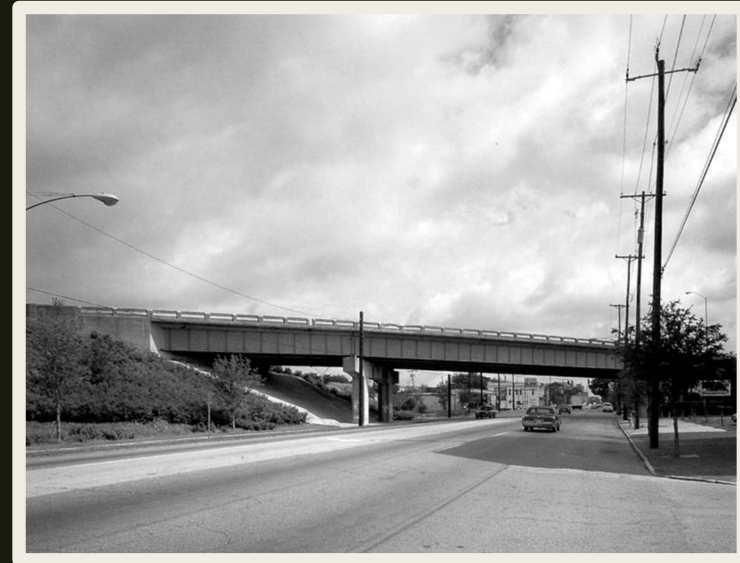
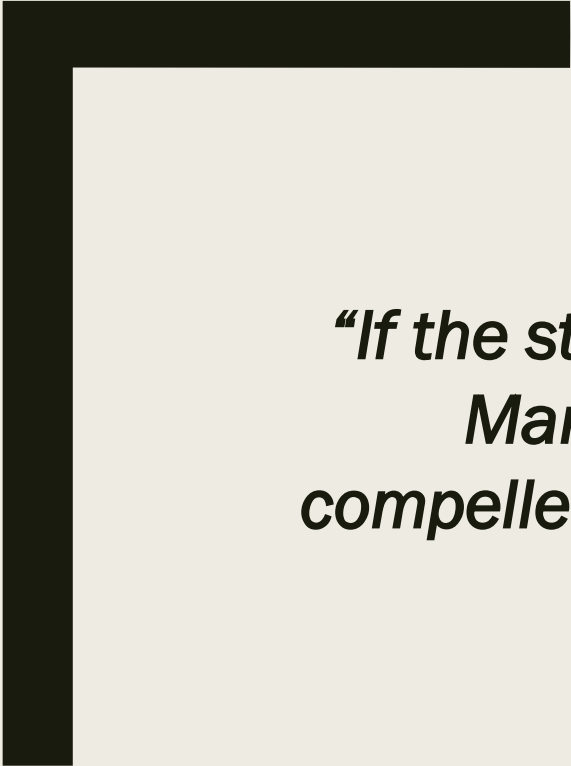


# RECLAIMING MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD. I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL

SAVANNAH CITY COUNCIL  
JANUARY 27, 2022

Presented by *The Reclaiming Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Coalition*  
Introduction by *Richard Shinhoster*  
Ellen Harris, AICP, LEED AP, Ethos Preservation – Co-Chair  
Denise R. Grabowski, AICP, LEED AP, Symbioscity – Co-Chair





***“If the street is named after a great leader like  
Martin Luther King, Jr., then we should be  
compelled to make the street live up to all of its  
potential.”***

***W.W. Law,  
Savannah Morning News, May 1996***



# THE HISTORY



# Evolutionary History 1750-1825

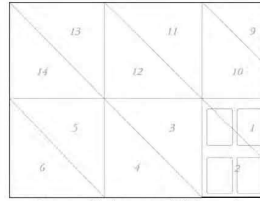
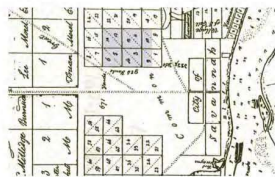
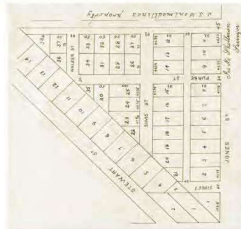


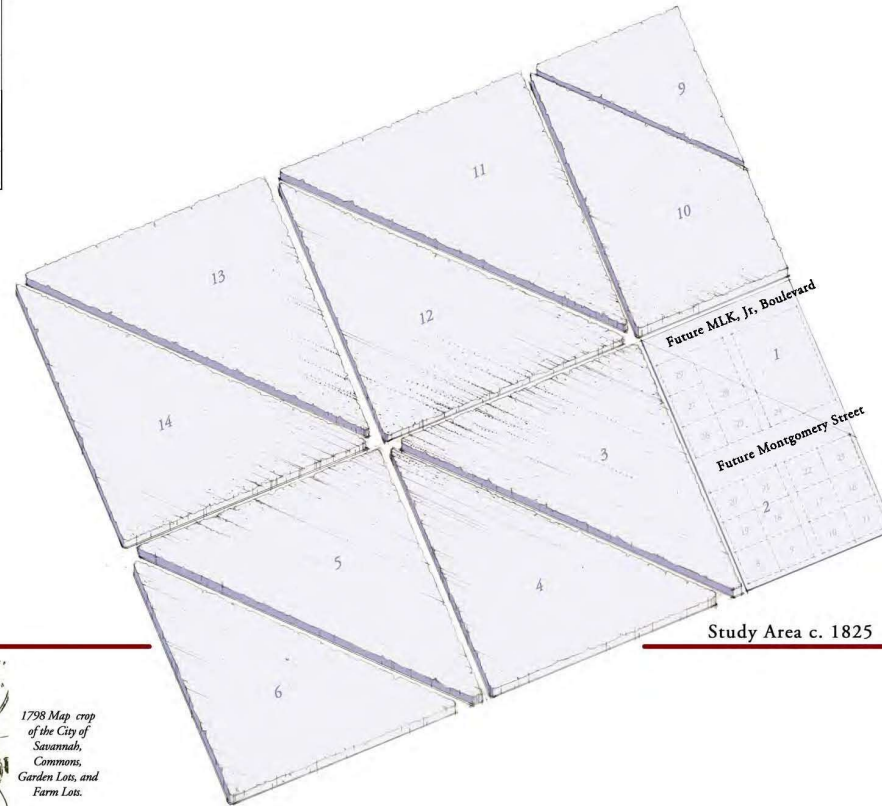
Diagram of the first street and block network emerging in the Study Area c. 1825.

1868 Parcel map of Garden Lot 11 and a portion of Garden Lot 12 along Stewart Street (now Selma Street).



1798 Map crop of the City of Savannah, Commons, Garden Lots, and Farm Lots.

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Study Area c. 1825

## 1750-1825

### SUBDIVISION OF THE GARDEN LOTS

Savannah's earliest settlers were allotted individual five-acre Garden Lots adjacent to the City Commons; these triangular lots were created by dividing ten-acre square parcels in half. The shape created longer crop rows for more efficient farming.

