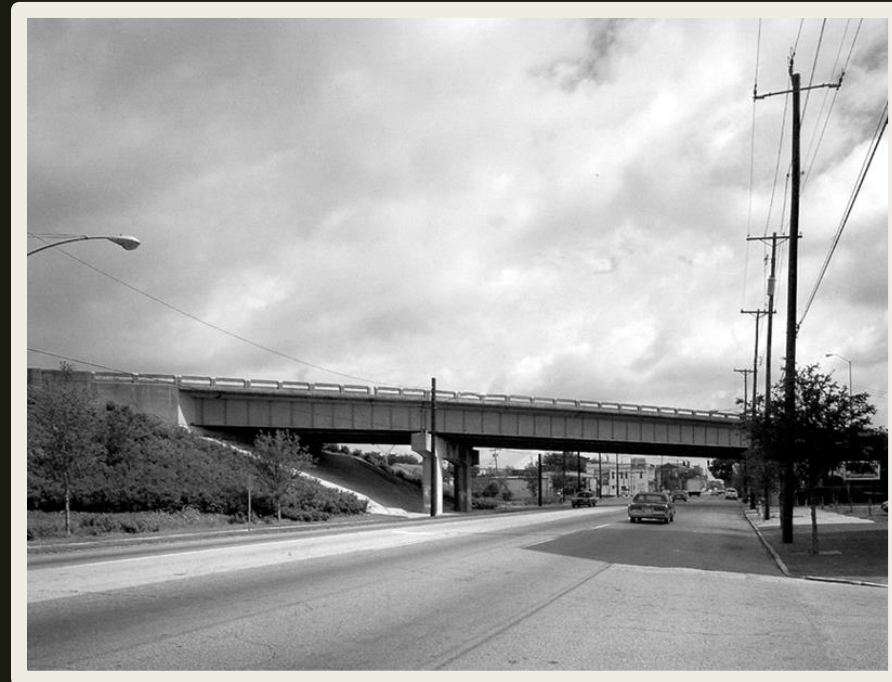
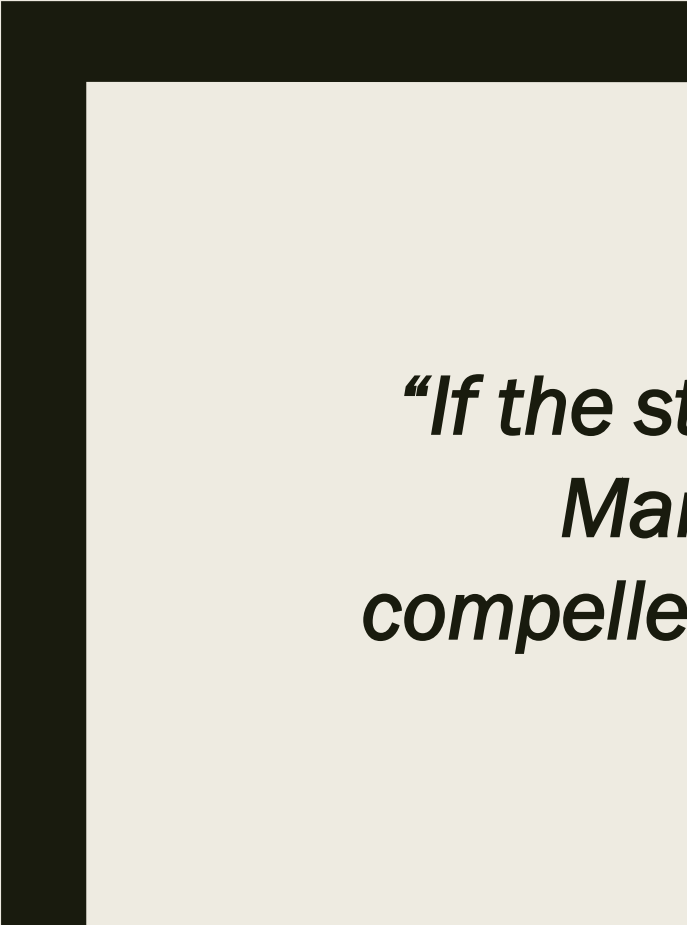


RECLAIMING MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD. I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL

SAVANNAH CITY COUNCIL
JANUARY 27, 2022

Presented by *The Reclaiming Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Coalition*
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

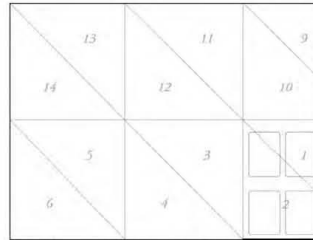
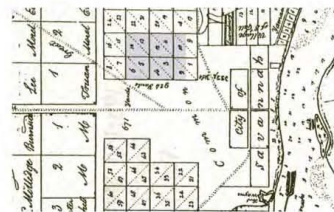


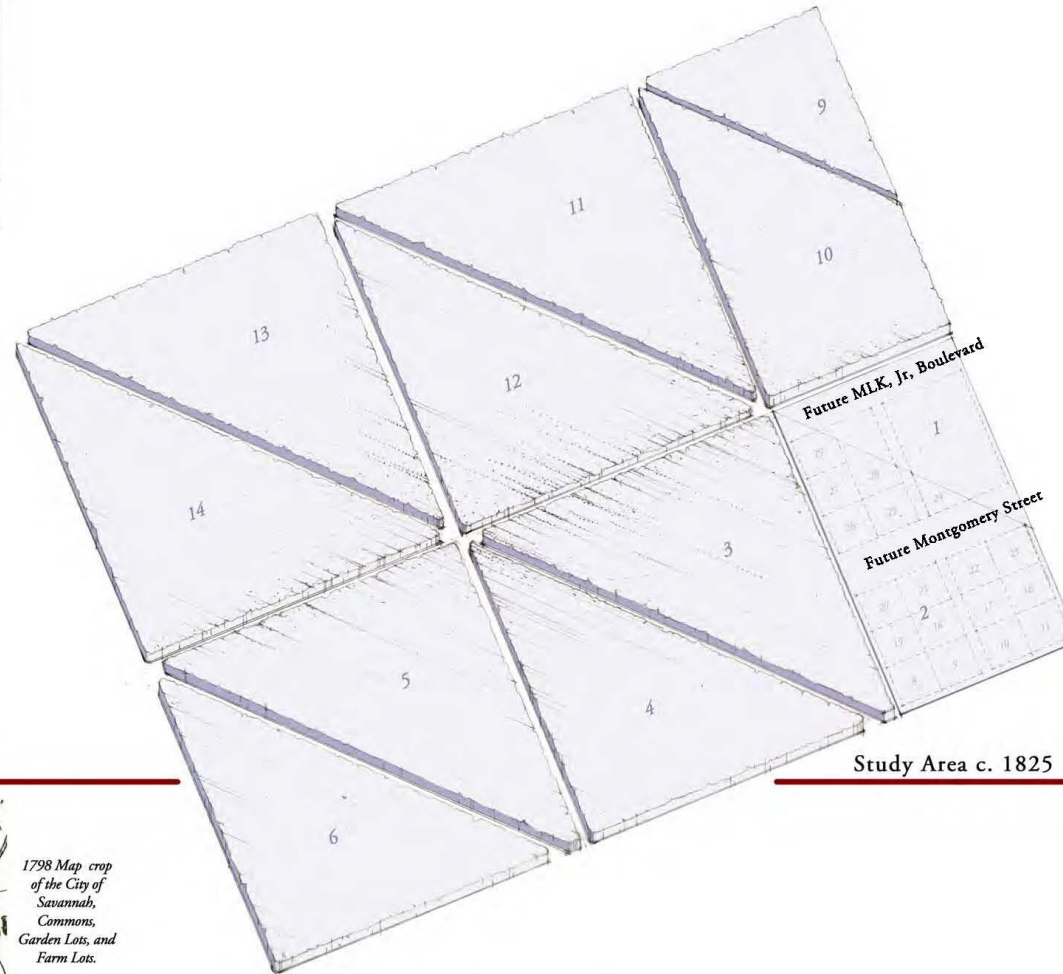
Diagram of the first street and block network emerging in the Study Area c. 1825.

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.

