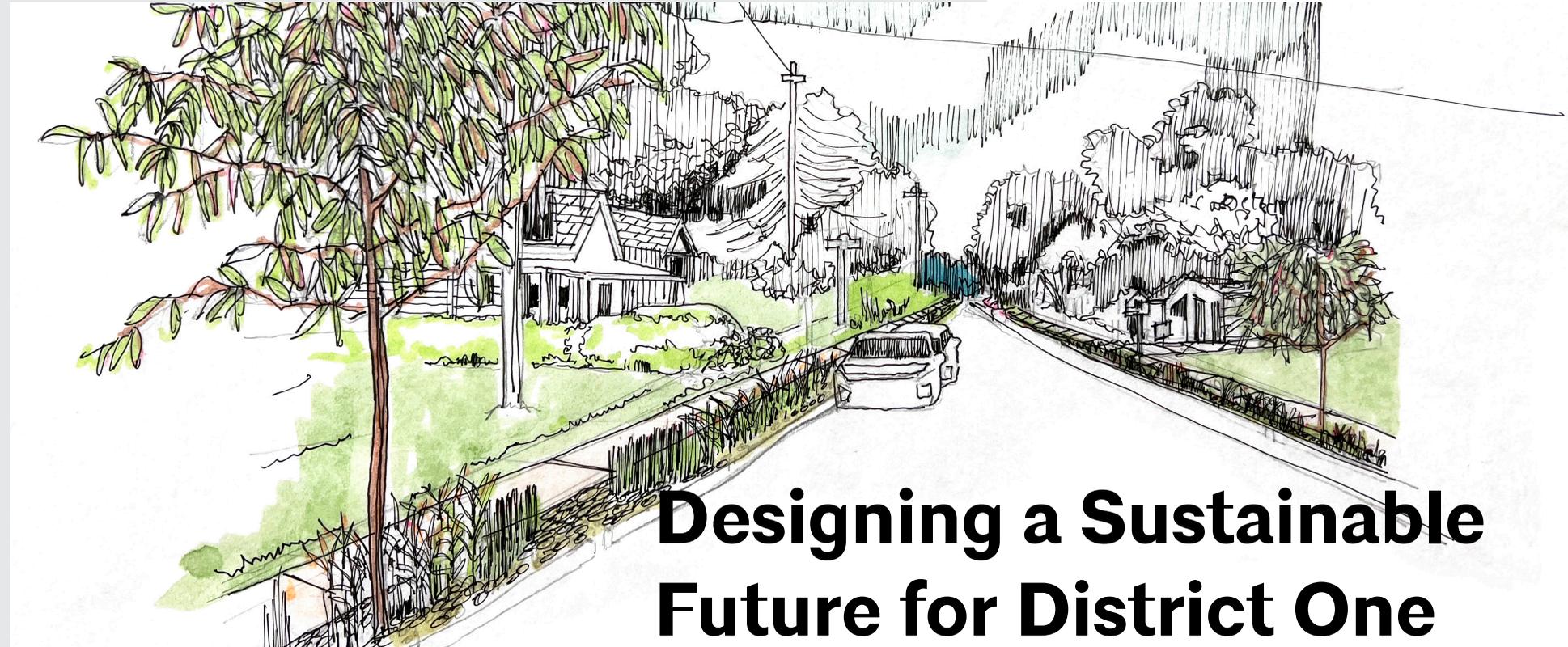


July 11-13, 2022



Designing a Sustainable Future for District One

AIA
Communities
by Design

Savannah, GA DAT Report

Disclaimer

The ideas represented in the following report are those of the American Institute of Architects' design assistance team, based on our observations of Savannah's District One community and its existing plans, the insights gleaned from the community's public workshops and conversations, and the ideas shared with us about the area and the aspirations for it in interactions with a range of stakeholders. The process has informed our thoughts and this report represents our best professional recommendations in the public interest. We do not serve a client in this endeavor. The report, and the process that produced it, is a public service to the District One community.

The ideas captured here represent four intensive days of work (July 11-13, 2022) and the information available to us at the time of this writing. We do not expect this report to be followed as verbatim, prescriptive advice. This work represents a beginning – we hope a new beginning – for the area. It should be understood as a developmental tool, and we expect the community will expand on these ideas and amend them as you make it your own. This report serves as an opening mechanism to begin the necessary public work and we expect the ideas to evolve and change as you utilize it and as District One continues to evolve through the public processes to follow.

Contents

Introduction	1
Community Leadership	8
Environmental Justice	13
Community & Economic Development	19
Public Policy & Resources	26
Moving Forward	30
Team Roster & Acknowledgments	32
Appendices	36

Dedication

This report is dedicated to Laureen Monica Boles, a resident of Carver Village, a citizen of Savannah, and a previous AIA national team member in multiple communities. We count Laureen as both a dear friend, and a valued professional in our network of public servants. This report is offered in the spirit of service that Laureen has exemplified, both here in Savannah and in other communities around the country through our program. It was Laureen who began the conversations with West Savannah leaders and residents about the possibility of hosting an AIA Design Assistance Team, and it is because of her commitment to her community that our team has responded to work with you to develop strategies that meet your dreams for tomorrow.

The Design Assistance Team (DAT) Program

For over half a century, the American Institute of Architects' design assistance teams have worked with communities to envision brighter futures and build the strategies to realize them. Our program was founded in 1967 as a response to the democratic call to action that the civil rights movement sparked in cities across the country. One of our founding volunteers was David Lewis, a South African exile who was active in anti-apartheid efforts there before coming to the United States in the 1960s. He – and other founders of our program – developed our methodology with several core operating principles, including an emphasis on local democracy and citizen participation as the driving element of all planning and design, the independent public service role for professionals beyond the normal constraints of politics and agenda-driven decision-making, and the need for a more holistic, interdisciplinary approach to designing our communities. As David Lewis liked to say, “the foundations of our cities

are the people.” He believed that American Urbanism was based on democracy and that urban design should represent the values of a society through its physical framework – connecting citizens to one another and enabling the unique community identities that our cities produce through that interaction. As such, the work of healing and repairing the urban wounds and trauma of the past in cities in the US and globally has been at the center of our mission for decades. It has been a founding goal of our program since its inception. Our program was designed with the intention to be a resource to communities like West Savannah. For these reasons, the communities of District One in Savannah have tremendous importance to our program – and to our broader profession. Your story matters to us – not only your history, but the story you are living today and the one that you will write tomorrow.

About Our Savannah Team

The AIA Design Assistance Team is an interdisciplinary group of professionals from around the country that were assembled specifically for this process. They were deliberately chosen from outside the state of Georgia. They were not paid for their service to the District One community. They were not engaged in any business development activities. It is also important to note that AIA teams do not serve a client. They were not another consultant team hired by a developer, institution or government agency. As a group of legitimate outsiders, their efforts are all made in public service to the community and the recommendations offered in this report are done so in the public interest, taking into account the community's values and aspirations, as well as the existing conditions. The team's role in this process included the following key components:

- To review dozens of existing plans and background documents about the area, from the Canal District Master Plan to past neighborhood plans to the City's Racial Equity and Housing Action Plans and other documents regarding environmental

conditions and port plans.

- To observe conditions in the area and gain an understanding of the physical framework for the westside, the issues facing the community, and its opportunities.
- To listen to the westside's resident experts share their experience and knowledge about existing conditions, community values, priorities, and aspirations for the future.
- Finally, to apply their best professional expertise in the public interest, using information learned through the process and community priorities to develop a set of strategies that respond directly to the needs, values, and desires of the community.

The following report is offered in the public interest with those components in mind. We hope that it may serve as a guide to implementation in the coming years.





Introduction

In 2021, a group of residents, non-profit leaders and elected officials living in the District One area of West Savannah, GA, approached the American Institute of Architect's Communities by Design program seeking help in reimagining their community. Communities by Design staff and the project team leader visited West Savannah in April to meet with residents, city officials, and others. The visit impressed on the AIA team that West Savannah indeed suffered from many years of poor planning, leading to haphazard placement of industry, degradation of the natural environment, and physical isolation reinforced by public infrastructure.

West Savannah as a community cannot be divorced from the port city of Savannah, GA which has a long, storied, and complicated history. It is the city's nineteenth century involvement and dependence on slave trafficking that so defines its spatial, social, economic, and cultural evolution. Inherent in the institution of slavery was the coda that people of African descent were not human, nor were they worthy of the freedoms and benefits of American society. This racialized pattern of evolution has long persisted in Savannah and other places in the United States. As a result, there is a tangible and persistent pattern of inequality in the provision of basic planning for, and implementation of, policies nurturing sustainable African American communities in Savannah.

Despite the myriad inequalities that shaped Savannah's black communities, the residents developed and built communal life as best they were allowed. Black artisans and carpenters built beautiful homes in many neighborhoods near central areas of commerce and outlying districts – including the study area for this report, West Savannah (inclusive of the Canal District). Black Savannah worked as longshoremen, made livelihoods through craft-based industry or the skilled trades. They had a professional class of doctors, lawyers, and shop keepers that lived in and participated

in communal life. Residents also built schools and faith institutions that were life enriching and sustaining even in the face of hostile segregation. No wonder then, that the Communities by Design staff (and later a larger West Savannah study group) encountered community voices that were clear: they reveled in the richness of the community they once knew and wished for the resources and planning assistance to help them determine a new future based on principles of sustainable economic and community development.

The City of Savannah has invested in a lot of solid citywide work recently to analyze key issues, from housing affordability to racial equity. Citywide plans can form important frameworks for the way we view policy. However, the communities of West Savannah represent an important geography where these issues have a powerful convergence – a place where they move beyond the abstractions of disparity to the lived conditions and narrative of place. Therefore, District One should be a priority for the city as it considers how to implement each of these policies because it is a geography that is home to all of these concerns – a place of important intersection where investments yield substantial benefit across the board rather than in just one narrow area.

The Charge

District One residents made the case that they were poised and possessed the social capital necessary to reverse the negative trends. The Communities by Design program assembled a group of volunteer professionals to help West Savannah residents birth a vision of the possibilities for their local circumstance. This report is the product of the Communities by Design Team's visit to West Savannah in July 2022.

The DAT team began our assessment with some key assets which included the presence of elected officials (serving on City Council) living in the community, a core group of residents that care about community betterment and are willing to organize for change.



The Team also met city officials who, while resolute in their development plans for the area, still engage with community leaders. The charge to the Team was to:

1. Listen to community voices for their view of present challenges and future opportunities
2. Observe the spatial, economic, and environmental realities on the ground in search for a coherent vision and matching strategies for the West Savannah residents to consider
3. Present recommendations for productively engaging with local government and quasi-governmental entities key to any reimagining of West Savannah.

What follows is not a one-size-fits-all theory of development and change. Rather, the DAT Team took elements from their disciplinary and professional backgrounds to suggest recommendations based in the intersection of environmental sustainability, community and economic development and community organizing.

Situation Analysis

Contemporary Savannah can be described as a city with vast inequalities, where investment in infrastructure and development has been institutionalizing these inequalities into the very fabric of society. The community needs a strategy to address the challenge of changing this institutionalization of inequality. As Savannah moves forward with expanded opportunities surrounding its port economy and the Enmarket Arena, the City must develop its built environment in a manner that protects and benefits its most vulnerable communities. Savannah must avoid a future as a bisected city in which some areas grow and thrive while others suffer or are displaced. Economic expansion and development thus far have impacted different sectors of the population unevenly, benefiting some areas while leaving many of the city's historic African-American communities behind economically and under stress from displacement pressures and environmental threats.

The Crucible of West Savannah: Tracing the Lineage of Racial Disparity

To observe conditions in West Savannah is to acknowledge as stark and dramatic a case of urban inequality as anything we've seen in the United States. It is an undeniable fact that systemic racism has shaped much of what has led to the city today – and its dramatically unequal realities. Racial disparity has been a defining characteristic of these neighborhoods since their inception and has been built into the physical fabric of the area from its beginning. The area's history illustrates how consistent racial disparity has been as a defining issue over every era of the city's development.

- **Slavery, Plantations & The Weeping Time.** The earliest land uses in the area following European settlement in the 1700s were as slaveholding plantations, farms, and rice fields. During this time, the Port of Savannah played a significant part in Trans-Atlantic slave trade as the entry point for numerous enslaved peoples from West Africa. It is important to note the historical significance of slavery. The Weeping Time – the largest slave auction in American history – was held at the Ten Broeck Race Course in this community in 1859, a history that remains untold beyond a small historical marker. The City of Savannah was established in 1733. Slavery existed in this community for 116 years, almost 40 percent of the entire city history. A good portion of the historic fabric of this city was built by enslaved people, which has profound importance to the city's contemporary identity.
- **The Canals and Railroads.** Disparities were carried over into the 19th and 20th century through a combination of segregation and discrimination using infrastructure. The development of the Savannah-Ogeechee Canal began in 1826. By the 1890s, the canal had become obsolete as railroads became the method of transporting goods from the area. It has stood since as a physical barrier through West Savannah. Similarly, the railroads

create barriers that to this day cut the community off from the wider city.

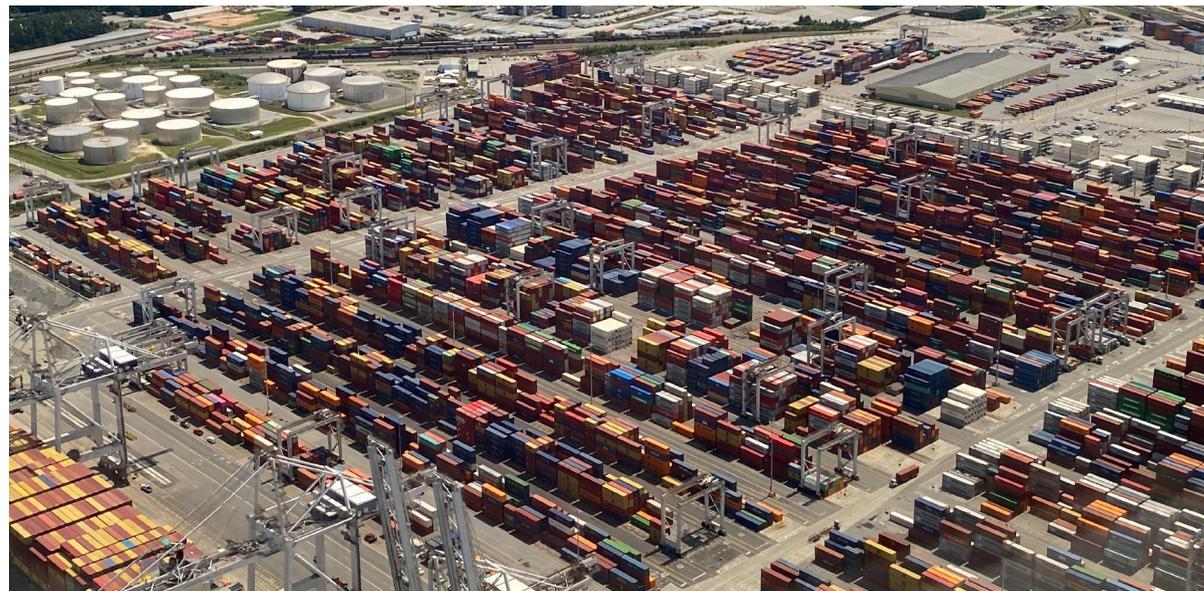
- **Redlining and Segregated Housing.** In the 20th century, the area was subject to the era of segregationist housing policy. The notorious practice of redlining – discriminating in mortgage loans by race – was also impacted the area. A 1936 map of Savannah created by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) illustrates the neighborhood consequences of racial discrimination in mortgage finance. Though the 1968 Fair Housing Act made such practices illegal, such discrimination persists today. In 1948, Carver Village was built as a segregated neighborhood, the "Carver Village Exclusive Colored Housing Development." It became the largest individually-owned housing development for people of color in the world for a time. Despite the circumstances of its creation, Carver Village became a thriving community for African-Americans. Residents like Lt. Henry Mack, who was a veteran of World War II in a segregated US Air Force and purchased his plot in 1948, lived in Carver Village until his death in 2020 – 72 years later. The Historic Carver Village/Flatman Village Conservation District was created in 2020.
- **Highway development.** In the 1960s, the development of I-16 displaced residents and destroyed existing neighborhoods in the area. As one account reportedly notes, "The Black-owned homes and businesses along what was then known as West Broad Street, now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, were profoundly undervalued and razed for the construction of the I-16 overpass. The Carver Heights, Carver Village, and Cloverdale communities were essentially cut from the social and economic fabric of the larger community, resulting in years of disinvestment and deterioration." The infrastructure has remained as a barrier for neighborhoods in the West Savannah community.



