

I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT

SAVANNAH GEORGIA

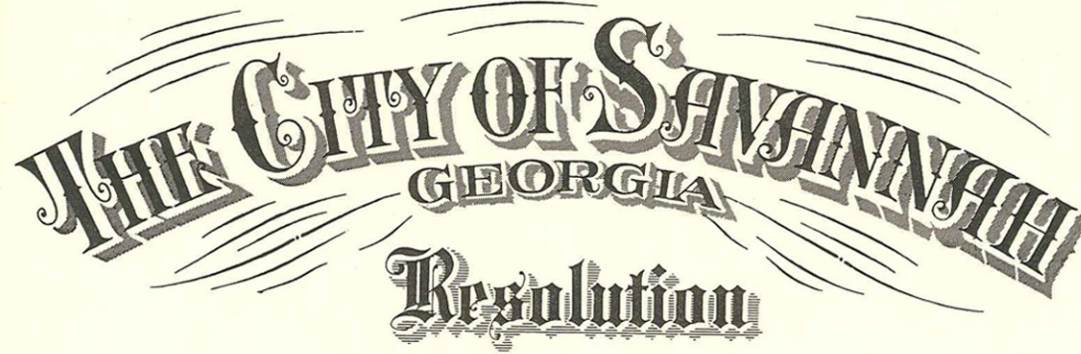


July 2012

RECLAIMING OLD WEST BROAD STREET

City of Savannah
Chatham County
Metropolitan Planning Commission
CORE Metropolitan Planning Organization
Savannah Development & Renewal Authority

Wilbur Smith Associates
Sottile & Sottile *Urban Design*
Urban Partners
Gilbert & Lattimore
Grice & Associates
McMillan & Associates



RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT
Reclaiming Old West Broad Street: I-16 Exit Ramp Removal Project

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RECLAIMING OLD WEST BROAD STREET: I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT.

WHEREAS, the I-16 exit ramps at MLK and Montgomery Street create a physical, social, economic, and psychological barrier to the area; and

WHEREAS, removing the flyover has been recommended in multiple planning documents for the area dating back to 1998; and

WHEREAS, extensive public involvement and participation guided the development of the Civic Master Plan and Economic Strategy; and

WHEREAS, removing the flyover will restore 8.2 acres of developable land to the City, reestablish 350 linear feet of blockface to Montgomery Street, and 650 linear feet of blockface to MLK Jr. Blvd.; and

WHEREAS, a new pedestrian and bicycle-friendly street network and new public square would be created in the area; and

WHEREAS, the economic strategy includes establishing a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood on the newly reclaimed land, with more commercial along MLK and around the square and more residential further west; and

WHEREAS, the transportation analysis indicates that traffic flow will continue to function safely and effectively; and

WHEREAS, current cost estimates indicate the project will cost \$38 million and multiple funding sources are being pursued simultaneously; and

WHEREAS, the MLK Jr. Blvd. will no longer be the "edge" of downtown but incorporated into the heart of the City; and

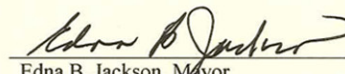
WHEREAS, Gwinnett Street and restored Roberts Street will become the gateway entrance into downtown; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, in partnership with the City of Savannah, is ready to move forward into the next phase of the project which will include developing the technical documents (including the Interchange Modification Report and preliminary engineering drawings) required for Georgia Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration approval;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah declare their full support for the Reclaiming Old West Broad Street: I-16 Exit Ramp Removal project.

Adopted and approved this 26th day of July, 2012.

ATTEST:


Edna B. Jackson, Mayor


Dyanne C. Reese, MMC, Clerk of Council



RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT

On July 26, 2012 Savannah City Council unanimously approved a Resolution of Support for the Reclaiming Old West Broad Street I-16 Ramp Removal Project.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following pages provide an overview of the I-16 Exit Ramp Removal Project.

Project Overview

Project Base Maps

Civic Master Plan

Street Sections

Background

The I-16 exit ramp at Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street has long been recognized as a physical and psychological barrier to economic development, pedestrian activity and neighborhood revitalization along these corridors. While the area to the north of the flyover has thrived in recent years, the area to the south has not seen the same rate of revitalization.

The purpose of this study is to examine the feasibility of relocating and reconfiguring the entrance and exit ramps at MLK, Jr. Blvd. and Montgomery Street in order to reconnect this area with the urban core of Savannah. This will effectively extend the perceived edge of the city center further west to West Boundary Street and beyond. A number of new blocks will be created which will be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly and provide opportunities for mixed-use housing and retail.

This study builds on previous studies conducted by the SDRA in 1998, 2002, 2004 and 2009; and a 2008 GDOT study. This study is not intended to be definitive, but should be used as the basis for additional study and analysis such as preliminary engineering, and an Interchange Modification Report, which will be necessary before construction can begin on the project.

The project was managed by the Metropolitan Planning Commission with partners including Chatham County, the City of Savannah, SDRA and CORE MPO. The primary consultant for the project was Wilbur Smith Associates (now CDM Smith) and subconsultants included Sottile & Sottile, Urban Partners, Grice and Associates, McMillan and Associates, and Gilbert & Lattimore. Other key participants included Georgia DOT, Federal Highway Administration, business owners, neighborhood groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.

History and Evolution

Savannah was founded in 1733 by James Oglethorpe with a vision of an egalitarian society. Each colonist was granted a relatively small plot of land within the city, a five acre garden lot in the area surrounding the city, and a 45 acre farm lot just beyond the garden lots. In the early days, no colonist was allowed to accumulate more than 500 acres of land. The area now known as MLK, Jr. Blvd. was originally within the garden lot area of the city. As the city continued to expand over time, it naturally expanded into the garden lots, as they were no longer necessary for their original agricultural purpose. By 1799, the city limits had expanded to Oglethorpe Avenue and in the early 1900s, the city encompassed the garden lots currently occupied by the I-16 exit ramp at MLK, Jr. Blvd.

