



West Hunter Street Baptist Church Special Resource Study

February 2022

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SUMMARY

The Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS), has prepared the West Hunter Street Baptist Church Special Resource Study to evaluate for potential inclusion within the national park system the historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church and study area located west of downtown Atlanta, Georgia. As directed by Congress, this special resource study evaluates the site using established criteria for evaluating the national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management that must be met for a site to be considered for inclusion in the national park system as a new, independent unit.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (PL 113-291), signed into law on December 19, 2014, directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church. This act identified the study area for this special resource study as the historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church, at 775 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, SW Atlanta, Georgia, and the block on which the church is located. The legislation further requires that the study process follow section 8(c) of Public Law 91-383 (54 U.S.C. 100507) and that the Secretary of the Interior submit a report containing the results of the study and recommendations to the House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

National Park Service Management Policies 2006, section 1.3, directs that proposed additions to the national park system must meet four legislatively mandated criteria: (1) national significance, (2) suitability, (3) feasibility, and (4) need for direct National Park Service management. All four of these criteria must be met for a study area to be considered for addition to the national park system.

Criterion 1 – National Significance

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church fully meets the criterion of national significance. The West Hunter Street Baptist Church site has been determined to be nationally significant based on National Historic Landmark (NHL) nomination criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65. The National Historic Landmarks Program supports the statement of national significance; however, this does not serve as an NHL nomination nor does the concurrence result in the site being listed as a National Historic Landmark. No other sites within the study area are considered nationally significant.

Criterion 2 – Suitability

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church is considered suitable for inclusion in the national park system. While other national park units and public sites throughout the South protect and interpret the civil rights movement, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church expands and enhances resource protection and interpretation related to the critical role that churches played during this time and the association with Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr., an internationally recognized leader of the modern civil rights movement of 1954-1964, as defined by the National Park Service.

Criterion 3 – Feasibility

Under this criterion, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site meets all of the components for consideration of feasibility as a unit of the national park system. An area of this size and configuration would be feasible to administer as a park unit. No changes in land ownership, zoning, adjacent land uses, or potential threats are known or are likely to occur that would affect the feasibility of administering the area as a new unit. The site has high potential for public enjoyment and interpretation, the designation of the area as a national park unit would likely result in beneficial economic impacts to the region, and there is public support for designation.

To fully meet criterion 3, both costs and budgetary feasibility must also be addressed. Costs associated with the acquisition, one-time facility development and rehabilitation, and long-term operations of the site appear to be feasible when taking into consideration the current deferred maintenance backlog and budgetary challenges facing the National Park Service. This special resource study concludes that criterion 3 is met.

Criterion 4 – Need for Direct National Park Service Management

Based on the analysis of the management currently operating West Hunter Street Baptist Church, direct National Park Service management of the site is needed. Despite their role in rehabilitating the church, it is not in the purview of the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. (the Foundation) to provide resource management of the site or educational and interpretive opportunities for visitors. No other entities are identified to manage the site. National Park Service management is considered a “clearly superior alternative” for the management and stewardship of the site.

CONCLUSION

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church within the legislated study area meets criterion 1– National Significance, criterion 2– Suitability, criterion 3 – Feasibility, and criterion 4 – Need for Direct National Park Service Management. The West Hunter Street Baptist Church is the only resource in the study area that meets the criteria. Therefore, the special resource study finds that the West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets all four criteria to be recommended for designation as a new unit of the national park system.

A GUIDE TO THIS STUDY

This special resource study is organized into the following chapters, briefly described below.

Chapter 1: Study Purpose and Background provides a brief description of the study area and an overview of the study's purpose, background, and process. This chapter also summarizes the National Park Service special resource study criteria for evaluation and study methodology.

Chapter 2: Historic Context and Description of Resources provides an overview of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church study area in the context of its strong association with the life of civil rights icon Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. and its role in local and national civil rights organizing.

Chapter 3: Analysis of the Four Criteria for Evaluation describes the evaluation process and findings for the West Hunter Street Baptist Church study area. This chapter provides the analysis and evaluation required in a special resource study.

Chapter 4: NPS Management Alternative identifies the most efficient and effective way to protect significant resources and provide opportunities for public enjoyment. This chapter describes the action by the National Park Service to preserve key resources and interpret West Hunter Street Baptist Church.

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CONTENTS

Summary	iii
Legislative History	iii
Special Resource Study and Summary of Findings	iii
Criterion 1 – National Significance.....	iii
Criterion 2 – Suitability.....	iii
Criterion 3 – Feasibility	iv
Criterion 4 – Need for Direct National Park Service Management	iv
Conclusion.....	iv
A Guide to This Study	v
Chapter 1: Study Purpose and Background	1
Purpose of the Special Resource Study.....	1
Special Resource Study Background.....	3
Description of the Study Area	5
West Hunter Street Baptist Church.....	5
Paschal’s Restaurant and Motor Hotel	6
Busy Bee Café	8
Special Resource Study Process.....	8
Step 1: Project Scoping and Collecting Information.....	9
Step 2: Applying the Four Criteria for Evaluation	9
Step 3: Final Study Completion and Transmittal to Congress.....	11
Compliance With the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).....	11
Special Resource Study Limitations	12
Chapter 2: Historic Context and Description of Resources	13
Introduction	13
Historic Context	13
Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr.	13
Abernathy and the SCLC – Second Phase of the Civil Rights Movement	19
Atlanta and the Civil Rights Movement.....	25
West Hunter Street Baptist Church and the Civil Rights Movement.....	26
Description of Study Area Resources	29
West Hunter Street Baptist Church.....	31
Related Resources.....	39
Associated Historic Sites and Resources Outside the Study Area.....	41

Brown Chapel AME, Selma, Alabama, and Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama	41
Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama.....	42
Edmund Pettus Bridge, Selma, Alabama.....	42
First Baptist Church of Montgomery ("Colored"), Montgomery, Alabama	42
Chapter 3: Analysis of the Four Criteria for Evaluation	43
Introduction	43
Evaluation of National Significance	43
Statement of National Significance	44
Study Finding on Criteria 1 – National Significance	45
Evaluation of Suitability	46
Type of Resource Represented By the Study Area.....	47
Theme or Context In Which the Study Area Fits	47
Comparative Analysis of Resources Similar to the Study Area.....	47
Similar Resources Within the National Park System	48
Similar Resources Outside the National Park System.....	50
Adequacy of Representation	51
Study Finding on Criteria 2: Suitability	52
Evaluation of Feasibility.....	52
Size and Boundary Configuration	53
Land Ownership, Local Planning and Zoning, and Potential Land Uses	54
Existing and Potential Threats to the Resources	55
Access and Public Enjoyment Potential.....	56
Public Support and Socioeconomic Impacts of Designation.....	56
Cost and Budgetary Feasibility.....	58
Evaluation of the Need for Direct National Park Service Management.....	62
Current Management of West Hunter Street Baptist Church.....	62
Study Finding on Criterion 4 – Need for Direct NPS Management	63
Special Resource Study Findings and Conclusion	63
Chapter 4: NPS Management Alternative	65
Alternative: National Park Service Unit.....	65
The Concept	65
National Park Service Role	65
NPS Management Structure.....	66
Resource Protection	66

Visitor Experience	66
Costs	67
Preparers and Consultants	69
NPS South Atlantic Gulf Region 2.....	69
NPS Washington Office	69
Denver Service Center	69
Appendix A: Bibliography	71
Appendix B: Legislation Authorizing This Special Resource Study	72

FIGURES

Figure 1. West Hunter Street Baptist Church SRS State and Regional Context Map	2
Figure 2. West Hunter Street Baptist Church SRS Study Area Map	4
Figure 3. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Front Façade	6
Figure 4. Historic Photo of Paschal’s Restaurant and Motor Hotel	7
Figure 5. Current View of Paschal’s Restaurant and Motor Hotel	7
Figure 6. Current View of Busy Bee Café.....	8
Figure 7. SRS Completion Pathways	10
Figure 8. Reverend Abernathy in Pulpit at First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama	14
Figure 9. Abernathy and King MIA Bus Ride.....	14
Figure 10. Reverend Abernathy and Rosa Parks – MIA Boycott.....	15
Figure 11. Reverend Abernathy and Martin Luther King – Birmingham Arrest	16
Figure 12. Left to Right: Frederick “Fred” Shuttleworth, Abernathy, and King.....	17
Figure 13. Abernathy, King, Fauntroy, and President Johnson.....	17
Figure 14. Abernathy, King, Walter Fauntroy, and President Johnson – White House Visit.....	18
Figure 15. Abernathy, Juanita Abernathy, Coretta Scott King, and King – Chicago Campaign.....	20
Figure 16. Poor People’s Campaign Marchers.....	21
Figure 17. Reverend Abernathy, Juanita Abernathy, Poor People’s Campaign – Resurrection City ...	22
Figure 18. Reverend Abernathy and Juanita Abernathy – UAW Workers Strike	23
Figure 19. Reverend Abernathy, R. Means, and Dennis Banks – Wounded Knee	24
Figure 20. Reverend Abernathy on the Cover of <i>JET Magazine</i> – 1973.....	25
Figure 21. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Original Structure – 1940s.....	29
Figure 22. Hosea Williams – West Hunter Street Baptist Church.....	29
Figure 23. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Front Façade.....	31
Figure 24. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Rose Window	32
Figure 25. West Hunter Street Baptist Church SE Façade	32

Figure 26. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Interior Window	33
Figure 27. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Exterior Window	34
Figure 28. West Hunter Street Baptist Church East Façade	34
Figure 29. West Hunter Street Baptist Church East Façade	35
Figure 30. West Hunter Street Baptist Church North Elevation.....	35
Figure 31. West Hunter Street Baptist Church NW Corner	36
Figure 32. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Sanctuary With Carpet.....	36
Figure 33. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Interior Sanctuary	37
Figure 34. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Pulpit.....	37
Figure 35. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Interior Balcony	37
Figure 36. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Balcony	38
Figure 37. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Basement Office	38
Figure 38. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Streetscape – Circa 1980s	39
Figure 39. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Proposed Boundary	64

TABLES

Table 1. One-time Improvement Cost Estimates – West Hunter Street Baptist Church.....	59
Table 2. Annual Operational Costs – 2019.....	60
Table 3. Estimated Costs for the Proposed West Hunter Street Baptist Church.....	61

CHAPTER 1: STUDY PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

New units of the national park system are typically added through an act of Congress. However, before Congress decides to create a new national park unit, it needs to know whether an area's resources meet established criteria for designation.

Provisions of law, together with National Park Service (NPS) policies, govern Congress's consideration of measures to create new units of the national park system. The National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 established the process for identifying and authorizing studies of new units. This and related legislative provisions have also been codified in 54 U.S.C. 100507, Additional Areas for the NPS System. New park unit studies must be authorized by Congress under 54 U.S.C., section 100507(b) (40, which states, "No study of the potential of an area for inclusion in the System may be initiated except as provided by specific authorization of an Act of Congress." Congress also required the Secretary of the Interior to "designate a single office to prepare all new area studies and to implement other functions under this section" (54 U.S.C. 100507(g)). This office is located in the NPS Directorate for Park Planning, Facilities, and Lands, Park Planning and Special Studies Division (PPSS Division).

When the National Park Service is tasked with evaluating potential new units, it must document its findings in a special resource study. Section 1.3 of NPS Management Policies 2006 states, "the National Park Service is responsible for conducting professional studies of potential additions to the national park system when specifically authorized by an act of Congress, and for making recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, the President and Congress." The special resource study process is intended to provide Congress with critical information used in the legislative process of designating a new unit.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (PL 113-291), signed into law on December 19, 2014, directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church. This act identified the study area for this special resource study as the historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church, at 775 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, SW Atlanta, Georgia, and the block on which the church is located. The legislation further requires that the study process follow section 8(c) of Public Law -91-383 (54 U.S.C. 100507) and that the Secretary of the Interior submit a report containing the results of the study and recommendations to the House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The purpose of this special resource study is to provide Congress with information about the potential designation of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a unit of the national park system. More specifically, the study evaluates the national significance of the study area, the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a unit of the national park system, and whether or not there is a need for direct NPS management of the study area.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church Special Resource Study

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

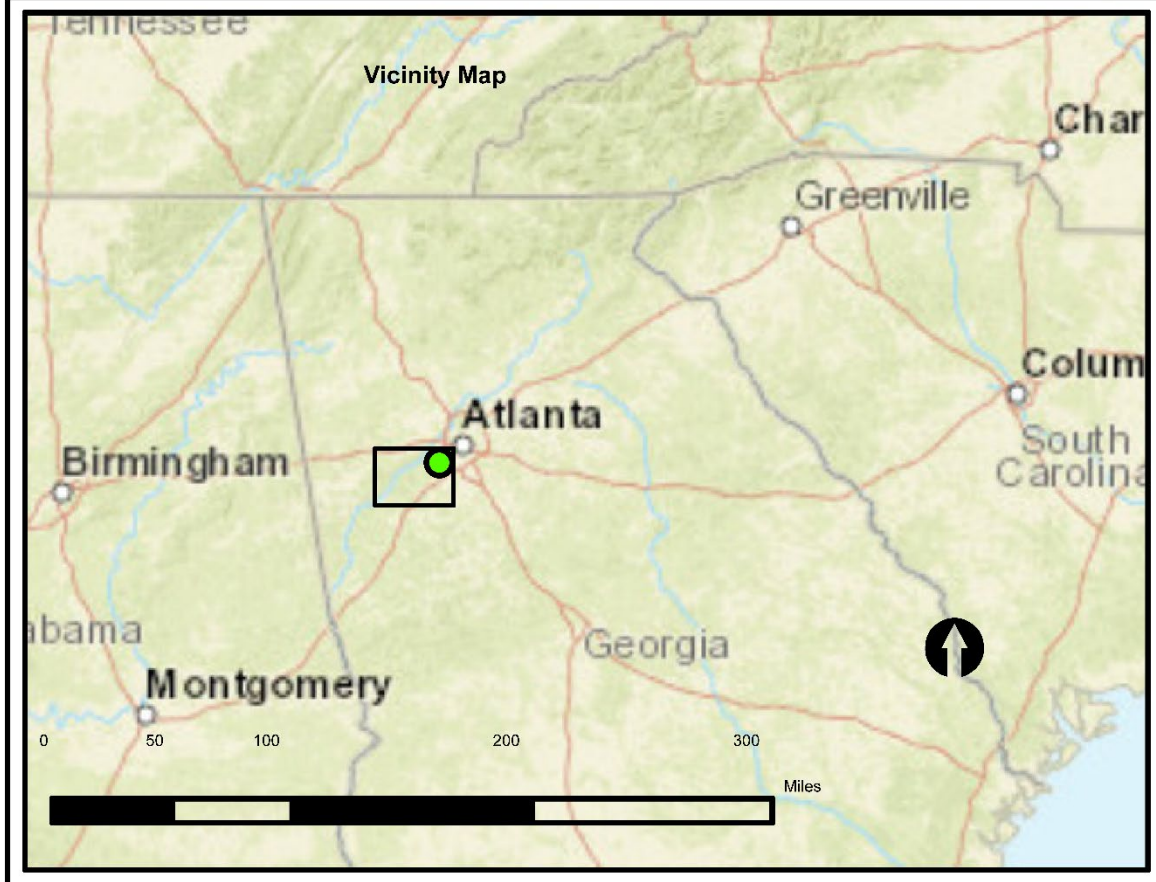


Figure 1. West Hunter Street Baptist Church SRS State and Regional Context Map

SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY BACKGROUND

In 1964, Congress enacted the most comprehensive civil rights legislation in US history. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 guaranteed all Americans the right to vote; prohibited discrimination in public accommodations based on race, color, religion, or national origin; outlawed job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; and granted the federal government extensive authority in enforcement. With the Act's passage the federal government used its power to realize the challenge towards a just and inclusive society that had begun a century earlier during Reconstruction. The legislation was the result of a movement birthed in the African American community's struggle to secure rights and protections previously denied to them through planned civil disobedience and protests to call attention to the system of apartheid that subjugated a whole segment of the country's population. The civil rights movement was led by continuum of organizations and individuals that amalgamated localized efforts into a national revolution.

Efforts have increased in recent decades to study the civil rights movement's effect on contemporary American governance and society. This has included an increased focus on preserving sites that represent the lives of individuals directly involved in leading the movement and watershed moments in its history. In November of 1999, Congress passed the National Park System New Area Study Act of 2000. The act instructed the Secretary of the Interior "to direct special resource studies to determine the national significance of each site, and/or areas, listed in Section 5 of this Act. . . ." Among the areas listed to be studied were "Civil Rights Sites." Since the passage of this act, the National Park Service has developed a Civil Rights Framework study and several thematic studies focused on specific aspects of civil rights history identified by the Park Service and a team of scholars. The framework and thematic studies allow planners to study and evaluate proposals by Congress and others to add units to the National Park System, establish national trails, and recognize sites through NHL designation that exemplify civil rights history in the United States. The framework and studies have been used in this special resource study to evaluate the national significance and suitability of West Hunter Street Baptist Church for consideration of inclusion as a unit of the national park system.

In February 2014, US Representative Hank Johnson introduced the West Hunter Street Baptist Church Study Act to the US House of Representatives. In September 2014, the bill, which had 77 cosponsors, passed in the House. That same month, it was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Energy and National Resources. On December 19th, Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015, which authorized a special resource study for West Hunter Street Baptist Church. The legislation directs the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate the site's national significance, suitability, and feasibility of designating the church as a unit of the national park system. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (PL 113-291), Subtitle D – National Park System Studies, Management, and Related Matters, Sec. 305 Special Resource Studies can be found in appendix B.

