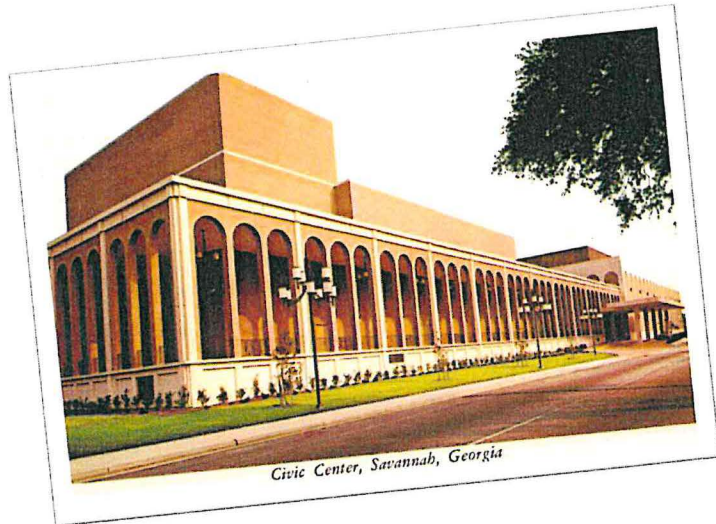


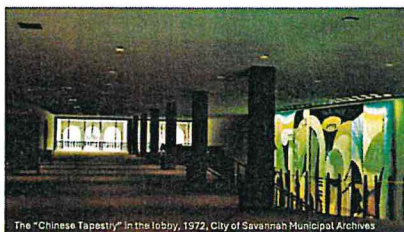
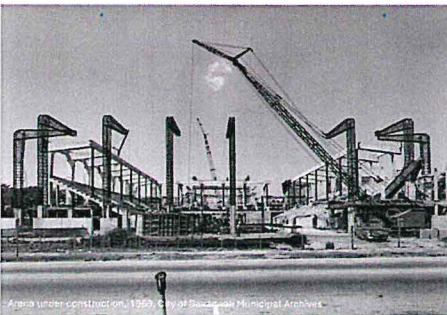
## Civic Legacy Council Workshop Presentation

December 11, 2025



1

## Savannah Civic Center Development



1960: First proposed

1967: Council approved on site of Municipal Auditorium; Ritzert & Nowell, Architects, selected to design combined arena/theatre complex; funded thru Federal Urban Renewal program and general obligation bond issue

1971 December 18: First event opening performance of Savannah Symphony Orchestra's season (building not finished)

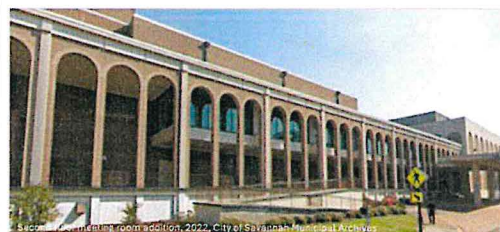
1972 February 11: Official Grand Opening (\$7.9 million construction)

1996: addition of 9,000sf meeting room spaces (\$5.5 million)

Late 1990s: First proposed building new arena elsewhere

**Savannah Civic Center Grand Opening Week Feb. 10-12**

Time	Event	Location
10:00 AM	Official Grand Opening Ceremony	Main Lobby
11:00 AM	Reception and Open House	Main Lobby
12:00 PM	Lunch and Networking	Main Lobby
1:00 PM	Performance by Savannah Symphony Orchestra	Main Lobby
2:00 PM	Reception and Open House	Main Lobby
3:00 PM	Performance by Savannah Symphony Orchestra	Main Lobby
4:00 PM	Reception and Open House	Main Lobby
5:00 PM	Performance by Savannah Symphony Orchestra	Main Lobby
6:00 PM	Reception and Open House	Main Lobby
7:00 PM	Performance by Savannah Symphony Orchestra	Main Lobby
8:00 PM	Reception and Open House	Main Lobby
9:00 PM	Performance by Savannah Symphony Orchestra	Main Lobby
10:00 PM	Reception and Open House	Main Lobby
11:00 PM	Performance by Savannah Symphony Orchestra	Main Lobby
12:00 AM	Reception and Open House	Main Lobby

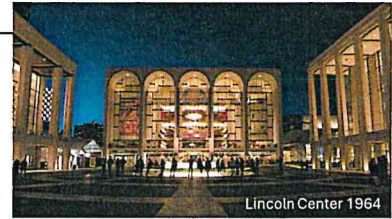


2

## Architectural Style

### *New Formalist:*

- Flourished 1960s in high-profile cultural, institutional, and municipal buildings
- Combined traditional building techniques and cutting-edge technology
- Established a contemporary monumentality that embraced ancient precedents such as arches and colonnades
- Commonly featured central plazas with pools and fountains
- Civic Center is in good company!



