



2018 - 2020

# CUYLER-BROWNVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD

GEORGIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY

## INTRODUCTION

The Cuyler-Brownville Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey was conducted as part of an ongoing city-wide preservation planning initiative sponsored by the City of Savannah and administered by the Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission.

The survey identifies all historically significant buildings, structures, and sites (collectively referred to as resources) within the Cuyler-Brownville Neighborhood and serves as an update to the 1994 historic resources survey of the neighborhood.

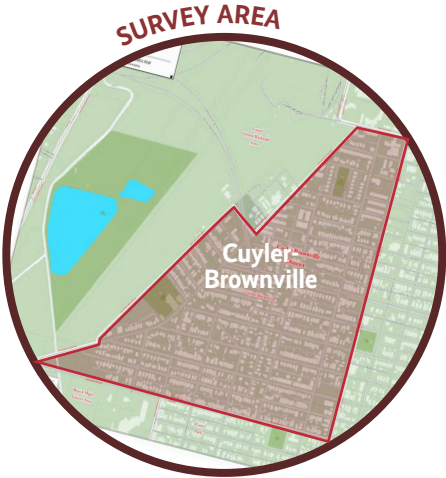


## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey began in December 2018 at the southern boundary of the district and included all resources 40 years of age or older. Through this survey, 1,027 resources were updated (from the 1994 survey) or newly recorded.

The survey revealed that 43 resources recorded during the 1994 survey had been demolished. The remaining 984 resources include 983 buildings and one (1) structure. These resources were photographed, marked on a neighborhood map, and a Georgia Historic Resource Survey form completed.

The results of the survey, including descriptive and historic information and photographs, can be found in the Georgia Natural, Archaeological, and Historic Resources Geographic Information System (GNAHRGIS) on-line database provided by the Historic Preservation Division, of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources at [www.gnahrgis.com](http://www.gnahrgis.com).



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The content for this brochure was derived from the survey report written by Ward Architecture + Preservation and Quatrefoil Historic Preservation Consultants published in 2020.

- Further study and evaluation of potentially NHRP eligible resources.
- Extend the period of significance to 1970 (the 50-year historic period); the survey revealed a continuum of development throughout the district to 1980.
- Update the local district building map to include 421 buildings within the local boundary found within the current period of significance during the survey.
- Update the NHRP district building/174 resources within the current period of significance (POS) found within the existing boundary, evaluate the discrepancy with the eastern boundary, and expand the western boundary to Kollock Street.

The report prepared to accompany the survey recommends several future preservation activities as follows:

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### NEIGHBORHOOD ARCHITECTURE & CHARACTER

Many different architectural building types were identified during the neighborhood survey. The building type is the overall form of the building: the unadorned building envelope as well as the interior room layout and height.

Identifying the building types help us understand the architectural and historical context that shaped the development of the historic resources on a local, regional, and national level. Below are four (4) crucial building types identified in Cuyler-Brownville.



614 W 49th St

The bungalow type is long and low with irregular floor plans and an overall rectangular shape. This is the most prevalent building type in the neighborhood with 283 identified resources.



523 W 39th St

The urban equivalent to the community store, the corner store is one of the most distinctive building types found in Savannah. This survey identified 17 of these resources.



626 W 42nd St

The shotgun house is a narrow building type, with consecutive rooms and no hallway constructed in urban neighborhoods in expanding Southern cities between 1880-1930. This survey identified 30 of these resources.



608 W 80th St

This unique building type features a side hallway adjacent to two rooms, like the side hall house, but only one-story. This building type may be unique to neighborhoods like Cuyler-Brownville. This survey identified 22 of these resources.



This historic resources survey has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products or consultants constitute endorsement or recommendation by these agencies. This program received Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender or disability in its federally-assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240.



# NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

## DURING THE PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE (POS)

The Cuyler-Brownville neighborhood was originally developed in the mid-19th century for freed slaves and survives as one of the most intact and continuously occupied African-American neighborhoods in Savannah. The neighborhood was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1998.