Historical Civil Rights Locations

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Atlanta University Center/ Vine City

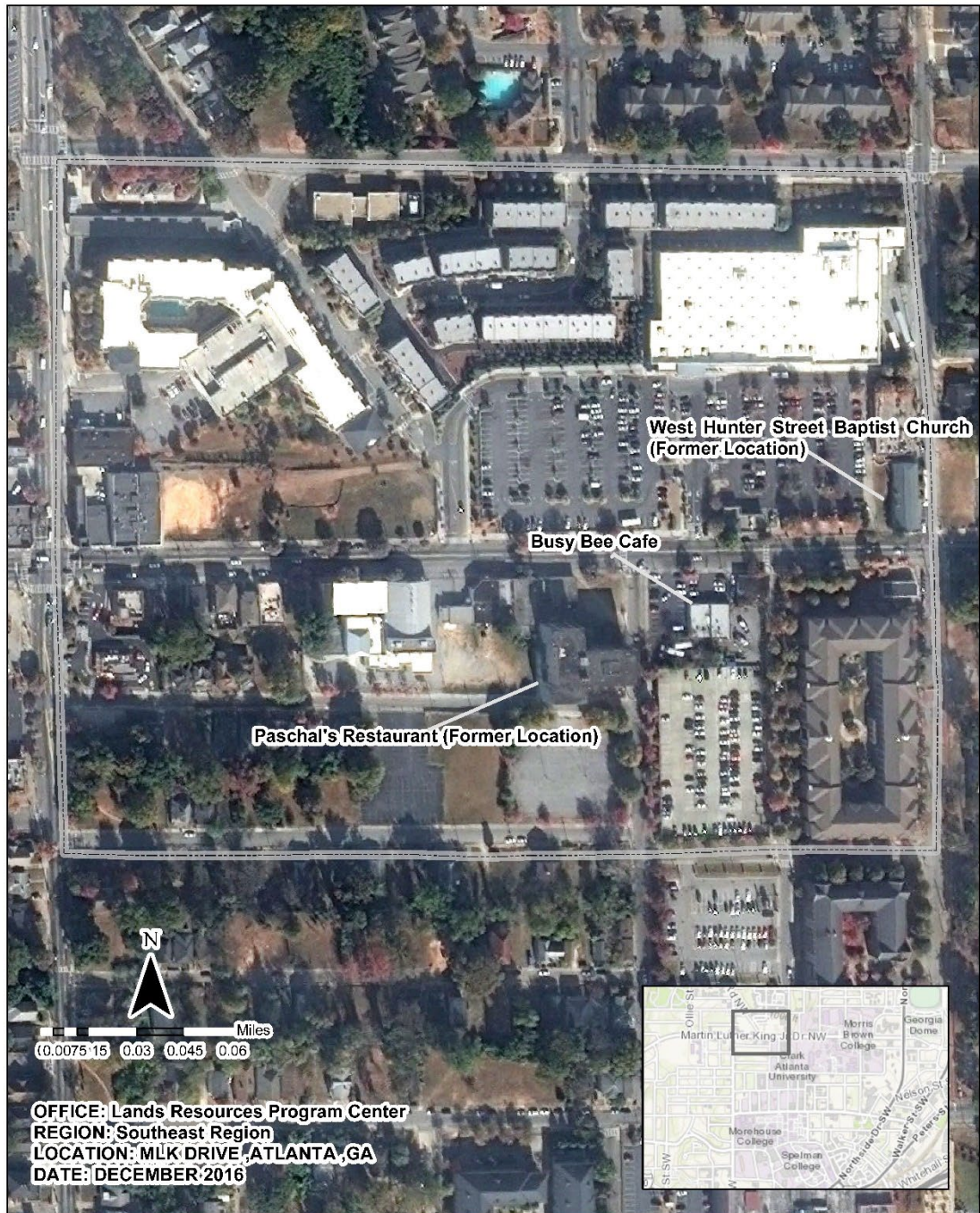


Figure 2. West Hunter Street Baptist Church SRS Study Area Map

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

West Hunter Street Baptist Church is located in Atlanta, Georgia, approximately 1.5 miles west of the city's downtown center. Section 3051 (b)(6) of the National Defense Authorization Act identifies the study area for the special resource study as "the historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church, located at 775 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Southwest, Atlanta, Georgia, and the block on which the church is located." Total acreage for the study block is approximately 20 acres. The block runs westward a quarter mile from the intersection of James P. Brawley Drive, Northwest and MLK Jr. Dr., SW to the intersection of Joseph E. Lowery Blvd, SW and MLK Jr. Dr., SW. The study area is bounded to the north by the historic Vine City community and to the south by part of the Atlanta University Consortium (AUC) complex.¹ The area's immediate south boundary runs parallel to the campus of Clark-Atlanta University. The area immediately surrounding the block is a mix of residential and commercial properties that include several local and National Historic Landmarks.

The study area and the larger Vine City community are located within the northwest quadrant of the city of Atlanta. The study area is characterized by several commercial spaces that developed from small, residential homes, turned storefronts into more substantial commercial lots and retail strips. The area has a flat elevation. Nearly all of the natural tree coverage and vegetation in the area has been removed for commercial development. The study area is located in the southeastern section of the Vine City community. The community contains several parks located near the center of the area and along its extreme southeastern border. Axial views of the downtown skyline can be seen from the peaks. A significant amount of tree coverage remains intact near the center and southwest portions of the community covering residential areas and parts of Morris Brown College. The community still retains many of the housing patterns characteristic of African American residential communities in the South.

In addition to West Hunter Street Baptist Church, there are two resources within the study area boundary that are related to the historic context of the area's cultural landscape: Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel and the Busy Bee Café. These resources were used by many of the movement's most notable leaders and organizations as a space for meeting and strategizing during the height of the civil rights movement. These structures are the few remaining historic resources that reflect the area's history as a commercial and cultural corridor for west Atlanta's African American community.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church

Built in 1906, West Hunter Street Baptist Church takes its name from the street on which it is located. Originally called Hunter Street, it was renamed in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1990. Founded as Mount Calvary Baptist Church in 1881, the congregation changed its name to West Hunter Street Baptist Church following the move to the location in 1906. The original structure was a Gothic-style, brick building characterized by sturdily proportioned corner buttresses and crenellated parapets. In 1953, the original façade was rehabbed into the Romanesque Revival style structure that exists today.

1. The Atlanta University Consortium (AUC) is the largest contiguous consortium of African American institutions of higher education in the United States. The AUC complex is located west of downtown Atlanta in the Vine City community. Member institutions include Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Spelman College. Interdenominational Theological Center and Morris Brown College are former members of the Atlanta University Consortium.

The brick façade was covered with granite masonry and the front was redeveloped to present a mid-twentieth-century ecclesiastical version of the Gothic Revival style (figure 3). The property is currently unoccupied and is owned and maintained by the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. In 2017, the Foundation began a program to stabilize the structure and restore key elements of its architectural features.



**Figure 3. West Hunter Street Baptist Church
Front Façade**

Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel

Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel has a long history as one of west Atlanta's landmark establishments. In 1959, after a decade of running a successful diner on West Hunter Street, brothers James and Robert Paschal expanded their operation by building a large restaurant across the street from their original location. The following year, the brothers built an adjoining nightclub at the site, Le Carousel. In 1967, a 120-room hotel was added to the site. The mid-century, single-story lounge is adjacent to the roadway, with the matching 120-room multistory hotel located at the immediate rear (figures 4 and 5). Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel was sold to Clark Atlanta University in 1996. The university operated it as a business center and student housing quarters until 2003. The site has since remained unoccupied.



Figure 4. Historic Photo of Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel



Figure 5. Current View of Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel

Busy Bee Café

Directly across the street from West Hunter Street Baptist Church is the Busy Bee Café. Opened in 1947 by self-trained cook Lucy Jackson, the Busy Bee was another west Atlanta landmark and was frequented by civil rights leaders and local politicians. The privately owned diner is still in operation (figure 6).



Figure 6. Current View of Busy Bee Café

SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY PROCESS

The special resource study process is designed to provide Congress with critical information about the resource qualities within the study area and potential alternatives for their protection. By law (Public Law 91-383 §8, as amended by §303 of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-391)) and NPS policy, potential new units of the national park system must fully meet the following four criteria for evaluation:

1. Possess nationally significant resources
2. Be a suitable addition to the system
3. Be a feasible addition to the system
4. Require direct NPS management or administration instead of alternative protection by other agencies or the private sector

This study includes the findings for these four criteria and will serve as the basis for a formal recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior as to whether or not the study area or portions thereof should be designated as a new unit of the national park system.

The following methodology was used to conduct this special resource study and determine if West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets the following criteria.

Step 1: Project Scoping and Collecting Information

Through a process called “scoping,” information about the study area and its resources is collected by the study team. National Park Service staff identify existing information sources and data needs, issues and potential constraints, and determine or confirm the appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) pathway. The canvassing of existing conditions and available data, such as designation status and nominations, and theme studies, etc., is a critical element of scoping and a factor in developing the special resource study. Site visits to the potential study area may be conducted to assess resource conditions and provide additional information that would be used in the development of the study findings.

During the early stages of the study, the team begins the process of identifying the stakeholders, agencies, and individuals with a direct interest in the study area or with expertise that could assist the team; this facilitates planning for later stakeholder conversations and public outreach activities. Engaging the potential stakeholders in the scoping process allows the public; neighbors of the study area; local, state, and other federal government agencies; and other stakeholders to share insights about their issues, concerns, ideas, goals, and objectives for the West Hunter Street Baptist Church Special Resource Study. This process also provides a way for the study team to gauge the level of interest and community support in designating the study area as a unit in the national park system as well as affirm the appropriate NEPA pathway.

Information collected and research conducted through this scoping process is used in the analysis of the four criteria for evaluation.

Step 2: Applying the Four Criteria for Evaluation

To be considered for designation, potential new park units must satisfy all four criteria noted above. Based on the nature of the study process, a sequential evaluation of these criteria is required. The NPS Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs has confirmed that to fulfill the mandate of a special resource study, the evaluation of criteria must be done sequentially. While a study area may clearly be infeasible or not in need of direct NPS management, the study process must first establish national significance, and then if that criterion is met, suitability; and so on.

If the study area is found to be nationally significant, the study process proceeds to the evaluation of suitability. Note that study areas designated as national historic or natural landmarks are already considered nationally significant by virtue of designation. If the resource is found to be nationally significant and suitable, the study process proceeds to the evaluation of feasibility. If the resource is found to be nationally significant, suitable, and feasible, the study process proceeds to the evaluation of need for direct NPS management. The evaluation of the need for direct NPS management is performed when an area has been found to meet all of the first three criteria for evaluation, and the study then proceeds with developing alternatives. An option for a potential new park unit can be included in the range of alternatives only if the study has determined that direct NPS management is clearly superior to other existing management approaches.

If the study determines that the resource does not meet any one of these criteria, then the study process usually ends, and the study outcome is a negative finding. A brief description of preservation and management options (e.g., affiliated area) can be included as part of the findings, regardless of a negative finding for suitability or feasibility.

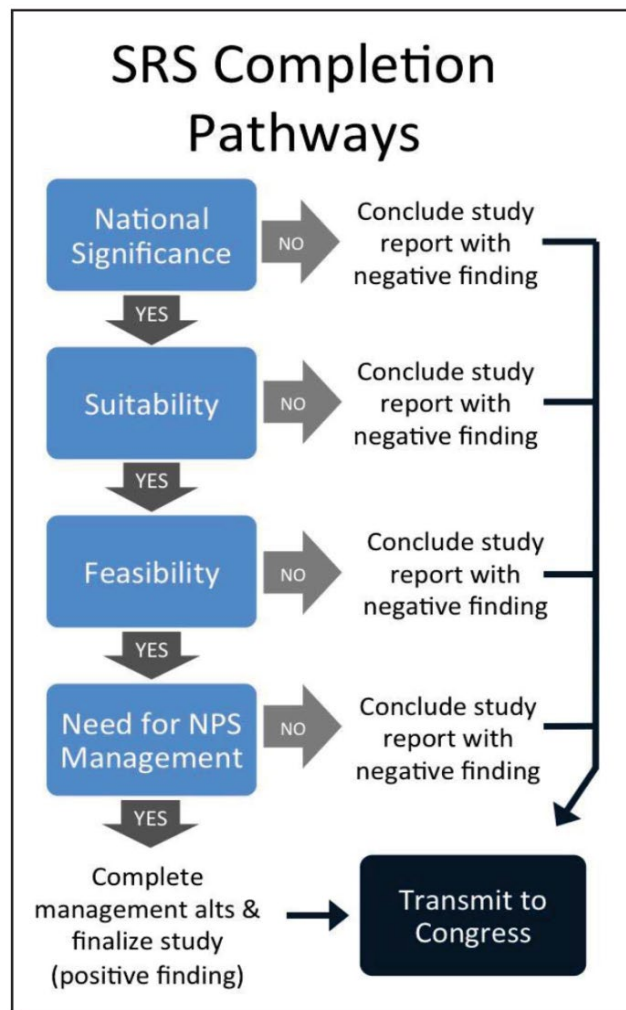


Figure 7. SRS Completion Pathways

Step 3: Final Study Completion and Transmittal to Congress

Following rigorous agency review and affirmation of the study findings, the final special resource study report will be transmitted by the NPS director to the Secretary of the Interior. The report and recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior are then transmitted to Congress, which may or may not take action on a study with a positive finding. If legislation for the establishment for a new unit is drafted, it will usually draw from study findings and elements of the preferred alternative. The time period in which Congress takes action is unknown.

The final special resource study report is made available to the public following receipt by congressional members. This is accomplished by posting the study report to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Study documents are not shared prior to their receipt by Congress nor can findings be discussed with the public or with key stakeholders until their transmittal.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

The National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 requires each study to be “completed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969” (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq’).” (54 U.S.C. 100507). This study complies with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), which mandates that all federal agencies analyze the impacts of major federal actions that have a significant effect on the environment.

A categorical exclusion (CE) was selected as the most appropriate NEPA pathway for this study. The study is excluded from requiring an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement because there is no potential for impacts on the human environment without further legislative action by Congress. The applicable categorical exclusion is in the category of: “Adoption or approval of surveys, studies, reports, plans, and similar documents which will result in recommendations or proposed actions which would cause no or only minimal environmental impact” (NPS NEPA Handbook, 3.2 (R)).

Public involvement is not required for a categorical exclusion. However, the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 requires special resource studies to be prepared with public involvement, including at least one public meeting in the vicinity of the area under study (54 U.S.C. 100507). Two public informational meetings were held early in the study process. The first on February 2, 2017, at the Robert Woodruff Library on the Atlanta University complex and the second on February 9, 2017, at the current location of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church congregation on 1040 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd in Atlanta’s West End community. The National Park Service worked closely with community leaders and stakeholders to publicize the meetings and the PEPC public comment period among a local and national audience. These meetings provided an opportunity to inform the general public about the study process and gain an understanding of whether there was public support for the creation of a potential park or other NPS involvement. Both meetings were well attended and public support for the study was positive. Public feedback during the meeting resulted in a full day oral history interview collection at the current West Hunter Street Baptist Church location. The NPS historian assigned to the SRS team interviewed 18 long-term members of the congregation on the history of the site and life of Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. Additional oral history interviews were collected throughout the year with leaders of the civil rights movement and local leaders as part of the SRS scoping process.

From January 23 to April 3, 2017, the NPS project website on PEPC obtained comments from more than a dozen respondents from various areas of the country, including Arizona, Louisiana, and Washington, DC. Responses collected via PEPC during the public comment period, public meetings, and oral history interviews indicated the study was viewed favorably, and the life of Ralph David Abernathy and his contributions to the civil rights movements warranted the effort.

SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY LIMITATIONS

Based on the authorizing legislation described above, this special resource study evaluates the resources identified in the legislation. Since the listing of West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a contributing site in the Atlanta University Center listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, significant research has been published about Atlanta's impact on the civil rights movement and nationally significant individuals such as Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. who, while integral to the movement, received less study than his confidant and copartner in the movement, Martin Luther King Jr.

A special resource study serves as one of many reference sources for Congress, the National Park Service, and other persons interested in the potential designation of an area as a new unit of the national park system. The reader should be aware that the analysis and findings contained in this report do not guarantee the future funding, support, or any subsequent action by Congress, the Department of the Interior, or the National Park Service. Because a special resource study is not a decision-making document, it does not identify a preferred NPS course of action.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the historic context of the study area in relation to its association with civil rights icon Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. and the related resources identified via the special resource study process. The information and research presented in this chapter were used in the analysis of the four criteria for evaluating the study area presented in chapter 3 of this study.

Because Congress directed the National Park Service to investigate West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a potential new unit of the national park system, understanding Atlanta's influence on the civil movement is essential. Therefore, in addition to exploring the life of Ralph David Abernathy Sr., the "Historic Context" section includes a brief overview of the city of Atlanta as a hub for many of the nation's leading civil rights organizations. Following this historic context, a description of the related resources within the study's boundary and brief overview of the cultural landscape history of the area immediately surrounding the site is provided.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr.

Ralph Abernathy Sr. was born in Linden, Alabama, in 1926. Following his high school graduation in 1944, Abernathy enlisted in the United States Army and rose to the rank of Platoon Sergeant during the Jim Crow military era of World War II before being honorably discharged and returning to a segregated civilian life. Following his military service Abernathy returned to Alabama and enrolled at Alabama State University (ASU) in Montgomery. As head of the ASU student council, he planned successful demonstrations against discriminatory practices at the university. It was also during this time that he accepted a call into the ministry and was ordained in 1948. In the summer of 1950, following his graduation from Alabama State University with a degree in mathematics, Abernathy made history as the first black disc jockey to integrate a white radio station in Montgomery. In the fall of that year, he moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to pursue graduate studies in sociology at Atlanta University. It was during this first semester that Abernathy met a young Martin Luther King Jr. while visiting Ebenezer Baptist Church. Abernathy returned to Montgomery in 1951 after completing his graduate studies, where he accepted an appointment as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Montgomery, the largest black congregation in the city (figure 8). In 1952, Abernathy married Juanita Odessa Jones, who held a bachelor's degree in business education from Tennessee State University and was an activist. King moved to Montgomery in 1954 to pastor Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. This move marked the beginning of a close friendship between King and Abernathy and a partnership in activism. The two young ministers discovered they shared the same concerns about the plight of African Americans under the South's system of segregation.