Lincoln Center 1964



Kennedy Center 1971



Atlanta Civic Center 1968

## A Place of Honor



1978: Johnny Mercer Theatre

1984: Martin Luther King, Jr. Arena

*Circa 1976 Arena Rooms:*

- Lowell Mason
- Cecil Day

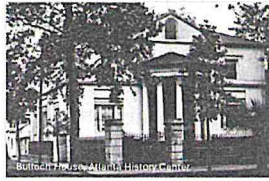
*Circa 1996 Community Rooms:*

- Andrew Bryan
- Jane Deveau
- Mary Musgrove
- Flannery O'Connor
- James Simms
- Franklin Traub

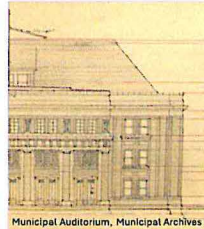




## Cycles of Transition & Loss



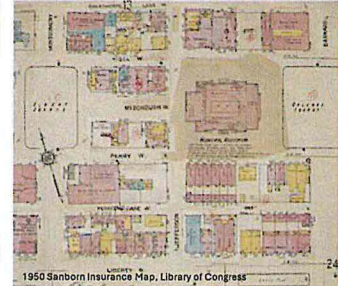
Bulloch House, Historic City of Savannah



Municipal Auditorium, Municipal Archives



"White Slums" - Area of Auditorium, 1940, Georgia Southern University



1950 Sanborn Insurance Map, Library of Congress

### Past Losses:

- 1914: Archibald Bulloch House
- 1935: Elbert Square (partial); Montgomery Street 2-way traffic
- 1960s Street grid/Oglethorpe Town Plan; Residential neighborhood, and Municipal Auditorium

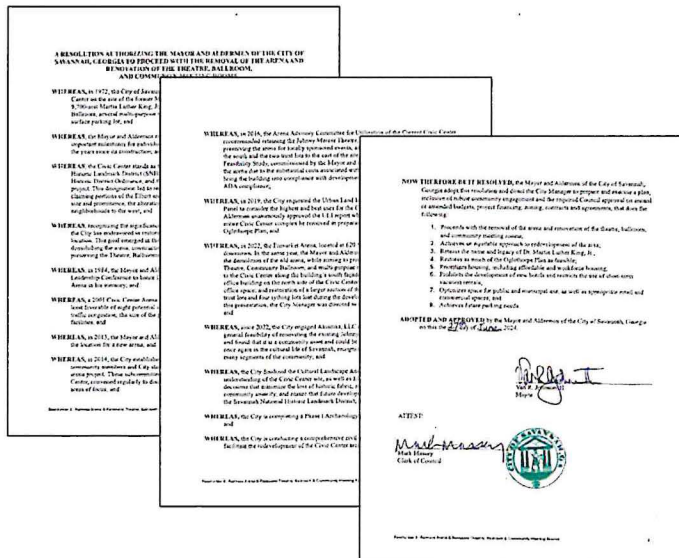
### Upcoming Loss:

- 2026: Martin Luther King, Jr. Arena

### Lessons Learned From the Past:

- Loss and change is traumatic
- Need to acknowledge and provide space for memories and hurt (past and new)
- Opportunity for restoration and to honor/remember what cannot be restored

## Civic Legacy - City Council Resolution



### Council Resolution passed in June 2024

- Proceeds with removal of arena & renovation of theater, ballroom & community rooms;
- Achieves an equitable approach to redevelopment of the area;
- Retains the name & legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.;
- Prioritizes housing, including affordable & workforce housing;
- Prohibits the development of new hotels & restricts the use of STVRs;
- Optimizes space for public and municipal use, as well as appropriate retail and commercial spaces; and
- Achieves future parking needs.

