

Park-wide Management Policies

Park-specific policies provide guidance on how a park should manage and protect its resources and help determine the types of commercial service activities that can occur within a park. The following management policies are summarized from the Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS 1985 General Management Plan (GMP) and 1994 addendum, along with input provided by the park's general management team.

Commercial services must comply with the following policies in order to operate within the park:

Good Relations with Park Stakeholders: The park values good relations with its partners, lessees, the surrounding community, and local officials. Commercial services will not negatively impact these stakeholders, but rather seek to strengthen and enhance their respective relationship with the park. The park will proactively address any conflicts that may arise over commercial services.

Historic Structures, Districts and Cultural Landscapes: A primary mission of the park is to restore, preserve, and educate visitors about the many historic structures that comprise Dr. King's Birth Home block and the larger Sweet Auburn and Old Fourth Ward neighborhoods. The park encourages commercial services that stimulate the rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of these historic buildings and educate visitors about the historical, cultural, and architectural values of the park's resources. Commercial services must not impede the park's ability to preserve, protect, and maintain its historic structures and cultural landscapes.

Museum Collections: The park's museum collections preserve those features of the park that cannot safely be left onsite, and serves the needs of staff and visitors. Commercial services may help promote existing and future museum collections for education, interpretation, and research. Commercial services will not interfere with the preservation or access of the general public to any existing or future collections.

Visitor Experience and Park Use Requirements: The park strives to create a high quality and educational experience for visitors. Commercial services should actively enhance visitor use while maintaining the values and purpose for which the park was established.

Commercial services should attempt to be universally accessible and must comply with any park regulations governing visitor use and behavior, such as state, local, and federal firearms laws. Additionally, any services provided at the park should minimize visitor congestion at or around critical park sites.

Transportation: Visitors most frequently use automobile transportation to access the park. In future years, visitors may also take the Atlanta Streetcar (expected completion date of spring 2014). Once at the park, visitors typically walk to the variety of attractions available at the historic site. If the park decides to pursue commercial services that affect transportation within the park, a high level of visitor safety must be maintained through appropriate speed and safety precautions.

Air Quality: Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS remains an urban park centrally located in a major metropolitan city. As commercial services are added to the park, they will be managed in ways that limit impacts to regional air quality.

Management Zones

Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS' General Management Plan defines specific management zones for the park. The management zoning system serves as a guide for operating lands and other resources to achieve park purposes and management objectives. The GMP categorizes the entire park as a historic zone, with an emphasis placed on preservation, protection, and interpretation of cultural resources and their settings. The park has identified the following subzones for the historic site:

Preservation/Restoration Subzone

Emphasis on preservation and restoration, including facades and yards visible from Auburn Avenue along the Birth Home block, to reflect the period 1929-1941, for interpretation and visitor enjoyment.

Preservation/Rehabilitation Subzone

Emphasis on preservation and rehabilitation of historic scenes, including historic structures, grounds and streetscapes.

Preservation/Special Use Subzone

Emphasis on preservation of the historic scene through rehabilitation of historic building facades and control of changes to non-historic and historic commercial, institutional, and residential properties that will continue to be owned by private and other non-federal interests. This subzone includes areas that may be compatible for infill construction and existing and future recreation and community development.

Commemoration/Visitor Services Subzone

Emphasis on provision of visitor facilities and information in areas designated to commemorate the life of Dr. King and the Sweet Auburn community.

Park Development Subzone

Emphasis on providing facilities for interpretive and park administrative use as well as visitor parking.

