

A detailed, light-colored map of an urban area, likely the Canal District, showing streets, buildings, and a canal. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey layer.

INITIAL FINDINGS CANAL DISTRICT MARKET OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

**February 17, 2026
Public Engagement Session**

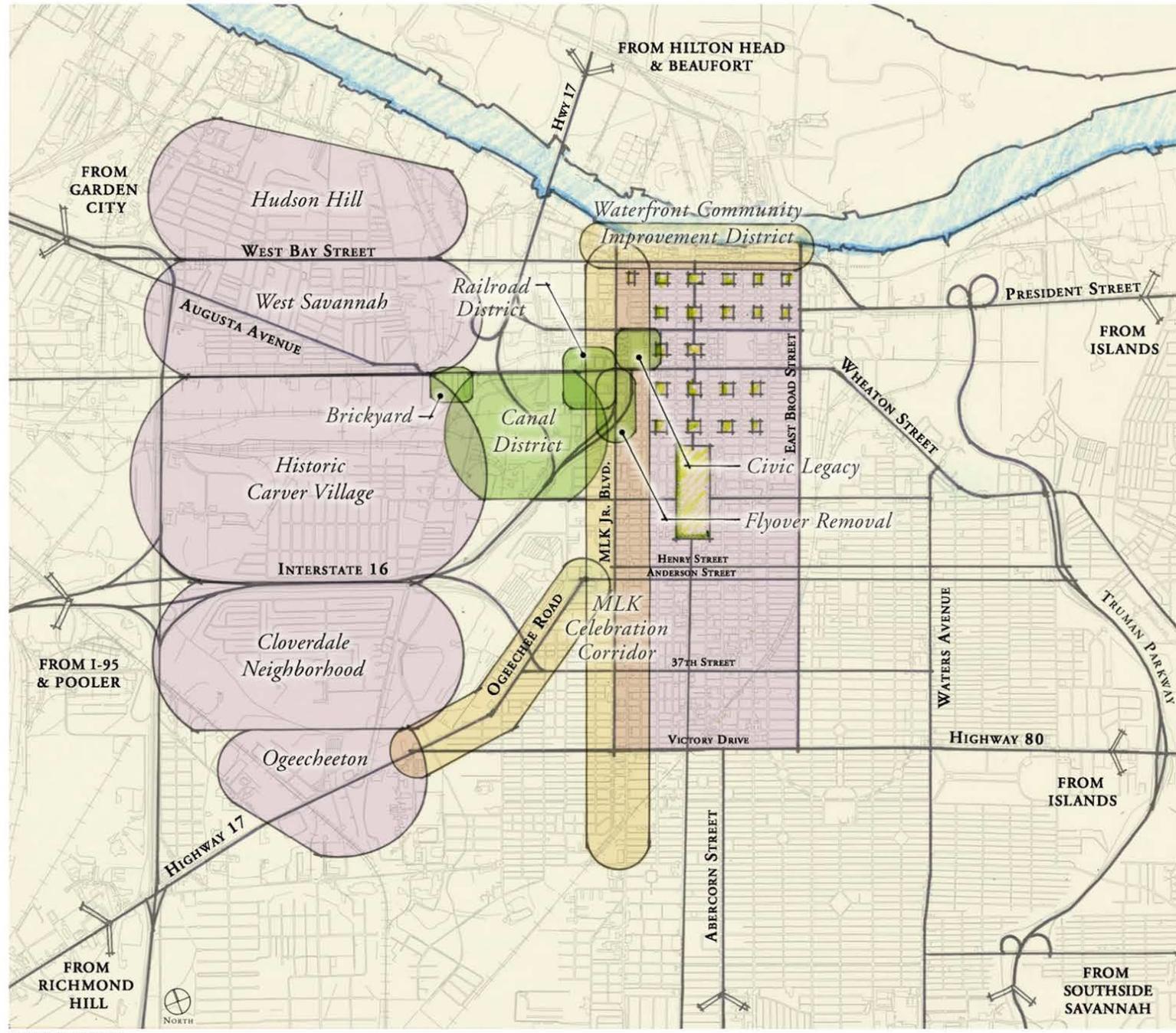
THE CONSULTANT TEAM



Overview of Areas

Civic Center Area

MLK, Jr. Boulevard, I-16 Flyover
Railroad District & Canal District

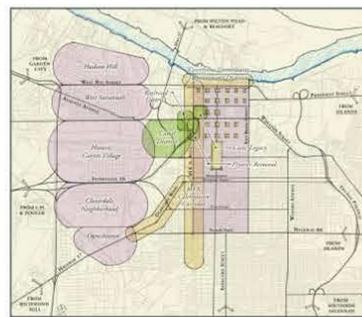


DISTRICT AND CORRIDOR PLANNING INITIATIVES

SAVANNAH GEORGIA

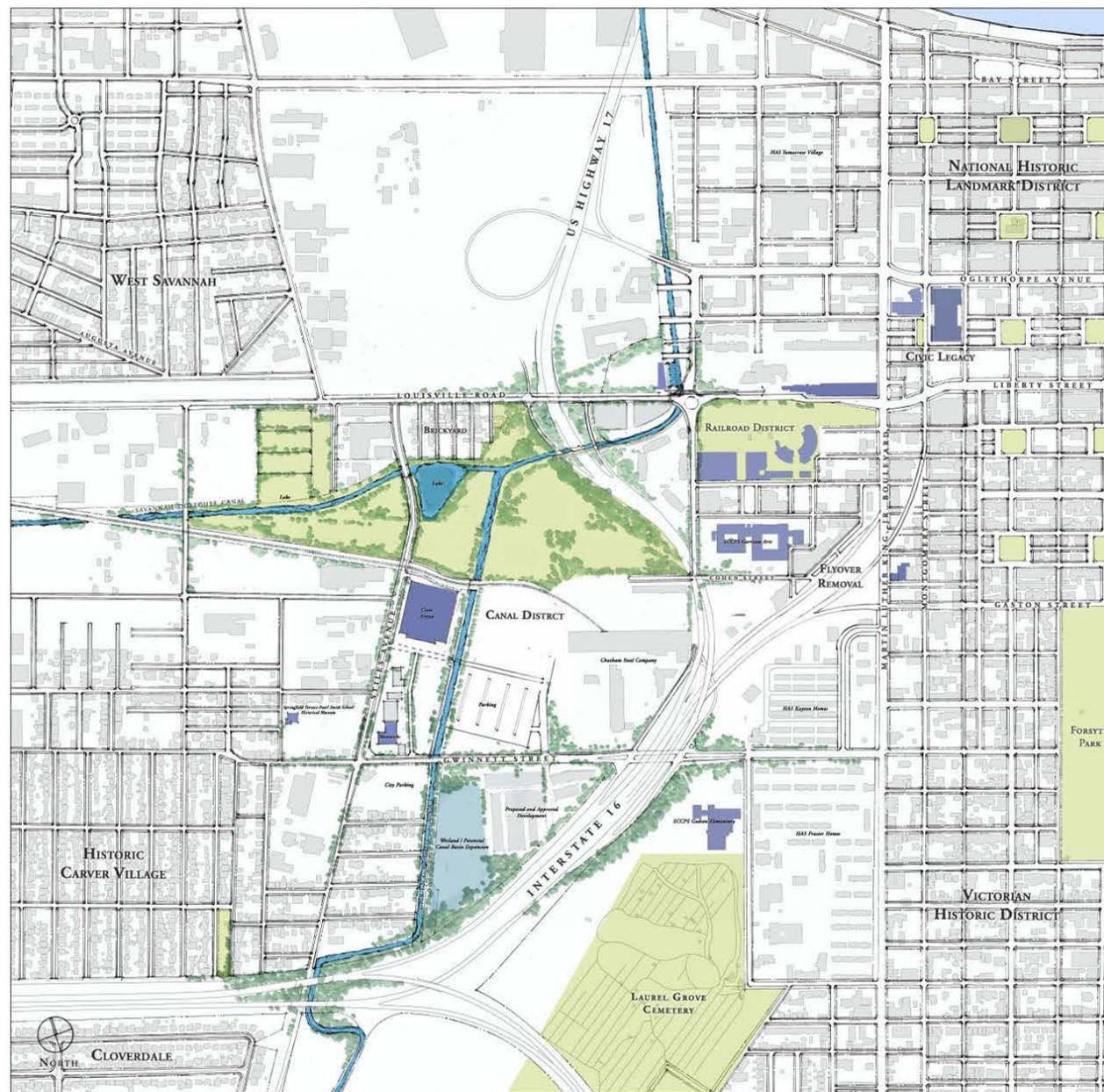


REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY



PLANNING INITIATIVES

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NEIGHBORHOOD AND HOUSING CONNECTIONS

Restoring Savannah's Community Connections

Civic Legacy

A comprehensive plan for the 7-acre Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center site in historic Savannah, will include arena removal, preservation of the Johnny Mercer Theater, the addition of a new multi-use structure, restoration of the historic street grid, and mixed-use redevelopment with a focus on housing. Ongoing planning is prioritizing contextual, equitable redevelopment.

Railroad District

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SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

City of Savannah
Sottile & Sottile Urban Design

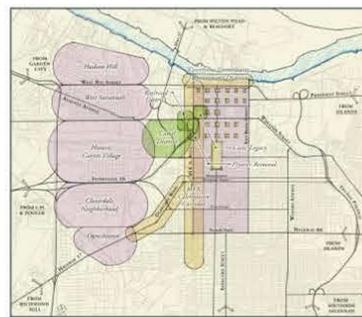
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WINTER 2026