## Civic Legacy – How Did We Get Here?

*More than 300 participants with nearly 500 comments*

- **Stakeholder Meetings**  
April 25, 2024 (79 participants)
- **Community-wide Open House #1**  
May 7, 2024, Civic Center Ballroom (155 participants)
- **Virtual Meeting**  
May 16, 2024 (23 participants)
- **Community-wide Open House #2**  
May 18, 2024, John Delaware Center (31 participants)
- **Community-wide Open House #3**  
May 20, 2024, Armstrong Center (25 participants)

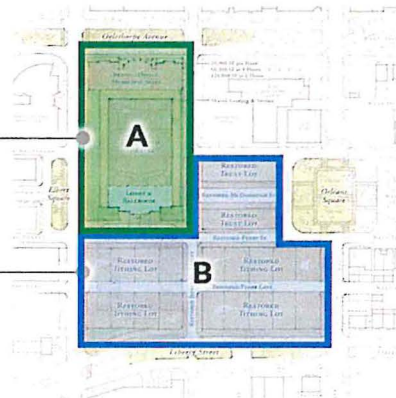


## Civic Legacy – Civic Center Redevelopment

*Project Approach*

### PROJECT AREAS

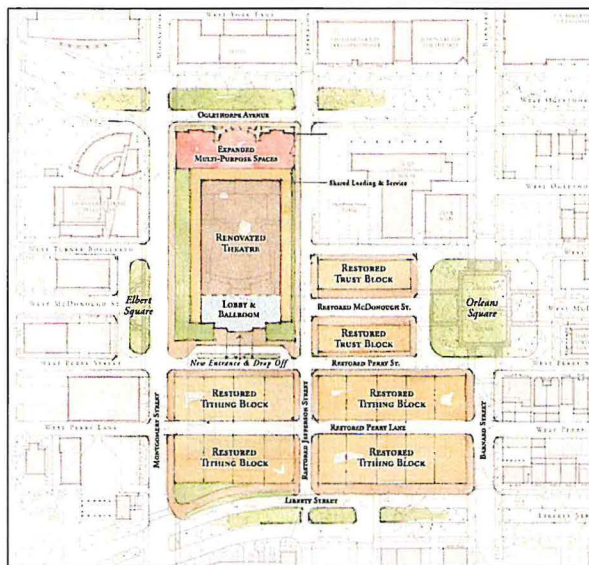
- A. Civic Block**  
Theatre, Ballroom, Community Meeting Rooms,  
New Multi-Use Space, Reimagining Elbert Square
- B. Oglethorpe Plan Blocks**  
Restoration of Oglethorpe Plan, Blocks & Lots,  
Streets, and Subgrade Parking





## Civic Legacy – Civic Center Redevelopment

### Project Approach



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## Civic Legacy – Project Partners

### Roles

#### Arena Removal Design & Construction

**GEL** Engineering

**RAYMOND**  
SINCE 1992

**REEVES  
+ YOUNG**

#### Equity-Driven Public Engagement

**BLUKNOWLEDGE**  
enhancing equity in public & community

**E4Progress Planning and Engineering, LLC**  
Creating a better future through equitable development of infrastructure and community projects

#### Market Study of Theatre

**AMS**  
PLANNING  
& RESEARCH

**Sottile & Sottile**  
Urban Design, Civic Architecture

#### Urban Planning & Architecture

**Sottile & Sottile**  
Urban Design, Civic Architecture

**Charles McMillan & Associates**  
Organization & Leadership

**ethos**

**symbioscity**  
PEOPLE • PLACE • PLANET

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## Civic Legacy – Arena Removal

### Scope



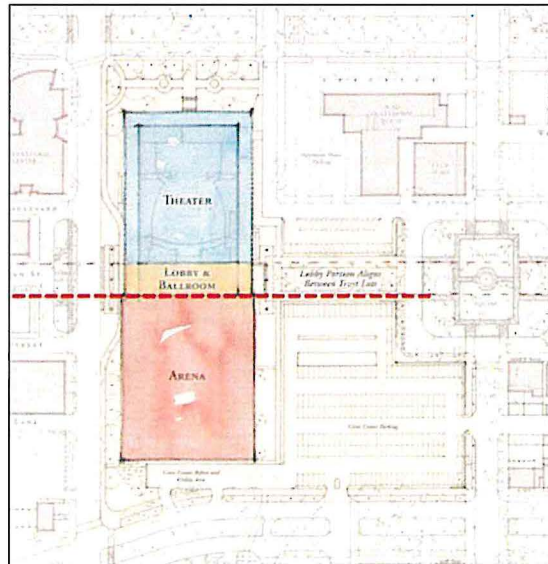
- Careful, controlled removal of the Arena down to the below-grade slab
  - No wrecking ball, no explosives
  - Hand demolition required within 30' of the existing Civic Center structure
- Installation of a temporary kitchen and lobby vending area
- Chiller replacement
- Construction of a weather-tight temporary enclosure at the south wall of the existing lobby
- All work sequenced to keep the Theatre, Ballroom, Meeting Rooms, and Lobby operational throughout construction

