

SAVANNAH
savannahga.gov



RCLCO
REAL ESTATE CONSULTING



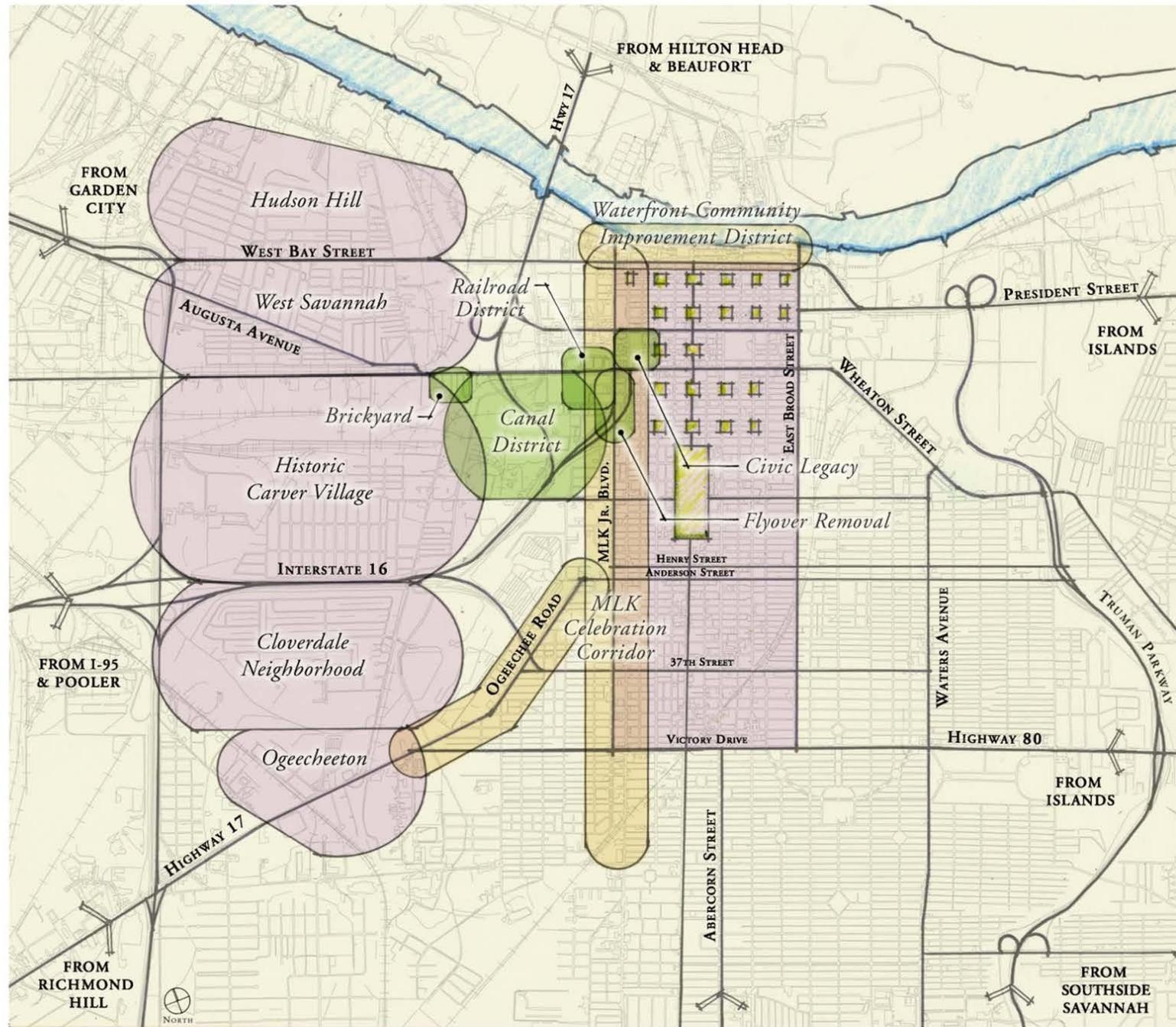
Sottile & Sottile
Urban Design, Civic Architecture



BLUKNOWLEDGE

UPDATE ON FINDINGS CIVIC CENTER & RAILROAD DISTRICT STUDIES

February 18, 2026
Community Meetings



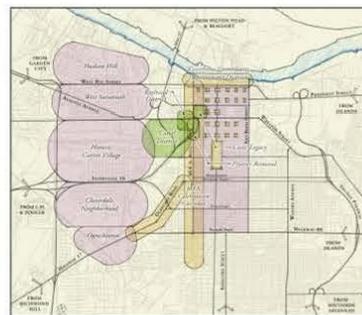
Sottile & Sottile, 2026

DISTRICT AND CORRIDOR PLANNING INITIATIVES

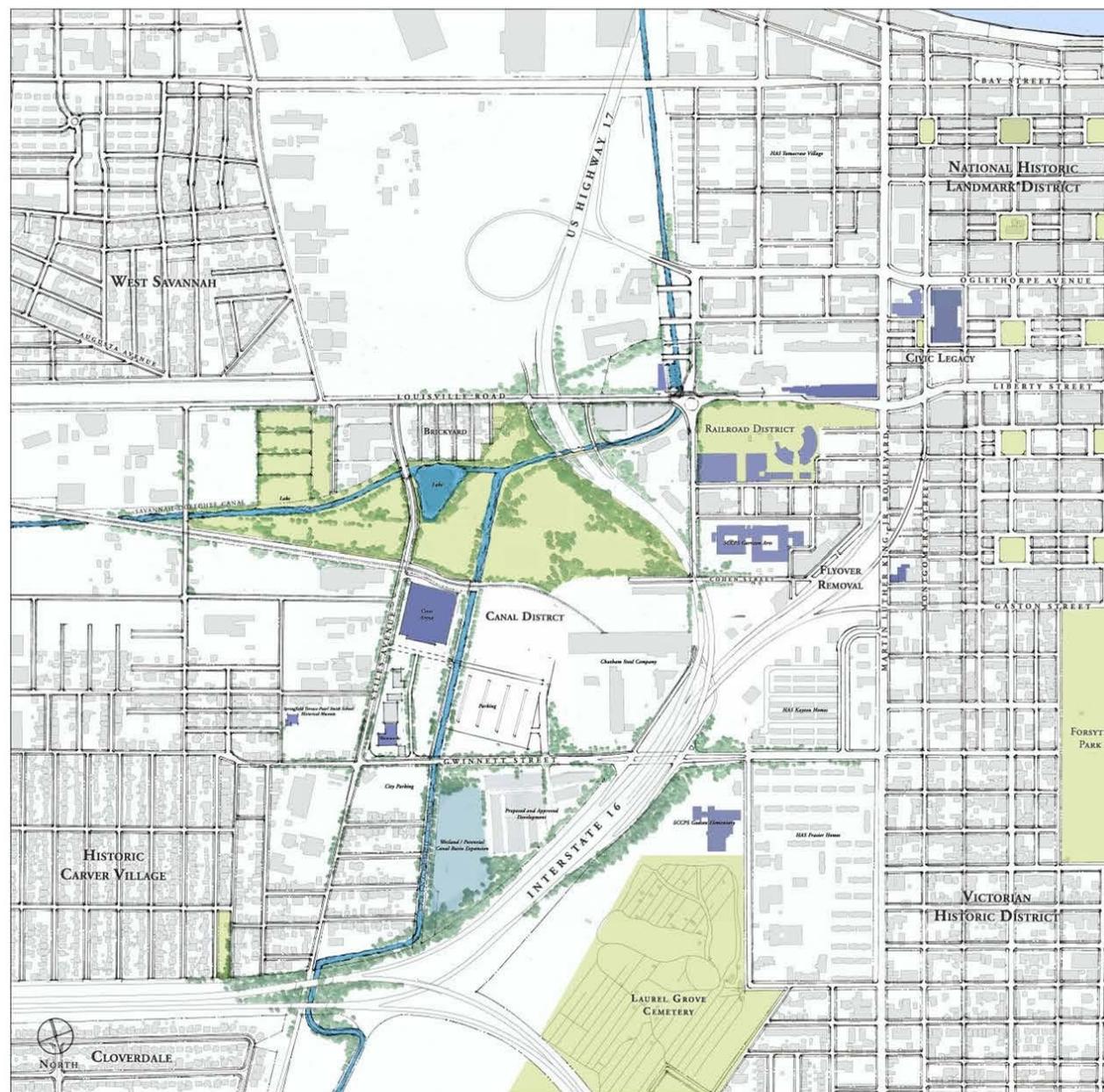
SAVANNAH GEORGIA



REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY



PLANNING INITIATIVES



NEIGHBORHOOD AND HOUSING CONNECTIONS

Restoring Savannah's Community Connections

Civic Legacy

A comprehensive plan for the 7-acre Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center site in historic Savannah, will include arena removal, preservation of the Johnny Mercer Theater, the addition of a new multi-use structure, restoration of the historic street grid, and mixed-use redevelopment with a focus on housing. Ongoing planning is prioritizing contextual, equitable redevelopment.

Railroad District

A reinvestment plan for this National Historic Landmark District, stewarded by the Coastal Heritage Society, that is focused on preserving historic assets while addressing housing, connectivity, and local economic needs. Planning will emphasize on balanced preservation and community benefit.

Flyover Removal

The I-16 flyover removal will reconnect westside neighborhoods to the city center by restoring the street grid and improving safety and access. The project creates opportunities for equitable redevelopment on reclaimed urban land.

Canal District

A series of westside redevelopment initiatives anchored by the historic Waterworks Building and the Enmarket Arena, that will transform underinvested land into a walkable mixed-use district with parks and improved connectivity. The plan supports historic preservation and community-driven economic growth.

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA
City of Savannah
Sottile & Sottile Urban Design

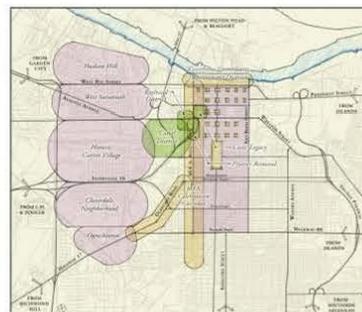


WINTER 2026

Information contained herein is conceptual. Information has been compiled from various sources and does not claim complete accuracy nor guarantee zoning or other types of development approvals. It is intended to provide an overview and analysis of conditions and strategies for neighborhood design. Sottile & Sottile, 2026

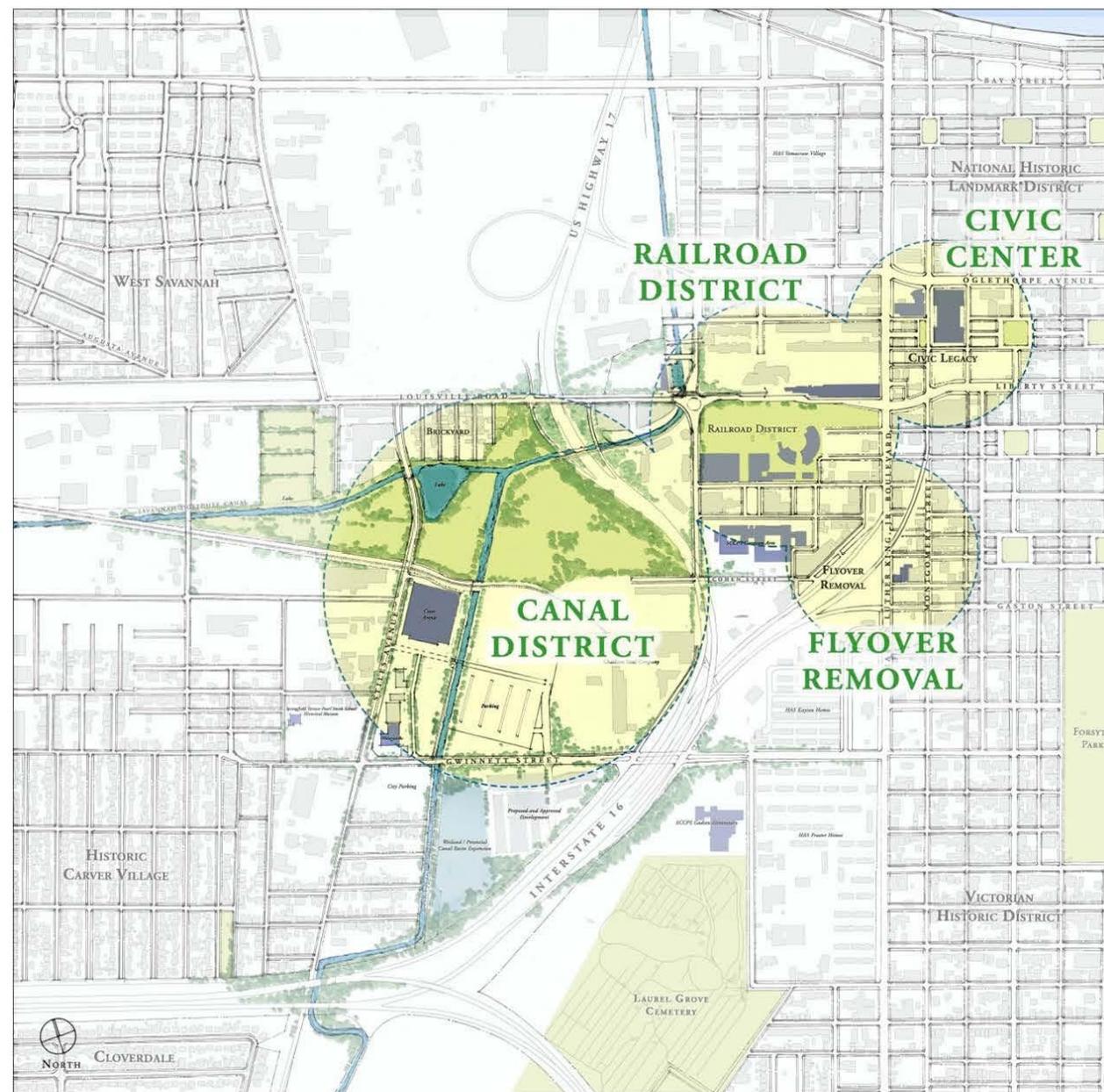


REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY



PLANNING INITIATIVES

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SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