The MLK, Jr. Blvd. (formerly West Broad Street) area developed in direct relation to the rise of the rail system. In 1833 the Central of Georgia Railroad Company was formed. In 1901, Union Station on West Broad Street was constructed and served as the transportation hub for the city. It was from this location that people or goods could travel within the city to local destinations,

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to destinations reached by train throughout the United States, or to international locations via the Savannah River. This placed West Broad Street at the center of transient commercial and population destinations.

Local and national politics had an impact on West Broad Street. It was partially due to the prevailing segregation policies during the first half of the twentieth century that West Broad Street thrived as a commercial and entertainment district for the African American population in Savannah up until the 1950s.

In 1955 the West Broad Street area was targeted by the Urban Renewal Administration for two goals. The first was to improve substandard housing while the second was to increase traffic flow. Approximately 150 business owners signed a petition protesting the project location. However, it was too little too late and in 1960 the I-16 interstate project was unanimously approved. Union Station was demolished by 1963 in order to, literally, pave the way for the I-16 exit ramp.

The I-16 exit ramp on MLK, Jr. Blvd. created a physical, economic, social and psychological barrier on West Broad Street which persists to this day.

Urban Analysis and Current Conditions

This study analyzes an array of existing conditions on the corridor including street networks, historic resources, pedestrian networks, land use and zoning. The results of this analysis show a current street network that caters to high-speed automobile traffic, is hostile to pedestrians and bicyclists, and lacks connectivity in both the east-west and north-south directions. The results also show a fair number of historic resources in the immediate vicinity of the exit ramp, which speaks to the rich history of the site. The area is within the Savannah Historic District.

Public Process and Participation

There was an extensive public participation process for this study. After completing the historical research on the area, a three day charrette was held on February 17-19, 2010 in order to engage stakeholders. Over 250 people attended during the three day period with the primary purpose being to learn about the community's vision for this area. Participants were asked to break into small groups and put their ideas on paper, developing five different possible scenarios for the exit ramp removal. These ideas were further developed by the professional design team into three preliminary concepts which were presented on the last day of the charrette for additional feedback and comments.

On October 12, 2010 an open house was conducted with approximately 150 attendees. The three concepts which were developed at the February charrette were further refined and presented, in addition to a preliminary transportation analysis and economic strategy. A survey was conducted both at the open house and online for 30 days afterwards, focusing

essentially on whether the exit ramp should be removed, and if so, what concept would be preferable. Overwhelmingly, 90% of respondents felt that the exit ramps should be removed and most (55%) preferred Concept 3.

The final public meeting is scheduled for July 2012. The Preferred Concept (Concept 3) has been further detailed, the transportation analysis has been completed, the economic strategy has been refined, and an Implementation Strategy has been developed. These will be presented at the final public meeting.

In addition to public meetings, numerous individual stakeholder interviews were conducted throughout the planning process.

Civic Master Plan

The Civic Master Plan identifies a series of streets and blocks currently occupied by the existing flyover and on-ramps and develops a plan to restore larger connections between the city center, the downtown Expansion Area to the west, and surrounding neighborhoods.

More specifically, the plan removes exit ramps all the way to Gwinnett Street which will be enhanced as a primary entry into city center. It creates a new public square on MLK, Jr. Blvd. across from Civil Rights Museum, with the potential for a civic building within the square. Selma Street is expanded into an urban boulevard and a portion of historic Roberts Street is restored. This will create a neighborhood of small-scale blocks (total new land will be approximately 8.2 acres) and interconnected street pattern. The Plan restores four blocks between MLK, Jr. Blvd. and Montgomery Street, restores multiple active street frontages to MLK, Jr. Blvd., reconnects multiple streets across the MLK, Jr. Blvd./Montgomery Street Corridor, and provides multiple north/south connections.

Economic Analysis

The Economic Analysis includes assessing the potential for redevelopment of properties that could be made available through the demolition of the current I-16 exit ramp. Based on stakeholder feedback as well as City Council priorities, the new parcels will be developed to ensure mixed-use development to include mixed-income housing. More commercial uses would be accommodated along MLK, Jr. Blvd. and Montgomery Street, as well as around a new public square, and more residential would be located within the interior of the area, further west of MLK, Jr. Blvd.

Additionally, the study includes alternative development scenarios as determined through stakeholder meetings and charrettes; detailing potential phasing approaches to the development of these sites; and economic feasibility analyses of each major alternative for the study area.

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Transportation Analysis

The Transportation Analysis includes the development and evaluation of different scenarios for the extension of the existing grid pattern, analysis of traffic redistribution and road realignments in the study area and the larger surrounding context.

The Analysis was a two part process. The first part was a Systems Level Analysis which examined the functionality of the roadways under a “no build” scenario predicted to 2035. This was compared with the Preferred Concept scenario in 2035. The results indicate that with both scenarios, there are opportunities for more efficient traffic flow.

The second part of the Transportation Analysis involved Synchro analysis, one of the leading traffic analysis applications, a microscopic signal analysis and optimization software application. It was conducted in order to better understand the impacts of potential traffic shifts on key intersections in the study area. The results of this analysis suggest that it would be potentially feasible from a traffic operations perspective to replace the current terminus of I-16 with the Preferred Concept, and return Montgomery Street to two-way operation. It is recommended that the project be carried on to the next phase, which will include a full interchange modification report (IMR). During the IMR, a detailed project level traffic analysis will be required to meet state and federal requirements.

