



Democrats try to halt Trump in Cuba

INSIDE, 4A

Savannah Morning News.

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A worker directs traffic as one lane of traffic is closed along Whitaker Street behind the US Courthouse. RICHARD BURKHART/SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

RINCON STATE OF THE CITY

Annual address details finances, growth

Latrice Williams
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Rincon Mayor Kevin Exley beamed with joy as he delivered the annual Rincon State of the City address Wednesday evening. A positive public safety rating and expansion of the city's wastewater system were among key highlights from the night. Here is what to know.

Finances

Exley was very candid about some of the city's financial issues, noting that there were two incomplete audits from 2023 and 2024 and multiple bank accounts that some staff were unaware of.

"It was one of the most unorganized areas in the city," said Exley. "When we start talking about issues, the City of Rincon had issues. We had so many bank accounts. We could not ask for grants because those audits were not completed."

Now the city is caught up as the audits from 2023 and 2024 are complete. Exley said through monthly reporting, the staff is able to stay on top of any and all funds.

"We have reduced our bank accounts from 16 to 10," said Exley. "We found a bank account with \$1 million in it. It was a bill pay account. Everybody that paid their water bill, money went into that account. We moved it over and now we are drawing interest off that money. We had money in accounts and we were not drawing any interest. We are drawing over \$60,000 a month in interest from the money we have in there."

See RINCON, Page 3A

Architects consider challenges, design of historic districts

Evan Lasseter
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

A panel of prominent Savannah architects was recently asked what the central tension is when designing buildings in the city's downtown historic district.

Neil Dawson, principal at LS3P Associates, described a tug of war. On one end is the "resistance" of residents fighting off oversized buildings, and on the other are the developers who see value in building in the city. Architects are at the center of the tension, designing Savannah's buildings of the future amid a moment the city is booming with growth.

"There's a lot of work still to be done, so I don't think we're frozen in time. But that's the tension that we have," Dawson said.

Dawson, Shedrick Coleman of SHED-DArchitecture and Patrick Phelps of Hansen Architecture helmed the panel to discuss the future of the city's architecture and how the local review processes constrain or promote strong buildings. Over 50 people attended the event hosted by the Historic Savannah Foundation at the Murray C. Perlman & Wayne C. Spear Preservation Center on East Broughton Street.

The discussion was moderated by a local preservationist, Ellen Harris, who is a principal at Savannah's Ethos Preservation.

Coleman's answer to that initial question hit right at the heart of the review process for building in historic downtown, saying the central tension is between creativity and complying with the design standards outlined in city ordinances. Coleman, who sits on the Savannah Downtown Historic District

Board of Review, said he has seen projects "go backwards" through the review process.

Coleman added that he thinks the city could use more balance between creativity and compliance.

"What we should be wanting is an opportunity to see, as stewards of the city, that infill work complements what we have in a way that honors Savannah, but doesn't try to overwhelm it," Coleman said.

Phelps offered insight into the process saying that in his work, much of the creativity comes from the collaboration. Architects are at the nexus of the ordinance's standards, community input and a developer's vision. Phelps said projects are ultimately successful when all three of those stakeholders are respected through the process.

See ARCHITECTS, Page 2A

SPD work to regain CALEA accreditation lost in 2018

Ansley Franco
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Savannah Police Department (SPD) is working to regain a nationally recognized law enforcement accreditation it lost in 2018 with the breakup of the former Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department.

Department leaders say the process to regain accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), is extensive but designed to strengthen accountability, transparency and service to the community. The metro department had held CALEA accreditation for



Johnson

decades before the split.

Today, the department is undergoing the multi-phase process required to obtain accreditation again. Unlike many oversight requirements, CALEA accreditation is voluntary. The process reviews everything from department policies to infrastructure and community engagement.

Sonya Johnson, SPD's director of strategic initiatives, described CALEA accreditation as a benchmark for professional policing.

"I call it the Ph.D. in law enforcement," Johnson said.

The program establishes hundreds of

best-practice standards developed through research and field testing. Agencies seeking accreditation must show that their policies, procedures and day-to-day operations align with those standards.

"It drives how we deliver our services. The philosophy and the foundation of it is continuous improvement," Johnson said. "Oftentimes, I would say that we become a little complacent, and that's in everything. We get so used to doing things a certain way that we don't necessarily look at other better ways for things to be done."