City of Savannah
Sottile & Sottile Urban Design

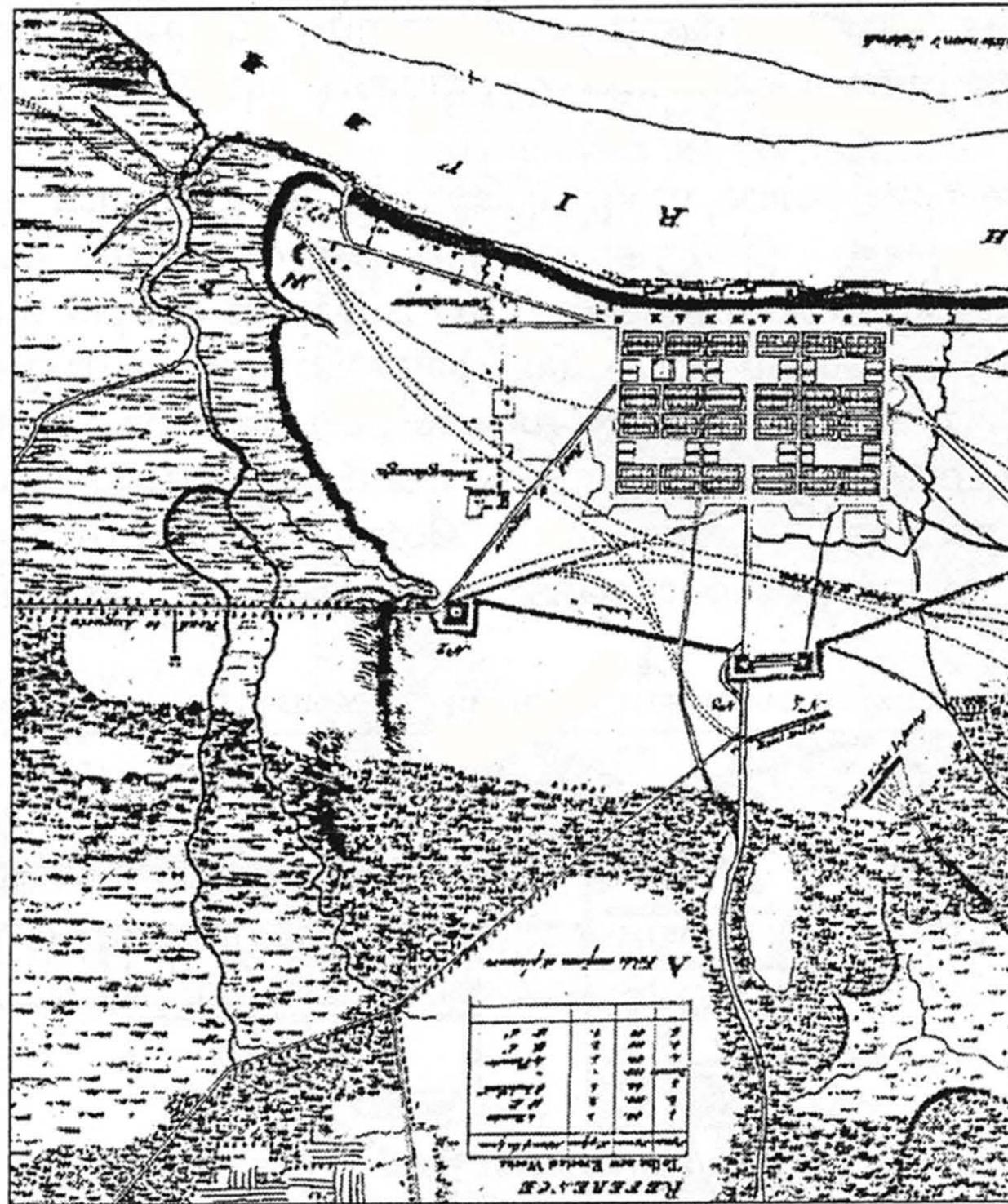
SCALE



WINTER 2026

History & Evolution

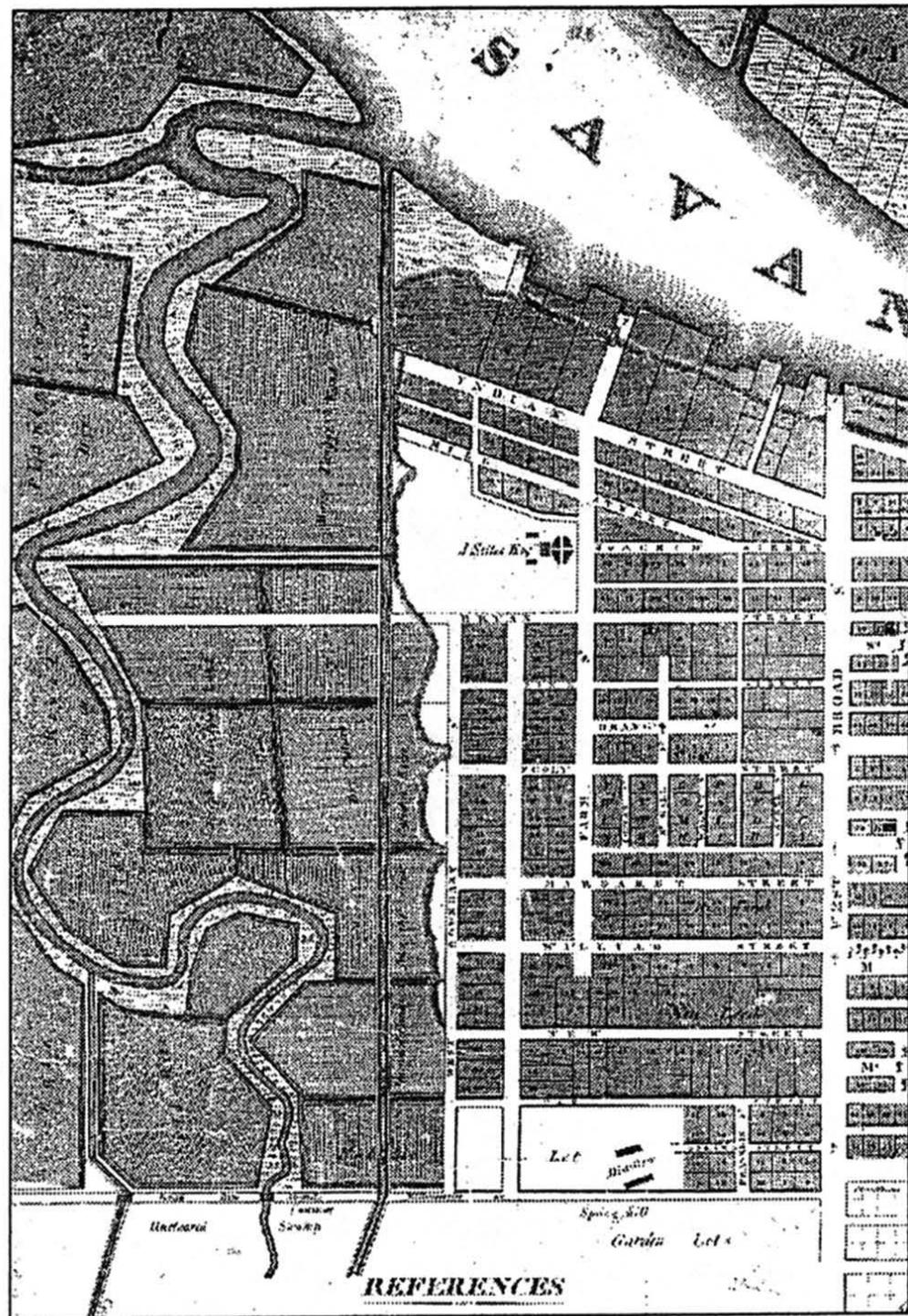
Musgrove Creek and Agriculture...



Plan of Savannah showing Musgrove Creek and its branches west of town, 1778⁴⁴



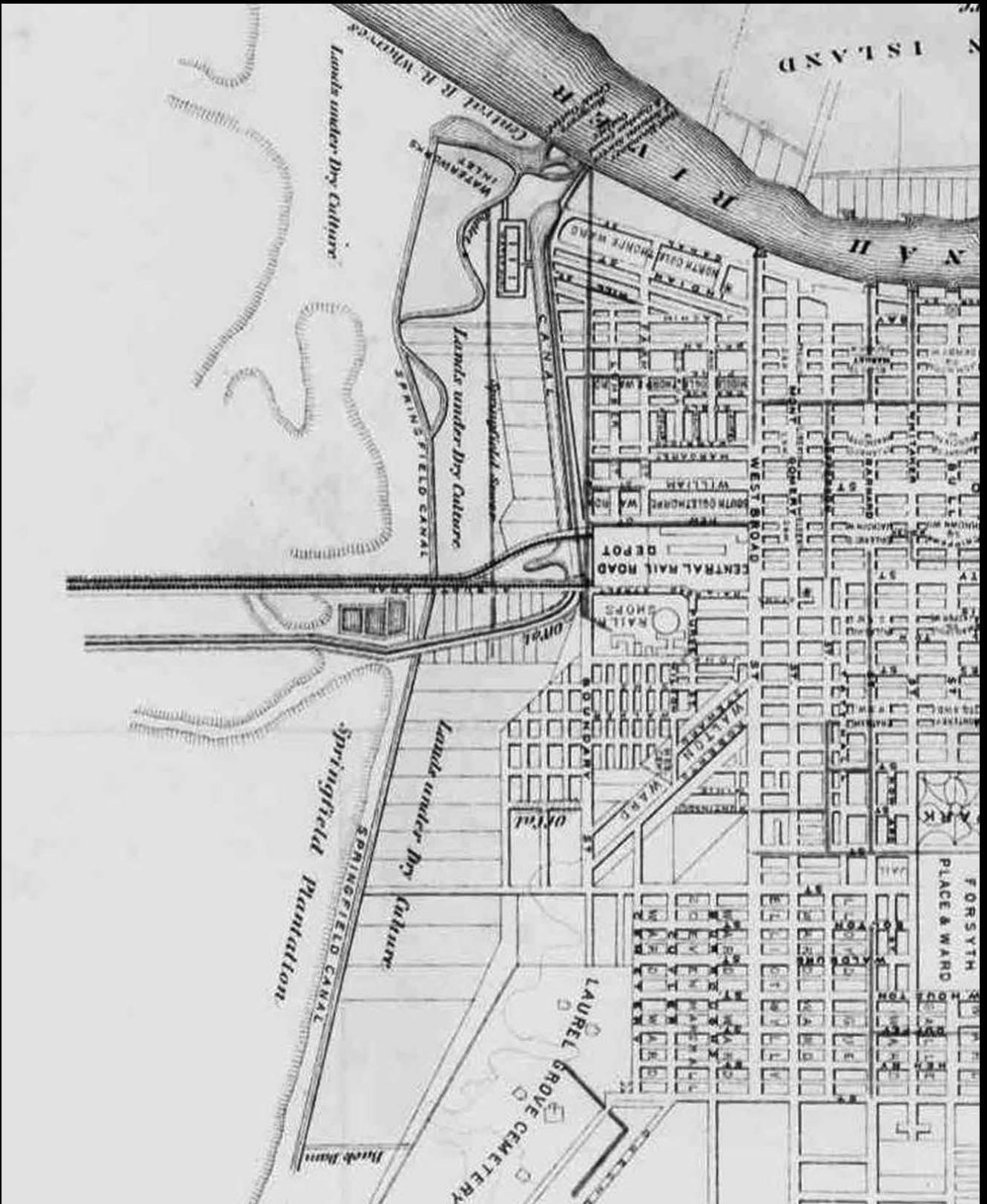
Map of Savannah showing "Old Rice Fields" under dry culture west of town,
drawn by I. Stouf, 1818¹⁸



Plan of the City of Savannah,
showing a canal linking with
Musgrove Creek near Louisville
Road (lower left), drawn by
John McKinnon, City Surveyor,
1820⁴⁹



The Railroad Era
Central of Georgia and Union Station...



1878

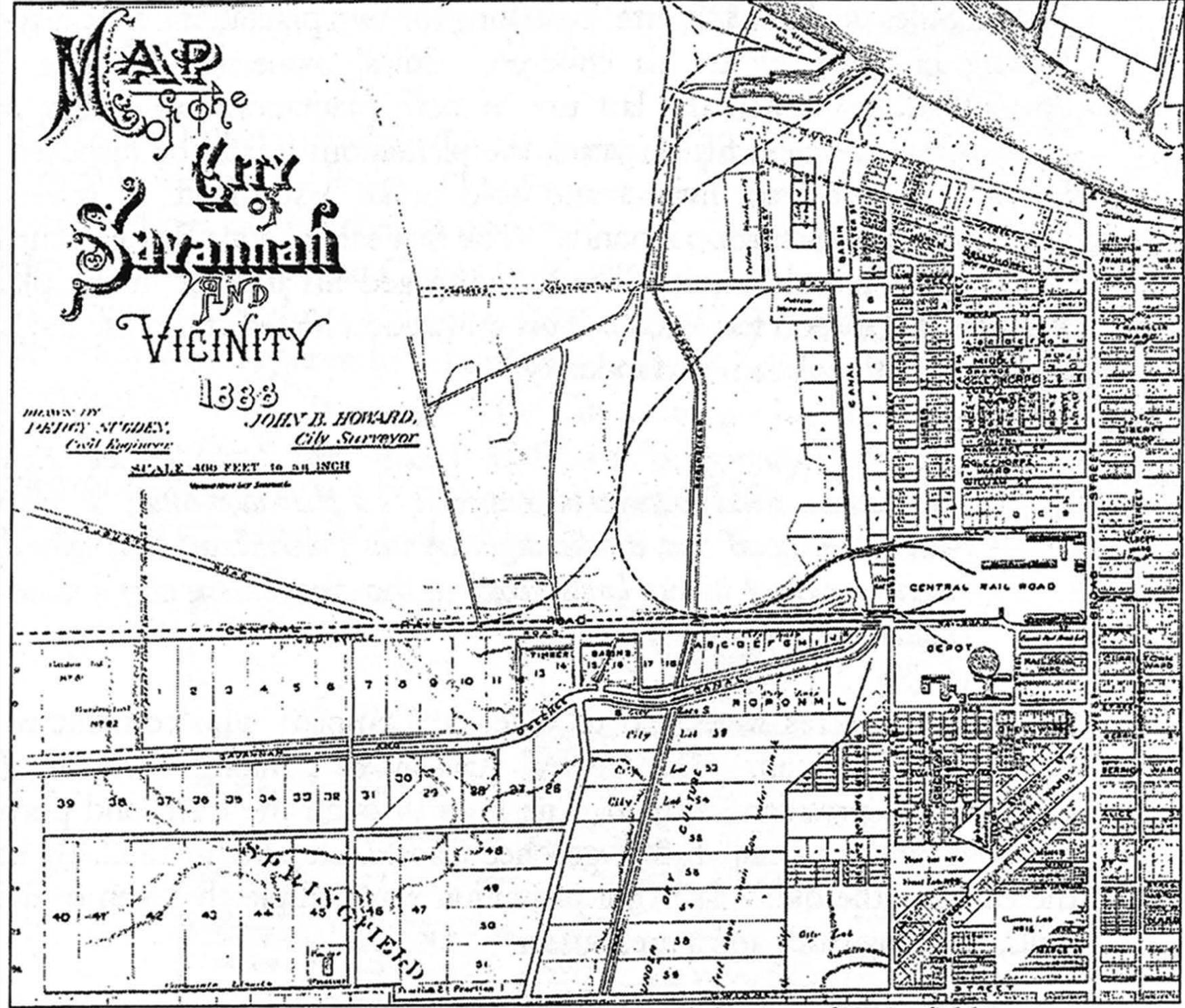
MAP OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH AND VICINITY

