

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE





Public Forum - Agenda

- **Introduction and Project Background** – Dr. Turkiya Lowe, Chief Historian, National Park Service
- **Presentation of Study** – Mary Beth Reed, President and Director of History, New South Associates, Inc. and Rebecca Fenwick, Director of Preservation, Lominack Kolman Smith Architects
- **Audience Question and Comment Period**

Integrity and Condition Assessment Savannah National Historic Landmark District



Objectives



1973 View, Factors Wharf



2016 View, Factors Wharf

- Prepare a report describing the current integrity and condition of the Savannah NHL district;
- Document major changes that have occurred within and adjacent to the district since its designation in 1966;
- Analyze the current integrity as compared to when the NHL was designated; and
- Analyze current threats to the integrity of the district.

Team

- Mary Beth Reed, Matthew Tankersley, Patrick Sullivan, New South Associates
 - Cultural resources management firm established in 1984 headquartered in Georgia
 - Mr. Sullivan currently a preservation planner, City of Atlanta
- Rebecca Fenwick and Jerry Lominack, Lominack Kolman Smith Architects
 - Savannah-based firm with over 50 years of experience
- All team members meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as historians and architectural historians

Methodology/ Tasks

- Orientation Meeting
- Identify character-defining features that convey significance of the Savannah NHL District
- Research
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis and mapping
- Reconnaissance survey
- Photographic documentation
- Gather input on current and future threats to the Savannah NHL District from the preservation professional community

Orientation Meeting Input

- Project orientation meeting in Savannah, November 2016 with NPS, members of local and federal agencies, and project consultants.

Including:

- Fort Pulaski National Monument
- Georgia Historic Preservation Division
- Historic Savannah Foundation
- City of Savannah
 - Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation and Planner
 - Savannah Zoning Administrator
 - Savannah Tourism Management and Ambassadorship Department
 - Director of Research Library and Municipal Archives

Preservation Professional Community Input

Key Recommendations from Orientation Meeting

Compare how NPS has conducted condition assessments of individual NHLs and other districts in the country;

Record the SNHLD from its interior and at its periphery;

Address the archaeology of lost/demolished historic buildings in district;

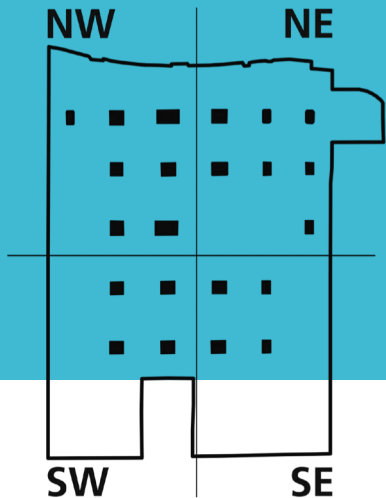
Provide a zonal analysis of the SNHLD, based on GIS mapping, depicting areas within the district that have experienced loss of plan and historic fabric, in addition to those areas that remain intact;

Develop a context documenting for the designation of the SNHLD during the mid-1960s and the intervening years of changes and stewardship;

Identify answers to such questions as, “What makes the SNHLD unique?” and “What are its measurements of success?;” and

Conduct outreach to inform the public about the condition assessment, disseminating the final report to the relevant local repositories (i.e. the Savannah Research Library & Municipal Archives, the Georgia Historical Society, local libraries, etc.), and presenting findings at public meetings.

Character-Defining Features: Savannah's Squares



"While Savannah does possess a number of very distinguished buildings, and while it has certainly played its role in the events of American history, the real meaning of this area lies in something else.

It lies in the wholeness of the place, in the rational nature of the rhythmic placement of streets, buildings, and open areas, and it lies in the great variety of spatial experience throughout the fabric of the district.

The essence of Savannah may be said to revolve around the character of her squares."

- EXCERPT from 1977 Updated Nomination

Retention of the Savannah Town Plan, historic architecture, and public open spaces considered the Savannah NHL District's character defining features.

Research



National Park Service – Savannah NHL District-related correspondence with local, state, and federal organizations dating from the late 1960s to the present



Historic Preservation Division – 1966 Savannah NHL District nomination, the 1977 boundary revision, and 2004 draft update nomination. Also, county-level database records of tax credit projects in Chatham County from 1991 - 2016 and all Section 106 projects conducted in the county from 1995 – 2016 (Research value limited – lack of locations).



MPC - GIS building data and access to current and previous preservation planning surveys that had been conducted within the SNHLD.



Historic Savannah Foundation - historic newspaper scrapbooks and the 1968 building inventory



Savannah Research Library, Municipal Archives and the Georgia Historical Society Collections - historic photography, historic newspaper articles, and research of secondary source materials.

Building a Project GIS

Savannah Area Geographic Information System (SAGIS) – primary data source for property parcels, building footprints, as well as contributing and non-contributing statuses for buildings within the NHL but no building dates.

GIS staff at the **Chatham County Board of Assessors** supplemented the project GIS dataset with year of construction dates allowing us to map district buildings by their year of construction. No major inaccuracies were observed during fieldwork.

Evaluation of the Savannah NHL District focused on buildings constructed after 1966 to the present, with unsympathetic additions on historic buildings identified during the reconnaissance survey.

Reconnaissance Survey

- Pedestrian Surveys, December 2016 and March 2017
- Used digital survey forms
- Focused on existing condition assessments of district's 22 squares (two are lost- Elbert and Liberty Squares) and the integrity of Oglethorpe's Savannah Town Plan as it appeared in 1966. We looked at:
 - Conditions of building and landscape integrity within the square's viewshed;
 - The density and type of infill , if present;
 - The presence of vacant/surface parking lots; and
 - Traffic volume.
- Surveyors also looked at existing conditions along the district's boundaries



Integrity - The ability of a property to convey its significance.

- NPS Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (1995)



A property retains integrity if it possesses one, some, or all of these aspects:

Location - This aspect refers to the critical relationship between a property and its actual location when it was constructed and within which historic events took place during the period of significance.