Johnson said the certification helps ensure the agency stays on the cutting edge of modern policing, operates effectively and remains fiscally responsible with taxpayer money.

tively and remains fiscally responsible with taxpayer money.

Pursuing best practices

Savannah Police Chief Lenny Gunther chose to pursue the certification shortly after he was appointed in late-2022, and hired Johnson in 2023 to help guide the effort.

The process is intensive and involves three major phases. The first phase, known as self-assessment, requires departments to review and align their policies and procedures with CALEA's standards. At SPD, that includes examining

See SPD, Page 3A

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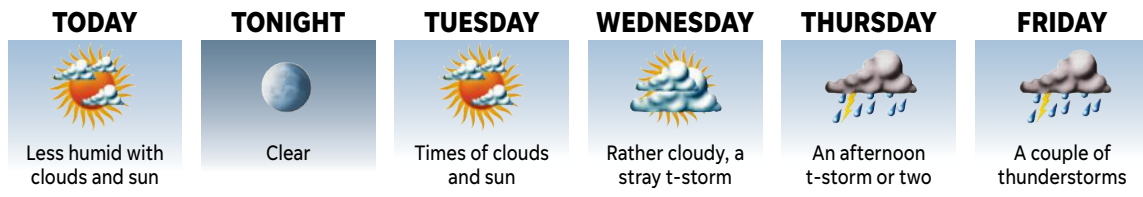
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FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR SAVANNAH



High **77** Low **59** RealFeel: 78
 High **82** Low **65** RealFeel: 85/65
 High **86** Low **65** RealFeel: 84/66
 High **82** Low **59** RealFeel: 88/59
 High **77** Low **63** RealFeel: 85/63

The patented **AccuWeather.com RealFeel Temperature**® is an exclusive index of the effects of temperature, wind, humidity, sunshine intensity, cloudiness, precipitation, pressure and elevation on the human body. Shown are the highest and lowest values for each day.

ACTIVITIES TODAY

| | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 8 am | 10 am | Noon | 2 pm | 4 pm | 6 pm |
| 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 3 |

0-2: Poor; 3-4: Fair; 5-6: Good; 7-8: Very Good; 9-10: Excellent

UV INDEX TODAY

| | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 8 am | 10 am | Noon | 2 pm | 4 pm | 6 pm |
| 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 2 |

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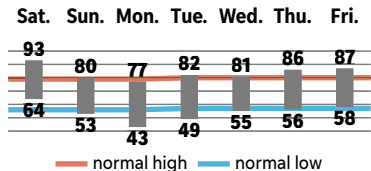
ALMANAC

Savannah Friday

TEMPERATURES

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| High/low | 87/58 |
| Normal high/low | 80/57 |
| Last year high/low | 83/63 |
| Record high | 94 in 1958 |
| Record low | 38 in 1986 |

TEMPERATURES TREND



PRECIPITATION

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| Friday | 0.00" |
| Month to date | 0.06" |
| Normal month to date | 2.78" |
| Year to date | 3.31" |
| Normal year to date | 12.36" |

COOLING DEGREE DAYS

Index of energy consumption indicating how many degrees the average temperature was above 65 degrees for the day with negative values counting as zero.

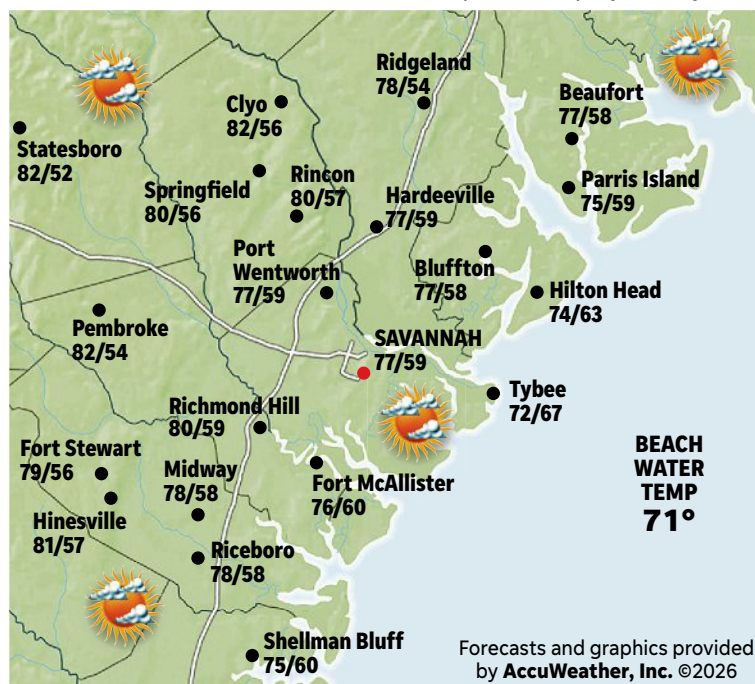
| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Friday | 8 |
| Year to date | 266 |
| Last year to date | 176 |
| Normal year to date | 133 |

