

# ***MASTER PLAN***

*for*

## ***Mobile's Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage District***

Prepared for:

**Mobile County  
Commission**



**February 28, 2025**



# Acknowledgements

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***“With nothing left to see, it is hard to catch Davis Avenue’s glory, but it lives on in memories and stories.”***

Eric Finley – The story of Mobile’s ‘Harlem’

Dec. 2, 2020 edition of Lagniappe

***“When they tore down the homes and buildings around Davis Avenue, they tore down our history. There is little left for the next generations to learn from.”***

Brenda Owen Norwood – The story of Mobile’s ‘Harlem’

Dec. 2, 2020 edition of Lagniappe



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

It is Mobile County's goal to prepare a community-driven Master Plan for Mobile County's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District ("The District"). Key goals for the area include:

- Preservation of historic sites
- Interpretation of the district's stories
- Heritage tourism resulting in the area's revitalization (without gentrification)

## HISTORY

The Avenue started as a dirt trail circa 1800 to connect Downtown Mobile to destinations to the northwest. During the 1830s, the trail was named Stone Street Road, and it was renamed Davis Avenue in 1861. From the late-19th century through the first half of the 20th century, The Avenue became a thriving mixed-use corridor for the African American community flanked on either side by a neighborhood of small lots with modest houses. During the 1960s, the area became a focal point for the Civil Rights movement. While the desegregation achieved was clearly a blessing

overall, it harmed the area economically over time. The displacement and demolition of buildings during the 1970s as part of the federal Urban Renewal program served as another blow to the area, and it has struggled ever since. Revitalization is critical.

### ***What is a Heritage District?***

*It is a cohesive and discernible area with a set of themes, stories and sites to be preserved, enhanced, interpreted and promoted.*

## STUDY AREA

As delineated in this Master Plan, the study area's main spine is a nearly two-mile segment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue extending from the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Hall on the east end to just shy of Three Mile Creek on the west end. The area also extends for several blocks to the north and south of that corridor. Although a finite area was necessary for planning purposes, many of this plan's interpretation and tourism strategies are linked to external sites such as Africatown, Oaklawn Cemetery, and the Hank Aaron boyhood home.

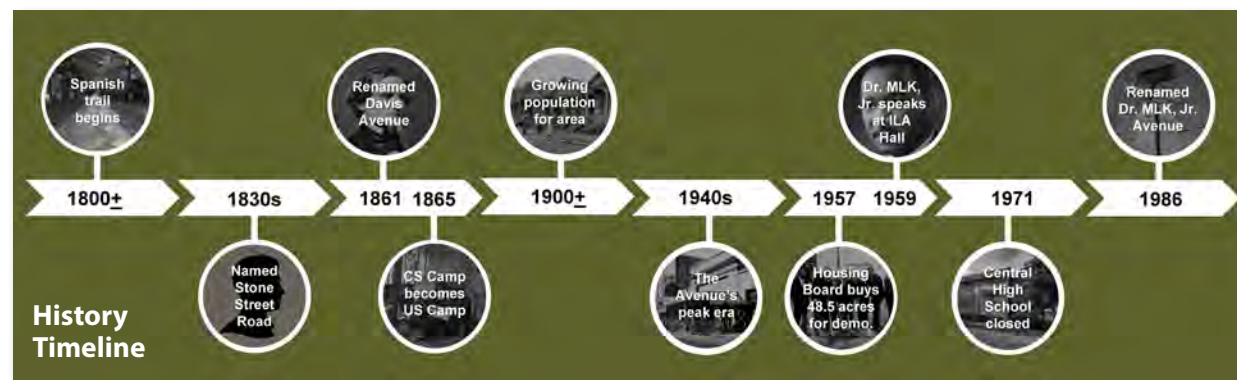
## PLANNING METHODOLOGY

This Master Plan was prepared for Mobile County through a process that engaged the public in a robust and hands-on manner throughout the life of the project. As the County's Request for Proposals (RFP) document for this plan stated, a key goal was to:

*"ensure widespread support, we want to empower various stakeholders and community members to participate in all stages of the process. Community engagement and participation are crucial in this process."*



*One of this project's numerous public engagement opportunities was the Open House held at the County's Historic Avenue Cultural Center (HACC) on February 21, 2024.*



The planning project's five-step process included:

- Task 1.0: Project Kick-Off & Research
- Task 2.0: Public Engagement Events
- Task 3.0: Charrette & Concept Plan
- Task 4.0: Draft Master Plan Preparation
- Task 5.0: Plan Presentations & Revisions

The charrette was an intensive five-day process that heavily engaged stakeholders in a hands-on manner.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## FRAMEWORK PLAN & AREA CONCEPTS

The Framework Plan at right provides an overview of the key physical concepts for this master plan. The dashed circles represent a roughly quarter mile radius, which equates to an approximate five-minute walk for the average pedestrian (from the center to the periphery). Each of the three distinct places is considered an “Area.” The map’s color-coded Place Types are based upon land uses, density, development, form and character. They are aspirational as part of a plan, but existing conditions are factored into their designations. This is not a parcel-specific proposed land use map, but instead reflects proposed primary uses. Key physical components of the Framework Plan include the following:

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue serves as the main spine for the overall District.
- Single-family housing dominates the balance of the District beyond the three Areas, in addition to churches and other land uses.

## AREAS OVERVIEW

The three planned Areas are summarized below:

### A. Gateway Area

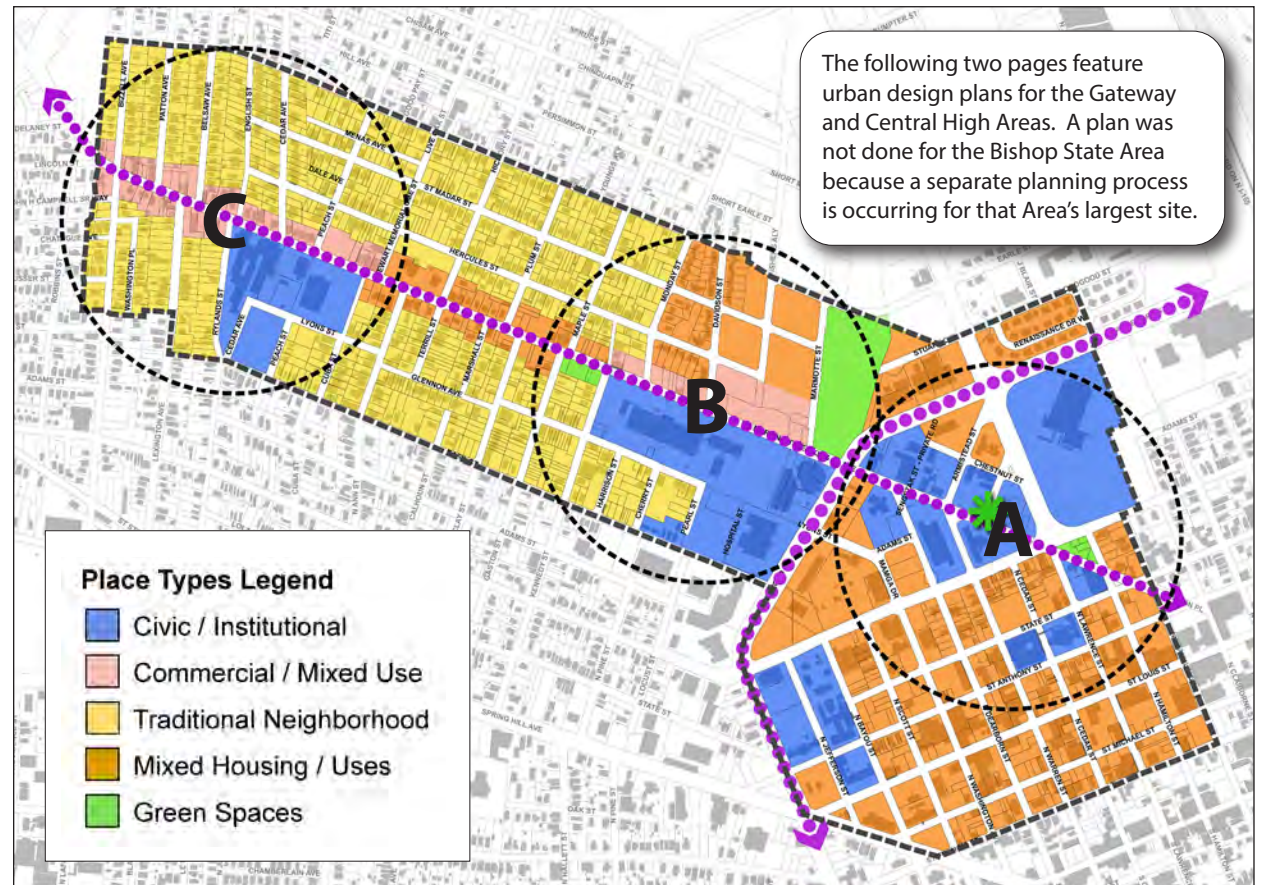
This Area anchors The District’s east end adjacent to Downtown. It has several landmarks such as the County’s Historic Avenue Cultural Center, historic churches, and the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Hall. New anchors such as the Interpretive Center and Gateway Park will make this Area The District’s “jumping off point.”

### B. Bishop State Area

The main existing anchors here are Bishop State Community College (BSCC) and Florence Howard Elementary, and there is also a small park. The institutional anchors will eventually be joined by a large mixed-use development planned for the north side of MLK Avenue as a partnership between BSCC, the Mobile Housing Authority, and the Fuse Project. It will include a substantial amount of affordable and student housing.

### C. Central High Area

Serving as The District’s westerly bookend, this area will be more focused on the needs of the surrounding residents, although it will still be a destination for heritage tourists to better understand the stories of The Avenue. Important sites include Central High School, White’s Barber College, the Vernon Z. Crawford Law Firm Office, and multiple historic churches. Central High’s impending re-opening as a special school is anticipated.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## GATEWAY AREA URBAN DESIGN PLAN

Primary concepts for this Area include the following.

### INTERPRETIVE CENTER

#### District Hub

The interpretive center will serve as the main anchor for the Gateway Area and the “jumping off point” for visitors to explore the broader District. Being located at The District’s closest point to the Downtown will make it more appealing to visitors.

#### Building Space Allocation

The center’s approximately 10,000 square feet of building space will be allocated roughly as follows:

- 7,500 square feet of exhibition space
- 2,500 square feet of event venue, gift shop, offices, and other support space

### AMENITIES & BUSINESSES

**Park & Special Events:** The proposed park by the proposed interpretive center will be an important new amenity for passive recreational purposes and special events.

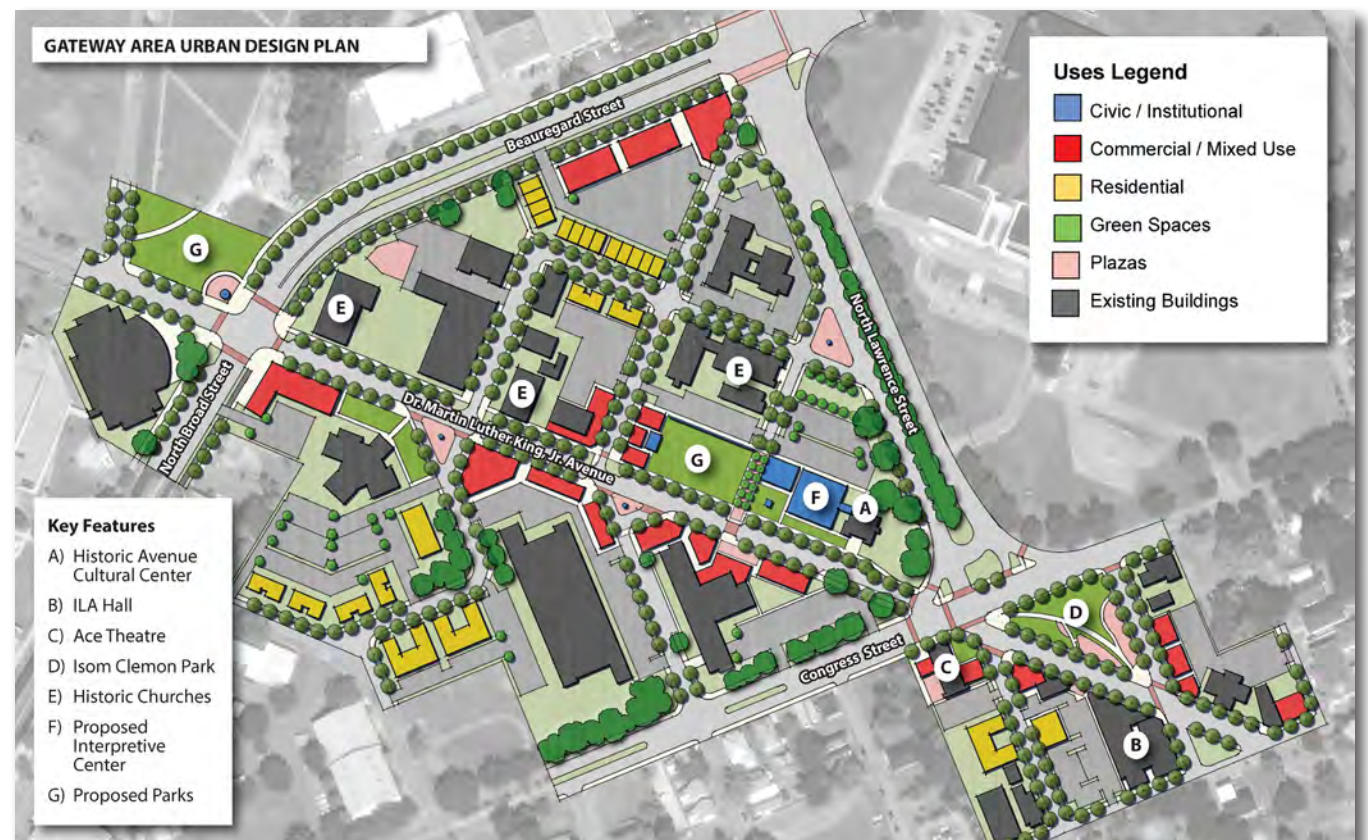
**Public Art:** Public art will be important to activate, brand, and interpret The District.

**Tour Operators:** Although most visitors to

The District will likely take self-guided tours tied to brochures and digital interpretation (phone apps, GPS technology, etc.), there will still be a market for guided tours.

**Commercial Development:** The potential 34,000 sq. ft. of business space includes:

- Destination Restaurants: 10,000 sq. ft.
- Entertainment Venue: 18,000 sq. ft.
- Retail: 6,000 sq. ft.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## CENTRAL HIGH AREA URBAN DESIGN PLAN

Primary concepts for this Area include the following.

### CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

#### Current Use & Condition

The 1924 Dunbar school became Central High School in 1955. A more contemporary-looking addition was later made to the front, but the school closed in 1970. The property was later used by Bishop State Community College, but it is now owned by Mobile County Public Schools. A major theme from stakeholders has been the importance of the school for community pride, and alum still remain organized.

#### Potential Future Uses

Any future uses will depend upon the school district, but it is recommended that it be used for some community-oriented use, such as educational purposes, a community center, business incubator, daycare, special events, and/or cultural programs venue.

#### Potential Future Design

Facade changes made prior to 1970 created a blank wall along MLK. It is recommended that a study occur to explore opening up the facade walls to provide visual interest to the adjacent streetscape, even if the openings are not functional as storefronts.

### OTHER KEY SITES TO INTERPRET

In addition to Central High, other key walkable sites for interpretation include:

- White's Barber College
- Vernon Z. Crawford Law Firm Office
- Historic Churches (Grace & Truth Christian Fellowship Church, Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Stewart Memorial Christian Church, Martin Luther Lutheran Church, etc.).





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OTHER PHYSICAL PLANNING IDEAS

In addition to the physical planning issues associated with the three specific Areas delineated for this plan, this plan contains numerous other such recommendations throughout The District. Below is a brief summary of the key topics addressed:

### BUILDINGS

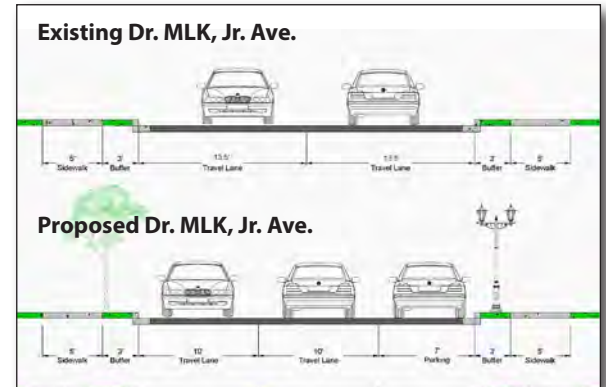
**Prioritize Existing Buildings:** Existing historic buildings that can be rehabilitated in way that restores their original character should be given priority over

new buildings. They are important for interpretation.

**New Building:** Because of so many buildings lost via Urban Renewal and decay, new compatible buildings are needed. Several example designs are in this plan.

### STREETS, STREETSCAPES & MOBILITY

The City of Mobile has planned a rebuild for Dr. MLK, Jr. Ave. west of Broad Street. This plan features the east segment's redesign (see at right). Other issues addressed are eliminating unnecessary curb cuts, ADA compliance, side-street sidewalks, and greenways. A new One Mile Creek greenway is suggested.



Above are existing and proposed designs for the segment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. It is proposed that a parallel parking lane would be added to one side of the street.

### PUBLIC SPACES & ART

**Public Spaces:** Improvements are recommended for the existing MLK Park, Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park was just developed, and this plan proposes One Mile Creek Park and Gateway Park.

**Art:** Locations have been identified for sculptures and recommendations for murals area also provided.

### OTHER ISSUES

Wayfinding and infrastructure are the other physical planning issues also addressed in this plan.



Example mural on a building in Tulsa's Greenwood District.

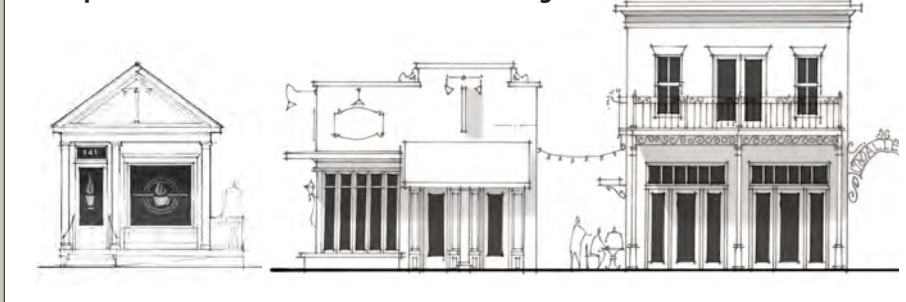
*Located on Congress Street in The District's Gateway Area, the Ace Theatre closed in 1971 and is currently vacant. While there is a range of potential uses, one might be an entertainment venue with dining and live music.*

**Proposed adaptive reuse of the Ace Theatre**



*There are numerous sites in The District available for new infill buildings. At right are just a few of this plan's many examples of commercial and mixed-use buildings that could be compatible with The District.*

**Example new commercial and mixed-use buildings**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ECONOMIC, MARKET, POLICY & PROGRAM STRATEGIES

### MARKETING STRATEGY

**Target Markets:** These groups will be targeted:

- Mobile residents, family and friends
- Heritage visitors/international: general, African-American, Civil Rights, labor movement
- Mardi Gras, beaches, cruises, eco-tourists

**Targeted Business Mix:** The optimal mix is below:

- Destination restaurants
- Specialty food stores (bakery, ice cream, fish market, etc.)
- Live entertainment
- African-American cultural experiences
- Pharmacy, personal goods and general merchandise store honoring historic businesses
- Gifts, toys, apparel and accessories



*Tulsa's Greenwood District has recruited retail and dining businesses consistent with the district's identity and themes.*



*New compatible housing such as this in New Orleans' Central City neighborhood might be built in The District.*

### FINANCING & LEVERAGING

**Interpretive Center:** This proposed facility for The District's Gateway Area would be developed and operated by a private, non-profit entity. Potential financial support might be from an endowment fund, Mobile County and the City of Mobile, foundations, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the State, unions, and corporations. Partnerships with property owners would also be beneficial. Revenues would be from memberships, admissions, and earned income.

**Private Property & Business Owners:** Proposed financing programs for property and business owners include: zero-interest or low-interest loans; building rehabilitation grants; and technical assistance. Also, an entrepreneur incubator might be established to support the culinary and hospitality industries.

### DISPLACEMENT PREVENTION

This plan's primary strategies to avoid the displacement of residents and businesses as The District revitalizes fall into the following three categories:

- Housing Rehab & Accessibility Programs
- Community Land Trust
- Infill Affordable Housing Development

Each of these categories is detailed in the full plan.

### POLICIES

**Zoning:** Zoning is an important plan implementation tool. It is recommended that new zoning districts be established that reflect this plan's Framework Plan. This may require the City's adoption of that part of this plan or their own consistent new land use plan.

**Design Guidelines:** It is not recommended that a regulatory historic district be designated that controls development. However, the City's existing Historic District Design Guidelines should be promoted for voluntary use and perhaps tied to any future incentive programs.

### PROGRAMS

Various financial programs being recommended are found in this plan's Economic & Market-Based Strategy and the Policies & Programs Strategy. The proposed program not previously addressed is the creation of a community garden somewhere in The District on an available City- or County-owned parcel. The most likely organization to spearhead that effort would be the Mobile Urban Growers, a local non-profit organization.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTERPRETATION & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

Below is a summary of the key facets of this strategy.

#### Interpretive Themes

- The Avenue's history is rooted in a Civil War camp and has links to Africatown.
- The Avenue was a vibrant "Main Street" for Mobile's African American community prior to desegregation.
- The Avenue served as the backdrop for Mobile's boycott-driven approach to the Civil Rights movement.
- Urban Renewal and other governmental programs combined to devastate The Avenue.

#### District-Wide Interpretation

Interpretation of The District's themes and stories should occur using a range of methods, including the following:

- Wayside interpretive exhibits
- Building markers
- Wall-mounted panels
- Digital interpretation

#### App-Based Interpretation

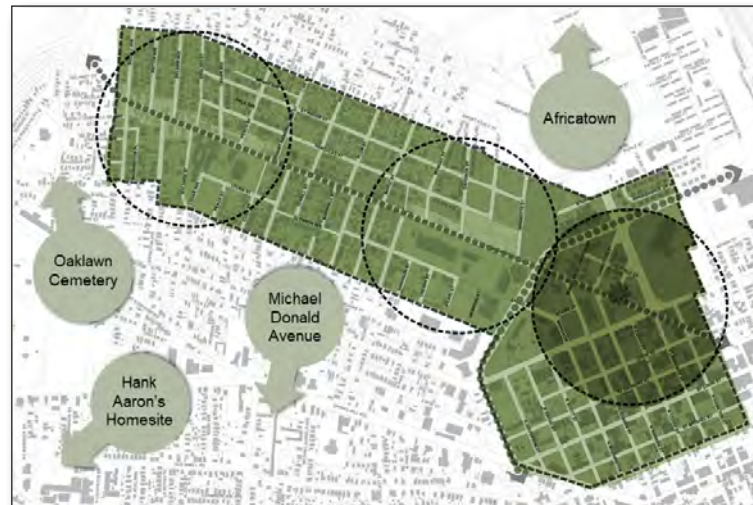
The following recommendations are offered for digital interpretation of The District via smartphone apps:

- Develop a smartphone app that accommodates selfguided tours of The District.
- Utilize QR codes as one means for accessing digital interpretation.
- Explore the use of augmented reality (AR) as a long-term low-priority goal should funding become available.

### Geographic Concept

It is proposed that the following three-tiered approach be used to interpretation of The District:

- *Gateway Area* – example sites: Historic Avenue Cultural Center, ILA Hall, new Interpretive Center
- *Overall District* – example sites: Central HS, Dave Patton Home, White's Barbering College
- *Peripheral Sites* – example sites (see map below):



## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### Overall Strategy

A three-phase strategy is proposed, as follows:

Launch Phase I: "INFORM" (near term)

Launch Phase II: "ACTIVATE" (mid term)

Launch Phase III: "EMPOWER" (mid and long term)

Phase I features four primary components:

- Share Mobile's Untold Civil Rights Story
- Engage and Cultivate the Next Generation
- Build Connections to Heritage Tourism
- Bring the District's Core Themes to Life

### Branding

*District Name:*

Historic Name - "The Avenue"

Full Name - "Mobile County's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District"

Short Name - "The District"

*District Color Palette & Logo:* See below





A group of people are seated at several tables in a room, likely a community meeting or a public consultation session. The room has walls covered with various informational displays, including maps, photographs, and text panels. One prominent panel on the right is titled "URBAN RENEWAL". The people are engaged in discussion, looking at documents, and some are looking towards the front of the room. The overall atmosphere is one of active participation and community engagement.

## A) OVERVIEW



# A) OVERVIEW

## PLAN PURPOSE

It is Mobile County's goal to prepare a community-driven Master Plan for The District that focuses on Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage. Key goals for the area include:

- Preservation of historic sites
- Interpretation of the district's stories
- Heritage tourism resulting in the area's revitalization (without gentrification)

An effective Master Plan should answer the following:

1. Where are we now? (existing conditions)
2. Where are we headed? (trends)
3. Where do we want to go? (stakeholder vision)
4. How do we get there? (strategies)

### Excerpt from the County's Request for Proposal (RFP) Document

*"The overall purpose of this project is to develop a comprehensive master plan that defines the physical and programmatic elements of a special district that will serve as the foundation for an area that provides both robust civil rights/cultural heritage tourism opportunities and services to the local community. The results of the planning and process will culminate in the development of a master plan that includes facilities and infrastructure that are needed to meet the goals and objectives of a functional special purpose district."*

***"There are lessons to learn because losing this community was losing our strength... We lost schools, neighborhoods, businesses and churches. We became unrooted and unconnected."***

- Mary Morris - civil rights activist  
*History bulldozed over on 'The Avenue'*  
December 16, 2020 - Lagniappe

***What is a Heritage District?*** *It is a cohesive and discernible area with a set of themes, stories and sites to be preserved, enhanced, interpreted and promoted (see more on page 4 regarding definitions).*

## STUDY AREA

The map on the following page delineates the very general study area for this Master Plan. Many people view "The Avenue" corridor historically as extending nearly two miles from the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Hall on the east end to the Rogers William Housing Project across Three Mile Creek on the west end. However, that is a very large area to be able to achieve successful positive change. While the specific proposed boundaries for The District will be addressed later in this plan, the following are some preliminary concepts to consider.

### Preliminary District Boundary Considerations

1. The District should be sufficiently compact to successfully achieve the objectives and to become a destination.
2. The District should attempt to incorporate a critical mass (density) of cultural resources.
3. The District should have clear boundaries via physical elements/character to provide a sense of arrival.
4. Much of The District should be walkable by being contiguous, physically cohesive, and avoiding substantial barriers that might disrupt connectivity (difficult highway crossings, etc.).

Also, public input is an important consideration to be factored into the district's boundary delineation.

It is preliminarily anticipated that The District will serve as a hub or "jumping off point" for the geographically broader existing African American Heritage Trail. However, relevant history and cultural resources located elsewhere beyond The District, such as the Clotilda and Africatown, can still be interpreted and promoted within The District.

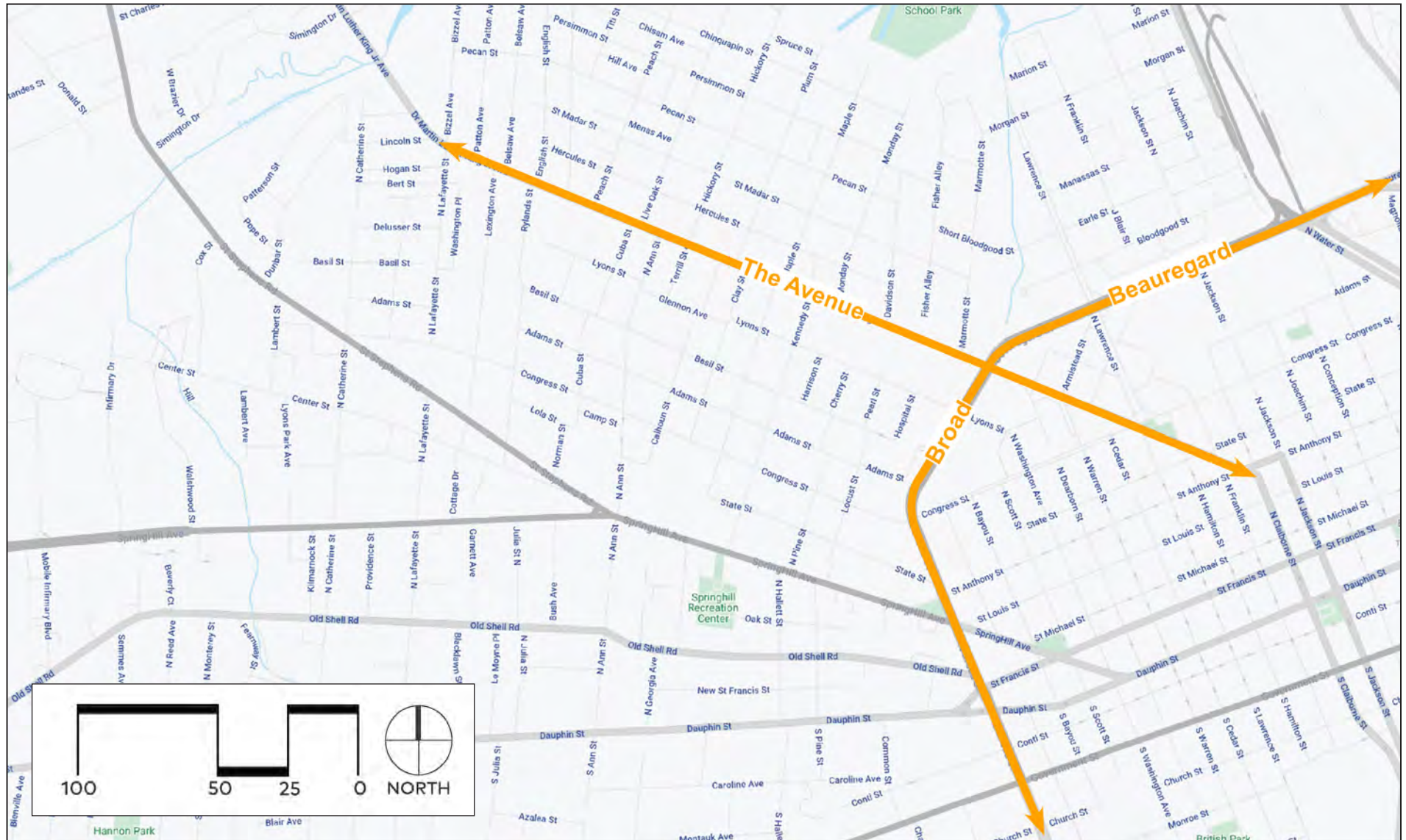
## PLANNING METHODOLOGY

This Master Plan was prepared for Mobile County through a process that engaged the public in a robust and hands-on manner throughout the life of the project. The five-step process for creating this plan is summarized on page 3.

# A) OVERVIEW

## General Study Area Map

The study area for this Master Plan was identified by the County in only general terms prior to the initiation of this project. It was intentional that research on the area's history would be conducted, key historic sites would be identified, public input would be solicited, and other considerations would be factored before the boundaries of The District would be determined. Regardless, there has been strong agreement that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue should serve as the area's key spine.





## A) OVERVIEW

### Task 1.0: Project Kick-Off & Research

The Consultant Team performed these sub-tasks prior to, during, and after a three (3) day *Trip #1* to Mobile on January 29-31, 2024:

Task 1.1: Kick-Off Meeting & Study Area Tour

Task 1.2: Physical Conditions Assessment

Task 1.3: Needs Assessment & Market Analysis

Task 1.4: Public Policy & Programs Assessment

Task 1.5: Identification of Themes, Stories & Sites

Task 1.6: Case Studies

Task 1.7: Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings

Task 1.8: Public Kick-Off Meeting

### Task 2.0: Public Engagement Events

Although this project included a robust public engagement facet throughout its life, this task was the only one dedicated solely to soliciting input from stakeholders and the general public. It offered a range of event types to meet the varied preferences and schedules of stakeholders. This task included a two (2) day *Trip #2* to Mobile for the Consultant Team on February 21-22, 2024, and it featured the following sub-tasks:

Task 2.1: Key Person Interviews

Task 2.2: Town Hall Meeting

Task 2.3: Open House Event

### Task 3.0: Charrette & Concept Plan

A “charrette” is an intensive process in which people work together over a limited period of time to develop creative ideas for solving problems. The charrette process has deep roots in the planning and design professions. Although this project’s methodology encouraged strong public input throughout the life

of the project, Task 3.0 offered the single greatest opportunity for meaningful “hands-on” involvement of County officials, key stakeholders, and the public in general. The charrette process provided a forum for the public to achieve a consensus. The most tangible outcome of the charrette was the creation of the Concept Plan as a prelude to the ultimate Master Plan. This five (5) day task comprised the Team’s *Trip #3* to Mobile. It occurred on May 16-20 and included the following components:

Task 3.1: Follow-Up Field Work (Day 1: AM & PM)

Task 3.2: Public Workshop (Day 1: PM)

- Workshop Orientation
- Planning Session
- Plan Presentations & Wrap-Up

Task 3.3: Concept Plan Development (Days 2 thru 5)

Task 3.4: Concept Plan Presentation (Day 5: PM)

### Task 4.0: Draft Master Plan Preparation

Based on the background research, public input process conducted up to this point, the expertise and experience of the Consultant Team, and the County’s response to the Concept Plan created during the Task 3.0 charrette, the draft Master Plan was prepared.

### Task 5.0: Plan Presentations & Revisions

Following the County’s review and feedback, the Consultant Team presented the draft plan to the public as part of the Team’s two (2) day *Trip #4* to Mobile, which occurred on September 4-5, 2024. Based on a review of the draft plan by the County, input from the presentation, and the County’s submission to the Team of a “red-lined” draft serving as a composite of all comments received by the County, it was revised and submitted to the County as a final document.



*A public kick-off meeting was held in the study area at Bishop State Community College on January 30, 2024. In addition to learning about the project from County representatives and the project consultants, participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and to provide their input from the very start of the project.*

# A) OVERVIEW

## How This Plan is Organized

As reflected in the Table of Contents for this plan document, it has been organized into the following eight primary sections:

- A. Overview
- B. Background
- C. Physical Planning Strategy
- D. Economic & Market-Based Strategy
- E. Policies & Programs Strategy
- F. Interpretation Strategy
- G. Communications & Branding Strategy
- H. Plan Implementation

There is also an Appendices with these sections:

- 1. Inventory of District Historic Sites
- 2. Economic Background & Tourism Potentials Report
- 3. Case Studies Report
- 4. Communications Strategy
- 5. Brand Guidelines Book

## BACKGROUND SECTION

This section of the plan is exactly as the name implies - it contains background information. *It provides the reader with information on existing circumstances for the study area* ranging from its history, physical conditions, economic and social context, applicable regulations, and similar information. Nothing in this section entails recommendations of the plan (as found in sections C-H), with two important exceptions. Those two exceptions are explained on the balance of this page.

### Interpretive Themes & Stories Sub-Section

This sub-section of the broader Background section immediately follows the sub-section entitled "History Overview & Sites." It is one of two sub-sections in this plan section that includes specific recommendations, as opposed to simply background information. The reason that recommendations are provided this early into the plan is that, until this topic can be addressed, other aspects of the required planning cannot occur. For example, the proposed district boundaries cannot be established until the interpretive themes and stories are first determined because those play into the boundary delineation. In short, the district needs to include places that tie directly to Mobile's Civil Rights and cultural heritage stories.

### District Boundaries Sub-Section

This topic addresses the second sub-section of the Background section featuring specific recommendations rather than simply background information. Until the boundaries for The District are determined, other aspects of the Background section

cannot be addressed. For example, when addressing historic sites, physical conditions, zoning and similar issues, the exact areas to be addressed must be understood. Otherwise, when assembling information on a topic such as existing buildings, the planners need to know how many blocks beyond either side of Dr. MLK, Jr. Avenue to go with the analysis.

### THIS IS NOT A REVITALIZATION PLAN

It is important for the readers of this plan to keep in mind the intent of the plan. *This plan is specifically for the development of a heritage district* and it is not an area revitalization plan. While this plan will address issues such as housing, infrastructure, and economic revitalization, it will do so only to the extent that those topics relate directly to a heritage district focused along the Dr. MLK, Jr. corridor. Thus, it is not a conventional revitalization plan, even though revitalization will be a goal for the plan. Instead, *this plan is focused more on historic preservation, interpretation, and heritage tourism.*

### Why Designate a District?

There are many different types of "districts," and they can vary greatly in their purposes. For example, some districts are regulatory in nature, such as a zoning district that controls the permitted land uses and development characteristics within a given area or a historic district that regulates building alterations. Some districts are for political reasons, such as jurisdictions that elected officials represent at the local, state and federal levels of government. Other districts are for tax purposes and/or the provision of public services.

*The purpose of The District* for Mobile's historic Avenue corridor and surrounding area is to establish boundaries for planning, interpretation and promotional purposes. It is not anticipated that any regulations will be tied to The District, although financial assistance and incentives might be targeted to The District.



A photograph of a two-story wooden building, possibly a church or schoolhouse, with a prominent porch and arched windows. The building is surrounded by large, leafy trees, and the scene is captured in a sepia-toned, vintage style. The text "B) BACKGROUND" is overlaid in the center of the image.

## B) BACKGROUND



## B) BACKGROUND

### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES

#### THE AVENUE'S HISTORY

The following concise history is a compilation from a variety of sources, including "Avenue: The Davis Avenue Story" by Paulette Davis Horton (1995) and a series of articles in the Lagniappe (2020). A review of historic maps also contributed to this brief history, and it has been edited by subject expert Eric Finley.

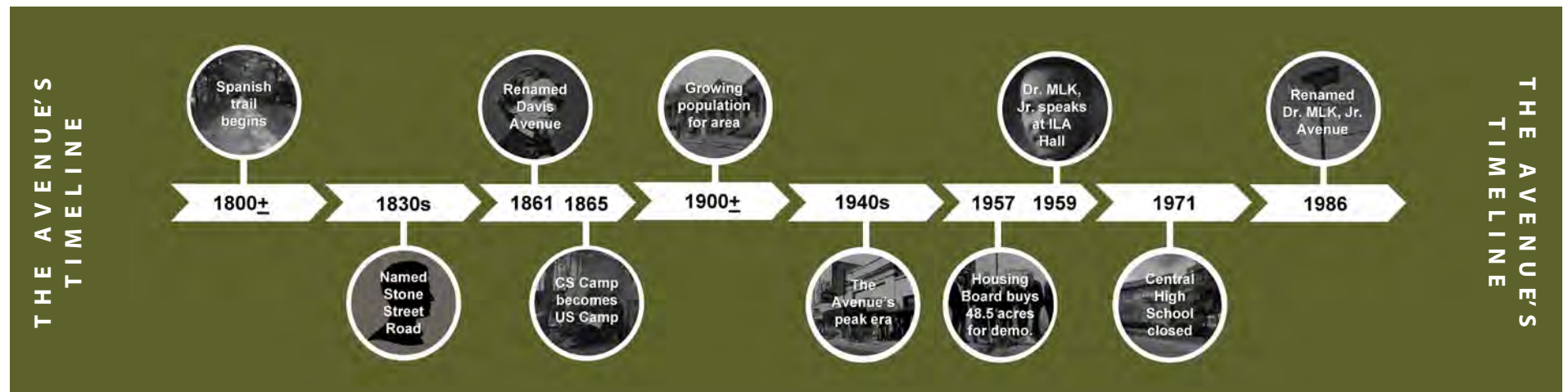
The Avenue started out as a dirt trail circa 1800 to connect Downtown Mobile to destinations located to the northwest. The trail traversed a 540-acre parcel owned by William Kennedy, a local physician loyal to Spain. At some point during the 1830s, the trail was named Stone Street Road after settler Sardine G. Stone. An 1853 map shows the street as having its current alignment, including the bend that occurs just south of Three Mile Creek. That same map illustrates the lands on the south side of the street being gridded off into blocks, but the north side of the street from

One Mile Creek extending west was not subdivided at all. The earliest maps label these creeks as "1 Mile Creek" and "3 Mile Creek." By 1867, a map (see the following page) shows subdivisions on the north side of the road extending only two blocks to the west of One Mile Creek relative to the 1853 map.

In 1861, the area from roughly south of today's MLK Avenue to Spring Hill Avenue became a campground for Confederate troops, and the road was renamed "Davis Avenue" after Confederate President Jefferson Davis the same year. A small brick structure believed to be a Confederate gunpowder magazine still stands close to the Avenue. Shortly after the war, the Freedmen's Bureau helped newly-freed slaves settle in that area, which was beginning to be known as "The Campground." Over the next few decades, African Americans began moving into the area from rural Alabama to secure dock and factory jobs in Mobile.

From the late-19th century through the first half of

the 20th century, the Avenue became a thriving mixed-use corridor flanked on either side by a neighborhood of small lots with modest houses, primarily of frame construction. Uses in and near the Avenue included grocery stores, restaurants, bars, drug stores, theaters, churches and a range of other uses. Because the era's Jim Crow laws limited the ability of African Americans to shop and dine where ever they wanted to, the result was strong market support from that community for the corridor's many businesses. In fact, it was such a robust and vibrant place that it has been referred to as the "Harlem of Mobile." Numerous famous musical performers that were part of the "Chitlin Circuit" played in the Avenue's clubs, including such greats as Fats Domino, Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, The Drifters, Cab Calloway, Nat King Cole, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Little Willie John, Hank Ballard, James Brown, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Etta James, B.B. King and Sam Cooke. Key clubs included The Ponderosa, The Ebony Club, The LeSabre Club





## B) BACKGROUND

### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES (CONTINUED)

and the Bonita Lounge.

An extremely important institution on The Avenue is the International Longshoreman's Association (ILA) Hall. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made his only appearance in Mobile at the ILA Hall, preaching on non-bitterness and love. On January 1, 1959, King told the packed crowd in the ILA Hall that "the old order of segregation is passing away, and a new order of freedom is just coming into being." The ILA Hall was also the place for dances and Mardi Gras balls, including a performance by Elvis Presley.

The Franklin Building was just one example of the strong presence of African American professionals on the Avenue. The drug store referred to as "Finley No. 3" occupied the bottom floor. Dr. James Franklin's office was on the top floor, along with: the offices of John LeFlore (President of Mobile's NAACP); attorney Vernon Crawford, who worked civil rights cases in Mobile; CPA T.N. Reed; and Dr. P.W. Goode, a dentist.

However, the advent of desegregation brought at least one unintended negative consequence. With no barriers on where people could go, the Avenue was dealt an economic blow during the 1960s since people could shop and dine on Dauphin Street and other areas in Mobile. A second blow to the area was the federal Urban Renewal program's implementation during the 1970s. The City of Mobile acquired many properties on the Avenue, demolished the buildings, and many of the properties remained vacant and still are today.

***"There were four movie theaters, grocery stores, funeral parlors, churches, barber-shops, hairdressers, tailors, restaurants, grills and hot dog stands. There were also pool halls, record stores, taverns, social clubs, pawn-shops, cleaners, appliance stores, bakeries and a cigar-maker. They weren't all Black-owned businesses, but all of them welcomed Black customers."***

*"The Story of Mobile's 'Harlem'"*  
- Lagniappe (Dec. 2, 2020)

***"On Dauphin Street, we had to step off of the sidewalk when a White person passed, but everyone was welcome and respected on The Avenue."*** - Robert Rembert Sr. - *"The Story of Mobile's 'Harlem'"* - Lagniappe (Dec. 2, 2020)



This 1867 map of Mobile shows "Stone Street Road" extending to the northwest from the river and Downtown just below the label of "Mobile." The road has a slight bend just south of Three Mile Creek, which still exists today. As the map illustrates, much of the land on the north side of the street was not platted and was undeveloped.

## B) BACKGROUND

### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES (CONTINUED)

#### HISTORIC PHOTOS FROM THE AVENUE & BEYOND



*Shotgun houses taken in 1937*

Source: McCall Rare Book & Manuscript Library  
- University of South Alabama



*Booker T. Theatre*

Source: Cinema Treasures



*Pike Theatre in 1940s*

Source: McCall Rare Book & Manuscript Library  
- University of South Alabama



*Klan march on Royal Street circa 1980*

Source: McCall Rare Book & Manuscript Library  
- University of South Alabama



## B) BACKGROUND

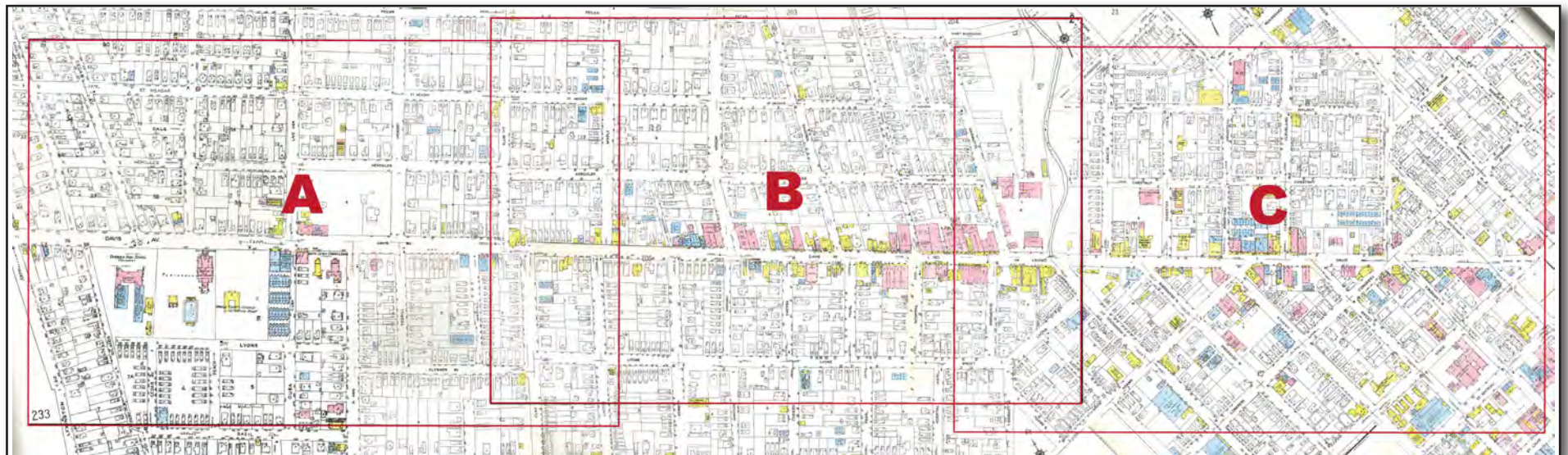
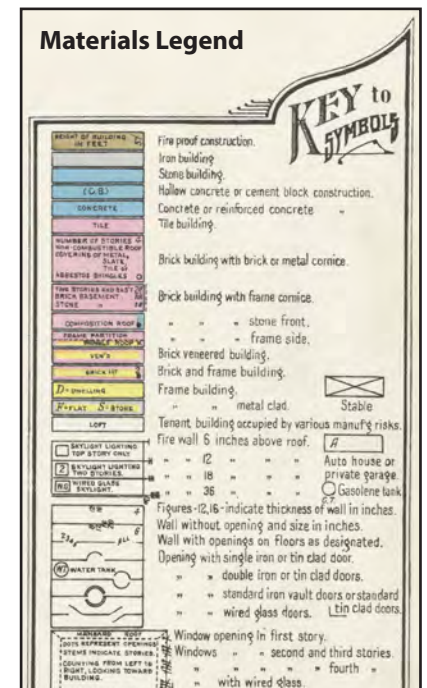
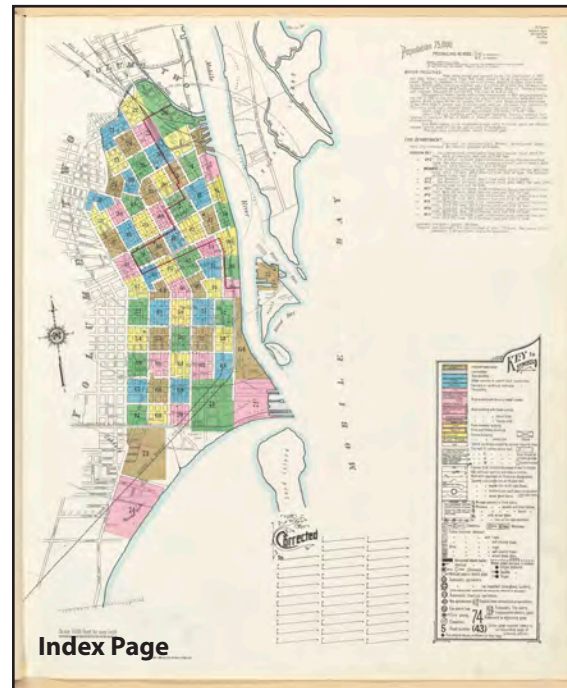
### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES (CONTINUED)

#### Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1924-1925

Available through the Library of Congress and other sources, Sanborn Insurance maps are an excellent source of information on buildings in urbanized areas of the US from the late-1860s through the 1960s. At right is the 1924-25 index page for Mobile, and the color-coded legend is enlarged to the right of it. The colors on the index map are unrelated to those in the legend. Most of the buildings on the maps are not colored, they tend to be houses, and they were likely uninsured. In general, the colors indicate the construction materials for each building, as follows:

Frame/wood  Brick  Stone/concrete

Below is a key segment of the Avenue and the surrounding areas as depicted in 1924-25. The three sub-areas delineated for this project with red boundaries - A, B and C, are enlarged on the following three pages for the purposes of legibility. Some of the most legible key sites and businesses are listed on each page for each sub-area map.