Design – The form, plan, space, structure or style of a property. For districts, such as the SNHLD, design concerns are elevated to a more holistic level of analysis clued in by how buildings, sites and structures are spatially related, the visual rhythms within the streetscape, circulation patterns, and the relationship of other features.

Setting – Either natural or manmade, this refers to the physical environment of a property. It is important particularly for districts that an evaluation should look not only within the district boundary but also its immediate surroundings.

Materials – This aspect speaks to the physical elements that compose and configure the property and help it speak to its sense of time and place.

Workmanship – How a property is crafted is also an aspect of integrity, displaying cultural trends, technological advances, and/or traditional practices in its construction and its finishes.

Feeling – This aspect highlights the property's ability to express its historic time and place through its character.

Association – For integrity of association, a property needs to have a direct link between a historic event or a person and needs to be sufficiently intact to demonstrate that link. Notably, because of the subjectivity of feeling and association, their retention alone is not considered sufficient in an evaluation of integrity.

Preservation Professional Community Input: Online Survey

- Online survey was conducted. Survey of 10 questions was sent to 40 individuals, 28 responded.
- Stakeholder committee selected participants to include those who had attended the project orientation meeting and various business and civic community leaders at the local, regional, state and national levels, who have an interest in historic preservation and a professional association with the SNHLD.
- Respondents were asked to provide their association with the SNHLD, rate the features (in order of importance) that they believed defined the resource, identify the greatest threats to the district's integrity, and note where those impacts were occurring.
- Other questions spoke to local preservation laws and their effectiveness.
- Finally, what educational outreach could help protect the SNHLD and promote its significance to the wider public.



Findings



Preservation Context



- Provides an administrative history of the NHL from its designation to today
- Much-needed historic context
- Gives the background on previous assessments, district expansions, lessons learned, and in some cases not learned

1968 Historic Savannah Foundation
Survey Inventory Map

Preservation Milestones

- Savannah has led the nation in preservation policy
- 1966- Savannah NHL District Designated
- 1973- Local historic district ordinance adopted
- 2008- Local historic district ordinance height map adopted
- 2011- Design manual produced for local historic zoning

Preservation Successes



Franklin Square

- 1973 Urban Renewal River Street Renovation
- 1973 Historic Zoning Ordinance Adopted
- 1975 Broughton Street Revitalization Project
- 1976 Owens Thomas House, Telfair Academy, Green-Meldrim House Designated NHLs
- 1978 Savannah College of Art and Design Opens, Adaptively Reusing Numerous Historic Buildings
- 1985 Franklin Square Restored
- 1997 Chadbourn Guidelines Established
- 2005 Historic District Ordinance Amended to Prohibit Demolitions
- 2008 Historic District Ordinance Height Map Adopted
- 2010 Ellis Square Restored
- 2012 Tourism Administrator Position Established by City
- 2015 Ben Carter Broughton Street Renovations



GIS SUMMARY DATA AND MAP

Size: 0.8 square miles or 510 acres

Contributing properties: 1,969

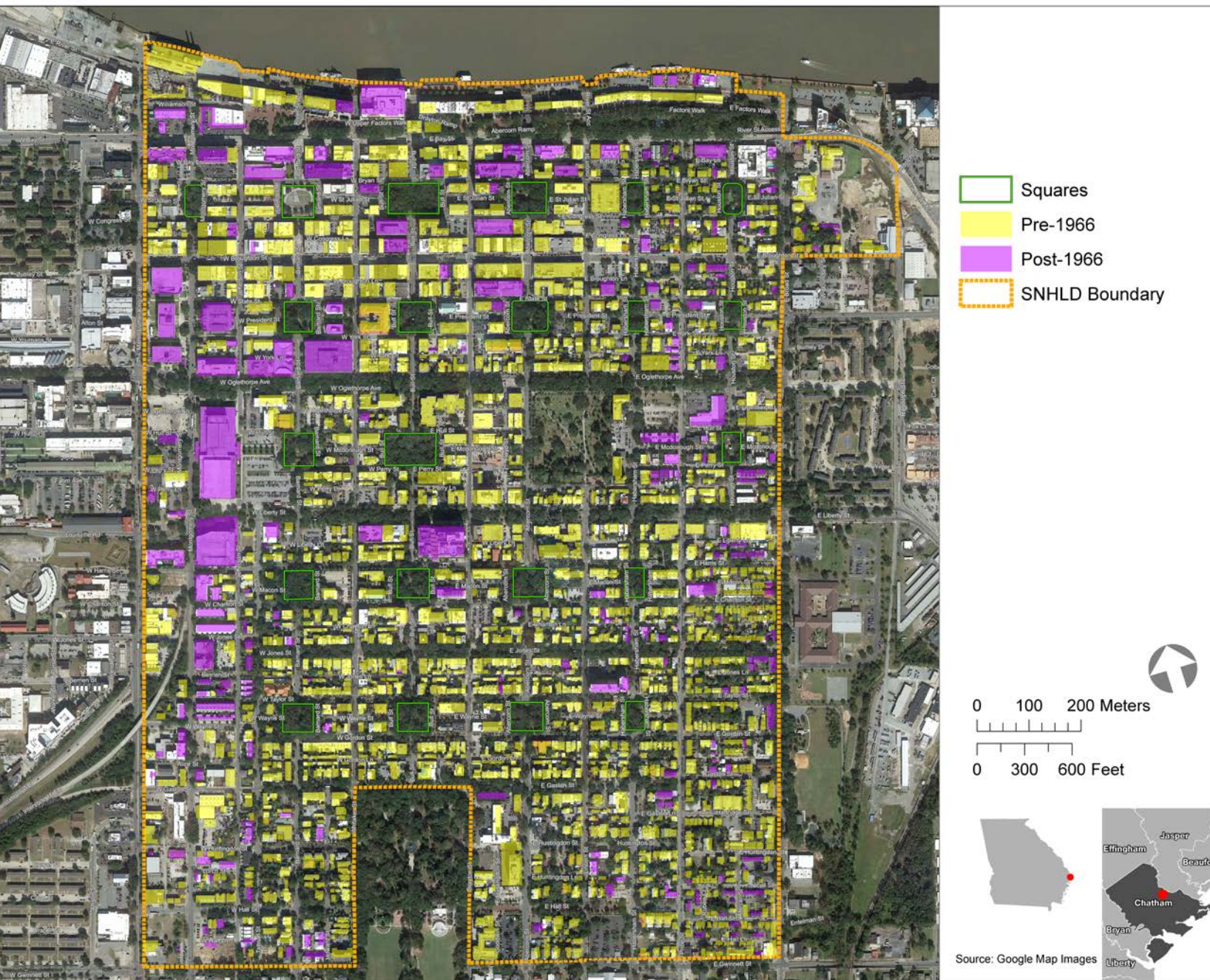
Non-Contributing properties: 648

Four Individual National Historic Landmarks located within district:

- Owens-Thomas House,
- Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences,
- Juliette Gordon Low Historic District,
- Green-Meldrim House

Two NHLs adjacent to western boundary:

- William Scarborough House,
- Central of Georgia Railroad Shops and Terminal



Building Summary

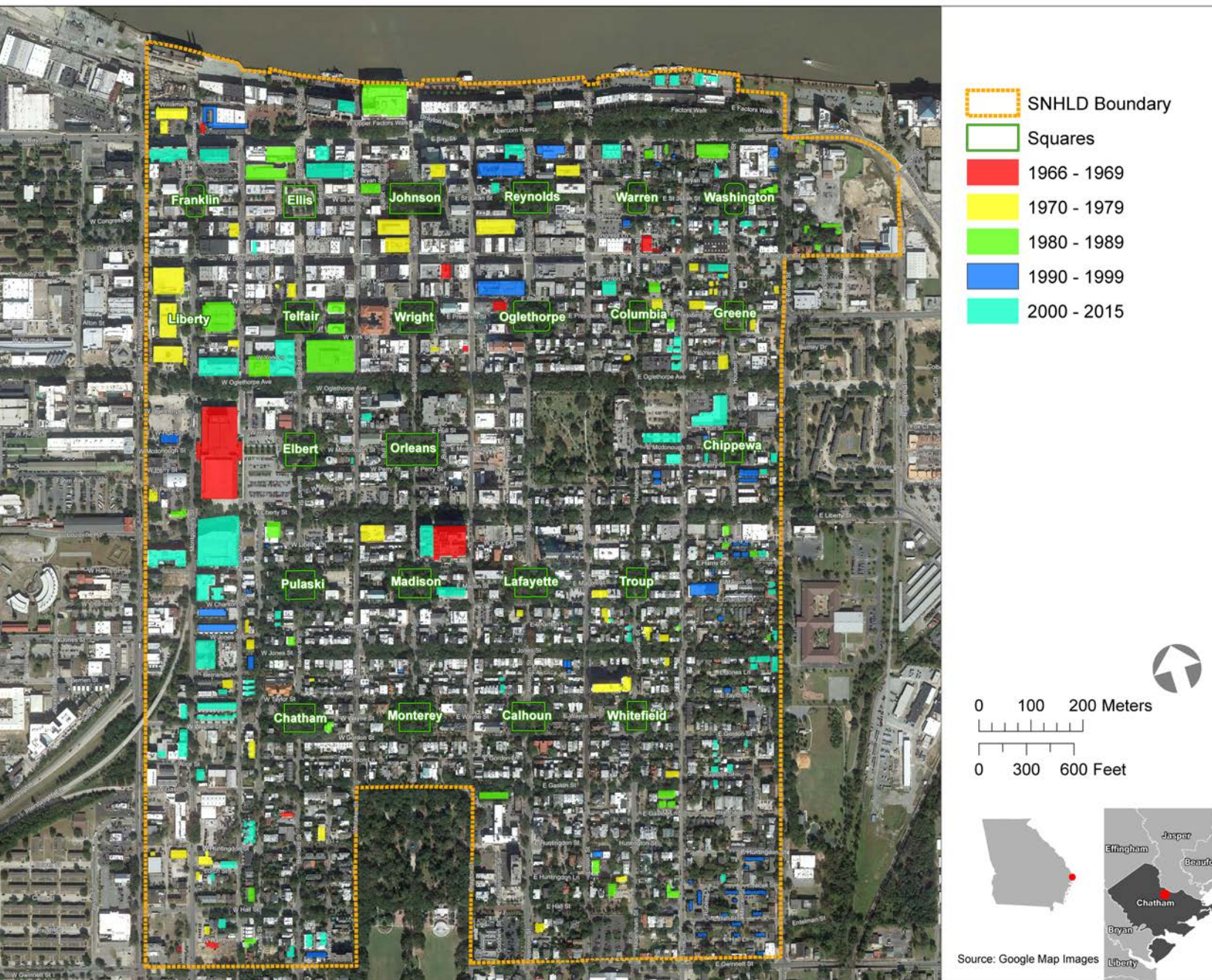
Pre 1966 & Post 1966

Strong preservation in district interior

Loss of buildings/fabric along margins

- Western boundary and area between Bryan and River streets
- Eastern boundary

How historically strong were the boundary areas to begin with?