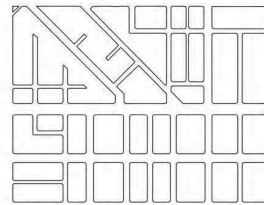
As Savannah expanded, land owners began to subdivide their Garden Lots for private development. Small blocks and connected streets that aligned with Savannah's plan were created in most cases. However, because of varying ownership, there were some instances of diagonal streets being laid out along the Garden Lot lines, most notably Roberts Street and Stewart Street.

## EARLY CITY EXPANSION

**I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT**  
SAVANNAH GEORGIA  
City of Savannah  
Chatham County  
Metropolitan Planning Commission  
CORE Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Savannah Development & Renewal Authority

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

# Evolutionary History 1825-1875



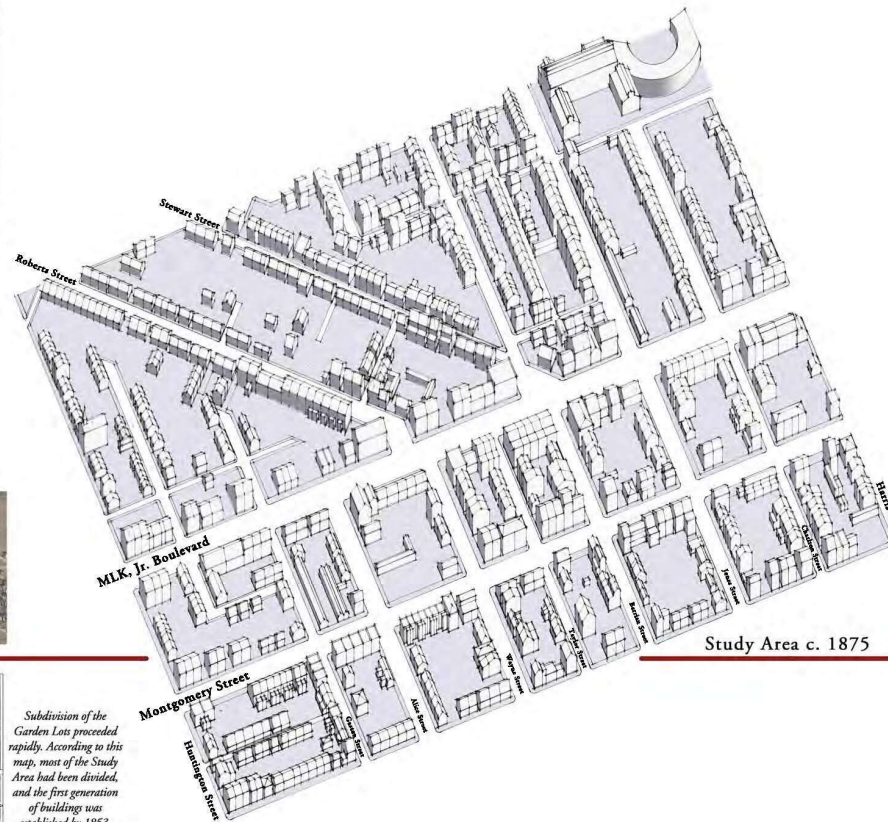
Study of the block pattern c. 1875 shows a dense network of small streets and lanes in the study area. Of particular interest is the first appearance of diagonally configured streets in the Savannah street network.

A portion of the Bird's Eye View of the City Savannah, Lithograph by A. Ruger, 1871.



Subdivision of the Garden Lots proceeded rapidly. According to this map, most of the Study Area had been divided, and the first generation of buildings was established by 1853.

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Study Area c. 1875

## 1825-1875

### GROWTH OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The area surrounding MLK, Jr Blvd. (formerly West Broad Street) and Montgomery Street rapidly developed as a primarily residential neighborhood with some commercial and industrial uses that serviced the railroad district to the north.

Subdivision of the original garden parcels continued the residential pattern, and it is apparent that Roberts Street and Stewart Street (now Selma Street) were aligned with the old Garden Lot parcel lines during this time, imbedding the diagonal character into this part of Savannah's street network.

## NEIGHBORHOOD GROWTH & EVOLUTION

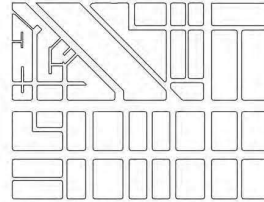
I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT  
SAVANNAH GEORGIA  
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Savannah Development & Renewal Authority

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



# Evolutionary History

## 1750-1825



Consolidation of the blocks between Roberts and Stewart Streets for Union Station and expansion of the lane network in Carriestown as building density increased.

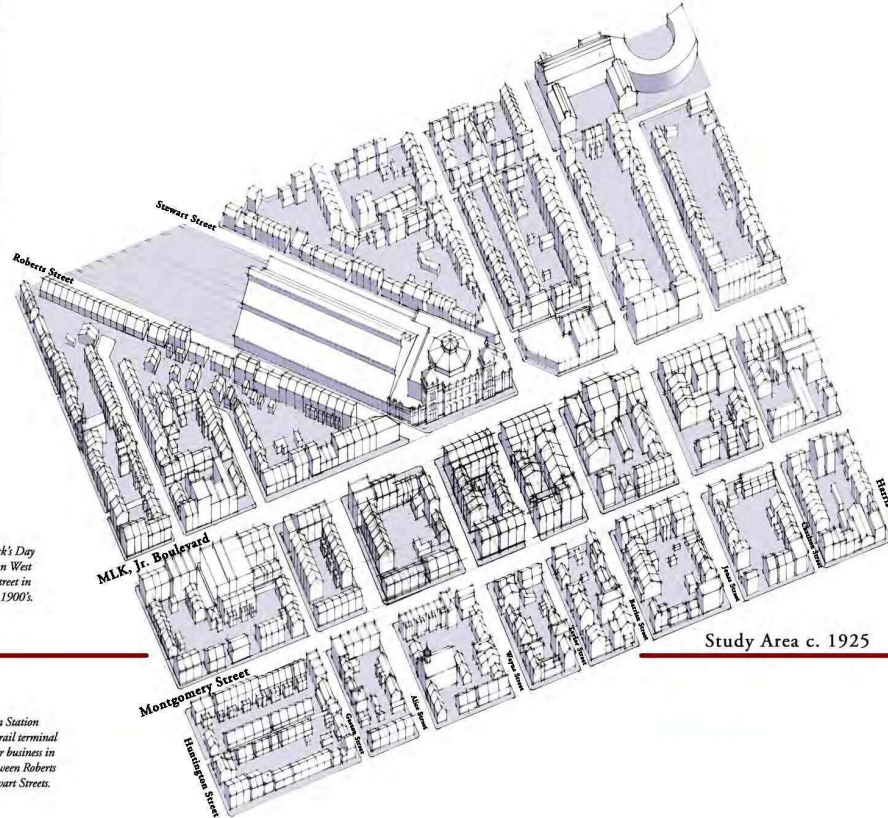


St. Patrick's Day parade on West Broad Street in the early 1900's.



