



Common Ground

**A Master Plan for
Savannah's Canal District**

An aerial architectural rendering of Savannah's Canal District. The image shows a dense grid of streets and building footprints, with numerous trees scattered throughout the blocks. The style is a light, monochromatic sketch or line drawing, giving it a technical and historical feel. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down on the city blocks.

Common Ground

**A Master Plan for
Savannah's Canal District**

Credits

2020 Mayor and Council

Van R. Johnson, II
Mayor

Alderswoman Kesha
Gibson-Carter
Post 1, At-Large

Alderswoman Alicia
Miller Blakely
Post 2, At-Large

Alderswoman
Bernetta B. Lanier
District 1

Alderman Detric Leggett
District 2

Alderswoman Linda
Wilder-Bryan
District 3

Alderman Nick Palumbo
District 4

Alderswoman Dr. Estella
Edwards Shabazz
District 5

Alderman Kurtis Purtee
District 6

2019 Mayor and Council

Eddie DeLoach
Mayor

Alderswoman Carol Bell
Post 1, At-Large

Alderman Brian Foster
Post 2 At-Large

Alderman Van
R. Johnson, II
District 1

Alderman Bill
Durrenece
District 2

Alderman John Hall
District 3

Alderman Jillian Miller
District 4

Alderswoman Dr. Estella
Edwards Shabazz
District 5

Alderman Tony Thomas
District 6

City of Savannah

Patrick Monahan
City Manager

Bret Bell
Chief Operating
Officer

Taffanye Young
Chief Officer of
Community Services

Bridget Lidy
Sean Brandon
Nick Deffley
Manny Dominguez
Martin Fretty
Kenan Hall
Zack Hoffman
David Keating
David Maxwell
Carol Moon

Heath Lloyd
Assistant City
Manager/Chief
Operating Officer
of Infrastructure
and Development

Philip Kalogitonas
Willie Mae Knight
Cristy Lawrence
Roger Raines
Cornelia Reed
Kerri Reid
Leonard Tropea
Margaret Williams
Nick Zoller

Chatham County- Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

Melanie Wilson
Executive Director

Planning Team

Jeff Williams
Perkins and Will

Cassie Branum
Perkins and Will

Denise Grabowski
Symbioscity

Kendra Harruff
Perkins and Will

Lauren Hawley
Perkins and Will

Lauren Neefe
Perkins and Will

Blake Reeves
Perkins and Will

Jeff Chermely
Perkins and Will

Kevin Smith
Thomas & Hutton

Jim Collins
Thomas & Hutton

C.J. Chance
Hussey Gay Bell

Design Review Team

During the planning process, this team provided a peer review of the project.

Michael Brown
Co-Owner,
Principal
Brown Pelican
Consulting

Gabrielle Bullock
Director of Global
Diversity, Principal
Perkins and Will

Malcolm Davis
Civic Architect,
Senior Associate
Perkins and Will

David Green
Global Urban
Design Leader,
Principal
Perkins and Will

Sylvester M.
Gould
Vice President,
Principal Owner
Consulting
Services Logistics

Paula Kreissler
Executive Director
Healthy Savannah

Dwayne Stephens
Vice Chair,
Savannah
Downtown
Historic District
Board of Review,
Parsons Program
Management
Team

Contents

The Canal District Master Plan consists of two critical documents that should guide the future of the area.

This document is the Master Plan.

01



The Master Plan
A document that focuses on the process, vision, and design recommendations for the Canal District

02



The Action Playbook
A document that focuses on the actions needed to implement the Master Plan in an equitable and inclusive way

Master Plan Contents

- 02 A Shared Perspective**
 - 08 A Place Between Two Histories
 - 10 A Long-Term Process of Alignment
 - 22 The Work of Change
- 26 The Master Plan**
 - 28 The District Master Plan
 - 30 Protect Communities
 - 34 Rebuild Nature, Elevate Civic Life
 - 38 Grow the City
- 42 Mobility**
 - 50 Trail System
 - 54 Street Improvements
 - 66 Temporary Arena Parking
- 68 Public Spaces**
 - 80 The Canal Park
 - 88 Wetland Preserve Park
 - 90 Neighborhood Parks
 - 92 Heritage Trail
- 94 Development**
 - 102 Catalytic Projects
 - 104 Transition Zones
 - 106 Zoning Land Use
- 108 Three-Year Arena Area Plan**





A Shared Perspective

on the Canal District





Vision

The Canal District is new common ground in Savannah. It protects historic communities, rebuilds nature, elevates civic life, and allows the City to grow.

The Master Plan seeks to coordinate actions and communication into a shared perspective, empowering Savannah residents and leadership to work together to develop resilient places and a stronger City.

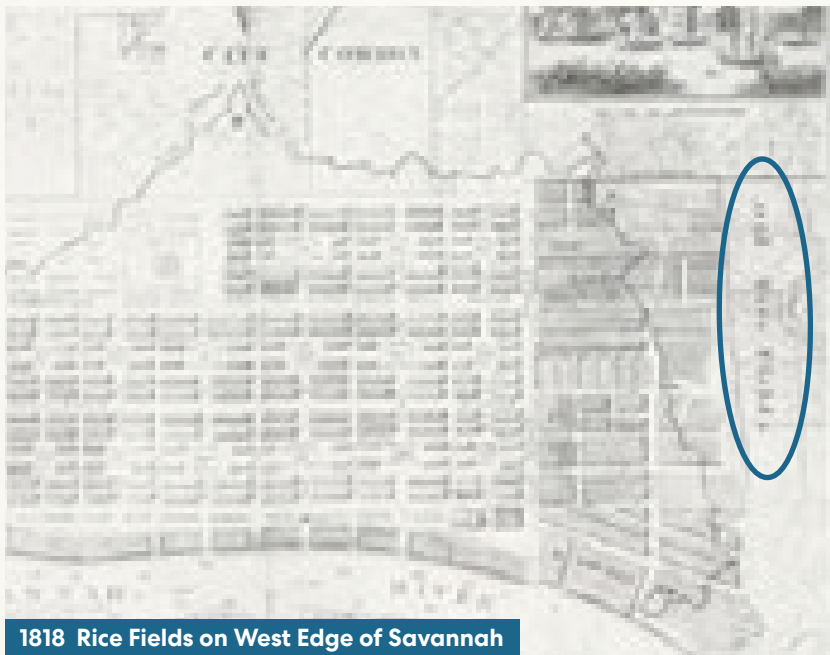
The Canal District





A Place Between Two Histories

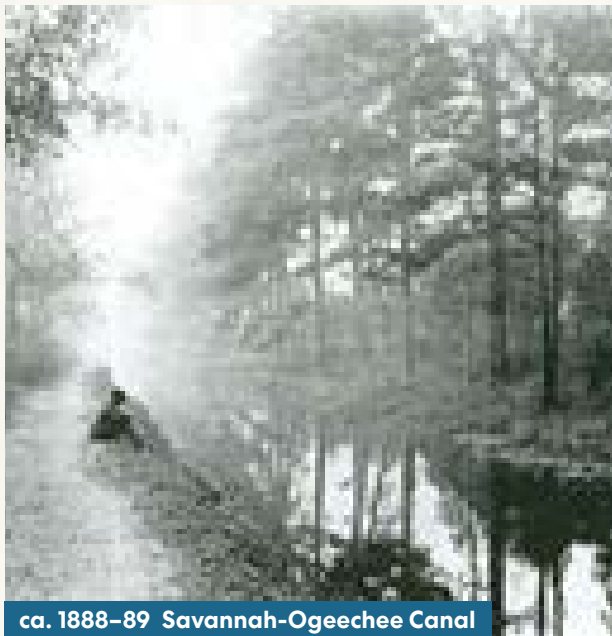
Situated just west of Downtown Savannah and the MLK Corridor, the Canal District exhibits a pattern of growth defined by the industrial developments of the last two hundred years and a historical divide in the City's communities.



