Appendix A-1
Phase 1 Summary Memorandum,
Victory Drive Corridor Study

Victory Drive Historic Corridor Study

Commemorating the WWI Veterans
And the Patriotic Fever of
Savannah and Chatham County

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Prepared in cooperation with the Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.

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I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Abstract

This report provides an investigative summary of Victory Drive's development as a World War I memorial boulevard by constructing a historical narrative from the road's inception to the present day. By locating historical documentation on the development of Victory Drive, this report will provide guidance and perspective as it relates to future management and planning for the corridor. It will also illuminate the features that best embody the history and significance of Savannah's commemorative corridor. To achieve this goal, this report provides a review and analysis of previous studies on the development of Victory Drive as well as a timeline that will help illustrate the evolution of the dedicatory drive. The timeline shows how Victory Drive's historic landscape has evolved in a chronological sequence and identifies the socio-cultural, economic and political factors that influenced those changes. (Figure 1)

Figure 1. (From the Left) 1-3) Landscape of Victory Drive in 1930s, 1940, and 1948, Georgia Historical Society Online Database, Savannah, GA. 4) Current Landscape of Victory Drive looking toward Waters Avenue, personal photograph by author, 2014.

Research Methods

The primary sources of material for this study include resources in the archives at the Georgia Historical Society, the City of Savannah's Municipal Archives, and the Kaye Kole Genealogy and Local History Room at the Bull Street Public Library. Online resources were also utilized, including the Hargrett Library database system, Georgia Archives by University System of Georgia and the Digital Image Catalog provided by Georgia Historical Society. Data collected from local and online resources include historic city maps, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, newspaper articles, historic photos and images,

unpublished scripts and notes, postcard collections, and past reports. While most data aided in developing the narrative of Victory Drive's history, historic maps played an especially important role in establishing Victory Drive's boundaries, edges, extensions, visual points of interests and overall imageability. In addition to the published and unpublished materials, on-site observations and photographic surveys were conducted to define and document the current condition and existing landscape features of Victory Drive. (See Appendix 1)

Definition of Study Area

Figure 2. West (from the Ogeechee Road intersection to the Wilmington River) and East (from the Wilmington River to Tybee Island) Segments of Victory Drive / US-80, map, from Google Maps.

Victory Drive / US-80 is an east-west thoroughfare that spans nearly 19.8 miles from the Ogeechee Road intersection in west Savannah through the town of Thunderbolt and the islands of Whitemarsh, Talahi, and Wilmington to Tybee Island, where it terminates. (Figure 2) The west segment of Victory Drive passes through, or along, three nationally recognized historic districts and is known for its impressive estates and sections of picturesque landscaping. [1] The Victory Drive / US-80 corridor is comprised of four previously existing roadways: 43rd Street (formerly King Street), Estill Avenue, Dale Avenue, and Tybee Road. The Victory Drive / US-80 corridor connects several jurisdictions: Chatham

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[1] Three historic neighborhood districts designated as National Register Historic Places exist along the west segment of the Victory Drive corridor and include: Cuyler-Brownsville Historic District, Thomas Square Streetcar Historic District, and Chatham Crescent/Ardsley Park District.

County, the City of Savannah, the Town of Thunderbolt and the City of Tybee. These communities have

both affected and been affected by the development of Victory Drive. (Figure 3)
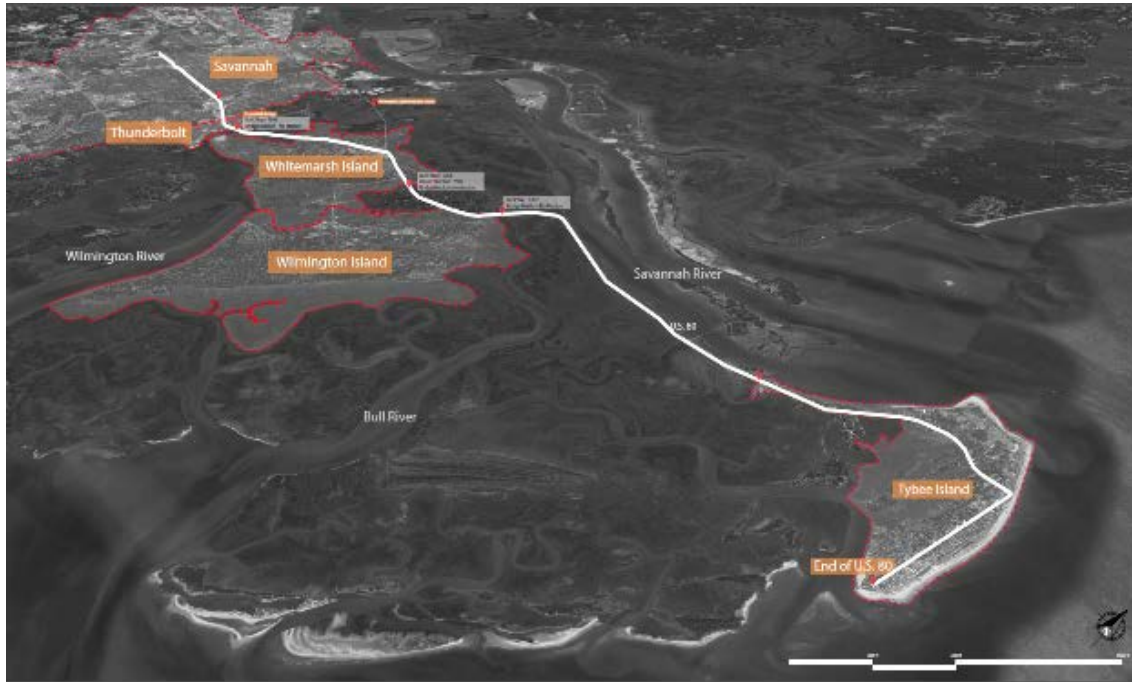

Figure 3. Aerial view of Victory Drive Corridor from the Ogeechee Road intersection to Butler Avenue of Tybee
Island, map edited by author, from Google Maps.