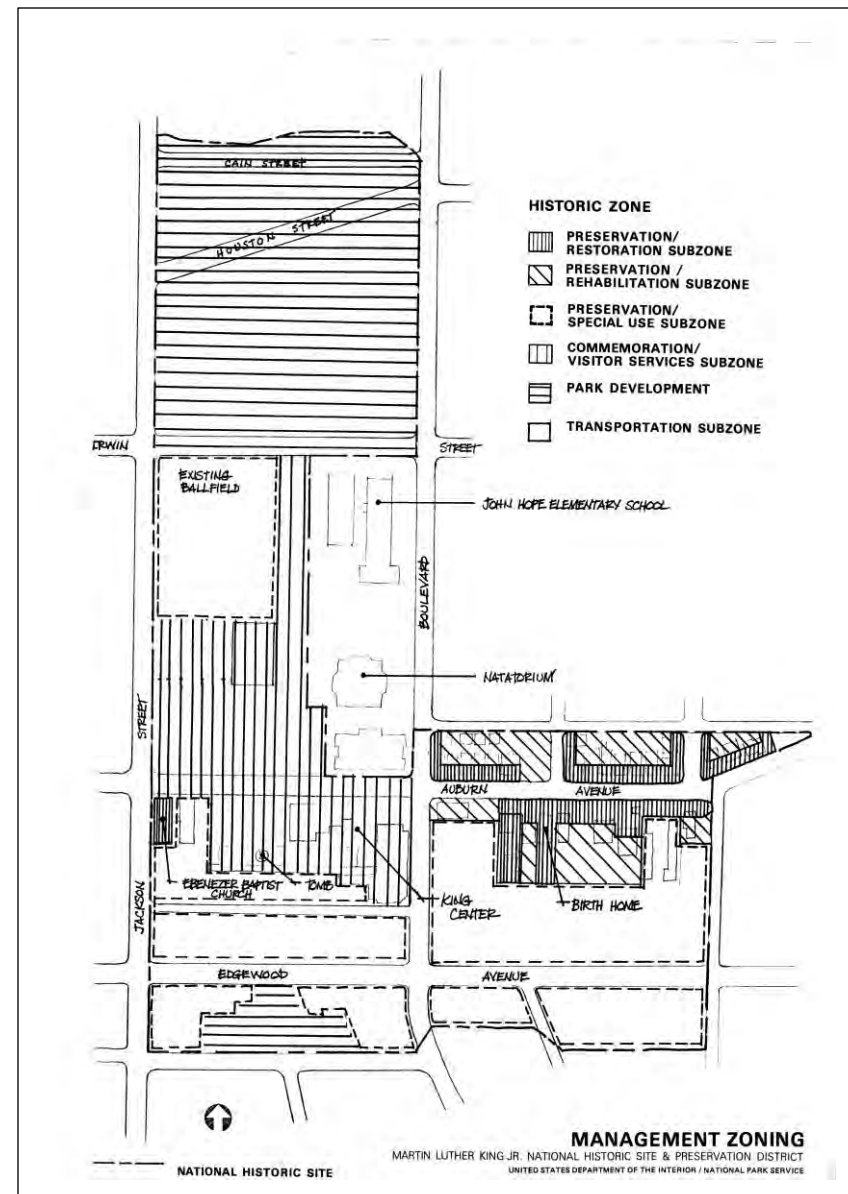
Transportation Subzone

Emphasis on providing for vehicular access through continued use of public right-of-way.

As the preservation/restoration and preservation/rehabilitation subzones have the highest level of protection, commercial services should be limited in these areas. Any commercial services provided in preservation/restoration and preservation/rehabilitation subzones should maintain and promote the historic setting, and if possible, provide interpretive value to visitors. In these two subzones, the park prefers commercial services that assist in restoring and rehabilitating historic structures and landscapes.

The park encourages commercial services in the preservation/special use, commemoration/visitor services, and the park development subzones. Commercial services related to transportation, such as a shuttle service or bus tour, may be appropriate in the transportation subzone, so long as they do not impede visitor access.

Figure 5: Management Zones, General Management Plan Addendum, 1994



Park Conditions for Commercial Services

Visitation

More than 703,600 visitors came to Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS in FY 2012, a comparable number to previous years. The highest visitation rates are in January, especially on and around Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The park celebrates King Week, the third week of January, with a variety of special events and programs that draw upon notable political figures and civil rights leaders. Besides the January influx, park visitation is higher in late spring and summer and lower in the late summer and early winter.

