Park Service and, by extension, to our collaborators. We are now in receipt of the Historic Savannah Foundation's [release](#), which a reporter shared with us late Friday.

About a week ago, Cynthia routed our press statement and FAQs to you. Our goal in addressing the miscommunication with reporters has been to 1) Convey that the district is not in danger of losing its NHL designation, 2) Clarify that the National Park Service has not yet made a final determination regarding the condition status, and 3) Express that additional factors -- including public comment -- will help inform the agency's final determination about the condition category. We have discussed our concerns about message accuracy with reporters and multiple parties and expect to announce opportunities for public comment shortly, using this upcoming announcement to re-emphasize the aforementioned points.

We sincerely welcome any additional thoughts you may have about this or upcoming announcements related to the assessment. I will be available Tuesday from 2p for a call, if needed. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Saudia Muwwakkil  
Assistant Regional Director  
Communications and Legislative Affairs

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National Park Service | Southeast Region  
100 Alabama Street, SW  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Desk: 404-507-5612  
Cell: 404-275-9838  
[Saudia Muwwakkil@nps.gov](mailto:Saudia_Muwwakkil@nps.gov)

On Mon, Apr 2, 2018 at 8:45 AM, Michelle Gavin <[MGavin@savannahga.gov](mailto:MGavin@savannahga.gov)> wrote:

Good morning Cynthia and Saudia,

Savannah has received some negative press in response to the release of the Integrity and Condition Assessment disseminated by Lominack Kolman Smith Architects and New South Associates, Inc. regarding Savannah's National Historic Landmark District. Members of the media have viewed the report as an official report from the NPS and have been broadcasting that Savannah's National Historic Landmark District is Priority 1 Threatened. From what I understand in your e-mail, Savannah is currently listed as Satisfactory, from assessment done in 2006. This information about a 2006 assessment was omitted in the assessment prepared by Lominack Kolman Smith Architects.

The City of Savannah takes a tremendous amount of pride in having a National Historic Landmark District and is dedicated to preserving this national treasure. We feel the media attention from this assessment has been negative, due to errors and misinformation about Savannah's current status.

Would the NPS be willing to issue a statement indicating this assessment is NOT an official assessment from the NPS and includes Savannah's current "satisfactory" status? We feel this would go a long way to end some of the negative press. Please advise.

Thank you so much for your time.

Best Regards,

Michelle Gavin

Director, Office of Public Communications

City of Savannah

[mgavin@savannahga.gov](mailto:mgavin@savannahga.gov)

Cell: (912) 433-5384

[www.savannahga.gov](http://www.savannahga.gov)

**From:** Walton, Cynthia [mailto:[cynthia\\_walton@nps.gov](mailto:cynthia_walton@nps.gov)]

**Sent:** Friday, March 23, 2018 4:06 PM

**To:** Michelle Gavin

Cc: Saudia Muwakkil

Subject: Re: Savannah NHL Press release

Hi Michelle,

Thank you for your message seeking clarification about the recent assessment the National Park Service commissioned on the Savannah National Historic Landmark District. We've addressed your question below. I've also included some background and FAQs that might help you better understand the context of this year's report. Saudia Muwakkil, the NPS' Communications Director for the Southeast Region, is cc'd on this email. Saudia has provided similar information in response to press inquiries.

The last comprehensive assessment of the Savannah National Historic Landmark District was conducted by the National Park Service (NPS) in 2002. NPS provided a cursory rating of satisfactory in 2006 when we learned plans were adjusted to construct the bus terminal outside of the district.

This year's report was

commissioned to provide complete data about incompatible changes that had occurred and have been proposed. We will consider the recommendations of the report along with public input before making any changes to the condition category.

## **FAQs**

### **Is the Savannah National Historic Landmark District in danger of losing its designation?**

No, the Savannah National Historic Landmark District is not in danger of losing its designation. This report calls attention to past and future preservation issues so that steps can be taken to improve the health of the district. Through careful stewardship additional losses of integrity can be avoided and the health of the landmark can be restored.