II. Historic Overview

Victory Drive was once a series of unpaved roads that connected the western edge of Savannah to the small fishing village, originally the Town of Warsaw (1856-1921), which is now the Town of Thunderbolt.[2] The westernmost segment of Victory was 43rd Street, at one point also known as King Street. This portion of Victory served as an extension of Estill Avenue (modern day between Bull Street and Waters Avenue) to the western city limits and the modern day Ogeechee Road intersection. (Figure 4) Originally, 43rd Street was offset a block north from Estill Avenue, creating a sharp turn that connected
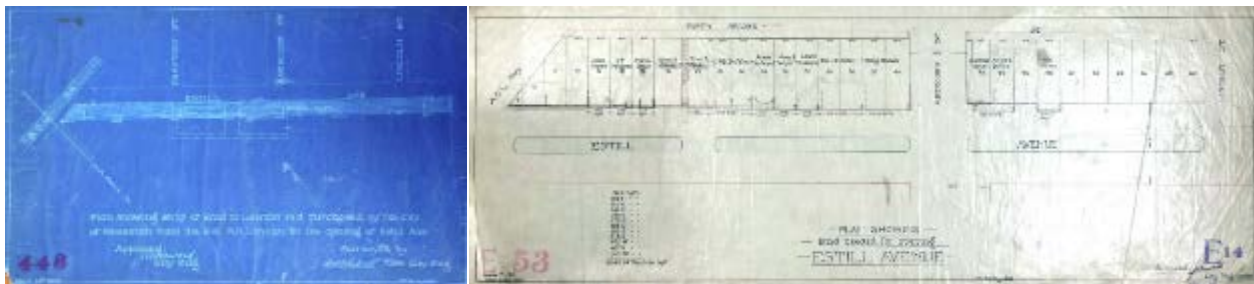

Figure 4. (Left) Engineering Map of Estill Avenue (1909) and (Right) Site Plan of Estill Avenue (1910), Research Library and Municipal Archives, accessed 2014.

the two sections of the road. 43rd Street, Estill Avenue, and Dale Avenue (modern day between Waters Avenue and city limits) made up the earliest version of what is now Victory Drive. Dale Avenue was Estill Avenue's extension that continued eastward from Waters Avenue to the eastern city limits of Savannah, and served as the connection from Waters Avenue to the Town of Thunderbolt. In the early 20th Century, the road passing through Whitemarsh, Wilmington and Tybee Islands was referred to as the Tybee Road.

Estill Avenue and the Great Savannah Races

Not much is known about Estill Avenue prior to 1908. It is generally thought to be named in honor of John Holbrook Estill (1868-1907), the publisher and editor of the Savannah Morning News

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[2] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I* from *The Monuments and Fountains of Savannah*, Report (Savannah, GA: Savannah Park and Tree Department, 1993).

during that time period. [3] However, an earlier reference to this street name can be found on an 1898

Sanborn Map.[4] (See Appendix 2) The U.S. International Grand Prix automobile races were held in

Savannah in 1908, 1910, and 1911.[5] Estill and Dale Avenues were selected by the American Automobile

Association (AAA) as the location for the first U.S. International Grand Prix Automobile Race and served

as the final stretch of the racetrack where spectators and judges would watch the race.[6] (Figure 5)
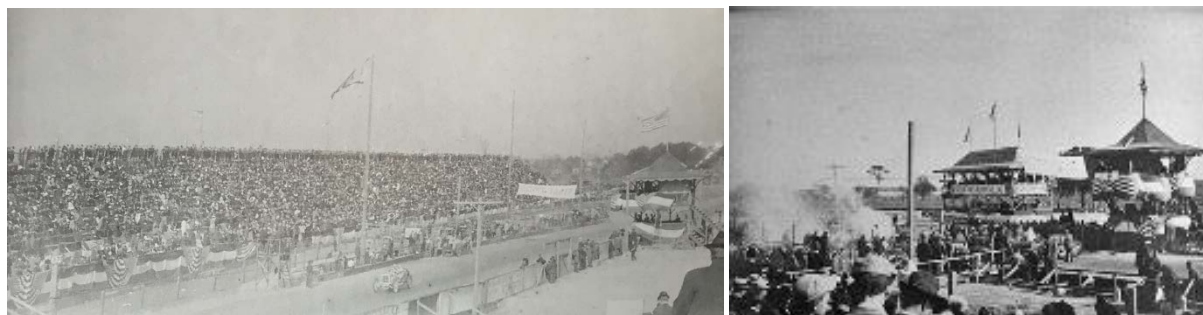

Figure 5. (Left) Grandstand of Savannah Automobile Race (1908), Savannah, GA. After AAA's 1909 announcement not to hold the race in Savannah anymore, the old grandstand was demolished. Shortly thereafter a new grandstand and start/finish line were constructed on Waters Avenue, around Forty-Sixth Street (Right) Frank T. Wheeler, *Images of America: The Savannah Races*, 1908, All photographs, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA.

These races at Estill and Dale Avenues brought fame and an economic stimulus to the City of

Savannah. To create adequate raceways, the roadways were prepared for the race with oiled-gravel and

"Augusta gravel," a mixture of clay and coarse sand.[7] This produced the best track conditions, helping

racers reach speeds of up to 100 miles per hour.[8] The course could also have been chosen for its native

flora including canopies of live oak trees with Spanish moss and tall palmettos, much of which can be

seen along Victory Drive today. (Figure 6) Despite its success in Savannah, AAA elected to change the

race location to Long Island, New York and racing on Estill and Dale Avenues ceased by 1912.

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[3] Jeffrey J.A. Davis, *Victory Drive* (Savannah: Chatham-Effingham-Liberty Regional Library).

[4] "Savannah, Ga. 1898, Index Map," map, in *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Georgia Towns and Cities, 1884-1922 Collection* (Athens, Ga.: Digital Library of Georgia, 2005), http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/CityCounty/Savannah1898/IndexMap.html.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Jeffrey J.A. Davis, *Victory Drive,* Report (Savannah: Chatham-Effingham-Liberty Regional Library).

[7] Frank T. Wheeler, *Images of America: The Savannah Races*, 1908

[8] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I*, report (Savannah: Monuments & Fountains of Savannah, 1993).

Figure 6. Early *Landscape of Estill Avenues*, Postcard and Image Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA, 2014
Unknown, *Plan (1910)*, 1910, Research Library and Municipal Archives.

Hosting an international automobile race in the City of Savannah provided an opportunity to sell real estate to spectators visiting for the event, and improvements to the surrounding landscape and residential developments began. In 1910, Estill Avenue was lined by 475 sabal palmettos planted by the City of Savannah Park and Tree Commission.[9] Additional plantings were made by Chatham Land & Hotel Company in 1911.[10] In the same year, Harvey Granger, the president of the Chatham Land & Hotel Company (developer of Chatham Crescent), proposed the "beautification" of Estill Avenue, including the division of Estill Avenue with multiple lanes of travel.[11] This division is arguably the first mention about the development of the iconic medians of Victory Drive. Around the time Estill Avenue was divided, the grandstands and visitor seating built along it were demolished. After demolition, the land these structures occupied became available for purchase and Savannah's elite began to construct luxurious residences along both Estill and Dale Avenues.[12] (Figure 7)

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[9]City of Savannah Municipal Research Library, Savannah, Georgia, Park & Tree Commission Records, *Historical Paintings of Savannah's Downtown Parks & Squares*, 1850-1925. Reference is noted with a quote from Park and Tree Commission stating "we expect to have marked success with them [Palmettos]",
[10] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I*, report (Savannah: Monuments & Fountains of Savannah, 1993).
[11] Ibid. Because of this proposal, Granger is often credited as one of the first designers of Victory Drive.
[12] Ibid.