1818 Rice Fields on West Edge of Savannah



1876 Central Rail Road, Springfield Canal and Plantation



ca. 1888-89 Savannah-Ogeechee Canal



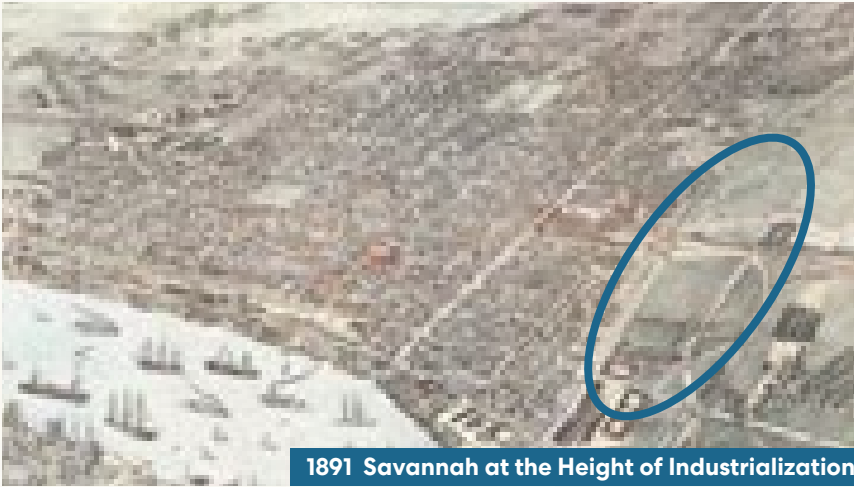
1976 Railroad Viaducts at West Boundary Street



1949 Still from Promotional Short for Carver Village



1918 Map of Brickyard Lots



1891 Savannah at the Height of Industrialization

A place of agricultural beginnings, industrial infrastructure, and historic communities.

The land that forms the Canal District is today a patchwork of industry, homes, and water infrastructure that tell the story of Savannah's growth from the founding of the colony on Yamacraw Bluff to the present day.

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.

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. The physical remains of this infrastructure confirm the historical importance of that labor to Savannah's growth.

In 1876, as Reconstruction ended, the century's third yellow fever epidemic decimated the Irish communities living along the canals and railroads, and emancipated African Americans moved into the areas the Irish communities abandoned. With segregation came the 20th-century struggle for equal

education, equal housing, and equal protection under the law, yet historic structures throughout west Savannah's neighborhoods reflect the character and resilience of African Americans and the communities, not just the structures, they built.

Springfield Terrace School, an elementary school for African American children, was opened in 1926, and its structure remains today on Hastings Street. In 1948, the first houses were sold in Carver Village, one of the last segregationist subdivisions financed by the Federal Housing Authority. Water drained in the open and the streets were not paved, yet many of the families who secured homeownership in Carver Village remain in those homes today, having expanded and remodeled them over time. As homeownership became a foundation of economic security, African American businessmen began to establish commercial enterprise along Bowden Street. The integrity of this livelihood persists in the texture and scale of west Savannah's many neighborhoods, leading to the addition of Carver Village to the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.

Other important structures, including the Water Works Pump House and the Henry Rose Carter Memorial Laboratory, where early studies of malaria contributed to the founding of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), attest to the way natural, social, and city-building histories are intertwined in the wetland plain of west Savannah.

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 Master Plan proposes a path toward common ground.

A Long-Term Process of Alignment

Finding common ground is a process that will play out over decades, not years.

February 2002

City develops "Westside Master Plan Overview"

September 2006

SPLOST 5 approved to partially fund the development of a new arena (\$70M projected)

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

July 2012

City purchases 11.5 acres near the existing City Lot for Canal District development

Creation of Arena Blue Ribbon Panel and FEMA purchases in the Canal District

December 2004

City purchases 10 acres near the existing City Lot for Canal District development

October 2010

SPLOST allocations revised due to global recession, Drops from \$70 million to \$21.7 million

September 2013

Arena site approved by City Council at Stiles and Gwinnett Streets

November 2013

SPLOST 6 approved, projection of \$120 million for the new Arena

May 2016

Barrett Sports Group recommendations, arena of 7,600 to 8,400 seats and City Council affirms arena site at Stiles and Gwinnett after some discussion of alternative arena sites

February 2016

Arena Advisory Subcommittees present reports to City Council and Barrett Sports Group

June 2019 - March 2020

The Canal District Master Plan is completed.

June 2017

New Public Works complex design contract awarded to relocate the existing City Lot at Stiles and Gwinnett

September & October 2018

Arena Community Workshops and community survey launched

Early 2022

Anticipated Arena Opening Day

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

May 2015

Barrett Sports Group hired to develop recommendations for Arena and City Lot site

May 2017

Canal District Master Plan by Barrett Sports Group presented

June 2018

Perkins and Will hired to design the Arena

October 2013

Canal District Vision Plan by Sottile & Sottile

June 2016

Barrett Sports Group hired to create a conceptual master plan for the District

December 2017

Project Management Services contract for the Arena Development District awarded

December 2018

Arena Concept Design Presented to Council

Continued growth of and investment in the Canal District

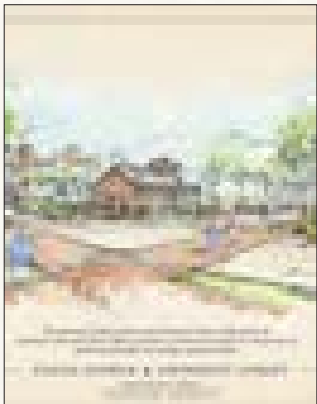
The Master Plan recognizes the Canal District's regional significance by weaving into the City's many ongoing initiatives.

The development of the Canal District can bring economic investment to historically distressed neighborhoods while expanding the footprint of Savannah's urban core. However, sustained diligence will be needed to wholly connect the District to the region and celebrate the regional significance of growing the City into this important area of Savannah.

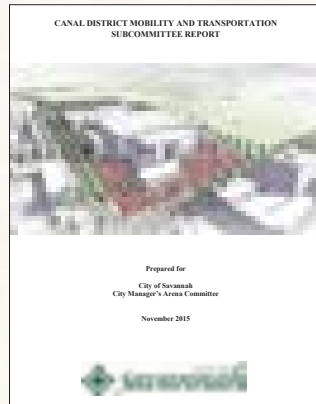
The Canal District Master Plan coordinates the immediate reality of the Canal District's development with the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and the progress of adjacent civic projects. It builds on the crucial work of the 2015–16 feasibility

Recent Plans

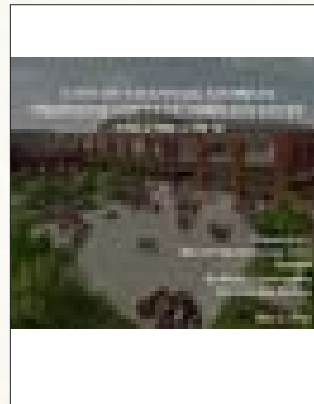
Among the many dimensions of the Canal District, this Plan unconditionally supports:



Canal District Vision Plan, 2013



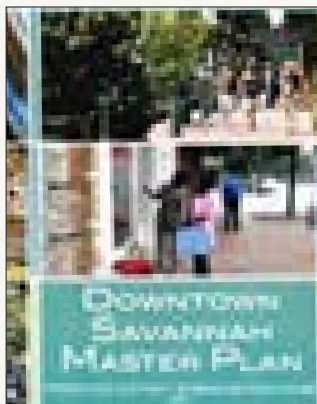
Savannah Arena Subcommittee Reports, 2015