### **Why does the National Park Service monitor the condition of National Historic Landmarks?**

A cornerstone of the National Historic Landmarks Program is monitoring the condition of NHLs to identify those that exhibit damage or face threats to the integrity of their resources. This information enables NPS, stewards, policy makers, and the public to take action to preserve these most significant exemplars of our heritage for future generations.

### **What are the condition monitoring categories?**

To monitor the condition of National Historic Landmarks the NPS has established four condition categories, which are described below:

**Satisfactory** (Priority 3) indicates that there is no known current or potential threats to the landmark

**Watch** (Priority 2) indicates NHLs that face impending actions or circumstances that likely will cause a loss of integrity.

**Threatened** (Priority 1) indicates NHLs that have suffered, or are in imminent danger of, a severe loss of integrity.

**Emergency** indicates that recent catastrophic damage has occurred that requires immediate intervention.

**What is the current condition the Savannah National Historic Landmark District? Will the condition category now be changed to “threatened”?**

NPS commissioned this report to provide NPS staff with a more complete understanding of incompatible changes that had occurred, or, were proposed to occur within the district. Without this data NPS staff has not been able to make an assessment of the district’s condition for several years.

NPS staff will consider the recommendations of the report along with public input before making any changes to the condition category.

**For Background**

The National Park Service (NPS) recently commissioned a study to assess the integrity and condition of the Savannah National Historic Landmark District. Designated by the Secretary of the Interior in 1966, the Savannah National Historic Landmark District is one of America’s oldest and most prominent National Historic Landmarks. The National Park Service monitors the condition of National Historic Landmarks to ensure that they continue to possess the historic qualities for which they were designated. In the case of the Savannah District, those qualities include the Savannah Town Plan (or Oglethorpe Plan) and the impressive collection of architecturally significant buildings built upon the plan.

The study, prepared by New South and Associates, documents, in narrative and graphic formats, major changes that have occurred within and adjacent to the district since its designation in 1966. The effort involved research, a reconnaissance survey, photographic documentation, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis and mapping, on current and future threats to the Savannah National Historic Landmark District.

This study shows that while still capable of conveying its nationally significant importance, the Savannah National Historic Landmark District has suffered from loss of integrity and faces future preservation challenges. The National Park Service has developed condition categories (satisfactory, watch, threatened, and emergency) to measure the health of National Historic Landmarks. The report recommends that the district be considered “threatened” due to previous loss of integrity and proposed incompatible development.

NPS staff will consider the recommendations of the report along with public input before making any changes to the condition category.

Through careful stewardship additional losses of integrity can be avoided and the health of the landmark can be restored. The National Park Service hopes that the information contained in this study will aid in the stewardship of the Savannah National Historic District by providing policy makers and the public with a better understanding of the District.

###

Cynthia Walton

National Historic Landmarks Program Manager

National Park Service, Southeast Region

[100 Alabama St. SW, Atlanta, GA 30303](#)

(404) 507-5792

On Thu, Mar 22, 2018 at 4:40 PM, Michelle Gavin <[MGavin@savannahga.gov](mailto:MGavin@savannahga.gov)> wrote:

Hello Cynthia,

I am trying to get some clarification on the statement you provided regarding Savannah's national historic landmark district.

As you will see in an email below, I saw you were quoted as saying that in 2006 Savannah was moved to a "satisfactory" level and the status has not changed since then. Does that mean Savannah's current level is "satisfactory" and not "threatened" as a recent report indicates?

Also, if the statement is true, why was it not included in the report?

The City of Savannah also has concerns that the report was based on only 28 respondents to a survey, an extremely low number. The City of Savannah also has concerns that the report was based on only 28 respondents to a survey, and extremely low number.

The City of Savannah has made great strides in recent years to preserve our landmark district and we feel like this long list of accomplishments was left out of the report.

Any feedback you could provide would be greatly appreciated. The City of Savannah and our tourism industry take great pride in our landmark district and we want to make sure the most accurate information is presented to our citizens and visitors.