## Civic Legacy – Arena Removal

### Milestones

- **Historic District Board of Review Approval for Arena Removal:** November 12, 2025
- **Council Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) Consideration:** February 12, 2026
- **Notice to Proceed / Mobilization:** Week of February 16, 2026
- **Lead & Asbestos Abatement:** Feb./June 2026
- **Temporary Kitchen Construction:** Feb./Mar. 2026
- **Arena Removal Begins:** June 2026
- **Temporary South Wall Installed:** Q1 2027
- **Substantial Completion:** February 2027
- **Final Completion & Site Restoration:** Q1 2027

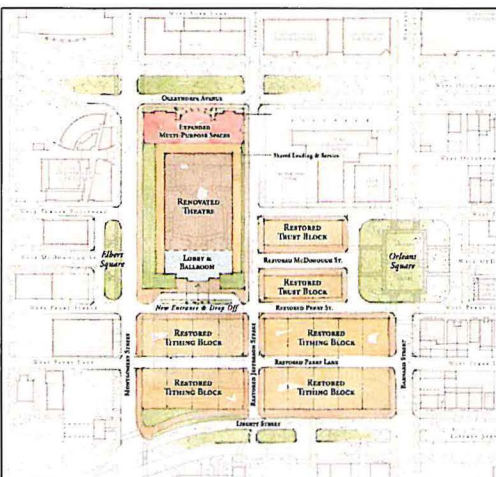
Budget: \$10 million (est.)





## Civic Legacy – Economic & Land Use Study

### Currently Underway



### Scope

- Evaluate the redevelopment of ~4.5 acres adjacent to the Civic Center into four titling blocks and two trust blocks under the Oglethorpe Plan

### Key Findings

- Strong housing demand (rental apartments, for-sale rowhomes and condos)
- High need for workforce/affordable and senior housing
- Retail opportunities for food, beverage & daily-use shops
- Limited office potential (small creative spaces)

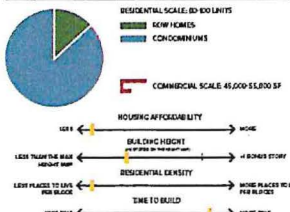
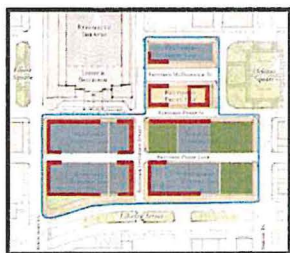
### Next Steps

- Prepare a redevelopment strategy that evaluates costs & benefits as well as outlines actionable steps for implementation
- Align program mix with community priorities & market demand
- Build financial models to guide implementation

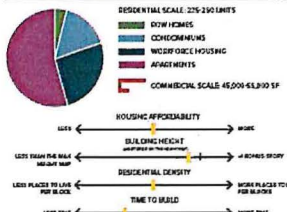
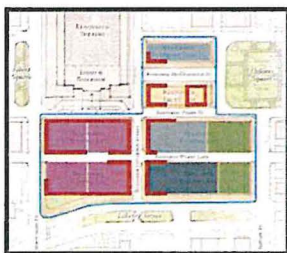
## Civic Legacy – Economic & Land Use Study

### Putting it Together | Residential and Commercial Scenarios

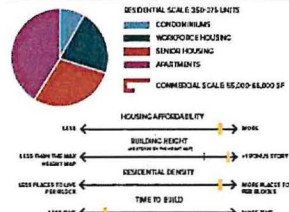
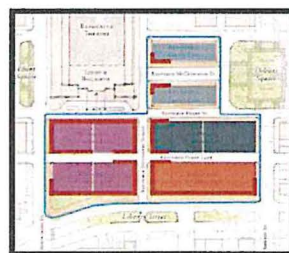
#### SCENARIO 1 (RESIDENTIAL) + SCENARIO A (COMMERCIAL)