Abernathy became an influential leader in Montgomery through his position at First Baptist Church. He and King, along with E. D. Nixon, president of the Montgomery National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter, and Mrs. Jo Ann Robinson, head of the Women's Political Council, founded the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to plan a boycott of the city transit system (figures 9 and 10). The boycott brought national awareness to the racial oppression that African American citizens endured in the South and propelled Abernathy and King to the forefront of the civil rights movement. The boycott resulted in the US Supreme

Court upholding a lower federal court ruling (*Browder v. Gayle*, 1956), which ended de jure segregation of public transit and dealt a hard blow to Jim Crow segregation in the South.²

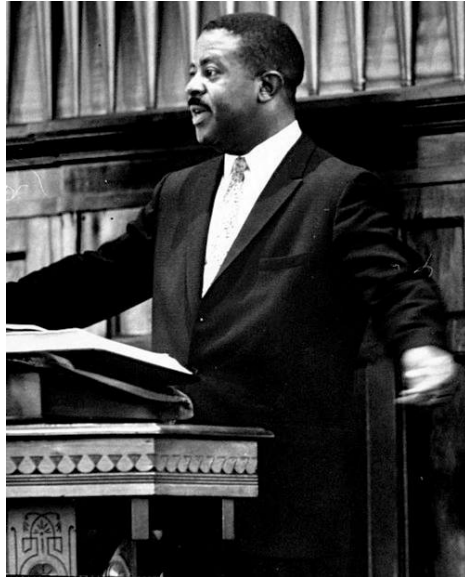


Figure 8. Reverend Abernathy in Pulpit at First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama



Figure 9. Abernathy and King MIA Bus Ride

2. *Browder v. Gayle*, 352 U.S. 903 (1956).



Figure 10. Reverend Abernathy and Rosa Parks – MIA Boycott

The success of the Montgomery bus boycott encouraged King and Abernathy to solicit other black clergy to band together to end segregation through organized programs and demonstrations. With Abernathy's help, King organized a conference of like-minded black pastors in 1957 to discuss formation of a region-wide organization to extend the Montgomery Improvement Association's influence to other southern cities. An initial meeting was facilitated by King in January. The meeting, titled the Southern Negro Leaders Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration was held at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. A formal meeting followed in February to incorporate the organization as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The organization focused on challenging segregation and encouraging voter registration as a means of giving African Americans the political power necessary to challenge racial oppression.

During the meeting, Abernathy's home in Montgomery was bombed by a local white supremacist nearly killing his pregnant wife, Juanita, and baby. His church, First Baptist of Montgomery, and three other prominent congregations were also bombed that same evening, underscoring the opposition the newly formed group would face in its attempts to dismantle the system of segregation.

King left his position as pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist in 1960 and moved back to Atlanta. Shortly after his relocation, he began using his influence to convince Abernathy to join him in Atlanta. Abernathy and his wife Juanita were initially against relocating. They were established in their positions as pastor and first lady of First Baptist Church in Montgomery where they were active leaders in local civil rights efforts. That same year, when Dr. A. Franklin Fisher—pastor of West Hunter Street Baptist Church in Atlanta—died unexpectedly, King was asked to pastor the church but saw an opportunity and worked with his father to suggest Abernathy as a candidate to the leadership at West Hunter. Despite his initial apprehension, in 1961 Abernathy accepted West Hunter Street Baptist Church's offer. The church's location across from the AUC complex meant that the church would have a thriving youth program, which appealed to Abernathy and his wife.

Abernathy's move to Atlanta coincided with Abernathy and King leaving the National Baptist Convention, the leading Black Baptist organization, after a contentious meeting. They would

subsequently join with the Progressive National Baptist Convention, established in 1961, which was committed to nonviolent but direct action in the struggle for civil rights. It also coincided with the start of major SCLC campaigns.³ Between 1961 and 1965, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference implemented major efforts aimed at dismantling segregation, outlawing racially discriminatory practices, and securing voting rights in Albany (GA), Atlanta, Birmingham (AL), St. Augustine (FL), Selma (AL), and throughout Mississippi. The SCLC campaigns against segregation in St. Augustine and Birmingham were particularly influential in passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (figures 11 and 12). Press coverage of the violence directed at civil rights demonstrators and local African American communities during these major campaigns both shocked and shamed Congress and Presidents Kennedy and Johnson into action (figures 13 and 14). The Southern Christian Leadership Conference partnered with Esau Jenkins and Septima Clark in 1961 to implement the SCLC Citizenship Education Program throughout the South.⁴ The program resulted in registration of more than 50,000 new black voters by 1964. The program taught the basics of the US political process and voting procedures to more than 5,000 citizens by the end of the decade (Westhoff 2014). The success of the Citizenship Education Program, along with voting rights campaigns in Selma and Mississippi, ultimately led to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.⁵



Figure 11. Reverend Abernathy and Martin Luther King – Birmingham Arrest

3. In 1958, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference launched an initial campaign “Crusade for Citizenship” that aimed at doubling the number of African American voters in the 1960 elections.

4. The Citizenship School program was founded during the 1950s on Johns Island, SC, by educator Septima Clark, community activist Esau Jenkins, and Bernice Robinson. The trio organized classrooms to teach adult islanders literacy, the constitution, and basic voting procedures. In 1961, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference renamed the program Citizenship Education Schools.

5. P.L. 89-110, 79 Stat. 437.



Figure 12. Left to Right: Frederick "Fred" Shuttleworth, Abernathy, and King



Figure 13. Abernathy, King, Fauntroy⁶, and President Johnson

6. Among other accomplishments, Fauntroy was a civil rights leader who worked with King and Abernathy. "As director of the Washington Bureau of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Fauntroy served as DC coordinator of the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 and a coordinator for the 1965 Selma to Montgomery marches and the 1966 March Against Fear. President Lyndon Johnson appointed him vice chairman of the White House Conference on Civil Rights in 1966 and vice chairman of the DC City Council in 1967." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Fauntroy.



Figure 14. Reverend Abernathy, Martin Luther King, Reverend Walter Fauntroy, and President Johnson – White House Visit

In 1964, Abernathy unwittingly aided freedom of the press in a landmark US Supreme Court ruling. In 1960, his name appeared alongside other SCLC members as endorsers of a full-page New York Times ad placed by Bayard Rustin without their knowledge or consent. The ad alleged violations of rights by officials in Montgomery including police commissioner L.B. Sullivan, who subsequently won a defamation suit against the Times and the SCLC members in state court.⁷ The case was appealed and eventually tried in the US Supreme Court, which sided with the Times and defendants upholding the freedom of the press to report on abuses by public officials and establishing the “actual malice” standard.⁸ Unfortunately, the Supreme Court ruling came after Abernathy and the other SCLC members’ property was seized as part of the lower court ruling that awarded Sullivan \$500,000.

One of the unique aspects of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was that unlike other civil rights organizations made up of individual members, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was an umbrella organization made up of local level affiliates. This style of operation allowed them to solicit and educate the masses of blacks through churches and local community organizations. This also allowed Abernathy and King to pair their contrasting oratory styles during campaign rallies as an effective pedagogy on nonviolent resistance to oppression and to exalt African American history and agency. Abernathy and King’s oratory styles differed in that Abernathy used common language and anecdotes steeped in African American oral traditions and historical facts, while King was more academic and drew on illustrations from literature (Abernathy 2010, p. 189). Abernathy also employed burlesque parody of white supremacists in his speeches to minimize fear of whites and encourage participation in direct-action demonstrations (Holmes 2013a; Holmes 2013b). According to King, “When Abernathy plants himself behind the lectern, squat and powerful. . .his listeners love and believe him.” (Smith 1990) King’s style served to teach the masses, while Abernathy’s compelled them to act (Abernathy 2010, p. 156).

7. Other SCLC members who were part of the lawsuit are Joseph Lowery, S. S. Seay, Dr., and Fred Shuttlesworth.

8. Prior to the US Supreme Court ruling, public officials often used defamation claims to silence political criticism and prevent coverage of issues in out-of-state publications.

Abernathy and the SCLC – Second Phase of the Civil Rights Movement

In the mid-1960s, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference expanded its efforts to northern cities like Chicago and Boston where segregation was just as entrenched as in the South. During this time, the organization began to shift its focus to address economic injustice, beginning with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's "Operation Breadbasket." The purpose of Operation Breadbasket was to impel companies doing business in the African American community to hire blacks as employees, not just at the lowest levels but throughout the hierarchy (Abernathy 2010, p. 400). Operation Breadbasket was modeled after a program begun by Reverend Leon Sullivan, an African American minister in Philadelphia, who organized hundreds of the city's black clergy in a "selective patronage" campaign aimed at increasing employment opportunities for blacks at companies with goods purchased by the area's black consumers (Belatramini 2013a; Belatramini 2013b, p. 6-7).

Abernathy launched Operation Breadbasket in Atlanta in 1962, targeting companies that benefited greatly from black consumerism. Abernathy focused Operation Breadbasket's initial campaign on the baking industry in the Atlanta area. Five bakeries were targeted for boycott and negotiation to secure employment for African Americans; the program produced 5,000 jobs in the area during a five-year span. Operation Breadbasket eventually expanded from Georgia to cities in Alabama, South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, and Illinois. The Chicago branch of the program, headed by Jesse Jackson, eventually developed into the long-running national Black Expo program.⁹ The Chicago branch of Operation Breadbasket was also part of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Chicago Freedom Movement.¹⁰ From 1966 to 1968, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in alliance with the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations and the American Friends Service Committee staged regular demonstrations against Chicago City Hall and the city housing authority to end housing discrimination and slums in the city (figure 15). The movement ultimately became the impetus for passing the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act).¹¹

King had begun plans for a program he entitled the "Poor People's Campaign" (PPC) by 1967. The Poor People's Campaign represented what King dubbed, the "second civil rights movement," a movement against the economic injustices that concurrently divided and plagued Americans from all backgrounds. The campaign was inspired by a visit King and Abernathy made to a rural Head Start program in Marks, Mississippi, the previous year. While there, they observed a classroom of visibly undernourished children whose lunch consisted of a single apple and bag of crackers divided among them by their teacher. The campaign's goal was to push Congress to pass an economic bill of rights to lift the load of poverty that plagued nearly twenty percent of the nation's population. The Poor People's Campaign called for a \$30 billion annual appropriation for a real war on poverty, congressional passage of full employment and guaranteed income legislation, and construction of 500,000 low-cost housing units per year until slums were eradicated.¹² The campaign centered on a "Poor People's March on Washington," where thousands of Americans from all backgrounds would travel to the National Mall to share with elected officials the effects of poverty on their respective

9. Black Expo is a large trade fair show for companies who do business with the African American community and black-owned businesses. The Expo occurs annually in major cities across the United States.

10. The Chicago Freedom Movement is also known as the Chicago Open Housing Movement.

11. P.L. 90-284, 82 Stat., 73.

12. P.L. 90-284, 82 Stat., 502-503.

communities. The campaign would shift the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's focus from civil rights to human rights.



Figure 15. Reverend Abernathy, Juanita Abernathy, Coretta Scott King, and Martin Luther King – Chicago Campaign

Unfortunately, King would never witness the birth of the “second civil rights movement.” In April of 1968, he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Abernathy took over as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference after King's death, an action that was sanctioned by King prior to his death. According to Abernathy, shortly after President Kennedy's assassination in 1963, during a candid discussion between the two men, King shared his premonition that he would face an early demise (Abernathy 2010, p. 475–476). King also expressed to Abernathy his wishes that Abernathy take over as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and his confidence that Abernathy shared his vision and therefore would best carry out the next phase of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's mission (Abernathy 2010, p. 475–476). Following this discussion, King called together a meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's executive leadership to express his intent to have Abernathy lead the organization in the event of his death. The group voted to amend the by-laws to allow for Abernathy's transition to head the organization if something should happen to King. Immediately following King's death, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference voted Abernathy as the new president of the organization.

Abernathy spared no time implementing the Poor People's Campaign's main demonstration, the Poor People's March on Washington, along with other economic and political empowerment efforts. In May 1968, just one month after King's assassination, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference—under Abernathy's leadership—held the march. Thousands of American citizens traveled to the National Mall to protest against poverty (figure 16). The Southern Christian Leadership Conference planned for participants from all backgrounds to live communally together on the mall lawn to show the necessities for living that all people require regardless of race.



Figure 16. Poor People's Campaign Marchers

Demonstrators who started off in mule-drawn caravans from the four corners of the nation converged on the National Mall in May 1968. The Poor People's Campaign officially started on May 12th with a rally at Cardozo High School in Washington, DC. Thousands of attendees listened to speeches by Coretta Scott King, Juanita Abernathy, Ethel Kennedy (wife of Senator Robert Kennedy), Julie Belafonte (wife of actor/civil rights activist Harry Belafonte), and Jane Briggs-Hart (wife of Senator Philip Hart). The rally culminated in an address from Abernathy (figure 17). The following day demonstrators from around the nation gathered on the National Mall and worked to build "Resurrection City," a tent city where they would live together until the demands of the campaign were met. To live in "Resurrection City," each participant had to register and sign a pledge to adhere to a nonviolent strategy. The campaign held a mass "Solidarity Day" rally on June 19, 1968, featuring speeches from a host of human rights activists, politicians, and SCLC leaders. Unfortunately, rainy weather turned the lawn into a muddy landscape and caused many of the demonstrators to abandon Resurrection City earlier than anticipated. The following month the campaign received another blow when Senator Robert Kennedy, a strong supporter of the movement, was assassinated. Despite the struggles, nearly 7,000 people attended the campaign on the National Mall. The Poor People's Campaign resulted in expansion of the government assistance programs and federal investment in food programs. Government food programs were expanded into hundreds of counties that had previously excluded the poor from receiving commodity distributions. A supplemental bill was appropriated for Head Start, and school lunch and breakfast programs were created for children whose families could not afford the cost of daily lunches. The campaign also confirmed Abernathy as the new head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and leader of the nation's most active human rights movement during that time.



Figure 17. Reverend Abernathy, Juanita Abernathy, Poor People's Campaign – Resurrection City

From 1969 through the mid-1970s Abernathy lead the SCLC in initiatives that included African American community political empowerment, labor rights organizing, combatting economic injustice for marginalized groups, and advocating for government programs to address national poverty (figure 18). In the spring of 1969, Abernathy led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in efforts in support of Local 1199B, a newly established hospital workers union in Charleston, South Carolina. The union, which consisted of more than 400 African American hospital workers, mostly female, went on strike against the administrations of Medical College and Charleston County Hospitals to open the workplace to unions, end race-based wage discrimination, gain an increase in hourly wages (to federal standard), and to challenge a long tradition of paternalistic, hegemonic race relations at the institutions. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference's involvement helped overcome divisions among local black leaders and united Charleston's black community in support of the strike. Abernathy called for a boycott of city businesses to place pressure on hospital administrators and local leaders to settle the strike. On April 25th, Abernathy was arrested and jailed for more than a week for protesting during strike demonstrations. His arrest helped increase national press attention on the strike. The *New York Times* coined the strike the "country's tensest civil rights struggle." Abernathy was released from jail in early May and a month later headlined a series of addresses by national civil and labor rights activists to more than 5,000 demonstrators who marched through the city to the hospital areas as part of ongoing strike efforts. The workers eventually accepted a compromise that included rehiring previously fired workers who had protested discriminatory practices at the hospitals, hourly wages raised to the federal standard, formal procedures to address grievances, and the establishment of the credit union. While the compromise did not garner collective bargaining rights, the strike's results were nonetheless significant. The economic boycott cost the city of Charleston an estimated \$15 million loss in revenue and brought attention to the city's racial issues.¹³ The female hospital workers' efforts ultimately improved race relations in the institutions and within the local community. The following year, Charleston elected its first black state legislator since Reconstruction, along with several black city council members.

13. George W. Hopkins, "Charleston Hospital Worker's Strike," South Carolina Encyclopedia, <http://www.sceyclopedia.org/sce/entries/charleston-hospital-workers-strike/>.



**Figure 18. Reverend Abernathy and Juanita Abernathy –
UAW Workers Strike**

Immediately following his release from jail in Charleston County, Abernathy along with Hosea Williams, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s executive director, headed to Cape Kennedy to begin the SCLC Moon-Hunger Education Protest against the Apollo 11 Moon Mission. The protest represented the Hunger Phase of the second chapter of the Poor People’s Campaign. The Moon-Hunger Protest was not against America’s ability to explore outer space but rather to point out the inability of the government to commit the same zeal and revenue to eliminating poverty.¹⁴ Beginning the evening of July 15th, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and local affiliates held a mass meeting, march, and prayer vigil in Cocoa Beach, Florida, leading up to the Mission launch at Cape Kennedy. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference selected twenty-five poverty-stricken families representing eight states and twenty-five US Congressional Districts to give testimony at Cape Kennedy, pointing out in-part that in those districts farm subsidies are paid out to farmers not to grow food or fiber, which could assist poor citizens.¹⁵ During May of 1970, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference held a five-day “March against Repression” in Atlanta to call for an extension to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and bring attention to repressive political forces intent in countering the gains of the civil rights movement.

During the march, Abernathy announced the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s Politics 70 for Representative Government programs. Politics 70 was a reemphasis on the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s political education programs and voter registration efforts, aimed at increasing black voter turnout and political representation in what would be considered a “turnaround” election year—1970 (O’Dell 2010, p. 194). That same year, more than 110 African American candidates were elected to political offices throughout the South (O’Dell 2010, p. 194). In 1971, Abernathy was invited to address the United Nations on world peace. He served as a member of the Presidential Committee of the World Peace Council where he was appointed as an honorary president. In a measure of the effectiveness of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s efforts to help shift the socio-political climate in the South, black elected officials accounted for

14. “From Jail in Charleston to Moon Shot at Cape,” *Atlanta Inquirer*, July 26, 1969

15. “From Jail...” *Atlanta Inquirer*.

almost forty percent of southern office holders at all levels by 1972 (Allen et al. 1972, p. 114). Not one to shy away from controversy, Abernathy repeatedly criticized the Nixon administration and southern demagogues for policies that were considered repressive and racist and for continued funding of the war in Vietnam.¹⁶

In 1973, Abernathy supported César Chávez and the United Farm Workers in their protest against growers' use of illegal immigrants as strikebreakers. In that same year, he worked on behalf of the American Indian Movement (AIM) to negotiate a peaceful settlement between the federal government and the organization during the siege at Pine Ridge Reservation in Wounded Knee, South Dakota (figure 19).



**Figure 19. Reverend Abernathy, R. Means,
and Dennis Banks – Wounded Knee**

In 1975, Abernathy and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference began “Operation Military” a program to protect the rights of African Americans in the armed forces. Abernathy appointed Tyrone Brooks, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s information director, to investigate complaints sent to the organization from black military personnel stationed in the United States and abroad.¹⁷ By this time, Abernathy had moved his burgeoning congregation into a larger sanctuary in the nearby West End community. There he continued to lead his parishioners in community development and outreach activities. In 1977, Abernathy resigned from his post as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to run an unsuccessful campaign for Georgia’s 5th Congressional seat (figure 20). He continued to serve as the senior pastor of West Hunter Street Baptist Church and President Emeritus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference until his death in 1990.