1888

DRAWN BY
PELLEY STURDEN
Civil Engineer

JOHN B. HOWARD,
City Surveyor

SCALE 400 FEET to an INCH
Measured by Sturden



Map of the City of Savannah showing the subdivision of Springfield Lots,
drawn by John B. Howard, 1888²³





Savannah's Union Station linked regional transit to the streetcar network on West Broad Street



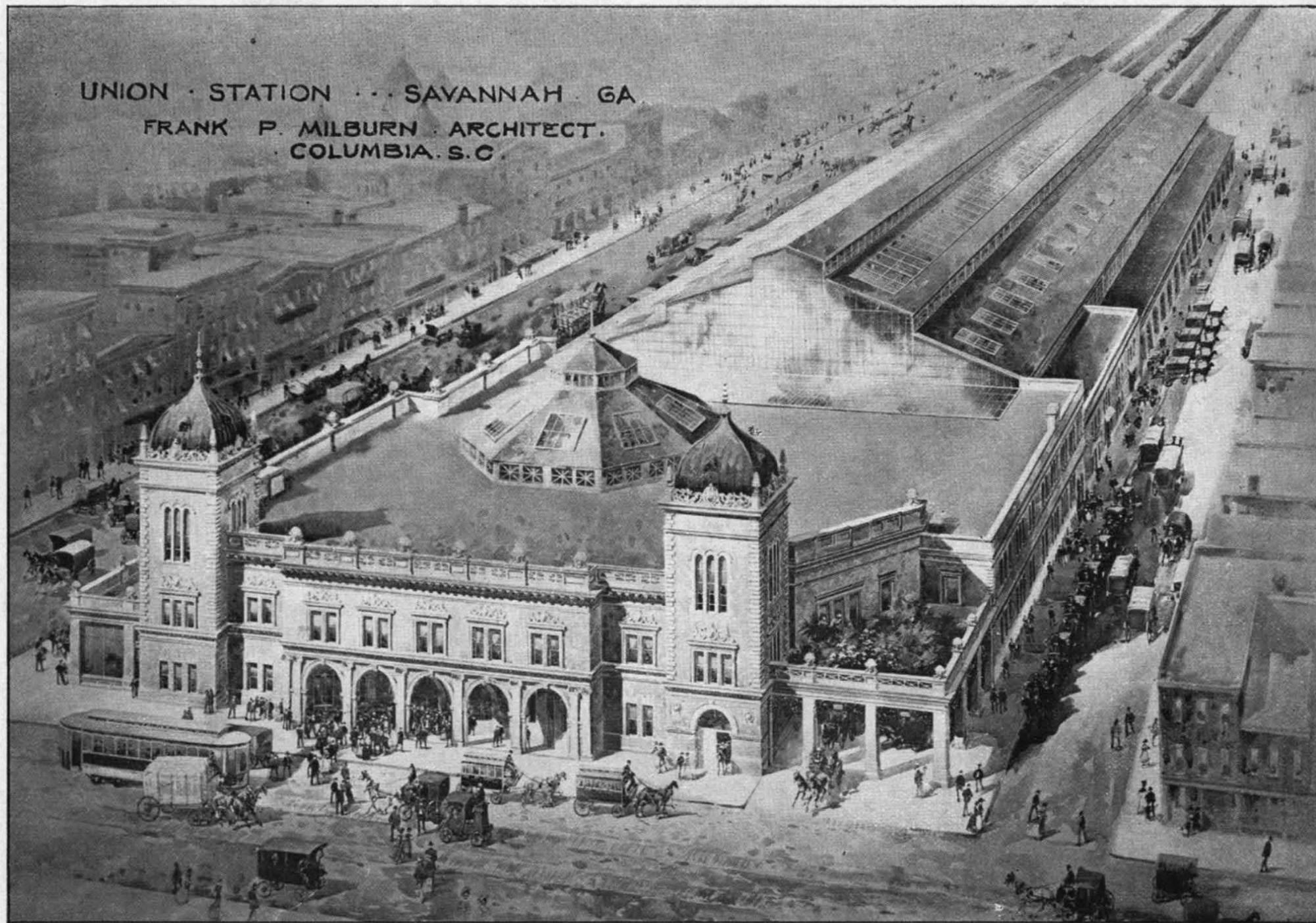
FRANK P. MILBURN, Architect.

GENERAL WAITING ROOM, UNION STATION.

Savannah, Ga

UNION · STATION · · · SAVANNAH · GA

FRANK · P · MILBURN · ARCHITECT ·
· COLUMBIA · S · C ·



BIRDSEYE VIEW, UNION STATION, SAVANNAH, GA.

For the Atlantic Coast Line, Seaboard Air Line and Southern Railways.

FRANK P. MILBURN, Architect.

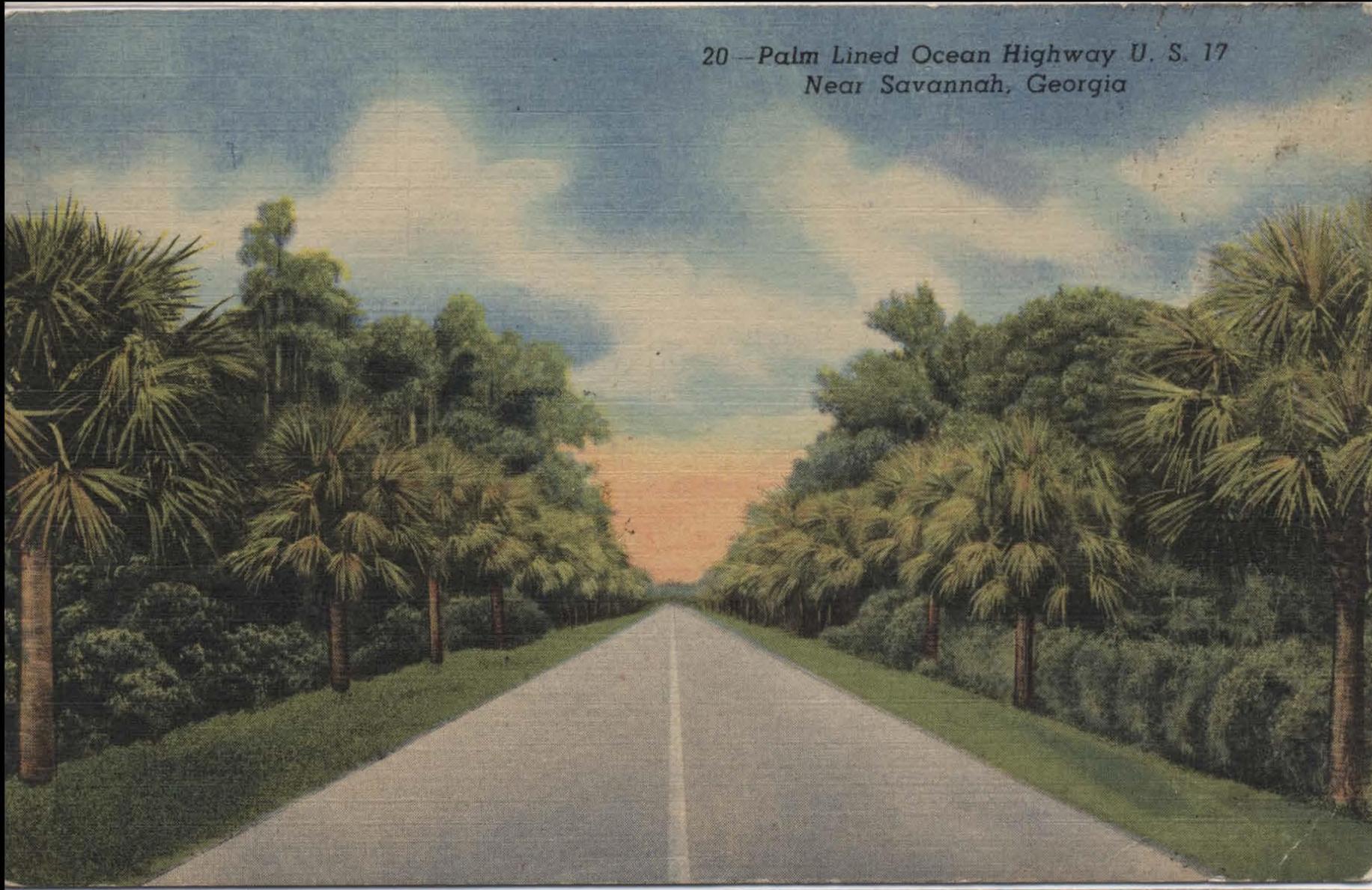
McKenzie & Son, Contractors.

*I-16 Extension and the
Loss of Neighborhood Fabric...*



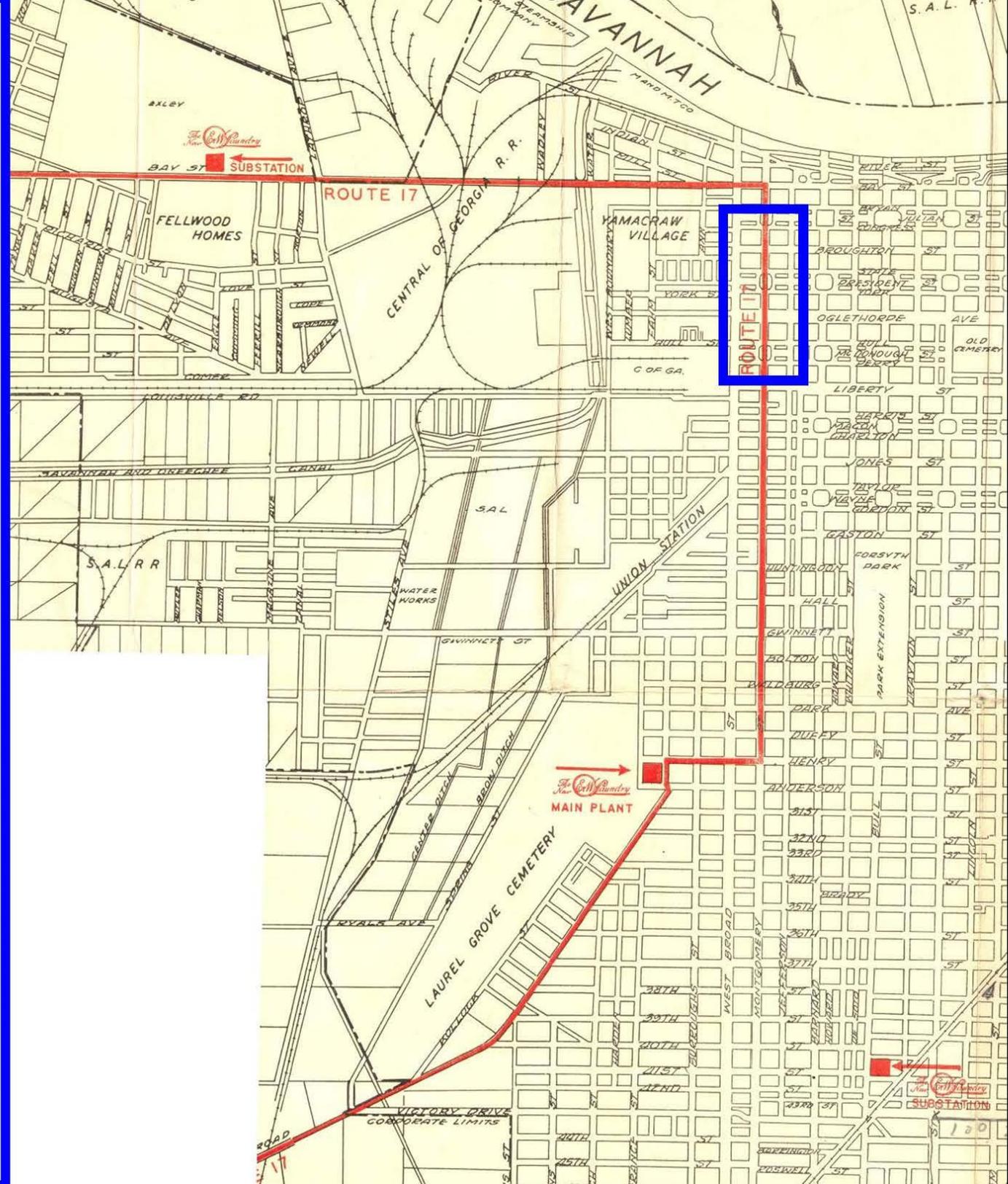
Numerous transportation choices were available in Savannah during the early 1900s

