



# Technical Assistance Panel

## Final Report

### June 6, 2019

# THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE Technical Assistance Panel (TAP)

## MISSION

The Urban Land Institute provides leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.



## TAPs MISSION

To provide local municipalities, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations with objective, multi-disciplinary guidance and advice on land use, real estate development and urban design-related issues.

The City of Savannah  
Thanks their  
Community Partners  
for their sponsorship support:

*Downtown Neighborhood Association*

*Historic Savannah Foundation*

*Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce*

*Savannah Downtown Business Association*

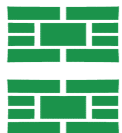
*Old Savannah Tours*



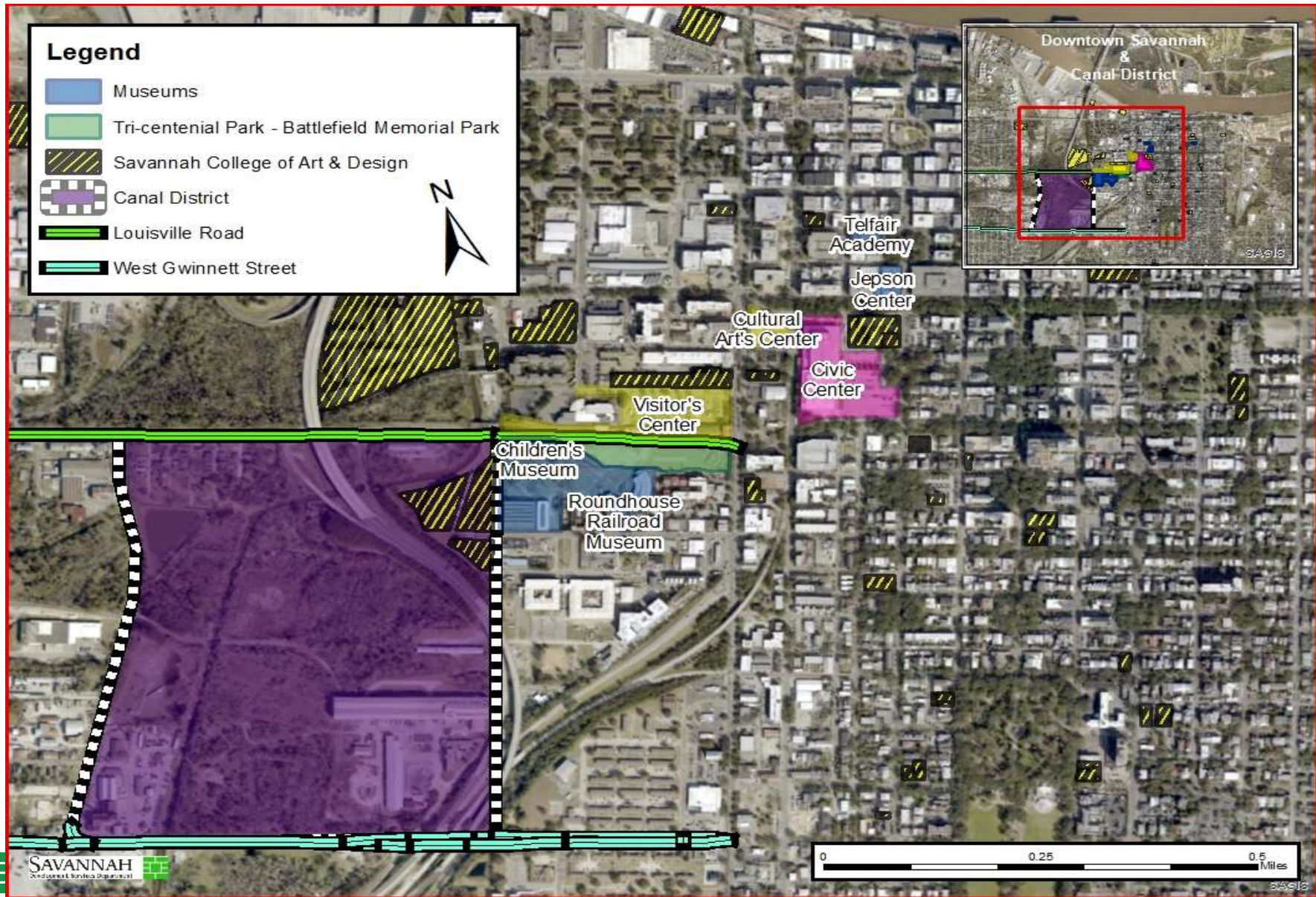
ONE CITY. ONE DIRECTION: FORWARD

# The Panel's Assignment

- ❖ **Western gateway** into Savannah's National Landmark Historic District,
- ❖ **Unique and significant redevelopment opportunity** within Savannah's National Landmark Historic District (NLHD).
- ❖ City's goal is to realize the **highest and best use** within the context of respecting the Oglethorpe Plan, reconnecting neighborhoods, and determining compatible mixed-use redevelopment opportunities.
- ❖ The City will consider the options of private redevelopment and/or a public/private joint venture development or other **forms of redevelopment partnerships**.



