

DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH



MASTER PLAN

DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH MASTER PLAN

Preserving Our Past, Embracing Our Future

City of Savannah

Chatham County-Savannah
Metropolitan Planning Commission

Savannah Development and Renewal Authority



Savannah Development
and Renewal Authority

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URBAN PLANNING
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS
URBAN DESIGN
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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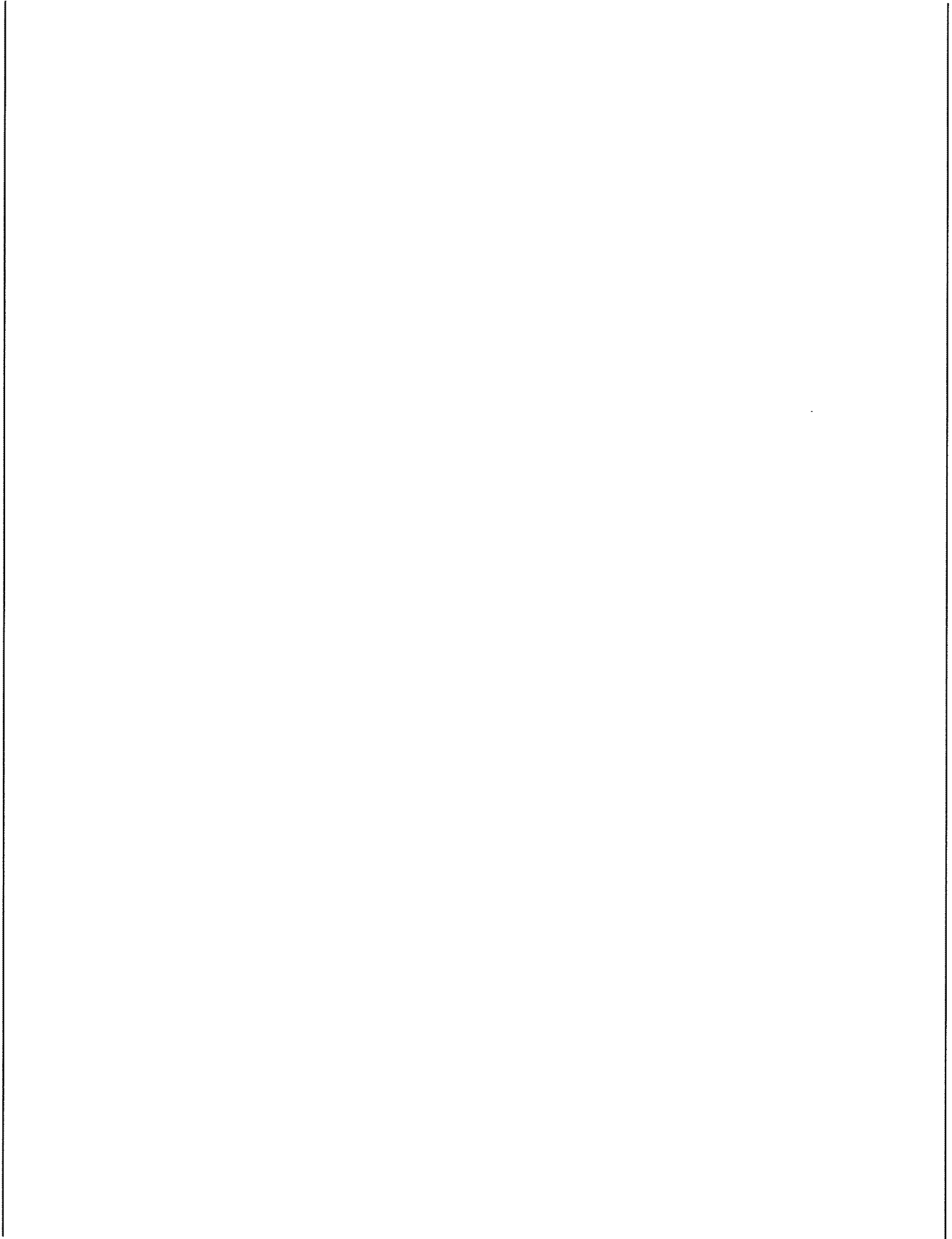
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BACKGROUND

Introduction
Plan Process
Existing Conditions



INTRODUCTION

"I stood agog in Lafayette Square in Savannah, amid brick paths, trickling fountains and dark trees hung with Spanish moss. Before me rose up a cathedral of linen-fresh whiteness with twin Gothic spires, and around it stood 200-year-old houses of weathered brick, with hurricane shutters that clearly were still used. I did not know that such perfection existed in America."

— Bill Bryson, *The Lost Continent: Travels in Small-Town America*

The purpose of any plan-making is to prevent change from occurring through chaos and incidence, and to instead lay some sort of expectation onto the projected future, no matter how fuzzy it may be. Savannah is no stranger to plan-making. Its original "Downtown" Master Plan, General James Oglethorpe's 1733 orders for development, imposed a classical vision of order and sophistication laid over a chaotic wilderness, allowing this particular piece of earth to become one of the most unique and inspiring cities in the world.

It is the function of this Downtown Savannah Master Plan to assess Oglethorpe's city as it nears its third century, and to project into the future a vision that will once again guide chaos and incidence into perfection.

A Master Plan is an official document that articulates a broad vision for the future and provides the foundation for policies

directing development activities, particularly public agencies' capital improvement projects.

Even in the best of times, certain challenges will arise that must be dealt with for a community to continue to prosper. It is the ability and willingness to always improve that sets highly successful communities apart from their less successful peers over the long run. The crux of any Master Plan effort is to engage civic leaders and citizens in identifying pressing challenges and to create mechanisms to address them.

Commissioned by the Savannah Development and Renewal Authority (SDRA), in conjunction with the City of Savannah and the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), the Downtown Savannah Master Plan defines a common community vision, and frames design principles and land-use and development strategies for strategic public and private invest-

INTRODUCTION

ments that will continue to foster growth and diversity in Savannah's downtown business and neighborhood core.

The Downtown Savannah Master Plan is a part of the overall Tricentennial Plan 2033 process that is currently underway by the MPC. The Tricentennial Plan consists of two documents that shape growth and development for the City and County: The Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan and The Chatham County-Savannah Unified Zoning Ordinance. This plan will be adopted by the Mayor and Aldermen as a public policy document and will be considered an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan.

THE DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH MASTER PLAN STUDY AREA

The primary study area for the Plan is bounded by the Savannah River to the north, Gwinnett Street to the south, the Truman Parkway to the east and Boundary Street to the west. The core of the study area encompasses the Savannah National Landmark Historic District. Due to its redevelopment potential and its critical position as the western gateway into the downtown area and National Landmark Historic District, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street Corridor, from the Savannah River to 52nd Street, is also included in the study area.

In order to gain a complete picture of the issues impacting and/or impacted by downtown, the planning process also considered citizen needs and challenges facing the areas and neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.

For mapping purposes, in keeping with the Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan, the areas immediately adjacent to the downtown and the study area on the east and the west, and on the Hutchinson Island riverfront are identified as the East Downtown Expansion Area, and the West Downtown Expansion Area and the Hutchinson Island Riverfront Expansion Area. These areas are mapped in Figure 1.

A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH

To guide the planning process, a common vision was established for downtown Savannah's future. This was no easy task given the diversity of desires and needs present in the downtown. Developed through an extensive public input process the following vision for downtown Savannah was crafted:

"The hub of economic vibrancy for the region, Downtown Savannah maintains its historic and culturally diverse identity while preserving the Oglethorpe Plan, embracing future growth and providing an unparalleled quality of life."

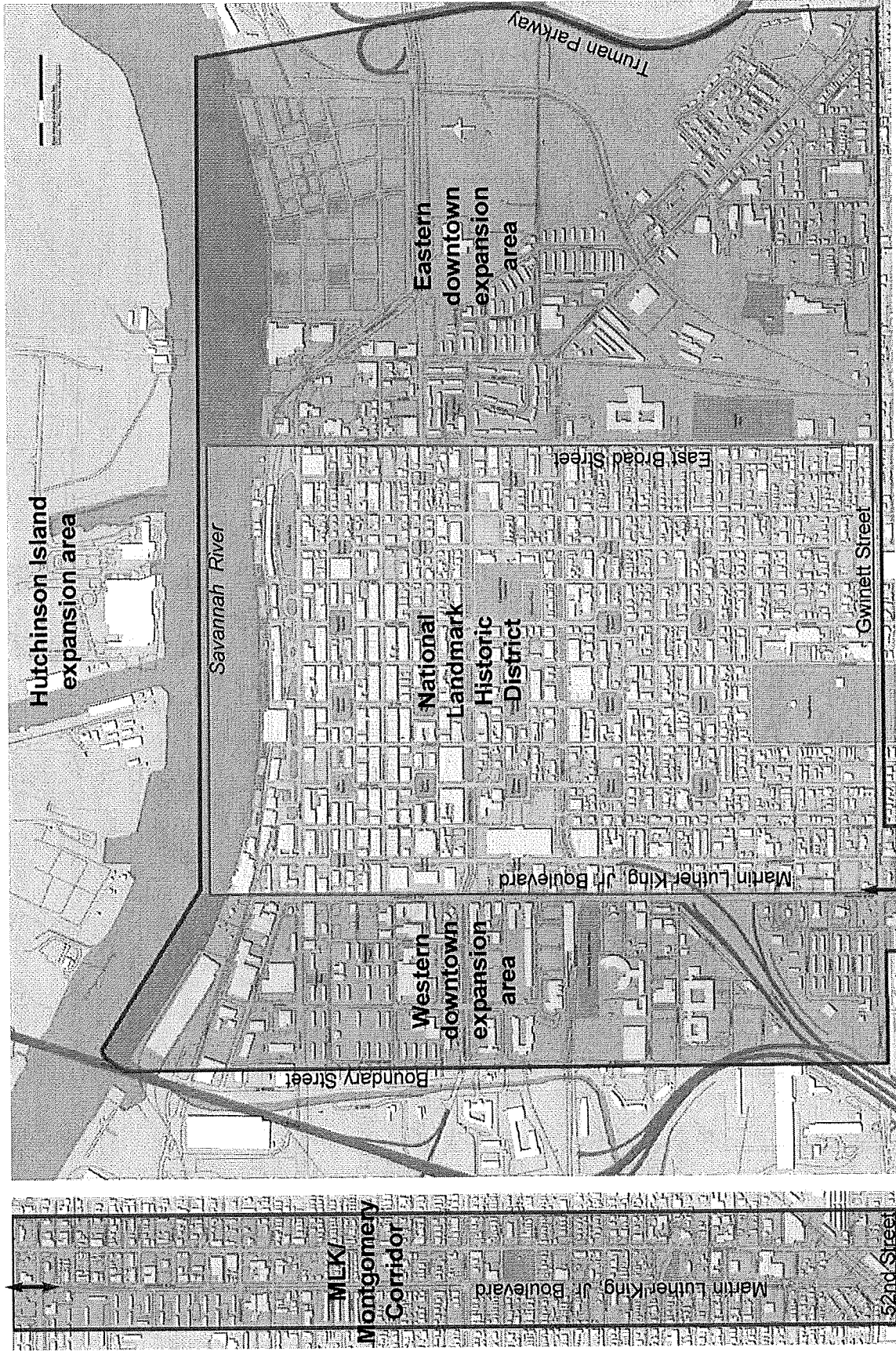


Figure 1: The Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area (red) and related geographic areas referenced throughout the plan. The National Landmark Historic District is Shown outlined in green.

INTRODUCTION

Building on the Vision, a series of Guiding Principles were crafted through the public process to provide the foundation for and guide the development of the specific recommendations included in this plan. Each principle is supported by a set of objectives necessary for ensuring their success.

As the next step in the planning process, this vision statement was broken down in a series of five guiding principles. These principles provide the foundation for and guide the development of the specific recommendations included in the plan. The next five chapters of this plan address each of these principles in turn, with recommendations spelled out in detail. Like the vision statement, the principles were vetted by the plan's steering committee and through a series of public meetings and open houses.

In brief, the five guiding principles are:

Diversify Economic Opportunity

Downtown Savannah will attract new businesses that provide skilled, living-wage jobs, maintain and enhance the tourism base, provide community-serving retail, and maximize opportunities for local entrepreneurship and investment.

To achieve this principle, public policy must:

- Reinforce and grow downtown's position as the economic hub of the region
- Build on the existing business base to expand downtown's economic strengths
- Enhance local entrepreneurship opportunities with special attention to the needs of low income and minority entrepreneurs who lack access to traditional capital resources

- Provide sufficient resources for mixed-income development
- Use Savannah's rich arts and cultural amenities to build new business opportunities and retain creative talent from local educational institutions
- Respond to changing economic realities in a manner that respects the fundamentals of the Oglethorpe Plan

Create Vibrant Neighborhoods with Appealing and Affordable Housing

Downtown Savannah will support a range of housing that is affordable to local working families and residents, to ensure a healthy economy and sustainable, vibrant community.

To achieve this principle, public policy must:

- Ensure the development of mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods
- Provide for a range of homeownership and rental housing options to serve all income groups
- Facilitate the production, rehabilitation and preservation of residential, mixed-use and mixed-income housing in the development of housing in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods

Ensure a Strong Quality of Life

A strong community depends on a safe and vital city for all its citizens, where streets are safe to walk, housing is secure and arts, culture and human services are accessible.

To achieve this principle, public policy must:

- Reduce concentrations of poverty through mixed-income

Retain the Fundamental Elements of the Oglethorpe Plan

development

- Provide economic opportunity for all residents
- Integrate downtown's considerable arts and cultural resources into the social fabric to provide opportunities for youth and bring diverse people together
- Ensure open public processes for planning and development efforts in which the downtown community contributes to the agenda
- Balance the mix of land uses to minimize conflicts

The distinct patterns and grid system elements of downtown Savannah will be strengthened and the focus on mixed-use development will be enhanced and extended to new developments occurring in the expansion areas adjacent to downtown.

Maximize Mobility

The transportation network will reinforce downtown Savannah as a destination and reflect the unique identity, character and pedestrian scale of the downtown. The transportation system will seamlessly move all residents, visitors, workers and students, providing efficient use of resources that minimize duplication of service. It will encourage strong connections to adjacent development in and around downtown and enhance the downtown's role as a vital center in the evolving Savannah region.

To achieve this principle, public policy must :

- Provide a physical plan that supports a truly accessible environment shared by pedestrians and all modes of mobility
- Respect and expand traditional downtown street patterns and a high level of connectivity, eliminating barriers to movement, commerce and sightlines whenever possible

To achieve this principle, public policy must support:

- Maintain the rhythm and scale of existing historic development within the downtown, recognizing opportunities for larger scale development in expansion areas
- Respect the Oglethorpe Plan so as to provide access to public spaces and the waterfront, respect view corridors, facilitate circulation and create small blocks that accommodate a mix of uses
- Provide a network of continuous and accessible sidewalks on all streets to support pedestrian-oriented development
- Maintain, increase, or enhance green space to connect the public realm and accommodate a variety of recreational needs
- Enhance connections to the riverfront



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PLAN PROCESS

"Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning."

— Thomas Alva Edison

A three-phase process kicked off in Spring 2005 and was characterized by ongoing citizen dialogue through public meetings, community and neighborhood work shops, online surveys, and consensus building.

Reconnaissance work included a comprehensive analysis of the study area its market, its built environment, its economic development potential, its land-use and mobility needs; and its interrelation with adjacent neighborhoods and planned developments.

Phase I of the process included establishing the common vision for the future of Savannah, ensuring community engagement in the process, and crafting of the guiding principles.

Phase II of the process provided a comprehensive approach to address a multitude of issues facing Savannah today. Framed by the guiding principles, the intent of this phase was to craft a set of public policy recommendations and strategies focused specifically on housing diversity, economic development, land-use and design, and mobility. In May 2007, the scope was revised with the inclusion of a component to address design and land-use issues related to large-scale development in the study area.

The third and final phase involved drafting of the plan and formulation of a phased implementation strategy.

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

A major element of the process was a continuous and comprehensive system of public involvement, which provided access and opportunity for citizen comment in the plan process, findings and strategies.

Public meetings were held in February and November of 2005, March of 2006, and March, May, and September of 2007. In addition, dozens of neighborhood, community and civic meetings, along with numerous presentations, and online opportunities on both the City and SDRA websites provided extensive access to the effort. Some of these efforts are shown in Figure 2.

Primary financial and technical partners in the planning process included the City of Savannah, SDRA, and the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC). The Downtown Neighborhood Association, the Historic Savannah Foundation, and the Savannah Area Tourism Leadership Council each provided seed funding in support of the effort.

PLAN PROCESS

Early in the process, a Steering Committee was appointed by the City to provide strategic direction for the project, serve as ambassadors of the plan to the public, comment on plan products and direction, and participate in community meetings. In early 2008, a review committee of technical staff, downtown business, neighborhood and partner organizations and stakeholders was convened to supplement the efforts of the Steering Committee and to ensure accuracy of the content and focus of the document.

To ensure coordination with existing and ongoing local planning and redevelopment efforts occurring adjacent to the Study Area, representatives of these plans were identified and involved in the creation of the Downtown Savannah Master Plan. Figure 3 shows the various planning efforts impacting and/or impacted by downtown and therefore critical to consult in crafting the Plan.

Many of the strategies recommended in the Plan will require modification to the City's Historic District Ordinance and pending Chatham-Savannah Unified Zoning Ordinance. To facilitate timely attention to this, the Mayor and Aldermen reconvened the Historic District Revisions Committee in early 2008 under the purview of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, to consider recommendations for amendment to the Historic District Ordinance. This process included consideration of those components of the Savannah Downtown Master Plan impacting design with specific focus on Height, Mass and Lot coverage. Strategies recommended in the plan impacting land-use are to be considered in the development of the Chatham-Savannah Unified Zoning Ordinance.

Figure 2: Some of the many public meetings held to gather public opinions and support for the Downtown Savannah Master Plan.



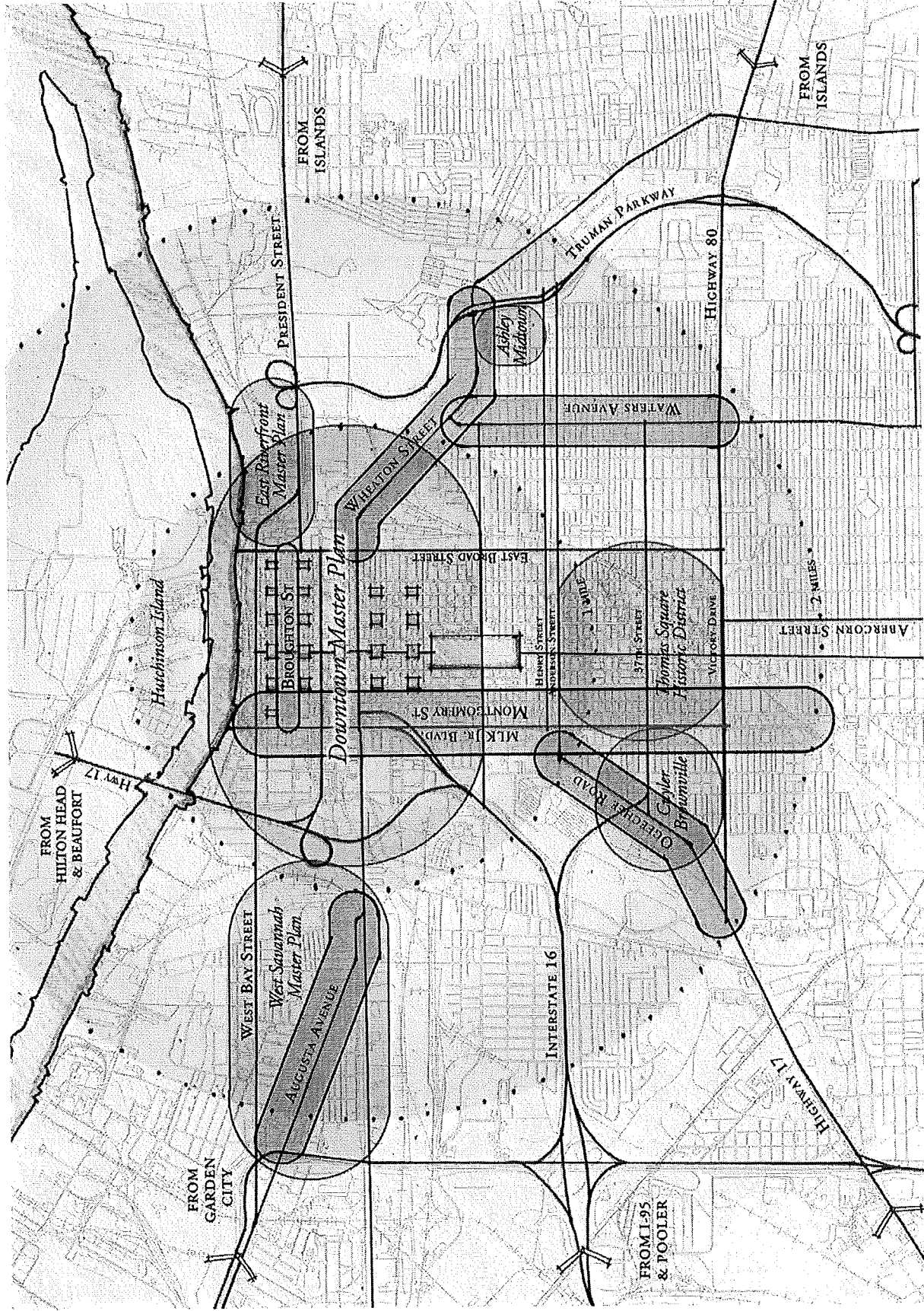


Figure 3: Other planning efforts in and near downtown Savannah



Savannah's first wards as they appear in 2008.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

"Savannah is sleeping amid its baskets of azaleas."

— Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*

Existing physical, economic, demographic, transportation, and other conditions in the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area were examined to identify significant issues to be addressed by the Downtown Savannah Master Plan and to assure that these recommendations were based on a solid foundation of understanding. What follows is a discussion of the major opportunities and constraints facing downtown Savannah today.

The Oglethorpe Plan

Noted city planner and expert on urban design Edmund Bacon called the Plan laid out by General James Oglethorpe in 1733, "one of the finest diagrams for city organization and growth in existence." As shown in Figure 4, the Oglethorpe Plan is comprised of wards with a central public square. The lots to the east and west of the squares, flanking the major east-west axis, were considered "trust lots" intended for large public buildings such as churches, schools, or markets. The remainder of the ward was divided into four areas, called tithings, each of which was further divided into ten residential lots.

Designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers, Oglethorpe's Plan

resulted in a town plan that allowed the flexibility for Savannah to grow into a great American city.

A critical challenge facing downtown today comes in the form of large-scale urban renewal and development that has found its way downtown in the past few decades and threatens the street grid. Three squares and thirteen streets and lanes have

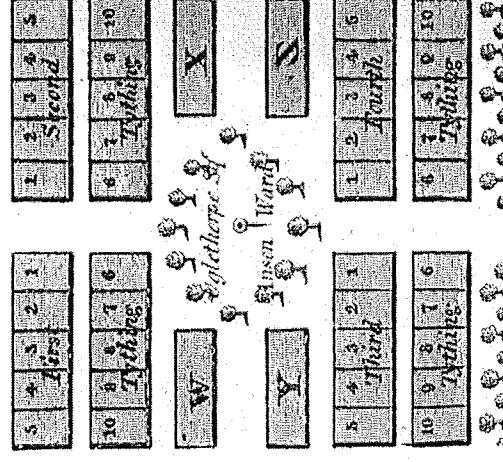


Figure 4: General Oglethorpe's Ward pattern including tithing lots, trust lots, and public squares.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

been lost to accommodate large civic developments like the I-16 Flyover, Savannah Civic Center, County Courthouse and former City Market Parking Deck.

Great cities respect their past while accommodating future development, and Savannah is no exception. A conscientious effort on the part of the City and the citizens to reclaim the lost squares as public space is underway and can be seen with the removal of the City Market Parking Deck. Ellis Square will be reclaimed by the development of an underground public parking garage and a landscaped square on top, promising to provide an interactive public space attraction. This undoubtedly will have positive impacts on tourism and the retail located downtown.

A number of key opportunities exist for reclaiming the lost grid pattern. The Civic Center site is a significant opportunity for repairing the grid, and is featured prominently in this plan. In the longer-term, the removal of the I-16 Flyover as it crosses Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is another opportunity site. Other key sites can be found in the east and west downtown expansion areas offering opportunities for compatible redevelopment. Several large parcels, including the public housing sites, exist in these areas.

With the current development pressure in Savannah, the time to plan for these areas is now. The process for addressing these areas is already included in Savannah's toolbox--the "Civic Master Plan." By employing this technique, which was used so successfully to guide the development planning for Savannah River Landing and Hutchinson Island, the city will ensure that quality, thoughtful and compatible development occurs. projects, where a series of public rights-of-way and open squares are planned into the development in keeping

with Savannah's historic grid and square pattern.

Large Scale Developments as Good Neighbors

Downtown Savannah is comprised of one of the largest National Historic Landmark Districts in the country. Its historic resources give Savannah such an appeal that, with a population of only 131,510, it hosts 7 million visitors each year. The importance of this historic urban fabric was one of the main reasons that the 1991 set of zoning ordinances known as the Chadbourne Guidelines were created. In 1966 the significance of Savannah's historic resources were recognized with the designation as a National Historic Landmark District. However, it was not until 1973, that the first protective zoning measures were put in place for Savannah's local historic district. In 1997, with the adoption of the Chadbourne Guidelines, those measures were strengthened to address, among other things building height, mass, location of entrances and number and size of windows. However, the Chadbourne Guidelines are limited in their requirements relating to large-scale development. These single buildings often take up whole blocks with a single use, a single entrance, and offer nothing to engage the public street face. A few buildings like this might not be a problem, but this subtle threat might eventually make entire blocks dead to activity.

Real Cities Mix Uses, Mix People

Ideally, urban living means easy access to all of life's needs and desires. Downtown Savannah's livability is tied to the city's wonderful pedestrian experience. Moreover, a diverse mix of land uses crowds into downtown, including offices, retail, hotels, schools, government, faith-based institutions, entertainment, and different types of residences. This enables

a large diversity of people to gather in close proximity to work, school, shopping, entertainment, and each other; a feat few cities can match. In fact, it is exactly this diversity of uses and peoples that sets Savannah apart from other similar sized historic communities.

A major challenge facing downtown Savannah will be ensuring this diversity of residents continues. Escalating property values are making it tough for entry-level homebuyers as well as long-term residents to remain downtown.

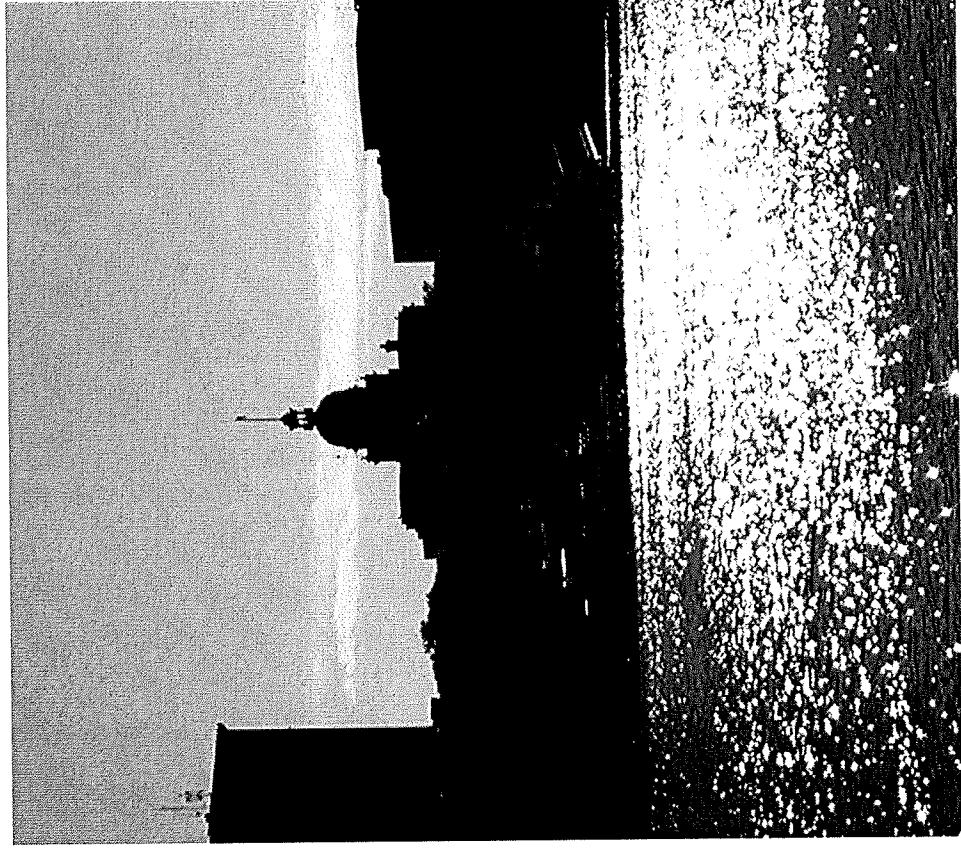
Another challenge in maintaining the diversity of uses downtown. Savannah's office district, for now the region's hub, has not grown considerably for some time, which puts it in danger of being eclipsed by suburban office growth and losing its central role. Further pressure comes from the rapidly expanding tourism market that is causing hotels to sweep up some of the best available land. Ensuring downtown Savannah remains the region's economic hub, with a diversity of economic engines — office, tourism, education — benefits the whole city. *It is downtown's economic engine that supports healthy city neighborhoods and gives the city a diverse job base with living wages.*

Keeping Savannah's Charm

Savannah has long been known for its charm and southern hospitality, attributes which are most easily found in the city's gracious public spaces and local-serving retail.

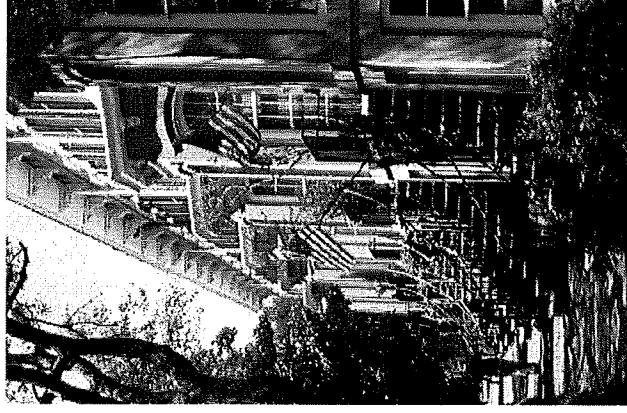
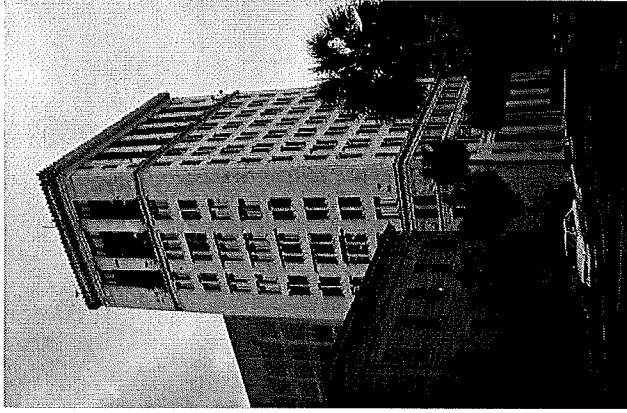
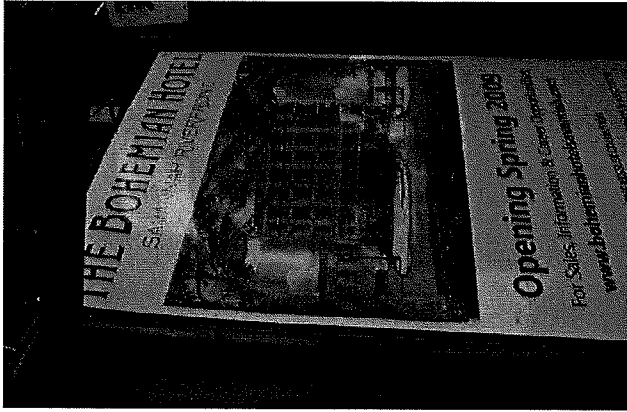
However, as the tourism and second-home markets grow, locally-oriented retail and services may have a hard time competing for space. Making sure existing retailers, and would-be entrepreneurs have opportunities to locate near their cus-

tomers, or have their customers easily get to them, is vital. Finally, increased property values, new customers, and new entrepreneurial opportunities are natural results of growth, but affordable housing, environmentally-conscious development, improved public environments, new parks, playgrounds, and other assets, should also be expected in return.

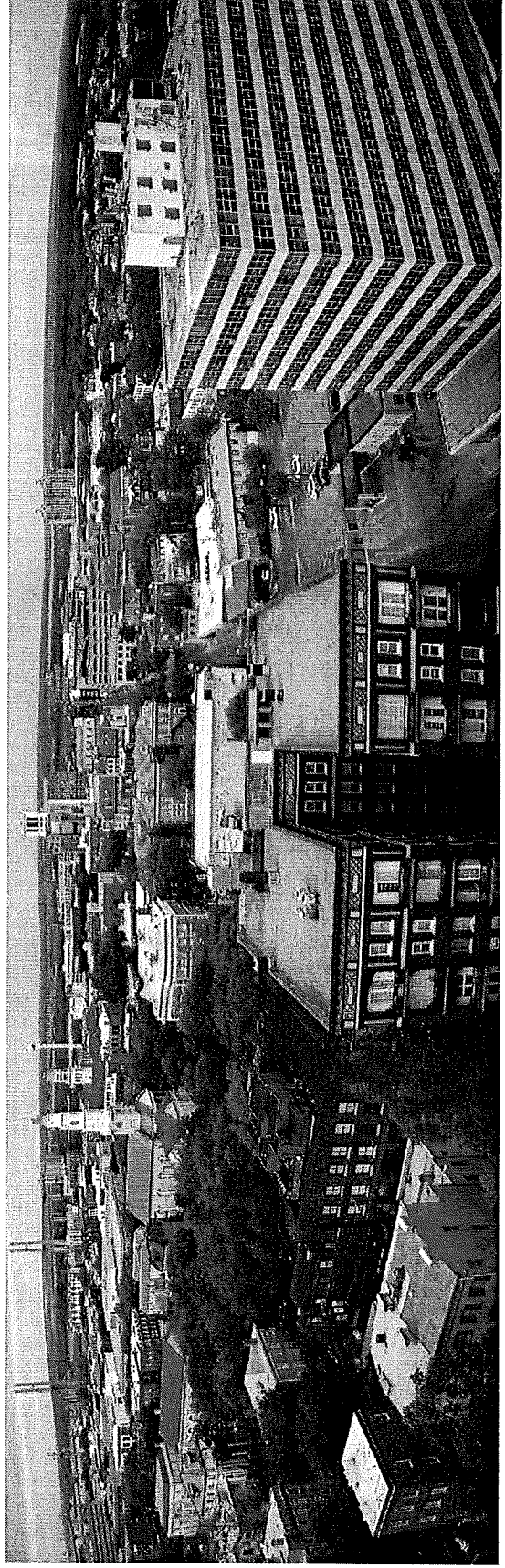


STRATEGIES

Diversify Economic Opportunity
Create Vibrant Neighborhoods with Appealing & Affordable Housing
Ensure a Strong Quality of Life
Maximize Mobility Options
Retain the Fundamental Elements of the Oglethorpe Plan



Savannah is fortunate in its booming tourism, established office market, burgeoning and varied retail offerings, and dense mix of downtown residences. Maintaining that diversity of uses is the key to a healthy downtown economy.