16. “Nixon Enemies: Listing is Honor, Says Abernathy,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 June 1973, 29A. “Abernathy, SCLC Supporting New Peace Offensive,” *Atlanta Inquirer*, 18 Oct 1969, 8.

17. “SCLC Launches Operation Military Against Bias.” *Jet*. 25 December 1975, 30.

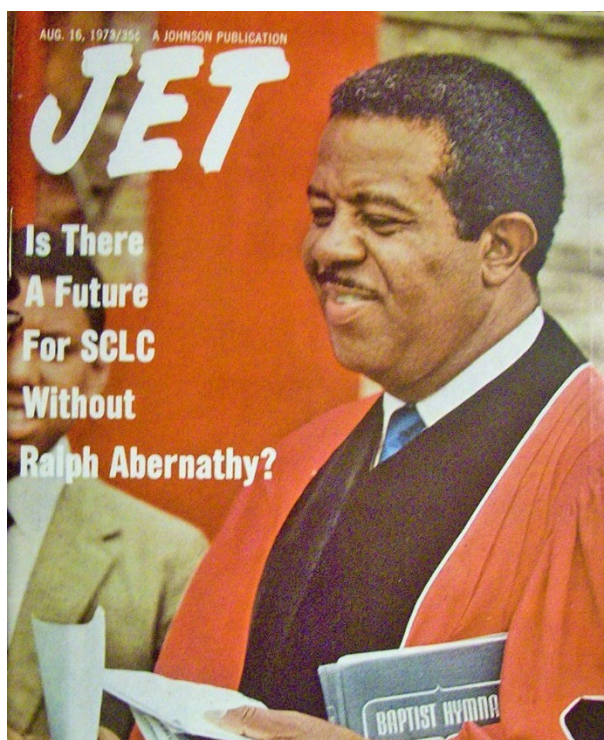


Figure 20. Reverend Abernathy on the Cover of *JET Magazine* – 1973

Following Abernathy's death, the city of Atlanta renamed a downtown freeway and major Westside artery (Gordon Street) in his honor.

Atlanta and the Civil Rights Movement

Atlanta is often referred to as the “cradle of the civil rights movement,” a title that speaks to the city’s history of civil rights leadership and organization. This was due in part to the city’s distinction of having one of the most economically successful black business districts in the nation and the highest concentration of African American institutions of higher education in the world. These institutions, which were established immediately following Emancipation, served as the intellectual home of many of the foremost African American leaders and activists. Most noted among them were sociologist and NAACP co-founder W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois’ philosophy was a major influence on the Atlanta black community and leadership, including civil rights attorney Austin Thomas “A. T.” Walden. Walden was one of the first black attorneys to practice in the South, and from 1919 through the early 1960s, he helped lead the city’s civil rights movement with pragmatic efforts focused on negotiation, and litigation when necessary. Walden and other leaders also saw suffrage as the primary means for dismantling white supremacy. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, black Atlantans held voting rights campaigns and then rallied their political force to gain a steady advancement in education and economic equity.

In 1918 and 1919, Atlanta’s black community used their political power to successfully defeat proposed bond issues that ignored black schools. The successes of these election strategies encouraged more voting rights campaigns in the city during the 1920s and 1930s. The expansion of the federal government under the New Deal also provided opportunities for black professionals.

Graduates from Atlanta's black institutions of higher education were able to gain positions in New Deal agencies and at a pay equal to whites (Brown-Nagin 2011, p. 45). This improvement in socioeconomic status encouraged more of the city's black population to register to vote. In 1935, with more black citizens on the rolls, African American voters used their political power once again and threatened to withhold support for proposed bonds if the city failed to set aside an equitable share of funds for black schools. The following year, local masonic leader John Wesley Dobbs formed the Atlanta Civic and Political League to deliver a bloc of black voters to the Republican Party to support bond issues favoring black schools. In 1943, equal pay for black teachers was achieved through litigation. In 1946, black Atlantans rallied behind congressional candidate Helen Douglas Mankin, a New Dealer, making her the first woman elected to the US Congress from Georgia.

Several years later in 1949, the Atlanta Negro Voters League was established as a forum to interview candidates and amass a voting bloc of 25,000 for preferred candidates.¹⁸ The Atlanta Negro Voters League helped re-elect Atlanta Mayor William Hartfield; in exchange, he desegregated the Atlanta Police Force that same year. Gains through voting and civil rights litigation continued into the 1950s, with the first black member of the Atlanta Board of Education being appointed in 1953, and the success of *Holmes v. Atlanta*, in 1955, which opened municipal golf courses to African American residents.¹⁹ In 1957, several area pastors, including Dr. A. Franklin Fisher, then senior pastor of West Hunter Street Baptist, and Martin Luther King Sr. formed the "Triple L (Love, Law, and Liberation) Movement." The pastors sought to desegregate the city's public transit system by sitting in the white-only section of a city bus, a move which secured a legal challenge to the segregation of the city's public transit. In 1959, the federal district court in Atlanta ruled in favor of the ministers, striking down the law segregating the city's public transit.²⁰ In 1960, Atlanta's civil rights efforts took a major turn to direct-action strategy when students at the Atlanta University Center organized demonstrations against segregated businesses and public accommodations in the city.

By this time, many of the nation's leading civil rights activists such as Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, Martin Luther King Jr., and John Lewis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had relocated to Atlanta, making the city the epicenter of the modern, direct-action, civil rights movement. Thus, Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr.'s relocation to Atlanta in 1961 to begin leadership of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church was also significant in his continuing efforts to gain universal civil and human rights. Churches have historically served as the chief vehicle for black social and political organization and have provided the foundation for countless efforts to advance civil and human rights in the United States; West Hunter Street Baptist Church was no exception.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church and the Civil Rights Movement

It is not surprising that Dr. Ralph David Abernathy came to Atlanta and became such a force for civil rights because the West Hunter Street Baptist Church is also emblematic of the black church's central role in organizing for civil rights advancement. A succession of activist-minded leaders during the early through mid-twentieth century, paired with its location in the heart of a city considered the "epicenter of the civil rights movement," resulted in the church serving as both sacred space and organizing center for civil rights activities with both local and national

18. "SCLC Launches Operation Military Against Bias." *Jet*. 25 December 1975, 30.

19. *Holmes v. Atlanta*, 350 U.S. 879 (1955).

20. "Hatfield, Edward. "Bus Desegregation in Atlanta." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, last modified Mar 28, 2021. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/bus-desegregation-in-atlanta/>

consequences. Even prior to Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr.'s appointment, the church was the site for progressive activities such as mass voting rights efforts and interracial services.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church was organized in 1881 by a small group of members of the Raymond Street community in Northwest Atlanta. The church, originally called Mount Calvary Baptist, changed its name to West Hunter Street Baptist in 1906 after the purchase of a lot and the construction of a sanctuary at 775 Hunter Street. By the 1930s, the church would experience a series of leaders that would engage the congregation in local efforts to secure voting rights, desegregate public accommodations, and promote improved racial relations. The Colored Voters League of Atlanta facilitated one of the earliest mass voting rights meetings at the church in 1934.²¹ In 1938, the site was host to another mass voting rights meeting facilitated by the Atlanta Civic and Political League; Atlanta NAACP President, Forrester Washington; and pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Reverend Martin Luther King Sr.²² During the 1930s, the church began engaging in interracial exchanges with white congregations and synagogues. Church youth were sent to attend The Council of the World Youth Congress Movement in Switzerland in 1936. During the 1940s, the church hosted several meetings of the YMCA's Hungry Club, a progressive interactive forum between black and white leaders. Under the leadership of Dr. A. Franklin Fisher in the 1950s, the church opened its doors to the Westside Voter's League, as well as for meetings of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Atlanta Negro Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Fisher joined with other black pastors in the area in 1957 in a demonstration that would initiate the desegregation of public transit in Atlanta. Dr. Fisher also served as advisor to founding members of the Atlanta Student Movement who would meet with the pastor in his office at West Hunter Street Baptist Church for advice on their efforts to desegregate area businesses.²³

At the urging of Reverend Martin Luther King Sr., the leadership at West Hunter Street Baptist Church offered Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. the position as senior pastor in 1961. Subsequent to Abernathy's relocation to Atlanta, the church became a site for national efforts by organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. For example, the church was a training site for northern college students participating in Freedom Summer's Voter Education Project and for the Mississippi Summer Project where African American and Caucasian students were trained on how to conduct voter registration drives throughout the Deep South.²⁴ The church also fed civil rights workers, provided a place for late night meeting and strategy sessions, and nonviolence training for field workers and staff.²⁵ Major SCLC leadership decisions were made at the church, including the decision to allow the attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery, over the Edmund Pettus Bridge, on what became known as "Bloody Sunday." (Abernathy 2010, p. 326) West Hunter Street Baptist Church was also one of the area meeting sites for the SCLC economic initiative known as "Operation Breadbasket." Abernathy led Operation Breadbasket in its beginning, starting in the South in 1962 with the initial Atlanta chapter.

21. E. N. Davis, "City Wide Registration Meeting is Slated for Tonight: Urge Voters to Attend Meeting," *Atlanta Daily World*, 16 July 1934.

22. "League Will Seek Young Voters: Fair-Sized Crowd Attends Tuesday Night Meeting." *Atlanta Daily World*, 4 May 1938.

23. Dr. Lonnie King, interview with author, Atlanta, GA., 24 March 2017.

24. Mr. John Reynolds, interview with author, Atlanta, GA., 20 June 2017. Mrs. Terrie Randolph, interview with author, Jonesboro, GA., 12 March 2017.

25. Randolph, interview.

The church continued to be at the intersection of civil rights organizing and spiritual discipleship into the late 1960s and early 1970s. Abernathy used West Hunter as a platform to support campaigns that would result in major gains in representation for African Americans. In 1972, West Hunter Street Baptist Church was the location for strategy sessions and field operations for Andrew Young's campaign to become the first African American Congressman from Georgia. That same year, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm visited the congregation in her campaign for US representative.²⁶ In 1973, the church provided organizing space for the Morehouse student-led University Movement for Black Unity's Get-Out-the-Vote operations to elect Maynard Jackson as the first black mayor of a major southern metropolis.²⁷ The church also served as one of Jackson's campaign headquarters.

As the congregation grew under Abernathy's leadership plans were made to expand the sanctuary. In the spring of 1972, concepts were developed for façade renovations and construction of an educational building and parking deck (figure 21). The plans for the construction were never completed. Later that year, the church purchased the former West End Baptist Church on 1040 Gordon Street. West End Baptist Church, an all-white congregation that had dispersed in response to the integration of the West End community, had a sanctuary and outbuildings that could accommodate West Hunter's membership and activities. In October 1973, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church congregation marched from the sanctuary to the new location on Gordon Street (now Ralph D. Abernathy Blvd.). Reverend Abernathy, Mayor Maynard Jackson, and Congressman Andrew Young, led by Booker T. Washington High School's marching band, headed the two-mile procession.

After the congregation's relocation, Abernathy allowed use of the former site of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church for political and civil rights organizations. The property served as the office of the Atlanta Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Reverend Hosea Williams, president of the Atlanta SCLC chapter, had an office on the second floor above the south main entrance of the building. Williams, who served as national field secretary for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference prior to heading the Atlanta chapter, also used the church to run a program for the homeless and as the sanctuary for the short-lived Martin Luther King Poor People's Church of Love. In March 1976, the building was occupied by Grace Covenant Baptist Church (figure 22).

In 2008, the property was purchased by the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. The Foundation is a nonprofit developed to restore the building and preserve the cultural history of the site and the legacy of Reverend Dr. Ralph Abernathy Sr.

26. Chisholm's address to the congregation of West Hunter Street Baptist was considered a progressive gesture for Abernathy as it was often not permissible or deemed appropriate for women to be allowed to address an audience from the pulpit in the Baptist denomination tradition.

27. Mr. Rodney Strong, interview with the author, Atlanta, GA., 29 March 2017.

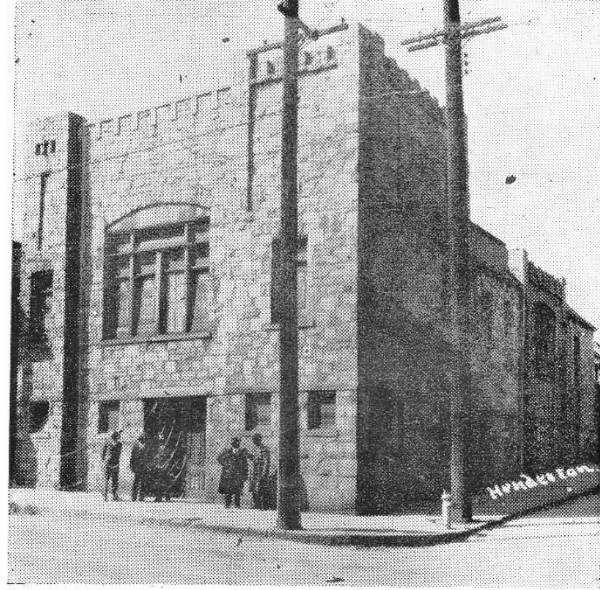


Figure 21. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Original Structure – 1940s



**Figure 22. Hosea Williams –
West Hunter Street Baptist Church**

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA RESOURCES

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church study area is located on the southern border of the Vine City community, a historic African American neighborhood home to a number of socially prominent residents and significant landmarks. These include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; Coretta Scott King; Maynard Jackson; Julian Bond; Alonzo Herndon; Morris Brown College; Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel; the family home of Dr. Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King; and part of the Atlanta

University Consortium complex. Initially settled in 1824 by a group of large landowners, the Vine City community was once part of a larger settlement known as Nash Bars. By the late nineteenth century, separate areas began to develop for white and African American populations. The introduction of educational institutions for African Americans in the area and the Seaboard Coastal and Southern Railway rail lines began the transformation of the area to its historic makeup. The great Atlanta fire of 1917, which devastated a significant portion of the Sweet Auburn Avenue district, furthered this transformation, making Vine City and other surrounding neighborhoods on the city's west side the preferred areas of black residential settlement.

By the 1940s, most of the white residents of Vine City had relocated. Homes turned into storefronts along West Hunter Street formerly run by whites were now occupied by black merchants who catered to the needs of west Atlanta's black residents. The influx of African Americans to the west side during the 1930s and 1940s compounded by the neighboring AUC complex and Booker T. Washington High school made Hunter Street the center for black commerce and culture in West Atlanta.²⁸ Popular sites along West Hunter Street included Oscar Harden's full-service auto-station, Citizens Trust Bank, Amos Drugs, Sellers Mortuary, Uncle Joe's Rest, Collegiate Barbershop, Bonner Brother's Cosmetics, a supper club owned by Major League Baseball MVP Donn Clendenon, Frazier's Café, the Busy Bee Café, and Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel. Attorney Donald Howell had an office on West Hunter Street and was a prominent figure in the civil rights movement. His firm represented the Atlanta Student Movement participants during their protest against segregation of Atlanta's public and retail services.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church, Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel, and the Busy Bee Café are the only remaining structures representative of Hunter Street's period as a center of African American self-sufficiency, culture, and commerce.²⁹ The sites are also among the few remaining throughout the city that were spaces used for civil rights planning and activities by major organizations and leaders during the height of the movement.

28. Booker T. Washington High School, established in 1924, was the first public high school for African Americans in Atlanta.

29. There are several other establishments from West Hunter Street's period as a center of commerce and culture that still exist at their original location (i.e., Bronner Brothers Cosmetics), however they no longer maintain their original features.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church

West Hunter Street Baptist Church, located at 775 Martin Luther King Jr Drive NW, was constructed in 1906 with an original façade that exhibited Romanesque inspired sturdily proportioned corner buttresses framing a monumental window onto the sanctuary, crenellated parapets, understated masonry relief panels set into the masonry façade, symmetrical openings, and a projecting belt course terminating the ground floor fenestration (figure 23). Location of the primary entry, corner buttresses, fenestration and secondary façade buttresses were incorporated into the façade redesign of 1953. Under the leadership of Dr. A. Franklin Fisher, the church was renovated in 1953 by architect Edward C. Miller. Miller, a distinguished black architect, redesigned the church to create its current two-story Gothic Revival appearance with Romanesque influences. During the redesign, Miller added the iconic stained glass rose window that has come to symbolize the building (figure 24). The redesigned primary façade on West Hunter Street Baptist Church commands a highly visible corner location at the intersection of West Hunter Street (now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive NW) and James P. Brawley Drive (formerly Chestnut Street) (figure 25). The symmetrical primary façade presents a mid-twentieth-century ecclesiastical version of the Gothic Revival style, dominated by rustic masonry exterior walls of randomly coursed, rock-faced granite with beaded mortar joints. Granite material is tentatively identified as Georgia-quarried “Silver Cloud Imperial,” a locally available material that remains in production. The Gothic Revival style rose window composed of cast stone tracery and stained glass is prominently centered in the façade. Cast stone blind arcading spans between the gabled towers on each side of the front façade. Parapets terminate in an understated cast stone coping. Historically, the center of the coping was topped with a cross, which no longer survives.