SUN AND MOON

| | Today | Tue. |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sunrise | 6:43 a.m. | 6:42 a.m. |
| Sunset | 8:03 p.m. | 8:03 p.m. |
| Moonrise | 4:32 p.m. | 5:30 p.m. |
| Moonset | 4:25 a.m. | 4:51 a.m. |

| Full | Last | New | First |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| May 1 | May 9 | May 16 | May 23 |

REGIONAL FORECAST



| City | Today | | Tue. | | City | Today | | Tue. | |
|-------------|-------|----|------|----|---------------|-------|----|------|----|
| | Hi | Lo | Hi | Lo | | Hi | Lo | Hi | Lo |
| Albany, NY | 87 | 61 | 89 | 66 | Greenwood | 75 | 52 | 70 | 61 |
| Americus | 83 | 61 | 85 | 66 | Griffin | 79 | 59 | 80 | 63 |
| Athens | 77 | 57 | 75 | 59 | Jacksonville | 77 | 61 | 85 | 65 |
| Atlanta | 81 | 62 | 77 | 65 | La Grange | 84 | 61 | 79 | 65 |
| Augusta | 79 | 51 | 78 | 61 | Macon | 81 | 57 | 83 | 66 |
| Brunswick | 73 | 67 | 81 | 68 | Milledgeville | 82 | 56 | 82 | 64 |
| Charleston | 76 | 56 | 80 | 65 | Montgomery | 89 | 66 | 86 | 67 |
| Chattanooga | 81 | 61 | 78 | 63 | Myrtle Beach | 70 | 55 | 71 | 63 |
| Columbia | 78 | 53 | 72 | 62 | Rome | 80 | 63 | 77 | 63 |
| Columbus | 83 | 64 | 82 | 66 | Tallahassee | 90 | 63 | 89 | 65 |
| Covington | 78 | 58 | 77 | 63 | Tifton | 84 | 59 | 87 | 66 |
| Decatur | 80 | 59 | 76 | 62 | Tuscaloosa | 87 | 69 | 81 | 66 |
| Dothan | 89 | 66 | 88 | 68 | Valdosta | 86 | 61 | 89 | 66 |
| Douglas | 84 | 56 | 87 | 65 | Waycross | 84 | 58 | 88 | 64 |
| Dublin | 83 | 54 | 83 | 63 | Winston-Salem | 73 | 50 | 69 | 59 |

RIVERS AND LAKES

In feet as of 7 a.m. Friday

| River / Station | Flood stage | Fri. | 24-hr change |
|-----------------|-------------|--------|--------------|
| Ogeechee | | | |
| Eden | 11 | 2.73 | -0.10 |
| Altamaha | | | |
| Doctortown | 12 | 3.79 | -0.10 |
| Savannah | | | |
| Burton's Ferry | 15 | 4.21 | +0.00 |
| Clyo | 11 | 3.04 | -0.12 |
| Butler Creek | 117.5 | 96.80 | +0.14 |
| Ohoopee | | | |
| Reidsville | 11 | 1.84 | -0.05 |
| Lake | | | |
| Thurmond | 330 | 323.14 | -0.13 |
| Oconee | 435 | 434.93 | +0.06 |