DIVERSIFY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

"The [urban] economy is like a corn popper in which not all of the kernels are popping simultaneously; but all the time corn is popping."

— Jane Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities*

It is easy to spot a busy downtown, but it can be hard to spot a healthy downtown. Does one sector of the economy dominate so much that it prevents others from growing? Does a city rely too much on a single economic sector? Is the local retail market supplying the basic needs of residents? Do local entrepreneurs have access into the market? Do development rules or physical conditions prevent land from being developed with needed uses? Are there adequate controls to ensure a diverse and appropriately-scaled mix of buildings and uses?

Healthy downtowns are those with a diverse mix of uses and users. Downtowns suffer when one group of uses dominate, which is why places like office-only Houston or casino-hotel-

dominated Las Vegas are having to work hard to attract new residents and retail to their downtowns. Savannah is fortunate in its booming tourism, established office market, burgeoning and varied retail offerings, and dense mix of downtown residences. However, like many other smaller cities, downtown Savannah faces strong competition from other markets including its own suburbs. Moreover, downtown faces issues created by its own unique economic mix and historic urban fabric.

The Downtown Savannah Master Plan analyzes downtown Savannah's existing and potential markets, and makes recommendations to balance any market inequities and ensure a diverse and healthy downtown economy.

MARKET ANALYSIS

Downtown Savannah is in the midst of a period of significant prosperity. The residential, entertainment, retail, and tourism markets are strong, and while Savannah can be compared to other historic tourist destinations like Charleston, SC and Annapolis, MD, it is used by a much more diverse mix of tourists, residents, students, and employees. Areas within the downtown have their distinct characteristics, some areas drawing mostly tourists and others populated largely by residents. The dynamics of the downtown are continually evolving with an apparent strengthening of many aspects of the downtown economy. Years of effort have resulted in increased retail activity, greater demand for downtown homes, and many more visitors coming to shop, eat, and explore the cultural offerings around town.

The rapid expansion of the downtown housing and hotel markets has resulted in rising real estate prices. This can be both a benefit and a problem for local residents. Those who own property in or near downtown benefit from the greater value of their assets, the general upgrading of properties, and the availability of additional tourist-supported retail opportunities presented by new businesses. Other residents or potential residents may find rising rents, higher prices, and the lack of services for local residents to have a negative effect on their quality of life.

What follows is a summary of the full retail, office, residential, and hotel market analysis. The analysis focuses on the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area, but may include information on wider areas to get a sense of the overall market impacting the downtown.

Home Ownership Market

Home ownership opportunities in downtown Savannah provide buying opportunities in several sub-markets, including luxury homes; condominiums; market-rate single-family homes; and affordable homeownership.

Luxury Home Sub-Market

Thirty home sales at \$500,000 or more in the past year indicate a strong luxury home market, while the success of a development of 65 townhomes and condominiums near Montgomery and Jones Streets encourages other planned new construction aimed at luxury market homebuyers. Concentrated new luxury home development could reuse vacant and/or underutilized infill sites in the currently high-valued portions of the National Historic Landmark District as well as "soft" sites in the east and west downtown expansion areas.

Condominium Market

The level of condominium sales downtown now exceeds the sales of single-family homes, reflecting a desire for smaller living units, fewer maintenance responsibilities, and unavailability of single-unit lots in the denser areas of downtown. Upper floor conversions on Broughton Street form one important niche in the condominium market that could expand westward to include properties along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The conversion of the Drayton Towers to condominiums sets a precedent for other large older undervalued properties in the historic area. New condominium development between the Savannah River and E. President Street could further expand

Affordable Homeownership

For the purposes of the Downtown Savannah Master Plan, affordable housing is defined as housing afforded by households earning up to 80% of the standard metropolitan statistical area median income. The neighborhoods immediately east of E. Broad Street and west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard have not shared in the recent prosperity of the downtown area. Targeted activities here to provide affordable homeownership could help break down the barriers between these communities and the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area and empower residents of these neighborhoods to participate in the broader revitalization effort.

Rental Housing Market

The chief factor encouraging additional rental housing in the downtown study area is the ongoing and planned growth of the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) student population. At current planned growth rates of 400 students per year, 400 additional units of College-operated housing and 900 to 1,000 new off-campus rental housing units will be needed in the next decade. With careful planning, these apartments and residence facilities could be sited in the downtown expansion areas, especially along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, to stimulate the revitalization of key corridors and spur neighborhood improvement and revitalization.

Retail Market

Expanded retail development activity in downtown Savannah can respond to market opportunities from five different customer segments: downtown residents, downtown workers, SCAD students, tourists, and Savannah regional residents.

the downtown area eastward. During 2005 and 2006, condominium sales in Downtown Savannah averaged 90 units annually, with the average sales price growing to nearly \$385,000 in 2006. During 2006, 85% of condominium sales were between \$200 per square foot and \$375 per square foot.

The housing downturn in 2007 slowed the level of sales to 60 but prices remained stable with the average sales price reduced slightly to \$357,000 largely due to smaller average unit size. The average price per square foot declined only slightly from \$296 to \$287. Whether the continued housing slump will further impact the market in 2008 is difficult to forecast, but indications to date are for lower levels of sales, but only modest reduction in pricing per square foot.

Figure 5: Recent Condominium Sales in Downtown Savannah

Year	Number of Sales	Average Square Footage	Average Sale Price	Average Sale Price Per SF	Number of Sales Above \$375/SF	Number of Sales Below \$200/SF
2005	87	1,334	\$279,972	\$209.89	3	37
2006	94	1,299	\$384,433	\$295.88	8	7
2007	60	1,245	\$356,907	\$286.70	4	6

Market-Rate Single-Family Homes

Recent sales of comparatively affordable market-rate homes in downtown (\$150,000 to \$499,000 price range) have been concentrated heavily in the area south of Liberty Street and east of Bull Street, especially in the Beach Institute area. If housing revitalization is coupled with well-coordinated community development efforts to create attractive neighborhoods, this market segment can energize significant revitalization activities at the in the neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study area.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Retail market opportunities from these five segments total up to 560,000 square feet which meets a variety of retail needs. Forty-five percent of these opportunities (248,000 square feet) meet everyday shopping and service needs, mostly for downtown residents, students, and workers. The remaining 55% of opportunities are for specialty goods that will attract a diverse customer base — both nearby residents and a more distant tourist and Chatham County market, consisting of downtown residents, residents from elsewhere in Savannah and Chatham County, and tourists.

These 560,000 square feet of retail market opportunities are shown in Figure 6, and include several major clusters that provide the basis for specific retail development efforts:

- An additional supermarket or multiple specialty groceries (50,000 s.f.) serving downtown residents and SCAD students;
- Complementary community-serving goods and services (110,000 s.f.), including additional pharmacies, convenience, and hardware stores;
- Expanded casual and limited-service dining (131,000 s.f.), both restaurants that fit within the physical character of the historic tourist zone and more traditional limited-service facilities positioned at the periphery;
- Expanded apparel offerings (123,000 s.f.), especially

- additional family clothing and shoe stores; and
- New specialty goods and home furnishings stores (145,000 s.f.) largely serving the downtown and regional residential markets.

Some of these opportunities can fill available store spaces and add additional vitality to the developing riverfront, Broughton Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor, and historic square locations. Other store types — particularly those requiring larger spaces, immediate automobile access, and low-cost space will provide the basis for business growth in the east and west downtown expansion areas.

Capturing these retail market opportunities will strengthen downtown by finding active uses for the first floors of vacant and underutilized commercial space, especially in the eastern portion of Broughton Street and along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The 250,000 square feet of retail space proposed for Savannah River Landing will capture many of these 560,000 square feet of opportunities, especially those meeting the needs of tourists and other Savannah area residents. This new concentration of retailing at Savannah River Landing may transfer some of the tourist market away from existing retail locations; those locations can adjust by adding retailers orient-

Figure 6: Summary of Retail Development Opportunities in Downtown Savannah

	Opportunities (In Square Feet)	Markets Served
Supermarket	50,000	Downtown Residents; SCAD Students
Community-Serving	110,000	Downtown Residents; SCAD Students
Casual & Limited-Service Dining	131,000	Downtown Workers & Residents; SCAD Students; Tourists
Apparel	123,000	Downtown & Other Savannah Residents; Tourists
Specialty & Home Furnishings	145,000	Downtown & Other Savannah Residents
TOTAL	559,000	

ed to meeting the needs of downtown workers, residents, and SCAD students.

Office Market

The presence of Class A office space is generally the gauge of office market health. Class A office space is the highest quality office space available in the most prestigious buildings competing for premier office users, and usually commands the highest rents per square foot in the regional office market. While recent office activity downtown shows modest positive signs — 9,000 square feet of net Class A office absorption in 2004 and 20,000 square feet of new quality supply in 2005 — there has been no significant Class A office development downtown in more than a decade. This poses perils for downtown's position within the overall Savannah office market for one simple reason — premier office users seek premier space. If downtowns do not offer this premier space, these office users will be enticed elsewhere to get that space. Although downtown Savannah now has the preponderance of Class A office space in the Savannah market, as little as 200,000 square feet of new Class A office space developed elsewhere would both shift this balance and remove the highest rent-paying office tenants from downtown.

To maintain its pre-eminent position in the Class A office market, downtown needs to encourage the development of a premier office property of at least 75,000-100,000 square feet in the next three to seven years. With high-quality amenities and the benefits of adjacency to the retail services and aesthetic features of downtown, such a new property will retain the highest rent-paying tenants, and, by establishing a new price point for the top of the downtown office market, help maintain rent levels at other downtown office buildings.

During the past two years, the development community has responded to this potential for new, higher-quality office space downtown with three proposed new developments: (1) a proposed office condominium building adjacent to the Liberty Street Garage; (2) 100,000 square feet of new offices proposed as part of the Savannah River Landing development; and (3) proposals for high-quality renovated office space as part of the eastside development. These proposed new office developments will provide competitive product to discourage current downtown tenants from leaving for more remote locations. Assuming that these developments are completed over a period of three to seven years, this higher quality product will enable downtown to maintain its pre-eminent position in the Class A office market.

Areas of downtown where office uses should be encouraged are shown in Figure 7, and include locations where office concentration already exists, where access is easy, or where large parcels are available on public land or through private redevelopment. In these areas, hotels and other competing uses should be discouraged or not permitted.

Hotel Market

Recent growth in demand for hotel rooms downtown — averaging a room night demand increase of 42,000 yearly from 2001 to 2007 — supports an additional 160 rooms annually at 70% occupancy. Hotels currently under construction and in the proposal stage will likely accommodate this growth for the next several years, but downtown development plans should anticipate the demand for at least another 800-1,100 new hotel rooms through 2012.

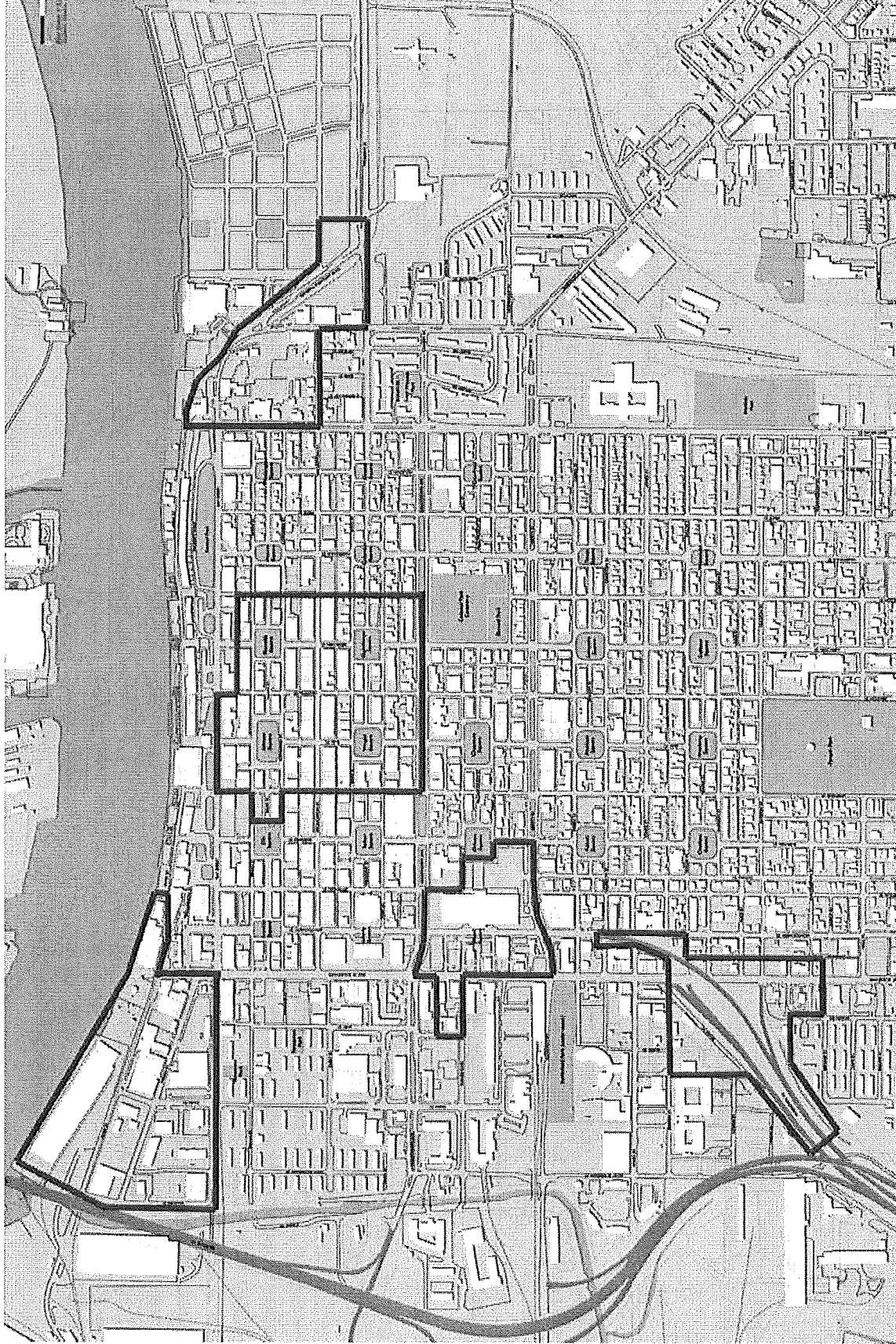


Figure 7: Recommended office and mixed-use locations where office concentration exists, where access is easy, or where large parcels are available on public land or through private redevelopment. In these areas, offices and mixed-use developments should be encouraged and hotels and other competing uses discouraged or not permitted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no question that land prices in Savannah are high, and therefore there is a need to develop tools to balance current market inequities to support a more diverse downtown economy. Critical needs include:

- Office development
- Community-serving retail
- Minority entrepreneurship opportunities
- Support for existing businesses

Similarly, there is a need to focus on opportunities generated by small-scale economic development efforts. Considerable opportunities are presented by publicly owned properties that will soon be available for redevelopment. Density will need to be maintained and strategically increased to support the desired range of services. A strong knowledge-based and creative resources connection with local higher education institutions, including SCAD, Georgia Institute of Technology - Savannah Campus, Savannah State University, and Armstrong Atlantic should be developed to help foster a stronger downtown community.

Develop New Class-A Office Space

One major objective of the Downtown Savannah Master Plan is to achieve and maintain a balanced and stable downtown economy, rather than see downtown evolve into a purely tourist-oriented economy. Offices downtown diversify the economic base and enable the downtown to more easily survive a downturn in tourism. Office workers create a captive consumer audience for downtown shops, restaurants and service-

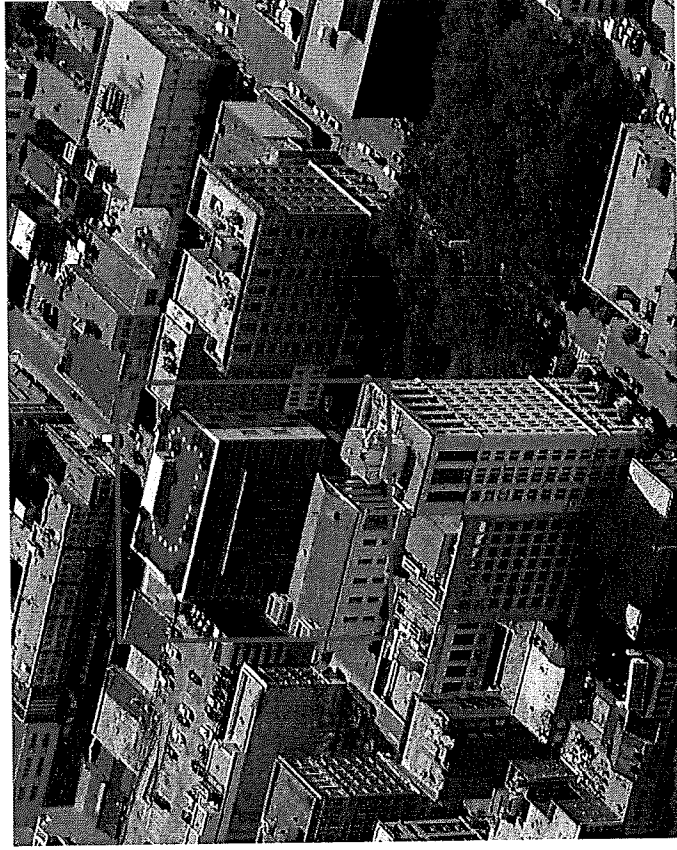


Figure 8: How a new office building, developed with green principles might fit within the existing central office district around Johnson Square.

es. Everyday downtown workers provide on-going demand for downtown and near downtown housing and assure that this housing stock does not become excessively devoted to the part-time residences of people living in other locations. Office-based employment tends to be higher paying and provides more career-ladder potential than tourist-based employment, therefore, it provides greater career-growth opportunities for near downtown residents. Downtown office-based and technical employment offers a greater opportunity to retain locally-educated young professionals who are acculturated to the downtown Savannah area and would transition easily to downtown-based employment.

The three most significant impediments to the development of additional class A office space in downtown are (1) the high cost of land and (2) the high cost of developing structured parking decks/garages, and (3) the lack of lower-cost parking alternatives. The three recently announced office developments downtown speak directly to these cost issues—one utilizes an adjacent, existing garage; the other two are located somewhat at the periphery of downtown as part of mixed-use developments.

To encourage additional office development potential in the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area as well as the east and west downtown expansion areas, three measures are recommended: 1) program currently publicly owned land for office development, 2) moderate the cost of land for offices by identifying some zones where offices are encouraged and where hotel uses (which support higher land prices) are not permitted, and 3) develop new public parking resources, both garage and surface parking.

- To maintain the potential for continued price-competitive office development in downtown beyond the three recently proposed developments, portions of publicly-owned property being made available for reuse should be dedicated to the long-term expansion of the downtown office base. One immediate example would be the reservation of a portion of the Civic Center site reuse for office development at below market land prices so that this reduced land cost will make the economics of office development more feasible. The Civic Center site also benefits from the available parking at the Liberty Street Garage, possible new parking on-site, and service by the new shuttle system.

- Create specific zones in downtown where hotels and other uses that compete with office development for land are not permitted. The most effective locations for such targeted office development would be properties located in the east and west downtown expansion areas with less expensive parking, but still within walking distance of downtown lunch resources and other retail amenities. Such locations are especially important for capturing technical employment that often requires less expensive space. The Indian Street area immediately west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and north of Bay Street offers one such possibility for a Tech Center with office, incubator, and commercial space.

- Develop an expanded supply of parking tailored to the market it is serving. New parking supplies could be located at a redeveloped Civic Center, incorporated into new office development on Johnson Square, and developed through a peripheral parking program as detailed in the Mobility chapter of this document. For the latter, convenience is extremely important so any transit shuttle from distant lots should run all day from early morning into the evening at frequent intervals, 10 minutes or less.

Utilize Educational Institutions

Successful cities often use their educational institutions to foster economic growth. Savannah benefits from the presence of several highly regarded institutions of higher education, and there are opportunities to bring new higher education facilities into downtown.

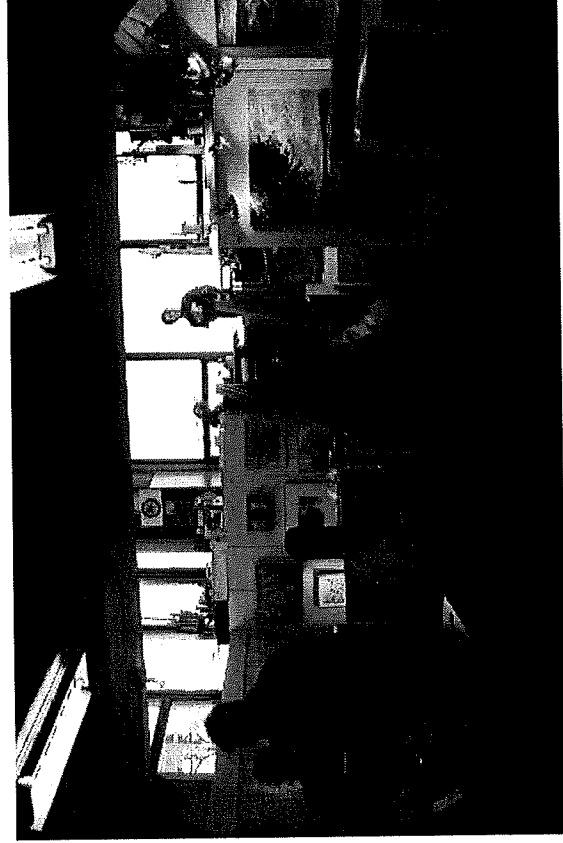
- Build on the success of Market Art Center's artist lofts in City Market, and establish an arts-based incubator in cooperation with SCAD, modeled on successful arts/gallery facilities like the The Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia. If located in the highly touristed area along River Street or in City Market, this facility could foster students into successful arts careers, raise the arts-image of Savannah, and contribute to the retail economy.

- Establish a design-based business incubator in cooperation with SCAD. SCAD's technology-based design program is cutting-edge and could be married with capital investors to foster successful design businesses that have a regional or national reach. This facility should be located along the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street Corridor, where SCAD's technology "campus" is located.

- Develop a downtown presence for local institutions of higher education including Georgia Institute of Technology - Savannah Campus, Savannah State University and Armstrong Atlantic University. A university with resources downtown would be an attractive higher-educational opportunity for Savannah residents, and help to keep local talent in the city. Programs should include a professional education center, a technology incubator space, a Maritime Logistics Innovation Center, or Savannah Area Geographic Information System (SAGIS). Like any educational institution, having more students and educators downtown brings more diverse users and economic development. Moreover, this use could be well-suited for the



Figure 9: Alexandria, VA's Torpedo Factory provides a model for a successful artist workspace/gallery space that also functions as a high-end tourist destination. The public interacts with artists in their workspaces (below) while the central public space (above) is also rentable for events.



several large vacant or soft properties located in the east and west downtown expansion areas, such as the Trustees Garden to the east and the area west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. A major institutional presence in these locations would help transition downtown's urban fabric into the expansion areas.

Encourage Economic Opportunities Along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard

Development of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard corridor supports several of the objectives of the Downtown Savannah Master Plan while also offering a more cost-effective location to capture many of the retail development opportunities identified for downtown. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard would provide lower-cost space for businesses providing community-serving goods and services to meet the everyday needs of downtown residents and students. As a result, downtown living would be enhanced through an expansion of retail amenities. A strong retail mixed-use concentration along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard would also encourage further improvements to aging housing west of the corridor by providing a positive adjacent commercial environment.

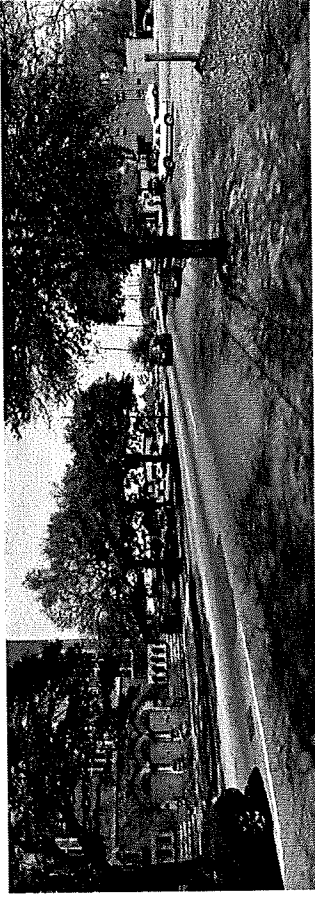
- Create a strong retail node on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard between Oglethorpe and Gwinnett Streets to draw downtown vibrancy into this key corridor by requiring active ground floor uses such as retail in any development and developing retail design standards. SCAD students, hotel guests, and employees of the new office development at the Civic Center would provide a market.

- Preserve entrepreneurship opportunities along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard by requiring any redevelopment of publicly owned land, such as the I-16 Flyover or the Civic Center site, to include affordable retail space reserved for local entrepreneurs. This will also help tie together the diverse neighborhoods on each side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.
- Develop a business incubator space along the corridor where entrepreneurs collaborate and mix with capital investors. Business incubation is a business support process that accelerates the successful development of start-up and fledgling companies by providing entrepreneurs with an array of targeted resources and services. These services are usually developed or orchestrated by incubator management and offered both in the business incubator and through its network of contacts. A business incubator's main goal is to produce successful firms that will leave the program financially viable and freestanding. These incubator graduates have the potential to create jobs, revitalize neighborhoods, commercialize new technologies, and strengthen local and national economies.

Encourage Retail Growth in Mixed-Use Areas and Commercial Corridors

Savannah's mixed-use central business district and established commercial corridors, such as Bay Street, Broughton Street, portions of Oglethorpe and Liberty Streets, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, are ideal places for accommodating new retail opportunities. Encouraging growth here will discourage land use conflicts in residential areas while supporting existing businesses with additional foot traffic. Figure

Figure 10: Photo-simulation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, showing how strategic redevelopment of empty and auto-oriented commercial land and public space improvements can yield a lively and attractive pedestrian-friendly corridor that offers opportunities for neighborhood businesses and entrepreneurs to establish themselves. The image to the right depicts the current character of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard with the redeveloped vision shown below.



Extra-wide lanes are narrowed to create room for dedicated on-street parking. The resulting slower speeds allow bicyclists to safely use the street.

A canopy of street trees helps shade what is now a hot stretch of street and also provides continuity with the residential areas to the east and west.

New development is located close to the street with active ground floor uses.

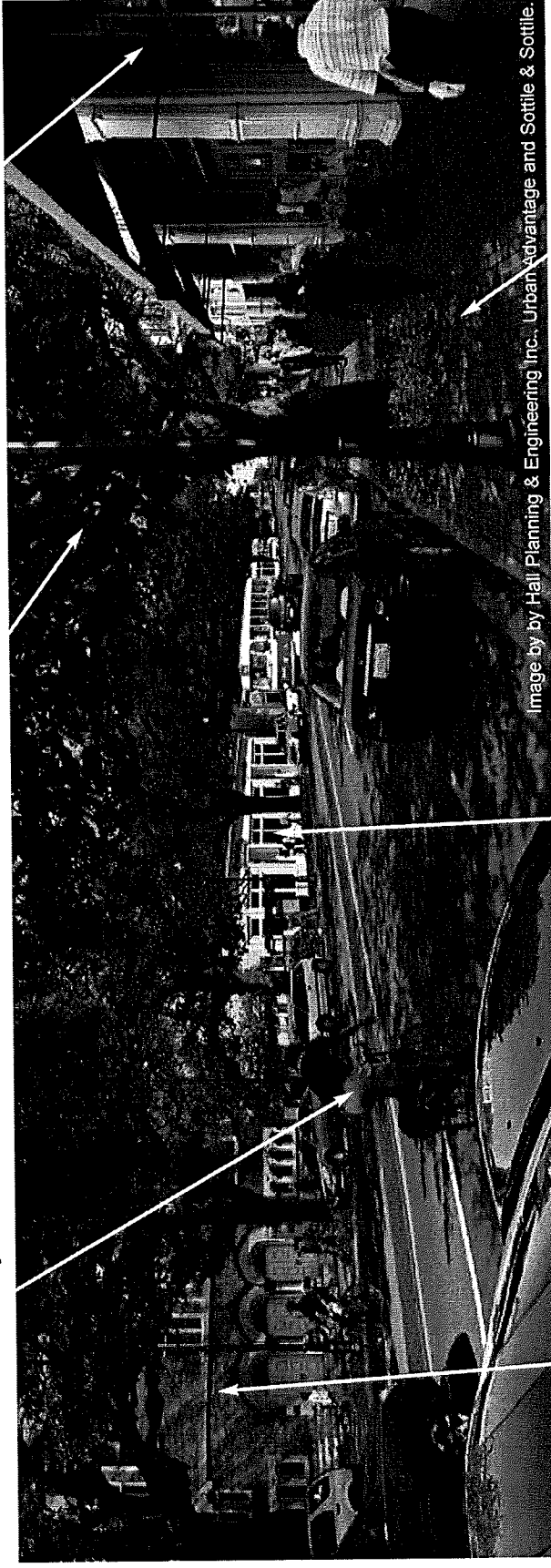


Image by Hall Planning & Engineering Inc., Urban Advantage and Sottile & Sottile.

Older buildings are maintained and given facade improvements to highlight their details.

Existing fast food restaurants can maximize their property by building to the sidewalk and adding complimentary uses.

Public space infrastructure improvements include sidewalk upgrades, attractive pedestrian lighting and plantings.

11 shows these areas in darker purple and red.

- Encourage retail market expansion throughout the mixed-use areas of downtown and along established commercial corridors by requiring active ground floor uses in any new development. The location of these mixed-use areas should correspond with the Future Land Use Map adopted by Mayor and Aldermen and County Commission, as seen in Figure 11. As well as providing more opportunities for neighborhood-serving retail, this will reinforce downtown walkability.
- Establish areas where large-scale commercial uses such as grocery stores will be encouraged and where they are appropriate.
- Examine enacting a special fee in lieu of providing parking that would support peripheral parking with a dedicated shuttle for retail employees. This system is described more fully in the Mobility chapter of this document.

Support Existing Downtown Businesses

Economic development strategies should also be targeted to support existing and growing small businesses, allowing them to capture a growing share of the new economic potential in downtown. These strategies focus on extending existing Savannah business support programs, and improving and marketing the downtown shopping areas as a whole.

- Expand knowledge and reach of existing business support activities, including the MLK Revolving Loan Fund, Micro Loan Fund, Business Improvement Loan Fund, and the Savannah Entrepreneurial Center. The latter

should provide low-cost shared space, on-site support services (shipping/receiving; security; etc.), smaller-than-usual space availability, access to technical and financial assistance, shared experience/networking opportunities, and technology education for new and expanding businesses.

- Establish new supports for smaller existing and start-up retail businesses. Specific supports could include (1) full or near-full tenant fit-out provided by the landlord or a non-profit organization, (2) targeted access to technical and financial assistance, (3) support with peer experience sharing and networking, (4) marketing assistance-both business-specific and commercial district-oriented, and (5) technology education.
- Institute a Façade Improvement Program that provides grants and low-interest loans for facade and signage improvements. Architectural and other professional services could be provided for free or at a reduced rate.
- Create a downtown-wide marketing program to encourage greater foot traffic and improved physical amenities such as streetscape improvements and shopper parking. These are recommendations a Business Improvement District could implement, and are described in more detail in the Quality of Life chapter.

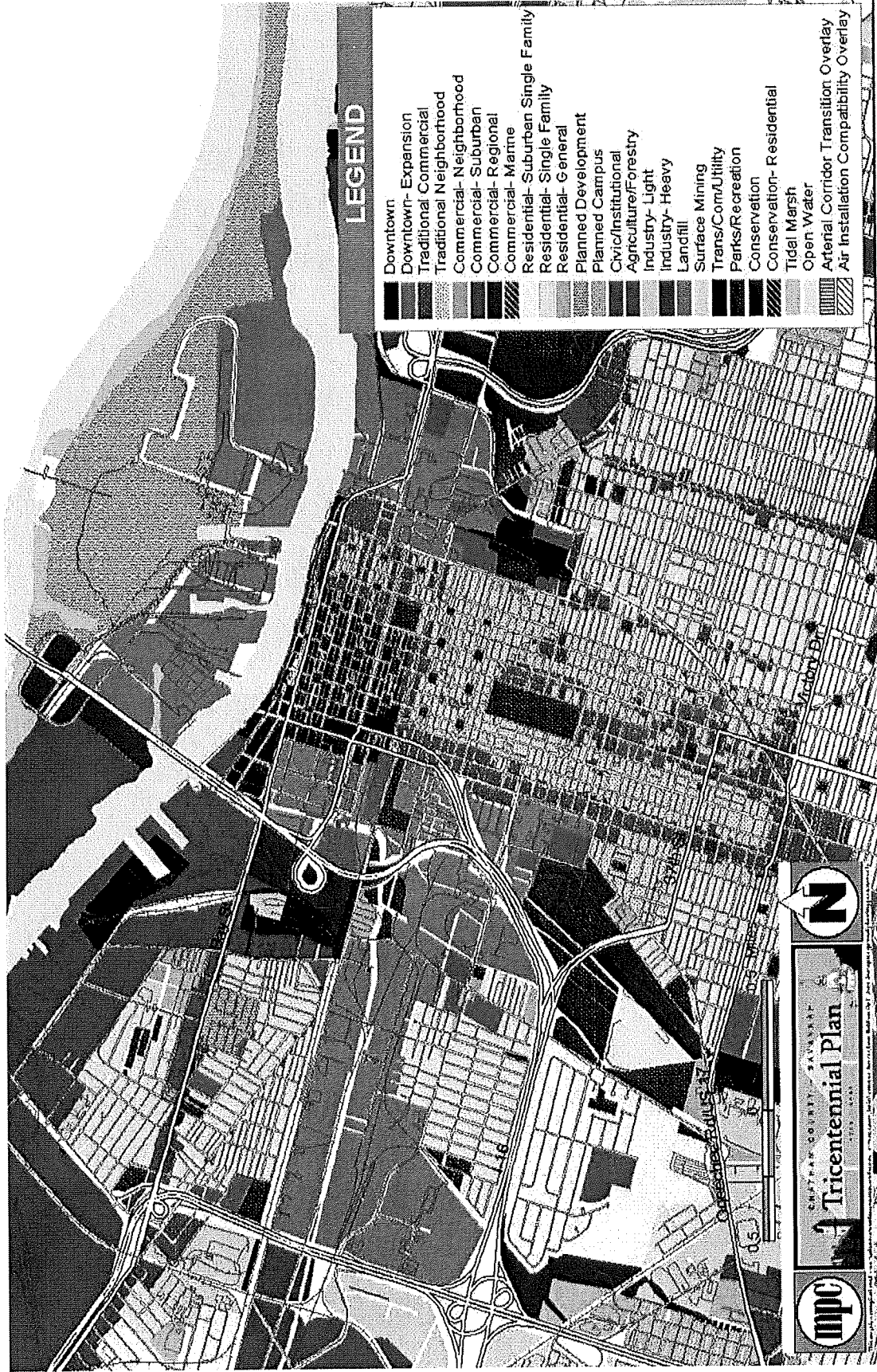
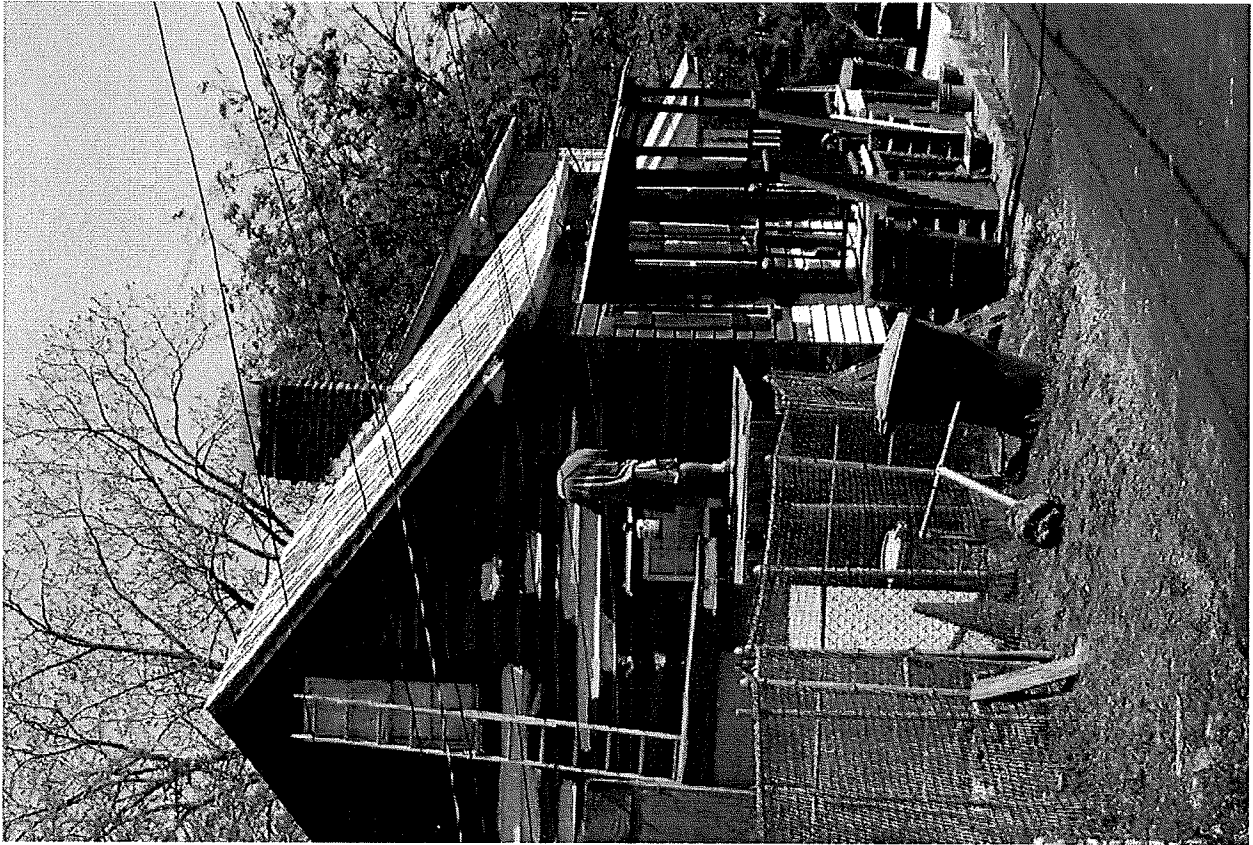
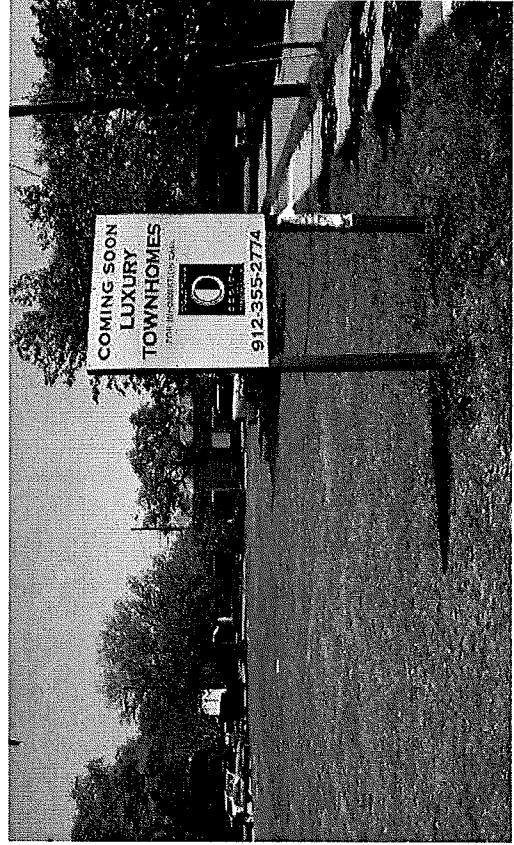


Figure 11: The City of Savannah's Future Land Use map adopted in November 2006. New development in Downtown Mixed Use (purple) and Traditional Commercial areas (darker red) should be encouraged to have active uses on the ground floor. This will reinforce walkable commercial districts as well as provide new opportunities for entrepreneurs.