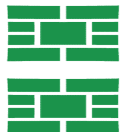
# Study Area



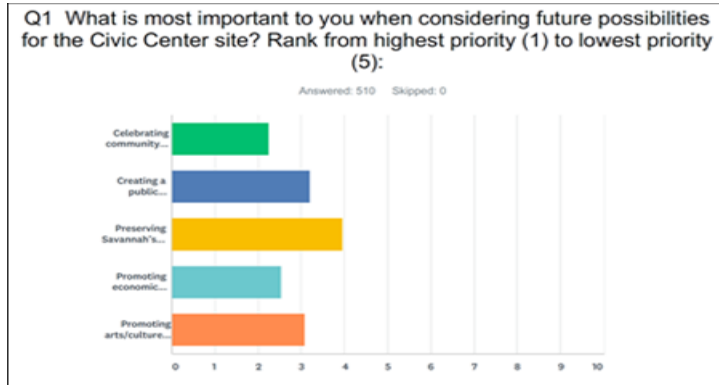
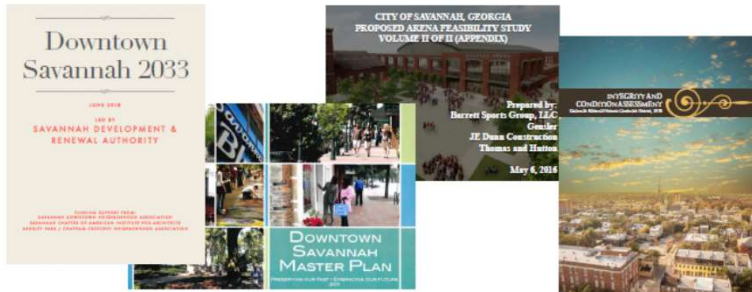
# City of Savannah Panel Questions



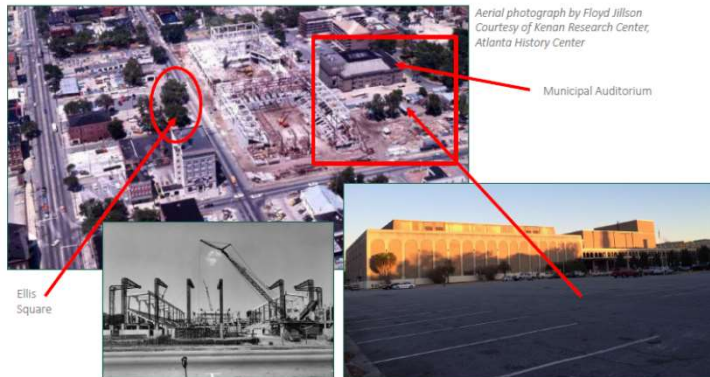
- 1) What is the **best use of this property** that respects the integrity of Savannah's National Landmark Historic District as well as celebrates and promotes our cultural assets including the Oglethorpe Plan, the urban forest, the architectural landscape, and a diverse community?
- 2) How can the City best leverage this property to have a **catalytic economic impact** on downtown while respecting the character of the surrounding neighborhood(s) and serving as a partner in community building?
- 3) What type of **partnership structures** (public-private, joint venture, sale/lease, City as developer, etc.) would best support the successful redevelopment of the site?
- 4) What opportunities are possible for the site to **serve as a gateway** to the National Landmark Historic District and to connect to the developing Canal District?



# TAP Process



## The Civic Center



City of Savannah Municipal Archives

SAVANNAH  
savannahga.gov

Special City Council Workshop  
October 30, 2018

**Urban Land Institute  
Technical Assistance Panel**

*Preliminary Presentation*

ONE CITY. ONE DIRECTION: FORWARD

# TAPs Framework for Recommendations

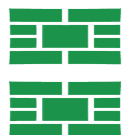
- 1) Shared vision and goals and public purposes
- 2) Capitalize on strengths and mitigate weaknesses
- 3) Reinstate pieces of the Oglethorpe Plan
- 4) Consider highest and best uses of the site
- 5) Understand fundamentals of economics



**A shared vision that is created and embraced by key stakeholders will stand the test of time and will persevere through implementation.**

Ten Principles, 9.