Figure 7. (Left) *Streetscape of Estill Avenue*, Online Database, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Middle) *Victory Drive at Atlantic Avenue*, Savannah, GA, Postcard Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Right) *Image of palm lined median at Estill Avenue*, Postcard Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA.

Dale Avenue and the Million Dollar Highway

Harvey Granger, developer of Chatham Crescent, commissioned the city's Park and Tree Commission to plant and care for the trees along Estill Avenue as well as the trees planted in the median. Because of the success of the planting, County Commissioner Oliver T. Bacon proposed the same improvements for Dale Avenue, expanding the project to include widening and paving the Avenue, the addition of granite curbing, and the cultivation of a landscaped median in 1913.[13] The project lasted nine years in an effort to create visual continuity between the avenues.[14] The last section of granite curbing was in place by 1921, completing the improvement project for Dale Avenue and its integration into Estill Avenue.[15]

It was during this redevelopment of Dale Avenue that the State of Georgia approved additional enhancements, including a fully paved extension to Tybee Island in 1919.[16] (Figure 8) On July 10, 1920, the commissioner's office awarded Gadsden Contracting Company and the Virginia Bridge & Iron Company a $900,000 dollar contract to construct a bridge connecting Savannah to Tybee Island through the Town of Thunderbolt.[17] The Wilmington River Bridge, also called the Spence Grayson Bridge, was constructed of concrete block and pier, spanning 625 feet over the Wilmington River.[18]

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[13] "Dale Boulevard Next Big Feature," *Savannah Morning News*, January 19, 1913.

[14] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I*, report (Savannah: Monuments & Fountains of Savannah, 1993).

[15] "Paving of Victory Ave. Soon To Start," *Savannah Morning News*, August 31, 1921.

[16] Dorothy H. Steward, *Ibid.*

[17] "Will Cost $900,000 to Build Tybee Rd.," *Savannah Morning News*, July 11, 1920.

[18] "Commissioners Inspect and Accept Wilmington Bridge," *Savannah Evening Press*, August 29, 1921.

Figure 8. (Left) Unknown, *The Road to Tybee Showing Constructed*, 1923, Vertical File, Savannah Public Library, Savannah, GA. (Right) Unknown, *Tybee Road, 14 Miles from Savannah & 40 Feet Wide.*, 1924, Vertical File, Savannah Public Library, Savannah, GA.

The cost of the Dale Avenue extension gave the project monikers such as, "Million Dollar Highway" and "A Million Dollar Chain" which was also known as "Million Dollar Road."[19] (Figure 9) Note that the original alignment of the Tybee Road was different from today's US-80 alignment. The original alignment followed what is now Johnny Mercer Boulevard across Whitemarsh and Wilmington Islands out to Tybee Island. Between 1969 and 1984 this route was part of the Georgia state highway system and was known as SR-367. SR-367 was decommissioned in 1984.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_former_state_routes_in_Georgia_(U.S._state)#Route_367)

Figure 9. (Left) *How New Tybee Road Brings*, 1923, Savannah Press, (Middle) Unknown, *Spence Grayson Bridge*, 1921, Thunderbolt Historical Museum. (Right) *New Million Dollar Road to Tybee, "The En Route to the Ocean"*, Unknown, Postcard Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA.

A Patriotic Thoroughfare

It was in 1919, after the approval of the Wilmington Bridge and Dale Avenue extension, that the idea of 'Victory Avenue' was first proposed. William O'Driscoll Rockwell, the Savannah City Engineer,

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[19] "How The New Tybee Rd. Begins Savannah and Adjacent Islands Together," *The Savannah Press*, June 16, 1923."Views Snapped At En Route of Tybee Road Parade," *Savannah Morning News*, January 22, 1923.

presented the idea that the extension of Dale Avenue be dubbed "Victory Avenue" in memory of those who served in the First World War (1914-1918). (See Appendix 3) In addition to the name, Rockwell proposed planting 135 sabal palmettos along the existing palm-lined drive; each palm commemorating a Chatham County resident who had fallen in the war. [20] Although Rockwell envisioned "Victory Avenue" as the new name of the Dale Avenue extension project, it was "Victory Drive" that was adopted when the project was officially dedicated in 1922.[21] A petition was soon made for Estill Avenue to join with Dale Avenue and be incorporated into the Victory Drive memorial.[22] While it is uncertain when Estill Avenue officially became part of Victory Drive, the first Savannah Supplement to Code to reference the new name dates to 1936.[23]

In addition to naming the highway in memory of WWI soldiers, a physical monument was also erected in their honor. On April 26, 1929, the American Legion Post 36, in collaboration with the Women's Federation in Savannah, added to the newly named Victory Drive a 14,200 pound, rough-cut Georgia granite monument engraved with the names of all 135 soldiers from Chatham County lost during the war.[24] This WWI Memorial Monument, or Roll of Honor Marker as it was also called, was placed at the intersection of Waters Avenue and Victory Drive. (Figure 10)

Figure 10. (Left) Unknown, *WWI Events*, date unknown, Online Data Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Middle) Unknown, *WWI Memorial Monument at the Intersection of Waters Avenue*, date unknown, Postcard Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Right) WWI Memorial Monument, Savannah, GA, Courtesy of the City of Savannah, Research Library & Municipal Archives on behalf of V. & J. Duncan Antique Maps & Prints.

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[20] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I*, report (Savannah: Monuments & Fountains of Savannah, 1993).
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Joseph C. Hester, *The Code of the City of Savannah, Containing a Codification of the Acts of the Legislature of Georgia Constituting the Charter of the City of Savannah and a Codification of the Ordinances Adopted by the City Council, Now in Force. (State Laws Include Acts of 1935) (Ordinances to May 1, 1936)* (Savannah: Press of Macfeely Print., 1936), 210.
[24] Jeffrey J.A. Davis, *Victory Drive* (Savannah: Chatham-Effingham-Liberty Regional Library).

By 1929, Victory Drive boasted approximately 400 palmetto trees. In 1935, the Park and Tree Commission planted an additional 317 palmettos at the cost of $2,219 along the historic corridor from Bull Street to Hopkins Avenue.[25] By 1950, 600 palmetto trees were in place.[26] At the peak of plantings, Victory Drive was said to be decorated with approximately 2,800 palmettos, thus causing some to claim the corridor as "the longest avenue of palms in the nation."[27]

Expansion and Redevelopment

Since its inception, Victory Drive has been subject to a series of events and phenomena that have led to a depletion of some of its original historic and defining characteristics. An increase in automobile traffic and adjacent commercial development were, and remain, the leading factors impacting the road and its commemorative landscape.