Downtown Savannah has traditionally included housing that is affordable by low- and moderate income residents (above). Recent escalation in prices for housing in downtown has allowed many homeowners to benefit from maintaining their properties, as the upgrade of this home (left) in the Beach Institute area of downtown demonstrates. However, rising prices put substantial pressure on the ability of downtown to continue to provide comparatively affordable housing options (below).



CREATE VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS WITH APPEALING AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

*"City areas with flourishing diversity sprout strange and unpredictable uses and peculiar scenes.
But this is not a drawback of diversity. This is the point of it."*

— Jane Jacobs

The beauty of city life does indeed lie in the unexpected, which is made possible by a diverse population living in close contact with one another. While rising property values and rising investment is normally a good thing, balance is needed. Those cities that lose their residential diversity are in danger of losing their character, becoming mere museum set-pieces, rather than fully functioning societies.

Downtown Savannah has traditionally been an area where lower income and working households have lived in close proximity with more wealthy residents. However, recent escalation in market prices for housing and other uses in many portions of downtown has put substantial pressure on the ability of downtown to continue to provide these housing opportunities. Innovative strategies will be required if the downtown is to maintain its diverse heritage of mixed-income and mixed-use development.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY CONTEXT

Any plan for affordable or workforce housing in downtown Savannah must be placed within the context of the overall affordable housing policy for the entire city. In general, the resources, policies, and programs to support housing affordability function at the citywide level; plans for any specific portion of Savannah — even an area as central to city-wide development as the downtown — must fit within that overall policy. On August 16, 2007, the Savannah Mayor and Aldermen adopted a resolution establishing a Housing Policy Statement for Savannah, which appears on page 28. This chapter's recommendations are rooted in the policy and operate to support and benefit the programs and procedures established by that policy statement.

Similarly, the Downtown Savannah Master Plan builds on

CITY OF SAVANNAH HOUSING POLICY STATEMENT

August 16, 2007

WHEREAS, the rising cost of real estate and construction in and around the City of Savannah is making it increasingly difficult for low- and moderate-income households-including our blue collar workforce, senior citizens and those who live in poverty-to afford modest, quality, housing without subsidy, and

WHEREAS, household incomes do not appear to be keeping pace with rising housing costs resulting in more low- and moderate-income families and individuals unable to purchase or rent decent and attractive housing, and

WHEREAS, mortgage payments are a great difficulty for many residents of the City of Savannah, and

WHEREAS, effective strategies are needed to provide affordable housing for our low- and moderate-income residents, our seniors, and those who live in poverty.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that affordable housing shall be defined as housing for which persons of any income group pay no more than 30% of their gross annual household income for rent and/or mortgage payments to occupy modest, quality, housing that is decent, safe and sanitary, and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the policy of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah will be to support the development and retention of affordable housing, and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Savannah will:

- Utilize all available federal, state and local government and private sector resources in support of affordable housing.
- Support the creation of new local public and private funding sources and partnerships for affordable housing.
- Support government regulations, zoning, codes, standards and incentives that encourage the production of quality, sustainable, affordable housing.
- Support the acquisition of property for the development of mixed-income affordable housing with compatible commercial/retail where possible.
- Support the redevelopment of public housing combined with mixed-income affordable housing and appropriate commercial/retail where possible.
- Support affordable housing construction in both developed and newly developing areas of the City including zoning, density standards and other tools.
- Support "green" affordable housing development.
- Support affordable housing development that is architecturally compatible with adjoining properties and neighborhoods.
- Support affordable housing development that considers neighborhood input and suggestions for making affordable housing neighborhood compatible.
- Increase home ownership, particularly among households earning less than median income.
- Increase the supply of quality rental housing, particularly for those earning less than 60% of median income.
- Support housing for homeless and special needs populations.
- Support transportation improvements that enhance access to employment and affordable housing.
- Support incentives and/or requirements for a portion of new housing to be affordable.
- Support efforts to educate the public about affordable housing as a way to increase acceptance of affordable housing initiatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Downtown Master Plan will include an affordability component for the downtown area and nearby neighborhoods.

many of the recommendations of the Metropolitan Planning Commission's 2004 Gentrification Task Force which identified the following policy framework and initiatives. This vision and the applicable recommendations are shown on pages 30 and 31.

Finally, the Downtown Savannah Master Plan's housing affordability element is structured to be consistent with and supportive of the efforts of Step Up Savannah's Housing Action Team to (1) create and achieve approval of an affordable housing funding mechanism; (2) collect and distribute data and information on the supply of affordable housing; (3) provide education and advocacy for more affordable housing; and (4) make more affordable housing available.

Housing Background

The areas in and adjacent to downtown Savannah include a complex array of neighborhoods. For purposes of this Plan, we have defined the following areas:

- **Downtown Savannah:** Generally the National Landmark Historic District bounded by the Savannah River, Martin Luther King Boulevard, E. Broad Street, and Gwinnett Street.
- **Downtown Housing Opportunity Area:** downtown and three adjacent subareas — *West Subarea* between Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and West Boundary Street (including Yamacraw Village); *East Subarea* between E. Broad Street and the Truman Parkway, north of Gwinnett; and the *Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Corridor Subarea* extending south along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to 52nd Street and including several neighborhoods — Cuyler Brownsville,

West Victorian, Metropolitan, and Cann Park.

- **Eastside Housing Opportunity Area:** The neighborhoods east of Bull Street between Gwinnett Street and Victory Drive and east of Truman Parkway, between the Savannah River and Victory Drive, and including these neighborhoods — East Victorian, portions of Thomas Square, Eastside, Baldwin Park, Dixon Park, Midtown, Live Oak, and Benjamin Van Clark.
- **Westside Housing Opportunity Area:** The neighborhoods between West Boundary Street and I-516 north of Victory Drive, and including the West Savannah neighborhood.

About 8,600 households lived in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area, while another 13,000 resided in the Eastside and Westside Housing Opportunity Areas (see Figure 13). In 2000, the median household income in Chatham County was approximately \$37,000. Those households with incomes below 80% of this level (below \$30,202) were considered low- and moderate-income. The 37,000 such households found important housing opportunities in these Housing Opportunity Areas: 16% of these low- and moderate-income households lived in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area in 2000, while another 21% found housing in the adjacent neighborhoods of the Eastside and Westside Housing Opportunity Areas.

In addition to being an important housing resource for low- and moderate-income households, these Housing Opportunity Areas have also traditionally housed key components of the middle-income downtown workforce, including administrative, clerical, public safety, professional, and management personnel, who typically earn between 80% and 120% of the County median. Twenty-one percent of housing

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENTRIFICATION TASK FORCE

Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2004

VISION STATEMENT:

The Task Force envisions a vibrant and inclusive community in which change enhances the desirability of neighborhoods without exclusion or involuntary displacement of responsible residents or businesses.

APPLICABLE RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. Land Use and Zoning

Recommendation 1.

Adopt an inclusionary zoning provision in the Zoning Ordinance for neighborhoods vulnerable to gentrification. Require developments with 25 residential units or more to provide 15 percent low-moderate affordable units or make an optional ("in lieu") payment to a Housing Trust Fund.

Recommendation 2.

Establish density bonuses in the Zoning Ordinance to encourage production of affordable housing. Density bonuses should be in the range of 10 to 20 percent to have a significant impact without exceeding the range of acceptable density in a given neighborhood.

Recommendation 3.

Remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to affordable housing in vulnerable neighborhoods. Such barriers include excessive lot size and lot coverage requirements, density requirements that are lower than necessary and suburban parking requirements. Another significant barrier is the limited range of permitted housing types. Housing types that should be permitted in many urban neighborhoods include: garage apartments, accessory units, mews and lane cottages, over-under duplexes, single room occupancy facilities, residential-retail mixed use, and single family to multi-family conversions. Permitting room rentals and accessory rental units can also assist residents on limited incomes to maintain their residence in revitalized neighborhoods (accessory units include garage apartment, carriage houses, cottages, and small additions).

Recommendation 5.

Increase property maintenance and code enforcement monitoring in neighborhoods identified as being vulnerable to gentrification in order to prevent neighborhood decline, lower property values, an exodus of residents, and speculator acquisitions.

Recommendation 6.

Encourage adaptive reuse of existing structure within neighborhoods vulnerable to gentrification by permitting expansion of non-conforming uses in traditional neighborhoods, provided they meet all development standards without variances.

B. Affordable Housing

Recommendation 1.

Develop new local financial resources and, where necessary, seek changes to state legislation, facilitating leveraging of private, state and federal

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENTRIFICATION TASK FORCE

Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2004

investment for affordable housing including:

1. a local housing trust fund capitalized and funded annually by the City
2. inclusionary zoning "in lieu" fees (See Rec. 1 under Land Use and Zoning)
3. new development "linkage" fees
4. documentary stamp fees
5. tax increment financing districts (See Rec. 2 under Redevelopment Programs)

Recommendation 2.

Expand and develop new housing programs that make it possible for responsible homeowners and renters, and new home buyers and renters, to co-exist, afford and occupy housing in neighborhoods that have gentrification potential.

Recommendation 3.

Expand educational opportunities, technical assistance and counseling for homeowners, home buyers, renters, landlords, contractors, developers, realtors and others involved with affordable housing in neighborhoods that are vulnerable to gentrification.

E. Redevelopment Programs

Recommendation 1.

Promote neighborhood identity based on diversity and pluralism. Historically, neighborhoods have evolved through a process of "succession" where a lower or higher income segment of the population displaces the other. A new model should replace this where neighborhoods support and even encourage income and cultural diversity.

Recommendation 2.

Establish a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) redevelopment district for areas that are vulnerable to gentrification. TIF districts permit local governments to capture increased tax revenues in areas where the tax base is growing as a result of new investment. TIF revenues could be used to fund affordable housing, neighborhood facilities, and business incubators in areas vulnerable to gentrification. A TIF district could be a significant funding mechanism for the Housing Trust Fund. Lobby for an amendment to State enabling legislation to provide for local government approval of TIF districts without a local referendum. Increase the use of Investment Revenue Bonds until TIF redevelopment districts are established.

Recommendation 3.

Strengthen the Land Bank Authority to obtain property for affordable housing and commercial development in neighborhoods threatened by gentrification.

Recommendation 4.

Incorporate these recommendations to the extent possible into the goals, objectives, and strategies of the new Comprehensive Plan in order to make them official City policy and to identify responsible agencies and timetables.

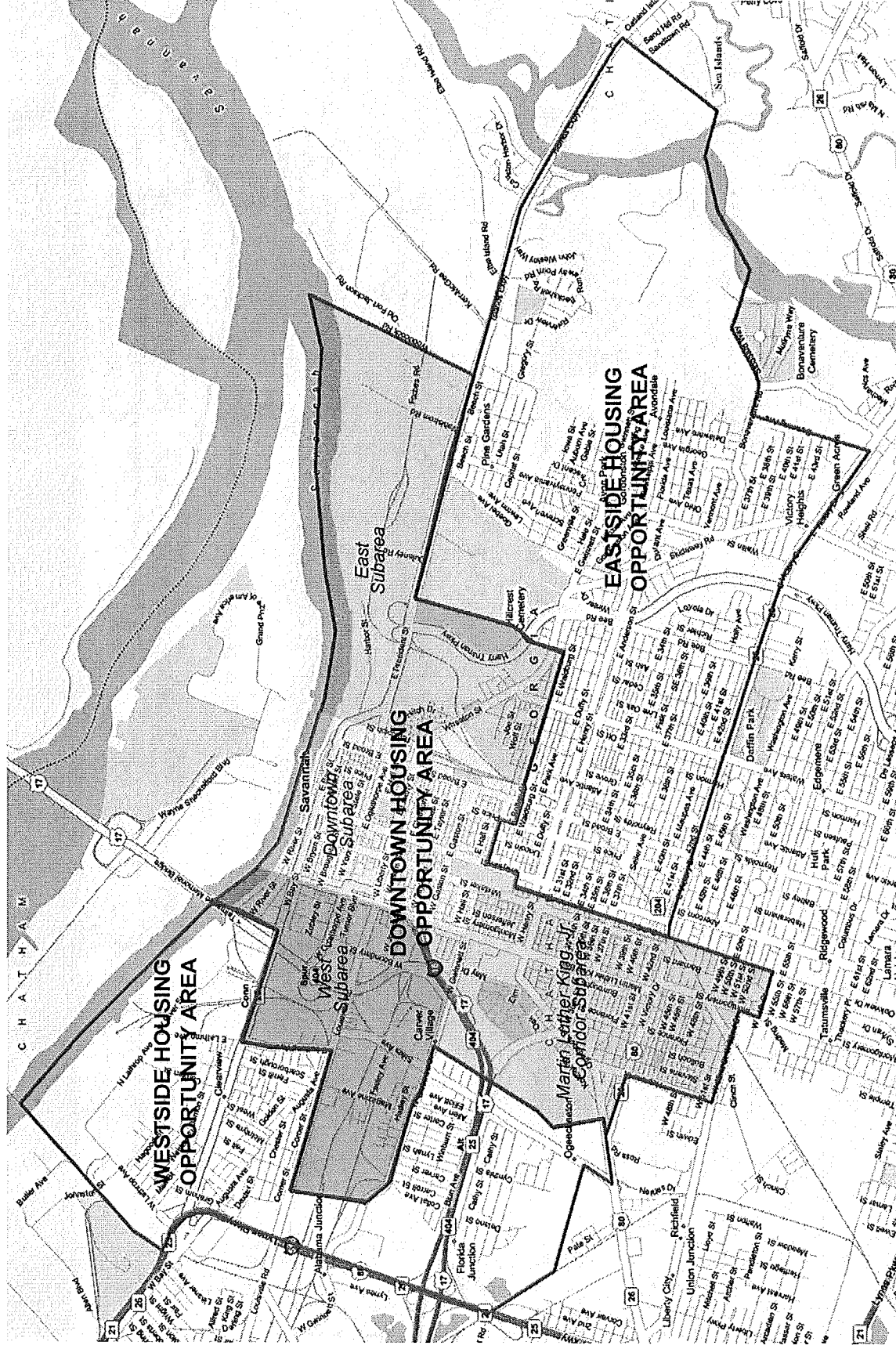


Figure 12: In order to approximate the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area, U.S. Census tract data was organized into four areas for the purposes of the affordable housing analysis: Downtown and the surrounding areas, the Western Area, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street Corridor, and the Eastern Area. Large public housing developments near in the Study Area are shown with red outlines.

Nonetheless, as recently as the 2000 census, the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area was a very important location for affordable housing opportunities in Savannah.

Housing Market Pressures

The recent escalation in market prices for housing in many portions of the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area has put substantial pressure on the ability of this Downtown Housing Opportunity Area to continue to provide these housing opportunities for both low- and moderate-income and workforce households. In downtown Savannah, housing for low- and moderate-income households cannot be built today without some form of incentive or public support. These escalating pressures are also making it difficult to produce such housing in the other Subareas of the Downtown Housing Opportunity

Area. Publicly-owned property provides one possibility where special considerations could be made to support expanded affordable housing opportunities.

The middle-income downtown workforce has also felt this pressure with many workers finding it increasingly difficult to find conveniently-located housing within their budgets. As a result of these cost pressures, an increasing portion of the downtown workforce is enduring longer commutes and raising demand for scarce downtown parking spaces. Savannah now faces the need for policies to retain workforce housing within reasonable walking distance of downtown employment hubs. In addition, housing quality needs to be improved and transit options need to be expanded to neighborhoods surrounding downtown where more affordable workforce housing can be made available.

Figure 14: Affordable Housing Opportunities, Downtown Housing Opportunity Area, 2000

	Total- Downtown Housing Opportunity Area	Downtown Savannah	West Subarea	East Subarea	MLK Subarea
Housing Authority of Savannah Developments	1,823	611	315	497	400
Other Income-Restricted Rentals	202	14			188
Young Student Singles & Non-Family Households (est.)	700	600			100
Homeowners With Income Below 80% of Median	1,175	153	100	97	825
Market-Based Affordable Rentals	2,052	693	31	112	1,216
Total Low- and Moderate-Income Affordable Units	5,952	2,071	446	706	2,729
Homeowners With Income From 80% to 120% of Median	434	117	2	29	286
Workforce Rentals	675	301	28	52	294
Total Workforce Housing	1,109	418	30	81	580

Source: U. S. Census; Urban Partners; Housing Authority of Savannah; U. S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

Rental Housing

As shown on Figure 14, nearly 40% of the affordable rental housing in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area is income-restricted and, with appropriate public policies, likely to continue as or be replaced as affordable housing. Recent redevelopment efforts pursued by the Housing Authority of Savannah, namely Ashley Midtown in the Benjamin Van Clark neighborhood and Sustainable Fellwood in the West Savannah neighborhood, exemplified how mixed-finance, mixed-use, mixed-income developments can improve and sustain these resources.

However, more than 2,000 affordable rental housing units reported in the 2000 census have market based rents, while another 675 units of workforce rental housing are also vulnerable to cost increases. These units are heavily concentrated in Downtown Savannah and in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Corridor Subarea of the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area.

Another significant factor putting pressure on the rental housing market in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area is the on-going and planned future growth in the SCAD student population. With some fluctuation from year to year, planned student growth rates average 400 students annually and 4,000 new students in a decade. Based on an average of three students per unit, these 4,000 students will require 1,300 to 1,400 housing units, of which SCAD reports its intent to add 400 new units in 10 years of College-operated housing. As a result 900 to 1,000 other units will need to be accommodated in the broader economy. With careful planning, these apartments and residence facilities could be sited at the periphery of the downtown, especially along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard,

to stimulate the revitalization of key corridors. On the other hand, these on-going rental housing demands also have the effect of competing for existing housing on blocks that have until now provided substantial affordable rental housing opportunities.

Home Ownership

Home ownership opportunities in downtown Savannah capture potential in several submarkets — luxury homes, condominiums, market-rate single-family homes, and affordable homeownership. Luxury homes and condominium sales have been achieving prices of \$500,000 and more. Much of the growth in the condominium market involves utilization of formerly vacant properties, such as upper floor conversions on Broughton Street, conversion of apartments, subdividing of single-family homes into condos, and new construction such as the Savannah River Landing development. However, some higher priced condominiums involve conversion of formerly affordable rental properties such as the conversion of the Drayton Towers to condominiums.

Recent sales of comparatively affordable market-rate homes downtown (\$150,000 to \$425,000 price range) have been heavily concentrated in the area south of Liberty and east of Bull, especially in the Beach Institute area. This market segment is rapidly increasing prices in areas that traditionally provided affordable homeownership opportunities, though there have been significant variations among neighborhoods in and around downtown in the extent to which they have been impacted to date by inflation in housing prices. The Metropolitan Planning Commission's Gentrification Task Force has identified five neighborhoods already under pressure — Baldwin Park, Beach Institute, East Victorian, West Victorian,

and Thomas Square. The Task Force also identified neighborhoods vulnerable to inflation pressures in the near future, including Cuyler/Brownsville and Metropolitan in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard corridor and Dixon Park, Eastside, and Midtown immediately along and east of East Broad Street. Recent community resident input has emphasized special inflation pressures in the Eastside, Metropolitan, and Cann Park neighborhoods.

As shown on Figure 14, current opportunities in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area for homeownership for low- and moderate-income households, as well as for households with incomes in the 80% to 120% of median range, are heavily concentrated along the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor. A positive public policy approach would encourage expansion of moderate- and middle-income homeownership opportunities at the periphery of the Downtown Savannah Master Plan area and the east and west downtown expansion areas. Where housing revitalization can be coupled with well-coordinated community development efforts to create attractive neighborhoods. Potential locations for this type of development include further improvement of the Beach Institute area, certain neighborhoods in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor, West Savannah, the neighborhoods north of Victory along either side of Waters and Pennsylvania, and neighborhoods south-east of Forsyth Park. Targeted program initiatives could work to coordinate this middle income investment with retention of affordable homeownership and rental units to create mixed-income communities.

Activities targeted here to provide affordable homeownership could help break down the barriers between these communities and the Historic District and empower residents of these

neighborhoods to participate in the broader revitalization effort. The City of Savannah has successfully employed a coordinated approach of redevelopment featuring public-private partnerships and mixed-financial sources committed to the development of mixed-income, mixed-tenure, mixed-use communities. This successful pilot effort has been undertaken in the Cuyler-Brownsville and West Savannah neighborhoods, and is currently underway in the Strathmore Estates development east of and very near to downtown. Other efforts could help retain affordable homeownership ahead of the tide of rising home prices.

The strategies proposed in this section are designed within these key principles for action:

- encourage all reasonable efforts to preserve existing affordable housing opportunities within the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area and east and west expansion areas, especially for long-term, year-round residents of downtown and adjacent neighborhoods;
- coordinate with City-wide affordable housing efforts to bring resources and affordable housing initiatives to the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area;
- recognize the significant presence of Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) resources in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area, to coordinate in detail with HAS to revitalize its developments for the benefit of its residents and of the overall downtown community; and
- develop special resources and programming to retain and expand affordable housing in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area to benefit long-term residents and the workforce facilitating the Downtown business and tourist-oriented economy.
- improve transit opportunities and efficiency to neighbor-

hoods outside of downtown to allow better movement of workers and residents to downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are targeted to meet the specific affordable housing issues present in downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Many are structured to support preservation of the existing affordable housing along the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Corridor and adjacent neighborhoods. (Note: "affordable" for this purpose is defined as being afforded by a household with income at 80% of SMSA median for the household size being accommodated by the affordable unit.)

Preserve and/or Replace Affordable Homeownership Opportunities

The recent increase in property values in formerly affordable neighborhoods adjacent to downtown highlights the vulnerability of long-term owner-occupied housing to market inflationary forces. This issue has two aspects. From the perspective of the long-term lower or moderate income homeowner, rising property values represent valuable wealth accumulation rewarding diligence in preserving his or her home. From the perspective of the pool of lower and moderate income households seeking homeownership opportunities, this represents the loss of a potentially affordable home.

The Downtown Savannah Master Plan recognizes this dilemma, but encourages city-wide housing agencies and organizations to directly address the continuing and increasingly acute

need of low- and moderate-income households to find quality homeownership opportunities in the neighborhoods surrounding downtown. These areas provide reasonable accessibility to downtown employment, while offering lower-cost home pricing. Similarly, efforts should be made to expand workforce housing opportunities in these communities.

Downtown organizations are encouraged to support these city-wide programs in identifying appropriate new homeownership opportunities and the resources to capture those opportunities. Furthermore, the transportation elements of this plan will work to improve accessibility between these more affordable homeownership locations and downtown employment centers.

Downtown organizations should work with city-wide housing agencies to target specific opportunities for preservation and rehabilitation of homes for on-going occupancy by low- and moderate-income homeowners. This focus will be carried out through several specific efforts including:

- monitoring turnover of currently affordable owner-occupied housing stock, with particular concern for maintaining the availability of affordable homeownership opportunities in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard/Montgomery Street corridor;
- recruiting lower and moderate income homebuyers to respond to available homeownership opportunities and supporting their home search with current and accurate information;
- encouraging the targeting of available City affordable housing resources to preserve and expand affordable homeownership opportunities in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area;

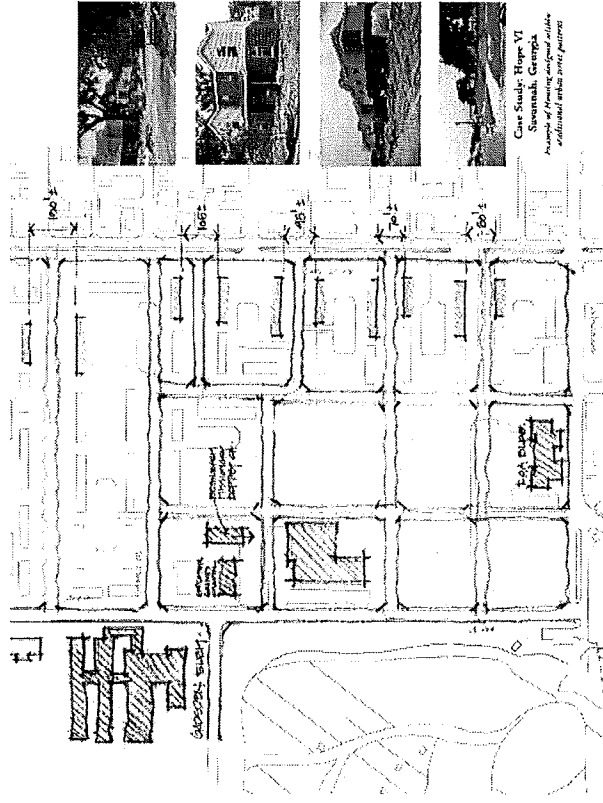
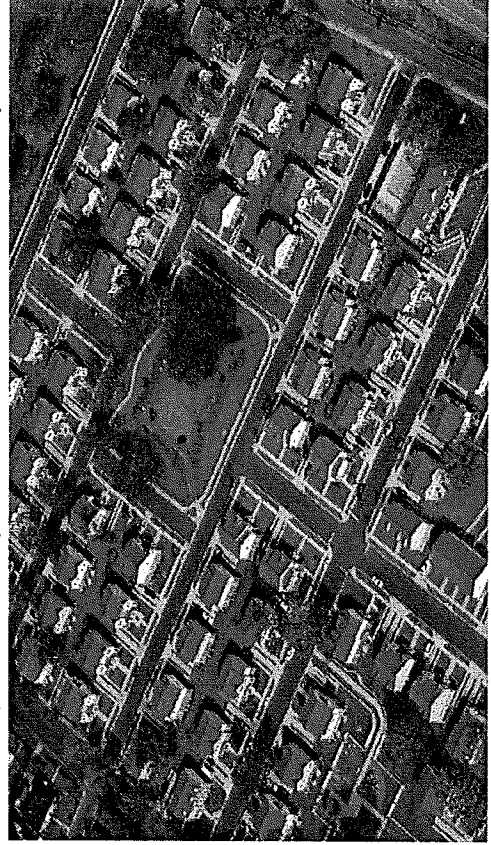


Figure 15: Several previous studies have looked at how an urban network of streets could be brought into Housing Authority properties. The study above looks at the Frazier Homes development on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, while the image below shows the successful Hope VI redevelopment of Ashley Midtown around a traditional street pattern.



- identifying locations for new infill construction of affordable homes and seeking and securing resources to assure ongoing affordability; and
- replicating the successful initiatives in Cuyler/Brownsville and West Savannah neighborhoods in other portions of the downtown vulnerable to inflation of housing prices.

In pursuing such approaches, the Downtown Savannah Master Plan recognizes that issues regarding the implementation of development activities involving eminent domain have become more complex and will require more creative approaches.

Reinvestment in Public Housing Developments

The Housing Authority's housing stock in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area provides 1,462 affordable housing units in seven public housing developments, plus another 361 units in Section 8 project-based developments. Downtown investment activities impacting these properties will assure that these affordable housing units are preserved or replaced within the same areas at prices which provide the same mix of affordability and household types as the current stock.

Priority will be given to activities which seek to upgrade the quality of the housing stock available to residents of these public housing developments. The residents of these developments will be actively engaged in the planning for these housing improvements. Whenever appropriate, residents will be provided opportunities to become homeowners and economic incentives may be made available for long-term residents.

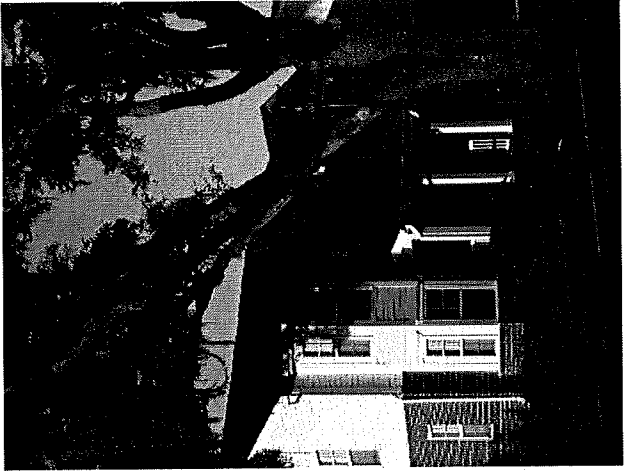
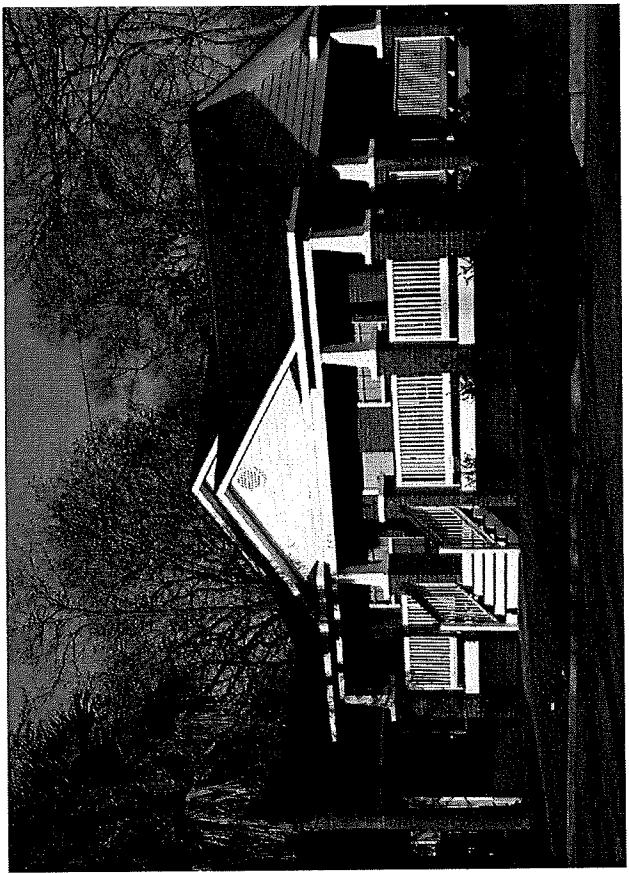
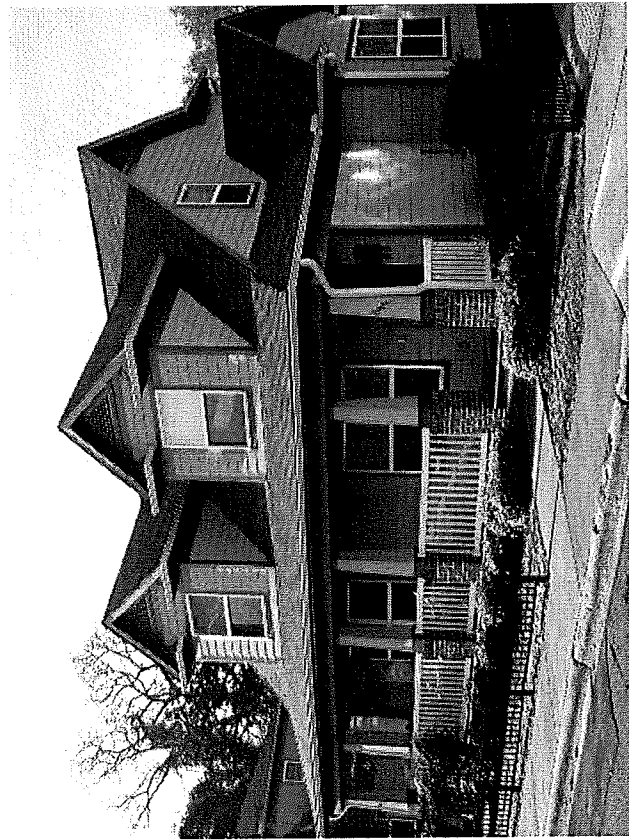
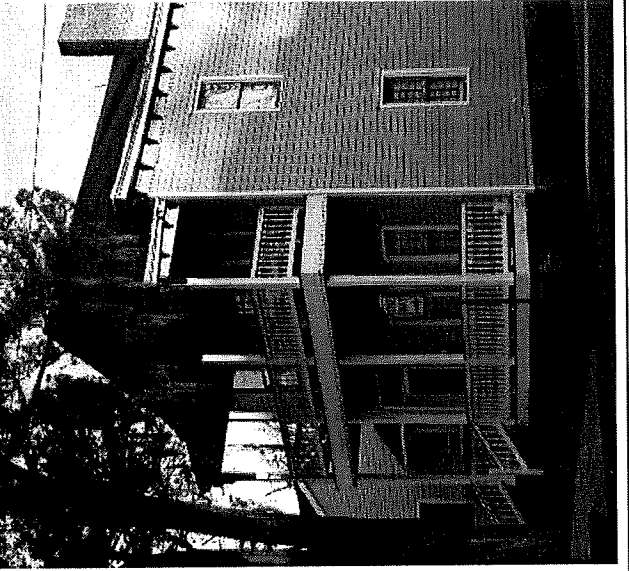


Figure 16:
Examples of
recently
developed
affordable
housing in
Savannah



Reinvestment activities will seek to create sustainable mixed income communities blending homeownership and rentals to the maximum extent possible and will be developed through creative models mixing a variety of private and public financing sources. These reinvestment efforts will create strong communities, not just rebuilt housing, and can include schools, commercial, public, and social services. Where appropriate, these reinvestment activities will seek to implement the comprehensive plan goals for the Downtown Expansion Areas to the east and west.