Union Station passenger rail terminal opened for business in 1901 between Roberts and Stewart Streets.

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Study Area c. 1925

## 1875-1950

### WEST BROAD PROSPERITY

The re-development of the blocks between Roberts and Stewart Streets to create the Union Station passenger rail terminal brought a period of intense growth and prosperity to West Broad Street.

Building intensity reached its greatest level during this time, including a vibrant and diverse mix of single and multi-family homes, and larger commercial, retail, office, and institutional buildings along West Broad and Montgomery Streets.

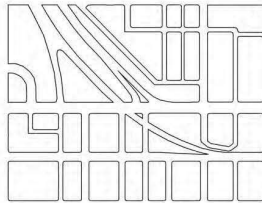
## UNION STATION & WEST BROAD VITALITY

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# Evolutionary History

## 1750-1825

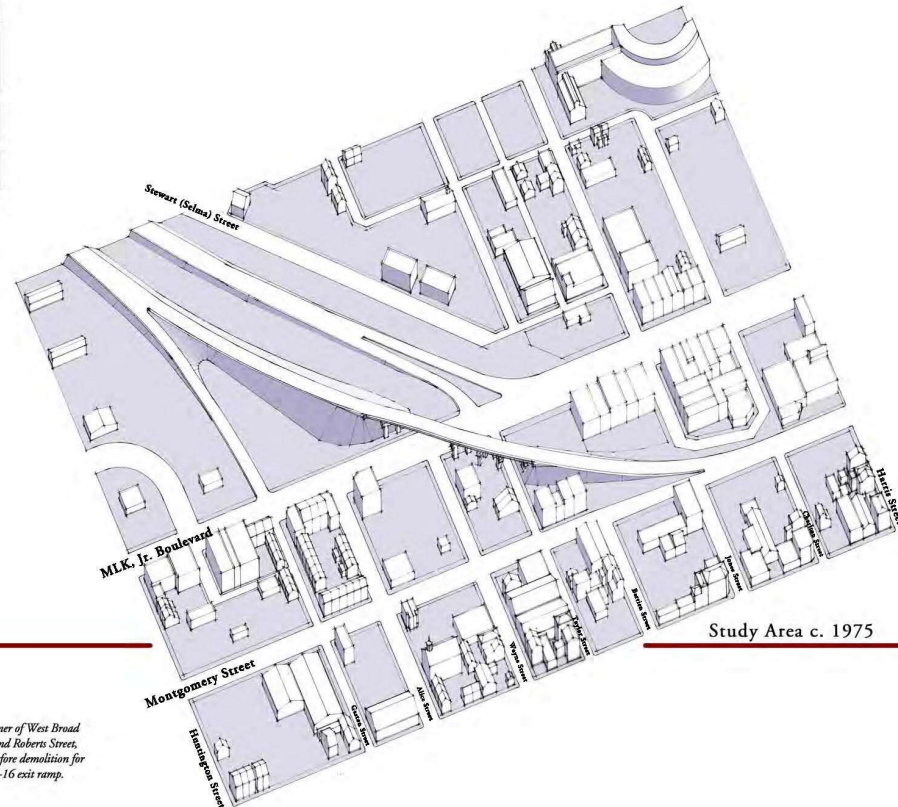


The street network after the 1960s became fragmented and disconnected. Several blocks were lost altogether.



The corner of West Broad Street and Roberts Street, shortly before demolition for the I-16 exit ramp.

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## 1950-1975

### DISSOLUTION OF THE PATTERN

In the early 1960's the Union Station passenger terminal was torn down and replaced with a spur of Interstate Highway 16, to facilitate auto traffic into the heart of Savannah's city center.

Much of the surrounding land was consolidated for construction of the highway and for adjacent development by the Housing Authority of Savannah. The project dissolved several city blocks completely, and cut off street connections between many others.

## NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOLITION & CLEARANCE

**I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT**  
SAVANNAH GEORGIA  
City of Savannah  
Chatham County  
Metropolitan Planning Commission  
CORE Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Savannah Development & Renewal Authority

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Grice & Associates  
McMillan & Associates

# Why?

- Physical Barrier
- Social Barrier
- Economic Barrier
- Psychological Barrier

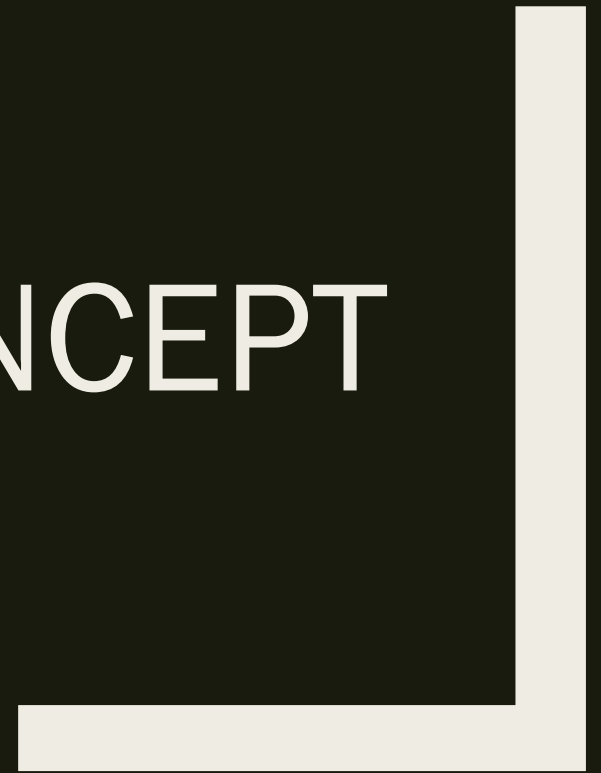
“The community vision for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street, from River Street to 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, is that of a historic and **diverse community** which welcomes all people to the area for its commercial **activity**, architectural and **cultural heritage** and boulevard appearance in a **vibrant** urban setting.”