TIDES

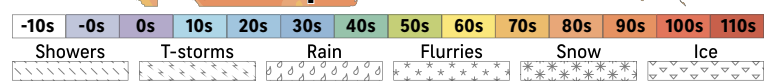
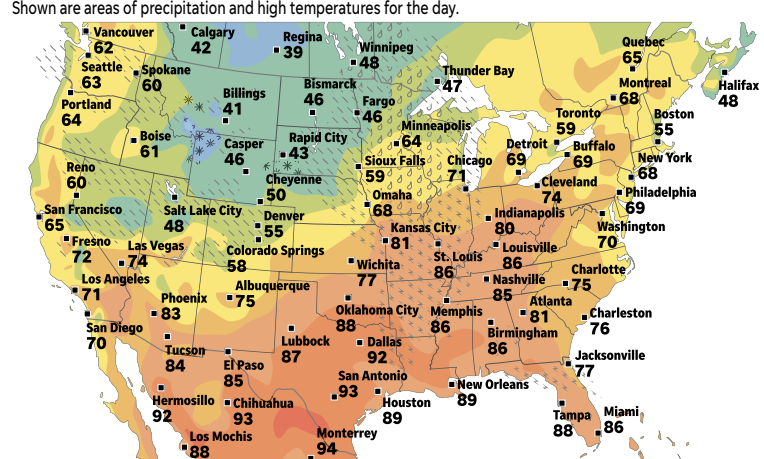
At the mouth of the Savannah River.

| High | Ht. | Low | Ht. |
|-------------------|-----|------------|-----|
| Apr. 27 5:39 a.m. | 6.9 | 12:03 p.m. | 0.2 |
| 6:19 p.m. | 7.3 | --- | --- |
| Apr. 28 6:29 a.m. | 6.9 | 12:34 a.m. | 0.2 |
| 7:06 p.m. | 7.6 | 12:49 p.m. | 0.1 |
| Apr. 29 7:14 a.m. | 6.9 | 1:23 a.m. | 0.1 |
| 7:47 p.m. | 7.8 | 1:30 p.m. | 0.0 |

MARINE FORECAST

Wind from the east-northeast at 10-20 knots Monday. Seas 3-6 feet. Visibility clear to the horizon.
 Tuesday: Wind from the east at 6-12 knots. Seas 2-4 feet. Visibility generally unrestricted.

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NATIONAL EXTREMES Friday for the 48 contiguous states

High 97° at Dryden, TX Low 10° at Lake Yellowstone, WY

| City | Today | | Tue. | | City | Today | | Tue. | |
|----------------|-------|----|------|----|----------------|-------|----|------|----|
| | Hi | Lo | Hi | Lo | | Hi | Lo | Hi | Lo |
| Albany, NY | 71 | 44 | 71 | 46 | Memphis | 86 | 66 | 81 | 64 |
| Albuquerque | 75 | 45 | 76 | 48 | Miami | 86 | 72 | 86 | 70 |
| Anchorage | 48 | 38 | 47 | 36 | Minneapolis | 64 | 40 | 56 | 39 |
| Billings | 41 | 29 | 55 | 36 | Muskegon | 75 | 52 | 58 | 45 |
| Birmingham | 86 | 67 | 81 | 66 | Nashville | 85 | 66 | 82 | 68 |
| Boise | 61 | 40 | 63 | 44 | New Orleans | 89 | 73 | 89 | 73 |
| Boston | 55 | 43 | 54 | 45 | New York City | 68 | 49 | 65 | 49 |
| Buffalo | 69 | 53 | 65 | 50 | Oklahoma City | 88 | 55 | 72 | 51 |
| Charleston, WV | 78 | 54 | 78 | 60 | Omaha | 68 | 40 | 58 | 38 |
| Chicago | 71 | 51 | 66 | 45 | Orlando | 88 | 66 | 90 | 64 |
| Cincinnati | 80 | 61 | 77 | 58 | Phoenix | 83 | 62 | 89 | 67 |
| Cleveland | 74 | 56 | 73 | 51 | Portland, ME | 58 | 38 | 54 | 40 |
| Dallas | 92 | 73 | 84 | 65 | Portland, OR | 64 | 49 | 66 | 44 |
| Denver | 55 | 35 | 61 | 39 | Rapid City | 43 | 33 | 45 | 30 |
| Des Moines | 70 | 43 | 61 | 42 | St. Louis | 86 | 54 | 71 | 52 |
| Detroit | 69 | 58 | 70 | 50 | Salt Lake City | 48 | 39 | 61 | 45 |
| Duluth | 50 | 37 | 53 | 32 | San Antonio | 93 | 74 | 96 | 73 |
| El Paso | 85 | 62 | 88 | 67 | San Diego | 70 | 57 | 69 | 57 |
| Houston | 89 | 74 | 92 | 73 | San Francisco | 65 | 53 | 69 | 51 |
| Indianapolis | 80 | 60 | 73 | 53 | Seattle | 63 | 46 | 59 | 44 |
| Kansas City | 81 | 44 | 63 | 42 | Tampa | 88 | 68 | 88 | 70 |
| Las Vegas | 74 | 58 | 81 | 61 | Trenton | 66 | 41 | 66 | 47 |
| Little Rock | 87 | 69 | 82 | 65 | Tucson | 84 | 54 | 86 | 61 |
| Los Angeles | 71 | 52 | 75 | 55 | Washington, DC | 70 | 48 | 67 | 53 |