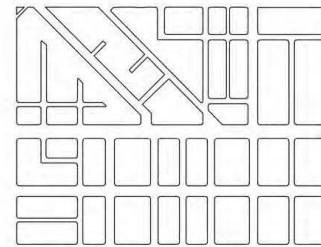
As Savannah expanded, land owners began to subdivide their Garden Lots for private development. Small blocks and connected streets that aligned with Savannah's plan were created in most cases. However, because of varying ownership, there were some instances of diagonal streets being laid out along the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



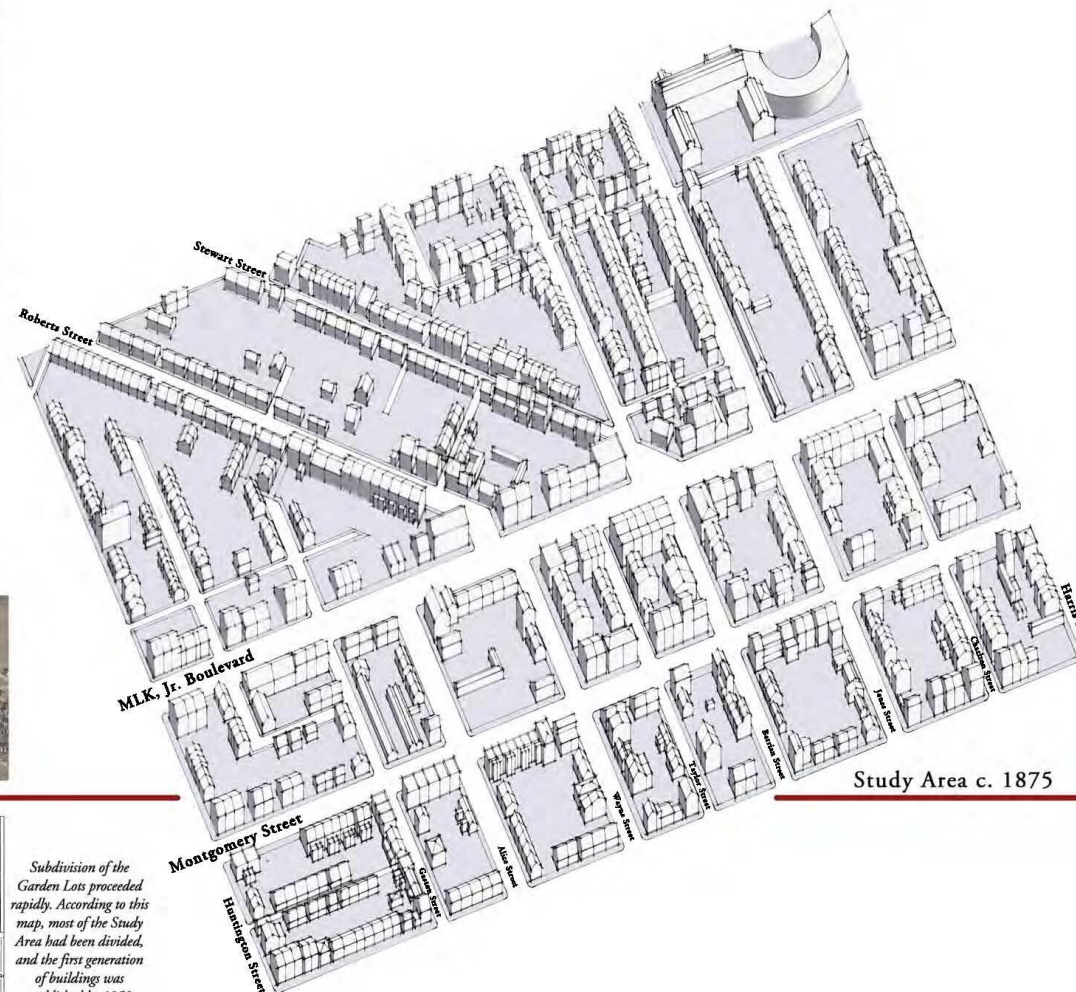
Study of the block pattern c. 1875 shows a dense network of small streets and lanes in the study area. Of particular interest is the first appearance of diagonally configured streets in the Savannah street network.

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.

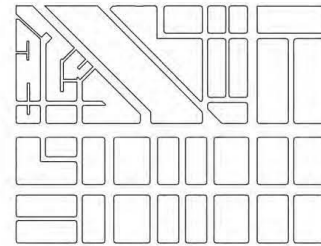
Subdivision of the original garden parcels continued the residential pattern, and it is apparent that Roberts Street and Stewart Street (now Selma Street) were aligned with the old Garden Lot parcel lines during this time, imbedding the diagonal character into this part of Savannah's street network.

NEIGHBORHOOD GROWTH & EVOLUTION

I-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT
SAVANNAH GEORGIA
City of Savannah
Chatham County
Metropolitan Planning Commission
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Wilbur Smith Associates
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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 Currietown as building density increased.

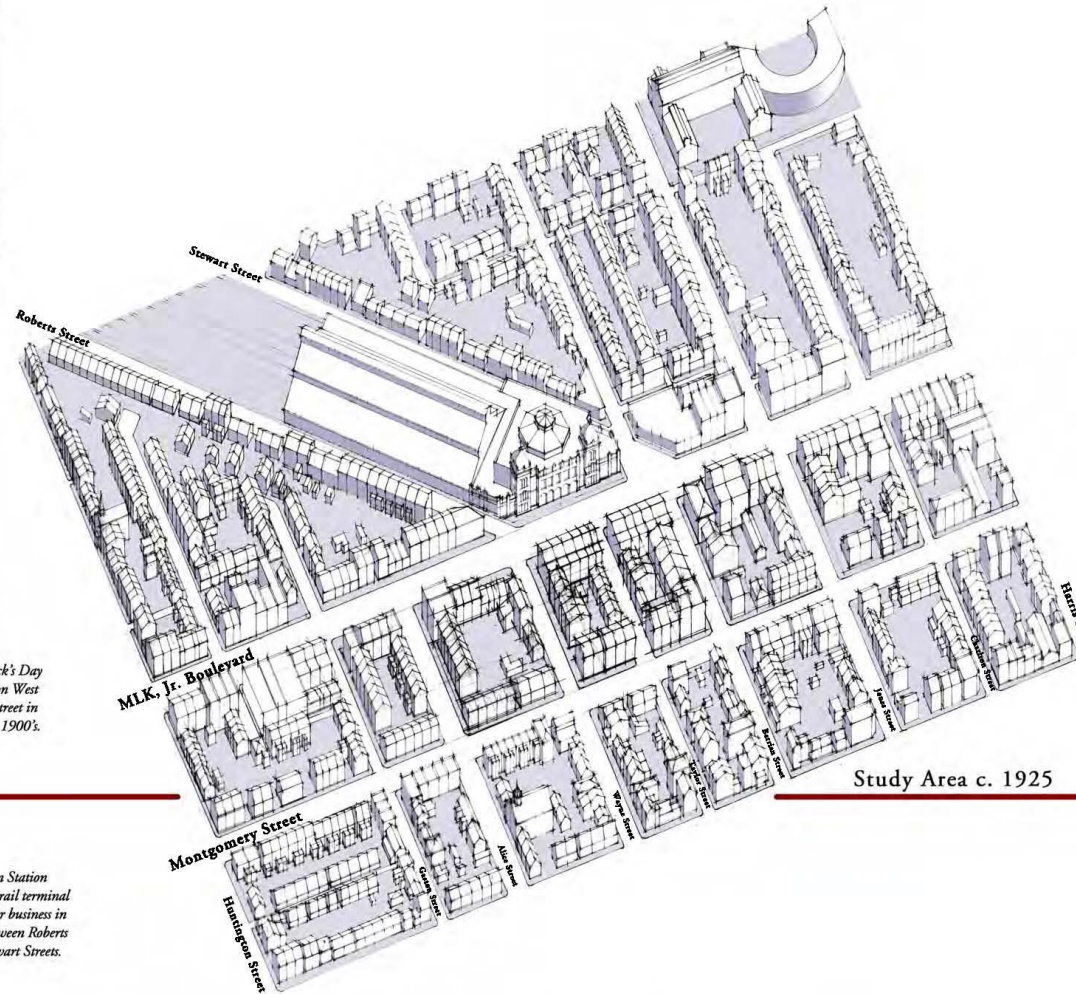


St. Patrick's Day parade on West Broad Street in the early 1900's.