# I-16 Flyover Timeline

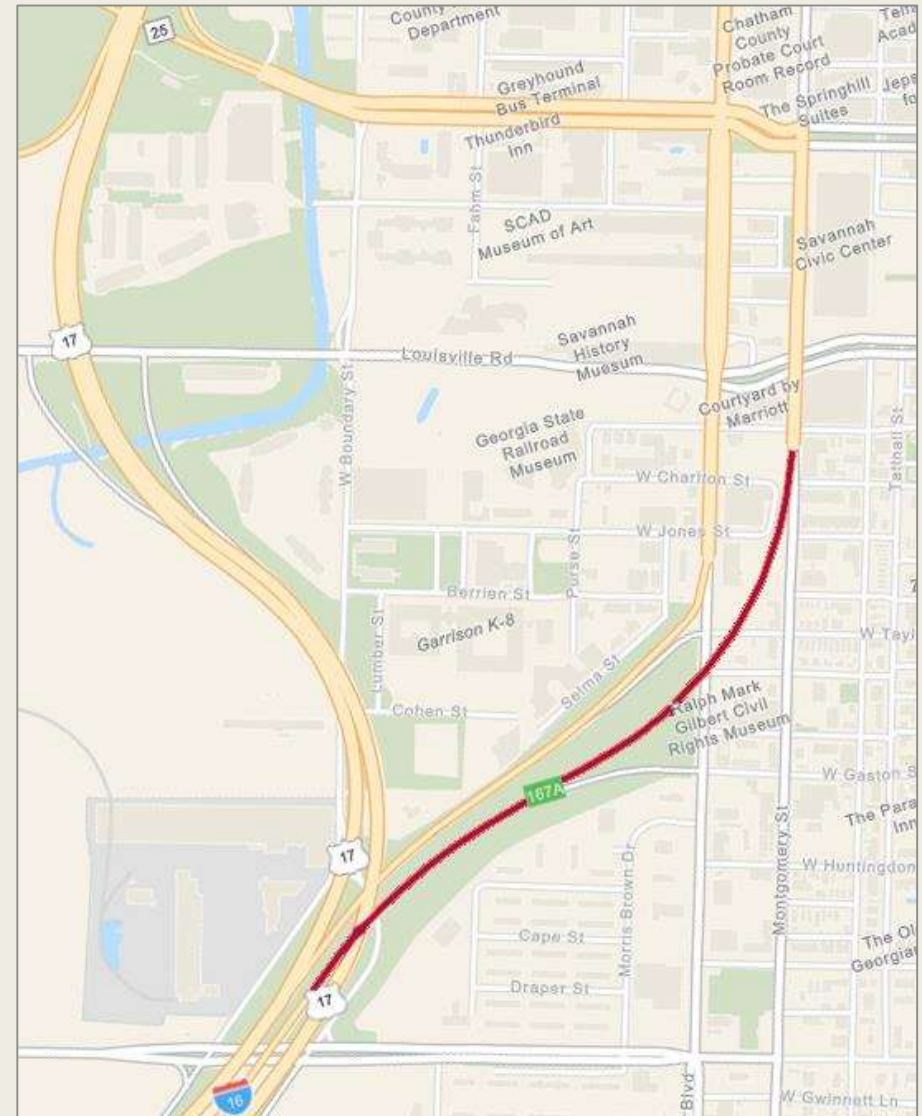
- 
- 1967 **I-16 Complete**
  - 1990 West Broad Street renamed Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
1990 I-16 connected to Hwy 17
  - 1995 MLK Jr./Montgomery Corridor Existing Conditions Survey (MPC)  
First official mention of removal of overpass
  - 1996 City adopts Revitalization Plan for MLK and Montgomery Corridor, includes removal of flyover
  - 1998 - 2009 Savannah Development and Renewal Authorities studies
  - 2008 **GDOT I-16 Terminus/MLK Jr. Boulevard Flyover Analysis and Concept Development Study**
  - 2012 **MPC, City, County Study: *Reclaiming Old West Broad Street***  
Savannah City Council unanimously approved a Resolution of Support for the *Reclaiming Old West Broad Street: I-16 Exit Ramp Removal Project*
  - 2016 **Interchange Modification Report complete**
  - 2019 Canal District Master Plan and Action Playbook- includes removal of flyover  
Downtown Master Plan adopted- includes removal of flyover  
City Council decision to redevelop Civic Center site

THE CONCEPT



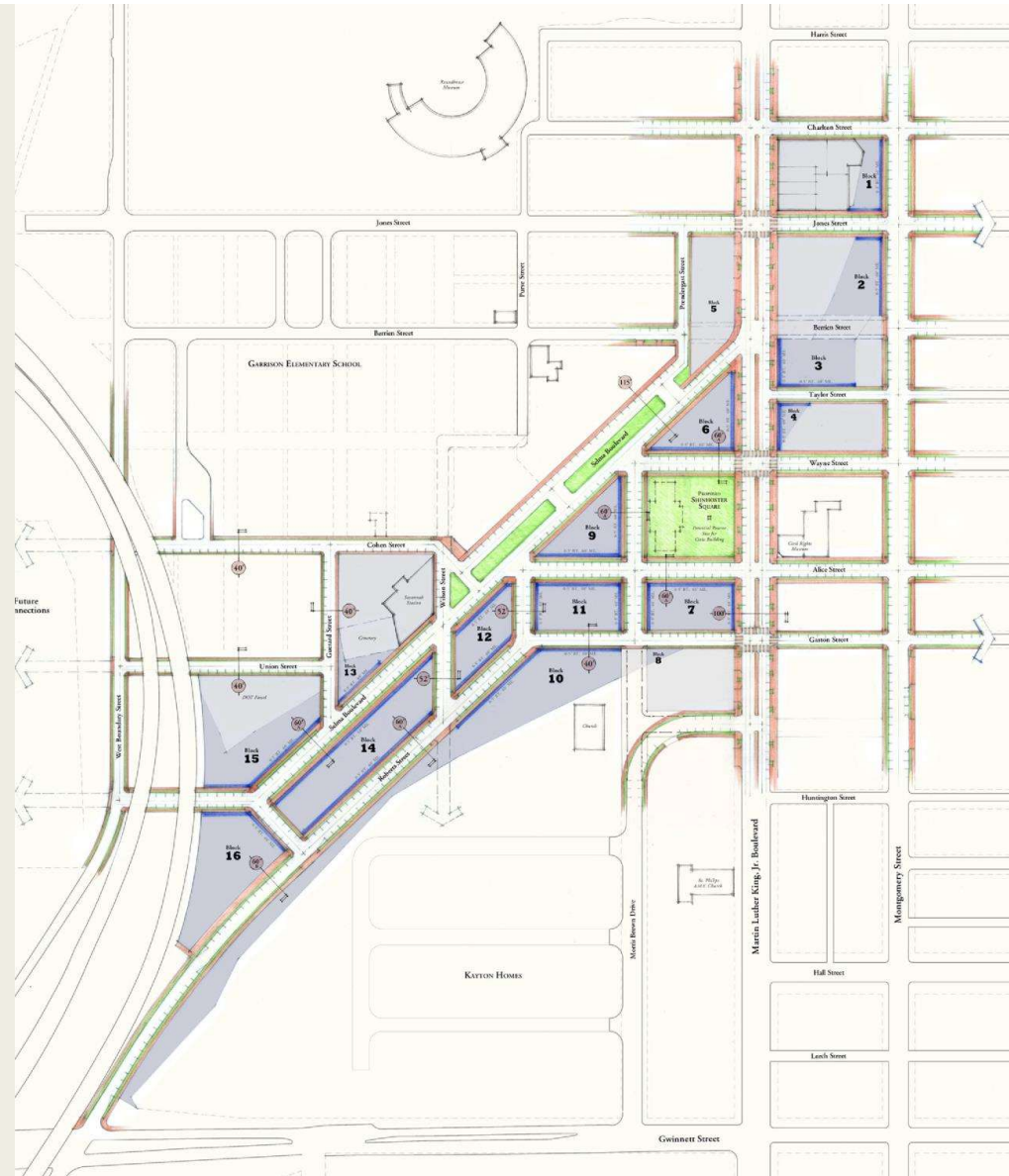
# Existing Conditions

- Montgomery Street – Terminus of I-16
- Injects interstate infrastructure into the heart of Savannah