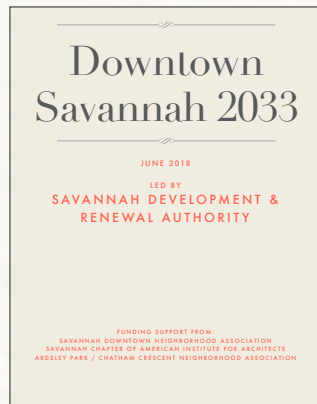
Savannah Arena Feasibility Study, 2016



Downtown Streetscape Plan, 2016



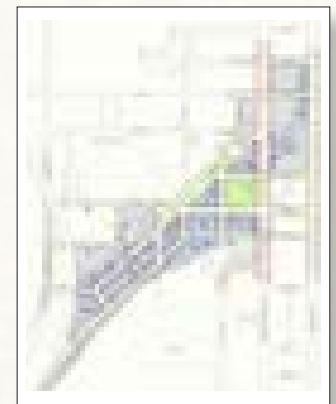
Downtown Savannah Master Plan, 2011



Downtown Savannah Master Plan 2033, 2018



The MLK-Montgomery Street Redevelopment Plan, 2001



Reclaiming Old West Broad Street with the Removal of the I-16 Flyover, 2015

studies, subcommittee reports, and planning initiatives for the Savannah Arena and surrounding area. Its recommendations carry forward the vision of the City that has been evolving with the revitalization plans for Downtown Savannah and the MLK Jr. Boulevard and Montgomery Street corridor.

In addition, the Canal District Master Plan follows the lead of ongoing plans and initiatives to build a healthier, more cohesive City both physically and economically. Such efforts include community-level support for business and cultural development. They include plans to renovate streets to

accommodate safely a greater array of transportation options. They also include plans to dismantle barriers such as the I-16 flyover, beginning with completion in 2015 of Reclaiming Old West Broad Street: Interchange Modification Report (IMR), which is required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for changes to the federal highway system.

Recent Initiatives

Among the many dimensions of the Canal District, this Plan unconditionally supports:

01

Coordination with local economic development organizations on business-retention programs for existing local businesses

02

Development and construction of Tide to Town to enhance bike and pedestrian connectivity

03

Collaboration with neighborhood residents, artists, and local historians to develop strategies for reflecting local history in new development and public art

04

Initiatives to promote health and community through the development of local food systems

To chart Savannah's future, the City listened, learned, and distilled the community's vision into a Master Plan and an Action Playbook directed at positive change.

This phase of the Canal District planning process began with a City-wide public listening session, held in the Coastal Georgia Center in August 2019. It continued through a series of public forums and a community-wide survey to solicit expectations, guidance, and feedback for a desirable and pragmatic plan for Savannah. These forums included a public visioning workshop on City Lot, a stormwater evaluation with City engineers and engineering consultants, and a design review summit in which local and national experts responded to the draft of the Plan. In addition, smaller, focused meetings were convened with residents of the impacted neighborhoods. The process concluded with a day-long briefing of the newly elected City Council in January 2020.

Throughout the process, residents of Savannah and community leaders voiced their concerns, needs, and ideas about the future of their city. Feedback, along with site research and analysis, illuminated the context of the Canal District as an underdeveloped area next to important historic neighborhoods in need of updated stormwater and sewer systems and stronger links to the City's economy and the jobs available to Savannahians.

The engagement process produced an understanding of Savannah's governance around public works and clarified the intersection of the new District's development with the progress of other civic projects underway, including flyover and complete-streets plans.



Plan Workshop

October 30

- Drainage in the Springfield Basin
- Different ways to convey water, resolve flood issues, plus create a beautiful and engaging public amenity

Design Review Summit

November 4-7

- Plan Presentation to Community with Expert Panel and Feedback
- Plan Presentation to City Council

Council Atlanta Trip

January 27

Council Meeting

February 27

October

November

December

January

February

Phase 3

Plan Finalization and Documentation



A lot of work to be done....There's a lot of infrastructure that needs to be implemented, and before we can start talking about all of the beautiful things, I think there's a lot of not-so-beautiful things that have to happen first.

- Local Architect, Savannah

Expansive property with lots of opportunity.

- City Official, Savannah

It's gonna be a bottleneck on Stiles Avenue...so my concern is, which side—the east side or the west side—are they gonna get land from to widen Stiles Avenue so that we don't have that congestion there. But overall, it's just gonna make Savannah more beautiful.

- Resident, Springfield Terrace

Being able to start to appreciate where we live as a coastal community and that connection to the canal systems and the stormwater system that we have, which people don't really understand how much value that has for us and keeps our homes and streets from flooding.

- Resident, Ardsley Park

My concern is that the people in those communities that are being affected are treated fairly and they're not trampled over, they're not removed from their homes, and the historic status stays right where it should be.

- Candidate, Savannah

I would like to maintain that community spirit—the one that's already been there....I'd like to see that area not compete with other districts that are currently being redeveloped right now.

- Resident, Savannah

Creating something other than just the Historic District... there's so much opportunity for active recreation with the park system above the railroad tracks and then a connection hopefully into some historically African-American neighborhoods that...have seen a barrier build over time...so building some continuity...and connection.

- Resident, Ardsley Park

Inclusion, economic development for all, job creation. When I think about the Canal District, I also think about expanding the money that is being concentrated there, to my district.

- City Council, Savannah

Sometimes I feel like it really doesn't matter what I think about it cause I feel like they gonna do what they wanna do anyway.

- Resident, Springfield Terrace

This is a much bigger project than I realized.

- Resident, Kensington Park

Those who will be coming from out of town, who will be coming from other counties, maybe they can find a way there could be a halfway point to minimize some of those traffic concerns.

- Former Resident, Cloverdale

Leafy vegetation, trees, kind of like little parks and... canals along them, linking different urban areas together so that you can bike or walk down them and then maybe sit down and have a picnic.

- Resident, Savannah

The gathering place.

- Childhood Resident

If this project is done right—if it's done correctly—it could make Savannah be a world-class city. If it's done wrong, you're gonna have more crime. You're gonna have more depressed people. And you're gonna have deeper depression in these already depressed neighborhoods.

- Resident, West Savannah

I don't know if it'd be big enough, if the water channel would be able to connect to the Savannah River and have small boats come up it?

- Resident, Savannah

We moved into Carver Village in 1955, so we've been in it and we're still there.... even though we've remodeled it and everything. But drainage is still an issue for us....It's only improved slightly.

- Resident, Carver Village

A blank slate that offers us an opportunity to re-create an entirely new neighborhood and a second downtown to Savannah.

- Resident, Downtown Savannah

We have been a part of the Arena since 2002, so we are very much for it. We just want to make sure that it enhances and don't detract from the neighborhood.

- Resident, Carver Village

I love where I live, I love where I'm located, and it's a brand-new house! And I love it. I love it. I'm just sorry in the years, we may have to relocate, but I just hate to move, I just hate to move.

- Resident, Springfield Terrace

Thousands of visions, comments, concepts, and concerns were voiced and recorded.

I think it needs to have some supporting interests too that are not just getting tourists in the area but actually getting people who live in the landmark district...to come to the Canal District and interact more and really link that area with the rest of the community.

- Resident, Savannah

We would like Carver Village to be preserved....But unless the drainage issue is taken care of, it's just gonna be a huge problem for us.

- Resident, Carver Village

I think the Arena project is gonna be amazing, and stitching that part of the community and stretching the boundary of the City that far west is extremely exciting to me.

- Resident, Downtown Savannah

I live and work there. 95 percent of my life is in that little area, and I just want to make sure that the money goes into...making sure that the businesses that eventually move into it are the ones that keep that area happy and safe and well provided for.

- Resident, Cloverdale

I just want to make sure there's a community-benefits agreement in place, that we protect the people who live there, protect the businesses, protect the churches. And we can have a free-flowing walkway, waterway, and a good box in place so that we can drain the water off, so it's a win-win for everybody: the City, the community, and people ten years down the road.