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan outlines the steps necessary to implement the Civic Master Plan and includes potential funding options. The approximate cost of implementing the Preferred Concept is \$37,200,000 which does not include right-of-way costs.

Funding opportunities and eligibility will be dependent on the type, or category, of work completed.

The categories include:

- Infrastructure
- Development
- Special Consideration
- Maintenance and Operations (M&O).

The following are potential funding mechanisms that have various degrees of application or opportunity for funding for the I-16 Exit Ramp Removal Project.

- Community Improvement Districts (CIDs)
- Federal Sources and Grants
- Impact Fees
- Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST)
- Special Service Districts (SSDs)

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- Tax Increment Financing/Tax Allocation Districts (TIF/TAD)
- Transportation Investment Act (TIA) (Also known as TSPLOST)

Short Term Funding Strategy

The short term funding strategy centers on utilizing available funding resources to advance the planning of the project. By placing the project in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the project will have access to formula and discretionary grants to use for transportation planning and implementation of the federal-aid highway system.

Long Term Funding Strategy

Whereas the short term strategy is to advance the project as expeditiously as possible with available funding, the long term strategy anticipates ensuring access to funding along five tracks:

- Regular Federal Transportation Funding Track
- Transportation Investment Act Sales Tax (TSPLOST)
- Other Federal Grants
- Local Sources
- Private Investment

Multiple funding sources will have to be utilized to fund all elements of the project. It is recommended that the funding strategies outlined here be aggressively pursued simultaneously to help ensure the security of project funding.

Implementation Strategy

The section outlines the steps necessary to remove the I-16 exit ramps and implement the Civic Master Plan for the study area. It outlines the sequential steps and timeframe associated with each action.

The implementation plan includes four distinct segments:

- Planning Phase
- Required Documentation and Approval Phase
- Infrastructure Phase
- Development Phase

While these phases will be discussed individually, they may overlap both in scope and timeframe.

1. Planning Phase

The planning phase is currently underway and will be a background element throughout the project. To date, the planning phase has explored the feasibility of the project, developed different concepts, and refined the preferred concept. It has included extensive public involvement and garnering stakeholder and political support. This phase has also included

identifying funding sources, developing economic strategies and goals, and writing the scope of work for the next phase.

2. Required Documentation and Approval Phase

The next phase of the project will include elements of the project required by state or federal law. This phase will include a more detailed traffic study and producing reports and engineering documents required for GDOT and FHWA approval.

3. Infrastructure Phase

The infrastructure phase involves, engineering, the implementation of the Maintenance of Traffic plan, demolition of the existing flyover, construction of new street and sidewalk networks, improvements to existing streets and sidewalks, and installation of all necessary utilities for development. It is likely that the City of Savannah would be the project manager. It is anticipated that this phase will be complete by 2018, subject to available funding.

4. Development Phase

The development phase involves refining the development plan to identify and recruit investors and businesses to the area. Certain plans and codes may need to be updated to reflect the goals of the project. This phase also includes identifying and recruiting partners to implement the specific housing goals.

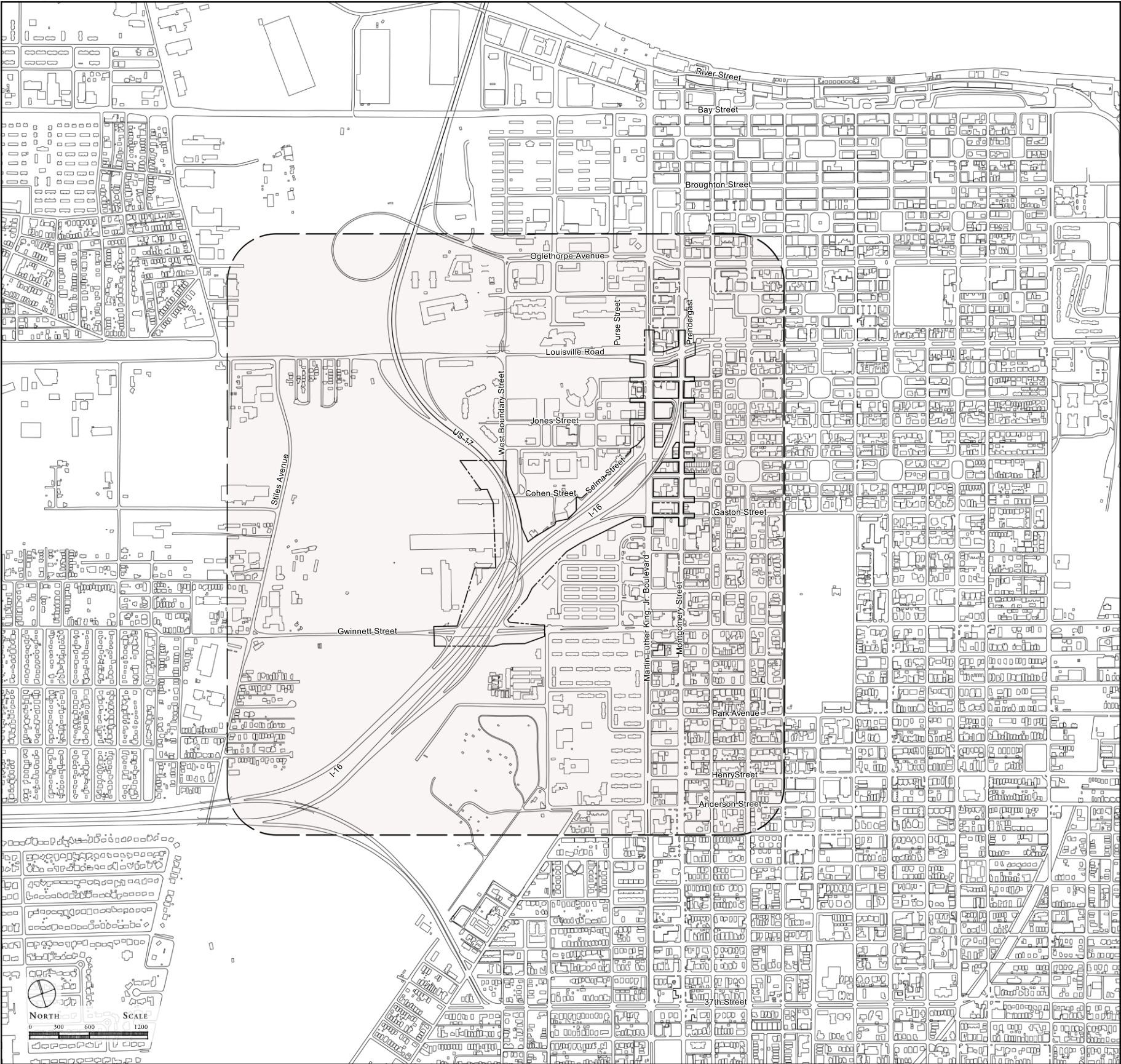
It is possible that the Civic Master Plan could be fully implemented by 2022, subject to available funding.