# Civic Master Plan 2012

- Preliminary planning
- Identified potential street network for reclaimed property
- Identified potential for redevelopment

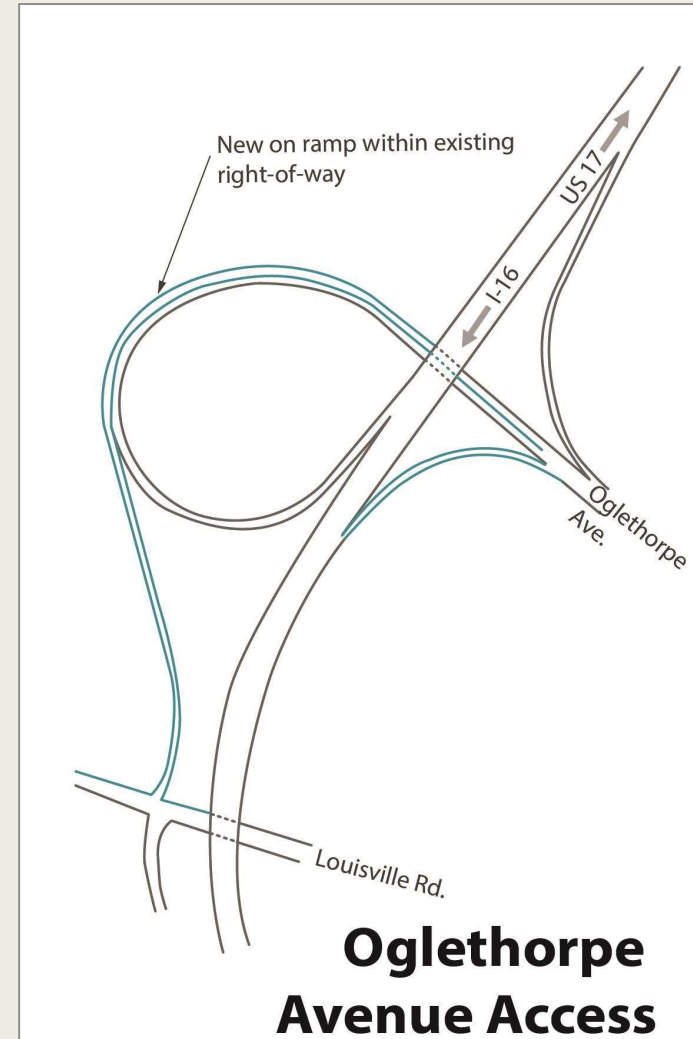






# Interchange Modification Report 2016

- Modify Oglethorpe to full interchange
- Serves downtown
- In concert with Gwinnett Street Improvements



# Comparison of Alternatives

Origin	Destination	Route	Travel Time (mins)	
			Existing	IMR
I-16 EB at 37th St off- ramp	Civic Center	via existing I-16 off-ramp	2.5	-
		via Gwinnett St	4.7	4.6
		via Louisville Rd	3.5	4.2
		via W Oglethorpe Ave	-	4.6
	City Hall	via existing I-16 off-ramp	6.1	-
		via Gwinnett St	8.8	8.8
		via Louisville Rd	7.3	8.3
		via W Oglethorpe Ave	-	5.1

# The Coalition

Neighborhood leaders

Housing Authority of Savannah

Savannah Development &  
Renewal Authority

Scenic America

Savannah Tree Foundation

Property owners

Business leaders

Planning & design professionals

Facilitated by:

Historic Savannah Foundation

U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock

Georgia Rep. Edna Jackson

# BENEFITS



Restoration

Economics

Safety

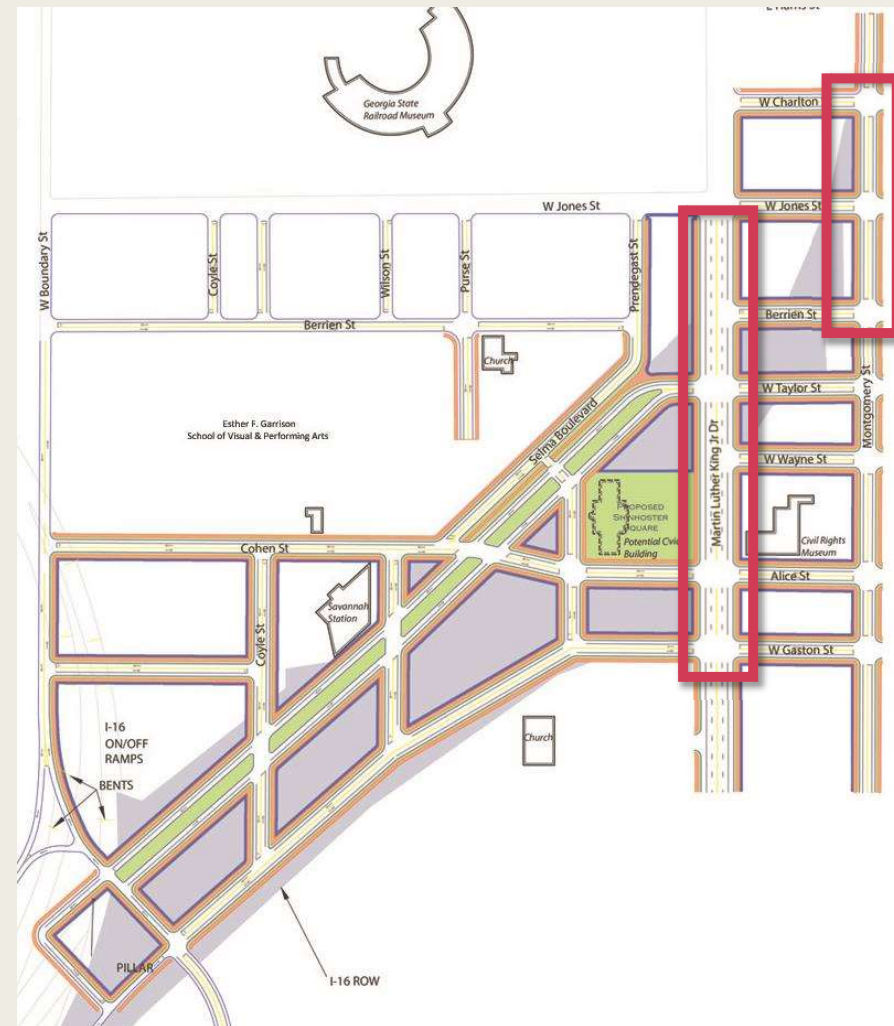
Connectivity

Beauty

# Restoration:

Taking action to amend the injustices of “urban renewal”