- **Environmental Injustice & the CIA Experiment.**

In 1955, the CIA unleashed “Operation Big Buzz,” a classified war experiment on unsuspecting residents of West Savannah, [specifically Carver Village](#). The experiment released over 300,000 mosquitoes from aircraft and through ground dispersal methods to test whether they could serve as a delivery mechanism for yellow fever if targeted. This secret government experiment on African-American communities was declassified in 1980. Understandably, the resulting community outrage and mistrust carry over to today. The port adjacent communities of West Savannah have been burdened by environmental justice issues for decades, but the growth of the port economy has made them more acute. The land use conflicts and insufficient transportation system are reflections of planning decisions that prioritized industry over communities. As the Canal District Master Plan observes, “Large industrial sites abut residential neighborhoods where many African American families secured homeownership for the first time in the 20th century. These neighborhoods are poorly served by the insufficient stormwater system and underutilized wetlands, and the highways and railroads along the District boundaries are designed to support the resident industry rather than the people who live there.” The resulting health impacts are dramatic.

- **Contemporary Challenges – The Port and the Arena.** The area’s current challenges are framed by the combination of two unprecedented developments – the Enmarket Arena and the expansion of the Port economy. The Arena is the largest project in city history, and is designed to fuel new growth in the Canal District, but is also creating real estate and displacement pressures for neighborhoods. The port is one of the fastest growing operations in the country, with growing encroachment of industrial property on neighborhoods, creating acute environmental and quality of life issues for residents.



The contemporary realities experienced in West Savannah are but the latest evolution of an inequality that persists. It has a direct lineage, passed through generations of citizenry and the physical framework. It is not just a historical narrative – it is a defining contemporary reality that continues to negatively impact the citizens of West Savannah today. The enslaved populations of the plantations have living descendants today. Some of the original homeowners of Carver Village – segregated by design – still live in their homes there, and in many cases subsequent generations of families have inherited these homes. They continue to experience a different reality from other areas of the city; simple observation reveals dramatically different circumstances when comparing the condition of the built environment across neighborhoods. The contrast is unmistakable. It impacts economic opportunity, accessibility, mobility, health and safety, and resilience.

In many cases, the citizens of West Savannah and their families have participated in building the infrastructure, the canals, the celebrated historic district of the city, but they haven’t often been the beneficiaries of similar investments in their home neighborhoods. The Canal District Master Plan noted that “African American communities have lived and worked in West Savannah for nearly three centuries. When west Savannah was still home to plantations – one of which gave the Springfield Canal its name – African Americans and Irish immigrants built the canals that drained the land and transported the goods that drove Georgia’s economy. They built the railroads, too, including the striking brick viaducts that arch over West Boundary Street today.” As [Pastor Larry Gordon](#) of the Weeping Time Coalition put it, “our enslaved people really built our fair town, hauled up the ballast stones and hauled down the cotton bales to the ships. The Black workforce made the bricks and hewed the timbers, and forged the decorative iron balustrades that make such a lovely appearance in our built environment.” Their descendants – our neighbors – deserve the same kinds of investments that have made the rest of the city so successful in their home neighborhoods.

Progress on racial equity is therefore a central organizing principle of this process, not only because it will have benefits for the citizens of West Savannah but because it will have benefits for the entire City.

The neighborhoods of West Savannah have experienced systemic inequality that stands in stark contrast to the downtown historic district and other city neighborhoods. As the Canal District Master Plan acknowledges, “The conditions for walking, riding, and driving in the Canal District could not be more different from those in Downtown Savannah, one of the most pedestrian-friendly urban environments in the world.” The public realm is completely different, and it is cut off from the rest of the city. Again, as the Canal District Master Plan observes, “the tangle of highways, railroads, canals, and wetlands forms a barrier between Downtown and west Savannah.” There are dozens of dead-end streets resulting from this infrastructure, cutting off connections to the rest of the city. The Master Plan acknowledges key challenges facing the community. For instance, it notes that “today, the area is overwhelmed by traffic on streets used to move cars and trucks from the highways to the adjacent industrial properties.” It also states that the area has “the most underinvested stormwater system in the City.” These conditions reflect a history of city design and planning that has largely excluded and disenfranchised the citizens of West Savannah’s neighborhoods. It is a lasting indictment of city-building and the societal values such designs reflect. Therefore, the burden is upon today’s public processes to make intentional and explicit their interest in hearing those voices and serving the public interest in wholly new ways. We hope this process can represent a small step in the greater departure from past traditions.

Broken Trust & A Fractured Civic Landscape

Each of these eras have legacies that live on today in their impacts, creating pervasive mistrust that is grounded in past experience. For instance, vaccine hesitancy in West Savannah’s African-American neighborhoods during COVID was linked to the CIA experiment of the 1950s and the distrust that has lasted

generations as evidence and experience has reinforced the rationale to be cautious about anything government agencies are promoting. Trust must be earned, and will require frameworks that allow for more communication across sector and more transparency to set the table for collaboration. There is a real need for mediating institutions and civic infrastructure that can broker working relationships and build trust over time across government, institutions, business and communities.

Existing Conditions & Pressures

The neighborhoods of west Savannah have been segregated by design, isolated from the rest of the city by infrastructure. Issues surrounding mobility are exacerbated by the lack of services available in the area. There are no banks, no grocery stores, and limited amenities to fulfill basic needs. The physical barriers create dozens of dead-end streets. The lack of pedestrian and bicycling facilities further limits options for residents. The lack of stormwater infrastructure leads to chronic conditions such as flooded streets and residential properties. Though the neighborhoods are located between two of the city’s economic drivers – the port and the arena – unemployment remains high. Furthermore, the neighborhoods of West Savannah are currently being adversely impacted by multiple developments that are putting acute pressure on existing conditions.

Housing Pressures

The 2004 report of the Metropolitan Planning Commission’s Task Force on Gentrification identified nine neighborhoods that were “most likely to experience gentrification in the future,” including West Savannah. Given the acute pressures on the housing market now, that geography has expanded significantly. In 2020, the Housing Savannah Task Force released the following major findings from their recent work:

- Housing costs in Savannah have outpaced incomes by at least 2:1 over the past 30 years.
- This has led, in part, to about 21,000 (40%) Savannah households having a difficult time affording quality housing.
- Broken down further, this means that many households with annual income less than \$50,000 or individuals with annual incomes less than \$35,000 are likely to have a difficult time affording quality housing. (The neighborhoods of West Savannah are therefore disproportionately impacted. For example, median household income is reportedly \$31,417 per year in Carver Heights, and has an average per capita income lower than 97.1% of the neighborhoods in the United States.)
- These conditions negatively impact not only those in need of housing, but also the community and the economy as a whole.

Most recently, since the beginning of the pandemic, the average home price in Georgia has risen by more than \$100,000, adding fuel and putting even further pressure on the above findings. In addition, discrimination and structural barriers in the housing market persist. In 2021, the Racial Equity and Leadership task force found that in 2019, 62% of mortgage applications submitted by Black residents of Chatham County were denied, while only 26% were denied for white applicants. In the core neighborhoods that are the focus of this process, real estate pressures are also impacted by two significant developments on the edges. On the riverside, the dramatic expansion of port facilities and related industrial development is encroaching on neighborhoods and impacting health and quality of life. On the downtown edge, the new Enmarket Arena is the largest project in city history, and the canal district is expected to grow and develop on the edge of neighborhoods, creating additional real estate pressures.





The Canal District and Arena

In 2020, the City completed the Canal District Master Plan and the Action Playbook to guide its implementation. The masterplan described the area as follows:

“A new name for a deep-rooted place, the Canal District is sited at a topographical shift in the City’s geography, a stretch of wetlands and later rice plantations just west of the bluff on which the National Historic Landmark District sits. This position, close to but separate from Downtown Savannah, has made the site a natural choice for locating major infrastructure interventions throughout industrialization in the 19th century and the nation-building projects of the 20th century. Construction of the Savannah-Ogeechee Canal began in 1826. By the 1890s, the railroads had surpassed the canals for trade and transport. Interstate 16 swept through in the 1960s, erecting a concrete barrier through much of west Savannah. At each transformation, new infrastructure became the vehicle of opportunity and inequity in the city...As the City launches into a major commercial and civic project with the Savannah Arena, it finds itself once again on the threshold of transformative infrastructure. Once again development will test the balance of opportunity and equity in the City. The Canal District will be the next chapter in this story of the labor, community, and values on which Savannah is built.”

The Canal District Action Playbook acknowledges that the historic neighborhoods in the “halo” adjacent to it will experience the “greatest impact from its transformation.” The plan also documents residents’ clear concerns about the district. As one resident declared, “We are looking at what that Arena could bring about to help the people who are already there. We don’t want to be displaced. We don’t want our neighborhoods to gentrify. Historically we’ve been there all of the time, and we would love to remain in place. Many of us are aging in place in our homes. We want to be able to do that.” Putting in place intentional strategies with the right package of policy mechanisms and tools to

support residents who otherwise will face displacement pressures is a central task and a barometer for how this development will be judged in the future. As the *Savannah Morning News* framed it, “When residents look back on the arena and the Canal District a generation from now, will they see new civic spaces and private investments that have in effect extended the boundaries of downtown while also enhancing the quality of life on the westside? Or will those future residents see that the Canal District has simply expanded the border of gentrification west to Stiles Avenue?”

Port Expansion

The Port of Savannah is among the fastest growing ports in the nation. It is already the third busiest in the nation and has the largest single-terminal container facility of its kind in North America. The Port of Savannah handled over 9% of the total U.S. containerized cargo volume and over 10% of all U.S. containerized exports in fiscal year 2020. As the Port Authority Executive Director Griff Lynch acknowledges, the port handles “an immense volume of cargo every day.” In 2021, a record-setting 5.6 million containers passed through, which was a 20% annual increase. On average, it serves roughly 36 vessels per week and has 14,000 truck moves per day. The port was adding a total of 1.6 million Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) of new capacity by June – a 25 percent increase in Savannah’s previous capacity for container trade.

It is undergoing dramatic expansion and development. In 2020, the Georgia Ports Authority acquired 145 acres next to the Port of Savannah as part of a larger plan to expand the port’s capacity to more than 9 million 20-foot-equivalent units (TEUs) by 2030, described as the largest addition of container terminal space in Savannah in more than 20 years. Both CSX and Norfolk Southern Railway serve the port. Through the ongoing Mesa Mega Rail project, the port is expanding its working tracks from 8 to 18. Upon completion, the Mason Mega Rail Terminal will be able to receive six 10,000-foot trains simultaneously. It will be the

largest intermodal rail facility for a port authority in North America. Earlier this year, the Port Authority also announced a \$200 million development at the Garden City Terminal upriver that will include additional container storage, 30 new cranes, truck lanes and gates. GPA reportedly plans to invest as much as \$3 billion over the next decade in port expansion.

The Environmental Justice Challenge

The near-port communities of West Savannah bear a disproportionate burden from the environmental and related impacts of the port operations. The City of Savannah recently made an application for a [2022 US EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant](#) to conduct a full study and identify mitigation and redevelopment strategies for several areas, including West Savannah. The application makes clear that “sensitive populations are disproportionately represented in the target area, and by extension, are disproportionately impacted by negative environmental impacts, an issue of environmental injustice.” It further outlines the key challenges facing these communities:

“Brownfields can expose sensitive populations to hazardous environmental contaminants via stormwater runoff, particulate inhalation, and direct contact. The target area is subject to legacy soil contamination, toxins from present day industrial operations, and deteriorating historic building materials with flaking lead-based paint and asbestos residues impacting both surficial soils and indoor air quality. Further, parts of the community are prone to flooding (FEMA), which elevates the risk of contaminants migrating off-site via stormwater run-off. The target area’s close proximity to major roads, such as Interstates 516 and 16, and US-80, yield conditions where high levels of carbon monoxide, ozone, particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide pollutants (all known to contribute to incidences of asthma, cancer and low-birth weight) persist. Emissions from area industries, including manufacturing and shipping operations, also contribute to the area’s particulate load. These emissions release sulfur dioxide and lead, pollutants that impede

respiratory function, particularly for individuals with lung diseases and children, who have higher respiration rates, underdeveloped immune systems, and greater risk of exposure through play on potentially contaminated soils. According to the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition, there are roughly 92,000 lbs. of carcinogens and 8,100 pounds of persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals released into the air annually, particularly in Savannah’s heavily industrial west side. Per EJSCREEN, the target area ranges from the 74th to 92nd percentile for National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) Air Toxics Cancer Risk nationally. Additionally, localized exposure to petroleum contaminants, such as potential release from nearby gasoline filling stations, are linked to various cancers including leukemia.”

Furthermore, the application notes that, “According to EJSCREEN, the target area is disproportionately impacted by multiple environmental injustices, including proximity to hazardous facilities requiring a risk management plan (RMP; 86th – 91st percentile nationally), propensity for lead exposure (88th to 95th percentile nationally), and hazardous waste proximity (69th to 81st percentile). These environmental concerns are compounded due to storm water runoff into the Savannah River and tributaries, which is a main source of drinking water for the region, serving as critical support to local fisheries and a source of livelihood and economic vibrance.”

Leveraging Fiscal Windfalls for the Public Interest

According to the Port Authority’s own data, Georgia’s deepwater ports and inland barge terminals deliver significant benefits, including supporting more than 496,700 jobs statewide annually and contributing \$29 billion in income, \$122 billion in revenue and \$3.4 billion in state and local taxes to Georgia’s economy. According to the Governor’s Task Force on Freight & Logistics Final Report, the logistics industry in Georgia represents 18 percent of the State’s gross state product (GSP). There are 5,000 companies providing logistics

services, providing 110,000 jobs and generating over \$50 billion in sales annually. The port economy dwarfs the economic impact of any other activity in the city. For instance, SCAD generates \$766.2 million in annual economic impact for the state as a whole, which is a record amount for the school, but only a fraction of the port’s impact. The Enmarket Arena’s estimated impact is also paltry compared to the port. The port is the main economic activity for the city by a long shot. It is a massive operation with significant benefits – and dramatic impacts on the port adjacent communities of West Savannah. As the Port Authority has [reportedly noted](#), “It’s one thing to celebrate the investments in the infrastructure here, which is wonderful, it will create jobs and help our economy, but we also need to do the right thing for the wonderful historic communities.” These statements have been backed by a range of actions from the Port so far, including small gestures such as providing resources for the new Brickyard neighborhood signage, as well as participation in the EPA-sponsored Savannah Community-Port Collaboration Pilot Project from 2016-2018. These are important first steps to build upon to strengthen port-community relationships and provide an opportunity to identify key needs to make the port expansion mutually beneficial. Given the incredible fiscal impacts of an expanded port operation, the City of Savannah has before it a transformational opportunity to make the critical investments needed to ensure its most vulnerable neighborhoods not only endure – but thrive – into the future.