Source: ULI's report  
*Successful Public-Private  
Partnership: From  
Principles to Practice*





# S.W.O.T. Analysis

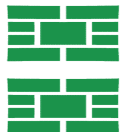


## Strengths:

- One of the largest Historic Districts in the U.S.
- 14 million visitors per year
- Strong market fundamentals
- Support for the Oglethorpe Plan
- Excellent location
- Serves niche audience size; affordable option for community events
- City ownership, ability to influence site

## Weaknesses:

- Not clear how to pay for improvements
- Constraints of Oglethorpe Plan
- Redevelopment of site will be complicated
- Current facility a “wall” in the community and challenged by dated infrastructure
- Lack of affordable housing and diversified business recruitment downtown



# S.W.O.T. Analysis

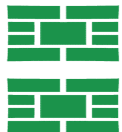


## Opportunities

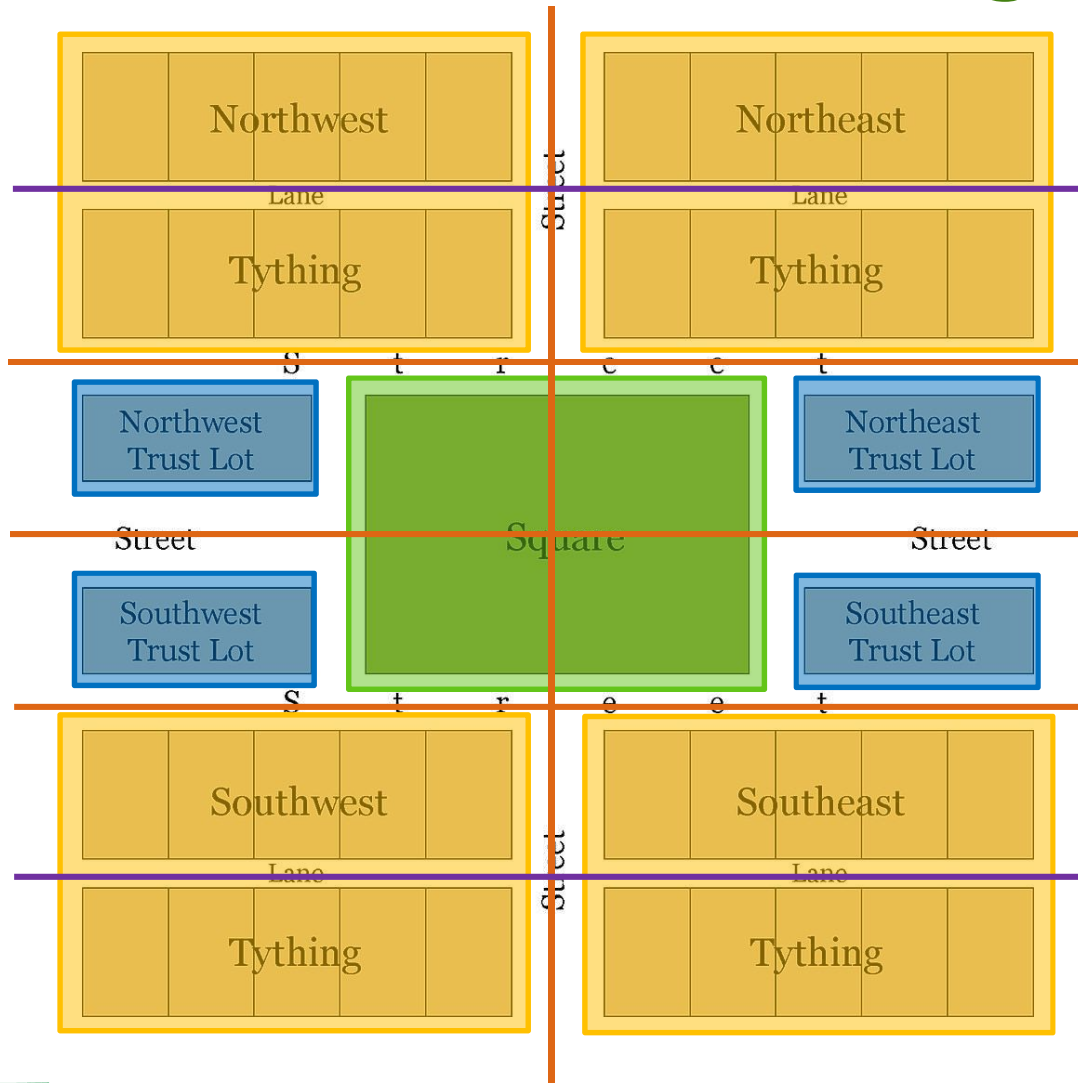
- Stimulate economy through mixed-use development
- Bring stakeholders together
- Create jobs; attract a robust incubator space
- Remove psychological barrier to MLK Blvd
- Return site to tax rolls
- Create new cultural and community assets
- Right wrongs of poor/inequitable planning and development decisions
- Restore Elbert and Jackson wards and honor the Oglethorpe Plan in a new way