- Reclaim over 8 acres of developable land
- Restore 650 linear feet fronting MLK Jr. Blvd.
- Restore 350 feet fronting Montgomery Street
- New civic, business, and affordable housing opportunities



Restoration

Economics

Safety

Connectivity

Beauty



# Economics:

Revitalize a once-vibrant corridor

- Reinvent Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. as a gateway to the city instead of the edge of downtown
- Stabilize property values



Restoration

Economics

Safety

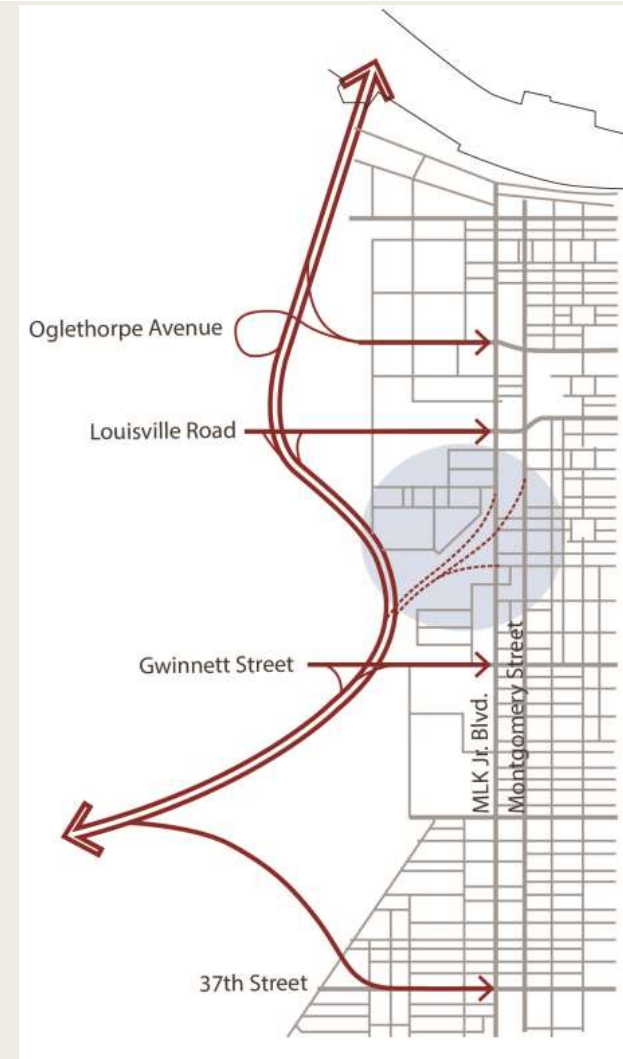
Connectivity

Beauty

# Safety:

Improve safety for all – drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, transit-riders, and others

- Montgomery Street between Gwinnett Street and Bay Street – Crash rate **3 times higher** than comparable streets
- Inadequate spacing between interchanges
  - *Five interchanges between 37<sup>th</sup> Street Connector and Oglethorpe Avenue*
  - *Average spacing of 0.3 miles*



Restoration

Economics

Safety

Connectivity

Beauty

# Safety:

Improve safety for all – drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, transit-riders, and others

- Inadequate weave area for right turn onto Liberty Street
- Limits pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- Challenging for pedestrians – especially tourists!



Restoration

Economics

Safety

Connectivity

Beauty



# Connectivity:

Knit the fabric of downtown together with neighborhoods to the west and improving the local street network

- Opportunity to make Montgomery Street a two-way street
  - *Alternative to Whitaker and Drayton*
- Establish connectivity
  - *West Savannah neighborhoods*
  - *Savannah Arena and Canal District*
  - *Redevelopment of the Civic Center*