Reinvestment activities will seek to incorporate attractive architectural designs compatible with the historic fabric of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Redevelopment patterns will assure adequate recreation facilities and open space, including, but not limited to, extending the traditional pattern of squares and blocks in areas adjacent to downtown to encourage a fully inter-related development pattern.

Establish an Affordable Housing Fund

The MPC Gentrification Task Force, the Step Up Savannah Housing Action Team, and other public/civic planning and policy-development efforts have called for the creation of new local financial resources to leverage private, state and federal investment for affordable housing. A key element in these discussions has been the creation of a local Affordable Housing Fund capitalized and funded with public and other sources of funding.

Resource Enhancements for Greater Downtown Affordable Housing

The increasing cost of land and construction in downtown Savannah and elsewhere in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area, coupled with the obligation to maintain affordable housing opportunities for the Downtown workforce suggests the need for special new resources to support housing affordability in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area. The need for these resources in Savannah is typical of concerns faced in and near downtowns throughout the country. Efforts to identify and target resources to meet this affordable housing need generally involve four types of activities:

- Targeting of public resources to finance affordable housing in and near downtown;
- Provisions for zoning and development incentives to encourage affordable housing development and preservation;
- Special permitting, development, and real estate transfer fees collected within target areas and dedicated to the production of affordable housing; and
- Deferral of real estate taxes in areas of rapidly escalating values to enable long-term resident homeowners to remain in their homes.

The decision to target available public resources to affordable housing in and near downtown is encouraged by the Downtown Savannah Master Plan but specific approaches of this type require a broader community-wide policy context. Application of the other three types of incentives could result in specific recommendations.

There are a variety of zoning incentives that could be provided to support affordable housing, but many of these potential incentives conflict with other Downtown Savannah Master Plan objectives. However, there is one potential modification that would both support affordable housing development and be consistent with other criteria:

Recommendation: Modify the requirement that each residential unit be required to include 600 square feet of land, except in certain areas for developers who produce affordable housing.

Currently, some downtown zoning districts require 600 square feet of lot area per residential unit. This rule limits the ability of developers to create affordable housing by driving up the cost of land per unit. Relaxing the rule where it would not impact already existing homes would allow for the orderly increase of residential density in Savannah and the associated benefits of more affordable housing costs, lower costs of infrastructure, the ability to support additional retail services, reduced auto use, and lower crime rates. Specific standards would need to be developed defining the basis on which additional units would be provided, the portion of those units that would need to be affordable, the definitions of affordability, and the sizes of those affordable units. The current height limits, coverage regulations, and setback requirements would continue in effect and would limit that overall height, mass, and density of development. However, on-site parking requirements might need to be waived for the affordable units.

As an alternative to on-site development, developers could make a contribution to an affordable housing fund or provide new affordable units in other locations. Again, standards would need to be developed for these alternative approaches.

Recommendation: Create expanded funding for affordable housing through development fees for new commercial development in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area and through collection of an additional property transfer fee on real estate sales in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area.

Special permitting fees, development fees, and real estate transfer fees collected within a prescribed area of downtown could be targeted to the production of affordable housing in downtown and surrounding areas.

These fees would be intended to support the development of affordable housing in the Downtown Housing Opportunity Area and the adjacent Eastside and Westside Housing Opportunity Areas to accommodate the needs of the growing workforce required for the expanded downtown employment base. Again, specific standards would need to be developed defining the levels of the fees, the minimum home price to which the property transfer tax would apply, and the types of affordable housing units that would be supported.

These fees would be similar to the funding stream for the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund which is based on fees of \$56 to \$72 per document filed with the City of Philadelphia related to deeds and mortgages. These are also similar to the funding basis for the State of New York Mortgage Agency whose affordable housing programs are largely supported through a .25% mortgage recording fee surcharge.

Recommendation: Create a tax deferral program for income-qualifying homeowners to avoid loss of housing affordability due to rising assessments.

The preservation of housing affordability for existing homeowners could be enhanced through deferral of real estate taxes in areas of rapidly escalating values to enable long-term resident homeowners to remain in their homes.

This program would be intended to support existing homeowners to remain in their homes despite increasing property tax bills. Again, specific standards would need to be developed defining the levels of income and other characteristics of homeowners that would be eligible for tax deferral, the basis for recapture of deferred taxes, the legal instrument used to maintain that tax position, and the interest rate to be charged on the deferral.

Similar programs are in existence in Chicago, suburban Philadelphia, and Cecil County, Maryland, among many other locations. Many, but not all, programs are limited to senior homeowners over the age of 65 or to disabled homeowners. Maximum income levels to qualify for deferral range from \$15,000 annual income to \$60,000 annual income. Some programs defer the full tax, while others only defer tax increases above the initial year base. All programs secure the deferred tax position with a lien and recapture the deferred taxes at the sale of the property, or at the death of the homeowner. In some cases the liens accumulate with no interest; in others annual interest can be as high as 6% on a non-compounding basis. Total deferrals cannot exceed 80% of the homeowners equity in the property.

Preserve Market-Based Affordable Rental Housing Downtown

Downtown Savannah is estimated to provide more than 1,300 market-based rental housing units to the non-student market. 550 of these units were occupied by lower-income households in 2000 and many of the remaining market-based units were occupied by younger members of the downtown workforce with incomes below \$45,000. Many of these units are small and more than half are occupied by single individuals or two-person unrelated households. The population occupying these units is heavily weighted to persons in their twenties. As a result, this housing stock is supporting an accessible entry-level workforce for downtown employers.

Efforts should be made to monitor rent levels and availability of these units to house the downtown workforce. The threats to the continued availability of these units for workforce housing include its increasing occupancy by off-campus students and the conversion of these units to small seasonal condominiums.

Preserve Market-Based Affordable Rental Housing in Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street Corridor

Similarly, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor provides nearly 1,000 market-based rental units affordable to a variety of household types. As identified by the Gentrification Task Force, several neighborhoods within the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor are highly vulnerable to residential gentrification

which may severely reduce the availability of affordable rental housing in this area. As documented in that Gentrification Task Force report, "people once living comfortably in a neighborhood are involuntarily uprooted as the neighborhood changes. As property values increase in response to improvements in the area, real estate speculation, property taxes and rents increase in tandem. Landlords in the community often seize this financial opportunity, evicting renters, and increasing the rent on apartments for which incoming residents are willing to pay more money. As a result, current residents, many of whom have spent their entire lives in the community, suddenly find themselves without homes and forced to move to less desirable locations."

Appropriate responses to this situation involve the full array of recommendations from the Task Force, with special emphasis on the following:

- Adopt inclusionary zoning provisions for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor neighborhoods requiring developments with 25 residential units or more to provide 15 percent low-moderate affordable units or make an optional ("in lieu") payment to an Affordable Housing Fund;
- Monitor property maintenance and code enforcement in these neighborhoods to prevent neighborhood decline, lower property values, and speculator acquisitions;
- Target existing and new housing finance resources to these Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor neighborhoods to secure long-term affordable rental housing through income-restrictions;
- Target consumer education activities and housing finance resources to these Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor neighborhoods

- to support existing renters to become homeowners;
- Identify one or more areas of concentrated housing development activity within these Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street corridor neighborhoods that emulate the current Strathmore Estates redevelopment strategy of public acquisition and land assembly prime for development. This requires a coordinated approach featuring public-private partnerships and mixed-financial sources committed to the development of mixed-income, mixed-tenure, mixed-use communities; and
- Implement these activities, pursuing models similar to the successful Cuyler/Brownsville and West Savannah models.

Affordable Housing & Development of Publicly-Controlled Sites

Periodically, development opportunities occur on sites that are publicly-owned. The potential redevelopment of all or a portion of the Civic Center property is one opportunity that may appear in the near future. Farther downstream, the I-16 Flyover at Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street may yield other publicly-controlled redevelopment opportunities.

In the redevelopment of publicly-controlled sites, governments often attempt to achieve a variety of public purposes. It is recommended that the creation of affordable housing be one of these objectives in the redevelopment of all publicly-controlled sites in the downtown area. This affordable housing component may involve on-site development as part of overall reuse approaches or it could involve financial participation in afford-

able housing activities off-site through linked development projects or contributions to the an Affordable Housing Fund or other financing mechanisms.

Affordable Housing & Public Development Assistance

Similarly, an affordable housing development component should be included as a complementary benefit of any public assistance provided for private development support within the downtown area. Examples of such public assistance could include financial participation, parking support, relaxation of zoning provisions, or other accommodations.

Workforce Housing Options & Supportive Transportation Services

As has been noted above, one of the significant impacts of rising housing prices in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods is its impact on the housing choices available to key components of the downtown workforce. Many middle-income workers — administrative, clerical, public safety, professional, and management personnel — previously were able to find quality conveniently-located housing within their budgets. As a result of housing cost pressures, an increasing portion of the downtown workforce is enduring longer commutes and raising demand for scarce parking spaces.

Similarly, many smaller rental units downtown have historically housed downtown employers' entry level workforce-persons in their twenties living as single individuals or in two-person unrelated households. As these smaller rental units become occupied by students and as some of them are converted to

small second-home condominiums, middle-income, long-term homeowners are pushed out of downtown in favor of wealthy students and second home owners.

One strategy for responding to these pressures is to improve the accessibility of neighborhoods beyond downtown to downtown employment and amenities. These slightly more distant neighborhoods, such as West Savannah, the Hudson Hill and Live Oak communities, could then expand the range of quality, affordable housing choices for the downtown workforce, while minimizing the costs of commuting (additional automobile ownership, downtown parking).

To effectively implement this strategy for expanded workforce housing options, customized transportation services need to be developed that are frequent, comfortable, and attractive. This will require targeting specific neighborhoods or locations, developing new routes, and providing an attractive quality of service and timeliness that serves the range of employment hours and downtown utilization that this workforce requires. More detail on this topic can be found in the Mobility Chapter.

QUALITY OF LIFE

"Window-breaking does not necessarily occur on a large scale because some areas are inhabited by determined window-breakers whereas others are populated by window-lovers; rather, one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing."

— George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, Fixing Broken Windows

The best cities are those where it is clear that someone actually cares for the place, where there is an obvious concern for basic order and safety, where conflicts between people and uses can be peaceably resolved, and where citizens and visitors feel they can revel in the joys of urban life. Savannah is fortunate among cities its size in its magnificent public realm, clear sense of pride in itself, and its unique quality of life.

As the hub of the city and region, downtown Savannah is an important place for people of all backgrounds, a crossroads and important location for services of all types, from city and county government to specialized high-end retail and personal services. With so many different activities and so many different people in the same area, it is important that the Downtown Savannah Master Plan pay close attention to quality of life to ensure downtown's benefits remain protected.

BACKGROUND

The past few decades have seen a revolution in American thought when it comes to quality of life issues in urban areas. New theories on crime prevention, such as "fixing broken windows", focus on repairing the little problems, like litter and graffiti, because tolerating them sends a signal that a place is without order thus fostering larger crimes. Community policing and foot patrols are being used to establish intimate connections between authorities and residents. Mixed-use downtowns and buildings create "eyes" on the street where there are always people who informally watch over spaces.

Crime and other deep-rooted sociological problems are often exacerbated by concentrating the poorest members of society

ty together. The federal HOPE VI grant program and many public housing agencies, including Savannah's, have tackled this by rebuilding public housing as fully functioning mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods. Meanwhile, affordable housing programs designed to allow working-class households to remain in areas that are gentrifying are encouraging a diverse population and creating a variety of housing options.

Likewise, the repair and maintenance of public space is seen as critical for keeping existing residents and businesses, and attracting new ones to a city. Streetscape improvements like trees and lighting not only make a place more comfortable and safe, but can help position an area as unique and celebrated. Older commercial districts within downtowns are finding ways to make themselves clean, safe, attractive, and accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles.

Within neighborhoods, many cities and community groups are taking over the cleaning and greening of vacant lots, often installing low fences to prevent dumping. Artists are put to work designing temporary displays for vacant storefronts. Savannah has successfully partnered with downtown businesses and area students, historical organizations and festivals to temporarily fill vacant storefronts and SDRA's EDGE Grant program for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard / Montgomery Street Corridor provides such a program to buffer parking and auto sales lots in conjunction with public sidewalk improvements.

Furthermore, cities are celebrating themselves and their urbanity, finding new ways to make city living desirable and attractive. Festivals, outdoor concerts, and weekly farmers markets are larger types of improvements, while outdoor sidewalk cafes, small tot-lot playgrounds, and neighborhood gar-

den centers can add to the quality of downtowns as well.

Fortunately, downtown Savannah's quality of life is already very high, as evidenced by the numbers of people seeking to visit and move here. It is a beautiful and practical place to live, work, shop, dine, and play. However, there is always room for improvement. Savannah's quality of life needs to be complemented by sidewalk cafes, planters and other inviting amenities that help to soften the hardscape and draw shoppers and diners. The following topics and recommendations are issues that Savannah should address to protect and improve its quality of life.

CRIME PREVENTION

To any big-city visitor, Savannah seems perfectly safe. However, during public meetings, many residents and businesses felt there was, at least, a perception of downtown being unsafe. This was especially true at nights, when many places downtown are without people to provide "eyes" on the street. While the existence of some level of crime is inevitable, combatting an exaggerated perception of crime and lawlessness is important in maintaining the existing quality of life and attractiveness of downtown to would-be shoppers, visitors, workers, and residents.

Recommendations

- Fix the "broken windows." By taking care of smaller nuisance-type problems, like litter, graffiti, noise, and problematic panhandling, a city sends a message that the downtown is carefully looked after. This in turn, helps

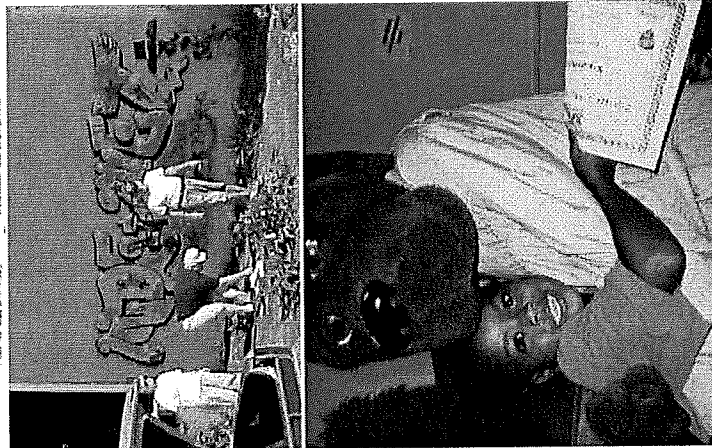


Figure 17:
Crime
prevention and
maintenance
programs help
keep down-
town safe and
attractive

prevent problems from escalating and places turning into lawless zones. The enforcement and strengthening of existing ordinances and programs and staffing to address graffiti, littering, nuisance businesses and noise concerns should be a priority. Enforcement of property maintenance laws must be consistent.

- Continue Savannah's existing programs such as the community-oriented policing initiative. Having uniformed police noticeably seen on walking, horseback, and bicycle patrols, interacting with local residents and businesses is important in gaining the faith and trust of the community. It also sends the message that smaller nuisance crimes will not be tolerated.
- Create a Downtown Ambassador program supported by a downtown Business Improvement District (described more fully later). These uniformed information officers would be specialized in assisting visitors and others downtown, but would also receive training in basic surveillance and crime prevention strategies to supplement and assist the efforts of the police. It should be explored if these officers could be deputized to aid in ordinance enforcement relating to litter, noise violations, and other non-criminal offenses. They would add a uniformed presence in downtown's commercial areas, and equipped with radios, could act as eyes and ears for the police.
- Create a Crime Prevention Council, that brings local businesses, neighborhood associations, and local police officers together to identify recurring problems and create solutions.
- Expand educational crime prevention programming including hosting crime prevention seminars, creating crime prevention guides, holding McGruff children's programs, and establishing a crime prevention award

ceremony in conjunction with the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department and local businesses to promote public safety and security. This is another task a downtown Business Improvement District could support.

- Expand Neighborhood Crime Watch zones where signage lets people know the area is watched. Expand the Downtown Neighborhood Association's Ward and Block Captain programs to participate at the Crime Prevention Council meetings and report back to their respective neighborhoods.
- Make safety a concern when reviewing new development. Savannah's CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) should be included in the site review process for new construction. Appropriate design, including an emphasis on lighting, lane security, and active street-fronts with street level retail, restaurant and other interactive uses should be used to promote a safe pedestrian experience. Public buildings like parking garages need to be well-lit and outfitted with emergency call-boxes to enhance safety. New parking decks should also include an interactive first level street front use.

CONCENTRATED POVERTY

Decades of policies have worked to confine poor households to economically isolated areas where extreme poverty and related sociological problems are compounded. This has occurred in every major city in the United States, including Savannah, but it wasn't until the last two decades that the results of these policies were studied in depth. The findings

now seem obvious — these areas face reduced private-sector investment and local job opportunities; increased prices for the poor; higher levels of crime; negative impacts on mental and physical health; low-quality neighborhood schools; and heavy burdens on local governments to provide more intensive public services, all of which can induce out-migration of middle-class households. Together, these factors combine to limit the opportunities for self improvement and quality of life available to residents in these neighborhoods.

Like other successful cities, Savannah needs to find ways to integrate the least fortunate members of society into healthy mixed-income neighborhoods where positive role models outnumber negative ones.

- Support the redevelopment of Housing Authority of Savannah properties over time, according to prioritization criteria developed by the Housing Authority of Savannah: mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods that better meet the housing, education, economic, and social needs of residents. Through these redevelopment efforts a commitment must remain to maintain or increase the current number of public housing units. Several models have recently been developed in Savannah that can be applied to other developments, such as the Strathmore Estates in east Savannah and Sustainable Fellwood in West Savannah. In the Downtown Expansion Areas and the neighborhoods adjacent to downtown, the sites should be integrated with the rest of Savannah by extending the downtown grid and square system where possible. Retail space should be included for neighborhood needs, and opportunities should be given to local entrepreneurs to fill the spaces. Schools, playgrounds, and parks

should also be included, depending on needs.

- Support ways to provide affordable/workforce housing, as detailed in the Vibrant Neighborhoods and Affordable Housing chapter of this document. This includes requiring affordable and workforce housing in the development of publicly controlled sites like the Civic Center and, in the future, the area left from removal of the I-16 Flyover. Provide density and other bonuses to developers who include affordable housing, and establish an Affordable Housing Fund, paid for by an impact fee on commercial development and a fee on high-end property transfers or some other dedicated revenue source.

PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

Keeping public spaces repaired and attractive is critical for retaining existing residents and businesses, as well as attracting new investors. The following recommendations address public space and vacant private property.

Commercial Area Improvements

The commercial shopping, office, and hotel district is the most public face of downtown Savannah. While many improvements are being made, such as the reclamation of Ellis Square and a plan to improve wayfinding signage, many more improvements await.

- Create a Business Improvement District (BID) for downtown Savannah. Communities of all sizes have

discovered the benefits of BIDs which, like a suburban shopping mall's common-space charge to renters, uses a dedicated funding source to provide special services for the common needs of the properties who pay into it. The creation of a BID requires a grass-roots effort built on the support of the property and business owners to be impacted by the BID. The services supplement existing municipal services, and do not replace them. Because of the nature of the services, all commercial properties within the service area will have to pay the assessment, which is usually based on real estate taxes and collected by the City. The use of the funds is governed by a board comprised of impacted business and property owners who ensure that funds are specifically allocated for needed programs and services within the impacted district.

Typically, a BID provides some or all of the following services:

- **Cleaning**, including regular foot-patrols for litter, graffiti removal services, and sidewalk washing.
- **Safety initiatives**, such as uniformed safety officers who act as eyes and ears for the police while assisting visitors with directions and other questions, and crime prevention seminars for business owners and downtown workers.
- **Marketing programs**, designed to lure people and tenants downtown. Programs that attract customers can include "First Friday" art crawls, "Restaurant Week" discounts, annual street fairs, special advertising, and provision of parking and other visitation information. Real estate market reports, retail mar-

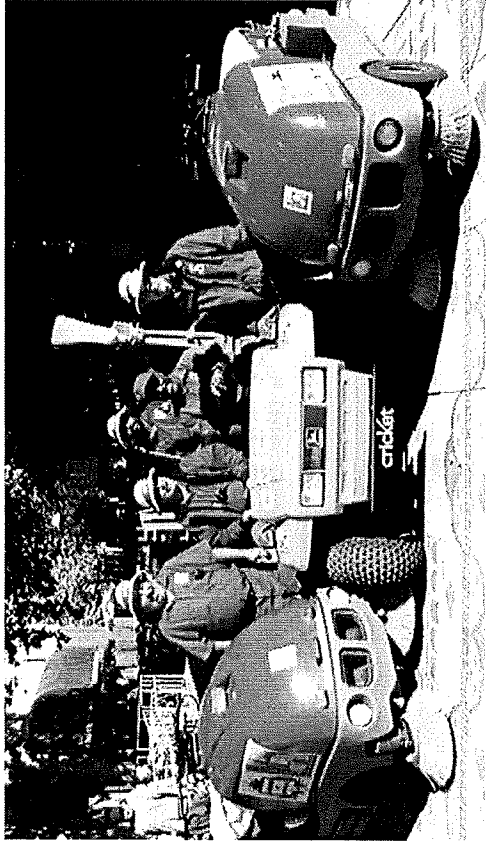


Figure 18: Downtown Albuquerque's BID uses a "Clean Team"

ket information and studies, "Living Downtown" housing information brochures, and business retention programs help bring in new tenants and residents.

- **Beautification programs**, such as lighting and streetscape improvements, changeable banners, flower baskets, directional signage, landscaping maintenance, and holiday decorations.

- **Planning and advocacy programs**. As a nonprofit, a BID can receive grants to do planning and advocacy initiatives, from funding streetscape improvements to helping the homeless.

- Fund and implement the streetscape plan along Broughton Street. As the heart of the downtown's retail district, Broughton Street needs a unique and unified look, with banners, information kiosks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, waste cans, benches, bike racks, bus shelters, and street trees. The City

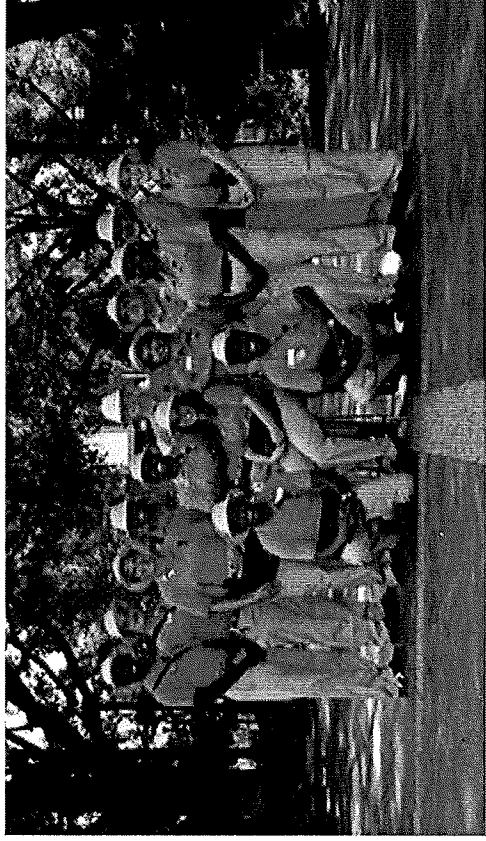


Figure 19: Downtown Jacksonville's BID has uniformed ambassadors

has begun a plan for improvements, and these recommendations should be carried out fully, perhaps with the help of a downtown BID. The long term success of this program will require a well-funded and consistent maintenance program.

- Implement the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Streetscape Improvement Plan including the installation of new street furniture, new sidewalks, underground powerlines, on-street parking, safety strips, and new streetlights. Just as with the Broughton Streetscape Improvement Plan, the success of streetscape improvements requires constant and dedicated maintenance.
- Pursue streetscape improvements and enhanced maintenance programs along all of the city's targeted redevelopment corridors including Wheaton Street, Waters Street, and East Broad Street. It

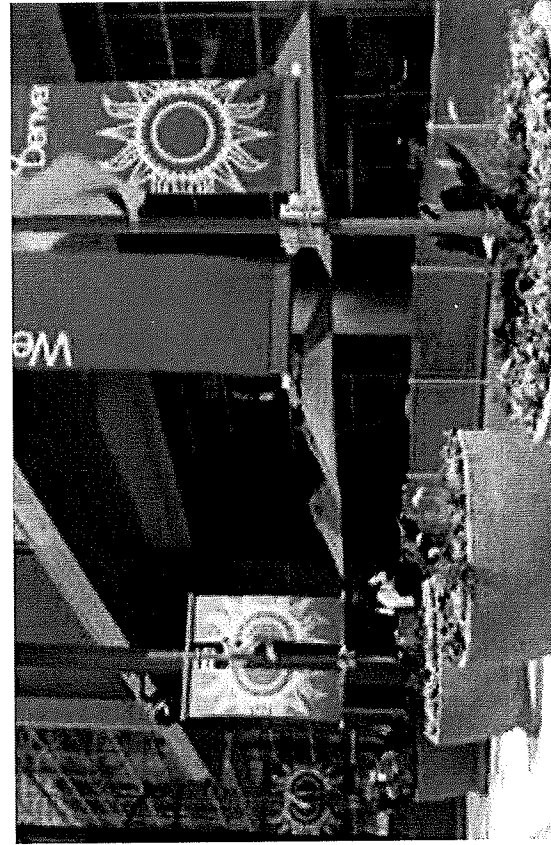


Figure 20: Downtown Denver's BID installed and maintains landscaping on the major retail streets in downtown

storefronts of vacant buildings. This will detract from the blighted building front and give the passersby something interesting to see.

- Explore and create financial incentives enabling property owners to repair and maintain businesses located in commercial corridors. These may include loans or grants and expanded use of tax freezes.
- Employ a number of strategies to deal with vacant buildings: Convene staff representing historic preservation, property maintenance, code enforcement, and downtown economic development to review local ordinances tasked with strengthening requirements of affirmative maintenance and ensure that adequate remedies and enforcement authority exists. Strengthen enforcement of the property maintenance ordinance that will preserve exterior architectural features such as windows. Create a deputized staff position in the Code Enforcement office, tasked with enforcement of property maintenance codes in the historic district and other redevelopment areas. Ensure staff is trained and well-versed in property maintenance as well as historic preservation. To address existence of boarded up buildings that risk demolition by neglect, develop mechanisms to limit ability and length of time buildings can remain boarded up including amending the building code to require that every window be fully supplied with glass window panes, establishing a registry of boarded up buildings, and revising the maintenance code to allow for temporary (i.e. six months) boarding-up of structures pending action in the form of sale or repair/improvements.

should be noted that streetscape improvements, alone, will not solve the problems of an aging commercial or commercial/neighborhood corridor. A comprehensive redevelopment and land-use strategy is critical to ensuring a healthy vibrant district.

- Support the River Street Master Plan. The plan is studying how best to connect River Street to the rest of the city, what new development would fit best, and how to best use the plazas and public spaces of Savannah's major tourist draw.
- Fill vacant storefronts, at least temporarily. Build on existing programs to connect Savannah's active professional and student artist communities with building owners to place temporary art installations in the

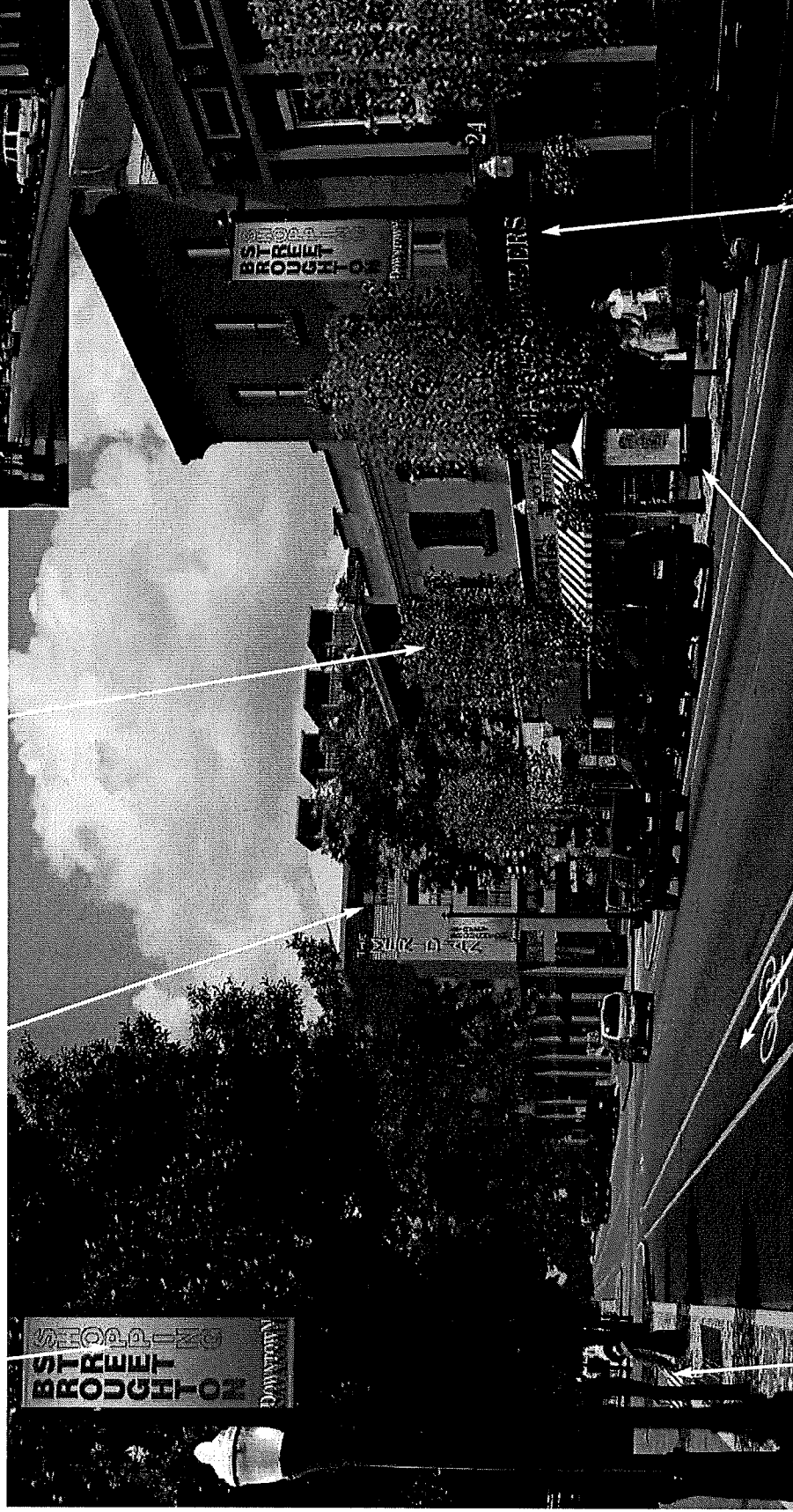
QUALITY OF LIFE

Figure 21: Photo-simulation of Broughton Street, showing potential streetscape and facade improvements with a new connection into the western downtown expansion area. It should be noted that this graphic was completed before the current Broughton Street streetscape improvement plan was being developed, and so may differ in its specific recommendations.

Branding items like banners and pedestrian lamps help define a retail district

Opportunities for denser urban development west of MLK Blvd.

Planting of trees to provide shade while ensuring facades can be seen



Shaded benches, especially near transit stops provide needed places of rest

Bicycle infrastructure, including bicycle lanes, "share the road" signage, and bike racks encourage ridership

Information kiosks help orient shoppers and visitors

Facade improvements include landscaping, large and open store front windows, fabric awnings, and improved signage

Neighborhood Improvements

Savannah's downtown neighborhoods range from stunningly beautiful to areas with large amounts of vacant land and worn buildings. Establishing strong neighborhood improvement groups, will help neighborhoods with a high quality of life to maintain it, and help bring improvements to neighborhoods that need it.

- Strengthen existing and establish new Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in neighborhoods hardest hit by blight. CDCs are 501(c)(3) nonprofits characterized by their community based leadership and their work primarily in housing production, job creation, and basic quality of life improvements. As nonprofits, they can receive grants and public money to implement improvements. The CDC model can be further used to strengthen neighborhood and faith-based neighborhood revitalization efforts. Typical activities of CDCs include:

- **Affordable housing development**, where they work with the City to acquire land, and use housing grants and other funding to construct needed types of family, rental, and senior housing.
- **Housing counseling services**, such as First Time Homebuyer assistance, energy assistance, home equity loans, home repair assistance (loans and design services), foreclosure prevention, financial education, affordability analysis, household budgeting, and credit repair.
- **Economic development initiatives**, such as providing access to property development tools and community initiatives.

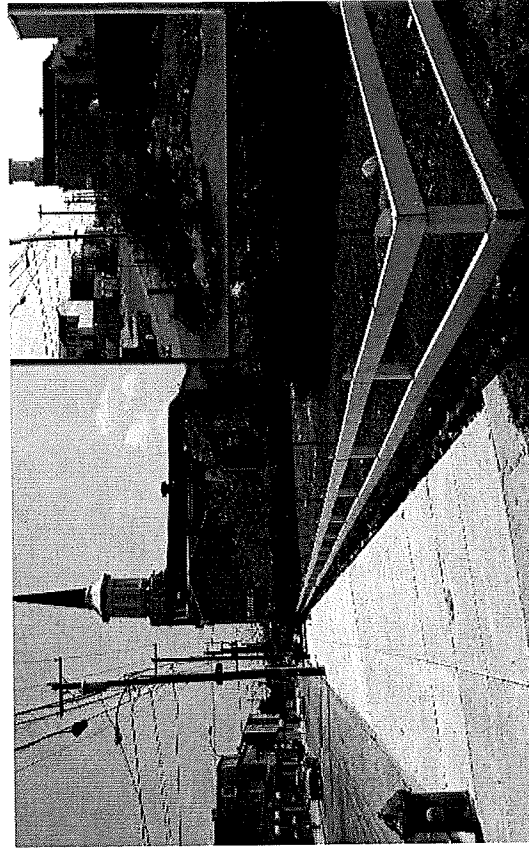


Figure 22: Philadelphia's New Kensington Community Development Corporation is one of the most successful in the nation. Its clean-and-green (and fence) program for vacant properties has improved over 300 lots (above), and allowed them to establish a Community Garden Center (below) that holds gardening classes and provides low-cost plants and free soil and mulch to residents.