The period that followed the Civil War witnessed some growth and rebuilding as residents struggled to recover from the impacts of war. The African-American population almost doubled in size as freed slaves from nearby areas settled within the City. Many of these people settled the Brownville and Dillontown developments north and west of the City in former farm lots. Brownville, approximately twenty acres, was laid out in 1867 between Dillontown and Laurel Grove Cemetery by Dr. Louis A. Falligant.

of the neighborhood was completely built-out with residential homes. These residents were mostly African-American middle-class home owners and renters, and included community leaders and professionals.

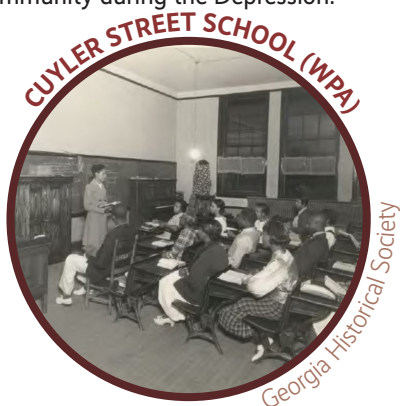


Institutional buildings were constructed in the neighborhood to serve African-Americans throughout the area, establishing Cuyler-Brownville as the primary location for important school, church, and medical services. The McKane Hospital (renamed Charity Hospital in 1901) was built on West 36th Street in 1896. Two public schools were constructed for African-American children in the early 20th century. In 1914, the Cuyler Street School opened on the north side of Anderson Street at Cuyler Street. This school became a landmark to the surrounding community, which eventually took on the same name. The Florence Street School opened in 1930 due to the continued growth in the community and high demand for additional space for African-American students.

In the 1910s and 1920s, the return of soldiers following World War I and the rise of the automobile resulted in changes to residential development. Garages, driveways, and streetscapes became a primary consideration. Development along the newly created segment of West 37th Street featured wider lots and the new buildings erected were similar to bungalows and two-story center hall homes with garages being constructed in the new automobile subdivisions.

Additionally, pattern books and catalogues were a readily available source of building materials and designs for the residents. Because of the anonymity of those placing orders, buyers were not subject to racist or separatist policies allowing African-Americans to incorporate new designs and materials into their buildings. These combined forces resulted in numerous one-story cottages and bungalows in areas previously vacant throughout the neighborhood.

With the onset of the Great Depression, development slowed. African-American neighborhoods in Savannah did not have much financial support for maintenance during the depressed economy. However, in this specific neighborhood, families turned to each other to provide support and Cuyler-Brownville survived as a stable, intact neighborhood. From 1933-1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted a series of programs referred to as the New Deal. One program was the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which employed professionals during a time of massive unemployment. This program also provided school activities for African-American children, adult education at the Cuyler Street School, and helped to sustain the community during the Depression.



As a result of the Fair Housing Act of 1938, the lands south of Cuyler-Brownville were opened up and African-American residents began purchasing lots and building new

homes outside of the neighborhood. As the population continued to shift, the Cuyler-Brownville neighborhood began to decline. Buildings maintained low rents, and vacancy rates increased. Long-time residents and African-American organizations grew concerned about these changes and sought to establish a record of their community. The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History sponsored a historic survey of Cuyler-Brownville.

Many larger homes on or near the 37th Street corridor were converted into tourist homes to meet the tourism demand and provided additional income for families. They provided affordable short-term rentals to travelers passing through from Highway 17 or en route to the beaches. The Rest-A-While Inn Motel, the Poinsettia, Sundown Lodge, Wayside Inn, and the Roamers Retreat were a few of the converted homes.



Today, long-time residents continue to live in the Cuyler-Brownville neighborhood and maintain properties within the heart of the district. Their continued occupancy and maintenance have resulted in a high degree of historic integrity within the core of the district away from the busier commercial strip along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The closely spaced and similarly shaped buildings along many block faces creates a continuous rhythm of structures which have established a street character that is not found elsewhere in Savannah.

# CUYLER-BROWNVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Cuyler-Brownville neighborhood is the area roughly bounded by West Anderson St on the north, Montgomery Street on the east, West Victory Drive to the south, and Kollock Street and Ogeechee Road to the west.

### LEGEND

Local Historic District Boundary (Survey Area)

National Register Historic District Boundary