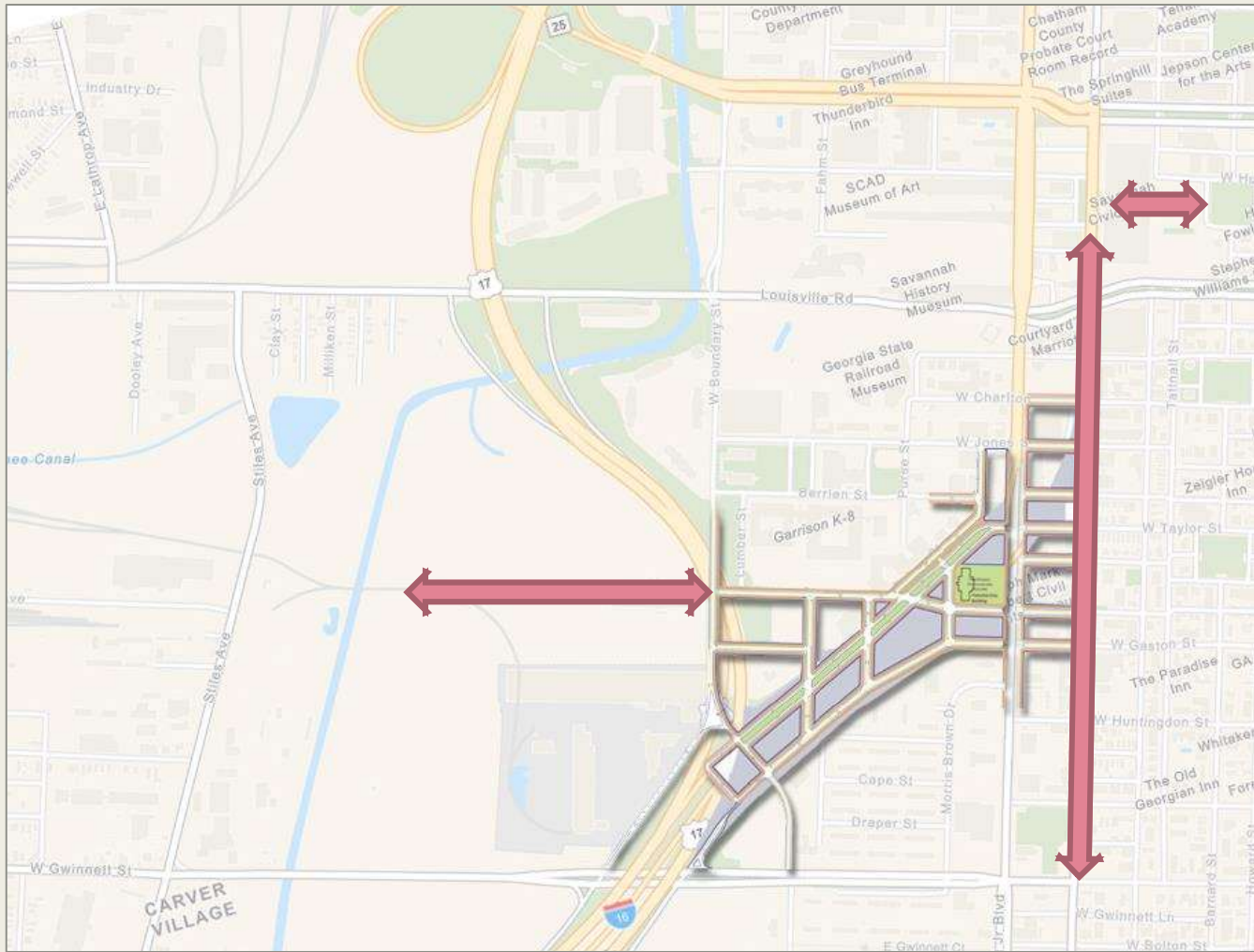
Restoration

Economics

Safety

Connectivity

Beauty



Restoration

Economics

Safety

Connectivity

Beauty



# Beauty:

Designing a proper gateway that reflects Savannah's beauty



Restoration

Economics

Safety

Connectivity

Beauty





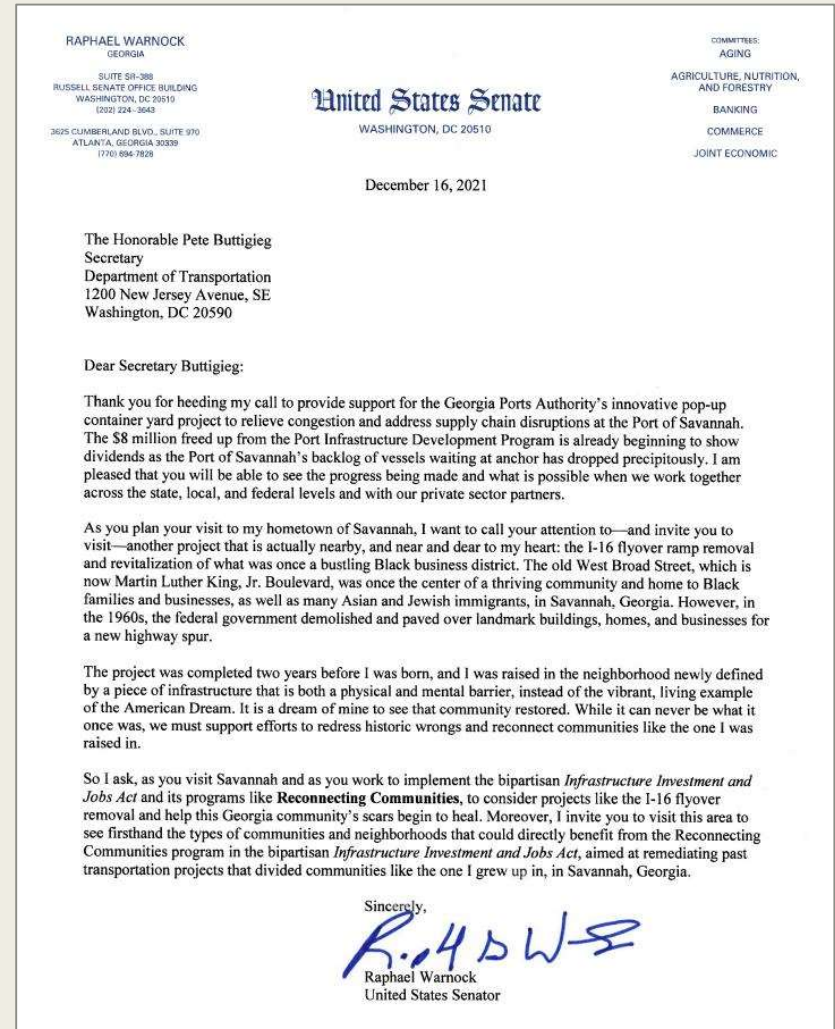


WHY NOW?



# Why Now?

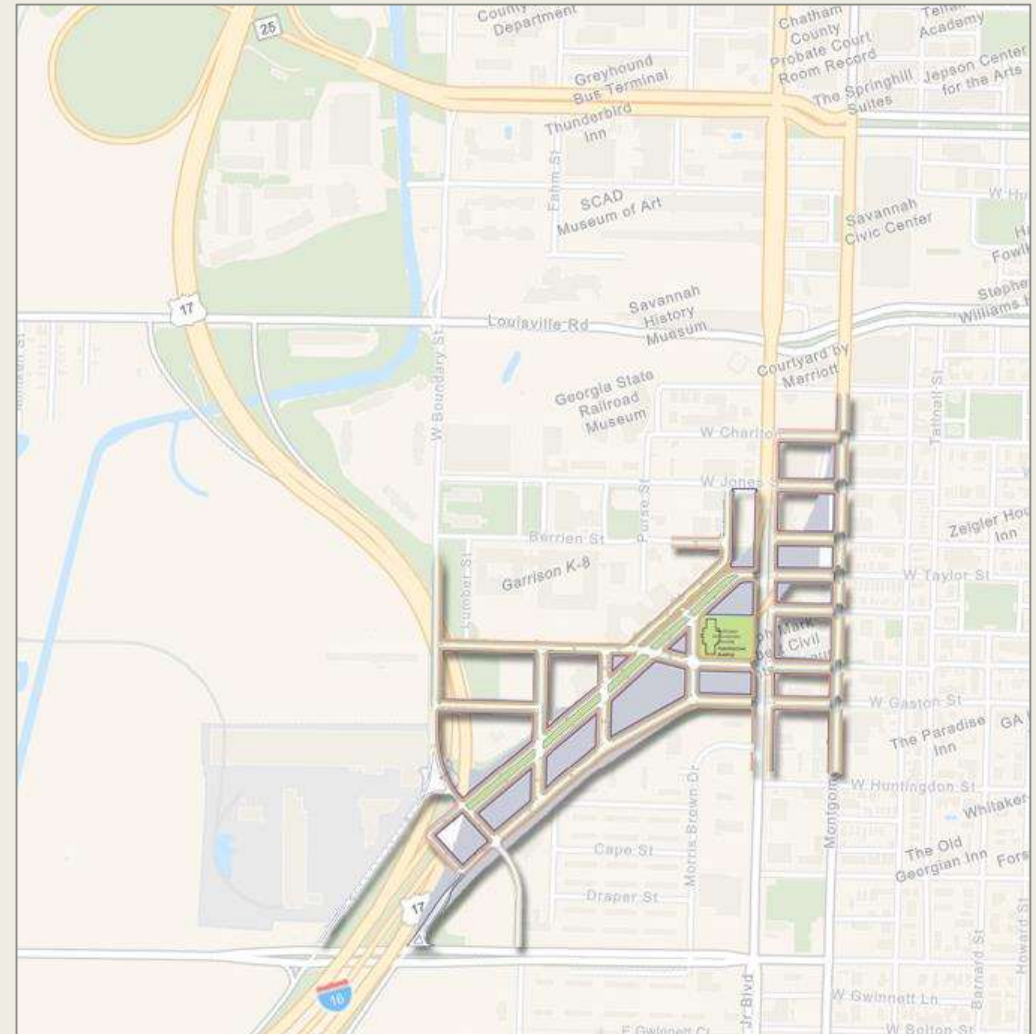
- Federal support
- Federal funding
  - *Infrastructure Bill*
  - *USDOT Reconnecting Communities*