- **Community advocacy**, such as neighborhood planning, monitoring zoning and development cases, and giving voice to resident concerns on topics such as overgrown lots and street sink-holes.
- **Open space management initiatives**, including vacant land cleanups, landscaping of vacant land, streetscape improvements, community garden developments, garden centers that supply discounted plants and free planting soil and mulch for residents.
- **Arts involvement initiatives** like public art commissions, murals on blank walls, even street furniture designs that provide opportunities to integrate a city's artistic, cultural and educational resources into the social fabric. This provides opportunities for youth in the community, and brings together people of diverse backgrounds.

Other recommended neighborhood quality of life improvements apply across the downtown. While mixing uses is usually a positive idea, there can be gaps or conflicts that need attention:

- Through the establishment of local-serving retail corridors, discussed in greater detail in the Economic Development chapter, encourage the establishment of businesses that meet the needs of downtown residents such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and dry cleaners.
- Establish "good neighbor" standards for commercial uses in close proximity to residences. These should cover aesthetics, noise, and hours of operation.
- Maintain and enhance the existing standards for outdoor uses such as sidewalk cafes and commercial use of sidewalks. Consider a limit on hours of outdoor dining

- in residential areas.
- Create a stronger "town and gown" relationship. Many cities with large college populations create a committee with representation from local institutions, public agencies, and community groups, that meets regularly to discuss common issues and initiatives. This can help bring attention to quality of life issues before they become problems.

Use the Arts

The creation of a multi-use arts space would attract new visitors and enhance the downtown experience for local residents. Ideally, this space would have a 600-1,000-seat capacity for shows and events. It could serve as the anchor for a visual/video production center. The space could potentially be located on West River Street, as an adaptive reuse of the Georgia Power Building, or within the Trustees Garden. This type of reinvestment in the downtown should be an anchor for other new developments, and should be connected to these areas in order to create destinations.

- Support the development of the City's new Cultural Arts Center along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The proposed 55,000 square foot facility will include performance and rehearsal spaces, and arts studio classrooms and serve as a catalyst for private development along the redevelopment corridor.
- Open discussions with local institutions of higher education on a joint program to develop an audio-visual production center in cooperation with the new venue.

MAXIMIZE MOBILITY

"[Savannah] is a city whose people, rich and poor, are so steeped in good manners — in the smile, the soft word, the easy humor of the Old South — that truck drivers wave at pedestrians as they pass."

— R.W. Apple Jr., Apple's America

BACKGROUND

Mobility issues have a major impact on the quality of life, economic vitality, and social sustainability of any city. Downtown Savannah is no exception. Founded and laid out before the invention and proliferation of the automobile, Savannah has been able to successfully maintain its walkable nature. A resident of downtown can easily walk for many daily needs, limited only by the lack of more community-serving businesses in the area. Savannah has an unusually high number of households without automobiles, just under 20%, making walking and transit relatively more important than in other communities.

Another unusual aspect of downtown Savannah's transportation system is the significant number of tourism and other special purpose shuttles that operate separately from the public

transportation system. This includes privately operated buses, rubber-wheel trolley replicas, horse-drawn carriage tours, private tourist shuttles, public shuttles operated by CAT, and the SCAD shuttle system. While removing a great deal of automobile traffic from the streets of downtown, the system could be consolidated to reduce its impact and increase its efficiencies and their effectiveness for downtown.

The Downtown Savannah Master Plan looks at transportation as a complete system, not as a series of disconnected parts. Each part contributes to a system that provides mobility for residents and visitors while recognizing and preserving the unique characteristics that make Savannah a wonderful place to live.

Discussions with stakeholders and the public, and additional field work led to the development of the following list of issues and recommendations related to mobility in Savannah.

BAY STREET

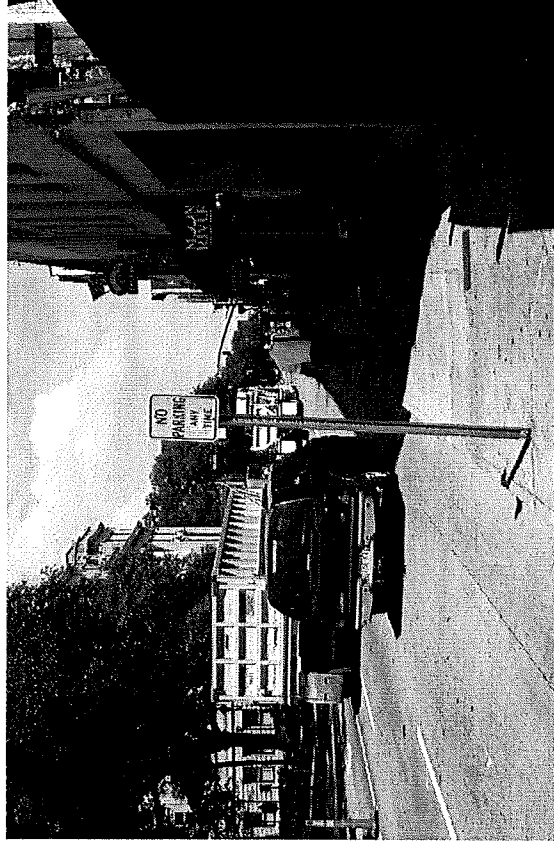
Bay Street is a critical transition point in downtown Savannah where the commercial core and the River Street / Factors Walk tourism areas meet. It has a different character than any other downtown Savannah street with tall rows of commercial buildings lining one side and a mix of tall trees, small open spaces, government offices, City Hall, hotels, commercial and some residential along the other. This street is equally shared by pedestrians and fast-moving auto and truck traffic.

Given Bay Street's narrow road width (56 feet) and historic buildings and trees that prevent widening, accommodating high levels of both pedestrian and auto traffic on one street is difficult. Most of the blocks currently have on-street parking on both sides, using six to seven feet of road width, and four travel lanes that average about ten feet in width — too narrow for safe movement of the many large trucks. There are few turning lanes, so left-turns from Bay Street often block travel lanes, and implementing “no left turns” rules is impossible since the street grid doesn't extend north of the street. Meanwhile, the sidewalks are extremely narrow, particularly on the south side where tall masses of hotels and commercial uses press against the pedestrian.

Strongly held positions exist among stakeholders and members of the public that the street should be modified to favor one form of transportation or the other. A number of issues must be balanced to achieve a positive outcome: quality of life versus use of public roads; industrial economic development versus tourism; pedestrian and auto-truck access; and state and local ownership, policies, and regulations.



Figure 23: Problem issues with Bay Street's pedestrian environment. Above, a hotel has cut into the already-narrow sidewalks for a drop-off zone; below, lack of on-street parking leaves pedestrians on narrow sidewalks, unbuffered from traffic.



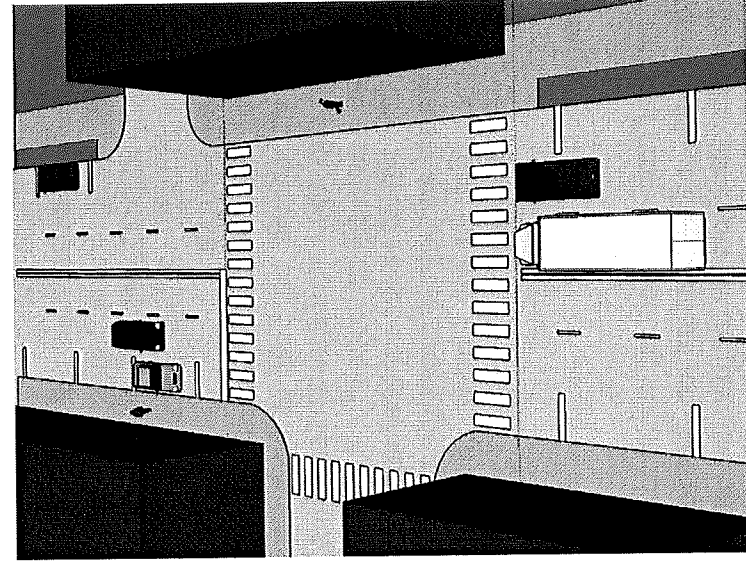


Figure 24: For many years, conditions on Bay Street at Bull Street were similar to most blocks of Bay Street: two narrow parking lanes, and four narrow through-lanes. This situation was unsafe for drivers and fostered congestion during peak flow.

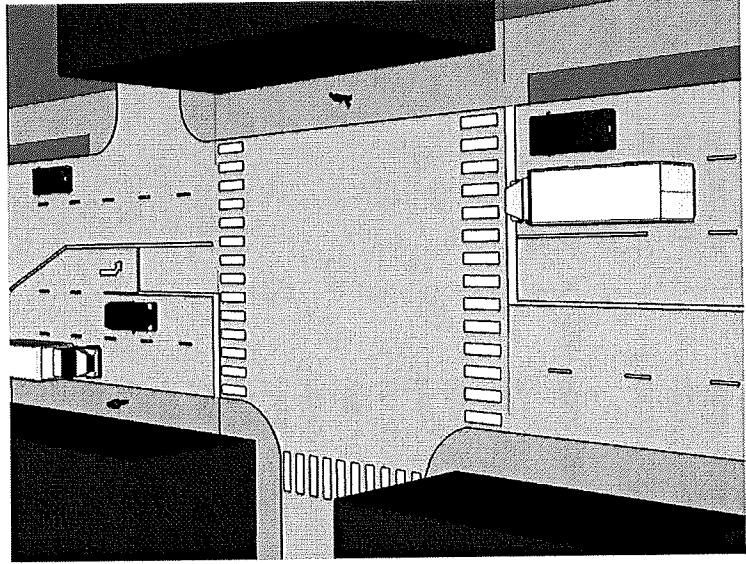


Figure 25: Currently, Bay Street at Bull Street incorporates turn lanes by removing parking on both sides of the street. This configuration heavily favors thru-traffic over commercial traffic, business interests, and pedestrian safety.

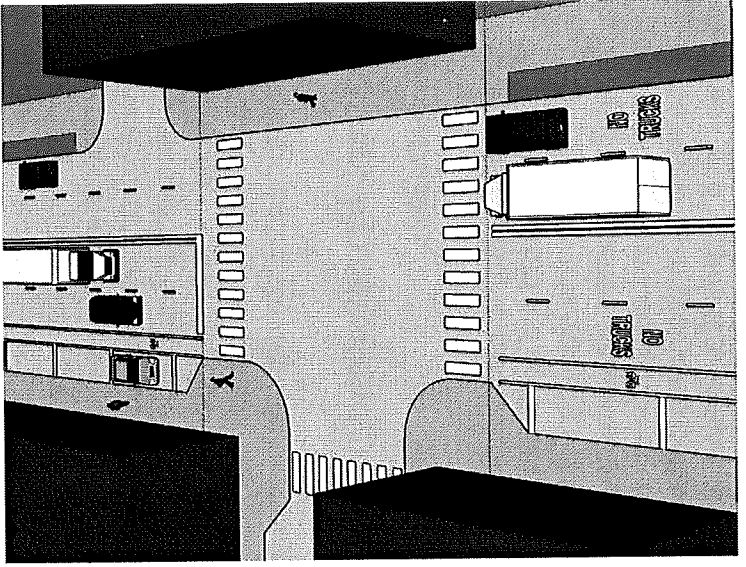


Figure 26: Ideally, Bay Street should balance the needs of its many users. By removing only one lane of parking, wider truck lanes and perhaps even a one-way bike lane could be added. Pedestrians are buffered from traffic and given bumpouts at corners.

Due to its service as a main east-west connector for GA State Highway 17 through downtown, Bay Street needs to accommodate the commercial and transportation needs of inter-municipal traffic. This is not a reason, however, to ignore the needs of all of the other users of the street including pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and visitors with varying levels of familiarity with Bay Street.

This plan focuses on developing a workable compromise between all users, calming the traffic and giving pedestrians and those with special needs, equal rights to use the street, while providing reasonable access for auto and truck thru-movements. In the long term, a more concerted effort should be made to develop a workable and fundable solution to the significant problem created by having what is essentially a

state highway run through the heart of Savannah on surface streets. Over the years, several large capital projects have been proposed including a new bridge across the Savannah River east of downtown, a tunnel under downtown, and a parkway around the south side of the city. While any of these options would remove auto and truck traffic from Bay Street, they all have significant impacts and costs that will have to be carefully studied before being implemented.

Bay Street Recommendations

Roadway Design

- Remove parking to make room for widened travel lanes, but ONLY from the north side of the street. Most of the buildings on this side are set far back, and mature trees within a planted tree-lawn separate pedestrians from traffic. Parking along the south side of the street must be retained to provide a buffer from traffic for pedestrians and to provide parking for businesses. A recent trial that removed south-side parking between Bull and Whitaker Streets has left pedestrians with a dangerously narrow sidewalk and no protection from fast-moving trucks and other vehicles. National studies have shown that one on-street parking space, if turned over at least 8 times a day, can provide up to \$200,000 in annual sales to the businesses in a downtown community thus making on-street spaces critical to the success of downtown businesses.
- Re-stripe the travel lanes to create wider lanes in the center. With the current on-street parking configuration, the travel lanes could be restriped to create two 10 foot lanes on the outside and two 11 foot lanes in the center. Wider center lanes will encourage trucks and

other wide vehicles to use these lanes. However, no turn lanes would be created. If parking is removed from the north side of the street, travel lanes could be widened further. Leaving eight feet for a safer southern parking lane, will allow four 11-12 foot lanes that can safely accommodate large trucks.

- Provide a refuge for pedestrians crossing Bay Street at Bull Street. Bump-outs should be built at all other street corners along the south side of Bay Street. This would give pedestrians a safe place to wait for the traffic signal to change and would reduce the amount of time it takes them to safely and legally cross the street. This is particularly important for the elderly, children, and people using mobility devices.

Other Recommendations

- Formalize the current trial project restricting trucks to the center lanes to provide some separation between pedestrians on the sidewalk and very large vehicles on the street. This has proven to be successful at putting the larger vehicles with longer stopping distances farther from where pedestrians might accidentally dart out into traffic. The wider center lanes encourage trucks to comply.
- Provide clear and easily identified signage to inform motorists and truck drivers of the unique rules associated with traveling on Bay Street in a densely populated, busy, historic area.
- Continue to investigate the potential of lowering the speed limit to 25 mph with city and state traffic engineering officials as well as the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police department. It is important that Savannah improve the pedestrian environment of Bay

Street, which will otherwise continue to be a major barrier between downtown and the waterfront. It is important to explore ways of overcoming any barriers to its implementation.

- Continue to explore long-term solutions to address the east-west truck and traffic concerns. Additionally, thought should be given to addressing enhancement of east-west rail connections from the Port terminals to the industries located along East President Street. Since rail connections are vital to the industries located along East President Street and can help remove truck traffic from Bay Street, the feasibility of adding rail and/or enhancing freight track should be explored as part of the various studies.

PARKING

"Not enough parking!" is often cited as a primary problem with downtowns across the country, but the issues surrounding parking are much more complicated than simple supply and demand. In fact, Savannah and other similar cities are lucky to have a parking "problem" — it shows how many people are attracted to downtown!

However, having an adequate amount of parking is indeed critical to many parts of downtown's vitality. This is especially true in smaller cities like Savannah which must compete with malls and suburban office developments that are often much closer to population centers and offer an abundance of parking options within sight of the front door.

Moreover, Savannah does seem to have a genuine problem

when it comes to parking in the downtown commercial areas. There are four municipal garages (with approximately 2,250 spaces total) and 3,000 metered spaces in lots and on streets in the office and shopping core that are filled to capacity almost daily. In particular, short-term parking — for those who are running errands, doing some quick shopping, or coming downtown for business meetings — is especially hard to find. The situation will improve slightly as the new Whitaker Street Parking Garage adds 1,000+ spaces, but since most of those have already been "sold" in blocks to meet the increased parking needs of nearby new office and hotel uses, it is expected that shortages for the short-term parker will continue.

However, simply building more parking garages and lots, is often not the most effective solution. Firstly, the cost of new garages, especially in a city of small lots and short blocks, is prohibitively high.

Secondly, the main parking issue in downtown Savannah is the large number of long-term parkers, such as downtown's employees, business owners, long-term visitors, and downtown residents, who tend to occupy the same spaces that are ideally located for short-term parking. Getting these drivers to park elsewhere or use transit is paramount. As such, expanded transportation alternatives, off-site parking, and fee structures that differentiate between long and short-term parking are needed.

Savannah's on-street permits, parking fees, and time limits, in particular, encourage this. Residents in a metered zone can apply for a permit providing for free on-street parking at parking meters. Many of Savannah's meters allow drivers to park up to 10 hours and meter fees are fairly low compared to cities with similar sizes and downtown user demographics.

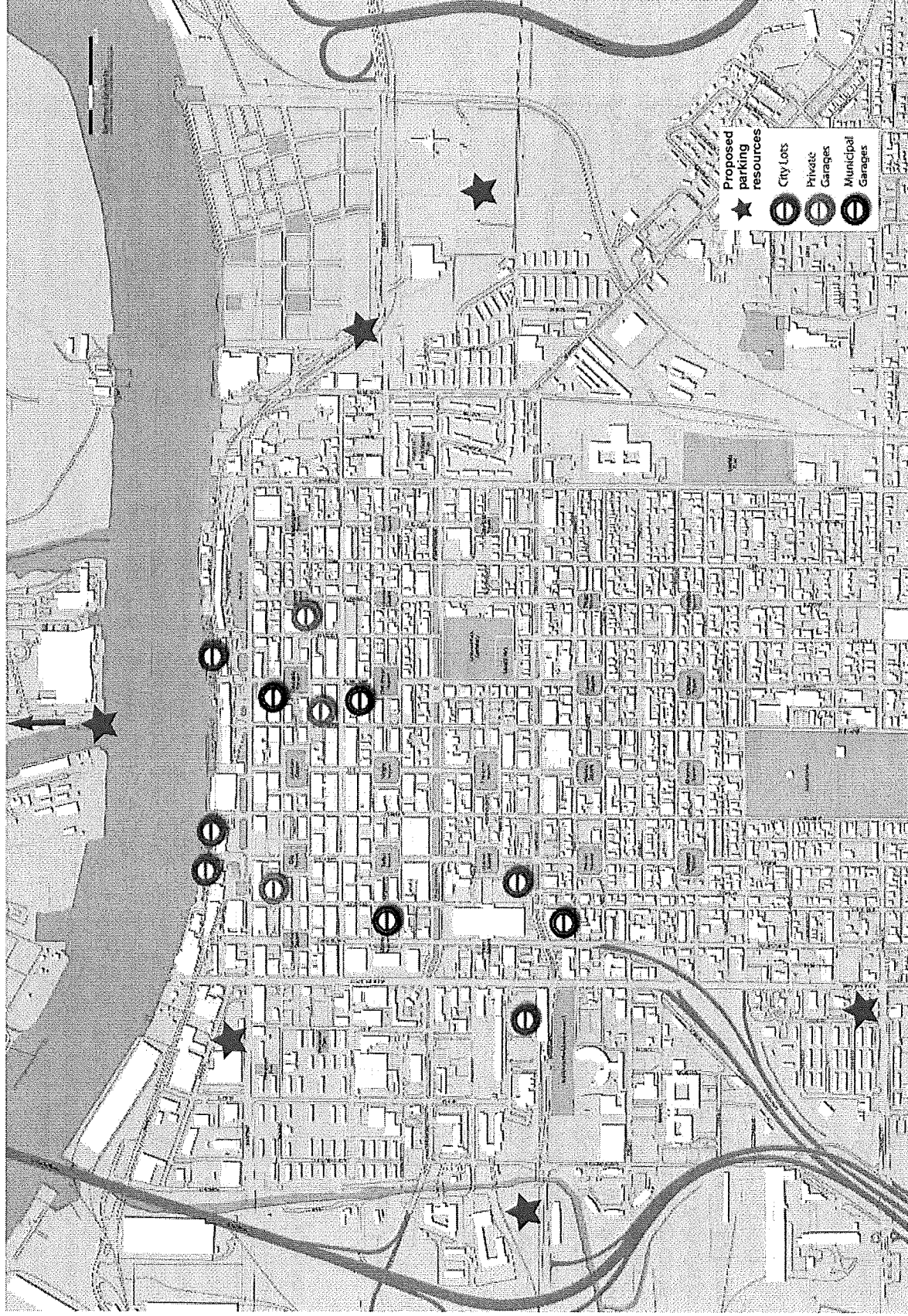


Figure 27: Map of existing and proposed parking resources. Proposed parking resources at edge locations are shown with a star. These locations would be serviced by the proposed "Super Shuttles" described and illustrated in the transit section, or other forms of transit.

Parking Recommendations

Improving the Existing Parking Supply

Annapolis, Maryland, for example, charges \$1.25 per hour, compared to Savannah's range of \$0.30 to \$0.75/hour. The retail district of Santa Barbara, California allows free parking for the first 75 minutes, and charges \$1.50 for each additional hour.

Another reason why adding parking garages and lots in downtown may not be the best solution is that parking garages and lots can be extremely harmful to historic urban character like that found in downtown Savannah. Parking is by nature not an active use; it requires large amounts of land and large structures, and the noise and traffic does not blend well with pedestrian or residential activity. Furthermore, even in a delightfully walkable city like Savannah, it encourages driving between destinations, adding to congestion, noise, environmental, health, and other problems. Additionally, issues of safety and security need to be thoroughly addressed at all parking garages, along with well lit travel ways for pedestrians to access decks afterwards.

As more residential development comes to Savannah, steps should be taken to limit the amount of parking built in residential areas. Cities like San Francisco are discovering that eliminating parking requirements for development in denser areas helps prevent traffic congestion while encouraging car-sharing, walking and transit use. After all, downtowns and other dense areas are often the only places where residents need not have automobiles. Furthermore, reducing parking requirements also decreases the cost of new office development and reduces the price of new housing, both of which are goals of the Downtown Savannah Master Plan. Such a strategy should only be undertaken with an enhanced and frequent public transportation link to and from off-site, peripheral parking.

- Continue conducting the parking inventory and other efforts already underway, such as examining the relationship between zoning and parking. To improve the management of the existing supply, it will be necessary to determine the true usage rates of all parking assets at all times of day during the week. The parking inventory should then be reviewed to target spaces to the most appropriate user (short-term vs. long-term, business, residential, visitor, etc.).
- Review regularly all on-street parking to determine whether additional spaces are available by re-striping, and where existing restrictions may be obsolete or outdated. To encourage business owners and employees to park away from retail and office areas, leaving spaces for customers, on-street parking fees should be changed to favor short-term parking, time limits should be shortened, and/or loading or other special purpose zones should be modified.
- Monitor usage of bulk sales of spaces in public garages to maximize garage efficiency. Fewer and/or more expensive bulk sales should be done in areas where high-turnover is paramount. As this is often a critical discussion with the development of infill construction, ensure that this information is readily available during the MPC's site review process.
- Develop greater coordination of public and private parking resources to manage the existing parking supply. Cooperation is needed between lot and garage owners to allow shared use of private lots, communication is needed between garage and lot operators to let cus-

tomers know where space is available. Parking Services should join with the City of Savannah Tourism and Film Department, SDRA, and the Downtown Business Association to develop a year-round campaign built around the ongoing wayfinding efforts and targeted at different parking markets — tourism and locals, etc.. Coordination should include educating visitors and residents about viable public transit options from their residences or hotels.

- Develop a "one stop" transportation and parking website and phone line covering all parking facilities, both public and private, as well as public and private transit options.

Adding to the Parking Supply

- Build on the current efforts to develop a series of peripheral parking facilities for long-term parking users, such as employees, business owners, and multi-day visitors. The new parking must be well connected to the downtown office and retail areas — depending on location, attractive and well-lit pedestrian routes and frequent, reliable shuttle service will be needed. Potential locations include low-cost surface lots near US Route 17 on the west side of downtown, and along East President Street, east of East Broad Street — both linked by frequent shuttle buses into downtown — and Hutchinson Island with its ferry service. Development of the peripheral lots must be linked to the downtown by travel ways — sidewalks, signage and dedicated public transportation systems. The Liberty Street Garage serves as an effective model for this, as many of its users are able to make the lengthy but pleasant walk to the downtown office and shopping areas. Additionally, siting parking

to support large-scale commercial uses along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and the new Cultural Arts Center at Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Gwinnett Street can be a catalyst for the westside of downtown.

- Encourage employers to implement Commuter Choice benefit programs for vanpooling and transit use — tax free benefit for both employers and employees.
- Consider fees tied to parking and/or development to help pay for the new peripheral parking and its pedestrian and transit connections, as discussed in the Economic Development Chapter. Fees might be proportional to the scale and impact of new development, or may be in lieu of building the required parking within the development. Additional income from raising on-street and public garage parking rates could also be dedicated to peripheral parking.
- Review the current fee structure of parking, which tends to over-stimulate demand in downtown and under-fund needed parking structures and services. Targeted increases in the parking cost would have the double positive effect of encouraging more walking, bicycling, and shuttle and transit riding while raising money to support improved parking availability. The recommended fee structure would prioritize downtown garages and on-street parking for short-term users, such as shoppers and those attending business meetings, and peripheral garages and lots for long-term users like commuters.

Protecting the Urban Fabric

- Mandate that any new garage fronting a major street must include active commercial or retail uses on its

ground floor.

- Limit the size of surface parking lots within the National Historic Landmark District to protect the historic walkable urban fabric. New surface parking lots should be no bigger than six spaces. Where possible, parking should be located along lanes and not main thoroughfares.
- Require that all surface lots in the city be screened with attractive fencing and landscaping along sidewalks and other pedestrian routes. Surface parking for any new development should be located to the rear or side of the lot, where possible.

CONNECTIONS

The success of cities often depends on having areas of the city be self-contained enough to foster community and uniqueness, while also being intimately connected within an overarching and easily-navigable network of movement. Oglethorpe's ward system demonstrates this, with each ward centered on an intimate square of its own, while the interface streets at the ward edges (i.e. Broughton, Oglethorpe, Liberty, Whitaker, and Drayton Streets) form the overarching movement system. This is one of the reasons for downtown Savannah's ability to adapt to new circumstances over the centuries.

The most recent economic success of downtown Savannah, and resulting increase in real estate prices, has provided opportunities to redevelop the Expansion Areas around downtown and on Hutchinson Island, which for many years were peripheral locations. Successful new development in these

places will depend on new streets and other transportation connections to tie these areas closely to the rest of the city.

The Savannah River Landing development to the east of downtown has set a high standard for how this can be achieved. By using a "civic master plan" process, the expansion of downtown's network of streets and squares was given priority to framing development on this site. As such, there is now only a small gap in the urban fabric between Savannah River Landings and the established downtown, a gap that extensions of River Street and Broughton Street could easily cross. Furthermore, encouraging transit-connections such as the proposed rail trolley system to Savannah River Landing and other east side developments will provide for congestion reduction and ease of transit use.

Similarly, on the west side of downtown, the area disrupted by the I-16 Flyover and its on- and off-ramps should be stitched back together and made more developable. Feedback during public meetings for the Downtown Savannah Master Plan was supportive of removing the Flyover and replacing it with a grid of surface streets. This action would convert Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street from high speed thoroughfares to urban neighborhood/commercial streets as well as open up a large area of land to opportunities for mixed-income, mixed-use, mixed-income redevelopment.

This is no small task, but the removal of highway infrastructure in urban areas where it has caused blight and a decline in the quality of the pedestrian and urban environment is becoming more common. Boston, San Francisco, Milwaukee, New York City, and Portland, Oregon have each successfully removed elevated highway sections in order to foster new urban development and encourage revitalization of the areas around

them. In each case, the new street-level grid that replaced the highway included public amenities such as parks, and quickly attracted new infill development.

Less disruptive than the I-16 Flyover, but still blocking the grid are the super-blocks created by the Civic Center and nearby parking lots. This site effectively separates the downtown from Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and areas west, both physically and psychologically. As the arena moves to a new venue, an opportunity will be created to redevelop the site in a way that will restore Orleans and Elbert Squares and the thru-streets of Savannah. This will facilitate the revitalization of the western edge of downtown and its connection to the Western Downtown Expansion Area.

Connections Recommendations

- Continue to recognize the removal of the I-16 Flyover and redistribution of its traffic as a positive step, acknowledging it as a process separate from the Downtown Savannah Master Plan. Because the Flyover is a part of the Georgia State Highway System and was paid for with federal funds, the process for removing it is complicated and long-term; however, the benefits will likely outweigh the investment.
- Commission an economic development and feasibility study to determine the best plan for relocation of the I-16 Flyover. This must be done in coordination with any planning for development of a new arena.
- Develop a Civic Master Plan for the area between Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street and west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard that would be redeveloped when the I-16 Flyover and ramps are removed and realigned.

- The plan for the redevelopment of the Civic Center should reestablish the former grid of streets through and around the site and restore Elbert Square to its former configuration. This is discussed in more detail in the "Oglethorpe Plan and Design" chapter of this document.
- Extend shuttle and streetcar transportation into the new areas as they are being developed. It is important to provide travel options from the very beginning because it sets the tone of new development — people are more open to trying new forms of transportation while they are changing other aspects of their lives. The Pearl District of Portland, Oregon is an example where a new streetcar line was critical in bringing development that catered to a population that saw transit as an asset.
- Explore connecting downtown to other important regional hubs, such as the airport, with fixed guideway transportation. This includes rapid busways, heavy rail, light rail and street cars.



Figure 31: The new streetcar line through Portland's Pearl District, a formerly under-developed area near downtown, attracted and set the tone for subsequent development.

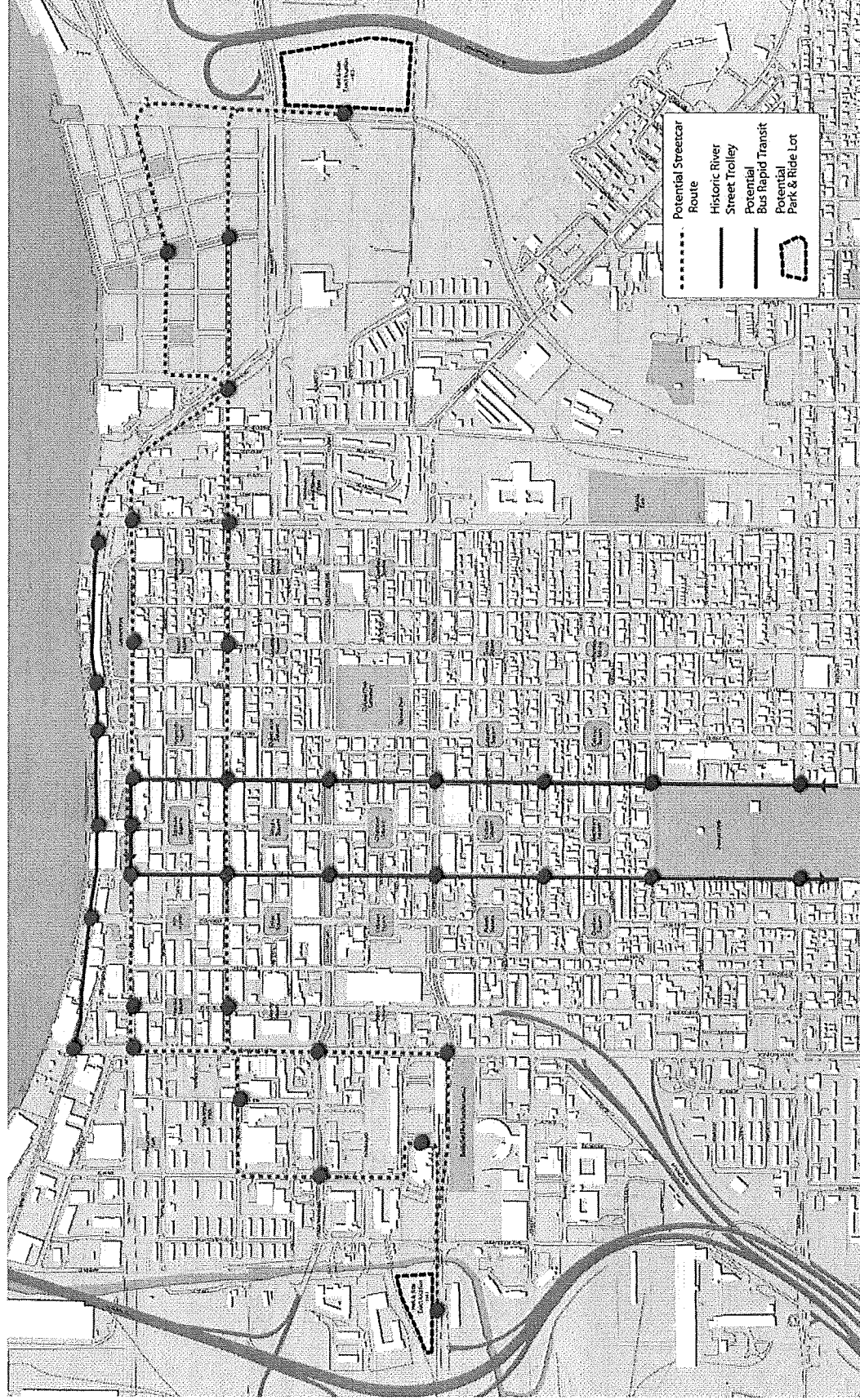


Figure 32: Map of proposed "Super Shuttle" routes, showing a possible east-west route along Bay and Broughton Streets, and north-south route along Drayton and Whitaker Streets. Future routes could be developed, possibly down Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and East Broad Street as major projects (i.e. the I-16 Flyover removal) are completed.

TRANSIT AND OTHER MASS TRANSPORTATION

Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) currently provides public transit service around Chatham County with downtown Savannah acting as the hub of the system. Thirteen to fourteen-thousand riders use CAT on a typical weekday, many of whom are destined for downtown, making it an important resource for city residents, especially those on limited incomes. CAT is exploring the potential development of a new main hub station, to replace the existing main on-street stop at the county courthouse on Broughton Street and at the Bull Street location. This would reduce the amount of bus traffic on the downtown streets and limit the need to idle and lay over on local streets, as well as give passengers access to an indoor climate-controlled waiting room, restrooms, and other amenities. Core transit service, however, would not be removed from downtown. Two locations are under consideration, the current site of the Greyhound Station on Oglethorpe Avenue and a site on Louisville Road at West Boundary Street. Currently, CAT is conducting a review of the two sites for environmental impacts and will be making their recommendation to the CAT Board once the review is complete.

In addition to CAT, there are currently three other private transit systems operating in downtown Savannah, all largely independent of one another: SCAD shuttles, the public visitor services, and the privately operated visitor tours. Each overlaps the other and there is little coordination between the four. This leads to a large number of shuttles and buses circulating around downtown. The Savannah Mobility Management Board (MMB) is working on this challenge and has just estab-

lished the Downtown Transportation System (DOT) marketing strategy to unify the advertising and operation of some of the services currently being provided.

Strengthening the transportation modes that provide an alternative to the automobile for downtown commuters and visitors will greatly improve mobility in downtown and help to relieve the parking shortage. Savannah has already begun the process of improving its transit system through MMB's express Downtown Transportation System (DOT) shuttle (operated by CAT), the Liberty Street Garage shuttle service, the DOT services including the ferry service, and the new pilot-project streetcar on River Street.