- Candidate, Savannah

It's important to bring communities together and have things available for them—not just for tourism, but also for them to enjoy without having to drive out of town four hours to enjoy certain events.

- Resident, Pooler

I would like to see vehicles excluded except for possibly bicycles and have it just open for people to come down to relax in.

- Resident, Ardsley Park

A space where the community has the opportunity to be active and get out and walk in a more beautiful environment.

- Resident, Savannah

I'm wondering what's going to happen to the pipes that are running, like, right outside of my house. Cause the ground is caving in, and the City said it's my responsibility with the ground cavin' in, so I don't know what's going to happen with that.

- Resident, Springfield Terrace

An opportunity to...make something happen on an open canvas with community feedback and input in order to ensure we're capturing what the future of Savannah should look like in that area.

- City Official, Savannah

I look forward to the time when we can all congregate in that one location with a large crowd and get the energy going that I think is gonna be there.

- City Official, Savannah

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.

- Resident, West Savannah

The visioning conversation was translated into key findings and conceptual direction for the Master Plan and its policy strategies.

Vision: The Canal District is new common ground in Savannah. It protects historic communities, rebuilds nature, elevates civic life, and allows the City to grow.

The Community

The Canal District Master Plan should build on our communities' strengths by:

- 01 Cultural Heritage**
Elevating the people who are rooted in this community.
- 02 Neighborhood Fabric**
Preserving the neighborhood fabric that connects our community.
- 03 Historic Features**
Keeping the historic features that celebrate our heritage and share our stories.
- 04 Homes and Jobs**
Preserving and respecting our livelihood.

The Canal District Master Plan should benefit our communities by:

- 01 Natural Environment**
Enhancing our access to green spaces and the Canal.
- 02 Built Environment**
Enhancing the physical characteristics of our community.
- 03 Community**
Strengthening our community as a network of neighborhoods.
- 04 Entertainment**
Bringing prosperity to our youth and future generations.
- 05 Economic Mobility**
Providing places where neighbors can play and gather.
- 06 Well-Being**
Providing nourishment to our community.
- 07 Connection and Movement**
Connecting us from within our community to our city.

The District

The Canal District should:

- 01 Be Family-Friendly**
A place where families can gather.
- 02 Foster Community**
Encourage a sense of community.
- 03 Be a Place to Relax**
Offer spaces to escape, restore, and reflect.
- 04 Be For Daily Use**
A place that supports daily life.
- 05 Be a Platform for Culture**
Foster local and Citywide culture.
- 06 Be a Recreation Hub**
Offer many types of active recreation.
- 07 Engage with Nature**
Allow people to connect with nature.
- 08 Be an Entertainment District**
Offer entertainment options.
- 09 Be Active at All Times**
Active throughout the day and throughout the year.
- 10 Changes with the Seasons**
Offer new experiences with every season.

Connectivity

The Canal District should increase the connectivity of people and places by:

- 01 A Connected Place**
Connecting destinations in the City.
- 02 Within Reach**
Bringing new offerings, such as jobs and amenities, closer to existing neighborhoods.
- 03 Walkable**
Being a place for walking.
- 04 Bikeable**
Promoting the use of bicycles as transportation.
- 05 Transit Rich**
Promoting the use of public transit.
- 06 Car Independent**
Reducing the reliance of residents, both present and future, on the automobile for daily travel.
- 07 Traffic Sensitive**
Helping alleviate potential traffic increases around the Arena and new urban development.

Open Spaces

The Canal District Master Plan should integrate infrastructure, historic and natural features, and water management in the design of its open spaces by:

- 01 Water and Flooding**
Embracing water and alleviating flooding by design.
- 02 Environmental Quality**
Remediating industrial land that will be reclaimed for future urban development.
- 03 Community Impact**
Being sustainably financed and mitigating new burdens on economically sensitive communities.
- 04 Historical Assets**
Keeping the historic features that celebrate our heritage and share our stories.
- 05 Buffers and Transitions**
Using natural buffers to transition between residential and industrial uses.
- 06 Adjacencies**
Clustering active uses near the Arena and everyday services near the existing neighborhoods.
- 07 Connectivity**
Connecting all parks and destinations in the City by multiuse trails and walkable, bike-friendly streets.
- 08 Parks and Open Space**
Embracing the natural features of the site to create recreational uses for everyone.

Today Savannah relies on infrastructure and circulation that divide the City and overlook important aspects of its history.

Informal Growth and Hidden History

West Savannah has grown informally from a plantation to an industrial economy while its history has never been fully celebrated.

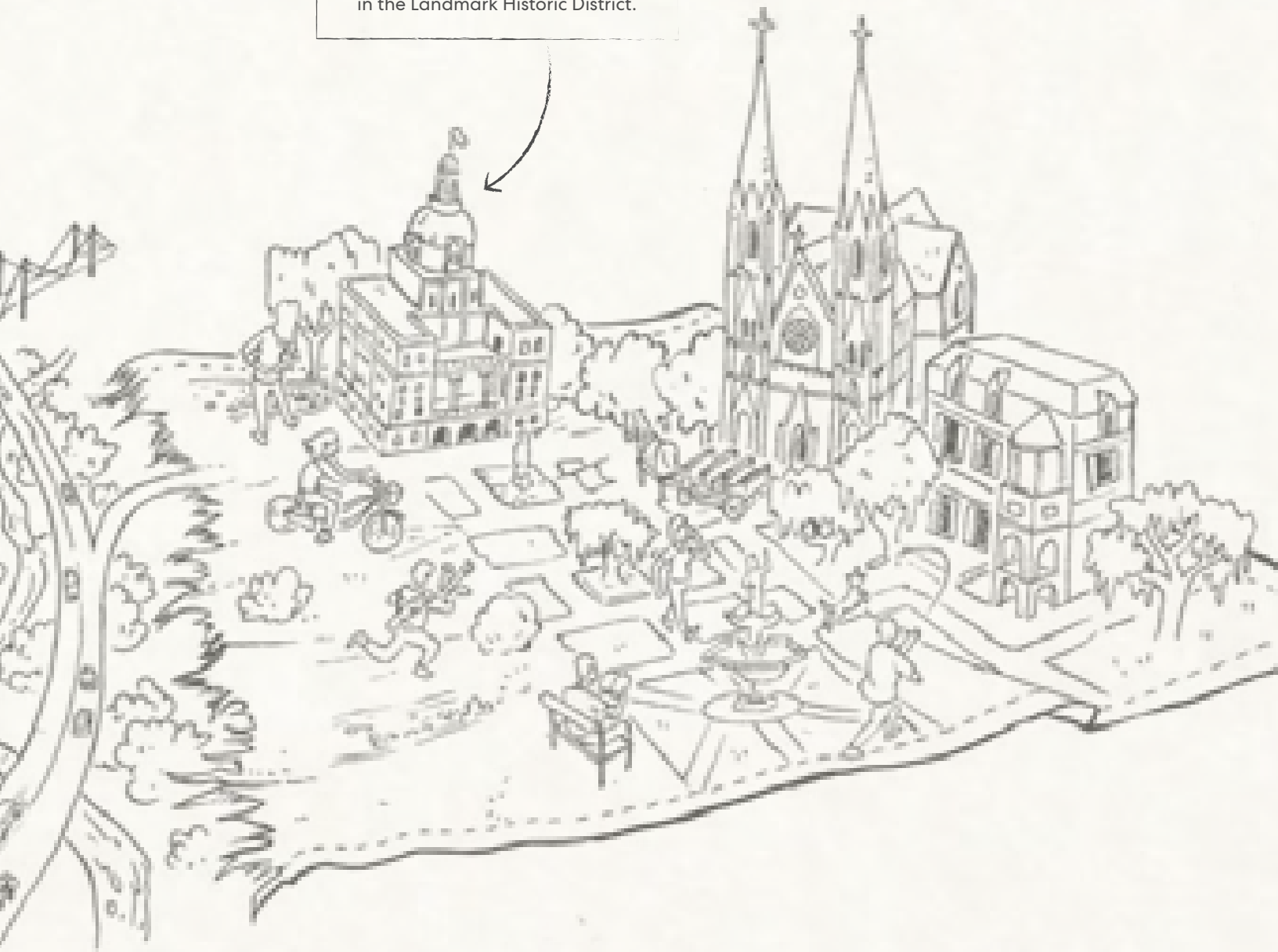
Infrastructure and Natural Systems

The tangle of highways, railroads, canals, and wetlands forms a barrier between Downtown and west Savannah.