In January of 1952, Tybee Road underwent improvements totaling $6,272,239, including the construction of a new drawbridge to connect Victory Drive to Tybee Island via Thunderbolt.[28] The bridge was completed three years later, with the modern drawbridge opening in 1955.[29] (Figure 11) The old Wilmington Bridge built during the expansion of Dale Avenue was demolished and its metal salvaged
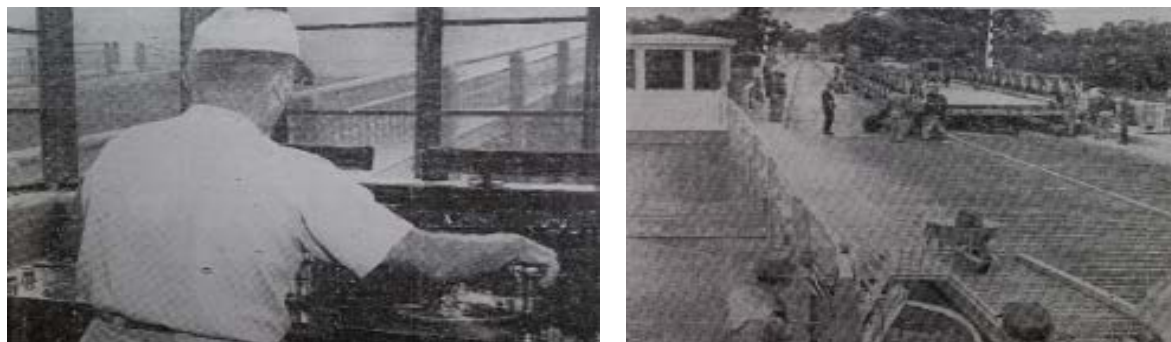

Figure 11. *Opening of New Thunderbolt Span Planned for Mid-May*, March 22, 1955, Savannah Morning News

[25] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I*, report (Savannah: Monuments & Fountains of Savannah, 1993).

[26] "Budget (1935)," in *Box 1, Folder 4*, by Park and Tree Commission Papers (1935).

[27] Jeffrey J.A. Davis, *Ibid.*

[28] "Road Work Cost Totals $6, 272, 239," *Savannah Evening Press*, January 09, 1952.

[29] *Vertical Files: Streets: SAV - Victory Drive*, January 17, 1962, Savannah Morning News Article, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga.

and used for scrap metal.[30]

A number of the redevelopment and expansion projects along Victory Drive reached their peak in the 1960's. In 1960, the state of Georgia resurfaced Victory Drive from Bull Street to the Ogeechee Road intersection and in the process removed the middle grass plat, or median, from Bull Street to Montgomery Street in order to accommodate the resurfacing, widening, and addition of turning lanes. Between Wallin Street and Skidaway Road, four large shade trees were removed to allow for fast food restaurant drive-thrus.[31] A median with palmettos was also removed near the intersection of Waters Avenue and Victory Drive in order to add a left turn lane.[32] By this time, the intersections of Victory Drive and Bull Street, as well as Victory Drive and Bee Road, had become so traffic-congested that engineers were prompted to design new turn lanes and install additional traffic lights, further altering the streetscape. (Figure 12)
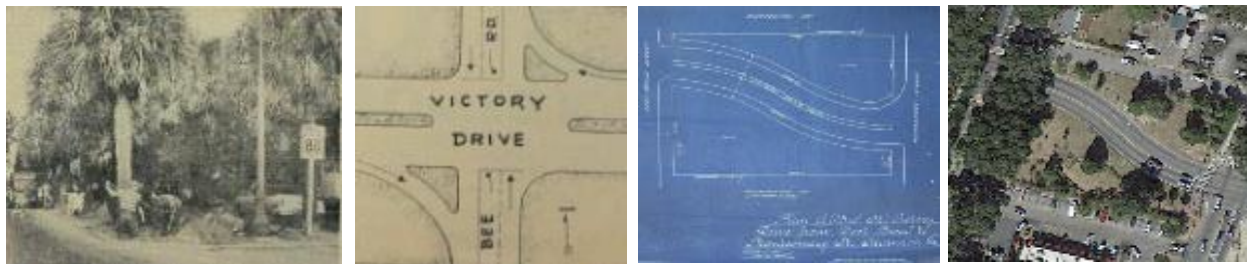

Figure 12. (From the Left) 1-2) Removal of Palm Trees on Victory Drive at the Intersection of Bee Road, October 27, 1961, Savannah Morning News, Savannah, GA. (3-4) *Plan for the street between Montgomery Street and MLK Jr. Blvd. (1930) and Current Configuration (Google aerial photo)*, Savannah, GA.

Victory Drive was also heavily impacted by the construction of the first phase of the Harry S. Truman Parkway in the 1990's. Many alterations were made to the portion of Victory Drive nearest the Truman Parkway, including the removal of landscape features, the addition of entrance and exit ramps, and the relocation of the Casey Canal.[33]

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[30] "Old and New Thunderbolt Bridges," *Savannah Evening Press*, July 18, 1955.

[31] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I*, report (Savannah: Monuments & Fountains of Savannah, 1993).

[32] Ibid.

[33] Jessica Archer, *The Journey of a Road: Victory Drive between Bee Road and Skidaway Road*, Internship Report (Savannah, GA: Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2013).

At the western end of the Victory Drive corridor, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has also been developing and revising concepts since the 1990's to change the intersection of Victory Drive and Ogeechee Road, potentially impacting the corridor as far east as Sadler Street. These plans have evolved over a period of years and are still under development as of 2014. [34] (Figure 13)
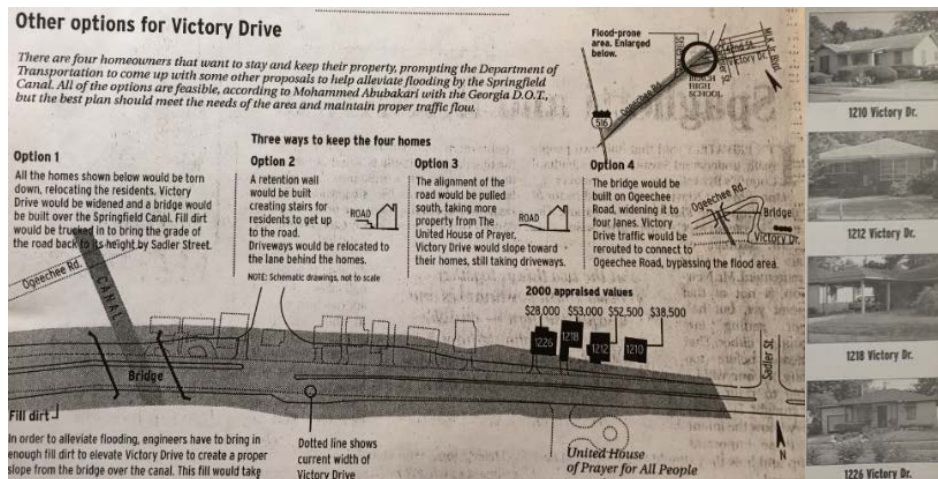

Figure 13. Unknown, *Landscape of Victory Drive after the Road Construction*, 2004, The Savannah Morning News, Savannah, GA.