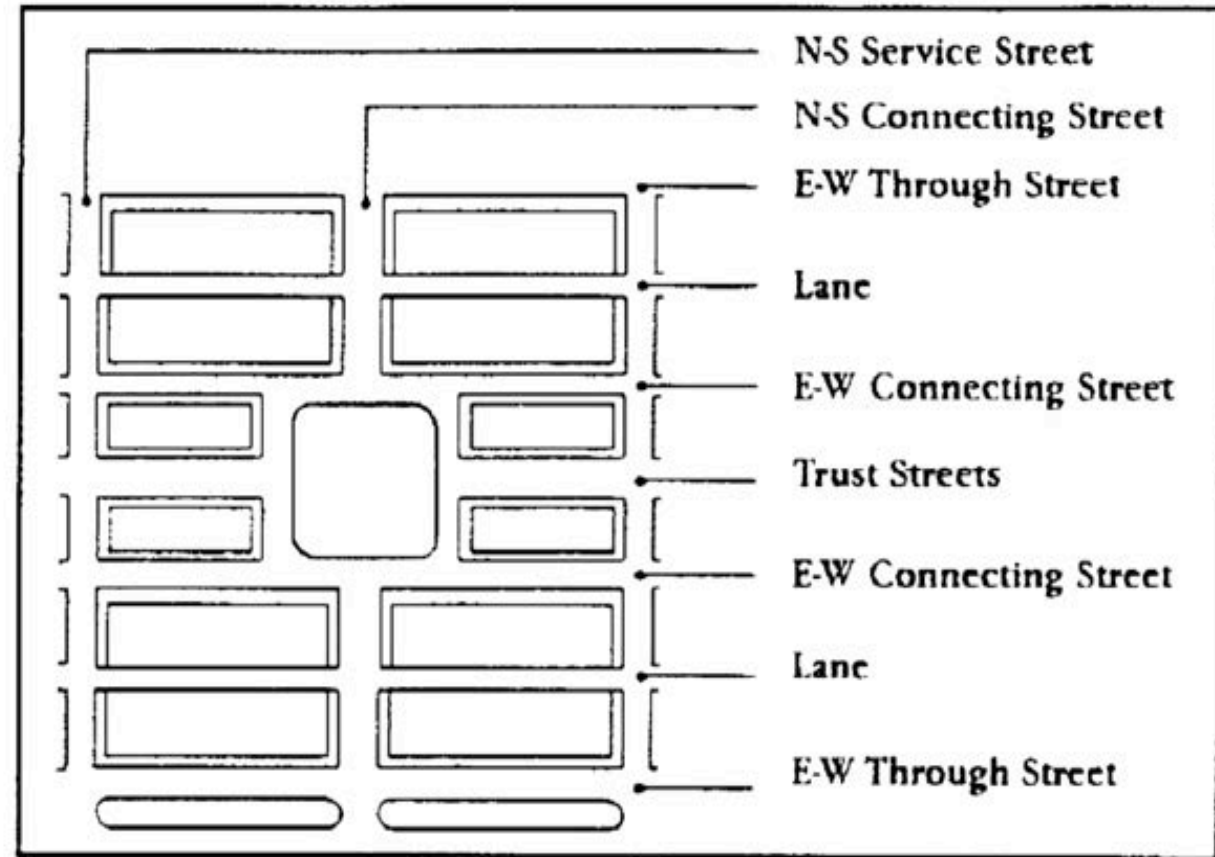
Breakdown by Year of Construction

- New construction increases in the 1980s through the 2010s



Contributing Buildings Lost Since 1966 and Road and Lane Closures

The Plan of a Square: The Basis for Assessing the Integrity of a Square

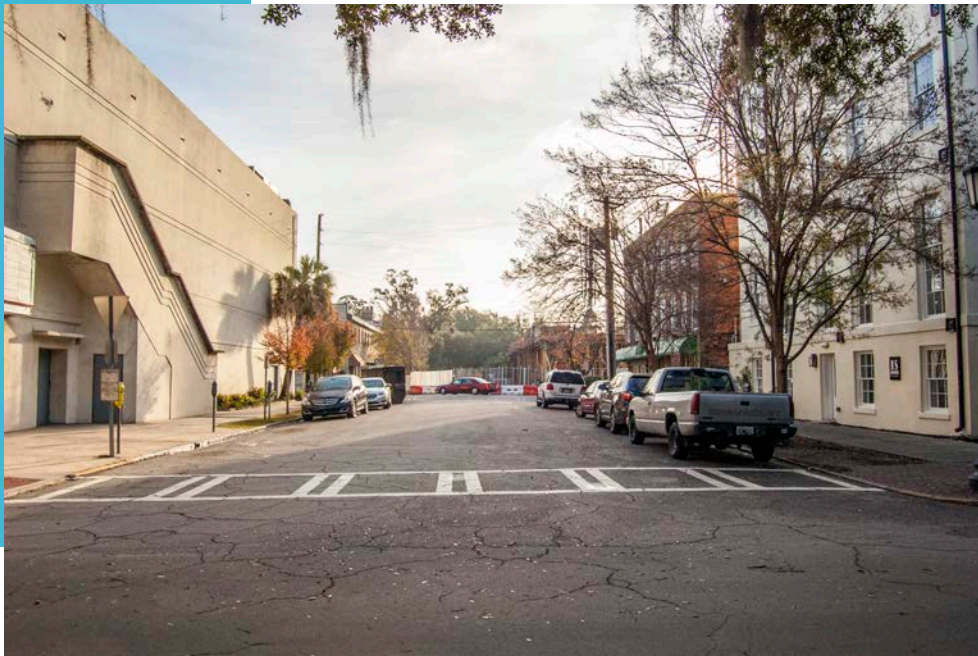


Survey of Squares

- **Big Picture** - The majority possess good to strong integrity.
- Included in assessment was the retainment or disruption of the original Town Plan, surrounding architecture, level of infill density, type of infill, presence of vacant parking lots, and level of traffic.
- Chippewa, Chatham, Monterey, and Calhoun squares particularly well preserved.
- Liberty and Elbert Squares are lost.
- The squares that have the greatest amount of diminished integrity include Johnson, Reynolds, Warren, and Orleans squares. All of these squares are in commercial areas.
- Some squares have mixed ratings due to significant infill construction but retain high levels of integrity in other areas such as Whitefield and Telfair squares.