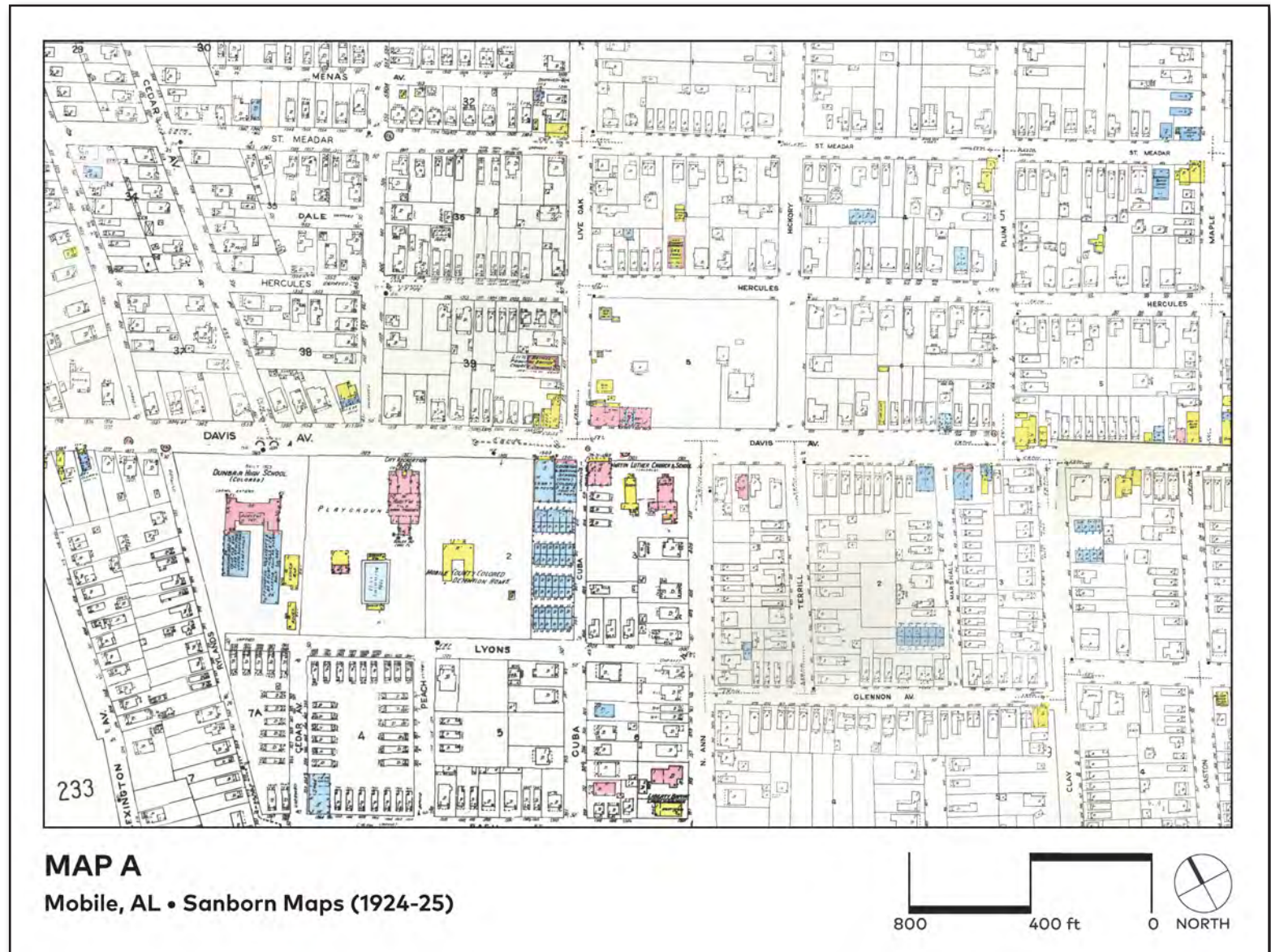
## B) BACKGROUND

### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES (CONTINUED)

#### Sanborn Insurance Map: Sub-Area A

Most of the properties on this map at right have been labeled “colored.” Some of the key properties that are most legibly labeled include the following (they are listed in sequence with going from the left to the right of the map):

- Dunbar High School
- City Recreational Building, Auditorium & Swimming Pool
- County Detention Home
- El Bethel Primitive Baptist Church
- Cooking & Baking School
- Martin Luther Church & School
- Liberty Baptist Church





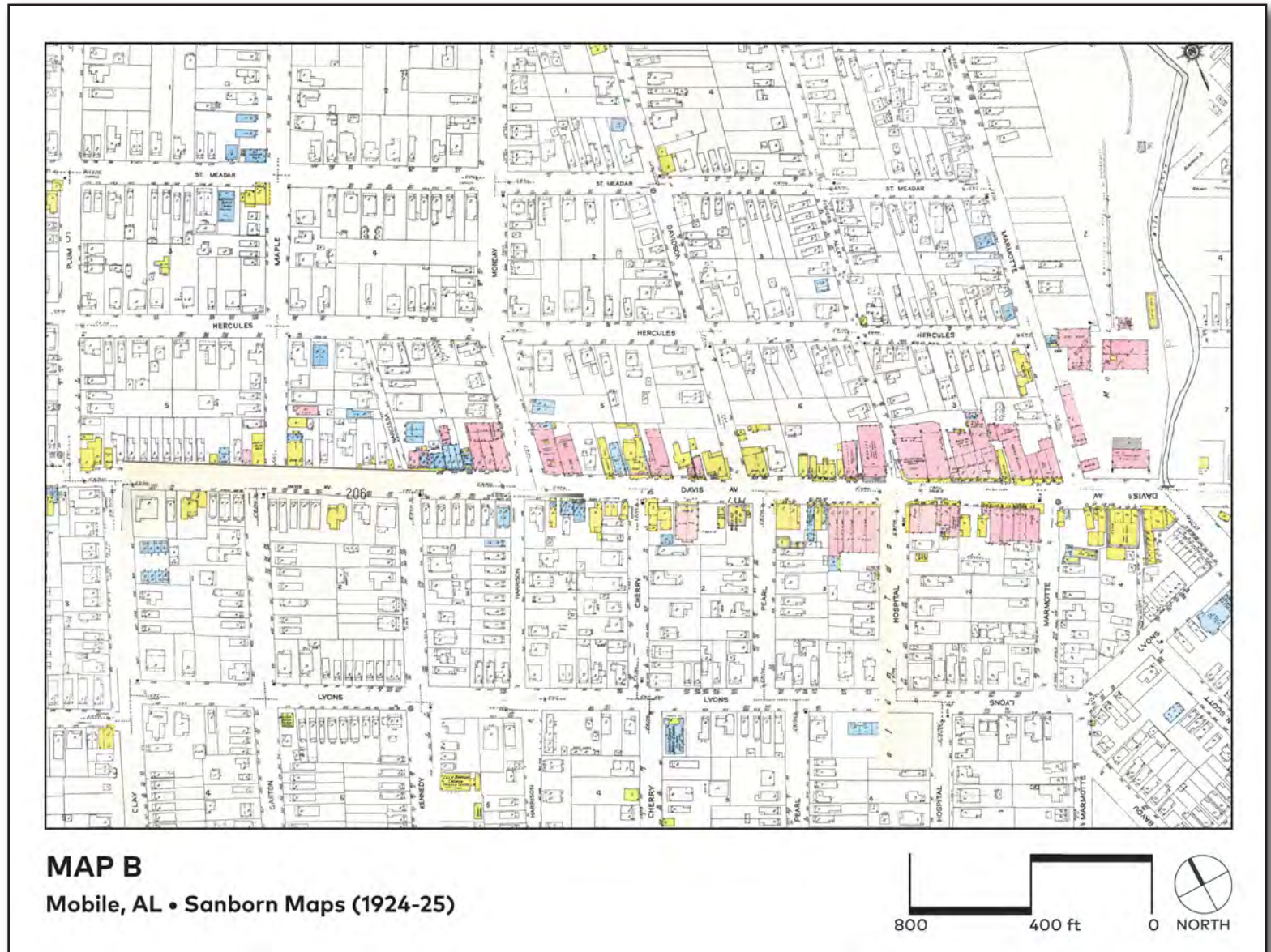
## B) BACKGROUND

### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES (CONTINUED)

#### Sanborn Insurance Map: Sub-Area B

Some of the properties on this map at right have been labeled “colored.” Some of the key properties that are most legibly labeled include the following (they are listed in sequence with going from the left to the right of the map):

- Tabernacle Baptist Church
- Dry Cleaners
- Auto Repair
- Lily Baptist Church
- Greater Union Baptist Church
- Movies
- Drugs (multiple stores)
- Filling Station
- Club





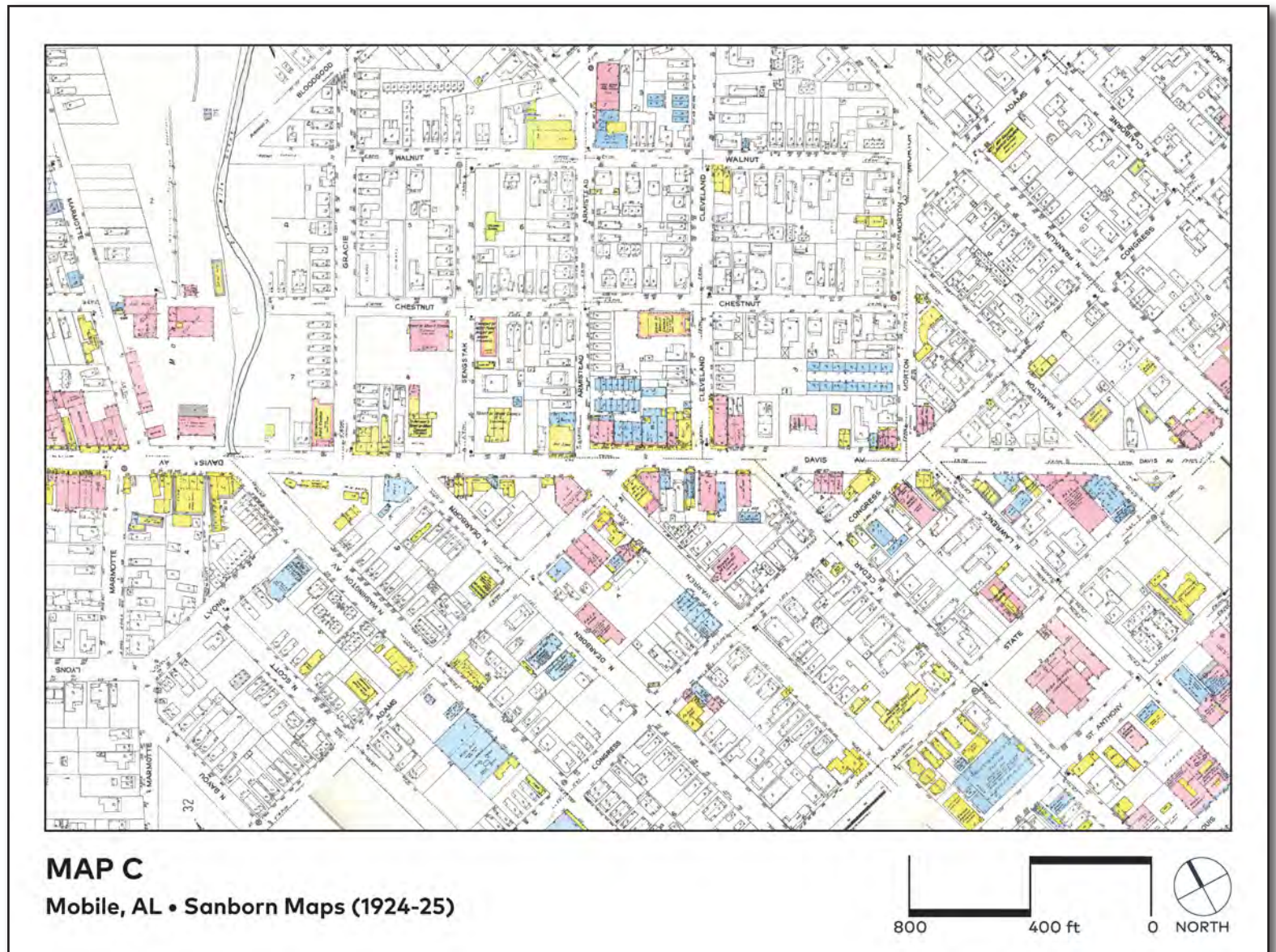
## B) BACKGROUND

### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES (CONTINUED)

#### Sanborn Insurance Map: Sub-Area C

Most of the properties on this map at right have been labeled “colored.” Some of the key properties that are most legibly labeled include the following (they are listed in sequence with going from the left to the right of the map):

- Metropolitan AME Church
- Plumbing
- Restaurants & Stores
- Most Pure Heart of Mary Church, Convent & School
- Public Library
- Movies
- Hall (International Longshoremen’s Association)
- Dry Cleaners





## B) BACKGROUND

### HISTORY OVERVIEW & SITES (CONTINUED)



## B) BACKGROUND

### INTERPRETIVE THEMES & STORIES

#### INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are the main concepts for telling the story of The District's rich heritage. To be effective with interpretation, it is important that the themes be somewhat general and limited in their number. Within the context of a heritage district, they should convey the most important ideas about the area. Below are the four interpretive themes that have been developed for The District.

1. The Avenue's history is rooted in a Civil War camp and has links to Africatown.
2. The Avenue was a vibrant "Main Street" for Mobile's African American community prior to desegregation.
3. The Avenue served as the backdrop for Mobile's unique boycott-driven approach to the Civil Rights movement.
4. Urban Renewal and other governmental programs combined to devastate The Avenue.

The four interpretive themes listed above are chronologically sequenced to allow visitors to understand the full history of The District from its earliest years to within the last few decades, including both positive and negative parts of the story.

#### STORIES

For each interpretive theme, a supporting story is needed to illustrate the theme. Stories can be lengthy or concise, they can be few or numerous, but they should all tie back to their associated interpretive theme. The stories provide an excellent

opportunity to put meat on the bones. In particular, stories of individuals can be told, both the area's well-known personalities and the more common resident or worker in The Avenue area. The following four pages summarize the potential stories to illustrate the four proposed interpretive themes.

***"There are memories of Watermelon Man and Vegetable Man, who sold fruit and produce from the back of their trucks, baseball player Jackie Robinson and Henry 'Dunn by Nunn' Dunn, a former Mr. America bodybuilder who painted murals on store walls."***

"The Story of Mobile's 'Harlem'" - Lagniappe (Dec. 2, 2020)



A residential street in Mobile taken in 1937 Source: Library of Congress



## B) BACKGROUND

### INTERPRETIVE THEMES & STORIES (CONTINUED)

#### INTERPRETIVE THEME #1:

*The Avenue's history is rooted in a Civil War camp and has links to Africatown.*

##### Supporting Story

The Avenue began as the Old Spanish Trail during the 1830s. This major thoroughfare served to connect undeveloped lands in the west to the Downtown commercial district in the east. As an area inhabited by enslaved people, free people of color, white people, immigrants, and Creoles, the road became a bustling and diverse corridor that evolved as Mobile evolved. By the mid-19th century, the Trail had become Stone Street Road, renamed after Captain Sardine Graham Stone purchased property on the road.

The military campground was established in 1861 by the Confederates during the first year of the Civil War. During the war, Stone Street Road was renamed Jefferson Davis Avenue to honor the President of the Confederacy. That may have occurred during Davis' first formal visit to Mobile as the Confederate President in 1861. The conversion of the Confederate camp into a Union camp occurred to restore civility in the city as the war ended in 1865. The Union camp soon became a place of refuge for newly freed-enslaved people in the region. Many of the residents could walk several blocks to the south for domestic work.

Descendants of the Clotilda slave ship would walk from Africatown to worship at churches in the area (primarily Stone Street Baptist Church). Union Baptist Church, founded in 1879 as the oldest Church in Africatown, was established with the help of Stone Street Baptist Church parishioners. Other churches visited and established around the Davis Avenue area during the 19th century included the Big Zion AME Zion Church (1842), the St. Louis Street Missionary Baptist Church (1853), the State Street AME Zion Church (1854), the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd (1854), and the Emanuel AME Church (1869). Sundays were a day that congregation members could be themselves and enjoy being in church.

In 1986, Jefferson Davis Avenue was aptly renamed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue.



## B) BACKGROUND

### INTERPRETIVE THEMES & STORIES (CONTINUED)

#### INTERPRETIVE THEME #2:

***The Avenue was a vibrant “Main Street” for Mobile’s African American community prior to desegregation.***

##### Supporting Story

At its height, The Avenue was the center of Black life, culture, and resistance for Mobile. During the late-19th century and early-20th century, Jim Crow Laws in Mobile and throughout the United States enforced legal racial segregation. The laws affected almost every aspect of daily life. They mandated segregation of schools, parks, libraries, drinking fountains, restrooms, transportation, restaurants, movie theaters, and doctor’s offices, to name just a few examples. “Whites Only” and “Colored” signs were posted throughout downtown Mobile, giving the Black community limited, and often inadequate, access to basic services. The Avenue became a safe haven for the Black population in Mobile, where they were treated with human dignity and welcomed through the front door. As a nexus point between The Camp-ground, The Bottom, A.F. Owens, and Orange Grove, The Avenue grew to be a thriving residential community and business district.

The Avenue became a home to churches, schools, and businesses that catered to the Black community. This street served as the foundation for the community. Schools and churches served as an extension of the family, providing structure, education, and a social support system. The Avenue’s Black-owned businesses generated wealth that was reinvested in the community. These small businesses were a testament to the entrepreneurial spirit and the pride of the community. With pride came advocacy, and efforts to change the laws and limitations of Jim Crow. Many community members made personal sacrifices to create a better life for the next generation. Community elders and notable Civil Rights activists were able to fund activism with proceeds from their businesses.

In summary, The Avenue community was born out of the laws and traditions of Jim Crow. The Avenue gave birth to the culture and society of a proud community. The booming business district, schools, and churches formed the foundation, but the diverse backgrounds of the people who lived and worked there provided the community with its identity. Even as we look back, The Avenue is a template for what a thriving community can be.





## B) BACKGROUND

### INTERPRETIVE THEMES & STORIES (CONTINUED)

#### INTERPRETIVE THEME #3:

*The Avenue served as the backdrop for Mobile's unique boycott-driven approach to the Civil Rights movement.*

##### Supporting Story

For as long as white supremacy has existed, there has been Black Resistance. Enslaved people's ultimate form of protest was to escape. The long tradition of resistance carried over into the 20th century with Mobile's own Civil Rights Movement. Fueled by the support of nationally-recognized Civil Rights leaders, schools, churches, and businesses primarily funded the movement, and Davis Avenue was its nexus.

The people of The Avenue demonstrated opposition to their status and conditions in various ways. Established leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Non-Partisan Voters League (NPVL) believed in slower-paced legal progress, largely won by fighting in court. In 1959, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at the local International Longshoremen's Association's (ILA) Hall on The Avenue. A younger more active leadership of Neighborhood Organized Workers (NOW), mostly proprietors of their businesses, sought to make an immediate widespread change by employing non-violent direct action. A few of the leaders visiting Mobile during the 1960s included Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali), Stokely Carmichael, Jesse Jackson, and H. Rap Brown. They all spoke at NOW's meetings to accelerate the Civil Rights Movement in Mobile.

NOW's mission was to increase the living standards of Blacks in Mobile, and to provide better race relations among citizens in a non-violent way. The first approach was the objective that the local white banks would hire black tellers. After many attempts of being refused, a black bank and savings and loan was funded and opened. The next tactic was a request to the downtown retail merchants to hire black sales clerks. After being refused with no consideration, Mobile had a black Christmas boycotting downtown with no purchasing from the retail stores in downtown Mobile. The boycotting of the stores continued for the next year, but with no black hires for sales positions. During this same period, the city was expanding west and two shopping malls opened with duplicate stores of the downtown area. Ironically, blacks were hired at the two malls and the Flanagans, a local black family, were the proprietors of a retail men's store in Bel Air Mall. Ultimately, the majority of retail business in downtown's Dauphin Street corridor closed.

In summary, Mobile's Civil Rights Movement was an economic-driven approach for results, fused with non-violent demonstrations. As a result, no dogs, fire hoses, or bloodshed were part of Mobile's experience during the era, unlike other parts of the state during the 1960s. Regardless of different methodologies, the ultimate goal was the same: full recognition of the humanity and dignity of Black people.



## B) BACKGROUND

### INTERPRETIVE THEMES & STORIES (CONTINUED)

#### INTERPRETIVE THEME #4:

***Urban Renewal and other governmental programs combined to devastate The Avenue.***

##### Supporting Story

The federal Urban Renewal Program was designed to improve the quality of life of residents through capital improvements. In Mobile, unfortunately, it was more “Urban Removal” than “Urban Renewal.” The reality of the program turned out to be a process by which untold numbers of people, primarily those of color, lost personal property, financial viability, and their community. The Urban Renewal program operated for nearly 30 years, from 1949 to 1974, as a federally funded government program implemented through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Mobile was a late bloomer, with most of the changes on The Avenue not taking place until the 1980s.

Under Urban Renewal, city governments acquired properties intending to enhance infrastructure, reduce blight, clearing slums, and improve traffic flow and safety. Properties were appraised with a rating system. The rating determined the future longevity of the property. Property owners were forced to sell and relocate. In the early days of Urban Renewal, rehabilitation loans were not yet available. The first Urban Renewal project in Mobile, the Broad-Beauregard Connector plan, included “the wholesale clearance and reconstruction of blighted areas.”

Urban Renewal disproportionately impacted predominantly Black neighborhoods across the nation. Mobile was no different. Black communities are still marked by the devastating impact of the program. Urban Renewal granted governmental agencies the authority to alter the landscape and displace people, ultimately leading to the destruction of Black communities. Three of the local area schools - Central High School, Caldwell, and A.F. Owens Elementary - closed with integration. This occurrence contributed to families relocating and then impacting The Avenue’s retail shopping.

Land, regardless of its condition, was sometimes cleared to make way for public buildings or proposed community facilities. For example, land now within the Church Street East Historic District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971) was designated to build the Municipal Auditorium, which later became the battleground for Mobile’s Civil Rights Movement. This area was considered a “top priority” and factored into the City’s Urban Renewal Plan. The Avenue, consisting of approximately 98% of black-owned businesses, was effectively closed with no renewal plans for the businesses. Thankfully, a half century later, plans are now being presented for community input through multiple federal grants for revitalization of The Avenue area.





## B) BACKGROUND

### DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

As explained earlier in this plan, The Avenue District boundaries were not determined prior to this project's initiation, but were instead intended to be delineated as part of the project. Public input, analysis, and a set of guiding principles were intended to address this issue. This page summarizes the set of principles crafted to help formulate the boundaries, and it then indicates how the proposed boundaries measure up to those principles. The map showing the proposed district boundaries is provided on the following page.

### DISTRICT BOUNDARY PRINCIPLES

The following six principles were developed with the help of public input for guidance to delineate the district boundaries:

- A. The District should include a concentration of historic sites.** Whether surviving or lost, there should be a critical mass of sites.
- B. The Avenue should serve as the District's central spine.** There is strong consensus that "The Avenue" is the focal point for the district.
- C. The District should be cohesive and avoid barriers.** Even if physical or psychological barriers currently exist, the potential for them to be overcome should be factored.
- D. The District should have proximity to other tourist areas.** While this principle is not absolutely critical, being near other tourist-oriented areas will increase the odds for the district's success.

**E. The District should be small enough for positive change.** Based upon the experience of numerous other communities attempting to revitalize their urban districts, it is very difficult to achieve success unless efforts can be focused on a relatively finite targeted area.

**F. The constraints of creating a single district should be avoided to accommodate a hierarchy of place types.** Rather than biting off a single large district, consider a targeted core area, a broader overall district with distinct nodes, and area-wide trails extending beyond the district.

**See page 4 for an explanation of the purpose of a district and why it is addressed in this plan section.**

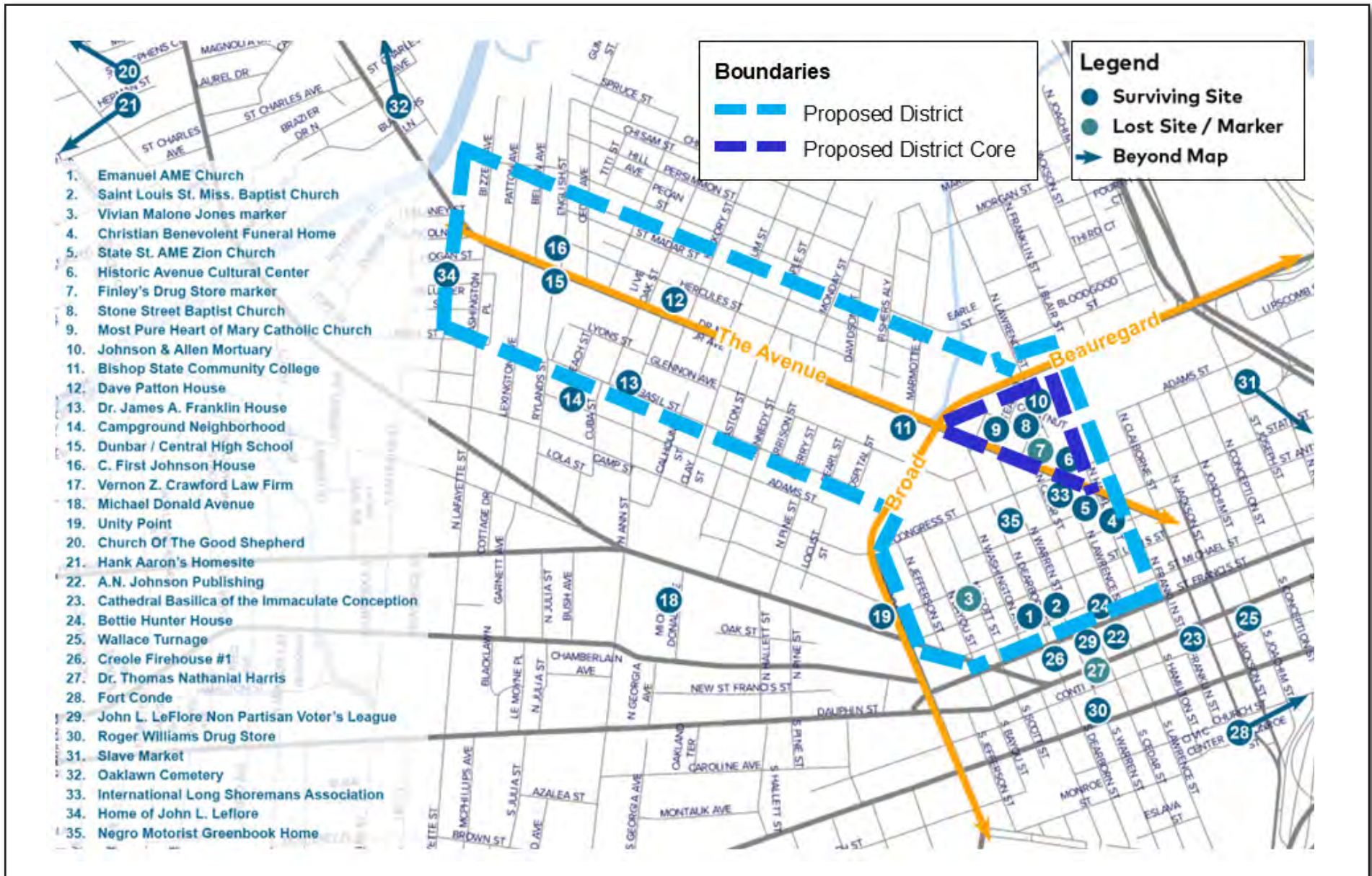
### APPLYING THE BOUNDARY PRINCIPLES

The application of the district boundary principles below is illustrated on the map on the following page.

- A. The District should include a concentration of historic sites.* While many of the identified historic sites are located around the Dauphin Street corridor, that area is diluted by the history of the broader community and lacks a pronounced African American legacy.
- B. The Avenue should serve as the District's central spine.* The proposed primary district is anchored by, and oriented along the axis of, The Avenue. Most of the district extends only a few blocks north and south of The Avenue, in addition to a larger node anchoring its southeast end.
- C. The District should be cohesive and avoid barriers.* The proposed district is contiguous and features only one existing barrier. Beauregard and Broad Streets are relatively wide and have fairly high levels of traffic, but physical enhancements and other techniques can mitigate the barrier effect.
- D. The District should have proximity to other tourist areas.* The easterly end of the proposed district is directly adjacent to Downtown Mobile, which enjoys the community's highest concentration of tourists, including numerous hotels, dining, retail, entertainment and meeting spaces.
- E. The District should be small enough for positive change.* Although the proposed primary district is large enough to make this principle a tremendous challenge, the final principle below offers a solution.
- F. The constraints of creating a single district should be avoided to accommodate a hierarchy of place types.* In addition to the proposed overall district, it is proposed that a core area will anchor the district adjacent to Downtown, while a series of interpretive trails will extend far beyond the district to places such as Africatown.

## B) BACKGROUND

### DISTRICT BOUNDARIES (CONTINUED)





## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

This page summarizes the study area's existing conditions as mapped on the following five pages. It addresses the following issues:

- Natural features
- Land uses
- Buildings
- Streets
- Public spaces

#### NATURAL FEATURES

The study area does not have many topographic challenges since it is relatively flat. However, water is an issue. Below is a summary of the three primary types of water features in the study area:

Streams: There are only two streams located in or near the study area. One terminates immediately north of where North Broad Street, Beauregard Street, and MLK Avenue intersect and it extends north. Aligned along a north-south axis, it is identified on some historic maps as "One Mile Creek." The other stream is Three Mile Creek located just west of the study area, which connects to One Mile Creek.

Wetlands: Although there are no delineated wetlands within the study area, there are extensive such areas to the north and west of the study area associated with Three Mile Creek.

100-Year Floodplains: The study area's 100-year floodplains are associated with the two creeks described above and include several residential blocks between roughly North Lafayette Street and Three Mile Creek to the west.

See page 21 for a map showing natural features.

#### LAND USES

Although predominantly comprised of single-family houses, the study area still has a rich mixture of land uses, as with most urban neighborhoods. Key institutional uses are mainly located on MLK Avenue and some of the other primary streets. They include Bishop State Community College, the former Central High School property, the Franklin Primary Health Center Medical Mall, Florence Howard Elementary, the Historic Avenue Cultural Center, the Kensington Health and Rehabilitation Center, the Dearborn YMCA, and numerous churches. With the exception of larger and relatively contiguous commercial uses on the east side of North Broad Street, most of the study area's commercial uses are small-scaled businesses scattered along MLK Avenue, including personal services and retail. There are very few dining businesses or industrial uses. See page 22 for a map illustrating the study area's existing land uses.

#### BUILDINGS

The study area's buildings are very reflective of the land uses described above. The most dominant building type is the single-family house, and most are located on the side streets that extend off of MLK Avenue. A typical street is Terrill Street, which is dominated by one-story clapboard-clad houses that are either Queen Anne Cottage style or shotgun houses dating from the late-19th and early-20th centuries. However, there are also a few one-story brick houses dating from the mid to late-20th century. Others include one and two-story brick commercial buildings, as well as a range of institutional buildings, including historic churches and large less historic schools. See page 23 for a map of the study area's buildings.

#### STREETS

The study area has the following three street types:

Arterial Streets: This street type is the most intensive relative to traffic volumes and speeds. The study area's only such street is North Broad and Beauregard Street, which features two driving lanes in each direction (four total), turn lanes at intersections, and on-street parking along some segments.

Collector Streets: Collector streets carry less traffic than arterials, but are still key spines through the areas they traverse. The only collectors in the study area are MLK Avenue and North Lafayette Street. MLK now has two driving lanes in each direction, but is planned for a "road diet" to feature only one lane per direction, bike lanes on each side, and generous sidewalks on each side of the street.

Local Streets: The balance of streets are in residential areas, they have one driving lane in each direction, and undelineated on-street parking occurs.

See page 24 for a map on the study area's streets.

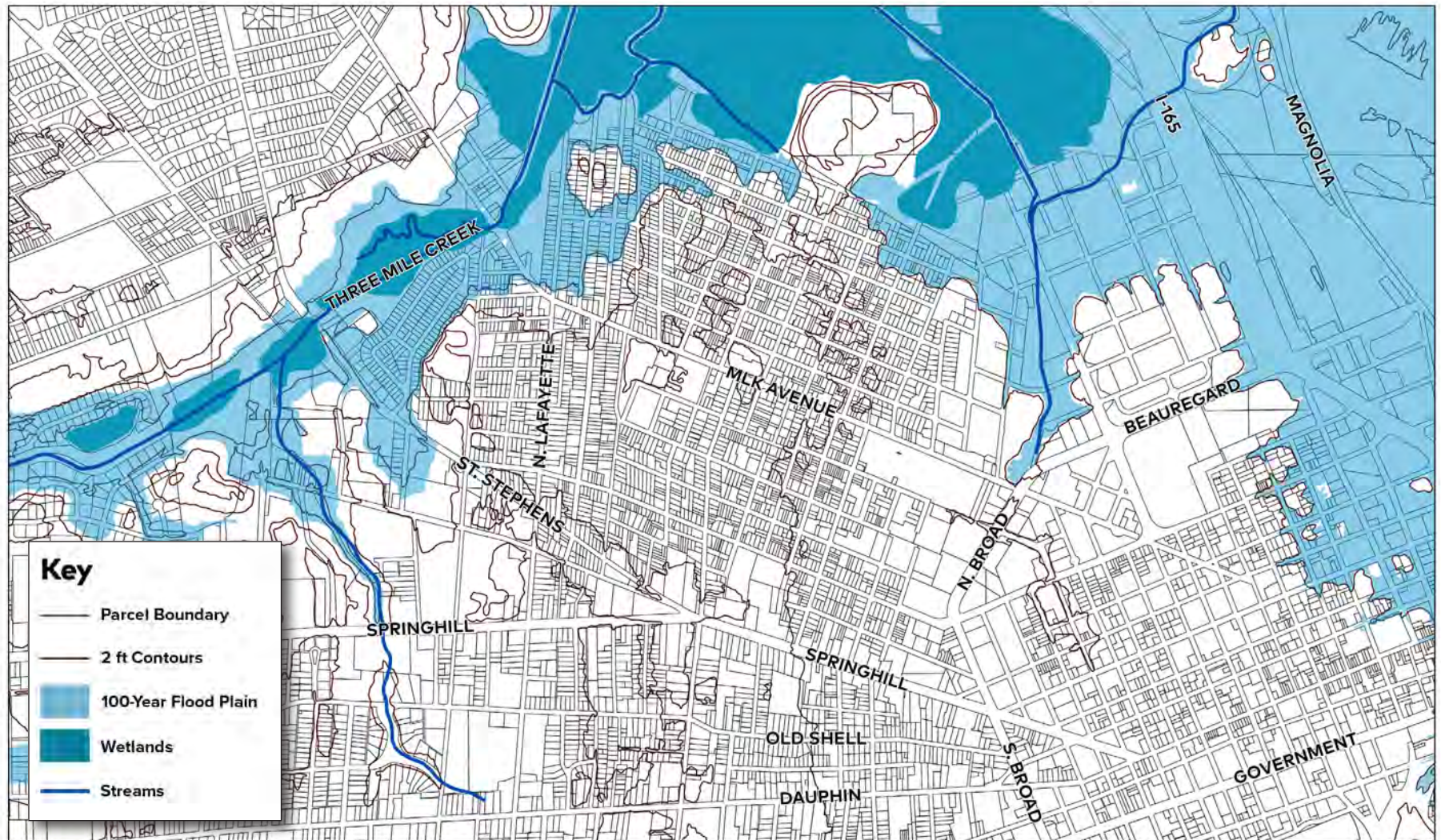
#### PUBLIC SPACES

Schools and civic buildings, considered "public spaces" here, have already been addressed as part of the other topics and related maps. However, parks are not addressed elsewhere. There are only two identified in the study area. One is the existing MLK Park on the south side of MLK Avenue adjacent to Florence Howard Elementary, which features only a basketball court, parking lot, and some green space. The other is the new Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park (see page 32). See page 25 for a map of public spaces.



## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PHYSICAL CONDITIONS: NATURAL FEATURES MAP



### THE DISTRICT • NATURAL FEATURES

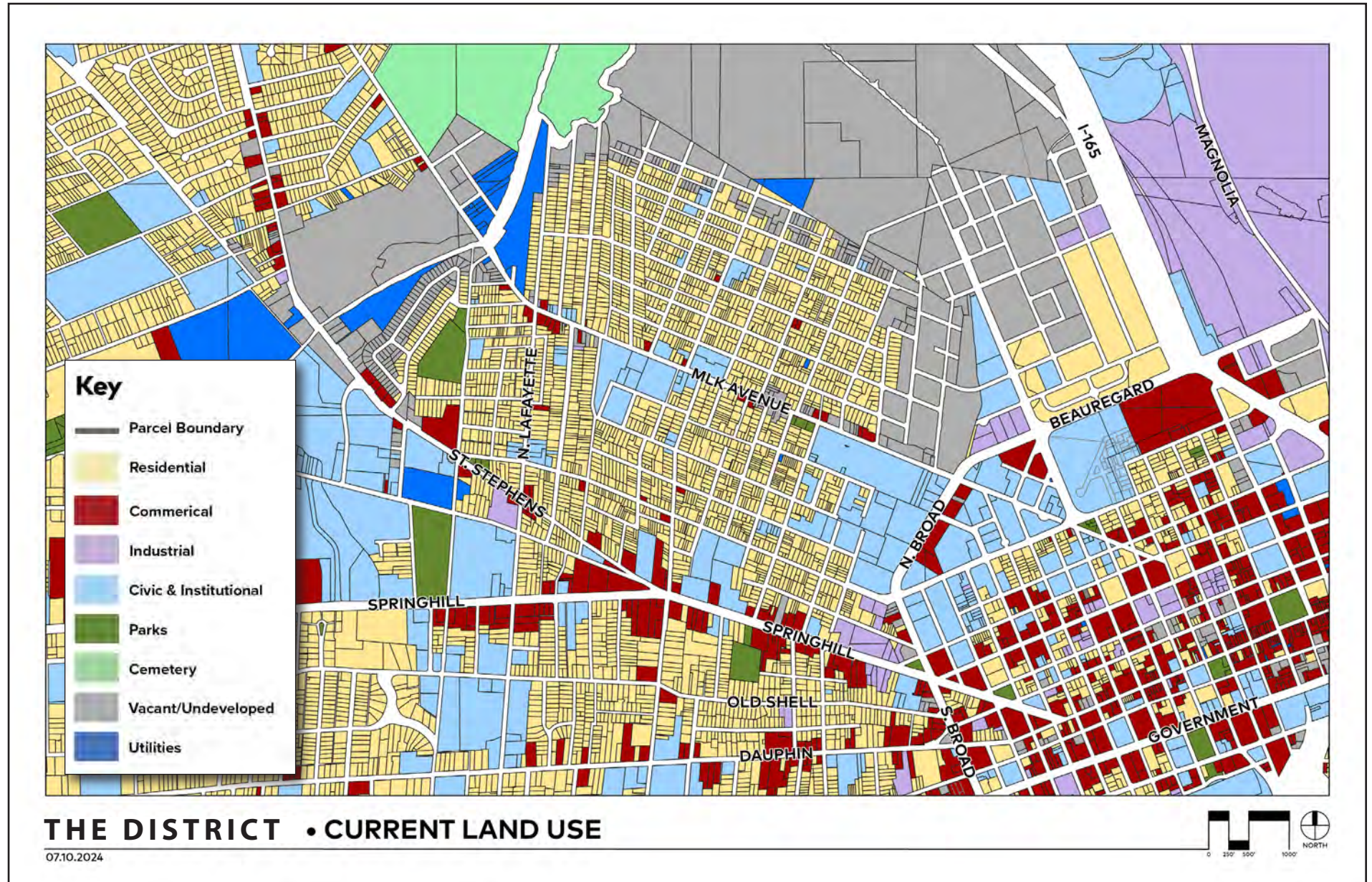
07.10.2024





## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PHYSICAL CONDITIONS: LAND USES MAP





## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PHYSICAL CONDITIONS: BUILDINGS MAP



### THE DISTRICT • BUILDINGS

07.10.2024





## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PHYSICAL CONDITIONS: STREETS MAP



**THE DISTRICT • STREETS**

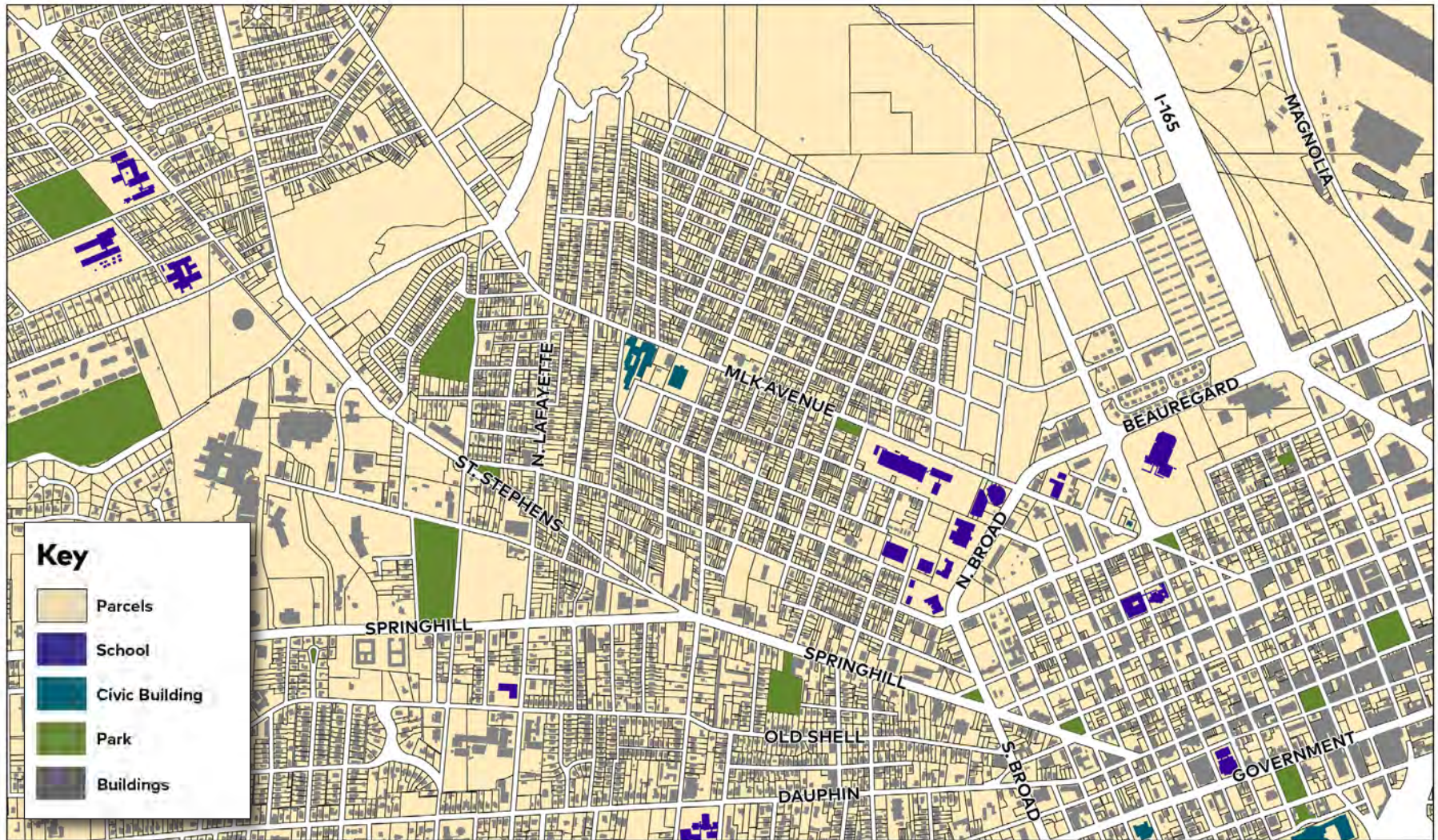
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## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PHYSICAL CONDITIONS: PUBLIC SPACES MAP



### THE DISTRICT • PUBLIC SPACES

07.10.2024





## B) BACKGROUND

### ECONOMICS & TOURISM POTENTIALS

#### BACKGROUND

This portion of the plan's Background section provides economic context and market analysis in support of tourism development and economic revitalization for Mobile's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District. While the primary objective of The District is to preserve and interpret it, there is also an opportunity to help revitalize the area and to create economic opportunities for African American entrepreneurs, neighborhood residents, and investors. Based on background analysis, field reconnaissance, interviews, community stakeholder engagement, and other input, it was determined that having a central "stepping off point" such as an interpretive center can anchor The District. The following few pages provide the results from a market analysis to test the viability of an interpretive center, as well as determining the types of spin-off economic opportunities that could be generated. See Appendix 2 for the full Economic Background & Tourism Potentials Report.

#### ECONOMIC BACKGROUND & SITE ANALYSIS

##### Economic Conditions

The largest share of Mobile County's 173,000 jobs are currently in retail trade (21%) and health care (15%). Manufacturing (10%) and transportation/warehousing (7%) are significant because of the major ocean port and associated distribution network. The District has a population base of approximately 3,700 people, an increase of roughly 300 people (9.1%) since 2010. The household base for The District has increased by 215 people (16%) since 2010.

##### Study Area Analysis

Mobile is accessible via I-65 to the north, and I-10 from the east and west. Africatown is roughly four miles north of the district, and Downtown is adjacent to the east. The numerous historic sites and interpretive themes are important to the study area analysis, and are described elsewhere in this plan. The MLK corridor is only a shadow of its former self, with less than 20 active businesses compared to the 200 that existed in 1951. Today, there is only about 28,000 square feet of occupied commercial building space located along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue (versus the estimated 250,000 square feet that was occupied in 1951). Of an existing total of roughly 43,000 square feet, nearly 36% is vacant. The existing business mix is comprised primarily of shopper's goods stores and personal services. The District and adjoining area has an estimated total of about 1,550 households and 3,700 residents. An estimated 92.4% of the residents are black. Two-thirds (1,020) of households are renters, with about 520 homeowners.

Table 2. RETAIL BUSINESS SPACE BY CATEGORY, THE AVENUE, MOBILE, 2024			
Category	Number	Sq. Feet	Percent
Convenience	3	4,065	9.6%
Shoppers Goods	4	12,200	28.7%
Eating & Drinking	2	1,300	3.1%
Entertainment	-	-	0.0%
Personal Services	9	9,700	22.8%
Vacant	13	15,300	35.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>42,565</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Sources:	Mobile County Revenue, businesses, and Randall Gross / Dev. Economics.		

#### MUSEUM MARKET ANALYSIS

In reviewing the assets, challenges, and opportunities for The District, it was determined that an interpretation center is best suited as an anchor to drive tourism and economic investment, to educate more people, and to celebrate the community's heritage. Thus, a market analysis was conducted to forecast the potential for an interpretative center, determine the format and program for the center, and define the content and concept for its development.

##### Mobile Museums & Attractions

Mobile already has a rich base of museums, historic sites, and interpretive venues. This base was examined in terms of the existing story/themes and exhibition format, location, audience, source markets, operating models, and other factors. Among the relevant local museums and sites examined were the following:

- History Museum of Mobile
- Africatown Heritage House (County-owned)
- Hank Aaron House
- Other Museums & Sites

Among the "other" museums and sites are the Battleship Memorial Park, the National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico, and another roughly dozen museums and attractions.

##### Existing Tourism Flow

Alabama State Tourism Department data indicates that Mobile County attracted an estimated 3,391,700 visitors in 2023, up by nearly 100,000 (3.0%) over the previous year. The tourism industry employs more than 15,000 people in Mobile County. Mobile area museums and heritage sites attract about 600,000

## B) BACKGROUND

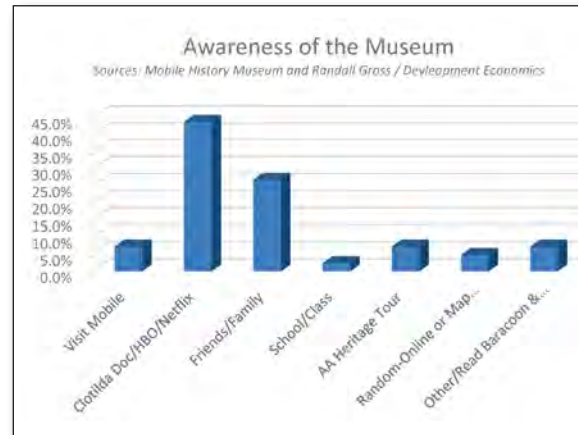
### ECONOMICS & TOURISM POTENTIALS

(CONTINUED)

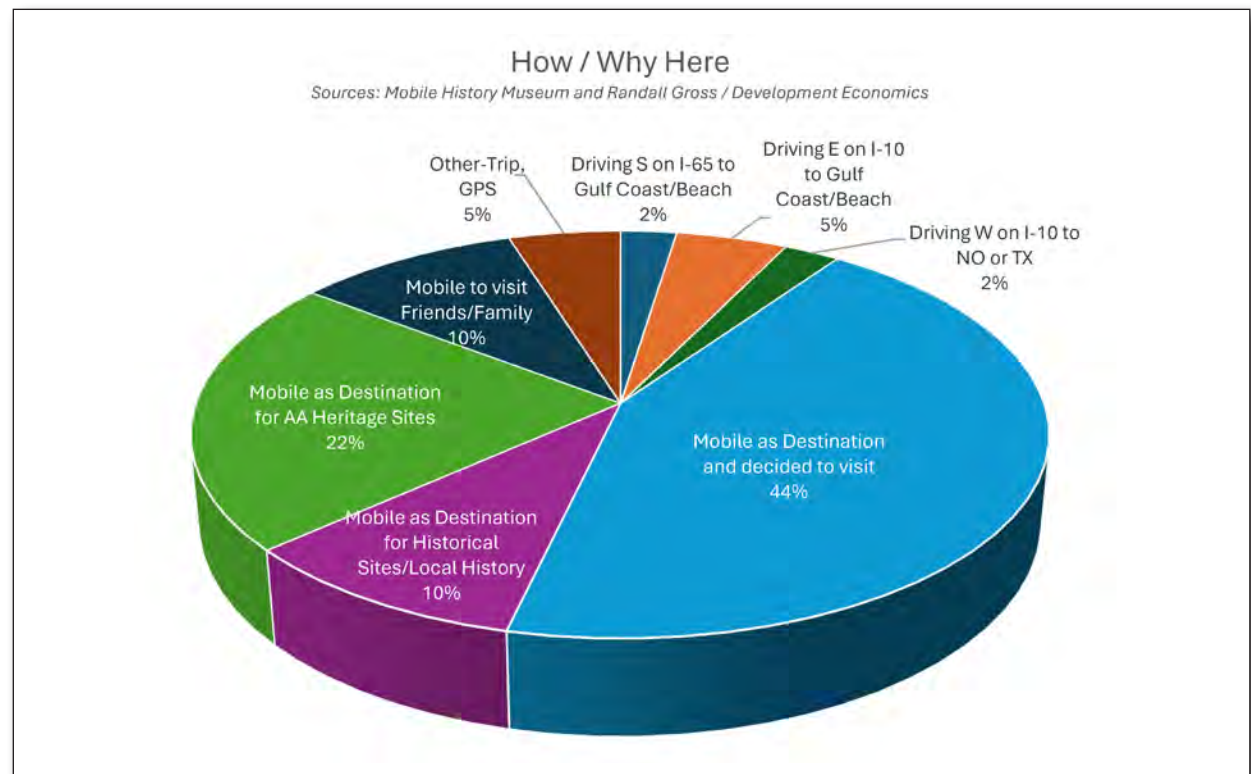
visitors per year. School tours account for an estimated 20% to 30% of local museum visitors, with another 20% of visits generated locally and 50% generated from out-of-town tourists and other visitors.

#### *Africatown as an Indicator*

Specific data on the Africatown Heritage House was collected through a survey conducted for this market analysis as an indicator of possible target markets for Mobile's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District. While the Africatown Heritage House exhibition had only been open for less than one year at the time of the survey, its statistics provide some indication of the origin of visitors. Approximately 28% were from within the Mobile area, and another 7% reside in the Pensacola/Florida Gulf Coast area. Other key markets include Birmingham, Montgomery, Texas, and areas in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Chicago and the Midwest. The survey asked respondents how they became aware of the Clotilda exhibition and the Africatown Heritage House. The largest share – nearly 44% – learned about the it and the overall subject from watching one of the several television documentaries shown on HBO, Netflix, National Geographic, and other sources. Another 27% learned of the exhibition through local Mobile friends and family who brought them to see it. A roughly equal number of others (7% each) learned about it through Visit Mobile tourism or via a local African American heritage tour. Another important question related to why and how out-of-town visitors found their way to come to this particular museum. The largest share



44%) came to Mobile as a destination and decided to visit the museum as part of their trip. Another 22% chose Mobile as a destination specifically to visit and experience the city's African American heritage, and 10% were visiting Mobile as a heritage tourism destination. Another 10% were in Mobile to visit friends and family (some of whom brought them to the site). About 5% were driving east on I-10 towards Gulf Coast beaches and decided to stop and see the museum. Another 2% were driving west on I-10 towards New Orleans or Texas and decided to see the museum. Yet another 2% were driving south on I-65





## B) BACKGROUND

### ECONOMICS & TOURISM POTENTIALS

(CONTINUED)

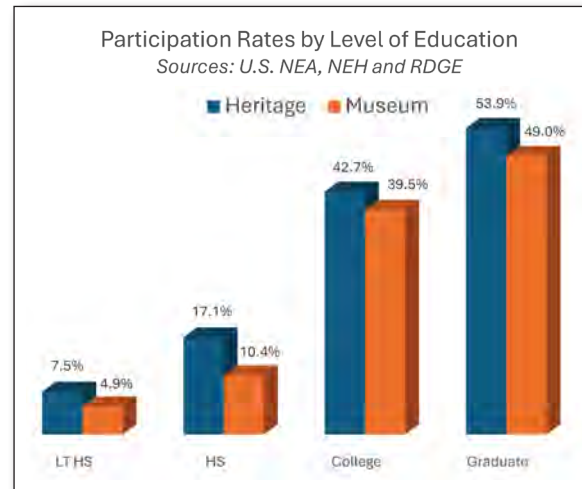
towards Gulf Coast beaches and decided to stop at the museum. Finally about 5% were in route on another trip and GPS alerted them to the presence of this museum. Information on audience demographics was also collected from the museum visitors. About 50% of the surveyed visitors were white and 50% were black. The median annual income was relatively high, at about \$120,000 (versus \$48,500 for city of Mobile and \$66,200 for the Mobile metro area), but there was a significant range (\$30,000 to \$400,000). The median age of individual visitors was 57, but again there was a significant range (8 to 85 years old).

#### Comparable & Relevant Interpretive Centers

As part of this analysis, information was collected from a sample of comparable or relevant interpretive centers nationwide, specifically on those associated with an African American or Civil Rights district, or more broadly with African American cultural heritage and/or the Civil Rights Movement, as well as with the American Labor Movement. Interestingly, many of the centers interpret stories that cross over between these topics. Forty-four comparable or relevant interpretive centers located in the US are listed in the full report (Appendix 2), and they exist all across the country. Penetration rates were determined for many of these centers that compare attendance to the local population as a measure of participation. Overall, findings indicate that performance has lagged relative to other types of interpretive centers, but attendance is generally increasing.

#### Demographic Base

This section of the report examines the demographic base for the interpretive center. With respect to the participation rates that are based upon national, regional and local data, 28.3% of American adults are likely to visit a heritage site at least once a year, and 23.8% are likely to visit an interpretive center. Participation rates for interpretive centers and heritage sites are highly correlated with educational attainment among adults. The higher the education level achieved, the higher the participation rate.



#### Audience Potential

The market analysis forecasted audience potential for 41,800 to 51,100 annually within five to seven years after opening. The target markets include: Mobile residents (along with their visiting families and friends), heritage visitors to Mobile (especially African American and Civil Rights heritage tourists), and portions of the region's beach-going, Mardi Gras, cruise ship, and other tourism cohorts.

#### Interpretive Center Requirements

Based on the attendance and utilization, an interpretive center of 7,200 to 9,300 square feet would be appropriate to accommodate this visitor base. That center would include roughly 5,000 to 7,500 square feet of exhibition space, plus event space, office, exhibit storage, classroom and other uses. The center would also have ancillary exhibits at some of the historic sites in the district identified elsewhere in this plan, as well as an affiliation with sites outside the district, including the Africatown Heritage House.

#### Interpretive Center Concept

The concept for the center was established during the drafting of the market analysis report that serves as Appendix 2 of this plan. However, that concept is explained in the Interpretation Strategy section of this plan.

### COMMERICAL REVITALIZATION & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Opportunities were examined for economic benefits and spin-off associated with the district, specifically related to an interpretive center, along with marketing and promotion of the district as a destination.

#### Visitor-Generated Demand

The attendance forecasts generated for the interpretive center via the market analysis were used as the basis for projecting retail and other commercial spin-off for the district. Based on average per-person tourist expenditures already documented for Mobile, visitors would spend approximately \$26.1 million in and around the district, including \$7.0 million in restaurants, \$2.6 million in retail shopping, and \$2.5

## B) BACKGROUND

### ECONOMICS & TOURISM POTENTIALS

(CONTINUED)

million in entertainment (see table below). These expenditures would increase along with attendance over the first five to seven years of operation.

Table. MUSEUM/TOURISM-GENERATED RETAIL DEMAND, THE AVENUE				
Category	Factor		Total 2024	5-Year Growth
<b><u>Mobile Area Tourists</u></b>			<b>3,391,712</b>	
<b><u>Total Spend</u></b>	\$	525.34	\$ 1,781,786,876	
Restaurants	\$	141.84	\$ 481,082,457	
Retail Trade	\$	51.43	\$ 174,444,062	
Entertainment	\$	50.33	\$ 170,691,619	
<b><u>Museum Visitors</u></b>			<b>46,417</b>	
<b><u>Total Spend</u></b>	\$	562.11	\$ 26,091,662	
Restaurants	\$	151.77	\$ 7,044,749	\$ 704,475
Retail Trade	\$	55.03	\$ 2,554,478	\$ 255,448
Entertainment	\$	53.85	\$ 2,499,529	\$ 249,953
<b><u>Demand (Square Feet)</u></b>				
Restaurants	\$	350	20,128	2,013
Retail Trade	\$	250	10,218	1,022
Entertainment	\$	150	16,664	1,666
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>47,009</b>	<b>4,701</b>
<b>Sources:</b>	<b>Alabama Travel, Visit Mobile, and RGDE.</b>			

The sales forecasts were then translated into square footage as a measure of demand for some of the existing or potential commercial space that could be located in the corridor. Visitors would generate demand for up to 52,000 square feet of commercial business activity over the first five to seven years if captured within the district, as outlined below:

- Restaurants: 22,000 square feet
- Retail Shopping: 12,000 square feet
- Entertainment: 18,000 square feet

The synergies between the interpretive center and destination restaurants, entertainment and retail ex-

periences will help maximize attendance to the range projected. To achieve those synergies, commercial activity should be concentrated near the interpretive center and existing historical assets.