## Threats

- Potential for the “French Quarter” effect
- Market-rate development could lead to high rents/prices; lack of strong policies could make the redeveloped area out of reach for many
- Site could be developed in a generic/commercial way that does not strengthen community
- Potential loss of cultural experiences; loss of a community gathering space
- Competing priorities have the potential to cancel each other out
- Future plans to remove I-16 flyover require planning for new traffic plans and restored gateway

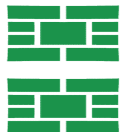


# Historical Context of Oglethorpe Plan

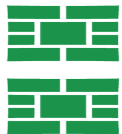
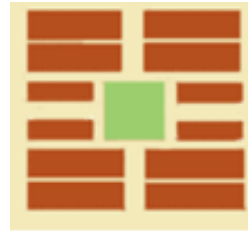


## The Ward

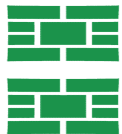
- Square
- Trust Lots
- Tythings/Building Lots
- Streets
- Lanes



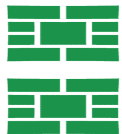
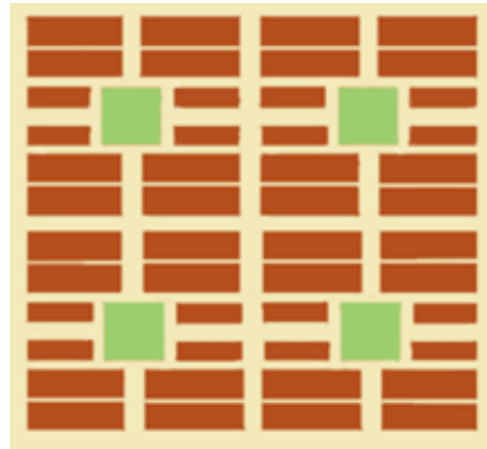
# Historical Context of Oglethorpe Plan



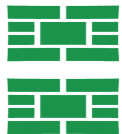
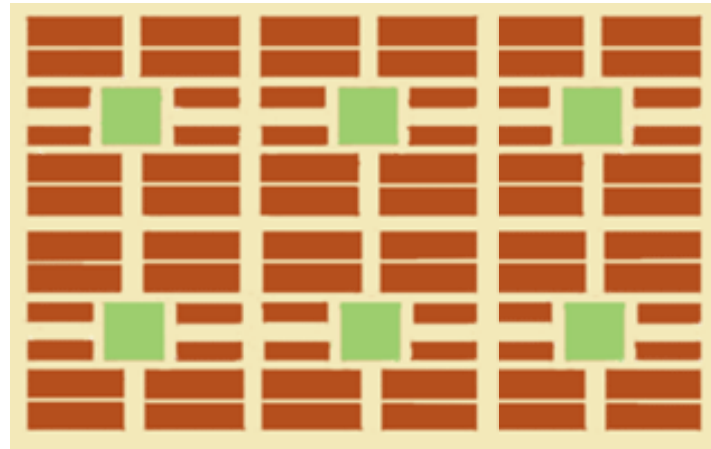
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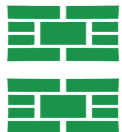
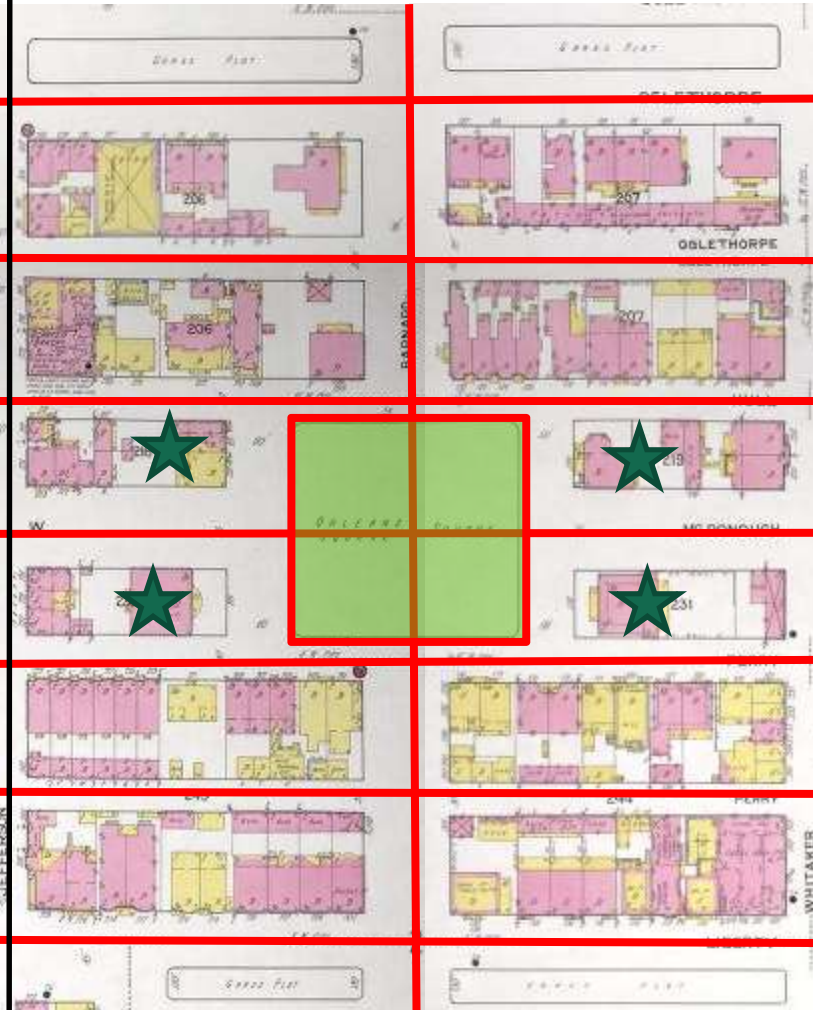