Georgia is in the process of updating its 2017 Freight and Logistics Plan, which represents one existing near-term opportunity to include mitigation investments for near-port communities as well. Approval by the Federal Highway Administration is expected in January 2023.

Savannah has several positive experiences it can build upon in developing institutional relationships to address environmental justice issues. Under the leadership of Harambee House, the Savannah Community Environmental Collaborative was developed through

the EPA’s CARE program years ago. It provides another model for institutional forums to pursue collaborative solutions that have mutual benefits for neighborhoods and industry. There is an urgent need for significant new institutional structures to facilitate such partnership given the pace of the port expansion and its impact on surrounding neighborhoods and communities along the river corridor.



Community Leadership

The challenges that District One residents are facing are unfortunately typical of too many black and brown communities, where residents are suffering centuries old neglect while the business community, the tourist industry, and other industries and groups get the benefit of tax dollars and infrastructure investments to the detriment of District One. This is partially due to leadership that has prioritized investments inequitably across the city. Established in 1733, Savannah has had 206 years of leadership that directed the values, priorities, and direction of city resources. 1996 witnessed a change in leadership with the election of Floyd Adams, Jr., the first African American mayor of Savannah, but a change in leadership could not and has not fundamentally changed who benefits from city resources. There are powers and systems that are much larger than any one political leader. Today, major shifts in thinking, planning, and valuing all community members will need to take place if Savannah, and specifically District One residents, are to see different outcomes. That shift begins with strong, collaborative leadership determined to recognize and work toward the attainment of “permanent interests” of all parties.

The team has focused on the strengths and the assets that exist in this community. It is not hard to speak of the strengths, especially when speaking of a people who are descendants of formerly enslaved persons brought to this country from Africa. To the residents of West Savannah: the strength exists in your DNA. You are the people whose ancestors survived the awful journey of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. You are the people whose ancestors built the plantations that became the fuel for Savannah’s economic engine. You are the people whose ancestors built the bricks that were in the brickyards and then used those same bricks to build the Owens-Thomas House, the Wormsloe Plantation and many other historic structures that are now celebrated in Savannah as tourist destinations. Your ancestors’ labor built The Telfair Academy, a museum whose walls have only

recently begun to tell your myriad histories and stories. It was your ancestors’ stolen labor, hard work, ingenuity, skill, craftsmanship, intelligence, wisdom, spirituality, compassion, and strength that allowed Savannah and America to catapult itself into the 20th century as a dominant industrial leader because she had over 400 years of free labor from your ancestors.

Remembering the power, the strength, and the communal determination that your ancestors summoned to live and to create community under the most difficult circumstances can be the same strength that fuels the collective renewal and commitment that synergizes the residents of District One to Educate and Empower the Community to demand something radically different for the legacy and the future of your community if it is to thrive. You will push forward against obstacles that exist or that might be erected to stop the building momentum of residents who deserve to participate in the prosperity that is Savannah. You are not pushing back, because you’re not going back, but you are pushing forward so that you can continue living off of and building on the legacies that had the hope and the courage to see you dream new dreams that your ancestors could not even fathom. As Maya Angelou wrote in “Still I Rise”, never forget that you are “...bringing the gifts that [your] ancestors gave [you which] are the dream and the hope of the slave.” Pushforward with knowledge of that power!

Many resources state that Savannah is one of the first planned city in the United States of America; a planned city that originally prohibited slavery, and one that offered 50 acres of land to freemen who desired to settle in Savannah. Unfortunately, the innovative and progressive ideals of the original planners lost to the pressures of the desire for wealth and income for a small few, which in America demanded slave labor. City plans, along with many other factors, continue to contribute to the long and ongoing history of a racially segregated city. Today, it is imperative that city leadership seek to revisit existing plans and planning processes and update them so that as the city experiences economic growth,

there is an opportunity for all residents to participate in the thriving economy fueled by tourism, the port, SCAD and other industries and entities, without the harmful impacts of economic exclusion, residential and business displacement, cultural erasure, and environmental pollution. Savannah’s population is over 54% African American, yet the economic wealth gap of African American residents compared to its white population is staggering, with 30% of communities of color having a net worth of zero as per the recent [Racial Equity and Leadership \(REAL\) Task Force report](#).

If Savannah is going to achieve more equitable outcomes for its majority African American residents, it will be essential that city leaders (government, corporations, philanthropic institutions, and community leaders) center the voices and priorities of people who have been most directly impacted by the city’s continued inequitable growth, a legacy of Savannah’s beginning which has now been institutionalized in systemic racism. Community power and resilience is essential for the transformation of the lives and outcomes for residents in District One; as such, leaders must **Strengthen the Alliance of Community-based Organizations and Stakeholders**. This challenge is not unique to communities in Savannah but throughout history, success has been achieved by groups that understand their shared struggles and have managed to work through their challenges to **develop a shared vision** to accomplish their goal(s). Establishing a collective vision will be essential to the success of this project and will determine the pace at which collective efforts are achieved.

The following recommendations are action items that seek to empower community members to be the leaders in the transformational change for District One residents. The recommendations seek to shift the focus from top-down leadership toward a new model of shared leadership which defers to community. This can be accomplished by creating educational opportunities to inform and empower residents, centering the voices of

community members who are most impacted by harmful practices, gathering research and data to understand the challenges that exist, and by demonstrating your greatest strength, which is self-determination which can be amplified through the power of storytelling. It is time that you tell your story to the residents of District One, to the people of Savannah, the nation, and the world. You have a beautiful story. Gather and tell the stories of your elders, your generation, and your youth. Through storytelling you can begin to acknowledge and/or celebrate the history of your pains and triumphs in Savannah. When you begin to do that, you begin to help to dispel the myths of the African American existence in this country. You’ll become a part of the great legacy that is exemplary of African American culture; you’ll become the griots of Savannah. When you tell the story of your people and their story of survival it allows your roots to grow deeper and stronger and your descendants and others are nourished. Most importantly, it expands the narrative of American history and culture, and it needs to be expanded to include the resilient stories of everyday and heroic people like the residents of District One. You should continue your tradition of “We Speak fuh We.” That is community strength.

Recommendations & Actions

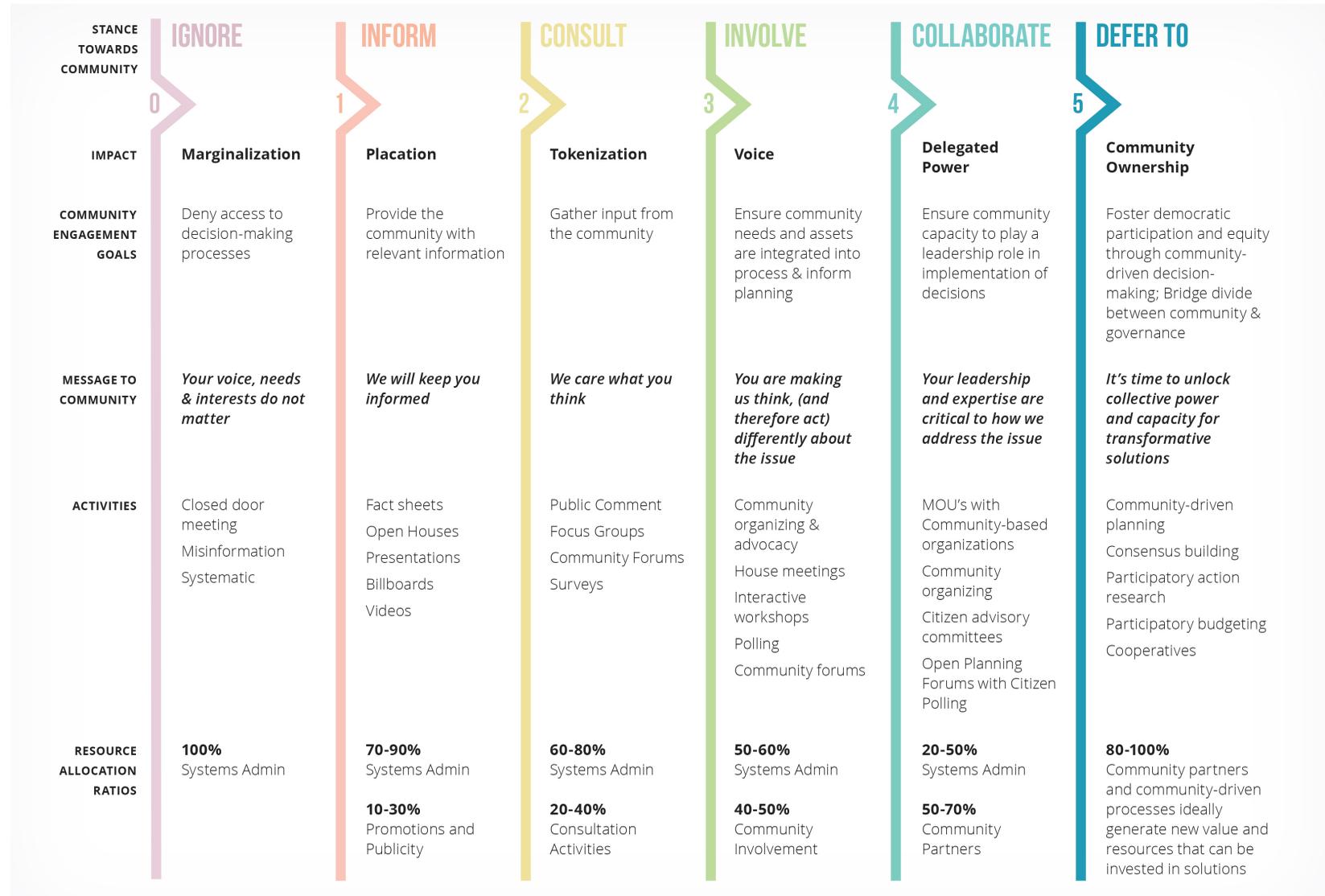
Recommendation #1 - Educate and Empower the Community

Develop a collective vision. Focus on one or a few critical and shared community priorities in order to organize and maximize resources. Use that collective vision and power to make demands without asking permission.

- Develop Community Benefits Agreement(s) in partnership with the City.
- Establish Educational Awareness Campaigns/Initiatives/Workshops on topics such as (but not limited to) cracking the zoning code and understanding how displacement occurs.

- Establish equitable community engagement practices that center impacted voices in all processes within your spheres of influence.
- Advocate the City government to adopt equitable community engagement practices that center impacted voices in all processes.
- Establish programs that will bring Restorative Justice.
 - Advocate for the city to institute Racial Reconciliation Training for City Staff (Zoning, Planners, Housing Development, Economic Development, City Manager, Mayor, and City Leadership).
 - Work with the City to identify harmful (racist) policies that can be challenged and changed (both structural and overt inequalities).
 - Communicate to city leadership that although trails and other aesthetic priorities are important to African American communities, these things must be secondary to needs that prioritize people. Strategies and investments that help to build and sustain communities must be first, especially when speaking of communities that have seen underinvestment historically.
- Build community power, capacity, and understanding of areas of intervention to advocate for local issues.
- Develop a dictionary of terms so that everyone is speaking in a language that is clear and understandable, ensuring that there are shared agreements and understanding.
- Identify potential mentees to engage in this process so that the work/advocacy continues beyond the tenure of current leaders.

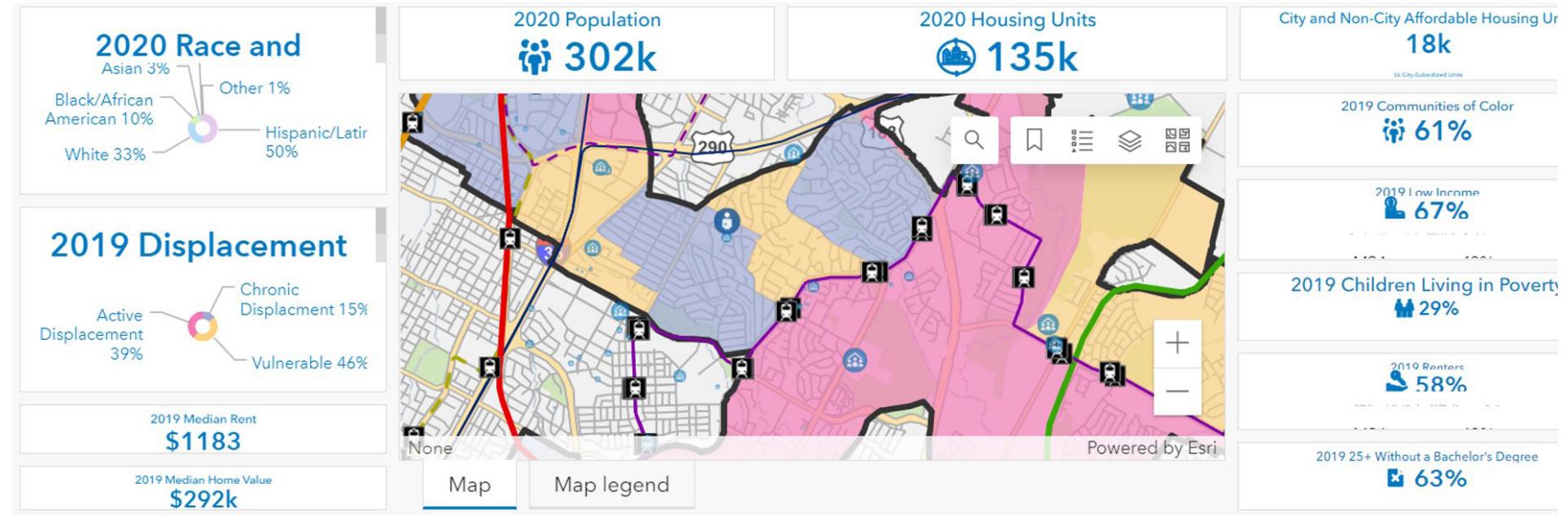
THE SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO OWNERSHIP



The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership, by Rosa Gonzalez & Facilitating Power

Recommendation #2 - Strengthen the Alliance of Community-based Organizations and Stakeholders

- Create a strong alliance with guiding principles and a charter that advances and advocates for the community’s collective vision. Establish key Points of Contact for the alliance to ensure:
 - Clear lines of communication.
 - Clear roles and responsibilities.
 - Expanded capacity to address ongoing issues and developments.
 - The alliance is updated and well informed of key issues to develop strategies to advocate with city leaders.
- Organize all neighborhoods in District One and establish a Community Action Committee.
- Explore the creation of a Community Development District for District One – which would support funding for community development projects.
- Map the landscape of nonprofit organizations to:
 - Identify leaders to help move these efforts forwards.
 - Understand the capacity of existing community-based organizations.
 - Provide additional resources and identify existing gaps.
- Focus on building the capacity of nonprofit organizations with financial resources, leadership development and organizational development training.
- Engage other local and national partners to support action:



- Philanthropic organizations;
- Black community professionals and business leaders;
- Nonprofit organizations;
- Other allies.

Recommendation #3 - Create public dashboards that display key data points to understand impactful investments/progress and negative impacts/harms.

- Collect, visualize, and publicize data and raise awareness about:
 - Displacement Pressures;
 - Immediate health needs within the community;
 - Community/cultural resources and assets.