Conclusion

The social and economic benefits of the I-16 exit ramp removal will be significant. Highlights include: reclaiming more than eight acres of developable land, 650 linear feet fronting MLK, Jr. Blvd., and 350 linear feet fronting Montgomery Street; reclaiming MLK, Jr. Blvd. (Old West Broad Street) as a major economic mixed-use corridor, reinventing it as a gateway to the city instead of as the edge of downtown; establishing additional connectivity between the city center and west Savannah neighborhoods and to the potential civic center development; creating the opportunity to restore Montgomery Street to two-way; improving traffic flow with a new street grid; providing economic opportunities in the newly created city-owned land; bringing more people to the area which will in turn create a larger marketplace (the population may double or triple); and finally laying the groundwork for expansion of the streetcar system.

This study establishes the framework which will guide future, more detailed studies such as the preliminary engineering and the Interchange Modification Report. It successfully captures the vision of the community for the potential redevelopment of this area, reclaiming the neighborhood surrounding Old West Broad Street.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Reclaiming Old West Broad Street

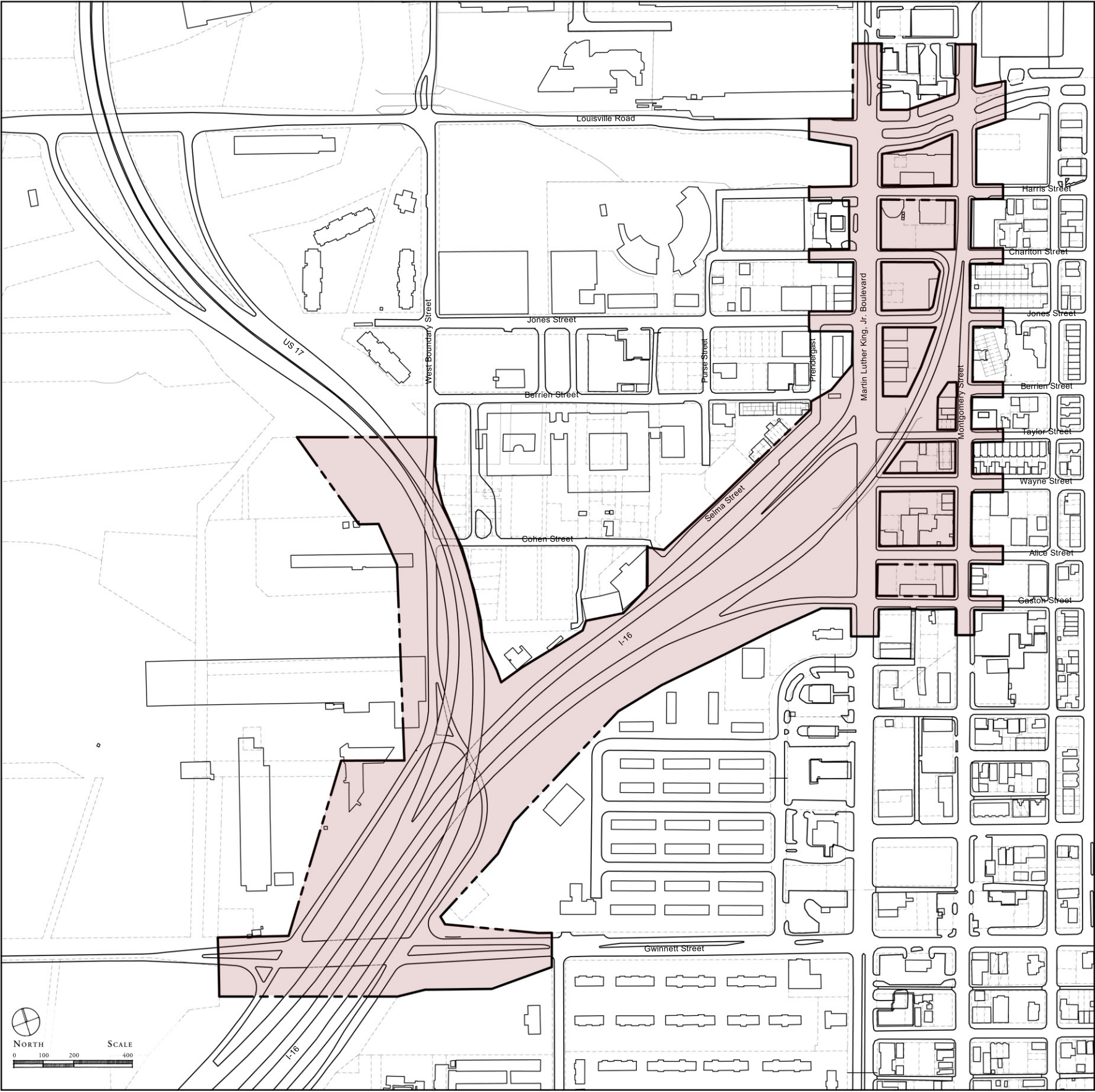


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SAVANNAH GEORGIA
Area of Influence