Figure 6: Annual Recreational Visitors at MLK, Jr. NHS

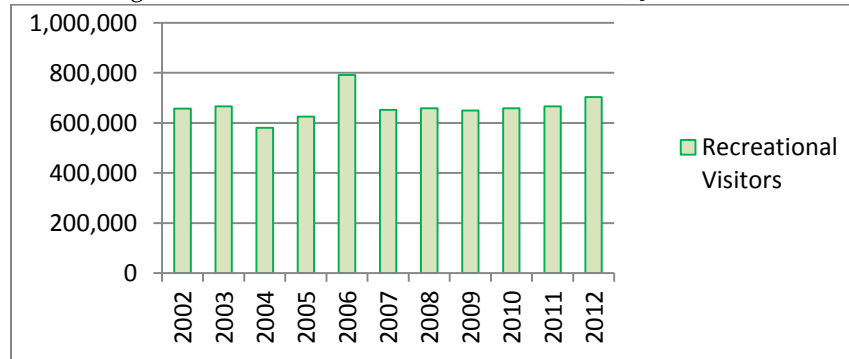
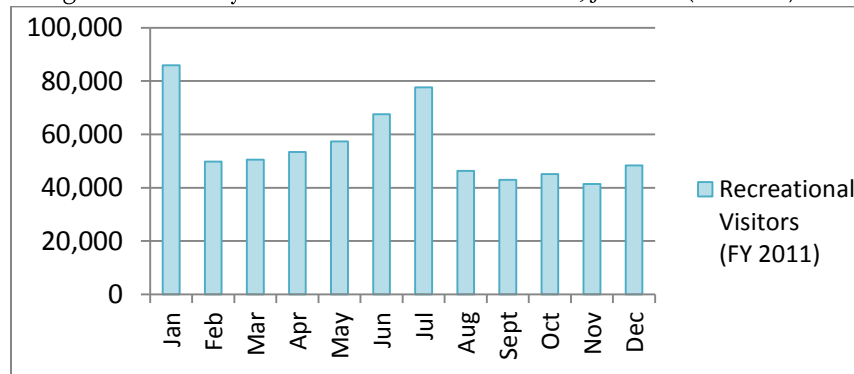


Figure 7: Monthly Recreational Visitors at MLK, Jr. NHS (FY 2011)



Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS' 2011 Long Range Interpretive Plan describes the following visitor categories:

- **School groups** – the most numerous organized group visiting the park, accounting for one-half of all park groups. School groups range from preschool to college. Most school groups visits help facilitate meeting certain curriculum standards and include an educational experience on-site, such as a ranger-led talk and a teacher-led park activity.
- **Adult groups** – includes commercial tour groups, church groups, family reunions, and education groups, many of which visit in the park in the spring and fall
- **International visitors** – according to the most recently completed visitor survey (1997), international visitors account for 10% of park visitation
- **Local residents** – many local residents bring out-of-town guests for special visits
- **Conventioneers** – Atlanta hosts numerous conferences and conventions, many of which provide time for their participants to visit the park
- **Subject matter enthusiasts and repeat visitors** – includes professors and individuals with a strong desire to learn and experience history
- **Dignitaries** – a large number of Southeast Regional Consulate General offices are located in Atlanta and request to tour the park
- **Military groups** – approximately fifteen groups visit annually, and typically represent the U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy
- **Organized sporting groups** – includes professional, college, and high school teams

The park's Long Range Interpretive Plan describes an opportunity to encourage greater visitation from the "Generation Y" demographic as well as local residents and suburban Atlantans. Anecdotally, visitation barriers for these groups include a lack of knowledge of the American

Civil Right Movement among younger generations who were not alive during the time period, as well as the perception that the park resides in an unsafe area.

Park Facilities and Sites Suitable for Commercial Services

The majority of the park’s nationally significant or contributing historic resources sit along the Birth Home block. Since its establishment, the park has prioritized restoring the facades of these structures and rehabilitating the interiors for adaptive use. Park planning documents recommend the park manage resources to accurately reflect the 1929-1941 period. Additionally, the park’s 1995 Cultural Landscape Report describes that some commercial activity should be reintroduced in the Birth Home block, with historic locations of stores being considered as potential commercial in-fill projects. Park planning documents describe that historic commercial uses of Fourth Ward buildings have included small grocery stores, restaurants, a café and soda fountain, and a butcher shop. Among Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS’ facilities, seven currently vacant structures and sites may be suitable for commercial services:

- **491 Auburn Ave. (“Delbridge-Hamilton Apartments”)** – Built in 1911 and the exterior stabilized in 2010, the two-story, hip-roofed four unit apartment building measures 36’ x 53’. This rectangular-plan building has a continuous concrete block foundation, a full-width porch, and balcony. A Historic Structure Report conducted for the building in 2013² suggests the rehabilitation of this structure for “long-term lease, month-to-month rental, or . . . as a bed-and-breakfast or an inn” as one potential use for the building. (#33 in Figure 8)
- **493 A, B, and C Auburn Ave.** – Three identical 28’ x 32’ hip-roofed double shotgun duplexes sit in a row behind the Birth Home. Featuring a two-room deep plan, these houses each have a brick pier foundation and front porch. The park rehabbed the exterior of all three shotgun houses in 2008-2009. (#40-42 in Figure 8). The park is currently in the process of completing a Historic Structure Report for these buildings.
- **530 Auburn Ave.** – Built in 1895, the two-story frame house features a hip roof, front-facing projecting gable, and rear additions. The park acquired this property in October, 2009.

(#25 in Figure 8)

- **445 Edgewood Ave.** – This half of a one-story, brick, parallelogram-shaped commercial duplex sits directly adjacent to a barbershop. The duplex unit consists of 1,080 square feet and contains two wood and glass storefronts. Built in 1909, the park previously used the facility as a maintenance building. (#57 in Figure 8)
- **Vacant lot at 461 Edgewood Ave. between Boulevard and Jackson St.** – This .61 acre vacant field on Edgewood Ave. once featured a park-owned modular building that has since been removed. (“Vacant Lot” in Figure 8)

In addition to these vacant or underutilized structures, the park believes the Visitor Center and visitor parking lot serve as ideal locations for potential commercial services. Current rental properties will not be considered for commercial service use at this time; the park will continue to uphold existing leases.



491 Auburn Ave.



493 B Auburn Ave., one of three shotgun houses



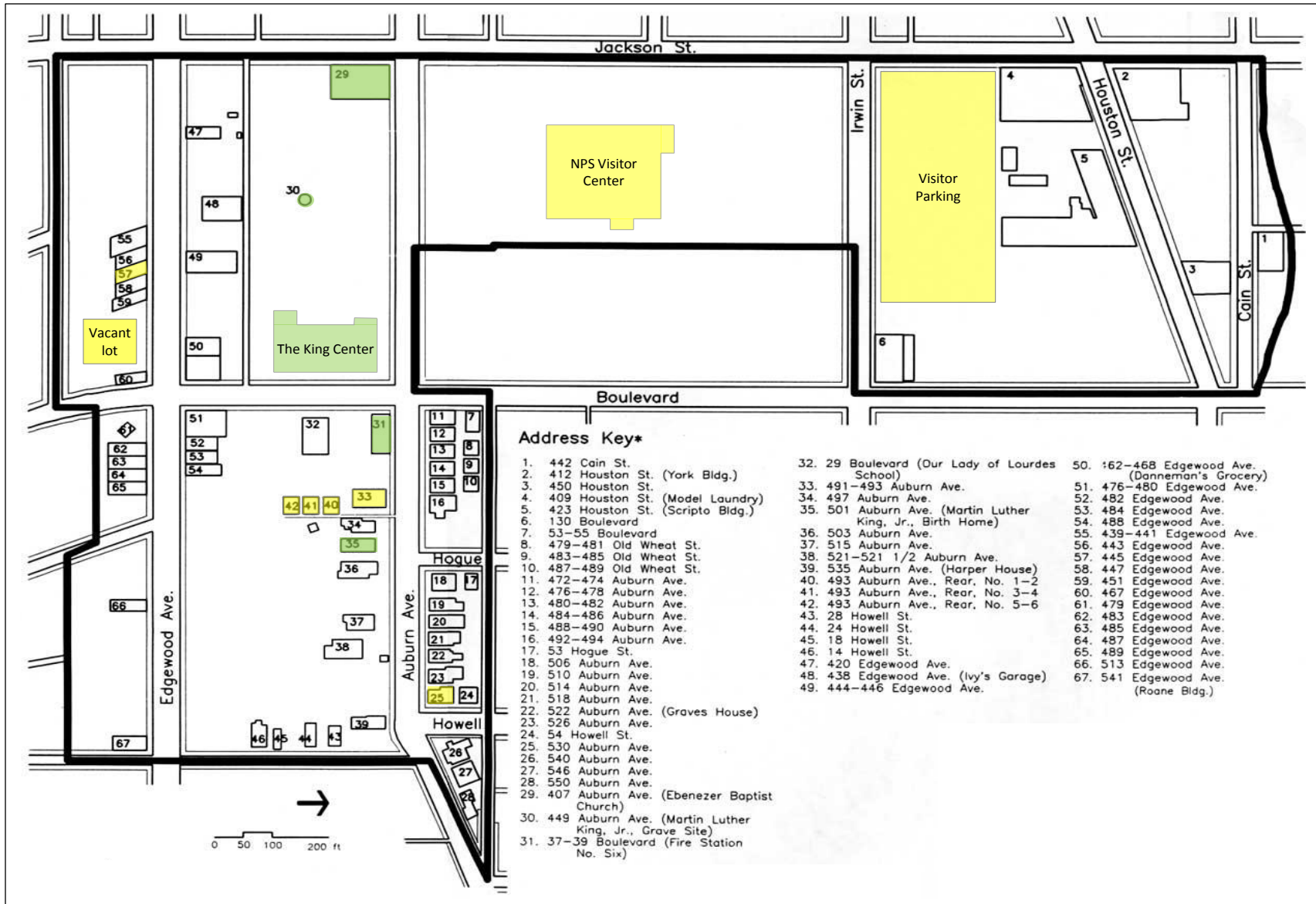
445 Edgewood Ave.