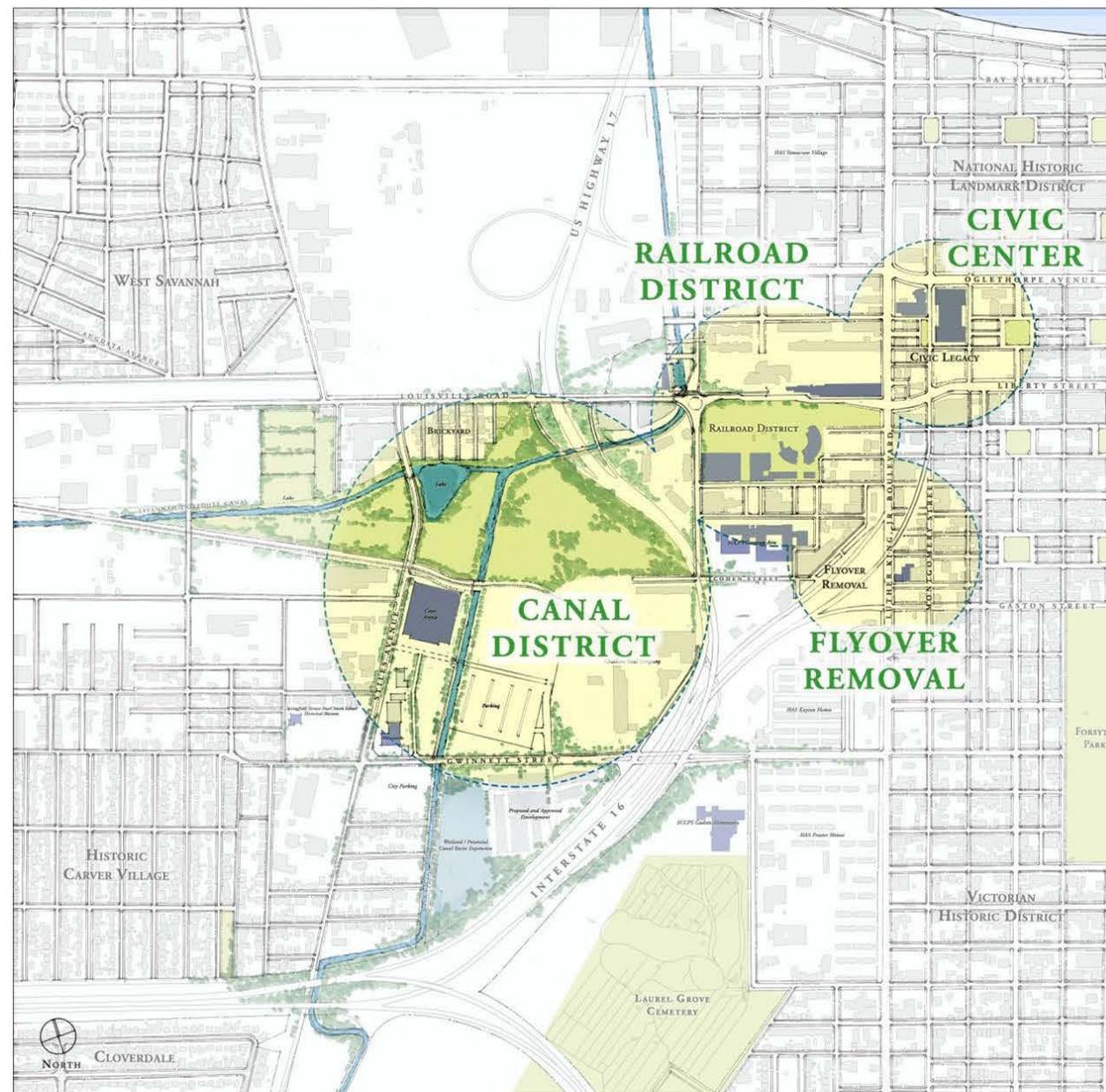


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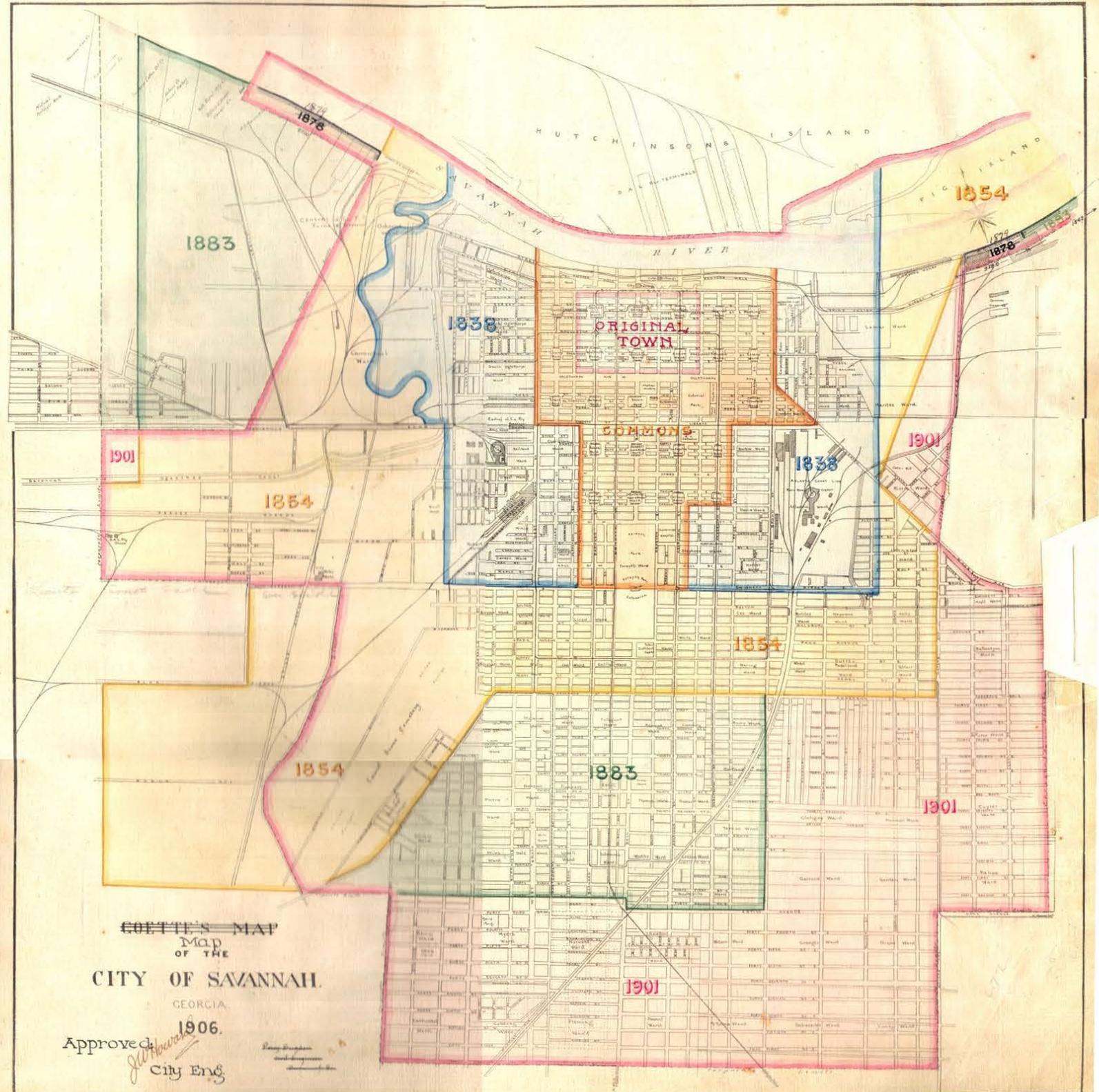
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WINTER 2026

History & Evolution

A Growing City...



COETTS' MAP
 Map
 OF THE
 CITY OF SAVANNAH.
 GEORGIA.

Approved *J. Howard*
 City Eng.

James Howard
 City Eng.

Transit and Transportation...



1871

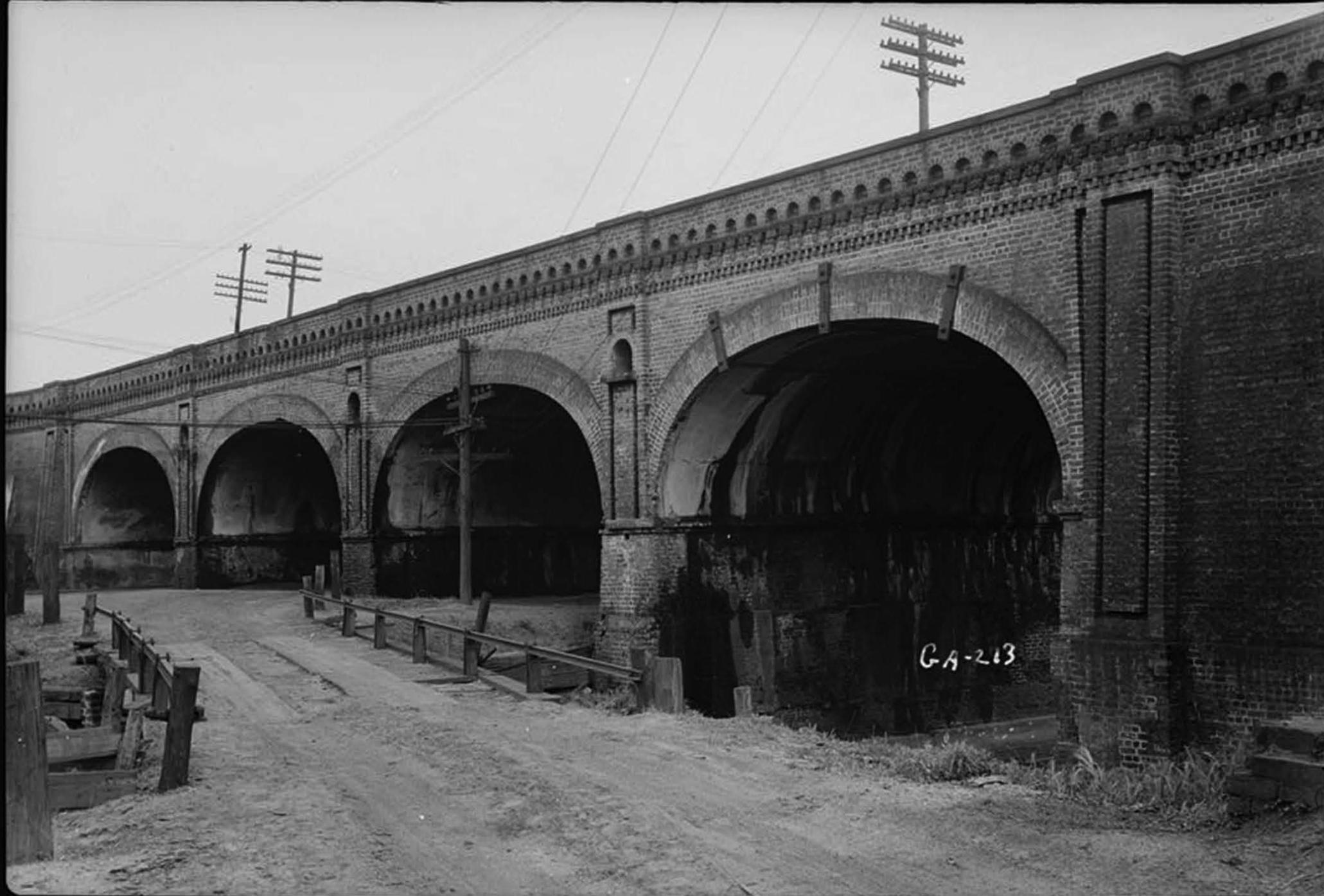
1891





GA., 26-SAV, 17-1

HABS



GA-213

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H.A.E.R. No. GA-131-18



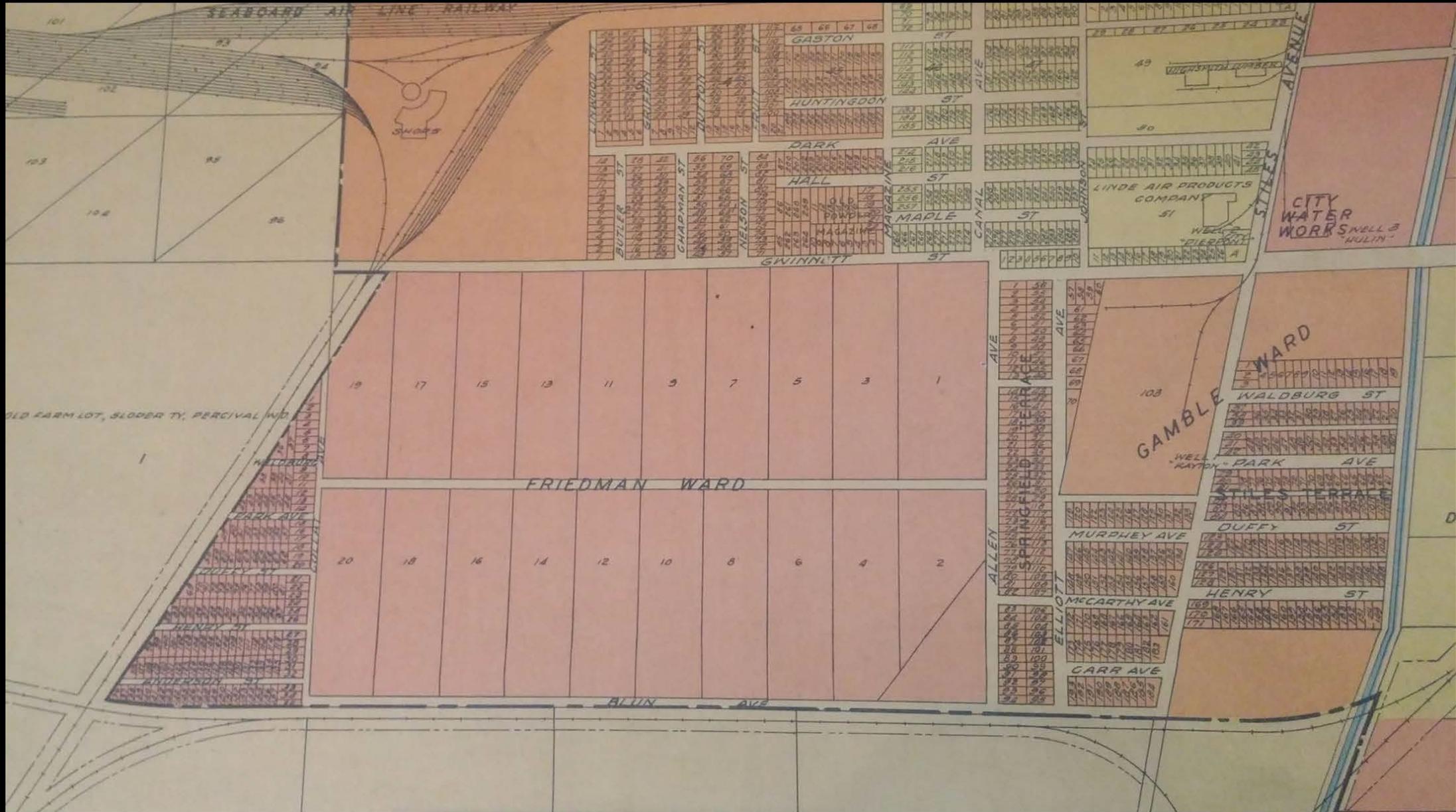
HAER No. GA-139-33

Westward Neighborhood Expansion...

Post World War II Housing Expansion...