Organized Growth and Public History

Savannah's public face is its celebrated system of civic squares and residential blocks in the Landmark Historic District.



The Work of Change

The Canal District represents a vision of Savannah where all are working to build places that celebrate the City's many histories.

The Canal District Master Plan prepares residents and leadership for the promise of new common ground in Savannah. It aligns site design with policy recommendations in order to develop a place of national appeal and civic pride, where the City's public and once-hidden histories are woven together and perspectives are shared to work in Savannah's collective interest.



**A Plan that Unifies
Savannah on
Common Ground**

Savannah's Best-
Known Historic
Structures



This Master Plan concerns two critical geographies.

The impact of future action will extend well beyond the District's boundaries.

1

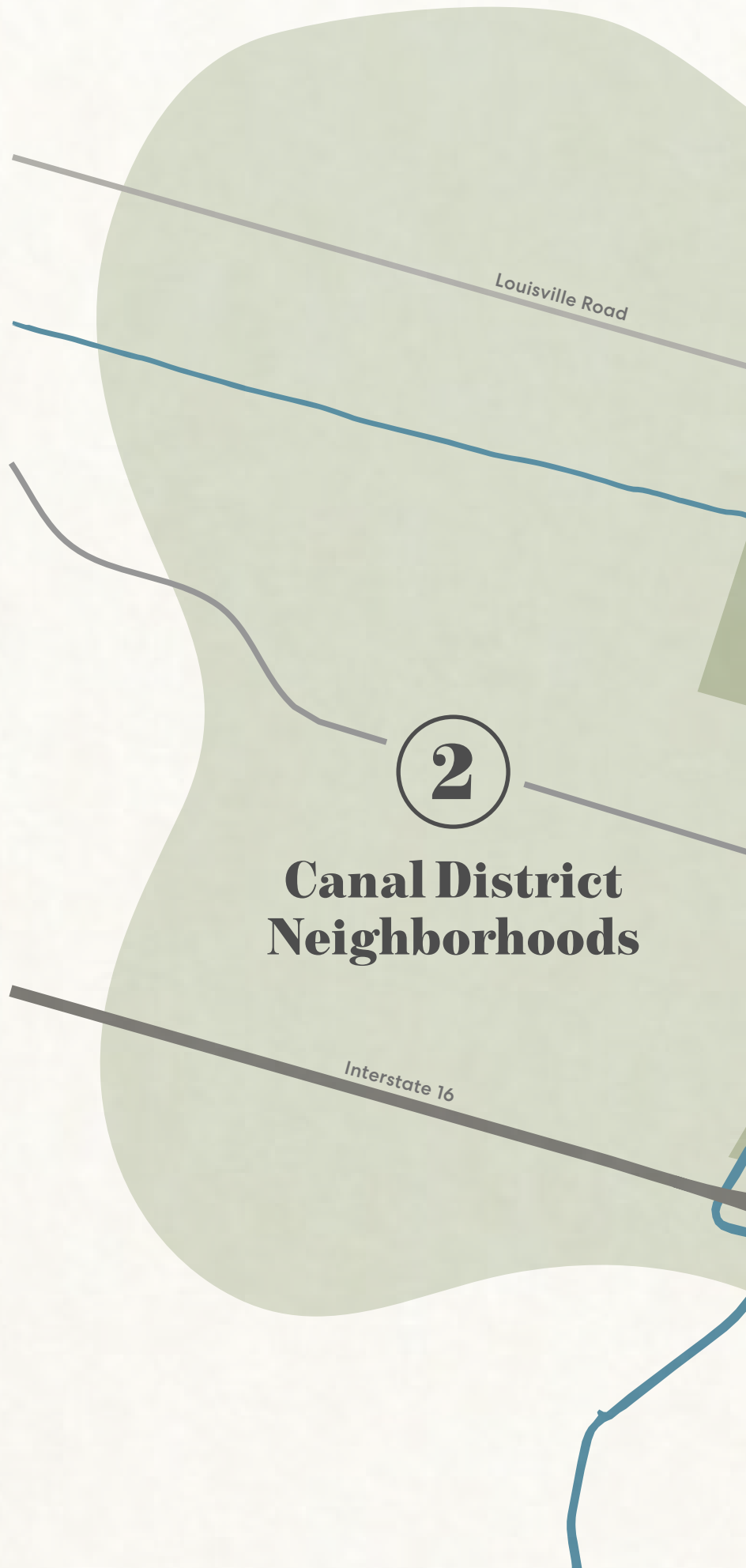
A Master Plan for the Canal District

This Plan provides a physical framework for growth within the Canal District site. The pages that follow outline this framework, its vision, and its ambitions.

2

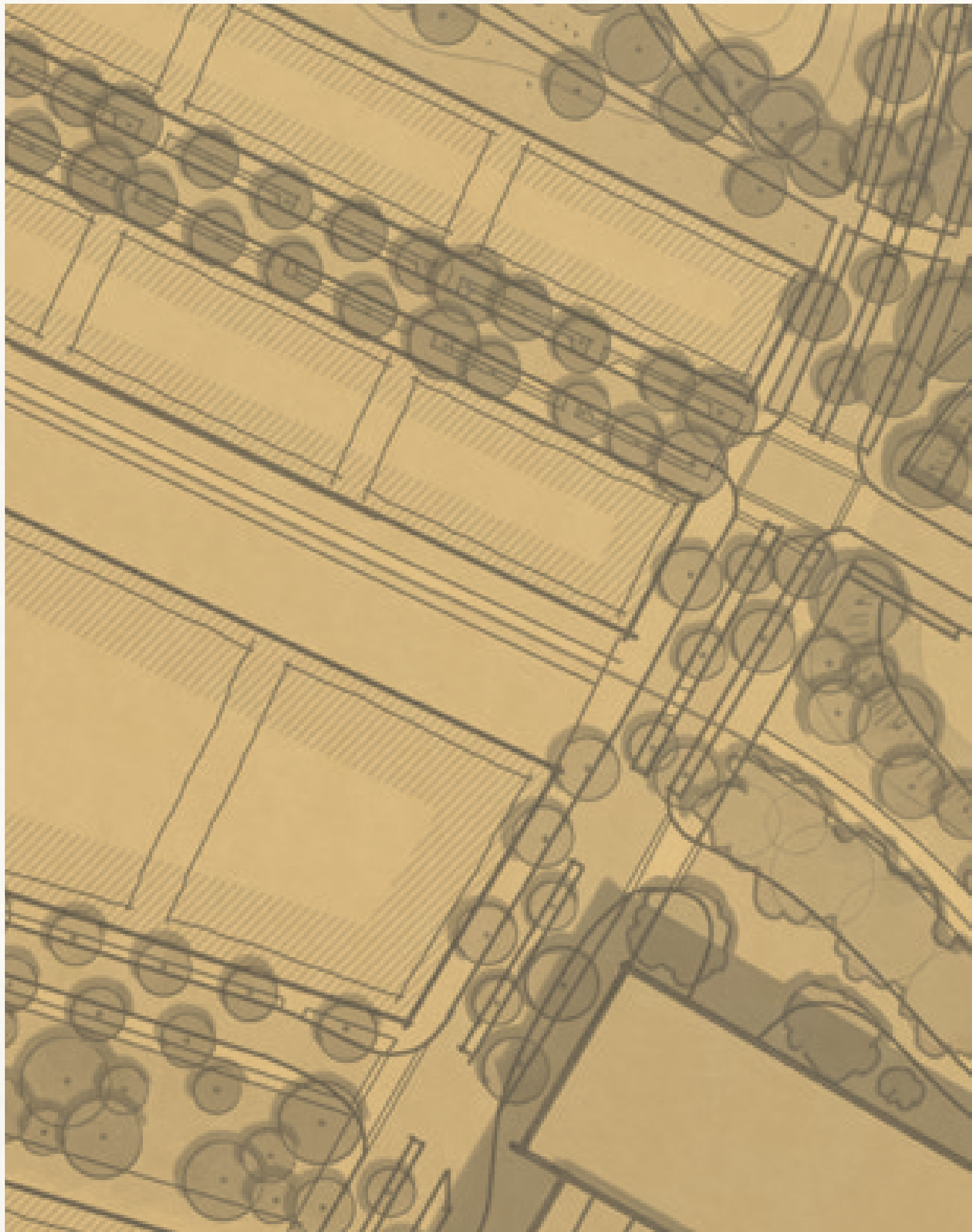
A Set of Policies and Actions for the Canal District Neighborhoods

