RESTORING THE LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION CONNECTION AFTER THE I-16 RAMP REMOVAL
## Project Details

### Purpose/Scope

- Feasibility of Removing the I-16 Ramp into Downtown Savannah
  - Civic Master Plan, Urban Design
  - Transportation Analysis
  - Land Use Analysis
  - Economic and Real Estate Analysis

### Team

- Wilbur Smith Associates
- Sotile & Sotile
- Urban Partners
- Gilbert & Lattimore
- Grice & Associates
- McMillan & Associates
Project Study Area
1998 MLK and Montgomery Corridor Revitalization Plan
2002 MLK and Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Plan
2004 Land Use Planning for MLK and Montgomery
2006-2008 Downtown Master Plan
2006 Visioning Charette
2007 Walkability Plan
2008 GDOT Feasibility Study
Before and After
Before and After
Before and After
Evolutionary History
Evolutionary History
Evolutionary History
Evolutionary History

Copy of McKinnon's Map of 1798.
Evolutionary History
Evolutionary History 1750-1825

1750-1825

SUBDIVISION OF THE GARDEN LOTS

Savannah’s earliest settlers were allocated individual five-acre Garden Lots adjacent to the City Commons; these triangular lots were created by dividing ten-acre square parcels in half. The shape created longer crop rows for more efficient farming.

As Savannah expanded, landowners began to subdivide their Garden Lots for private development. Small blocks and connected streets that aligned with Savannah’s plan were created in most cases. However, because of varying ownership, there were some instances of diagonal streets being laid out along the Garden Lot lines, most notably Roberts Street and Stewart Street.
Evolutionary History 1825-1875

1825-1875
Growth of the Neighborhood

The area surrounding MLK, Jr Blvd. (formerly West Broad Street) and Montgomery Street rapidly developed as a primarily residential neighborhood with some commercial and industrial uses that serviced the railroad district to the north.

Subdivision of the original garden parcels continued the residential pattern, and it is apparent that Roberts Street and Stewart Street (now Selma Street) were aligned with the old Garden Lot parcel lines during this time, imbuing the diagonal character into this part of Savannah’s street network.
Evolutionary History 1875-1950

1875-1950
WEST BROAD PROSPERITY
The re-development of the blocks between Roberts and Stewart Streets to create the Union Station passenger rail terminal brought a period of intense growth and prosperity to West Broad Street.

Building intensity reached its greatest level during this time, including a vibrant and diverse mix of single and multi-family homes, and larger commercial, retail, office, and institutional buildings along West Broad and Montgomery Streets.
Evolutionary History 1950-1975

1950-1975
Dissolution of the Pattern

In the early 1960’s the Union Station passenger terminal was torn down and replaced with a spur of Interstate Highway 16, to facilitate auto traffic into the heart of Savannah’s city center.

Much of the surrounding land was consolidated for construction of the highway and for adjacent development by the Housing Authority of Savannah. The project dissolved several city blocks completely, and cut off street connections between many others.

Neighborhood Demolition & Clearance
Evolutionary History 1975-2010

1975-2010
BUILDING BACK THE EDGE

The Study Area has seen a number of significant redevelopment projects in the last several decades. Many of these projects have been constructed in the Montgomery Street corridor, and include a mix of hotels, multi-family residential, rowhouses with detached carriage houses, and some smaller scale commercial buildings.

While there have also been several large projects built recently west of MLK Jr. Blvd., there is still a large void in redevelopment on the MLK corridor, and consequently large tracts of frontage remain un-built or under-utilized.

NEW DEVELOPMENT & REVITALIZATION

1-16 EXIT RAMP REMOVAL PROJECT
Savannah, Georgia
City of Savannah
Chatham County
Metropolitan Planning Commission
CORE Metropolitan Planning Organization
Savannah Development & Redevelopment Authority

William E. Osborne
Savannah's Regional
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NEW DEVELOPMENT & REVITALIZATION
Existing Conditions: Historic Resources
Existing Conditions: Pedestrian Network

- Inconsistent and incomplete pedestrian structure west of MLK.
- Approximately 1,000' between pedestrian crossings on Montgomery Street.
- Lack of crosswalks, narrow sidewalks with no traffic buffers, and frequent curb cuts contribute to an unsafe pedestrian environment between Jones Street and Taylor Street.
- Sidewalk compromised by numerous curb cuts, with frequent vehicle movements into and out of restaurants.

Map shows the disparity between pedestrian network west of Montgomery Street and that of the West Boundary Zone.

Pedestrian Walks & Crossings
- Signalized Intersection

- Disorganized pedestrian network elements around the I-16 Exit Ramps.
Existing Conditions: Connection Deficiencies

Local Street Network
East-West & North-South Deficiency
Highway Evolution

A newer elevated highway provides a high-speed connection to US-17 as well as an exit opportunity at Louisville Road, while allowing local surface streets to pass underneath.

The I-16 Exit Ramp was completed in the 1960's does not allow easy surface street connections through the area, and being almost 50 years old, it is showing increasing signs of wear.