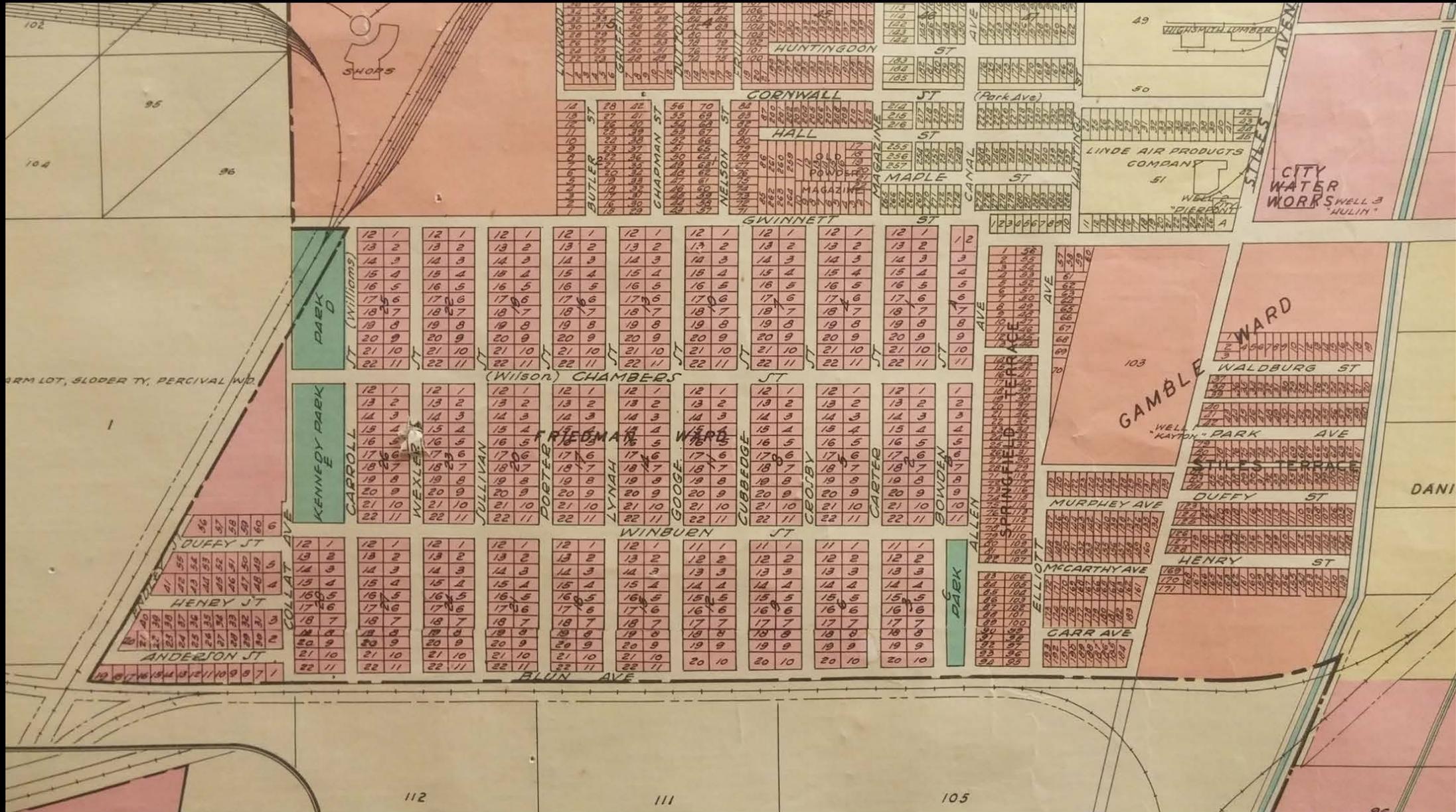
CARVER VILLAGE
1947

Materials shortages and construction moratoriums imposed by the war effort led to a dire need for housing in Savannah after World War II. Carver Village was platted in 1947 to provide quality housing for Savannah's African American community, and particularly black active military members and veterans.



1945

Friedman Ward prior to re-platting.



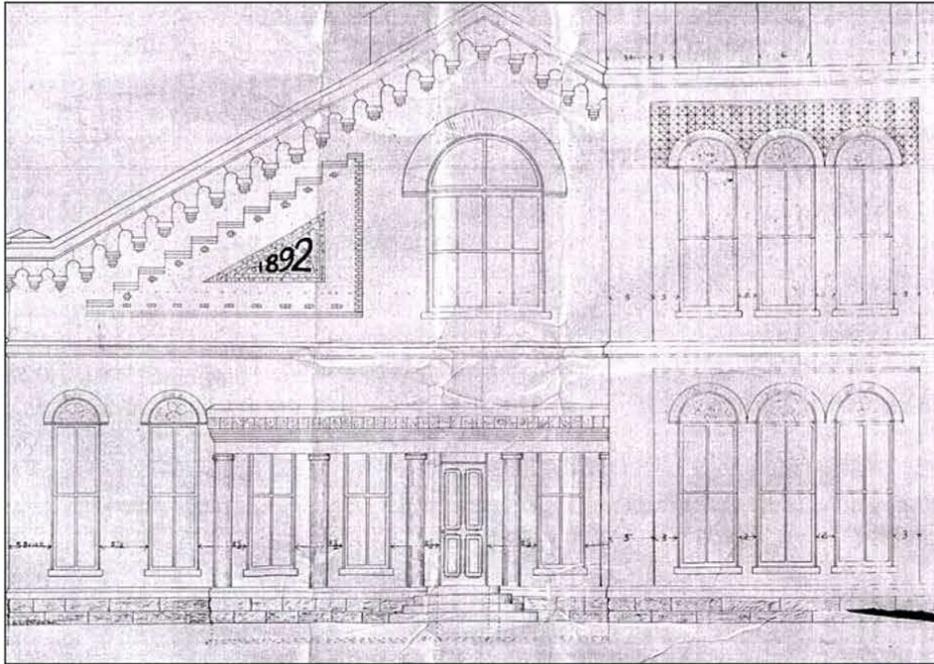
1953

Carver Village



2016 – Carver Village application for National Register of Historic Places designation status was accepted by the State of Georgia

Landmark Public Facilities...



Savannah Water Works Pump House, East Elevation,
drawn by Thomas T. Johnston, Consulting Engineer and G. L. Christy, c. 1891-1892⁶

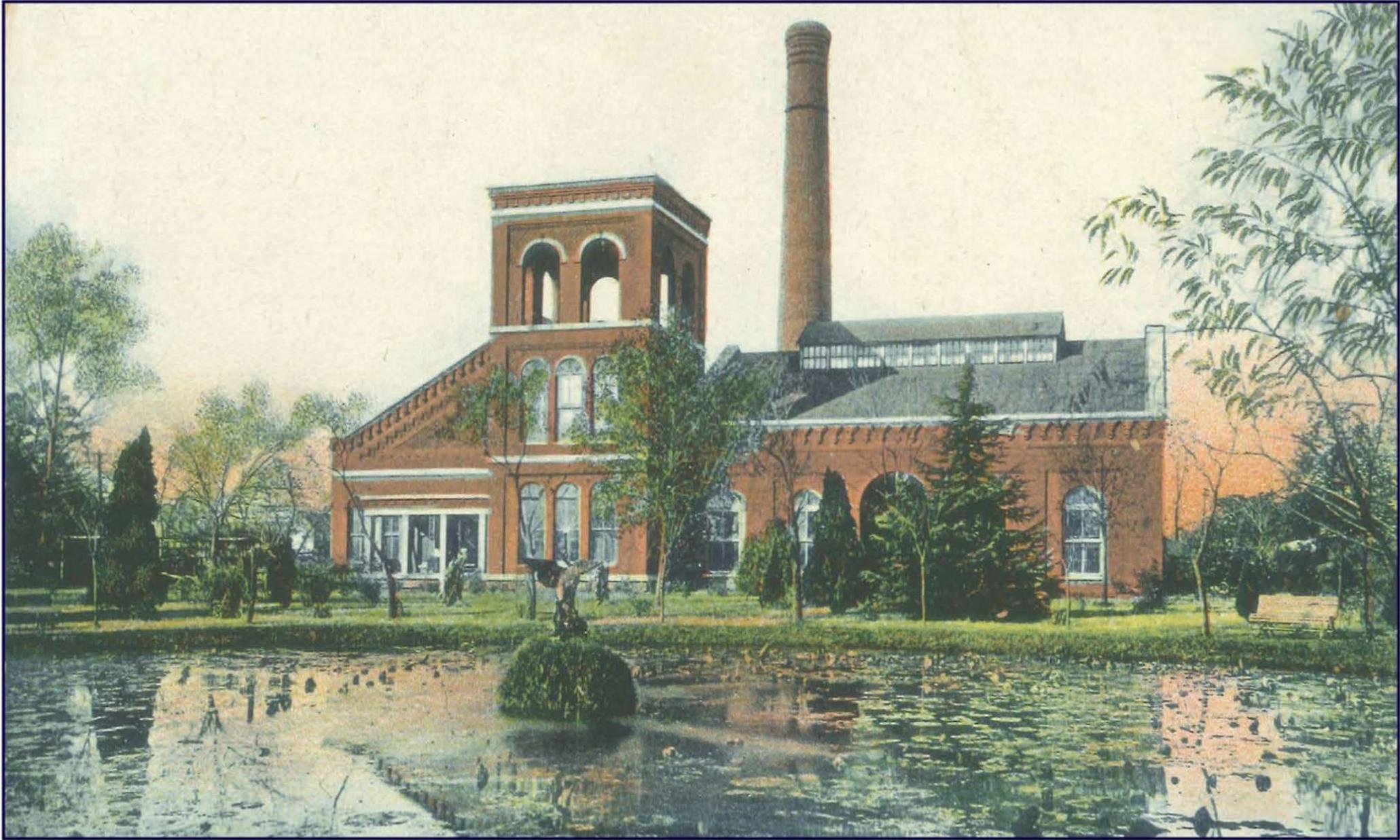
“The building will be of red pressed brick, with granite and terra cotta trimmings and will be quite a handsome and imposing structure.”

Savannah Morning News, 21 November 1892

“...protecting the interests of the City and securing for the public as economically as possible with good and substantial work a system of new water works with the increased supply so much needed to secure the comfort and protect the health of our community now and for years to come.”

Savannah Mayor John J. McDonough – 1891





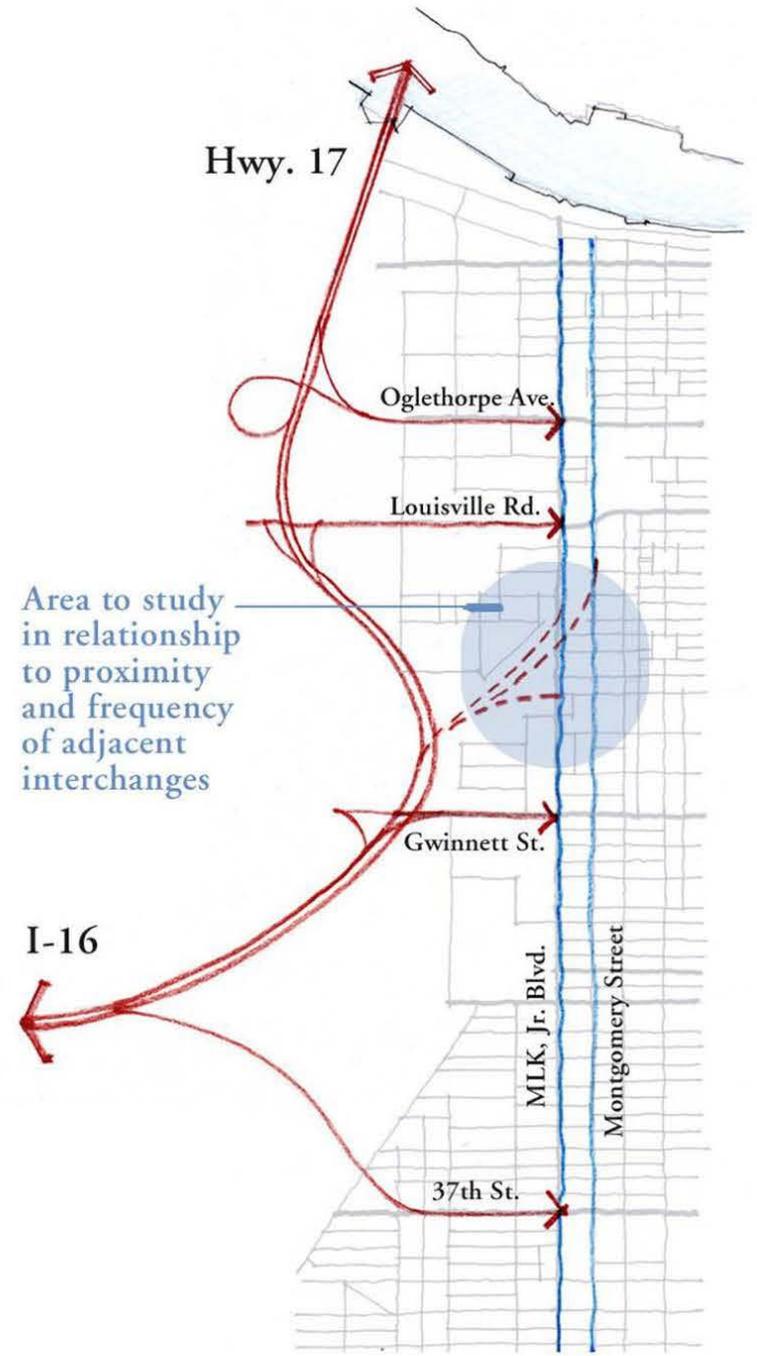
Gwinnett Street Station (Courtesy of City of Savannah, Research Library of Municipal Libraries on Behalf of V & J Duncan Antique Maps and Prints)