This Plan presents a collection of recommended strategies to benefit all areas impacted by new development. These strategies are outlined in the Action Playbook.



1
Canal District







Master Plan

for the Canal District

The District Master Plan

This Plan is designed to inform and empower City residents and leadership to develop resilient places where people and nature thrive and the City can grow.

Savannahians should work to build places that:

01

Protect Communities

Historic structures and neighborhood features should keep their meaning as pillars of social life along the Canal.

02

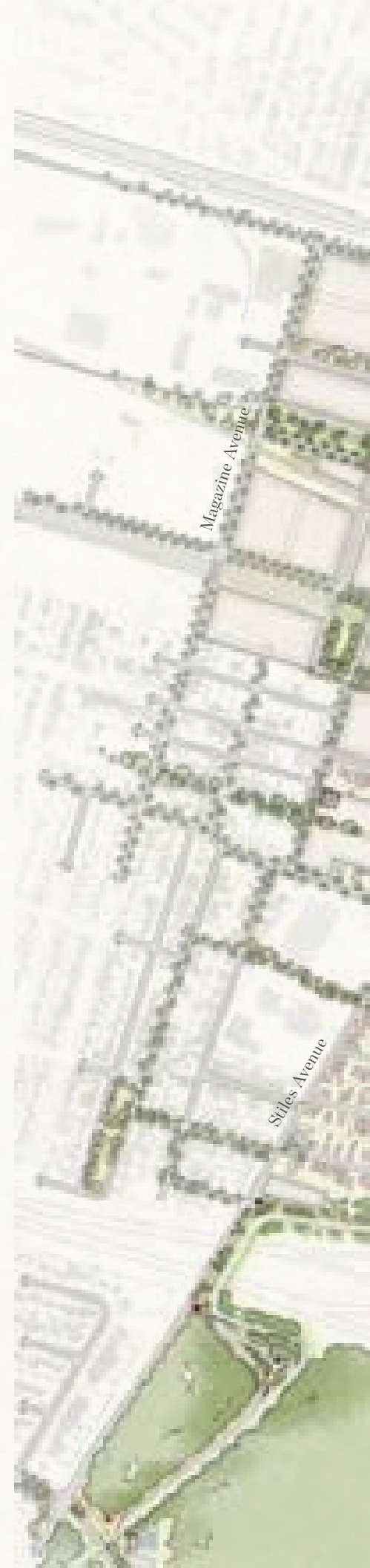
Rebuild Nature, Elevate Civic Life

The Springfield Basin's wetlands and canals should return to being a source of strength for the City and its activities.

03

Grow the City

Sustainable development should fill out reclaimed spaces throughout a new central system of paths, streets, and parks.