These public transportation and private development projects along Victory Drive not only caused a visual disruption to the original features of the corridor, but also led to the relocation of several key monuments. (Figure 14) One such monument was the Cohen Humane Fountain, located at the intersection of Bull Street and Victory Drive. The fountain, originally located at Bay and Whitaker Streets,

Figure 14. (Left) Unknown, *The Cohen Humane Fountain at Bull Street*, Online Data Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Middle) *The Cohen Humane Fountain at Bull Street*, Savannah, GA, personal photograph by author, 2014. (Right) Unknown, *Current Location of WWI Memorial at the northwest corner of Daffin Park*, Online Data Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA.

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[34] Bret Bell, "Will a Bridge Run Through It?", *Savannah Morning News*, June 26, 2001.

was constructed as a drinking fountain for horses and mules in 1934.[35] This monument was relocated to the median at the intersection of Bull Street and Victory Drive in 1945, but later moved an additional 15 feet west in 1960 to accommodate the road expansion.[36] The redevelopment also resulted in the relocation of the WWI monument erected in 1923. The granite monument was moved approximately 30 feet in 1962 from its original location at the intersection of Victory Drive and Waters Avenue to accommodate a left turn lane. The WWI monument was moved a third time in 1999 to its current location on the northwest corner of Daffin Park, as a result of roadwork.

The Impact of Commercialization

Improvements of Victory Drive came with an increase in commercial road-side development. (Figure 15) At the forefront of the development along the corridor was the Johnny Harris Restaurant, Savannah's "oldest continuously operating restaurant".[37] In 1936 the restaurant moved from its original location at Victory Drive and Bee Road further east to its current location on Victory Drive.[38] The new location of this restaurant, in addition to a drive-in movie theatre built nearby, established the south-eastern city limits as a commercial node. Multiple restaurants followed Johnny Harris' example and opened their doors in the same area. Bars, nightclubs, and bowling alleys were added to the mix from the

Figure 15. (Left) Johnny Harris Restaurant, Online Data Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Middle) Al and Anna Relmer, Online Data Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Right) The Shopping Plaza at Skidaway Road and Victory Drive, map, in *Google Maps*.

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[35] "Live Edit," Savannah, GA, accessed 2014, http://www.savannahga.gov/.
[36] Dorothy H. Steward, *Victory Drive, A Memorial for World War I*, report (Savannah: Monuments & Fountains of Savannah, 1993).
[37] Jessica Archer, *The Journey of a Road: Victory Drive between Bee Road and Skidaway Road*, Internship Report (Savannah, GA: Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2013).
[38] Ibid.

late 1930's to the late 1950's.[39] This stretch of Victory Drive was ideal for commercial development as a halfway point between downtown Savannah and the neighboring town of Thunderbolt. This location continued to attract other industries such as the Dr. Pepper, Seven-Up, and Tru-Ade Bottling Company in 1941 and the Backus car dealership in 1955.[40]

By the early 1960's, small shopping complexes and strip malls began developing along Savannah's Victory Drive. The Victory Drive Shopping Plaza, designed by Al and Anna Remler, was one of the first commercial developments on the eastern portion of Victory Drive.[41] The plaza was quickly followed by the construction of a K-Mart store in 1962, which in turn prompted other competing chain retailers to introduce franchise branches in the same area.[42] In 1979, several new fast-food restaurants were constructed on the north side of Victory Drive between Wallin Street and Skidaway Road.[43]

Recent Redevelopment Along Victory Drive

By the second half of the 20th century, Victory Drive, once renowned for having the longest row of palms in the nation, had lost hundreds of the trees that had given the road its original commemorative identity to both commercial development and roadwork projects.[44] The loss of landscape features eventually resulted in an effort to not only assess the damage, but reverse it and preserve the awareness of the corridor's history. In 1994, the City of Savannah began replacing palmetto trees along the corridor, and the Park and Tree Commission replanted a palmetto for every missing or dead tree by 1998.[45]

As a result of these development impacts, the streetscape and overall legibility of the original Victory Drive commemorative landscape exists in varying states of flux from the Ogeechee Road intersection to Tybee Island. West of the Wilmington River, many of the oaks and palms remain along portions of Victory Drive as visual reminders of Savannah's commemorative efforts and a continued

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Marcus Holland, "New Look for an Old Friend," *Savannah Morning News*, March 1, 2000.
[42] Jessica Archer, *The Journey of a Road: Victory Drive between Bee and Skidaway Road- A Historical Report for the Chatham County Metropolitan Planning Commission*, Report (Savannah, GA: September 2013).
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Jan Skutch, "Victory Drive Refurbished: Palmetto Trees Replaced for First Time in a Decade," *Savannah Morning News*, February 23, 1994.

commitment to the history and beauty of the city. The section of road from the Ogeechee Road

intersection to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard has a very narrow median with one row of palmettos.

Crossing over Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard going east towards Bull Street, there is neither a median

nor palms.

From Bull Street continuing east, there is a canopy of shade trees along with a large median with

two rows of palmettos down each side for almost two miles. The canopies of shade trees are interrupted

however once one has crossed Victory Manor/Dixie Avenue. The combination of the Truman Parkway

and the concentration of commercial buildings in this area have resulted in a major gap in the historic live

oak canopy. Any shade-providing live oak trees are now few along this section of the corridor. (See

Appendix 4) However, the medians and the planted palmettos do continue through the center of the

corridor all the way to the Thunderbolt Bridge where a completely new landscape emerges. The extension

of Victory Drive, as US-80 / Tybee Road, from Thunderbolt to Tybee Island provides a contrast of the

natural marsh landscape against a modern steel and concrete roadway. (Figure 16)

Figure 16. (Top-Left to Right) 1) View from the Ogeechee Road intersection looking east. 2) View from Bull
Street looking toward Whitaker Street. 3) View from Waters Avenue looking east. (Bottom-Left to Right) 4)
View from Skidaway Road looking toward Wallin Street 5) Landscape of Tybee Road 6) Streetscape of Butler
Avenue, Tybee Island. All personal photographs by author, 2014.