# The Oglethorpe Plan: Civic Center Site

Elbert Square/Ward



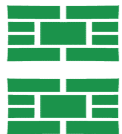
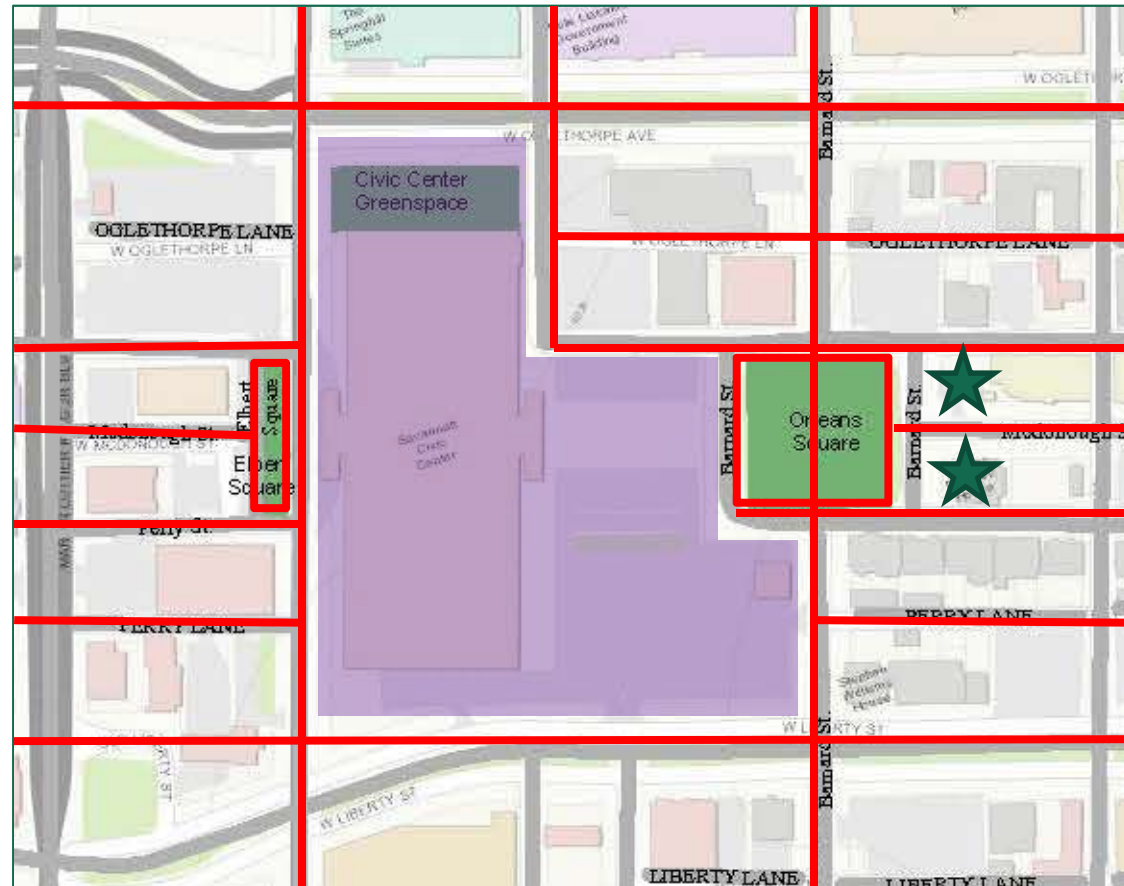
Orleans Square/Jackson Ward, early 20<sup>th</sup> century