Henry Rose Carter Memorial Laboratory



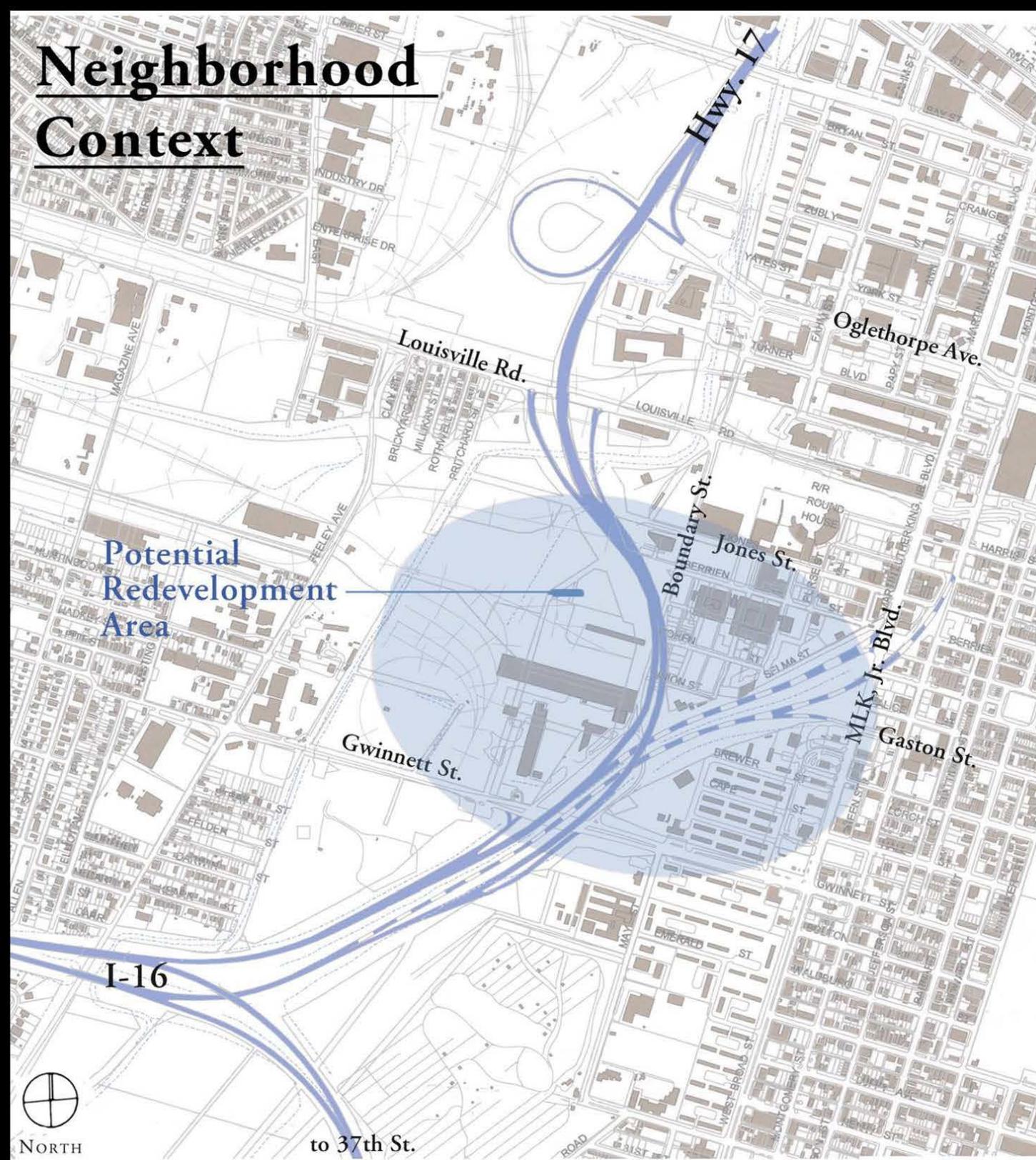
*Malaria Control in War Areas, Henry Rose Carter Laboratory, Savannah, Georgia, 1944.
National Library of Medicine.*

Reconnecting Blocks at the I-16 Flyover



I-16 Access to Western Edge

Neighborhood Context

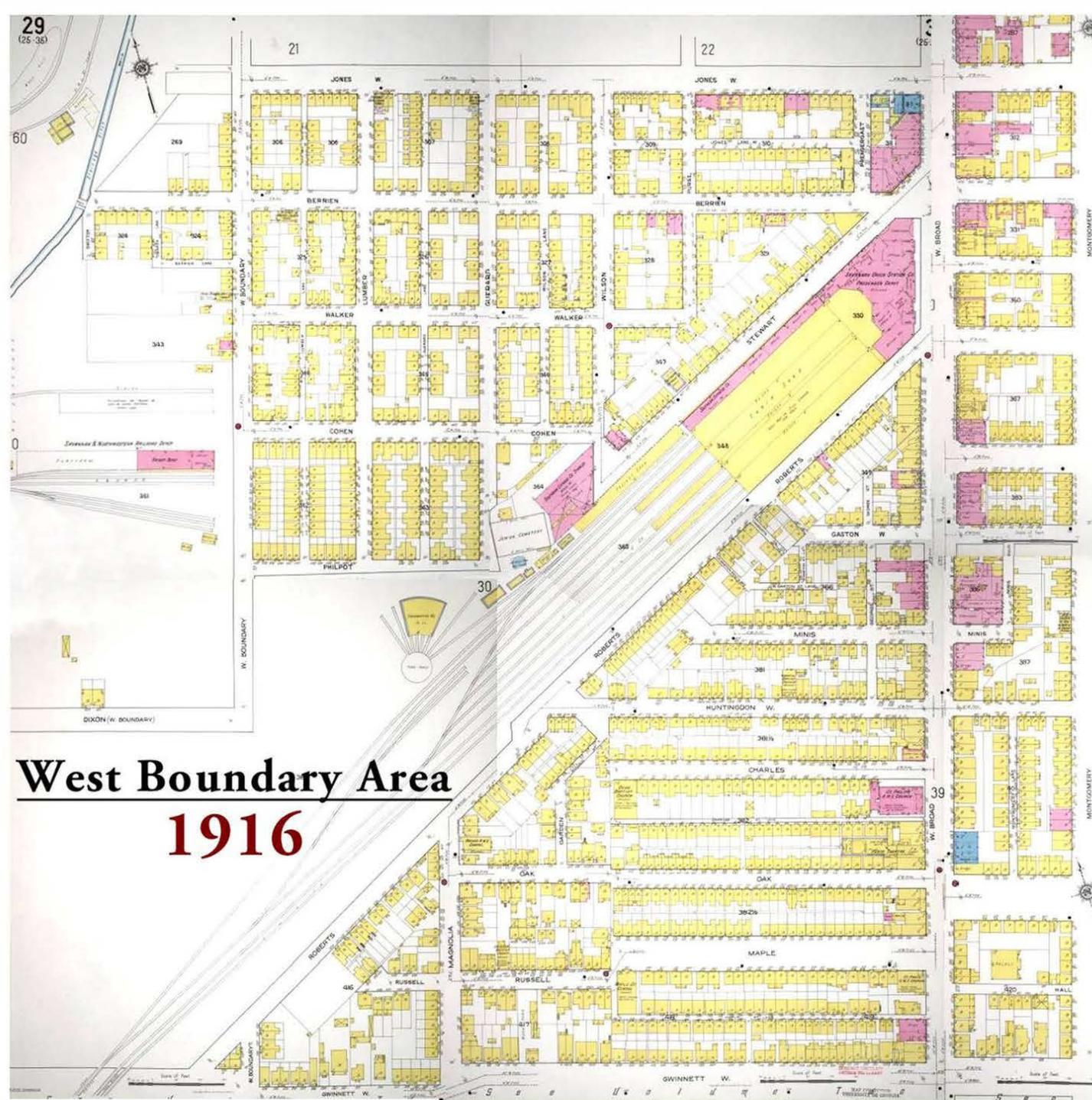


Potential
Redevelopment
Area



NORTH

to 37th St.



West Boundary Area 1916

Sanborn Map, 1916

In 1916, Savannah's Union Station occupied the site where the I-16 Flyover currently exists at an angle to the city's street grid. Neighborhoods developed to the north and south of the station and railroad tracks in continuity with the rectilinear block pattern, meeting the rail tracks and station at their angle.



UNION TRUST BLDG. W. BROAD STREET.



Savannah Morning News.

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 2007 • SAVANNAHNOW.COM  LIGHT OF THE COASTAL EMPIRE • 50 CENTS



Photos by John Carrington/Savannah Morning News

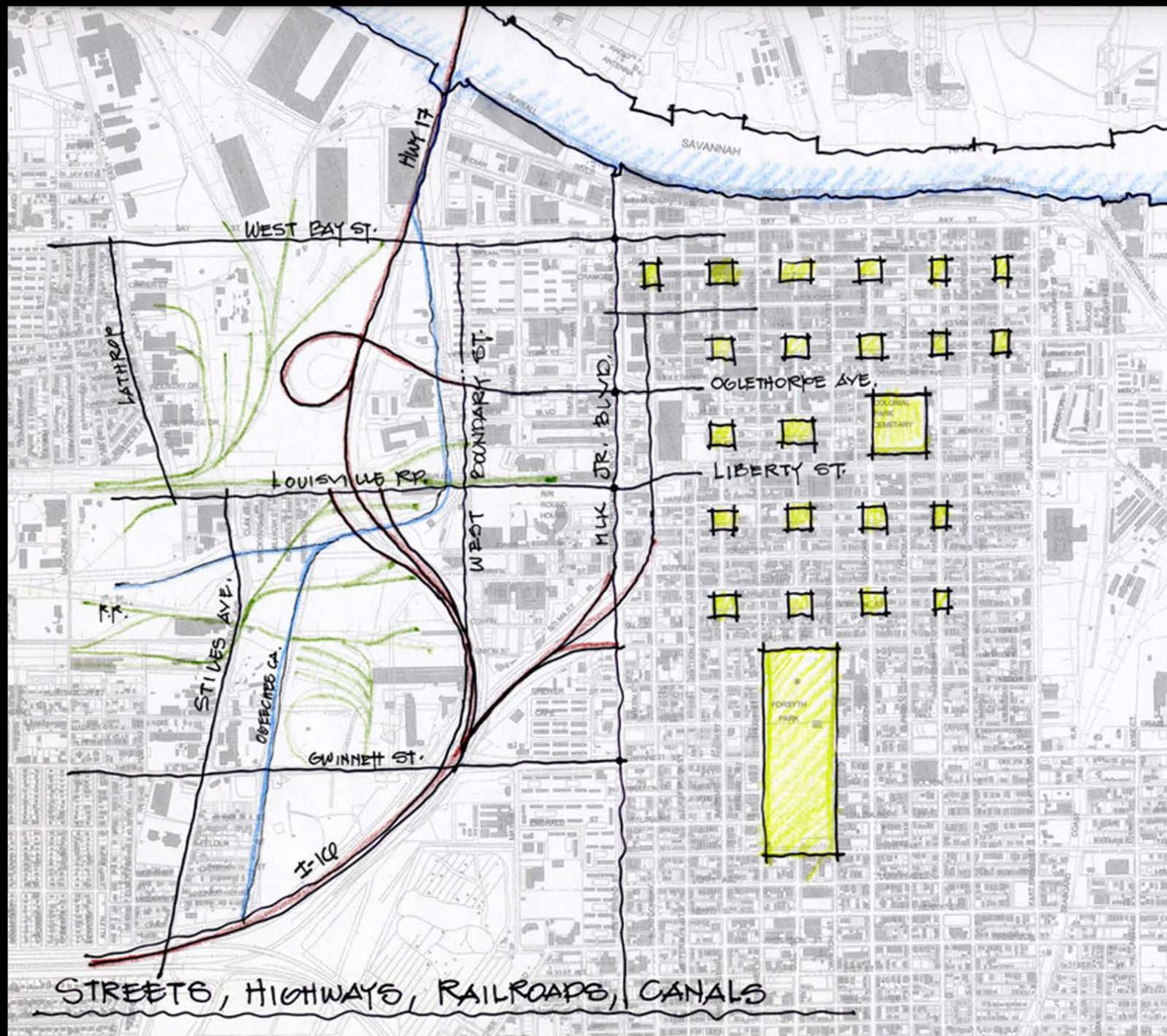
The historic Union Station railroad terminal and an assortment of other historic buildings between what used to be Berrien and Wayne streets were razed in the early 1960s to make way for the Interstate 16 overpass at what is now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