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I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT

SAVANNAH GEORGIA

Boundaries of Detailed Planning Area

I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT

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City of Savannah

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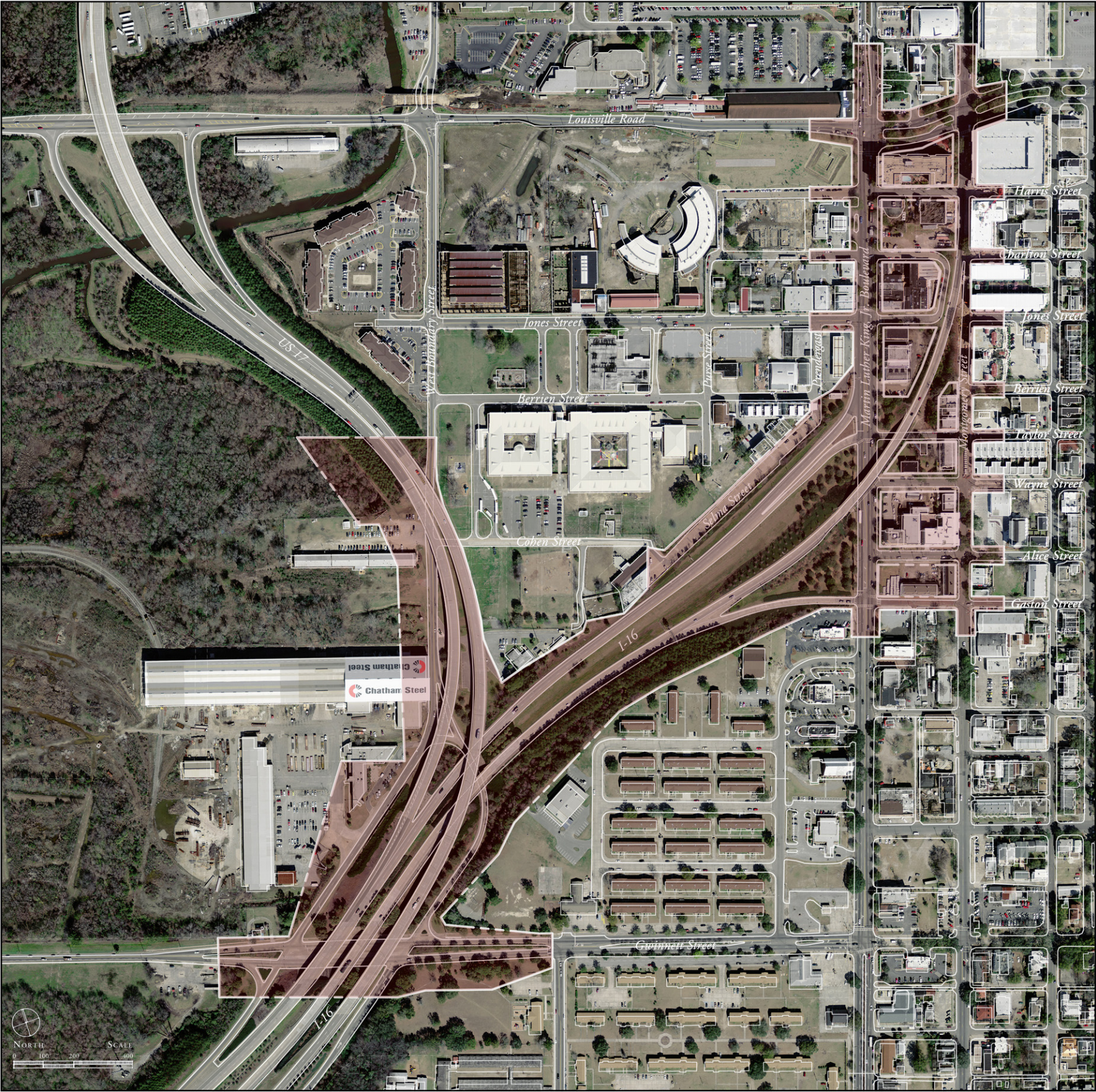
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SAVANNAH GEORGIA