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.

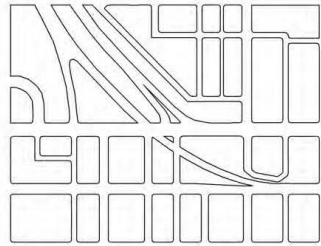
Building intensity reached its greatest level during this time, including a vibrant and diverse mix of single and multi-family homes, and larger commercial, retail, office, and institutional buildings along West Broad and Montgomery Streets.

UNION STATION & WEST BROAD VITALITY

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 1750-1825

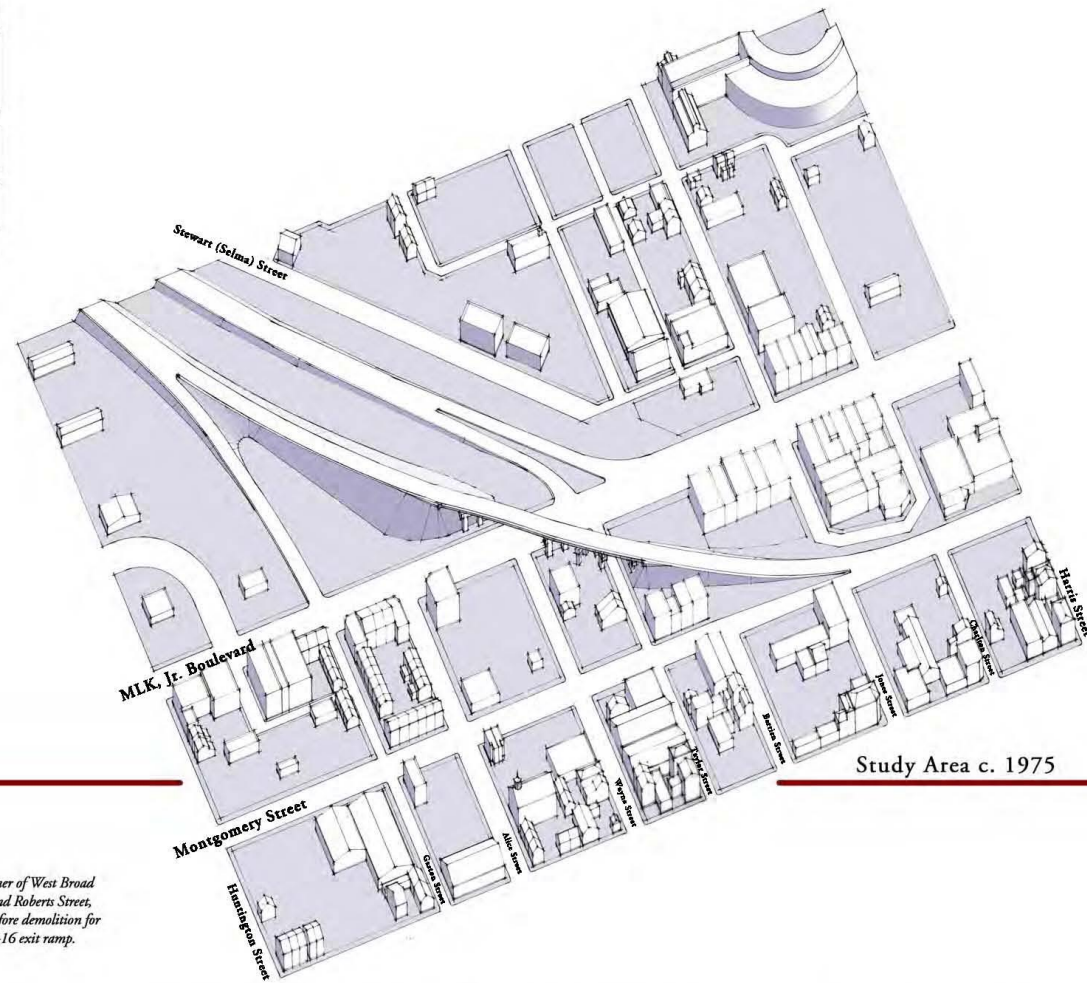


The street network after the 1960s became fragmented and disconnected. Several blocks were lost altogether.



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

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Study Area c. 1975

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

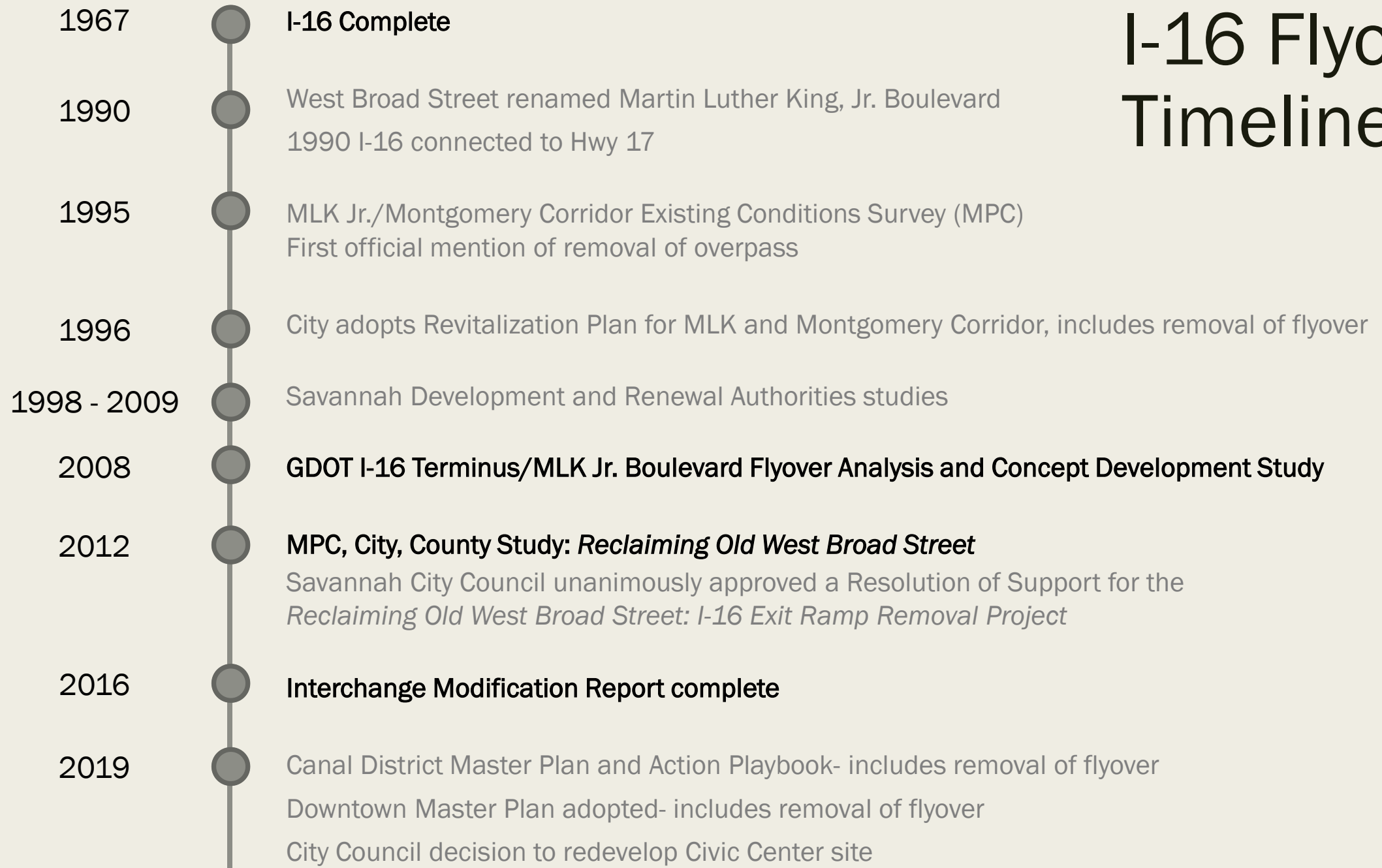
Wilbur Smith Associates
Sottile & Sottile Urban Design
Urban Partners
Gilbert & Lattimore
Grice & Associates
McMillan & Associates

Why?