530 Auburn Ave.

2: The 2013 Historic Structure Report for 491 Auburn Ave. was in draft form during the development of the Commercial Services Strategy.

Figure 8: Map of Park Sites and Historic Buildings Suitable for Commercial Services



- Key park building
- Park facility or site that maybe suitable for commercial services

Figure 9: Aerial Map Illustrating Locations of Vacant Sites Suitable for Commercial Services



Local Economic and Tourism Trends

Atlanta draws visitors from around the world, accounting for over half of Georgia's tourism, a state that saw a total tourism demand of \$31 billion in 2011³. Additionally, the Georgia visitor economy witnessed over 9.7% growth since 2010. As of 2010, Atlanta saw over 35 million visitors, making it the seventh-most visited city in the country.⁴ Popular attractions located in close proximity to the park include the Georgia Aquarium – the world's largest indoor aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, and Underground Atlanta. (See Appendix B for a map of recreational attractions near the park.)

At the time of the park's establishment, the neighborhood in and adjacent to the Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS was deteriorating. Sweet Auburn, once named the "richest Negro street in the world" by Civil Rights leader John Wesley Dobbs, struggled economically by the early 70s due to out-migration, lack of investment, increased crime, and a highway construction project that divided the community in two. The National Trust for Historic Preservation recognized Sweet Auburn as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 1992.

In recent years, the Sweet Auburn and Old Fourth Ward neighborhoods have experienced an economic resurgence due to support from the park, the Historic District Development Corporation (which has preserved over 110 single family homes and constructed nearly 500 units of multifamily housing in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood), Central Atlanta Progress, and other community groups and private developers. Local restaurants and bars have begun to crop up along Edgewood Avenue and trendy new businesses attract a more cosmopolitan crowd to the area. Georgia State University's growing downtown campus also directly contributes to the revitalization of the area. Approximately 4,200 students live in campus housing – and many others in private residential housing – within or adjacent to the Sweet Auburn or Old Fourth Ward neighborhoods.

Significant redevelopment efforts have been and are currently underway in the historic neighborhood. In early 2013 The National Trust for Historic Preservation developed a revitalization plan for the Sweet Auburn community as part of its Main Street Program. The Main Street plan provides short-term recommendations focused on the beautification of streetscapes and building facades, and longer-term

recommendations centered on attracting and establishing new development to the area.