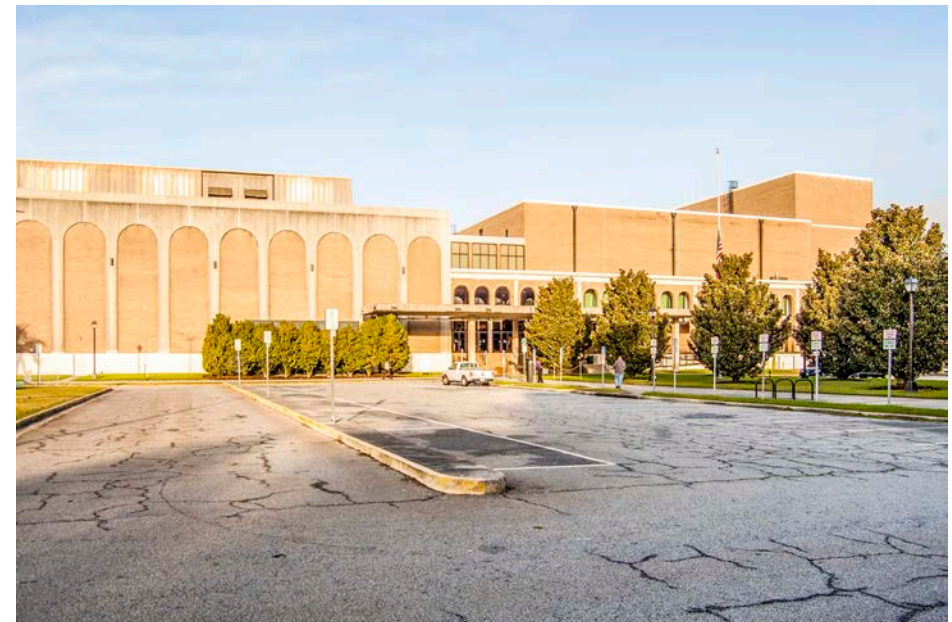
Chippewa Square

- Example of strong preservation
- Retains integrity of plan, architecture, and landscape



Orleans Square

- Example of square with less integrity
- The north and east sides of the square retain a high degree of integrity (plan and architecture) and low infill.
- But the construction of the Savannah Civic Center and its attendant surface parking lot in the late 1960s has erased the Oglethorpe-designed town plan to the immediate west.
- A parking lot for a building facing Whitaker Street is also present on the northeast trust lot and covers several tything lots.



Boundary Survey

Scope of work included an inspection of the boundaries of the district and interior areas that has concentrations of post-1966 infill development.

Northern Boundary



Looking South within the Trustees' Garden at Kehoe Iron Works.



Factors Walk at Barnard Street, looking north.



Plant Riverside District, under construction on River Street.

Southern & Eastern Boundaries



Southern

Barnard and Gwinnett streets, looking northeast.



Eastern

Broad and Gwinnett streets, looking northwest.

Western Boundary



William Scarbrough House NHL, just outside the district's west boundary.



Looking northeast at the City's Civic Center (built 1971), on the east side of Ellis Square.

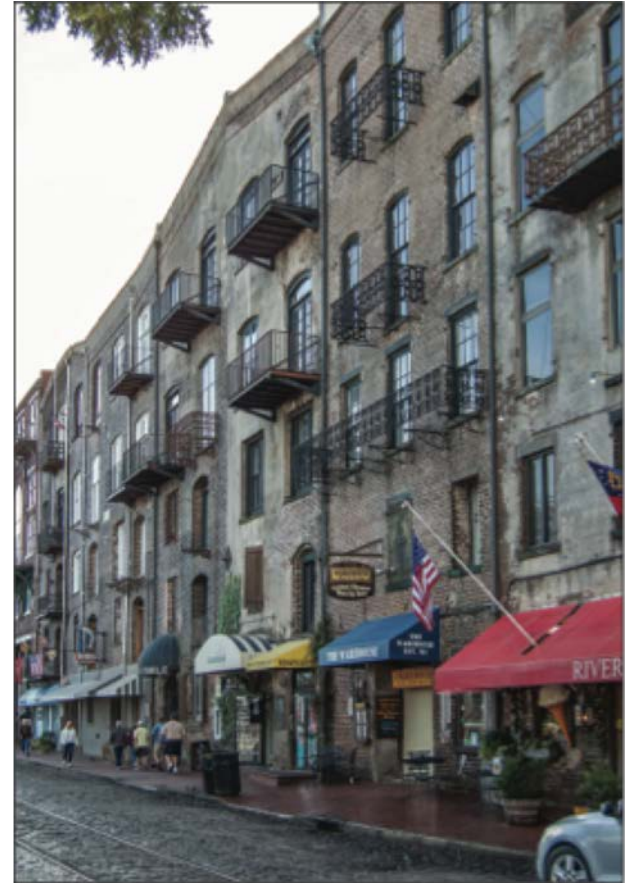


View of City Cultural Arts Center, under construction, south of Oglethorpe Ave.

