

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Savannah Beach Town Hall and Auditorium

2. Location: 403 Butler Avenue, Tybee Island, Chatham County

3a. Description: The Savannah Beach Town Hall and Auditorium, now known as the Tybee Island City Hall, is a one-story, wood frame, Colonial Revival-style municipal building located at 403 Butler Avenue on Tybee Island in Chatham County. The building was constructed in 1939 using funds from the Works Progress Administration program and is situated near the center of the island in the northeast corner of Memorial Park, a 4.5-acre public park that serves as the site of several government and education buildings, and recreational facilities. The building fronts west onto Butler Avenue and is set behind a modest cultivated lawn, with a grassy expanse along its north side and several live oak trees. The rectangular, multi-purpose facility features a symmetrical façade, a brick veneer exterior, half circle wood vents in side gables, single and paired double hung windows, and a pedimented, partial-width portico with a large entablature supported by four brick piers with stucco insets. The interior of the building features a symmetrical layout with city offices located on both sides of the centered entry hall and a rear wing housing an auditorium. The auditorium contains a stage in the west end that features wooden Art Deco-style ornamentation around the edges and a balcony (now enclosed) at the east end that is supported by three fluted Doric columns with symmetrical stairs leading to the balcony located along the outer walls underneath. All rooms feature historic plaster walls and ceilings, simple wood baseboards and window/door casings, hardwood floors, and five-panel wood doors. Minimal alterations include replacement of the main entrance door, windows and modification of the front columns; however, the majority of historic materials and details remain intact, and the property retains a high degree of overall historic integrity.

3b. Period of Significance: 1939-1971

3c. Acreage: Less than one acre

3d. Boundary Explanation: The boundary of the nominated property is rectangular and begins at the corner of Butler Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, runs northwest 175 feet, southwest along a line running 10 feet from the rear elevation of the building, then southeast to Butler Avenue, and northeast to the beginning point.

4a. National Register Criterion: A and C

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Politics/Government, Entertainment/Recreation, Social History, Architecture

4c. Statement of Significance: When the Savannah Beach Town Hall and Auditorium was completed in 1939, it was the first significant public facility built in the town and facilitated the growth and development of the “Town of Savannah Beach” into a suburban seaside city after World War II. The Savannah Beach Town Hall and Auditorium is significant under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government as it served as the city’s principal municipal building from 1939 to 2014, housing the offices of the town clerk, mayor, municipal judge, and other offices. For 75 years the building served as the civic and governmental hub of the island where the business of the town was conducted. During this time the auditorium served as council chambers where the mayor and city council held regularly scheduled public meetings as well as a polling place for elections. The property is also significant under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Social History as the only public facility available on the island for citizens to gather for recreation, entertainment, and socialization, serving as the center of community life on the island for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The large auditorium could accommodate functions of up to 500 people and was frequently used for dances, receptions, dinners and socials, plays and presentations, as well as the annual community Christmas program – a tradition that spanned several decades. The building also served as a meeting hall for various social groups and community betterment organizations, providing working and meeting space for over eighty years to churches, schools, the public library, fraternal societies, political groups, and youth organizations. Additionally, the Savannah Beach Town Hall and Auditorium is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a good example of a Colonial Revival-style town hall built with funding from the federal government’s Works Progress Administration (WPA) program and through the sale of municipal bonds, one of the most important Depression-era programs of the 1930s and early 1940s. The Colonial Revival style was popular in Georgia from 1890 through the 1940s and was commonly used for public buildings such as government offices, post offices, libraries, banks, schools, and churches.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The property is being nominated at the local level of significance for its association with the day-to-day functions of local government on Tybee Island, as a community center, and as a good example of a Colonial Revival-style WPA municipal building in Chatham County.

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by the City of Tybee Island, and nomination materials were prepared by preservation consultant, Quatrefoil Historic Preservation Consulting.