- Reveal “truths” by analyzing and presenting data (comparative data sets over time)
 - Erasure of home ownership;
 - Erasure of businesses.
- Develop clear mechanisms that allow residents to hold elected officials accountable for delivery of services and investments.

Recommendation #4 - Engage SCAD in conversations about the role of the institution in equitable community development and create frameworks to support university-driven involvement and investment that avoids harm and supports accountability on priorities that advance community priorities.

- Work with SCAD to help them become a leader in Savannah based upon their stated goals and values.

- Work with SCAD so that they can become a model anchor institution in the nation.

Recommendation #5 - Tell your Story: The Great Pushforward, We Speak Fuh We

- Tell your story to:
 - The people of Savannah;
 - The people of our nation;
 - The people of the world.
- Determine the call to action that you want to leave listeners with given the community’s collective vision.
- Push your narrative on social media.
- Collaborate with local and national creatives to get your story out.

- Create a publicly accessible repository (physical drop boxes around neighborhoods and digital site) to collect desired benefits sought by community members.
- Develop a story-mapping program to raise awareness of community concerns and issues.
- Document your community's history through story maps, oral histories, etc.



**Environmental
Justice**

Environmental Justice

Neighborhoods in District One are recognized not only as Environmental Justice communities but historically significant communities with profound impacts on the region. Yet, communities within District One are increasingly under threat due to industrial and commercial development within essential habitats that buffer the community from storms and sea level rise. Due to poor land use decisions, these communities' public safety, health, and quality of life are diminished. Increased vulnerability and decreased resilience to flooding impacts have caused loss in property and property value, which have made communities less resilient. In addition to erosion of the benefits of wetlands, the industrial operations which have crossed the boundary into the community fence line are impacting and compromising residents' health and future neighborhood stability.

District One is served by the most underinvested stormwater system in the City of Savannah. Water flowing in from the entire Springfield Basin simply has no place to go, and an otherwise beautiful landscape suffers from underutilization and neglect.

Unregulated land use by industry creates air pollution and hazards that are dangerous to the welfare and well-being of residents located near these noxious sites. Residents are concerned about the cumulative impacts these toxic sites have on their physical and mental health. Specifically, truck traffic serving the industrial operations on the edges of the community is creating conditions that are exposing residents to diesel emissions and particulate matter. Other air criteria of concern such as Noxious Oxide, Volatile Organic Compounds, Sulfur Dioxides, and black carbon, have been proven, through scientific studies, to cause asthma, other respiratory illnesses, heart disease, birth defects, and cancer as a result of long-term exposure.

Environmental Justice is the fair application of all laws, regulations, rules, policies, funding, and decision making to reduce disproportionate environmental and quality of life impacts on low-wealth black, brown, and indigenous communities through intentional consideration that seeks to minimize historical disparities through meaningful engagement. Meaningful engagement involves incorporating community input into conversations, designs, implementations, and evaluations of processes impacting their quality of life.

District One is located in a wetland environment that provides many ecosystem services, recreation, and flood and stormwater opportunities. In nontidal and tidal freshwater wetlands, vegetation is predominately:

- Trees;
- Forested shrubs or scrub wetlands;
- Persistent or nonpersistent vegetation;
- Emergent, (or erect, rooted herbaceous) plants ;
- Submerged and floating plants;
- Aquatic beds.

Recommendations & Actions

Recommendation #1 - Create alternative traffic circulation patterns to/from the port to minimize adverse impacts such as air and noise pollution from within the neighborhoods.

This recommendation is achievable through a coordinated effort with State, County and City authorities to develop alternative traffic circulation patterns that are more protective of residents' health and quality of life objectives. With this said, the community must begin to work to identify social determinates of health outcomes as well as defining what quality of life means for the residents in this area. Furthermore, the Georgia Port Authority is complicit with contributing to this challenge, which obligates them to assist with eliminating the impact they are having on the community. The Georgia Port Authority can work with the community and local leaders on an initiative

to phase out fossil burning equipment that service the port for more renewable options such as zero emission technology, electric vehicles, solar and shore side power.

The community can collect the following data to support its position for this recommendation:

- Community-based Health Survey
- Truck Traffic Counts
- Low-cost Air Monitors as a screening tool
- Ensure trucking companies are following local ordinances to ensure truck traffic routes are appropriately established. Trucking companies should not be using community streets to access the port and industrial operations. These routes need to be well marked to indicate to trucking operators where the trucking route is located.
- Explore the use of Transfer of Development Rights as an alternative to encroaching industrial and port expansion into the community.

Recommendation #2 - Develop a comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment to understand the context of challenges in the area through a lens of environmental resiliency which is defined by the community but includes resiliency objectives specific to the community needs. These objectives can be environmental, health, housing, transportation, or other community identified priorities.

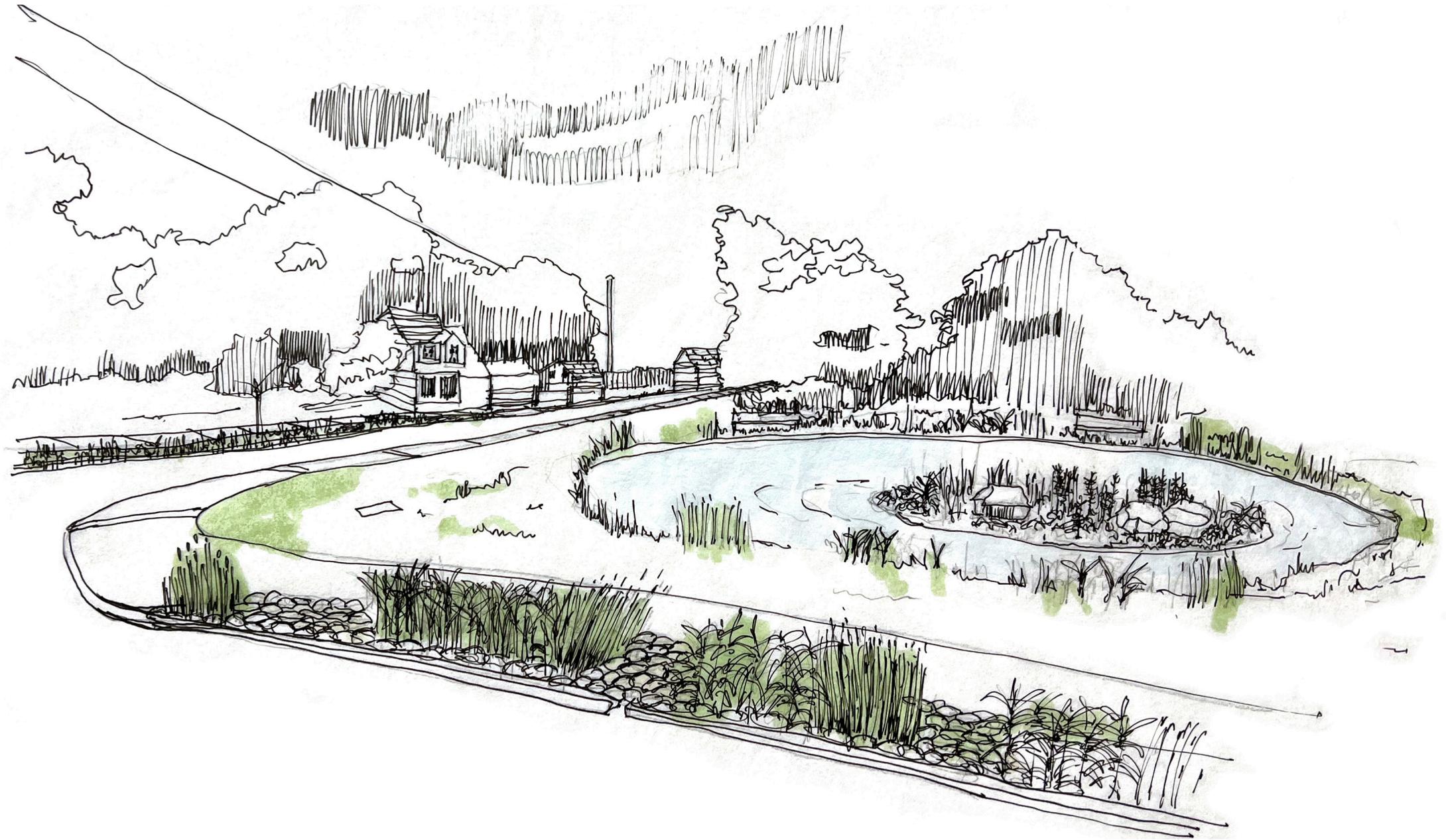
The community should work with Ivory Bay CDC and the newly formed Community Advisory Committee to design and implement a comprehensive community assessment

of vulnerabilities of the area. This vulnerability assessment needs to be informed by the community to frame additional resilience objectives which can be leveraged to identify funding opportunities to address vulnerabilities to create a more resilient community. The community can work with the local health department to ascertain current health of the residents in the area, development of a cumulative health impact assessment, design citizen science projects to collect environmental data, and other community-based data needed to completely tell the story of the community. The community can collect the following data to support its position for this recommendation:

- Community-based Health Impact Assessment
- Citizen Science Projects
- Request environmental studies for the area including brownfield assessments, Toxic Release Inventory listings, Environmental Impact Statements, Underground Storage Tank listings, etc.
- Soil Testing

Recommendation #3 - Green Infrastructure strategies need to be incorporated into all neighborhood development and improvement projects for this area.

The City needs to work with the Community to ensure green infrastructure is prioritized not only for the arena and canal district but internal to each neighborhood. In this section, recommendations are provided for what green infrastructure can be achievable in District One. There are green infrastructure strategies residents can deploy themselves to collect, store and slowly release water into the system. For example, New Orleans has successfully implemented a [Community Adaptation Program](#) that provides funding between \$10,000 to \$25,000 dollars to create green infrastructure strategies for private homeowners with technical assistance from landscape architects and professionals.



Green Infrastructure development can be utilized as a stormwater management strategy for District I neighborhoods.

The community can collect the following data to support its position for this recommendation:

- Replicate New Orleans' Community Adaptation Project to assist with stormwater management efforts on individual private properties.
- Rain Gardens
- Rain Barrows
- Bioswales

Recommendation #4 - Restoration of Wetlands

Rebuilding nature to protect community assets are central to any city and community redevelopment efforts particularly for communities in coastal areas. The community's vulnerability assessment needs to consider frequent flooded areas to be reclaimed by nature to support increasing green infrastructure strategies with the intent to create more resilient neighborhoods for homes that are at extreme risk for flooding. This is further enhanced by ensuring natural and ecological habitats are protected from development pressures. Homes at extreme risk of flooding can be elevated, relocated and/or retrofitted to reduce risk. City funded home repair programs can provide financial resources for homes at risk of flooding for low-income eligible homeowners. The community residents can be prepared to address flood risk on their properties by using signs within the community acknowledging this area is at risk of flooding. Industry and future community development can eliminate flooding by implementing erosion and sedimentation control best practices.

The community can collect the following data to support its position for this recommendation:

- Monitor Water Quality in the area.
- Collaborate with the City's Public Water Department on stormwater management best practices for their neighborhood.

- The community needs to understand the City's flood mitigation plan to include pre and post disaster hazard responses.
- The community needs to advocate for the city to implement an outreach effort to educate the residents about their watershed and the flooding challenges in their neighborhoods.
- A city funded Community Navigator program can be created to advance community needs and priorities to address ongoing stormwater management and infrastructure improvement.

Recommendation #5 - Improve the viewshed for abruptly terminated neighborhood streets.

Improving the viewshed within the community not only improves the aesthetics of an area, but also helps to improve the quality of life, including physical and mental health for residents. Furthermore, these improvements help to increase property values, preserve a community's unique character, build civic pride, and attract beneficial development to the area. This type of assessment can be used to develop scenic tours incorporating community walks, education programs and historic photographic exhibits along a designated community path.

The community can collect the following data to support its position for this recommendation:

- The Community can conduct a visual assessment of their neighborhood to identify areas for viewshed improvements particularly for streets that terminate abruptly.
- Develop a Viewshed adoption program for volunteers, civic leaders and residents to work together to maintain and improve over time.





Improving the viewsheds in the neighborhood would reap considerable benefits for the community.

Recommendation #6 - Improve neighborhood mobility with complete street strategies

Building better mobility through complete streets strategies ensures seamless continuum of safe, reliable, and efficient mobility options for an area that depends on public transit. Public transit access needs to be enhanced in this area which will require a policy response changing the design and delivery of infrastructure within the community that is equitable and accessible to all residents.

The community can collect the following data to support its position for this recommendation:

- Residents need to advocate for different modes of transportation options to include biking, walking and vehicular options. The neighborhood interior prioritization should focus on pedestrian traffic.
- The community needs to advocate for the City to develop a pedestrian plan for the area to include mobility improvements such as sidewalk installations and maintenance, bus stop enhancements, and connectivity networks with broader regional opportunities.

Caution: Mobility improvements often make any area more desirable. The community needs to work with the City to ensure there are measures to prevent displacement pressures.

Recommendation #7: Development of community-based logic model to track and evaluate progress and hold partners accountable for action items

Leaders and advocates for this work need to design an accountability process. The use of Logic Models are great for tracking objectives of initiatives, resource allocation, specifying goals, assigning responsibility and tracking progress over time.

The community can collect the following data to support

its position for this recommendation:

- Provided in the appendix is a simple example of a logic model residents can use to develop their accountability and evaluation process.

Resources

- **EPA's EJSCREEN:** District One Environmental Justice Profile exposes the vulnerability residents' face as a result of poor land use decisions. [EPA's EJSCREEN](#) mapping tool provides a useful first step in understanding locations within the community for further analysis, outreach, and in some situations further review. EJSCREEN provides environmental and demographic data for a specific location. The EJSCREEN standard reports are provided in this section of the report.
- **Logic Model** (See Appendix)
- **[EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant Program](#)** (Capacity Building Grant)
- **[Moving Forward Network:](#)** MFN is a national network of over 50 member organizations that centers grassroots, frontline-community knowledge, expertise and engagement from communities across the US that bear the negative impacts of the global freight transportation system.
- **[Water Forward – Community Ambassadors:](#)** Water Forward is the name for the City of Austin's Integrated Water Resource Plan that is being developed with input from community members through their Community Ambassador program. The plan will be released in 2024 and has the goal of incorporating equity and affordability. Through the Community Ambassador program, the city will be "working to reach people who have been systematically left out of, misrepresented in, or ignored during previous planning initiatives." The Community Ambassador program will be a key outreach component of the plan update process.

- **Earth Camp:** A 4-day camp for Austin 5th grade students to learn about protecting the water ways. This is an opportunity to also plant seeds for students to learn about how they can become involved in protecting their environment.



**Community &
Economic Development**

Community & Economic Development

District One is a community with a rich and long history – residents and businesses in the District were, and are still, major contributors to Savannah’s development and culture. However, the District suffers from long-term lack of investment, which has created quality of life issues such as flooding, job loss, closures of local and historic businesses, high poverty rates, and unemployment.

Many communities across the District were places where African American-majority residents and businesses thrived – and we continue to benefit from the culture and legacies of those individuals, families, community leaders, and institutions across the City and within the neighborhoods of District One. Savannah has long advertised the cultural contributions of District One to tourists and residents. District One and these neighborhoods have contributed significantly to the development and expansion of the City’s tourist economy.

Recent developments in District One (including port expansion, investments in expansion of the tourist industry, and development and approval decisions) have not prioritized investment in infrastructure, programs and services, or community development that benefited and built wealth for the community’s residents. This is evidenced most profoundly in the increased market pressures that District One residents are feeling. This lack of investment has led to increasing rates of illness, death, and declining health; concentrated poverty; declines in the quality of area properties; and segregation that prevent area residents and businesses to fully participate in the thriving, local economy.