#### Local Trade-Area Demand

The destination effects created by the interpretive center and spin-off activity would help leverage demand for \$7.9 million in local spending. This demand could generate potential for another 10,400 square feet of new commercial space (assuming existing vacant buildings could be rehabilitated and occupied). However, much of the demand would be so small that, within specific categories, there would be insufficient demand (e.g., 200 square feet of shoe sales) to warrant the development of commercial space. Based on this analysis, there is some opportunity for community-serving uses such as small food and pharmacy businesses.

When added to the tourist-generated potentials, there would be the total (local and tourist-driven) opportunity for about 24,000 square feet of restaurants and snack places, 20,000 square feet of retail businesses, and roughly 20,000 square feet of entertainment venue space.

Table 1. SUMMARY OF HOUSEHOLD TRADE-AREA SUPPORTED RETAIL POTENTIAL BY CATEGORY, THE AVENUE, 2024 AND 2029				
Type of Good	Gross Demand (SF)		Existing Uses	Warranted Demand
	2024	2029		
Convenience	10,645	10,711	4,065	6,646
Shoppers Goods	26,888	27,016	12,200	14,816
Eating/Drinking	2,173	2,191	1,300	3,907
Limited Service	898	908	-	908
Full Service	1,010	1,016	-	1,016
Entertainment	1,665	1,811	-	1,811
Personal Services	8,229	8,231	9,700	(1,469)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,600</b>	<b>49,959</b>	<b>27,265</b>	<b>25,711</b>
Existing Vacant			15,300	
<b>Net New Space</b>				<b>10,411</b>
Note: Assumes Pro-active Internal/External Campaign, Recruitment.				
Source: Randall Gross / Development Economics.				

#### Recommended Tenant Mix

	Square Feet
• Live entertainment	20,000
• Destination restaurants	20,000
• Specialty food & snack stores	8,000
• Pharmacy/Personal care store	3,500
• Gifts; hobbies, toys & games store(s)	3,000
• Hardware & general merchandise store	8,200
• Vintage store (1940s-60s era merch.)	2,800
• African American cultural experiences	NA

#### Key Tenant Characteristics

- Independent, locally- and black-owned businesses
- Serving local area residents, as well as tourists
- Creating entrepreneurial opportunities in the community
- Offering live music and entertainment
- Offering healthy, vibrant food choices
- Capturing the cultural dynamic and historical spirit of The Avenue; and honoring the historic businesses and people



## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PLANS & POLICIES

At this point in the planning project, it is not known what changes might be recommended, if any, to the existing plans and policies that impact the study area as a means of implementing this plans recommendations. Regardless, this page through page 35 summarize those plans and policies as background information.

### EXISTING PLANS

The following plans by the City of Mobile that impact the study area include the following.

#### Comprehensive Plan

Mobile's most recent citywide comprehensive plan was prepared in 2015 and amended in 2017. As with all such plans, it covers a broad range of planning issues, including proposed land uses, mobility, housing, and a range of other topics. Two of the most relevant components of that plan for this plan for The District are summarized below.

#### Framework Plan

This plan section maps out and describes the various proposed "development areas," which are ultimately to be implemented through zoning. See page 31 for a map that enlarges the vicinity around the study area for this project. The area east of Beauregard and North Broad Streets is designated as Downtown, while the area west of that boundary is designated as Traditional Neighborhood. The following is a description from the plan of the intent of each of those two development area types:

#### Downtown: Intent

- Infill development that complements the existing character and enhances the pedestrian-friendly urban environment
- Fewer surface parking lots - more structured parking
- Increased streetscaping, including improved sidewalks, street furniture and lighting along corridors
- Greater mix of uses - retail, restaurant, office, residential

#### Traditional Neighborhood: Intent

- Better connectivity to neighborhood centers with accessibility to retail and services
- Appropriately scaled and designed infill development, including housing in a variety of configurations
- More sidewalks and streetscaping
- Protections for historic properties
- Increased protections for existing traditional development



## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PLANS & POLICIES: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FRAMEWORK MAP





## B) BACKGROUND

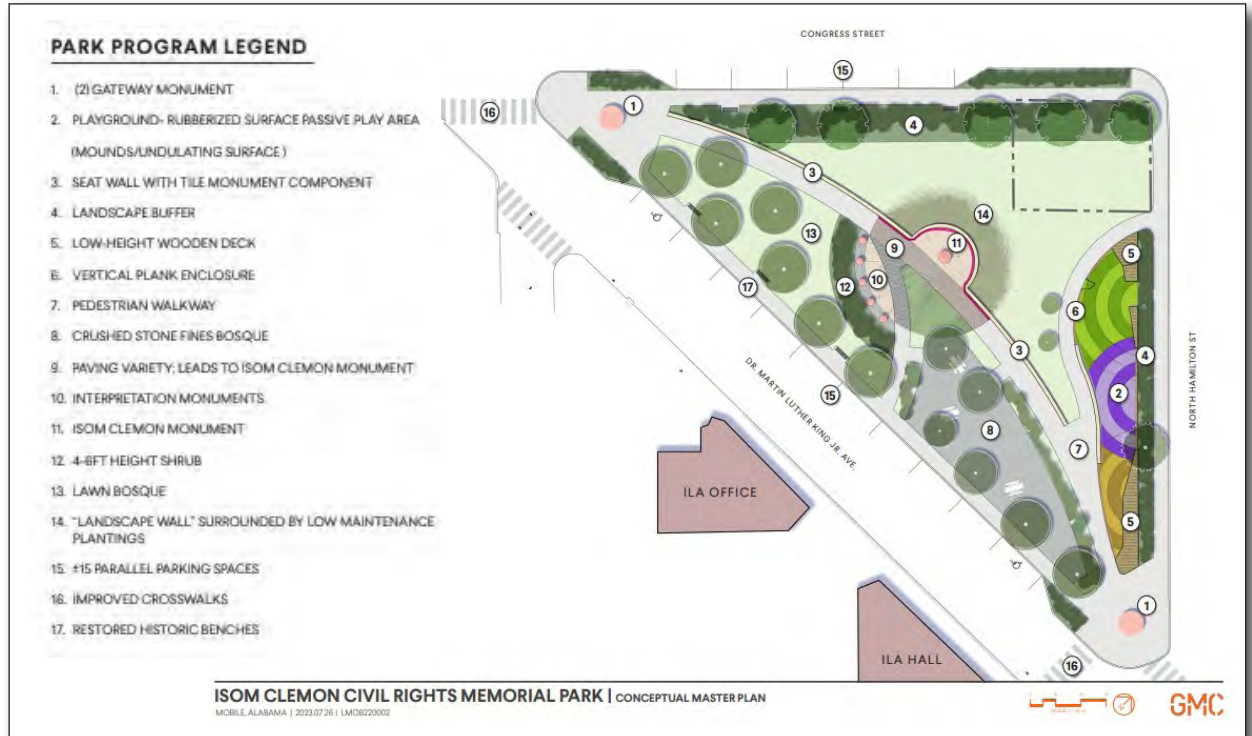
### EXISTING PLANS & POLICIES (CONTINUED)

## Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park Plan

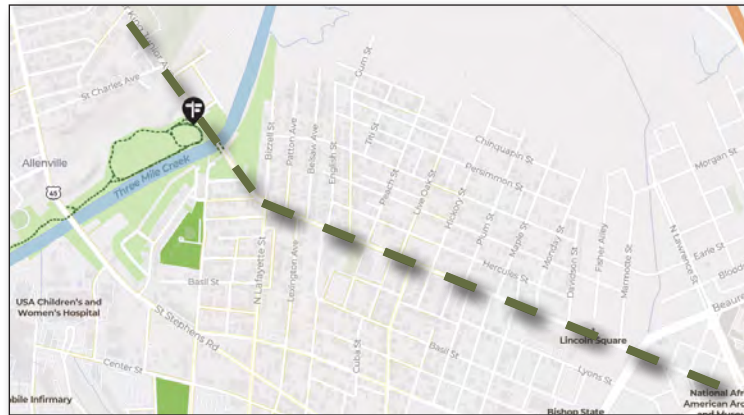
The groundbreaking for this City/County collaboration occurred in July of 2023 and construction should be completed in late-2024. A triangular pocket park bound by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, Hamilton Avenue, and Congress Street, it is across the street from the ILA Hall, a prominent meeting place during the Civil Rights era. The late Isom Clemon led the ILA for many years. Key elements of the park will include a monument of Clemon and bronze reliefs depicting key moments in Mobile's Civil Rights history, landscaping, paved surfaces, seating, and a small playground. See the site plan at right. The rehabilitation of the ILA Hall across the street is in planning.

## Three Mile Creek Greenway Trail Plan

This planned trail is a 6.5-mile linear park that will provide access to Three Mile Creek. It will connect existing parks and infrastructure leading to Downtown Mobile and other areas. Advocated for by the community for 35 years, the City has prepared an implementation plan, secured funding from multiple sources, and is undertaking detailed design and construction of the greenway in phases. Illustrated at right, a segment of the greenway will be just northwest of the proposed most westerly boundary of The District. A park with a trailhead is planned for the north side of the creek on the west side of Three Mile Creek (see the illustration at far right and the location map at immediate right).



*Site Plan for Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park by Goodwin Mills Caywood.*



The map above shows Dr. MLK, Jr. Ave. with a dark green dashed line.



*Proposed MLK Trailhead designed by Dix-Hite.*

## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PLANS & POLICIES (CONTINUED)

#### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Avenue Redesign Plan

The City of Mobile received a large federal grant to rebuild this important street into a more “complete street” that serves more than drivers. It is a follow-up project to the improvements recently completed for North Broad Street. While engineering for the street’s rebuild is still in progress, public engagement for the project began in May. While the plans will vary from segment to segment based on available right-of-way (ROW) widths and existing conditions, in general, the new designs will feature the following:

- One (1) driving lane in each direction, plus turn lanes at key intersections
- One (1) bike lane on either side of the street
- One (1) planting strip between the curb and sidewalk on either side of the street

#### The Branches on the Avenue Development

Proposed for a large vacant site on the corner of Beauregard and MLK across from Bishop State Community College, this proposed project is a partnership between Bishop State, the Mobile Housing Authority, and the non-profit Fuse/Figures. The development will include retail space, recreational facilities, and 350 mixed-income and student housing units. Plans are still forthcoming, but this will be an important project for the area, and particularly for BSCC students.

#### Other Relevant Plans

Although a “Community Concept Redevelopment Plan” was prepared for the Dr. MLK, Jr. Avenue Corridor in 1996, its age makes it now relatively obsolete.





## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PLANS & POLICIES (CONTINUED)

#### EXISTING POLICIES

It is important to remember that any existing local-level policies have the potential to be revised in order to implement this plan. Thus, policies such as the existing zoning should not be considered a constraint.

#### Zoning & Development Standards

The map on the following page illustrates the existing zoning for the study area. Below is a list of the zoning districts within The District, which is considered an “urban” area per the zoning.

Single-Family Residential (R-1): Within urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 6,000 sq. ft., maximum building coverage is 50%, maximum building heights are 35 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 5 ft.

Two-Family Residential (R-2): Within urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 4,000 sq. ft., maximum building coverage is 50%, maximum building heights are 35 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 5 ft. It also allows up to 20 dwelling units per acre.

Multi-Family Residential (R-3): Within urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 4,000 sq. ft., maximum building coverage is 50%, maximum building heights are 45 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 10 ft. It also allows up to 30 dwelling units per acre.

Residential Business (R-B): Only applied to urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 4,000 sq. ft., maximum building coverage is 75%, maximum building heights are 45 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 5 ft. It also allows up to 10 dwelling units per acre.

Buffer Business (B-1): Within urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 4,000 sq. ft., maximum building coverage is 45%, maximum building heights are 45 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 10 ft. It also allows up to 25 dwelling units per acre.

Limited Neighborhood Business District (LB-2): Within urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 4,000 sq. ft., maximum building coverage is 50%, maximum building heights are 45 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 10 ft. It also allows up to 25 dwelling units per acre.

Neighborhood Business District (B-2): Within urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 4,000 sq. ft., maximum building coverage is 50%, maximum building heights are 45 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 10 ft. It also allows up to 25 dwelling units per acre.

Community Business (B-3): Within urban areas, minimum lot sizes are 4,000 sq. ft., maximum building

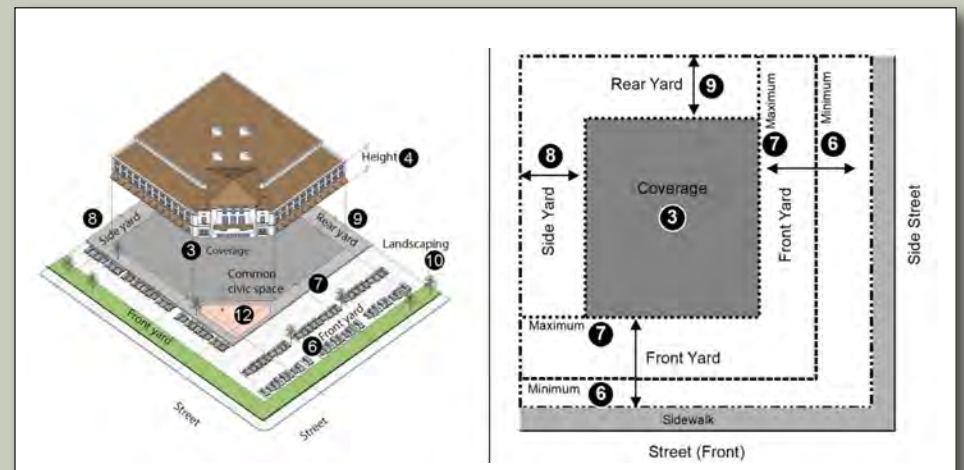
coverage is 50%, maximum building heights are 45 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 10 ft. It also allows up to 25 dwelling units per acre.

General Business (B-4): Not tied to urban or suburban areas, minimum lot sizes are not applicable, maximum building coverage is 95%, maximum building heights are 100 ft., and minimum front setbacks are 0 ft. It also allows up to 200 dwelling units per acre.

#### Other Relevant Policies

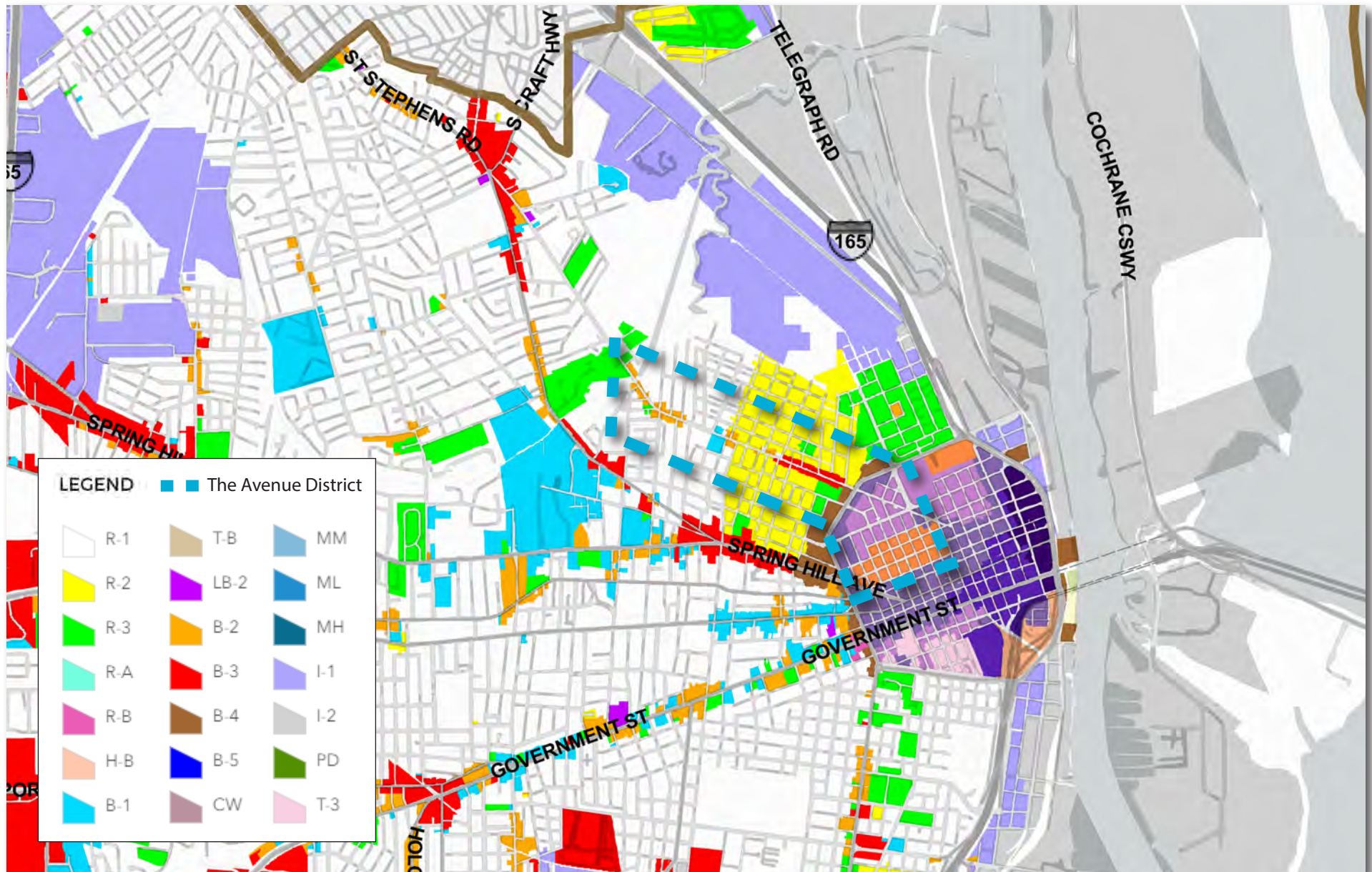
The portion of the district east of Broad Street is within the *Downtown Development District* overlay, which features various transect-based sub-districts and addresses both design and land use issues. Also, Mobile has seven *locally-designated historic districts* in which most exterior property alterations must be approved by the Historic Development Commission, but none of them overlap the proposed boundaries of The District. The DeTonti Square District abuts it.

*This graphic is from the City's zoning ordinance for the B-3 zoning district. As illustrated on the map on the following page, this district is a key one for a main segment of Dr. MLK, Jr. Avenue. It requires a relatively urban form of development per historic development patterns.*



## B) BACKGROUND

### EXISTING PLANS & POLICIES: ZONING MAP





## B) BACKGROUND

### PUBLIC INPUT RESULTS

#### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The process for public input for this planning project has been robust. It is summarized below:

##### Task 1.0 Events: January 29-31, 2024

*Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings*  
(Historic Avenue Cultural Center)

#1: Public officials

#2: Historians and preservationists

#3: Tourism professionals

#4: Business community representatives

#5: Institutional representatives

*Clergy representatives* (Franklin Medical Mall)

*Public Kick-Off Meeting* (Bishop State)

##### Task 2.0 Events: February 21-22, 2024

*Key Person Interviews* (various as needed)

*Open House Event* (Historic Avenue Cultural Center)

*Town Hall Meeting* (Bishop State)

The five-day charrette process that occurred on May 16-20 is summarized on the following page.

***“To ensure widespread support, we want to empower various stakeholders and community members to participate in all stages of the process. Community engagement and participation are crucial in this process.”***

Excerpt from County’s Request for Proposals (RFP)

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Although countless inputs have been provided by stakeholders as part of this planning project for The District, below are some of the most significant and frequently heard comments:

- Transparency with all aspects of the project is critical to gain the trust of stakeholders.
- All people interested in the project should be given a seat at the table. The project cannot be driven by only a handful of stakeholders and those with power.
- Authenticity is required to tell the real story. The history must be told in a genuine manner that avoids sugar coating the past.
- We should interpret and promote what made Mobile’s Civil Rights movement unique relative to the experience of other communities, including the use of boycotts to seek the hiring of African Americans by local businesses for better jobs.
- Highlight both The Avenue’s well-known heroes and everyday people who made it what it was, including doctors, drug store operators, retail shop owners, bartenders, musicians, ministers, port workers, and others.
- Link heritage tourism for The District to the area’s other relevant destinations. In particular, the recent national publicity related to the Clotilda and Africatown should be leveraged for The District in a strategic way.
- Revitalization is sorely needed for both commercial and residential areas. However, strategies will be needed to avoid gentrification and the displacement of people from their residences and owners from their businesses.
- Leverage The District’s numerous institutions, such as Bishop State and churches. Central High School was an important source of identity and pride for area residents, and the building needs to be put back to use in a way that benefits everyone.
- The District’s master plan should focus on successful implementation of the plan. Fortunately, federal funding has been secured and earmarked for some early implementation projects. Additional funding, partners, and external investment will be sought for future implementation.
- Manage expectations with regard to what the master plan can realistically accomplish. Do not over-promise and underdeliver.

## B) BACKGROUND

### PUBLIC INPUT RESULTS (CONTINUED)

#### CHARRETTE

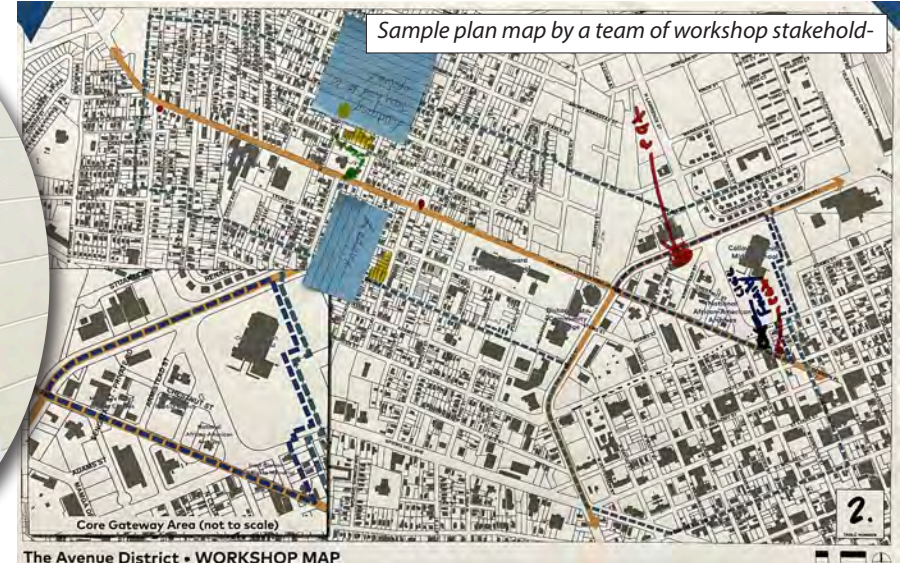
A “charrette” is an intensive process in which people work together over a limited period of time to develop creative ideas for solving problems. The charrette process has deep roots in the planning and design professions. Although the project methodology was designed to encourage strong public input throughout the life of this project, the charrette offered the single greatest opportunity for meaningful hands-on involvement of stakeholders. The charrette process provided a forum for the public to achieve a consensus on a wide range of planning issues, with the most tangible outcome being the Concept Plan as a prelude to the ultimate Master Plan. This five-day task held from May 16-20, 2023, included the following two public sessions:

#### Public Workshop (May 16)

- Workshop Orientation
- Presentation by Consultants of Key Findings
- Planning Exercise by Citizen Planners
- Presentation of Ideas by Citizen Planner Teams

#### Concept Plan Presentation (May 20)

On the final evening of the charrette, the Consultant Team presented to the public the Concept Plan that they created during the preceding days. A thorough and detailed discussion was then conducted with the public to learn what stakeholders liked in the Concept Plan and what could be improved upon for the subsequent draft Master Plan.



#### Key Workshop Ideas

- Museum interpreting the area's history (various potential locations)
- Restoration of Ace Theater
- Establish restaurants throughout
- New housing in various areas
- Promote walking and biking
- Businesses, assisted living, and senior housing at Branch property
- Reuse buildings owned by school system (including Central H.S.)
- Improve and interpret Oaklawn
- Consider eco-tourism
- Provide a grocery store
- Add markers for historic sites
- Community center near Central H.S.
- Improve/expand parking/infrastructure
- Community and medicinal gardens
- Amphitheater for events/performances
- Involve young people more



## B) BACKGROUND

### CASE STUDIES: OVERVIEW

Appendix 3 of this plan - Case Studies Report - examines case studies to learn from the experiences of other districts that are relevant to The District – Mobile’s Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage District. This scope of work for this planning project calls for the identification of several potential places to consider for the case studies, but to ultimately select three to be studied. That report starts by outlining the parameters established for selecting the case studies, followed by a summary of the districts considered. It also explains why some places were initially considered, but ultimately dismissed as candidates for the case studies. After then listing the types of questions to be applied three case studies, the balance of the report consists of the three case studies.

### CASE STUDY PARAMETERS

The following parameters were considered in assembling a list of potential case study candidates, and for then determining the three places to be studied:

***“We are not ‘recreating the wheel’ with this vision or approach. As we consider the overall expected impact of creating the Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District, we examine the impacts of similar projects across the State and Country. In Alabama alone, we have seen Civil Rights Districts flourish with tremendous tourism and economic benefits.”***

Excerpt from County’s Request for Proposals (RFP)

- **District Theme:** Case study districts should be limited to those that are focused on African American cultural heritage and/or Civil Rights to have the highest level of relevance. These districts should not simply be places within predominantly African American areas of a community and/or focused on a theme such as jazz.
- **Size of the Community:** Rather than only considering the population of a place’s municipal boundaries, the size of its metropolitan area is a more relevant factor for comparative purposes. Mobile has a metro population of 411,640 (2023). However, it should be emphasized that this consideration is not critical since lessons might be learned by comparable place in much smaller or much larger communities.
- **Deliberate Effort:** The districts to be studied need to have evolved (or at least have been strongly reinforced) through a deliberate and proactive planning and implementation effort. They should be places where a concerted effort occurred with public sector support and private sector involvement. Ideally, that process would have included strong public engagement.
- **Success of the Area:** While a district’s level of success may be difficult to quantify within the limited scope of this project, there should be some level of evidence that the district has succeeded. Consequently, the primary planning will need to have occurred roughly three or more years ago for sufficient time to have passed.

The next three pages summarize the case studies.

### CASE STUDY CANDIDATES

Based upon research conducted for this project, it appears that the following places have enjoyed success with all three of the objectives for The District (commemoration, interpretation, and revitalization). They are each sequenced below in order of their relevance to this project for Mobile based upon limited research. Within Appendix 3, basic information is provided on each:

1. Birmingham Civil Rights District – Birmingham, AL
2. Greenwood District - Tulsa, OK
3. Douglas Block – Rocky Mount, NC
4. Paradise Valley Cultural & Entertainment District – Detroit, MI
5. Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor – Buffalo, NY
6. Sweet Auburn District – Atlanta, GA
7. African American Arts & Cultural District – San Francisco, CA
8. Six Square District – Austin, TX

In addition to these these eight places that were considered, there were several others that are listed in Appendix 3 and it is explained why they did not make the initial cut of eight places.

## B) BACKGROUND

### CASE STUDIES:

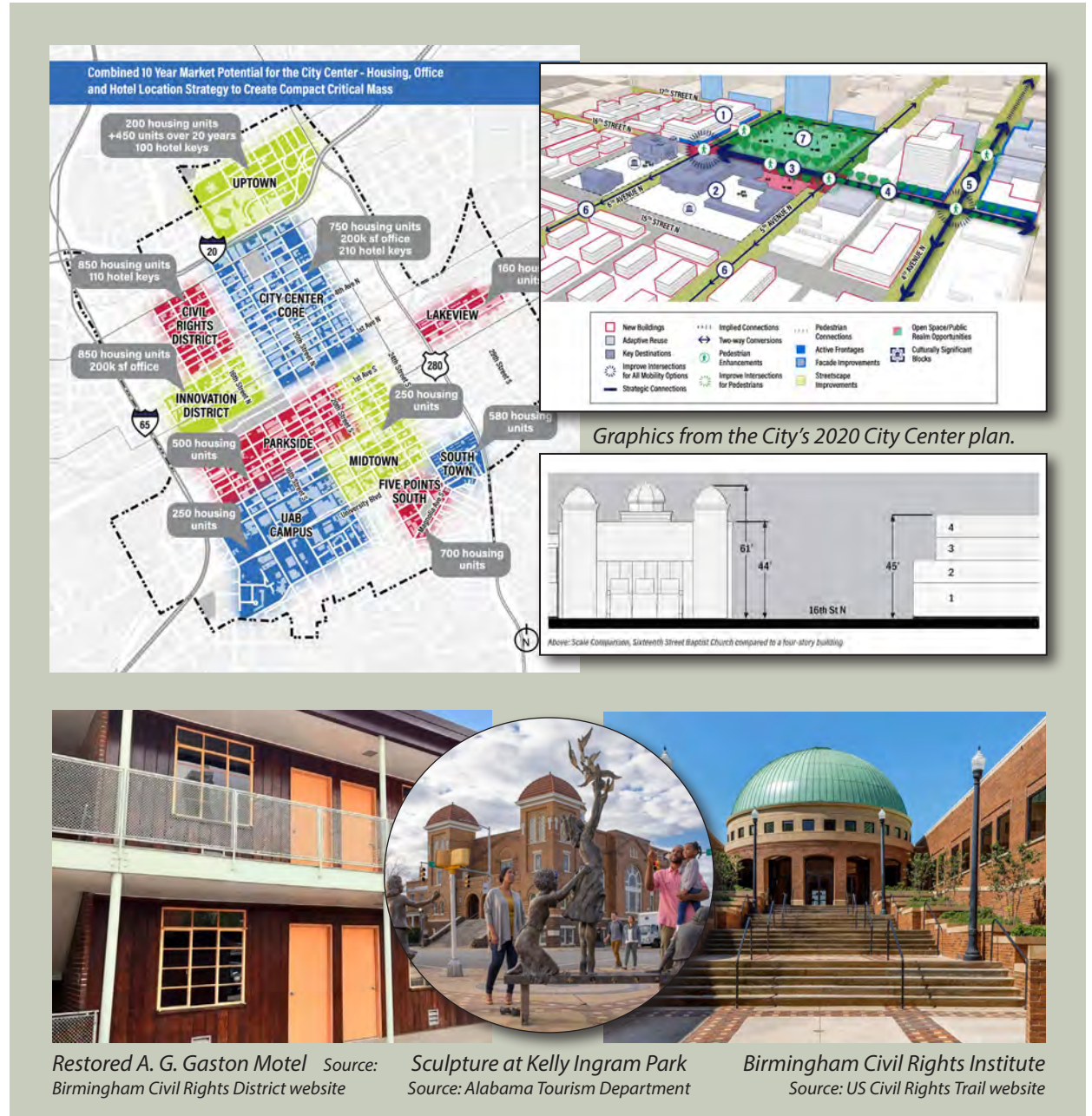
#### BIRMINGHAM CIVIL RIGHTS DISTRICT BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

##### Context of the District

- *Location:* North Central Alabama
- *MSA Population:* 863,000
- *Municipal Population:* 196,910
- *Size of the District:* 4.5-block core / 24 blocks overall

##### Lessons Learned from the District

- *Collaborate with partners having strong technical and financial resources.* In their case, it was the National Park Service.
- *Integrate planning efforts for the district into the community's broader community planning efforts.* The City's 2020 City Center Master Plan expanded on previous plans by other entities.
- *Avoid new development that might overshadow the district's most important sites.* As an example, the 2020 plan included design standards for new infill that might be located near the iconic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.
- *Activate the district with retail, dining and entertainment uses.* The existing context for much of this district does not accommodate the potential for storefronts and outdoor dining.



See Appendix 3 for the full case study.



## B) BACKGROUND

### CASE STUDIES:

#### GREENWOOD DISTRICT TULSA, OKLAHOMA

##### Context of the District

- *Location:* East Oklahoma
- *MSA Population:* 1,034,123
- *Municipal Population:* 410,131
- *Size of the District:* 3-4 block core / 35 blocks overall

##### Lessons Learned from the District

- *The district might benefit from a single managing entity.* There is currently often confusion over who oversees what.
- *Consider the needs for a community center.* Facilities such as the Greenwood Rising History Center are sometimes called upon to essentially play this role.
- *Even unrelated anchor uses can leverage benefits to the district.* The minor league baseball stadium is thematically unrelated to Greenwood's history and cultural resources, but the baseball fan market supplements that of heritage tourists for businesses.
- *Interpretive centers addressing virtually any topic can attract large audiences if done with enough creativity.* The story of Greenwood is a powerful draw in and of itself, but the tremendous creativity and engaging nature of the exhibits at the Greenwood Rising History Center make the visitor draw that much stronger.

See Appendix 3 for the full case study.





## B) BACKGROUND

### CASE STUDIES:

DOUGLAS BLOCK

ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA

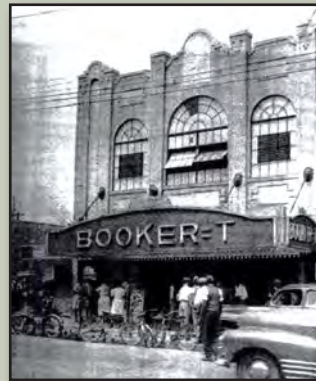
#### Context of the District

- *Location:* East North Carolina
- *MSA Population:* 144,090
- *Municipal Population:* 53,957
- *Size of the District:* 3 blocks

#### Lessons Learned from the District

- *Pursue a wide range of funding sources to implement the project.* This project used a range of federal grants, loans and tax credits key to their success.
- *Seek a use/business mix reflective of the historic mix when the district was at its peak.* The current mix is similar to that of the area in the early-20th century.
- *Even unrelated anchor uses can leverage benefits to the district.* The Rocky Mount Event Center leverages economic spin-off benefits to area businesses.
- *Fill in the “missing teeth” with compatible new buildings on the most important streets.* Filling the gaps provides visual cohesiveness and tenant spaces.
- *Use streetscape improvements to encourage private sector investment.* Improvements included new sidewalks, street trees and nostalgic street lights.
- *Tie the district’s historic themes to nationally-recognized themes.* Rocky Mount native and jazz great Thelonious Monk can tie to the “Chitlin” Circuit.”

See Appendix 3 for the full case study.




Bird's eye rendering from 2004 plan Source: The Walker Collaborative



Grand opening festivity photos Source: The Walker Collaborative



An aerial photograph of a campus area, overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. A white line-art diagram is superimposed on the image, showing a network of buildings, streets, and green spaces. The diagram includes various building footprints, parking lots, and a series of green rectangular areas representing lawns or parks. A central road or path runs through the middle of the campus, with smaller paths branching off. The overall layout suggests a well-planned urban or institutional environment. The text "C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY" is centered over the diagram in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

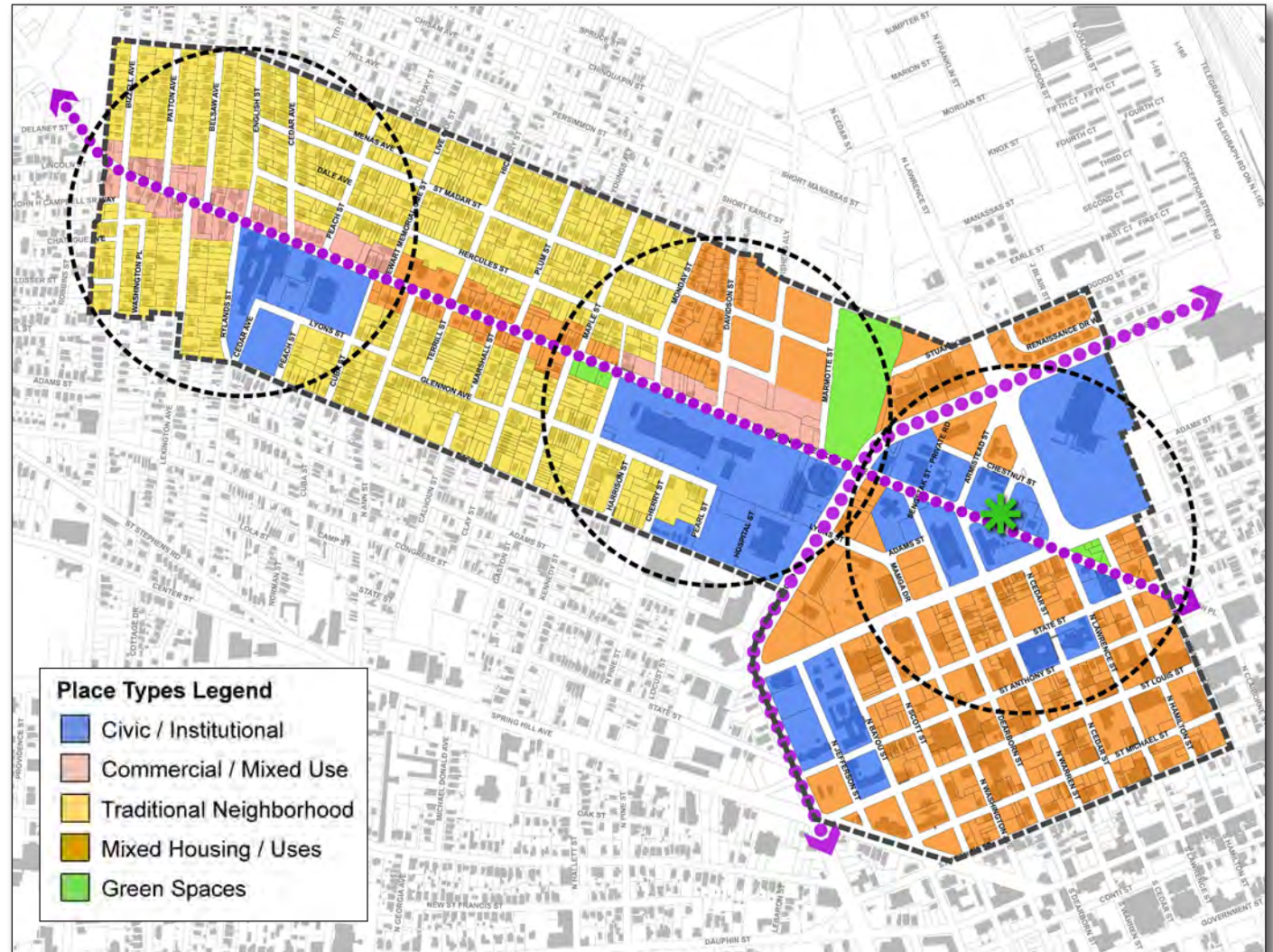


# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

## FRAMEWORK PLAN

The Framework Plan at right provides an overview of the key physical concepts for this master plan. The dashed circles represent a roughly quarter mile radius, which equates to an approximate five-minute walk for the average pedestrian (from the center to the periphery). Each of the distinct places is considered an “Area.” The map’s color-coded Place Types are based upon land uses, density, development, form and character. They are aspirational as part of a plan, but existing conditions are factored into their designations. This is not a parcel-specific proposed land use map, but instead reflects proposed primary uses. Key physical components of the Framework Plan include:

- *Dr. MLK, Jr. Avenue* serves as the main spine for the overall District.
- *The Gateway Area* anchors The District’s east end adjacent to Downtown.
- *The Bishop State Area* is dominated by institutional and mixed land uses.
- *The Central High Area* serves as The District’s west anchor and is focused on the community’s needs.
- *Single-family housing* dominates the balance of The District, in addition to churches and other land uses.



The following eleven pages address for each of the three Areas: 1) the Area concept, 2) the urban design approach, and 3) precedent imagery intended to illustrate what the Area might look like and feel like in the future. It is important to keep in mind that, for each color-coded place type depicted above, the names in the legend only convey the primary land uses. For example, the Traditional Neighborhood place type can include uses such as churches, while the Mixed Housing / Uses place type can include businesses and other land uses.



# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

## GATEWAY AREA PLAN

### CONCEPTS

The primary concepts for the Gateway Area are described on this page, while the physical planning facets are addressed on the following three pages. These concepts are rooted in, at least in part, the market analysis findings summarized on pages 26-29 and detailed in Appendix 2 of this plan.

### Interpretive Center

#### District Hub

The interpretive center will function as the main anchor for the Gateway Area and the “jumping off point” for visitors to explore the broader District. Being located at the district’s closest point to the Downtown will make it more appealing to visitors already in the area.

#### Building Space Allocation

As detailed in this plan’s Appendix 2 report, the center’s approximately 10,000 square feet of building space will be allocated roughly as follows:

- 7,500 square feet of exhibition space
- 2,500 square feet of event venue, gift shop, offices, and other support space

### Walkable Cultural Sites

Among some of the key sites in this Area are:

- Historic Avenue Cultural Center (Davis Library)
- Stone Street Baptist Church
- Most Pure of Heart of Mary Catholic Church
- Dearborn YMCA

- International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA)
- The Ace Theater
- MAMGA
- State Street AME Church
- Funeral homes

### Amenities & Businesses

#### Park & Special Events

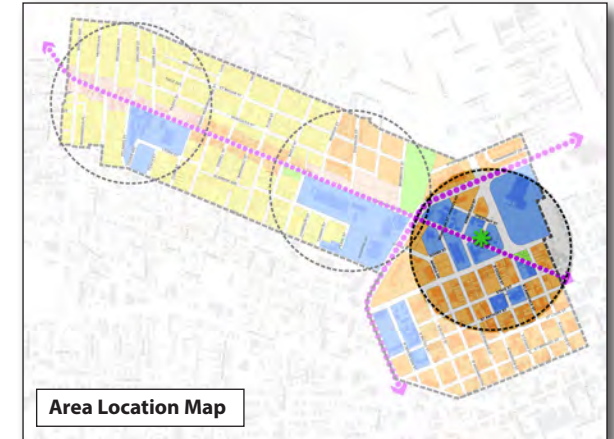
The proposed new park by the proposed interpretive center will be an important new amenity both for passive recreational purposes and for special events.

#### Public Art

Public art will be important for activating, branding, and interpreting The District. See pages 67-70 in the section on Public Spaces & Art for more on this topic.

#### Tour Operators

Although most visitors to the district will likely take self-guided tours tied to brochures and digital interpretation (phone apps, GPS technology, etc.), there will still be a market for guided tours. See this plan’s Interpretation Strategy for more on this topic.



#### Commercial Development

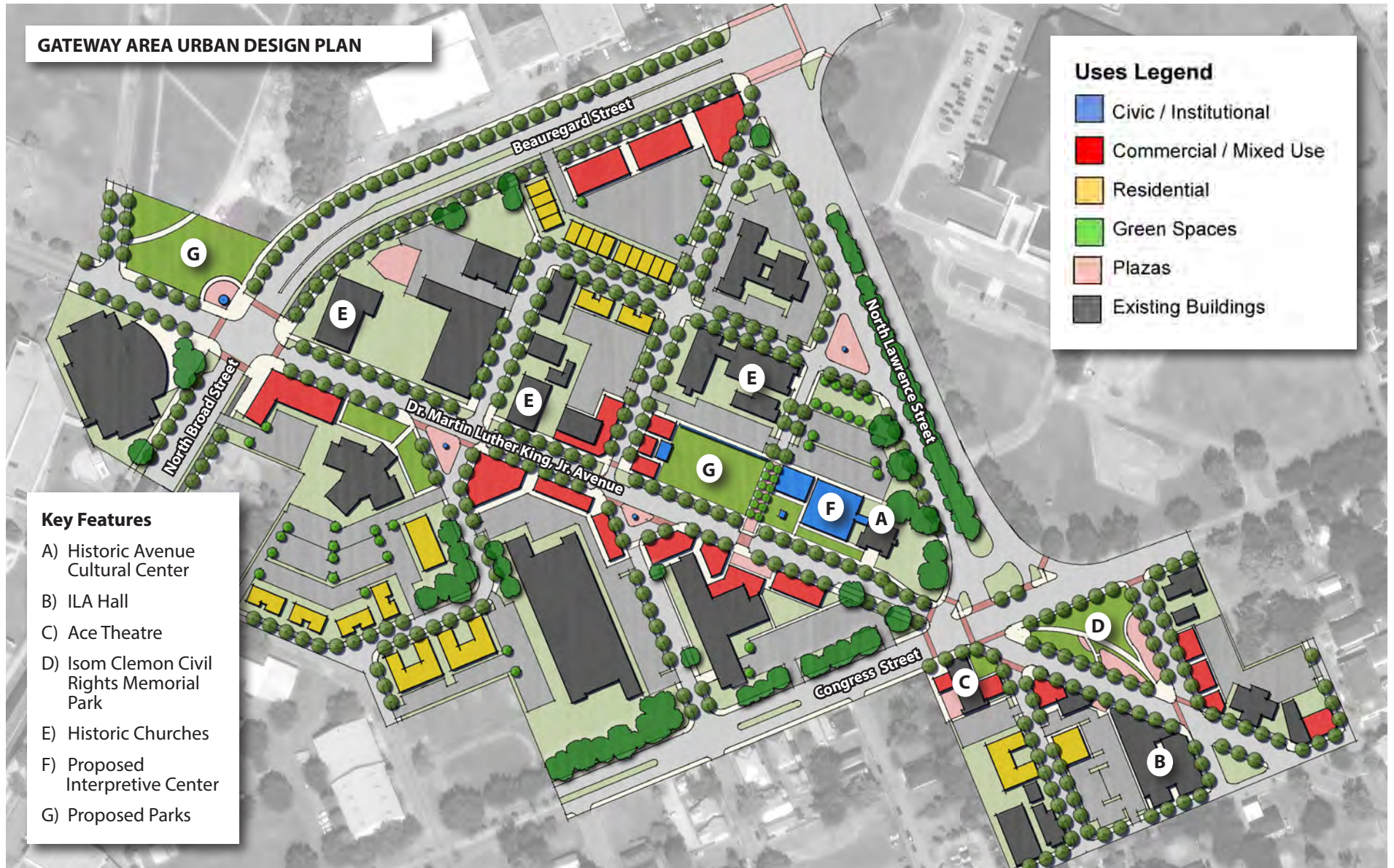
Of the potential 34,000 square feet of business space, the breakdown might be as follows:

- *Destination Restaurants*: 10,000 square feet (Avenue heritage themes, healthy food choices)
- *Entertainment Venue*: 18,000 square feet (live music/entertainment - e.g. The Apollo)
- *Retail*: 6,000 square feet



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### GATEWAY AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### GATEWAY AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)

#### PRECEDENT IMAGERY

Images on this page include both existing features to preserve and enhance, and images reflecting the potential character of proposed new features.



Park with stage - Fairhope, AL



Greenwood Rising History Center - Tulsa, OK



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### GATEWAY AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)

#### ARTIST RENDERING

The rendering at right illustrates what the Gateway Area could look like in the future based upon the urban design plan on page 44. It is viewed from the air at a point just west of the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and North Broad Street. The redeveloped east side of North Broad Street is seen in the foreground. Dr. MLK, Jr. Avenue is the focal point that extends to the east with the Downtown skyline looming in the distant background. The proposed park and interpretive center can be seen on the north side of the Avenue. It is important to keep in mind that this rendering is only conceptual and the ultimate reality will most likely differ in some ways.





# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

## BISHOP STATE AREA PLAN

### CONCEPTS

The primary concepts for the Bishop State Area revolve around the existing educational institutions, existing and new parks, and a planned mixed-use development.

### Educational Institutions

The two institutions are the most significant existing features anchoring this area, as follows:

#### Florence Howard Elementary

This one-story school complex features buildings with very large footprints. No recommendations are offered here, particularly since local school districts conduct their own planning for their facilities.

#### Bishop State Community College

As the namesake for this Sub-Area, this college serves as its main anchor. As with the Mobile County Public School System, the State plans its own facilities. Regardless, it is noteworthy that the fence that was recently installed around the perimeter of the campus negatively impacts the campus' accessibility and projects an image that the area is not safe. While it is recognized that the intent of the fence was to enhance security, *it is recommended that security alternatives to the fence be explored, such as creating more access points that are still monitored and secured.*

### Parks

Pages 65-66 of this plan section features a section on Public Spaces. That section will go into more detail on parks than here, but the importance of parks

to this Sub-Area warrants a brief mention:

#### Martin Luther King Park

Located on the south side of MLK and straddling either side of Kennedy Street, the main existing features are a basketball court and a parking lot. A playground should be considered for the segment of the park currently undeveloped and adjacent to Florence Howard Elementary (SE corner of MLK and Kennedy).

#### Proposed One Mile Creek Park

This new passive recreation park, proposed by this plan, would be located on the northwest corner of MLK and Beauregard Street where a floodplain exists (directly adjacent to the Branch Development).

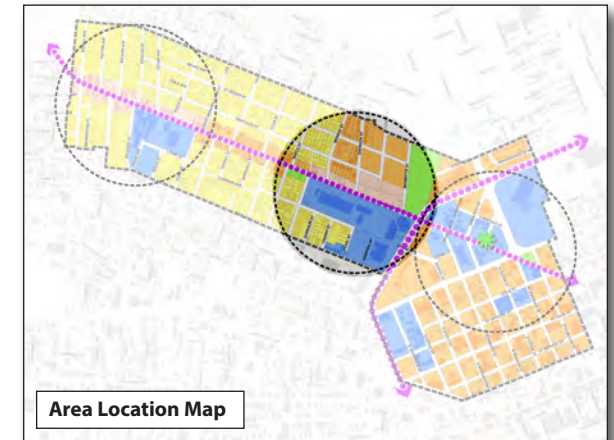
### Proposed Branch Development

This proposed development is described on page 33. Proposed for a large vacant site on the corner of Beauregard and MLK across from Bishop State, this project is a partnership between Bishop State, the Mobile Housing Authority, and the non-profit Fuse/Figures. The development will include retail space, recreational facilities, and 350 mixed-income and student housing units. Plans are still forthcoming, but this will be an important project for the Sub-Area.

#### Recommended Development Principles

The following design principles are encouraged:

1. Maintain an overall street grid and block form.
2. Buildings fronting streets should avoid parking lots between the buildings and streets.
3. Building facades should have distinct bays to break up the massing and to maintain a human



scale.

4. Commercial buildings fronting streets should feature storefronts avoiding reflective or heavily-tinted glass.
5. Outdoor dining should be promoted where viable.
6. Housing should feature a range of types (above non-residential space, attached, detached, etc.).

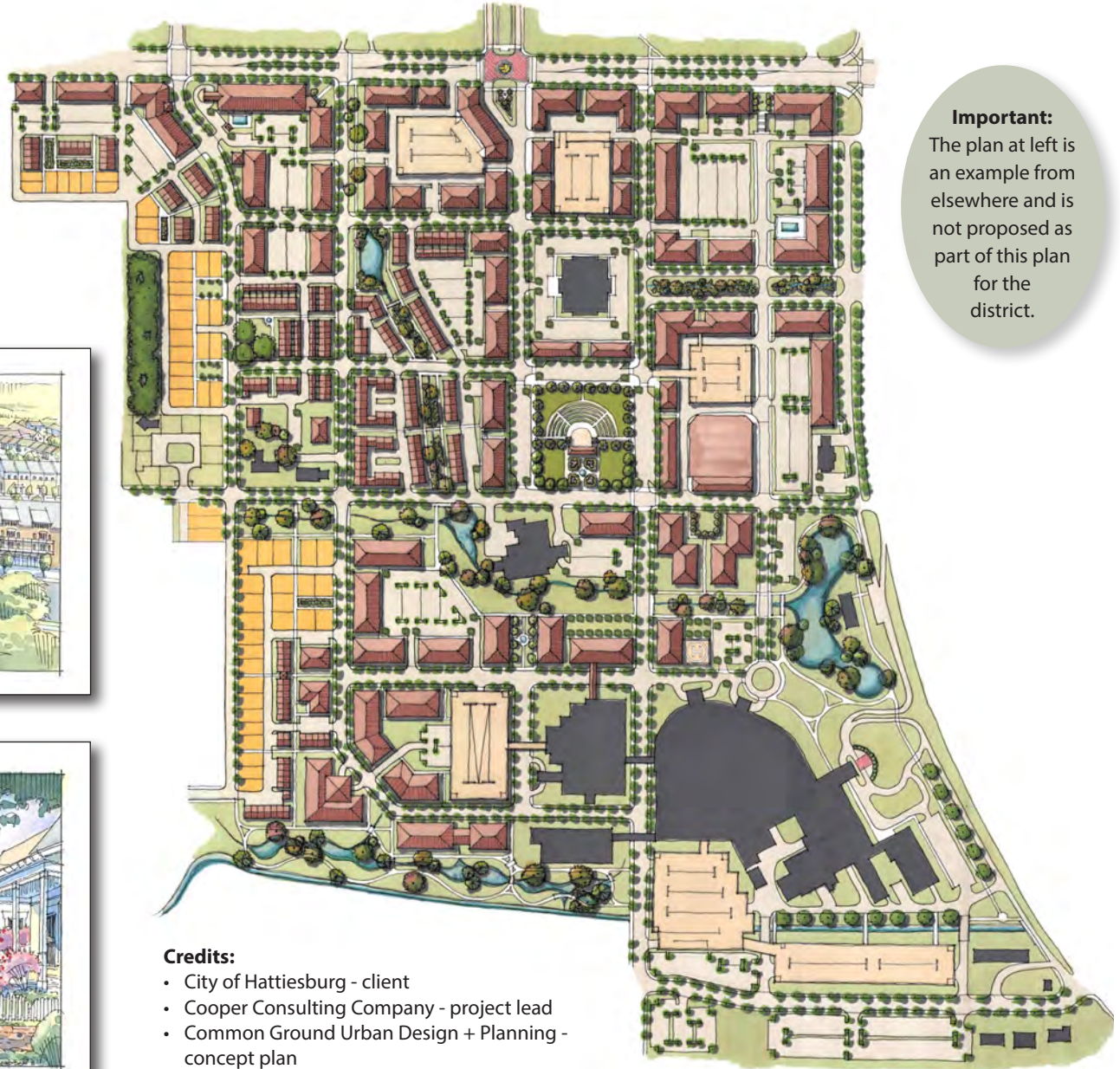
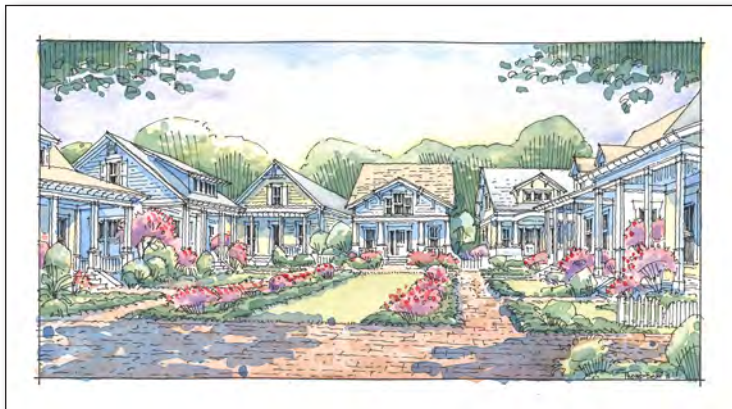


## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BISHOP STATE AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)

#### Example Mixed-Use Development

Because the planning for the Branch Development is still occurring, it would be inappropriate for this plan to include its own plan for the site. However, to illustrate the recommended development principles on the previous page, this example urban design plan is for a study area in Hattiesburg, MS, located adjacent to the University of Southern Mississippi's campus.