City's 'iron curtain' could be torn down

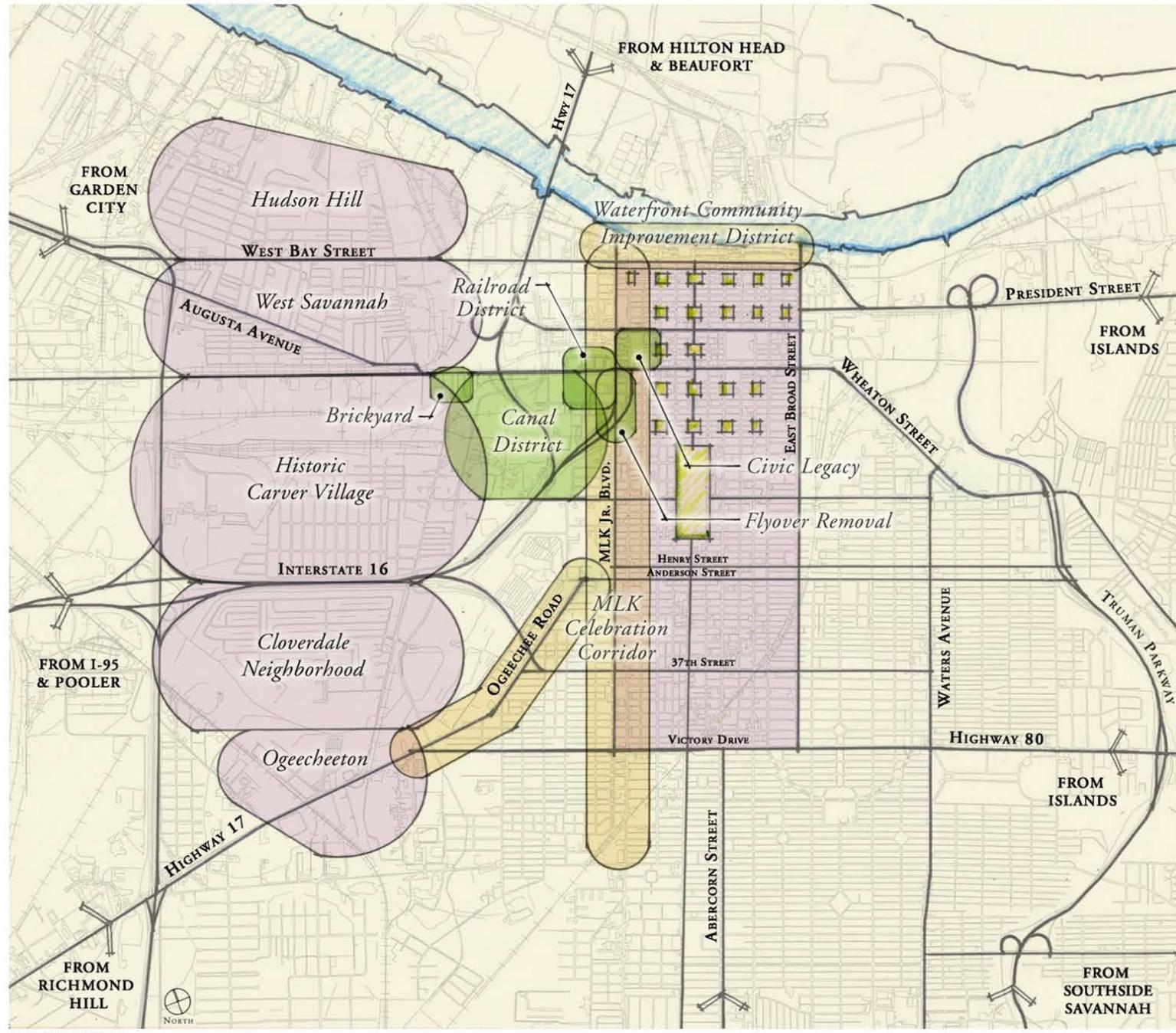
Preservationists, planners agree I-16 flyover is an impediment to progress



Existing Street Pattern



The Canal District Today...

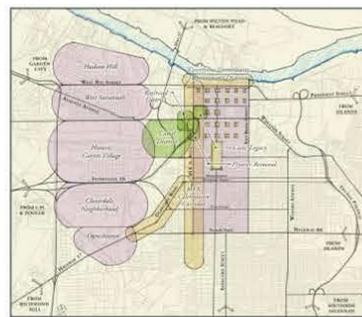


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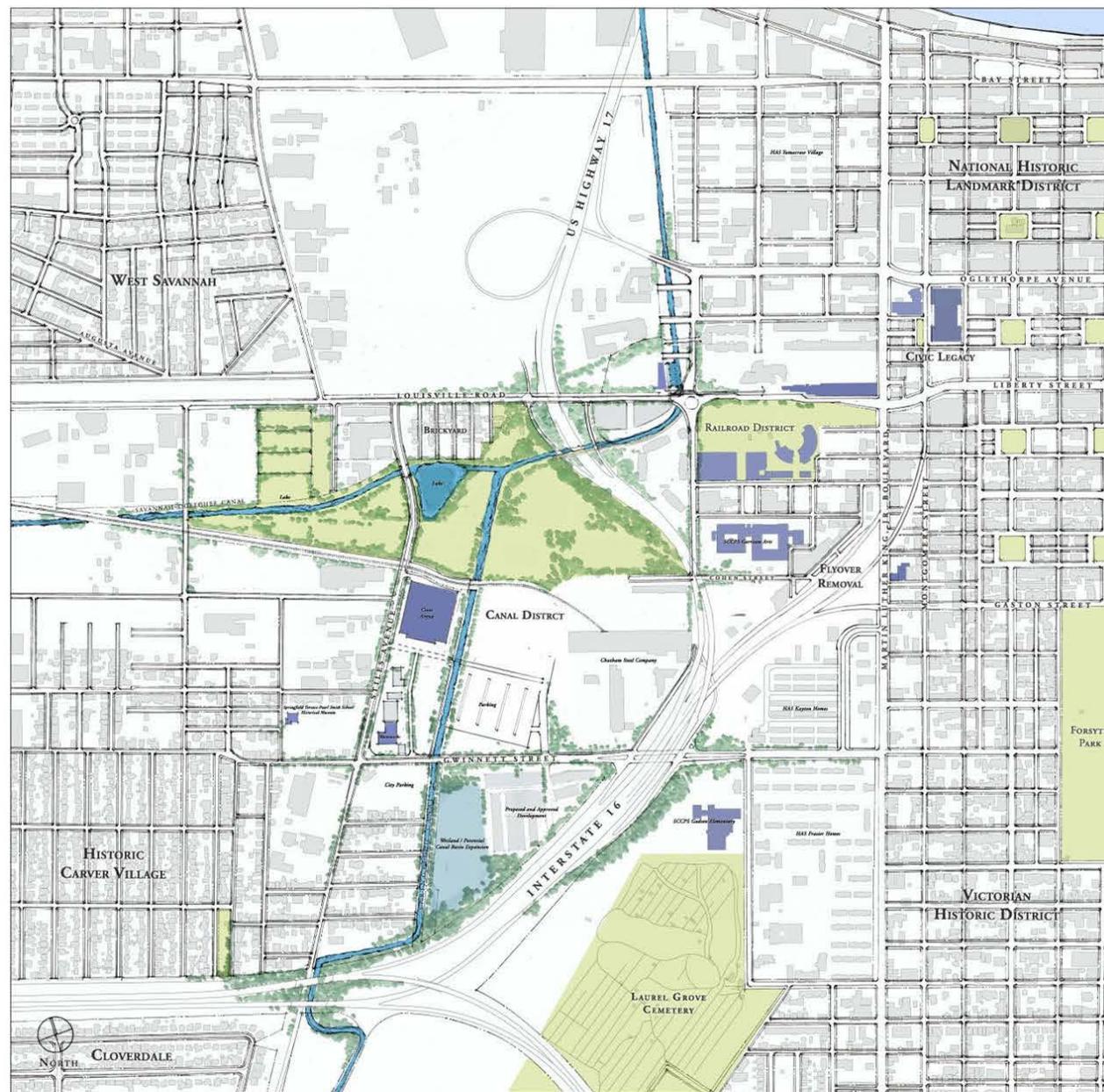


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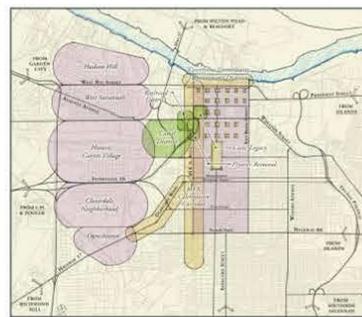
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WINTER 2026

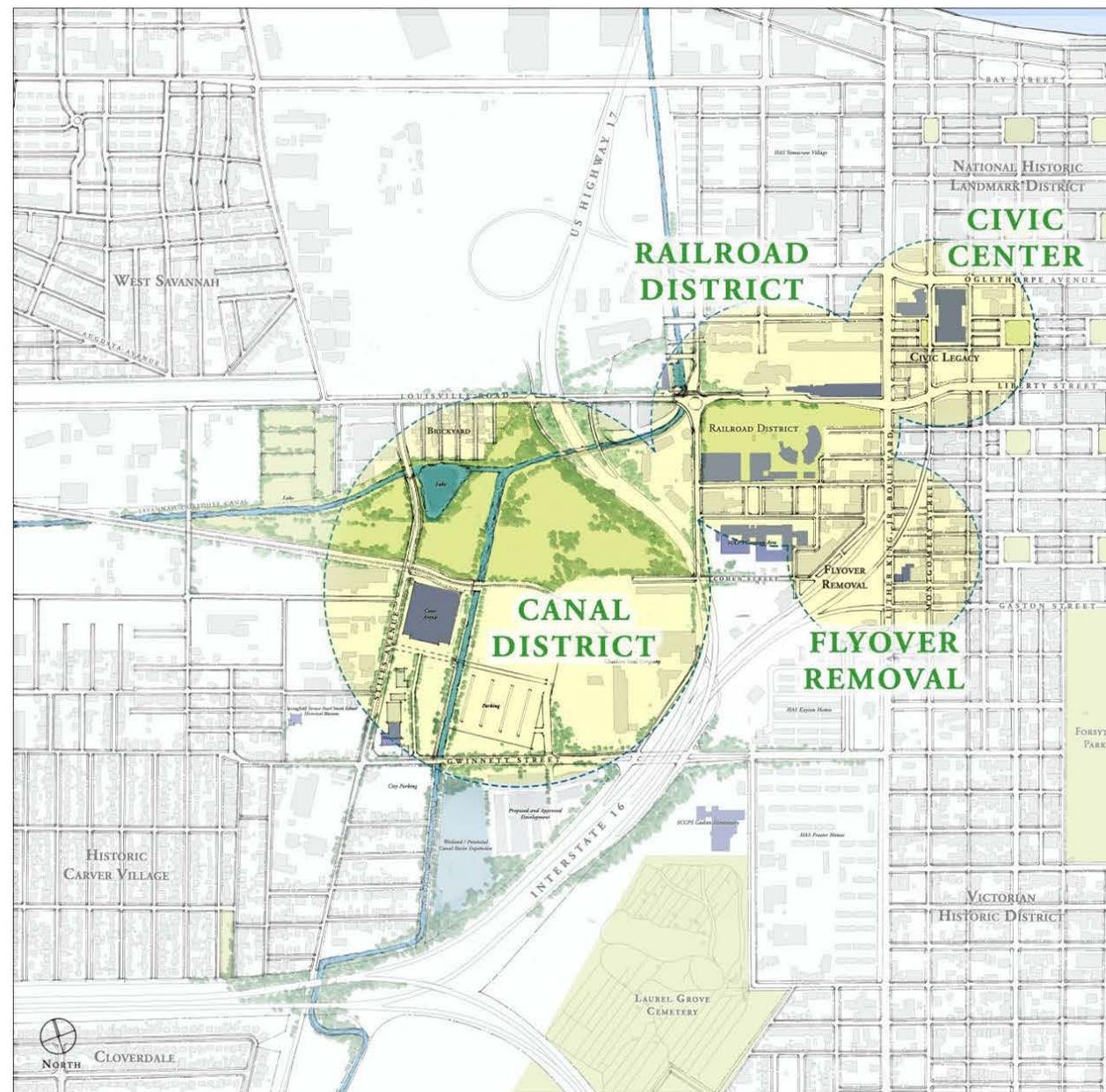


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WINTER 2026

IDEAS WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR FROM THE COMMUNITY

Community Goals & Equity Outcomes

- ▶ Prevent displacement of legacy residents, with explicit protections provided in the development process
- ▶ Affordable homeownership opportunities and deeply affordable rental housing
- ▶ Small business wealth-building opportunities

Anti-Displacement & Affordability Tools

- ▶ Consider full suite of programs to empower local community ownership
- ▶ City-held, revenue-generating amenities to cross-subsidize affordability
- ▶ Understand spectrum of available tools from local projects (e.g. Habitat for Humanity)

Fiscal, Tax, & Financial Considerations

- ▶ Clarify tax and revenue expectations, especially where City-owned assets do not generate property tax
- ▶ Evaluate the tradeoffs between public control and fiscal productivity
- ▶ Leverage increases in the tax base to reinvest in place, through mechanisms like tax allocation districts (TADs)

Implementation & Process Guidance

- ▶ Importance of intentional, ongoing engagement, not just one-and-done outreach
- ▶ Focus on opportunities to involve local nonprofits in implementation
- ▶ Share and understand best-practice case studies, where investment does not result in displacement

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Development of City-owned land in the Canal District can...



