

SUSIE KING TAYLOR CENTER FOR JUBILEE, INC.
422 WEST 43RD, SAVANNAH GA 31401
Email: saltwatagirl@gmail.com/ (912) 547-5937

April 3, 2023

**RE: CITY OF SAVANNAH PUBLIC PROPERTY NAMING APPLICATION
Request and Application to Name the Square
(located at Abercorn Street and East Wayne Street):
“Susie King Taylor Square”**

Honorable Mayor Van Johnson and City of Savannah Alderwoman and Aldermen:

Susie King Taylor Center for Jubilee, Inc., on behalf of itself and its board members and officers who are Savannah residents and citizens, together with its Committee, ***The Coalition to Name Susie King Taylor Square*** and its members, who are Savannah residents and citizens, submits the above-referenced ***Request and Application to Name the Square “Susie King Taylor Square” (“Letter Request & Application”)***. This Request & Application is being submitted, with permission, in renewal of the still-pending Application to Name/Rename the Square “Susie King Taylor Square” that was submitted by the Center for Jubilee, Reconciliation, and Healing on August 4, 2021 (copy attached).

This Letter Request & Application is presented to Mayor Van Johnson and other City officials for the purpose of our organizations’ desire to name the now unnamed square (formerly Calhoun Square) “**Susie King Taylor Square**” (sometimes “**Taylor Square**” for short). This public square is in the 400 Block of Abercorn Street in historic downtown Savannah, Georgia.

The balance of this Letter will demonstrate that this Request & Application amply satisfies all “Application Criteria and Requirements” for the “Square Renaming Process to Submit Names for the Square located at Abercorn Street and East Wayne Street” as set forth at the City of Savannah website. See <https://www.savannahga.gov/3726/Square-Renaming>

- I. **SECTION I.** The City of Savannah website, concerning the Square Renaming Process, provides:

Proposed naming must satisfy at least one of the following criteria:

- **It honors and commemorates a noteworthy person associated with the City of Savannah, Chatham County, the State of Georgia or the United States of America;**

- **It commemorates local history, places, events or culture;**
- **It strengthens neighborhood identity; or**
- It recognizes native wildlife or natural geographical features.

Natural Person Naming Request shall consider the following

- **The proposed honoree shall be deceased, absent extraordinary circumstances;**
- **Whether the proposed namesake made a sustained contribution over an appreciable time period, exerted efforts of benefit or significance to local, state or national affairs and/or demonstrated leadership in governmental, cultural or historical affairs, humanitarian efforts, or community development;**
- **Contributions that beneficially changed the nature and characteristics of the community; and**
- **Achievement by a native Savannahian of national or international acclaim in a specific field of endeavor that has reflected positively on Savannah.**

See <https://www.savannahga.gov/3726/Square-Renaming> (emphasis supplied).

We show that the present Letter Request & Application advances not just one, but three of the first set of bullets above and all four of the second set of bullets above, as follows:

We request the naming of the presently unnamed square, formerly Calhoun Square, as “Susie King Taylor Square” (“Taylor Square” for short) in honor of Susie Baker King Taylor whose noteworthy life is associated with the City of Savannah, Chatham County, the State of Georgia, and the United States of America. She was a catalyst for positive change during and after the Antebellum Period on the coast of Georgia. Her accomplishments range from joining the United States Union Army as a young, enslaved fourteen-year-old girl and participating in military expeditions and camp life, nursing the Colored troops both within the Union and Confederate side, as well as teaching them and the women and children in the camps to read and write, and later running her own private day and night schools in Savannah until the first school for African Americans was built in Savannah after Emancipation. Susie Baker King Taylor is the first and

only African American woman to publish her memoirs of her life in the Civil War in the United States.

Naming the square after Susie Baker King Taylor will also commemorate the local history and strengthen the neighborhood identity by openly acknowledging that there are hundreds of enslaved Africans buried in the vicinity of Calhoun and Whitefield Squares. This area was originally known as the “**Negro Burial Ground**,” and “**Strangers Burial Ground**.” (See attached report, “Savannah’s Negro Burial Grounds” and “Strangers Burial Ground,” as prepared by Luciana M. Spracher for the City of Savannah Municipal Archives, 2021. (<http://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20859/BurialroundsHistory-2021-03--09>.)

This report thoroughly supports our Board of Directors’ intentions to honor the hundreds of enslaved and Free Negroes who lie beneath the unmarked ground. We believe that this sacred place deserves an honorable name that will also commemorate it as a place to pay homage to those souls who have no names left to call, or places to bring flowers. (See also discussion below concerning Susie King Taylor’s life in Savannah.)

After more than a century and a half of honoring a man, John C. Calhoun, who worked to divide and break up this country, it is surely fitting now to rename the square after someone, Susie King Taylor, who though enduring enslavement under the laws and customs of this country, nonetheless dedicated her considerable talents to holding this country together.

II. **SECTION II.** The City of Savannah website, concerning the Square Renaming Process, further provides:

The following shall not be considered:

- Persons that resided in the City of Savannah for less than five years, other than prominent national figures;
- Names assigned to existing public property within the city or unincorporated Chatham County where duplication of the name is likely to lead to confusion; and
- Commercial names where usage of such name would amount to advertising.

See <https://www.savannahga.gov/3726/Square-Renaming> .

