



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 9, 2018

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National Park Service to host public forums in large-scale review of Savannah National Historic Landmark District

Agency welcomes public's participation at local meetings and online

ATLANTA — The National Park Service (NPS) will hold public forums this spring as part of the agency's most comprehensive effort to assess the Savannah National Historic Landmark District. The public has a chance to review an independent report prepared about the district's condition and offer additional input prior to NPS making a final determination about where the area stands with regard to its preservation status.

"The Savannah National Historic Landmark District is one of the nation's premier preservation districts," said Cynthia Walton, National Historic Landmarks regional program manager for the National Park Service Southeast Region. "This is the most extensive study we have conducted since the district received federal designation in 1966."

In 2015, NPS commissioned New South Associates, Inc. to conduct an Integrity & Condition Assessment, documenting major changes that have occurred in and around the district over 50 years and recommending an appropriate condition category based on thorough evaluation. The study involved research, a reconnaissance survey, photographic documentation, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis and mapping of current and future threats to the district. As part of this process, New South Associates also interviewed historic preservation specialists; local government, business, civic and tourism professionals; and others personally or professionally associated with the district.

New South Associates recently concluded its independent review of the district. Among other conclusions, their findings — which are to undergo further review by the National Park Service — indicate:

- The majority of Savannah's squares retain a high level of integrity in relation to their retention of the Savannah Town Plan, architectural integrity and landscape integrity.
- Planning policies adopted by the City of Savannah to restore the Savannah Town Plan to its original design provide the opportunity to reestablish "lost wards" into the larger mosaic of the district, as with the restorations of Franklin and Ellis Squares.
- The district's greatest challenges are related to the loss of the Savannah Town Plan and large-scale development, particularly in relation to height and mass.
- The squares that have seen the most change related to degradation of the Savannah Town Plan and a high amount of incompatible infill development are those located in the highly commercial areas of the district where the squares have been completely or partially lost.
- The district's boundaries have diminished integrity, especially the western boundary.

"Savannah's landmark district still maintains exceptional value as a national treasure," Walton stated. "The district is not at risk of being removed from the National Historic Landmarks program. This analysis will help serve as a guidepost for those involved in preserving Savannah's historic character and integrity."

The public can learn more about the current review of the Savannah National Historic Landmark district by visiting <https://go.nps.gov/savannah> where the New South Associates report is posted, along with details about the study's intent.

Additionally, the National Park Service will hold public meetings in Savannah this spring where New South Associates will present its study and findings and offer an opportunity for audience feedback. **Public forums will be held on May 10 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm and May 11 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm** at the **Metropolitan Planning Commission**, Mendosa Hearing Room, located at 112 E State St, Savannah, GA 31401.

Public comments can also be submitted online through June 30, 2018 at <https://go.nps.gov/savannah>.

About the National Historic Landmarks Program:

The National Historic Landmarks Program, established in 1935, is administered by the National Park Service on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior. The agency works with preservation officials, private property owners, and other partners interested in nominating properties for National Historic Landmark designation. Completed nominations are reviewed by the National Park System Advisory Board, which makes recommendations for designation to the Secretary of the Interior. If selected, property ownership remains the same but each site receives a designation letter, and is eligible for technical preservation advice. The National Historic Landmarks Program is one of more than a dozen programs administered by the National Park Service that provide states and local communities technical assistance, recognition, and funding to help preserve our nation's shared history and create close-to-home recreation opportunities.

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