Create wealth-building opportunities

- ▶ Build diverse and attainable housing options
- ▶ Deliver spaces where local entrepreneurs and small business owners can flourish
- ▶ Focus on small-scale projects where locally based firms can take the lead



Improve economic resilience

- ▶ Drive foot traffic to the area
- ▶ Create a balanced mix of residential and commercial development
- ▶ Any development that does not directly serve local residents helps make other projects successful



Support past and future City investments

- ▶ Generate tax revenue to support continued investment
- ▶ Create destinations as reason to use Tide to Town trail
- ▶ Increase the Enmarket Arena's return on investment to the local community



Ensure preservation of legacy residents and businesses

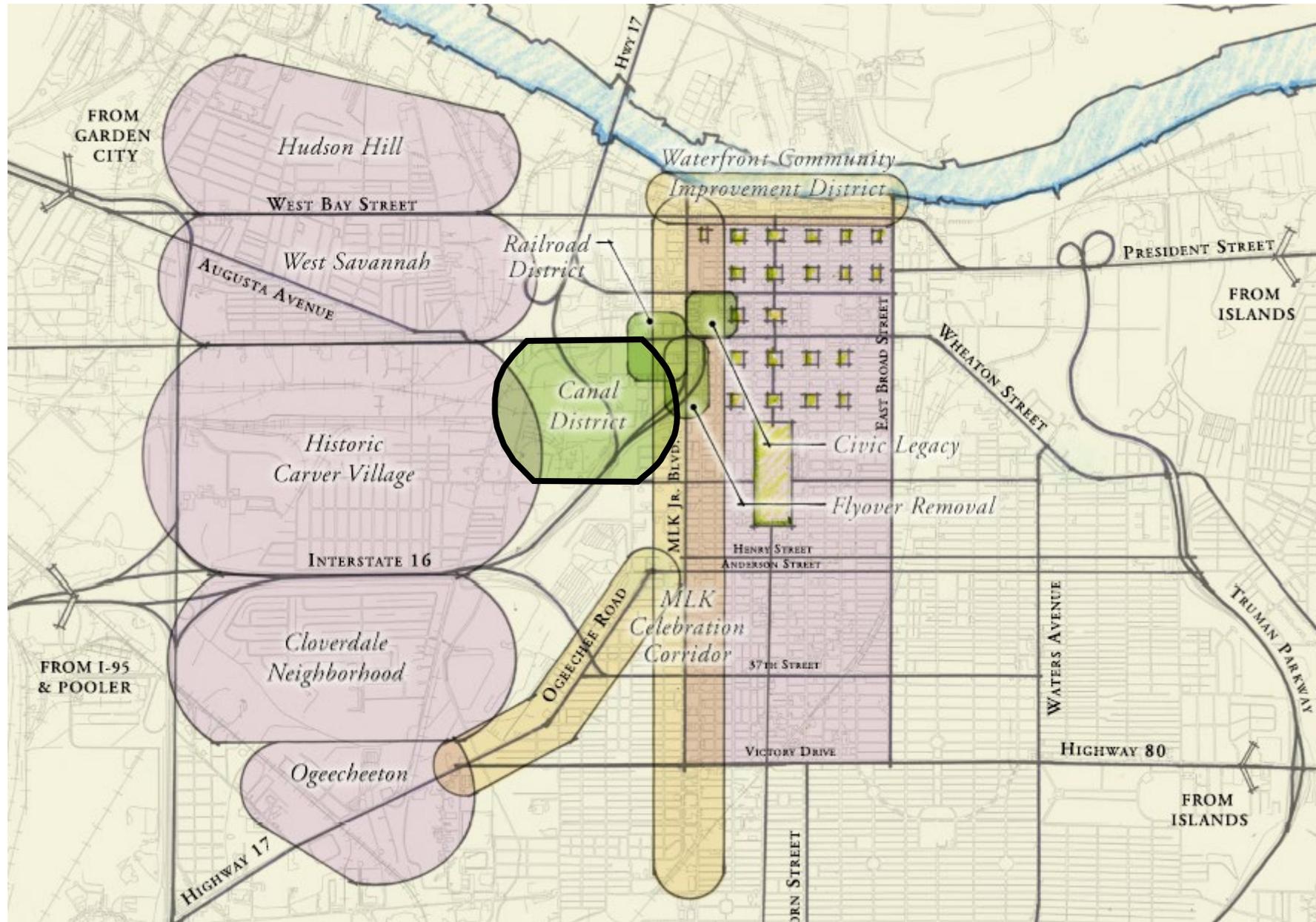
- ▶ Prioritize housing options affordable to existing neighborhood households
- ▶ Explore strategies that keep investment within neighborhoods and expand local participation in real estate value creation

Any other “guiding principles” we should be thinking about?

What does success here mean to you?

BROADER CONTEXT

BROADER AREA CONTEXT

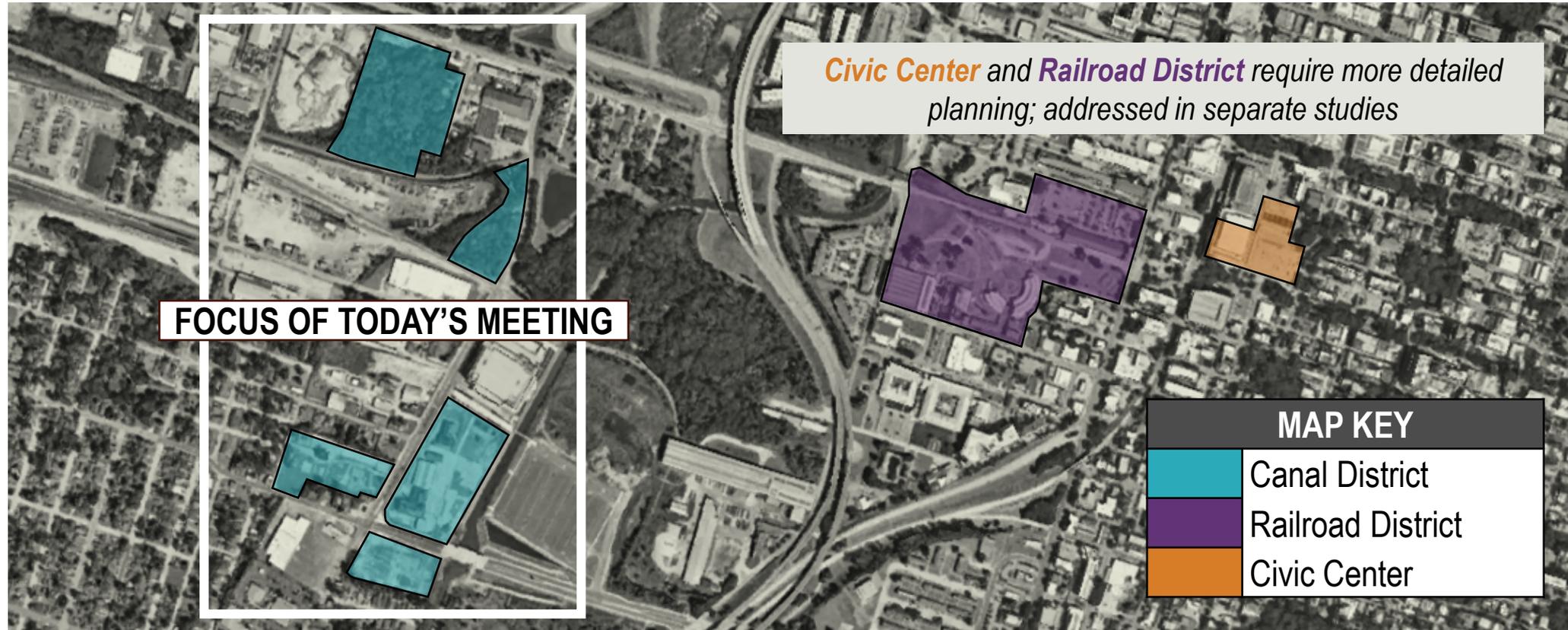


The Canal District plays a key role in connecting Westside neighborhoods to the Historic District.

Because this area is so critical, the City must ensure long-term planning is informed by a clear understanding of all the different ways this district can serve Savannah residents.

Source: Sottile & Sottile

MAP OF STUDY AREAS



Canal District

- ▶ Made up of several large sites, vacant land, and underutilized City-owned buildings
- ▶ The City is already investing here (canal and trail improvements, arena) but needs analysis to guide more detailed planning in the future

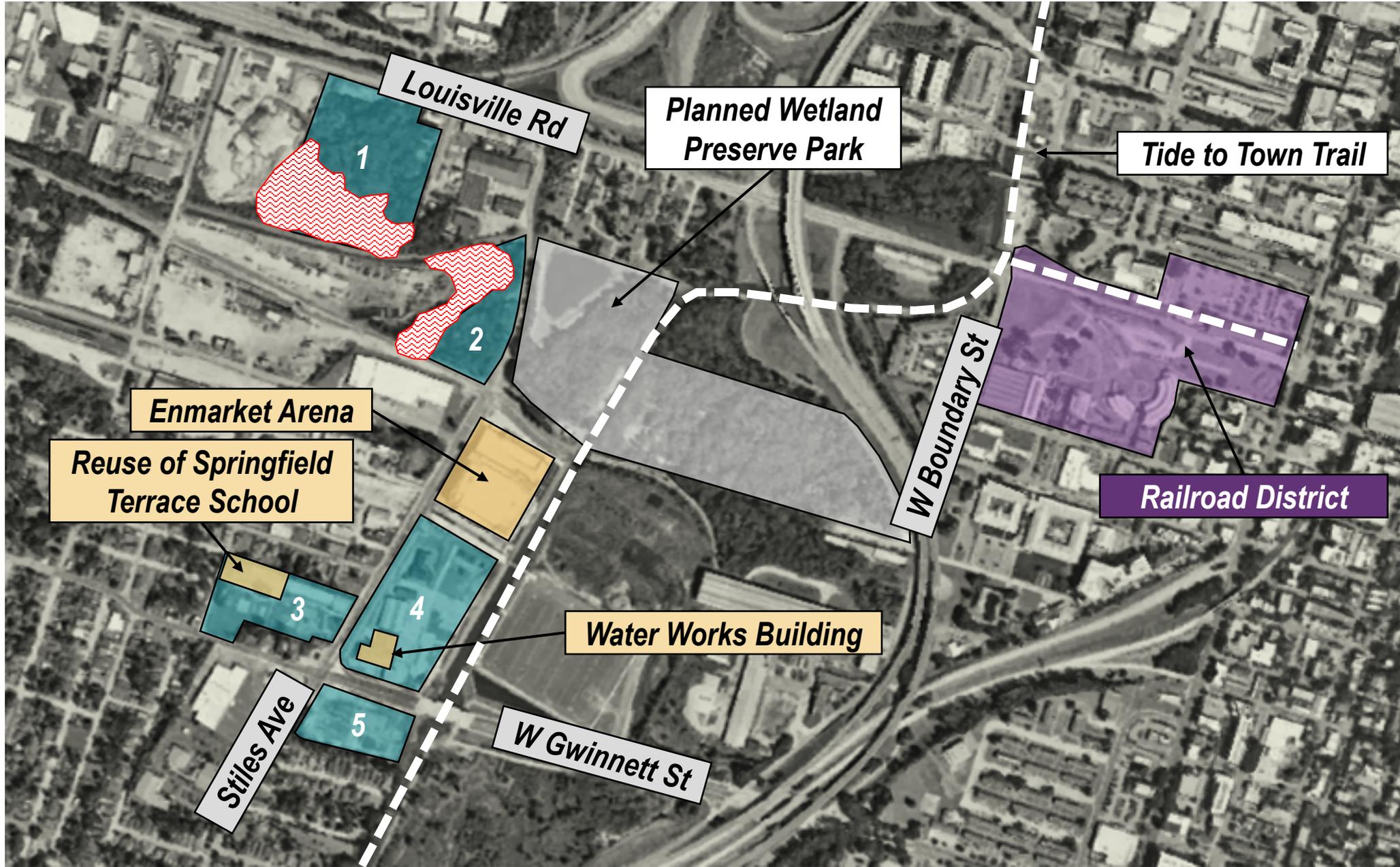
Railroad District

- ▶ Includes museums, parks, and other established places that interpret Savannah's history
- ▶ Opportunity to enhance how people experience the area, and its connection to the community

Civic Center

- ▶ Arena removal creates opportunity for new development
- ▶ Opportunity to restore the Oglethorpe Plan and introduce new uses