Of the nearly 2,800 palmetto trees that once lined this famous palm and oak-lined drive, only a few hundred have survived the changes made over the years to accommodate the increase in traffic and commercial developments. Despite the changes, there are sections of the original design which remain largely intact. However, there are also large sections of the corridor that have lost the integrity of the original design. Fortunately, a variety of efforts have been made to retain awareness of Victory Drive's integral components, including the palmettos in the medians, the live oak framework and the various monuments. The elements of the original commemorative landscape design, which established Victory Drive as a historic pathway, should be preserved where they remain and be restored where they do not in order to reestablish the visual impact, historical authenticity, and physical integrity of this significant historic urban landscape.

III. Historical Significance of Victory Drive

From its inception as a dirt street, to a race track, to a scenic memorial passageway to its support of residential and commercial development, Victory Drive has served the City of Savannah as not only a physical roadway, but also a record of the passage of time. Having developed out of necessity and community activism, Victory Drive emerges as a candidate for National Register listing. Based on the requirement for historical and social significance under the "Criterion A", Victory Drive may quality as a historic landscape associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of American history. Through the years, Victory Drive has certainly contributed to American history both locally and nationally. The corridor, through its many uses and features, also reflects the social, cultural, and economic ideals that shaped the American landscape. (Figure 17)

Figure 17. (From Left) 1) Advertising Poster of American Automobile Club (1908), Online Data Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. 2) Historic Marker at the intersection of Waters Avenue and 46th Street, Savannah, GA, personal photograph by author, 2014. 3) WWI Monument Tablet at Daffin Park (2014). 4) Streetscape of Savannah city limits (2014). All personal photographs by author, 2014.

World War I Memorial Military Boulevard

Victory Drive has developed meaning beyond its primary function as a transportation corridor. This is largely because of its status as a commemorative urban landscape. The significance of Victory Drive has its origin in 1922 when the City of Savannah passed the ordinance naming the thoroughfare "Victory Drive" to memorialize the fallen soldiers and veterans of World War I from Savannah and Chatham County. Several monuments have been erected at various points along the thoroughfare, including the eastern reaches of Victory Drive / US-80 outside of the Savannah city limits. Wilmington Island Memorial Bridge and its corresponding monument, situated to the south of the bridge, was

installed in 1954 to commemorate veterans of all wars. The commemorative function of the corridor is still recognized today and a Veteran's Tree and plaque were recently installed in Daffin Park as a tribute to all veterans. [46]

The initial decision to designate Victory Drive as a memorial boulevard was motivated by the patriotism, in Savannah and throughout the country, inspired by the First World War. As 2014 marks the centennial of the war's beginning, a renewed interest in these memorials has arisen, as evidenced by the creation of the nonprofit World War I Memorial Inventory Project. The Project notes that, "in the aftermath of World War I, Americans erected thousands of memorials throughout the country to commemorate U.S. participation. Many were the work of the leading sculptors, artists, and architects of the day; others, such as simple honor rolls, were more modest but no less heartfelt." [47] Thus, Victory Drive represents not only the sentiments of Savannah residents, but is also a particularly grand example of the patriotic fervor that swept the entire nation at that time. (Figure 18)

Figure 18. (Left) WWI Memorial Monument at the Intersection of Waters Avenue, Online Data Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA. (Right) WWI Memorial Monument at North-West Corner of Daffin Park, Savannah, GA, personal photograph by author, 2014.

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[46] Adopted by The Mayor And Aldermen of the City of Savannah, comp., "Markers, Monuments, and Public Art Master Plan and Guidelines for the City of Savannah," *Historic Site and Monument Commission*, January 24, 2013, http://www.thempc.org/documents/HistoricPreservation/Site%20and%20Monument/Masterplan%20Revised%2001-24-13.pdf.

[47] "World War I Memorial Inventory Project," WWI-inventory, accessed 2014, http://wwi-inventory.org/Home_Page.html.

Historic Urban Landscape

  The earliest information about Victory Drive dates to 1908 when the American Automobile Association (AAA) hosted the United States' first International Grand Prix Automobile Race on Estill Avenue. Arguably, it was one of the finest automobile race tracks in the United States at that time. The automobile races of Estill Avenue garnered international attention and acted as an economic and social stimulus for the area before 1912.

  In addition to this early history, the significance of Victory Drive is also linked to its contribution as a template for urban landscape and street design. The Savannah Park and Tree Commission, through the planting of palmettos in 1910 between Bull Street and Waters Avenue, became one of the most significant contributors to Victory Drive's unique development. Other prominent landscape features include the azaleas planted inside the medians between the palmettos and the live oaks planted near the outer edges of the road and on the front lawns of the adjacent homes, which provided a canopy of shade to the section of Victory Drive between Bull Street and Waters Avenue. (Figure 19) The early planting of palmetto trees, azaleas, and live oaks along the corridor as part of "beautification efforts" would impact the city's decision to designate the roadway as a WWI memorial. Victory Drive, despite all its hidden history, remains recognizable because of its distinct urban form and signature landscape that have made it a lasting focal point for the city.

Figure 19. Ken Jenkins, *Landscape of Victory Drive*, Savannah, GA., Postcard Collection, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, GA.

IV. Conclusion

This report was created in an effort to better understand the history, evolution, and identifying characteristics of the Victory Drive / US-80 Corridor. The study aims to contribute to the conversation of how best to approach the future planning and management of Victory Drive as a commemorative corridor that reflects local and national pride and remembrance, while remaining useful and functional as a modern street. The continued loss of historic characteristics and defining landscape features along Victory Drive remains a concern among local citizens as economic development continues along the corridor and traffic and transportation pressures increase.

Although Victory Drive was once another local dirt road, it has evolved into a major arterial that connects the City of Savannah to Tybee Island, both geographically and socially. Throughout its history, Victory Drive has undergone many changes in design, name, and urban development. While evolution and progress can be positive, they can also be detrimental to the character of an area if not thoughtfully managed. It is possible to incorporate change while maintaining an area's historic character. Preserving iconic and defining features is the one of the best ways to ensure that historic significance is not lost, even as urban landscapes adapt to different uses.

History has revealed that while the original idea behind the creation of Victory Drive rested firmly on its identity as a war memorial, the function of the corridor has gradually evolved to accommodate a modern lifestyle. Although some historic and landscape features have been lost along the corridor, including a substantial number of palmettos, enough features remain in places to preserve, and perhaps restore, some of Victory Drive's historic, commemorative landscape without compromising the current function of the corridor as a modern urban thoroughfare. Understanding Victory Drive as an historic urban landscape of both local and national significance will aid the city in defining what is most appropriate when developing plans to accommodate both the past and present along Victory Drive.