Transit Recommendations

- Support the completion of the CAT downtown transit station. This facility is a critical improvement to Savannah's public transit system that will allow CAT to expand its role in serving the transportation needs of downtown and the region.
- Once the new downtown transit station has been constructed, implement a new East-West "Super Shuttle" that will connect to the new parking lots, as well as neighborhoods to the east and west of downtown, and alleviate traffic and parking congestion along and around Broughton. The "Super Shuttle" would provide easy access to the center of downtown for CAT riders arriving at the downtown transit station, allowing regular buses to be more efficiently redeployed on longer routes. The shuttle could also provide east-west service along Broughton making it easy for shoppers to use the entire street by parking once. The Super Shuttle would be designed to fit into its urban context by using

short 30-foot buses powered by battery or hybrid propulsion.

- Implement a North-South Super Shuttle connector to neighborhoods south of downtown to open up convenient access to lower cost housing for downtown workers. This shuttle would have the advantages of reducing the parking problem in downtown while helping to revitalize other neighborhoods. The shuttle would use the same type of environmentally and city-friendly vehicle as the East-West Shuttle.
- Review the streetcar feasibility study completed by CAT in 2003 to determine the feasibility of an expanded streetcar system beyond River Street through extensions into the expansion areas to the east and west, as well as neighborhoods to the south. This system could eventually take over the function of the East-West Super Shuttle connecting the transit center and peripheral parking lots to downtown and on to Savannah River Landing.

- Develop a partnership between Savannah College of Art and Design, the Mobility Management Board, the City, and CAT aimed at streamlining the current system of buses and shuttles in downtown Savannah. This will require a central point of ownership and leadership to ensure coordination and prevent duplication of efforts. The current multiple systems result in duplication of service and boarding sites that could be eliminated, thereby reducing the cost of providing the shuttles for all stakeholders and improving service for riders as well as decreasing traffic congestion. A first step would be for CAT to expand existing incentives to encourage student ridership and offer SCAD students a special discount pass for a semester. An example of how this could be done is provided by the Capital District

Transportation Authority (CDTA) in Albany, New York and the New York State University at Albany where student ID's are now good for riding certain public bus routes that were formerly duplicated by University shuttles. This will become increasingly important as area college and universities site downtown campuses.

- Implement a transportation day pass good for parking and all transit and shuttle services. This would require the development of an agreement between CAT and the Parking Department on the fair distribution of costs and revenues. The passes should be made widely available through retail shops, vending machines, government offices, by mail, and on-line.
- A successful transit system must ensure accessibility including accessible bus shelters, real-time arrival information (Intelligent Transportation Systems, or ITS), and buses that accommodate two wheelchair users and feature low floors to ensure ease of boarding.

CONVERSION OF ONE-WAY STREETS

Historically, Whitaker, Drayton, Lincoln, and Price Streets that run between wards instead of through them have long been considered more practical service streets rather than "front-door" streets. Once the automobile began to dominate transportation, these streets were made one-way and given the role as the main north-south traffic spines of downtown Savannah. As such, their orientation centers on moving vehicle traffic efficiently.

This is often a useful designation, in that they allow rapid

movement to and from the downtown without the intrusion of large highway-style infrastructure. However, the resulting high-speed traffic, lack of trees, and difficult crosswalk conditions has created undesirable pedestrian environments and reduced residential and business activity.

With the recent resident and visitor growth in the downtown, businesses are starting to re-appear on Whitaker, Drayton, Lincoln, and Price Streets, taking advantage of lower cost space and the availability of small existing parking lots. This is exemplified by the commercial uses developing in the recently renovated Drayton Towers and the Whitaker Street Design District. This is leading to a re-evaluation of the level of pedestrian amenities that should be provided on all of the north-south service streets.

As downtown's tide continues to rise, it will become essential to better connect other areas of the city to it, both to support the new stores, offices, and jobs, and also to bring investment and positive change to the outer neighborhoods. Staying true to Oglethorpe's vision for these practical streets, Whitaker, Drayton, Lincoln, and Price Streets can act as these connections.

Conversion of One-Way Streets Recommendations

- Explore conversion of Whitaker, Drayton, Lincoln, and Price Streets back to two-way streets. This will result in a small amount of reduced capacity, but the total traffic counts on these streets is not so high that this will cause a problem. It will also allow for more direct trips to destinations in the area, which will create a small

reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), a measure of congestion, on nearby streets. Converting to two-way streets will also reduce speeds slightly, resulting in a more comfortable pedestrian environment, and easier vehicle crossings at stop-sign intersections. Access to the growing number of retail establishments along these streets will also be simplified.

- Move main bus routes from Abercorn and Barnard to Whitaker and Drayton as they travel north and south in the study area. Provide bus stop amenities for stops on the new North-South Super Shuttle.
- Improve streetscape and functional elements on Whitaker, Drayton, Lincoln, and Price Streets including crosswalk improvements, new bus stops and shelters, widened sidewalks at intersections (bump outs), and more pleasant sidewalk paving.
- Restore parking on Whitaker, Drayton, Lincoln, and Price Streets on the blocks between Bay and Oglethorpe by narrowing the width of the travel lanes. This would provide as many as 200 new spaces assuming 20 feet per stall and 1000 feet of usable block face on each street. It would also calm traffic and provide a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles, at least on one side of the street.
- Add new street trees along Whitaker and Drayton Streets between Bay and Gaston Streets where there are few trees today.

VISITOR MOBILITY

Attracted by the city's unique and beautiful urban environment, Savannah has become a national destination for visi-

MOBILITY

tors. Currently, many of these visitors start at the Visitors Center or a known destination like River Street, but because many are unfamiliar with the intricate streets and squares, they create additional traffic while they search for specific places and for parking. Once on foot, visitors often stick to one or two comfortable tourist areas and few of them (and their dollars) venture outward. A system of wayfinding signage for drivers and walkers is needed and is currently being designed through a citizens' task force working with the City's Tourism and Film Office and the Savannah Mobility Management Board (MMB).

The MMB has been established to address transportation problems related to visitors to Savannah and Hutchinson Island in general. The MMB has completed a plan for improved mobility and is in the process of implementing a streetcar pilot-project on River Street in cooperation with the City of Savannah. The line will run along existing and improved tracks on River Street from Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to the Waving Girl statue, using two historic trolleys retrofitted with diesel-electric hybrid engines. This line will serve primarily as an attraction at first, providing a fun way for visitors to see River Street. It could form the first piece of a larger, more commuter and resident oriented rail transportation system in the future.

The MMB has also worked on a new Express Shuttle service for downtown, improving the ferry system, and training customer service specialists to help people get around Savannah.

Visitor Mobility Recommendations

- Complete the current Wayfinding initiative and install a system of attractive signage that helps visitors orient

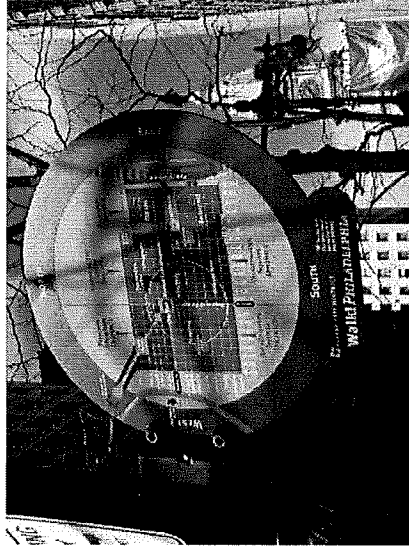


Figure 33: Philadelphia's "heads-up" directional signage makes it easy for visitors to find destinations and discover the city.

themselves to the city, both as drivers when first arriving, and as pedestrians when moving about on foot. Vehicular signage should point out visitor parking and major destinations such as hotels and the visitor center. Pedestrian signs should be much more detailed and include maps of the city.

- Investigate the extension of the River Street Streetcar into the areas to the west and east of River Street's retail zone. Connection with Savannah River Landing, and the new CAT downtown transit station would add destinations and bring a wider and more sustainable ridership for the streetcar line. Additionally, investigate further expansion of the system into the neighborhoods to the south to offer more transit options to downtown workers and residents.

BICYCLES AND ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Savannah's relatively flat topography, pleasant streets, and good weather make it an excellent bicycling city. Many students and residents currently use bicycles to get around town. The City and MPC have developed a bicycle route system for the county in 2000, and have designated a number of routes downtown that require implementation and development. The system will encourage local and state agencies to create bicycle improvements when repairing or rebuilding these streets, and also allow agencies to seek federal funding for improvements. Encouraging more bicycle commuting would reduce auto congestion and the demand for parking downtown. Additionally, the City is reviewing public rights of ways to

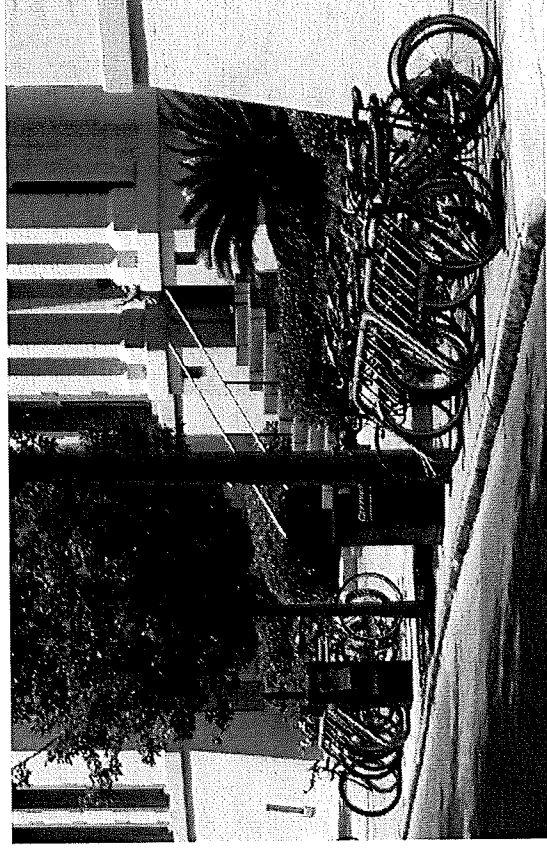


Figure 34: Bicycles are already a large part of Savannah's transportation system.

determine the best locations for bike racks and other amenities.

Alternative forms of transportation should also be explored and encouraged including scooters, vespas, and even Segways. Such alternative forms would reduce congestion and the need for additional parking downtown.

Recommendations

- Provide improved amenities for bicycle transportation including additional bicycle racks throughout downtown, bicycle lane markings on pavement, signage reminding motorists to share the road, and a "Bike Central" facility in cooperation with a downtown health club to provide members with storage lockers, showers, and changing rooms.

- Support the development of the East Coast Greenway/Coastal Georgia Greenway and the identified connections to downtown.
- Provide amenities encouraging scooter use. These amenities will require policy changes addressing parking, storage, signage, and registration of such vehicles.
- Support the Coastal Commuters Program sponsored by the MPC. Coastal Commuters will offer ride-matching assistance and Emergency Ride Home program. The program will be incentivized through preferential parking locations, subsidized monthly transit passes, pre-tax deduction on transit pass costs, installation of bicycle racks and availability of shower facilities for bikers and walkers.

- parking within the right-of-way.
- Investigate and expand on other means of improving mobility, such as audio and visual signals that aid in crossing streets.
- Create financial incentives to encourage downtown businesses to develop or retro-fit buildings to ensure accessibility.

ACCESSIBILITY

Like many older cities, Savannah may seem hard to get around to people with disabilities and pedestrians using baby strollers — cobblestone and Belgian block paving, uneven or missing sidewalks, and a lack of sidewalk ramps can hinder basic movement. Most people will suffer from some disability at some point in their lives and cities need to be made accessible for all.

Accessibility Recommendations

- Financially support the City's curb cut efforts, and require all new development to construct sidewalk ramps. Furthermore, increase enforcement to prevent vehicles from blocking sidewalks and curb cuts by

RETAIN THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF THE OGLETHORPE PLAN

"It is amazing that a colony, struggling against the most elemental problems of survival in a wilderness, should be able to produce a plan so exalted that it remains as one of the finest diagrams for city organization and growth in existence."

— Edmund Bacon, Design of Cities

The Oglethorpe Plan's highly unique system of organized public squares within a fine-grained grid of blocks, streets and lanes is fundamental to Savannah's urban and architectural expression. A set of twelve blocks surrounding each square comprise a ward, the basic unit of the city. Pedestrian paths cross through squares, while vehicles move around their perimeter. Four trust blocks are located directly east and west of each square and have direct frontage on it. These blocks are most suitable for civic and institutional buildings, prominent commercial buildings or larger homes. Eight tithing blocks are located on the north and south of each square. The Tithing Blocks are larger with frontage either on a north-south connecting street or a north-south through street. Tithing blocks are divided by lanes which provide access for services away from primary streets. Originally, tithing blocks were subdivided into 60-foot wide lots and were intended primarily to accommodate the residential and commercial life of the city. Oglethorpe's Plan has grown up to become

Savannah's National Historic Landmark District and proven to be an immensely successful and enduring model for urban development. Its inherent mix of uses, rhythm of lots, organization of public and private space, and ability to grow and change incrementally over time have generated a beautiful, healthy and human scaled city.

New development within the Downtown Historic District is governed by the Historic District Ordinance. Much of the Ordinance in its current form was implemented in 1997 and was based on a study and report conducted by Christopher Chadbourne which began in 1992. The regulations for development in Savannah's Downtown Historic District are often referred to as the Chadbourne Guidelines.

The Downtown Savannah Master Plan recognizes the critical importance of the Oglethorpe Plan as both a link to the past and a guide for future development, land use, and character

of downtown and the adjacent riverfront and neighborhoods. The Downtown Savannah Master Plan provides a physical framework from which the following issues can be addressed:

- Principles for Large-Scale Development;
- Effectiveness of Development Review Processes;
- Protection of Tree Canopy, and
- Opportunities within Major Civic Projects

ESTABLISH DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENT

Buildings that occupy large footprints bear a responsibility to provide pedestrian activity, human scale, economic diversity, safety, and aesthetic qualities within the surrounding block and sidewalks that characterize successful blocks historically comprised of many smaller buildings. Large-scale development should be held to a higher standard of design in order to achieve these qualities because it has a greater impact on the surrounding historic district.

A number of recent large-scale development proposals are not consistent with desired design, scale or mix of uses for downtown. While big-box retail and large office blocks have made inroads in many downtowns, Savannah flourishes on small-scale, local businesses that serve local residents as well as tourists. An active street life, quality design, and easy access all facilitate the sustainability of diverse small businesses and a human scale consistent with the Oglethorpe Plan.

The following recommendations for large-scale development aim to strengthen and enhance the existing design standards as they apply in the area located within the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area. Furthermore, these standards should be applied as appropriate to new development occurring in the east and west downtown expansion areas as well as on Hutchinson Island. The recommendations within the design principles for large-scale development allow the Downtown Savannah Master Plan to act as a policy tool, providing a basis for revisiting and updating the existing design standards. Any text changes to the Zoning Ordinance would be drafted into a final form by the MPC and taken forward for public input, review and ultimately adoption by the Mayor and Aldermen.

It is important to remember that these design principles are incremental in their application. In their potential to guide large-scale development, they have the ability to make better, more compatible buildings and a safer, more human-scaled, economically diverse and enduring public realm.

Definition of Large-Scale

Large-scale development is defined by the current Historic District Ordinance as any building over 9,000 square feet in footprint. This was originally determined by studying the average titling blocks in the Oglethorpe plan, which contain 27,000 square feet, and establishing that a building that occupies more than a third of its block (9,000 square feet) would be considered 'large-scale' and should be held to a higher standard.

Most blocks within the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area are made of collections of many buildings rather

ments for new large-scale development.

Hundreds of citizens provided input during two land-use and design workshops and through subsequent online surveys focusing on large-scale development. This interest formed a foundation for a concentrated study of large-scale development in the Downtown Savannah Master Plan Study Area. Working closely with the MPC and conducting further research helped confirm the direction for recommendations. Additionally, studying the effects of the current Ordinance over the last ten years, revisiting some of the initial recommendations that were a part of its creation, and reviewing initiatives from comparable communities, helped in understanding potential areas for improvement.

Design Principles

A series of Design Principles were established to organize and discuss individual elements of design that affect large-scale development. It is important to remember that these principles are incremental. Certain principles are more intensive than others. Individual principles should be understood to contribute only one particular aspect of a building's effectiveness within the city. All of the principles together add up to making better buildings and a safer, more human-scaled, economically diverse and enduring public realm.

It also is important to note that the Design Principles proposed by the Downtown Savannah Master Plan are stated as policy goals, but are not ordinances. As such, the wording included in the principle is meant to be concise and broad in its overall intent. The process of drafting actual ordinances to support these principles would necessarily include more detailed and case-specific language.

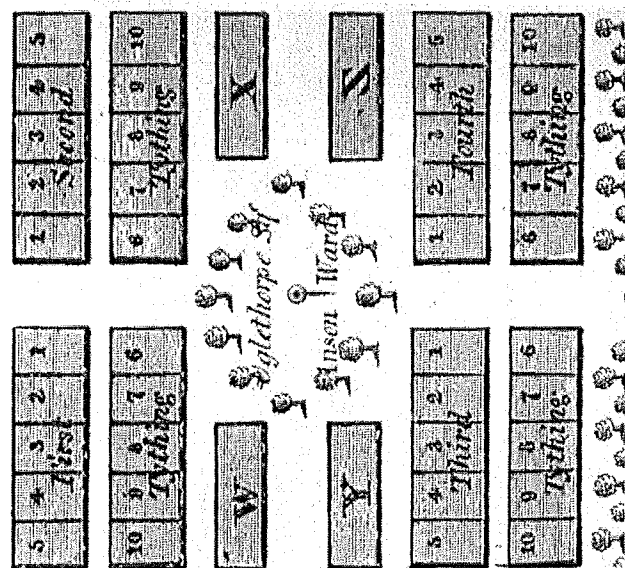


Figure 35: Typical ward in the Oglethorpe Plan.

than a few buildings or even a single building. Therefore, when buildings occupy large footprints (large-scale development) they have a greater impact on the district. As such, they have a responsibility to provide the pedestrian activity, human scale, economic diversity, safety, and aesthetic qualities within the surrounding block and sidewalks that normally accompany blocks comprised of many smaller buildings.

While design standards within Savannah's Historic District generally mandate a high level of architectural integrity, the existing provisions for large-scale development provide only minimal additional requirements when compared to other, smaller buildings. Therefore, the focus for these design recommendations is to look for ways to strengthen the require-

Principle 1: Streets and Lanes

Streets and lanes within the Oglethorpe Plan Area should be maintained, reclaimed or reconstructed for public use wherever historically present. Similar connected street patterns should be added in areas of new development.

Oglethorpe Plan

Development should preserve or reconstruct the original ward pattern of streets and lanes in the Oglethorpe Plan area between Gaston Street, Bay Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and East Broad Street. Historic rights-of-way should remain open or be reopened and should not be used for private purposes when practical and feasible.

Adjacent Grid Pattern

Development adjacent to the Oglethorpe Plan area should preserve or reconstruct the original grid pattern of streets and lanes. Rights-of-way should remain open or be reopened and should not be used for private purposes.

Downtown Expansion Areas

To be in line with the Savannah Tricentennial Plan, development in adjacent Downtown Expansion Areas — areas positioned for infill and redevelopment to the east and west of the National Landmark Historic District — should create patterns of streets and lanes consistent in dimensions, and connected to the ward pattern and grid pattern of streets and lanes in adjacent neighborhoods. A Civic Master Plan, as was developed for the east riverfront and Hutchinson Island, should be developed for these areas. The projected public rights-of-way should be kept open at all times, and should not be used for private purposes.

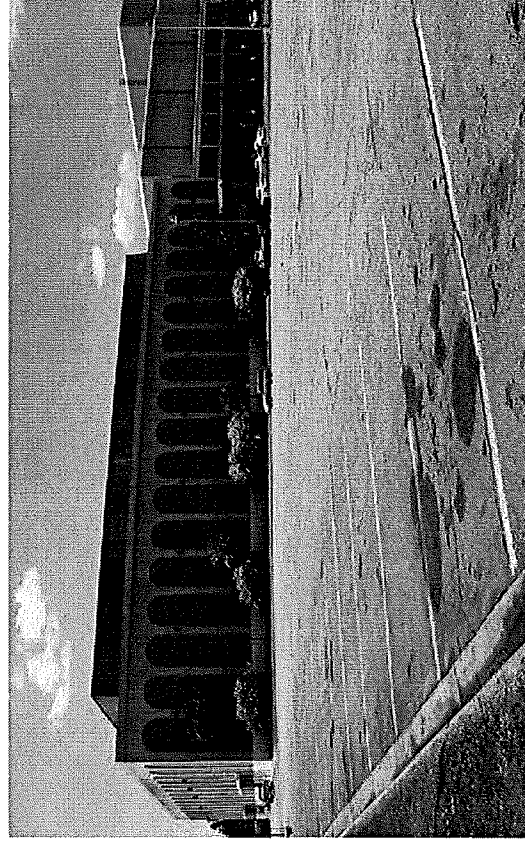
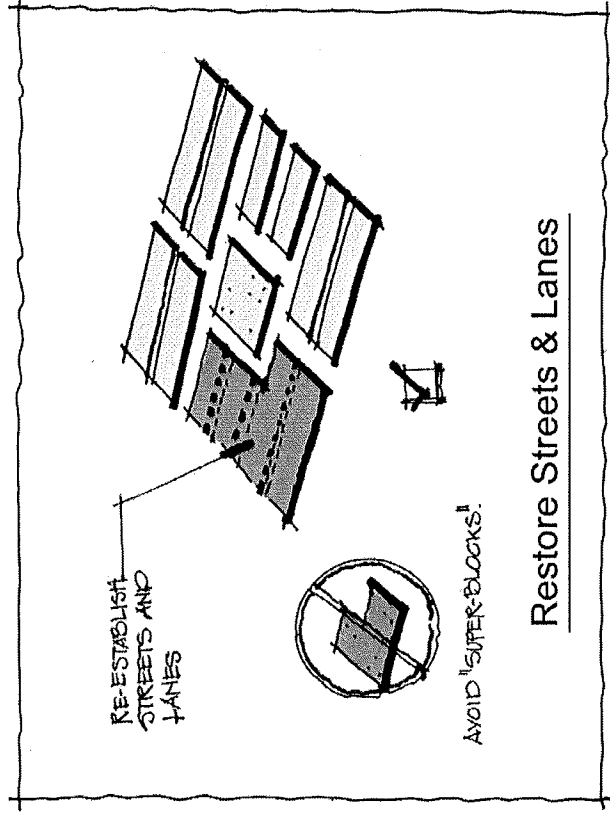


Figure 36: Re-establish the Oglethorpe Plan public rights-of-way in areas that have been consolidated by development.

Why This Matters

The character of Savannah is a direct result of its extraordinarily unique urban plan. The rhythm and scale of its small blocks has been the primary influence on its built form. In areas where the street plan has been preserved, the quality of human scale and economic diversity is greatest. In areas where streets and lanes have been closed, the scale and character of the City has been diminished. For example, over the course of the past century, thirteen streets and lanes have been closed, impacting the west side of the city between Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street. In future development scenarios, the City should seek to re-open these streets and lanes and resolve to not deed or quit claim any other streets. Patterns of small blocks and connected streets increase pedestrian access, sight lines, traffic calming, on-street parking, mixed-uses and economic vitality.

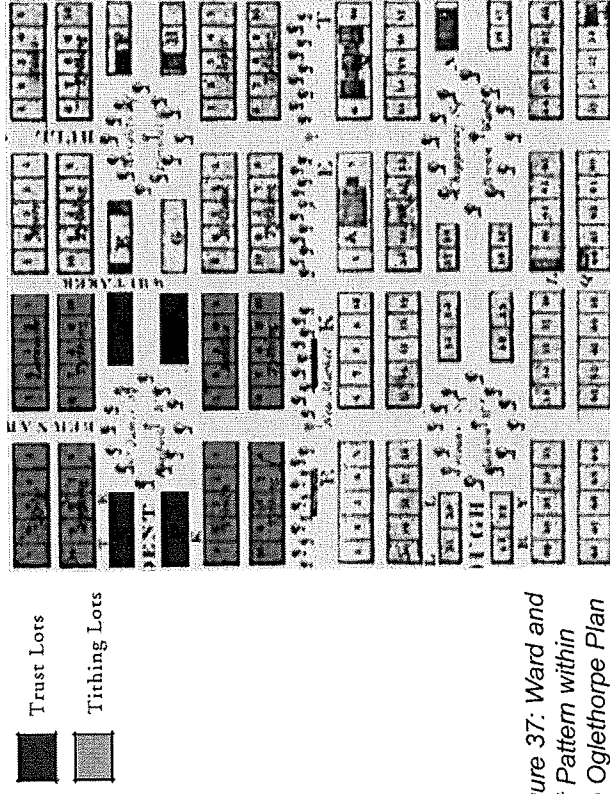
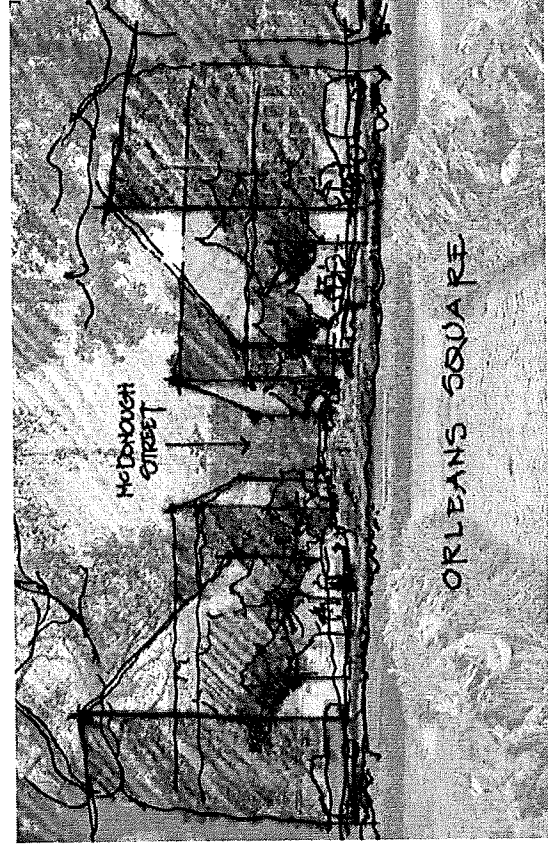
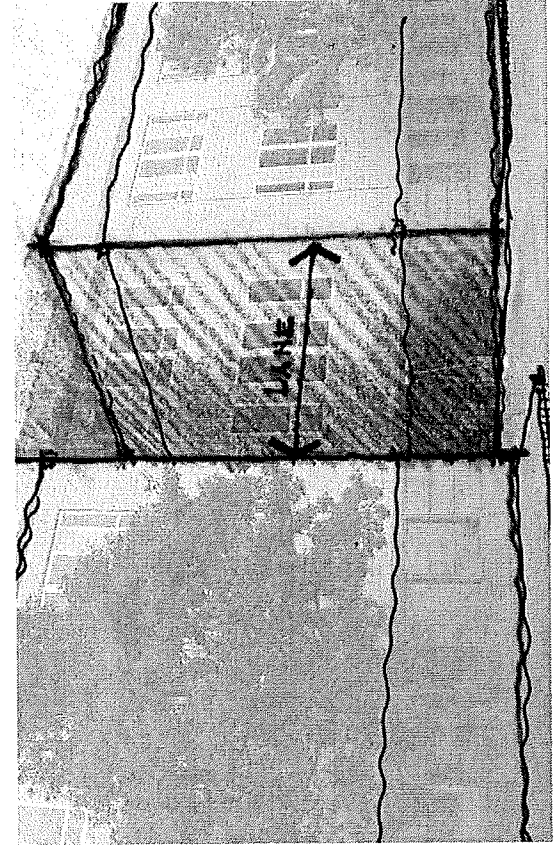


Figure 37: Ward and Lot Pattern within the Oglethorpe Plan



Principle 2: Building Footprint & Block Frontage

Building footprints for large-scale development should be limited to a maximum square footage within the Oglethorpe Plan. Individual adjacent buildings may be constructed for shared use.

Large-scale development is currently qualified as a building with a footprint of 9,000 square feet or more. Most titling blocks contain 27,000 square feet of total block area. The current standard was established to identify buildings that occupy 1/3 or more of a titling block as large-scale development.

Why This Matters:

Blocks that contain collections of multiple buildings allow the city to evolve, promoting change over time and greater economic diversity. Large-scale buildings present challenges to diversity when they occupy entire city blocks. They create more pressure for the individual building to provide the total vitality and diversity for the entire block. A study of building patterns within the Oglethorpe Plan indicates that establishing a maximum footprint could be an effective tool. For larger users, multiple buildings could be constructed for shared use, as depicted in Figure 38.

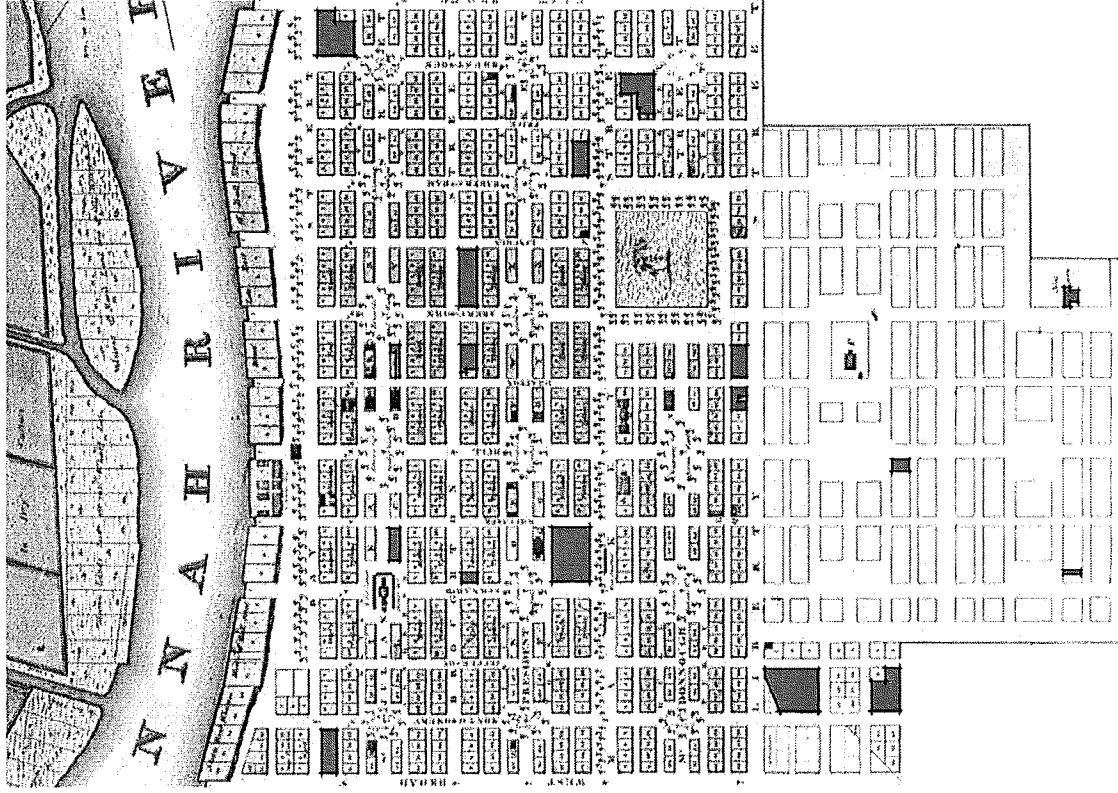
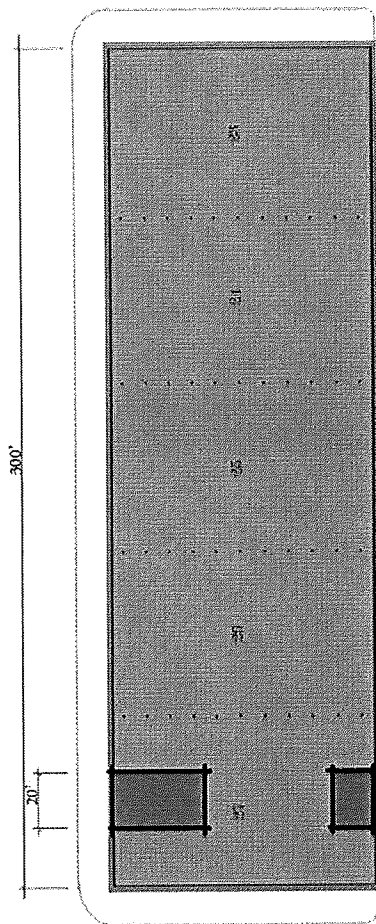


Figure 38: Excerpts from a Building Footprint and Block Frontage Study (above) conducted within the framework of the Oglethorpe Plan, showing the 100 Block of West Gordon Street. (right)

Building Footprint & Block Frontage

127 West Gordon Street

P R I M A R Y S T R E E T



Building Footprint

Block Boundary
& Oglethorpe Plan Lot Lines

Block Size:
Building Footprint (Approx.):

30,000 sf
1,020 sf

Block Length
Building Frontage

300 feet
20 feet

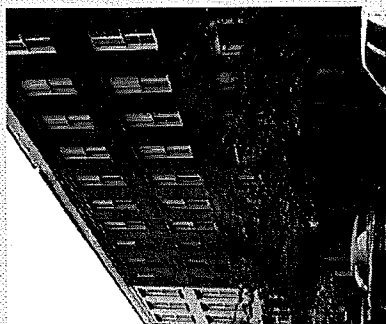
Partial Lot Usage:

Portion of 27 Chatham
Ward

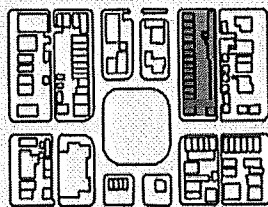
Building Use:

Residential

Information contained herein has been compiled from various sources.
Due to availability of data it does not claim complete accuracy. It is
intended instead to provide an overview and analysis of urban conditions.



127 West Gordon Street
Gordon Rowhouse



Chatham Ward

Downtown Master Plan

URBAN ANALYSIS

S A V A N N A H G E O R G I A
Savannah Development & Renewal Authority
Metropolitan Planning Commission
Sortile & Sortile Urban Design

Principle 3: Building Entrances

For large-scale development, a minimum interval of primary entrances should be required along all street frontages with the exception of lanes. A primary entrance should be defined as an entrance that has an individual street address.

The existing Historic District Ordinance requires that primary entrances be provided for large-scale development at intervals not to exceed 60 feet. This should be upheld firmly and further defined to ensure that these entrances produce the opportunity for active streetscapes.

The current dimension of 60 foot intervals appears to be appropriate for all block types with the exception of Trust Blocks which could be stated as 100 foot minimum interval due to the increased frontage along primary streets. This standard should be upheld for large-scale private development. Civic and institutional buildings would not be required to meet this standard.