#### Important:

The plan at left is an example from elsewhere and is not proposed as part of this plan for the district.

#### Credits:

- City of Hattiesburg - client
- Cooper Consulting Company - project lead
- Common Ground Urban Design + Planning - concept plan
- Thompson Placemaking - renderings



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BISHOP STATE AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)

#### PRECEDENT IMAGERY

Images on this page reflect the potential character of proposed new features in this Area, including the planned Branch Development.





# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

## CENTRAL HIGH AREA PLAN

### CONCEPTS

The primary concepts for the Central High Area are described on this page, while the physical planning facets are addressed on the following three pages.

### Central High School

#### Current Use & Condition

As summarized below, the 1924 Dunbar school became Central High School in 1955. At some point a more contemporary-looking addition was made to the front, but it closed in 1970 as part of the school district's desegregation plan. The property was later used by Bishop State Community College, but is now owned by the Mobile County Public School System

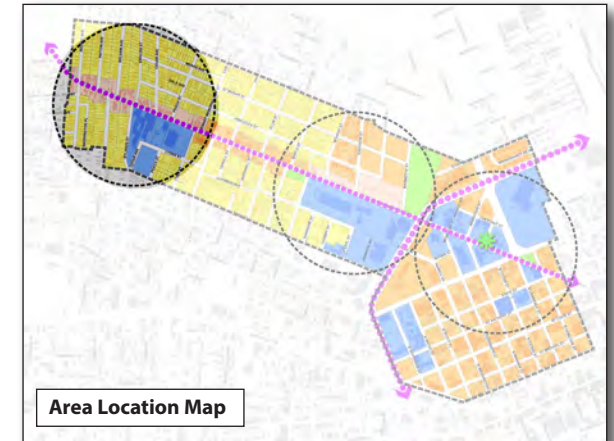
and sits empty. A major theme from the numerous public engagement events for this project was the importance of the school to the pride of the community, and alumni still remain organized and active.

#### Potential Future Uses

Although any future uses will depend upon the school district's wishes, *it is recommended that Central High School be used for some community-oriented purpose*, such as one or more of the following: community center, educational purposes, small business incubator, daycare, special events, and cultural programs. Reuse of the building will require a structural evaluation and consideration of issues such as mold.

#### Potential Future Design

The front addition and other changes made prior to 1970 lack somewhat in aesthetics and create a blank



wall along MLK. *It is recommended that a study occur to explore opening up the facade walls to provide visual interest to the adjacent streetscape, even if the openings are not functional as storefronts.*

#### Interpretation

This topic is addressed in the Interpretation Strategy, but as suggested earlier in this plan, sites such as this can be linked to the proposed interpretive center within the Gateway Area of the district.

#### **Walkable Cultural Sites**

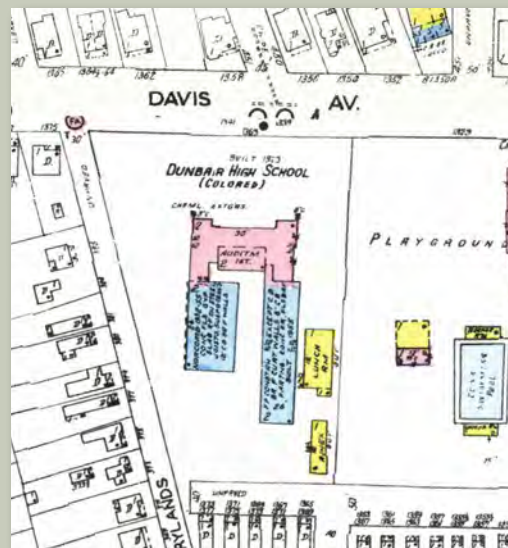
In addition to Central High School, other sites include:

- *White's Barber College*: this facility still operates
- *Vernon Z. Crawford Law Firm Office*: the County recently acquired it and is preserving the building
- *Historic Churches*: examples include Grace & Truth Christian Fellowship Church (MLK Ave.), Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church (Lexington Ave.), Stewart Memorial Christian Church (MLK Ave.) and Martin Luther Lutheran Church (MLK Ave.).



At right is a 1925 Sanborn Insurance map showing Dunbar High School, built in 1924. The main front section is depicted in a salmon color, while it appears that there were rear sections in blue. The yellow lunch room and annex were wooden structures. In 1955 Dunbar Junior High School moved to St. Anthony Street and the school at this site became Central High School. Above is a graduating class from what appears to be the 1960s.

Photo Source: Central High School Facebook page





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### CENTRAL HIGH AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### CENTRAL HIGH AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)

#### PRECEDENT IMAGERY

Images on this page include primarily existing features to preserve and enhance, and one image reflecting the potential character of a new building.





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### CENTRAL HIGH AREA PLAN (CONTINUED)

#### ARTIST RENDERING

The rendering below illustrates what the Central High Area could look like in the future based upon the urban design plan on page 51. It is viewed from the street level looking east down Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. Central High School is on the south side of the street in the foreground (right). While the rendering does not convey the specific day-to-day use of the school building, it shows a special event occurring in the court yard. The existing historic buildings on the north side of the street have been rehabilitated, and the street has been redeveloped in accordance with the City's current plans for the street. It is important to keep in mind that this rendering is only conceptual and the ultimate reality will most likely differ in some ways.





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BUILDINGS: EXISTING

This plan section applies both to buildings within the three Areas just addressed and to buildings located elsewhere within The District.

#### Prioritizing Existing Buildings

Existing historic buildings that are feasible to rehabilitate in a manner that restores their original character should be given priority above new buildings as part of the district's preservation and interpretation. See this plan's Plan Implementation section for information on financial incentives for historic rehabilitation.



*This concrete block building at the corner of North Cedar and Congress Streets was recently rehabbed into a building that now contributes to The District.*



#### CURRENT ACE THEATRE



*Located at 501 Congress Street within The District's Gateway Area, the Ace Theatre opened in 1943. It was operated by King Theatres and was listed as having 500 seats. The theatre closed in 1971 and is currently vacant. While there is a range of potential uses for it in the future, one might be an entertainment venue with dining and live music. In accordance with this plan's market analysis, there is potential future demand for 20,000 sq. ft. of live entertainment space and the same amount for destination restaurants (see page 29). Such a project could also take advantage of both the state and federal level investment tax credits for historic rehabilitation if done according to federal preservation standards.*

#### POTENTIAL ACE THEATRE





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BUILDINGS: EXISTING (CONTINUED)

#### Standards for Building Rehabilitation

While it is not recommended that regulatory standards be applied to the study area via a local historic district, the federal standards (summarized at right) are a good resource and might be incentivized if tied to grant programs for historic properties. As explained in the Implementation Strategy, qualified projects can earn federal and state rehab tax credits.

#### Historic Buildings as Models

The District's historic buildings should serve as models for future new infill development. In fact, the following pages on the design of new buildings do that very thing.



*Located at 557 Congress Street in The District, this historic house awaits a rehabilitation.*



*This restored house next door at 559 Congress Street is now an inspiration for The District.*



*These shotgun houses in The District are deteriorated, but still retain their overall character.*



*These shotgun houses in The District are evidence that new buildings can respect history.*

#### THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BUILDINGS: New

#### COMMERCIAL & MIXED-USE INFILL

In light of the large volume of historic buildings lost in The District over the past half-century due to the federal Urban Renewal program and more recent deterioration, new infill development will be important to revitalize The District. The architectural elevations on this and the following page were prepared to represent a broad range of potential commercial and mixed-use building types based upon historic examples. The following points should be considered:

- The architectural elevations reflecting wood siding could also be masonry cladding, and those reflecting masonry cladding could also be wood siding.
- Despite the strong aesthetic quality of these designs, they are actually quite simple and feature very little detailing that would be expensive to build.





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BUILDINGS: New (CONTINUED)

#### COMMERCIAL & MIXED-USE INFILL (continued)



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BUILDINGS: New (CONTINUED)

#### RESIDENTIAL INFILL

As with so many of the commercial and mixed-use buildings, many of The District's residential buildings were also lost to Urban Renewal and deterioration. While the rehabilitation of existing historic buildings should remain the top priority relative to new infill buildings, it will be important for new buildings to be compatible with historic buildings. Historically, The District's most common residential architectural types were the shotgun, bungalow, and vernacular cottage. While there is not much of a tradition of attached housing in The District, compatible designs are certainly possible. As in the case of the commercial and mixed-use elevations on the previous two pages, these attractive historically-based residential designs are actually simple and have very little detailing that would be expensive to build.





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### BUILDINGS: New (CONTINUED)

#### RESIDENTIAL INFILL (continued)



# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

## STREETS, STREETSCAPES & MOBILITY

### Planned Redevelopment of MLK Avenue

As already indicated on page 33 of this plan, the City of Mobile secured two federal grants to redesign and redevelopment the segment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue between just west of Three Mile Creek on the west end to Broad Street on the east end. The intent is to create a “complete streets,” which means that it will not only serve motorized vehicles, but pedestrians and cyclists are well. Planning and design work are nearing completion, and the City has held several public meetings to get stakeholder input.

#### Design Overview

As the legend map at bottom right reflects, the street’s design varies to adjust to its context (“context sensitive design”). For example, the specific design proposed for location “G” is illustrated at right. However, regardless of the specific location, the following is a summary of the most typical features:

- One (1) driving lane in each direction
- Turn lanes at key intersections
- Bike lanes and pedestrian crosswalks
- New curbs and planting strips
- Street lights (historic style at human scale)
- Traffic lights
- New water lines

The City’s proposed plans for MLK Avenue clearly follow “best practices” for corridor planning and will greatly enhance the area. Regardless, *this plan by the County for The District cannot impact the City’s design for this particular segment of MLK Avenue.*

#### Location G: Existing

*This intersection of MLK Avenue is at Peach Street with White’s Barber College located on the northwest corner. The existing condition features two driving lanes in each direction, a sidewalk on either side, and a planting strip between the sidewalk and curb for some segments of MLK.*



Graphics Source: City of Mobile

#### Location G: Proposed

*The proposed redesign of this segment of MLK Avenue will include a “road diet” that goes from four existing driving lanes to just one in each direction, a designated bike lane on their side, improved sidewalks and traffic signals, new curbing and water lines, brick crosswalks, and human-scaled historic-looking street lights.*



#### Legend Map for Cross-Section Designs - Source: City of Mobile





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### STREETS, STREETSCAPES & MOBILITY

(CONTINUED)

#### MLK Avenue Segment in the Gateway Area

This page proposes a redesign for the segment of MLK Avenue east of Broad Street in the Gateway Area. A survey will be needed to confirm the right-of-way (ROW) and street design dimensions to validate the details of the existing and proposed designs.

#### Existing Design

The current configuration of the street includes one 13.5 ft.-wide driving lane in each direction, 3 ft.-wide planting strips (buffers) on the outside of the curbs, and 5 ft.-wide concrete sidewalks on the outside of both planting strips. The right-of-way (ROW) extends only 1 ft. beyond the outside edge of both sidewalks.

#### City's Design in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan

As described on page 30 of this plan, the City's Comprehensive Plan proposes one driving lane in each direction, a bike lane on each side, and a planting strip and sidewalk on the outside of both sides.

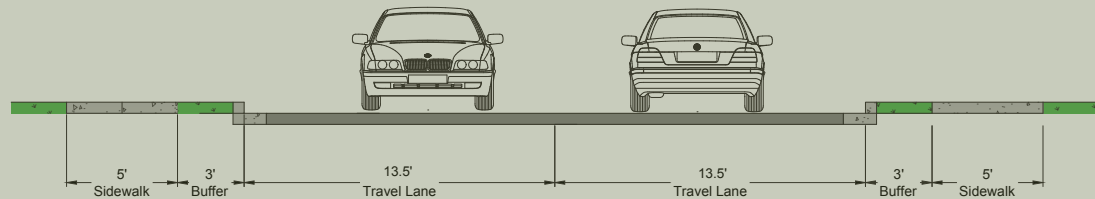
#### Recommended Street Design

The following design is recommended:

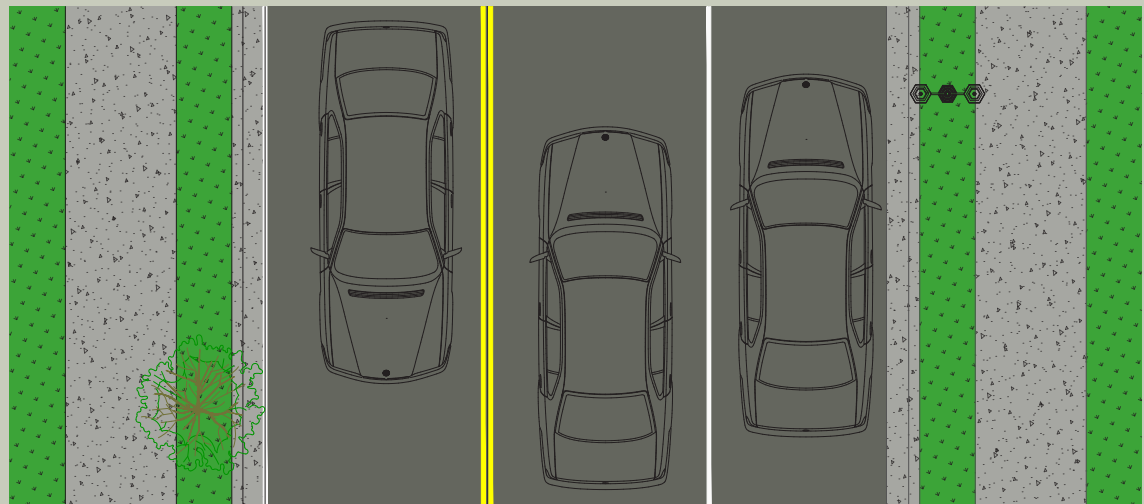
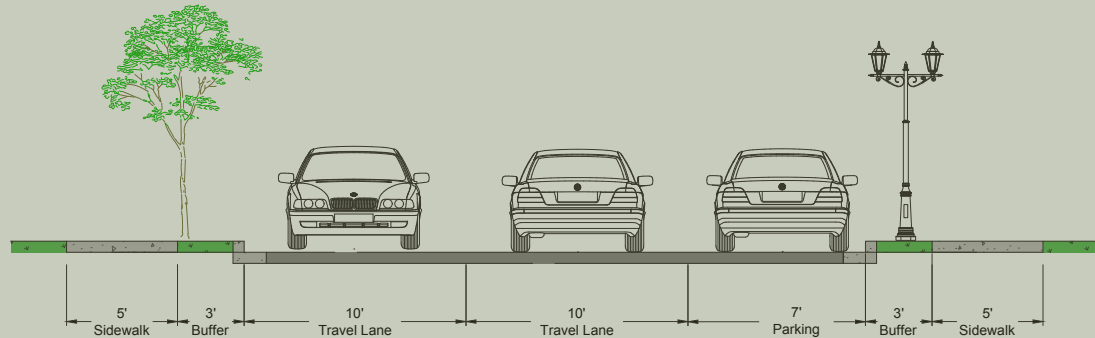
- Two 10 ft.-wide driving lanes (one per direction)
- One 7 ft.-wide parking lane to be located on whichever side of the street best accommodates it.
- Existing curbing, planting strips and sidewalks to remain, with street trees and street lights added.

The parking will not only provide convenient short-term parking, but also a buffer for pedestrians and outdoor diners from moving vehicles. Designated bike lanes are not suited for such an urban context.

#### Existing Design: Two Driving Lanes & No On-Street Parking



#### Proposed Design: Two Driving Lanes & One Parking Lane



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### STREETS, STREETSCAPES & MOBILITY

(CONTINUED)

#### Elimination of Unnecessary Curb Cuts

Closing unused curb cuts and driveway aprons will prevent vehicles from traversing the sidewalk and landscaping, and improve the appearance of the public right-of-way. Removing unused driveway aprons and replacing with landscaping will provide additional pervious surfaces for stormwater absorption, and more intact curbing will channel stormwater into stormwater drainage systems.

#### ADA Compliance

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) creates mandatory standards for accessibility of public accommodations, including sidewalks and curb ramps. Any street and pedestrian improvements in The District should include bringing existing facilities into compliance with ADA. Given that many heritage tourists are seniors, these improvements will be particularly important for The District.

#### Side-Street Sidewalks

Many of the side streets that intersect with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue have inadequate sidewalks or no sidewalks at all. Sidewalk improvements along side streets will improve the safety, convenience, and appearance of the adjacent residential areas. These improvements will also help to achieve the objectives of the ADA regulations noted above. For street segments with unneeded curb cuts to be eliminated, those enhancements will enhance sidewalk safety.

#### Closing Curb Cuts

This small triangular area is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of MLK Avenue and State Street. It currently has four curb cuts featuring sloped segments of concrete. It should all be replaced with turf and curbing.



#### ADA Curb Ramps

At right is the intersection of MLK Avenue and Tunstall Street. All four points where the sidewalk meets the street lack a ramp and instead transition directly from the curb to the street's surface.



#### Improved Sidewalks

This view of Clay Street looks north to the intersection of MLK Avenue. At present, there are no sidewalks and unneeded curb cuts. This graphic illustrates new sidewalks and the replacement of missing curbing.





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### STREETS, STREETSCAPES & MOBILITY

(CONTINUED)

#### Greenways

Greenways are essentially linear parks intended for hikers, joggers, cyclists and roller skaters. They can have a variety of surfaces, including concrete, asphalt, gravel, wood chips or dirt. They often follow streams because of their linear orientation and the affordability of the associated floodplains (since their development value is very low). Within more urbanized areas, greenways often take the form of bike lanes or sidewalks, and they can connect more conventional greenways having a more natural context.

While no greenways currently exist or are planned within The District, the City's proposed Three Mile Creek Greenway will be located just west of The District and it will extend 6.5 miles. See page 32 of this plan for information on that planned greenway.

#### Proposed One Mile Creek Greenway

It is recommended that consideration be given to creating a segment of new greenway along One Mile Creek. It might be created as part of the development of this plan's proposed new park or as part of the forthcoming Branches development to the immediate west. Engineering would determine which side of the creek is best suited for the greenway, and asphalt is the most likely surface. The future redeveloped MLK Avenue's sidewalk and bike lane could serve as a link between this greenway and the planned Three Mile Creek Greenway. It is acknowledged that there is no logical end point or connection for this proposed greenway since the creek feeds into a swampy area.



# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

## WAYFINDING SYSTEM

### Current Citywide System

Wayfinding systems entail a network of directional signage to guide people, particularly visitors, to key destinations within an area. They typically feature a simple sign with the names of destinations and arrows pointing in their direction, and they are located at or near key intersections. The existing signage is relatively sparse with few signs having been installed.

### Proposed System for the District

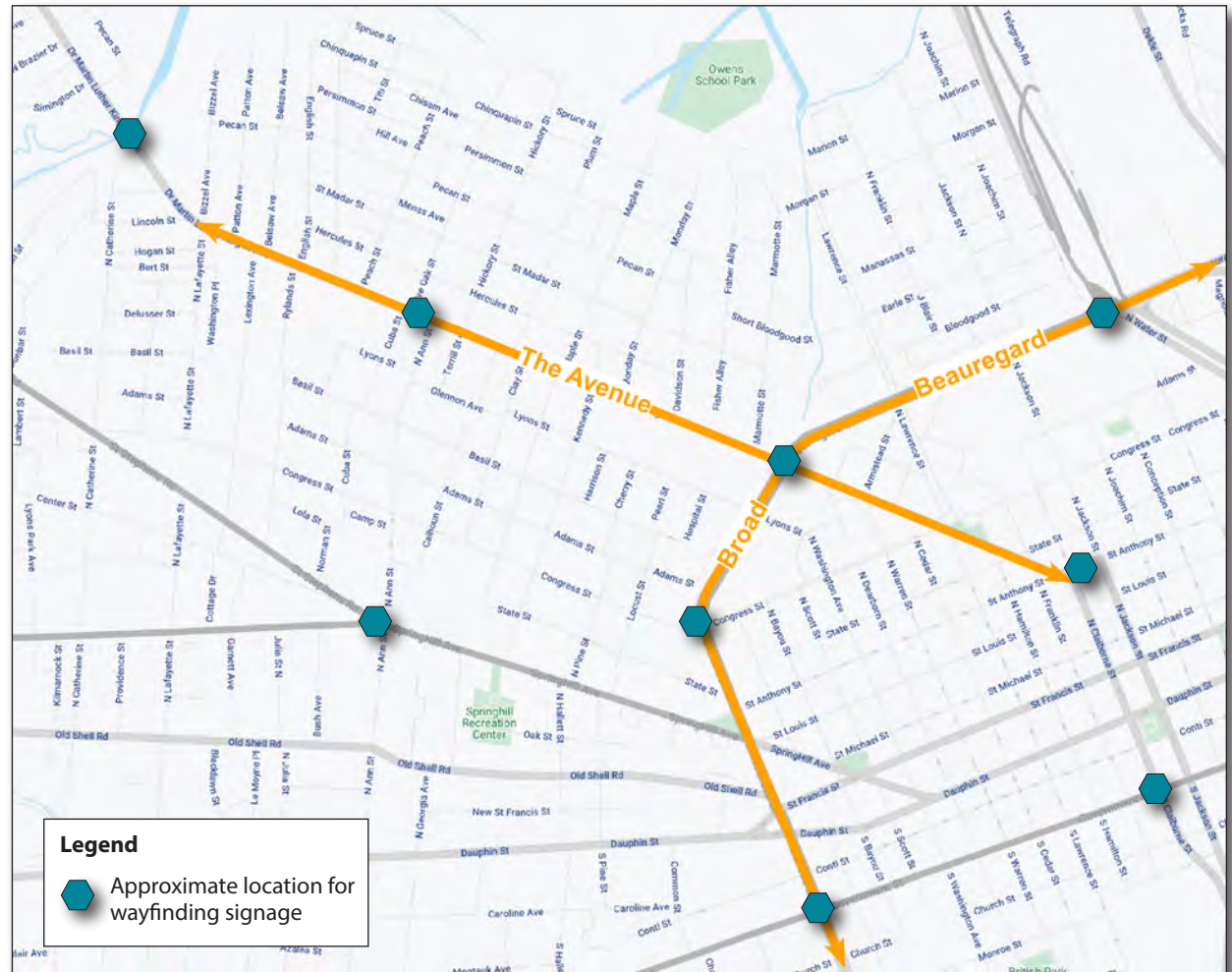
One alternative for The District's wayfinding system is to simply utilize the existing citywide system. However, because of its current limitations, it is recommended that the system for The District be unique.

#### Signage Design

It is recommended that a graphic designer be hired by the County to design the optimal signage, as the graphic at right is only a rough concept. The ultimate design should incorporate the color scheme and logo that is developed for The District. See pages 92-93 for the recommended logo.

#### Signage Locations

The map above at right shows potential locations for wayfinding signage. It is important to understand that the map



locations are very general and simply identify key intersections where signs should be provided. For any given intersection, as many as four separate signs might be needed so that people coming from all directions might see it. A detailed wayfinding location plan will be required subsequent to this plan to determine specific locations.

#### Needed Approvals

All wayfinding signage should be located within public right-of-ways (ROWS) and should avoid obscuring other existing signage. Any State-designated streets will require State DOT approval, and City-controlled streets will require City approval.



# C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

## PUBLIC SPACES & ART

### PUBLIC SPACES

#### Existing Public Spaces

Only one park has been identified in The District:

##### Martin Luther King Park

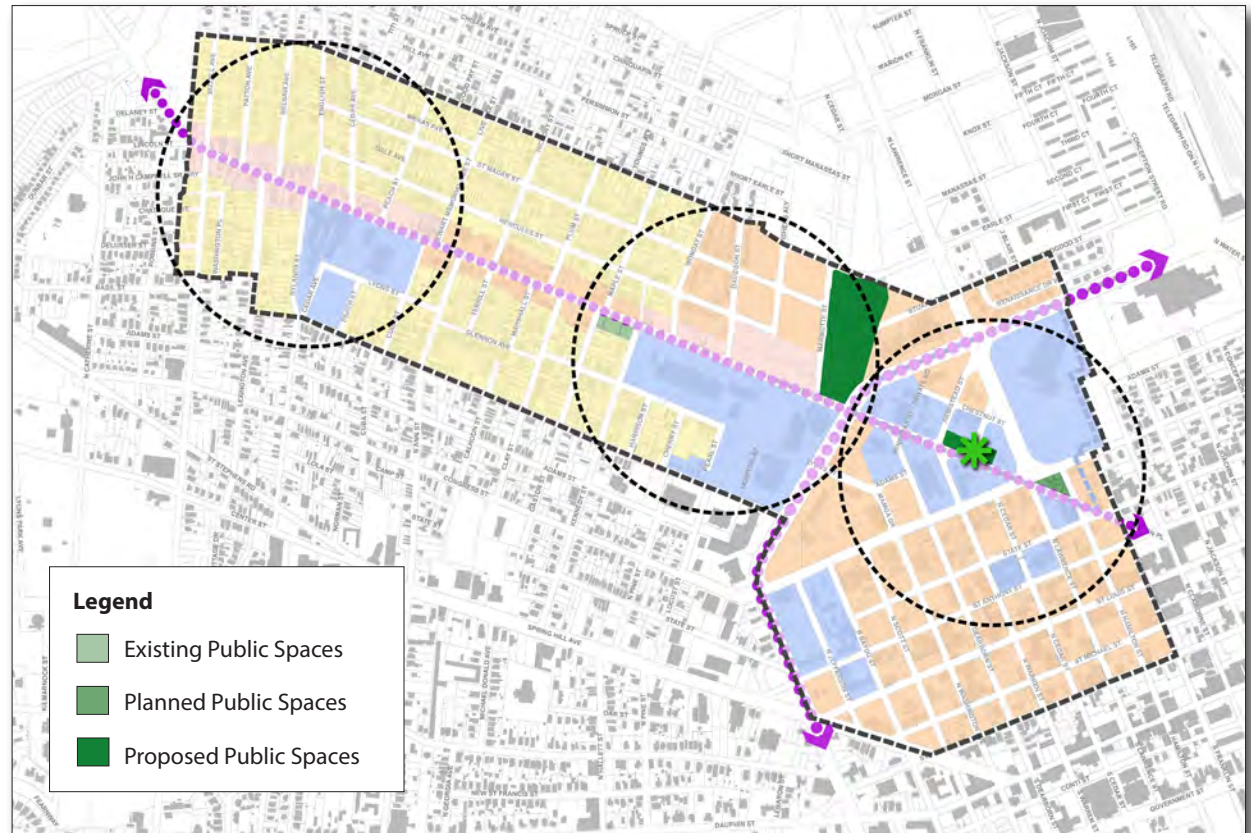
Located on the south side of MLK and straddling either side of Kennedy Street, the main existing features are a basketball court and a parking lot. *It is recommended that a small playground be considered for the undeveloped segment of the park adjacent to Florence Howard Elementary on the southeast corner of MLK Avenue and Kennedy Street.*

#### Planned Public Spaces

In addition to the planned Three Mile Creek Greenway and its associated parks, which are just west of The District and already described on page 32 of this plan, only one public space is planned (and currently under construction), as follows:

##### Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park

This new park in the Gateway Area was previously described on page 32 of this plan. Developed by the County and supported by the City, the groundbreaking occurred in July of 2023. A triangular pocket park, it is across MLK Avenue from the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Hall and named for the former ILA and Civil Rights leader - Isom Clemon. Once completed, the park will include a monument of Clemon, additional public art, landscaping and lawn areas, paved surfaces, seating, and a small playground. The adjacent ILA Hall will also be undergoing a rehabilitation to compliment the new park.



**Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park in Progress:** Above is the overall park, including a newly constructed house in the background. At right is the playground area with a colorful rubberized surface.





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### PUBLIC SPACES & ART (CONTINUED)

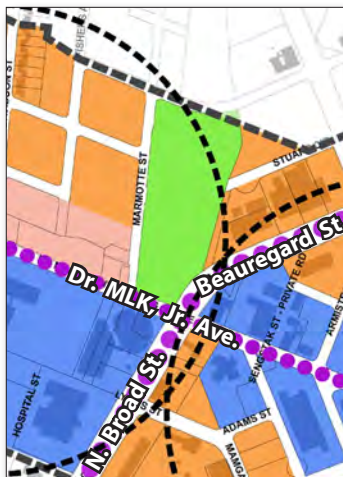
#### PUBLIC SPACES (continued)

##### Proposed Public Spaces

In addition to the one existing park and the one new park already planned and being developed, this plan for The District proposes two new public spaces, as follows:

##### Proposed One Mile Creek Park

This proposed new passive recreation park would be located on the northwest corner of MLK Avenue and Beauregard Street where a floodplain exists directly adjacent to the planned Branch Development discussed elsewhere in this plan (see location map below). As explained previously on page 63, this plan also proposes that a segment of greenway be developed along One Mile Creek. This new park would be intended for passive recreational uses and only modestly improved, as opposed to having active recreational uses. It might also serve as a highly-visible location for large-scale public art. See the following page for ideas related to public art for The District.



The proposed One Mile Creek Park is highlighted in green in this portion of the Framework Plan above.

##### Proposed Gateway Park

By far, the most significant proposed new park for The District is the one located in the Gateway Area, as illustrated in the Framework Plan at right. Adjacent to the proposed interpretive center, it would feature the following components:

- A large central lawn free of obstructions such as trees
- Peripheral deciduous trees to frame the space and provide shade and environmental benefits
- Strategically located paved surfaces for small plaza areas and pedestrian pathways.
- A stage anchoring the west end with associated concessions and restrooms. The restrooms might be open to the public on a regular basis if maintenance can be provided by either the interpretive center staff or the City.

A hallmark of some successful urban parks in recent years has been non-fixed seating (folding chairs), but the staffing needed to set them up each morning and store them each evening is likely not viable.



The proposed Gateway Park would be located on the north side of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and immediately west of the proposed interpretive center. A stage and commercial development would anchor the west end of the park.



This existing park and stage in Fairhope (AL) has some of the same characteristics as the proposed Gateway Park for The District. It features a relatively unobscured central lawn area with peripheral trees, a stage anchoring one end, and concessions space.



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### PUBLIC SPACES & ART (CONTINUED)

#### PUBLIC ART

As conveyed in the Background section of this plan regarding case study districts (see pages 38-41 and Appendix 3), public art has been used effectively in similar districts to add visual interest and to reinforce the themes being interpreted. *For the purposes of this plan, public art will include both sculpture and murals, even when murals are located on the walls of privately-owned buildings.*

#### Proposed Sculpture

Below are recommendations regarding sculpture locations, design, and implementation.

##### Sculpture Locations

In examining the full length of MLK Avenue, the best options for locating sculpture are within the Gateway Area. Because the segment of MLK within this area serves as a juncture between two differently-oriented street grids, a series of small triangular sites are created along the street's south side. Examples of such diagonally-oriented streets intersecting with MLK include Dearborn, Warren and Cedar Streets. The map at right highlights in purple the location of recommended sites for sculptures.

##### Design Themes & Character

In general, the themes and character of The District's sculpture should not be overly prescribed in order to better facilitate the artistic process. However, the following broad parameters might be considered:

- *Themes:* It is recommended that the themes for the sculpture be tied to the interpretive themes for

The District as described in this plan's Interpretation Strategy beginning on page 80. Those themes are associated with Mobile's Civil Rights movement and the area's African American cultural heritage.

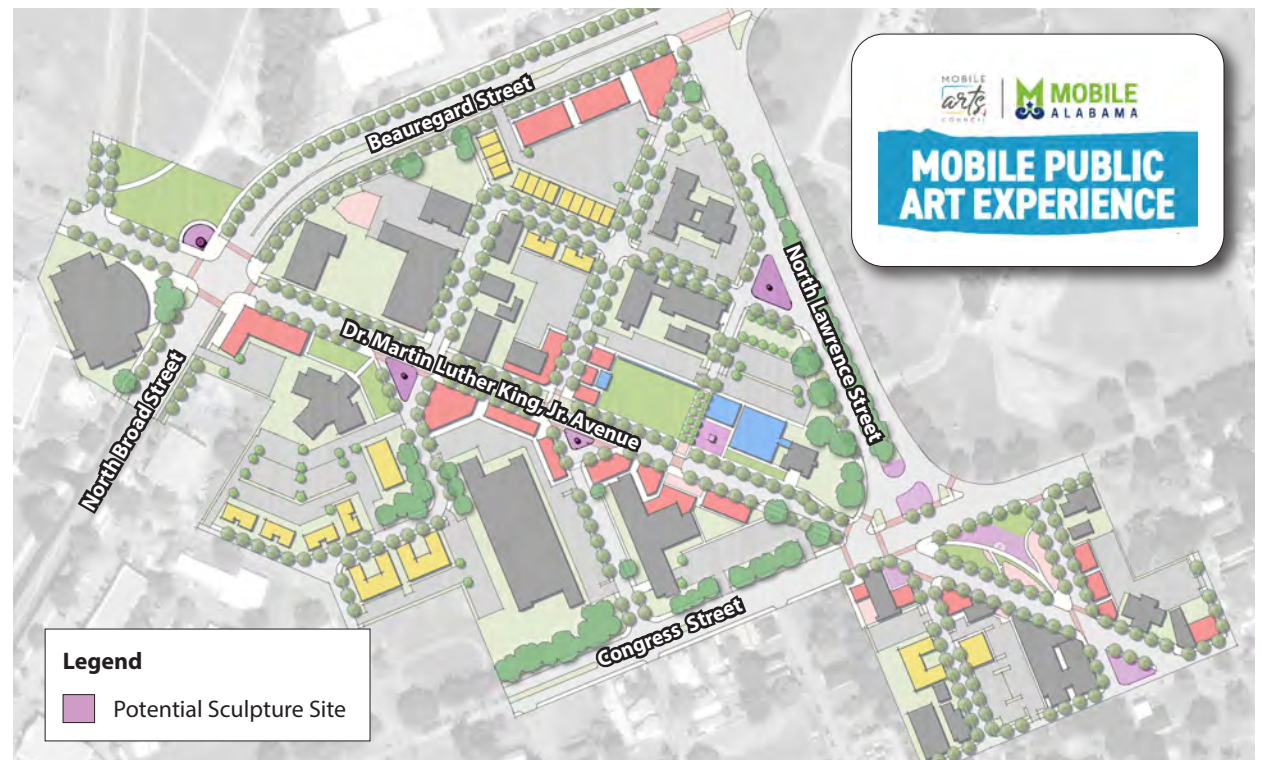
- *Character:* While the character of the sculpture can be determined on a case-by-case basis, it is recommended that it be, in general, big and bold. Smaller and highly-detailed sculpture can work within more constricted spaces where people can view it from a short distance.

See the following page for examples of sculpture from other districts similar to this one planned for

Mobile. They display a broad range of characteristics.

##### Implementation of a Sculpture Program

*It is recommended that The District's sculpture program be overseen by the Mobile Arts Council. They have experience running design competitions for public art, including their recent process for the art in the Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park. Another competition managed by the Council last year was the Chickasabogue Park Conference Center Window Design Contest, which included a \$5,000 prize for the winner. It is important that any design competitions have clear submission standards and selection criteria.*





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### PUBLIC SPACES & ART (CONTINUED)

#### PUBLIC ART (continued)

##### EXAMPLE SCULPTURE





## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### PUBLIC SPACES & ART (CONTINUED)

#### PUBLIC ART (continued)

##### Proposed Murals

As noted previously, most murals are located on privately-owned buildings, so they are a different type of “public art.” Since The District is not part of a designated local historic district and murals are not located within a public right-of-way, they are not subject to regulations. Regardless, guidance is warranted:

##### Mural Locations

The best location for murals on buildings tends to be the side facades. In fact, when murals are regulated as part of historic districts, they are typically not permitted on front facades, and even on side facades they may not be permitted when the mural would visually compete with architectural features such as doors, windows, and detailing. While murals in The District do not need to follow such rigid standards, some of these concepts deserve consideration.

##### Design Themes & Character

The themes and character of The District’s murals should at least somewhat mirror those discussed previously for sculptures, including:

- **Themes:** Themes should be tied to the interpretive themes as described elsewhere in this plan, with the overarching themes being Mobile’s Civil Rights movement and African American heritage.
- **Character:** The character of murals can range widely, but some of the most compelling and effective examples from other districts are those utilizing historic images (photos or sketches).

##### Implementation of a Mural Program

As with the sculpture program, it is recommended that The District’s mural program be supported by the Mobile Arts Council. As noted previously, since most murals will occur on private property, a formal program for

murals is not necessary. However, the Council may still be a good information and advisory resource, and they have been involved with murals. As an example, they spearheaded the mural recently created for the Taylor Park Community Center.



These two examples of murals represent those that currently exist in Mobile. The mural above is located in the district on MLK Avenue near the intersection of Monday Street. Applied to the side of a one-story commercial building, it conveys a range of Civil Rights Movement themes. It does not visually obscure any architectural features since it is on a blank wall. The mural at left is on a historic two-story commercial building located outside of The District on the corner of Government and South Jefferson Streets. Entitled “Big Figures,” it features multiple Civil Rights Movement heroes associated with Mobile’s prominent Figures family. Although the facade does feature architectural elements such as window and door openings, it does not significantly detract from the building’s architectural integrity.



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### PUBLIC SPACES & ART (CONTINUED)

#### PUBLIC ART (continued)

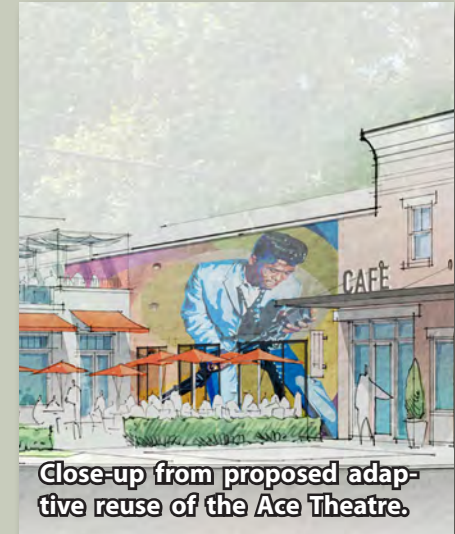
**Mobile Public Art Experience:** This partnership between the City of Mobile and the Mobile Arts Council's highlights public art via a website with an interactive map. New art in The District should be added to the website at: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/4f6b743fb7604608aa801d8f706d1922/>

#### EXAMPLE MURALS

At immediate right is a mural being painted on the facade of the Taylor Park Community Center in Mobile. It was orchestrated by the Mobile Arts Council, which could play a role in the implementation of this plan for The District. At far right is a close-up of the graphic on page 54 of this plan illustrating a potential rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the now-vacant Ace Theatre located at 501 Congress Street within The District's Gateway Area. The two sample murals on the bottom are from the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Both utilize historic images. See Appendix 3 for more information on this district and other similar districts across the country focused on the Civil Rights Movement and African American cultural heritage. The one at bottom at left is the recreation of a single historic photo, while the one at bottom right uses historic images, but the configuration and applied colors makes it feel more creative and contemporary.



Taylor Park Community Center mural being painted.



Close-up from proposed adaptive reuse of the Ace Theatre.



Mural on a building in Greenwood - Tulsa, OK.



Mural on a building in Greenwood - Tulsa, OK.



## C) PHYSICAL PLANNING STRATEGY

### INFRASTRUCTURE

As The District sees increased land development activity, infrastructure improvements will be needed, as explained below.

#### Redeveloping MLK Avenue

Technically referred to as Phase 4: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue from Broad Street to Butchers Lane, the City of Mobile currently has a “complete streets” initiative underway in the redevelopment of MLK Avenue. As explained previously in this plan, the project consists of a 1.2 mile segment of MLK Avenue and it includes street lane reconfiguration, bicycle lanes, pedestrian safety improvements, stormwater network improvements, street lights, and new water lines. It will traverse both the Bishop State Area and the Central High Area of The District. Following this project’s completion, it is recommended that future street and streetscape improvements in The District focus on the Gateway Area.

#### Stormwater Management

As design plans are developed for improvements in The District, either public streets or private development, stormwater management should be a priority. Future street improvements should address any deficiencies in the existing gutters, inlets, and storm pipe network. Private developments will be regulated by the City of Mobile’s Stormwater Management Ordinance. Also, one consideration might be an “adopt a storm drain” program, as some communities have. This type of program entails individuals and/or entities agreeing to periodically check the drains they have committed to and clear them of any debris.



*This organization, which is part of Hamline University in Saint Paul (MN), works with communities across the country to establish local programs to adopt storm drains. Their website is: <https://adopt-a-drain.org>*

#### Sanitary Sewers & Water

Improvements to The District’s existing sanitary sewer network may be required for increased demand resulting from future land development. The need for any such improvements should be addressed during the permitting process for such new developments. Similarly, water infrastructure needs, and any required improvements to the existing system, will be considered during the land development permitting process.

#### City’s Planned Project to Rebuild MLK Avenue

The proposed redesign of this segment of MLK Avenue adjacent to Florence Howard Elementary will include a “road diet” that goes from four existing driving lanes to just one in each direction, a designated bike lane on their side, improved sidewalks and traffic signals, new curbing and water lines, brick crosswalks, and human-scaled historic-looking street lights. It will be a major investment in infrastructure.



#### Power & Telecommunications

The District’s existing power and telecommunications infrastructure consists primarily of above-ground overhead lines and poles. As part of the design for street improvements, utility pole and line relocations may be required.

#### Street Lighting

New street lighting that is part of streetscape enhancements in The District will require new power supply connections. Those should be installed underground. Also, to accommodate special events, electrical outlets accessed by a protective cover plate might be located at the base of the light poles.



*The same street light design used historically Downtown is proposed for The District.*



# D) ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGY





## D) ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGY

### MARKETING STRATEGY

Strategies are recommended here for marketing and tourism development based on the market analysis and concepts developed in concert with the community's vision to celebrate and revitalize The District.

#### Key Elements

Marketing The District as a destination for local residents, as well as for tourism, will involve the integration of several key elements. First, as indicated throughout this plan, development of an interpretation center is recommended to anchor The District and create a “jumping off point” for visitors. The center would not only interpret the history of The District through collections, interpretive materials, oral history, interactive exhibits, audio-visual presentations, and other elements, but it would also provide a place to orient visitors and help initiate self-guided and guided tours of The District. The center could serve as the anchor of the mixed-use Gateway Area, coupled with visitor activities featuring 34,000 square feet of restaurants, retail, and entertainment. The concentration of activity at and around the center would also help create a critical mass to spin-off economic benefits to the surrounding community.

The District would also be pro-actively marketed in coordination and in affiliation with sites within The District, as well as with Africatown and other relevant heritage sites throughout Mobile County. The co-branding and affiliation with sites like Africatown will add marketing strength to the overall destination potential for The District. These affiliations will also help in creating itineraries and packages for tours – both

self and guided – of The District and of areas beyond. The interpretation center and sites would also be packaged with dining, lodging, and entertainment with discounted tickets and special prices for package participants. Key partners to market The District should include Visit Mobile and Alabama Tourism.

#### Target Markets

The market analysis for this plan identified and forecasted the various target markets for the interpretation center and the broader District. These target markets include *Mobile County residents*, some of whom experienced the history of The District firsthand and led efforts to enhance The District's economic health and civil rights. But a particularly important target identified by community members themselves is the youth who are unaware of The District's heritage and of the trials, tribulations, and accomplishments of their forebears. Community members are also likely to bring *their out-of-town visitors*, including family and friends, to engage in The District's offerings.

Another target market will be *heritage tourists* and other visitors with an interest in African American heritage, the Civil Rights movement, labor history, and general American history. In addition are other tourism markets that form part of the broader Mobile and Gulf Coast market base. These markets include *Mardi Gras visitors, cruise passengers, eco-tourists, and beach tourists*. Even a small share of the millions of beachgoers can amount to large numbers of visitors.

#### Business Development

Tourism can create opportunities for entrepreneurial development, employment, and community revi-

talization in The District. It will be important for the County and its partners to help ensure that those opportunities and benefits accrue, where possible, to residents of the community. Key strategies relating to business development are outlined below.



Several shops and restaurants targeting visitors have concentrated near the Greenwood Rising Historic Center in Tulsa. That interpretive center is their district's primary anchor that leverages economic spin-off for the area's businesses.

#### Target Business Mix

The commercial market analysis forecasted potential for business development generated by the tourists and destination visitors drawn by the interpretation center and marketing efforts that have been described. Redevelopment concepts for the Gateway Area with 34,000 square feet of commercial space and the Central High Area with 24,000 square feet of commercial space (including 14,000 square feet of existing businesses) would help capture some of the demand forecasted in the market study. The targeted business mix includes the following:

## D) ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGY

### MARKETING STRATEGY (CONTINUED)

- Destination restaurants
- Specialty food stores (e.g., bakery, ice cream, fish market)
- Live entertainment
- African-American cultural experiences
- Pharmacy, personal goods and general merchandise store honoring historic businesses
- Gifts, toys, apparel and accessories

Sales and square footage demand for each type of business is provided in Appendix 2.

#### Entrepreneurial Development

Creation of a *small business incubator* is recommended, perhaps located at the planned Branch Development or Central High School with training provided in partnership with Bishop State Community College. The incubator could focus on developing hospitality skills. While culinary arts training programs currently exist elsewhere in the community college system (at the Carver Campus), there may be opportunities for specialty culinary arts training and/or partnerships for training within the community. Graphics, communications, drafting and design, accounting, and management supervision training already present at the local campus could be integrated with retail and restaurant management, marketing, and other skills that could assist these businesses.

It is also recommended that existing local community business operators, investors, and entrepreneurs be upskilled and/or provided with opportunities to co-invest in emerging local business opportunities. Financing and technical assistance programs would

help in leveraging local community participation. Such programs could include equity, low-interest loans, or loan guarantees to support financing for businesses tied to participation in technical assistance programs. There is also a need for regulatory assistance to fast track investment and reduce bureaucratic “red tape.” Several existing property owners who are based in the community have expressed an interest in investing in expansion or in new ventures, but have encountered zoning, code, and other restrictions that may prevent their full participation.

#### Business Recruitment

Aside from prioritizing existing community investors, business people and workers, there is also a need to recruit businesses that would meet demand and serve the interests of The District in a way that helps capture a destination market. The County and/or

City could help with recruitment of locally-owned and unique (non-franchised) businesses that would fit the categories recommended based on this plan’s market findings. Recruitment could also benefit from programmatic incentives, especially real estate, to leverage investment. Perhaps the most powerful tool available would be the use of public (County, Schools, City) land, the cost of which could be written down as necessary to leverage investment. Similarly, public agencies could invite equity or non-equity participation in mixed-use projects in The District, such as an anchor mixed-use development that includes the interpretation center plus commercial tenants. In building the mixed-use concept and using rental or other incentives, public agencies can help to leverage appropriate private business investment, while also controlling the product and ensuring the highest quality presentation.

#### **Café Reconcile: New Orleans, LA**

In 1996, the pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish joined with community members to bring a safe space for school children and their families to the historic Central City neighborhood in New Orleans. Using funds from donors, the founders purchased a blighted, historic five-story building to serve as a restaurant and the center of Reconcile’s operations for the broader rehabilitation of the neighborhood. Today, their innovative Workforce Development Program is designed as a positive space that supports the career exploration and job readiness opportunities of young people 16-24 years old. Interns earn industry credentials, explore career and educational pathways that suit their individual abilities, and experience real-world, on the job training in their restaurant. The intern journey begins with paid 14-week training to address barriers to employment and/or educational opportunities, while gaining real-world experience with one-on-one coaching. To create a supportive transition into professional or educational pursuits, their staff stay connected with alumni through a one-year program ensuring that all of the same support and resources remain available.



Source: Café Reconcile Facebook page



## D) ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGY

### FINANCING & LEVERAGING

Several concepts for financing and leveraging of private business development have been introduced in the previous section. Here, some more detail is provided on the financing of an interpretation center and leveraging of private real estate development in The District.

#### Interpretation Center

The interpretive center could be funded through:

- Capital campaigns
- Local land and grants (County and/or City)
- Individual contributions
- Corporate sponsorships

A feasibility study, including a financial pro forma, can help suggest the requirements of both capital financing and operations.

#### Operations & Funding

Based on best practices, the operating model for the interpretation center might be to structure the center as a *private, nonprofit organization with its own board* to include members of the community, as well as those who can attract capital and ensure operational sustainability. Such an organization would have its own endowment fund that could help contribute to that financial sustainability over the long term. Mobile County and City would normally contribute operating funds, but might not have direct responsibility for center operations. Other grant support could be enabled through corporate, community, and private foundations, as well as through government and non-governmental sources, including the National

Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Alabama State Council on the Arts, Institute of Museum and Library Sciences, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and others. Memberships, admissions, and earned income should also contribute to the operating budget for the center. An equity partnership with private property owners and/or businesses in a mixed-use center might also provide opportunities for reducing overhead costs on an annual basis.

#### Private Property & Business Owners

There is a variety of mechanisms that could help support local businesses and also leverage new investment in the district.

#### Financing Programs

Financing programs for existing property and business owners include:

- No-interest and/or low-interest loans
- Façade and building rehabilitation grants
- Technical assistance

#### Business Incubator

A business incubator was recommended previously to leverage opportunities in hospitality, restaurants, retail, and other businesses that could benefit from heritage tourism. As noted above, there is the opportunity for use of public land and equity partnerships to leverage private investment as part of master-planned concepts such as a mixed-use development anchored by the interpretation center. Other potential locations include the planned Branch Development and Central High School. A local model incubator located just east of the district is the Innovation Portal. See information on that incubator at right.

#### Innovation Portal

Innovation Portal is a non-profit incubator focused on accelerating startup growth in the Gulf Coast region. The Portal Fund at Innovation Portal provides pre-seed investments to entrepreneurs in the early stage of developing high-growth companies in the South Alabama and Gulf Coast region. This fund supports these startup founders with seed capital and access to programming, milestone-based mentoring, a workspace, and a growth-focused community.

Located on the outside boundary edge of The District on the northwest corner of Franklin and St. Louis Streets, the Portal Fund provides investments of \$10,000 to \$50,000. Funding is provided in the form of a loan that can convert into equity at the time of a funding event. Since 2019, four ventures have received funding totaling \$135,000. The fund focuses on high-growth ventures located in, or willing to relocate to, the Gulf Coast Region.



Source: Birmingham Business Journal - Steve Goraum

## D) ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGY

### DISPLACEMENT PREVENTION

Gentrification represents one of the main concerns expressed by members of the community resulting from an increase in tourism and the revitalization of The District. Specifically, there is a fear of displacement due to rising housing costs, building rents, and taxes. But there is also an underlying concern that the creation of this District meant to memorialize and celebrate African American heritage and the community's struggle for civil rights will have the very opposite effect: one where more people who have not shared in that struggle will visit, live, and work in, and generally overwhelm and displace the existing residents. Change is inevitable, but every effort should be made to assist existing residents and businesses to maximize their equity and ensure that they benefit economically from those changes.

### Housing Rehabilitation, Access & Upgrading

Existing residents should be given every opportunity to access capital as necessary to enhance the value of their long-term investment. Potential tools include:

- *Zero-interest or low-interest loans and grants* should be directed to property owners in The District to help with housing rehabilitation and upgrading.
- *Financial training programs and technical assistance* can help people move up the economic ladder or access the benefits of homeownership.
- *Non-profits such as community development corporations (CDCs)* can be established to focus on housing rehabilitation and preservation in The District.
- *Matching funding programs* can be made available

or more accessible for rehabilitation of abandoned housing and for existing households to “move up” into those houses.

- *Loan guarantees and letter-of-credit programs* can help prospective homeowners in The District overcome a lack of clean credit or other financial access issues.
- *Training programs* can be created for local residents to participate in rehabilitation and construction as part of a pool of local entrepreneur contractors. Such training can be integrated into the entrepre-

neurial development and incubator programs discussed earlier.

### Community Land Trust

The establishment of a community land trust should also be considered for The District. Land trusts help existing residents retain and leverage their equity within the community through ground leases, equity pools, and other mechanisms. Such collaborative approaches can help reduce displacement by empowering existing property owners to use their real estate equity as leverage. See more below on CLTs.