Aerial Imagery of Detailed Planning Area

I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT

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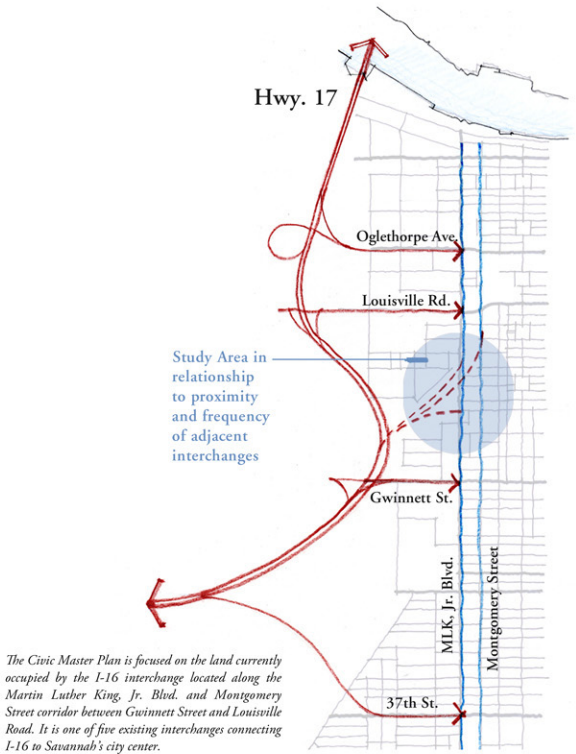
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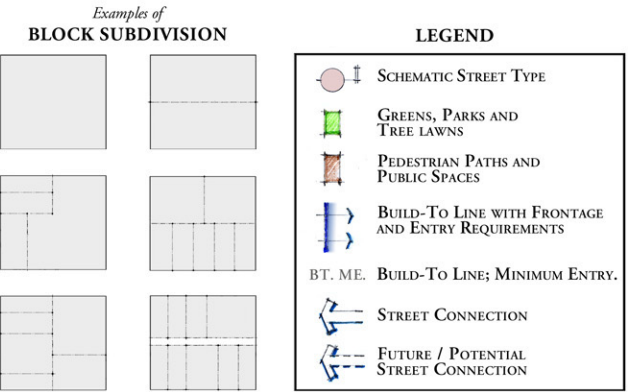
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The land area occupied by the existing I-16 interchange at Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. was formerly home to Union Station and a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood in Savannah's west boundary. The goal of the plan is to reclaim this significant land resource and restore it as a well-connected district, integral to Savannah's city center.



Mixed Uses & Subdivision of Blocks

Blocks should be subdivided to allow for a diverse range of building types and lot sizes. Primary uses may be mixed within blocks and within buildings. Fee-simple lots may be subdivided within blocks in varied configurations. Subdivided blocks shall allow for each lot to have a minimum of 15 feet of frontage on a primary street or a lane and a minimum lot size of 600 square feet.



Adjustments and revisions to the street and block plan by the Metropolitan Planning Commission are anticipated due to final project engineering, property transfers and unforeseen environmental and regulatory conditions.

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CIVIC MASTER PLAN
West Boundary - Interstate 16 Flyover Area
SAVANNAH GEORGIA

Block Plan

The single most important defining element of the Civic Master Plan is the street and block plan, reconnecting this large open property to the historic patterns of the City of Savannah. The street and block plan organizes the site, improves circulation, and creates small blocks to accommodate a range of uses and open spaces. It is the basis for the official mapping of streets, parks, and other public spaces that will shape the future of the public realm.

Streets and Parking

A network of interconnected streets provides circulation throughout the area. Street sections are compact with 10 foot travel lanes on most streets. Curb radii are minimized to between 6 and 12 feet. Parallel parking is provided on all streets on either one or two sides. Parallel parking is accommodated in 8 x 20-22 foot bays. Additional off-street parking may be provided in surface lots with screened edges or in structured decks. Off-street parking may not front a build-to line.

Sidewalks and Street Trees

A network of continuous sidewalks on all streets promotes connections and pedestrian-oriented development. Sidewalks are generally 5 to 6 feet in width, ranging up to 18 feet along retail frontage. Street trees are provided in tree lawns or tree wells along all streets. Tree lawns are 4 to 8 feet in width and are located between the sidewalk and the street. Regularly spaced and aligned street trees provide human scale, visual continuity, shade for pedestrians, and a barrier between moving traffic. Trees should be Live Oaks at 40 to 50 foot intervals, or other species compatible to those found in the city center.

Public Spaces

In addition to the network of high quality, pedestrian oriented-streets, a number of additional public spaces have been created, including a linear park space within the historic Selma Street / Stewart Street corridor, as well as a large public square on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. across from the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum. The western portion of this public square is envisioned as an appropriate site for a future landmark civic building.

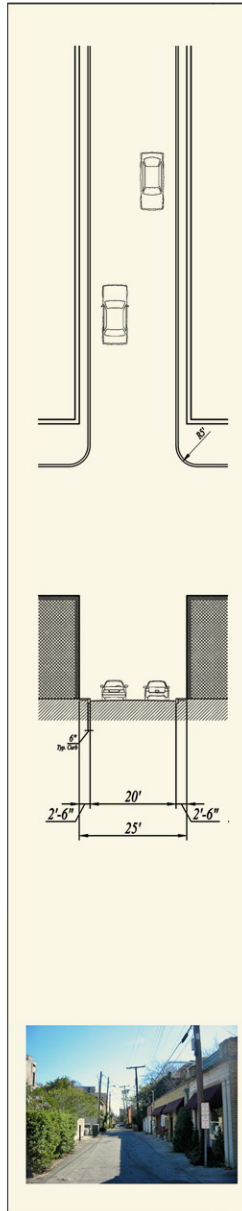


The 1901 Savannah Union Station was demolished in 1963 to make way for the I-16 terminus and exit ramp.