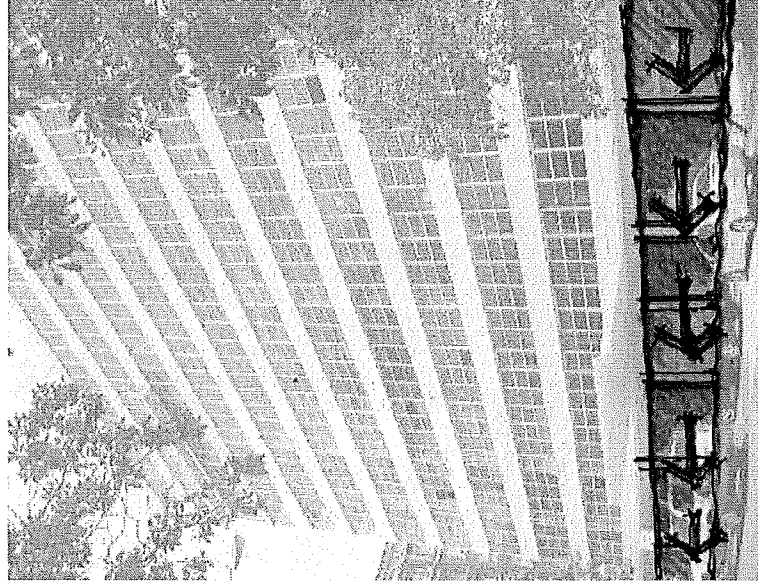
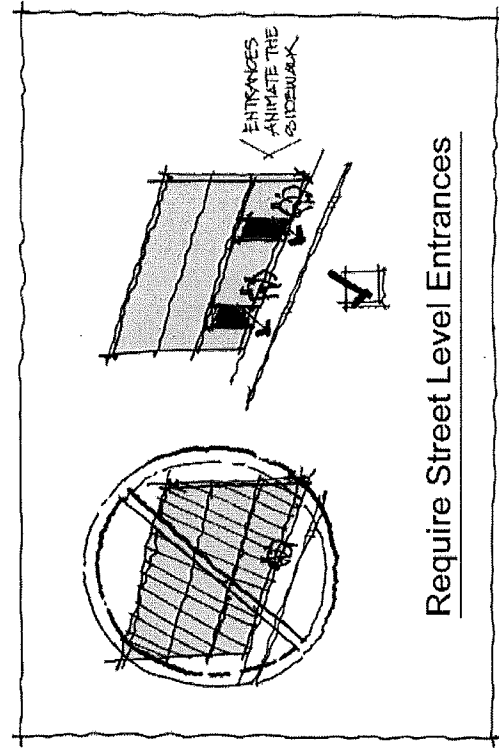
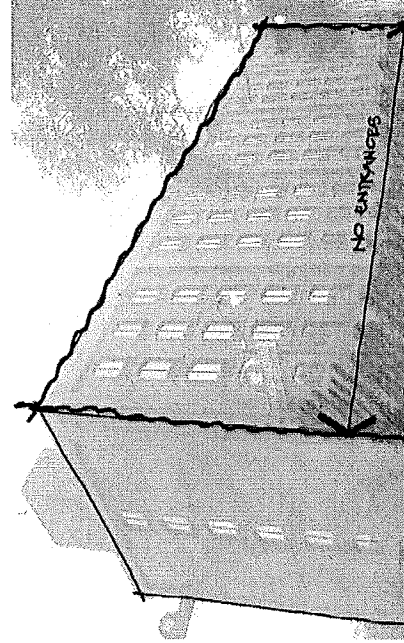


Figure 39: Regular entrances (above) provide vitality to the street while no entrances (below) along block face reduces pedestrian presence



Why This Matters

The number of functional entrances within a block is a direct measure of its vitality, human scale and pedestrian activity. Savannah's most walkable blocks feature multiple street addresses along their sidewalks.

While the windows of a building produce 'eyes on the street,' doorways that provide access to interior uses provide 'feet on the street.' A challenge for large-scale development is to create enough dispersed activity on its surrounding sidewalks to provide the level of safety and human scale found in blocks comprised of many smaller buildings. By providing access points for different interior uses at the street edge, larger buildings can contribute to the activity on the sidewalk and can evolve to support different uses over time.

Block Addresses

100 Block West Gordon Street

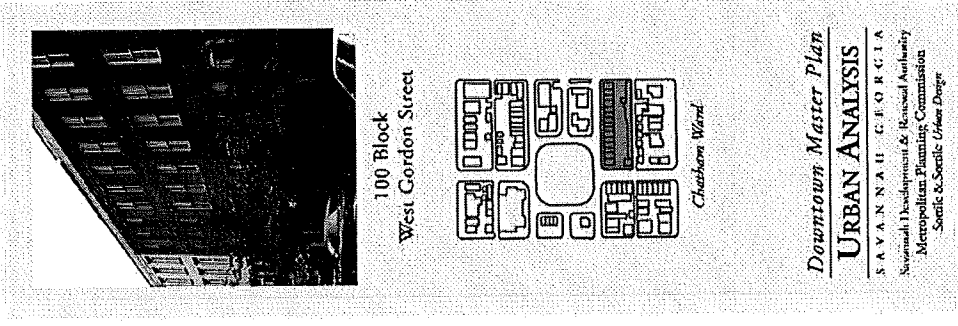
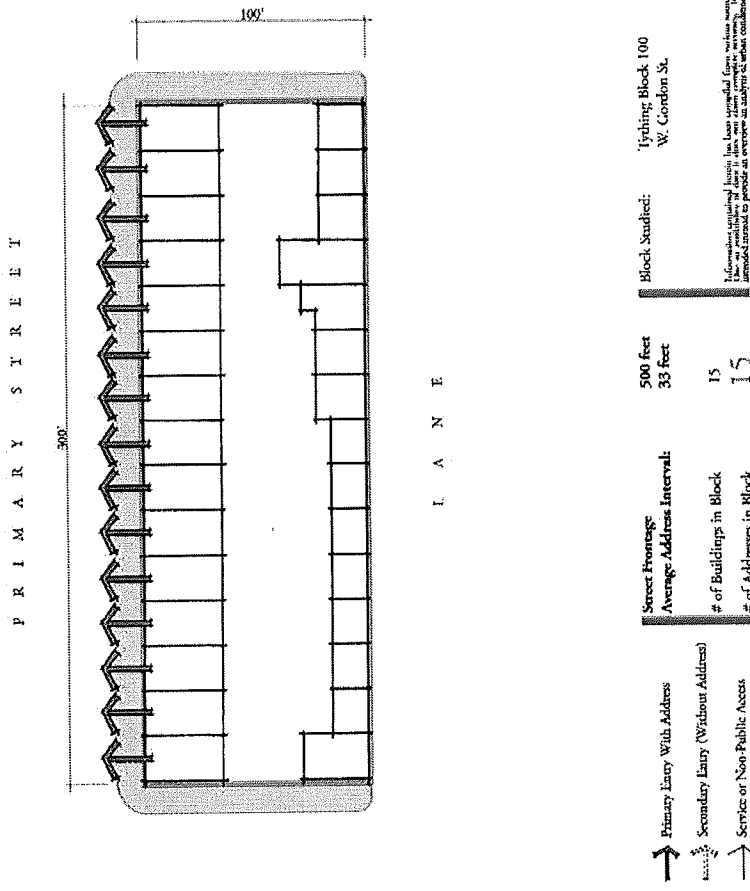


Figure 39: Excerpt from a Building Footprint and Block Frontage Study conducted within the framework of the Oglethorpe Plan, showing the 100 Block of West Gordon Street.

Principle 4: Lot Coverage & Height

To encourage compatible new development in zoning districts with 75% maximum lot coverage, consider allowing the ability for a proposal to increase up to 100% lot coverage in exchange for a proportionate reduction in building height, as long as the resulting development remains below the height map and is consistent with other visual compatibility factors.

The Historic District Board of Review should be able to consider designs during Height and Mass Review that propose adjusted height and lot coverage to achieve more compatible designs and varied building heights. Principles to consider include varying building height within a block, reduced height and massing along lanes and the relationship between taller buildings and adjacent lower historic structures. This principle would only be used to lower development height, not increase.

Why This Matters

Multiple heights within a block create natural variation in the skyline and more visual interest for pedestrians. Large-scale development built to the same height over long block faces reduces visual interest. Building up to the existing height limit can sometimes produce development that is out of scale with adjacent historic buildings. By reducing the height along a portion of the proposed building, a more compatible relationship may be achieved.

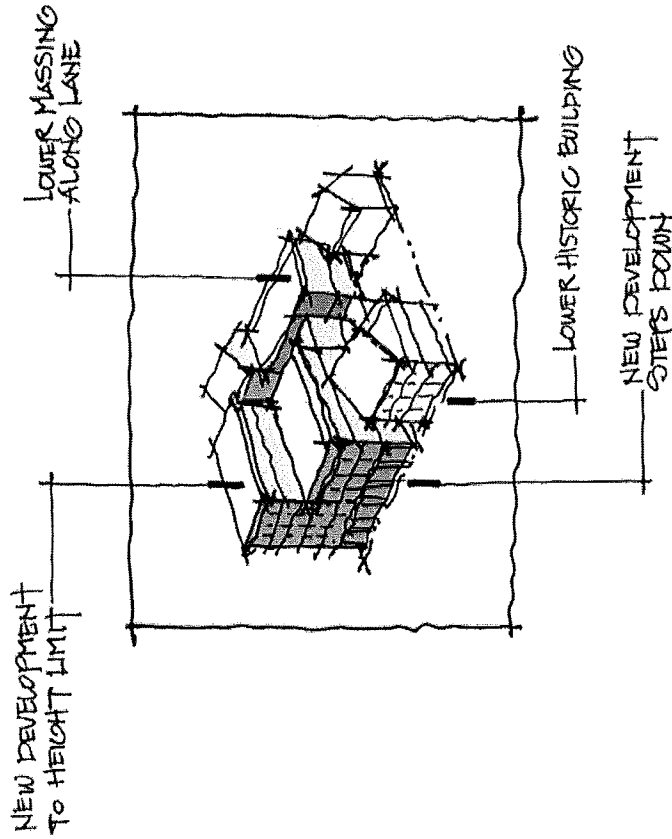
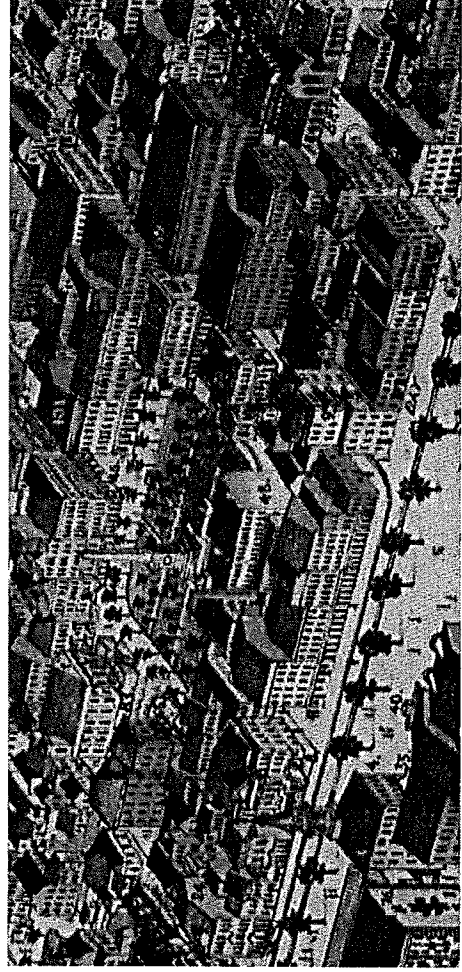


Figure 40: Savannah's blocks had historically had mixed heights, as this 1891 birds-eye drawing shows.



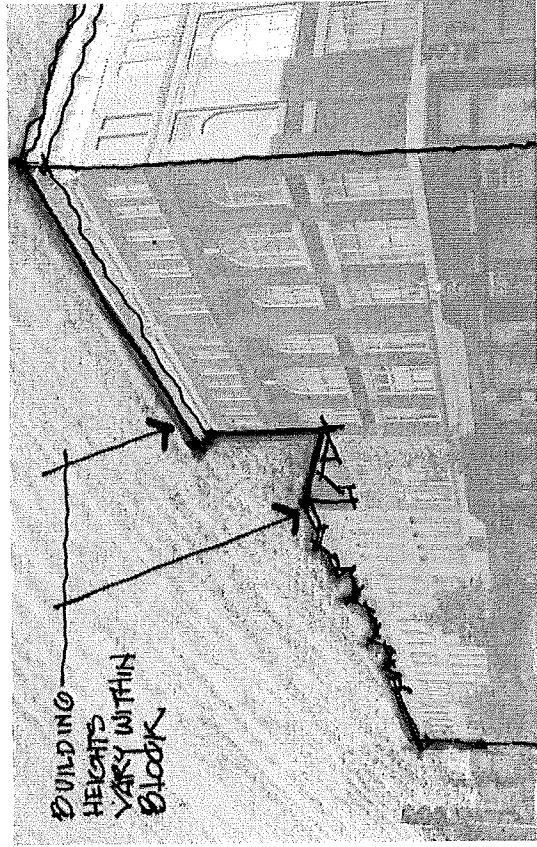


Figure 41: Varied heights within a block create a diverse streetscape and visual movement in the skyline.

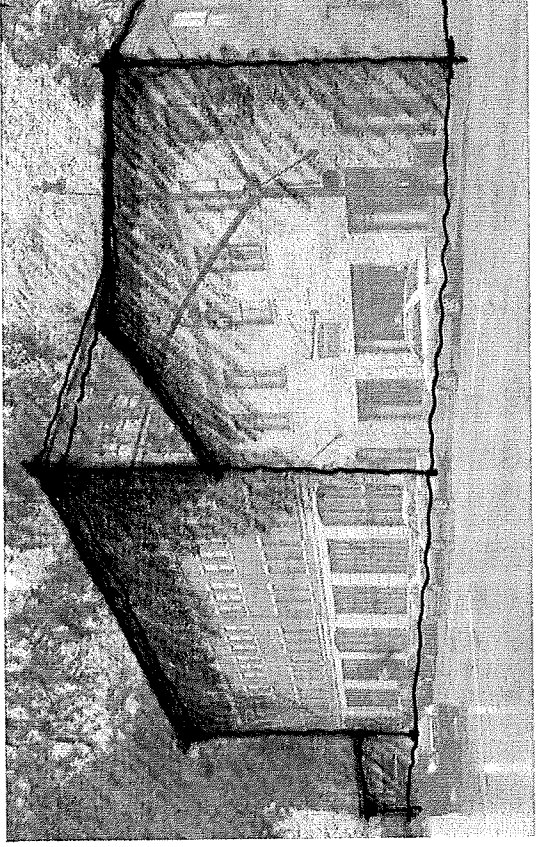
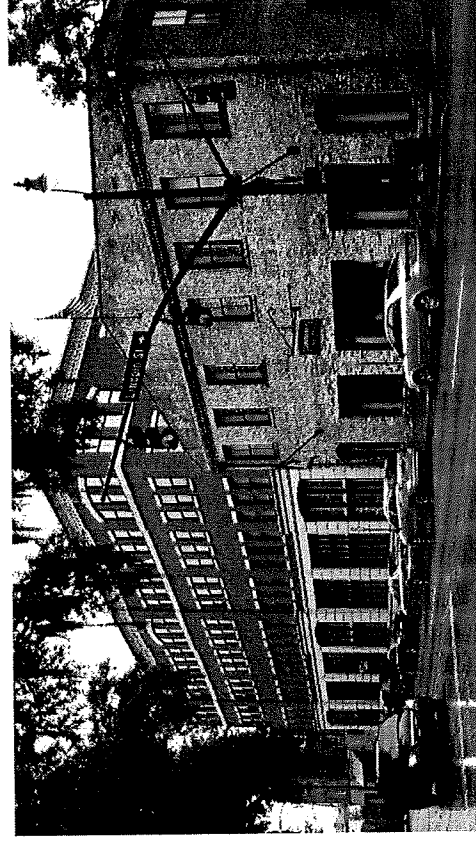


Figure 42: An interesting composition of buildings within a block.



Principle 5: Building Mass

For large-scale development, no continuous wall above the base should exceed 60 feet in length before creating a setback. Setbacks between street fronting walls should be at least 24 feet wide and 8 feet deep and contain windows in the wall perpendicular to the street.

Strengthening existing requirements for varied building planes would help create buildings that emphasize volume and have more effective visual massing. The existing standard requires buildings to change planes every 60 feet, but does not specify any other standard to create volume. The effect of the current ordinance often promotes buildings that meet the standard through the use of false or applied facades, but does not assist in diminishing the overall mass or providing architectural interest.

Why This Matters

Large footprint buildings which can be read as multiple volumes are more effective at breaking down visual scale. Requiring setback standards for facades would result in multiple volumes and real articulation in the building, not simply minor facade variations, as is current practice. Introducing windows into the perpendicular wall of the setback produces benefits for the building's interior spaces and completes the visual purpose for the setback from the exterior.

The original Chadbourne Guidelines, on which the current Ordinance is based, anticipated this idea. However, at the time, the pressures of large-scale development had not been as immediate and dimensional standards for setbacks were never adopted.

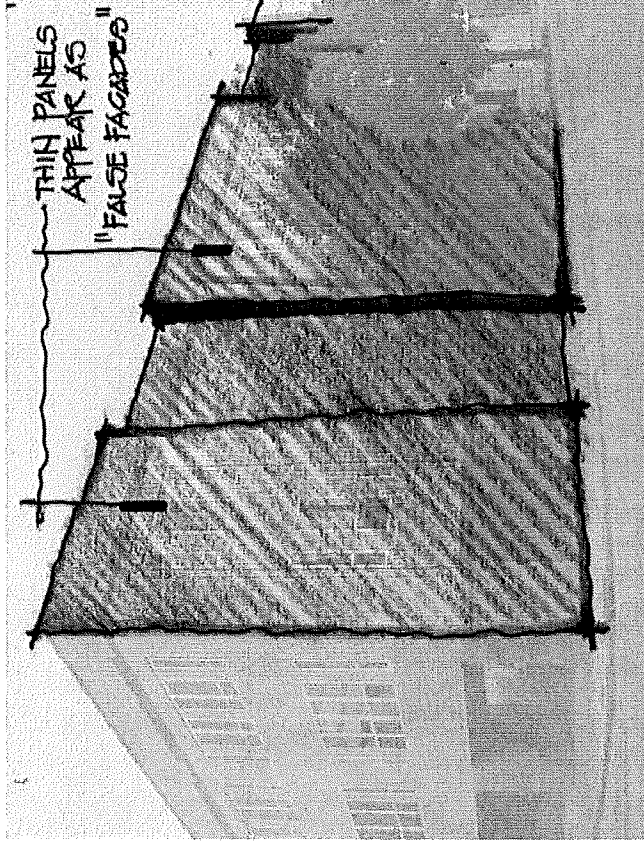
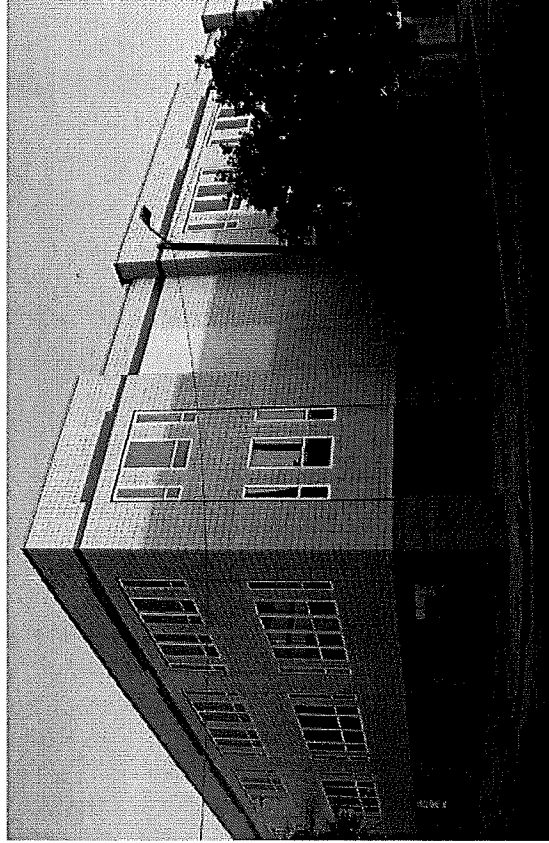


Figure 43: Minimally offset planes can produce "false facades."



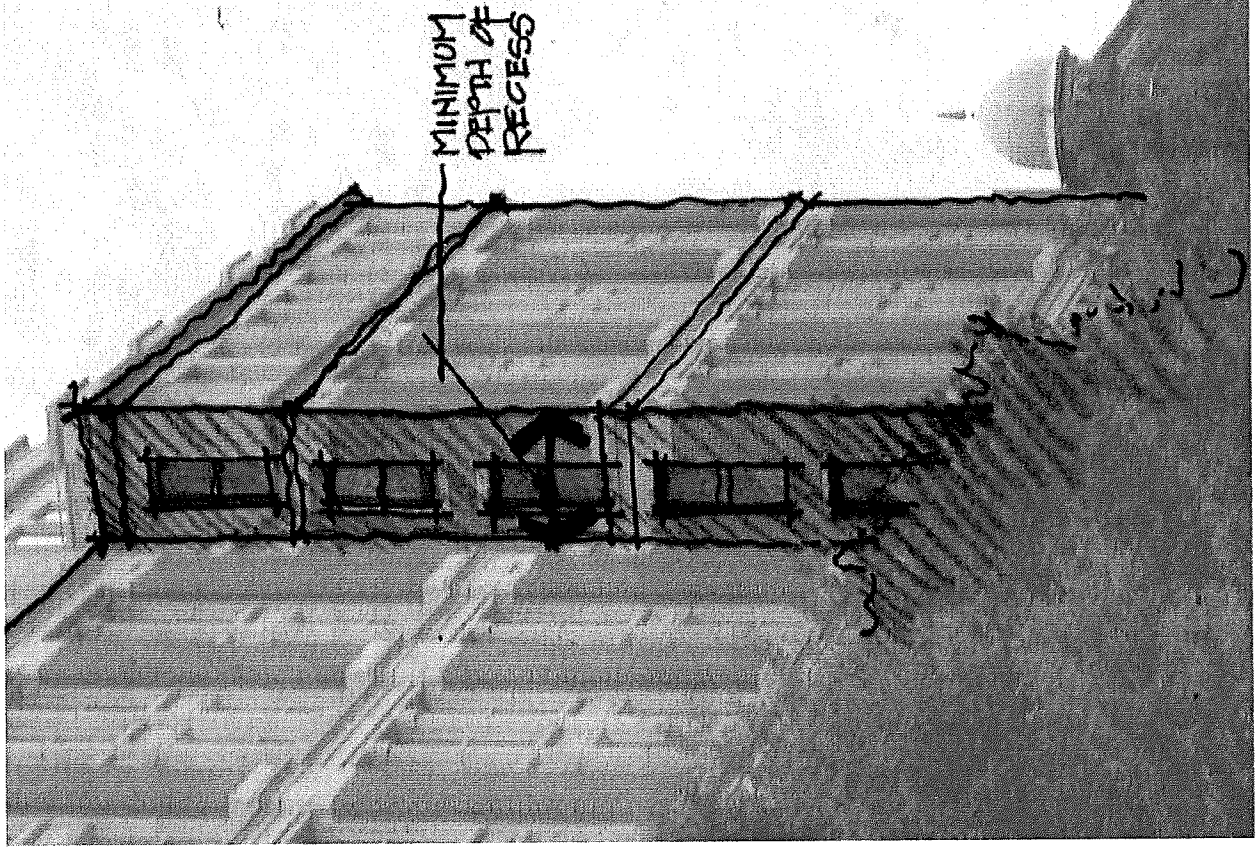
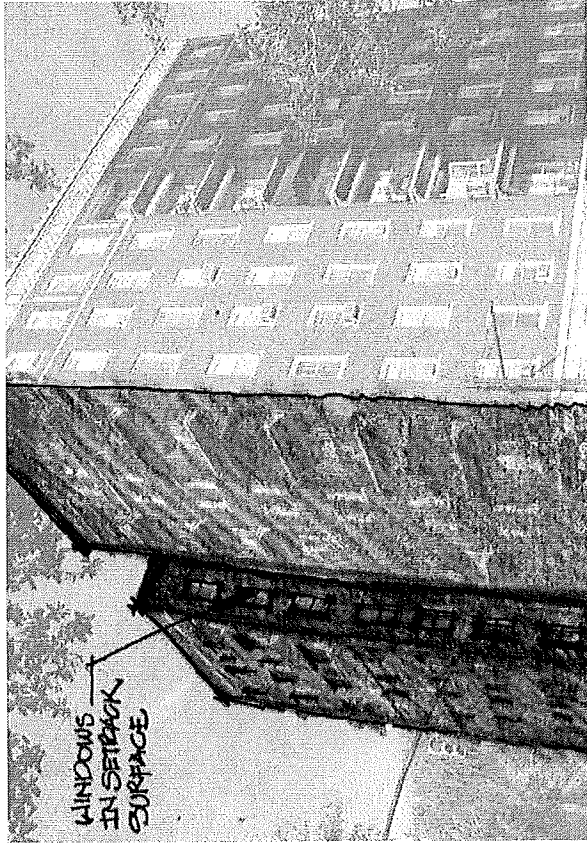
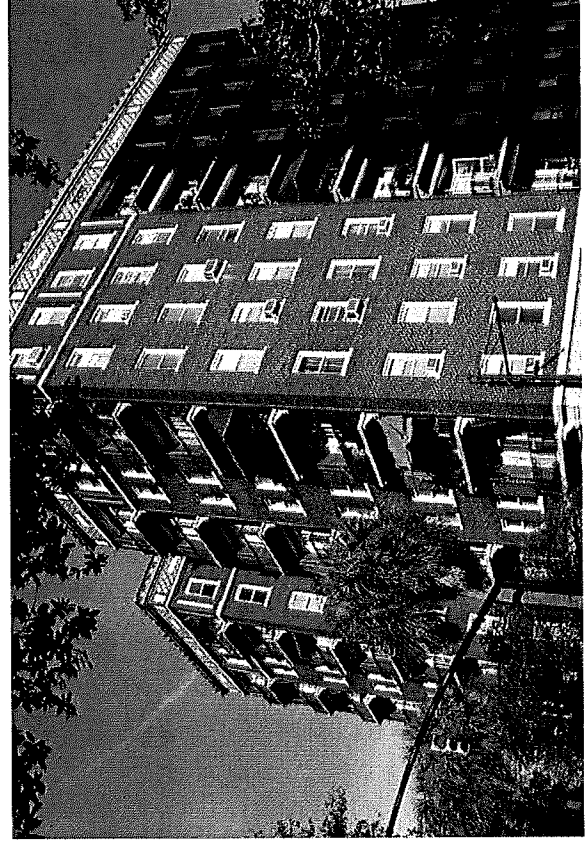


Figure 44: Facade recesses should have a minimum depth that allows windows within the offset.



Principle 6: Materials

Building walls in large-scale development should incorporate brick, cast stone, stone, concrete formed or assembled as stone, or other high-quality, long-lasting modular masonry material over a minimum percentage of their surface area.

Large-scale buildings should be composed of human-scaled materials appropriate to the building use. The recommended requirement for higher quality, human scaled materials on commercial and mixed-use buildings would be 75% minimum of their surface area would feature high-quality, long-lasting modular masonry materials. Other permitted materials may be used for the remainder of the facade.

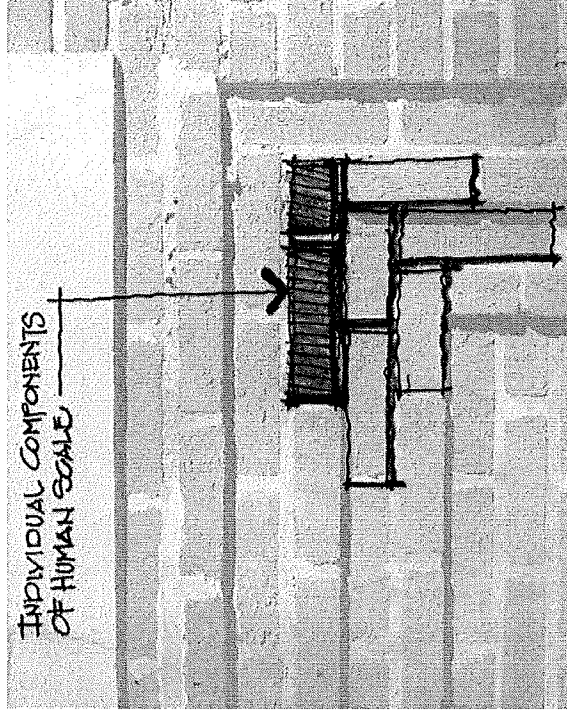


Figure 46: Human-scaled materials such as brick are proportional to the human body and create a legible sense of scale and texture on larger surfaces.

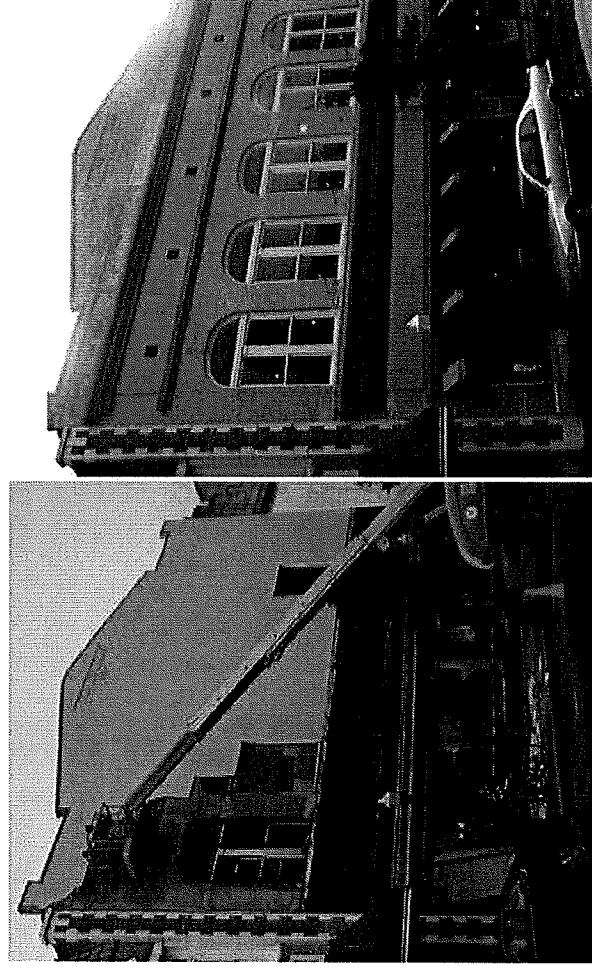
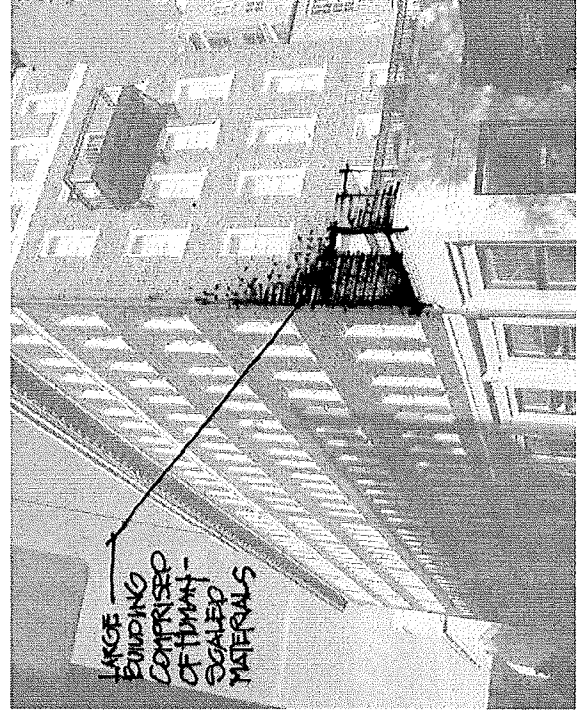


Figure 45: The change from stucco to the original brick gives this building a much more inviting exterior.

Why This Matters

The message of quality and durability inherent in long-lasting materials creates the perception of timelessness and continuity. High quality materials provide an expression of concern for the quality of the building, historic district and the pedestrian experience. Masonry elements provide a particularly strong connection between human scale and the built environment. The size of a brick is directly related to the ability of a mason to lay it by hand. Therefore, we perceive buildings that have been assembled with human-scaled materials as the result of

tangible human activities rather than as synthetic. Stucco lacks human scale on large surfaces and visually amplifies building size. Stucco as a traditional building product is appropriate for smaller structures, but is ineffective as a material for large-scale development.

Individual masonry elements of a known size, when applied over larger facades, lend texture and allow the observer to understand the total size and scale of the structure as well as distance and relationship to the building.

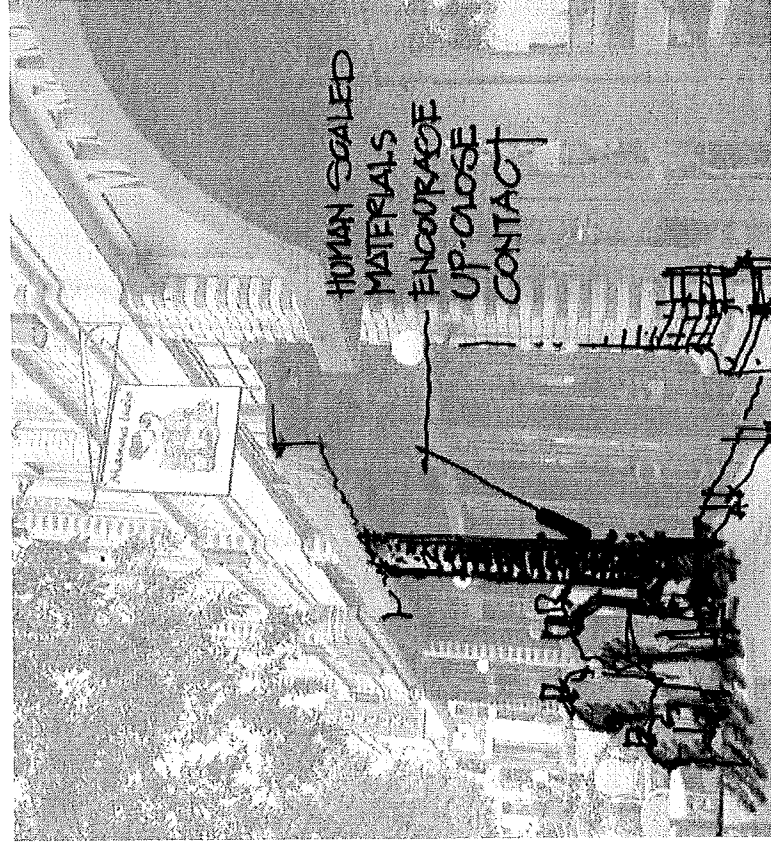


Figure 46: Human-scaled materials encourage up-close contact.

Principle 7: Windows

Facades for large-scale development should incorporate windows and doors over a minimum percentage of surface area for street fronting facades. Window sashes should be inset not less than 3 inches from the facade. This existing provision should be reinforced and possibly increased.