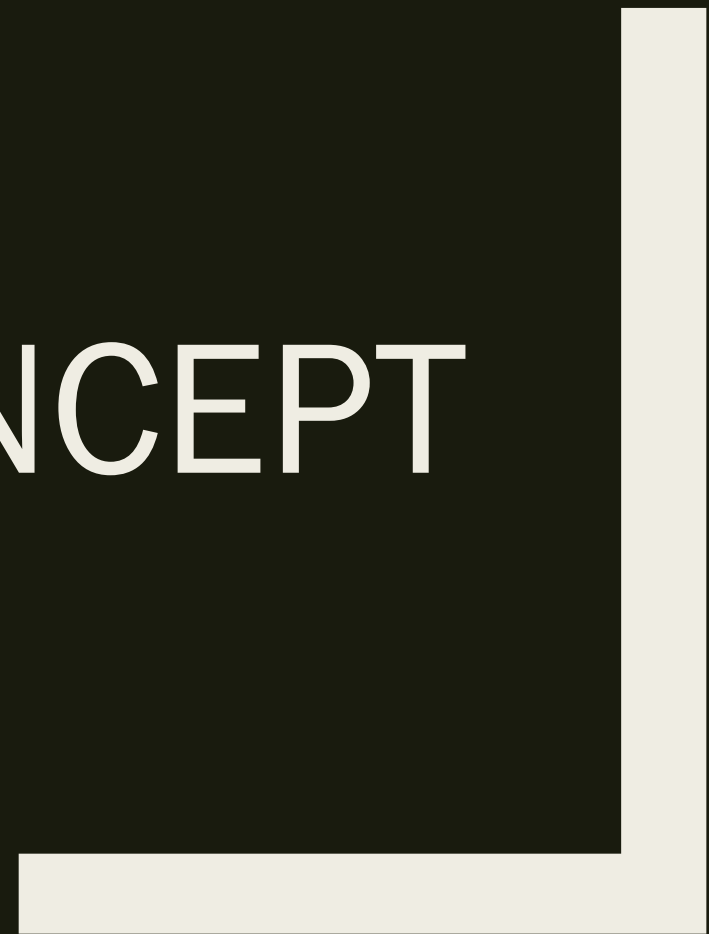
- Physical Barrier
- Social Barrier
- Economic Barrier
- Psychological Barrier

“The community vision for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street, from River Street to 52nd 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