Throughout the history of the City of Savannah, municipal, state, and federal funds have been directed toward some neighborhoods and away from others,

including District One. Government-led initiatives such as development of highways and Urban Renewal led to major infrastructure and neighborhood investments that forced low-income and racial/ethnic minority communities into less desirable blocks and homes with rents that were affordable due to the old age and low quality of housing, flood risk and exposure to environmental contaminants, long distance to employment centers, and more. Policies such as redlining identified such neighborhoods as high credit risk – often on the basis of the race of those who live there – and banks denied loan applications from creditworthy borrowers simply because they lived in those neighborhoods. These types of policies explicitly excluded certain communities from resources, infrastructure, and basic services that were available to more affluent residents and businesses that could have been used to improve homes, businesses, and quality of life. In turn, concentrated poverty has grown over time.

Increasing quality of life and economic equity in District One will preserve important legacy communities, ensure local residents have access to the quality of life they deserve, and support a more robust and resilient city-wide economy. In order to revitalize these neighborhoods, it is critical to address longstanding community issues, such as the lack of quality basic infrastructure (including sidewalks and stormwater systems) that create and/or perpetuate poverty and inequity. Leveraging public investment to support community re-investment can retain and provide resources for current community members, while attracting new residents and businesses.

By investing in District One, city leaders can ensure that residents, businesses, visitors, students, and more, enjoy a safe and healthy environment with the basic infrastructures and services necessary to support a high quality of life with a fundamental platform that all people need to reach their fullest potential. The City should work with District One residents and aligned partners to address:

- **Housing:** Improve the quality of housing in District One, and ensure that people can live, stay, and move into neighborhoods that retain their historic character.
- **Workforce and Business Development:** Support local businesses, remove barriers and provide resources to form new businesses, and support residents in accessing quality jobs with opportunities for upward mobility.
- **Catalytic Projects:** Taking advantage of planned development in the District to ensure the community benefits and investment addresses long-term needs and concerns.

Additionally, in pursuing these neighborhood improvements, leaders across District One can work closely with community and neighborhood groups to prioritize place-keeping of the cultural heritage and historic character of each neighborhood through strategies to promote neighborhood stability that limit resident and business displacement.

Housing

Families and individuals want to stay in the neighborhood – but need support keeping up and reinvesting in their homes. Homes in this area have a look and feel that reflects the history of this area, but without reinvestment, homes will decline in quality, which will have a negative impact on health outcomes including asthma, allergies, and injury due to unsafe living conditions. Additionally, as the housing stock begins to decline, properties become the target of market rate investors seeking cheap properties, which can indicate the beginning of displacement of long-term residents. With major investments coming into this district, there is an opportunity to tap into future value to ensure current residents and businesses are benefiting.



Recommendations & Actions

Recommendation #1 – Create anti-displacement priorities and coalitions to ensure residents are not experiencing forced displacement

- Establish a Tax Allocation District boundary and rates that can provide funding for community improvements and enable the City to bond against infrastructure and development projects.
- Identify organizations within the community who can play a leadership role in collaborating with the City and taking a proactive role addressing challenges BEFORE residents are displaced.
- Collect information from residents and businesses about the specific cost increases and challenges that cause displacement (e.g. back taxes, selling properties), and identify households who are currently at risk of losing their properties.
- Organize and take action to demand the creation of set-aside funds within major development projects to fund anti-displacement efforts. The neighborhoods should receive benefits from the developments planned around the arena and the Waterworks.
- Work with the City to advocate and support the creation of new programs and initiatives so that residents can:
 - Cap and freeze or subsidize property taxes for legacy residents, including those on fixed incomes;
 - Subsidize payments for back taxes;
 - Allow residents to pay taxes in installments;
 - Develop or expand programs that promote property owners accessing tax exemptions (e.g.

Homestead), and support classes and resources that promote home ownership opportunities for community members;

- Establish programs that expand economic mobility through small grants or loans for residents for emergency rent assistance, emergency home repairs or other residential needs that will help stabilize households.
- Work with the City to advocate for changes to existing policies that increase costs for property owners and renters
 - Create new regulations and policies around changing uses that can exacerbate housing affordability (e.g. Short-term rental restrictions, sunset policies for affordability and affordable or inclusionary housing projects);
 - Review policies that connect taxes to Fair Market valuation (e.g. school taxes).
- Explore creation of new models of home ownership, such as community land trusts, to remove land and property ownership from transactions based on market valuation.
- Establish partnerships with organizations that can support homeowners on specific issues, including but not limited to Heirs Property Education and Property Loss Prevention Program and education around the county's Homestead Tax program.

Precedents:

Westside Future Fund (Atlanta, GA): Launched by the Atlanta Committee for Progress and supported by former Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, the program recognizes the long-term inequity in Atlanta's Historic Westside. Commits to fostering long-term transformational change through a collaborative approach to be led by the Westside Future Fund. The

ACP, a coalition of top CEOs and leaders from the private sector, universities, and nonprofits, made the fund a top priority, and provided board leadership along with early philanthropic support.

Pros: Nonprofit leadership removes some constraints of operating within city government – and increases flexibility, ability to receive private donations, and ability to create and support a variety of community partnerships that serve the area specifically.

Cons: Requires specific participation of the City or other institutions with substantial financial resources.

Community Initiated Solutions (Austin, TX): In response to Project Connect (a \$7.1 billion transit investment that includes new light rail, a subway, and more services across the city) voters approved \$300 million in anti-displacement strategies. The City of Austin's Housing and Planning Department, allocated \$20 million of the anti-displacement funds for new community-based contracts, Community Initiated Solutions, for nonprofit entities to apply for funding to support activities and services that help to stabilize tenants, preserve and expand homeownership, and build economic mobility along Project Connect stations and lines.

Pros: The Housing and Planning Department created a community driven process that began with the development of an equity tool that was used to identify priorities for spending the entire \$300 million anti-displacement investments. The process for identifying how funds would be allocated, including the priorities, places and the purposes were identified in consultation with community centering the voices of individuals with lived experience specific to displacement risk. Because the dollars are local dollars, there is a degree of flexibility in how the funds can be used.

Cons: Current funding can only be used for housing related priorities and does not currently contain opportunities to protect/support small businesses,

cultural assets and the other priorities that community members identified as relevant to address displacement pressures. Additionally, the allocation of the funding will be over a 13-year period which might not allow for proper interventions to be made when they are most needed, which cannot currently be accurately predicted. Managed and maintained by City of Austin staff.

Oakland Community Land Trust (Oakland, CA): The Oakland Community Land Trust was created in 2009 to stabilize housing threatened with foreclosure because of the recession and mortgage crisis. The Oakland CLT was formed to acquire and rehabilitate properties in foreclosure. Its mission is to “expand and preserve housing and economic development opportunities for Black, Indigenous, other communities of color, and low-income residents of Oakland.” According to the CLT's website, they:

- Acquire housing, land, and other critical community-serving real estate and steward them in trust to ensure that they remain affordable forever.
- Create shared-equity ownership structures that balance the needs of individuals and families to build wealth with the long-term goal of permanently preserving affordability.
- Foster leadership and build resident power through an engaged board of Oakland CLT residents and community members to enact a vision of resident-controlled development on community-owned land.

Pros: Retention of public subsidy to benefit future households, create permanently affordable housing in a specific location, and protection of land from real estate speculation.

Cons: Complex and time-consuming implementation process. Clear community support and trust in the model is necessary and can be difficult to achieve.

Equitable Development Initiative (Seattle, WA): The Office of Planning and Community Development has budgeted capital and ongoing funding to build capacity and distribute funds among communities that are impacted by displacement and historic disinvestment. The current funding round is making available up to \$6.8 million for qualifying organizations, and the program is managed fully by City staff.

Pros: Local government overseeing investments, selecting awardees, and administering other aspects of the program simplifies funding distribution and ensures strategic investments align with economic development goals.

Cons: If there is a lack of trust in city government, it might be hard for citizens to trust the city to act in their best interests if there is no prior demonstration of this. An appropriate model might be a quasi-governmental body that is designated to administer the fund to include city staff and community leaders through a collaborative, transparent process to guide investments.

Recommendation #2 – Support healthy home improvements for existing residents, homes, and properties

- Dedicate set-aside funds from the city's annual budget, major development projects, and fundraise from other sources (including local foundations, financial institutions, corporations, and private individuals).
- Establish grants and a revolving loan fund to support property improvements.
- Create a list and vet local vendors who can provide property improvement services to local residents in a timely and high-quality manner.
- Expand the existing [Home Repair Assistance](#) program and provide technical assistance to support residents in navigating property improvement processes and (if funded) provide construction management services.

- The current home repair program should consider expanding grant and/or loan amounts to cover important infrastructure repairs such as foundations, plumbing or electrical work which are vital to providing safe, healthy housing.
- Stop the current practice of issuing code violations and notices specifically targeting low-income residents. This process accelerates displacement pressures. Develop a new approach that proactively identifies properties in need of repair and connect homeowners with existing, or create new, programs and financial resources so that households can make the identified repairs. The current practice is one of wealth extraction.

Precedents:

Baltimore Healthy Neighborhoods (Baltimore, MD):

Healthy Neighborhoods provides below-market rate loans for the purchase and renovation of housing in strong but undervalued neighborhoods.

- Nonprofit-led program that offers four loan options to eligible borrowers;
- Programs focus on the purchase and renovation of formerly vacant properties, as well as on home improvements;
- Income-eligible households may also receive grants up to \$10,000.

Pros: Strategic lending encourages investment in targeted neighborhoods/blocks; programs meet different needs for neighborhoods across the city.

Cons: Can potentially accelerate displacement if renovated homes are too expensive for local residents to purchase; financing may not help potential beneficiaries overcome high upfront costs of homeownership.

West Orange Housing Rehabilitation Program (West Orange, NJ): The Housing Rehabilitation Program encourages homeowner preservation and neighborhood stability by assisting income-qualified homeowners with zero-interest, forgivable loans of up to \$35,000 to make home repairs.

- Eligible projects include repair or replacement of roofs, heating and electrical systems, doors and windows, kitchen and bathroom updates.
- Loans are not repaid until home is sold; but program encourages long-term residency by forgiving loans of households that stay for 12 years.
- Funded through local developer fees.

Pros: Supports existing homeowners; improves housing stock; no cost to homeowners until property is sold; long-term residence encouraged.

Cons: Does not address vacant or blighted properties; requires partners such as CDFIs or other private lenders.

Workforce/Business Development

Residents in District One want more access to high paying jobs. There are missed opportunities when major investments and projects come to the city; it's important to train and prepare District One residents so that they can take advantage of job opportunities presented. Housing costs are potentially escalated for all Savannah residents if outside workers are recruited to support burgeoning industries. Current training and jobs programs should be expanded through affirmative marketing campaigns to ensure that information and opportunities are accessible to the community. Small, local businesses are often essential anchors and glue to the social cohesion of a neighborhood. By providing funding and support to businesses to reinvest in their commercial properties, the city can help to stabilize neighborhoods and support the local economy.





Recommendations & Actions

Recommendation #3 - Improve retail façades and upgrade existing properties by supporting business owners and commercial tenants.

- Develop new dedicated funds to increase the number of projects that can be supported by the existing City program, such as set-asides within the Tax Allocation District to be established by the City.
- Expand promotion and technical assistance available through existing City programs to ensure business and property owners have support accessing and using funds.
- Conduct outreach and engagement with the City to enhance program offerings and provide greater access to businesses that have not historically had access to the program.

Precedent:

Storefront Renovation Program (Cleveland, OH): The program helps neighborhood retail districts become more attractive and economically viable and provides diverse places for people to visit and shop by assisting in the design and funding of signage and the rehabilitation of traditional storefront buildings.

- Provides technical assistance in design and financing of improvements.
- Reimburses 50% of construction costs up to \$50,000 for projects that meet design standards and labor and wage requirements.

Pros: Provides technical assistance and works closely with smaller property owners to implement projects; improves physical condition of existing properties; and targets neighborhoods with catalytic investments.

Cons: Reimbursable grants may limit applicants with

insufficient access to capital; and maximum grants of \$25,000 may not be sufficient to close gaps in rehabilitation projects for local commercial properties.

Recommendation #4 - Develop resources to ensure local vendors and businesses are connected to job opportunities and professional development resources.

- Create a directory of local artists, business owners, service providers, and skilled professionals of all types.
- Develop community-managed resources and marketing plans to promote local spending.
- Create marketing materials to distribute to tourist agencies and programming entities to ensure that tourist spending can benefit local businesses, artists and community organizations/
- Host community meetings and/or workshops to discuss jobs, contracts and benefits provided via City procurement.
- Host community meetings and/or workshops to guide businesses and vendors through the existing certification and disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) programs at the City.
- Establish scholarship programs and wraparound services to ensure that local residents have support to take advantage of career change, training, and professional development resources.

Recommendation #5 - Develop strategies for a business incubator to provide support that is tailored to the unique needs of local entrepreneurs and business investors.

- Conduct outreach to local entrepreneurs to understand the needs of local businesses and entrepreneurs, including home-based businesses and youth.

- Develop strategies for an incubator to facilitate transfer of knowledge from farmers and businesses to local food truck and vendor operators.
- Explore connections to existing local training programs (e.g. Workforce Coastal – Savannah Tech).
- Partner across the community to develop community gardens and food production/ distribution sites to provide jobs for local residents, as well as healthy food.
- Explore creation of a minority business incubator, which could include mentor-protégé relationships across sectors (Professional Services, Construction, Management and Operations).

Catalytic Projects

The City has promised significant benefits to the community from the development of the arena and advancement of the Canal District Plan. There remains a need to get specific with how the community will materially benefit from those investments – in terms of jobs, cultural programming and historic preservation, quality of life improvements, and more. In addition to benefits, these investments must not harm and displace community residents and businesses. Collaboration and intentional strategies can ensure that these projects meet the community’s goals and contribute to major improvements in this area.

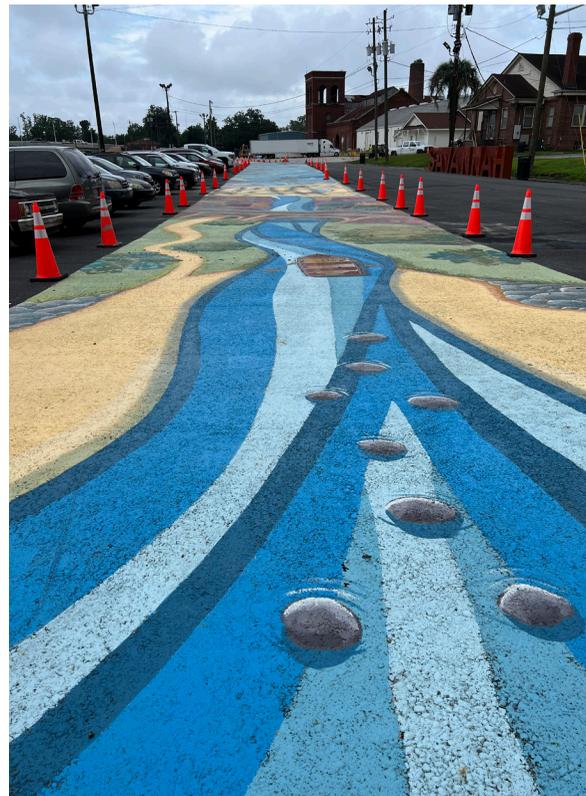
Recommendations & Actions

Recommendation #6 - Expand recreation and programming offerings within the district to serve local residents and ensure neighborhoods benefit from tourist spending.