WORLD FORECAST

| City | Today | | Tue. | | City | Today | | Tue. | |
|--------------|-------|----|------|----|----------------|-------|----|------|----|
| | Hi | Lo | Hi | Lo | | Hi | Lo | Hi | Lo |
| Amsterdam | 59 | 45 | 60 | 45 | Manila | 98 | 79 | 98 | 80 |
| Athens | 76 | 54 | 73 | 52 | Mexico City | 84 | 58 | 87 | 58 |
| Baghdad | 88 | 63 | 79 | 63 | Montreal | 68 | 47 | 72 | 51 |
| Beijing | 71 | 50 | 70 | 49 | Moscow | 40 | 34 | 43 | 33 |
| Bermuda | 73 | 68 | 74 | 64 | Nassau | 85 | 71 | 84 | 72 |
| Buenos Aires | 61 | 47 | 66 | 55 | Paris | 72 | 49 | 66 | 50 |
| Calgary | 42 | 26 | 51 | 31 | Rio de Janeiro | 85 | 74 | 82 | 74 |
| Copenhagen | 54 | 39 | 57 | 39 | Rome | 70 | 45 | 71 | 48 |
| Frankfurt | 68 | 48 | 67 | 47 | Singapore | 90 | 80 | 91 | 80 |
| Hong Kong | 84 | 77 | 83 | 75 | Sydney | 76 | 57 | 75 | 56 |
| Jerusalem | 65 | 51 | 70 | 50 | Tehran | 77 | 59 | 77 | 60 |
| Johannesburg | 74 | 47 | 72 | 44 | Tokyo | 68 | 59 | 74 | 63 |
| Kabul | 74 | 52 | 73 | 53 | Toronto | 59 | 48 | 60 | 45 |
| Lima | 74 | 66 | 73 | 66 | Vancouver | 62 | 48 | 56 | 45 |
| Lisbon | 81 | 59 | 74 | 56 | Vienna | 65 | 43 | 65 | 43 |
| London | 71 | 48 | 61 | 44 | Warsaw | 58 | 35 | 53 | 32 |

Weather: s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice

Architects

Continued from Page 1A

The architects also delved into the nitty gritty of the ordinance's design standards and the challenges with receiving approval at the HDBR.

Any architect, citizen or board members who has attended an HDBR meeting knows the infamous phrase, "visual compatibility." The ordinance regulating design downtown calls for new buildings to be visually compatible with those nearby it.

The architects had consensus on moving away from the term itself due to it being highly subjective. Phelps said the focus should be on specific design criteria—such as scale, height, proportion of openings—that are "architectural fundamentals." He added those things can be judged specifically within the context of other buildings around a proposed project.

"I think we just need to rely on the criteria, the basis of good design," Phelps said.

Coleman said one of the central issues is that rulings by HDBR on visual compatibility cannot be appealed. Coleman added that he has seen visual compatibility "weaponized" at times on the HDBR because of it.

If moving away from the term entirely was a bridge too far for some, there could be revisions to the ordinance in how visual compatibility is implemented, Coleman said.

The panel also explored other aspects of the ordinance such as downtown's height map and allowances of bonus stories. Bonus stories of one story above the



Historic Savannah Foundation hosted a panel of prominent Savannah architects to discuss the future of architecture and historic review processes in Savannah's downtown on April 16, 2026. EVAN LASSETER / SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

height limit are allowed in certain areas if the project meets one of four criteria, which includes items such as affordable housing or multiple active ground-floor uses.

Dawson proposed eliminating the op-

tion, which Phelps agreed with saying it is often treated as a right by developers instead of a bonus. Phelps said developers treating the bonus as a right drives further tension with residents. Eliminating the bonus story is a measure sup-

ported by the Downtown Neighborhood Association.

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