THE CANAL DISTRICT TODAY



MAP KEY	
Study Area	
1	4.8 Developable Acres
2	2.2 Developable Acres
3	4.5 Developable Acres
4	5.7 Developable Acres
5	4.1 Developable Acres
	Existing Projects
	Not Developable
Planning Efforts	
	Planned Improvements
Railroad District	
	Railroad District Parcels

SCOPE OF WORK

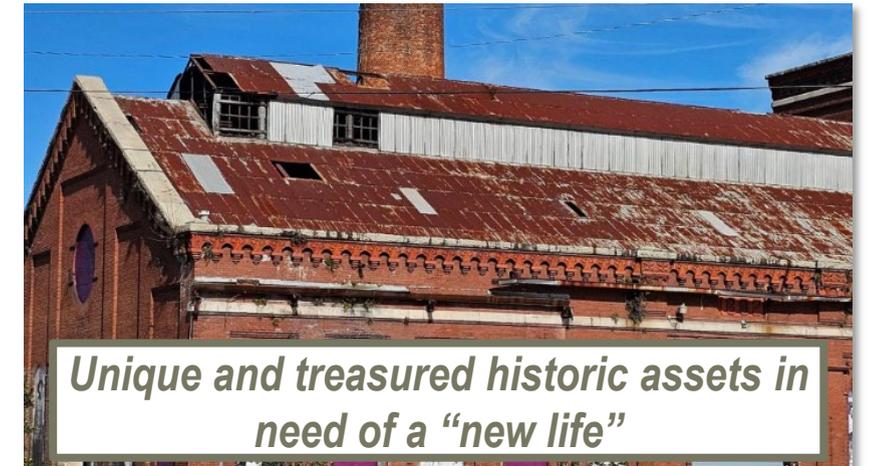
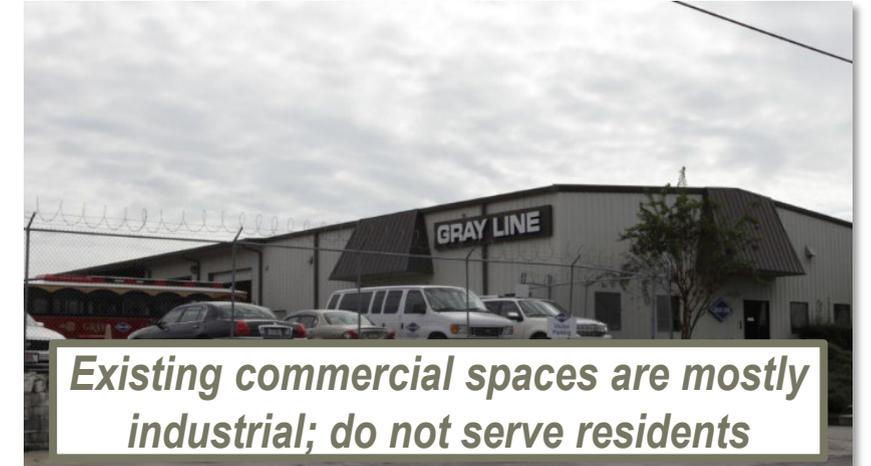
- ▶ **Market Demand:** How much support is there for market-rate rental housing, affordable rental housing, for-sale housing, retail, hospitality, and office development on these City-owned sites?
- ▶ **Feasibility:** Can the market deliver these different types of development at price points that serve market demand and address local needs?
- ▶ **Strongest Opportunities:** Based on this demand and feasibility analysis, what types of development are the strongest opportunities for the City-owned sites? What does the City need to do to facilitate this development and make sure it serves the community?
- ▶ **Water Works:** For the Water Works building specifically, what other opportunities exist to make sure this project succeeds? How can the City help make this project a reality?



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OPPORTUNITIES

The Canal District offers many opportunities but needs clear guiding ideas that can help shape what comes next



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REAL ESTATE OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES

The City will likely have to play a more active role on ambitious projects

Market Can Lead

- ▶ Rental housing (market-rate and affordable / workforce)
- ▶ For-sale housing (market-rate)
- ▶ Retail
- ▶ Hotel
- ▶ Office



City Must Lead

- ▶ Reuse and activation of the Water Works building
- ▶ Rehabilitation of Springfield Terrace School with flexible community and City office space

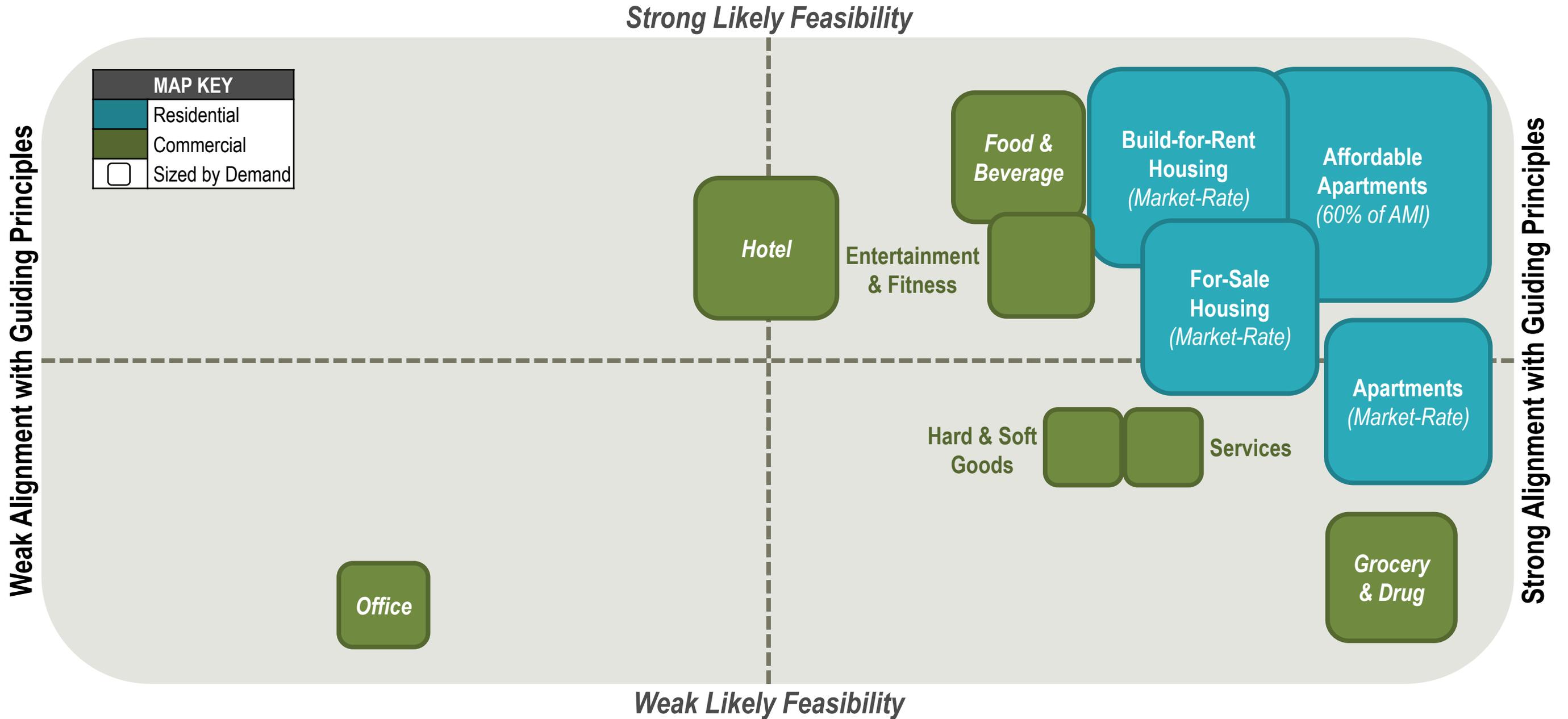


ALIGNMENT WITH GUIDING PRINCIPLES

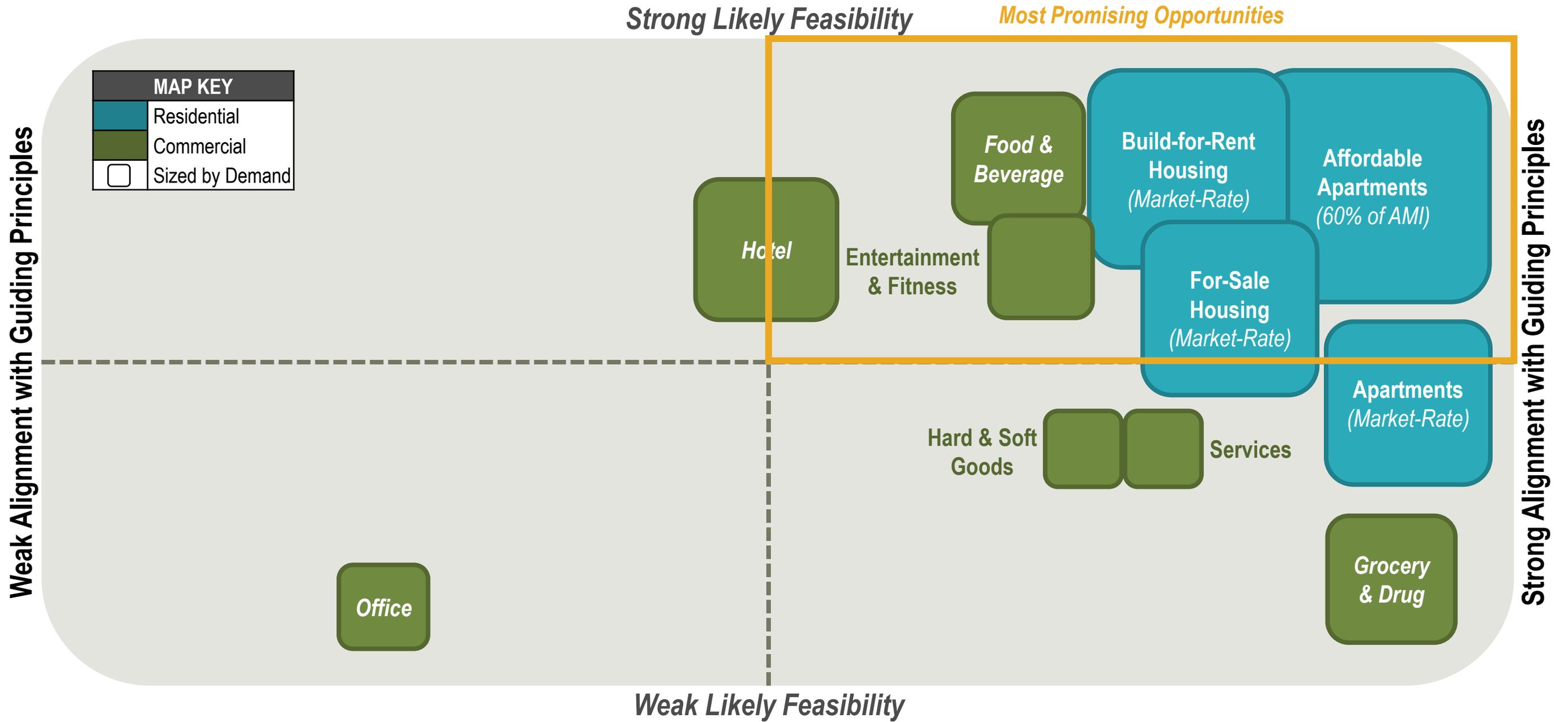
Satisfying the guiding principles requires a mix of residential and commercial uses—embracing the specific advantages of each City-owned site

	Create wealth-building opportunities	Improve economic resilience	Support past and future City investments	Ensure preservation of legacy residents and businesses
Rental Housing	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
For-Sale Housing	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓
Retail	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Hotel		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
Office		✓✓	✓	

SUMMARY OF MARKET OPPORTUNITIES



SUMMARY OF MARKET OPPORTUNITIES



RESIDENTIAL MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANAL DISTRICT

The strongest housing opportunities for the Canal District involve smaller, naturally affordable for-sale homes, as well as market-rate and affordable rentals

Rental Housing



Build-for-Rent Homes

1720 Barnard St, Savannah, GA



Affordable Apartments

1401 Fellwood Dr, Savannah, GA



Market-Rate Apartments

1501 Montgomery St, Savannah, GA

For-Sale Housing



Small-Lot Single-Family Detached Homes

1328 Comer St, Savannah, GA



Rowhomes

909 Jefferson St, Savannah, GA

COMMERCIAL MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANAL DISTRICT

The strongest commercial opportunities are retail spaces that directly serve the local community, as well as a smaller-scale hotel located near the arena

Retail



Walgreen's



Small-Scale Fresh Food or Pharmacy

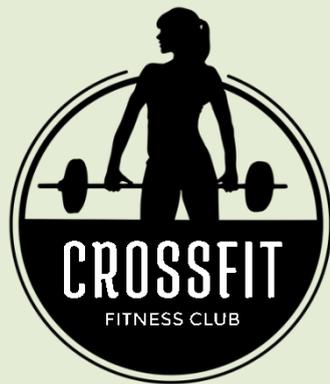
Restaurants

Hospitality



Hotel

Staybridge Suites Savannah



Entertainment & Fitness



FRENCHIES
modern nail care

Services

enmarket
arena
merchandise

Hard & Soft Goods



Miscellaneous

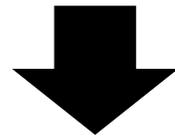
OPPORTUNITIES AT WATER WORKS

WATER WORKS POSSIBILITIES

The Water Works building is a treasured asset that can be repurposed to serve the neighborhoods around the Canal District

Key Findings of Water Works Feasibility Study:

- ✓ **Clear gap** in current market offerings
- ✓ **Space offers scale** needed to mix and match different elements
- ✓ **Opportunity for City** to show its commitment to reinvestment



How should the City approach and execute on this project?