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



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



## Civic Legacy – Equity-Driven Public Engagement

*Aligned with Savannah GPS Equity Implementation Framework*

### Goals

- Broaden participation to include residents and business owners that reflect Savannah's demographics
- Remove barriers to participation from communities that have been historically marginalized
- Support a meaningful engagement process for all residents

### Activities

- Public Engagement Meetings
- Stakeholder Focus Groups
- Community Survey
- Experience Survey



City of Savannah Capital Projects Management

Civic Legacy Council Workshop Presentation December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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## Civic Legacy – Equity-Driven Public Engagement

*August 2025 - Present  
Economic & Land Use Study*

### 2 Public Meetings

OCT 28-29, 2025

Open House + Presentation

**100**

Sign-Ins

**167**

Feedback Cards Submitted  
61% residents live outside 31401

### 4 Stakeholder Focus Groups

OCT 28-29, 2025: Housing, Neighborhoods,  
Business & Economic Development,  
Community & Faith Leaders

**31**

Participants

**30**

Experience Surveys Collected  
public meeting attendees + focus group  
participants

### 1 Community Survey

Open OCT 28 - DEC 8, 2025

Follow up & Targeted Strategies

**1,119**

Responses

**60%**

residents live outside 31401



City of Savannah Capital Projects Management

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## Civic Legacy – Equity-Driven Public Engagement

August 2025 - Present  
Economic & Land Use Study

**Community Survey**  
Open OCT 28 - DEC 8, 2025

Results of targeted  
outreach in purple

**1,119**

Responses

42% increase in  
responses

**18%**

household income  
<\$60k

138% increase in  
responses

**45%**

household income  
>\$120k

Household Income: 888  
responses

**133**

identify as  
Black  
African American

169% increase in  
responses

**21**

identify as  
Hispanic  
Latino/a

79% increase in  
responses

**20**

identify as  
Asian American  
Pacific Islander

155% increase in  
responses

**31**

identify as  
Multiracial

**535**

identify as  
White

Race/Ethnicity: 749 responses

SAVANNAH  
savannahga.gov

City of Savannah Capital Projects Management

Civic Legacy Council Workshop Presentation December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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## Civic Legacy – Equity-Driven Public Engagement

*People-Centered & Data Driven Process*

- Uplift community voice - Feedback Cards & Community Survey
- Facilitated diverse participation in focus groups
- Documented the breadth of participation using demographic data
- Implemented targeted survey outreach and promotion to ensure participation from communities that have been historically marginalized
- Invited residents to share their public engagement experience to ensure a meaningful engagement process



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savannahga.gov

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## Civic Legacy – Market Study of Johnny Mercer Theatre

### *Market Demand, Program Analysis & Operations Study*



- Assessment of the operations, use, and financials of the theatre to inform the design of the renovation

### **Preliminary Findings**

- The Johnny Mercer Theatre is underutilized (80–100 days/year) and often the last choice for presenters due to outdated quality, high costs, and inflexible operations
- Renovated facility would meet significant demand from local and national users

### **Expected Study Outcome**

- Recommendations on facility program, operating model, and financial strategy to guide renovation design and long-term sustainability

### **Timeline for Completion**

- Final activity profile, management and governance recommendations, and operating projections – Q1 2026

## Civic Legacy – Renovation of Facility

### *Theatre, Community Ballroom, and Community Meeting Rooms*

- Design RFP to be released in 2026
- New lobby addition with entry off restored Perry St.
- Expanded multipurpose building addition on Oglethorpe frontage
- Upgraded back-of-house spaces and modernized patron amenities
- Renovated Community Ballroom and Meeting Rooms
- Connectivity improvements between the Theatre, Ballroom & new civic spaces





## Civic Legacy – Civic Center Naming Resolution

### *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Civic Center*

- Resolution to be considered during City Council meeting today
- Formal renaming of the Civic Center to honor Dr. King's legacy
- Alignment with Council's 2024 direction to retain and elevate the MLK, Jr. name
- Naming to be incorporated into all project materials moving forward



### *MLK, Jr. Weekend Celebration – January 2026*

- Hardhat tour of the Arena prior to demolition
- Program in the Ballroom celebrating the Civic Center's history and renaming
- Historical materials curated by Municipal Archives
- Event will highlight community memories and Dr. King's legacy