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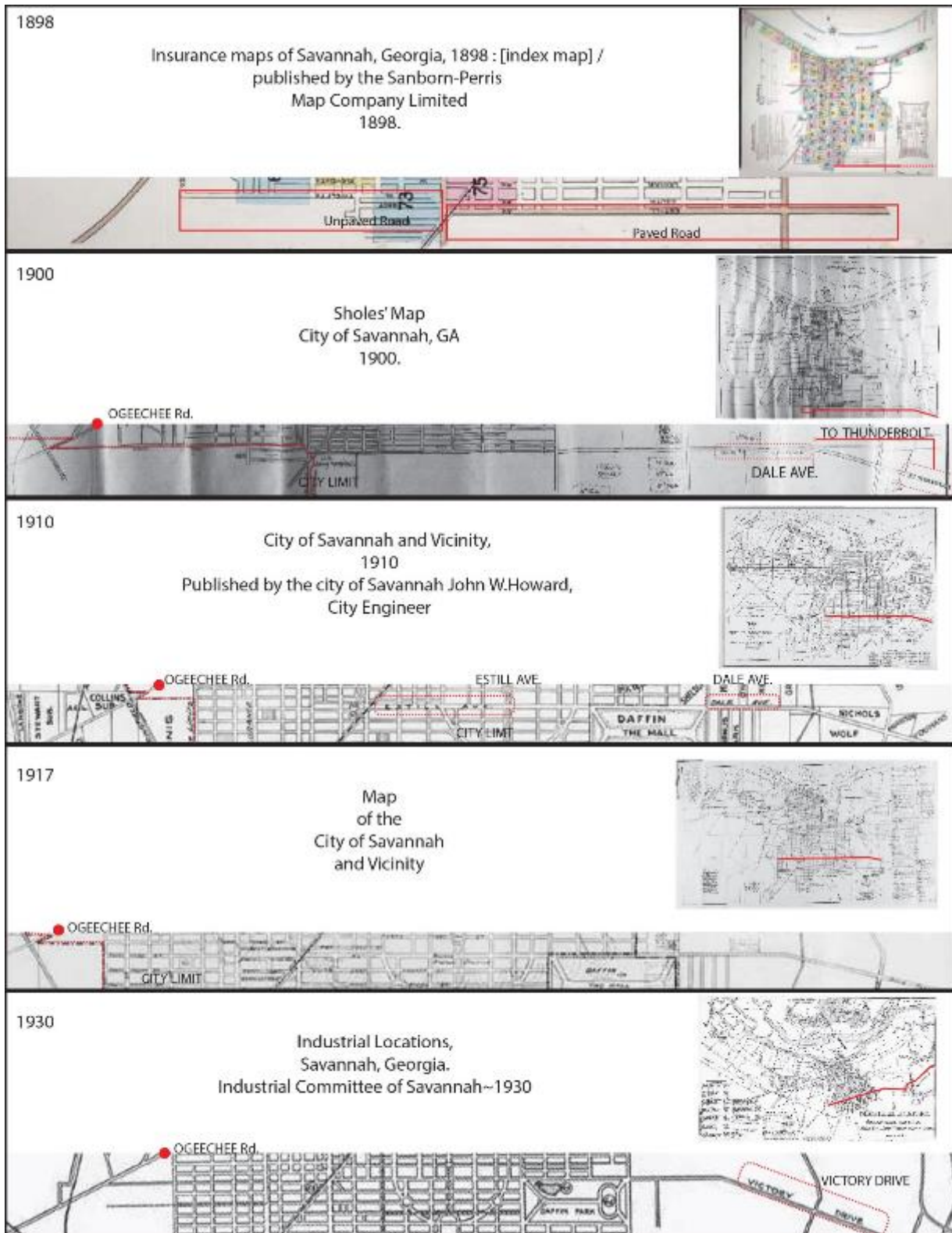
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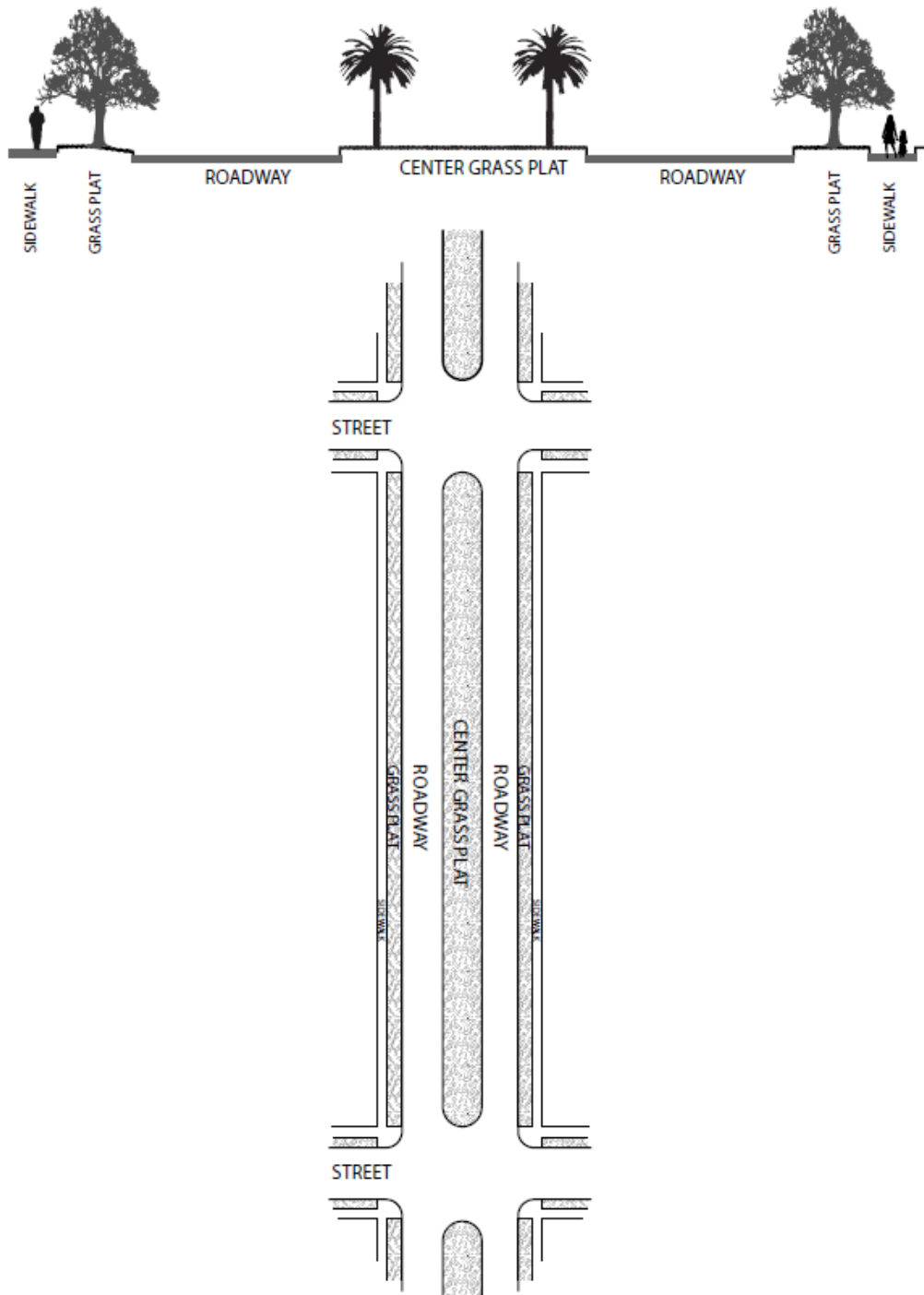
Appendix. 1. Analysis of Character Zones
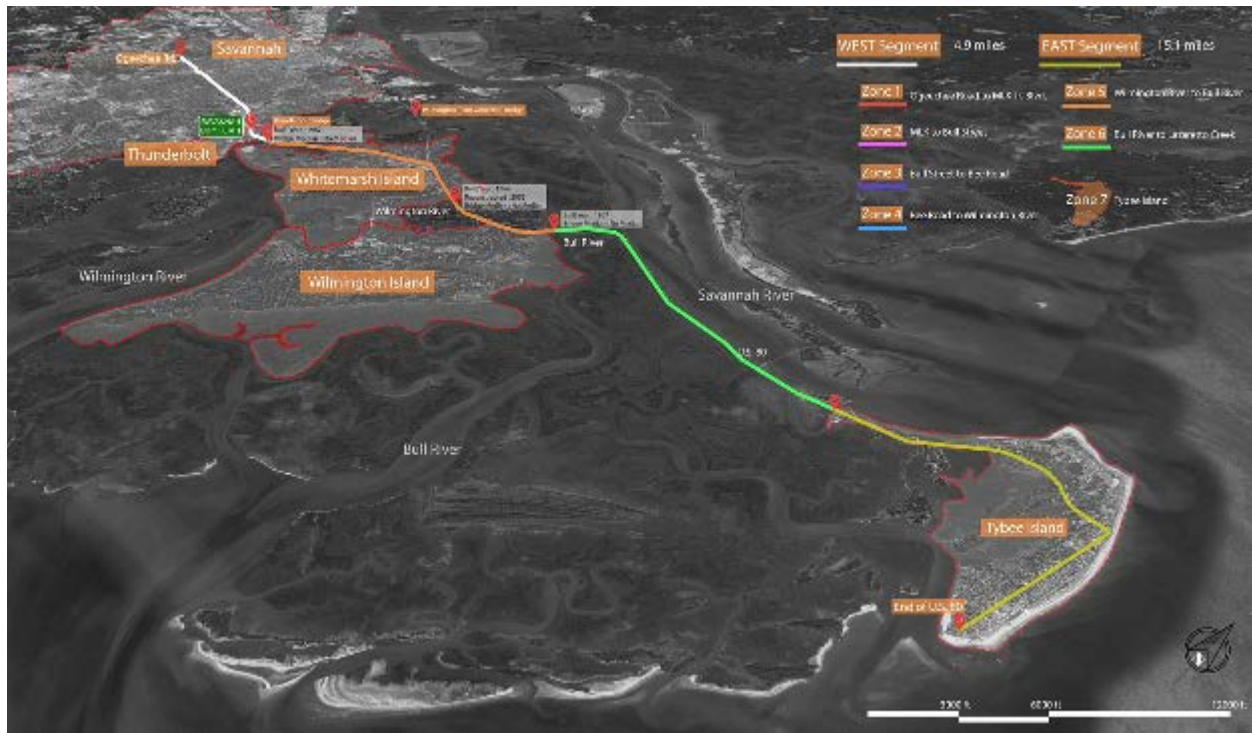
Zone	Section	Condition
1	Ogeechee Road to MLK	Architecture: Bungalow architecture (residential)
		Landscape: Includes Sabal Palmettos; No Live Oaks
2	MLK to Bull Street	Architecture: Eclectic architecture ranging from Italianate to Victorian (residential); A major railroad crosses Victory Drive
		Landscape: Includes no defining landscape
3	Bull Street to Bee Road	Architecture: Greek and Italianate architecture (residential)
		Landscape: Includes Sabal Palmettos, Live Oaks & Indica Azaleas
4	Bee Road to Wilmington River	Architecture: Eclectic architecture (residential and commercial)
		Landscape: Includes both Sabal Palmettos and Live Oaks; also includes Daffin Park, the largest recreational and public space along Victory Drive featuring a stadium and a manmade lake.
5	Wilmington River to Bull River	Architecture: Contemporary architecture (commercial)
		Landscape: Includes both Sabal Palmettos and Live Oaks
6	Bull River to Lazaretto Creek	Architecture: N/A
		Landscape: Naturalizing, Saltwater Marsh Landscapes
7	Tybee Island	Architecture: Diverse architecture (Transportation; highways and bridges spanning over marshland with access to occasional pockets of residential and commercial developments).
		Landscape: Includes palms, marsh grass, shrubs, beach grass and sand.