- Provide financial resources to support the development of cultural arts and historical

organizations to expand cultural and historical events in Savannah to ensure that entertainment and tourist offerings provide a continuum of events and activities that explore Savannah's long and diverse history beyond the colonial period. This might include:

- Plays, concerts, festivals;
- Community historic walking tours;
- Buy local business programs and campaigns, as well as business pop-ups;
- Public art exhibits and temporary murals or other displays highlighting the history of communities and their experiences that have not typically been celebrated.
- Formally protect City funds allocated to the development and activation of the Canal District to ensure set-asides are accountable to community and used for the benefit of residents directly impacted by the developments. This could be done through a Community Advisory Committee that sets priorities, in collaboration with community through an equitable community engagement process.
- Engage community members in conversations to develop new events and programs that can take advantage of community venues created around the arena and Waterworks buildings.
- Remove barbed wire from any publicly owned spaces (those that are in active use especially, but other spaces as well; if needed for safety, erect appropriate aesthetically pleasing gates).
- Create alternatives to security and policing for City action or for funding by outside entities. (e.g. Increase local recreational programs and offerings, replacing costs for security and policing with increased offerings and jobs for community – such as trash pickup, lifeguards).



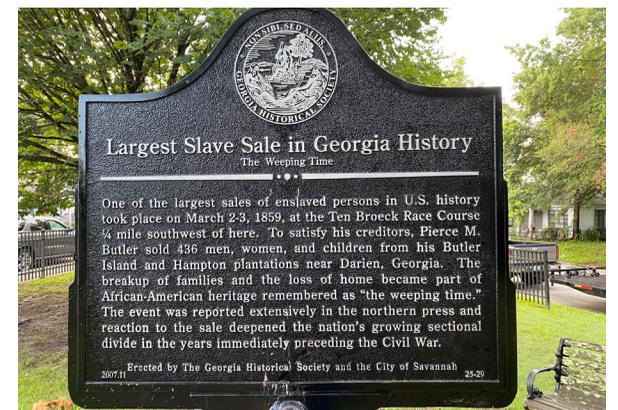
Recommendation #7 - Adjust the Arena and Waterworks designs and business plans to reflect community priorities, needs, and ensure that long term plans provide jobs and benefits to District One.

- Review business plans for the Arena to establish local hiring/supplier diversity initiatives and policies.
- City staff should create communications materials (e.g. bi-annual reports) to transparently share data with the community about the development and impacts of major projects and decisions.
- Advocate for the creation of requirements for major events at the Arena to financially contribute to local community and economic development funds (e.g. per-event contributions).
- Establish programs that ensure community residents, event producers, and more have opportunities to activate the arena.
- Convene community engagement sessions to establish community priorities for the design, development, and long-term management of the Waterworks building.

Recommendation #8 - Conduct community engagement sessions to determine the community's interest in using the Weeping Time site. Some considerations might include:

- A marketing and communications campaign to raise awareness of the significance of this site and share the communities' priorities with the world.
- Use of the site as a memorial and a creative placemaking location to uplift this important national history.
- The purchase and maintenance of the site by the city as one of its park spaces with the vision of the community informing the design and best use of the newly designated park space.

- The completion of a Historic Landscape Survey for the site, Cultural Landscape recognition for the site, and application for its inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The development of a local and national fundraising and community awareness campaign to support community-driven development of a program and business plan that uplifts and celebrates the history of the Weeping Time site and event.
- The production of a study that demonstrates the economic impact of cultural spaces that celebrate the legacy and history of African American people.



Racial Disparity & The City Brand & Story

The Canal District Master Plan observes that “West Savannah has grown informally from a plantation to an industrial economy while its history has never been fully celebrated.” The team finds this observation to be a dramatic understatement. Like other American cities, Savannah has been having a number of public conversations and debates over its historical narrative in recent years, including the need to preserve and memorialize the Weeping Time as an important site and the renaming of multiple public parks that are the historical location of burial grounds for enslaved people, and a host of other issues. These debates reflect a larger question about Savannah’s identity and its narrative as a community. The city has been a popular tourist destination for years and has maintained a carefully curated brand narrated for the outside world that continues to exclude the full history of the city. It is a tale half-told, though there is growing interest and demand for a fuller accounting that brings meaning to a more accurate and inclusive historical record – from both residents and the broader tourism market.

In her groundbreaking historical account, *The Weeping Time: Memory and the Largest Slave Auction in American History*, author Anne C. Baily offers an important challenge to us. As she writes, “The poisonous codification of race and its amplification during the era of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery created a significant breach in our understanding of ourselves and our potential links to one another. The next 500 years since the abolition in the nineteenth century could be about recovery and restoration of that breach. That restoration depends in significant part on the democratization of memory: the acknowledging of all voices in the history and breaking the silence of those voices previously muted or unheard. It may then be possible for more of us to live lives informed by the past but not burdened by it. It may also be possible for us to live lives more conscious of our linked past, present, and future and more committed to the ideals of freedom we

hold dear.” It is a profound statement on the American condition, and one that is influencing a growing movement to give voice to a full historical accounting and a deeper sense of national identity. This movement is illustrated by the following sample of historical and cultural museums and memorials that are contributing to our global narrative today, and their instant popularity as a tourism demand develops and more people want to engage with the full history of the African diaspora:

- **The African Burial Ground National Monument, New York.** The African Burial Ground National Monument memorializes an estimated 20,000 free and enslaved Africans who were buried on the site from the 1690s until 1794. The site was rediscovered during construction of a federal office building in 1991. In 1993, the site was designated a National Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The memorial was proclaimed a National Monument in 2006. A memorial designed by Rodney Léon, AARRIS Architects, and Elizabeth Kennedy Landscape Architects opened in 2007. Over 45,000 people visit the monument annually.
- **The Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington DC.** The Museum opened in 2016, and since then more than 7.8 million people have visited the museum and 21 million virtual visitors have toured its website exhibits since it opened to the public.
- **National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, AL.** The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, informally known as the National Lynching Memorial, is a national memorial to commemorate the victims of lynching in the United States. It is intended to focus on and acknowledge past racial terrorism and advocate for social justice in America. More than 1 million people have visited the museum since it opened in 2018.
- **The International African American Museum, Charleston, SC.** Scheduled to open in January 2023, the museum “is about a journey that began centuries ago in Africa, and still continues. It is about the journey of millions of Africans, captured and forced across the Atlantic in the grueling and inhumane Middle Passage, who arrived at Gadsden’s Wharf in Charleston, South Carolina and other ports in the Atlantic World. Their labor, resistance and ingenuity and that of their descendants shaped every aspect of our world.” This museum has already established a relationship with a museum developing in Freetown, Sierra Leone to focus on the history of the slave trade there, opening a path to a globally connected narrative.
- **Valongo Wharf, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.** In its pre-Olympics construction work, the city of Rio discovered the remains of Valongo Wharf, the site where more enslaved people entered the Americas than anywhere else. It has since been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site and has undergone initial archaeological work. An AIA team made several key recommendations to its future as part of a project there in 2019.
- **The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers, Charlottesville, Virginia.** Completed in 2020 to commemorate enslaved African Americans who built and worked at the University of Virginia, the memorial was the result of a process that began with the President’s Commission on Slavery and the University in 2013. The Commission was charged with investigating and planning the interpretation of historically significant structures associated with slavery. They acknowledged the effort was “part of a larger conversation that is also leading re-interpretation of many national landmarks and memorials that bring this history into greater focus.”
- **John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, Tulsa, Oklahoma.** In 2018, John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park was dedicated as a Literary

Landmark in honor of the late Dr. John Hope Franklin. Reconciliation Park resulted from the 2001 Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. As they describe the park, “It memorializes the Tulsa Race Riot and Massacre, called the worst civic disturbance in American history. The Park also tells the story of African Americans’ role in building Oklahoma and thus begins the long-delayed rendering of the full account of Oklahoma’s history.”

As these brief examples illustrate, there is a real demand to engage in the global narrative of the African diaspora and to connect with our shared American experience through it. During the past 5 years, the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund has raised \$80 million and supported over 200 preservation projects across the US. The program was launched specifically to “preserve and protect places that have been overlooked in American history and represent centuries of African American activism, achievement, and resilience.” This program represents just one resource that the city could partner with as it begins to deliberate over how best to honor the important historical narrative that the Weeping Time encapsulates.

Savannah has portrayed itself as a creative place that embraces both history and cutting-edge innovation. However, it is well behind the curve on this movement and the team believes that the city brand is at risk without focused investment in breathing life into its full identity and history and bringing its brand up to date. It has before it an incredible opportunity to expand its tourism and strengthen both its global brand and its civic identity, but the costs of inaction are also quite steep. Civic leaders should begin organizing this work immediately and should begin with sites like the Weeping Time, which represent places of historical significance to both our national and global narrative.



**Public Policy &
Resources**

Public Policy & Resources

The overarching purpose of public policy is to protect and advance the health, safety and welfare of the residents of a community. An examination of a variety of conditions within the District One area (including environmental, social, political, and economic) suggests either a need for new policies or a renewed effort to strenuously enforce the existing policies. The impact upon the District One neighborhoods by local industries, particularly the port, is palpable. A study of various data tells us that District One residents suffer from adverse exposure to numerous damaging environmental concerns, including excessive truck traffic and noise; air pollution; contaminated groundwater; localized flooding; and elevated levels of disease. Given that these conditions have persisted over a long period of time without either recognition or action by the parties in control, it seems appropriate for the affected communities to self-organize to become their own best advocates, gathering the various community groups into a cohesive advisory community group, headed by a trusted champion or champion(s) as a key first step.

The inaction of policies aimed at mitigating or remedying harmful conditions will end once multiple community organizations come together in harmony around agreed upon priorities to form concentrated power capable of influencing public policy decisions. District One neighborhoods are entitled to public policies that facilitate a healthy and safe environment in which to live, work, play and pray. City leaders and corporate citizens, by virtue of their power, influence and authority, are the de facto stewards of the public good, but ultimately the community must elevate its own voice to a level that moves policy and enforcement towards implementation with the urgency that is warranted. A paradigm shift is in order to prioritize the health, safety and welfare of District One residents above the existing social, political, and economic status quo.

Recommendations & Actions

Recommendation #1: Create frameworks for equitable community engagement and participation in projects intended for community benefit – ensuring residents and advocates know what to demand and how to achieve their goals.

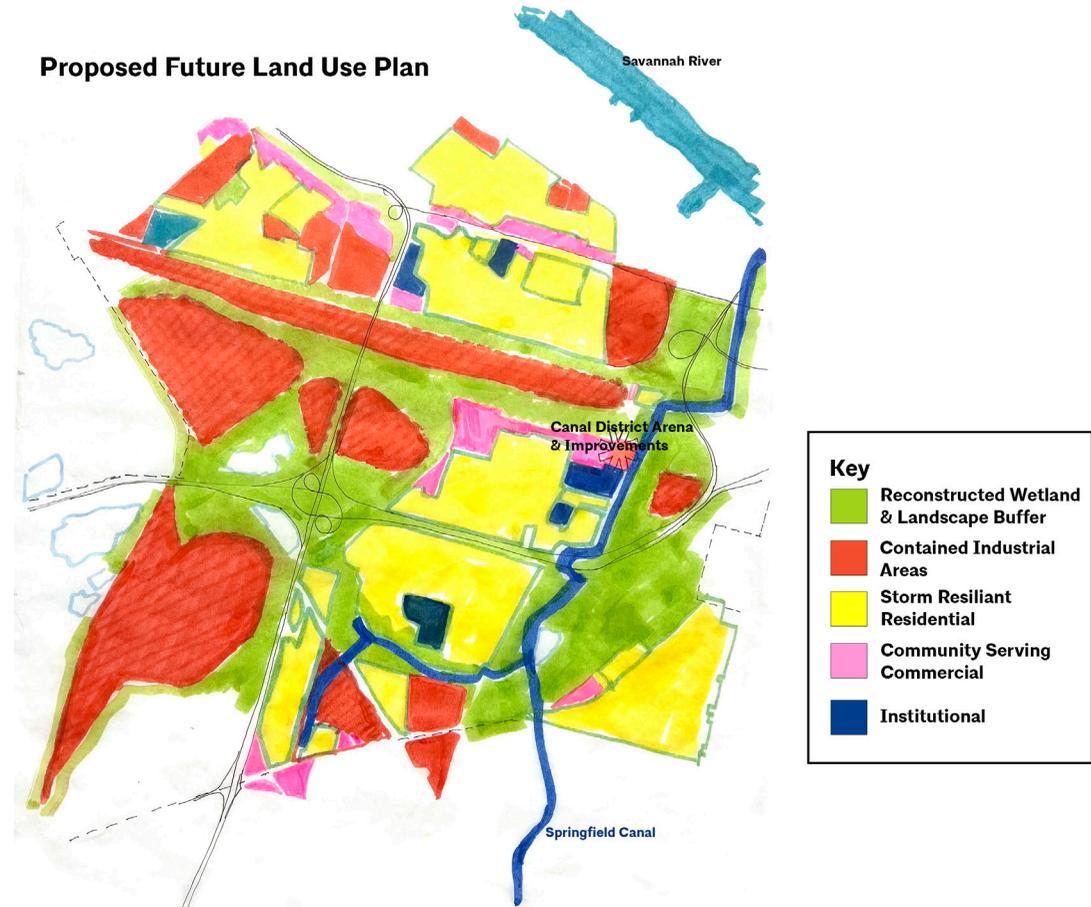
- [Strengthen Community Benefits Agreements](#) that will spell out the specific benefits the community will receive in return for supporting a proposed development within their neighborhood.
- Ensure programs and plans are considering multiple levels of community participation (e.g. community input, contracts, jobs) during various project phases (e.g. design, construction, governance, operations).
- Create a development authority that is quasi-public that has the capacity to facilitate the development of new projects that benefit the community.
- Complete an analysis of the historic investments that have not been made in the communities and require that the same percentage that was not given be re-invested into the community during the same time period. For example, if 10% of tax revenue (or other city dollars) was invested in an identified community over a 20 year period, an equitable investment would mean that the city would commit to investing 90% tax revenue (or other city dollars, excluding any new tax revenue to the communities that are being made whole) would be made over a 20 year period.

Recommendation #2: Support local residents and homeowners and establish robust protections against resident displacement.

- Allow targeted Accessory Development Unity (ADU) provisions in zoning code as one means of protecting/stabilizing residents on fixed incomes from displacement due to increases in annual property taxes caused by gentrification.

- Create an Inclusionary Zoning Affordable Housing program to set goals to include a minimum percentage of units made available to residents with a maximum area median income of 80%.
- Revise building codes to require flood-responsive new development, and fund/implement programs that educate and support existing residents to raise existing structures out of flood danger in the short-term.

- Advocate for the conversion of prioritized regressive taxes to support community reinvestment rather than penalize and displace residents experiencing poverty and disinvestment.
- Exchange blight taxes with proactive resources and preventative support for investment.





Recommendation #3: Revise City zoning ordinances to resolve zoning conflicts and tighten restrictions around zoning exemptions and to address continuing encroachment of polluting industrial uses in residential areas.

- Enact policy that ensures the separation of industrial and residential uses, restricts expanding industrial operations, and mandates industrial setbacks and landscape buffers.
- Creation of environmental overlay zone in which no industrial development can occur while clearly defining areas where such development is allowed along with conditions to protect adjacent residential areas.
- Streamline and improve code enforcement mechanisms so that enforcement can be swift and effective.
- Advocate for stronger enforcement of laws and regulations surrounding industrial uses adjacent to residential uses – including but not limited to requirements for public notice for input on planning processes; increasing and collecting fines for violations; pursuing compensation for resident damages/addressing past and current harms, and taking legal action against repeat violators.