Louisville Road

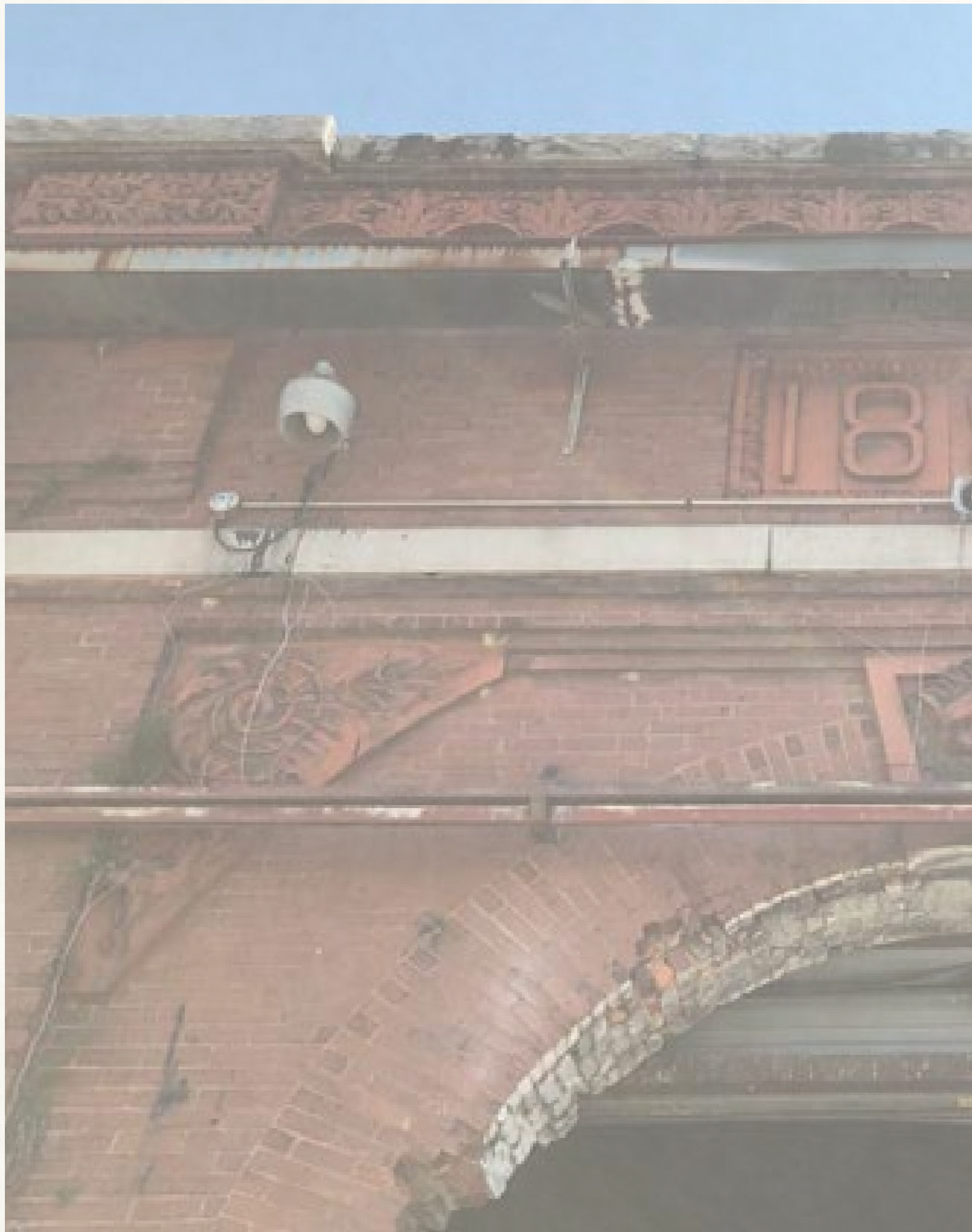
Oglethorpe Avenue

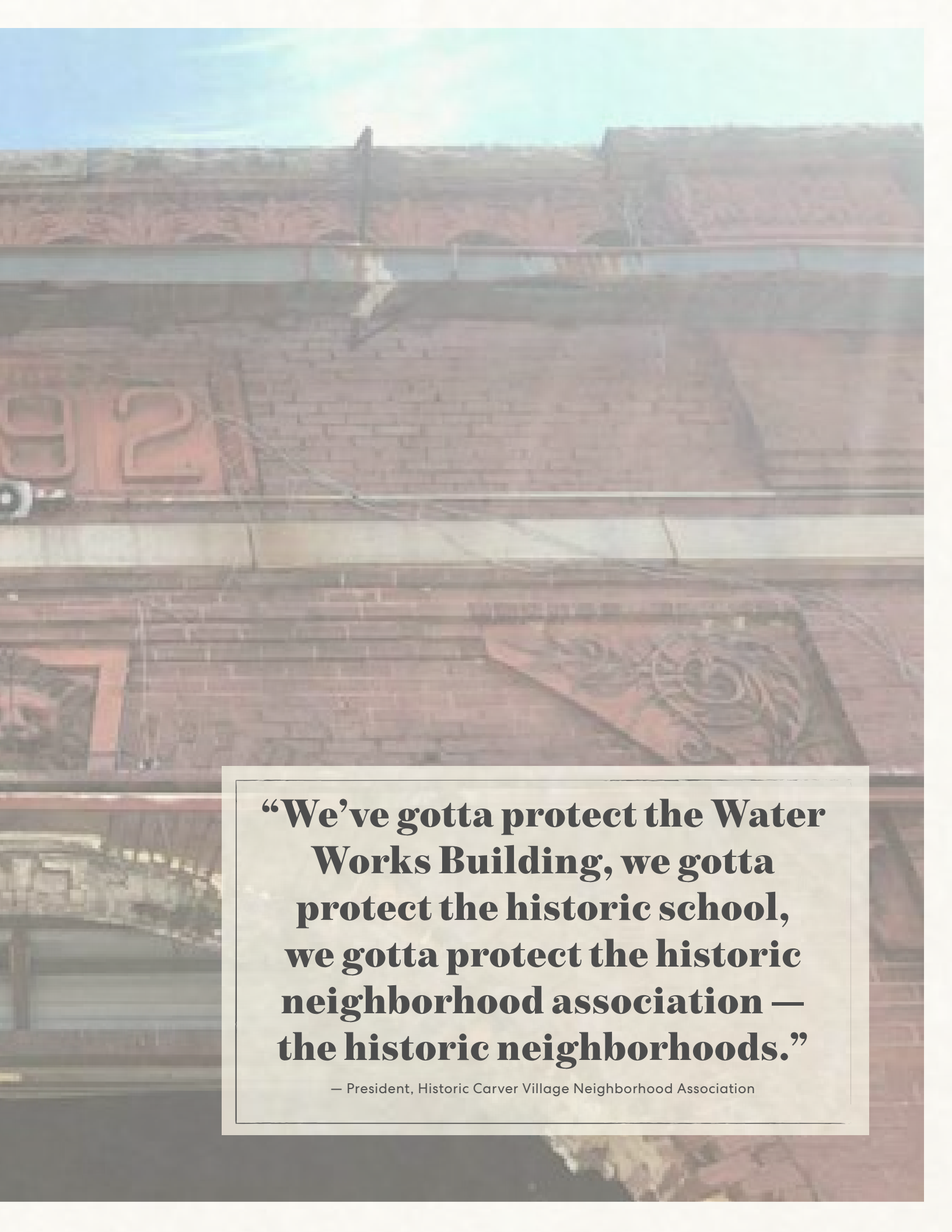
Boundary Street

Gwinnett Street

MLK Jr Boulevard







“We’ve gotta protect the Water Works Building, we gotta protect the historic school, we gotta protect the historic neighborhood association — the historic neighborhoods.”

— President, Historic Carver Village Neighborhood Association

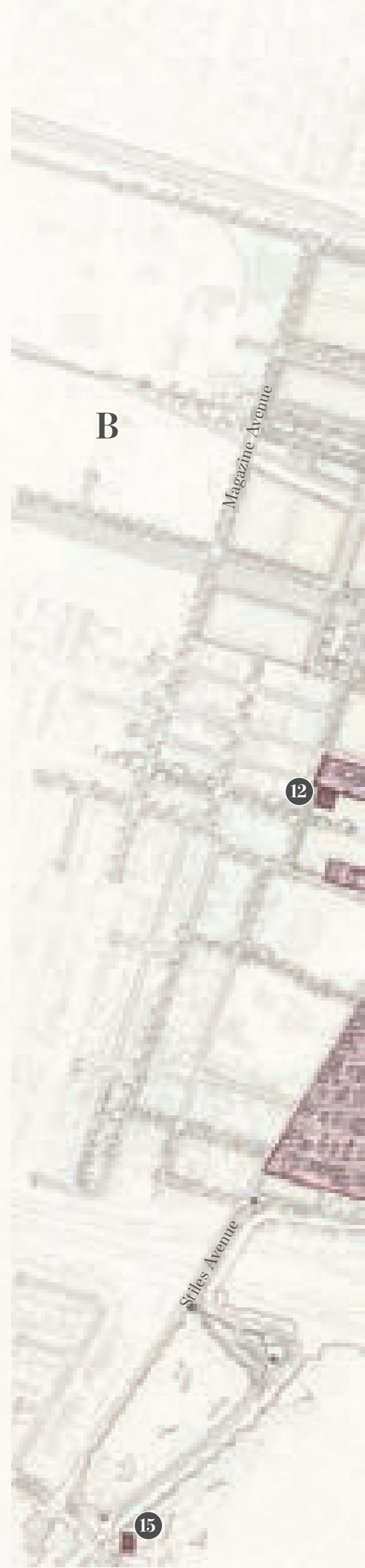
Protect Communities

Historic structures and neighborhood features should keep their meaning as pillars of social life along the Canal.

The residential neighborhoods surrounding the Canal District are home to communities rooted in the history of African American resilience, from surviving enslavement and building Savannah's railroads to building strong families and making homes for the generations to gather.

The Canal District Master Plan's design and policy recommendations work to preserve places and buildings that honor the legacy of these historic neighborhoods while laying the foundation for homeownership, stable employment, and intergenerational wealth.