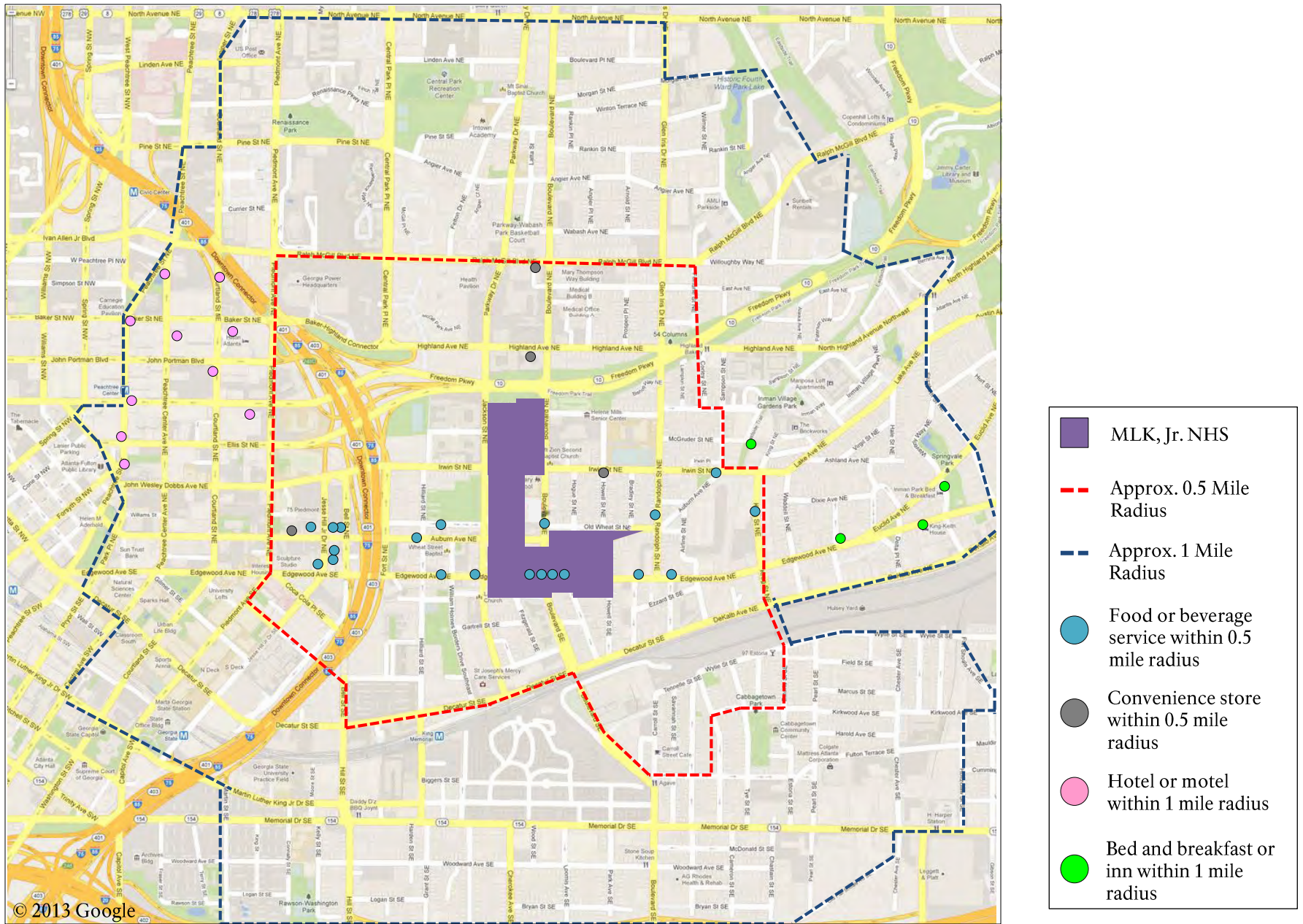
Two other notable projects include the Atlanta Streetcar and the Atlanta BeltLine. The Atlanta Streetcar project, with an anticipated completion date of spring 2014, will connect riders between Centennial Olympic Park and The King Center via Edgewood and Auburn Ave. Similarly, the Atlanta BeltLine project aims to increase visitor and resident access to different city neighborhoods. The project, partially complete in some areas, redevelops a historic rail corridor that borders the city into a comprehensive network of public parks, multi-use trails, and transit. The Atlanta BeltLine plans to border the eastern boundary of the Fourth Ward neighborhood.

Due to Sweet Auburn's current trajectory of revitalization, commercial services at Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS have the opportunity to not only enhance the visitor experience, but to also assist in restoring some of the vibrancy, culture, and the historic environment of the once thriving neighborhood. At the same time, the park recognizes the potential for external parties to provide a variety of services outside or adjacent to park boundaries in the coming years, meeting current visitor demands. Given the anticipated economic and commercial growth of the Sweet Auburn and Old Fourth Ward communities, certain activities and services may not be deemed "necessary" for the park to provide to visitors in future years, and should be reevaluated as time progresses.