20—Palm Lined Ocean Highway U. S. 17
Near Savannah, Georgia



Highway 17

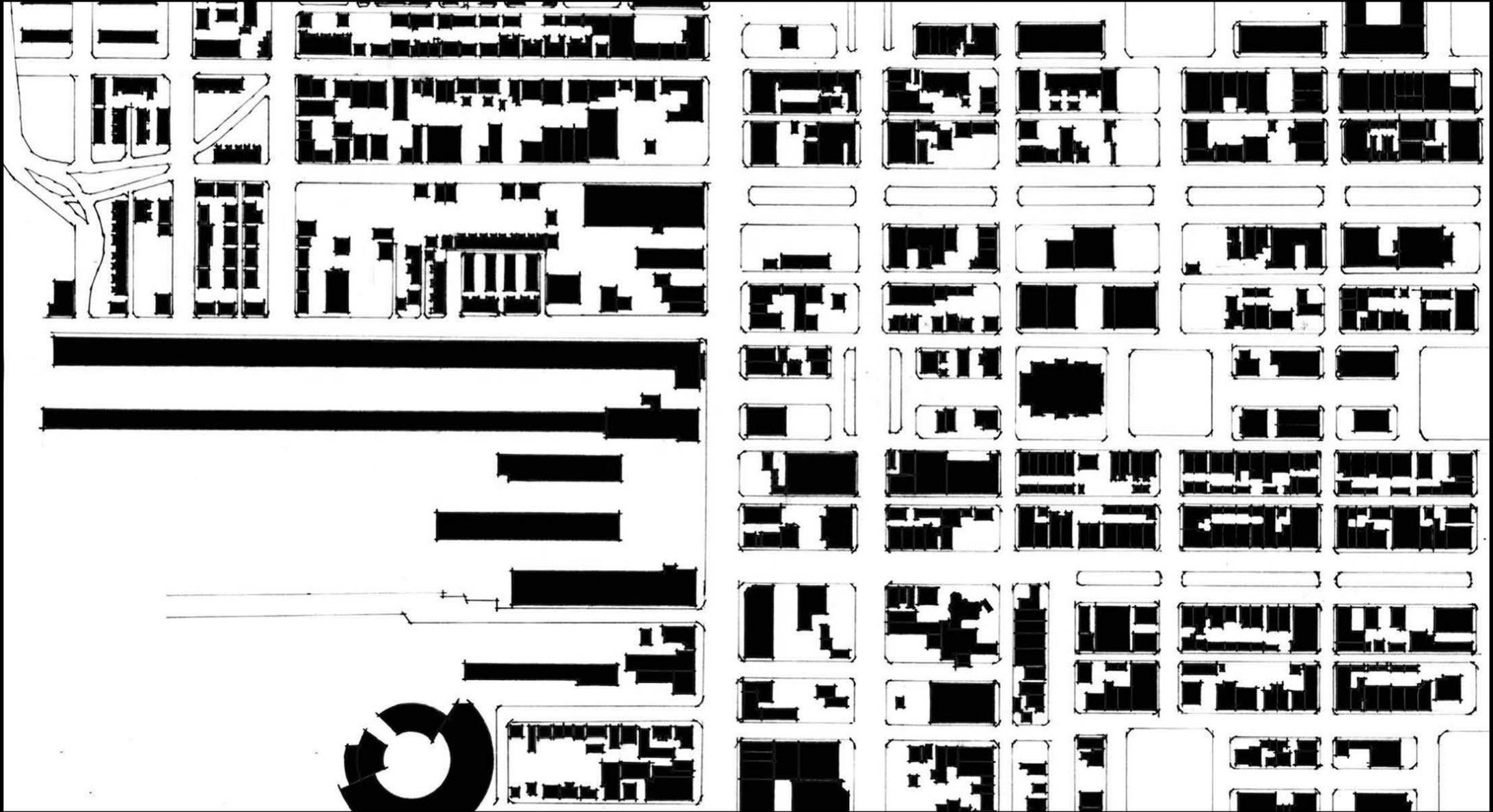
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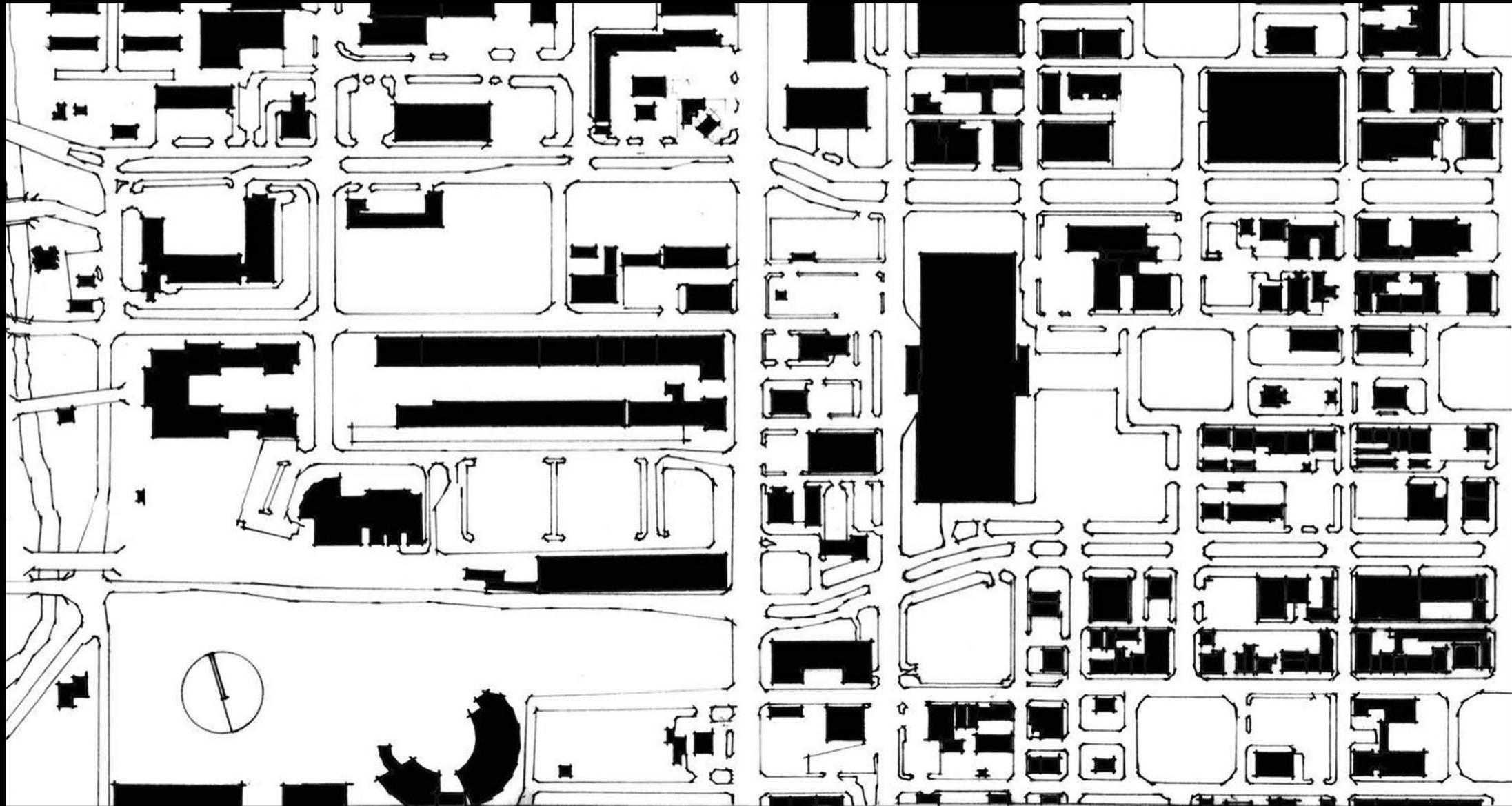
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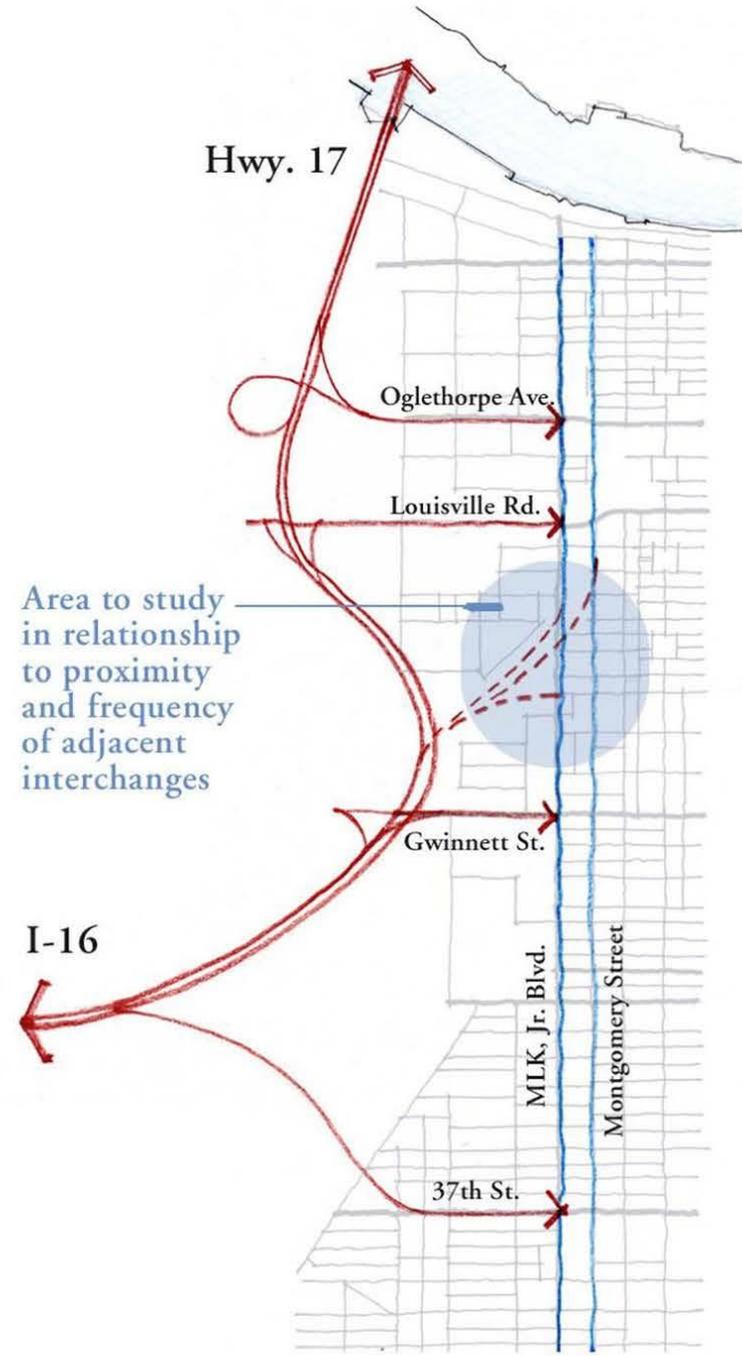