Field
Photography—
replicating
original 25
views from
1977
nomination



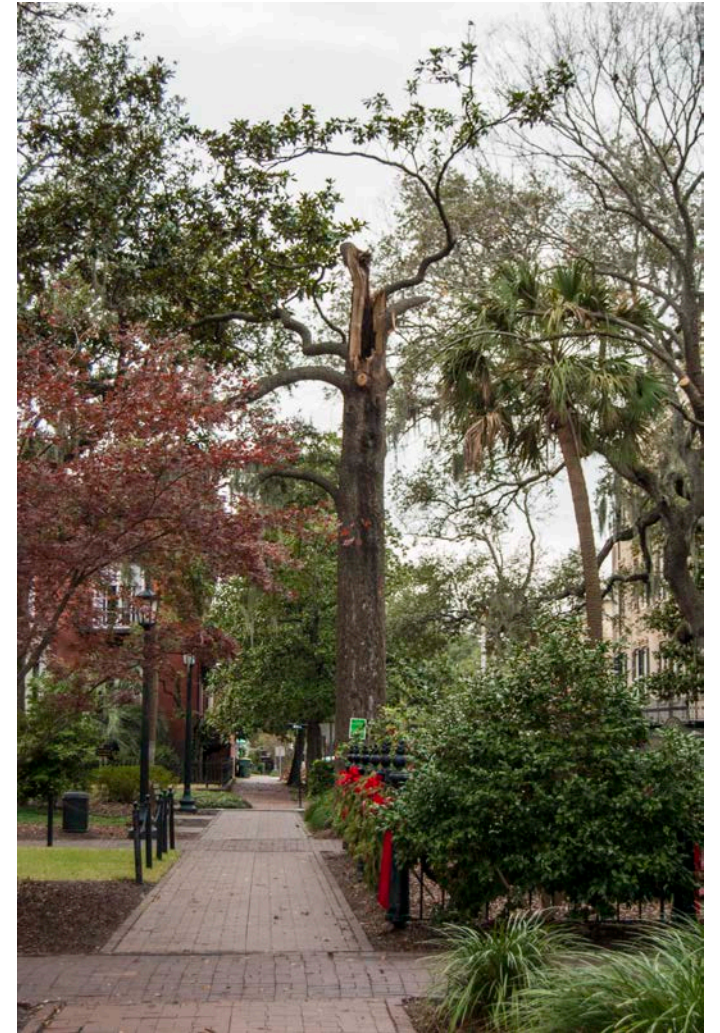
1977 Factors Row Rear



2016 Factors Row Rear

Summary of Threats Identified

- Incompatible construction
- Infrastructure upgrades
- Incompatible zoning standards
- Natural disasters
- Noise
- Truck vibration



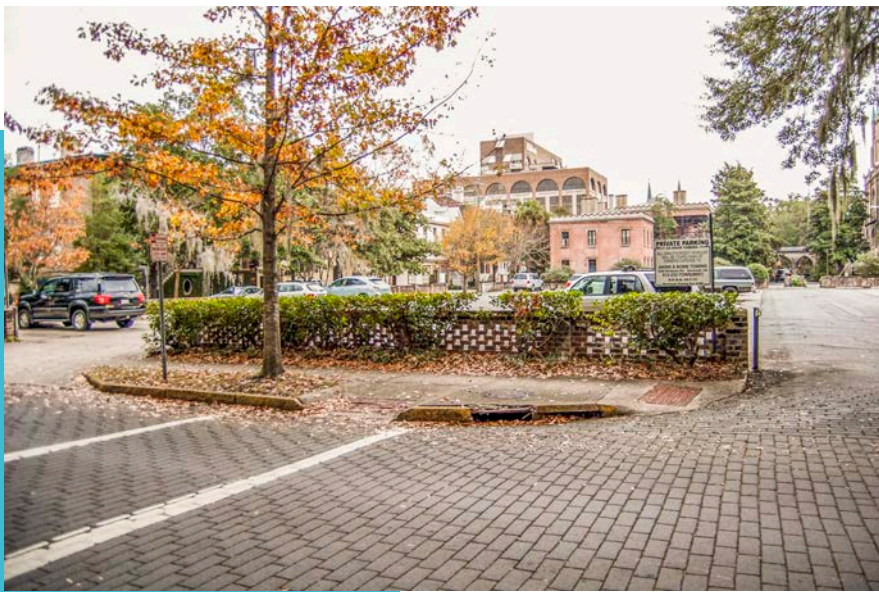
Monterey Square storm damage after Hurricane Matthew

Factors Related to Diminished Integrity

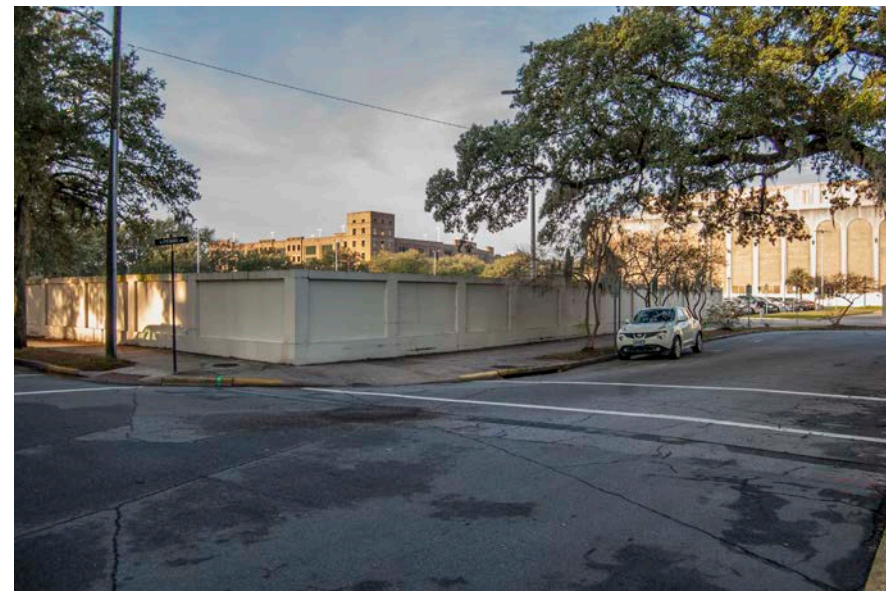


Lost asphalt blocks in angled pattern near former U.S. Post Office
(Photo courtesy of Dr. Robin Williams)

- Vacant sites or non-contributing parcels within the local historic district, often paired together, are susceptible to development
- Variances to existing ordinances related to the height map, lot coverage, etc.
- Residential density restrictions
- Lack of infrastructure protections
- Governmental project regulation review limitations



Parking Lot on Trust Lot and Loss of W Macon Street,
Pulaski Square



Civic Center Built Over Section of Elbert Square, Parking
on Trust Lots and Tything Block of Orleans Square (1971)



Federal Complex, East Trust Lots Telfair Square, W President
Street Converted to Private Parking (1982-85)



Jones Lane between Abercorn and Drayton, Loss of Courtyard,
House/Carriage House Connection



Metropolitan Planning Commission, Oglethorpe Square Tything Block (1994)



Rose of Sharon Apartments, Whitefield Square Tything Block (1971)



Parking deck (1973) on tything block and Plantation Inn rooftop addition (1990), Reynolds Square



City parking garage on tything block, Reynolds Square (1996)



