

1750-1825

Subdivision of the garden lots

Savannah's earliest settlers were allotted 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, land owners 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.

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, imbedding the diagonal character into this part of Savannah's street network.

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.

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.

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.

Primary Street Network

I-16 & Major Surface Street Network

37th Street Extension

Allows East-bound exit from, and West-bound entry to highway.

Does not allow West-bound exit from, or East-bound entry to highway.

Gwinnett Street

Allows East-bound exit from, and West-bound entry to highway.

Does not allow West-bound exit from, or East-bound entry to highway.

Louisville Road

Allows East-bound exit from, and West-bound entry to highway.

Does not allow West-bound exit from, or East-bound entry to highway.

Oglethorpe Avenue

Allows West-bound exit from, and East-bound entry to highway.

Does not allow East-bound exit from, or West-bound entry to highway.

MLK at Gaston Street

One way exit movement East-bound.

MLK at Taylor Street

One way entrance movement West-Bound

Montgomery Street

One way exit movement, east-bound onto Montgomery Street

Pedestrian Network

Fragmented Environment in Corridor

Inconsistent and incomplete pedestrian structure west of MLK.

Approximately 1,000' between pedestrian crossings on Montgomery Street.

Lack of crosswalks, narrow sidewalk with no traffic buffer, 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 movement into and out of restaurants.

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Highway Network

Two Ages of Infrastructure

Older Infrastructure

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

Newer Infrastructure

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.

Design Charrette

Invitation & Schedule

The I-16 Exit Ramp Removal Study Charrette & the MLK Jr. Boulevard - Montgomery Street Expo were held February 17 -19, 2010. The events were held at the Con-Ed Center in the historic McKelvey-Powell building at 714 MLK, Jr. Boulevard.

The event was organized by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, The City of Savannah, Chatham County, Coastal Region MPO, and Savannah Development & Renewal Authority.

More than 250 citizens attended and participated in the I-16 Charrette including the Kick-Off Presentation, the Hands-On Design Session, Pin-Ups, Discussions, Open Studio and Public Presentations.

Design Charrette

Process & Participation

The Kick-Off Meeting, Goals & Visioning, Hands-on Design Session, and Progress Presentations were well attended with great participation from numerous citizens, community leaders, and property owners. Many citizens and officials also stopped by the open Design Studio during the three-day Charrette to offer additional input as various options were developing.

Facilitated Discussion on Visioning and Goals

Kick-Off Presentation, February 17 2010

- Creative Enterprise Zone - develop incentives to support urban vibrancy
- Creative/knowledge based industries; music-media hub
- Community - civic pride
- A place where businesses can survive
- Make people feel good about MLK/Montgomery
- Multi-layered uses of buildings - hotel to retail to school to community use/housing
- Incentive to invest and to encourage all citizens opportunity to be a part of revitalization
- Look at un-met needs and integration of diverse options
- Look at other communities and their efforts
- Neighborhoods were deteriorated in the 50s and 60s
change needed to occur
- Consider cost of undertaking this project
- Re-create Union Station - grocer, retail
- Recognize elders in Civil Rights - WW Law and Earl Shihoster
- Create a place for ALL citizens
- Rebuild, Retain Character
- Diverse Cultures
- Consider ways to engage youth
- Trees, grass, parks
- Build for the future
- Consider our kids
- Consider Healthcare Needs
- Sustainable development: multi-modal, mixed housing stock, urban gardens
- What makes Savannah memorable? Oglethorpe Plan - still working
- Focus on basic infrastructure to grow with City - dynamic - flexible