1955



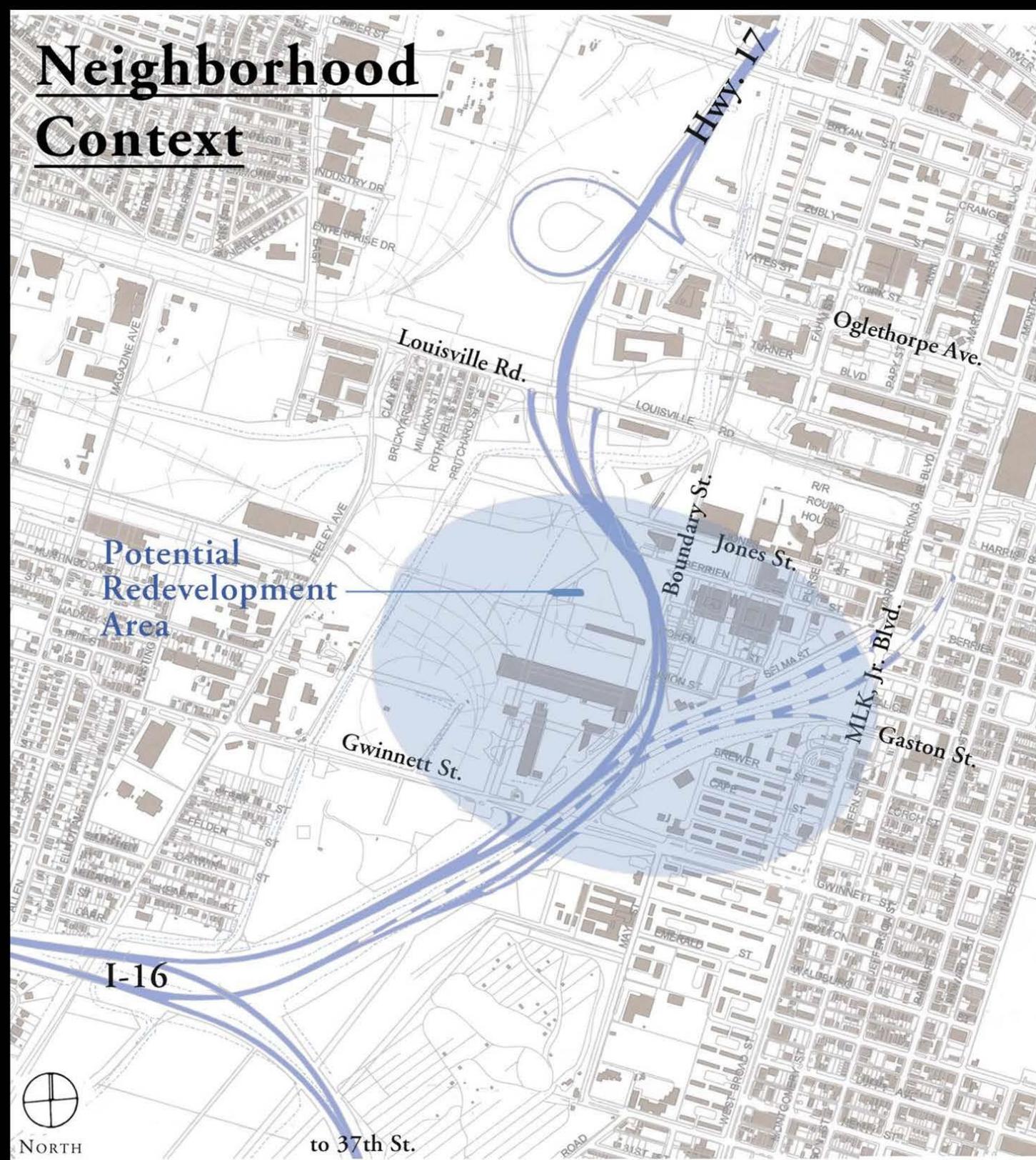
2002





I-16 Access to Western Edge

Neighborhood Context

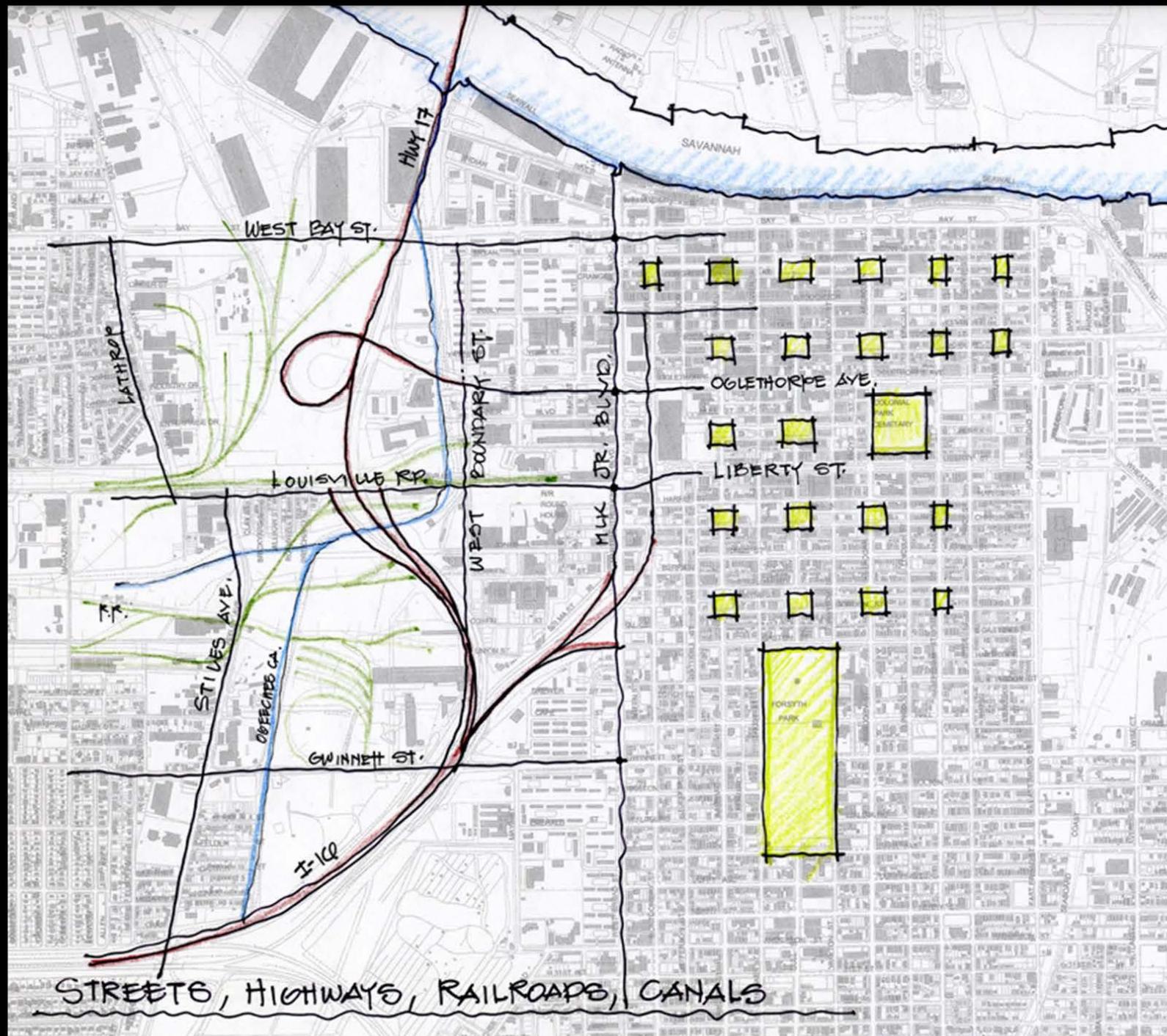


Potential
Redevelopment
Area



NORTH

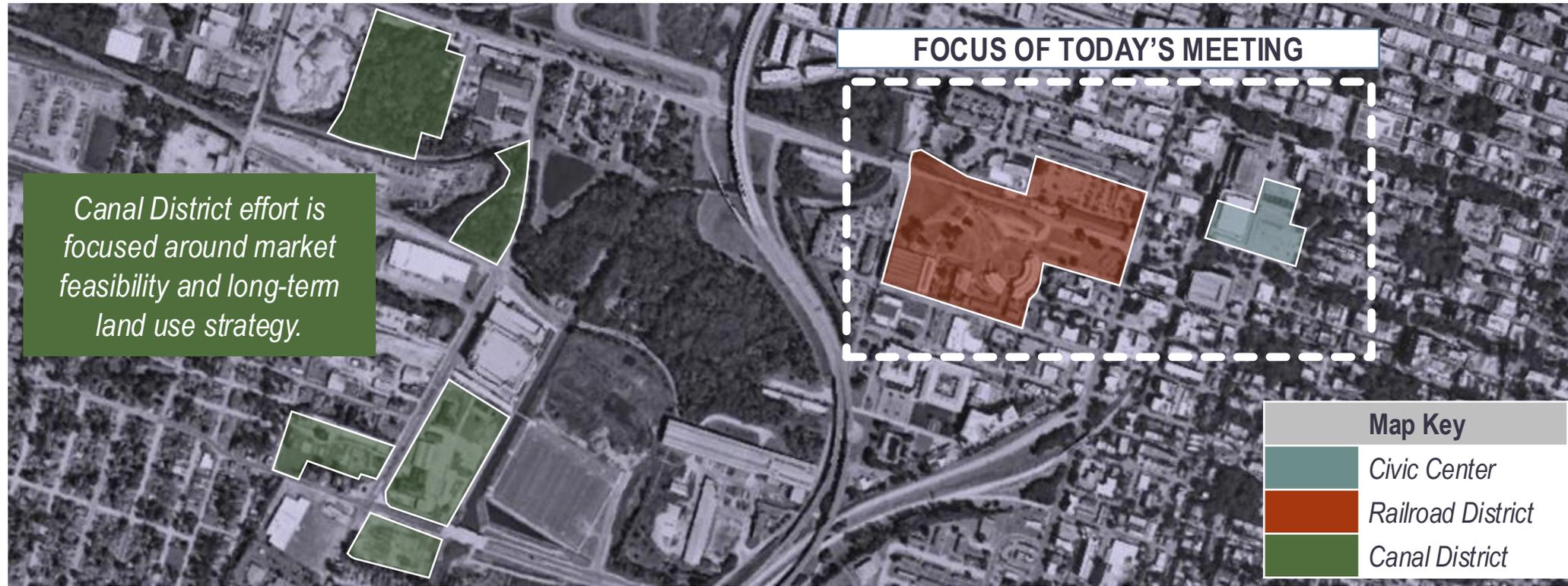
to 37th St.



STREETS, HIGHWAYS, RAILROADS, CANALS

WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

MAP OF STUDY AREAS



Canal District

- ▶ Made up of several large sites, vacant land, and underutilized City-owned buildings
- ▶ The City is already investing here (canal and trail improvements, arena) but needs analysis to guide more detailed planning in the future

Railroad District

- ▶ Includes museums, parks, and other established places that interpret Savannah's history
- ▶ Opportunity to enhance how people experience the area, and its connection to the community

Civic Center

- ▶ Arena removal creates opportunity for new development
- ▶ Opportunity to restore the Oglethorpe Plan and introduce new uses

WHERE WE ARE

CIVIC CENTER



WE ARE HERE

RAILROAD DISTRICT



WE ARE HERE

CANAL DISTRICT



WE ARE HERE

CIVIC CENTER UPDATE

RECAP: CIVIC CENTER COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Framework from Council:

- ▶ *Proceeds with the removal of the arena and renovation of the theatre, ballroom, and community meeting rooms*
- ▶ *Achieves an equitable approach to redevelopment of the area*
- ▶ *Retains the name and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- ▶ *Restores as much of the Oglethorpe Plan as feasible*
- ▶ *Prioritizes housing, including affordable and workforce housing*
- ▶ *Prohibits the development of new hotels and restricts the use of short-term vacation rentals*
- ▶ *Optimizes space for public and municipal use, as well as appropriate retail and commercial spaces*
- ▶ *Achieves future parking needs*

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH, GEORGIA TO PROCEED WITH THE REMOVAL OF THE ARENA AND RENOVATION OF THE THEATRE, BALLROOM, AND COMMUNITY MEETING ROOMS.

WHEREAS, in 1972, the City of Savannah completed the construction of the Savannah Civic Center on the site of the former Municipal Auditorium; the seven-acre site includes the 9,700-seat Martin Luther King, Jr. Arena, 2,500-seat Johnny Mercer Theatre, Community Ballroom, several multi-purpose rooms, two levels of lobby space, and a 225-space surface parking lot; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Aldermen recognize the Civic Center has served as the site for important milestones for individuals and families, as well as for visitors to Savannah over the years since its construction; and

WHEREAS, the Civic Center stands as the largest single parcel in the Savannah National Historic Landmark District (SNHLD). Its construction preceded the enactment of the Historic District Ordinance, and the development was classified as an Urban Renewal project. This designation led to recombinations of the Oglethorpe Plan, including the claiming portions of the Elbert and Jackson wards, the diminishment of Elbert Square's size and prominence, the alteration of the street pattern, and a decrease in connectivity to neighborhoods to the west; and

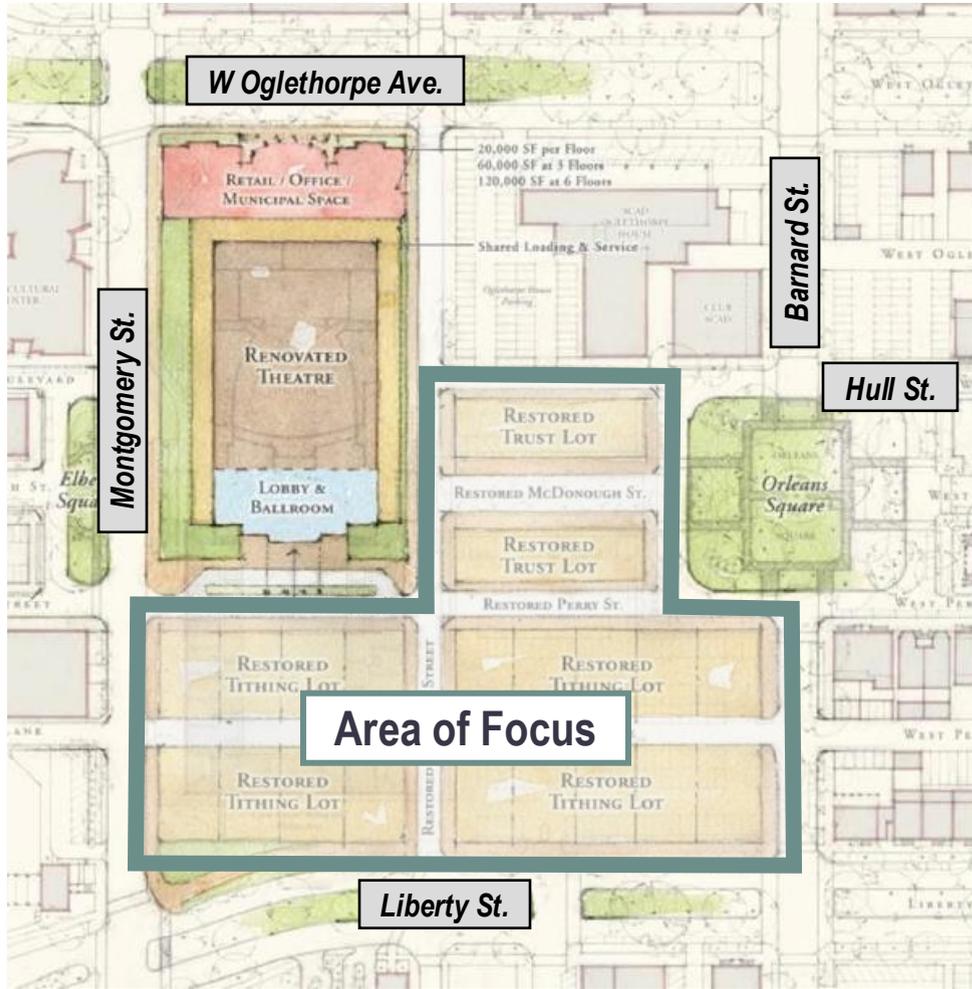
WHEREAS, recognizing the significance of the Savannah National Historic Landmark District, the City has endeavored to restore the lost elements of the Oglethorpe Plan at this location. This goal emerged in the late 1990s, when the City explored the possibility of demolishing the arena, constructing a garage on its site, and relocating the arena while preserving the Theatre, Ballrooms, and multi-purpose rooms; and

WHEREAS, in 1984, the Mayor and Aldermen approved a request from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by naming the Civic Center Arena in his memory; and

WHEREAS, a 2001 Civic Center Arena Analysis ranked the existing Civic Center site as the least favorable of eight potential sites for a new arena due to limitations stemming from traffic congestion, the size of the parcel for future development, and inadequate parking facilities; and

RECAP: STUDY GOALS

Our goal is to identify an actionable strategy for restoring the historic ward layout and generating long-term value for the City and community



What defines success?