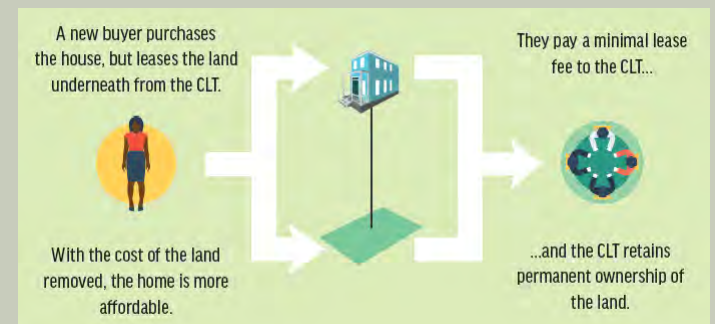
### COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS (CLTs)

The following is an excerpt from the April 11, 2023 edition of Nonprofit Quarterly:

***A community land trust is a non-profit means to own and steward land for long-term public benefit.***

*The community land trust was first used in the U.S. to protect rural lands for Black farmers in the late 1960s in Albany, Georgia. Today, it is typically used to preserve housing affordability for urban low-income residents and avoid displacement. Bernie Sanders, while mayor of Burlington, was a leading advocate of this strategy.*

*A community land trust preserves affordability through nonprofit land ownership in which residents have a direct say in governing. Typically, the family owning a home on trust land is entitled to a percentage of equity gain (often 25 percent), but the trust keeps the rest, ensuring housing affordability to the next family. Not only is this efficient, but the trust also can intervene in cases of default to forestall foreclosure; notably, land trust resident-owners had a foreclosure rate that was one-eighth the rate of “fee simple” (traditional) homeowners during the Great Recession.*



Source: Church Hill People's News - Richmond, VA



## D) ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGY

### DISPLACEMENT PREVENTION (CONTINUED)

#### Affordable Housing Development

In addition to protecting and upgrading existing housing assets, there is also the opportunity to prevent displacement by creating a larger supply of decent, safe, and affordable housing within the district. One planned project – *the Branch Development* – proposes to do just that by adding 350 affordable and mixed-income multi-family units, 100 student beds, and 30 new single-family homes to the existing housing mix in the community. Aside from this potential project, there are other opportunities to leverage affordable housing through the use of tools such as the following:

- *Project-based vouchers* and other existing financing mechanisms.
- *Fast-track permitting and compliance programs*, which can help reduce the up-front costs of developing new affordable and mixed-income housing, particularly when some of the regulatory road-blocks are cleared away through the master planning process.

Community development corporations (CDCs) and other non-profit housing developers can focus their resources and expertise on development of affordable infill housing throughout the neighborhood. Credit and homeownership training programs, along with deferred interest-free second mortgage programs, can ease existing residents in their transition to homeownership. As noted previously, loan guarantee letters of credit or employer guarantee programs can make the financing of affordable housing

much more accessible. Rent-to-own programs tied to self-sufficiency (including credit, financing, and homeowner training) can move existing renters into homeownership. Finally, city-wide or county-wide

housing trust funds can be used to help support non-profit affordable housing developers through loans, equity, and cash grants.



*This new infill housing in a New Orleans urban neighborhood has a scale, form and character compatible with the neighborhood.*





# E) POLICIES & PROGRAMS STRATEGY



## E) POLICIES & PROGRAMS STRATEGY

### POLICIES

#### Zoning

One of many methods used to implement community plans is to utilize zoning and development regulations. Those tools might be an option for The District. However, since such regulations for The District are adopted and enforced by the City of Mobile, *the City might need to first adopt this plan (or this section of the plan) as part of its formal policies.*

Pages 34-35 of this plan address The District's current

zoning, which includes three different residential districts and six mixed-use or commercial districts. Page 42 also features this plan's recommended Framework Plan. Its color-coded map (below) delineates Place Types, which are based upon land uses, density, development, form and character. They are aspirational as part of a plan, but existing conditions are factored into their designations. It is not a parcel-specific proposed land use map, but instead reflects proposed primary land uses. *It is recommended that the County work with the City to revise the district's zoning so that it is aligned with this plan's Framework Plan.*

#### Steps to Adopt New Zoning

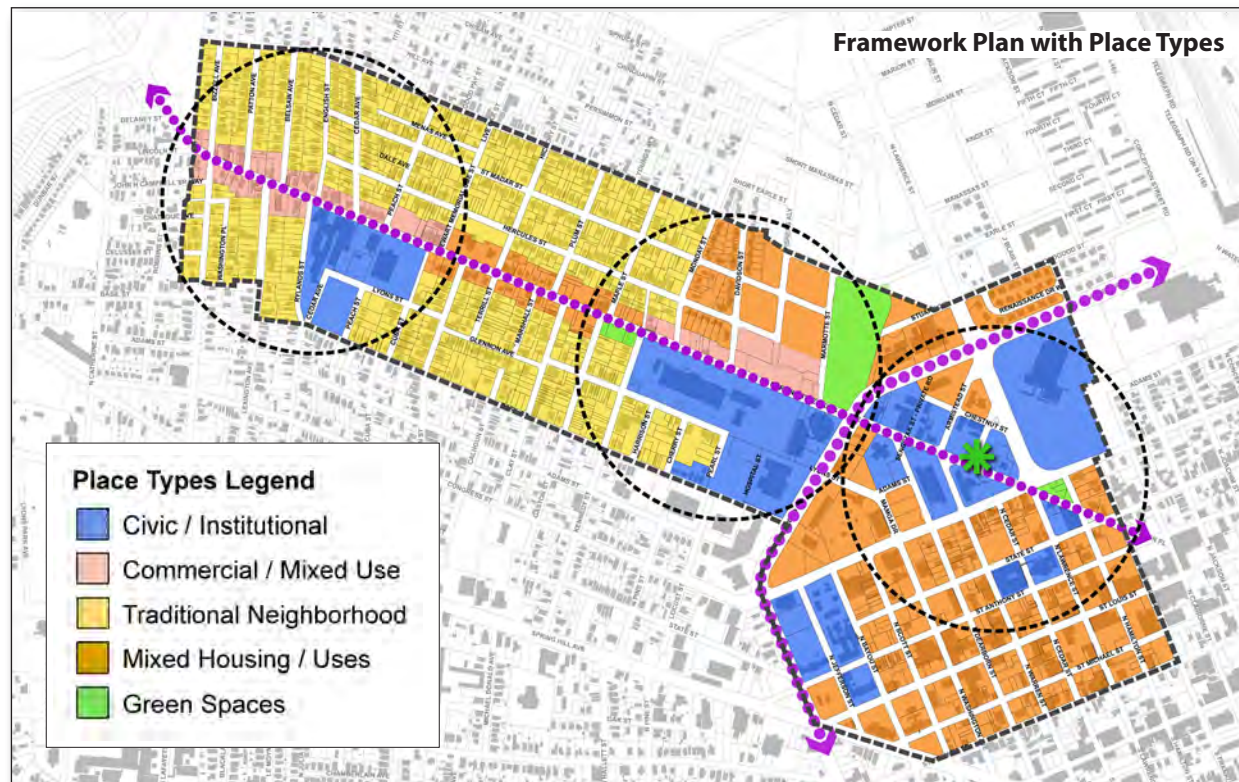
If the City were to be on board with this concept, implementing this plan's Framework Plan through revised zoning would require the following steps:

##### *Plan Approval by the City*

The City of Mobile tries to update its Future Land Use Map every five years, and the current map was updated in 2017. The City also occasionally prepares Small Area Plans, such as the recent Africatown Plan. In Mobile, such plans only require Planning Commission approval and not City Council approval. For the purposes of this plan for The District, only the Framework Plan section would need to be approved by the Planning Commission as a first step towards implementing it through the City's zoning. However, more detail would be needed for each proposed Place Type described in this plan with respect to development densities, building setbacks and heights, physical form and character (that step is beyond the scope of this planning project).

##### *Zoning Changes by the City*

Proposed new zoning in the City of Mobile must first go before the Planning Commission and then it requires City Council approval. Once new zoning is adopted in Mobile, it is only implemented by individual property owners when they request the new zoning for their properties. One potential option available for The District would be an overlay zone, such as the one applied to Africatown to implement that recent plan. In addition to addressing design issues, that overlay addresses several other issues, including permitted land uses and buffers between differing uses.



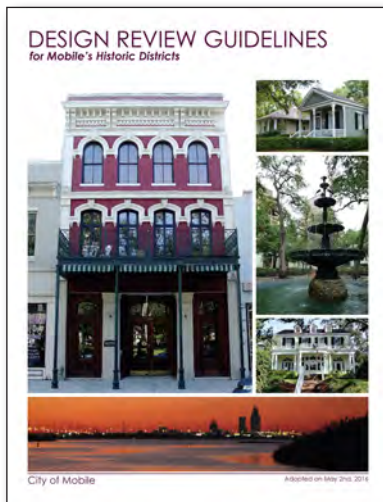
## E) POLICIES & PROGRAMS STRATEGY

### POLICIES (CONTINUED)

#### Design Guidelines

Mobile has seven locally-designated historic districts in which most exterior property alterations must be approved by the Historic Development Commission. None of those historic districts overlap the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage District ("The District"), although the DeTonti Square District abuts the most easterly end of The District. The City's current Design Review Guidelines were adopted in 2016.

Between The District's economic challenges and the loss of so many historic structures over time, it is not recommended that a local historic district be designated for The District. However, *it is recommended that the City's existing historic district Design Guidelines be promoted for voluntary use and perhaps tied to any future incentive programs.* In that scenario, following the Guidelines might be a condition for property owners securing building rehabilitation loans or grants. Also, it is noteworthy that the City is currently in the process of be updating those Guidelines.



Above at left is the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Hall on MLK Avenue in The District's Gateway Area, which is currently undergoing a physical rehabilitation. At right above is a row of one-story frame cottages built in 1872. Located on the southwest corner of Congress and Warren Streets, these structures have been beautifully rehabilitated. There are numerous other potential future rehab projects for historic buildings throughout The District. While not falling under the authority of the City's Historic Development Commission, both projects are consistent with the City's Design Review Guidelines. If promoted with property owners in The District, those guidelines could provide helpful information without being mandated.

***"Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact."***

- John Kenneth Galbraith - Economist, Ambassador, and Harvard Professor

***"The greenest building is the one that already exists."***

- Carl Elefante, FAIA - Architect

***"It's not good because it's old, it's old because it's good."***

- Unknown source



## E) POLICIES & PROGRAMS STRATEGY

### PROGRAMS

Some recommended programs have already been addressed because they are tied to issues previously discussed, but a new one is described here.

#### Programs Already Addressed

The following programs have already been recommended in the “Economic & Market-Based Strategy” plan section. See pages 72-76 for details.

##### Financing Programs

- Zero-Interest and/or Low-Interest Loans
- Building Rehab Grants
- Technical Assistance

##### Entrepreneur Incubator

This facility would help establish new businesses.

##### Housing Rehab & Accessibility Programs

- Low Interest Loans / Grants
- Financial Training Program
- Community Development Corporations
- Matching Programs
- Loan Guarantee “Letter of Credit” Programs
- Training Programs

##### Community Land Trust

This program would be a tool for more affordable housing and other types of development.

##### Affordable Housing Development

- Project-Based Vouchers
- Fast-Track Permitting & Compliance Programs
- Community Development Corporations
- Credit & Homeownership Training Programs

- Deferred Interest-Free Second-Mortgage Programs
- Guarantee Programs for Affordable Housing
- Rent-to-Own Self-Sufficiency Programs
- Housing Trust Fund

#### Community Garden Program

It is recommended that the idea of a community garden be explored to provide healthy and affordable food to area residents. Two key issues include:

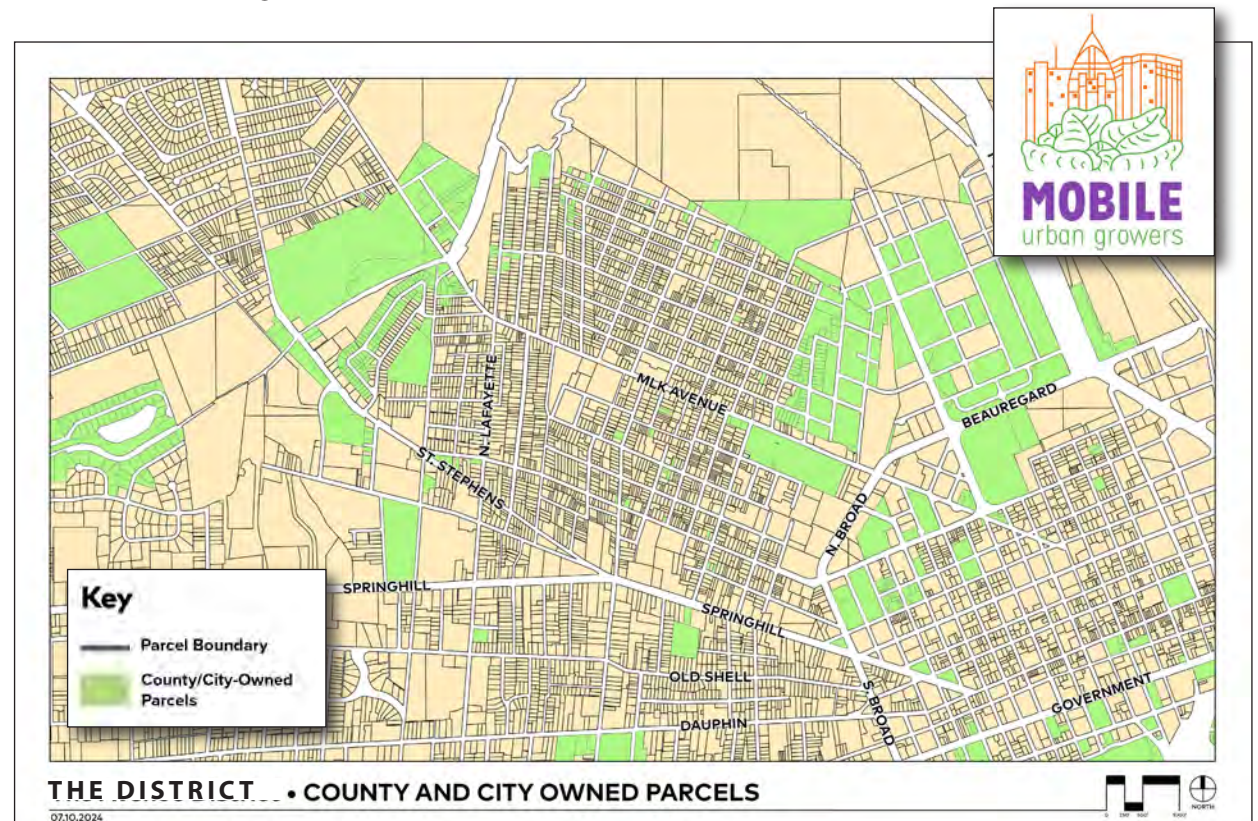
##### Garden Location

It is recommended that a vacant property owned by one of the two local governments be utilized for a

community garden. The map below highlights such parcels. The site ultimately selected should be centrally located to The District.

##### Garden Development & Management

Mobile Urban Growers, Inc. is a non-profit entity that helps citizens and groups establish and operate community gardens. They currently are associated with over 20 gardens in the community and seem to be well-positioned to assist with a garden for The District. For more information, their website is <https://www.mobileurbangrowers.org/>.



A photograph of a family of four (a mother, a father, and two young girls) visiting a museum exhibit. The exhibit features large historical photographs and posters, including one with the text "NOW OR NEVER" and another titled "DEMOCRATIC Catechism". The family is looking at the exhibit with interest. The text "F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY" is overlaid in the center of the image.

## F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY



# F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

## INTERPRETIVE THEMES & STORIES

Interpretive themes are the main concepts for telling the story of The Avenue's rich heritage. To be effective, the themes should be limited in number and they should convey the most important ideas. Developing the initial set of interpretive themes and stories was a step conducted relatively early in the planning process. That step was necessary to determine the boundaries of The District since the location of the most relevant historic sites was a key factor to determine the boundaries. Below are the four interpretive themes developed for The District:

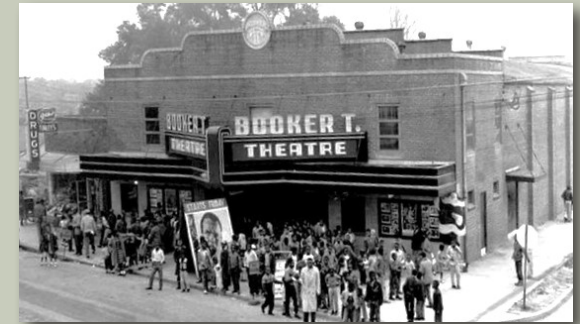
1. *The Avenue's history is rooted in a Civil War camp and has links to Africatown.*
2. *The Avenue was a vibrant "Main Street" for Mobile's African American community prior to desegregation.*
3. *The Avenue served as the backdrop for Mobile's unique boycott-driven approach to the Civil Rights movement.*
4. *Urban Renewal and other governmental programs combined to devastate The Avenue.*

These interpretive themes are chronologically sequenced to allow visitors to understand the full history of The District, including both positive and negative parts of the story. For more details on those themes and stories, see pages 13-17 of this plan.

This page and the following also features a set of four broad themes developed later as part of the market analysis for an interpretive center. These themes are

### The Avenue Business District

The Avenue was known as Mobile's black business district, a place where every type of good or service was available from majority black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. The 1951 Davis Avenue Quality of Housing Field Survey documented nearly 200 active businesses, not including the many churches, schools, and other institutions. This list included 66 grocery stores and markets, 64 restaurants and ice cream parlors, 41 barber and beauty shops, 14 shoeshine and repair shops, and 6 pharmacies. There were also theatres, mortuaries, doctor's offices, dental labs, and other economic activities. Based on this inventory, it is estimated that the community supported 200,000 to 250,000 square feet of retail/commercial space alone, not including professional offices and other economic activity.



The Booker T. Theatre circa 1960 Source: Cinema Treasures

### A Port City

Mobile is set apart from many other communities because of its role as a major port city. The port helped enable two distinct aspects of Mobile's way of life that set the community apart. First, ports constantly bring new people and goods to a city, which allows for more diverse experiences and creates a rich cultural melting pot. The American Mardi Gras originated in Mobile, blending creole, Spanish, and French cultures into a festival and a lifestyle. Port cities often have a more laissez-faire attitude about the aspects that make people different. While there may be rigid social customs, there is also an understanding that different people need to be able to get along. Another characteristic of port cities is how the port itself leverages local economic opportunities that may not be available in other regions. Thus, port cities tend to constantly attract people seeking economic opportunity and a better way of life.



Port of Mobile in 1905 Source: bygonely.com

# F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

## INTERPRETIVE THEMES & STORIES (CONTINUED)

compatible with, and supportive of, this plan's original set of themes, but they are more specific to the interpretive center. They address the following four topics:

- *The Avenue Business District*
- *A Port City*
- *The Labor Movement*
- *Integration, Urban Renewal & Unintended Consequences*

In summary, many aspects of Mobile's African American heritage and the Civil Rights Movement were similar to that of other communities in the South. However, there are other aspects that make the story for Mobile and The District more unique. For example:

- The Clotilda, the last known U.S. slave ship, made its illegal voyage in 1860 - 52 years after the international slave trade had been outlawed. Africatown is a legacy of that story.
- The Civil Rights Movement had a greater focus on boycotts to secure higher-level jobs for African Americans relative to the objectives and strategies of other communities.
- Tragically, the last lynching of an African American attributed to the Ku Klux Klan occurred in Mobile in the 1980s.

### The Labor Movement

In addition to the port's overall broad impact on the city, it is also a defining characteristic of Mobile's African American community, especially in terms of jobs and entrepreneurship. Many of Mobile's black port workers have belonged to unions, which have helped leverage economic opportunities and a living wage. In fact, the labor movement and the efforts to achieve economic empowerment played a relatively unique role in Mobile's Civil Rights struggle. The focus on entrepreneurship and on attaining good-paying jobs for African Americans is somewhat unique as a driving force in the local Civil Rights Movement. In other locations, the focus was more often on public accommodation (e.g., the Montgomery Bus Boycotts and the Sit-Ins in Nashville and Greensboro) or resulted from a violent struggle that attracted the world's attention (e.g., Birmingham).



*Mobile ship building company ferry with segregation signs - 1935.*  
Source: McCall Rare Book & Manuscript Library - Univ. of S. Alabama

### Integration, Urban Renewal & Unintended Consequences

Another defining characteristic of Mobile's Civil Rights struggle was the unintended consequences of integration and the federal Urban Renewal program. The impacts of government policies imposed from above have impacted negatively on The District, on Mobile, and on area residents. Examples include:

Central High School: The closure of a community asset and source of pride due to the integration policies that favored existing white schools.

The Avenue: The loss of a once vibrant and independent black business district due to urban renewal and the end of segregated accommodation.

Displacement: Displacement and the loss of a sense of place due, again, to urban renewal, new interstate highway infrastructure, and other programs that ripped apart communities.

Surviving & Thriving: There is also a very positive story repeated throughout the district of how Mobile's black community survived and thrived, despite the various challenges and roadblocks placed in its path.



# F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

## ON-GOING RESEARCH

While there is an existing body of research about the history and rich stories of The District, it will be worthwhile to continue research and the documentation of stories for subsequent interpretation.

### Oral History Program

It is recommended that a program be established for local students to conduct oral history interviews of elderly citizens to document life in The District in earlier eras before this important information is lost. As part of that, it should also document the area's Civil Rights history. There are at least two options for pursuing a project for local students to conduct oral history interviews. Both options, and perhaps more, should be explored.

#### Locally-Originated Program

This approach would not rely on outside organizations for implementation, although such organizations could serve as information sources. For example, the non-profit Oral History Association (OHA) could be an excellent resource. Established in 1966, the OHA engages with policy makers, educators, and others to help foster best practices and to encourage support for oral history and oral historians. With an international membership, OHA serves a diverse audience including teachers, students, community historians, archivists, librarians, and filmmakers. By utilizing the OHA's principles and information, participating students could gain valuable experience



in research, history, and documentation, while benefiting the district's interpretation. This approach could also be done with no significant costs.

#### StoryCorps

Another oral history option for the district is to begin a relationship with StoryCorps, a non-profit organization that assists groups with oral history projects. While their employees can actually conduct the interviews for a fee, a more cost-effective approach is to hire them to train local students to conduct and document oral histories. Their training services start at \$7,000, plus expenses.



*Two sisters interviewing their mother in Atlanta during a StoryCorps recording session.*

Source: Current - News for People in Public Media (Rob Hill)

### INTERVIEWING TIPS

Below is an abbreviated excerpt from the website of the non-profit Oral History Association:

1. The interview should be conducted, whenever possible, in a quiet location with minimal background noises and possible distractions, unless part of the oral history process includes gathering soundscapes or ambient sounds.
2. The interviewer should record a lead-in at the beginning of each session. It should consist of contextual information, such as:
  - a. names, or when appropriate, pseudonyms, of narrator and interviewer;
  - b. full date (day, month, year) of recording session;
  - c. location of the interview (being mindful to not list personal residence address, but rather generic "narrator's home"); and
  - d. proposed subject of the recording.
3. Both parties should agree in advance to the approximate length of each interview session. Given the unpredictability of the setting, however, the interviewer should be flexible and prepared for the session to be cut short, interrupted, or possibly to run long, if both parties agree.
4. Along with asking open-ended questions and actively listening to the answers, interviewers should ask follow-up questions, seeking additional clarification, elaboration, and reflection.
5. The interviewer should secure a signed legal release form ideally when the interview is completed. It is important to follow the guidelines of the partnering repository's policy on this, if relevant.

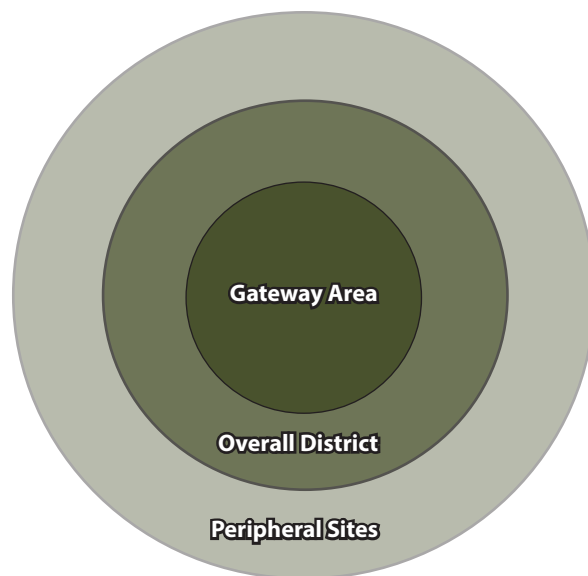
## F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

### THREE-TIERED GEOGRAPHIC APPROACH

It is proposed that a geographically-oriented approach be used for interpreting The District and beyond, as described below:

- *Gateway Area (dark green):* Example sites include the Historic Avenue Cultural Center, the ILA Hall, historic churches and mortuaries, and the proposed Interpretive Center.
- *Overall District (medium green):* Example sites include Central High School, the Dave Patton Home, White's Barbering College, and historic churches.
- *Peripheral Sites (light green):* Example sites include Africatown, the Hank Aaron Home, Michael Donald Avenue, and Oaklawn Cemetery.

Below is a graphic that conveys this concept.



Below is a map illustrating the proposed three-tiered geographic approach for interpreting The District. The most robust interpretation will occur in the Gateway Area anchoring the east end of The District. It is the area most proximate to the Downtown core, where many tourists frequent, and it will feature the proposed new interpretive center. Several important historic sites are also within comfortable walking distance, as conveyed by the dashed circles representing a quarter mile radius (an approximate five minute

walk from the center point). The map below also addresses sites located beyond The District. It is important to note that the peripheral sites below are not exhaustive since limited space on the map is available. However, see page 12 for a more comprehensive map showing numerous historic sites, both within The District and outside of it.





# F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

## INTERPRETIVE METHODS: INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Pages 43-44 and 74 of this plan feature recommendations for the development of an interpretive center to be located to the immediate west of the existing Historic Avenue Cultural Center. As detailed further in this plan's Appendix 2 report, the center's approximately 10,000 square feet of building space will be allocated roughly as follows:

- 7,500 square feet of exhibition space
- 2,500 square feet of event venue, gift shop, offices, and other support space

The existing interpretive panels in the Cultural Center (pictured at right) are relatively simple, but they are well-researched, thoughtfully prepared, attractive, and effective. Once the new interpretive center is developed, some or all of these exhibits could be moved to the interpretive center.

### Interpretation within the Interpretive Center

The future design of the interpretive center and its exhibits will be determined by a subsequent process to be led by experts at designing such facilities and creating interpretive experiences. In the meantime, however, the approaches taken by similar facilities during the past decade can be instructive for the effort in Mobile. Model facilities might include those in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Tulsa's Greenwood district. Some of the common features found in those facilities are described on the following page.

### Existing Exhibits in the Historic Avenue Cultural Center

*The Historic Avenue Cultural Center was originally constructed as the library for Mobile's African American community during the segregation era. The structure was renovated and building space was added to the rear a few years ago. It is now used for conducting research and holding meetings. These photos illustrate the various exhibits within the new rear portion of the building. They are all in the form of interpretive panels on walls.*



## F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

### INTERPRETIVE METHODS: INTERPRETIVE CENTER (CONTINUED)

#### Static Exhibits

These types of exhibits have no moving parts or animation. They often feature wall-mounted panels with text and graphics or cases displaying artifacts with interpretive labels. The three examples at right from Birmingham include: stacks of shirts to convey the ratio of white collar and blue collar workers, a sculpture of Rosa Parks, and segregated water fountains.

#### Static Exhibits



Birmingham Civil Rights Institute



Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History - Detroit, MI  
Source: Michigan Econ. Development Corp.

#### Animated Exhibits

The examples at right from the Greenwood Rising History Center include segments of film with audio and the use of holograms (far right). While too complex to explain here, holograms can create a ghost-like figure of a person who moves and interacts with interpretive center visitors. For Greenwood, holographic barbers in a re-created barbershop mimic cutting hair while a visitor sits in a barber chair as the holograms seen only in the mirror talk to each other.

#### Animated Exhibits



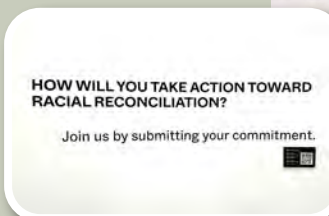
Greenwood Rising History Center - Tulsa, OK



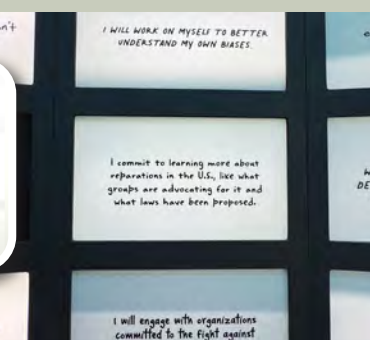
#### Interactive Exhibits

Interactive exhibits involve visitors in some active manner. Sometimes they involve prompting and/or answering questions related to the topic being interpreted by pushing a button. As with many of the other interpretation examples on this page, the example here is from the Greenwood Rising History Center. The exhibit asks visitors "How will you take action toward racial reconciliation?" Visitors can write their response onto a digital tablet and the answers appear on a curved wall (far right) in a grid of answers.

#### Interactive Exhibits



Greenwood Rising History Center - Tulsa, OK





# F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

## INTERPRETIVE METHODS: THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

Interpretation of The District's themes and stories can occur, and should occur, using a range of methods. The following four methods are proposed here:

- Wayside interpretive exhibits
- Building markers
- Wall-mounted panels
- Digital interpretation

Each category of interpretation is addressed here and on the following pages.

### Wayside Interpretive Exhibits

Wayside exhibits are a widely-used and effective means of interpreting historic sites and districts. It is recommended that they be used throughout The District and installed at strategic locations tied to historic sites. The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared a manual (see at right) for creating effective wayside exhibits. The key objectives of wayside exhibits within the district should include the following:

- Convey the interpretive themes and stories described on the previous pages 80-81, among others.
- Consider locating them at key historic sites such as those identified on the map on page 12.
- Follow NPS standards regarding design, fabrication, exhibit framework, and installation.
- Include a QR code tied to smartphone apps for digital interpretation (see page 88).

### What Makes a Good Wayside Opportunity? (Excerpt from NPS "Wayside Exhibits" guide)

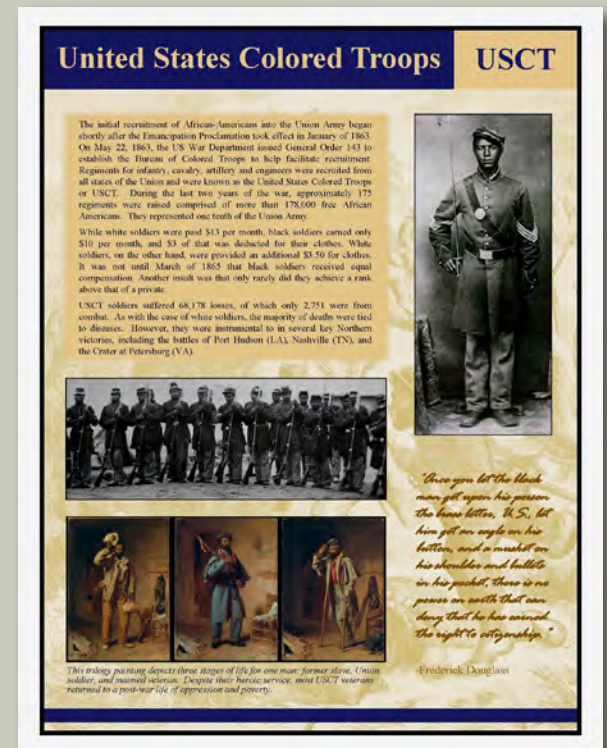
"Four key factors lead to successful wayside exhibits: a significant landscape feature with a well-documented story; at least one compelling, site-specific, reproducible-quality graphic that illuminates the story; a safe, accessible place for visitors; and routine maintenance of the site and the sign. There are many media options for reaching park visitors. If the right conditions do not exist for wayside exhibit experiences, consider another medium."



2009 NPS manual on wayside exhibit best practices



National Park Service (NPS) wayside exhibit at Monocacy National Battlefield in Frederick, MD



Wayside exhibit design for the Brice's Crossroads Battlefield

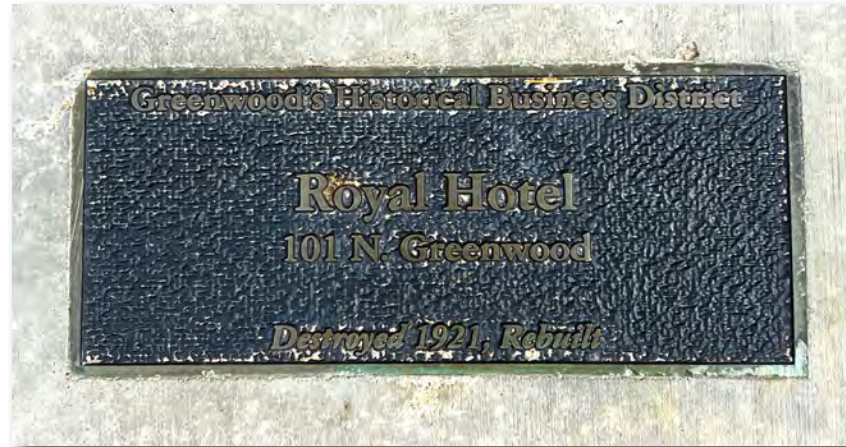


# F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

## INTERPRETIVE METHODS: THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT (CONTINUED)

### Building Markers

It is recommended that markers be placed in the sidewalks along MLK Ave., as was done in Greenwood (see at right). Most of the buildings that once existed during the The District's peak are now gone and warrant commemoration. For those sites with surviving graphics, such as historic photos, interpretive wayside exhibits might supplement the markers. This idea can be implemented most cost-efficiently when the street is redeveloped, as planned by the City (see page 33).



This is one of many metal plaques installed flush in the sidewalks within the Greenwood District in Tulsa, OK. They indicate the location and name of a business that was destroyed by the 1921 massacre, as well as whether or not the structure was rebuilt. In this case, the Royal Hotel was indeed rebuilt.

### Wall-Mounted Panels

Interpretive panels mounted on building walls can achieve both interpretive objectives and enhance the appearance of blank walls. When mounted on historic buildings, it is important that:

- Panels should be limited to only blank walls so they do not obscure or visually compete with architectural features such as doors, windows, and detailing.
- Panels should be primarily two-dimensional without projecting beyond the facade surface more than an inch or so.
- Panels should be installed in a manner that does not damage the building.
- Panels should be well-maintained, including removing any graffiti.



Above is a series of interpretive panels mounted on the blank side wall of the building adjacent to the former Greyhound station in Downtown Anniston, AL. This site was associated with attacks on the Freedom Riders by a racist mob in 1961. At right is a wall-mounted panel listing businesses destroyed during the Greenwood massacre in 1921.





## F) INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

### INTERPRETIVE METHODS: THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT (CONTINUED)

#### Digital Interpretation

As time goes on, digital tools for interpretation will become more and more prevalent and important. Even if it is a long-term project, digital interpretation should be part of the approach for The District.

#### Website-Based Interpretation

This section on digital interpretation assumes that any app (application)-based interpretation accessed on a smartphone can also be accessed via a website that is managed by the entity (or entities) that are responsible for promoting The District. Therefore, the topic of digital interpretation will focus on app-based systems, as described below.

#### App-Based Interpretation

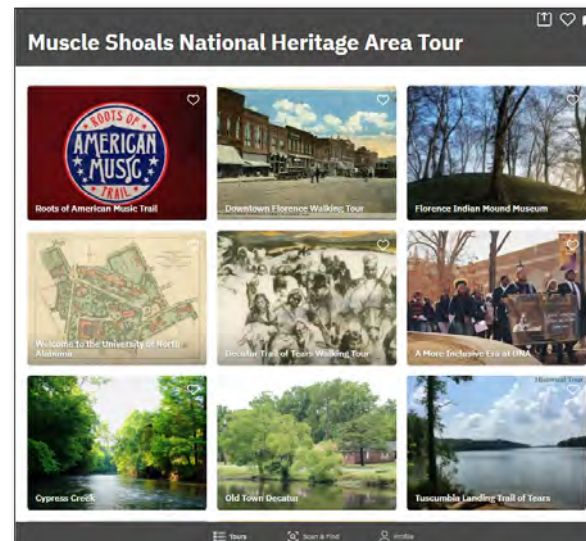
The following recommendations are offered for digital interpretation of The District via smartphone apps:

- *Develop a smartphone app that accommodates self-guided tours of The District.* There are many existing such apps that already exist in other places and can be used as models, such as the app for the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area in northwest Alabama. Multiple theme-based tours should be developed based upon the specific themes proposed in this plan. These app-based tours are typically tied to Geographic Positioning Systems (GPS) and feature audio and video interpretation. It is recognized that creating an app can be relatively costly, but the County has a substantial amount of funding earmarked to implement elements of this plan.

- *Utilize QR codes as one means for accessing digital interpretation.* As already suggested on page 86 regarding interpretive wayside exhibits, stickers with QR codes can be placed on wayside exhibits.



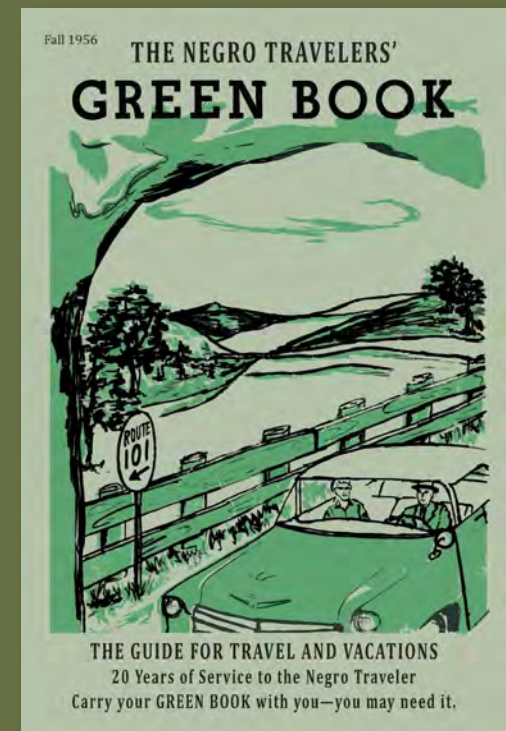
- *Explore the use of augmented reality (AR) as another long-term low-priority goal should funding become available.* In particular, AR can be a powerful tool for attracting a hard to reach young audience. One model for AR is the American Battlefield Trust's use of it for battlefields in which a smartphone can capture the actual landscape in front of the viewer and then animate it with soldiers fighting a battle. To see this app, go to: <https://www.battlefields.org/visit/mobile-apps/gettysburg-battle-app>



To access the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area app, go to: <https://msnha.stqry.app/1>

#### THE GREEN BOOK

An annual guidebook for African-American travelers from 1936 to 1967, the Green Book became "the bible of black travel" during the Jim Crow era, when open (and often legal) discrimination was widespread. The guide identified services and places relatively friendly to African-Americans so they could find lodging, businesses, and gas stations. Although no specific ideas can be offered yet, perhaps the theme of the Green Book can be used as part of self-guided tours of The District.



The logo is a circular seal. The outer ring contains the text "MOBILE COUNTY" at the top and "CIVIL RIGHTS & CULTURAL HERITAGE" at the bottom. The center of the seal features a stylized, symmetrical design that resembles a globe or a shield with curved lines.

## **G) COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING STRATEGY**



# G) COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING STRATEGY

## OBJECTIVES, AUDIENCES & KEY MESSAGES

### Communications Summary

To successfully announce The District and communicate with stakeholders on a consistent basis, we recommend a multi-phased launch approach with three distinct phases:

- 1) Inform
- 2) Activate
- 3) Empower

Each launch phase will include timely announcements and awareness initiatives supplemented with ongoing communications tactics, including strategic messaging, media relations, community engagement, digital content, and brand rollout. These will be implemented by Mobile County's communications and public affairs staff. Communications goals and key messages will fall under three central themes:

- 1) Honor
- 2) Protect
- 3) Renew

These core themes will serve as the backbone of communications efforts, while blending the past, present, and future into The District's communications strategy.

### Communications Goals

Below is an elaboration on the three communications goals listed above:

- Honor Mobile's rich civil rights and cultural heritage legacy, and the firsthand memories of residents.

- Protect and preserve the historical nature of The District and its stories through authentic communications and storytelling efforts to local, regional and national audiences.
- Renew confidence in The District's potential and spur economic investment by shifting local perception of The District as a place not only with a vibrant past, but also a bright future.

### Target Stakeholders

The primary local stakeholders to be targeted for support and involvement with The District include:

- District Residents (current and former)
- Young Professionals
- Clergy/Faith Community
- Community/Civic Groups
- Schools/Education Institutions
- Business Leaders
- Tourism Officials
- Public Officials



*Many of the targeted stakeholders are people who have been involved with the creation of this plan.*

### Key Messages

The key messages as part of this Communications Strategy should not to be confused with the interpretive themes that are described on pages 80-81 of this plan's Interpretive Strategy. Instead, these are the messages to be conveyed for the purposes of marketing The District, as follows:

#### Message Theme #1: HONOR

- *Goal:* Educate and inform residents/visitors
- *Tone:* Credible, Informative, Transparent
- *Message:* The District served as the backdrop to Mobile's unique boycott-driven, business-first approach to the Civil Rights Movement.

#### Message Theme #2: PROTECT

- *Goal:* Gain confidence and buy-in among residents and stakeholders
- *Tone:* Confident, Reassuring, Trusted
- *Message:* The District will encourage revitalization without gentrification – ensuring the rich culture, integrity and history of The District is protected during its evolution.

#### Message Theme #3: RENEW

- *Goal:* Inspire and encourage confidence and investment
- *Tone:* Motivational, Uplifting, Forward-Thinking
- *Message:* The District is not only a piece of nostalgic history for Mobile's Black community, but will once again become a thriving district known for education, entrepreneurship, community and entertainment, as it once was.

# G) COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING STRATEGY

## MARKETING STRATEGIES & TACTICS

### District Promotional Launch:

#### Overview & Timeline

It is recommended that The District's launch occur slowly and intentionally over the next few years to coincide with timeline of the ARPA funding period, while capitalizing on tangible milestones and ongoing storytelling opportunities when civil rights and cultural heritage discussions are timely. Recommended launch milestones include the following:

#### Launch Phase I: "INFORM" (Fall 2024-2025)

Host a District kickoff event and ribbon cutting/community celebration at Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park, the Patton House, or the Historic Avenue Cultural Center with event themes aligned with district brand/history (education, entrepreneurship, entertainment, community, faith). Consider hosting the kickoff event on the Friday/Saturday before Thanksgiving week to align with Central High School's alumni reunion weekend. The event could be a two-part gathering with a County-led ribbon cutting ceremony in the morning in line with traditional County project openings, with the second part of the event taking place in a more social setting to engage any visiting the Central High School alumni.

#### Launch Phase II: "ACTIVATE" (Fall 2025-2026)

Consider hosting an annual "Activate The District" multi-day series of community activations around The District in 2025 and 2026. Consider planning this to coincide with important milestones aligned with Black holidays, civil rights milestones, and/or business-focused awareness initiatives. Examples

include the following:

- MLK Day (Jan. 15)
- Black History Month (February)
- MLK Assassination (April 4)
- Earth Month (April)
- National Small Business Month (May)
- Juneteenth (June 19)
- National Minority Mental Health Month (July)
- Black Business Month (August)
- Booker T. Washington Day (Nov. 14)
- Small Business Saturday (Thanksgiving weekend)
- Other important local civil rights milestones (Crawford, Figures, etc.) or relevant business/community milestones.

#### Launch Phase III: "EMPOWER" (2027-Beyond)

Host and launch an event formalizing a District Commission outlining priorities moving forward once the project is out of the County's hands in ways that locals can continue to engage and support the Commission, Young Professional's Task Force, and other groups that could be play a visible role in communications and stakeholder engagement.

#### **Launch Phase I Strategies & Tactics – "Inform"**

Below are key communications strategies with recommended short-term tactics for Launch Phase I. Appendix 4 of this plan features a multi-page table with short, medium and long-term communications recommendations outlined in the grid-style communications plan for each of the three launch phases. The tactics are designed intentionally to align with the current roles and skillset of Mobile County's public affairs staff.

#### Share Mobile's Untold Civil Rights Story

Highlight how Mobile's Civil Rights history is unique and largely untold compared to its Alabama counterparts, such as Birmingham and Montgomery. Recommended tactics include:

- *Media:* Launch a media op-ed campaign educating Mobile residents, Black and white, on Mobile's unique approach to the movement with opinion pieces from a mix of influential voices.
- *Community:* Schedule a series of town hall style events and secure a list of speaking engagements at local churches/clubs for Commissioner Ludgood and other visible partners to speak in/outside of The District to educate them on the vision and to gain continued buy-in.
- *Digital:* Develop and execute a social media series spotlighting the everyday heroes of The District to be shared both on Mobile County and local partner platforms.

#### Engage and Cultivate the Next Generation

Build relationships with community organizations to shift community perceptions of The District, while connecting young and old people to its stories and significance. Recommended tactics include:

- *Community:* Create a Young Professional (YP) Task Force with a core group of students and young professionals who will be the visible "NextGen" leaders for The District.
- *Media:* Pitch a feature story/announcement about the YP Task Force to local media to position them as the next generation who is the driving force behind The District.



# G) COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING STRATEGY

## MARKETING STRATEGIES & TACTICS

(CONTINUED)

- **Digital:** Develop and execute a social media campaign or video series interviewing Mobile's YP community, who will be instrumental to the future success of The District.
- **Branding:** Partner with the Mobile County Public School System (MCPSS) to work with K-12 students on a variety of engagement opportunities based on MCPSS goals and priorities. One idea could be a student art contest at Florence Howard Elementary creating artwork depicting The Avenue's nostalgic past and The District's bright future.

### Build Connections to Heritage Tourism

Promote and connect heritage tourism opportunities with The District to Africatown and the Alabama/U.S. Civil Rights Trail, along other statewide/regional tourism destinations. These connections should be built locally, regionally, and nationally. Recommended tactics include:

- **Messaging:** Assemble a roster of local storytellers, young and old, to become trained ambassadors to help educate residents and visitors about the history of The District.
- **Community:** Facilitate an Alabama Civil Rights tourism-focused panel discussion with statewide leaders during an important milestone (ex: Black History Month, National Travel and Tourism Week, etc.) discussing how each key city/region in the state has its own unique Civil Rights history.
- **Media:** Partner with Visit Mobile and/or Alabama

Tourism on a regional or national media campaign highlighting Alabama's Civil Rights heritage and how Mobile's unique Civil Rights history is largely untold (potentially during Black History Month or Black Business Month).

### Bring The District's Core Themes to Life

Reframe how locals view The District by highlighting important themes and bridging the past, present and future through messaging and community engagement efforts. Recommended tactics include:

- **Branding (Education):** Develop school launch activations with District-branded swag, coloring books, guest speakers, and/or District "show and tell", and gifts for students representing The District's key themes.
- **Community (Entrepreneurship):** Host a networking night at Innovation Portal celebrating The District's legacy and spirit of entrepreneurship, distribute District-branded merchandise, etc.
- **Community (Faith):** Develop nostalgic branded ma-

terials of The District to connect with older generations of churchgoers along the Avenue.

- **Events (Entertainment):** Host a live musical performance featuring local Black musicians at Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park introducing The District as a cultural hub.

### Mobile County Communications Staff Resources for Implementation

- Director of Public Affairs & Community Services (Media/PR Lead)
- Deputy Director of Public Affairs & Community Service (Digital Lead)
- Public Affairs Manager (Community Engagement Lead)
- Videographer - Contractor or in-house (TBD)
- Graphic designer – Contractor or in-house (TBD)



Tulsa's Greenwood District has used special events to help elevate the image and profile of that area. Examples include the Black Wall Street Rally & Festival (left), a motor cycle oriented event, and the annual Juneteenth Celebration (right).

Graphic Sources:  
Left - Black Wall Street Rally  
Right - Travel Oklahoma



## G) COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING STRATEGY

### DISTRICT BRAND

#### What is a Brand Identity?

A brand's identity is the unique DNA that defines its individuality and helps to create a deeper connection with the audience, just like the unique characteristics of people. A brand's identity is not just about the visuals, it is about the aesthetic power it evokes when you engage with it. Therefore, in order to be successful, a strong brand requires meticulous planning, understanding of the core customers, and flawless execution. More importantly, the brand must have a strong strategic meaning in order to survive. This includes its character, core values, and perception.

#### Criteria for the New Brand

The following criteria were considered in creating The District's brand:

- *Visibility:* Does it stand out? Is it memorable?
- *Application:* Will it reproduce well in various applications?
- *Simplicity:* Is the symbolism easy to identify?
- *Connection:* Will visuals and messages connect with the target audience?
- *Retention:* Is it easy to read and understand?
- *Color:* Is there an applicable use of color/meaning?
- *Descriptive:* Does the symbolism accurately reveal the core values and mission?
- *Timeless:* What is the life potential of the brand?
- *Equity:* Does it reflect the age, use, and recognition of the current mark?
- *Typography:* Does it have uniqueness, consistency and readability?

#### Name: "The District"

"The District" is an approachable shortening of the area's official name - Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage District. The District transcends geography to celebrate the collective past - a cohesive area rich with themes, stories, and significant sites that deserve to be preserved, enhanced, and cherished. It is a vibrant tapestry of history, resilience, and community spirit.

#### Logo

The District celebrates and promotes the rich history and vibrant future of the community. The logo features a road leading toward a rising sun, perfectly encapsulating the dual focus. The road symbolizes the journey toward progress and a brighter future, while the sun's rays represent the District's core pillars:

- Arts & Entertainment
- Education
- Entrepreneurship
- Faith & Spirituality

#### Logo & Examples of Its Potential Use





# G) COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING STRATEGY

## DISTRICT BRAND (CONTINUED)

### Uses for the District's Logo

The logo created for The Avenue District can be utilized in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Wayside exhibits
- Wayfinding signage
- Digital interpretation
- Marketing and promotion
- Street light banners
- Key street intersection

See  
Appendix 4  
for this plan's  
Brand  
Guidelines  
Book.

Some examples of concepts from the marketing and promotion category are illustrated on the previous page. Regarding the latter two examples, associated graphics from districts in other communities are provide at right.

### Examples of Other Districts



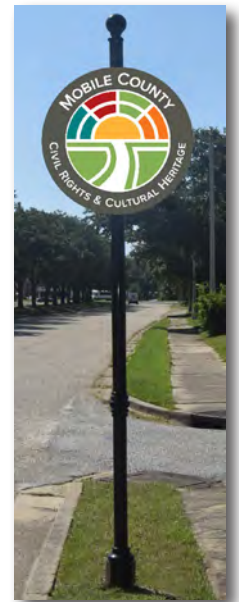
*This rendering prepared for Downtown Topeka, KS illustrates how a key intersection by the State Capitol could be animated with a large State seal. At right is a photo of the intersection of MLK Avenue and N. Broad Street in the District, which could have a like treatment.*

*This banner is mounted onto a pedestrian-scaled street light in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District. It reinforces the very deliberate branding effort for the district.*



Rendering Source: The Walker Collaborative

### Examples of the Logos Use for Themes and Streetscapes







## H) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



## H) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### PRIORITIES

Plans such as this are typically implemented incrementally over time. Anytime a plan with this many recommendations is prepared, it is important to understand that some recommendations are more critical than others. This fact is particularly significant in light of the limited upfront funding for plan implementation. The implementation of this plan will require ongoing collaboration and coordination to accomplish the multiple priorities identified through the planning process. Given the critical need for ongoing, long-term collaborative commitment, significant investments needed, and the desire to leverage early implementation and ongoing investments to create momentum, a two-tiered approach is proposed. Implementation priorities have been split into two groups - Tier One and Tier Two priorities. Below are the Tier One priorities, while the Tier Two priorities can be found on pages 97-98 in the form of a matrix.

#### Tier One Priorities

**Priority 1:** Formally establish a new entity charged with convening an Implementation Task Force to develop a multi-jurisdictional strategy framework that includes the responsible parties and a more detailed timeframe.

*Responsible Party:* Mobile County and City of Mobile

*Time-Frame:* Near Term (Year 1)

**Priority 2:** Develop physical elements of a Civil Rights Trail that includes major cultural and historical attrac-

tions such as the Patton House and the Crawford Law Firm Office, and the associated branding/marketing-communication tools.

*Responsible Party:* Mobile County

*Time-Frame:* Near Term (Year 1)

**Priority 3:** Implement the Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue Complete Streets Project.

*Responsible Party:* City Of Mobile

*Time-Frame:* Mid Term (Years 2-3)

### SEQUENCING & RESPONSIBILITIES

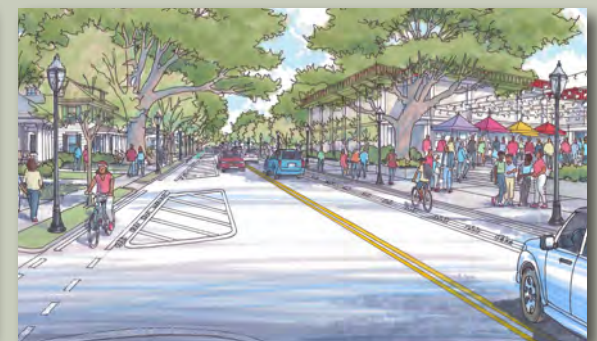
#### Implementation Sequencing

Some plan recommendations will need to occur before others, although the sequencing of many will be less significant. The Tier Two Implementation Matrix on pages 97-98 indicates the suggested time-frame for each key recommendation. Implementation of

this plan's marketing concepts are one example of the importance of sequencing. Since there is only one opportunity to make a first impression, it will be helpful to hold off on aggressively marketing The District until an initial product improvement phase can occur to avoid underwhelming visitors. Such improvements will primarily feature physical improvements related to streets, buildings, and public spaces.

#### Implementation Responsibilities

Implementing this plan successfully will require Mobile County, the City of Mobile, and other established entities to commit to a "team sport" approach with multiple players. The Tier Two Priorities Implementation Matrix will serve as a blueprint for the newly created special purpose district and Implementation Task Force. Once established, it should be charged with developing a more detailed, multi-jurisdictional strategy framework that includes identifying the responsible parties and specific timeframe for each priority included in the matrix. The Task Force may also identify new priorities as coordination advances.