Resources For Implementation

The timing of the AIA process with the District One communities has been fortunate because it coincides with several national initiatives that are now making available unprecedented resources to assist communities with environmental justice issues, the legacies of segregation and racial injustice and a host of related issues affecting marginalized communities in America. The City of Savannah should be well-positioned to take advantage of an historic opportunity to bring new resources to bear in addressing these

priorities locally. For instance, several developments in federal policy and programs are targeted toward communities like District One specifically.

Federal Resources

President Biden created the Justice40 Initiative to “deliver 40% of the overall benefits of climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, clean water, and other investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution.” Through this initiative, “hundreds of Federal Programs are Being Transformed to Maximize Benefits to Disadvantaged Communities Across the Country.” Under this “whole of government approach,” major new funding such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will be directed to targeted areas that are deemed disadvantaged communities. As a result, the City of Savannah and the communities of District One have an historic opportunity to access an unprecedented amount of federal resources to direct toward community priorities identified through this process.

In addition, the new Inflation Reduction Act – passed since this community process took place – includes significant new investments for communities like District One. Many of the law’s provisions relate directly to investments identified in the preceding recommendations. For instance, IRA will institute a new initiative toward “Creating Climate and Environmental Justice Block Grants to support community-led projects in disadvantaged communities and address disproportionate environmental and public health harms related to pollution and climate change.” It will also provide “Funding for fence-line monitoring near industrial facilities, air quality sensors in disadvantaged communities, new and upgraded multipollutant monitoring sites, and monitoring and mitigation of methane and wood heater emissions.” The Act provides funds for “Cleaning up ports to reduce the pollution burden faced by fence-line communities, jump-starting the transition of ports to zero-emissions with funding

for clean technology and emissions reduction plans.” It will also create Neighborhood Access and Equity Grants “to support neighborhood equity, safety, and affordable transportation access. These grants will reconnect communities divided by existing infrastructure, mitigate negative impacts of transportation facilities or construction projects on communities, and support equitable transportation planning.” The law also contains resources for community resilience, including HUD funds “to improve the climate resilience of affordable housing” and funds for “Planting trees, establishing community and urban forests, and expanding green spaces in cities, which combats climate change, lowers energy bills and reduces heat-related death and illness.” As the implementation of IRA rolls out, Savannah should be well-positioned to pursue federal resources to assist the Westside communities and can utilize the findings of this report to set the stage for federal partnership by demonstrating independent analysis that supports the need for such investments.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) established a new program called the [Reconnecting Communities Pilot \(RCP\)](#) discretionary grant program. It includes \$1 billion over the next 5 years. The program is “dedicated to reconnecting communities that were previously cut off from economic opportunities by transportation infrastructure. Funding supports planning grants and capital construction grants, as well as technical assistance, to restore community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, mitigation, or replacement of eligible transportation infrastructure facilities.” It has an October deadline for applications.

In August, the USDOT issued a [Thriving Communities Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) to hear directly from communities about where disadvantaged communities “need more direct assistance from capacity building providers and the federal government to successfully access infrastructure funding and advance transformative transportation projects.”

Local Resources

There are also important local resources that the communities of the Westside can access for some of the priorities contained in this report. For instance, the City invested a record \$7M its FY2022 budget for the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund, and plans to increase the level of investment to \$12.5M annually by 2032 in accordance with the Housing Savannah Action Plan. The Historic Savannah Foundation has launched an affordable housing initiative as well, which seeks to provide assistance to preserve older housing while combating gentrification. Community Development Financial Institutions can be important partners in accessing capital, and Savannah has multiple CDFI institutions locally that could be partners to Westside communities. In particular, Carver State Bank has received undisclosed funds from Wells Fargo recently and also received major funds from JPMorgan Chase in 2021. As they note, “Through this investment and new access to additional capital, Carver State intends to increase its lending to small businesses – particularly Black-owned businesses – in the region. Carver State expects to expand its small business lending by 50%.” These resources could play an important role in stimulating small business growth in westside communities. Overall, the philanthropic community has relatively modest funds, but there are opportunities to leverage funding similarly to spur additional investment. There are reportedly [79 foundations](#) giving to nonprofits in Savannah, Georgia. Combined, these foundations have assets of \$1.83 Billion. The Savannah Community Foundation, Inc. gives more than 200 charitable organizations grants each year totaling approximately \$2,000,000.



A Community Altar Call: Building Trust

In a way, the built environment in West Savannah is its own monument. It is a monument to the inequality we have built into our cities. Its physical barriers, disinvestment, and its separation and isolation from the rest of the city all reflect a larger civic divide. Its 'hidden history' speaks to the exclusion of communities whose narrative is an important part of our story. That is a bridge that must be crossed – here in Savannah, and in cities across our nation.

Public trust is currently at a low point in America's communities and Savannah is no exception. Given the past history – and some valid ongoing concerns – it doesn't take much imagination as an outsider to relate to the position most residents of the westside probably have toward government, business and institutions by now. The path forward must begin with actions that give the communities of West Savannah a reason to first participate and second to build confidence in a new relationship. The past is marked by moments that reinforce mistrust – for valid reasons – concerning broken promises and unfulfilled aspirations. This is the hard work of community building, and it is the most important task before you. It is collective work and it will require broad participation. The work is in front of us, not behind us.

Conclusion

The preceding report, and the ideas collected within, represent the collective values, priorities, and aspirations of the citizens of West Savannah and our team's best professional expertise to suggest actions that will make those ideas realities.

It is our sincere hope that the work which emerges from this process honors the generations of District

One residents who have called this community home, whose labor built this great city, those who overcame segregation, who broke down barriers, and whose struggle today is a living testament of the power of community to reach for and achieve a better world. You inspire us. May the ancestors smile upon your dreams, and your children reap their rewards.

Our AIA team visited for a short 3 days, but we were profoundly affected by the experience. We came to Savannah as strangers, but we left as partners who are invested in your collective success. You are part of our greater family of program communities, and this work binds us together. Consider us a resource to your efforts as you move forward with implementation. Our team and program will provide advice and assistance wherever appropriate. We will also be following your efforts with interest and rooting for your success.

The story of West Savannah is an important part of the American narrative, and it is our sincere hope that the next chapter in that story is one of transformation and profound inspiration for us all.





Team Roster



Roland Anglin, PhD, Team Lead, Cleveland, Ohio

Roland V. Anglin's career spans more than twenty-five years of working in the public, educational, and philanthropic sectors. In all his professional

positions, Anglin has focused on promoting economic and community development in and for low-income communities. Currently, he is Dean and Professor of the College of Education and Public Affairs at Cleveland State University. Immediately prior to this position, Anglin was the Senior Advisor to the Chancellor of Rutgers University–Newark and Director of the Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies, an applied research institute at the university. In his role as Senior Advisor, he worked as part of a team to implement various initiatives using the anchor role of the university to improve postsecondary outcomes in Newark.

Dr. Anglin began his academic career at Rutgers University in the late 1980's. During this time, he published some of the seminal work on citizen attitudes toward sprawl development. In 1991 he was recruited to the Ford Foundation, where he spent eight years. He served first as the program officer responsible for community development. Subsequently, he was asked to become Deputy Director for Community and Resource Development, which is part of the Asset Building and Community Development Division.

After leaving Ford in 1999, Dr. Anglin went to the Structured Employment Economic Development Corporation (Seedco), a national community development intermediary. At Seedco, Dr. Anglin was the Senior Vice President responsible for building the capacity of community-based housing organizations in

twenty-three cities partnering with Seedco.

After returning to academia in 2000, Dr. Anglin published three books: Promoting Sustainable Local and Community Development, Katrina's Imprint: Race and Vulnerability in America (with colleagues), and Resilience and Opportunity (with colleagues). Anglin received his doctorate from the University of Chicago, a master's degree from Northwestern, and a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College (City University of New York).



Diane Jones Allen, FASLA, Arlington, TX/ New Orleans, LA

Dr. Diane Jones Allen has established a national reputation by bridging practice and research in the areas she cares most deeply about; transportation

access, sustainability, and environmental justice. These interests have led to a research and creative output that is remarkable for the holistic integration of academic productivity with successful and meaningful practice. As Principal Landscape Architect with Design Jones LLC she became elevated to Fellow in the American Society of Landscape Architects in 2019. Design Jones LLC also received the 2016 American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Community Service Award under her leadership. Diane is a Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Board (CLARB) certified landscape architect, licensed in Texas, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, Mississippi and Maryland.

In 2017 she became Program Director for Landscape Architecture, College of Architecture, Planning, and Public Affairs, at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), where she assisted the program in renewing accreditation in 2018, developing its strategic plan, increasing its enrollment and also starting a new undergraduate program, the Bachelor of Science in

Environmental Design. Diane was elevated to full professor in 2020. She introduced new courses to the curriculum, including Design and Human Behavior and also instituted the Design Thesis as additional option to the Written thesis, that is a degree requirement for the Master of Landscape Architecture at UTA.

Diane served on the ASLA Blue Ribbon Panel on Climate Change and Resiliency in 2017 and has increased her research and service in this area. Diane also served on the Board of the Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF), serving as Vice President for Education in 2021. As a result of this service she and her committee members are working on 2 papers on increasing Black Faculty presence for journal publication. Diane is also part of one of two cross disciplinary teams that won the 2020 Skidmore Owens and Merrill (SOM) Foundation Research Prize focused on examining social justice in urban contexts. Her team's is working with six Freedman's Towns along the Trinity River to combat the impacts of urban sprawl and gentrification. She and her multidisciplinary UTA collaborators are working on an upcoming book "Reclaiming Black Settlements: A Design Playbook for Historic Communities in the Shadow of Urban Sprawl" to be published by Island Press in 2023.

Diane's research and practice are guided by the intersection of environmental justice, identity, and sustainability in cultural landscapes, including "Nomadic" responses to "Transit Deserts," places of increasing transportation demand and limited access, as discuss in her book "Lost in the Transit Desert: Race, Transit Access, and Suburban Form" published by Routledge Press in 2017. Diane also co-edited "Design for Democracy: Techniques for Collective Creativity", published by Island Press in 2017. Diane received Faculty Development Leave from UTA for academic year 2021-2022 and is a 2021 Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Research Fellow where she is researching and writing her upcoming book "The Maroon Landscape: A Cultural Approach to Climate Resiliency" to be published by the University of South Carolina Press in 2023.

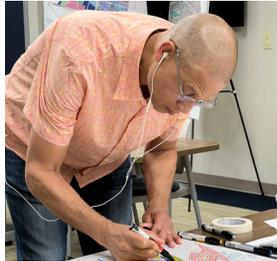


Nefertitti Jackmon, Austin, Texas

Nefertitti Jackmon is the City of Austin's first Community Displacement Prevention Officer. She leads the Displacement Prevention Division, tasked with developing

and leading programming and outreach to prevent the displacement of vulnerable communities, which will include \$300 million over 13 years in anti-displacement funding approved by voters in November 2020 as part of Project Connect Proposition A. The use of Project Connect anti-displacement funding will be guided by the Project Connect Equity Tool. Since COVID-19, Jackmon has worked with department leadership to program more than \$50 million in tenant stabilization services including the Relief for Emergency Needs for Tenants (RENT) Program. Among leading and participating in numerous relevant bodies of work, Jackmon served as Vice-Chair on the Council appointed Anti-Displacement Task Force (2017-18). She is a speaker and regular participant in national discussions on anti-displacement strategies and policy discussions related to gentrification.

Prior to coming to the Housing and Planning Department, Jackmon was the executive director of Six Square, a nonprofit organization responsible for celebrating and preserving the cultural legacy of the African American community within Austin's Black Cultural District. Nefertitti has a Bachelor of Arts in English from California State University Fresno and a Master of Arts in Africana Studies from the State University of New York at Albany. She also has a certificate from Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, Executive Program in Social Entrepreneurship.



**R. Steven Lewis,
NOMAC, FAIA, LEED
AP, Los Angeles, CA**

Steven Lewis is an architect and a tireless advocate for social justice and diversity within the field of architecture. He is currently a principal with the firm

ZGF Architects, where he leads the Los Angeles office's urban design practice. Prior to joining ZGF, Steven was appointed by Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, to the position of Urban Design Director for the City's Central Region, where he played a key role in shaping the vision of present and future development. Steven is the AIA 2016 Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award recipient, and was elevated to the AIA College of Fellows in December of 2015. In January of 2008, he returned to Southern California to join Parsons as a Design Manager after serving four years with the U.S. General Services Administration's Office of the Chief Architect in Washington, DC.

Steven was a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design for the 2006-07 academic year. He was a founding partner of the Los Angeles-based firm of RAW International in 1984, and for the next twenty years, was an essential part of the firm's growth and success. In December of 2010, he concluded a two-year term as President of the National Organization of Minority Architects, traveling around the country advocating for architects-of-color, while cultivating the next generation of diverse architects and designers. Steven recently launched a consulting practice – "Thinking Leadership – What we Do...Who we Are" – aimed at assisting clients attain superior outcomes through his engagement. More than anything, Steven is a facilitator of partnerships and alliances between groups and individuals who seek to use architecture and design to effect positive change to our world.



**Lydia Gaby, Los
Angeles, CA**

Through her role as Director at HR&A, Lydia leads projects that promote equitable economic development and resiliency and manages large-scale participatory planning

processes. Lydia supports a variety of HR&A services including program design, financial and organizational strategy, community engagement, and climate adaptation planning. Most recently, she developed an equitable economic development framework for Greenwood Park in Baton Rouge, and is working to design the City of Newark, NJ's approach to economic development and long-term recovery from COVID-19.

She supported the historic transition of Judge Lina Hidalgo, Harris County's first female County Judge, including leading program development and management for the Talking Transition initiative, the County's largest community outreach and participatory policy-making initiative in recent history. Lydia has developed strategies for organizations including the NYC Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Education, for which she also developed and is supporting the implementation of a Racial Equity Plan.

Through her work as a Forefront Fellow with the Urban Design Forum, she developed physical, programmatic, and financial strategies for resident-led resilience and climate adaptation planning on NYCHA campuses. Lydia received her bachelor's degree from Harvard University and pursued coursework in Environmental Science and Public Policy at both Harvard College and the Harvard Graduate School of Design.



**Omar Muhammad,
Charleston, SC**

Omar Muhammad is a planner for the City of Charleston and Executive Director of the Low Country Alliance for Model Communities. Omar was recently named "One

of 12 Black Leaders to Know in South Carolina," by the Charleston Post and Courier for his long-term engagement in environmental science and community-based work, including his work of environmental justice advocacy with LAMC in North Charleston.

He has successfully led efforts to engage the LAMC communities through various outreach strategies. Omar has successfully funded community research initiatives to train residents on the use of the EJRADAR online mapping tool, conduct a community-based health survey to assess health service gaps at the community level, and conduct a zoning analysis for Environmental Justice communities. Mr.

Muhammad has been instrumental in leverage relationships with both academics and governmental agencies to assist in the development of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) with the help of the University of Maryland and the EPA Region IV. Omar has been successful in leveraging relationships with academics and governmental agencies. Omar has been instrumental in securing mitigation funding totaling over 4 million dollars to address quality of life concerns in low-wealth communities. Specifically, he has led efforts to create the only Community Land Trust in the City of North Charleston, negotiated 4 million dollars in mitigation with Palmetto Railways, lead an effort to complete the very first Community Benefits Agreement for a local community and a warehouse developer. Mr. Muhammad sits on the Mitigation Agreement Commission (MAC) which advises LAMC on implementation of the Mitigation Agreement between

the South Carolina State Ports Authority and LAMC; the executive board for the Union Heights Community Council; volunteer staff for the Charleston Community Research to Action Board (CCRAB), the Clean Power Plan Environmental Justice Analysis Workgroup for the State of South Carolina and the Clean Power Plan Advisory Workgroup for the State of South Carolina.