Market

Addresses clear gaps in supply and demand

Financial

Is feasible for developer to finance and build

Economic

Generates economic value to the City and community

Physical

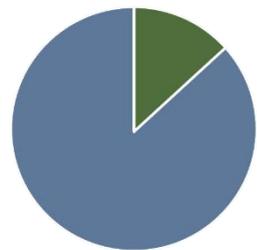
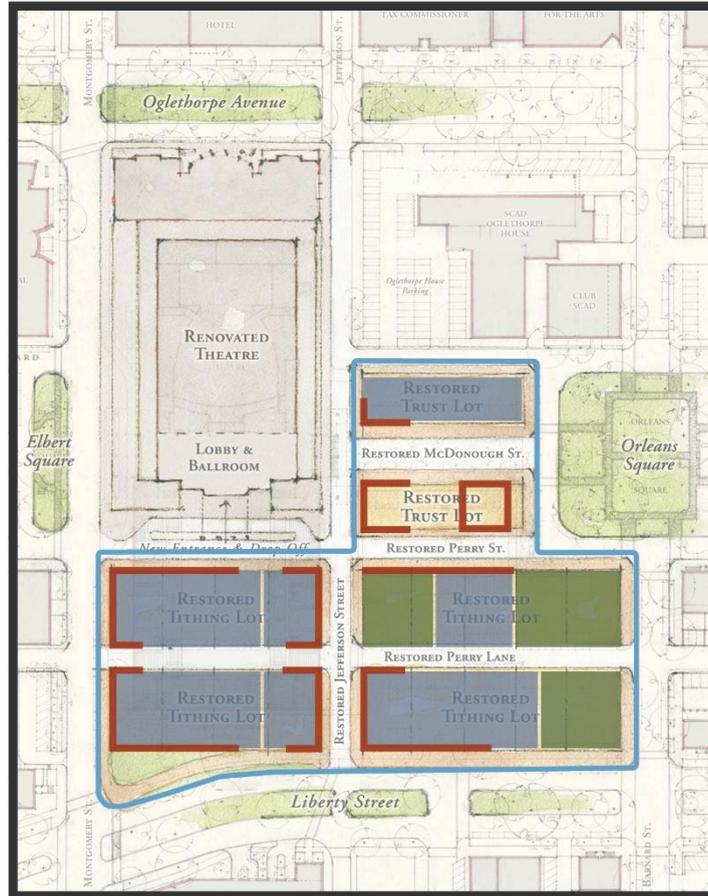
Is tailored to historic context and opportunities of site

Community

Vision is grounded in rigorous community engagement process

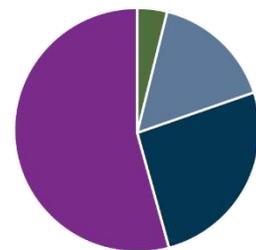
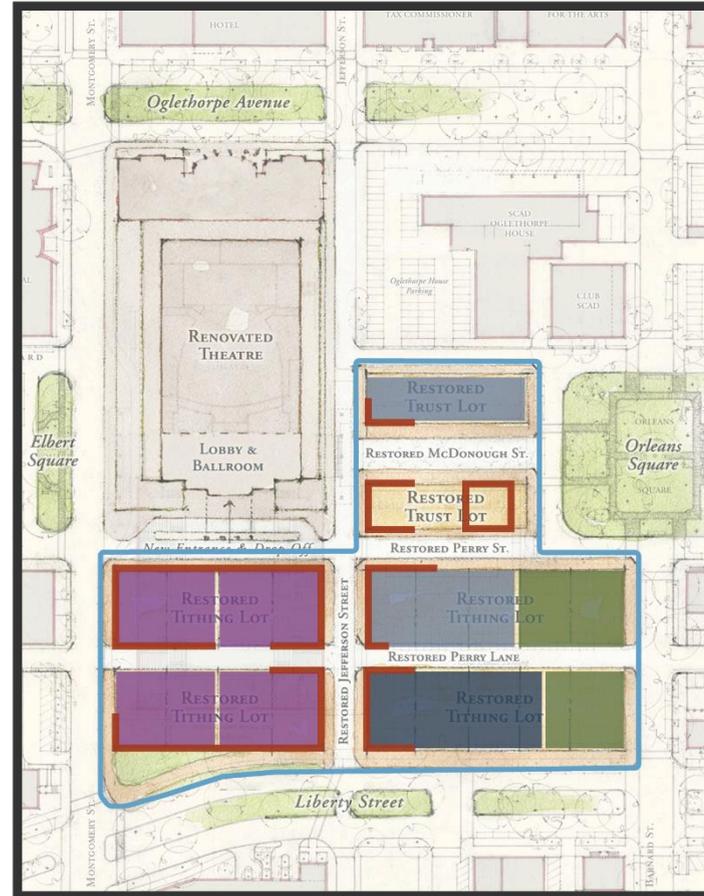
PRIOR PROGRAM SCENARIOS

**SCENARIO 1 (RESIDENTIAL) +
SCENARIO A (COMMERCIAL)**



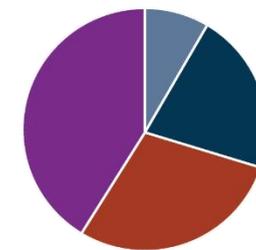
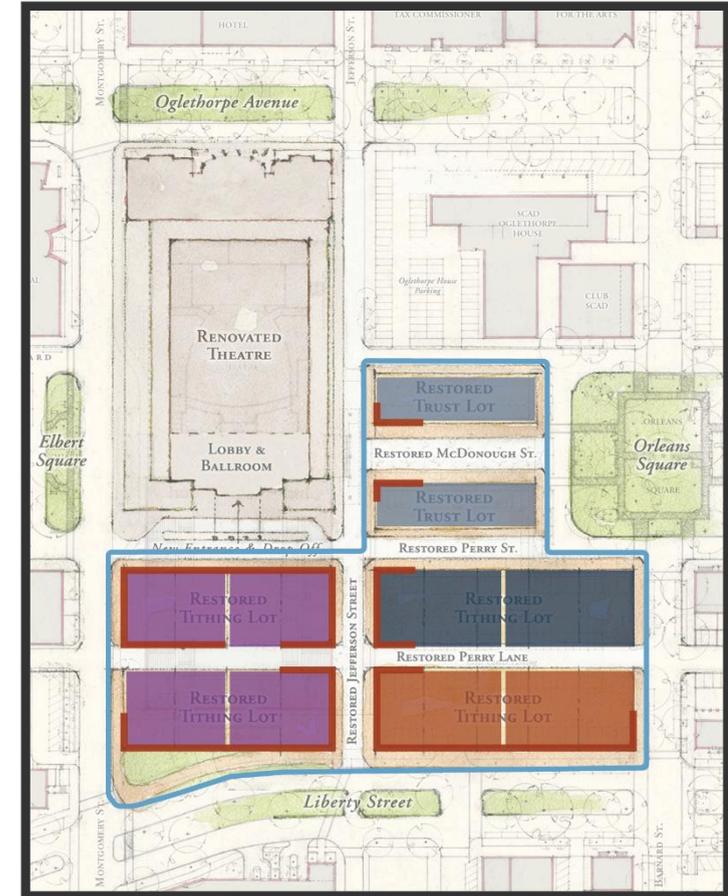
RESIDENTIAL SCALE: 80-100 UNITS
 ROW HOMES
 CONDOMINIUMS
 COMMERCIAL SCALE: 45,000-55,000 SF

**SCENARIO 2 (RESIDENTIAL) +
SCENARIO B (COMMERCIAL)**



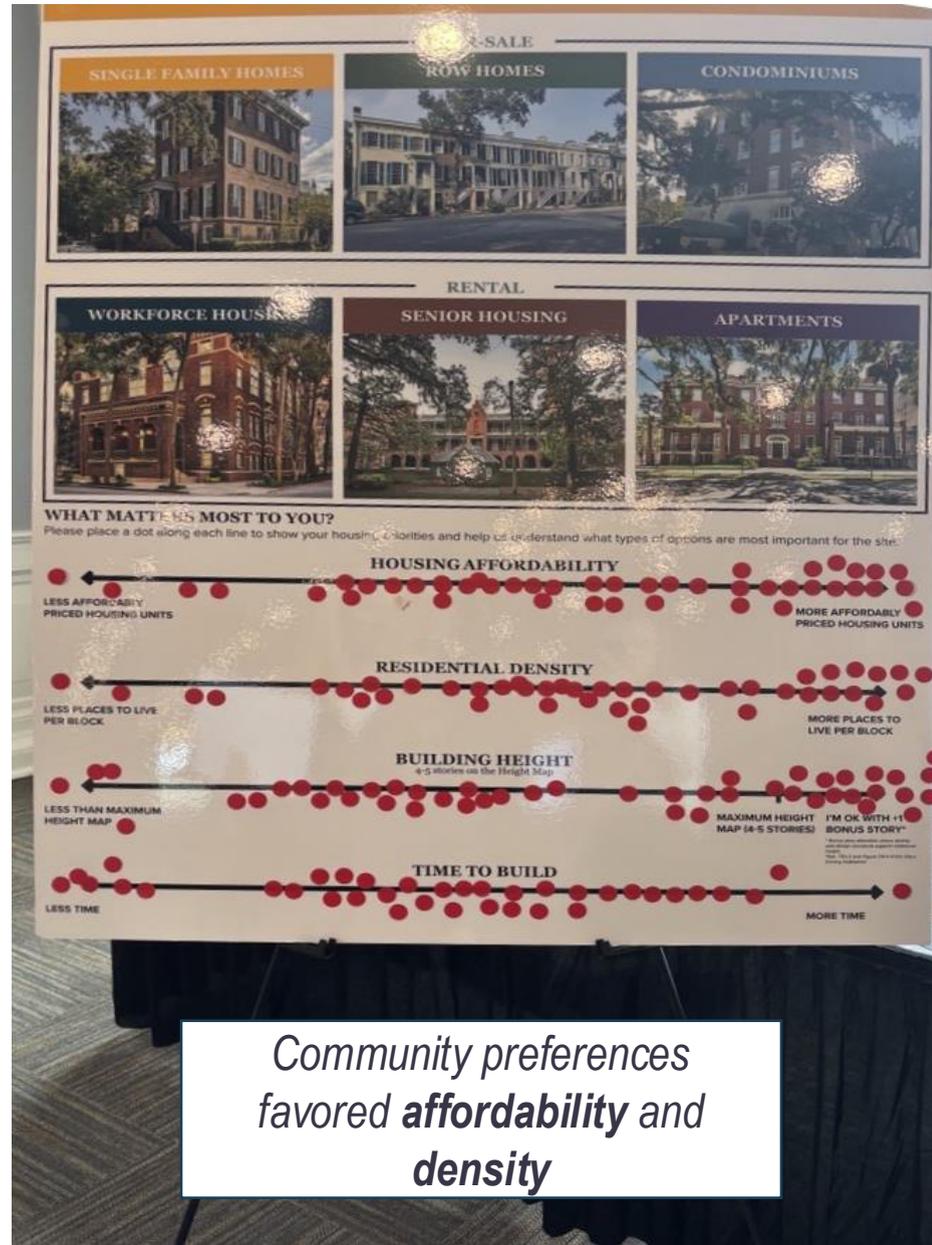
RESIDENTIAL SCALE: 225-250 UNITS
 ROW HOMES
 CONDOMINIUMS
 WORKFORCE HOUSING
 APARTMENTS
 COMMERCIAL SCALE: 45,000-55,000 SF

**SCENARIO 3 (RESIDENTIAL) +
SCENARIO C (COMMERCIAL)**



RESIDENTIAL SCALE: 350-375 UNITS
 CONDOMINIUMS
 WORKFORCE HOUSING
 SENIORS HOUSING
 APARTMENTS
 COMMERCIAL SCALE: 55,000-65,000 SF

THEMES FROM PRIOR ENGAGEMENT



THEMES FROM PRIOR ENGAGEMENT

***In-person feedback
from October public
meeting:***

*For housing, what matters
most to you?*

#1: Housing affordability

*For commercial uses, what
matters most to you?*

**#1: Local shops &
independent restaurants**

*What types of homes feel right
for this site?*

**#1: Rowhomes &
workforce housing**

Desire for Affordability

- ▶ *Residents expressed a need for both workforce housing and housing at deeper affordability levels*
- ▶ *Residents were mixed in their desire to integrate affordable housing at the Civic Center site or locate affordable housing in other areas of the City*