Figure 10 displays local accommodations, shopping, and food services in the vicinity of the park – some of which are inholdings within park boundaries. A number of restaurants and dining options exist along Edgewood Ave, two to three blocks from the center of the park, and even more beyond a 0.5 mile radius of the park. However, some of these services are difficult for visitors to access because they are located on the other side of a major freeway. Downtown Atlanta features numerous lodging and hotel accommodation options. However, the vast majority resides beyond a 0.5 mile radius from the park and cluster around the Peachtree Center Station. (See Appendix C for a directory of local accommodations, dining options, and convenience stores).

3: "The Economic Impact of Tourism in Georgia," U.S. Travel Association, August 2012. Available at <http://www.georgia.org/industries/Tourism/Pages/tourism-industry-research.aspx>
4: "America's Most Visited Cities," www.forbes.com, http://www.forbes.com/2010/04/28/tourism-new-york-lifestyle-travel-las-vegas-cities_slide_5.html

Figure 10: Aerial Map Illustrating Nearby Services and Accommodations



Necessary and Appropriate Criteria

The National Park Service Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998 describes that “the development of public accommodations, facilities, and services in units of the National Park System shall be limited to those accommodations, facilities, and services that are necessary and appropriate for public use and enjoyment of the unit of the National Park System in which they are located.” Necessary and appropriate criteria help parks determine which commercial services can enhance the visitor experience while not negatively impacting the park and its ability to carry out its mission. They allow a park to easily identify which services can be considered for a Commercial Use Authorization, concession contract, or lease.

Appropriate criteria help to answer the question, “*Can the park authorize this service without compromising the reason it is a unit of the National Park System?*” These criteria provide insight into the critical components of the park and visitor service that cannot be compromised and they describe the potential negative impacts of commercial services that must to be prevented. All commercial services – whether a Commercial Use Authorization, concession contract, or lease – must meet all appropriate criteria to operate in the park.

Necessary criteria help to answer the question, “*Why is this service important for the park?*” These criteria describe how a commercial service could enhance the visitor experience and further the goals and mission of the park. Necessary criteria are unique to NPS concession contracts – while CUAs do not need to meet any necessary criteria, concession contracts must meet at least one necessary criterion. Leases must meet all appropriate criteria, but should not be used for services that are subject to authorization as a CUA or concession contract.

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site identified the following necessary and appropriate criteria for commercial service operations at the park:

Appropriate Criteria:

(Commercial services must meet all appropriate criteria)

1. Services do not conflict with or diminish the purposes for which the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site was established – to preserve and interpret the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his contribution to the modern American Civil Rights Movement.
2. Services do not compromise public health, safety, or well-being.
 - Services carry appropriate insurance
 - Services meet all federal, state, and local health and safety codes and regulations
 - Services do not promote dangerous recreational activities
 - Services provide alcohol responsibly and in adherence with local and state laws
3. Services do not unduly conflict with other authorized park uses, such as interpretive and educational programming.
4. Services do not monopolize recreational opportunities or limit historic landscapes and buildings at the expense of the general public.

Necessary Criteria:

(Concessions must meet at least one necessary criterion; Commercial Use Authorizations and leases may be issued without meeting any necessary criteria)

1. Facilitates understanding and appreciation of the park’s mission and values by educating visitors about the lifetime achievements of Dr. and Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., the modern American Civil Rights movement, and/or the historic Sweet Auburn community.
2. Provides a basic visitor service that is not available within a reasonable walking distance from the park. Basic services must meet immediate visitor comfort and convenience needs.

Evaluation of Commercial Service Opportunities

Throughout the development of the Commercial Services Strategy, the park sought input from a variety of stakeholders on ideal commercial service and business opportunities for the park. These stakeholders included the park’s general management team and long-term staff members. Additionally, they consisted of nineteen partner representatives and thirty-four visitors who participated in focus groups conducted as part of a Visitor Services Project effort led by the University of Idaho in November 2012. (Please see Appendix D for the list of attendees). Lastly, a few select partners provided additional input during follow-up interviews conducted by the Business Management Group. Across these stakeholder meetings and interviews, participants discussed preferred commercial services for Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS and the benefits and potential challenges associated with providing these services to the public. The following themes emerged from the stakeholder feedback:

Stakeholder Themes

Despite the urban setting and relatively close proximity to amenities, park visitors frequently request a variety of commercial services

While some restaurants and lodging options can be found within a half-mile to a mile radius of the park, visitors are typically non-local and lack information on their surroundings. They frequently request food and beverage services in the immediate vicinity of the park. Few venture out to Edgewood Ave. As one visitor described, “We were trying to get lunch and it turned out pretty difficult to even find somewhere to eat.” Some also commented that they would like lodging closer to the park as well as transportation services.