*An important facet of plan implementation will be to keep the vision for the future at the forefront for inspiration.*

## H) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### POTENTIAL COSTS & FUNDING SOURCES

#### POTENTIAL COSTS

Some of the ideas in this plan are already in the works and have a funding source, such as Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park, the ILA Hall rehabilitation, and the redevelopment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue west of Broad Street. Also, until detailed design and engineering can occur for the physical improvements, only *extremely general cost estimations* can be offered, as follows:

#### **MLK Ave. Redevelopment: East Leg - \$2,630,000**

- *Comparable Costs:* The west leg being done by the City with federal funding is \$9 million, but with a reduction to 75% for a simpler design and no new traffic signals, a cost of \$1,061 per foot is used.
- *Total estimate for Gateway Segment:* \$2,630,000

#### **Interpretive Center - \$5,620,600**

- *Feasibility Study & Plans:* \$170,000
- *Land Acquisition:* \$155,600 (value per tax assessor)
- *Building Design:* \$495,000 (15% of construction)
- *Building Construction:* \$3,300,000
- *Exhibits:* \$1,500,000

#### **Gateway Park (plans & land only) - \$234,250**

- *Plans:* \$75,000
- *Land Acquisition:* \$159,250 (value per tax assessor)
- *Construction:* to be determined based on plans

#### **One Mile Creek Park & Greenway - \$1,084,000**

- *Plans:* \$50,000
- *Land Acquisition:* \$150,000 (value per tax assessor)
- *Construction:* \$884,000\*

\* Based on per linear foot costs for Three Mile Creek

#### **Ace Theatre**

- *Acquisition:* figures are currently unavailable
- *Rehabilitation:* to be determined, but this would be a private sector project.

#### **FUNDING SOURCES**

The recommendations of this plan feature a range of potential funding sources for implementation, including the County. *Many of the most fundamental types of expenses associated with this plan's implementation will likely be met through the general funds of the applicable local governments.* However, this section will point out some very specific potential funding sources.

#### **ARPA**

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, also called the COVID-19 Stimulus Package or American Rescue Plan, is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill passed by the 117th United States Congress and signed into law in March of 2021. The intent was to speed up the country's recovery from the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and recession. In addition to making funds available to individuals and businesses, the Act also allocated \$350 billion in assistance to state and local governments. Mobile County was awarded more than \$80 million in ARPA State and Local Recovery Fund funding, of which \$3.5 million is dedicated to this project. All of the \$3.5 million of Mobile County ARPA funds allocated to this project have been invested in planning, design, and construction of Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District assets.

#### **National Park Service (NPS) Preservation Fund:**

##### **African American Civil Rights**

The African American Civil Rights (AACR) program documents, interprets, and preserves sites and stories related to the African American struggle to gain equal rights as citizens. The 2008 NPS report "Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites" serves as the foundation reference document for the grant program and for grant applicants to use in determining the appropriateness of proposed projects and properties. The grants are provided through the NPS's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) and administered by the NPS. This competitive program provides grants to states, tribes, local governments (including Certified Local Governments), and nonprofits. A non-federal match is not required, but preference is given to applications that show community commitment through non-federal matches and partnership collaboration.



Grants fund a broad range of planning, development, and research projects for historic sites including: survey, inventory, documentation, interpretation, education, architectural services, historic structure reports, preservation plans, and "bricks and mortar" repair. Projects are split into two categories: physical "preservation projects" and "history projects." Preservation grants are for the repair of historic properties, while history grants are for more interpretive work, like exhibit design or even historical research.



## H) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### POTENTIAL COSTS & FUNDING SOURCES

(CONTINUED)

#### Tax Incentives for Historic Buildings

These tax credits exist at both the federal and state level, as summarized below:

##### Federal Tax Credit

This long-standing financial incentive for the qualified rehabilitation of historic buildings provides a 20% investment tax credit. Main requirements include:

- The property must be listed on, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places (NR), or a “contributing” structure within an NR district.
- Costs must exceed the adjusted cost basis (ACB), which equates generally to the amount spent on the property (including acquisition) prior to the rehabilitation’s initiation.
- The property must be income-producing, which can include rental residential.
- The project must meet federal preservation standards (Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Historic Rehabilitation).

##### State Tax Credit

Alabama’s state incentives mirror the federal program in most ways. The 2017 Alabama Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit provides for a refundable income tax credit against the tax liability of the taxpayer for the rehabilitation, preservation, and development of historic structures. The program provides \$20 million in tax credits each calendar year from 2018-2027. The credit is equal to 25% of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures for certified historic structures. The

Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) is the administering agency for this program.



*The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) is the best source of information regarding preservation-related incentives.*

##### Alabama Property Tax Benefits

Historic buildings in Alabama may be assessed for ad valorem purposes at the lowest tax rate. This benefits historic property that is income-producing since owner-occupied historic homes are already assessed at the lowest tax rate. Historic buildings are those that are listed in, or eligible for, listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) must certify that the property is currently listed or make a determination of eligibility for the National Register. The type of documentation required from an applicant will vary upon a property’s current National Register status. The responsibility of providing well-researched and thorough information and making a case for eligibility rests with the property owner who is seeking the tax benefit. As of October 23, 2023, all applications for the Ad Valorem Program must be submitted in electronic format to the AHC.

### OTHER IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Other plan implementation issues include the following three topics:

#### Plan Adoption

It is recommended that this plan be formally adopted by the County to give it more political clout. Also, as recommended on page 77, the County should work with the City to help them understand the Framework Plan portion of this plan to potentially lay the foundation for this plan’s proposed Place Types to be converted into new zoning within The District.

#### Implementation Flexibility

While the plan should generally be adhered to as time passes, the County should remain flexible to adjust to changing circumstance and to leverage future opportunities that cannot be anticipated at present. It is important that the County stick with the overall objectives and principles of the plan, but not at the cost of being completely inflexible.

#### Keeping the Plan Current

Unlike a citywide comprehensive plan or similar plans, it is not critical that this plan be completely overhauled every few years. However, it is important that it be revisited at least annually to take stock in what has been achieved and to determine what will be the next steps. The strategies will need to adjust as circumstances change. As part of tracking the plan’s implementation, an update should be given to the County Commission at least annually.

# H) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

## TIER TWO PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

No.	Recommendation	Page #	Time-Frame
<b>A. Physical Planning Strategy</b>			
A-1	Negotiate with the property owners to acquire the site proposed for the interpretive center and new park	43-46, 84-85	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-2	Conduct a feasibility study and conceptual plans for the proposed interpretive center	43-46, 84-85	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-3	Pursue security alternatives to the fence surrounding Bishop State with more access points and less of a negative visual impact	47	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-4	Explore the addition of a playground to the east end of Martin Luther King Park	47, 65	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
A-5	Pursue the development of the proposed One Mile Creek Park and Greenway segment within The District's Bishop State Area	47, 63, 66	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-6	Design and develop the proposed Gateway Park (once A-1 is successfully completed)	43-46, 66	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
A-7	Support the planned Branch Development across from Bishop State in a mixed-use urban form appropriate to the context	47-48	On-Going
A-8	Support the reuse of Central High School with a community-minded use and explore opening the façade in place of the blank walls	50-53	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-9	Continue efforts to preserve and restore the Vernon Z. Crawford Law Firm Office, which was recently acquired by the County	50-53	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-10	Pursue the acquisition, restoration, and adaptive reuse of the Ace Theatre for a future use such as entertainment and dining	54	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
A-11	Prioritize the preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings over new infill development, but follow this plan's design guidance	54-59	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-12	Support the City's redesign of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and pursue a redesign for the east segment	60-61	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-13	Pursue the establishment of a wayfinding system of directional signage within The District	64	Long Term (Yrs. 4-5)
A-14	Begin the process of adding public art within The District in the form of sculptures and murals	67-70	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-15	Provide any needed infrastructure upgrades as prompted by the demands of future development in The District	71	On-Going
<b>B. Economic &amp; Market-Based Strategy</b>			
B-1	Tie The District's marketing to Africatown, and target Mobile residents, tourists, and the other market segments identified in this plan	72	Long Term (Yrs. 4-5)
B-2	Pursue the targeted business mix as specified in this plan, which is based upon this plan's market analysis	72-73	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
B-3	Establish a small business incubator and recruit existing businesses to The District, as well as encouraging new start-ups	73-74	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
B-4	Fund the proposed interpretive center with a range of financial sources and create a non-profit to operate it	74	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
B-5	Adopt tools for The District's property and business owners, including low and/or low interest loans, grants, and technical assistance	74	Near Term (Yr. 1)
B-6	Adopt a package of financial tools to avoid displacement of residents and businesses as The District revitalizes in the future	75-76	Near Term (Yr. 1)
B-7	Pursue affordable housing in The District, and explore the creation of a community land trust and/or a Community Development Corporation	75-76	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)



# H) PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

## TIER TWO PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX (CONTINUED)

No.	Recommendation	Page #	Time-Frame
<b>C. Policies &amp; Programs Strategy</b>			
C-1	Work with the City to translate this plan's proposed Place Types into zoning districts with zone-specific standards	42, 77	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C-2	Encourage and incentivize use of the City's Design Review Guidelines without mandating them through historic district designation	78	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C-3	Implement the proposed programs and policies, including those cited in Section B, as well as the proposed community garden	79	Near Term (Yr. 1)
<b>D. Interpretation Strategy</b>			
D-1	Pursue interpretation of The District's rich history in a manner consistent with the themes and stories described in this plan	13-17, 80-81	On-Going
D-2	Continue historic research via a program in which young people conduct oral history interviews of The District's long-time stakeholders	82	On-Going
D-3	Implement recommendations A-1 and A-2 to pursue the development of an interpretive center in The District's Gateway Area	43-46, 84-85	Near Term (Yr. 1)
D-4	Employ historic interpretation with wayside exhibits, building markers, wall-mounted panels, and digital tools district-wide	86-88	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
<b>E. Communications Strategy</b>			
E-1	Launch Phase I ("Inform") of the Communications Strategy's three-phased approach	90-91	Near Term (Yr. 1)
E-2	Launch Phase II ("Activate") of the Communications Strategy's three-phased approach	90	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
E-3	Launch Phase III ("Empower") of the Communications Strategy's three-phased approach	90	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
E-4	Begin using the logo and other branding components in a highly visible manner	92	On-Going

# **A P P E N D I C E S**

**1) Inventory of District Historic Sites**

**2) Economic Background & Tourism Potentials Report**

**3) Case Studies Report**

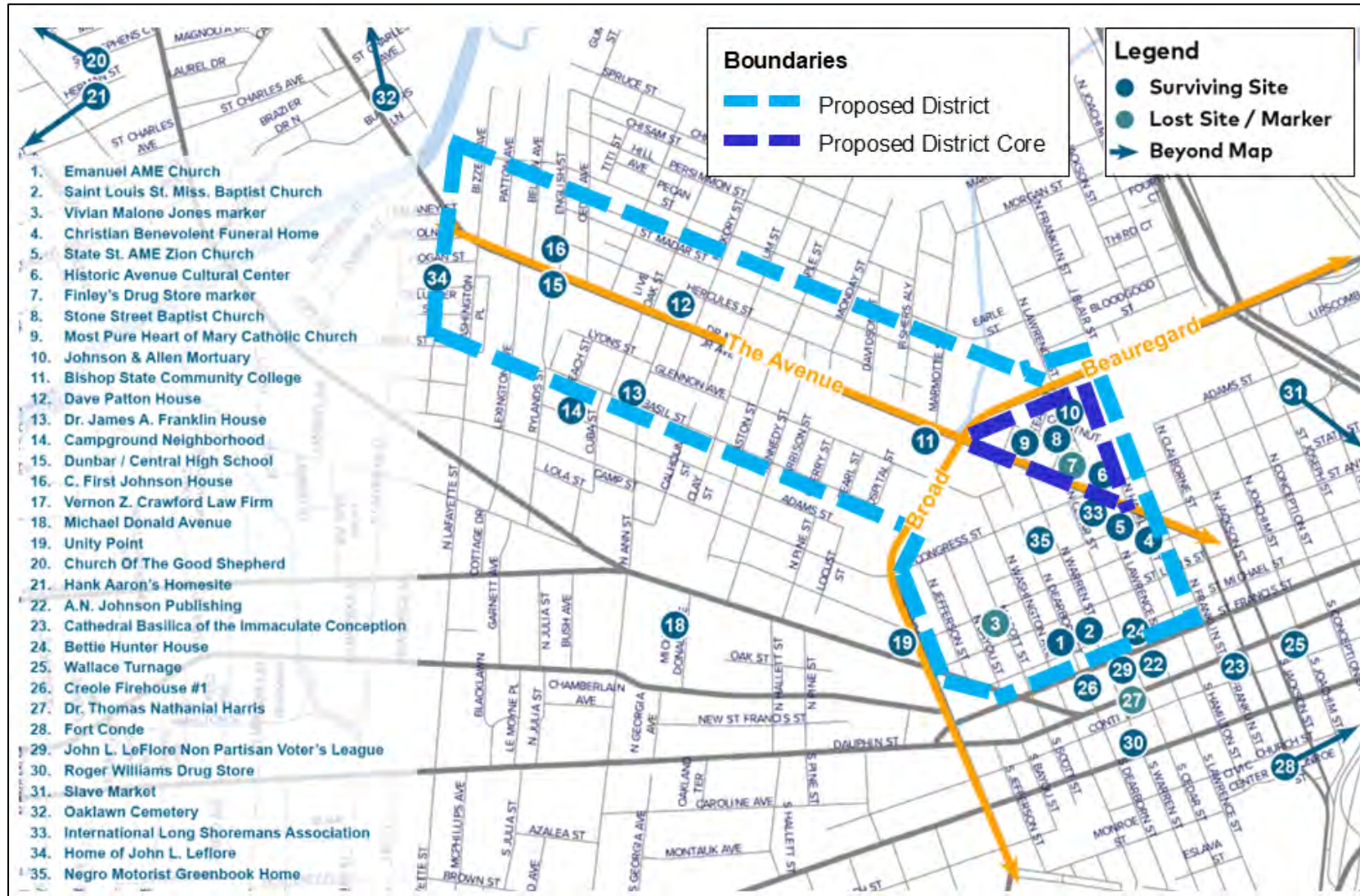
**4) Brand Guidelines Book**



# **1) Inventory of District Historic Sites**

## MAP OF SITES

Below is a map that identifies key historic sites in and near Mobile's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District. Adhering to the same numeric designation and sequencing as this map, the following pages summarize each of the sites.





## SUMMARY OF HISTORIC SITES

### 1. Emanuel AME Church

(654 Saint Michael Street)

Built in 1869, a brick structure replaced it in 1881. In 1890-1891, Mobile architect James H. Hutchisson designed the Gothic Revival façade. Architectural historian Elizabeth Gould called the brick patterning of the Gothic lancet arches "unusually fine." It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### 2. Saint Louis Street Missionary Baptist Church

(108 North Dearborn Street)

This stately historic building is an African American church founded in 1853, which makes it the second oldest Missionary Baptist congregation in the state. The building itself was constructed in 1869 and was designed by combining the Classical Revival and Renaissance styles. The two-story church features long rectangular windows, pilasters, and a four-tiered domed bell tower with Ionic columns. The church was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 and is a property on the African American Heritage Trail of Mobile.

### 3. Vivian Malone Jones Marker

(760 Saint Anthony Street)

Vivian Malone Jones (1942-2005) was one of the first two black students to enroll at the University of Alabama in 1963. In 1965, she became the university's first black graduate. She was made famous when George Wallace, the Governor of Alabama, attempted to block her and James Hood from enrolling at the all-white university.

### 4. Christian Benevolent Funeral Home

(201 North Hamilton Street)

This funeral home was the first Alabama mortuary owned by an

African American woman, Mrs. Pear Johnson Madison.

Established in 1928, the Christian Benevolent Funeral Home remains open today.

### 5. State Street AME Zion Church

(502 State Street)

State Street African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was established in 1829. Built in 1854, it is the oldest documented Methodist church building in Alabama. It is also one of two African American churches founded in the Methodist tradition in Mobile prior to the American Civil War.

### 6. Historic Avenue Cultural Center

(564 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue)

Designed in 1931 by prominent local architect George B. Rogers, it was intended as a miniature replica of the Main Mobile Public Library that was intended for white citizens. It was the only library available to black Mobilians during the Jim Crow era. Currently, this is the location of the Historic Avenue Cultural Center.

### 7. Finley's Drug Store Marker

(578 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Avenue)

Pharmacist John L. Finley, Jr. opened Finley's Pharmacy #1 in 1950 and later Finley's #2. That one was later sold to his brother-in-law Benjamin F. Jackson, Sr. John's younger brother, pharmacist James H. Finley, Sr. eventually opened five drug stores. Finley's #3 stood at this site in the Franklin Building, which no longer stands. James Finley, Sr. was the vice president of the Neighborhood Organized Workers (NOW), which helped end a segregated Mobile. John Finley, III became a pharmacist and closed Finley's #1 in the 1990s during the demise of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue.

**8. Stone Street Baptist Church**

(311 Tunstall Street)

This historic African American church was established in 1806 by slaves freed from their masters. It was originally located on then-named Stone Street (today's MLK Ave.), but relocated to its current location in 1870. The existing pale-brick Gothic Revival building was constructed in 1931. This church remains active today, and it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

**9. Most Pure Heart of Mary Church**

(304 Sengstak Street)

This church was founded as a mission in 1899 by the Society of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart to serve Mobile's Creoles of African descent. The first Josephite priests were Rev. Joseph St. Laurent and Rev. Louis Pastorlli. By 1901, a small school was established that continues today as the Most Pure Heart of Mary School, although the school is now separate from the church. The school was first taught by the laity, until five Sisters of St. Francis arrived from Pennsylvania in 1902 to take over. The Neoclassical church building was completed in 1908 and dedicated in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This church served as a meeting place for the Neighborhood Organized Workers (NOW), which was established in Mobile in 1966 with a mission to achieve equality for the African American community. The church is listed on the African American Heritage Trail of Mobile.

**10. Johnson and Allen Mortuary**

(600 Chestnut Street)

This funeral home was purchased in 1906 by Clarence Allen and Edgar Harney. Harney died in 1911, and A.N. Johnson became a partner. They buried people of all races. Allen's wife started the Josephine Allen School, and the housing development in Happy

Hill was named in her honor.

**11. Bishop State Community College**

(351 N. Broad Street)

Prominently located on the southwest corner of MLK Avenue and North Broad Street, Bishop State Community College is a public, historically black community college with campuses and facilities throughout Mobile and Washington County. The college was founded in 1927, and it is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions.

**12. Dave Patton House**

(1252 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue)

This two-story structure was built for Dave Patton, a Mobile African American entrepreneur born in 1879. Patton began his career using two mules to haul merchandise for local merchants. He gradually became a prominent real estate entrepreneur and contractor, and he built many of the area's roads and schools. He purchased this property in 1900 and completed the Mediterranean Revival style house, designed by local architect George B. Rogers, in 1915. Patton died in 1927. The property eventually passed to the Stewart Memorial C.M.E. Church and once served as its parsonage. The property is included on the African American Heritage Trail of Mobile, and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

**13. Dr. James A. Franklin House**

(355 N. Ann Street)

This was the residence of Dr. James A. Franklin, who served the medical needs of Mobile's African American community for 53 years. He reportedly never turned an indigent patient away. Franklin was the only African American to graduate from the



University of Michigan in 1911. He opened his home to black celebrities during the Jim Crow era, and he provided hospitality to notables such as Marion Anderson, Paul Roberson, and Jackie Robinson. Today, there are 21 Franklin Primary Care Centers honoring him and rooted in his healthcare philosophy.

**14. Campground Neighborhood**

(Kennedy Street to Rolland Lane)

This neighborhood is named for the Old Campground, a military encampment that occupied the area during the American Civil War. It was initially a Confederate camp, but was transformed into a Union camp after the war. This historically African American neighborhood consists of working-class housing. The district also includes the houses of the burgeoning black middle class comprised of professionals such as doctors, dentists, and entrepreneurs.

**15. Dunbar/Central High School**

(1365 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue)

Built originally as the "Dunbar School," this school was built on this site in 1924 and Dr. W.A. Caldwell was the first principal. In 1947, the Old Medical College on St. Anthony Street was remodeled and became Central High School, and Dr. Benjamin Baker was named the principal. In 1955, the schools switched locations when Dunbar Junior High School moved to St. Anthony Street and Central High School moved to this location on today's MLK Avenue. The high school produced a culturally diverse curriculum that exposed students and the African American community to the arts during the Jim Crow Era. The school closed in 1970 as part of desegregation in the Mobile school system. Used for some years by Bishop State, the property is now owned by the County school board and vacant.

**16. C. First Johnson House**

(1358 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue)

Christopher First Johnson founded the Union Mutual Aid Association (UMAA), Mobile's first black life insurance company. By 1920, Johnson had written over \$9 million in insurance. He was also the ninth pastor of the St. Louis Street Baptist Church.

**17. Vernon Z. Crawford Law Firm Office**

(1407 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue)

Vernon Crawford established the first African American law firm in Mobile. He successfully argued the Birdie Mae Davis case that desegregated Mobile schools. He stood before the Supreme Court and won the landmark case of Bolden vs. the City of Mobile, which changed the City's organizational structure to the current mayor-council form. Crawford was a legal champion who brought justice to Black Mobile.

**18. Michael Donald Avenue**

(Between Springhill Avenue & Old Shell Road)

Nineteen-year-old Michael Donald was walking to a store in 1981 when two members of the United Klans of America abducted the Black youth, beat him, cut his throat, and hung his body from a tree on this residential street (previously Herndon Street). Angry that an interracial jury had failed to convict a Black man for killing a white police officer in Birmingham, the Klansmen selected Donald at random and lynched him to threaten the Black community. On the same evening, other Klan members burned a cross on the Mobile County courthouse lawn. The street features a historic marker telling the story of Donald's death.

**19. Unity Point Park**

(Corner of Springhill Avenue and Broad Street)

Working together, John Leflore and Joseph Langan helped create a more peaceful end to segregation than other major Alabama cities could claim. LeFlore increased Black voter turnout with a "pink sheets" campaign in which organizers informed voters which candidates were a positive force for the Black community. Langan campaigned against the proposed "understanding clause," a method to prevent Blacks and poor whites from voting by claiming that they did not understand the Constitution thoroughly. Though they both faced opposition, they accomplished a great deal in the battle for civil rights. During the leadership of Mobile's first Black Mayor, Unity Point Park was created in 2009. A statue was unveiled in 2010 to commemorate the achievements of these two great leaders.

## **20. Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd**

(605 Donald Street)

The oldest African American Episcopal Church in Alabama, this church was established in 1854 and it has the third oldest Episcopal congregation in the state. It was established by seven enslaved and free African American women and men. Located at 608 Donald Street, it is located northwest of the study area. The current structure appears to date from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **21. Hank Aaron House**

(St. Stephens Road between Allison and Clinton Streets)

Hank Aaron, one of professional baseball's most iconic figures, had his humble beginnings at this house. His story is interpreted here at the Hank Aaron Childhood Home and Museum. Much of his early days and career have been preserved and are on display at this site. As with the site described above, this one is located beyond the study area for this project. It is located to the

southwest at 755 Bolling Brothers Blvd. adjacent to the Hank Aaron baseball stadium.

## **22. A.N. Johnson Publishing**

(512 Dauphin Street)

A.N. Johnson was a successful entrepreneur and community advocate at the turn of the century. Owner of the People's Drug Store and a partner of the Johnson and Allen Mortuary (site #10), he also published the "Mobile Weekly Press." He attempted to change the 1901 Alabama State Constitution. However, after failing to achieve that after a year of lobbying throughout the state, he sold his Mobile investments and moved to Nashville, Tennessee.

## **23. Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception**

(2 South Claiborne Street)

When Michael Portier became the First Bishop of Mobile in 1829, he commissioned architect Claude Beroujon to design a grand cathedral. Its cornerstone was laid in 1835, and after fifteen years of starting and stopping construction, the cathedral was consecrated by Bishop Portier on December 8, 1850. The congregation was supportive of St. Martin de Porres Hospital, the local African American hospital during the Jim Crow era. Although the building has suffered from fire and undergone modifications over the years, it still remains an important local landmark.

## **24. Bettie Hunter House**

(504 Saint Francis Street)

This house was the residence of Bettie Hunter, who was born in 1852. A former slave from Selma, Alabama, she became wealthy from a successful hack and carriage business that she operated in



Mobile with her brother, Henry. They were part of a group of African Americans who recognized the opportunities in the carriage business, so they cornered this part of the transportation market in Mobile. This wood-frame Italianate house was built for Hunter in 1878, but she died less than a year after its completion.

**25. Wallace Turnage**

(Corner of Conti and Joachim Streets)

In 1864, Wallace Turnage was an enslaved 17-year-old owned by a merchant, Collier Minge, whose house stood on the site of today's Seanger Theatre. Turnage escaped wartime Mobile by walking 25 miles down the western shore of Mobile Bay. After surviving three weeks in the Fowl River estuary, he paddled a rowboat into the Bay, escaping to the Union base. He later moved to New York and provided notes that are recorded in the book, "A Slave No More."

**26. Creole Firehouse #1**

(13 North Dearborn Street)

This firehouse is associated with the first volunteer fire company in Alabama. It was founded in 1819 by members of Mobile's Creole community. The current complex of one and two-story brick structures appear to date from the mid to late-nineteenth century and it is now used as a private residence.

**27. Dr. Thomas N. Harris Marker**

(Corner of Saint Francis and Warren Streets)

Born in Montgomery in 1868, Thomas Nathaniel Harris was the first licensed African American physician and dentist in Mobile. He graduated in 1899 from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, and he completed post-graduate courses in Philadelphia. He opened Mobile's first medical facility for Blacks

in 1905, but the building housing his offices no longer exists.

**28. Fort Conde**

(Corner of Royal and Church Streets)

The original Fort Condé was built in 1723 by French explorers. Under various colonial powers, it went by different names, including Fort Louis, Fort Charlotte, and Fuerta Carlota. The extant remnants of the original fort, discovered during the construction of the Wallace Tunnel in 1966, may be seen in Mardi Gras Park, facing Church Street. The replica fort was opened in 1976 as part of the nation's bicentennial celebration.

**29. John LeFlore Non-Partisan Voter's League Office**

(558 Saint Francis Street)

LeFlore started the Mobile chapter of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1925 and led it for decades until the State of Alabama expelled the organization in 1956. He then started the Non-Partisan Voter's League and was instrumental in desegregating schools, rail cars, postal service, and the police force in Mobile. He served as its director of casework from 1959 until his death, including organizing two lawsuits that reached the United States Supreme Court. In 1974, LeFlore won election to Alabama's House of Representatives, but died during his term.

**30. Roger Williams Drug Store**

(605 Dauphin Street)

Dr. H. Roger Williams opened one of the early African American drugstores - Live and Let Live - on this site in 1901. Born on a sugar plantation in Louisiana, he graduated from Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1900 and was the second black physician to practice medicine in Mobile. He served

as the president of numerous medical and civic associations, including the General Chairman of the Mobile Emancipation Association. He was a published writer and poet.

**31. Slave Market**

(Corner of Royal and St. Louis Streets)

After the federal abolition of international slave trading in 1808, slave dealers transported enslaved people from all over the South into Mobile. On this site, which is located outside of this project's study area, enslaved people were sold as chattel to southern planters through public auction.

**32. Oaklawn Cemetery**

(1800 Holt Road)

The first burial in Oaklawn Cemetery dates from the 1870s. This cemetery is a significant place for the African American community of Mobile. Located northwest of the study area for this project, the burial ground is the final resting place for many. While the number of burials unknown, it is estimated that as many as 10,000 people are buried there. The cemetery contains burials of veterans from all branches of the military, including from WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf Wars.

**33. International Longshoremen's Hall**

(505 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue)

The International Longshoreman's Association (ILA) Hall is a historic labor union meeting hall. The ILA established the Mobile chapter in 1936 in order to represent the community's African American longshoremen. The hall was built in 1949 in the Art Moderne style. Many prominent African-American entertainers performed in its auditorium, and it became a gathering place during the Civil Rights Movement. On January 1, 1959, it became

the only place in Mobile to host a speaking engagement by Martin Luther King, Jr. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

**34. Home of John L. LeFlore**

(1504 Chatague Avenue)

John L. LeFlore was born in 1903 in Mobile and emerged as one of the most significant advocates for Black equality in the city. Serving as the director of the NAACP from 1925 until Alabama banned the organization in 1956, LeFlore was a steadfast leader in the fight for civil rights. Following the NAACP expulsion, he founded the National Part Vote League in 1956, where he worked as director of casework until his death on January 30, 1976. In 1964, shots were fired into his home, and in 1967, his house was firebombed and immediately restored. That incident that was repeated in 1969, though the bomb failed to explode. On all occasions, he and his wife were at home, but fortunately unharmed. The property is currently owned by his grandson and used as a rental unit. There is no historic marker.

**35. Negro Motorist Green Book Homes**

(254 & 256 N. Dearborn Street)

These two brick Bungalow style single-family houses are located directly adjacent to each other. They are both listed in the 1949 edition of the Green Book as being owned by F. Wildins (254) and E. Jordan (256). There are no historic markers at these properties.



## **2) Economic Background & Tourism Potentials Report**

# MOBILE

## Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District

### *ECONOMIC BACKGROUND & TOURISM POTENTIALS REPORT*



*Prepared for the Walker Collaborative and  
Mobile County, Alabama  
First Draft: June 5, 2024  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides economic context and market analysis in support of tourism development and economic revitalization within Mobile's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District. One of the objectives of The District is to help remember, celebrate, and educate people – especially the younger generation - about the significance of The Avenue and of Mobile's African American heritage. Part and parcel of that effort is the opportunity to leverage tourism and other visitors to help revitalize the neighborhood and to create economic opportunities in The District for small and African American entrepreneurs, neighborhood residents, and investors.

Based on background analysis, field reconnaissance, interviews, community stakeholder engagement, and other input, it was determined that having a central “stepping off point” such as a museum or interpretation center would help fill a gap and anchor The District in order to tell its story for residents and visitors alike. This report provides the results from a market analysis to test the viability of a museum as well as determining the kinds of spin-off economic opportunities that could be generated for local residents and business people.

Section 1 of this report provides economic background and a Site Analysis that examined the various assets and factors impacting on the marketability of The District for a museum or interpretive center. Detail is provided elsewhere in the plan about the various historical assets and themes associated with The District, so this section summarizes some of those assets in terms of their role in marketing The District for tourism. Section 2 provides the results of the museum market analysis that was completed for this plan, while Section 3 summarizes the kinds of business and economic development spin off that could be expected to help leverage revitalization in the neighborhood. Strategic recommendations are provided in a later section of the plan.

## **Section 1. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND & SITE ANALYSIS**

This section provides an overview of existing economic conditions countywide and within The District as context for an analysis of tourism and economic potential. Population and employment trends are examined within the Mobile Metropolitan Area. A site analysis was conducted specifically of The District area to identify assets and to inventory the existing base of economic activity. The site analysis examines factors impacting on the general marketability of The District for tourism and related activities.

### **Economic Conditions**

As an important seaport starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mobile became the economic driver for south Alabama, attracting manufacturing and distribution of goods worldwide. Over time, the county's economic base has diversified so that the largest share of the county's 173,000 jobs are now in retail trade (21%) and health care (15%). Manufacturing (10%) and transportation & warehousing (7%) remain significant, with much of the employment in those sectors relating back to the presence of a major ocean port and associated distribution network.

The District study area has a population base of about 3,700, which represents an increase of about 300 or 9.1% since 2010. The household base in the area increased by 215 or 16%. The District is part of Mobile County, which has a population of about 411,000. The county's population increased in every decade between 1880 and 2020. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic and other factors caused what appears to be a temporary reversal in population patterns, with the Census Bureau estimating a 0.8% decrease in population between 2020 and 2023.

### **Study Area Site Analysis**

A site analysis was conducted to assess existing conditions, context, and factors impacting on The District's marketability for tourism and other economic activity. Field reconnaissance was conducted throughout The District, and interviews were held with business operators and representatives of institutions and historic sites throughout The District. Findings from this site analysis are summarized below.



## **Access & Exposure**

The District is situated northwest of downtown Mobile and is located within walking distance of several of the city's main attractions including Bienville Square, Dauphin Street and the Saenger Theatre. The History Museum of Mobile and cruise ship terminals are also located within walking distance or a short drive away. Ultimately, while somewhat separated and disjointed from downtown, The District could be considered a walkable extension of the historic downtown area if populated with active uses.

Mobile is accessible via I-65, which extends northward to Montgomery, Birmingham, Huntsville, Nashville, and north to Chicago. I-10 connects Mobile east to the Florida Panhandle and Jacksonville; and west through south Mississippi to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Houston, and west to Los Angeles. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Avenue extends from downtown through The District and up to Gorgas before merging into St. Stephens Road (U.S. Highway 45) through Pritchard and connecting to I-65. Africatown is roughly three miles further east. The District (centered around Bishop State Community College) is located about 5.4 miles (10 minutes' drive) from Africatown Heritage House.

Mobile Regional Airport has nonstop service to Atlanta, Charlotte, Houston, DFW, and Washington, DC. In addition, Breeze Airways is starting service from Mobile to Orlando and Providence.

**Traffic.** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue is one of about five main roads and arterials that lead out of downtown Mobile towards suburban areas. However, it is not a heavily travelled corridor, with an average of between 4,900 and 7,100 vehicles per day (according to Alabama Department of Transportation). So, sites along the corridor and within The District are not well-exposed to through traffic on a regular basis. Still, The District is so close to downtown that it should be easy to draw people in from the downtown area.

## **Historical Context**

The cultural and civil rights heritage of The District is palpable, and it is this historical context that drives opportunities for tourism and neighborhood revitalization. The District's history and specific heritage sites are discussed elsewhere in this master plan. However, it is worthwhile to inventory and revisit key sites as a basis for understanding the assets that can be used to leverage tourism and other economic opportunities in the area.

**Key Historical Sites.** Several of these key sites are listed below, along with a brief understanding of the aspects of historical narrative that are important to - and unique to - Mobile.

- **Davis Public Library** (Historic Avenue Cultural Center). This site is significant as the segregated library for African Americans built in 1931 and designed by George Bigelow Rogers to mimic the main public library, but on a much smaller scale. The restored building has also served as a cultural center and mini-museum for The District.
- **Central High School.** Central High, which relocated to the old Dunbar School (ca 1924) site in 1955 was Mobile's high school for African Americans during the segregation era and served as a hub for the community and the arts, and as an anchor for the community's black business, cultural and entertainment district along The Avenue. Central was closed through the process of desegregating the schools, but in doing so, the "heart" of the community to many people was reduced to an empty shell. Since then, the building has served ancillary purposes for Bishop State Community College and the public school system, which still owns it. But it is vacant today.
- **Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church.** This historic church, completed in 1908, served the congregation whose members gave rise to the Knights of Peter Claver, the oldest (and largest) black Catholic organization in the U.S. A parish school was established on an adjacent site in 1901. The church and school served as a hub of activity during the Civil Rights era, hosting meetings of the *Neighborhood Organized Workers* (NOW). Priests and nuns from the church participated in demonstrations in support of the black community. The church and school still present a strong historic presence on MLK Avenue near the library, YMCA, and other sites listed. The interior of the church sanctuary evokes the history contained therein.
- **Stone Street Baptist Church.** This historic congregation was established in 1843. The congregation moved to its present location in 1870 and the building was rebuilt in 1909. This building was placed on the National Register for Historic Places in 1985. Some of the survivors and their descendants of the Clotilda from west Africa who settled in Africatown eventually joined this church. It has remained one of the most influential black Baptist churches in the state.



- **International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Local 1410.** The ILA is the largest maritime workers union in North America. Its presence in Mobile goes back to 1936, with the Art Moderne ILA Hall built in 1949. The ILA is significant to The District for its leadership in securing fair wages and rights for its workers, and for hosting meetings focused on worker's rights during the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, the Hall itself hosted various entertainers including Elvis Presley as well as leaders including the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This building is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park.** Isom Clemon Park is a new pocket park established to honor the legacy of local Civil Rights leader Isom Clemon and to provide a community open space in The District. Importantly, the site also served as a meeting place during the Civil Rights Movement. Clemon led the ILA Local 1410 and was a co-founder of the Alabama Democratic Conference (ADC) established to help black Alabamans gain political access. Clemon also helped get the first African American delegates from Alabama seated at the Democratic National Convention.
- **Bishop State Community College.** Bishop State, an historically black college, was founded in 1927 and is among the few HBCU community colleges nationwide. Bishop State is an important anchor for The District and provides a critical education resource for African Americans throughout the Mobile region.
- **Vernon Z. Crawford Law Office.** Attorney Vernon Crawford founded Mobile's first black African American law firm, which was heavily involved as a leader in fighting discriminatory policy in the courts. Crawford's office building expresses a unique style and remains steadfast in its position in the northern end of the corridor.
- **Oaklawn Cemetery.** This historic cemetery lies somewhat further north of The District beyond Three Mile Creek. However, it is very significant and meaningful to the African American community in The District and throughout Mobile. The earliest burials in this African American cemetery date to the 1870s and may include 10,000 or more since. Burials of veterans from nearly all conflicts and military branches can be found here; among them the Buffalo Soldiers and Tuskegee Airmen, and recipients of the various military honors. The cemetery receives support from dedicated volunteers but there is continued deterioration.
- **Dave Patton House.** Patton was a local African American entrepreneur who became successful enough to employ the services of top architect George Bigelow Rogers to design his Mediterranean-Revival style

mansion on the Avenue in 1915. The house is owned by the Stewart Memorial CME Church and has been listed on the National Register for Historic Places since 1987.

**Davis Avenue Business District.** Aside from these individual sites, The Avenue was also known as Mobile's black business district, a place where every type of good or service was available from majority black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. The 1951 Davis Avenue Quality of Housing Field Survey documented nearly 200 active businesses, not including the many churches, schools, and other institutions. This list included 66 grocery stores and markets, 64 restaurants and ice cream parlors, 41 barber and beauty shops, 14 shoeshine and repair shops, and 6 pharmacies; plus theatres, mortuaries, doctor's offices, dental labs and other economic activities. Based on this inventory, it is estimated that the community supported 200,000 to 250,000 square feet of retail/commercial activity alone, not including professional offices and other economic activity.

**Port City.** Mobile is set apart from many other communities because of its role as a major port city, as discussed previously. The port helped enable two distinct aspects of Mobile's way of life that set the city apart. First, ports constantly bring new people and goods to a city, which allows for more diverse experiences and creates a rich cultural melting pot (or gumbo). The American Mardi Gras originated in Mobile, blending creole, Spanish, and French cultures into a festival and a lifestyle. Often (but not always), port cities have a somewhat more laissez-faire attitude about things that make people different. So, while there may be rigid social customs, there is also some understanding that different people need to be able to get along. The other characteristic of port cities is how the port itself leverages local economic opportunities that may not be available in other regions. Thus, port cities tend to constantly attract people from the "hinterlands" seeking economic opportunity and a better way of life.

**The Labor Movement.** The port is also a defining characteristic of Mobile's African American community, especially in terms of jobs and entrepreneurship. Many of Mobile's black port workers belong to unions, which have helped leverage economic opportunities and a living wage. In fact, the labor movement and the efforts to achieve economic empowerment played a relatively unique role in Mobile's Civil Rights struggle. The focus on entrepreneurship and on attaining good-paying jobs for African Americans is somewhat unique as a driver force in local civil rights movements where, in other locations, the focus was more often on public accommodation (e.g., the Montgomery Bus Boycotts and the Sit-Ins in Nashville and Greensboro) or resulted from a violent struggle that attracted the world's attention (e.g., Birmingham).



**Urban Renewal.** Another defining characteristic of Mobile's Civil Rights struggle were the unintended consequences of integration and urban renewal. The impacts of government policies imposed from above have impacted negatively on The District, on Mobile, and on area residents. Examples include the following:

- **Central High School:** The closure of a community asset and source of pride due to the integration of schools that favored existing white schools.
- **The Avenue:** The loss of a once vibrant and independent black business district due to urban renewal and the end of segregated accommodation.
- **The People:** Displacement and the loss of a sense of place due, again, to urban renewal, new interstate highway infrastructure and other programs that ripped apart communities.

There is also a very positive story repeated throughout The District of how Mobile's black community survived and thrived, despite the various challenges and roadblocks placed in their path.

### **The Avenue's Business Base Today**

The Avenue's commercial business district is only a shadow of its former self, with less than 20 active businesses compared to the 200 that existed in 1951. Today, there is only about 28,000 square feet of occupied commercial building space located along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue (versus the estimated 250,000 square feet that was occupied in 1951). Of an existing total of about 43,000 square feet, nearly 36% - more than one-third – is vacant. This vacant space is in more than a dozen historic or vintage buildings, some of which could be refurbished. The building inventory does not account for the many acres of vacant commercial land throughout the corridor, much of it located where businesses or houses once stood prior to the imposition of Urban Renewal policies in the area. Much of this land could be physically redeveloped for business or residential use as warranted.

<b>Table 2. RETAIL BUSINESS SPACE BY CATEGORY, THE AVENUE, MOBILE, 2024</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Sq. Feet</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Convenience	3	4,065	9.6%
Shoppers Goods	4	12,200	28.7%
Eating & Drinking	2	1,300	3.1%
Entertainment	-	-	0.0%
Personal Services	9	9,700	22.8%
Vacant	<u>13</u>	<u>15,300</u>	<u>35.9%</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>42,565</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Sources:	Mobile County Revenue, businesses, and Randall Gross / Dev. Economics.		

The existing business mix is comprised primarily of shopper's goods stores and personal services. Shopper's goods are those for which consumers will comparison shop and establish the core of a shopping district. Shopper's goods space is concentrated primarily in one chain business - the Family Dollar store. Other shopper's goods stores include two small apparel shops and an auto supply store. Nine of the remaining businesses, which account for one-half of all businesses operating in The District, are hair salons and barber shops. Black business districts often retain personal services like barber shops because those establishments also serve an important role as cultural institutions alongside churches and schools, within their respective communities. In addition to these businesses, there are two small eating and drinking establishments and three convenience businesses. In discussions with several business operators, it became apparent that most sales are made to neighborhood residents, although there are sometimes tourists passing through the area during Mardi Gras.

These businesses are generally dispersed throughout the corridor, with The Avenue lacking a concentrated commercial hub where consumers can walk, shop, dine, receive services and be entertained among a variety of businesses. For all intents and purposes, the thriving business district that once characterized The Avenue no longer exists. But there



are fragments including buildings and institutions, houses, landscape, and a few local entrepreneurs that can form the basis for revitalization. Among those local entrepreneurs are people like Eric Finley who provide guided tours of the area, interpreting the community's history while providing a personal perspective.

### **Key Anchors**

The District has several anchor uses along the length of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Avenue. The historic International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) Building and Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park anchor the southern end of The District, followed to the north of Congress Street by the Historic Avenue Cultural Center and the Dearborn YMCA, Stone Street Baptist Church, Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church, and the Mobile Area Mardi Gras Association (MAMGA). North of Beauregard is the campus of Bishop State Community College followed by Florence Howard Elementary School and Martin Luther King Park. Five blocks further north of Hickory Street is the Stewart Memorial Christian Church and Martin Luther Lutheran Church. The Franklin Primary Health Center forms a health care node at Cuba Street. The old Central High School building is located just north of there at Rylands Street. Three Mile Creek is located just beyond the northwest boundary of The District.

### **Population and Housing**

The District and adjoining area defined roughly by St. Stephens Road (west), Three Mile Creek (north), Telegraph Road / I-165 (east), and Congress Street (south) has an estimated total of about 1,550 households and 3,700 residents, down just slightly from the 2020 Census. An estimated 92.4% of the population self-identifies as black, with 3% identifying as being two or more races. About 25% of residents are age 25 to 44, and another 14% are ages 55 to 64. Nearly 40% of households are comprised of singles. Two-thirds (1,020) of householders are renters, with about 520 homeowners.

The District's housing stock is relatively diverse, with bungalows, cottages, ranches, and Victorian homes built over time and scattered throughout. Not surprisingly, the condition of the housing stock also varies wildly, with some housing in fair to poor condition and other homes well-maintained despite deferred maintenance. As noted earlier, there is a significant number of vacant lots, including prominent parcels along MLK, where families were displaced through Urban Renewal programs. Redevelopment is proposed for the largest parcel, located across MLK from Bishop State Community College (between Davidson and Marmotte streets), to accommodate housing and mixed-use. The planned Branch Development (a partnership of Fuse/Figures, the Mobile Housing Authority and Bishop State) is proposing about 350 multi-family units, 100

units of student housing in mixed-use buildings, and 30 single-family homes on the site. About 52 new housing units were built fairly recently on land adjacent to this site between Davidson and Monday streets.

### **Surrounding Areas & Relevant Sites**

As noted earlier, The District is located in walking distance from key parts of downtown Mobile. Access to The District from downtown helps in marketing and promoting The District to tourists and other out-of-town visitors. However, The District is somewhat isolated from several other key sites or areas that could be used to help interpret the story of African Americans in Mobile. Such sites include Africatown Heritage House, located about five miles away to the northeast. This site is critically important because of its role in remembering the community that developed out of the last slave ship to reach American soil – The Clotilda, which brought African people to Mobile in 1860. Another site, baseball great Hank Aaron’s childhood home, has been relocated to the baseball stadium, roughly 8 miles from The District.



## **Section 2. MUSEUM MARKET ANALYSIS**

In reviewing the various assets, challenges, and opportunities for the Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District; it was determined that an interpretation center or museum is best suited as an anchor to help drive tourism and economic investment, to educate more people including younger generations, and to celebrate the community's heritage. As such, a market analysis was conducted to forecast the potential for a museum or interpretation center, determine the format and program for such a facility, and define the content and concept for its development. The existing museum base and tourism flow through Mobile was examined, audience cohorts identified, and attendance forecasted for a museum in The District. Based on the museum content and audience forecasts, a physical development program was identified along with concepts for its exhibitions, format, and location.

### **Mobile Museums & Attractions**

Mobile already has a rich base of museums, historic sites, and interpretive venues. This base was examined in terms of the existing story base and exhibition format, location, audience, source markets, operating models, and other factors. Interviews were conducted with representatives of many of these museums, and data and information collected for them. Among the relevant local museums and sites examined are the following:

- **History Museum of Mobile.** Mobile's History Museum operates 20,000 square feet of interpretive exhibition space, housed in the historic Southern Market (Old City Hall) building downtown. The museum, which attracted 42,400 visitors in FY2023, offers a diverse array of well-designed exhibits relating Mobile's story and its importance to global commerce. The museum includes various exhibits on slavery and local African American history as well as the Civil Rights Movement, with stories told through artifacts, video, and photographic images. The History Museum also operates the Phoenix Fire Museum, Colonial Fort Conde (13,800 annual visitors), and Clotilda: The Exhibition at the Africatown Heritage House.
- **Africatown Heritage House.** This 2,500 square-foot facility offers "Clotilda: The Exhibition at the Africatown Heritage House." This exhibit interprets the story of the Clotilda and the people it brought to Mobile. The ship's rediscovery made international news, which has helped bring media attention to the Clotilda's story in Mobile. The Clotilda exhibition at Africatown Heritage

House is operated as a subsidiary of the History Museum of Mobile. The exhibit attracted about 8,000 visitors between its opening in summer 2023 and January 2024. Africatown Heritage House is a Mobile County asset.

- **Hank Aaron House.** The home of world-famous baseball star Hank Aaron has been relocated to a site near Mobile's minor league baseball park. There is a nonprofit organization charged with raising funds for its restoration and operations, but it is not yet open to the public.
- **Other Museums & Sites.** The U.S.S. Alabama Battleship is the most-visited attraction in Mobile, with more than 340,800 in attendance at the 36,000 square-foot exhibition in 2023. The National Maritime Museum of the Gulf Coast is by far the largest museum in the region, with 100,000 square foot building and 40,000 square feet of exhibition space. It is a public museum oriented to Mobile's impressive port heritage and operations, but the museum has not yet lived up to attendance expectations, with just about 11-12,000 visitors in 2023 (of which about one-third were school children on field trips). The museum is being reimagined and directed under new management. Other local sites include the following (with the most recent available annual attendance):
  - Mobile Medical Museum (1,100)
  - Bellingrath Gardens & Home (160,000)
  - Mobile Carnival Museum (13,300 (2007))
  - Oakleigh House Museum
  - Richards-DAR House Museum
  - Condé Charlotte Museum
  - Exploreum Science Center (150,000)
  - Bragg-Mitchell Mansion
  - Alabama Contemporary Art Museum (4,500)
  - USA Archaeology Museum (7,200)
  - Mobile Museum of Art (8,269 (on-site))

In addition to the various museums and visitor attractions, Mobile also plays host to the nation's oldest Mardi Gras celebration, which has a large and historic African American component. Mardi Gras attracted an estimated 713,000 in attendance in 2023. There are also several African American heritage festivals celebrated locally, including Juneteenth and Spirit of our Ancestors.



## **Existing Tourism Flow**

Overall tourism flow to Mobile County and the Gulf Coast was examined, with particular attention to those visitors making their way to Mobile and its museums and heritage sites. Alabama State Tourism Department data suggest that Mobile County attracted an estimated 3,391,700 visitors in 2023, up by nearly 100,000 or 3.0% over the previous year. The tourism industry employs more than 15,000 people in Mobile County, according to the State data. By contrast, nearly 8.4 million tourists visited neighboring Baldwin County, making it the most-visited county in Alabama and creating nearly 45,000 tourism-related jobs. Most of Baldwin County's tourism is obviously beach related, although Fairhope itself attracts about 10% of the county's tourism flow, including seniors and heritage visitors interested in experiencing the town's walkable downtown district.

Mobile Tourism counts ten primary designated market areas (DMAs) generating the largest number of trips, which include Birmingham (10.6%), New Orleans (6.7%), Atlanta (6.0%), Montgomery (5.5%), Mobile/Pensacola (4.4%), Huntsville-Florence (4.2%), Houston (3.5%), Baton Rouge (3.2%), Jackson (2.8%), and Dallas-Fort Worth (2.5%). Other key DMAs include Memphis, Nashville, Hattiesburg-Laurel, Biloxi-Gulfport, and Orlando-Tampa.

## **Mobile Museums & Heritage Sites**

Mobile area museums and heritage sites attract about 600,000 visitors per year, based on the annual data provided by participating sites. School tours account for an estimated 20 to 30% of local museum visitors, with another 20% of visits generated locally and 50% generated from out-of-town tourists and other visitors. Specific data on *Africatown Heritage House* was collected through a survey conducted for this market analysis as an indicator of possible target markets for Mobile's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District. Key findings from this survey include the following:

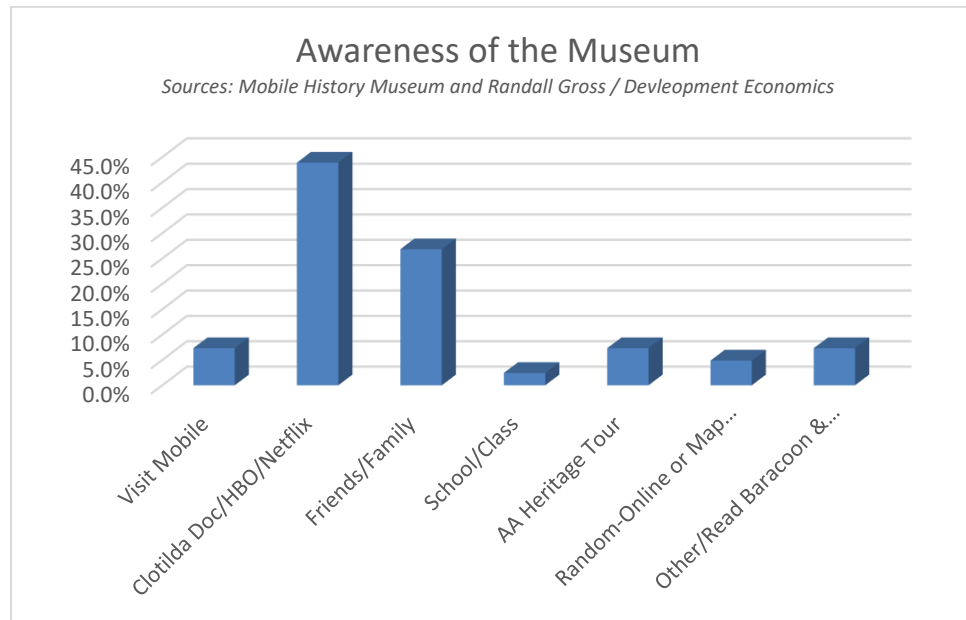
**Source Markets.** While the Africatown Heritage House exhibition had only been open for less than one year, it provides some indication of the origin of visitors, as shown below.



About 28% of visitors were local residents, originating from within the Mobile area. Another 7% reside in Pensacola/Florida Gulf Coast. Other key markets include Birmingham and Montgomery in Alabama, Texas, and areas in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, and Chicago and the Midwest. This data is only a sample from a brief snapshot in time, but it is somewhat consistent with general tourism data indicating an “inverse T” shaped market that extends east and west along the I-10 Corridor on the Gulf Coast, and north along the I-65 Corridor through Alabama, Tennessee, and north to Chicago.