# The Oglethorpe Plan: Civic Center Site

Elbert & Jackson Wards, present day



# Existing Conditions

## Confusing Savannah Gateway

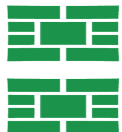
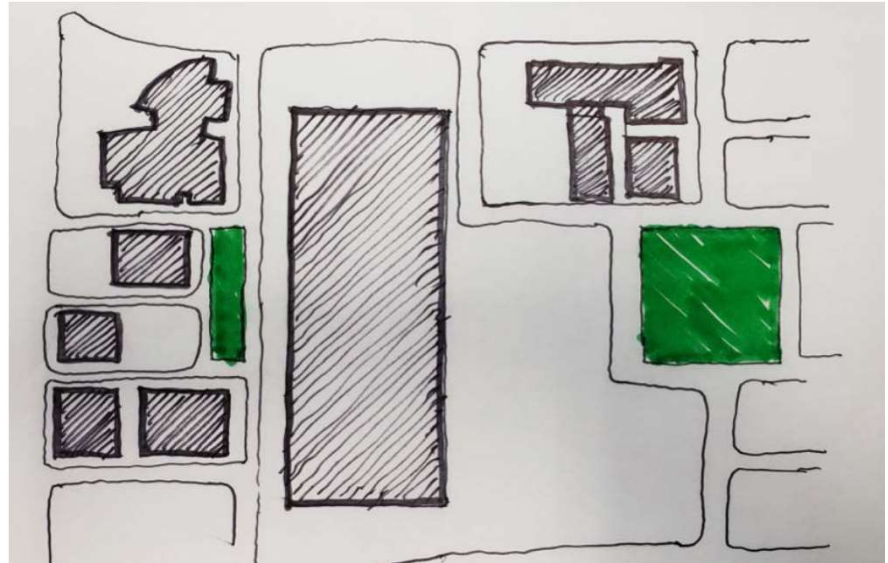
- Montgomery Street/Elbert Square

## Visual, Logistical, Psychological Barrier

- “Super Block” creates a “wall”
- Loss of square and character of wards
- Little visible pattern remains

## Economic Viability of the Civic Center Site

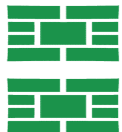
- Structure and Materials
- Mechanical/Electrical/Plumbing Systems
- Accessibility
- Fiberoptic Infrastructure
- Current Emergency Uses
- Grounds and Parking



# Recommendation

*“It is the (ULI) panel’s strong recommendation that the entire Civic Center Complex be removed and preparations for the restoration of the Oglethorpe Plan in this area be pursued.”*

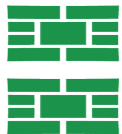
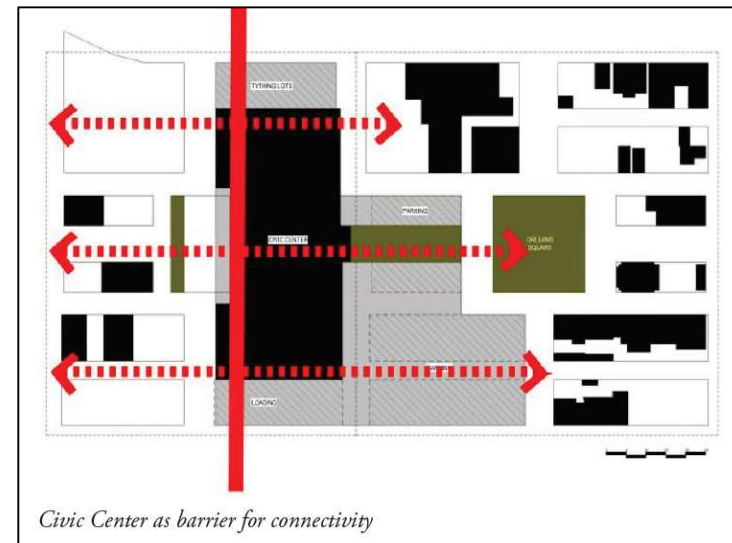
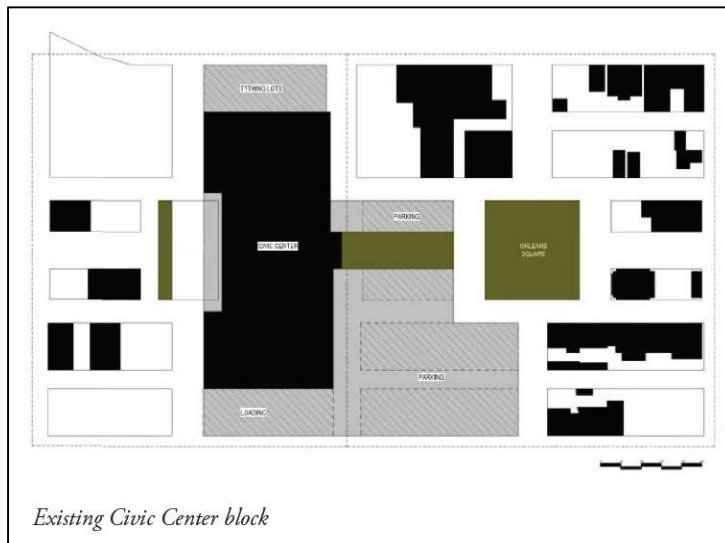
“ [Garvin] found that the secret to urban greatness stems from management of the streets, squares, parks, and special places that make up the ‘public realm.’ To maintain greatness, cities must not only maintain but also ‘continually alter their public realm to meet the changing needs of their occupants.’” – from “In Print: What Makes a Great City,” a review of Alexander Garvin’s book *What Makes a Great City*, by David R. Godschalk in the *Urban Land* magazine, published online Dec. 2, 2016.”