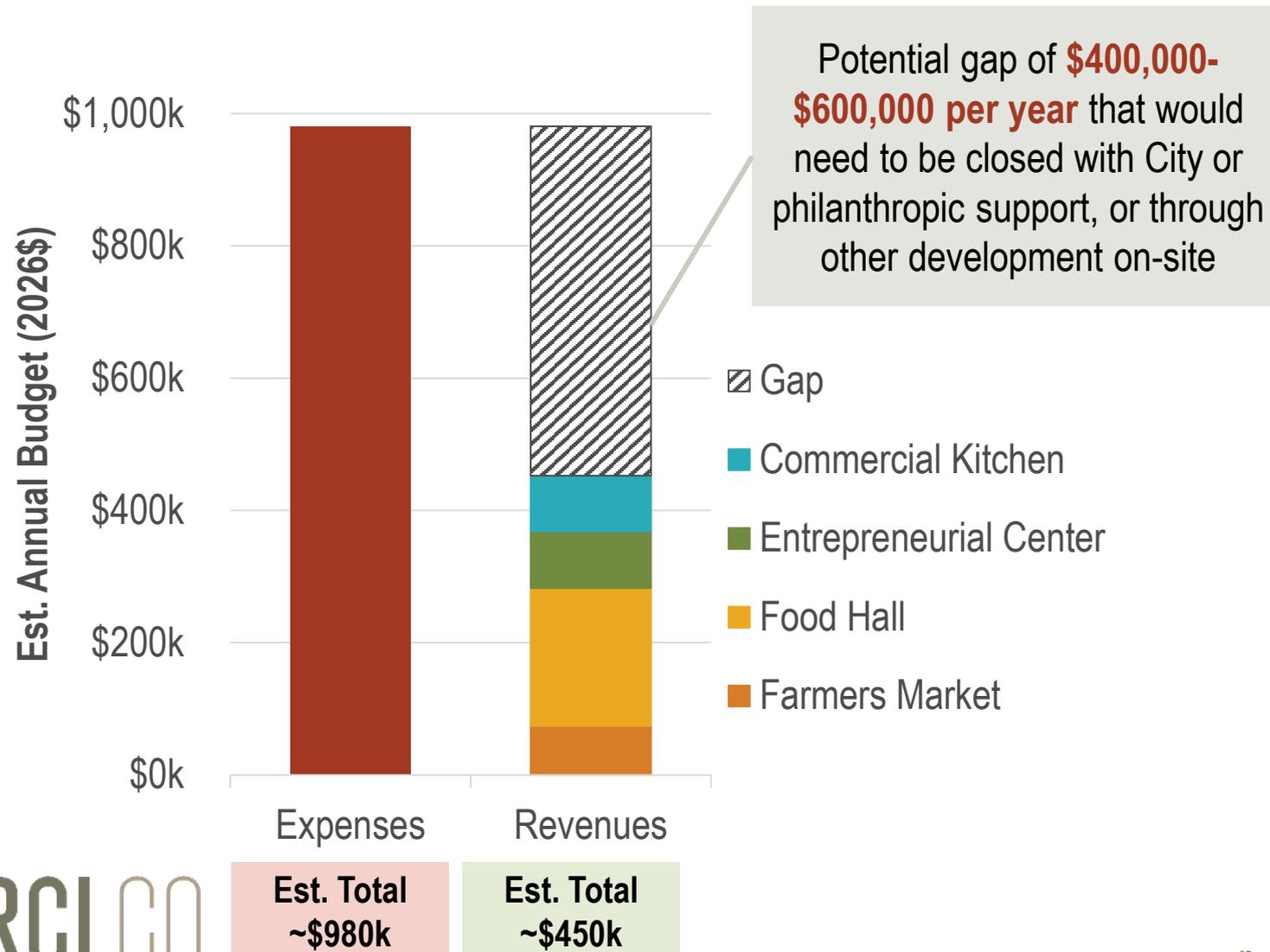
How can the City make sure Water Works is set up for long-term success?

Program Elements Included in Study:



OPERATING CONSIDERATIONS

The Water Works building is likely to need support to be financially viable—especially in its first few years of operation



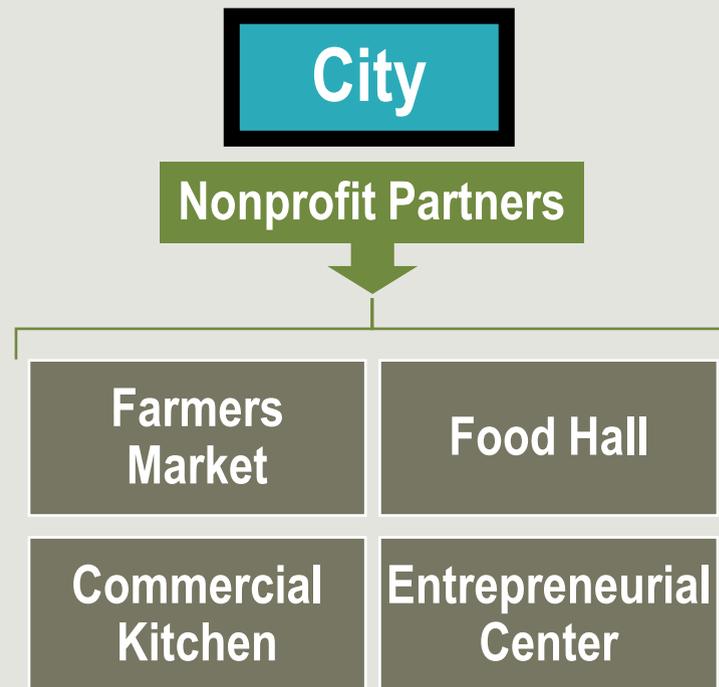
- ▶ At least initially, the Water Works building would need enough subsidy to cover 40-60% of its annual expenses
- ▶ The entity that oversees the Water Works building will likely need to leverage multiple sources of funding to fill the gap and keep the building operational

OPERATING CONSIDERATIONS

Two strategies for overseeing operations of the Water Works building:

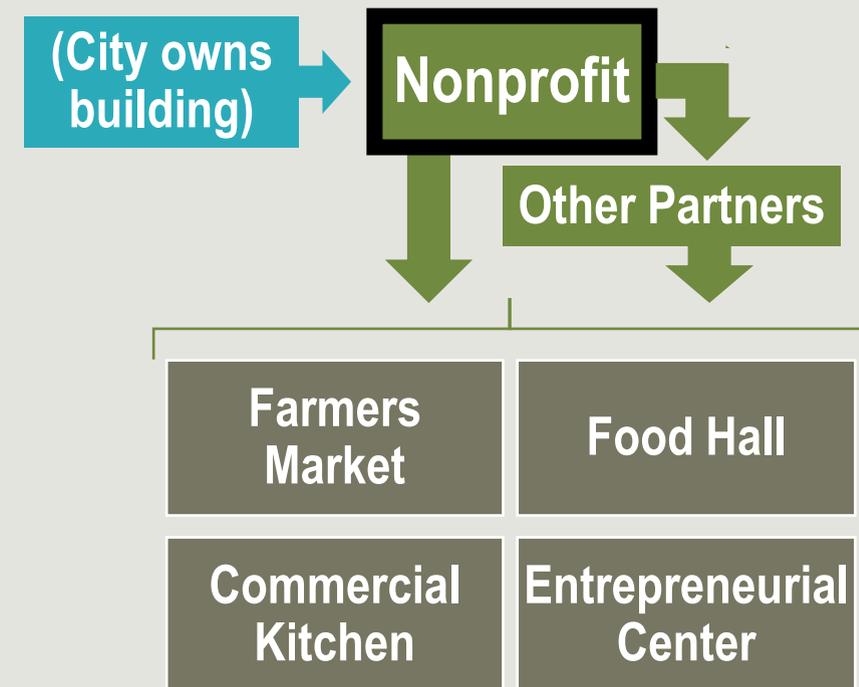
CITY OVERSEES

City owns building and oversees programming, engaging with nonprofit partners to handle day-to-day operations of components



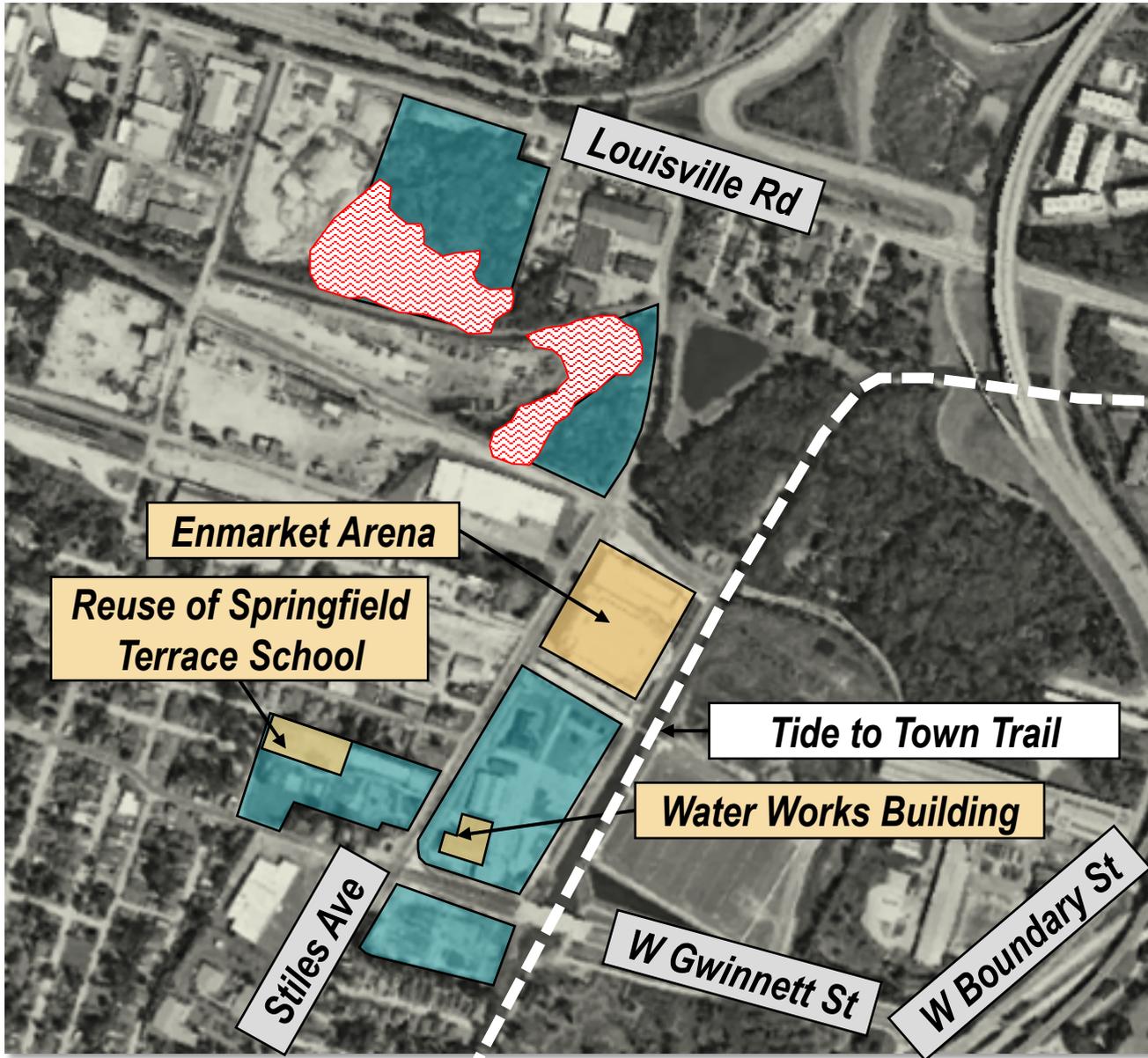
NONPROFIT OVERSEES

City owns building but outsources management of programming to a single nonprofit partner, who oversees any other necessary partnerships



DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION



- 1 What types of development should the City prioritize in its planning efforts for this district?
- 2 How should the City balance different approaches to operating and providing support for the Water Works building?
- 3 What does successful development in the Canal District mean to you?

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