Commercial services can support the revitalization of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood

Originally a flourishing community filled with attractive storefronts and bustling activity, the Sweet Auburn neighborhood has deteriorated in the face of increased crime, out-migration, and de-investment. Visitors often feel disappointed to see the Sweet Auburn neighborhood so dramatically different from their expectations. In recent years the community has

begun a slow process of revitalization – commercial services offered by the park may help stimulate the area and return the neighborhood to its original vibrancy. Stakeholders enthusiastically describe the significant momentum of growth within the community and the great opportunity presented to the park at this time.

If possible, commercial services should prioritize the use of local, small businesses

Given the park’s location in an underserved community, stakeholders commented on their desire to see commercial services at the park utilize local entrepreneurs and small businesses. Park stakeholders view commercial services as an opportunity to enhance the visitor experience while also improving the economic status of local residents.

Structures utilized by commercial services should maintain the integrity of the historic Sweet Auburn and Old Fourth Ward communities.

Park stakeholders emphasized the importance of maintaining the historic integrity of the Sweet Auburn and Old Fourth Ward neighborhoods. Any storefronts should ideally feel and look like stores and buildings during the 1929-1941 era. Park visitors and stakeholders caution the over-commercialization of the area. One visitor commented that “We don’t want the place to become Disney World-ish” and another emphasized, “No McDonalds.”



A row of Queen Anne-styled homes in the residential block of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birth

Potential Commercial Service Opportunities

When asked to provide feedback on commercial service opportunities at the park, stakeholders described a variety of ideas. Almost all exhibited strong support for bringing new activities and services to the park. The full list of commercial service ideas generated by these discussions, regardless of feasibility or appropriateness, is provided below:

Food and Beverage

Despite the availability of food and dining options within a half-mile radius of the park, visitors and stakeholders most frequently described wanting food services at the park. Comments pointed to an opportunity for light food, authentic Southern cuisine, and healthy dining. Specific food and beverage services mentioned include:

- Light food and beverage vendors
- Café, tea room, or soda shop; potentially with an outdoor patio space
- Ice cream store or stand
- Full-service restaurant. Requested restaurant types included authentic Southern cuisine or healthy dining
- Cafeteria with a large seating area
- Vending machines
- Special event food and beverage vendors

Lodging

A variety of accommodations currently exist in downtown Atlanta, with the closest major hotels located a mile from the park. However, park staff and stakeholders commented that a small bed and breakfast or inn would be an ideal use of one of the park's recently renovated, and currently vacant, historic buildings. Specifically, the park could provide an authentic early-to-mid twentieth century experience unparalleled by nearby lodging through the utilization of historic structures situated only a few steps away from Dr. King's Birth Home. While many stakeholders conveyed strong enthusiasm with the idea of a historic inn or B&B, some described concern with its financial sustainability, especially given the limited room capacity of these facilities.

Retail

In general, stakeholders provided positive feedback on the historic site's bookstore and recommended bringing additional retail services to the park. Small vendors could sell general products and sundries to visitors (e.g., water, snacks, film, sunscreen, hats, etc.). Multiple stakeholders also mentioned souvenirs related to the park and Dr. King as a potential commercial service opportunity. These retail services could include:

- Historic drug store or convenience store
- Souvenir shop
- Mobile, seasonal, or special event souvenir vendors



The bookstore at the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, operated by Eastern National.

Tours

Existing private tours (including bus, bike, and Segway tours) already traverse the park outside of an authorized park permit program. In addition to professionalizing and ensuring the high quality of these services, stakeholders described the opportunity for increased interpretive and educational tours at the park, potentially coupled with other historic sites across the Atlanta. Possible tour services:

- Guided walking tours of the larger Sweet Auburn community
- Trolley, bus, and bike tours
- Tour to a variety of historic sites across Atlanta (e.g., African American heritage tour)