Best regards,

Michelle Gavin

Office of Public Communications Director

City of Savannah

Office: [\(912\) 651-6410](tel:(912)651-6410)

Cell: [\(912\) 433-5384](tel:(912)433-5384)

[mgavin@savannahga.gov](mailto:mgavin@savannahga.gov)

[www.savannahga.gov](http://www.savannahga.gov)

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Ellen Harris <[HarrisE@thempc.org](mailto:HarrisE@thempc.org)>  
**Date:** March 22, 2018 at 12:09:52 PM EDT  
**To:** Michelle Gavin <[MGavin@Savannahga.Gov](mailto:MGavin@Savannahga.Gov)>  
**Cc:** Bridget Lidy <[blidy@Savannahga.Gov](mailto:blidy@Savannahga.Gov)>, Melony West <[westm@thempc.org](mailto:westm@thempc.org)>, "Bret Bell" <[BBell@Savannahga.Gov](mailto:BBell@Savannahga.Gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: NHL Press release

It is not in the report but I confirmed this information with the National Park Service. See below:

*From: Walton, Cynthia <[cynthia\\_walton@nps.gov](mailto:cynthia_walton@nps.gov)>  
Date: Thu, Mar 22, 2018 at 6:06 AM  
Subject: Re: details  
To: Rebecca Fenwick <[rebecca@lksarchitects.com](mailto:rebecca@lksarchitects.com)>*

*Hi Rebecca,*

*In 2006 the district was moved to "Satisfactory" when a proposed bus terminal was moved outside the boundary. Since 2006 the condition has not changed.*

Cynthia

Cynthia Walton

National Historic Landmarks Program Manager

National Park Service, Southeast Region

[100 Alabama St. SW, Atlanta, GA 30303](#)

[\(404\) 507-5792](#)

Ellen I. Harris, AICP, LEED A.P.

Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

[110 East State Street](#)

[Savannah, GA 31401](#)

Tel. (912) 651-1482

Fax (912) 335-5922

Email [harrise@thempc.org](mailto:harrise@thempc.org)

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**From:** Michelle Gavin [<mailto:MGavin@Savannahga.Gov>]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 22, 2018 11:38 AM

**To:** Ellen Harris <[HarrisE@thempc.org](mailto:HarrisE@thempc.org)>

**Cc:** Bridget Lidy <[blidy@Savannahga.Gov](mailto:blidy@Savannahga.Gov)>; Melony West <[westm@thempc.org](mailto:westm@thempc.org)>; Bret Bell <[BBell@Savannahga.Gov](mailto:BBell@Savannahga.Gov)>

**Subject:** Re: NHL Press release

Good morning Ellen,

Bret Bell and I reread the report this morning, we do not see anything in the report citing that the district status was changed in 2006 to priority 3 satisfactory. Can you please refer me to that section? We were citing a different section, see the attached picture:

Michelle Gavin

Office of Public Communication Director

City of Savannah

Office: [\(912\) 651-6410](tel:9126516410)

Cell: [\(912\) 433-5384](tel:9124335384)

[mgavin@savannahga.gov](mailto:mgavin@savannahga.gov)

[www.savannahga.gov](http://www.savannahga.gov)

On Mar 22, 2018, at 9:19 AM, Ellen Harris <[HarrisE@thempc.org](mailto:HarrisE@thempc.org)> wrote:

Just wanted to give you a heads up that the City's press release contained some inaccurate information- specifically, the statement which reads;

*As cited in this report, the status of Savannah's Landmark District has not changed. It was designated as "Priority 1 Threatened" when it was last assessed in 2002, and it is recommended in this report to remain at "Priority 1 Threatened."*

This report changes the District's status from Satisfactory to Threatened. In 2006 the District's status was changed to Priority 3 Satisfactory after the CAT Transfer Station was moved out of the District and has been at that level since.

Thanks,

Ellen

Ellen I. Harris, AICP, LEED A.P.

Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

[110 East State Street](#)

[Savannah, GA 31401](#)

Tel. (912) 651-1482

Fax (912) 335-5922

Email [harrise@thempc.org](mailto:harrise@thempc.org)