The current Ordinance specifies retail storefront area windows should not be less than 55%. This should be strongly upheld and consideration given to additional standards:

- Ground level of retail uses: 55% (existing standard)
- Ground level of all other uses: (25-35% potential standard)
- Upper levels for all uses: (15-20% potential standard)

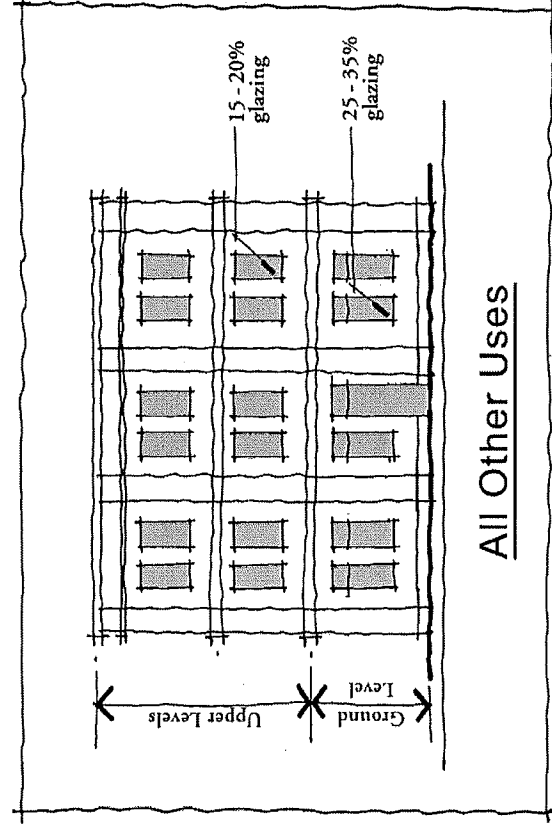
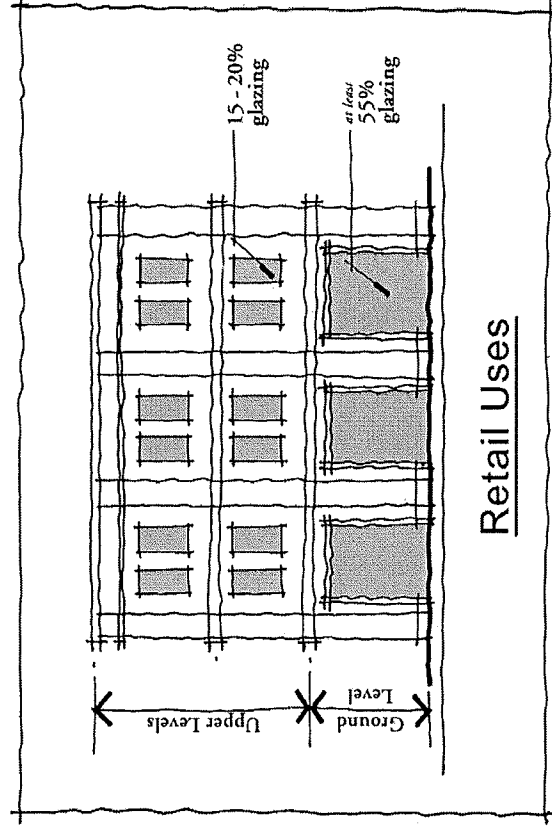
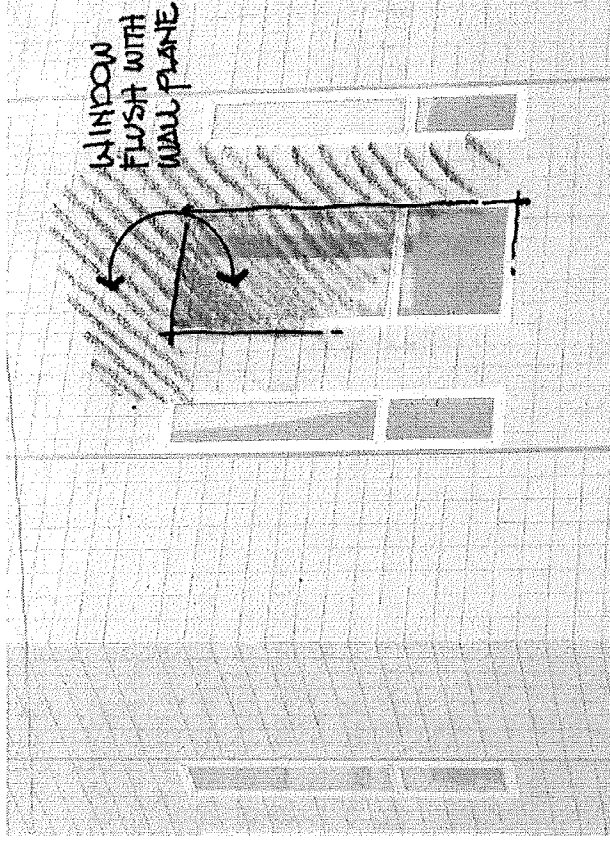


Figure 48: Suggested minimum window areas for various building types.

Why This Matters

Building facades should have large window areas to share the building's interior activities with the street. Storefront windows at street level are larger, suggesting common uses, while upper levels are smaller, indicating more private uses. The design of storefronts in particular can enhance pedestrian activity. Commercial and mixed-use buildings should provide a high level of transparency at the street level in order to visually connect activities within and outside of the building. The depth of window insets contributes to the perceived thickness and adds texture to the wall in which it is located and reinforces building material.



Figure 49: Removing the window coverings instantly gives this building a human scale, as well as knowledge that there is indeed life inside it.

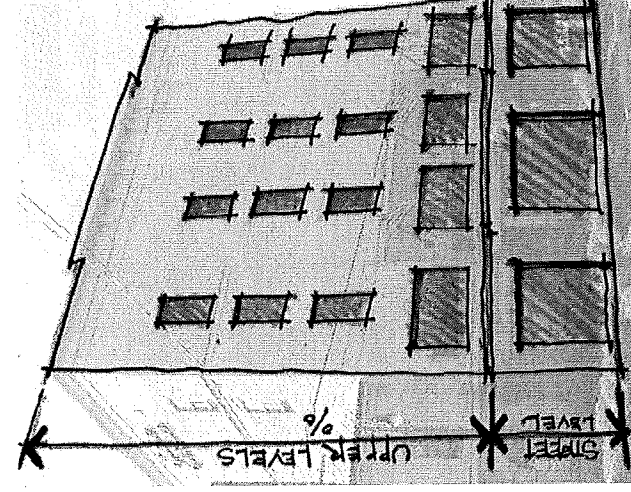
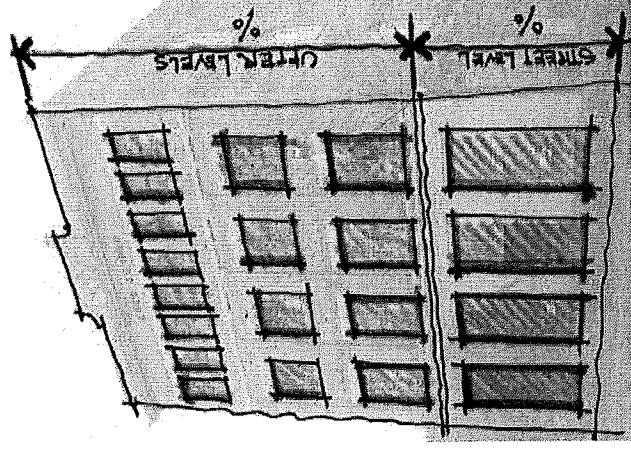


Figure 50: Smaller percentage of window area, especially at upper levels, diminishes relationship with the street, while a large percentage of glass-to-wall area creates an engaging relationship with the street.



Principle 8: Parking

Street level structured parking should not front directly onto a primary street. Off-street parking should be set back a minimum of 20 feet from property lines along all public rights-of-way, excluding lanes. Access to parking areas for large-scale development should be from the lane and potentially north-south service streets.

Why This Matters

Structured parking refers to any parking area located within or covered by a building, on either one or multiple levels. Structured parking built to the sidewalk creates 'dead spots' within the downtown streetscape. Interactive uses must be provided at the street level with all new structured parking. Off-street parking for new construction should be looked at carefully if it necessitates driveway curb cuts and sidewalk removal. Streets and sidewalks are owned by the public, and only in extreme circumstances should access to private property be permitted to limit uses of public property.

Curb cuts on primary streets made to access private parking destroy sidewalks and reduce public parking inventory along the street. Curb cuts also compromise street trees and threaten pedestrian safety on the sidewalk. In addition, passenger drop-off areas for large-scale development should not remove or compromise public sidewalks.

Some discussion has occurred about whether it is always practical or possible to require off-street parking to be accessed from the lane. The ordinance currently states that curb cuts should be permitted only from lanes and north-south service streets.

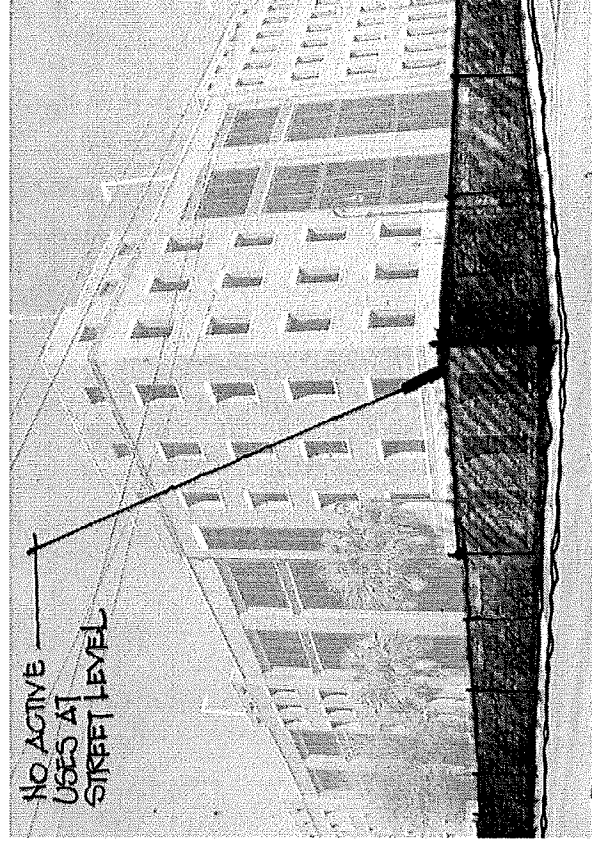
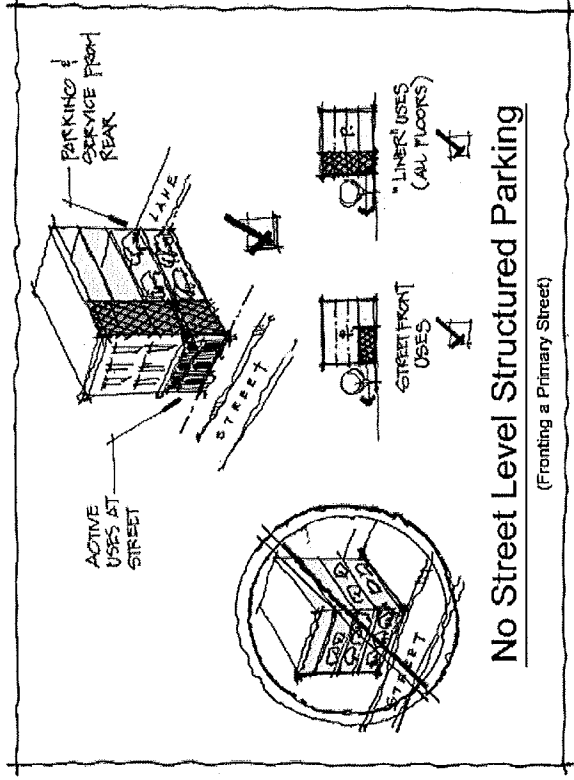


Figure 51: Interactive uses must be provided at the street level with all new structured parking.

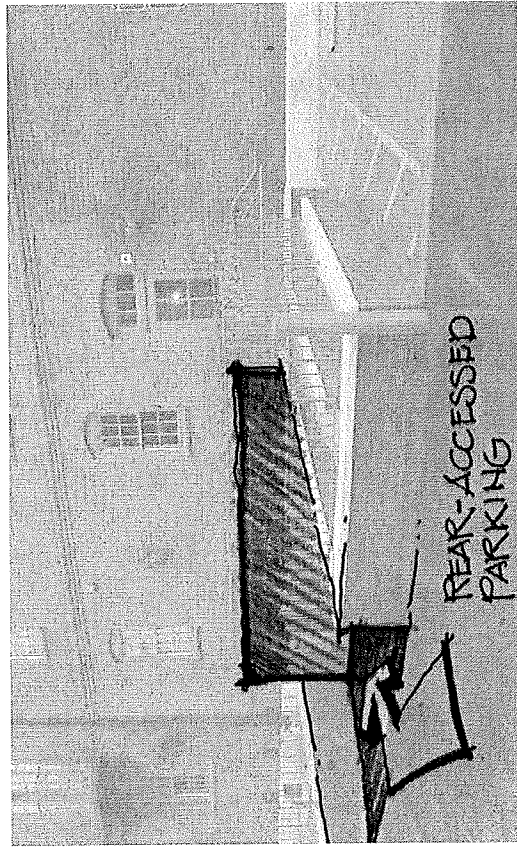
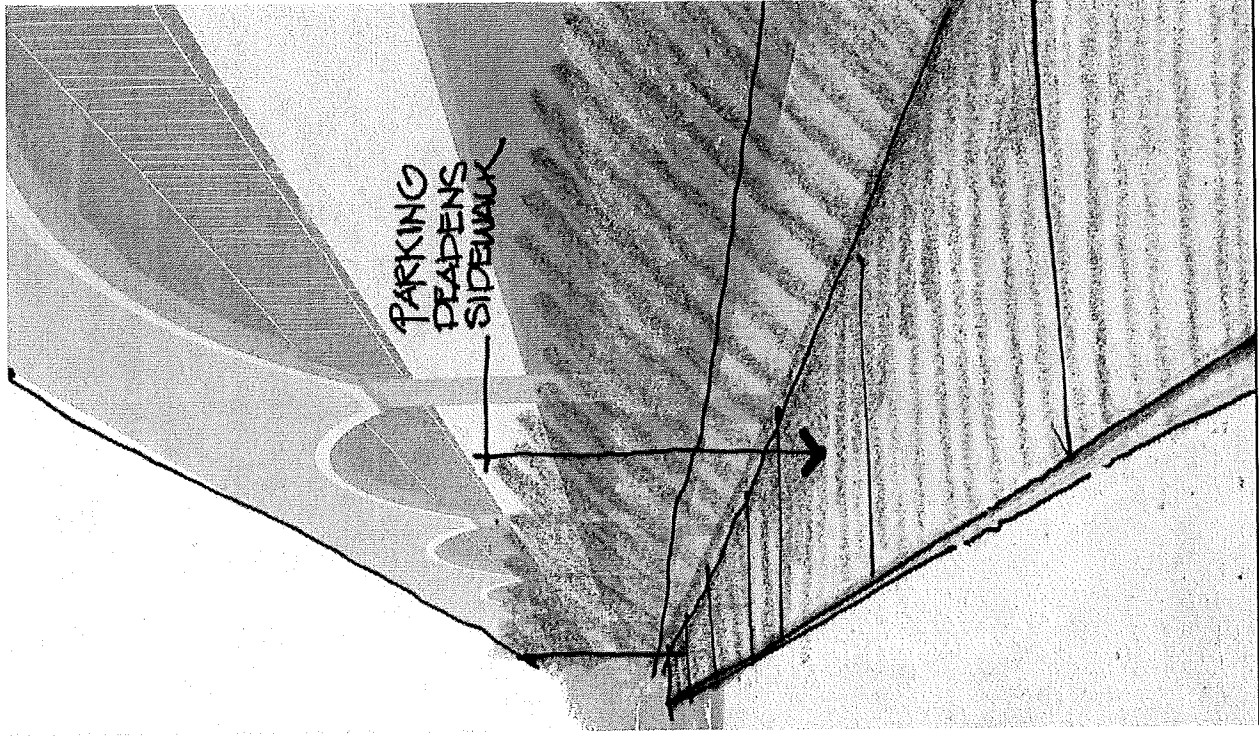
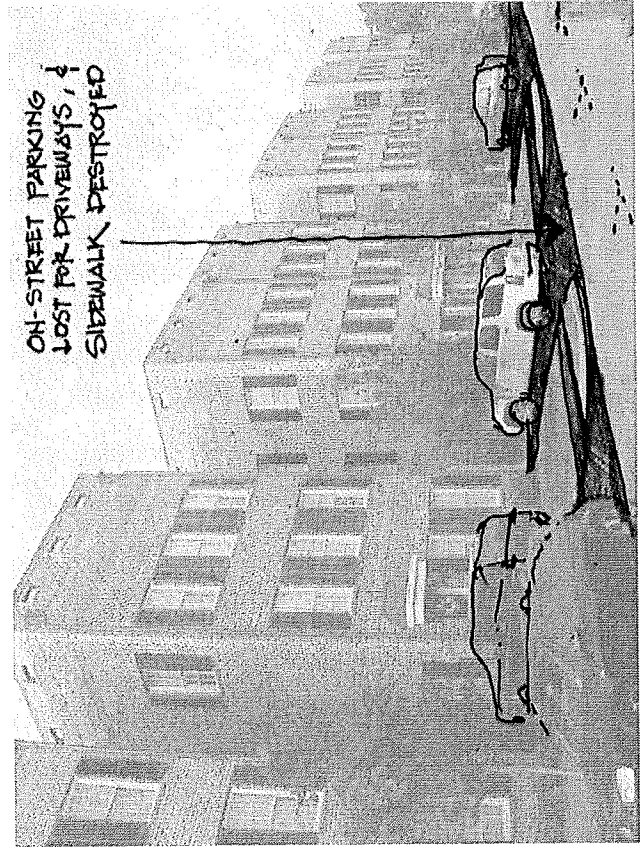


Figure 52: Curb cuts should not be permitted to remove sidewalk and eliminate on-street parking. Lane-accessed parking preserves the integrity of sidewalks.



Principle 9: Service

Service areas for large-scale development should be accommodated within the site and should not extend into nor occupy the public right-of-way.

The increased size of service areas for large-scale development places an excessive burden on the lane in comparison to other smaller development and therefore must be accommodated on site. Service and waste equipment should be concealed on the interior behind doors or screened by opaque fencing of an adequate height (8 feet).

Why This Matters

Service equipment for large-scale development is generally larger in size, creating too great a physical obstruction when located within the lane right-of-way. Visual impacts of service equipment can be concealed through screening, thereby improving the overall condition and appearance of the lanes.

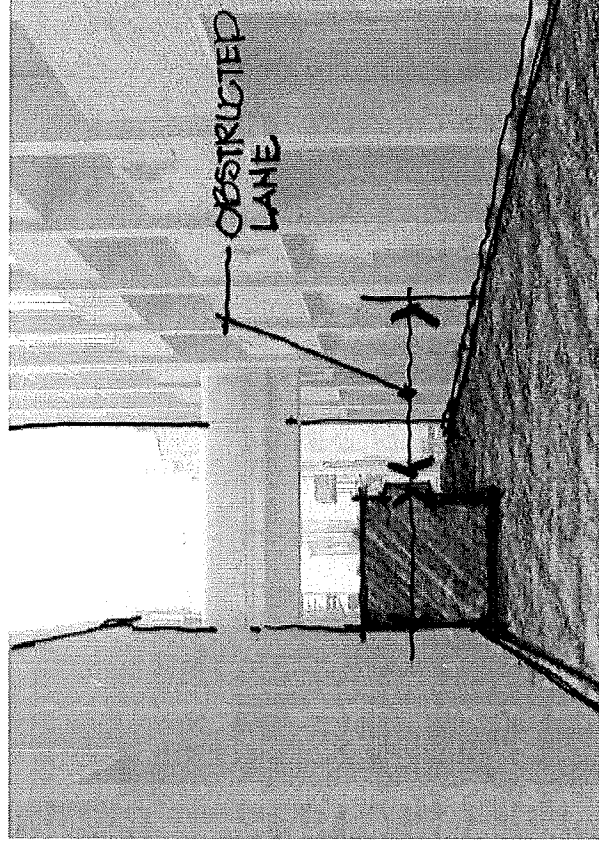
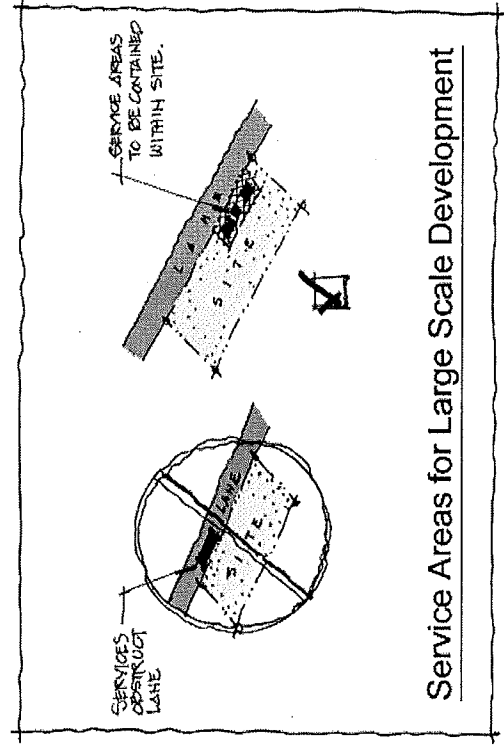
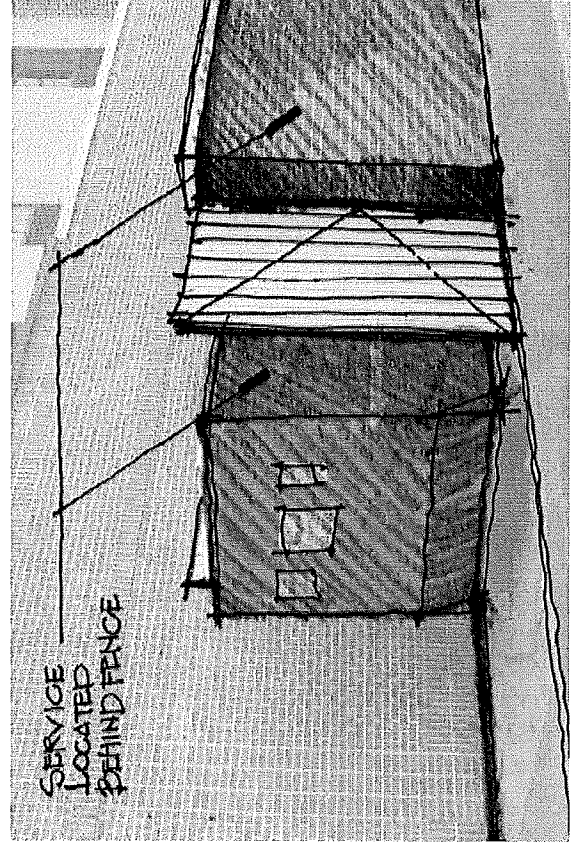


Figure 53: A compactor impedes the public right-of-way, while services screened from the public realm by a wall gives an orderly image.



The following recommendations examine additional areas of the design and development review process that are not covered by the previous design recommendations:

CANOPY TREES

Consideration should be given to the protection of mature canopy trees, and for providing space for planting new trees. This may require variation in building footprint, height and lot coverage as well as restricting encroachment on the right-of-way. Recently, several new building projects have required that large trees existing on public right-of-way be extensively pruned, and in some cases removed. This is causing a reduction in the extent of tree canopy downtown, and may affect the health and longevity of the trees.

This matters because, in addition to the historic squares, a unique feature of downtown Savannah is the presence of many large canopy trees. These trees provide important aesthetic, environmental, social and economic benefits. This heritage needs to be protected to be protected, and provision should be made for replacing and increasing the canopy for future generations.



Figure 54: Savannah is known for its mature canopy

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESSES

The current development review process does not always result in the desired design or mix of uses. Fortunately, the Unified Zoning Ordinance currently being created by the MPC acknowledges the shortcomings and will establish a more effective process. Some recommendations include:

Recommendations

- Develop handbook/outreach materials to explain process and role of staff, boards, City and the MPC.
- Develop new tools to better regulate design of new development and to encourage desired uses.
- Expand design tools (e.g. strengthen existing "visual compatibility standards) to allow variations of design elements, height, setbacks, etc. to negotiate desired elements.
- Encourage pre-application review meetings. Pre-application review meetings can help to shape a project before the design is so far developed that required changes are costly and time consuming. The City of Savannah and the MPC should be viewed as a resource to assist with successful project development and ultimate approval.
- Expand developer outreach and education. Education is a key factor in successful review processes as well as the accomplishment of desired outcomes. Outreach and education can be accomplished by instituting a series of mini-seminars, at City of Savannah and the MPC locations or taken "on the road" through the

chamber of commerce or other feasible hosts. Brochures, mailings, and web pages can also be effective tools.

OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN MAJOR CIVIC PROJECTS

Redevelopment of the Civic Center and I-16 Flyover areas represent significant opportunities to reconnect neighborhoods and to use public resources to leverage desired types of private investment. Major public investment in civic improvement projects such as this can spur significant investment by the private sector; they can also focus attention and effort on new construction and other investment, creating new uses and buildings compatible with city desires and worthwhile public investment.

- Create a Civic Master Plan for the Civic Center site. The City's impending plans to construct a new arena complex to the west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, provides an opportunity to reclaim the lost street patterns of Orleans and Elbert squares. To support this, a Civic Master Plan should be created to address restoration of the Oglethorpe Plan, Elbert Square, and extends streets to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Consideration will have to be given to the land uses and building types that will be encouraged, such as mixed-use, mixed-income residential/commercial development and office development as described in the Vibrant Neighborhoods Chapter. The Civic Master Plan should also consider the implementation and timing of the grid restoration.

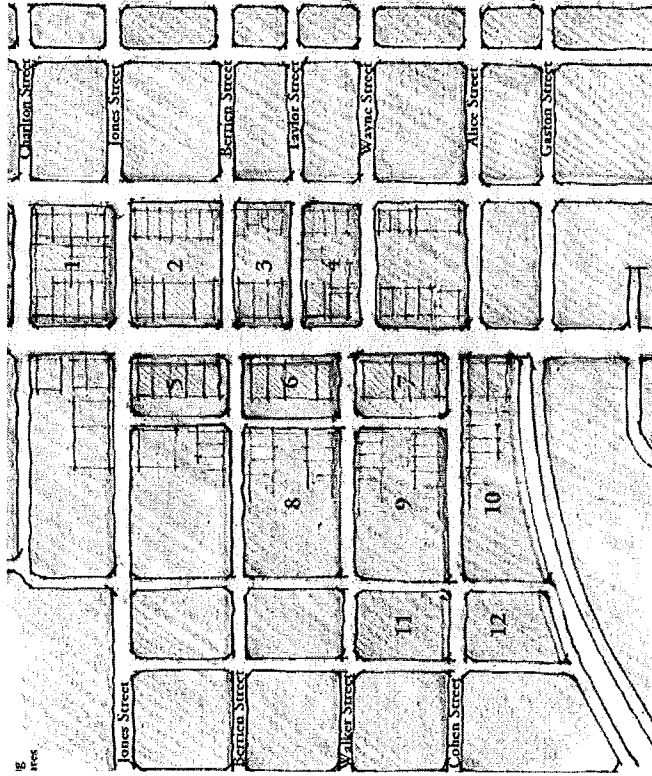


Figure 55: From a conceptual study of development opportunities in the I-16 Flyover area that shows how the grid could be re-extended to connect across Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. and Montgomery Street.

- Continue to study the costs and benefits associated with the removal of the I-16 Flyover and ramps, and re-routing of traffic. As studies progress, create a Civic Master Plan for the area that codifies where new public rights-of-way would be located that extend Charlton, Jones, Berrien, Wayne, Alice, and Gaston Streets across Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard westward. Previous studies have shown the potential for reclaiming up to 9 acres of developable land, including 650 linear feet of street front along Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard and 350 linear feet along Montgomery Street.

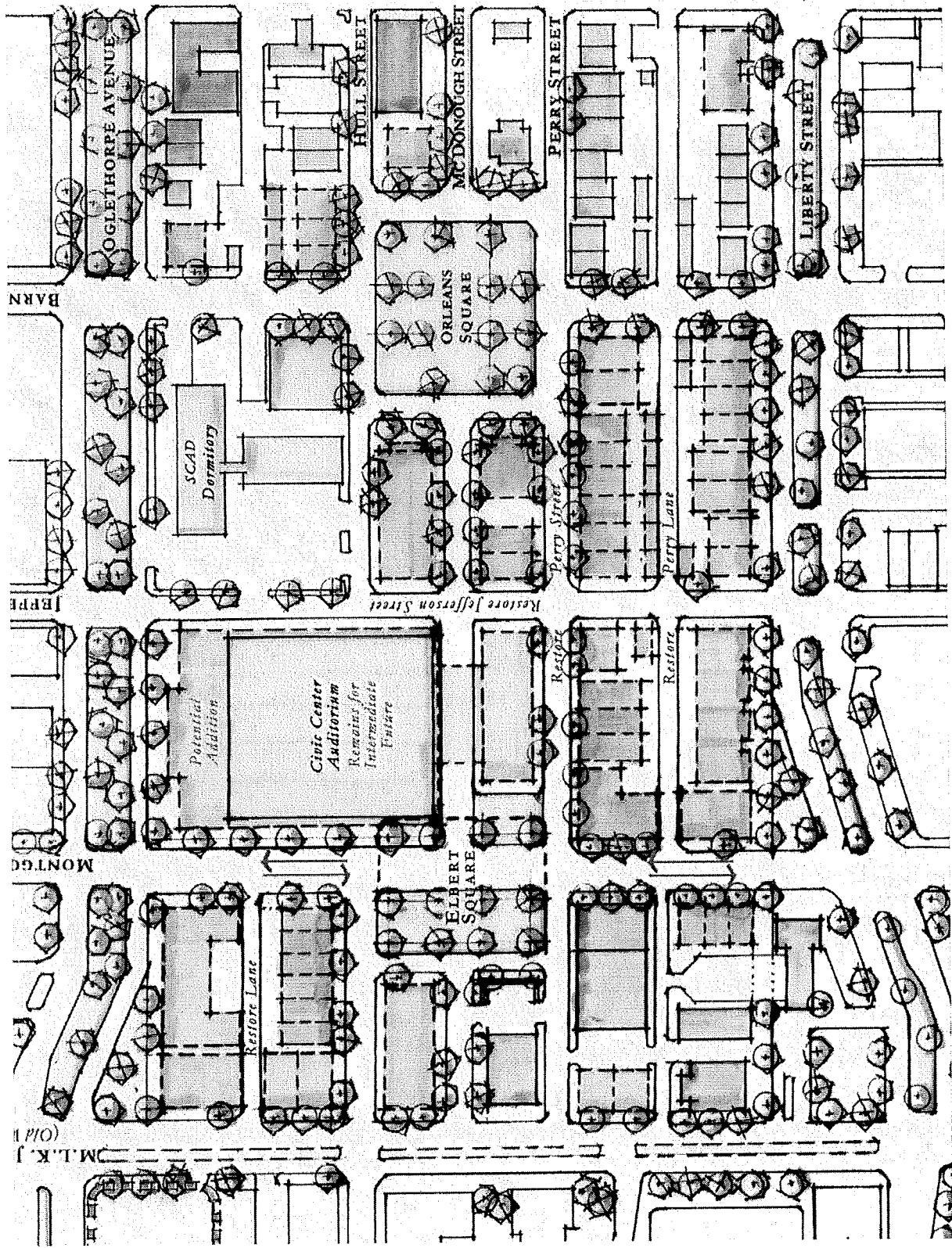
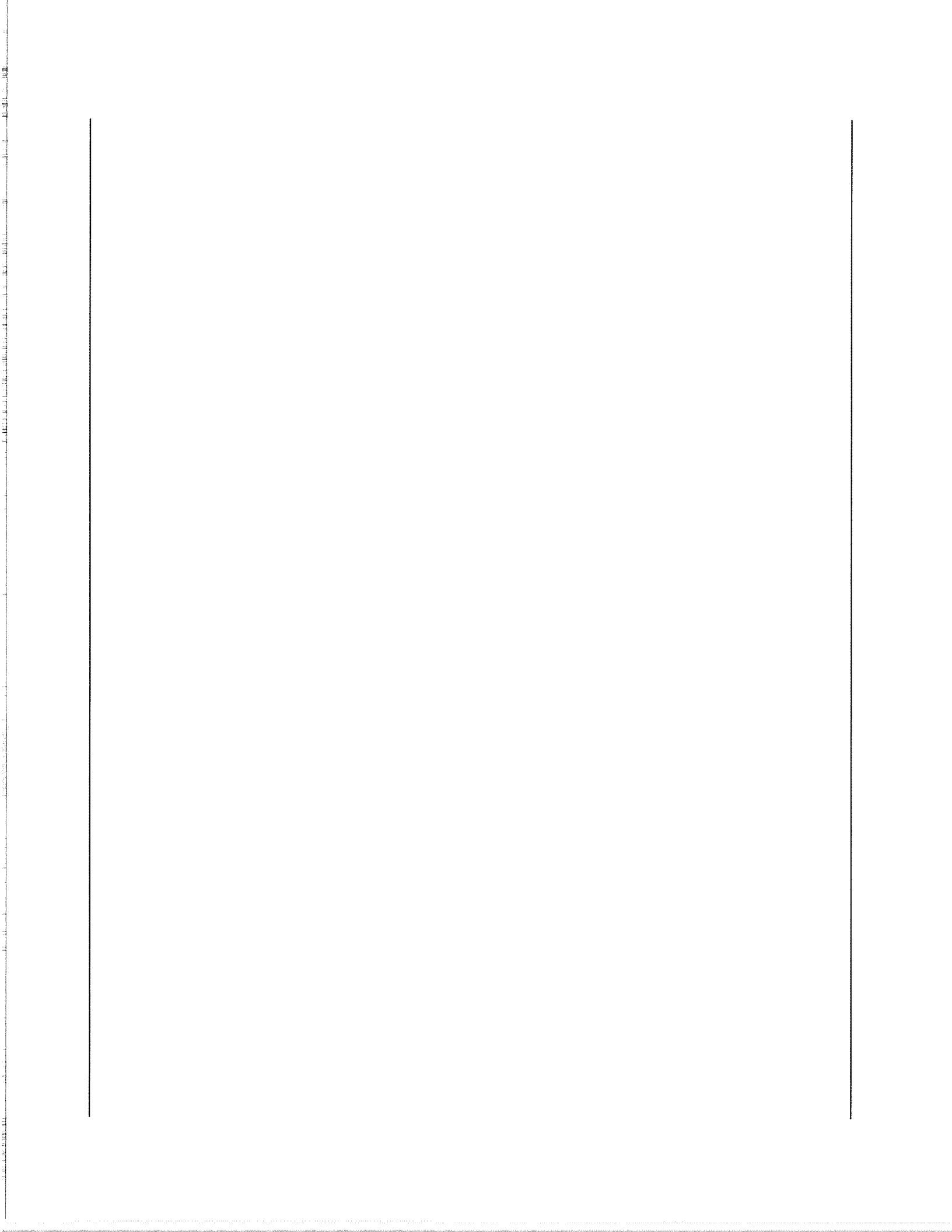


Figure 56: Detail from a Block Regeneration Study around Elbert and Orleans Squares

IMPLEMENTATION

Diversify Economic Opportunity
Create Vibrant Neighborhoods with Appealing & Affordable Housing
Ensure a Strong Quality of Life
Maximize Mobility Options
Retain the Fundamental Elements of the Oglethorpe Plan



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Among those agencies and organizations that participated in the public process were the following:

Affordable Housing providers
 American Institute of Architects - Savannah Chapter
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 Cann Park Neighborhood Association
 Chatham Area Transit Authority
 Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission
 City Market Merchants
 City of Savannah (Mayor and Aldermen, Citizen Office, Economic Development Department, Facilities Maintenance, Department of Housing, Leisure Services, Management/Financial Services, Park and Tree, Public Development, Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department, and the Tourism and Film Services
 Coastal Georgia Greenway
 Commercial Realtors Alliance of Savannah/Hilton Head
 Savannah-Chatham Council on Disabilities
 Cuyler Brownsville Neighborhood Association
 Downtown Business Association
 Downtown Business Owners
 Downtown Neighborhood Association
 Downtown Savannah Master Plan Steering Committee
 Eastside Neighborhoods
 Economic Development Service Providers
 Ellis Square Merchants Association

Georgia Institute of Technology - Savannah Campus
 Georgia Power
 Historic Savannah Foundation
 Housing Authority of Savannah
 MLK/Montgomery Business Association
 Metropolitan Neighborhood Organization
 Minority and Women Business Leaders
 Mobility Management Board
 Neighborhood Residents At Work
 River Street Business/Property Owners
 Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce / Savannah Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
 Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, CEO Council
 Savannah Area Tourism Leadership Council
 Savannah Board of Realtors
 Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)
 Savannah Development and Renewal Authority (SDRA)
 Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA)
 Savannah River Landing
 Savannah Waterfront Association
 Southern Baptist Alliance of Ministers
 Trustee's Garden
 Tourism Advisory Committee