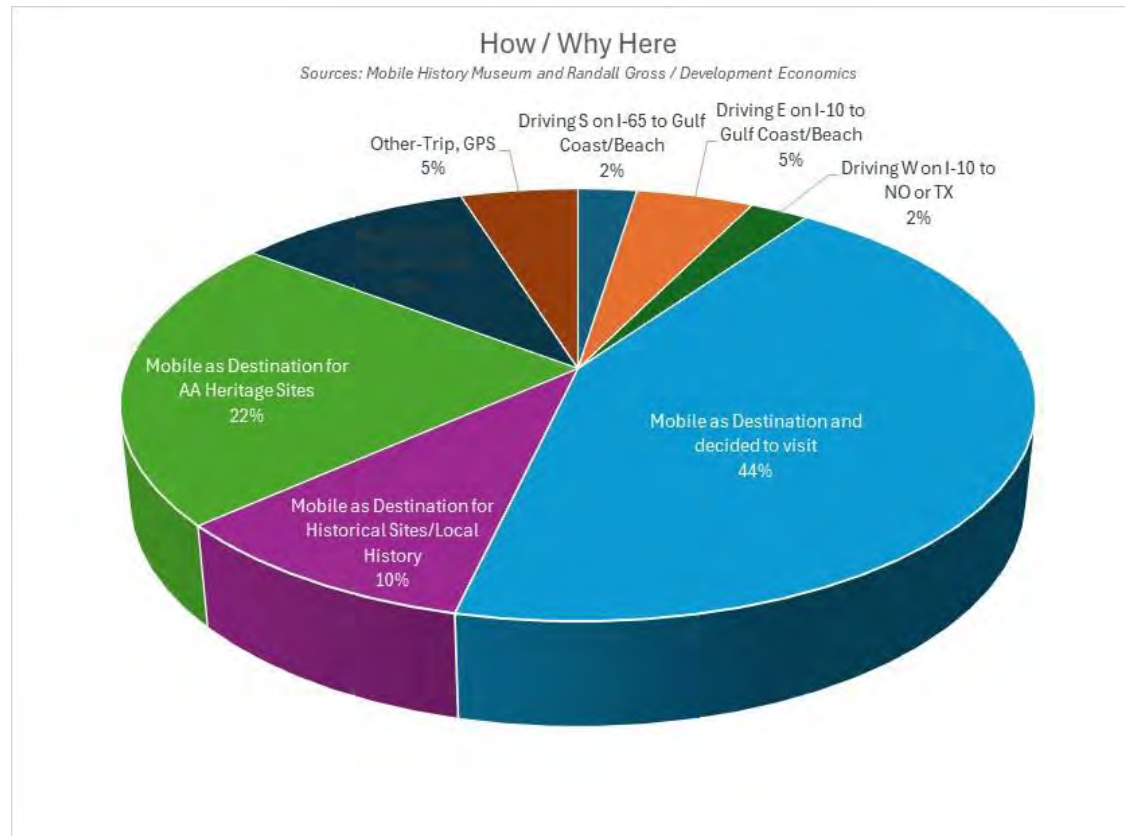
**Awareness.** The survey asked respondents how they became aware of the Clotilda exhibition and the Africatown Heritage House. The largest share – nearly 44% - learned about the exhibition and the subject from watching one of the several television documentaries shown on HBO, Netflix, National Geographic, etc. Another 27% learned of the exhibition through local Mobile friends and family, who brought them to see it. About an equal number of others (7% each) learned about it through Visit Mobile tourism or via a local African American heritage tour.





**Purpose of Visit.** An important question related to why and how out-of-town visitors found their way to come to this particular museum, as summarized below.

The largest share (44%) had come to Mobile as a destination and decided to visit the museum as part of their trip. Another 22% chose Mobile as a destination specifically to visit and experience the city's African American heritage. And 10% were visiting Mobile as a heritage tourism destination. Another 10% were in Mobile to visit friends and family (some of whom brought them to the site). About 5% were driving east on I-10 towards Gulf Coast beaches and decided to stop and see the museum. Another 2% were driving west on I-10 towards New Orleans or Texas and decided to see the museum. Yet another 2% were driving south on I-65 towards Gulf Coast beaches and decided to stop at the museum. Finally, about 5% were in route on another trip and GPS alerted them to the presence of this museum.



To summarize these groups, about 32% of the museum's visitors could be categorized as "heritage tourists," about 14% were through travelers (including beach tourists) who stopped on an impulse, and 10% had local connections. The remaining 44% were coming to Mobile for another reason (sightseeing, business, convention, event) and decided to include the museum in their itinerary.

**Demographics.** Information on audience demographics was also collected from the museum visitors. About 50% of the surveyed visitors were white and 50% black. The median annual income was relatively high, at about \$120,000 (versus



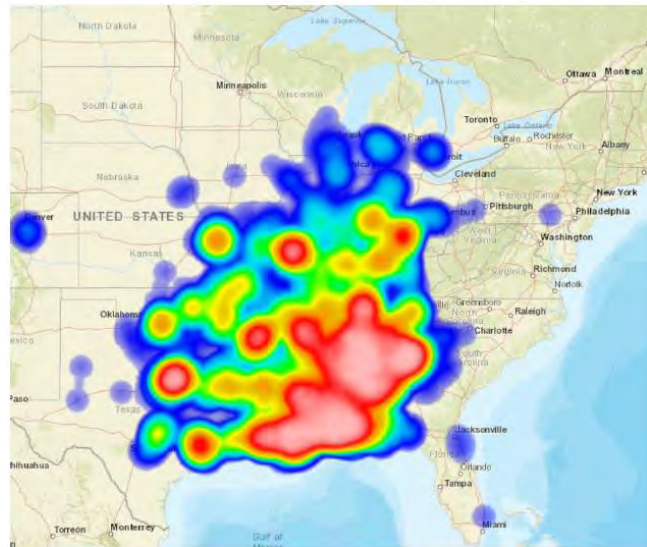
\$48,500 for city of Mobile and \$66,200 for the Mobile metro area), but there was a significant range (\$30,000 to \$400,000). The median age of individual visitors was 57, but again there was a significant range (8 to 85 years old).

**Heritage Tourism Development.** Surveys conducted for Mobile Tourism indicate that arts, culture and heritage are among the county's highest-scored assets, while Mobile's transportation accessibility (both as a destination and in terms of local mobility) was rated low. Not surprisingly, Mobile Tourism's strategic plan lists heritage tourism among its strategies for destination development and urge the agency to "continue to promote the six pillars (history, arts, culture, culinary, ecotourism, and Mardi Gras)" and to "continue to collaborate with and promote cultural heritage tourism."

### **Beach Tourism**

As noted before, beach visitors dominate tourism in the region, with millions traveling to Gulf Shores and surrounding areas for beach vacations. While Mobile and The District are geographically separated from the beach destinations, Mobile is located on route (I-65 and I-10) and within a short distance for day trips (and 94% of beachgoers drive, according to Gulf Shores/Ocean Beach Tourism (GSOBTA). As such, even capturing a small share of the millions of beach tourists in the region can boost local tourism in Mobile.

**Source Markets.** There is clearly a southeast regional base for Gulf Shores and Orange Beach visitation, extending north into the lower Midwest, east into Georgia and Florida and west into Texas and Oklahoma. Nearly 40% of visitors originate in-state from Alabama, with 12% from Louisiana and 11% from Mississippi. Other key states include Tennessee, Texas, Georgia, Missouri, Arkansas, Florida and (southern) Illinois.



	2020	2021
Alabama	31%	36%
Louisiana	15%	12%
Mississippi	11%	11%
Tennessee	7%	6%
Texas	7%	6%
Georgia	5%	5%
Missouri	3%	4%
Arkansas	4%	4%
Florida	5%	3%
Illinois	0%	2%

Source: Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism Association

**Side Trips.** Nearly three-quarters of tourists visiting Gulf Shores and Orange Beach are there primarily for the beaches themselves. However, there are a lot of other activities in which visitors engage while they are on vacation for a week or more in these locations. Aside from dining out, relaxing, swimming, shopping and other typical beach activities, about 23% do engage in some sightseeing while on their trips. Specifically, about 7% of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach tourists visit the U.S.S. Alabama and 6% visit “historical sites.” About 5% specifically visit Fort Morgan, 4% visit the National Naval Aviation Museum, 2% go on the Civil War History Trail, and 2% visit Bellingrath Gardens. While these percentages seem small, even 1% of the 8.4 million tourists to Baldwin County equates to 84,000 visitors, or twice as much as the Mobile History Museum’s total annual attendance.

**Demographics.** The beach tourists generally come in parties of around four people and spend an average of four days in the area. The average age is 46, with an average household income of \$125,000 (similar to that of the Clotilda Exhibition visitors). About 63% of the adults have a college degree and 21% are executives or are in senior management. According to GSOBTA, 77% of the beach visitors are white, 16% African American, 4% Asian, and 4% Latino.



### **Other Mobile Area Tourism**

In addition to local historical sites and museums, more than 700,000 visitors come to Mobile each year for the city's Mardi Gras celebration. While not as well-known or attended as its counterpart in New Orleans, the local celebration is no less grand, exciting, and boisterous.

The Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center offers 316,000 square feet of exhibition space including two exhibition halls with 50,000 square feet each, two ballrooms, 16 meeting rooms (26,500 square feet), 52,000 square feet of pre-function area and 45,000 square feet of outdoor space. Convention sales generated 112,300 room nights in 2022-23, according to Mobile Tourism. A sample of conventions and meetings held in Mobile includes the Alabama Education Technology Conference, the Church of the Living God International Conference, the National Association of Buffalo Soldiers and Troopers Motorcycle Club, Southern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Annual Conference, Alabama Early Childhood Education Conference, and the American Society of Botanical Artists Annual Conference, among others. Conferences and conventions will sometimes program offsite tours and events, including visits to museums and other sites.

Carnival Cruise line offers more than a dozen 6 and 8-day trips per year from Mobile's 66,000 square-foot cruise terminal. Visit Mobile arranges pre- and post-cruise packages that include dining and attractions in Mobile for cruise passengers. An estimated 30,000 cruise passengers pass through Mobile on these trips, providing another source of museum attendance. Aside from cruises, there are also airboat adventure tours in the Mobile-Tensaw River, as well as bayou and swamp tours to experience the region's wildlife and natural environment. Ecotourism is a niche that local tourism agencies are marketing more heavily in recent years.

### **Comparable & Relevant Museums**

Information was collected from a sample of comparable or relevant museums and interpretation centers nationwide, specifically on those associated with an African American or Civil Rights district, or more broadly with African American cultural heritage and/or the Civil Rights Movement as well as with the American Labor Movement. Interestingly, many of the museums interpret stories that cross over between these topics, including civil rights museums that also touch on the labor movement. Some comparable or relevant museums are listed below.

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| • New Orleans African American Museum                   | New Orleans    |
| • National Civil Rights Museum                          | Memphis        |
| • Greenwood Rising                                      | Tulsa          |
| • Mississippi Civil Rights Museum                       | Jackson        |
| • National Center for Civil & Human Rights              | Atlanta        |
| • Birmingham Civil Rights Institute                     | Birmingham     |
| • Ozarks Afro-American Heritage Museum                  | Ash Grove AR   |
| • National Underground Railroad Freedom Center          | Cincinnati     |
| • National Voting Rights Museum                         | Selma          |
| • Black History Museum & Cultural Center                | Richmond       |
| • International Civil Rights Center & Museum            | Greensboro     |
| • Minnesota African American Museum & Gallery           | Minneapolis    |
| • Labor Museum and Learning Center of Michigan          | Flint          |
| • Kansas African American Museum                        | Wichita        |
| • African American Civil War Memorial & Museum          | Washington, DC |
| • National Museum of African American History & Culture | Washington, DC |
| • Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum                      | Savannah       |
| • Youngstown Historical Center of Industry & Labor      | Youngstown OH  |
| • Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum     | Orangeburg SC  |
| • Labor and Industry Museum                             | Belleville IL  |
| • Rosa Parks Museum                                     | Montgomery     |
| • The American Labor Museum                             | Haledon NJ     |
| • Albany Civil Rights Institute                         | Albany GA      |
| • Labor Hall of Fame                                    | Washington, DC |
| • The Cleveland African American Museum                 | Cleveland      |
| • Wisconsin Black Historical Society Museum             | Milwaukee      |
| • Sloss Furnaces  | Birmingham     |
| • Freedom Rides Museum                                  | Montgomery     |
| • George Washington Carver Museum                       | Phoenix        |
| • Mosaic Templars Center                                | Little Rock    |
| • Prudence Crandall Museum                              | Canterbury CT  |



- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| • Debs Museum                                   | Terre Haute IN   |
| • African American Museum of Iowa               | Cedar Rapids     |
| • Kentucky Center for African American Heritage | Louisville       |
| • Accord Civil Rights Museum                    | St. Augustine FL |
| • Dallas Civil Rights Museum                    | Dallas           |
| • Tuskegee Human & Civil Rights Center          | Tuskegee         |
| • Minnesota's Labor History Interpretive Center | St. Paul         |
| • MLK Jr. National Historical Park              | Atlanta          |
| • Medgar Evers Home National Monument           | Jackson          |
| • Pullman Village                               | Pullman IL       |
| • The Legacy Museum                             | Montgomery       |
| • International African American Museum         | Charleston       |

### **Local Penetration Rates**

Penetration rates were determined for many of these museums that compare attendance to the local population as a measure of participation. These rates, which range from 0.031 for the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta to 1.863 for the Tuskegee Institute, provide an indication of performance within the local market. The average penetration rate for sampled museums from this list was 0.121 overall.

Overall, findings from other museums indicate that performance has lagged other types of museums, but attendance is generally increasing. Often, these museums have been under-resourced in comparison to other types of cultural heritage museums, and many have struggled to recover financially since the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **Demographic Base**

Based on data from comparable museums as well as on visitor flow in the region and to area museums, the market base was defined for a museum in The District. This market base is defined partly by geography in terms of the likely source markets, but also in terms of key niches and targets that would help drive demand for this interpretive center or museum. Below is a summary of the market base and key niches that form the basis for the market analysis.

### Primary Geographic Market Base

The geographic market was defined to include local, regional, national and international target markets. A primary market will include residents of the Mobile Metro Area and neighboring areas within a two-hour (day trip) drive. Regional and national domestic target markets were also defined along with the international market that is often important for sites of African American cultural significance. A summary of key domestic markets and their current and 5-year projected population base is provided below.

Market	Population		Penetration Rate
	Existing	Projected	
• Chicago	9,262,800	8,956,600	0.5%
• Dallas-Fort Worth	8,100,000	8,917,800	0.8%
• Houston	7,510,300	8,141,700	1.6%
• Atlanta	6,307,300	6,652,300	3.2%
• Orlando	2,817,900	3,071,900	2.4%
• Nashville	2,102,600	2,255,900	3.2%
• Jacksonville	1,713,200	1,904,200	2.9%
• Pensacola/Day Trip Markets	1,522,000	1,622,900	6.0%
• Louisville	1,365,600	1,371,300	2.5%
• Memphis	1,335,700	1,319,500	5.0%
• Birmingham	1,184,300	1,193,400	30.1%
• Huntsville-Florence	841,100	894,800	16.8%
• New Orleans	962,200	890,300	23.4%
• Baton Rouge	873,700	878,800	12.3%
• Jackson	610,300	594,300	15.4%
• Mobile	411,600	406,400	13.9%
• Montgomery	385,500	386,500	47.9%

Penetration rates for each of these markets were determined for existing tourism to Mobile based on visitor origin data supplied by Visit Mobile. These rates provide an indication of where existing tourism to Mobile originates and how likely



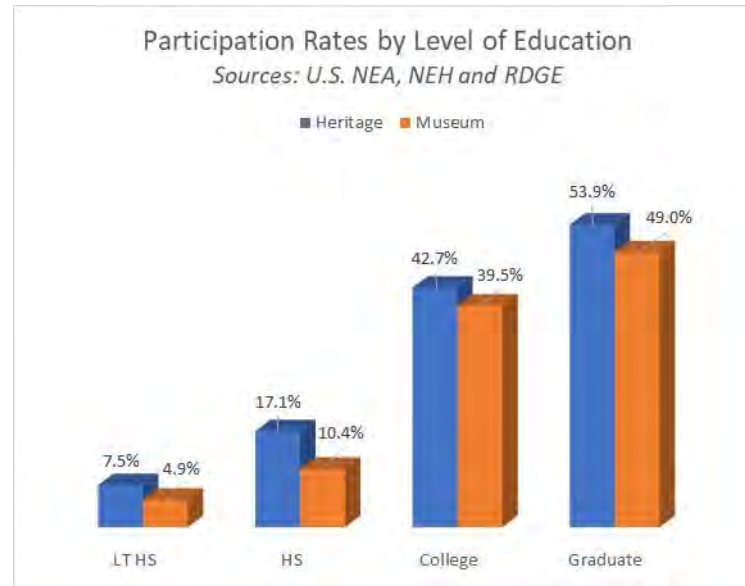
(the penetration rate) someone from each market is to visit Mobile County's hotels, restaurants, recreation areas, and/or visitor attractions at least once per year.

## Participation Rates

Demand was assessed for a museum in The District with themes associated with African American heritage and the Civil Rights Movement. Demand is contingent on the rate at which populations are likely to visit such a museum. Surveys and data collected for the **Mobile Metropolitan Statistical Area** (Mobile County) by the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), help provide a snapshot of the rates at which different groups are likely participate in certain arts and cultural activities. This data is strengthened using local data collected for this study through the survey of visitors to the Clotilda Exhibition at the Africatown Heritage House Museum, data on beachgoers, data from other local museums and comparable museums nationwide, and on other inputs. Focus was given to participation rates relating to the likelihood to do the following at least once during a year:

- Visit a museum
- Visit a historical /heritage site or district
- Visit an African American cultural site or district
- Visit a Civil Rights heritage site

Overall, about 28.3% of American adults are likely to visit a heritage site at least once during the course of a year, and 23.8% are likely to visit a museum. Participation rates for museums and heritage sites have been found to be highly correlated with **educational attainment** among adults. So, the higher the education level achieved, the higher the participation rate and the more likely that someone will visit a museum or heritage site. This finding is true, regardless of the type or subject matter of the heritage site. As shown below, museum participation rates in Mobile County are lowest for those with less than a high school education, at just 4.9% visiting a museum in a given year. By contrast, 42.7% of those with a college degree and 53.9% of those with a graduate degree, on average, are likely to visit a museum. Similarly, only 7.5% of those less than a high school education will visit a heritage site, while 39.5% of college-educated adults and 49.0% of those with graduate degrees, on average, will visit a heritage site in a given year.



Because educational attainment is highly correlated with incomes, then it is also found that **higher-income households** have more leisure time and are also more likely to visit museums and heritage sites.

**Race and ethnicity** can play a role in defining the market for both African American and Civil Rights heritage sites and museums, since members of the African American community may share the highest level of interest in these themes. However, as shown by the results of the Africatown survey, whites and other non-black adults will still account for a large share – if not the majority - of visitors to these sites. This factor relates in part to participation rates for museums and heritage sites in general, with blacks less likely to visit a museum (17.1% versus 26.7%) or a heritage site (18.6% versus 33.2%) than whites. These findings are likely correlated again back to income and educational attainment.

With respect to specific themes, only about 1.1% of American adults, overall, are considered **Civil Rights Heritage “enthusiasts”** that would purposefully plan trips to visit Civil Rights museums and sites. Various factors may impact this relatively low rate, but as the number of sites increases, so does participation. And several major Civil Rights museums and



heritage sites have only recently opened. By comparison, about 2.3% of American adults consider themselves “Civil War heritage enthusiasts.”

## **Audience Potential**

Several approaches were employed to forecast the audience potential for a museum in The District. Specifically, the potential was tested for a museum that focused on unique themes and characteristics of Mobile’s African American cultural heritage and Civil Rights movement. First, participation rates were applied to the targeted geographic market areas and projected to determine the share likely to visit a museum or heritage site oriented to African American heritage and the Civil Rights Movement over the next five to ten years. Second, capture of the existing visitor base was determined within the competitive context and in relation to the current penetration rates for existing markets. Third, penetration rates at comparable and relevant museums were assessed to refine the findings and assess projections against comparable museum performance.

Based on these inputs, the market analysis forecasted audience potential for 41,800 to 51,100 within five to seven years after opening. Based on the analysis above, the target markets would include Mobile residents (along with their visiting families and friends) and heritage visitors to Mobile (especially African American and Civil Rights heritage tourists); as well as portions of the region’s beach-going, Mardi Gras, cruise ship and other tourism cohorts.

## **Venue Requirements**

Based on the attendance and utilization, an interpretation venue of 7,200 to 9,300 square feet would be appropriate to accommodate this visitor base. That scale of venue would include about 5,000 to 7,500 square feet of exhibition space, plus event space, office, exhibit storage, classroom and other uses. The museum would have ancillary exhibit interpretation at the various heritage sites in The District as outlined below. There would also be an affiliation with other sites outside of The District including the Clotilda Exhibition at the Africatown Heritage House.

### **Museum Concept: Mobile's African American & Civil Rights Center**

A concept was tested and is proposed for the museum or interpretation center that would include the main center as an anchor to introduce visitors to The District and the story of African American heritage and Civil Rights in Mobile; as well as “ancillary” heritage sites that are interpreted on their own but as part of a tour itinerary throughout The District. Ancillary sites would include (among others)

- Davis Public Library (Historic Avenue Cultural Center)
- Central High School
- Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church
- Stone Street Baptist Church
- International Longshoremen's Association Local 1410
- Isom Clemon Civil Rights Memorial Park
- Bishop State Community College
- Vernon Z. Crawford Law Office
- Oaklawn Cemetery
- Dave Patton House

As noted earlier, the museum would also be “affiliated” with the Africatown Heritage House and the Clotilda exhibit.

### **Exhibition Focus**

The exhibition would focus on three primary elements – roughly aligned with the themes – of The District that maximize the opportunity to draw tourists to unique stories and create a destination. These elements include the following:

- The unique role of the **Labor Movement and Economic Empowerment** in Mobile's Civil Rights Struggle. As noted elsewhere, the focus on entrepreneurship and on attaining good-paying jobs for African Americans is somewhat unique as a driving force in local civil rights movements where, in other locations, the focus was more often on public accommodation (e.g., the



Montgomery Bus Boycotts and the Sit-Ins in Nashville and Greensboro) or a violent struggle with that attracted the world's attention (e.g., Birmingham).

- **Integration, Urban Renewal and Unintended Consequences.** The consequences of government and other policies imposed from above have impacted negatively on The District, Mobile and area residents. Examples include:
  - **Central High School:** The closure of a community asset and source of pride due to the integration of schools that favored existing white schools.
  - **The Avenue:** The loss of a once vibrant and independent black business district due to urban renewal and the end of segregated accommodation.
  - **People:** Displacement and the loss of a sense of place due, again, to urban renewal, new interstate highway infrastructure and other programs that ripped apart communities.
- **Surviving and Thriving:** The positive story of how Mobile's black community survived and thrived despite the various challenges and roadblocks placed in their path.

### **Section 3. COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

Opportunities were examined for economic benefits and spinoff associated with The District, specifically with the development of a museum or interpretation center, along with marketing and promotion of The District as a destination. Existing business conditions in the area were examined based on field reconnaissance, inventory, community input, and interviews with neighborhood business operators. Demand generated by projected tourists and other visitors for retail, restaurants, services, and entertainment was forecasted. Demand leveraged in the local market was also determined. Ultimately, these findings are used to make recommendations on leveraging business opportunities for local entrepreneurs and for creating jobs and other economic opportunities for residents in the neighborhood and in Mobile.

#### **Existing Business Conditions**

Businesses and commercial properties within The Avenue corridor and surrounding neighborhoods were inventoried for this study, with key findings detailed in Section 1 of this report and summarized below. As the community has emphasized, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue corridor today represents only a small remnant of the large and vibrant business district that formed the heart of Mobile's black community during the segregation era.

#### **Retail Business Inventory**

There is an existing inventory of about 20 businesses occupying 42,000 square feet of retail / commercial business space. As discussed in Section 1 of this report, the current business base is but a mere shadow of the thriving Davis Avenue district that once included upwards of 200 businesses occupying an estimated 250,000 square feet of business space. In a district that formerly buzzed with all manner of independent, local, black-owned businesses as discussed in Section 1, today The District includes only a sparsely populated remnant of mainly barber shops and hair salons, a chain dollar store, and a gas station or convenience food store located here and there. More than a dozen commercial buildings and nearly 40% of remaining commercial space in The District is vacant, not to mention the many acres of vacant land that once held businesses and housing throughout the corridor.



## Customer Base

Representatives of several existing businesses operating in The District were interviewed for this study. They noted that the existing customer base is primarily comprised of people from the neighborhood and other local people who have friends or family in this area. There are occasionally tourists who come to the area, sometimes having participated in one of the local African American heritage tours operated by the Finley family.

## Visitor-Generated Demand

The attendance forecasts generated by the museum market analysis were used as the basis for projecting retail and other commercial spin-off that could create economic opportunities within The District.

Table.		MUSEUM/TOURISM-GENERATED RETAIL DEMAND, THE AVENUE		
Category	Factor	Total 2024	5-Year Growth	
<b><u>Mobile Area Tourists</u></b>		<b><u>3,391,712</u></b>		
<u>Total Spend</u>	\$ 525.34	\$ 1,781,786,876		
Restaurants	\$ 141.84	\$ 481,082,457		
Retail Trade	\$ 51.43	\$ 174,444,062		
Entertainment	\$ 50.33	\$ 170,691,619		
<b><u>Museum Visitors</u></b>		<b><u>46,417</u></b>		
<u>Total Spend</u>	\$ 562.11	\$ 26,091,662		
Restaurants	\$ 151.77	\$ 7,044,749	\$	704,475
Retail Trade	\$ 55.03	\$ 2,554,478	\$	255,448
Entertainment	\$ 53.85	\$ 2,499,529	\$	249,953
<b><u>Demand (Square Feet)</u></b>				
Restaurants	\$ 350	20,128		2,013
Retail Trade	\$ 250	10,218		1,022
Entertainment	\$ 150	16,664		1,666
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>47,009</b>	<b>4,701</b>	
<b>Sources:</b>	<b>Alabama Travel, Visit Mobile, and RGDE.</b>			

The 3.4 million Mobile area tourists are estimated to spend nearly \$1.8 billion within the community, including \$481 million in restaurants and bars, \$174 million in retail trade, and \$171 million in entertainment. There are about 46,400 visitors projected for The Avenue Museum (as shown in the previous section of this report). Based on the average per-person tourist expenditures, these visitors would spend about \$26.1 million in and around The District, including \$7.0 million in restaurants, \$2.6 million in retail shopping, and \$2.5 million in entertainment. These expenditures would increase along with attendance over the first five to seven years of operation.

The sales forecasts were then translated into square footage as a measure of demand for some of the existing or potential commercial space that could be located in the corridor. Based on this analysis, visitors would generate demand for up to 52,000 square feet of commercial business activity over the first five to seven years if captured within The District, as outlined below:

- Restaurants: 22,000 square feet
- Retail Shopping: 12,000 square feet
- Entertainment: 18,000 square feet

The synergies between the museum and destination restaurants, entertainment and retail experiences would help maximize attendance to the range projected. In order to achieve those synergies, commercial activity should be concentrated around or near the museum and existing historical assets like those outlined above.

### **Local Trade-Area Demand**

The destination effects created by the museum and spin-off activity would help leverage local demand from households within a trade area extending from The District out into Pritchard and suburban areas. Demand for \$7.9 million in local spending could be captured from within that trade area, translating into sales supporting the operation of these businesses.



Table 1. SUMMARY OF HOUSEHOLD TRADE-AREA SUPPORTED RETAIL POTENTIAL BY CATEGORY, THE AVENUE, 2024 AND 2029				
Type of Good	Gross Demand (SF)		Existing Uses	Warranted Demand
	2024	2029		
Convenience	10,645	10,711	4,065	6,646
Shoppers Goods	26,888	27,016	12,200	14,816
Eating/Drinking	2,173	2,191	1,300	3,907
Limited Service	898	908	-	908
Full Service	1,010	1,016	-	1,016
Entertainment	1,665	1,811	-	1,811
Personal Services	8,229	8,231	9,700	(1,469)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,600</b>	<b>49,959</b>	<b>27,265</b>	<b>25,711</b>
Existing Vacant			15,300	
<b>Net New Space</b>				<b>10,411</b>
Note:	Assumes Pro-active Internal/External Campaign, Recruitment.			
Source:	Randall Gross / Development Economics.			

This demand could generate potential for another 10,400 square feet of new retail/commercial space (assuming existing vacant buildings could be rehabilitated and occupied). That being said, much of the demand would be so small that within specific categories, there would be insufficient demand (e.g., 200 square feet of shoe sales) to warrant the development of commercial space. Based on this analysis, there is some opportunity for community-serving uses like small food and pharmacy businesses, etc.

When added to the tourist-generated potentials, there would be the total (local and tourist-driven) opportunity for about 24,000 square feet of restaurants & snack places, 20,000 square feet of retail businesses, and about 20,000 square feet of entertainment venue space.

## **Recommended Tenant Mix and Key Characteristics**

Based on the aforementioned tourist-driven and local demand, the following mix of businesses is recommended as opportunities for local entrepreneurs and for tenant outreach and recruitment to The District. Again, the greatest synergies can be achieved if these uses are clustered near the museum and historical sites in order to maximize walkability and create a “vibe” from the intensity of activities.

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| • Live entertainment  | 20,000 square feet |
| • Destination restaurants                                   | 20,000             |
| • Specialty food & snack stores (bakery, ice cream, market) | 8,000              |
| • Pharmacy/Personal care store                              | 3,500              |
| • Gifts; hobbies, toys & games store(s)                     | 3,000              |
| • Hardware & general merchandise store                      | 8,200              |
| • Vintage store (1940s-1960s era merchandise)               | 2,800              |
| • African American cultural experiences                     |                    |

The businesses that capture this demand would share certain characteristics. First, many would be oriented to serving as destinations for both local and visitor trade. A significant increase in business activity is unlikely to survive based solely on walk-in trade from the neighborhood. But by establishing a destination for both local/regional residents as well as visitors, the market can support more business opportunities that are captured within The District. Other characteristics that would support this capture include the following:

- Independent, locally- and black-owned businesses
- Serving local area residents as well as tourists
- Creating entrepreneurial opportunities in the community
- Offering live music and entertainment
- Offering healthy, vibrant food choices
- Capturing the cultural dynamic and historical spirit of The Avenue; and honouring the historic businesses and people who made The Avenue a vibrant place



### **3) Case Studies Report**

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report examining case studies is to learn from the experiences of other districts that are relevant to Mobile's Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District. As wisely stated in Mobile County's request for proposals (RFP) document:

*"We are not 'recreating the wheel' with this vision or approach. As we consider the overall expected impact of creating the Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage District, we examine the impacts of similar projects across the State and Country. In Alabama alone, we have seen Civil Rights Districts flourish with tremendous tourism and economic benefits."*

This scope of work for this planning project calls for the identification of several potential places to consider for the case studies, but to ultimately select three to be studied. This report starts by outlining the parameters established for selecting the case studies, followed by a summary of the districts considered. It also explains why some places were initially considered, but ultimately dismissed as candidates for the case studies. After then listing the types of questions to be applied three case studies, the balance of the report consists of the three case studies.

### CASE STUDY PARAMETERS

The following parameters were considered in assembling a list of potential case study candidates, and for then determining the three places to be studied:

- **District Theme:** Case study districts should be limited to those that are focused on African-American cultural heritage and/or Civil Rights to have the highest level of relevance. These districts should not simply be places within predominantly African-American areas of a community and/or focused on a theme such as jazz.

- **Size of the Community:** Rather than only considering the population of a place's municipal boundaries, the size of its metropolitan area is a more relevant factor for comparative purposes. Mobile has a metro population of approximately 430,000. However, it should be emphasized that this consideration is not critical since lessons might be learned by comparable place in much smaller or much larger communities.
- **Deliberate Effort:** The districts to be studied need to have evolved (or at least have been strongly reinforced) through a deliberate and proactive planning and implementation effort. They should be places where a concerted effort occurred with public sector support and private sector involvement. Ideally, that process would have included strong public engagement.
- **Success of the Area:** While a district's level of success may be difficult to quantify within the limited scope of this project, there should be some level of evidence that the district has succeeded. Consequently, the primary planning will need to have occurred roughly three or more years ago for sufficient time to have passed.

### CASE STUDY CANDIDATES

Based upon research conducted for this project, it appears that the following places have enjoyed success with all three of the objectives for Mobile's district (commemoration, interpretation, and revitalization). They are each sequenced below in order of their relevance to this project for Mobile based upon limited research. After the name of each district and its location, the community's Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) population is noted in parenthesis.



**1. Birmingham Civil Rights District – Birmingham, AL**

(MSA population – 863,000): A National Park Service (NPS) initiative was conducted in 2018 to establish an NPS park covering 4.5-contiguous blocks and featuring two churches, a park, a hotel, a Masonic Temple, and a Civil Rights institute that are all tied to the history and theme of the Civil Rights movement. Two years later, the City's 2020 City Center Master Plan proposed a much larger 24-block district encompassing the NPS park. While the facet of the NPS's involvement is likely irrelevant for Mobile, other aspects appear to be very relevant. The only drawback of this place as a case study is that – as a formalized district - it is not as mature as some of the others. Thus, the level of success cannot be determined to the same extent as some of the longer established districts. Nevertheless, its many other attributes earned it a #1 ranking among the eight candidates.

**2. Greenwood District - Tulsa, OK** (MSA population – 1,034,123):

This area was historically known as “The Black Wall Street,” although those most familiar with its history indicate that it was really more of a “Black Main Street.” Thus, it was not a financial capital, making it more in keeping with The Avenue in Mobile. The 1921 race riots that resulted in a massacre and its burning has only recently gained substantial national attention. Like Mobile, it also suffered greatly from the negative impacts of Urban Renewal. The multimillion-dollar Greenwood Cultural Center - an educational, arts, and humanities complex promoting history, culture, and positive race relations - was constructed in the 1980s.

**3. Douglas Block – Rocky Mount, NC** (MSA population – 160,000):

Unlike the other case study candidates that are communities much larger than Mobile, this one is much smaller. There are 185,000 people within the City of Mobile's municipal boundaries, versus 54,000 for Rocky Mount. However, those figures make

Mobile's size much closer to Rocky Mount than the other communities considered here, which are all much larger. The original planning to revitalize, interpret and promote the area - their “Black Downtown” - began in 2004. Despite the area's name as “a block,” it actually entails multiple blocks. Many buildings had been lost or were deteriorated and vacant at the time of the initial planning project. However, the project resulted in key buildings being rehabilitated, including the Douglas Building and the Booker T. Theatre. Housing and businesses have also now occupied buildings, and the area is currently a destination.

**4. Paradise Valley Cultural & Entertainment District – Detroit, MI**

(MSA population – 3,521,000): The history of this area mirrors that of The Avenue very closely with regard to its once vibrant life and the causes of its demise. A residential neighborhood called “Black Bottom” that was associated with the commercial Paradise Valley area was replaced by a park. The district is overseen by the Paradise Valley Cultural and Entertainment District Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Unlike many similar districts, this one appears to be attracting substantial private investment and is revitalizing as a major entertainment destination.

**5. Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor – Buffalo, NY**

(MSA population – 884,000): Like the potential boundaries for The Avenue's future district, this place features a long relevant street, but is anchored with a small district or “focus area.” It was designated as a state heritage area in 2007, when the commission that manages it was also established. They finished a strategic plan in 2022 that is limited to their focus area, and it may be a good model for this plan for The Avenue District in Mobile. The commission's website features a video of the plan's presentation. The corridor's headquarters opened in 2023.

6. **Sweet Auburn District – Atlanta, GA** (MSA population – 6,200,000): This well-known district has a very similar history to that of The Avenue District, including being anchored by a key street. Many of the area's residential properties have been redeveloped with the help of the Historic District Development Corporation, but the commercial properties on Auburn Avenue have reportedly not achieved the same success. There are numerous key partners at the national, state and local levels, including historic preservation groups, tourism groups, and economic development groups.
7. **African American Arts & Cultural District – San Francisco, CA** (MSA population – 4,620,000): This district was established by the City of San Francisco in 2018 with a focus on preserving cultural assets and arts, advocating for economic vitality and sustainable businesses, advocating for health and the environment, and improving the area's quality of life. It is located in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood, and it is one of several City-designated cultural heritage districts. There is also a "complex" with the same name as the district, but it appears to be in another part of town and it is unclear if there is any relationship between the two.
8. **Six Square District – Austin, TX** (MSA population – 2,420,000): Now marketed as "Six Square: Austin's Black Cultural District," this part of East Austin was designated by the City of Austin in 1928 as the "Negro District." Because it covers a six square-mile area, it is less relevant to the future district for Mobile. In fact, based upon preliminary research, it appears that its size may have handicapped the district's long-term success.

#### Other Places Considered

The following places were suggested by various people and considered, but they were dismissed when it was determined that

they did not meet the parameters outlined earlier in this report:

- U Street & Georgia Avenue – Washington, DC: There was no clear evidence found that this place is a discernible district or that there have been any organized efforts for it. There is an Upper Georgia Avenue Main Street program, but they do not appear to focus on African American heritage, the Civil Rights movement, or any similar issues.
- 18<sup>th</sup> & Vine Jazz District – Kansas City, MO: This area is overseen by the Jazz District Renaissance Corporation, a non-profit. Their website states that they "seek to create a sustainable, economically strong cultural neighborhood where visitors and residents alike can enjoy the uniqueness of the historic 18th & Vine Jazz District.... we seek to preserve this historic cultural neighborhood, rich in the heritage and legacy of Kansas City's African American traditions." The focus appears to be more on jazz music than cultural heritage.
- Clay Street – Annapolis, MD: While this corridor is part of a predominantly African American neighborhood and the City is attempting to revitalize it, no evidence could be found that a program exists with a focus on cultural heritage, the Civil Rights movement, or similar issues/themes.
- Old West Baltimore – Baltimore, MD: This area has similar circumstances to Clay Street in Annapolis (see above).

Finally, some otherwise relevant places were identified that are attempting to achieve success, but they have not yet reached the point of becoming legitimate destinations. Examples include the North 24<sup>th</sup> & Lake Streets Area (North Omaha, NE), Jefferson Street (Nashville, TN), and the Farish Street District (Jackson, MS). Similarly, Montgomery has various relevant sites and attractions, but has not



yet achieved the level of a district as is envisioned for Mobile. Chattanooga is similarly situated with its African American Heritage Museum and Bessie Smith Cultural Center, but it has no cohesive district.

### QUESTIONS FOR THE CASE STUDY DISTRICTS

The following questions will be posed for the case study districts:

- A. How large is the community's population?
- B. How large is the district geographically?
- C. How does the district's history compare with that of The Avenue District in Mobile?
- D. What prompted the district's revitalization and when did it begin?
- E. What groups and individuals spearheaded the revitalization effort?
- F. What were the primary objectives for the district?
- G. Was there a formal planning process for the district?
- H. What degree of interpretation has occurred, such as interpretive markers or an interpretive center?
- I. What is the mix of current uses, such as entertainment, dining, housing, retail, lodging, offices, institutions, etc.?
- J. Are there any particular "anchors" for the district (museum, community/conference center, etc.)?
- K. How was the district's planning and implementation funded?
- L. How successful do you think the district has been relative to the original objectives?



*Like most of the cultural heritage districts identified through this project as potential case studies, Atlanta's Sweet Auburn District provides lessons to learn. Tied to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., it is strongly promoted in the region and has good name recognition.*

**CASE STUDY #1:**

**Birmingham Civil Rights District – Birmingham, AL**

**Context of the District**

- *Location:* North Central Alabama
- *MSA Population:* 863,000
- *Municipal Population:* 196,910
- *Size of the District:* 4.5-block core / 24 blocks overall

**History of the District**

Known as “Little Harlem,” this important area was home to several black churches in the 1800s. It was common for Birmingham’s African American community to congregate here, and it boasted retail shops, attorneys, doctor’s offices, a half-dozen hotels, and much more. The buildings were designed by black architects and built by black construction companies. Before Jim Crow authorized the separation of races, black businesses had locations throughout the city. After Jim Crow, African Americans and their businesses were restricted to the area that is now known as the Civil Rights District - along Third, Fourth, and Fifth Avenue North, from 15th to 18th Street.

The black business district was not only vibrant during the daylight hours, but it especially thrived throughout the night. On weekend nights, the streets were filled with crowds of people visiting the bars or just out for a stroll. Live entertainment made the district the place to be. Performers such as Duke Ellington, Lucky Millender, Claude Hopkins, Jimmy Lunceford, Sonny Blount (Sun Ra), Fess Whatley (Southland Greatest Swing Band) and Louis Armstrong were known to frequent the Masonic Temple at 1630 Fourth Avenue North. Built in 1922, the seven-story building was not only used for entertainment, but it also housed black professional offices and was the state headquarters for the Masons and the Order of the Eastern Star.

By the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement, Birmingham was deeply segregated, as were most large southern cities. Early attempts to integrate residential neighborhoods had led to a series of bombings. Barred from all but manual labor jobs, black workers struggled to put food on their tables. The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, a Birmingham pastor and Civil Rights activist, sought help from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Together, they launched a series of non-violent activities from 1962 to 1963. Some of the most lasting images of the national Civil Rights movement came from the Birmingham campaign. Examples included police dogs and fire hoses turned against children as they marched for their rights, and the faces of the young girls who died in the 1963 church bombing. These events sparked public outrage, leading to the eventual passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

**Partners & Planning for the District**

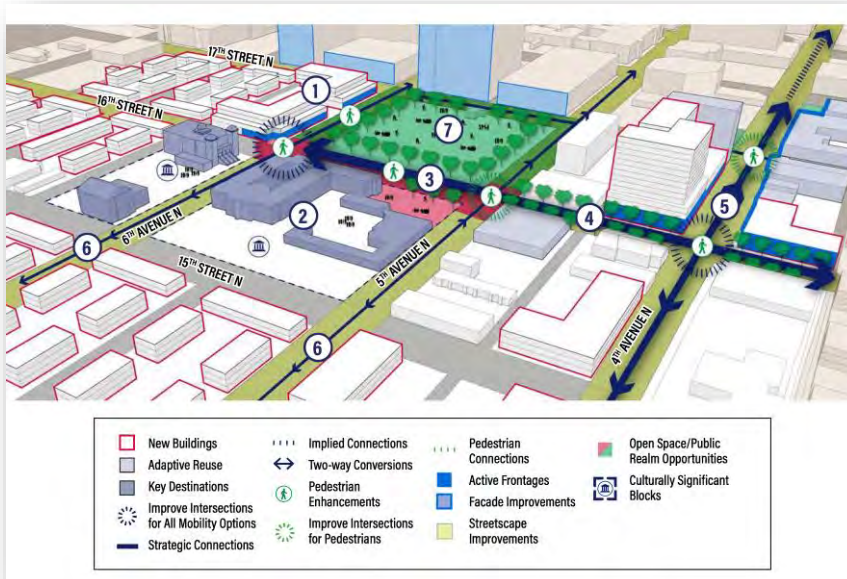
In the late-1970s and early-1980s, a group of black and white Birmingham citizens developed a concept to create an educational and research center that would influence the struggle for human rights all over the world. In 1992, after almost a decade of thoughtful planning and coalition building, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) opened its doors. It was strongly supported by the City of Birmingham, by almost every major business in the city, and hundreds of committed individuals. Designed by architect Max Bond of New York, the Institute stands at the corner of Sixteenth Street and Sixth Avenue North as the anchor in Birmingham’s Civil Rights District. The federal government established the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument in 2017, which encompasses four city blocks in Downtown Birmingham. Key sites include the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Kelly Ingram Park, Colored Masonic Temple, and the A.G. Gaston Motel. The National Park Service (NPS) and City of Birmingham cooperatively manage the area.





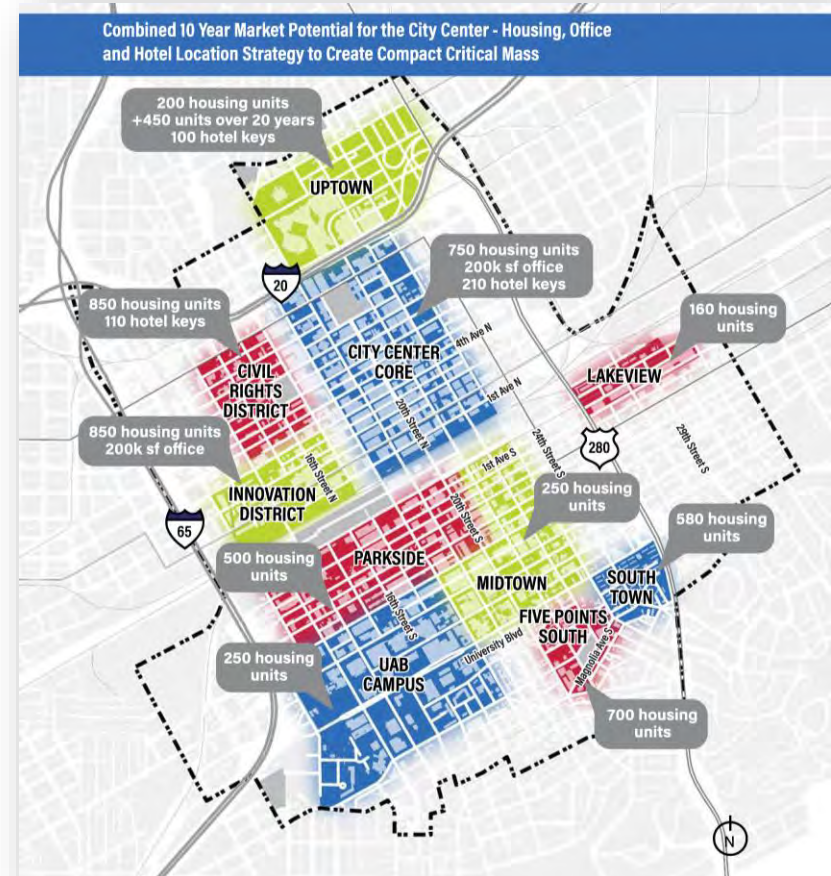
*The A.G. Gaston Motel was an important site during the era of the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham. It represents lodging that was available for African Americans when most lodging was not. Source: Birmingham Civil Rights District website*

In 2020, the City prepared the “Birmingham City Center Master Plan,” and the 27-block Civil Rights District is one of ten districts proposed



*This diagram from the City’s downtown master plan illustrates the key components of the core area of the district. Source: City of Birmingham*

for the study area. The four-block part National Monument portion of the district was given particular focus. Proposed key improvements to the area included an expanded Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a fully preserved and interpreted A.G. Gaston Motel, and a renovated Kelly Ingram Park. It also addresses new infill development near the church intended to not dwarf it in scale.



*This map from the City’s downtown master plan illustrates that the Civil Rights District is one of ten districts. Source: City of Birmingham*

More recently, in 2019, a local economic development agency – Urban Impact - proposed a project for the Civil Rights District referred to as “Freedom Walk.” The plan was to link the Historic Fourth Avenue Business District with the Civil Rights District, as well as the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument. The plan included retail and other developments along Fourth Avenue North, as well as back-alley entertainment space along the corridor and streetscape improvements. The plans also included several buildings in and around the district that could potentially be renovated, and Urban Impact would partner with Main Street Alabama in its revitalization program.

#### **Implementation & Funding for the District**

The district is relatively compact and consists of 12 individual sites, including a diverse combination of historic markers, monuments and memorials, museums, historic churches and institutions, public spaces, and the Fourth Avenue Historic (Business) District. These features are clustered around Kelly Ingram Park. Specific anchors of the district's core area include the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the Kelly Ingram Park, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and the A.G. Gaston Motel. The Civil Rights Institute, a museum which chronicles the events, actions, and victories of the Civil Rights Movement, opened in 1993. It addresses life under segregation, the Civil Rights Movement, the Freedom Riders and marches in Birmingham, and human rights globally.

The Fourth Avenue Business District was once the vibrant home to 300 businesses catering to Birmingham's black community, and there are several remaining black-owned businesses. Historic locations of businesses and sites in the district are demarcated with historic markers. However, the business district only comprises about 20-30% of the total area of the overall Civil Rights District, and it is not the main focus of the district.

In August of 2023, the City of Birmingham approved a \$1 million investment in upgrades to the now 31-year old facility. Just a few months before that, the Jefferson County Commission announced that nearly \$2.7 million of the County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds would be dedicated to six organizations in Birmingham's Civil Rights District to improve their facilities and promote tourism in Birmingham.

#### **Success of the District**

In July 2005, BCRI was accredited by the American Association of Museums, making it only the second African American specific, non-profit fully accredited museum in the country. The district is convenient to Downtown and walkable. Unfortunately, many of the land uses and structures framing this core area are of the type that hinders vibrant private sector uses that can leverage the tourism market. For example, the north end of the park is fronted by an AT&T utility structure with blank facades and an adjacent seven-story parking garage. Other sides of the park feature large parking lots or buildings lacking ground floor storefronts and active uses.



*The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute serves as the primary anchor of the district. Source: US Civil Rights Trail website*



Visits to the district reveal that surprisingly little business spin-off exists in the immediate area surrounding the district can be attributed to the district thus far. It is likely that Birmingham's hotels, air B&Bs, and restaurants benefit, but there does not appear to be much activity directly around the district itself.

Regardless of the district's constraints, the BCRI has become a major attraction for Birmingham, as over 1,700,000 people had visited it by 2007. According to the museum's management, it gets 125,000 to 150,000 visitors annually. US News and World Report lists the district as the #1 recommended visitor attraction in Birmingham. According to surveys conducted by the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel, an overwhelming majority of visitors (over 95%) traveled to Birmingham specifically to tour the BCRI. According to a 2007 article by Lawrence Pijaux on the Black Past website, the BCRI had contributing almost \$20 million annually to the local and statewide economy during its first fourteen years. That figure included: \$5.7 million in direct spending by visitors; \$12.4 million in ripple economic impact; and \$1.8 million in salaries and direct purchases by BCRI.

Finally, the district generally lacks branding such as signage that could be used to tie the disparate sites together.

### Lessons Learned from the District

- *Collaborate with partners having strong technical and financial resources.* Many projects for Civil Rights and cultural heritage districts may not be able to partner with entities as resourced as the National Park Service, as in the case of Birmingham's district. However, a range of potential partners should be sought.
- *Integrate planning efforts for the district into the community's broader community planning efforts.* In 2020, the City prepared the "Birmingham City Center Master Plan," and the 27-block Civil Rights

District is one of ten districts proposed in that plan. It expands upon previous planning efforts for the district, and it makes the district's future development part of the local public policy context.

- *Avoid new development that might overshadow the district's most important sites.* To date, this concept has been followed, and it is spelled out in detail in the City's 2020 City Center plan with respect to buildings such as the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.
- *Activate the district with retail, dining and entertainment uses.* This objective can be accommodated by buildings with ground floor space conducive for these uses, such as interesting storefronts and outdoor dining. Most of the existing physical context for the district does not lend itself to such private sector leveraging.

### Primary Contact from the District

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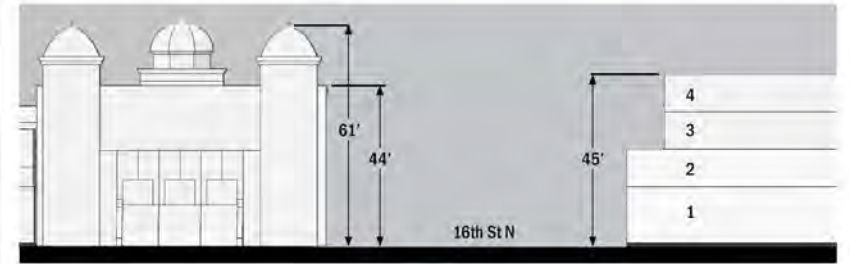
(205) 328-1850



*Sculpture near the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.  
Source: Alabama Tourism Department*



Plans for the core area of the District. Source: National Park Service



Above: Scale Comparison, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church compared to a four-story building

The graphic above illustrates how to develop new buildings near the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church without dwarfing it, while the rendering below provides a vision for the future. Both are from the City Center Master Plan.

Source: City of Birmingham





**CASE STUDY #2:**  
**Greenwood District - Tulsa, OK**

**Context of the District**

- *Location:* East Oklahoma
- *MSA Population:* 1,034,123
- *Municipal Population:* 410,131
- *Size of the District:* 35 blocks\*

\* This was the historically-based size of the neighborhood, but the focal point today is three to four blocks.

**History of the District**

During the early-1900s, the majority of the African American migrants to Tulsa settled in the area that would become known as the Greenwood District, the main thoroughfare of which was called "Black Wall Street." The strict racial segregation of the day resulted in a nationally renowned black entrepreneurial center. As families arrived and homes sprang up in the Greenwood District, the need for retail and service businesses, schools, and entertainment became clear. A class of African American entrepreneurs rose to the occasion, creating a vibrant, vital, and self-contained economy. Greenwood Avenue had it all: nightclubs, hotels, cafés, newspapers, clothiers, movie theaters, doctors' and lawyers' offices, grocery stores, beauty salons, shoeshine shops, and more. Greenwood Avenue began to be compared favorably to legendary streets such as Beale Street in Memphis and State Street in Chicago.



*Greenwood circa 1917 (Oklahoma Encyclopedia)*

In the spring of 1921, social and economic tensions in Tulsa sparked what is considered one of the worst racial violence events in American history. Many white residents felt intimidated by the prosperity, growth, and size of the district. Not only was it expanding in population, but it was also expanding its physical boundaries, eventually encroaching into the boundaries of white neighborhoods. The Tulsa Race Massacre started when police accused a black shoe shiner of assaulting a white woman. After a group of armed white men and a group of armed black converged at the jail, an incident between two men occurred that sparked the tragic event. The two-day massacre occurred from May 31<sup>st</sup> through June 1<sup>st</sup>. It did not end until the Oklahoma National Guard intervened.

As many as three hundred people lost their lives, although the numbers have been debated and vary widely. Property damage was in the millions of dollars, and approximately 5,000 district residents were left homeless. The 35-square-block Greenwood District was left in ruins. Tulsa's African American community eventually rebuilt the ravaged district, much of it occurring within a decade of the massacre. By 1942, it boasted 242 black-owned and black-operated business establishments.



*Massacre aftermath (Wikimedia)*

Sadly, following its rebirth during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, integration, urban renewal, a new business climate, and the aging of the early Greenwood District pioneers caused the community to decline starting in the 1960s and continuing through the early-1980s. Desegregation had encouraged black citizens to live and shop elsewhere in the city, causing Greenwood to lose much of its original vitality. Few businesses remained by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Partners & Planning for the District**

In 1996, 75 years after the massacre, the State legislature authorized the formation of the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. The commission's final report, published in 2001, recommended a program of reparations to survivors and their descendants. The state passed legislation to establish scholarships for the descendants of survivors, encourage the economic development of Greenwood, and develop a park in memory of the victims of the massacre in Tulsa. Schools in Oklahoma have been required to teach students about the massacre since 2002.

The Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission (TRMCC) began in 2015. TRMCC reached out to and included key Greenwood District organizations - The Greenwood Cultural Center, the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce, and the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation - as well as numerous other Greenwood District leaders, community members, and Massacre descendants to identify projects to commemorate the entire rich history of the Greenwood District and position it for growth and development. They identified five key areas of focus:

1. Education
2. Arts and culture
3. Cultural tourism
4. Commemoration
5. Economic development

The team of over 30 people traveled to Montgomery, Alabama, to visit other examples of social justice institutions and met for months to determine the TRMCC's defining work. TRMCC then developed a list of projects to be completed by 2021 that would meet the core purpose of truth-telling, educate the world about the history of Greenwood, and spur entrepreneurial opportunities. TRMCC recognized that the Centennial and these projects would be the start of Greenwood's renaissance, not simply the culmination of the 2021 Centennial. The budgeted projects resulted in an ambitious fundraising goal of nearly \$30 million, which TRMCC achieved.

### **Implementation & Funding for the District**

Revitalization and preservation efforts in the 1990s and 2000s resulted in tourism initiatives and memorials, including the following:

#### Greenwood Cultural Center

Built in 1995, the Greenwood Cultural Center was created as a tribute to Greenwood's history and as a symbol of hope for the community's future. It has a museum, an African American art gallery, and a large banquet hall. The total cost was nearly \$3 million. The building includes the Mabel B. Little Heritage House, the rebuilt home of 1921 Massacre survivors Sam and Lucy Mackey. The larger center was built to include this historic house. The Center sponsors and promotes education and cultural events showcasing African American heritage. Its award-winning summer and after school programs include the "Young Entrepreneurs" Summer Program, the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools Summer and After Schools Program, and Orbit, a theater-arts program in collaboration with the Tulsa Performing Arts Center. In 2011, the Center lost all funding from the State of Oklahoma, threatening its existence. However, the community responded with donations and GoFundMe campaigns, and the Cherokee Nation contributed to its summer programs. Michael Bloomberg donated \$1 million to the Greenwood Art Project



in 2019. In 2021, President Biden visited the Center during the 100-year commemoration of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The Greenwood Chamber of Commerce has sent promoted the idea of National Park Service (NPS) involvement with the District (see the most recent information on that idea below).



#### John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park

In 2008, construction began at 290 North Elgin Avenue for a Reconciliation Park to commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. John Hope Franklin, son of B.C. Franklin and a notable historian, attended the groundbreaking ceremony. After his death in 2009, the park was renamed John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. Attractions include two sculptures and a dozen bronze informational plaques. It was primarily designed for education and reflection, as opposed to recreational activities, as with many parks. Originally funded by the State, City, and private donors, it is now owned by the City and managed by a non-profit corporation - the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation.



#### Greenwood Rising History Center

The Greenwood Rising History Center was completed in 2021 at 21 North Greenwood Avenue on the corner of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street. It is a state-of-the-art history center located at the Greenwood District that provides an opportunity for visitors to reflect upon and honor the legacy of Black Wall Street before and after the Tulsa Race Massacre.



### Other Area Partners & Sites

Other partners in the district include the following:

- *Greenwood Chamber of Commerce* – this organization focuses on the district and includes participation, in particular, by area landlords.
- *Black Wall Street Chamber of Commerce* – while honoring the spirit of Black Wall Street, this organization has a community-wide perspective for African-American owned businesses.
- *Hille Foundation* – this foundation supports a range of non-profits in Tulsa, particularly those related to the revitalization and promotion of the Greenwood District.

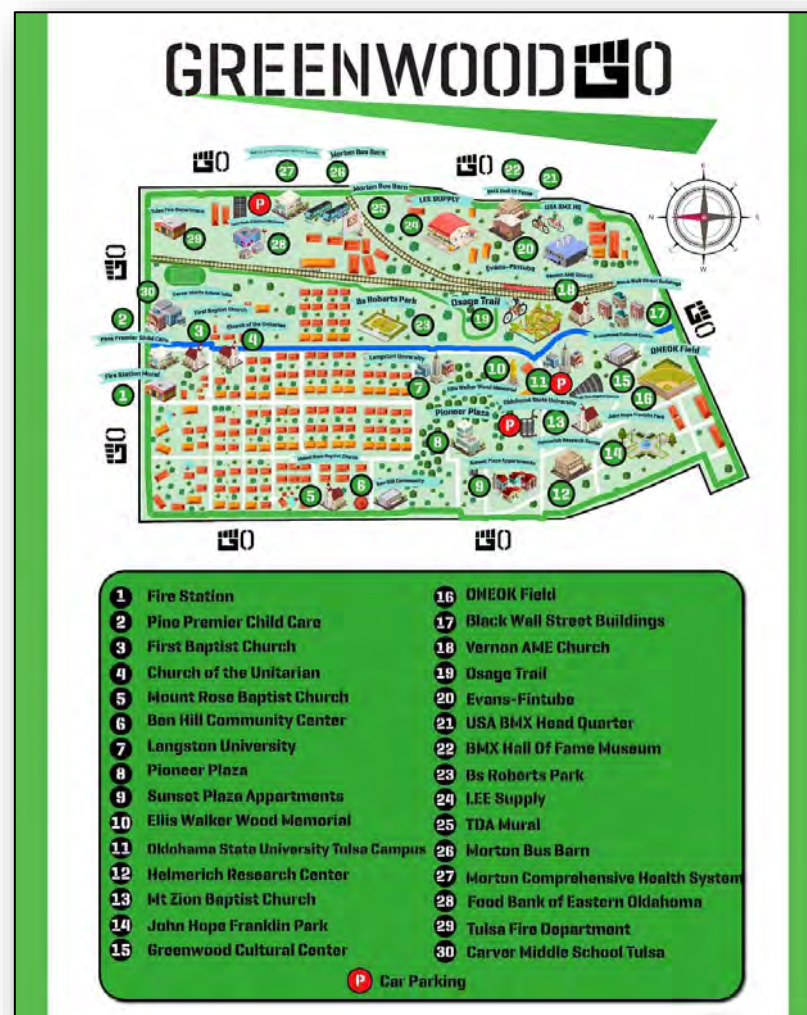
Other important sites in the Greenwood District include the following:

- Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Mount Zion Baptist Church
- Black Wall Street Gallery
- Tee's Barber Shop
- Wanda J's Restaurant
- The Loc Shop on Black Wall Street
- Black Wall Street Tees & Souvenirs
- Fixins Soul Kitchen

With respect to the TRMCC's \$30 million raised since its establishment in 2015, their raised funds were spent as follows:

- Greenwood Rising History Center building and start-up operations - \$20 million
- Greenwood Art Project - \$1.2 million
- Pathway to Hope and Greenwood District markers - \$1.75 million
- Greenwood Cultural Center Renovation - \$5.3 million (City funds)

- Commemoration Activities, Community Grants, Educational Programming, and Economic Development programming - \$1.5 million



Map from GreenwoodGo



Also, the Greenwood Rising organization has employed the National Main Street Center's "Four Point" approach of organization, design, economic vitality, and promotion. See graphic at right.



### Success of the District

In recent years, a wide range of key destinations have been built within the district. In 2010, the city's minor league baseball team, the Tulsa Drillers, began play in a new stadium constructed in the Greenwood District. Among the considerations for the location was the opportunity to leverage economic benefits to the district. Along with ONEOK Field, associated development has included a hotel and an expanded mixed-use district. Also, the GreenwoodGo project came about as a response to the Black Lives Matter Mural being abruptly removed from Greenwood during the aftermath of the George Floyd murder. The mural brought people to the district and it highlighted the importance of art in outdoor spaces, as well as the need for people to have safe and accessible places to walk, bike, and exercise. GreenwoodGo addresses those needs by creating a network of paths and trails that connect residents and visitors to the entire Historic Greenwood District. More recently, the removal of the segment of I-244 that disrupts the district has been considered. The Mayor's office recently approved funding to conduct a study and the US Secretary of Transportation has even commented positively on the concept. Also, in December of 2023 Oklahoma Senator James Lankford and New Jersey Senator Cory Booker introduced a bill to establish Historic Black Wall Street as a National Monument to be overseen by an appointed commission and managed by the National Park Service

(NPS). Advocates included over ten Tulsa-based non-profits comprising the Black Wall Street Coalition. The bill is still under review.

Links to videos on the district are provide here:

<https://youtu.be/8QDaAL4qsl8>

<https://youtu.be/omLJ4eOIY44>

### Lessons Learned from the District

- *The district might have benefitted from a single managing entity.* While that issue cannot be reversed at this point because there are numerous well-established entities involved, greater coordination between the groups would be helpful. People are currently often confused regarding who to go to for certain issues.
- *Consider the needs for a community center.* In the Greenwood District, the Greenwood Cultural Center serves this role to a certain extent. However, entities such as the Greenwood Rising History Center, from time to time, are called upon to play a similar role as a community center. Centers in the area need better programming.
- *Even unrelated anchor uses can leverage benefits to the district.* ONEOK Field – the minor league baseball stadium – is thematically unrelated to Greenwood's history and cultural resources. However, private investments nearby such as restaurants that might not be able to survive simply on heritage tourists can benefit by the baseball fan market support. Recent attendance is record-breaking.
- *Interpretive centers addressing virtually any topic can attract large audiences if done with enough creativity.* The story of Greenwood is a powerful draw in and of itself. However, the tremendous creativity and engaging nature of the exhibits at the Greenwood Rising History Center make the visitor draw that much stronger. It is clearly the key anchor for the district today.

## Primary Contacts from the District

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List of businesses in 1921 mounted on a facade



Rebuilt core of the commercial area today, including a mural below







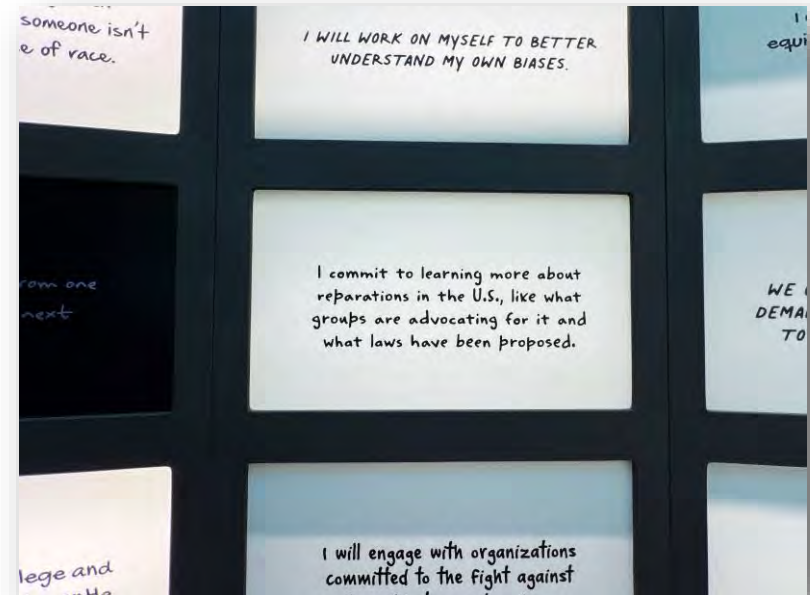
One of numerous plaques in the sidewalks indicating where specific businesses existed in 1921



Racial reconciliation exhibit in the Greenwood Rising History Center (see more related photos above at right)

## HOW WILL YOU TAKE ACTION TOWARD RACIAL RECONCILIATION?

Join us by submitting your commitment.



### CASE STUDY #3

#### Douglas Block – Rocky Mount, NC

##### Context of the District

- *Location:* East North Carolina
- *MSA Population:* 144,090
- *Municipal Population:* 53,957
- *Size of the District:* 3 blocks

##### History of the District

*The following history has been adapted from the City's 2004 redevelopment plan for the area by The Walker Collaborative:*

Rocky Mount experienced a building boom during the 1920s, and it was during that era that the Douglas Block emerged. In 1925, Dr. Junius Douglas built the Douglas Building, and in 1926 the Savoy Theatre (later renamed the Booker T) was built. Because of the Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation, the area soon grew as the only alternative for African Americans in Rocky Mount for their goods and services. With a rich variety of businesses and entertainment, including the Manhattan Theatre, this area was a social hub for the African American community through the 1950s.

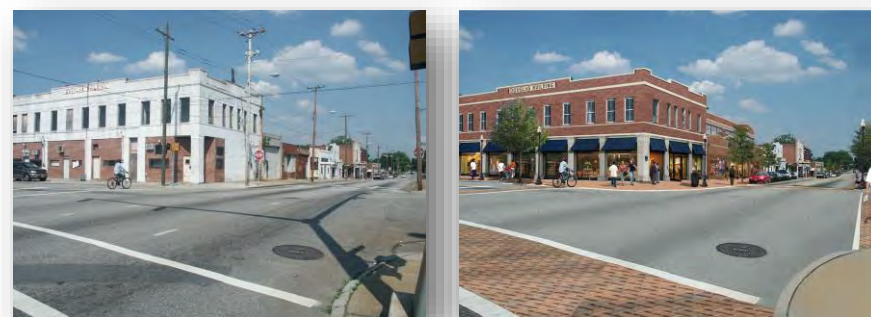
The Douglas Block also has a rich musical history that is a story. The best-known musician associated with the community is Thelonious Monk, the legendary jazz musician. Born in Rocky Mount in 1917, his family moved to New York while he was a child, but even his brief time as a Rocky Mount resident is reason enough to celebrate his life. Another important piece of musical heritage was the annual "June German" dances. Accommodating thousands of people from the region, tobacco warehouses near the Douglas Block were used to host entertainers such as Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Count Baise, Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, and Billie Holiday.

The Civil Rights Movement in Rocky Mount has a national perspective

given that icons such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke there during the 1960s. Ironically, the Civil Rights Movement contributed toward the physical and economic decline of the Douglas Block area beginning in the late-1960s. Prior to that era, Rocky Mount's African American community was quite limited with respect to where they could secure various services, shop, dine, and be entertained. The Douglas Block area's property owners and businesses took advantage of this opportunity. However, once the Civil Rights Movement brought about changes that allowed Rocky Mount's African American community to enjoy much greater economic and social freedoms, the Douglas Block area no longer had a captive market. By the 1970s, the area had suffered a severe economic and physical decline.

##### Partners & Planning for the District

In 2004, the City hired a consultant team to prepare a redevelopment plan for this important area. The plan included an economic and market analysis, alternative development plan scenarios, a transit plan, and a historic interpretation strategy based upon a strong public input process. Key recommendations included the rehabilitation of historic buildings, new infill mixed-use buildings, a community center / interpretive center, a plaza and amphitheater, day care, townhouses, streetscape redevelopment, new public parking lots, financial incentives for the private sector, and zoning adjustments.



*Visual simulations from 2004 plan – existing (left) and proposed (right)*  
Source: The Walker Collaborative





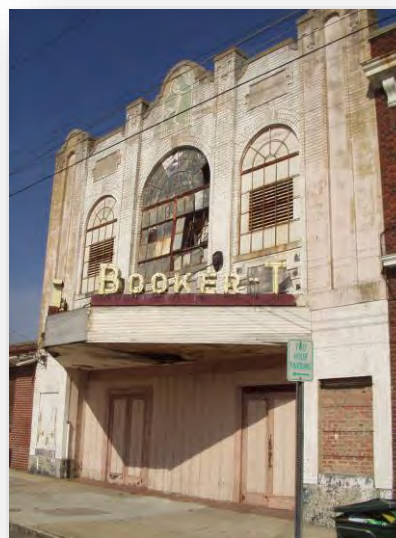
### Implementation & Funding for the District

The City used the 2004 redevelopment plan to secure a \$1 million federal Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grant in 2010, a \$2.8 million Section 108 loan, and a \$285,000 federal special appropriation for implementation. They also obtained Historic Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits to help fund the project. Phase I of implementation consisted of building rehabs, and Phase II featured new construction.

In 2018, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality entered into an agreement with the City of Rocky Mount to develop a Downtown Event Center on eight acres adjacent to the Douglas Block as a follow-up of the 2010 brownfields agreement. Formerly an auto service station and ice company, the site cleanup included addressing impacts from underground and aboveground petroleum storage tanks. Through the brownfields agreement, the City conducted environmental assessments and removed multiple underground fuel storage tanks and contaminated soil at the site. One interesting aspect is that all of the key restored buildings are still owned by the City, which uses a management company to deal with tenants.

### Success of the District

The Douglas Block district is located at the north end of the Downtown Rocky Mount business district. It lies in close proximity to major cultural and educational facilities, including the Imperial Centre for the Arts & Sciences, the Veterans' Memorial at Jack Laughery Park, and the Braswell Memorial Library (all one block west) and the Rocky Mount campus of Edgecombe Community College (two blocks south). Douglas Block buildings comprise 25,000 square feet of commercial retail space, distributed as follows: Douglas Building (4,465 sq. ft.), Manhattan Theater (3,545 sq. ft.), Burnette Building (7,000 sq. ft.), Stokes Building (4,770 sq. ft.), and Thorpe Building (3,446 sq. ft.). The historic Booker T. Theater was transformed into a multi-purpose facility for theatrical and musical performances, movie showings, banquets, parties, and meetings. A digital projector is available, as well as seating for up to 300 people. Also, eight residential units are located on the second floors of the Douglas



*The Booker T. Theatre has been restored – before (left) and after (right)  
Source: The Walker Collaborative*

Building (5) and Burnette Building (3). Those efficiency and one-bedroom units range from 614 to 928 sq. ft. and feature several features designed to maintain low energy consumption and costs.



*Ribbon-cutting ceremony for the restored Douglas Building*  
Source: The Walker Collaborative

For additional information, visit the following two videos:

<https://walkercollaborative.com/rockymountnc-neighborhoods/>

<https://youtu.be/SaWXRm7NZAi>

### Lessons Learned from the District

- *Pursue a wide range of funding sources to implement the project.* As noted previously, funding for this project included a federal Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grant, a Section 108 loan, a federal special appropriation, historic rehabilitation tax credits, and New Market tax credits. Those varied sources were critical to the ultimate project success.
- *Seek a use/business mix reflective of the historic mix when the district was at its peak.* The current mix is very similar to that of the area during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it includes a doctor's office (pediatrician), restaurants, a coffee house, lawyers offices, a theatre, a hair salon, a soap making shop, and upper floor housing units.
- *Even unrelated anchor uses can leverage benefits to the district.* Like Greenwood's minor league baseball stadium in Tulsa, the Douglas Block has the major Rocky Mount Event Center (opened in 2018) that can leverage economic spin-off benefits to nearby private sector businesses.
- *Fill in the "missing teeth" with compatible new buildings on the most important streetscapes.* This lesson has not yet been realized, as there are several vacant lots where historic buildings that could not be saved once stood. New buildings filling in the gaps would provide more visual cohesiveness to the area, as well as providing opportunities to house additional uses that could make the area a larger draw.
- *Use streetscape improvements to encourage private sector investment.* An important part of the revitalization of the district was the development of new streets and streetscapes, including the addition of street trees and human-scaled historic looking street lights. These types of public sector investments make private



investment that much more appealing.

- *Tie the district's historic themes to nationally-recognized themes, when possible.* Although jazz great Thelonious Monk only spent a short amount of time in Rocky Mount after being born there, his legacy has been leveraged to help brand the district. The “Chitlin” Circuit” hosted black entertainers during the segregation era, and Rocky Mount’s past as a stop on the circuit has been tied to that theme.

#### **Primary Contacts from the District**

##### Rocky Mount/Edgecombe Community Development Corporation

Joyce Dickens – President & CEO

[rmecdc@embarqmail.com](mailto:rmecdc@embarqmail.com)

(252) 442-5178

##### City of Rocky Mount

JoSeth Bocook – Deputy Director

Department of Development Services

[joseph.bocook@rockymountnc.gov](mailto:joseph.bocook@rockymountnc.gov)

(252) 972-1179



*The 165,000 square foot Rocky Mount Event Center opened in 2018.*

## **4) Brand Guidelines Book**





# BRAND GUIDELINES

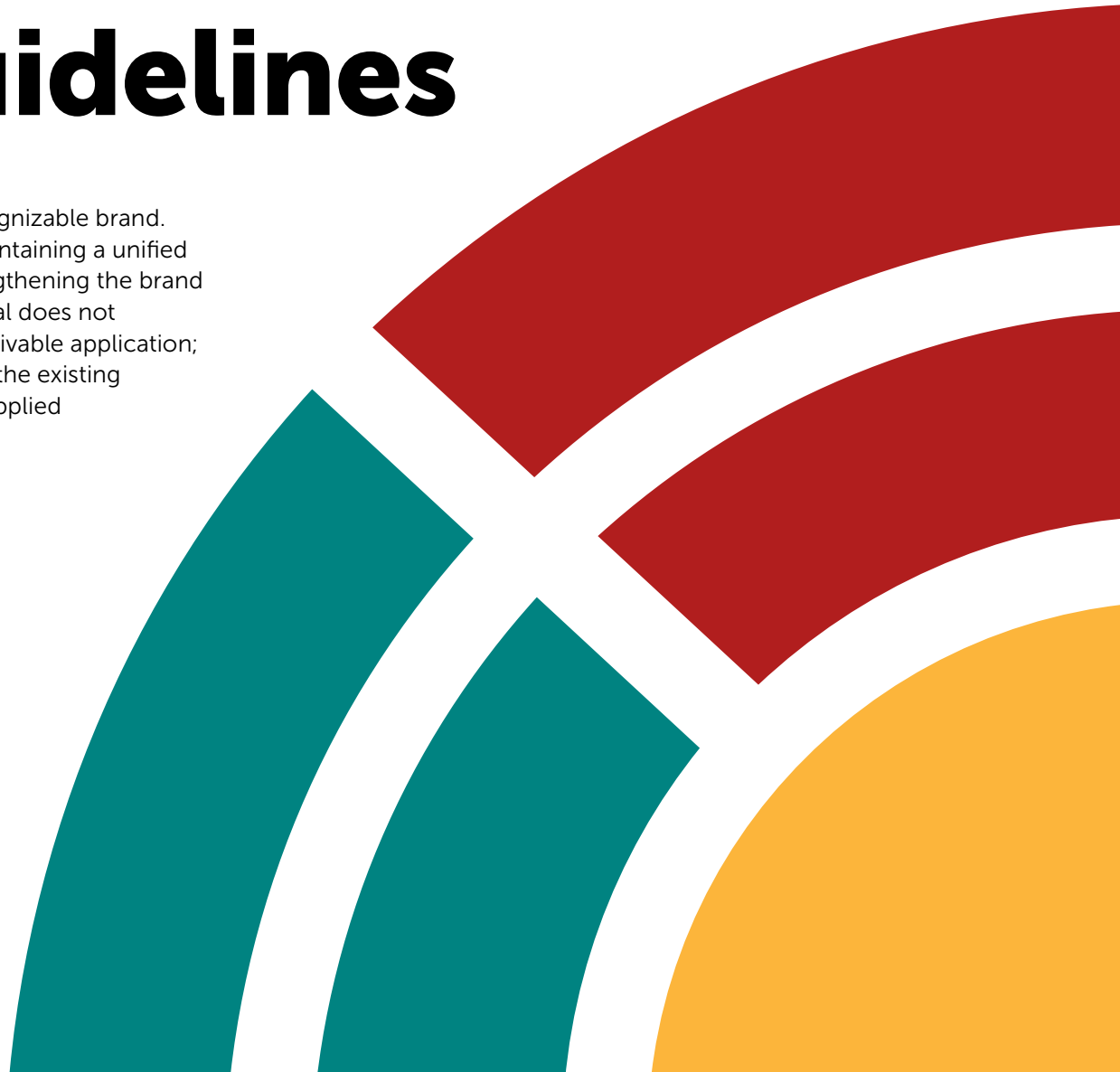






# Welcome to Our Brand Guidelines

Consistency is key to building a strong and recognizable brand. These guidelines provide the framework for maintaining a unified brand identity across all communications, strengthening the brand presence and reinforcing our values. This manual does not attempt to provide a set of rules for every conceivable application; instead, it sets out detailed specifications for all the existing applications and it outlines guides that can be applied to any new applications.





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# Introduction

The Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage District is more than just a geographical space; it celebrates the collective past—community—a cohesive area rich with themes, stories, and significant sites that deserve to be preserved, enhanced, and cherished. It's a vibrant tapestry of history, resilience, and community spirit.

At the heart of this initiative lies "The Avenue," a historic corridor that echoes the voices of our ancestors. Once a bustling "Main Street" for Mobile's African American community, The Avenue served as both a hub of cultural life and a battleground for social justice during the Civil Rights movement. Despite the challenges posed by urban renewal and governmental programs, the vision is clear: a commitment to reviving the untold stories of Mobile's Civil Rights legacy and fostering a new generation of engaged community members.

## **The Vision and Goals for building a district brand include:**

Embarking on a community-driven master plan and brand that seeks to:

- **Preserve** the historic sites that tell our stories.
- **Interpret** the rich narratives that define our identity.
- **Promote** heritage tourism revitalizing the area without leading to gentrification.

## **Through these efforts, we aim to:**

- **Honor** Mobile's profound civil rights and cultural heritage, valuing the firsthand memories of our residents.
- **Protect** and preserve the historical essence of The District by employing authentic communications and storytelling that resonate with local, regional, and national audiences.
- **Renew** confidence in The District, transforming perceptions and inspiring economic investment for a brighter, inclusive future.

This branding guideline is not just a set of rules; it's a commitment to honoring our cultural heritage while paving the way for education, entrepreneurship, and prosperity. The logo, inspired by the District's rich cultural history, reflects its potential as a thriving hub for culture and future commerce.

This guideline ensures clear and consistent visual communication of the District's identity across all platforms—from publications to signage, and from websites to business papers. Adhering to established standards for layout, color, and typography ensures a unified presentation that reflects our mission and values.

As we embark on this journey, we invite you to join us in building public awareness of the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage District. Together, we can cultivate a vibrant future for The District, rooted in the rich legacy of our past.



# Logo

This brand guide outlines the proper usage for the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage logo. The logo serves as the cornerstone of the visual identity, representing the mission to preserve and promote the rich history of civil rights and cultural heritage within Mobile County.

# 02







# Primary Logo

This is the primary logo used for the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage brand. Consistent application of this logo is crucial for maintaining a unified and professional brand presence across all platforms and materials. This guide provides clear specifications for its size, color variations, clear space, and acceptable uses, ensuring a cohesive and recognizable brand image.

## Logo Meaning

The Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage District celebrates and promotes the rich history and vibrant future of the community. The logo, featuring a road leading toward a rising sun, perfectly encapsulates this dual focus. The road symbolizes the journey toward progress and a brighter future, while the sun's rays represent the district's core pillars:

-  Arts & Entertainment
-  Entrepreneurship
-  Education
-  Faith & Spirituality

These pillars serve as the foundation upon which the district aims to build, fostering growth and development in these key areas. By highlighting these elements, the district seeks to not only acknowledge its past but also actively cultivate a thriving and culturally rich environment for generations to come.





## Secondary Logo

### "The District" Logo with Banners

This section of the brand guide details the usage of the secondary logo for "The District," a key initiative of the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage. This distinct logo, featuring banners representing the core pillars of the district—Arts & Entertainment, Entrepreneurship, Education, and Faith & Spirituality—serves to specifically identify and promote this vibrant community. While the primary logo represents the broader organization, this secondary logo focuses on the unique character and multifaceted nature of The District. Consistent application of this logo, according to the guidelines outlined herein, will reinforce the district's identity and effectively communicate its diverse offerings and community focus.







# Logo Usage

This section provides essential guidelines for the use of the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage logos (both primary and secondary). It outlines specific “don’ts” to ensure consistent and effective brand representation. Adherence to these guidelines maintains the integrity of the visual identity and avoids misrepresentation or dilution of the brand message.

Alternate logo use will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. In situations such as special use signage, e.g., vehicle, building, trade show, or any other situation where the logo will require adaptation or be scaled beyond the size limitations set forth in these guidelines, color accuracies and visual integrity will determine the size limitations and restrictions.

## **DO NOT Distort**



## **DO NOT Change Colors**



## **DO NOT Place on Unapproved Backgrounds**



## **Icon Usage**

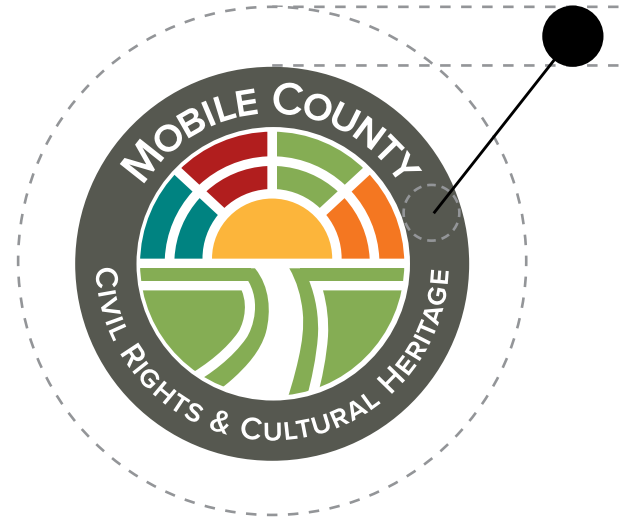
In some instances the icon can be used separately,  
**BUT THIS REQUIRES APPROVAL.**





## Logo Clear Space

Clear space, also known as exclusion zone or buffer zone, refers to the area surrounding the logo that must be kept free of any other graphic elements, text, or imagery. The following guidelines detail the minimum clear space required for each logo variation. Adhering to these specifications guarantees the logo's integrity and prevents visual confusion.







# Logo Minimum Size

To ensure legibility and maintain the integrity of the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage logos, it's crucial to adhere to minimum size requirements for both print and digital applications. Reducing the logo below these specified sizes can result in distortion, loss of detail, and difficulty in recognition.

## Print



— 1 Inch —

## Digital



— 117 Pixels —



— 1 Inch —



— 117 Pixels —



# Colors

Color plays a vital role in establishing brand recognition and conveying specific emotions and messages. The Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage brand utilizes a carefully selected color palette that reflects the values, history, and mission. This section of the brand guide outlines the approved primary and secondary colors, providing specific color values for various applications (print, web, and digital media). Adhering to these color specifications ensures that our visual communications are consistent, impactful, and clearly represent the organization.

# 03





# Primary Logo Colors



RGB: 87, 89, 82  
CMYK: 0, 32, 87, 0  
WEB: 575952



RGB: 252, 181, 59  
CMYK: 0, 32, 87, 0  
WEB: eab447



RGB: 64, 129, 128  
CMYK: 86, 16, 44, 21  
WEB: 408180



RGB: 152, 36, 36  
CMYK: 0, 96, 91, 30  
WEB: 982424



RGB: 144, 171, 90  
CMYK: 48, 8, 83, 9  
WEB: 90ab5a



RGB: 217, 118, 45  
CMYK: 0, 66, 100, 0  
WEB: d9762d



# The District Logo Banner Colors

The colors used in the banners integrated into “The District” logo are used to represent different pillars of the Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage. Each banner has a unique color assigned to it to represent a specific community aspect. The specifications for those colors are listed below.



RGB: 64, 129, 128  
CMYK: 86, 16, 44, 21  
WEB: 408180



RGB: 152, 36, 36  
CMYK: 0, 96, 91, 30  
WEB: 982424



RGB: 144, 171, 90  
CMYK: 48, 8, 83, 9  
WEB: 90ab5a



RGB: 217, 118, 45  
CMYK: 0, 66, 100, 0  
WEB: d9762d





# Background Colors for Logo Usage

The choice of background color significantly impacts the visibility and effectiveness of the logo. To ensure optimal contrast and legibility, it's crucial to use the logo on appropriate background colors. This section outlines acceptable background colors for each logo variation. Generally, the logo should be placed on backgrounds that provide sufficient contrast, allowing it to stand out clearly. Avoid using background colors that are too similar to the logo's colors, as this can cause it to blend in and become difficult to see. Specific examples of acceptable background colors are shown here, ensuring consistent and impactful visual communication.



White  
RGB: 255, 255, 255  
CMYK: 0, 0, 0, 0  
WEB: ffffff



RGB: 178, 176, 160  
CMYK: 29, 23, 35, 2  
WEB: b2b0a0



RGB: 236, 228, 192  
CMYK: 3, 5, 26, 2  
WEB: ece4c0



RGB: 252, 238, 177  
CMYK: 0, 9, 32, 0  
WEB: fceeb1





# Color Palette

Our brand's color palette extends beyond the core logo colors to include primary and secondary accent colors. These colors play a role, adding consistency, visual interest, and flexibility to our brand identity across various applications. The primary colors are used as a foundation for backgrounds, sections, and typography. The secondary accent colors offer further options for highlighting specific information, creating visual hierarchy, and differentiating sections within layouts. These accent colors should be used strategically and in moderation, complementing the primary logo and maintaining a cohesive brand experience across both print and digital materials.

When designing for a specific pillar, use the corresponding pillar color as an accent color.

The four pillars:

-  Arts & Entertainment
-  Entrepreneurship
-  Education
-  Faith & Spirituality

Consistent application of these colors will reinforce our brand identity and ensure a polished and professional look.

## Primary Color Palette



RGB: 0, 2, 13  
CMYK: 60, 40, 40, 100  
WEB: 00020d



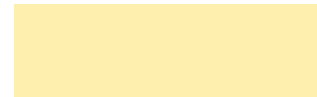
RGB: 87, 89, 82  
CMYK: 0, 32, 87, 0  
WEB: 575952



RGB: 178, 176, 160  
CMYK: 29, 23, 35, 2  
WEB: b2b0a0



RGB: 236, 228, 192  
CMYK: 3, 5, 26, 2  
WEB: ece4c0



RGB: 252, 238, 177  
CMYK: 0, 9, 32, 0  
WEB: fceeb1

## Accent Colors



RGB: 64, 129, 128  
CMYK: 86, 16, 44, 21  
WEB: 408180



RGB: 152, 36, 36  
CMYK: 0, 96, 91, 30  
WEB: 982424



RGB: 144, 171, 90  
CMYK: 48, 8, 83, 9  
WEB: 90ab5a



RGB: 217, 118, 45  
CMYK: 0, 66, 100, 0  
WEB: d9762d



RGB: 252, 181, 59  
CMYK: 0, 32, 87, 0  
WEB: eab447





## Alternate Versions

Our logo is available in two alternate colorways:

### **Black:**

Provides a simple option for high-contrast applications or when color is limited in certain applications.

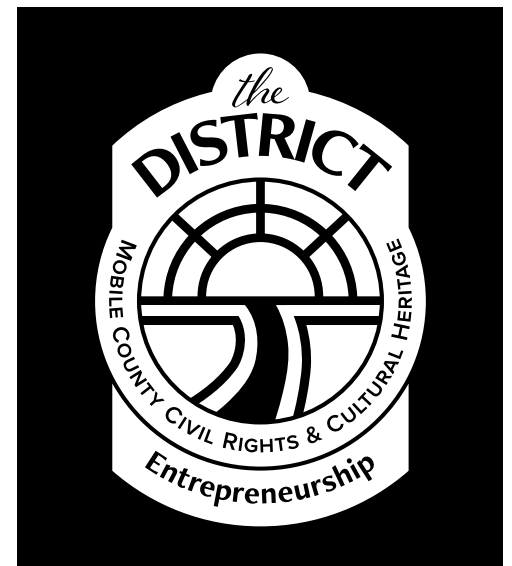
### **Reversed (White logo):**

Offers a light alternative for dark backgrounds or when black is not suitable.

One Color Black



Reversed





# Typography

Typography is a crucial element of our brand identity, shaping how our message is perceived. This section outlines the approved fonts, typefaces and usage guidelines, ensuring consistent and effective communication across all platforms.

04





# Logo Fonts

## Primary Logo Fonts

This section specifies the fonts and typefaces used in the primary logo. These fonts should not be altered or substituted to maintain consistency throughout the brand identity.





## Secondary Logo Fonts

The District logo expands on the primary logo to highlight an individual pillar such as Faith & Spirituality. The fonts and typefaces used are outlined in this section.







# Primary Identity Font

Our primary font is the cornerstone of our visual identity. It's carefully chosen to embody our brand's personality and values, ensuring consistency and recognition across all platforms from headlines, body copy, callouts and captions.

## Museo Sans

---

**Aa**

**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**

**+880123456789**

**@#\$%&\*+!**



## Typeface Styles

Below are the different typeface styles available in the Museo Sans font family.

Museo Sans 100

Aa Aa

Museo Sans 700

**Aa Aa**

Museo Sans  
Condensed 100

Aa Aa

Museo Sans  
Condensed 700

**Aa Aa**

Museo Sans 300

Aa Aa

Museo Sans 900

**Aa Aa**

Museo Sans  
Condensed 300

Aa Aa

Museo Sans  
Condensed 900

**Aa Aa**

Museo Sans 500

Aa Aa

Museo Sans  
Condensed 500

Aa Aa



# Paragraph Fonts

The primary paragraph font is Museo Sans, providing visual clarity in a modern style. For long copy documents, Adobe Garamond Pro, a serif font, can be used for its ease of readability.

## Paragraph Typeface

### Museo Sans

It remporemolut omnim volorehent voluptio. Nam, soluptaquo quam illiqui ducieni molecum, volo ius abore sitatqu ibuscit aut poreiurest, sectat ullitis modipitiam restis et quundebis voluptas di ulparchitem facersperum voluptaqui nest, cum consed quatur mil idunt fuga. Et deria nonsecus evellaut landunt la.

## Secondary Paragraph Typeface for Long Copy Letters and Documents

### Adobe Garamond Pro

It remporemolut omnim volorehent voluptio. Nam, soluptaquo quam illiqui ducieni molecum, volo ius abore sitatqu ibuscit aut poreiurest, sectat ullitis modipitiam restis et quundebis voluptas di ulparchitem facersperum voluptaqui nest, cum consed quatur mil idunt fuga. Et deria nonsecus evellaut landunt la.





# Stationery

Consistent stationery is crucial for projecting a professional and unified brand image. These tangible touchpoints reinforce brand recognition and build trust with the public.

The following guidelines outline the style and specifications for various stationery items included in the Mobile County Civil Rights and Cultural Heritage brand identity.

# 05



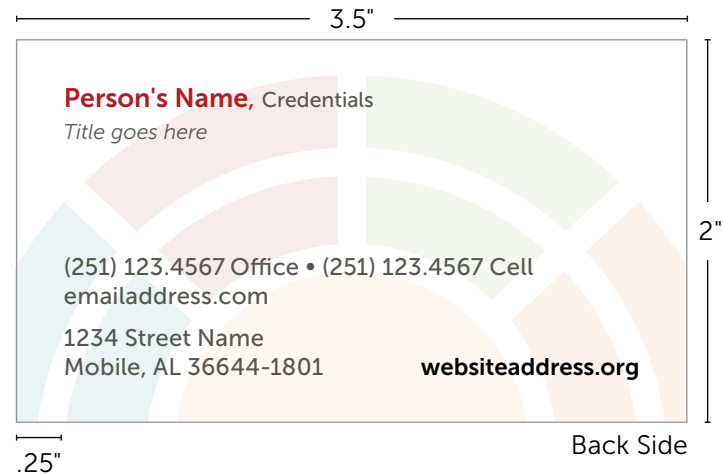
# Business Card

## Specifications

Size: 3.5"w x 2"h  
Ink: 4-color process, full bleed  
Stock: 14pt Matte Stock



Front Side

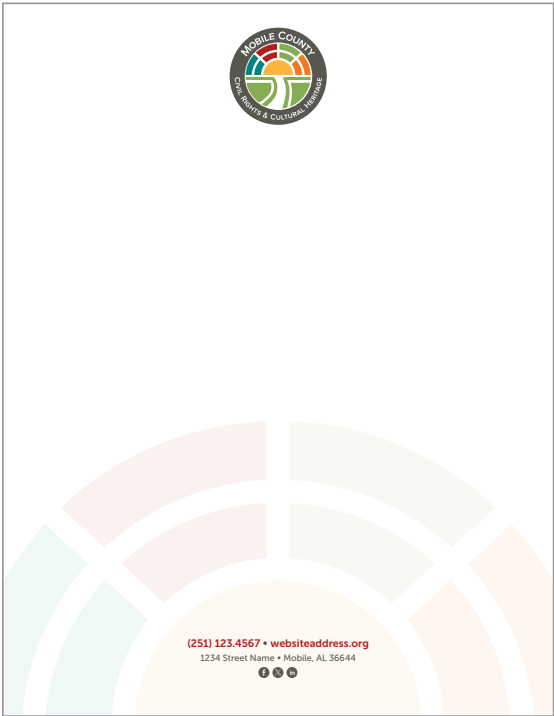




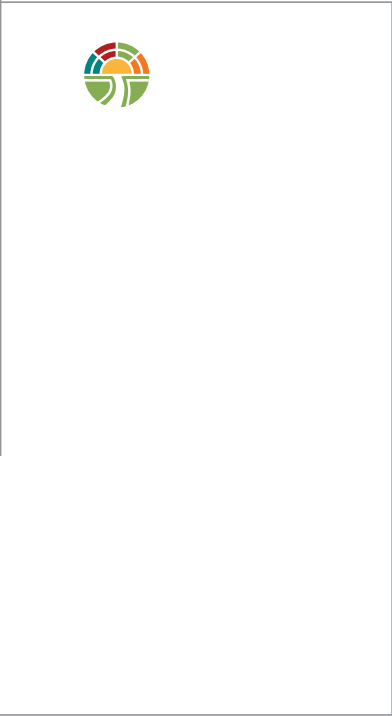
# Letterhead

## Specifications

- Size: 8.5" x 11" Inches
- Ink: 4-color process, full bleed
- Stock: 70 LB. Opaque Smooth White Uncoated



Primary Letterhead

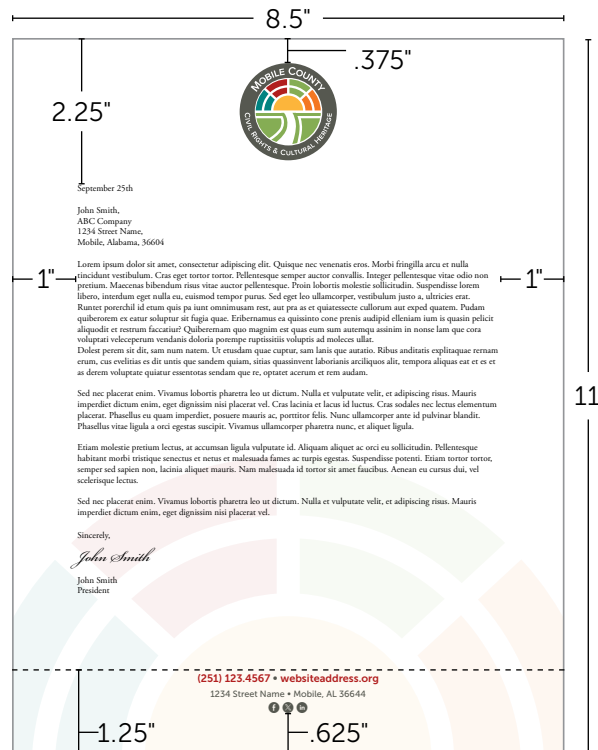


Secondary Overflow Sheet

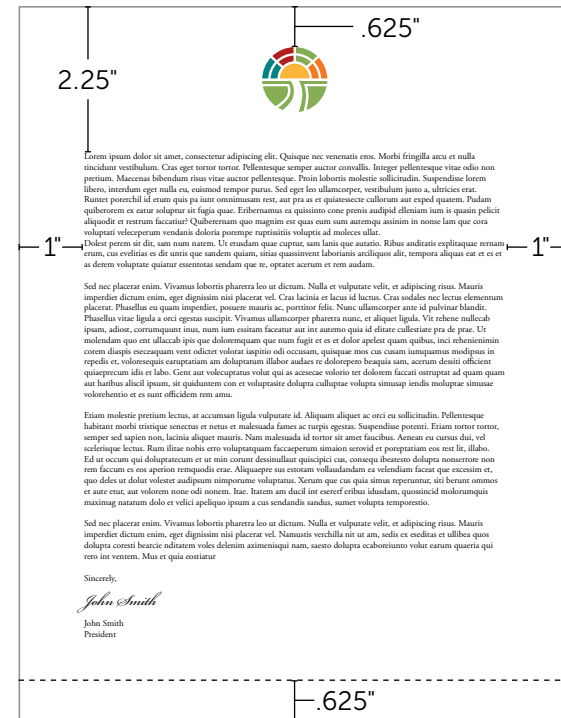




## Letterhead Margins



Primary Letterhead



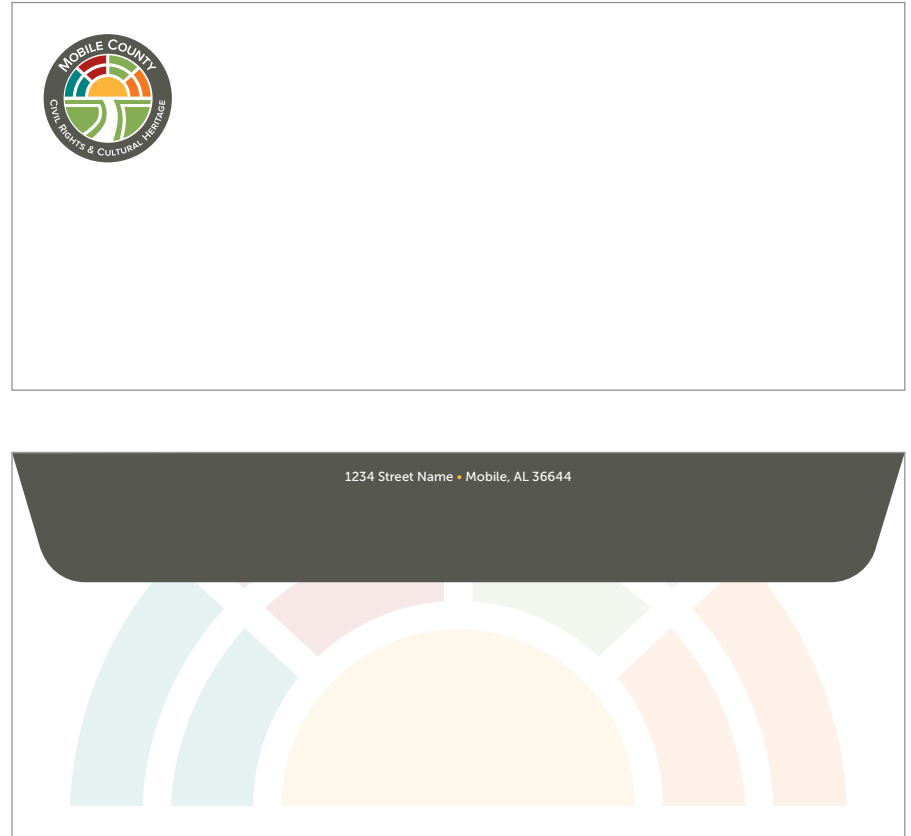
Secondary Overflow Sheet



# Envelope

## Specifications

Size: #10 Commercial Envelope (4.125" x 9.5")  
Booklet Flap  
Ink: 4-color process  
Stock: 70 LB. Opaque Smooth White Uncoated





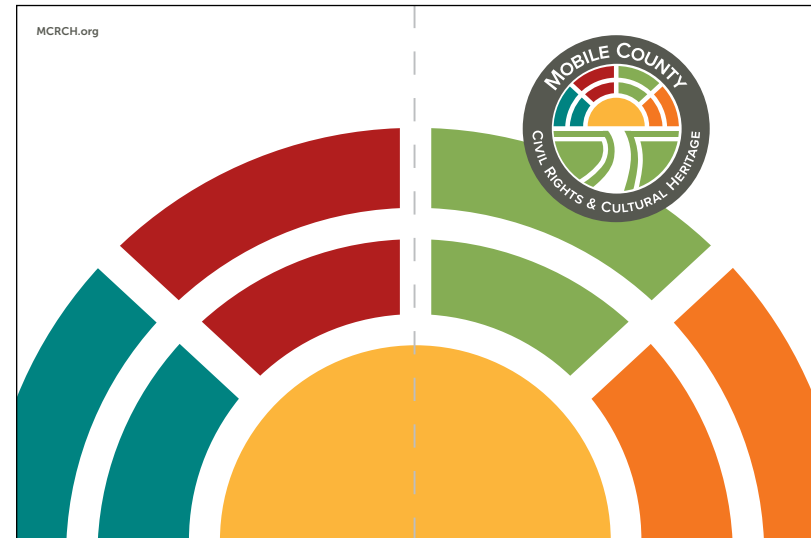
# Presentation Folder

## Specifications

Size: 18"w x 12"h folded to 9"w x 12"h  
 Ink: 4-color process, full bleed  
 Stock: 14pt Cover Gloss White Smooth  
 Other: Score/fold (Center of width)  
 2 Horizontal glued pockets  
 Horizontal business card slits  
 Coating: Aqueous coating

Back

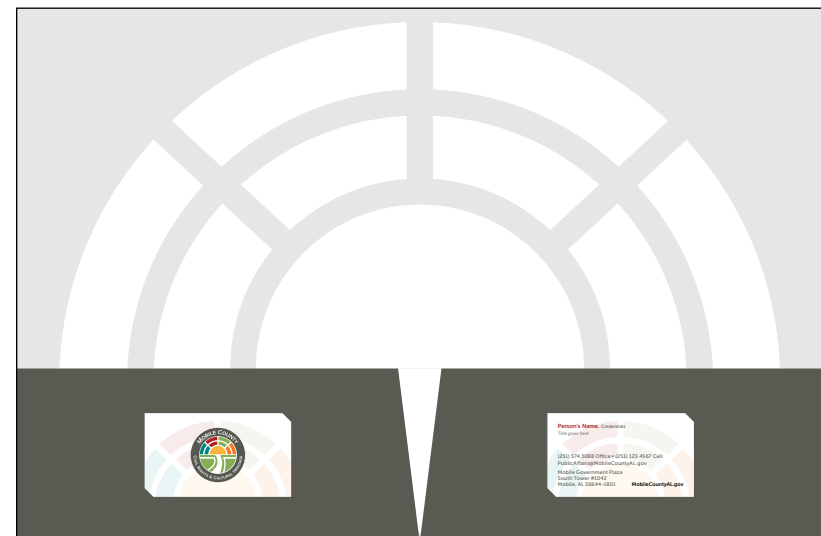
Front



Front



Inside







# Digital

In today's digital landscape, consistent logo usage across all online platforms is crucial for establishing brand recognition and reinforcing brand identity. Whether it's on a website, social media profile, app icon, or digital advertisement, the logo should be prominently and consistently displayed. This constant visibility helps create a cohesive brand experience, strengthens brand recall among audiences, and fosters a sense of trust and familiarity. Adhering to specific guidelines ensures its effectiveness and prevents misuse that could dilute the brand's impact.

# 06



# Social Media Application

Use the logo or icon as your social media profile picture. This ensures instant brand recognition and maintains visual consistency across all platforms. The icon can be used when the text of the full logo becomes too small to be legible. When using the icon be sure to reference the name “Mobile County Civil Rights & Cultural Heritage” in titles, headers, etc., to ensure clarity in communication.

Imagery for social media profiles should adhere to the visual guidelines and include images within the boundaries of The District.



Full Logo



Icon



# Signage

Consistent signage is crucial for establishing a strong and recognizable brand presence. Adhering to these guidelines ensures a unified visual identity across all physical locations.

# 07





# Signage Guidelines



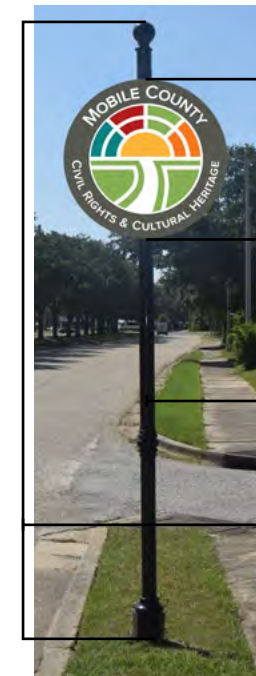
## Primary Logo

The primary logo should be used in locations that represent all aspects of the overall brand message.



## The District Logo

The secondary logo should be used in locations or events referencing a specific "pillar" category of the brand such as Arts & Entertainment, Entrepreneurship, Education, and Faith & Spirituality.



Final Sign Dimensions are TBD.

Poles to match current downtown signage system

Height is approximately 102"

## General Signage Notes

All signage should adhere to the current Mobile County and City signage guidelines, including approved poles and installation hardware. Signs should be mounted at the appropriate height for maximum readability and visibility.



# Imagery

Our brand imagery should consistently portray authentic moments of human connection and positive engagement within diverse settings. We aim to capture the vibrant energy of successful interactions, whether in a collaborative business environment, a stimulating educational setting, the inspiring world of arts and entertainment, or the reflective space of faith and spirituality. Images should showcase genuine emotions like joy, focus, inspiration, and connection, avoiding overly posed or artificial scenarios. The focus should be on depicting the positive impact of these interactions, highlighting how our brand empowers individuals and communities to thrive. This approach will ensure our visuals resonate with the audience, conveying a message of optimism, progress, and shared success.

08



# Imagery Guidelines

**Do** use imagery depicting real life situations with a positive feel.

**Do** show environments that highlight The District's core pillars.

**Do** present people in bright natural light and positive community roles.







# Promotional

To maintain brand consistency across all applications, the logo must be reproduced according to the guidelines outlined in this manual. When applied to specialty products, such as apparel (shirts, hats, etc.) and accessories (coffee mugs, water bottles, etc.), the logo should be positioned and sized appropriately to complement the product's form and function.

09



## Promotional Examples



Here are a few examples of how The District logo may be used on promotional items. Notice that the appropriate size proportion in relation to the typography is always maintained. Brand standards specifically for promotional product and apparel usage are currently being developed. Therefore, any use of The District mark for promotional usage prior to updates to these guidelines must be approved prior to reproduction.



# Inquiries

For inquiries regarding brand guidelines, including appropriate logo usage or visual identity, please contact the Public Relations (PR) department of Mobile County Commission. It serves as the central point of contact for all brand-related questions and can provide the necessary guidance and resources to ensure consistent and accurate brand representation.

## Contact Information:



**1234 Street Name**  
**Mobile, Alabama 35544**



**emailaddress@url.com**



**(251) 123-4567**



**MobileCountyAL.com**

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# **Building Our Brand Together**

**By adhering to these guidelines, we ensure a consistent and powerful brand presence across all platforms and touchpoints. This unified approach strengthens our brand recognition, reinforces our core values, and fosters a stronger connection with our audience. This guide serves as a living document, subject to updates as our brand evolves. We encourage you to refer to it regularly and to reach out to the PR team with any questions. Together, we can maintain the integrity and strength of our brand.**



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