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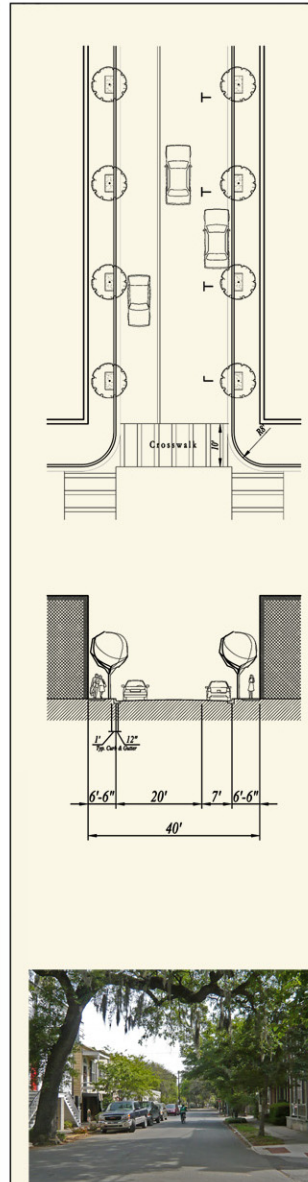
July 15, 2012



Service Street

25' LANE

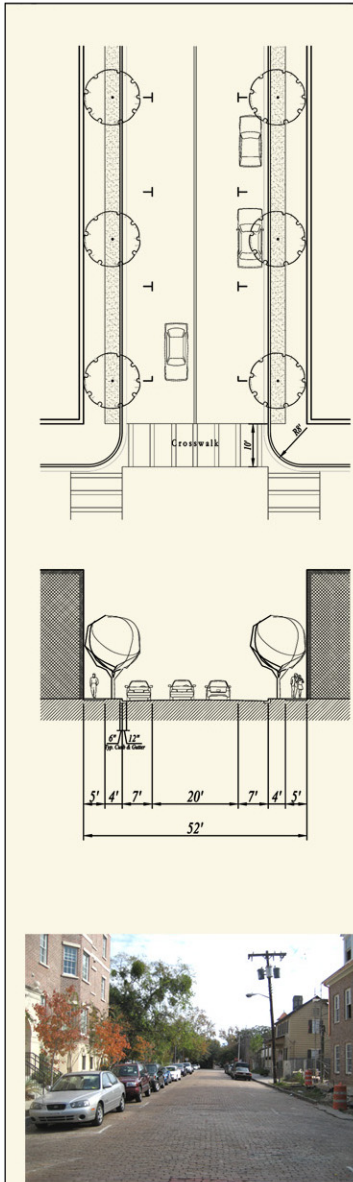
The 25 foot lane allows for vehicular access to garages and parking areas with two lanes of travel. Building walls, garden walls, or neatly paved parking areas may define the edges of the Lane.



Neighborhood Street

40' STREET

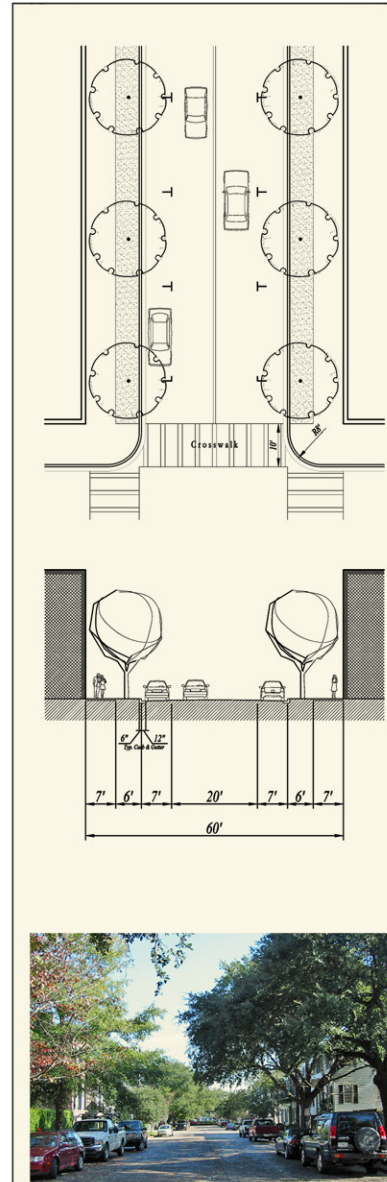
The 40 foot street is compact in character. It has two travel lanes with parallel parking on one side and street trees in planting areas along both street edges. The scale is neighborly with 40 feet between buildings.



Neighborhood Street

52' STREET

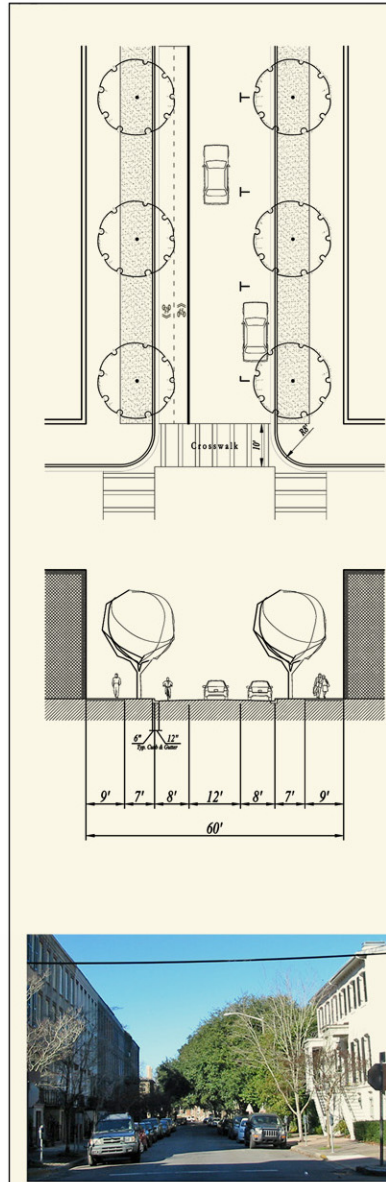
The 52 foot street allows for two travel lanes with parallel parking and a compact tree lawn and sidewalk on both sides. This helps create a comfortable, safe, pedestrian environment with sidewalks sheltered from moving traffic by parked cars and tree lawns.