**Figure 23. West Hunter Street Baptist Church
Front Façade**

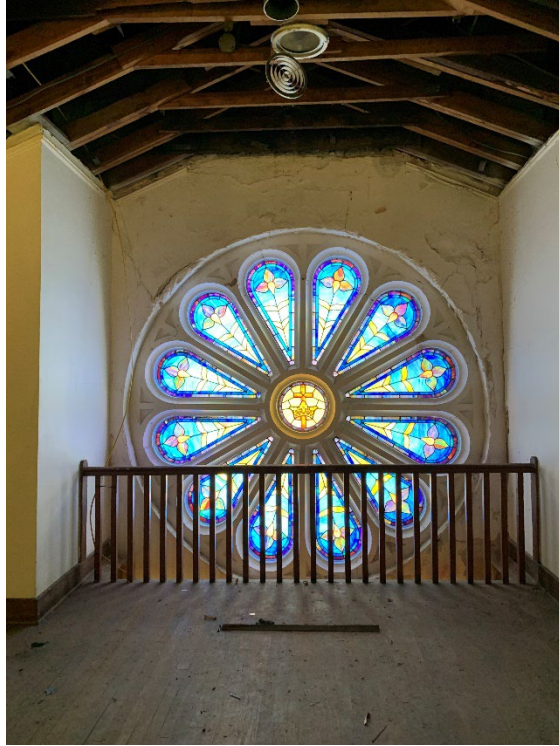


Figure 24. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Rose Window



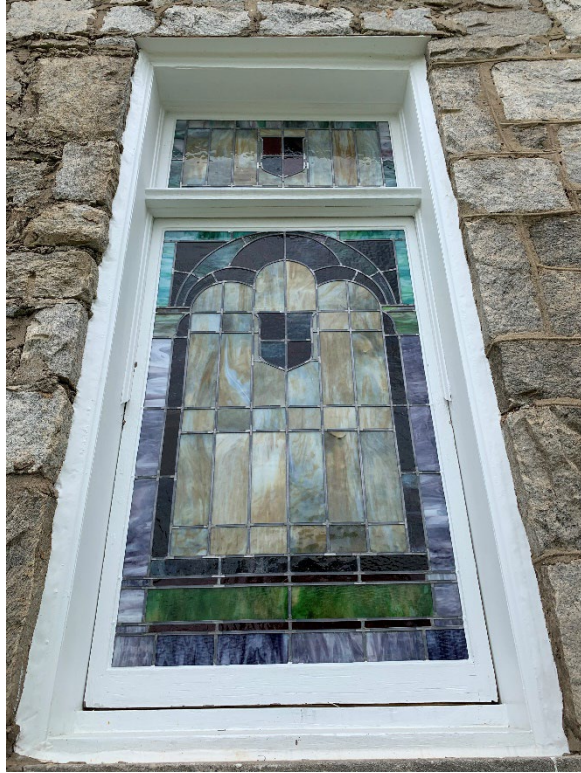
Figure 25. West Hunter Street Baptist Church SE Façade

Fenestration on the primary façade includes windows that frame the main entry and vertically proportioned stained glass lights set into the corner buttresses. Windows are painted wood with divided light sash, under camber arches with a keystone. Cast stone windowsills project slightly from the masonry. Metal grilles provide a protective feature, while the main double entry doors opening to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. exhibit timber finish with iron strap hinges that add to the period detail. The truncated, low hipped roof is finished with asphalt shingles.

Secondary facades are defined by a masonry buttresses creating regular bays along the east-and-west-facing secondary facades: on the west side the buttresses terminate in flues with projecting masonry caps. Masonry coursing and treatment is less refined than the primary façade, with larger masonry units and flush struck masonry joints. Regularly spaced paired window openings are located between buttresses, fitted with painted wood operable sash under a transom lite (figures 26 and 27). Cast stone sills project slightly from the masonry. The east façade on James P. Brawley Drive (formerly Chestnut Street) is divided into five sections by buttresses and two flues that project from the façade (figures 28 and 29). There are six stained glass windows that remain on this façade at the southern end. The three windows toward the northern rear end are currently boarded shut. Below the six original windows are six basement (ground-level) windows that have been blocked with concrete masonry units. The rear, north façade has two doors and two windows. The rear façade is unadorned concrete masonry (figures 30 and 31).



**Figure 26. West Hunter Street Baptist Church
Interior Window**



**Figure 27. West Hunter Street Baptist Church
Exterior Window**



Figure 28. West Hunter Street Baptist Church East Façade



Figure 29. West Hunter Street Baptist Church East Façade



Figure 30. West Hunter Street Baptist Church North Elevation



Figure 31. West Hunter Street Baptist Church NW Corner

The main entrance opens into the lower level (basement), an interior metal stair immediately to the east of the door provides access up to the sanctuary and the upper balcony level. The main sanctuary level of the rectangular plan, historically, was open with pews on each side of a carpeted, center aisle. The pews have been removed (figures 32, 33, and 34). The balcony is located at the rear of the sanctuary, accessed by the same metal stair in the southeast corner of the building (figures 35 and 36). The secondary door on the east facade leads to the basement, which houses the assembly hall, a small office, a kitchen, and a restroom in the southeast corner under the metal stair. The basement has tile floors and a suspended acoustical ceiling (figure 37).

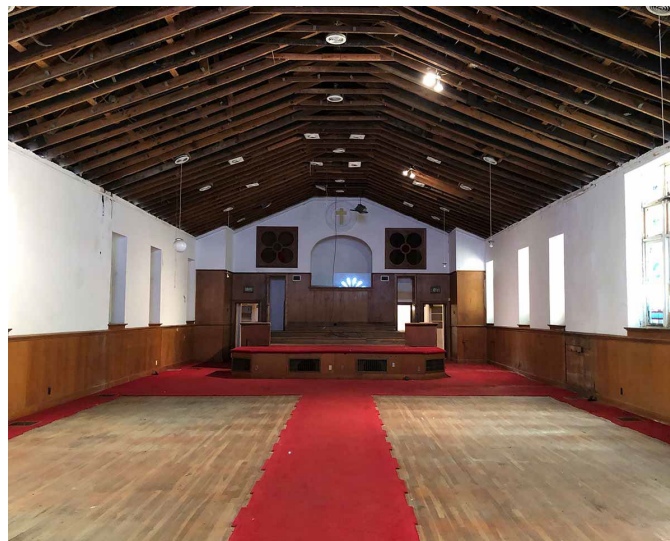


Figure 32. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Sanctuary With Carpet



Figure 33. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Interior Sanctuary



Figure 34. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Pulpit



Figure 35. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Interior Balcony



Figure 36. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Balcony



Figure 37. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Basement Office

West Hunter Street Baptist Church has maintained a high level of integrity from its period of significance despite changes in the surrounding area. The church has maintained its location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association from its historic period, including the exterior and interior façade that has remained unchanged since a major renovation in the 1950s that resulted in the church’s current design. The setting of the church exhibits change, including renaming of West Hunter Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd in 1973 and demolition of many of the small businesses and establishments that once made West Hunter Street a hub of community and civil rights activity (figure 38). An addition to the setting includes a large commercial strip that now takes up much of the 700 and 800 blocks of the boulevard.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church is currently owned by the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. The church has sustained a considerable amount of damage to the second level interior caused by water entering through the roof and windows and pest infestation.



Figure 38. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Streetscape – Circa 1980s

The Foundation received grants through the NPS African American Civil Rights Grant Program to begin efforts to address critical structural needs and interior damage. The work, which began in October 2017, includes, but is not limited to, pest control, asbestos abatement, and demolition of severely damaged areas, electrical, HVAC, and plumbing work, stained glass rehabilitation, and masonry repointing.

In 1976, West Hunter Street Baptist Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource in the Atlanta University Center District (NR 76000621). The historic district encompasses several of the nation's premiere historically black colleges, including Morehouse and Spelman Colleges, Clark Atlanta University, and Morris Brown College. West Hunter Street Baptist Church and the former sanctuary for Friendship Baptist Church, which was located on Mitchell Street, were two churches included within the historic district for their association with the development of the Atlanta University community. In 2016, Friendship Baptist Church was demolished during the construction of the Atlanta Falcon's National Football League Stadium, leaving West Hunter as the only contributing resource within the Atlanta University Center district.

Related Resources

Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel. Brothers James and Robert Paschal were born and raised in the east Georgia town of Thomson. As children, the pair worked alongside their parents during the summer months picking cotton to support their family, an experience which inspired their entrepreneurial pursuits and commitment to supporting the civil rights movement. In his early teens, James, the businessman and younger of the pair, ran a series of shoeshine stands and a vegetable wagon in Thomson. After serving in the Army during the Second World War, James returned to America and worked as a Pullman porter for several years before pursuing his dream of opening a restaurant. Robert, who relocated to Atlanta in 1935 at the age of 15, started as a busboy gradually working his way to supervising soda fountain operations for a local drugstore chain. In 1947, the brothers formed a partnership and opened a small 30-seat diner on West Hunter Street. The location was too small for a kitchen, so food was prepared each day at Robert's home and transported to the diner. It was during this time that Robert perfected his secret fried chicken recipe, which made the diner a staple for westside residents.

The diner's success warranted an expansion and in December of 1959 the Paschal's opened a 200-seat restaurant directly across the street. A year later, La Carousel lounge was established at the site. The night club hosted some of the biggest names in modern jazz and soul music including Dizzy Gillespie, Aretha Franklin, Lou Rawls, Cannonball Adderly, and Ramsey Lewis. Le Carousel, with its engagements by the nation's best jazzmen, and the restaurant, had a sixty percent white clientele. The integrated patronage meant that the brothers were in violation of the establishment's license, which was for 'colored only.' Paschal's was one of the few establishments where blacks and whites could be served and entertained together. This made the business a target of routine threats from white supremacists, although no one ever carried out intended attacks (Kendall 2006, p. 126).

Paschal's also provided support to the civil rights movement. The brothers offered their establishment to members of the Atlanta Student Movement. Student demonstrators used the restaurant as a home base. They would meet at Paschal's to pray, sing hymns, and receive instruction from civil rights leaders like Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. and Reverend Hosea Williams who taught them nonviolent protest strategy (Kendall 2006, p. 125). The brothers bailed student demonstrators out of jail and brought them to their establishment where they were fed and could be picked up by anxious parents (Kendall 2006, p. 126). Carolyn Banks, a participant in the student demonstrations and a former member of Atlanta City Council, gave credit to the brothers during a program in their honor:

“We, the students of the 1960s student movement, will be ever grateful to the Paschals. They gave us food for our bellies, sustenance for our spiritual souls, and bail for our bonds.” (Kendall 2006, p. 125)

Paschal's La Carousel Restaurant, located midblock at 830 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive NW, is built on an irregularly shaped, large urban lot measuring 55 feet wide on the street front and 208 feet in depth, with a 100 foot by 80 foot leg extending to a frontage on Paschal Boulevard SW. The single-story commercial structure is set immediately adjacent to the roadway, flush with adjacent commercial businesses. The exterior veneer of rustic textured Roman brick indicates the building's midcentury origins: masonry treatment includes terminating terra cotta coping and common bond treatment across the facade. Fenestration for the building is currently protected by temporary security panels; therefore, additional description of the building features is limited. For example, the restaurant sign consisting of channel letters in distinctive mid-century script may not survive.

In 1967, the Paschal brothers expanded again with the development of a 120-room hotel at the site. The Motor Hotel was Atlanta's first black-owned and operated hotel. Paschal's restaurant, Le Carousel lounge, and the hotel became Atlanta institutions. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the establishment was the premiere gathering space for Atlanta's black politicians and power brokers. In 1996, the brothers sold the successful establishment to Clark Atlanta University. The university ran the restaurant for a brief time period and used the hotel as a dormitory before closing the operation in 2003. The school continues to own the property, which remains unoccupied. The Motor Hotel and Lounge have retained integrity of location, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Busy Bee Café. Located several feet down the block from Paschal's is the Busy Bee Café. Lucy Jackson, a self-taught culinarian, opened the small diner in 1947. Like Paschal's, the diner, known for great traditional soul food, served civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph David Abernathy Sr., among others. At one time, the restaurant was listed in the historic Green Book travel

guides for African Americans during segregation.³⁰ The café is the only business that began along West Hunter Street during segregation that remains in operation and in its original location.

The Busy Bee Café, located midblock at 810 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive NW, is built on a narrow urban lot measuring thirty-three feet wide on the street front and 124 feet in depth. The single-story commercial structure is set well back from the roadway, with a paved asphalt parking lot in front. The exterior veneer of smooth textured Roman brick indicates the mid-century origins of the building: masonry treatment includes a terminating brick coping and stacked quoin treatment at corners. Aluminum storefront windows and doors are the primary fenestration of this understated façade, and a narrow modern awning defines entry and waiting areas. The unadorned secondary facades of the building consist of painted concrete masonry units. The building retains integrity of location, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. Immediately surrounding single-story businesses are compatible with the Café's façade.

ASSOCIATED HISTORIC SITES AND RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE STUDY AREA

Based on the legislation authorizing this special resource study, the study area is limited to the block surrounding West Hunter Street Baptist Church as outlined in chapter 1 under the section "Description of Study Area." Through the project scoping process, internal research, site visits, and public outreach activities, the study team identified additional historic sites and resources associated with Ralph David Abernathy's life and career as an activist that are located outside the authorized study area boundary. These sites and resources could impact the analysis of four criteria presented in chapter 3 and should warrant consideration in any proposed management alternatives. These associated historic sites and resources include: First Baptist Church (Montgomery, AL), Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (Birmingham, AL), Brown Chapel AME Church, and the Edmund Pettus Bridge (Selma, AL). The last four are NHL designated properties with national significance under criteria 1, 2, and 3. First Baptist Church is listed in the state of Alabama's Historic Register for its association with the civil rights movement.

First Baptist Church and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church are significant for the meetings and events that took place related to the Montgomery bus boycott and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's initial years.

Brown Chapel AME, Selma, Alabama, and Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

Brown Chapel AME and Sixteenth Street Baptist Church are significant for events that took place as part of the SCLC campaigns during the height of the movement and where prominent civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, and Fred Shuttlesworth congregated to make plans for the movement. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference used the Brown Chapel sanctuary as the headquarters for the Selma Voting Rights Campaign. Between March 7th and 25th the "Bloody Sunday" march, the Minister's March, and the Selma to Montgomery March were led from Brown Chapel AME. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was at the center of the

30. The official title of the Green Books was "*The Negro Motorist Travel Guide*." The Green Books were published by an African American mailman, Victor Green, from 1936 to 1966. The books served to guide African American travelers to establishments that were black-owned or friendly towards black patrons. The guides were intended to spare African Americans the dangers and inconveniences often encountered while traveling the country during the period of segregation.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Birmingham campaign and is significant for the 1963 bombing of the sanctuary that killed four little girls and injured others, bringing international attention and concern to the treatment of blacks in the South. Each of these events made voting rights and racial terrorism in the south a national issue.

Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama

Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. assisted in leading a civil rights protest march from Dexter Avenue Baptist Church toward the capitol in Montgomery, Alabama. Dexter Avenue is also where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. pastored for six years (1954–1960) during the bus boycott and the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Upon King's arrival at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Abernathy, who was three years older, was his mentor in the city's black ministerial community. After King's relocation to Atlanta, the church's influence on regional and national activity waned.

Edmund Pettus Bridge, Selma, Alabama

The Edmund Pettus Bridge is significant as the site where peaceful marchers were met with violence from the Alabama state troopers and an armed posse during "Bloody Sunday."

While these other comparative properties' involvement in the civil rights movement culminated at a different time in the movement or with specific singular events, West Hunter Street Baptist Church's involvement lasted throughout Abernathy's tenure and into the late 1970s when Hosea Williams used the West Hunter building for the headquarters of the SCLC Atlanta Chapter.

The Abernathy home located in the Collier Heights National Register District in Southwest Atlanta was also considered for its association with Abernathy; however, the home is not the best representation of his career or any of the activities associated with the civil rights movement that Abernathy helped to lead. The home is currently occupied by the Abernathy family and is used to house his documents and personal affects.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church, with Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. as its pastor, had a prominent role in the civil rights movement and has the strongest association with Abernathy and his leadership in that movement. His most active years and prolific work for civil rights took place during his tenure at the church. His office was there, which also doubled as an alternative meeting place for the SCLC executive core. In providing support for Abernathy and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, West Hunter Street Baptist Church was instrumental in the organization and execution of numerous civil rights campaigns. The property also represents the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's shift in focus from desegregation to political and economic empowerment under Abernathy's leadership.

First Baptist Church of Montgomery ("Colored"), Montgomery, Alabama

First Baptist is significant for its activity around the bus boycott and its association with Abernathy as his first full-time pastoral assignment was there. During his nine-year administration (1952–1961) two major events took place at the church, the bombing of the sanctuary and parsonage in retaliation for the success of the bus boycott and the siege of May 1961 when thousands of whites surrounded the church for 48-hours threatening to burn the building for providing refuge to Freedom Riders.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the evaluation of the four criteria that must be met for a study area to be considered for designation as a national park unit. The application of these criteria follows agency and legislated guidance outlined in Section 1.3 (Criteria for Inclusion) of the NPS *Management Policies 2006* as well as the National Park System New Areas Studies Act (Title III of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998, P.L. 105-391; 54 U.S. Code 1005007). For a study area to be considered for designation as a potential new unit of the national park system, it must meet the following four criteria for evaluation:

- 1) Possess nationally significant resources.
- 2) Be a suitable addition to the system.
- 3) Be a feasible addition to the system.
- 4) Require direct NPS management or administration instead of alternative protection by other agencies or the private sector.

These four criteria are analyzed sequentially, and there are several pathways for concluding the study process based on individual criteria findings. The study process may be truncated if a negative finding is made for any one of these criteria. The findings presented in this chapter will serve as the basis for a formal recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior to Congress on whether the study area should be designated as a new unit of the national park system. A summary of these findings can be found at the end of this chapter.

EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The determination of national significance for a study area is the first step in the special resource study evaluation process. To determine their national significance, historic places or sites being studied for their outstanding cultural resources are evaluated using established NHL criteria. More rigorous than the National Register of Historic Places nomination process, NHL designation serves as official recognition by the federal government of the national significance of a historic property or site. Outlined in 36 CFR Part 65, the NHL designation process for determining national significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess:

1. exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture; and
2. a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

In addition, to be eligible for designation as a National Historic Landmark, an area must meet at least one of six “Specific Criteria of National Significance” contained in 36 CFR Part 65:

- Criterion 1: be associated with events that made a significant contribution to and are identified with or that outstandingly represent the broad national patterns of US history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or

- Criterion 2: be associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
- Criterion 3: represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
- Criterion 4: embody the distinguishing characteristics or an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for the study of a period, style, or method of construction, or represent a significant, distinct, and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- Criterion 5: be composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity or exceptional historic or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or
- Criterion 6: have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation of large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree.

The use of the NHL criteria to determine national significance is the only link between the special resource study process and the National Historic Landmarks Program regulations. It does not confer landmark designation; separate designation processes, governed by other regulations, exist for the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Statement of National Significance

West Hunter Street Baptist Church is nationally significant under NHL criterion 2 for its close association with Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr., an internationally recognized leader of the modern civil rights movement. While pastoring at the West Hunter Street Baptist Church, Abernathy served as the SCLC secretary-treasurer, and following Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, as president of the organization. During the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, Abernathy helped the Southern Christian Leadership Conference expand its focus on desegregation to include universal human rights issues such as economic justice and labor rights. During Abernathy's most prolific years in the movement, West Hunter Street Baptist Church served as his primary workspace. The church, with Abernathy as its pastor, also took on a prominent role within the civil rights movement.