**Appendix 2.** Analysis of Historic Maps: Development of Victory Drive Boundary

Appendix 3. Reproduction of Proposal Drawing on the Improvement of Victory Avenue in 1919

SIDEWALK GRASS PLAT ROADWAY CENTER GRASS PLAT ROADWAY GRASS PLAT SIDEWALK

STREET

GRASS PLAT ROADWAY CENTER GRASS PLAT ROADWAY GRASS PLAT SIDEWALK SIDEWALK

STREET

Reproduction of 1919 Proposal Drawing by Mr. W.O'D Rockwell, City Engineer (October 16, 1919, The Savannah Press)

Appendix 4. Analysis of Victory Drive's Median and Side Walks around Commercial Area

Cross Street
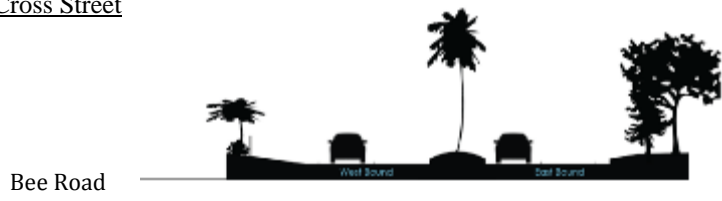
Bee Road

River Drive

Bee Road

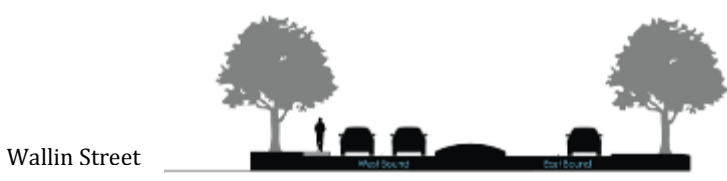

Third Street

Third Street

Limerick Street

Limerick Street

Harry Truman parkway

Wallin Street

Wallin Street