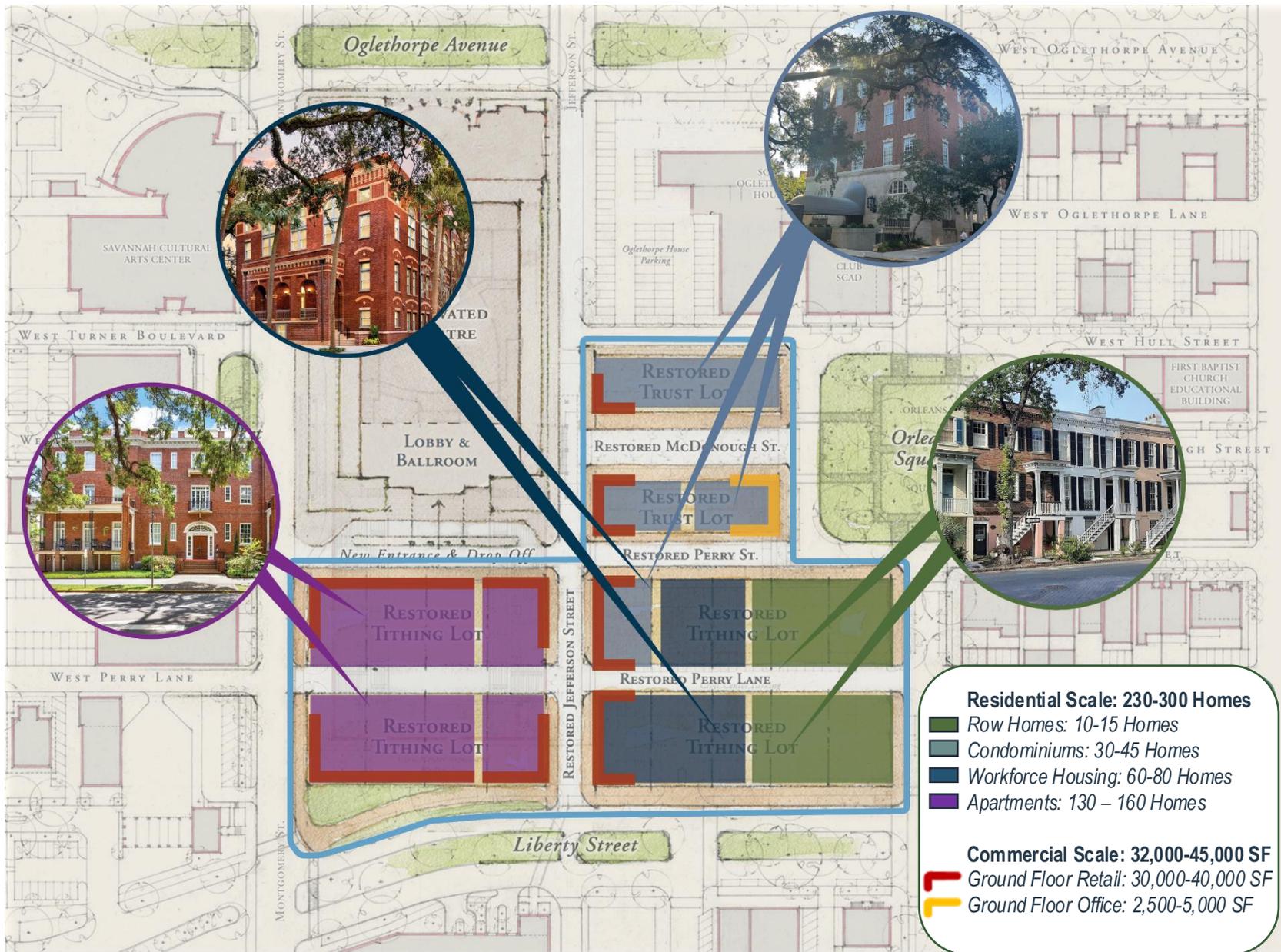


Desire for More Services and Uses for Residents—Not Just Visitors

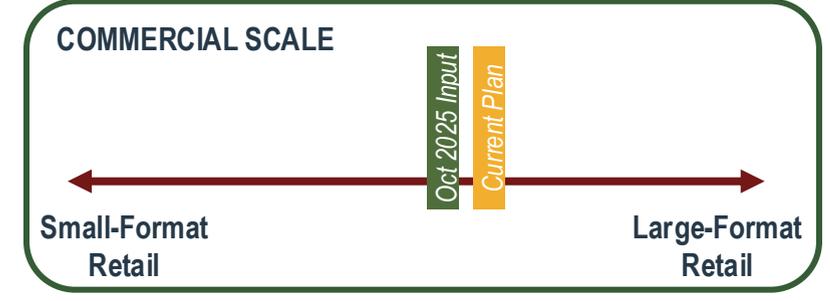
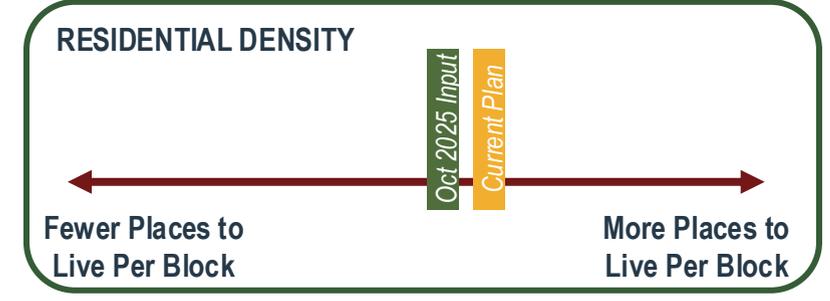
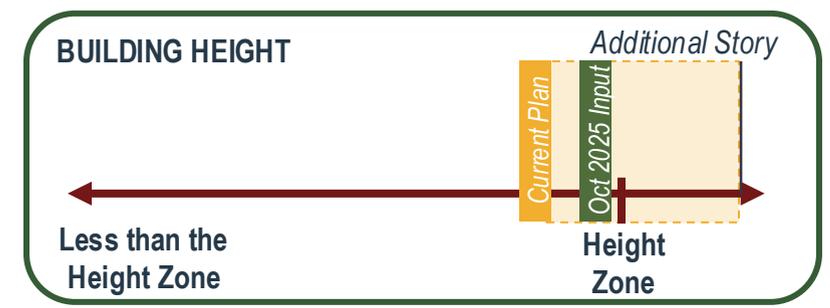
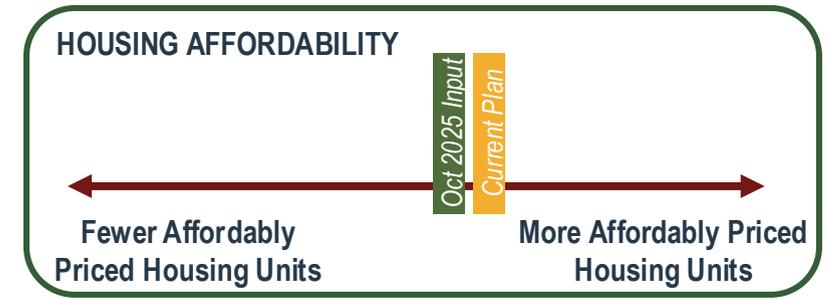
- ▶ *Residents perceive that development occurring in the Historic District tends to be oriented to visitors, not those who live in Savannah*
- ▶ *Places to shop for daily needs, including fresh food*



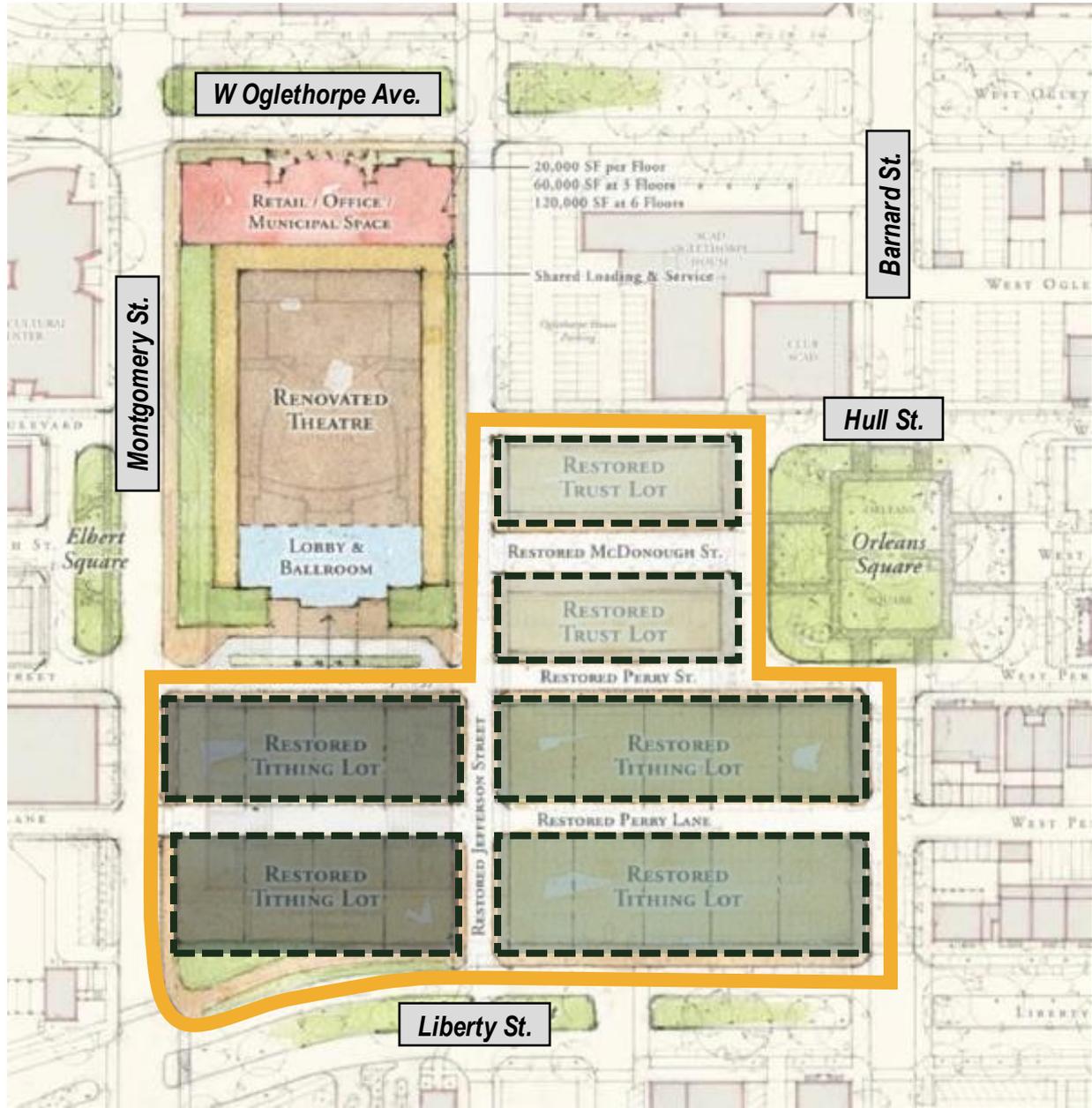
UPDATED PROGRAM



How Does the Current Plan Reflect Previous Public Input?



POTENTIAL PHASES OF REDEVELOPMENT



COLOR KEY	
	Early Phases
	Later Phases

Rental apartments are built first, including ground-floor retail to activate near theater



Workforce housing is built next, supported by value created from rental apartments, retail, and for-sale housing



Later phases focus on incremental for-sale housing development that benefits from and builds on commercial ground-floor activation

NEXT STEPS

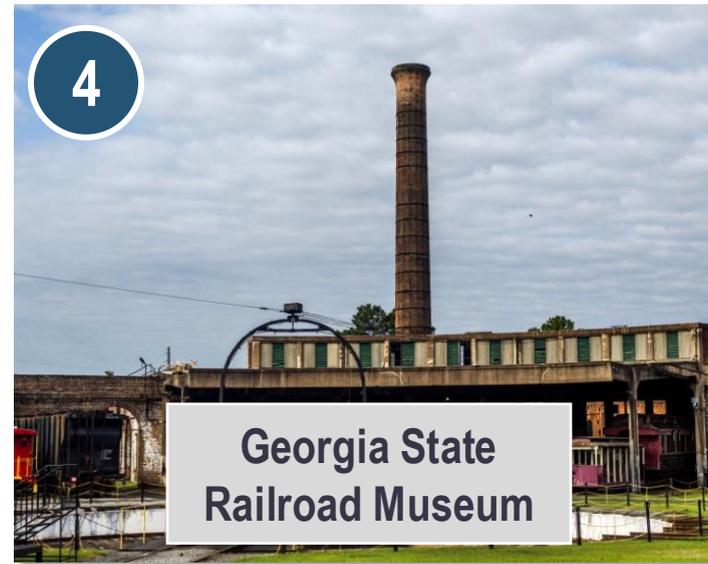
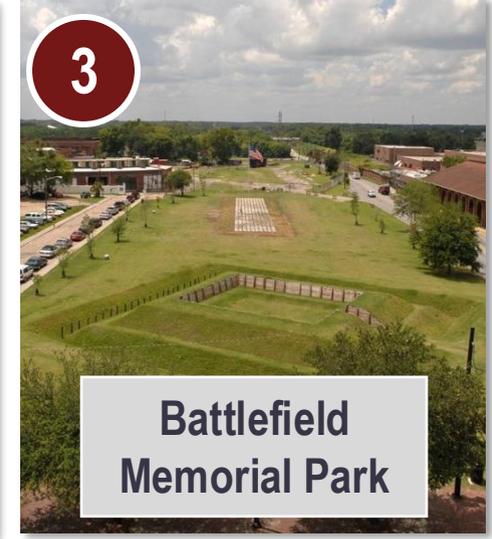
While we are nearing the end of our study, the City will focus on translating this vision into action—and will need your feedback

- ▶ **Public Priorities:** *How can the City use its tools, such as land value, tax incentives, and zoning, to achieve more affordability and high-quality design?*
- ▶ **Partnership Strategy:** *What qualities should the City prioritize in selecting real estate development partners (for example, partners that are based locally)?*



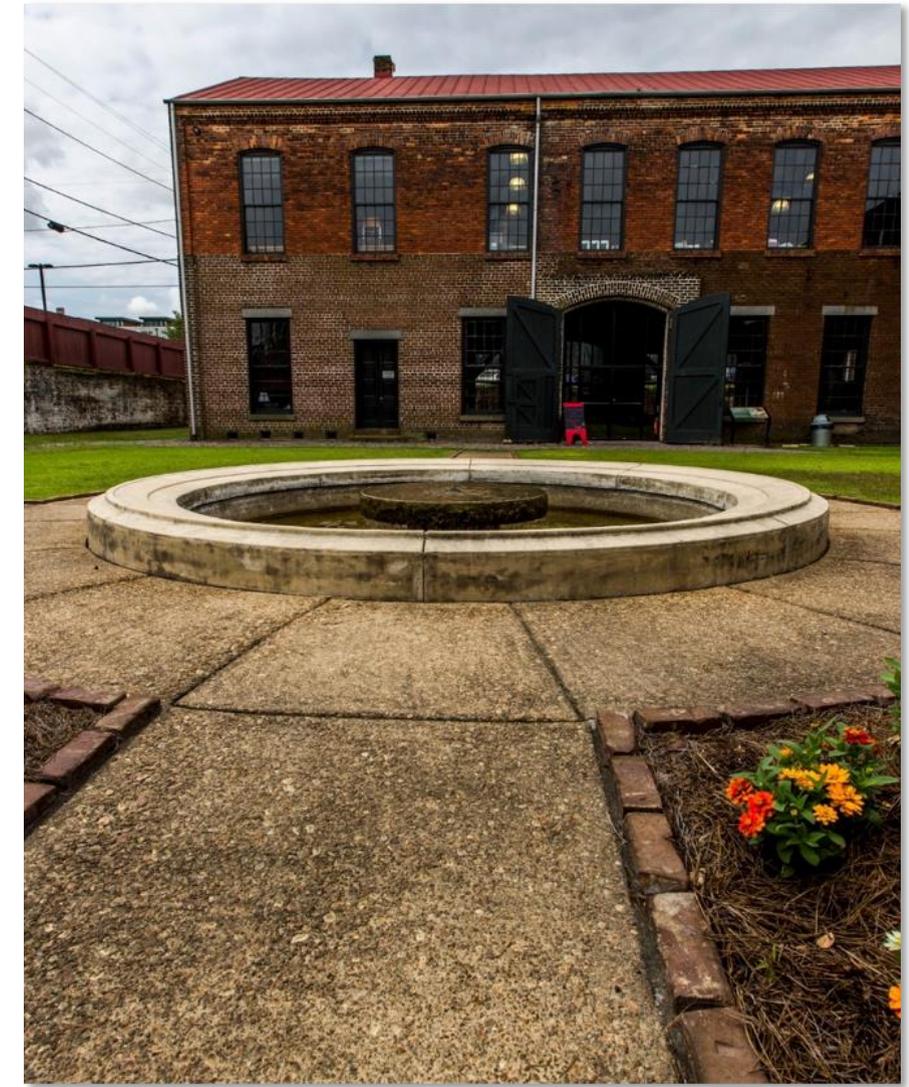
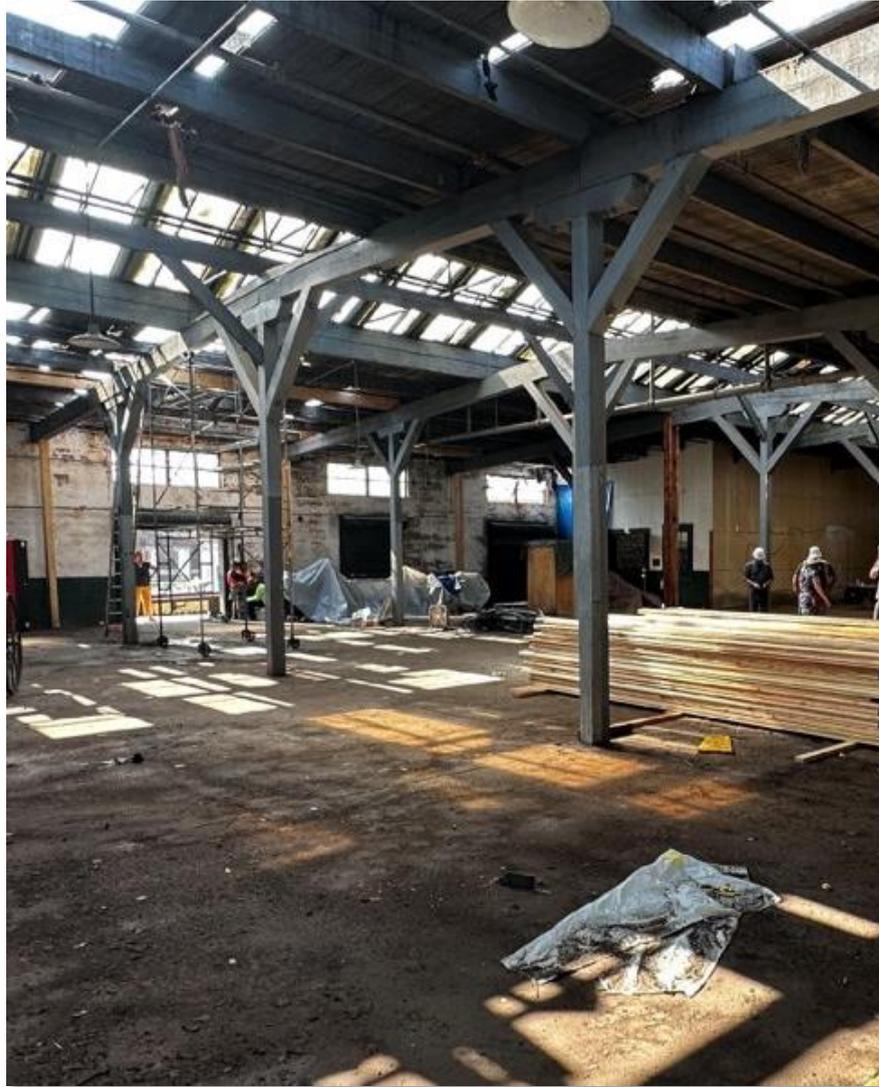
RAILROAD DISTRICT ANALYSIS