The period of significance for the property began in 1961 when Abernathy became pastor of the church and ended in 1973 when Abernathy moved the congregation to a new location, and he entered his final years as the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The property also demonstrates the role the African American church has played in fighting racial oppression during the modern civil rights movement. Under Abernathy's leadership, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church and congregation exemplified the role of the black church as the primary institution through which collective action was organized in pursuit of achieving racial equality in America. The congregation of West Hunter saw securing freedom for African Americans as one of its central missions, as did many black churches. Churches have historically served as the chief vehicle for black social and political organization and have provided the foundation for countless efforts to advance civil and human rights in the United States.

Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. was president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a confidant of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He served as pastor of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church congregation from 1961 until his death in 1990. Abernathy co-founded the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and co-organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which brought national attention to the Montgomery Improvement Association's key leaders and racism in the segregated South. Abernathy and King formed an indelible friendship in the early 1950s centered on a dedication to ending segregation in the South and advancing human rights issues.

During the height of the civil rights movement, Abernathy and King led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in a series of civil rights campaigns throughout the South and in select northern areas. These campaigns led to passage of legislation ending the system of segregation in public accommodations, commercial settings, and housing, along with implementation of fair housing protections. Abernathy was jailed 44 times, beaten nearly to death, suffered the attempted murder of his wife and child and destruction of his first church during a series of bombings, and endured the seizure of his personal assets during his time as an activist. Following King's assassination, Abernathy took over as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and led the organization into a new phase that focused on economic injustices and human rights issues. Abernathy garnered acclaim during this period as a strong mediator and proponent for labor rights issues, economic opportunity, and social programs to address poverty and human rights issues that plagued Americans from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The current NRHP nomination that lists West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a contributing resource provides only one sentence regarding its importance for its association with Abernathy as a civil rights leader and pastor of its congregation. The nomination was prepared subsequent to the congregation's move to its current location. As the 50-year anniversary mark of major civil rights events such as the 1963 March on Washington, 1964 Civil Rights Act, and 1968 Poor People's March on Washington have passed in recent years, more efforts have begun to research the impact of major leaders like Abernathy, who though integral to the movement, received less focus from scholars than more identifiable leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Congressman John Lewis.

While there have been major transportation arteries named in honor of Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. since his death in 1990, very little published documentation exists focused on his career and his impact nationally and internationally. Abernathy's autobiography published in 1989, a photo journal authored by Abernathy's youngest daughter, articles from major publications during the 1960s and 1970s, and collected oral histories encompass the majority of accessible resources detailing Abernathy's life.³¹ Unpublished writings, speeches, papers and other items pertaining to Reverend Abernathy's life and career are maintained by the Abernathy family. Continued research into the history of West Hunter Street Baptist Church and the impact of Abernathy's leadership during the second phase of the civil right movement, which focused on human/economic rights, has the potential to provide deeper understanding on the impact of the outcomes of the movement on contemporary American society and governance.

Study Finding on Criteria 1 – National Significance

While West Hunter Street Baptist Church is listed as a contributing resource within an existing National Register of Historic Places district, the site's history and national significance as an

31. The majority of secondary resource information on Abernathy's life and career as a pastor and civil rights leader were produced and published largely by African American news outlets.

individual resource still required analysis. As part of the SRS process, thorough research into the history of the site and the life and career of Ralph David Abernathy was conducted to develop an analysis of West Hunter Street Baptist Church's national significance based on NHL criteria. The draft national significance statement was sent to the National Historic Landmarks Program at the National Park Service Washington Support Office in the spring of 2019 for review and determination. On April 19, 2019, the National Historic Landmarks Program concurred with the statement of national significance for West Hunter Street Baptist Church. The statement of national significance does not serve as an NHL nomination nor does the concurrence result in the site being listed as a National Historic Landmark. The review and concurrence on the site's national significance by the National Historic Landmarks Program establishes that West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets the special resource study criterion of national significance established for consideration as a new unit of the national park system.

Upon initial evaluation of the two other related resource sites identified, **Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel and Busy Bee Café**, the study concludes that neither resource meets the National Historic Landmark criteria for national significance as individual resources and were therefore not included in the national significance statement. These related resources are important for their role in supporting the greater civil rights movement but not for their close association with Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. Therefore, these resources are not found to be nationally significant as separate, individual resources as required under National Historic Landmark criteria.

EVALUATION OF SUITABILITY

A study area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies, tribal, state or local governments, or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined by comparing the study area to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. This comparative analysis should also address the rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the national park system or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the study area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas. Based on this determination, a finding on suitability is made.

Of the three properties within the study block that are related to the historic context with civil rights icon Ralph David Abernathy Sr., only West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets the special resource study criteria for national significance. The other two properties, Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel and Busy Bee Café, are related to the context but not nationally significant on their own. Therefore, only the West Hunter Street Baptist Church will be analyzed in the suitability section.

The following methodology was used to evaluate the suitability of West Hunter Street Baptist Church for potential designation as a unit of the national park system:

1. Define the type of resource represented by the study area.
2. Identify the theme or context in which the study area fits.
3. Identify sites that represent the resource type within the national park system and similar sites protected by other agencies, state, local or tribal governments, and the private sector.
4. Through a comparative analysis, describe how the resource type is represented.
5. Consider adequacy of representation and determine whether the resource will duplicate, enhance, or expand opportunities for visitor use or resource protection.

Type of Resource Represented By the Study Area

West Hunter Street Baptist Church is a historic structure with national significance because of its association with Ralph David Abernathy Sr. under NHL criteria 2. The site also illustrates the role of the city of Atlanta as the center for civil rights organizing during the height of the movement.

Theme or Context In Which the Study Area Fits

Under the Revisions of the National Park Service's Thematic Framework (1996), the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site is associated with the following theme and theme topics:

Theme IV – Shaping the Political Landscape

- Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories

West Hunter Street Baptist Church is illustrative of the life of civil rights leader Ralph David Abernathy and the modern civil rights movement. Abernathy co-founded and led one of the twentieth century's most politically and socially influential organizations, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The actions of this organization propelled the federal government to enact laws that changed the social fabric of this nation's history and secured rights that African Americans were entitled to as US citizens yet had been denied since emancipation. The site's period of association covers Abernathy's period as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during its shift from civil to human and economic rights. This period occurs within the period identified in the NPS National Historic Landmarks Civil Rights thematic study as The Second Revolution, 1964–1976. The activities of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during this period furthered black political enfranchisement resulting in a wave of African Americans elected to political positions during the 1970s that changed the social landscape of the American south.

Comparative Analysis of Resources Similar to the Study Area

In addressing the suitability criterion, a comparative analysis is needed to determine whether similar resource protection and visitor opportunities exist at other NPS units or other land management entities. West Hunter Street Baptist Church represents a nationally significant leader who led a movement that shaped the American political landscape. The following comparative analysis looks at resources in the national park system and outside the agency that could represent Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. or offer an opportunity to learn about his life and career as a national civil rights leader.

Similar Resources Within the National Park System

Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument. Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument located in Birmingham, Alabama, preserves and interprets the events, stories, and places associated with the nonviolent struggle against racial segregation in Birmingham during the mid-twentieth century. The events that took place there during 1963 helped propel the civil rights movement to the forefront of the American conscience. Public outrage over the violent events in Birmingham produced political pressure that helped ensure passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The monument also commemorates, preserves, and interprets the dramatic events of “Project C” and the struggle for human and civil rights as it played out in Birmingham during the 1960s. Project C was the direct action campaign of planned protest.³² Project C challenged racist laws aimed at limiting the freedoms of African Americans and ensuring racial inequality. Leaders from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference along with Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights took up residence at the A. G. Gaston Motel from April through May of 1963 to direct Project C.

Within the monument are several prominent historic structures and landscapes that were pivotal to the events of 1963 and to the continued historic significance and relevance of the monument.

These resources include the A. G. Gaston Motel, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Bethel Baptist Church, St. Paul Methodist Church, Kelly Ingram Park, and the Colored Masonic Temple. The A. G. Gaston Motel is the only resource directly managed by the National Park Service.

The monument’s themes and significance statements highlight the leadership of Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth. Reverend Shuttlesworth was a founding member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference along with Abernathy and King. Shuttlesworth formed the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights in 1956 when the state of Alabama prohibited the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from operating in Alabama. An additional thematic focus for the monument is the role of African American churches in the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s and how they served as a support for civil rights leadership.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church is comparable to Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument in that it is a historic resource that represents a national civil rights leader and illustrates the role of the black church as a vehicle for community organizing and civil rights activism. While the monument’s focus includes the Birmingham campaign organized by Abernathy, Shuttlesworth, King, and other SCLC leaders, it is not a viable representation of Abernathy’s life and leadership within the civil rights movement.

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, located in Atlanta, Georgia, preserves, protects, and interprets for the benefit, inspiration, and education of present and future generations, the places where Martin Luther King Jr. was born, lived, worked, worshiped, and is buried while interpreting the life experiences and significance of one of the most influential Americans of the twentieth century. The park preserves the home and immediate neighborhood where his family life and values laid the foundation for his leadership during the civil rights movement. Civil rights history is regularly interpreted at Martin Luther

32. Project C – the C stood for “confrontation.”

King, Jr. National Historical Park through interpretive tours, programming, exhibits, and special events.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Preservation District protects core elements of one of the most prosperous and influential African American streets in segregated America from 1910 to 1960, the Sweet Auburn commercial district. Sweet Auburn included many organizations and businesses that actively supported the American civil rights movement, including the headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge, for which Martin Luther King Jr. was the founding president.

Park resources include historic Ebenezer Baptist Church. The church is interpreted under the theme of Church and Community as the Christian foundation of Dr. King's spirituality, values, philosophy, and social activism. Additional themes associated with the park and its resources include Segregation and Struggle, and Leadership and Legacy. These themes examine how the life and death of Martin Luther King Jr. were central to the transformation of segregation in America and his visionary leadership of the modern civil rights movement.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church is thematically comparable to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park in that it is associated with the life of a nationally significant civil rights leader. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park lacks any in-depth information on Ralph David Abernathy's life, leadership, and contributions to the civil rights movement. The park does not offer interpretation of African American life outside of the Sweet Auburn commercial district or civil rights activity along Atlanta's Westside corridor. West Hunter Street Baptist Church presents the opportunity to learn about Ralph David Abernathy and other national leaders associated with the site such as Hosea Williams. The study site highlights historic resources associated with civil rights activity and illustrate the history of West Atlanta's black commercial district, the West Hunter Street corridor. These resources, along with West Hunter Street Baptist Church, highlight the history of Atlanta as a center for civil rights organizing during the height of the movement.

Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail commemorates the events of the Selma voting rights movement, including the people, the places, and the routes of the Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches of 1965. Through partnerships and collaboration, the trail interprets and preserves the important stories of the Selma voting rights movement, inspiring all citizens to be vigilant in protecting their constitutional rights. The fifty-four-mile-long national historic trail begins at the Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in Selma and then follows the 1965 historic routes of the Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches through the city and eastward along US Highway 80 through Dallas County and Lowndes County. Crossing into Montgomery County, the trail continues into the city of Montgomery and ends at the Alabama State Capitol.

Media coverage of the violent confrontation between law enforcement officers and members of the civil rights movement on March 7, 1965, now known as "Bloody Sunday," followed by the minister's march on March 9, also called "Turnaround Tuesday," and the final Selma to Montgomery voting rights march on March 21–25, 1965, brought the issue of voting rights to the forefront of national consciousness, and through nonviolent protest, won broad support for the cause of civil rights in America. Martin Luther King and Ralph David Abernathy were leaders and organizers of this march. The events resulting in the Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches significantly influenced the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which empowered citizens previously denied the right to vote. The Voting Rights Act continues to change the political, economic, educational, and social

fabric of American society.

First Baptist Church of Montgomery is among the sites associated with the national historic trail. The church is listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage for its association with Ralph David Abernathy, involvement in the civil rights movement under his pastorate (1952 – 1961), and hosting the first Institute on Non-violence and Social Change sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957. The church was among several properties examined in chapter 2 for comparison with West Hunter Street Baptist as the best example of Abernathy's life and career. The events during Abernathy's pastorate at First Baptist of Montgomery resulted in civil rights advancement at the local level and thrust the Montgomery Improvement Association, King, and Abernathy into the national spotlight; however, this period does not capture a holistic view of his career nor does it cover the span of his most prolific years and his time as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The church does not present programming aimed at interpreting Abernathy's life and activity at the site other than an overview on their website.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church and Paschal's restaurant are two sites that served as meeting spaces for the planning and implementation of the Selma voting rights marches organized by Abernathy and King. West Hunter Street Baptist Church and the study area offer an examination of the decision making that led to the first march, "Bloody Sunday," and a determination to continue the demonstrations despite the violence and losses suffered.

Similar Resources Outside the National Park System

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights' mission is to harness Atlanta's legacy of civil rights to strengthen the worldwide movement for human rights. The center, located in downtown Atlanta, is the brainchild of civil rights legends Andrew Young and Evelyn Lowery. The center is one of the few places in the world to educate visitors on the bridge between the civil rights movement in America and the contemporary struggle for human rights around the world.

The center features two main permanent exhibits focusing on American civil and human rights. The civil rights exhibit presents the fight for equality in the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. The exhibit is a series of themed interactive exhibits and displays that illustrate Jim Crow laws, the urban south during the 1950s, Freedom Riders demonstrations, the 1963 March on Washington, and acts of racist violence in resistance to the movement. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights also houses the Morehouse Martin Luther King Jr. Collection, which includes King's personal papers and items. In addition to the permanent exhibits, the center presents programming on issues ranging from human trafficking to LGBT rights.

Ralph David Abernathy is referenced in the exhibit texts and pictured in many of the historic photos used to develop displays throughout the center's gallery on civil rights. The center lacks any in-depth presentation on Abernathy's life or leadership. While the mission of the center focuses on Atlanta's role in the movement, it does not detail specific landmarks, communities, or organizations that helped support the movement or helped to develop the city into a hub for national organizations during the movement's height. West Hunter Street Baptist Church offers the opportunity to learn about the importance of black communities and black institutions that have fought for freedom against oppression throughout American history and during the civil rights movement.

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is the anchor resource of the city of Birmingham's civil rights district and a part of the Birmingham Civil Rights National

Monument. The institute is a cultural and educational research center that promotes a comprehensive understanding of the significance of civil rights development in Birmingham. The institute houses a series of exhibits focused on the modern civil rights movement and human rights. It also provides an educational curriculum for area schools that covers a range of lesson topics such as *Women in the Movement* and *Black Power in the Black Belt*. The curriculum highlights individuals, such as Nina Simone, Shirley Chisholm, and Albert Einstein, who used their careers as a platform to speak out against racism during the period of the modern civil rights movement. The institute also partners with seven local museums and public libraries to offer after-school learning activities.

While the institute's programming highlights a diverse range of local and notable figures important to the civil rights and human rights movements, there is no comprehensive focus on Abernathy other than brief information presented on First Baptist of Montgomery, which makes West Hunter Street Baptist the best option in comparison.

The King Center – The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. The King Center is located in downtown Atlanta in the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park along Auburn Avenue. The King Center was established by Coretta Scott King in 1968 as a living memorial to her husband's life and dream. The center's mission is to provide research, education, and training in the principles, philosophy, and methods of Kingian Nonviolent Social Change. The center promotes the King Philosophy, which includes the Triple Evils, six Principles of Nonviolence, six Steps of Nonviolent Social Change, and the Beloved Community. The center offers 1- to 2-day trainings on the Kingian Nonviolent Principles.

The center also houses the King Library and Archives (KLA), the largest repository of primary resource materials on Dr. King. The KLA mission is to handle use of archival materials relevant to the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the modern civil rights movement. The King Library and Archives includes personal writings, photographs, and printed material belonging to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and members of his family, including his widow Coretta Scott King.

The center's main space Freedom Hall houses regular exhibits including African art and exhibits honoring Dr. and Mrs. King, Rosa Parks, and Mahatma Gandhi.

In 1977, the remains of Dr. King were removed from their original location at South-View Cemetery in southeast Atlanta and reinterred within a memorial tomb that rests in the center of Freedom Hall plaza. Mrs. King's remains are also interred there.

The King Center provides information related to Ralph David Abernathy to the public, primarily via KLA partnerships with other repositories. The information accessible through the KLA Collection is largely administrative correspondence related to his early positions as financial secretary-treasurer of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The information obtainable does not offer detailed information on his personal life, his speeches or writings, and his work as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The center, much like the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, centers on the life of Martin Luther King and his immediate family.

Adequacy of Representation

The comparative analysis presented in this special resource study places the historic context of West Hunter Street Baptist Church within the larger picture of the history of the civil rights movement and civil rights organizing in America. By comparing and contrasting it to other similar civil rights sites, the suitability of West Hunter Street Baptist Church is apparent.

West Hunter Street Baptist Church would fill a gap in the National Park Service by providing an opportunity to preserve the legacy of Ralph David Abernathy Sr. Currently, no other site within or outside of the national park system offers an examination of Abernathy's career, life, and leadership. Ralph David Abernathy's most prolific period falls within the NHL Civil Rights Framework's Second Revolution (1964–1976) period. Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail is the only national park unit that falls under this period and only three National Historic Landmarks with African American affiliation were identified as associated with this period within the framework. West Hunter Street Baptist Church presents the national park system with an opportunity to examine the social and political response to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Despite the gains African Americans made through the civil rights movement, it took continued effort to implement remedies to restrictions and racist practices. Abernathy led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during a period when the organization's focus was aimed at empowering African Americans to use the protections gained from the 1964 act and Voting Rights Act of 1965 to further dismantle institutional racism.

The NPS System Plan identified a number of historical and cultural topics as being underrepresented, in need of greater emphasis, or missing from the present system. One is social organizations history, specifically the nationally important topic of civil rights. Another is African American history, specifically the nationally important topic of historic figures. The contributing role of African American churches during the civil rights movement also falls in this topic.

Study Finding on Criteria 2: Suitability

Based on the comparative analysis presented above, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site fills a number of gaps in National Park Service representation of sites that illustrate the life of Ralph David Abernathy and his role as a national civil rights leader. While other national park units and public sites throughout the South protect and interpret the civil rights movement, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church increases focus on the critical role that churches played during this time and the association with Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. Because the site would expand and enhance resource protection and the interpretation of the Ralph David Abernathy within the national park system and by other entities, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site is considered suitable for inclusion in the national park system under this criterion.