He is from Augusta, GA where he earned his Biology degree from Augusta State University. Omar has a Masters Degree in Community and Urban Planning with a policy focus from the College of Charleston. He completed a 9-month training with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA) Region IV's Environmental Justice Academy and was selected Valedictorian for the inaugural class. He is also a past participant in a joint EPA Region IV and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Leaders in Environmental Action Pilot (LEAP) inaugural class. He lives in Charleston with his wife Tawana Muhammad and son Aamir.

AIA Staff:

Paola Capo

Paola Capo is the Sustainability and Communities by Design Specialist at the AIA and staffs the Disaster Assistance program. In her position, she provides architects and communities with the resources they need to create healthier, more sustainable and equitable built environments. She graduated from Georgetown University in 2017 with a degree in Science, Technology, and International Affairs, concentrating on Energy and the Environment—a degree inspired by the many places she lived growing up as an Army brat. She recently completed the 6-week [IN]City program at UC Berkeley to expand on her knowledge in urban planning.

Erin Simmons

Erin Simmons is the Senior Director of Design Assistance at the Center for Communities by Design

at the AIA in Washington, DC. The Center is a provider of pro bono technical assistance and participatory planning for community revitalization. Through its design assistance programs, the AIA has worked in over 250 communities and has been the recipient of numerous awards including “Organization of the Year” by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and the “Outstanding Program Award” from the Community Development Society. Erin is a leading practitioner of the design assistance process, providing expertise, facilitation, and support for the Center’s Design Assistance Team programs. In this capacity, she works with AIA components, members, partner organizations and community leaders to provide technical design assistance to communities across the world. Her portfolio includes work in over 100 communities across the United States and internationally. Erin is an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism in London, UK. Prior to joining the AIA, Erin worked as historic preservationist and architectural historian for an environmental and engineering firm, where she practiced preservation planning, created historic district design guidelines and zoning ordinances, and conducted historic resource surveys. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Florida State University and a Master’s degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Georgia.

Joel Mills

Joel Mills is Senior Director of the American Institute of Architects’ Center for Communities by Design. The Center is a leading provider of pro bono technical assistance and democratic design for community success. Its programs have catalyzed billions of dollars in sustainable development across the United States, helping to create some of the most vibrant places in America today. The Center’s design assistance process has been recognized with numerous awards and has been replicated and adapted across the world. Joel’s 27-year career has been focused on strengthening civic capacity, public processes and civic institutions. This work has helped millions of people participate in

democratic processes, visioning efforts, and community planning initiatives. He has delivered presentations, training content, workshops and public processes in over a dozen countries across 5 continents. In the United States, Joel has provided consultative services to hundreds of communities, leading participatory processes on the ground in over 85 communities across 35 states. His work has been featured in over 1,000 media stories. Joel has served on dozens of expert working groups, boards, juries, and panels focused on civic discourse and participation, sustainability, and democracy. He was a founding Board Member of the International Association for Public Participation’s United States Chapter. He has spoken at numerous international conferences concerning democratic urbanism and the role of democracy in urban success, including serving as the Co-Convener of the Remaking Cities Congress in 2013. Joel is an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism in London, UK. He is the author of numerous articles on the relationship between democracy, civic capacity and community.



Appendix I – Logic Model Template (Created by Omar Muhamamd)

Title:

Goal:

Specific **M**easurable **A**udience/Issue Directed **R**ealistic **T**ime-Bound (SMART)

Resources (or Inputs) – the funding, equipment, personnel, and other contributions needed to conduct activities and create outputs

Activities – those efforts or interventions designed and conducted to produce an outcome

Outputs – tangible products and services resulting from activities

Target Audience – the individual, community, system, or other unit at which an activity or output is directed. This should be a specific definition of the unit for which the activity or output is designed.

Outcomes – the changes expected as a result of the program or project

- **Long-term outcomes** – the expected change in social, economic, and/or environmental condition as a result of the program or project
- **Mid-term outcomes** – the plausible changes or human actions resulting from the achievement of the short-term outcomes
- **Short-term outcomes** – the expected immediate change in the issue or audience resulting from the outputs

Goal – the result or achievement toward which effort is directed. It is broader and more general than an objective or an outcome. It may be the result of efforts that the program contributes to but does not direct.

Objectives – establish the standards of achievement in terms of some proportionate improvement in existing conditions. Objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Audience or issue directed, Realistic and ambitious, and Time-bound).

Performance Measures – objectives are quantifiable indicators used to demonstrate the implementation of activities, creation of outputs or to quantify progress toward outcomes.

Evaluation – helps organizations identify the role they play in community-wide impact by identifying specific constituents who benefit from the services the organization provides. For programs and organizations, the performance measures focus on whether customers are better off as a result of your services. These performance measures also look at the quality and efficiency of these services. A evaluation process should ask three simple questions to get at the most important performance measures: **How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?**

Objectives (SMART)	Resources	Activities (What will you do?) Output (What will you produce?)	Short-term Outcomes	Mid-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes

Project Timeline

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 10	Year 20

Project Cost Estimate

Activity	Estimated Initial Cost	Outcome

Total:

Appendix II- DAT Case Studies

The Power of ‘We Speak Fuh We’

The local Geechee and Gullah traditions have always been a place of community power, and in the iconic Gullah phrase, ‘We Speak Fuh We,’ the citizens of West Savannah’s neighborhoods have a powerful organizing call to action and statement of empowerment. It doesn’t take much imagination to see how a grassroots movement could be animated by ‘We Speak Fuh We’, with a platform of neighborhood issues that could be taken to public leaders. It is also a powerful phrase to reinforce culture and spark community pride – a profound statement that one could see in the neighborhoods and hear in rallying cries to mobilize residents for change.

#Don’tMuteDC

Washington, DC, provides one important precedent case in organizing around cultural preservation and anti-displacement. The public realm in DC is animated by local music. Go-go, the local funk music unique to DC, has been a part of city culture since the 1970s. However, it has recently become a cultural symbol in the context of a gentrifying city whose racial makeup is changing rapidly. In April 2019, a controversy over music and public space ignited a musical protest movement around go-go after new residents of luxury apartments in a gentrifying area of the historic African-American U Street corridor complained about the noise from a Metro PCS store. The store had been known for projecting go-go music since the 1990s out onto the street on its corner in the Shaw neighborhood. A threatened lawsuit caused the store to turn off the music, sparking a sharp grassroots backlash. The slogan #dontmutedc was born, with thousands of protestors marching and over 80,000 signing a petition. A signature demonstration called [Moechella](#), a mashup of “Moe” (DC slang for “homeboy/girl”) and Coachella (after the California music festival), was organized at 14th and U Streets

and stopped traffic with a go-go band playing a full concert. The event drew thousands of participants. The location marked a symbolically important place as part of the city’s historic African-American cultural corridor that has been impacted by gentrification. Don’t Mute DC held town halls and conferences to focus attention on needed resources for the community as well. The movement resulted in the Metro PCS store returning to its tradition of projecting go-go music out onto the street and a host of other actions. The DC City Council passed a resolution to make go-go the official music of the city, and conversations about the impact of gentrification resulted in significant new investments in local health and education facilities. A go-go rally and protest to save a local hospital resulted in \$22 million in new funding for the facility. Similarly, the coalition was able to win back \$53 million in restored funding to Banneker Academic High School’s revitalization and saved a workforce development program that was facing elimination. [Don’t Mute DC](#) lives on as an organization dedicated to cultural preservation and the battle against gentrification and displacement. It sparked a similar movement in New Orleans called “Don’tMuteNOLA.” Go-go has been similarly used in protests all over the city as an anthem for community empowerment and cultural preservation.

DAT Case Studies

The Will to Make Change: Building a New Tradition for Savannah

“Twenty years ago, your ideas seemed like dreams. Now we are living those dreams.” Those are the words from one community 20 years after an AIA team visited. They describe a “snowball effect” of momentum that built as they began with small steps in their implementation process and built energy over time for phased implementation of bigger and bigger projects. Many communities have described a moment of change that happened as a result of their process and led to dramatic new relationships that benefited the entire community.

In Salt Lake City, 3 civic organizations came together to form what was termed a “pioneering collaboration to engage the community.” What happened in Boise, Idaho during the 1980s is now celebrated by locals as “The Boise Revolution.” As one civic leader observed, the revolution “completely changed the direction downtown Boise was headed. The real revolution was the community coming together to overcome downtown’s stagnation, to heed the advice of the R/UDAT team that Boiseans should “submerge their individual agendas and work together in the broader interest of the entire community.” Leaders in Santa Fe described their effort as “an experiment in deep democracy.” They represent a pattern in successful communities, whereby community involvement and action leads to deeper partnerships, novel practices and huge investments. In similar fashion to Savannah, some of AIA’s recent project communities are working toward addressing deeply ingrained challenges regarding racial equity, housing affordability and resilience. They offer a hopeful narrative of what is possible when people come together to reinvent their communities.

The Bee Branch, Dubuque, Iowa

An AIA team worked in Dubuque in 2007 with a community process around a host of key issues, including flood mitigation and stormwater issues facing its most diverse and vulnerable neighborhoods. The city’s Bee Branch neighborhoods had been through 6 horrific flooding events leading to presidential disaster declarations over less than two decades. The City established a whole-of-government approach to addressing its flooding issues, bringing together agencies to formulate a coordinated strategy that could leverage partnerships at every level of government. Building partnerships set the table for funding mechanisms. In 2013, the project was awarded \$98.5 million from the Iowa Flood Mitigation Board through state sales tax increment financing spread over 20 years. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded the City of Dubuque \$31.5 million in disaster resiliency funds for the Bee Branch

Healthy Homes Resiliency Program and stormwater infrastructure improvements. When combined with other state and federal grants and local donations, the City has received \$163 million to help fund the \$249.6 million project so far. It is a transformative effort that includes daylighting a creek, creating new wetlands and a greenway, neighborhood mitigation efforts like porous pavements and flood-friendly landscaping elements (raingardens and related design improvements) and house-by-house flood retrofitting. It is now not only performing well when major rainfall occurs but has created what is arguably the city’s greatest public space. And the work continues.

West of 9th, Louisville, Kentucky

In 2016, the AIA had a design assistance team that worked with the communities West of Ninth Street in Louisville. The Russell neighborhood and the area known as West of Ninth mark a dividing line in Louisville. Crossing Ninth Street, one experiences a steep decline in income, life expectancy, employment and a number of other indicators. The Beecher Terrace public housing projects were built in 1941, originally to house WWII plant workers. One stakeholder report noted that average family income in the complex was below \$3,000. The Russell neighborhood was home to a number of famous citizens, including Muhammad Ali. More recently, it was also where Breanna Taylor was killed. There are deep wounds and mistrust as a result of both historic events and contemporary life which the city and community must do the hard work of addressing together. Like District One in Savannah, West Louisville has needs for both revitalization and economic development as well as anti-displacement and affordable housing. Following the process, the neighborhood received \$30 million in federal Choice Neighborhoods grants from HUD to redevelop the Beecher Terrace projects. As one local report noted, the initiative includes plans to “address community concerns about potential negative consequences like higher rents and property values.” A combination of policies were put in place to freeze property taxes for

vulnerable homeowners to stem gentrification pressures while also directing more investment to the community. The West End Opportunity Partnership creates a taxable increment financing (TIF) district to ensure tax dollars are reinvested into local neighborhoods. The mechanism freezes property taxes for residents already living in the neighborhoods. Over 30 years, 80% of the taxes collected in the district would stay in the community. A board made up of residents and local organizations will decide how to reinvest the resources in the community. An arts and cultural district is also part of the work now to preserve cultural heritage and celebrate community.

Indianapolis, Indiana

In 2009, the city hosted an AIA team to look at neighborhood revitalization in an area that had over 5 dozen brownfield sites and 2 superfund sites. The neighborhoods faced disinvestment and decline, abandoned housing and distrust. Hundreds of residents participated in the process, which also included local and federal officials. The Assistant Administrator of the EPA pledged federal support for implementation efforts and as a result the city was awarded one of the first grants in the Sustainable Communities Partnership among federal agencies. Millions of federal dollars were pledged toward brownfields and Superfund cleanups, a transit corridor, and a green housing redevelopment. The Pilot focused on two areas within the District: a former railyard redeveloped to support urban agriculture, and two former maintenance facilities redeveloped as affordable housing and permanent supportive housing units. HUD, DOT, and EPA helped develop a land reuse plan to support urban agriculture at the former railyard that will include environmental design components, neighborhood strategies and local policies necessary to make reuse successful, and an implementation plan. The federal partners also helped the community develop form-based codes to support brownfield site reuse planning and green building design. Now called Monon Farms, the 15-acre former rail yard and maintenance facility has transformed from an abandoned and contaminated industrial property. As a 2013 federal

report states, “The EPA invested \$383,000 for soil testing, site clearance, targeted excavation, regrading, and a non-prescriptive cap. EPA partnered with Kansas State University to examine soil and compost conditions before and after the growing season and measure how plants take up soil contaminants. The results aided in the development of safe gardening practices for other urban agriculture projects.” Another site, the former Ertel Manufacturing facility, has reportedly “grown to over 500,000 square feet of manufacturing space” after a \$6 million remediation. The 16 Park initiative is transforming a former school into a mixed-use community center. That project was funded with \$34.4 million as a mixed-financing package of Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity, competitive ARRA funds, and Indianapolis Housing Trust Fund grants. A 1.5 acre site which historically served as a lumberyard before becoming an unofficial dump, is undergoing brownfields assessment work. King Park Development Corporation, the neighborhood community development organization, has received significant grants for housing and economic development activities in the area as well. These neighborhoods are undergoing dramatic positive change as a result.

The Fifth Ward, Houston

In 2012, an AIA team assisted the Fifth Ward in Houston with neighborhood revitalization. The area was facing historic disinvestment, abandoned housing, economic decline, crime and violence issues. It had earned the notorious moniker, “The bloody Fifth” by city residents. The process included hundreds of participants. A year later, a Houston Chronicle headline described a coming “renaissance” for the neighborhood, identifying a series of projects that included playgrounds, splashpad parks, a new 10,000-square-foot public library, a health and wellness facility, over 100 new units of housing, and the restoration of an historic theater, all in the works. Within 6 years the neighborhood had begun a comeback with the local community development corporation playing a leading role. As one local feature described it, “Now—thanks in part to the Fabulous Fifth,

a planning effort by the American Institute of Architects Communities by Design program—the DeLuxe is just one star in a constellation of buildings breathing new life into the two-mile corridor. As Houston prepares to receive over \$1 billion in federal housing aid post-Hurricane Harvey, the Fifth Ward is poised to carry out a master plan in a city without traditional zoning. If Payton’s organization can follow through, it will show the country what the redevelopment of a black community looks like—redevelopment that doesn’t entail the loss of neighborhood culture, or the displacement of its longtime residents.”

Conclusion

As these brief case studies illustrate, current challenges facing the communities of District One do not have to be a permanent condition. Building a broad community coalition and leveraging partnerships throughout the community to employ new policy approaches and successfully attract resources can make a dramatic difference in Savannah too.

Designing a Sustainable Future for District One

Facilitated by AIA Communities by Design

AIA
Communities
by Design



1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

[aia.org](https://www.aia.org)

© 2022 The American Institute of Architects