Neighborhood Street

60' STREET - A

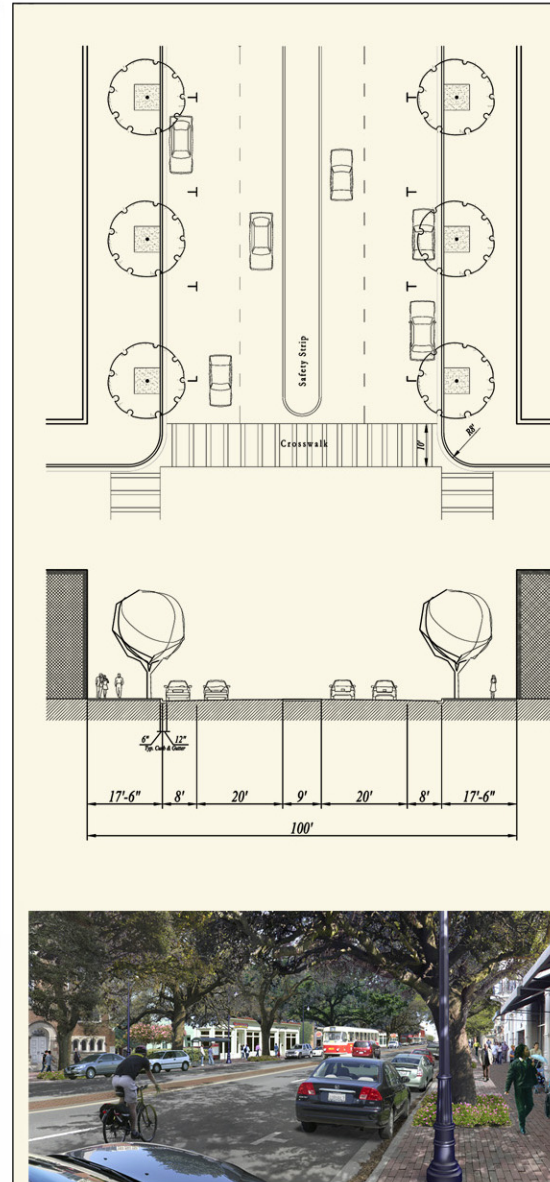
This 60 foot street allows for two travel lanes with parallel parking and a larger tree lawn and sidewalk on both sides. The 60 foot street is versatile, balancing pedestrian, vehicular, and bicycle movement throughout the district.



Neighborhood Street

60' STREET - B

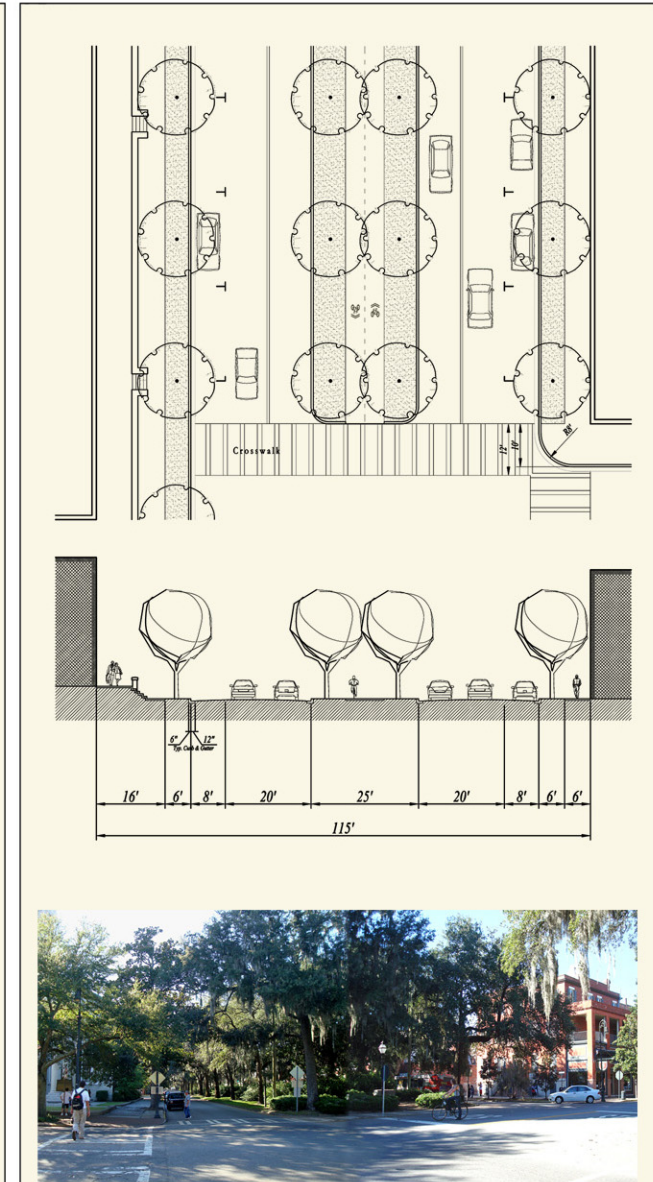
This 60 foot street allows for one generous lane of travel in one direction and parallel parking on one side. A dedicated bicycle lane is provided for increased cyclist safety, in anticipation of higher traffic speeds due to the wider travel lane.



Commercial / Retail Street

100' BOULEVARD

The 100 foot boulevard allows for four lanes of travel separated by a paved safety strip, as well as parallel parking and a generous sidewalk with tree wells on both sides of the street. The width of the safety strip anticipates the possibility of future mass transit.



Urban Boulevard

115' BOULEVARD

The 115 foot boulevard includes a 25 foot tree-lined median dividing a pair of two-way travel lanes with parallel parking along both edges. A wide tree lawn separates the sidewalk from the street. The median anticipates a potential bike path connection to a larger greenway system.

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SCHEMATIC STREET TYPES

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