We show that the present Letter Request & Application does not involve any of the above disqualifying considerations, as follows:

Susie Baker King Taylor lived in Savannah as a child and as an adult. Early in her childhood, Susie Baker lived in Savannah with her grandmother Dolly where she was taught to read and

write in secret schools for enslaved Africans until the Civil War began. After the Civil War, Susie Baker King and her husband Edward King returned home to Savannah to start their lives together. She gave birth to their son and contributed to Savannah by setting up a school for African American children until public schools were provided for them.

See American Battlefield Trust, *Civil War Biography: Susie King Taylor*,
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/susie-taylor>

Accordingly, this is certainly not a case of a person who resided in the City for fewer than five years. Nor is there any concern regarding names assigned to existing public properties or regarding commercial names.

III. **SECTION III.** The City of Savannah website, concerning the Square Renaming Process, further provides:

Naming request must consider the following criteria;

- The number of residents and businesses directly impacted;
- Community diversity;
- The historical significance of preexisting name or location;
- The appropriateness and compatibility of the request in relation to the existing area;
- The impact on emergency service delivery; and
- Continuity and stability.

See <https://www.savannahga.gov/3726/Square-Renaming> .

We show that the present Letter Request & Application addresses all of the above six criteria, as follows:

1. Residents and businesses will not be directly impacted by, say, any address change in that the square is presently unnamed and must receive a new name in any event.
2. Community diversity will be advanced in that, by naming the presently unnamed square "Susie King Taylor Square," the City of Savannah will be honoring for the first time a woman and an African American woman with a square name.
3. There is no compromise or dilution of historical significance in that there is now no preexisting name or location inasmuch as the square is presently unnamed.
4. One factor, among others, advancing the appropriateness and compatibility of the Request & Application relates to the fact that, as we believe, Susie King Taylor received her secret education in homes in the vicinity of the presently unnamed square.
5. There will be no impact on emergency service delivery.
6. There will be no adverse impact on continuity and stability inasmuch as the square is already presently unnamed and in need of a name.

IV. **SECTION IV.** The City of Savannah website, concerning the Square Renaming Process, further provides:

Application must additionally include the following items:

- Name and Contact Information of the Applicant
- Support Letter from one of the following Savannah City Council members representing the square (Mayor, At-Large Post 1, At-Large Post 2, or District 2 Alderman)
- Proposed Name
- Statement of Significance for proposed name with supporting citations

See <https://www.savannahga.gov/3726/Square-Renaming> .

We show that the present Letter Request & Application addresses all of the above four bullets, as follows:

Bullet #1: Name and contact information of applicant is as follows:

**SUSIE KING TAYLOR CENTER FOR JUBILEE, INC.
PATT GILLIARD-GUNN/ROZ ROUSE/PEGGY HILLEARY - CO-CHAIRWOMEN,
COALITION TO NAME SUSIE KING TAYLOR SQUARE
422 West 43rd Street, Savannah ga 31401
Email: saltwatagirl@gmail.com / (912) 547-5937**

Bullet #2: This Request & Application attaches two such support letters.

Bullet #3: The proposed name is Susie King Taylor Square, also Taylor Square for short.

Bullet #4: See above statement of significance in connection with Section I of this Letter.

For all these reasons, we respectfully submit that the City of Savannah should grant this Request & Application to name the presently unnamed square "Susie King Taylor Square."

SUSIE KING TAYLOR CENTER FOR JUBILEE, INC.

By: PATT GILLIARD-GUNN,
Its: PRESIDENT & CEO

Attachments:

1. Copy of Application to Name/Rename the Square "Susie King Taylor Square" submitted by Center for Jubilee, Reconciliation, and Healing (filed August 4, 2021)
2. Report: "Savannah's Negro Burial Grounds" and "Strangers Burial Ground," as prepared by Luciana M. Spracher for the City of Savannah Municipal Archives, 2021. (<http://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20859/BurialroundsHistory-2021-03--09>)
3. Two support letters



Office of the Mayor Savannah, Georgia

Van R. Johnson, II
Mayor

March 31, 2023

Mr. Joseph Shearouse, Jr.
City of Savannah
2 East Bay Street
Savannah, Georgia 31402

Re: Naming Request Endorsement for Consideration- 'Susie King Taylor Square'

To Whom It May Concern,

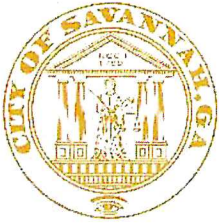
Please be advised that I endorse the naming request for consideration to name the public square located on Abercorn and East Wayne Streets, to 'Susie King Taylor Square' in accordance with City Ordinance and the process outlined within 'Article E. Naming of Public Property, Facilities, and Streets'.

I look forward to this application advancing within the process as required by City Code.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Van R. Johnson II", is written over the typed name and title.

Van R. Johnson, II
Mayor, City of Savannah



CITY OF SAVANNAH—CITY COUNCIL

Kesha Gibson-Carter
Alderwoman At-Large

April 19th, 2023

City Hall
2 East Bay Street
Savannah, Georgia 31402

Re: Naming Request Endorsement for Consideration- 'Susie King Taylor Square'

To Whom It May Concern,

I, Alderwoman Kesha Gibson-Carter, officially endorse the naming request for consideration to name the public square located on Abercorn and East Wayne Streets, to 'Susie King Taylor Square' in accordance with City Ordinance and the process outlined within 'Article E. Naming of Public Property, Facilities, and Streets'.

I look forward to this application advancing within the process as required by City Code.

Thank you,

Alderwoman Kesha Gibson-Carter
City of Savannah, Georgia
At-Large Post 1