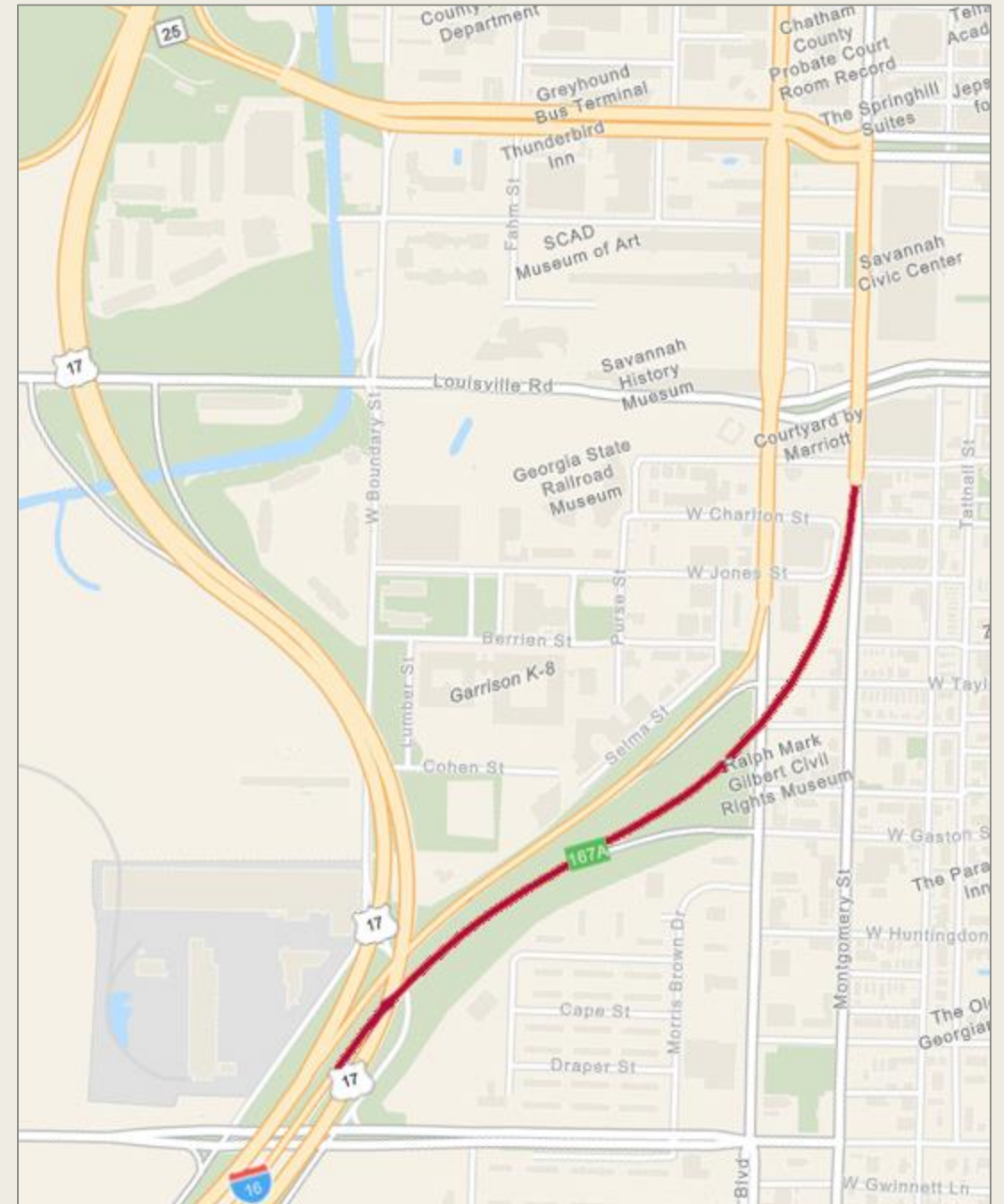


THE CONCEPT



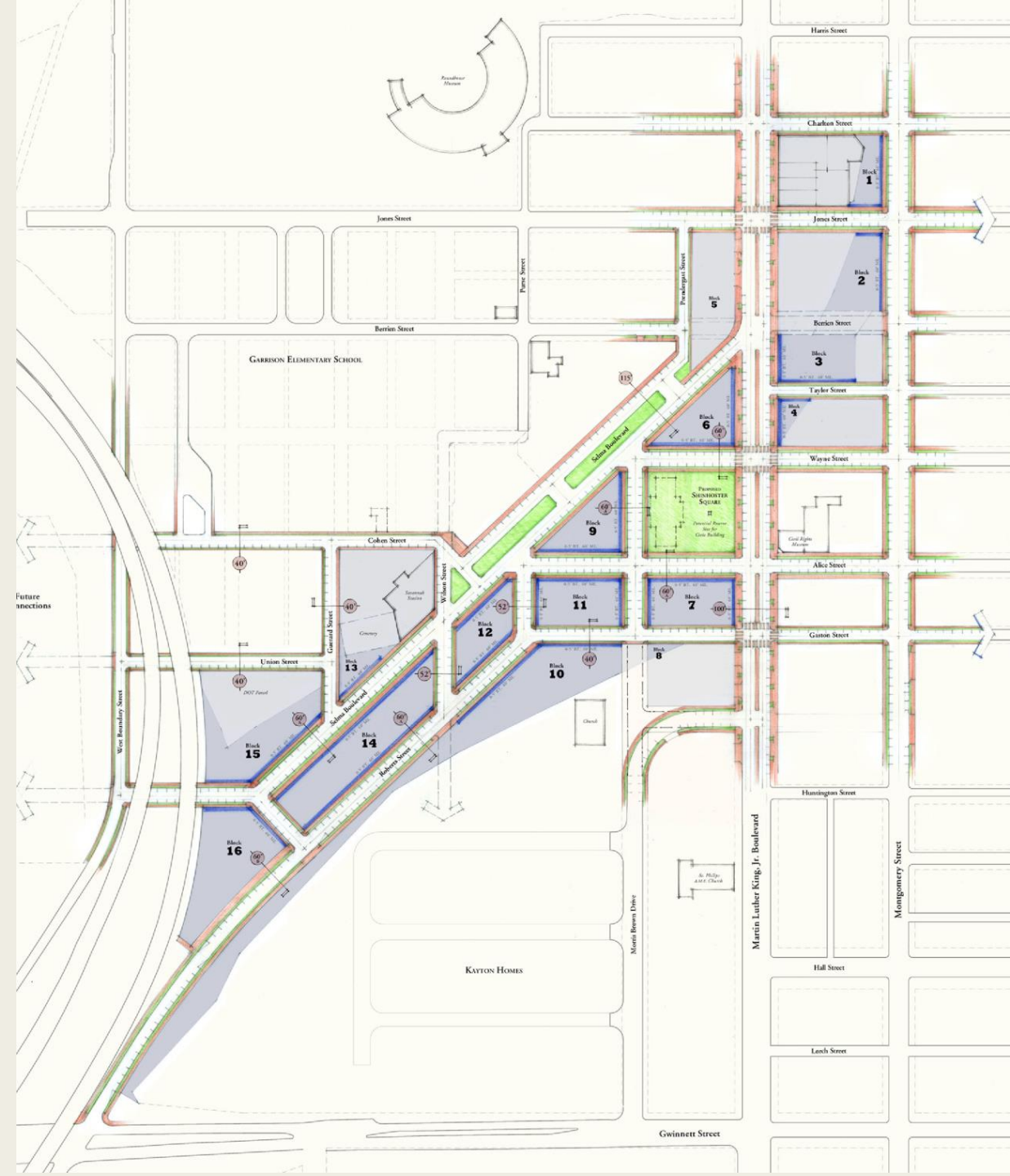
Existing Conditions

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



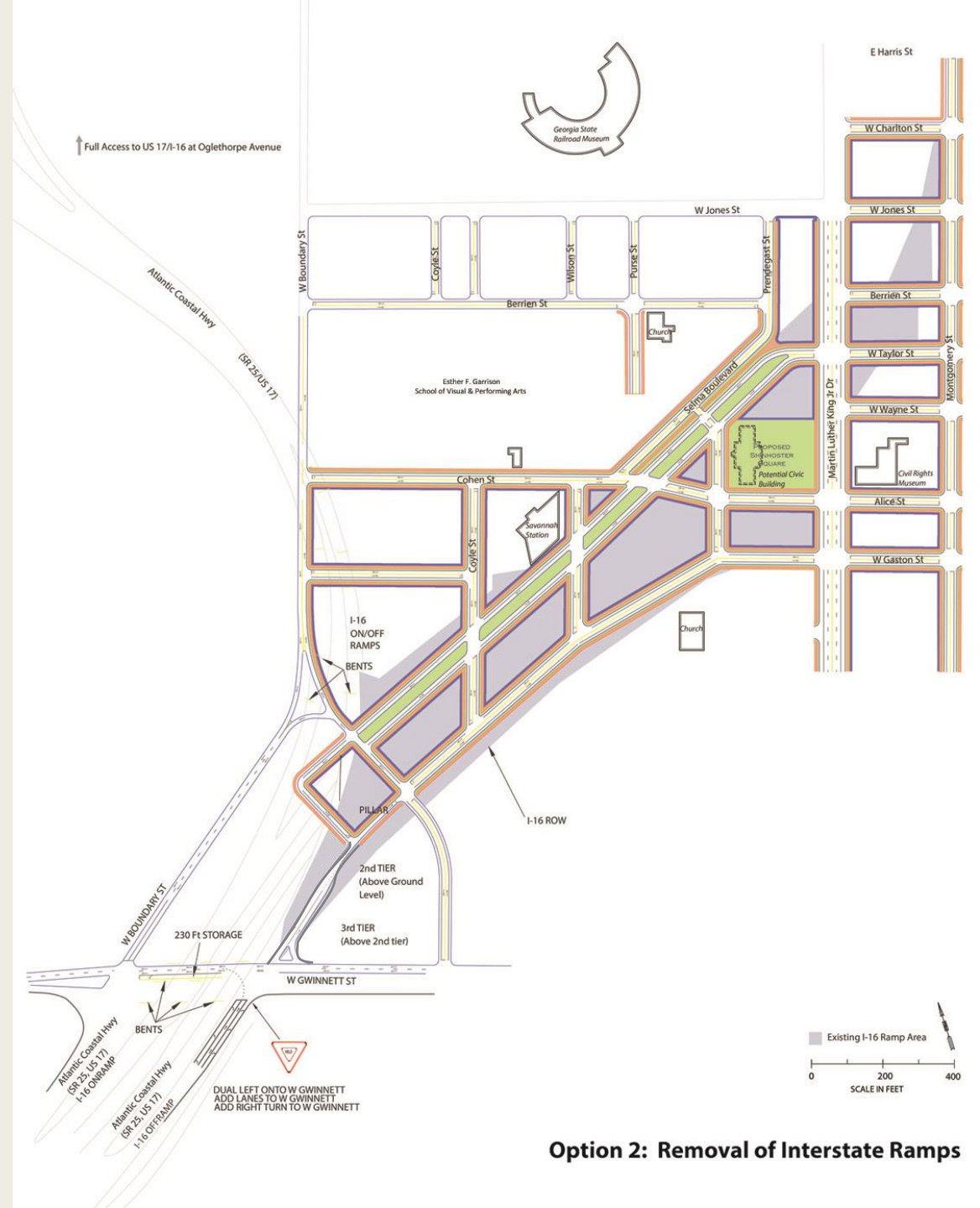
Civic Master Plan 2012

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



Interchange Modification Report 2016

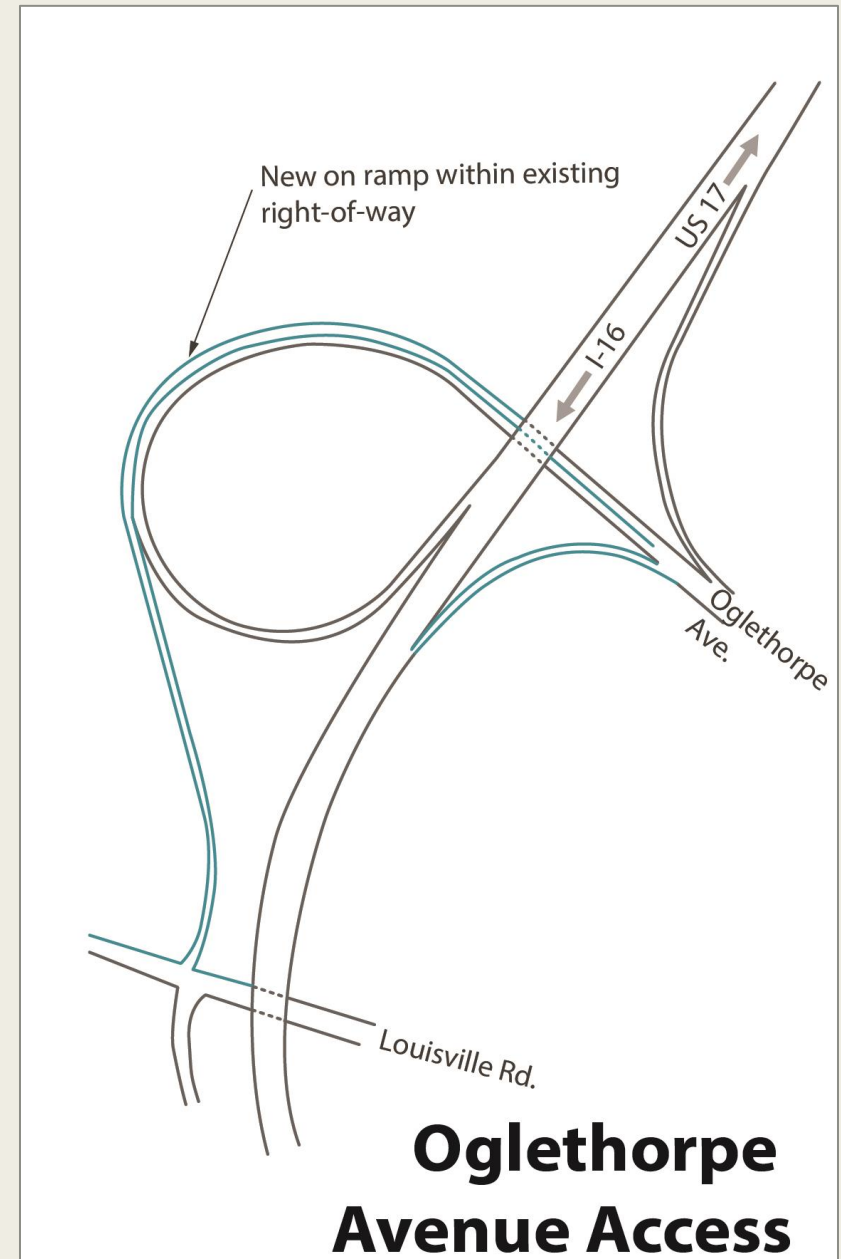
- Reconfigures local street network – based on traffic and existing conditions
- Extends Boulevard Concept