## Recommendation:

# Remove the Wall

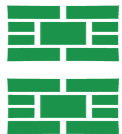
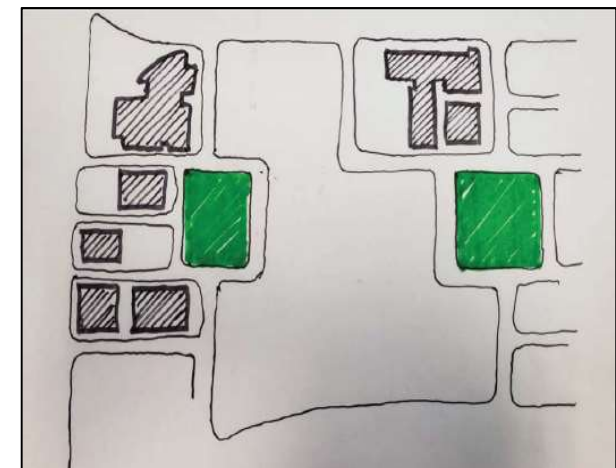
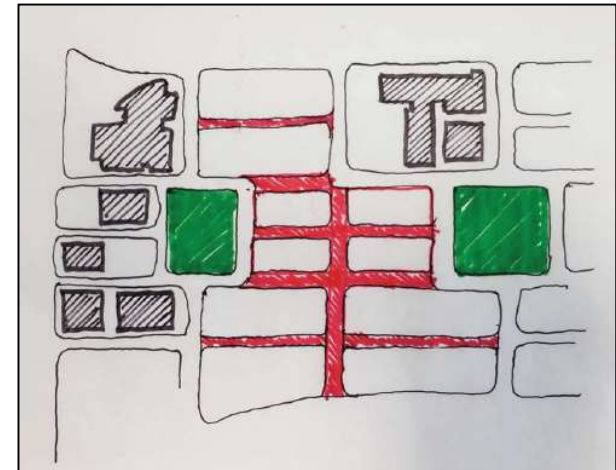
- Represents monolithic presence
- Impinges on 2 historic wards and squares
- Blocks vehicular and pedestrian traffic along once viable east-west thoroughfares curtailing:
  - Economic growth
  - Limiting access to Historic District and west Savannah



*Recommendation:*

# Re-establish Square/Street Patterns

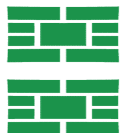
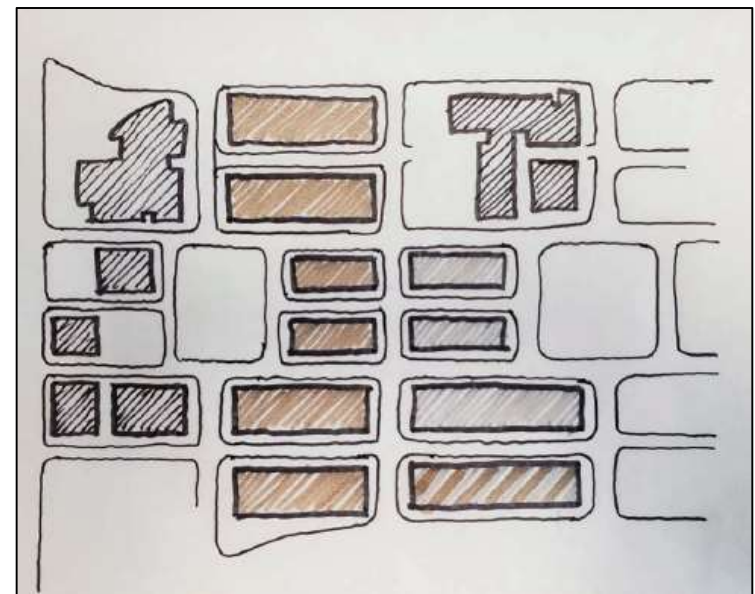
- Re-establish Oglethorpe Plan ward pattern lost with Civic Center development:
  - Tything and Trust lots
  - Massing of block construction
  - Architecture of the historic buildings
- Preserve the Historic District
- Address our historic designation with the National Park Service