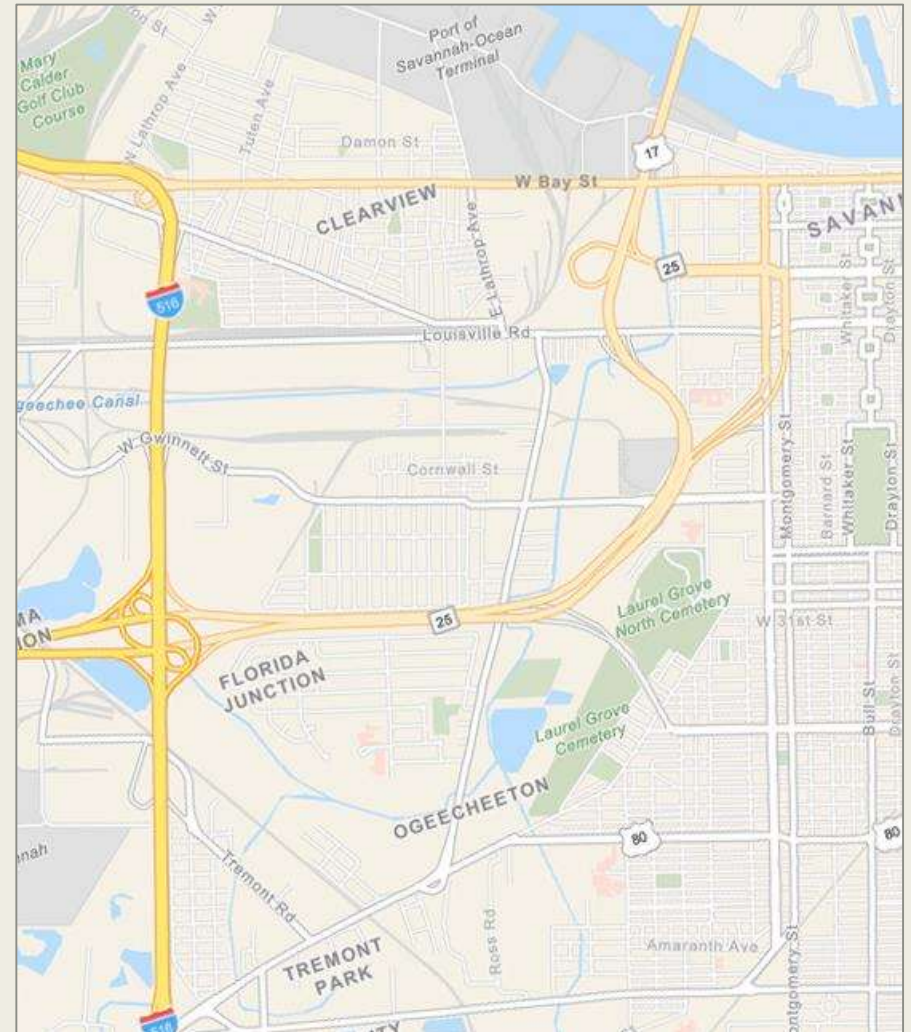
# Why Now?

- Federal support
- Federal funding
  - *Infrastructure Bill*
  - *USDOT Reconnecting Communities*
- Supports City of Savannah initiatives and priorities
  - *Canal District*
  - *Civic Center redevelopment*
  - *Affordable housing*

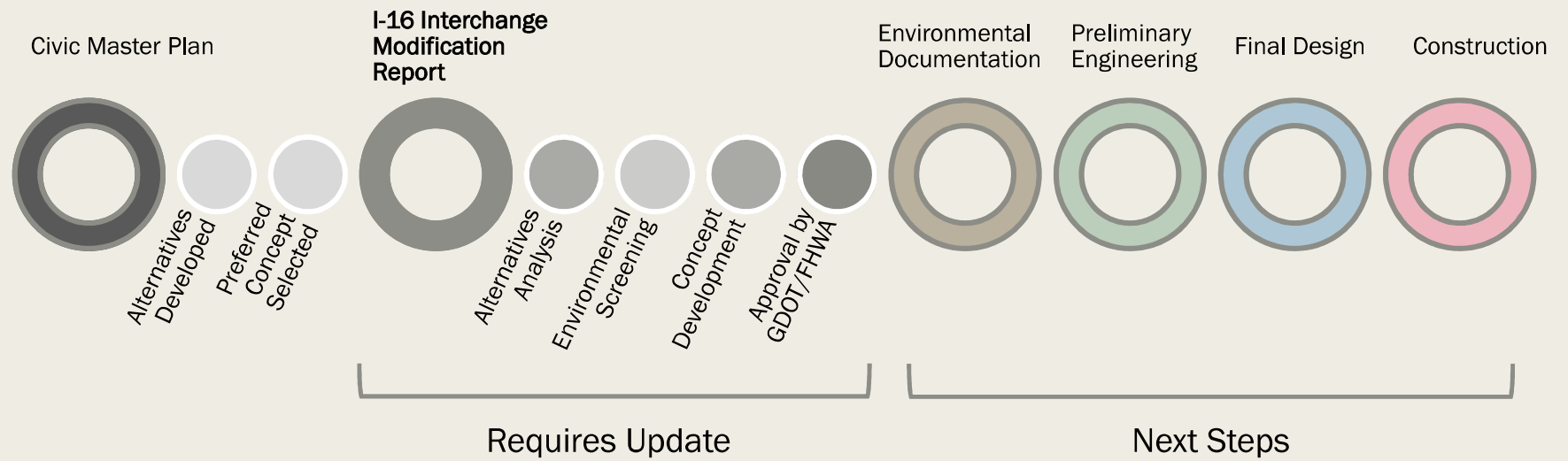


# Why Now?

- Federal support
- Federal funding
  - *Infrastructure Bill*
  - *USDOT Reconnecting Communities*
- Supports City of Savannah initiatives and priorities
  - *Canal District*
  - *Civic Center redevelopment*
  - *Affordable housing*
- Coordination with GDOT
  - *Savannah River Crossing*



# What's Next?



THANK YOU!