- Consider generators of traffic flow west/south
- Multiple movement options leads to economic development
- Don't concede to auto-oriented solutions
- Take the 50-100 year vision forward
- Concern about natural disaster - how to evacuate quickly
- Crosswalks needed - esp. in Kayton and Frazier homes area
- Traffic lights - need to provide enough time to cross
- Get people into the city effectively- don't back up traffic on I-16
- Gwinnett Street might need to be enhanced
- Arena Potential, Gwinnett Improvements
- Look for other models for Federal financing
- Planning too often related to buildings - relate to people too
- People need to be protected - this is their home - don't displace
- Don't forget to design for entire community
- Make transition as easy and accessible as possible
- More connectivity/more options to get into town will alleviate stress
- SCAD and other development will generate more people/commerce
- Cars are not the only way to move people
- Look at what other cities are doing
- High-priced oil, schools (distance learning), food production (local)
- Many more people will be moving to urban centers
- Welcoming image for native Savannahians to come home
- Focus on recreation, education
- Structure sessions so young people can participate
- Connect neighborhoods, connect streets
- Focus on affordability
- Replace lost amenities (movie theater) and lost history
- Entertainment history - retain cultural roots
- Consider needs of aging population
- Opportunity for local jobs through construction and demolition
- Current system works well - new plan must work as well
- Think Big
- 37th Street - need to protect the neighborhood fabric
- Return to retail and commercial along MLK and Montgomery
- Reference Atlantic Station in Atlanta as a case study
- Consider removing ramps but re-purposing bridge - crosswalk
- Gaston at West Broad: in West Broad's heyday - "could see everyone"
- "Always was a community"- make it community again - safe, everyone knew each other, diverse
- Potential hub for transit system
- Streets historically ran all the way to cemetery
- Care must be taken to sell off parcels smaller in size- don't sell all land to one developer for one development
- Provide incentives for lower/middle incomes
- Better public notice to Kayton and Frazier Homes about meetings
- Redevelopment will encourage travel south of Liberty Street

- What is it going to cost? Where is money going to come from?
- Don't squeeze out the little person - allow renters
- Avoid gentrification
- Concern about mix of land use - think it through
- Financing - use long-term debt to finance improvements over a long period of time - leverage local funds with state and federal funds
- Multi-modal transportation
- Mixed housing stock
- Let vision be fundable
- Plan for people who live here now as well as in the future
- Do not build a school on a highway
- Don't repeat mistakes of the past
- Look out over 50 years to create opportunities to finance improvements (political and community partnership)

Hands-On Design

February 18 2010

Citizens participated in the Hands-On Design Session in small groups, working together to develop ideas for the I-16 Area.

Each of the five Design Teams presented their ideas to the entire group during an informal Pin-up Session.

Participants recorded additional ideas about redeveloping the I-16 and MLK area.

Table 1 Concepts

Hands-On Design

- Encourage diverse interests in the area
- I-16 at Gwinnett – beautified as a major entry to Savannah; Gwinnett connected as an important corridor
- From Gwinnett, a redeveloped Boundary Street connects to Jones and Louisville
- I-16 movement to spread out to network vs. “Pipeline” approach
- Boulevard to replace I-16 ramps with green space between to accommodate bikeway or canal
- Residential – Mixed & Sustainable

Table 2 Concepts

Hands-On Design

- Essential to knit together major projects and create access among them, where historic development pattern meets new technology/development; Avoid barriers
- Access to redevelopment area from 17, coming south; after Oglethorpe exit – How can we get in?
- Triangular garden lots – Develop to showcase farming, working history & sustainability
- Work with the flood plain in creating civic space (i.e. develop lake & canal)
- Trolley Hub developed at Union Station

Table 3 Concepts

Hands-On Design

- Restore historic street patterns & residential community
- Gwinnett & Louisville – Improve entry experience to Savannah
- I-16 Exit ramp transitions to an urban boulevard, creates numerous economic development opportunities
- Park & Ride – Access to possible arena site, streetcar, canal, mixed-use development
- Design for not only cars; Route west for streetcar; Create connections to West Savannah neighborhoods
- Sustainable boulevards for residents and business users
- Public Park to honor W.W. Law

Table 4 Concepts

Hands-On Design

- Disperse highway among city streets
- Enhance Oglethorpe interchange to allow on-ramp south
- Transit Hub – Light rail to west for commuters, linking to trolley downtown; Intermodal connections from downtown system to western suburbs, airport, Pooler

- Reconnect street grids through Kayton & Frazier Homes
- Montgomery Street restored to two-way movement
- Connect streets across route of ramps
- Re-establish Selma & Roberts Streets
- Re-establish vital edges on MLK
- Create connected, walkable streets with short blocks, street trees
- Build parks with retail & active edges
- Re-build Union Station as transit hub; Psychological value in the image of Union Station; Civic focal point.
- Identity for district - naming opportunity

Table 5 Concepts

Hands-On Design

- Enhance I-16 gateway just north of Gwinnett; create routes into parking decks – intermodal center; tie to possible light rail on MLK
- Enhance interchanges at Gwinnett & Louisville
- Amtrak – Connect to Visitors Center
- East/west access from MLK to possible arena district via Cohen Street; Develop smaller streets west of MLK
- Develop Green space / Urban garden / lake within former right-of-way
- Create an Arts & entertainment – mixed-use district; with offerings for children - museum, gaming, movie theater
- Cultural/museum district along MLK & small business incubators
- The Frogtown Fleamarket, mix of produce and goods; Urban Grocery
- Encourage 3-4 story building heights along MLK; Allow for taller building heights, stepping back from MLK; bring in affordable & senior housing