EVALUATION OF FEASIBILITY

An area that is nationally significant and meets suitability criteria must also meet feasibility criteria to qualify as a potential addition to the national park system. To be feasible as a new unit, an area's natural systems or historic settings must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond its boundaries) and be capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost. A variety of factors may affect feasibility, including land ownership, acquisition costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements. The feasibility evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability of funding and personnel.

Of the three properties in the study block that are related to the historic context of civil rights icon Ralph David Abernathy Sr., only West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets the special resource study criteria for national significance and suitability. The other two, Paschal's Restaurant and Motor

Hotel and Busy Bee Café, are related to the context but not nationally significant on their own. Therefore, only the West Hunter Street Baptist Church will be analyzed in the feasibility section.

For an area to be considered feasible as a new unit of the national park system, a variety of factors must be considered. In evaluating feasibility for West Hunter Street Baptist Church, the National Park Service considered the following factors:

- size and boundary configuration;
- land ownership, local planning and zoning, and potential land uses;
- existing and potential threats to the resources;
- access and public enjoyment potential;
- public support and socioeconomic impacts of designation; and
- cost and budgetary feasibility.

Although these factors are considered individually below, the evaluation of the feasibility of establishing a new national park system unit at the West Hunter Street Baptist Church takes into account all of the above factors in the context of current National Park Service management. Evaluation of these factors under criterion 3 must consider if the National Park Service can feasibly manage the proposed new park unit given current agency-wide limitation and constraints.

Size and Boundary Configuration

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (PL 113-291) directs the Secretary of the Interior to use the historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church and the block on which the church is located as the study area in this special resource study. The total acreage for the study block is approximately 20 acres. As described earlier, the site within the block that meets national significance is the West Hunter Street Baptist Church, which is approximately 0.181 acres, consisting of the church building sited directly on the street with sidewalks on the front (south-facing) and one side (east-facing). The west side of the church property includes approximately .07 acres of grassy lawn, and on the north-facing side are retail businesses. Although there is very little exterior space on the property, the church reflects a boundary configuration of sufficient size and configuration to protect the nationally significant resource and to allow for visitation and management on the interior and exterior of the building.

There are no significant size or boundary barriers for management and operation of the site. Interstate, state, and local roads connect to the site in this urban area, and it is fully accessible to the public from existing rights of way. In normal traffic conditions, driving time from the nearest national park unit headquarters, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, is eleven minutes (2.5 miles) and to the nearest site within that park, the King Family Home, is two minutes (0.6 miles). This distance would not present an obstacle in managing or providing visitor access to resources within the site if it were to be under the umbrella of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park's management, but operated as a separate unit. There is adequate space within the church building to accommodate staff needs, such as offices, storage, and breakroom. The small lawn area and shrubbery would need to be maintained and there is space within the church to store maintenance equipment and exterior space to construct a small storage area. Also, it would be possible to transport a hand/riding mower and other grounds maintenance equipment to the site if necessary.

Overall, the size and boundary configuration of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site is found to be feasible to be managed as a potential new unit of the National Park Service. However, given the close proximity to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, it would make sense that the superintendent of that park also manage the church site, with the possibility of additional staff dedicated to West Hunter Street Baptist Church.

Land Ownership, Local Planning and Zoning, and Potential Land Uses

Based on current county accessor data, lands within and surrounding the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site are zoned as mixed use. Immediately surrounding the church are commercial properties (i.e., Walmart, restaurants). The resource is surrounded by medium-density residential and low-density mixed use to the north/east, low-density commercial and office/institution to the south, and medium-density mixed use in the south block of MLK Jr. Drive.

The historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church building owner is the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. The Wing Stop building and the bank at the corner of MLK Jr. Drive and Leach Street are owned by Atlanta Westside Village Retail Partners.

If Congress were to designate a new park unit that included West Hunter Street Baptist Church, there may be no immediate need to change existing land ownership. While any land considered for inclusion in a national park unit would only be acquired from willing sellers at fair market value or from willing donors, the primary goal of the Foundation is to have the church managed and operated by the National Park Service. Changes to land ownership could be in the future, while management of the site could be taken over from the Foundation by the National Park Service.

Local Planning. The City of Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan dated 2016, a required planning document by State law, is updated every three to five years and sets growth patterns for the City by neighborhood.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Innovation Corridor Project is underway to address vehicular and pedestrian safety concerns, provide additional pedestrian and bicycle access through the implementation of new multiuse trails, and introduce a new linear park along the corridor. It will also include raised landscaped medians, pedestrian crossing islands, repaired sidewalks, ADA upgrades, and a new two-way cycle track. There will also be traffic signal improvements, upgraded signs, and markings along with lighting improvements along the road. The goal is to transform MLK Jr. Drive to a pedestrian and bicycle friendly corridor with improved access. Metered parking has also been added along MLK Jr. Drive, including in front of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Corridor Transportation Study dated 2005, included a land use analysis and future traffic impact analysis to develop recommendations for future land uses and road and intersection improvements. The plan has been adopted and the projects incorporated into the city's comprehensive development plan.

Although commercial and other mixed-use development may change, there is no reason to expect significant changes around West Hunter Street Baptist Church in the near future. Current land ownership and existing land use patterns could support the proposed designation of the church becoming a national park unit. Based on these findings, the study site meets the feasibility factor based on current land ownership, local planning and zoning, and potential lands uses in the area.

Existing and Potential Threats to the Resources

Although commercial and other mixed-use development may change, there is no reason to expect significant changes around West Hunter Street Baptist Church in the near future. However, the mixed-use land use for and around the resource provides a potential longer-term future threat with the current absence of historic preservation protection. The current land use allows for the following zoning classifications:

- Mixed Use – This land use category allows for a mix of uses such as commercial, office, hotels and residential, but not industrial uses. This land use category is not as widely used as it had been in the past since it has been supplanted by Mixed Use Low Density, Medium Density or High Density to reflect the scale and intensity of the development. The general mixed-use land use accounts for 5.5 percent of the city.
- Office/Institutional – This land use category allows office, institutional uses. Examples are office parks and large institutional uses.
- Low Density Mixed Use – This land use category allows for a mix of uses—residential, limited office and commercial—that are compatible with a neighborhood setting.
- Medium Density Mixed Use – This land use category allows for a mix of uses—residential, limited office and commercial—along corridors and nodes that serve various neighborhoods.
- Low-Density Commercial
- Mixed Residential Commercial
- Planned Development Housing and Office Commercial

An Historic and Cultural Conservation District would be a more protective zoning classification as the current allows for a density and use that could create an adverse effect on the resource. West Hunter Street Baptist Church is also located in a zone that has a Special Public District with one of the interests to preserve the district's historic pattern and distribution of building types that are primarily characterized by single-family residences, institutions, and neighborhood commercial buildings, many of which were constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Foundation is currently taking a proactive approach to rehabilitate the church and maintain it to limit potential threats to the structure, making sure to monitor the church's condition and limit outside threats with vegetation removal and repairs/replacements commonly needed in aging structures. The church was in disrepair when the Foundation acquired the building. Using NPS African American Civil Rights Grants, the Foundation has been able to make substantial progress toward restoring the church to its original appearance. Completed restoration work includes environmental remediation and abatement of building, replaced roof and gutters, restored stained glass windows/frames and exterior doors, and prepared architectural and engineering plans for next phase of construction. The ongoing and next phase of restoration efforts includes waterproofing the basement level; repointing all exterior stonework; installing new electrical, HVAC, plumbing, and bathrooms, and an ABBAS lift to sanctuary level; painting the interior; and repairing/refinishing floors.

Through the Foundation efforts, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church has been saved from potential loss.

Currently, no significant existing or potential threats to the West Hunter Street Baptist Church have been identified. Because there are no known or potential threats that would impact the feasibility of a proposed national park unit designation, the study site meets this factor for feasibility.

Access and Public Enjoyment Potential

Located in urban Atlanta, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church is fully accessible to the public from existing interstate, state, and local rights-of-way connecting this site to its urban surroundings. In normal traffic conditions, driving time from the nearest national park unit headquarters, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, is eleven minutes (2.5 miles) and to the nearest site within that park, the King Family Home, is two minutes (0.6 miles). The study site is serviced by national airports and major highways, making the site easily accessible for most out-of-town visitors with personal or rented vehicles. Atlanta also has a robust public transportation system. Existing access to the study site supports public enjoyment and visitor use.

The boundary of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church consists of the church structure and a small lawn on one side of the church. There is no parking on the church property. Currently, the Foundation and their contractors use the adjacent parking lot owned by the Atlanta Westside Village Retail Partners and Walmart. There are a few possibilities for parking. There is metered parking immediately in front of the church along MLK Jr. Drive, and one possibility to secure parking is to work with the city of Atlanta to designate some of the metered parking for church use only. Another possibility is to develop an agreement with the adjacent landowner, Atlanta Westside Village Retail Partners, to lease or donate some of Atlanta Westside Village Retail Partners parking spaces. Efforts during this study process to contact Walmart to inquire about the possibility of leasing some of their parking were unsuccessful. There also may be potential for agreements with the entities that own nearby parking decks within the area. Further, the lawn on the church property could be evaluated for constructing a small parking area.

There is not currently a space in the church that is dedicated to visitor use as a contact point. However, there is ample space within the church to offer contact and orientation information to the visiting public. There is space for interpretation and museum collections to be displayed as well as touring the church and offices where Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. worked and preached, providing opportunities for visitors to learn about the role that Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. played in the civil rights movement.

In summary, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church has sufficient access for administration of a potential park unit, and there is potential for public enjoyment of the study area's resources. The church meets this factor for feasibility.

Public Support and Socioeconomic Impacts of Designation

Public outreach activities took place early in the special resource study to collect additional information resources, inform the public about the special resource study process, and gauge public support. A project newsletter announcing the study was mailed to stakeholders, including landowners within and adjacent to the study area in January 2017. Interested individuals were directed to attend informational meetings or visit the project's NPS PEPC website for more information. Local informational meetings were held at the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library on February 2, 2017, and at the current location of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church congregation's location on February 9, 2017. These meetings allowed the NPS study team to share information about the study and gather the public's ideas through direct interaction between the public and NPS personnel. During this initial period of public outreach, five questions were posted to the project website and on posters displayed during the informational meetings to guide

discussions about the study area's appropriateness for inclusion in the national park system and potential management alternatives:

1. The former West Hunter Street Baptist Church building is one of the last remaining churches in the Atlanta University National Register District. What are some initiatives that can be undertaken to recognize the history of the site? (i.e., website, audio tour of the area, restoration projects)
2. African American churches have historically been at the center of local community development and the fight for civil rights. In your opinion, is the former West Hunter Street Baptist Church building illustrative of this history? Is the Church's impact on a national, regional, or local scale, and why?
3. In your opinion, how has historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church's role and history in civil rights and community organizing contributed to the modern civil rights movement?
4. Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr., Julian Bond, and Reverend Hosea Williams were civil rights leaders who used West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a headquarters to implement multiple civil and human rights programs. In what ways do you feel these individuals influenced civil rights at the national level? What are some of the more tangible aspects of their legacies today?
5. Are there other places within the described study boundary that were in existence and are important to the civil rights story of West Hunter Street Baptist Church?

Approximately 40 individuals attended the outreach meetings. A total of 17 correspondences were received via the PEPC website between January 23 and April 3, 2017. Based on the comments received in person at the informational meetings and electronically, there appears to be public support for designating historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a new unit of the national park system.

The majority of the comments submitted by the public recognize the importance of West Hunter Street Baptist Church and the study area and believe the stories surrounding Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. and his involvement in the civil rights movement should be told. Those interested in the long-term preservation of the church and development of visitor experiences saw the National Park Service as an appropriate agency to make this a reality.

Commenters also expressed an interest in connecting the site and Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. to the greater civil rights movement, including Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park. They directed the study team to consider other resources in the study area where activism took place, including the Busy Bee Café and Paschal's Restaurant and Motor Hotel.

One respondent expressed opposition to the designation of the site as a unit of the National Park Service based on concerns about visitor and staff safety in the area of Atlanta where West Hunter Street Baptist Church is located.

While members of the public didn't mention that the establishment of a proposed national park unit in the area would benefit the local economy, tourism continues to be a growing industry in Atlanta and greater Georgia. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park receives approximately 700,000 visitors per year. The Atlanta Metro Travel Region drew more than fifty-five million people to the area in 2018, which is more than fifty percent of the visitors statewide with seventy-

two percent of that travel being for leisure. The direct expenditures by tourists accounted for more than \$16 billion in Metro Atlanta and more than 300,000 hospitality industry jobs. The proposed designation of an additional national park unit in the metro area could be expected to bring additional visitors to the area, which may complement tourism related economic activities already occurring within the region. While the possible economic impact of a new national park unit varies greatly related to the park's location, size, associated development, visitation numbers, and visitor opportunities, the proposed designation of the site as a national park unit would likely support local economic activity and provide additional support to existing heritage tourism efforts.

Based on broad public support expressed during the public scoping period of the special resource study process and that the proposed designation of a new national park unit would likely support and complement current socioeconomic activities within the region, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets this feasibility factor.

Cost and Budgetary Feasibility

Since the National Park Service has a legislated mandate to conserve resources unimpaired for public enjoyment, it could be assumed that the park units it manages would continue indefinitely into the future. However, designation of a new unit of national park system does not automatically guarantee that funding or staffing to administer that new unit would be appropriated by Congress. Any newly designated national park unit would have to compete with the more than 400 existing park units for limited funding and resources within a current fiscally constrained environment. Study areas that may be nationally significant, suitable, and technically feasible for designation as a new park unit may not be feasible in light of current budget constraints, competing needs across the entire agency, and the existing National Park Service deferred maintenance backlog.

Acquisition Cost. Any future land acquisitions would have to consider larger agency-wide and regional priorities for purchasing new park lands. The establishment of a new national park unit by Congress does not guarantee funding or the purchase of lands, and any improvements would require further cost analysis and planning. Any National Park Service acquisition of private properties would occur only through donation or from a willing seller for the appraised fair market value.

As outlined in the land ownership section presented above, the 0.181-acre West Hunter Street Baptist Church property is owned by the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. If Congress were to designate the West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a new national park unit, the National Park Service would need to determine actual real property acquisition costs through formal real estate appraisals at the time of acquisition. However, based on available 2020 fair market value data from the Fulton County Assessor's office, the potential acquisition costs could range between \$400,000 and \$600,000. Future acquisition costs could vary significantly depending on fair-market value and regional trends within the real estate market and are difficult to predict with accuracy.

If Congress were to designate a new park unit that included West Hunter Street Baptist Church, there may be no immediate need to change existing land ownership. While any land considered for inclusion in a national park unit would only be acquired from willing sellers at fair market value or from willing donors, the primary goal of the Foundation is to have the church managed and operated by the National Park Service. Although land ownership changes could occur in the future, the National Park Service could take over management and operations of the site from the Foundation.

One-Time Facility Cost. As part of the special resource study process, National Park Service staff from the Interior Region 2 Facility Support Division conducted a site visit/reconnaissance of the

West Hunter Street Baptist Church in August 2020, during which NPS staff had access to the interior and exterior of the church. With support from the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc., information related to the current condition of church and grounds was collected. Based on available information collected during this site visit as well as additional data such as construction documents and specs provided by the Foundation, NPS staff was able to develop gross cost estimates to evaluate what potential one-time facilities costs may look like if the church were to be designated as a new national park unit (table 1). Gross cost estimates are presented in fiscal year 2021 dollar amounts and include base construction, federal management, contingency, and design and compliance costs. If the West Hunter Street Baptist Church were to be designated a new unit of the National Park Service, there would likely be additional capital improvement and new construction costs not captured in the study.

Table 1. One-time Improvement Cost Estimates – West Hunter Street Baptist Church

Infrastructure/Asset	One-time Improvement Cost
Security Alarm	\$150,000
Fire Suppression System/Fire Alarm	\$450,000
HVAC Upgrades	\$600,000
ABAAS Upgrades	\$250,000
Interior upgrades of West Hunter St Baptist Church, including furnishings	\$500,000
Landscape upgrades of West Hunter St Baptist Church	\$50,000
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST	\$2,000,000

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church was undergoing renovations at the time of the site visit. The church will be in good condition because of the Foundation’s work to accomplish a complete restoration of the property. One-time facilities costs would primarily focus on bringing the building’s fire alarm, fire suppression, and HVAC systems up to code, meeting legally mandated Architectural Barriers Act accessibility standards for federal facilities, and reconfiguring the interior space to meet National Park Service needs. Total preliminary construction cost for the facilities upgrades are estimated at \$2 million. However, given the ongoing work at the time of the assessment, some costs may be substantially lower as the Foundation continues to improve the property. Other costs may fluctuate, as it is difficult to determine the exact future cost to the National Park Service.

Additional one-time costs related to the West Hunter Street Baptist Church and potential National Park Service management could include cultural resource baseline, historic structure, and landscape documentation that would inform future cultural resource management (e.g., National Register of Historic Places determinations of eligibility, cultural landscape reports, or historic structure reports). Site plans, orientation and interpretive materials, and museum exhibits could also be developed if the National Park Service assumed management of the church.

Operational Cost. National park unit operating costs vary widely depending on their overall size, the types and quantities of resources they manage, the number of visitors, the level of programs offered, safety and security issues, staffing, and many other factors. At a minimum, the operating cost of a proposed new park unit at West Hunter Street Baptist Church would need to include grounds and facilities maintenance, utilities, communications, administration, and other miscellaneous

expenses. Operating costs would include staffing. Personnel would be required to design and deliver interpretive programming (e.g., personal interpretation, exhibits, special events), maintain facilities and grounds, perform administrative functions (budget, management, planning, and compliance), provide for law enforcement (if necessary), and conduct outreach to the community and schools.

To help estimate the potential costs of operating West Hunter Street Baptist Church as a new unit of the National Park Service, operational costs from the existing national park unit of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park were used as a baseline for comparison. Specifically, Ebenezer Baptist Church within the greater park unit was chosen because of its similarities to the West Hunter Street Baptist Church in terms of location in Atlanta, GA; size; type of resources protected; setting; and acreage. The full-time equivalent (FTE) employees for Ebenezer Baptist Church for interpretation and orientation include approximately two GS-5 Park Guides, four GS-4 Park Guides, one GS-9 Park Ranger, and one GS-11 Lead Ranger for an average cost of approximately \$450,000 per year; however, some of these FTE employees also support the greater park unit and are not dedicated to Ebenezer Baptist Church. Ebenezer Baptist Church had an average annual maintenance and operating cost of approximately \$100,000. This operating cost includes maintenance staff, maintenance, and administrative costs. The total maintenance and operational costs for Ebenezer Baptist Church are approximately \$550,000.