Option 2: Removal of Interstate Ramps

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

Carver State Bank

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

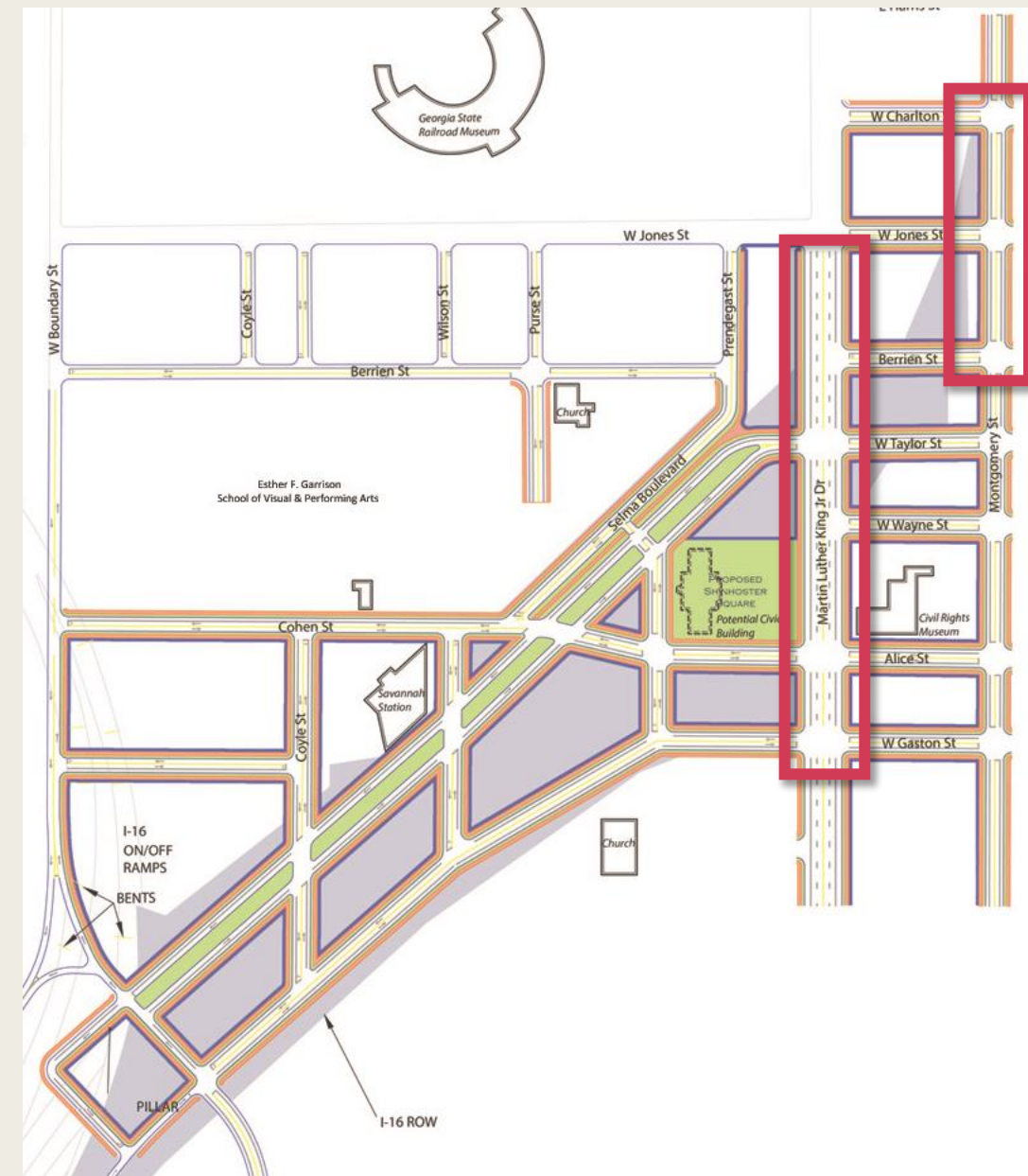
Connectivity

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

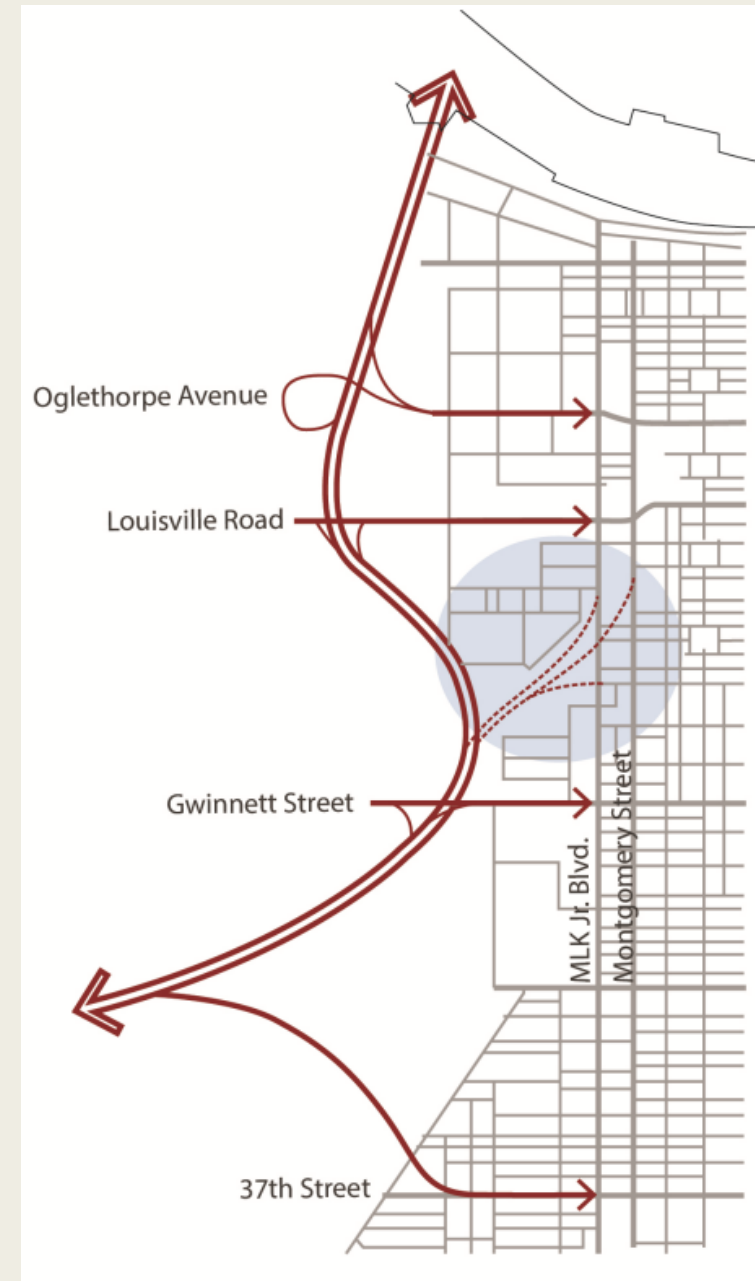
Connectivity

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 37th 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*