- Bike routes, Connect to Henry & Anderson, return to two-way movement
- Create a destination for Savannah suburbanites to come Downtown

Comments on Work-in-Progress Presentation, February 19 2010

- Strengthen community - develop enough creative capital to be sustainable
- Need to develop analysis to identify what “entertainment/culture” means
- Project must incorporate economic and financial plan
- Does one component stand out as achievable now?
- Common ownership of land by the City - could make redevelopment happen more quickly
- Next Steps - 7 year game plan to build - money to make vision actionable - must proceed with the optimism that it MUST happen
- Don't create expectations if leadership can't make it happen
- Let's be bold and mighty forces will come to our aid
- Make corridor the destination once again
- It is Time to Act
- Concept and Charrette format used is productive - nothing is carved in stone
- Pull together- something positive will result
- Multi-modal question - getting to historic district core - facilitate transportation - discussion/need
- Where will the people come from?
Who will live where new neighborhoods are created?
- Be inclusive with the community
- Keep land costs down, keep ownership in City's hands - give a helping hand to smaller developers and land owners
- Value of land could support financing
- Create opportunities for all citizens to invest
- Reasonable time frame?
 - 10-20 year build out
 - Spread investment out over larger area
 - Government entities determine priority
- Zoom to fine grain details
- Eco-land use-finance - government has to provide support
- Let's not blow it - an opportunity like this comes along only once in many years
- MLK/Montgomery needs to remain the priority
- How will we handle traffic? Alice? Gaston?
- City government has to commit - fast track
- Public funds have to be committed to creating and sustaining. Rooftops=business
- Resources need to be put in place to support residential and business growth

- Can a resolute action be taken? Yes. We should move quickly and expediently
- Very good - inspired to support what's best for the City
- Doesn't have to be grand but need an entry way to Savannah that represents Savannah

Context Diagrams

Charrette Sketches & Preliminary Concepts

1965

The Highway Ends

When I-16 was originally planned, the highway came to a complete terminus 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

By 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 terminus now functioning as an exit, different strategies to reconfigure the ramps and restore neighborhoods can be considered. Three concepts were explored at the Charrette. These are differentiated by the extent of their removal of the I-16 ramps.

Minimum Removal

Key Ideas & Benefits

- Remove Exit Ramps initially two blocks west of MLK; in the future, remove to Gwinnett
- Public Park on MLK across from the Civil Rights Museum
- Restoration of Historic Selma Street and later, Roberts Street
- Potential Site for new Transit / Rail Center fronting Public Park
- Potential for future rail corridor in I-16 right-of-way
- Opens two new developable blocks on the West side of MLK

Intermediate Removal

Key Ideas & Benefits

- Remove Exit Ramps initially three blocks west of MLK; in the future, remove to Gwinnett
- Public Park on MLK across from the Civil Rights Museum
- Urban Boulevard along Historic Selma Street
- Opens three developable blocks on the East side of MLK
- Opens four new developable blocks on the West side of MLK

Maximum Removal

Key Ideas & Benefits

- Remove Exit Ramps back to Gwinnett Street
- Public Park on MLK across from the Civil Rights Museum
- Restoration of historic Roberts Street
- Potential Site for new Transit Center fronting MLK on old Union Station Site
- Opens three developable blocks on the East side of MLK
- Potential to open four large developable blocks West of MLK

Charrette Concept

Maximum Exit Ramp Removal

Removal of the I-16 on-ramp and exits west to Gwinnett Street allows the creation of a new civic building fronting onto MLK, Jr. Boulevard with a public reserve to the west within the former right-of-way. This could be held as a green space and a future rail corridor opportunity or used as a neighborhood development area. A public park could be located along MLK, Jr. Boulevard across from the Civil Rights Museum with re-established streets and mixed-use buildings surrounding its edges as well as significant infill and revitalization opportunities within the Montgomery Street Corridor.

Charrette Concept

Minimum Exit Ramp Removal

Removal of the I-16 on-ramp and exits immediately west of MLK, Jr. Boulevard would allow for the creation of a prominent civic building site fronting a park at MLK, Jr. Boulevard. This new park, across from the Civil Rights Museum, would have the opportunity for multiple additional mixed-use building sites surrounding its edges. With the removal of the elevated ramp structure, significant revitalization opportunities would also be created within the Montgomery Street Corridor.