THE RAILROAD DISTRICT, TODAY



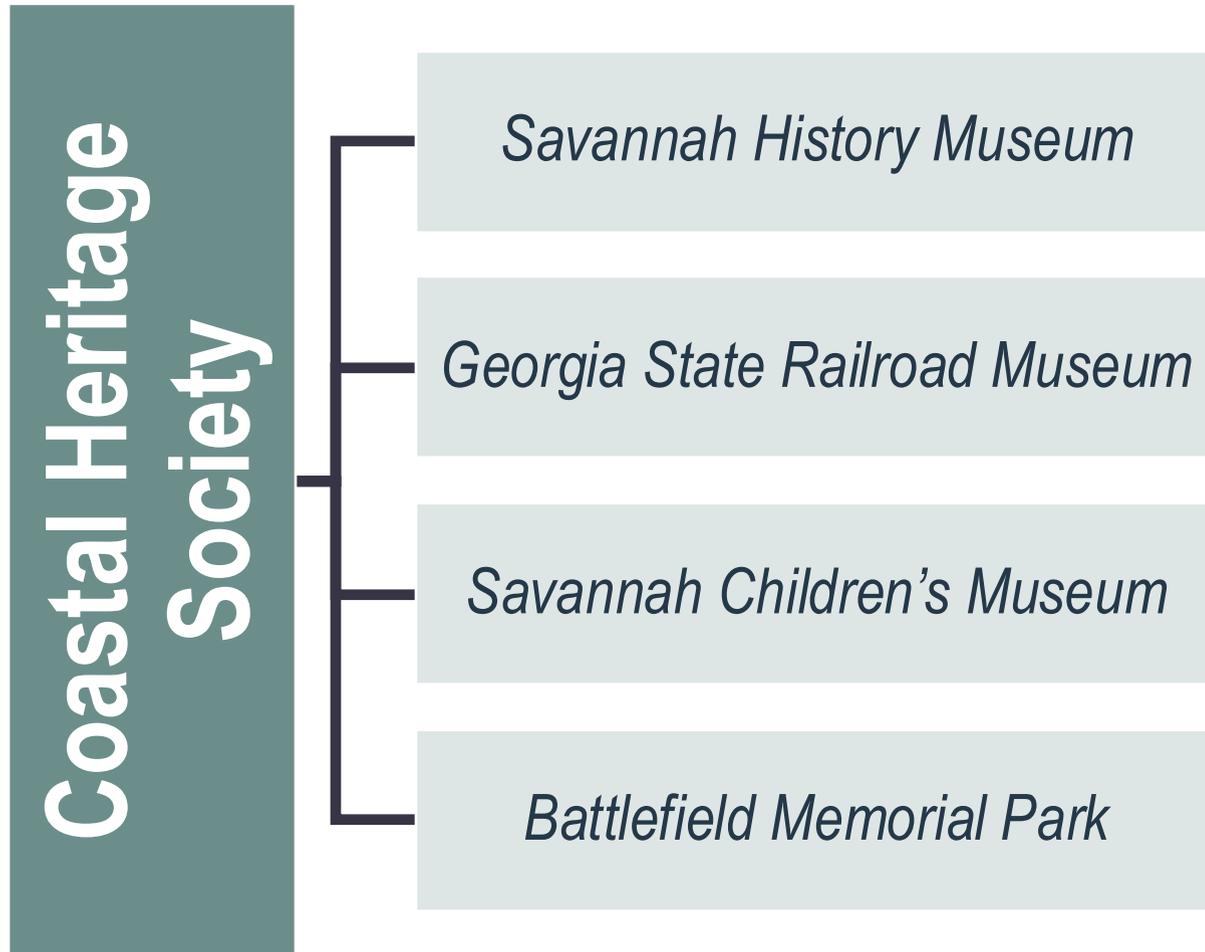
THE RAILROAD DISTRICT, TODAY

The site is home to unique and treasured historic assets in need of investment



THE ROLE OF COASTAL HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Coastal Heritage Society (CHS) is a key steward of the City-owned land in this district, and development can help support its long-term role



CHS Priorities

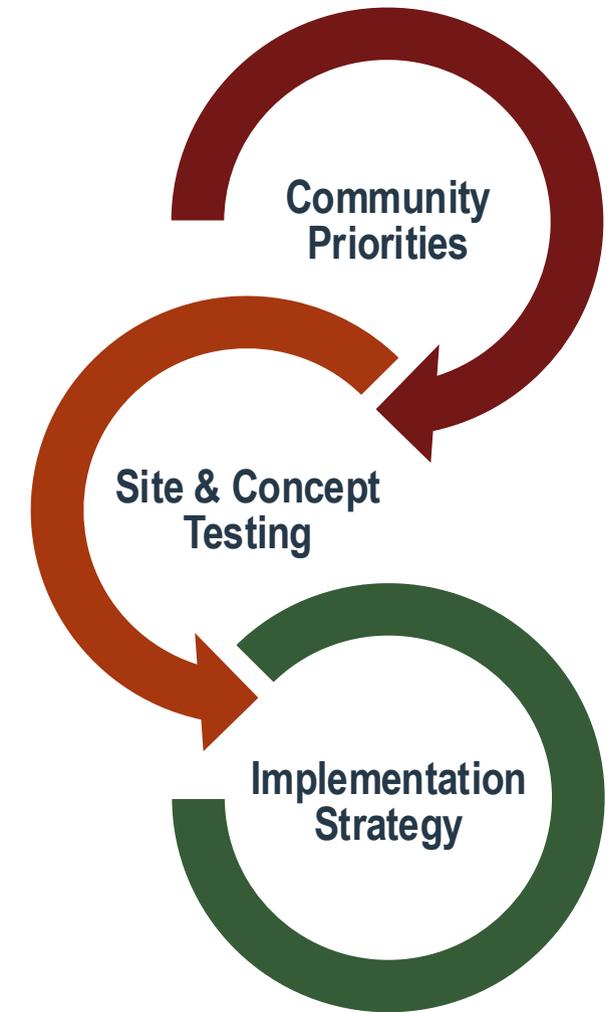
- ▶ Create new streams of revenue that can be used to maintain historic buildings
- ▶ Increase visitation
- ▶ Honor and respect historic legacy of this area



STUDY GOALS

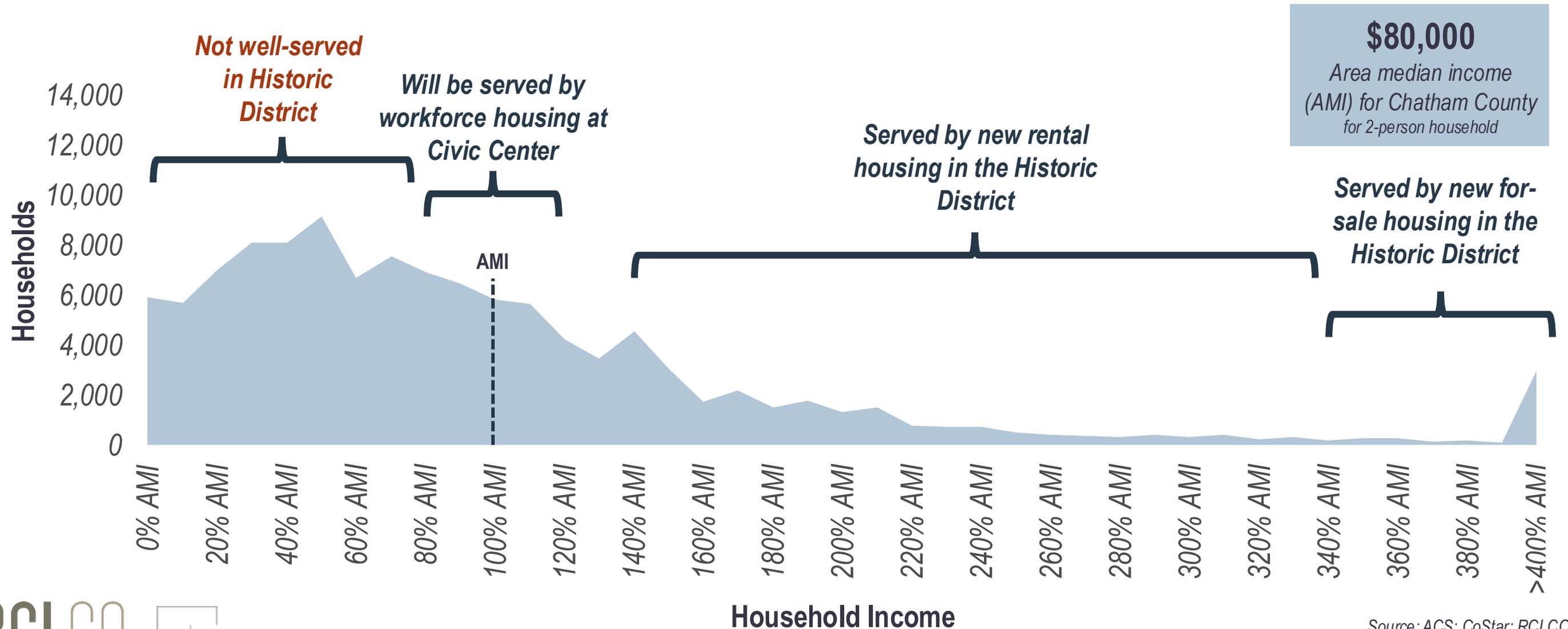
Our goal is to develop a strategy for the Railroad District that leverages the potential redevelopment to maximize the impact of this important place

- ▶ **Market:** *What types of new projects can address gaps in supply and demand?*
- ▶ **Financial:** *What types of new projects are financially feasible?
How can they generate value for the City?*
- ▶ **Economic:** *What benefits could new projects bring to the local economy, and how could those benefits support the historic buildings already here?*
- ▶ **Physical:** *How can new development work with the site—its size, its layout, and its history?*
- ▶ **Community:** *How can new district redevelopment reflect the priorities and concerns of the surrounding community?*



OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS AFFORDABILITY

Affordability is a top priority for the community (as heard during our prior outreach) as well as the City, and there are opportunities to meet that need in this area



DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY SITE

North Parking Lot



SITE GOALS

- *Generate revenue to maintain historic structures*
- *Retain city control*
- *Respect historic district designation*
- *Increase foot traffic*
- *Prioritize uses that can deliver parking for visitors*

POSSIBLE USES

- *Market-Rate Rental Housing*
- *Hospitality*
- *Ground Floor Retail*

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY SITE

Historic Train Shed & Head House



SITE GOALS

- *Preserve historic buildings*
- *Anchor incoming Tide to Town trail*
- *Increase foot traffic and connectivity*
- *Broaden site appeal to residents*
- *Leverage the site's strong accessibility and visibility*
- *Complement Savannah History Museum*
- *Continue to serve Savannah residents and visitors*

EXISTING / POSSIBLE USES

- *Museum (Existing)*
- *Visitor Center (Existing)*
- *Micro Food Hall (Independent Operator)*
- *Café / Restaurant (Independent Operator)*

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY SITE

Restored Historic Roundhouse (or other historic structure)



SITE GOALS

- *Restore portion of roundhouse, or other structure*
- *Expand usable space*
- *Enhance the visitor experience by providing more destinations at the heart of the district*

POSSIBLE USES

- *Museum*
- *Small-Scale Retail / Food & Beverage*
- *Event Venue*

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY SITE

Paint Shop



SITE GOALS

- *Preserve & restore building*
- *Enhance experiences of both residents and visitors*
- *Minimize disruption to existing facilities*
- *Provide opportunity for CHS expansion*

POSSIBLE USES

- *Museum*
- *Art / Entertainment*
- *Event Venue*
- *Creative Office*
- *Food & Beverage*

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES BY SITE

Corner Parcel



SITE GOALS

- *Leverage close proximity to public parks, museums, and historic district*
- *Support nearby anchors with complementary uses*
- *Minimize disruption to historic character of site*

POSSIBLE USES

- *Affordable Rental Housing*
- *Hospitality*
- *Market-Rate Rental Housing*

KEY QUESTIONS / AREAS FOR FEEDBACK

There are many different development options and opportunities for this district.

➔ *From your perspective, what should the City prioritize?*

Some types of developments will require public investment, while others will generate revenue that can be reinvested into the site.

➔ *How should the City balance these types of development?*

The site has the potential to be a vital asset that serves the community in different and important ways.

➔ *What does long-term success look like to you?*

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