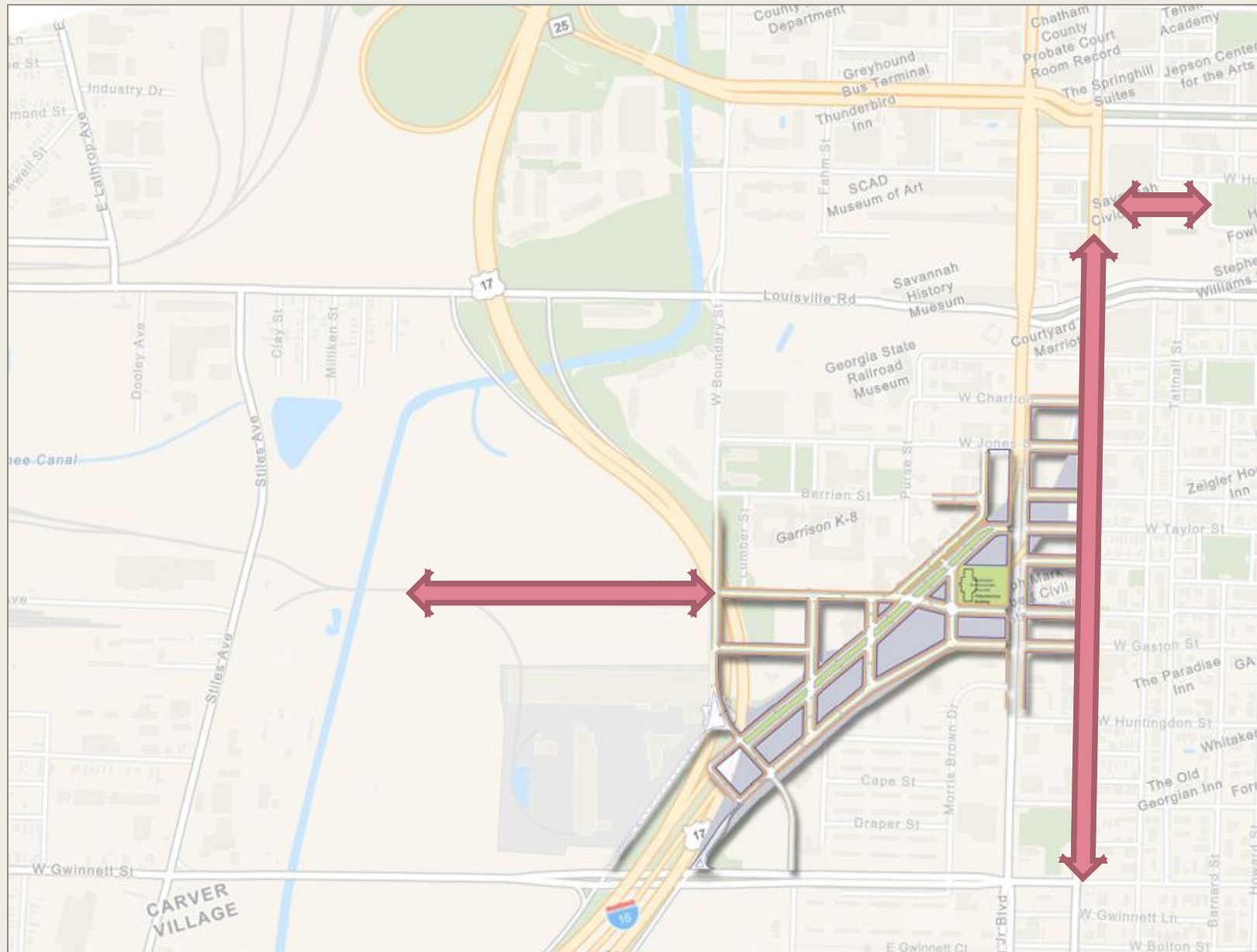
Restoration

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*

RAPHAEL WARNOCK
GEORGIA

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RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-3643

3625 CUMBERLAND BLVD., SUITE 970
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30339
(770) 694-7828

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
AGING

AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY

BANKING

COMMERCE

JOINT ECONOMIC

December 16, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:


Thank you for heeding my call to provide support for the Georgia Ports Authority's innovative pop-up container yard project to relieve congestion and address supply chain disruptions at the Port of Savannah. The \$8 million freed up from the Port Infrastructure Development Program is already beginning to show dividends as the Port of Savannah's backlog of vessels waiting at anchor has dropped precipitously. I am pleased that you will be able to see the progress being made and what is possible when we work together across the state, local, and federal levels and with our private sector partners.

As you plan your visit to my hometown of Savannah, I want to call your attention to—and invite you to visit—another project that is actually nearby, and near and dear to my heart: the I-16 flyover ramp removal and revitalization of what was once a bustling Black business district. The old West Broad Street, which is now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, was once the center of a thriving community and home to Black families and businesses, as well as many Asian and Jewish immigrants, in Savannah, Georgia. However, in the 1960s, the federal government demolished and paved over landmark buildings, homes, and businesses for a new highway spur.

The project was completed two years before I was born, and I was raised in the neighborhood newly defined by a piece of infrastructure that is both a physical and mental barrier, instead of the vibrant, living example of the American Dream. It is a dream of mine to see that community restored. While it can never be what it once was, we must support efforts to redress historic wrongs and reconnect communities like the one I was raised in.

So I ask, as you visit Savannah and as you work to implement the bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* and its programs like **Reconnecting Communities**, to consider projects like the I-16 flyover removal and help this Georgia community's scars begin to heal. Moreover, I invite you to visit this area to see firsthand the types of communities and neighborhoods that could directly benefit from the Reconnecting Communities program in the bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, aimed at remediating past transportation projects that divided communities like the one I grew up in, in Savannah, Georgia.

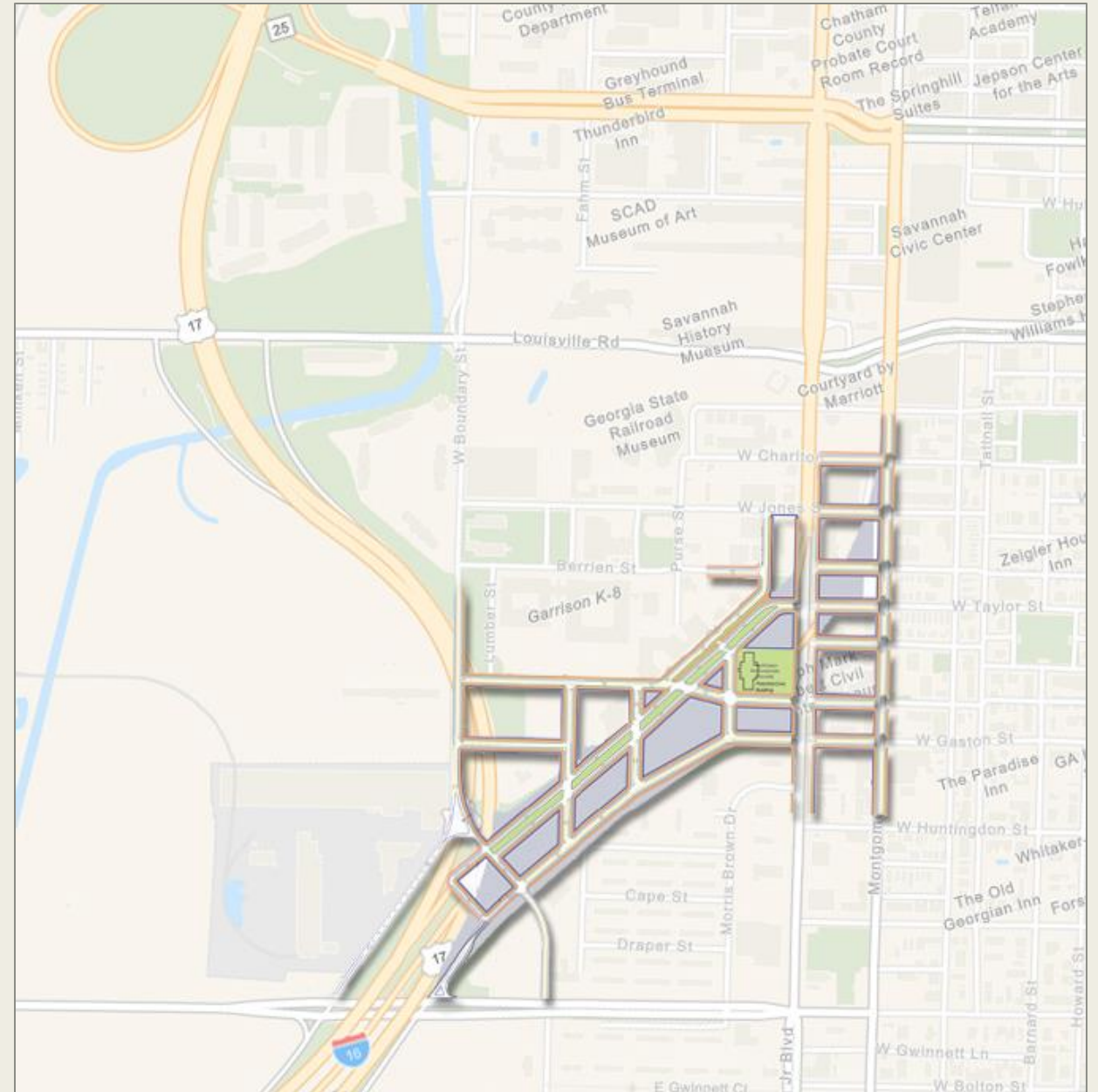
Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