An additional analysis of operational costs from other existing national park units such as Abraham Lincoln National Historic Site, Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, and De Soto National Memorial were used as a baseline for comparison (table 2). These units were chosen because of their similarities to the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site in terms of size, although most have more acreage and structures than the church property. These sites have annual operating budgets ranging from \$700,000 to \$1.4 million. To operate West Hunter Street Baptist Church, staff such as park guides, leads and other rangers, facility assistants, museum technicians, and archivists would likely be needed at an estimated cost of \$700,000. Since this would be a new unit, facility operations are estimated to be between \$500,000 and \$800,000 per year. The total annual maintenance and operational costs are estimated to be between \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million.

Table 2. Annual Operational Costs – 2019

Park Unit	Operating Budget (FY 2019)	Full-time Equivalent Employees
Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site	\$1,367,000	12
Andrew Johnson National Historic Site	\$999,000	10
De Soto National Memorial	\$732,000	6
Ebenezer Baptist Church (part of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park)	~\$550,000	~8 (some of these staff also support the greater park unit)

As a result of agency-wide priorities, it would likely take several years for the National Park Service to fully staff and operate any newly designated national park unit. Overall costs and budgetary considerations associated with the acquisition, one-time facility development and rehabilitation, and operations of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site are projected to be minor to moderate in

comparison to the majority of NPS units but will add to the overall costs of the National Park Service, nonetheless.

In summary, acquisition costs for the 0.181-acre site could range between approximately \$400,000 and \$600,000; one-time facilities improvements and restoration costs of the church are estimated to be \$2 million; and using comparable national park unit operation budgets, annual operating and maintenance costs for a proposed West Hunter Street Baptist Church national park unit may range from between \$1.2 million and \$1.6 million per year (table 3).

Table 3. Estimated Costs for the Proposed West Hunter Street Baptist Church

Cost Elements	Estimated Costs
Acquisition Costs*	\$400,000-\$600,000
One-time Capital Costs†	\$2,000,000
Annual Operating and Maintenance Costs	\$1,200,000-\$1,600,000

* However, donations are often the course of action taken.

† However, the costs may be substantially lower as the Foundation continues to improve the property.

National Park Service Maintenance Backlog and Fiscal Constraints. As evidenced by the current National Park Service repair backlog, the agency has greater demands for cyclic and recurring maintenance than the funding that is currently available. The addition of West Hunter Street Baptist Church would likely further dilute these funds; therefore, the feasibility of the National Park Service serving as the managing entity for the site as a unit in the national park system is dependent on National Park Service funding source managers' ability to prioritize cyclic and recurring maintenance projects to meet this potential new unit's facility requirements. Partnerships could provide opportunities for shared operating responsibility and resources. The study area could be effectively administered by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost, depending on fund source availability, and considered feasible under this factor.

Completion and transmittal of the study does not guarantee establishment of a unit of the national park system or future funding for any NPS actions at West Hunter Street Baptist Church. Even if a unit is established, while new NPS units share common elements, each NPS unit requires a distinct organizational structure. The organizational structure may be influenced by the NPS unit's enabling legislation or proclamation, its size, resources, scope and delivery of public programming, and its location. NPS units are not considered operational (prepared to welcome visitors, preserve resources, and provide programming and services on a regular basis) until they receive an operating appropriation from Congress, which can take years.

Study Finding on Criterion 3 – Feasibility

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets all of the components of the special resource study feasibility factors. The size and configuration of the church property would be feasible to administer as a new unit. No changes to land ownership, zoning, or adjacent land uses that would affect the feasibility of administering the site as a new unit are likely to occur. No known or potential threats are foreseen to the church. The study site has vehicle access, and the study area has high potential for

public enjoyment and interpretation. There is public support for designation of the area as a national park unit, and the designation would likely result in beneficial economic impacts to the region.

Evaluated under the feasibility criterion, costs and budgetary feasibility associated with the potential acquisition, one-time facility development and rehabilitation, and long-term operations of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site appear to be feasible even considering the current deferred maintenance backlog and budgetary challenges facing the National Park Service. This special resource study concludes that criterion 3 –Feasibility, is met.

EVALUATION OF THE NEED FOR DIRECT NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MANAGEMENT

The fourth criterion in the special resource study evaluation process addresses whether the study area requires direct management by the National Park Service instead of protection by another public agency or the private sector. National Park Service *Management Policies 2006* (§1.3.4) further requires direct National Park Service management not only to be needed but that its management be “the clearly superior alternative.” Inclusion in the national park system would provide a study area with the stewardship mandate defined in the National Park Service Organic Act,

“...which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations...”

There may be a need for direct National Park Service management if current or potential management entities cannot provide opportunities for resource stewardship or public enjoyment. Unless direct National Park Service management is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the National Park Service recommends other existing organizations or agencies continue resource management responsibilities and the study area is not recommended for inclusion as a new unit of the national park system.

Although the National Park Service has a mandate to conserve resources and provide for public enjoyment and it can be assumed that areas it manages continues indefinitely into the future, designation of an area as a national park unit does not automatically ensure adequate staff and funding to administer a site—any new authorizations need to compete with other existing park units for funding in a fiscally constrained environment.

Current Management of West Hunter Street Baptist Church

After decades of sitting vacant, the historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church was purchased in 2008 and is owned and maintained by the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation. In October 2017, the Foundation began a program to stabilize and rehabilitate the structure and restore key elements of its architectural features.

The Foundation is currently taking a proactive approach to rehabilitate the church and maintain it to limit potential threats to the structure, making sure to monitor the church’s condition and limit outside threats with vegetation removal and repairs/replacements commonly needed in aging structures. The church was in disrepair when the Foundation acquired the building. Using NPS African American Civil Rights Grants, the Foundation has been able to make substantial progress toward restoring the church to its original appearance. Completed restoration work includes environmental remediation and asbestos abatement of building, replaced roof and gutters, restored stained glass windows/frames and exterior doors, and prepared architectural and engineering plans

for next phase of construction. The ongoing and next phase of restoration efforts includes waterproofing the basement level; repointing all exterior stonework, installing new electrical, HVAC, plumbing, bathrooms, and an ABBAS lift to sanctuary level; painting the interior; and repairing/refinishing floors. Through the Foundation efforts, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church has been saved from potential loss.

In evaluating the need for direct National Park Service management, the study must determine that the National Park Service is clearly the superior alternative. Currently, the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. is protecting and rehabilitating the church through funding by the NPS African American Civil Rights Grant Program. Although the Foundation has made great strides in this direction, they currently do not have other fund-raising opportunities or friend's groups. The Foundation's goal for the church is for it to be open to the public for interpretation to educate visitors about the life and work of Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. Despite the desire by the Foundation to see the church opened for public visitation, at the time of this study, they do not have the necessary resources to expand their role of the management of the resource to provide these opportunities for visitors. To the study team's knowledge, there are no other entities interested or willing to take on management of the church. Based on this analysis, it can be demonstrated that direct National Park Service management is needed for accomplishing the protection of resources associated with the West Hunter Street Baptist Church and developing appropriate visitor experiences.

Study Finding on Criterion 4 – Need for Direct NPS Management

Based on the analysis of the existing management currently operating West Hunter Street Baptist Church, direct National Park Service management of the site is needed. It is not in the purview of the David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. to provide continued resource management of the site or educational and interpretive opportunities for visitors. There are no other entities to manage the site.

SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church within the legislated study area meets criterion 1– National Significance, criterion 2– Suitability, criterion 3 – Feasibility, and criterion 4 – Need for Direct National Park Service Management. The West Hunter Street Baptist Church is the only resource within the study area that meets the criteria to be recommended. Therefore, the special resource study finds that the West Hunter Street Baptist Church meets all four criteria to be recommended for designation as a new unit of the National Park Service. See figure 39 below for proposed boundary map.



Figure 39. West Hunter Street Baptist Church Proposed Boundary

CHAPTER 4: NPS MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE

A management alternative is developed for resources found eligible for potential inclusion in the national park system to identify the most efficient and effective way to protect significant resources and provide opportunities for public enjoyment. The NPS special resource study team developed one alternative for resource preservation, visitor services, and interpretation for the nationally significant resource of West Hunter Street Baptist Church.

This chapter describes the action by the National Park Service to preserve key resources and interpret West Hunter Street Baptist Church.

This study does not assume that establishment of a new park will result in immediate funding, and even upon authorization of a new unit, NPS operations would not begin immediately.

ALTERNATIVE: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UNIT

The Concept

In this alternative, an NPS unit would be established at 775 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, SW Atlanta, Georgia at the currently privately-owned West Hunter Street Baptist Church. This key resource has never been open to the public for interpretation, is currently undergoing rehabilitation after being vacant for decades, and will require further rehabilitation for preservation to ensure resource protection. This important resource would provide a venue for NPS interpretation of West Hunter Street Baptist Church's significance for its close association with Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr., an internationally recognized leader of the modern civil rights movement.

This is the only property described for inclusion in this alternative and shown on the map (figure 39) to illustrate the potential boundary envisioned.

National Park Service Role

The National Park Service would own and manage the above-listed property and resources and provide for resource protection and interpretation there. The unit would work closely with the Ralph David Abernathy III Foundation Inc. and Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park on interpretive materials and special events.

Upon acquisition of the church property, the National Park Service would evaluate their needs and undertake recommended treatment plans consistent with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. A cultural landscape report to closely examine the site's history and landscape resource and recommend a treatment plan would be needed, as would a historic structures report, historic resource study, and other studies and plans required by NPS policy.

The National Park Service would work with the Abernathy and King families and other relevant families and individuals associated with Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr. to ensure his life, work, and stories are preserved, presented, and interpreted accurately. The park would also work with the families to secure collections items such as personal effects, papers, documents, furnishings, photos, political effects, etc.

NPS Management Structure

The West Hunter Street Baptist Church site is located in close proximity to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park. Driving time to its headquarters is eleven minutes (2.5 miles) and to the nearest site within that park, the King Family Home, two minutes (0.6 miles). Given the proximity of the two, it makes sense that the potential new site be under the umbrella of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park management but operated as a separate unit, whereas, the superintendent of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park would also serve in that capacity for the church site with additional staff dedicated to West Hunter Street Baptist Church.

This suggests that a mentoring relationship between the two park staffs would be feasible in that the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park could handle certain administrative and oversight functions for both parks, possibly including contracting, purchasing, and hiring. Such a relationship would help to reduce the initial operational expenditures and provide guidance to the site staff of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church site and his or her presumed small staff. Key support staff needed at the potential new site could also include a facility manager, who would be assigned the management responsibilities for site operations, maintenance, and security and a chief of resources or chief ranger to oversee management of interpretation, resources, and visitor access.

Resource Protection

In this alternative, the West Hunter Street Baptist Church would be under NPS ownership, assuming a willing seller, allowing NPS knowledge and resources to be applied to this historic and nationally significant structure. The church is on a 0.181-acre property and is vacant. The owner has stabilized the structure and is currently restoring key elements of its architectural features to the period of significance, saving it from decades of deterioration, with the intention of the NPS managing it for public interpretation. The National Park Service would still have some restoration and one-time costs involved with making it occupiable.

Planning and data needs that would guide future management direction and document the resources are yet to be identified but would be likely to include a park foundation document and possibly a site plan. A foundation document would aid in determining what planning and data needs are essential. Interpretation needs are likely to include long-range interpretive and exhibit planning. Resource needs are likely to include a cultural landscape report, historic structure report, and HABS/HAERS documentation.

Visitor Experience

Visitors to an NPS unit of West Hunter Street Baptist Church would have the opportunity for an in-depth exploration of the church that served as Reverend Dr. Ralph David Abernathy Sr.'s workspace while pastoring at the church and when he was the SCLC secretary-treasurer and later president of the organization. The property also offers the opportunity to discuss the role the African American church played in fighting racial oppression during the modern civil rights movement.

Visitors to West Hunter Street Baptist Church would have the opportunity for orientation to the site, to view Dr. Abernathy's office, and to view the church and its architecture. Visitors could learn exceptional stories and experience in-depth interpretation of Dr. Abernathy's work. Nearby privately-owned businesses where Dr. Abernathy and other civil rights movement activists frequented could be experienced from the public right-of-way.

Costs

NPS management of a unit consisting of West Hunter Street Baptist Church would be funded through federal appropriations as part of the annual NPS budget. Under this alternative, the National Park Service would own and manage approximately 0.181 acres on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. While no detailed estimates of operating costs have been completed for this study, similar NPS sites illustrate the potential range, although it is difficult to liken NPS sites of comparable size since the study site is so small. Similar NPS sites have staff ranging from 0 to 12 FTE positions; the operations envisioned in this alternative would probably require 7 to 12 FTEs. Similar NPS sites typically receive annual funding ranging from \$700,000 to \$1.4 million. The total annual maintenance and operational costs for West Hunter Street Baptist Church are estimated to be between \$1.2 million and \$1.5 million.

Additional funds for capital improvements would be awarded through the NPS competitive process. One-time facilities costs would primarily focus on bringing the building's fire alarm, fire suppression, and HVAC systems up to code; meeting legally mandated Architectural Barriers Act accessibility standards for federal facilities; and reconfiguring the interior space to meet National Park Service needs, including a visitor orientation space. One-time facilities improvements and restoration costs of the church required for visitor access are estimated to be \$2 million; however, the costs may be substantially lower as the Foundation continues to improve the property. Acquisition costs for the 0.181-acre site could range between approximately \$400,000 and \$600,000 (though donations are often the course of action taken). These estimates are assumptions about the property, and more detailed estimates would be developed as part of future management planning if a unit is designated.

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APPENDIX A: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX B: LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING THIS SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

PUBLIC LAW 113-291—DEC. 19, 2014

128 STAT. 3799

(2) the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park shall be adjusted to reflect the acquisition of the land; and
(3) the acquired land shall be administered as part of the Vicksburg National Military Park in accordance with applicable laws (including regulations).

Subtitle D—National Park System Studies, Management, and Related Matters

SEC. 3050. REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND WAR OF 1812 AMERICAN BATTLE- FIELD PROTECTION PROGRAM.

Section 7301(c) of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11) is amended as follows:

54 USC 308103.

(1) In paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking subparagraph (A) and inserting the following:

“(A) BATTLEFIELD REPORT.—The term ‘battlefield report’ means, collectively—

“(i) the report entitled ‘Report on the Nation’s Civil War Battlefields’, prepared by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, and dated July 1993; and

“(ii) the report entitled ‘Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States’, prepared by the National Park Service, and dated September 2007.”; and

(B) in subparagraph (C)(ii), by striking “Battlefield Report” and inserting “battlefield report”.

(2) In paragraph (2), by inserting “eligible sites or” after “acquiring”.

(3) In paragraph (3), by inserting “an eligible site or” after “acquire”.

(4) In paragraph (4), by inserting “an eligible site or” after “acquiring”.

(5) In paragraph (5), by striking “An” and inserting “An eligible site or an”.

(6) By redesignating paragraph (6) as paragraph (9).

(7) By inserting after paragraph (5) the following new paragraphs:

“(6) WILLING SELLERS.—Acquisition of land or interests in land under this subsection shall be from willing sellers only.

“(7) REPORT.—Not later than 5 years after the date of the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the activities carried out under this subsection, including a description of—

“(A) preservation activities carried out at the battlefields and associated sites identified in the battlefield report during the period between publication of the battlefield report and the report required under this paragraph;

“(B) changes in the condition of the battlefields and associated sites during that period; and

“(C) any other relevant developments relating to the battlefields and associated sites during that period.

“(8) PROHIBITION ON LOBBYING.—None of the funds provided pursuant to this section shall be used in any way, directly

or indirectly, to influence congressional action on any legislation or appropriation matters pending before Congress.”.

(8) In paragraph (9) (as redesignated by paragraph (6)), by striking “2014” and inserting “2021”.

SEC. 3051. SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this section as the “Secretary”) shall conduct a special resource study regarding each area, site, and issue identified in subsection (b) to evaluate—

(1) the national significance of the area, site, or issue; and

(2) the suitability and feasibility of designating such an area or site as a unit of the National Park System.

(b) STUDIES.—The areas, sites, and issues referred to in subsection (a) are the following:

(1) LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER, LOUISIANA.—Sites along the lower Mississippi River in the State of Louisiana, including Fort St. Philip, Fort Jackson, the Head of Passes, and any related and supporting historical, cultural, or recreational resource located in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana.

(2) BUFFALO SOLDIERS.—The role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the early years of the National Park System, including an evaluation of appropriate ways to enhance historical research, education, interpretation, and public awareness of the story of the stewardship role of the Buffalo Soldiers in the National Parks, including ways to link the story to the development of National Parks and the story of African-American military service following the Civil War.

(3) ROTA, COMMONWEALTH OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS.—Prehistoric, historic, and limestone forest sites on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(4) PRISON SHIP MONUMENT, NEW YORK.—The Prison Ship Martyrs’ Monument in Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn, New York.

(5) FLUSHING REMONSTRANCE, NEW YORK.—The John Bowne House, located at 3701 Bowne Street, Queens, New York, the Friends Meeting House located at 137-17 Northern Boulevard, Queens, New York, and other resources in the vicinity of Flushing, New York, relating to the history of religious freedom during the era of the signing of the Flushing Remonstrance.

(6) WEST HUNTER STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, GEORGIA.—The historic West Hunter Street Baptist Church, located at 775 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SW, Atlanta, Georgia, and the block on which the church is located.

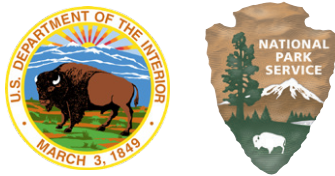
(7) MILL SPRINGS BATTLEFIELD, KENTUCKY.—The area encompassed by the National Historic Landmark designations relating to the 1862 Battle of Mill Springs located in Pulaski and Wayne Counties in the State of Kentucky.

(8) NEW PHILADELPHIA, ILLINOIS.—The New Philadelphia archeological site and surrounding land in the State of Illinois.

(c) CRITERIA.—In conducting a study under this section, the Secretary shall use the criteria for the study of areas for potential inclusion in the National Park System described in section 8(c) of Public Law 91-383 (commonly known as the “National Park System General Authorities Act”) (16 U.S.C. 1a-5(c)).

(d) CONTENTS.—Each study authorized by this section shall—

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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