HIGHWAY NETWORK
Two Ages of Infrastructure
Highway Evolution

1965

The Highway Ends

When I-16 was originally planned, the highway came to a complete终止 in downtown Savannah where the on-ramp and exit ramp currently merge into the urban street grid at MLK Jr. Blvd. and Montgomery Street.

1990

The Highway Continues

In 1990, a new highway structure was constructed, continuing the end of I-16 to connect with Highway 17, and creating a continuous route with multiple access points. Currently, the MLK and Montgomery ramps of I-16 serve only as an exit from the highway to downtown Savannah.

2010

Now Only an Exit

Three Concepts

With the terminals now featuring an exit only, different strategies to reconfigure the ramps and remove neighborhoods can be considered. These concepts were explored in the Charette. They are differentiated by the extent of those removal of the 1-16 ramps.

I-16 Exit Ramp Removal Project

City of Savannah

Chatham County

Metropolitan Planning Commission

CRA Metropolitan Planning Organization

Savannah Redevelopment Authority

Walton Smith Associates

Savannah Urban Design Workshop

Forsman & Associates

Cronin & Associates

McMillan Associates
Legislative Background

☐ Could this be built today?

☐ Ramp Constructed in 1967

☐ National Preservation Act – 1966
  - Listed the National Landmark District
    - This section of downtown not in the district
Legislative Background

- **US DOT Act 1966/Federal Highway Act 1968**
  - Section 4(f)

- **National Environmental Policy Act 1969**
  - Federal agencies to document decisions and impacts to environmental resources

- **Uniform Relocation and Assistance Act 1970**

- **Executive Order 12898 1994**
  - Environmental Justice
Why Consider Ramp Removal?

- Physical Barrier
- Social Barrier
- Economic Barrier
- Psychological Barrier

“The community vision for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street, from River Street to 52nd Street, is that of a historic and diverse community which welcomes all people to the area for its commercial activity, architectural and cultural heritage and boulevard appearance in a vibrant urban setting.”
Proposed Civic Master Plan

The land area occupied by the existing I-16 interchange at Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd was formerly home to Union Station and is a robust mixed-use neighborhood in Savannah’s west boundary. The goal of the plan is to retain this significant land resource and reuse it as a well-connected district, integral to Savannah’s city center.

The site contains opportunity for a diverse range of development types and uses. This mixed-use neighborhood is ideal for a sustainable, walkable, and mixed-use development pattern.

Mixed Use & Subdivision of Blocks

Blocks should be subdivided to allow for a diverse range of building types and uses. Primary streets may be retained within blocks and secondary streets can be eliminated to facilitate subdivided block areas. Subdivided blocks shall allow for the Include 15 feet of green space on a primary street at a minimum size of 400 square feet.

Adjustments and encumbrances on the street and block plans for the Metropolitan Planning Commission are anticipated due to final public engagement, property acquisition, and subsequent environmental and regulatory compliance.

Block Plan

The single most important defining element of the Civic Master Plan is the street and block plans, recommending the large, open spaces as appropriate to the historic patterns of the City of Savannah. Streets are provided to allow for a diversity of land uses that will accommodate a range of uses and open spaces. The block is the basis for the official mapping of streets, blocks, and other public spaces that define the fabric of the public realm.

Streets and Parking

A network of interconnected streets provides circulation through the area. Street centers are composed of 30 feet wide (or less) and include pedestrian areas. Car parking is provided on all streets or as an internal or shared street. Parking spaces are configured in 18-foot wide bays. Additional off-street parking may be provided in public lots with associated sidewalks. Off-street parking may not exceed a 1:3 parking ratio.

Sidewalks and Street Trees

Sidewalks are connected throughout the area to provide access and pedestrian linkages. Sidewalks are provided 5 to 6 feet wide, ranging up to 10 feet along Snake Creek. Street trees are provided on one lane or two ways along all streets. Tree lines are 8 to 10 feet in width and are located between the sidewalk and the street. Regularly spaced and aligned street trees provide a human scale, visual identity, and a barrier between moving traffic. Trees should be Live Oak at 40 to 50 feet minimum or other species comparable to those found in the city center.

Public Spaces

In addition, the network of high-quality, pedestrian-oriented streets, a number of additional public spaces have been identified, including a linear park space within the Historic South Street Flex and a garden box along Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, across from the Ralph Abernathy Civil Rights Museum. The western portion of the public space is envisioned as an appropriate site for a future landmark civic building.

CIVIC MASTER PLAN

West Boundary - Interstate 16 Flyover Area

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

February 23, 2021

1-6 EXIT RAMPS REMOVAL PROJECT

City of Savannah

Chatham County

Metropolitan Planning Commission

CORE Metropolitan Planning Organization

Savannah Development & Renewal Authority

Wilkins & Associates

Swidler & Associates, Urban Design

Urban Planning

Gilbert & Associates

Grace & Associates

Henderson & Associates
Savannah, GA
Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Savannah, GA
Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Savannah, GA
Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
“If the street is named after a great leader like Martin Luther King, Jr., then we should be compelled to make the street live up to all of its potential.”—

W.W. Law,
Savannah Morning News
May 1996