*Recommendation:*

# Establish Height Limits

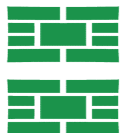
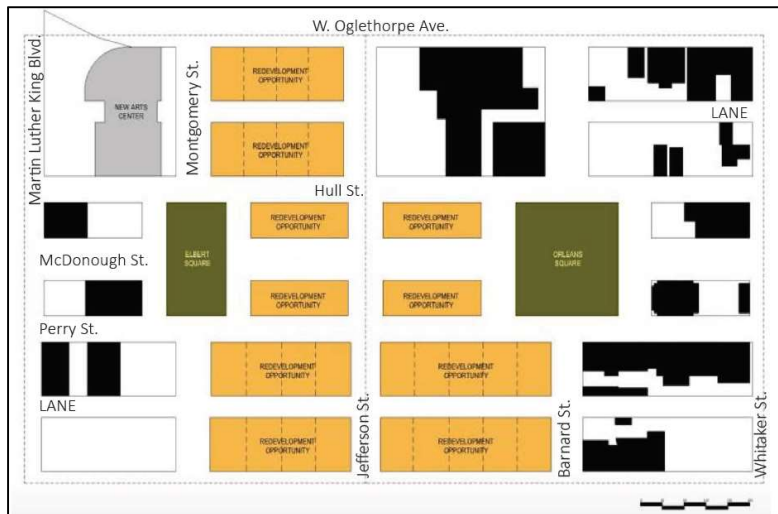
- Stimulate economic activity and put the site back on the tax rolls
  - 4 to 6 stories closer to Montgomery Street (4 stories permitted)
  - 2 to 4 stories closer to Barnard Street (4 stories permitted)
  - 4 to 6 stories closer to West Liberty Street and West Oglethorpe Avenue (5 stories permitted)



*Recommendation:*

# Pursue Mixed-use Development

- Civic Space
- Commercial
- Residential
- Workforce “Missing Middle” Housing



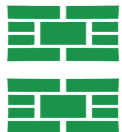
# Economic Forecast

- Sales tax and collected revenues from permits and fees
- Projected tax revenue from new construction
- Economic activity from demolition, pre-development, site preparation and construction
- Economic activity from new residents and jobs after redevelopment
- Increased public revenues from the “Halo Effect”
- Revenues expected from future commercial uses and new jobs

A valuable asset but not without inevitable costs for demolition and site preparation

## Estimated Net Value of Site

Est Land Value (Cleared)	\$12-\$18 Million
Demolition	(\$3-\$4 Million)
Site Prep	(\$4 to \$5 Million)
Net Value	\$3 to \$11 Million





*Suggested*

# Implementation: Short-term (1 yr)

- Meet with stakeholders
  - Confirm intent to demolish the structure
  - Confirm intent to restore and implement the Oglethorpe Plan
  - Assess importance of restoring streets vs. streets and lanes in Oglethorpe Plan
  - Confirm the kinds of uses desired, including height and density of each



*Suggested*

# Implementation: Short-term (1 yr)

- Define matrix for success
- Pursue due diligence costs, property appraisal, market analysis, infrastructure and utilities; hire outside experts to get clear, unbiased understanding of what is involved
- Establish financial strategy/deal structure
- Develop implementation strategy, plan/schedule/phasing



*Suggested*

# Implementation: Mid-term (2-3 yrs)

- Develop and issue RFP
- Establish financing mechanism
- Build, solidify and maintain partnership agreements
- Build/execute Arena—monitoring how progress of project may have an impact on plans for the Civic Center site
- Begin Phase I construction for Civic Center site starting with infrastructure and utilities



*Suggested*

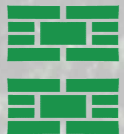
# Implementation: Long-term (4+ yrs)

- Demolish Civic Center
- Manage process
- Monitor compliance; ensure RFP is properly executed
- Begin recognizing community economic benefits



# **Council Meeting Agenda Item: # 55**

**requesting a “Motion to adopt the recommendations of the Urban Land Institute-Atlanta regarding the redevelopment of the Savannah Civic Center Site”**



# City of Savannah – ULI Project Team



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Studio



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