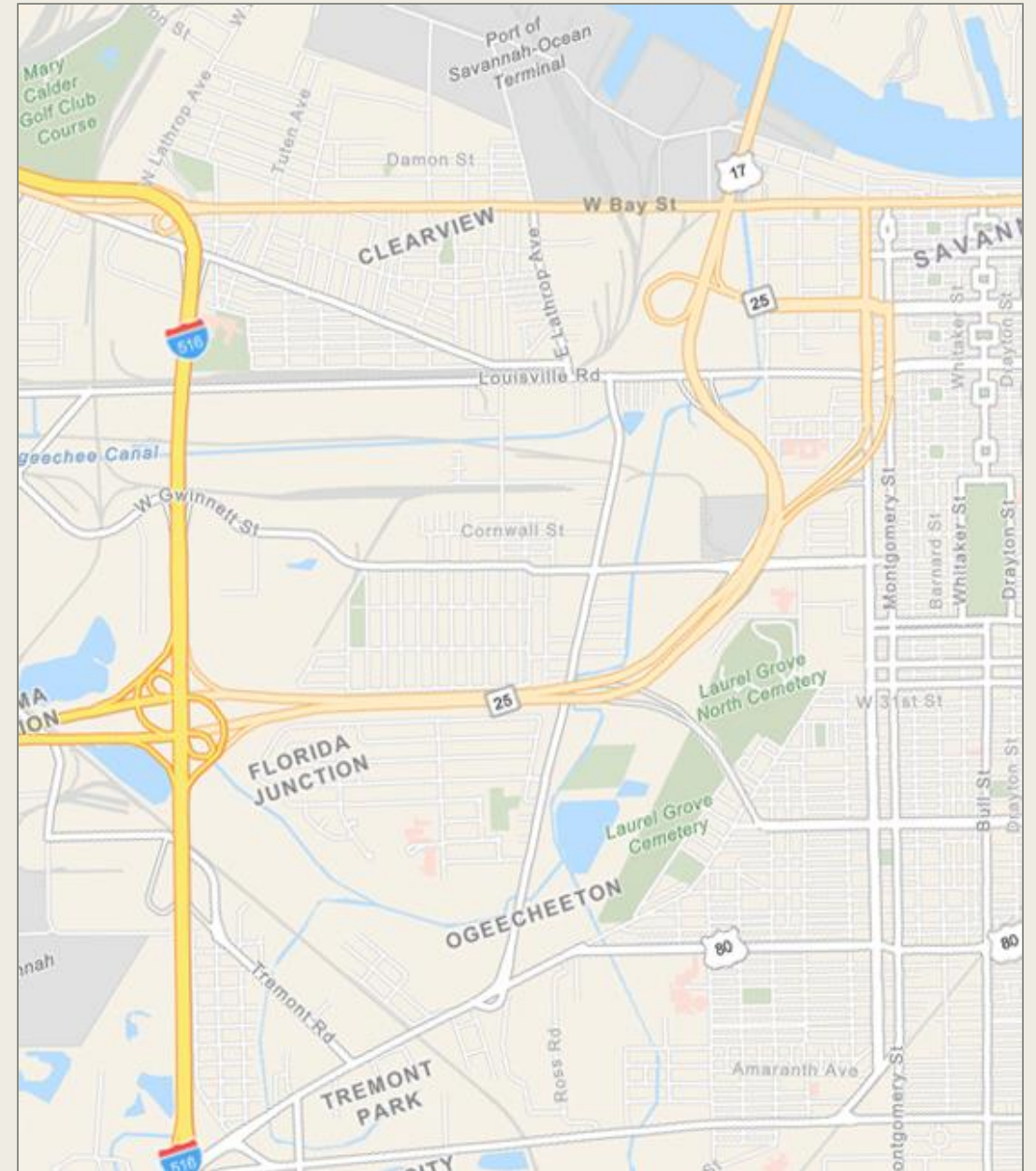
Why Now?

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

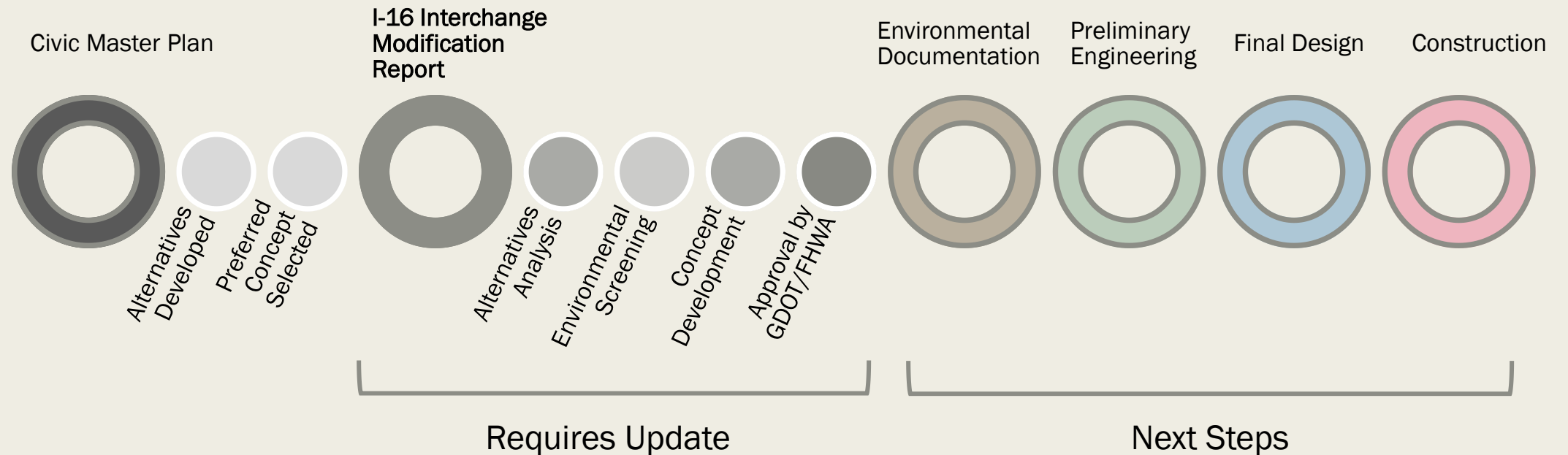


Why Now?

- 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!