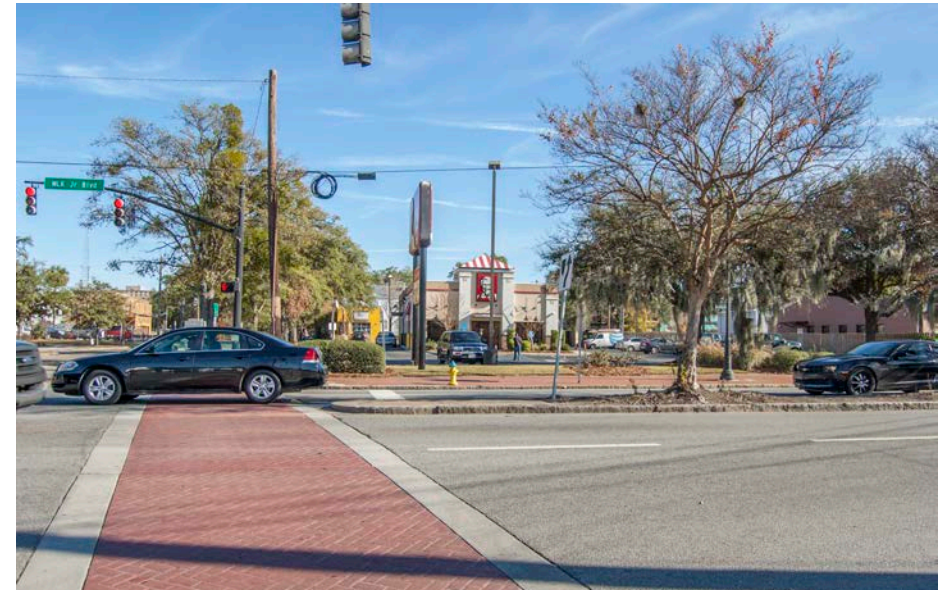
North Side of Bay Street, Just Outside District (1997)



North Side of Bay Street, Just Outside District (2017)



West Side of Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Just Outside District (2009)



Southeast Corner Gwinnett and Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Just Outside District

Assessing Threats: Preservation Professional Community Input

What local preservation or zoning efforts do you believe have been the most successful in protecting historic resources within the Savannah NHL District?

"Savannah is lucky to have a very involved and active preservation commission which overlooks infill and demolition threats."

"A combination of the preservation review board, the HSF and private property owners."

"Historic Review Board; but opportunities to override their decisions by going to City Council undermine it."

"Probably our zoning ordinance but it needs to be updated."

Assessing Threats: Preservation Professional Community Input

What is most in need of preservation?

"The Oglethorpe Plan is the platform on which everything else sits, therefore its preservation is of paramount importance."

"Density and scale of the built environment – the more that is changed, the less the district looks like it did historically."

"Large-scale development is overpowering the important historic buildings. Oglethorpe plan is probably next. Unfortunately, government has been the biggest violator of the plan."

"...new architecture tries to copy old; should encourage modern architecture as old architecture is a mix of what was once modern, what makes Savannah awesome is its layers of architectural styles..."

"...opportunities to restore closed streets in the plan should be sought."

Assessing Threats: Preservation Professional Community Input

What is most in need of preservation? (continued)

"...maximum density caps need to be rethought."

"...the squares and tree canopy with them, as well as the street tree canopy, are critical to the sense of place in the current district, and the district's ability to express Savannah's historic development patterns."

"Architectural mix—need more affordable residential options, fewer hotels."

"The Oglethorpe Plan should be prioritized above all else as it is the NHL's character defining feature of greatest significance; and is perhaps the feature that elevated the district to receive landmark status."

Assessment: Condition Categories

Four “condition categories” provide a measure of the health of the NHL in terms of its ability to convey the significance that led to its designation:

- **Satisfactory** (Priority 3) indicates that there is no known current or potential threat to the landmark.
- **Watch** (Priority 2) indicates NHLs that face impending actions or circumstances that likely will cause a loss of integrity.
- **Threatened** (Priority 1) indicates NHLs that have suffered, or are in imminent danger of, a severe loss of integrity.
- **Emergency** indicates that recent catastrophic damage has occurred that requires immediate intervention.

Recommended Status

THREATENED: NHLs that have suffered or are in imminent danger of suffering a severe loss of integrity.

Status remains until the condition of the property is substantially stabilized or the threat is mitigated.

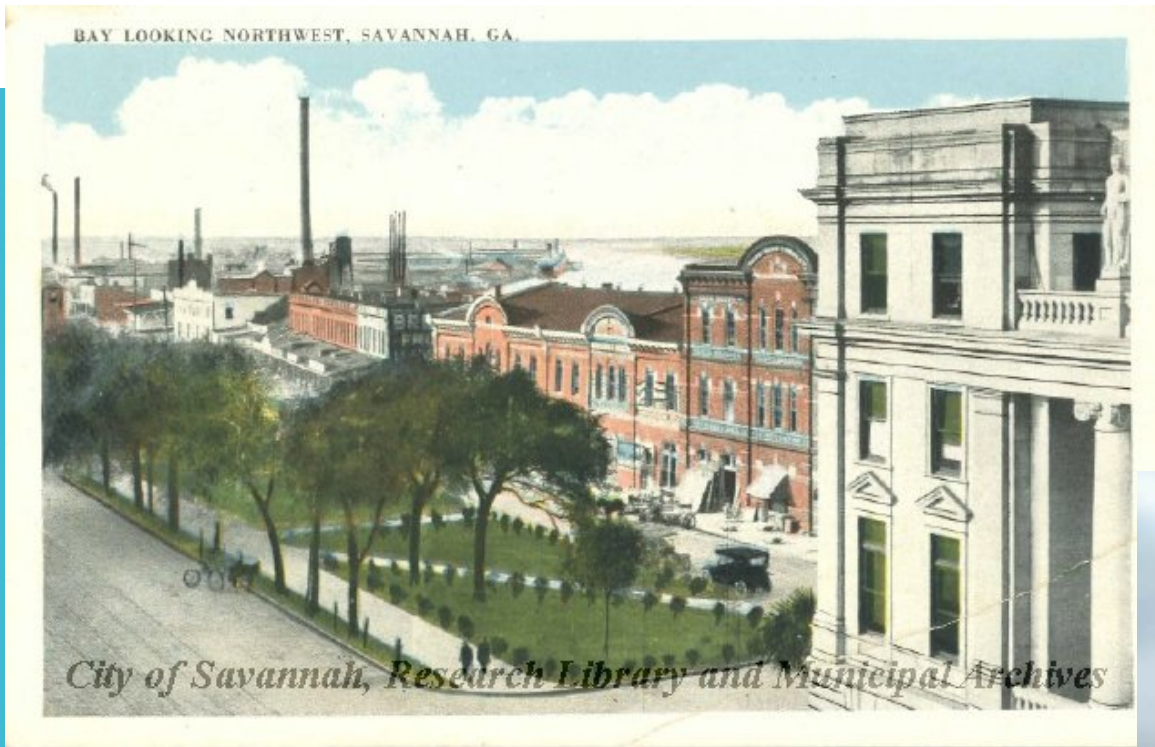
Threatened properties may include, but are not limited to, those that are:

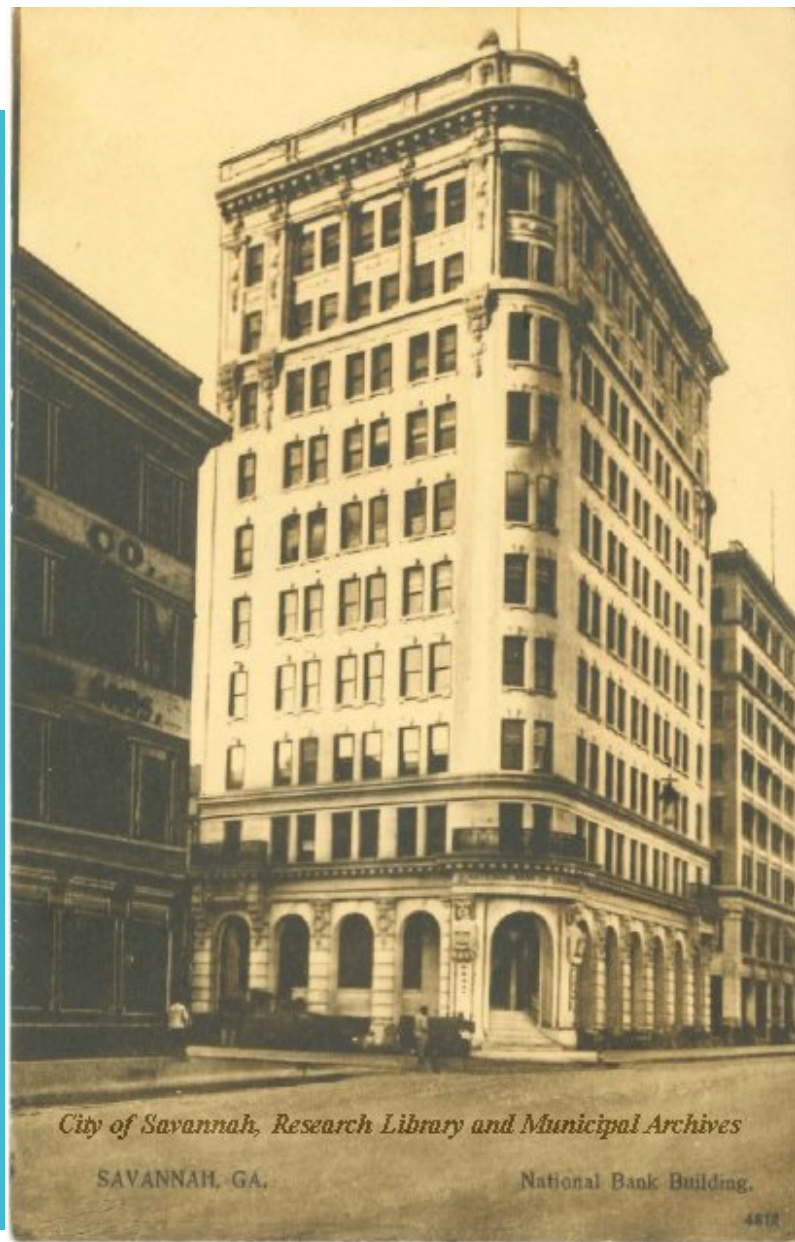
- Damaged or severely deteriorated and requiring major stabilization or restoration.
- *Affected by insensitive alterations, demolition, or inappropriate new construction.*
- Undergoing or threatened by destructive environmental cleanup or hazardous material remediation.
- Suffering vandalism or theft of artifacts.
- Condemned or slated for demolition.

Recommended Status

Threatened Status recommended, based on two of the greatest challenges facing the district:

- Loss of Savannah Town Plan (the principal character defining feature of the district)
 - Street and lane closures and impact on integrity on squares
- Large-scale development threatening the density and scale of the district (another crucial character defining feature)
 - Height and Mass
 - Over a dozen new hotel developments under construction or planned, including:
 - New Build, 255 Perry Street
 - Rehab and New Build, River Street
 - New Build, 412 Williamson Street
 - New Build, 321 Montgomery Street
 - New Build, 600 E. Bay Street
 - New Build, 607 Drayton Street





National Bank of Savannah (1904)



Sun Trust Bank buildings, northwest corner Broughton and Bull Streets (1975)

Area and Type of Diminished Integrity

- Boundaries – in particular the Western Boundary
 - Governmental
 - Hospitality
- Between Bryan and River Streets - greatest area of large scale infill
 - Hospitality



Chatham County Jail, Courthouse, and Parking Garages location of Liberty Square (1978)



Hotel, Corner of Bay and Martin Luther King Jr Blvd (2001)

Potential Threats

- Continuation or growth of current threats
- Cumulative effects of large-scale development and alteration of the Savannah Town Plan
 - Large hotel developments
 - Large government complexes
 - Rooftop additions
 - Developments that disrupt the Savannah Town Plan by closing roads and altering the original square configuration

NHL Assessment: Part of the Preservation Toolkit

This report is intended to help provide an objective analysis and to provide information to help safeguard the Savannah National Historic Landmark District for current and future generations.