**"We moved into Carver Village in 1955, so we've been in it and we're still there."
—Resident, Carver Village**



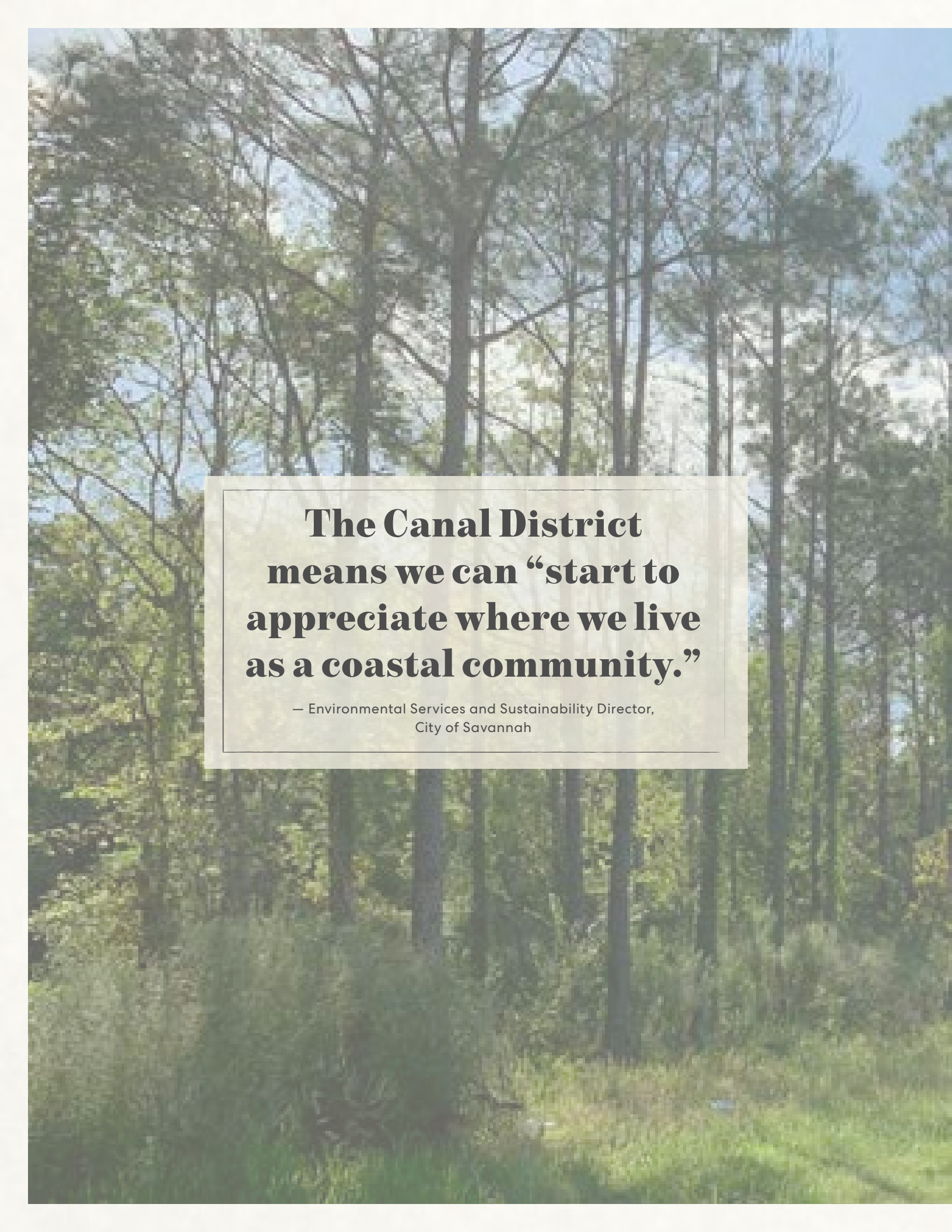


Neighborhood Pockets

- A. Brickyard
- B. Collat's Quarters
- C. Springfield Terrace
- D. Waterworks

Characteristic Structures

- 1. Louisville Trading Company
- 2. Industrial Buildings
- 3. 1929 Seaboard Freight Station
- 4. Coastal Georgia Center
- 5. Savannah Visitor Center
- 6. Georgia State Railroad Museum
- 7. Savannah Children's Museum
- 8. Savannah Station
- 9. 415 West Boundary Street
- 10. Chatham Steel
- 11. Savannah Arena
- 12. Pearl Smith School
- 13. Water Works Building
- 14. Water Works Pump House
- 15. Bowles C. Ford Park



**The Canal District
means we can “start to
appreciate where we live
as a coastal community.”**

— Environmental Services and Sustainability Director,
City of Savannah



Rebuild Nature, Elevate Civic Life

The Springfield Basin's wetlands and canals should return to being a source of strength for the City and its activities.

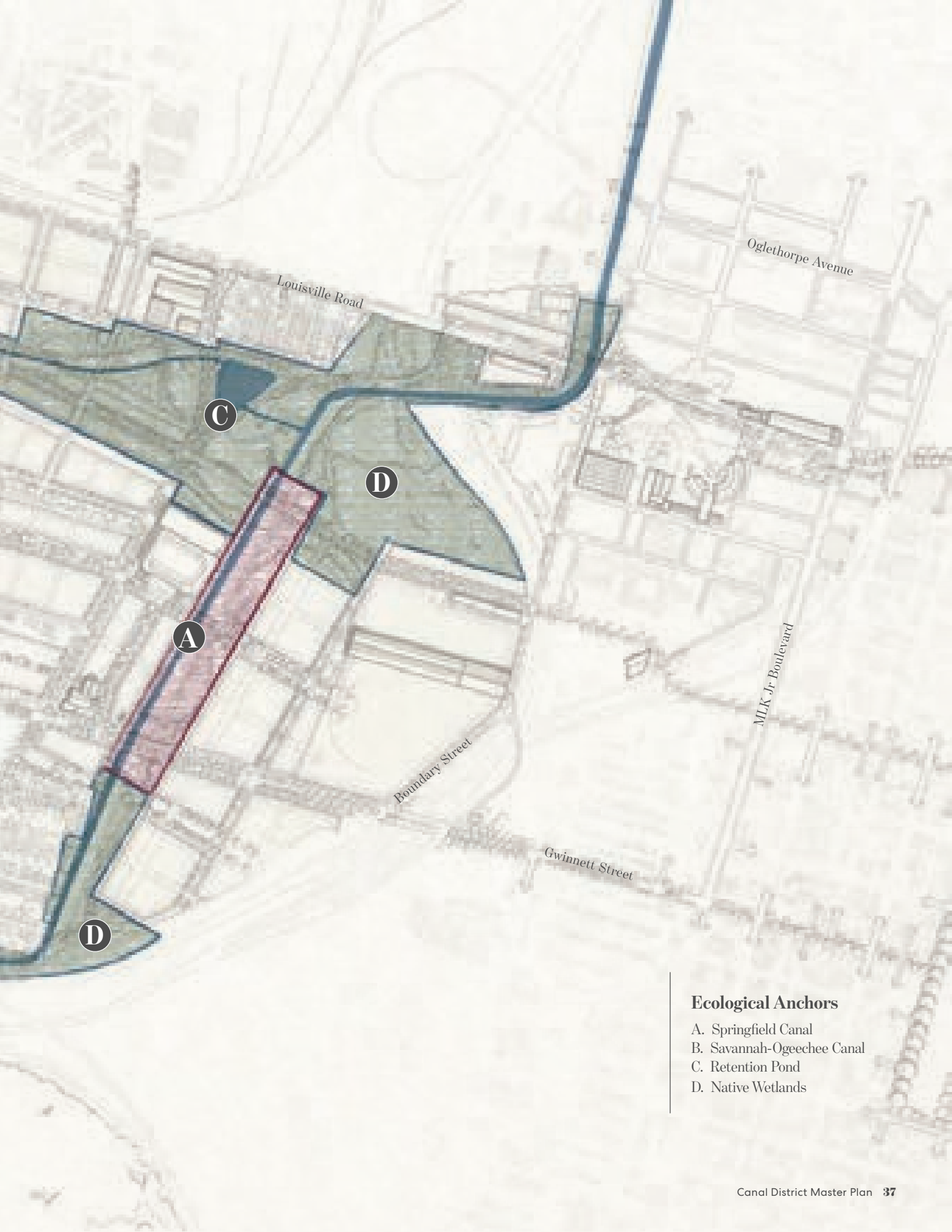
The Canal District's low-lying marsh was fertile ground for rice plantations before industrialization created the need for canals and railroads in the nineteenth century. Today the canals, wetlands, flora, and fauna subsist in a floodplain with an insufficient stormwater and sanitary sewer system.

The Canal District Master Plan's design and policy recommendations work to reclaim the land around the Springfield Canal and strengthen the relationships between the area's ecological anchors and built environment. Stormwater improvements address persistent drainage issues, support the new Savannah Arena, and make inviting new green spaces possible. The City's connection to the water is made stronger.

"I live about a hundred, no about a thousand feet from the Canal, where there's a problem."

— Resident, Waterworks





Louisville Road

Oglethorpe Avenue

C

D

A

MLK Jr Boulevard

Boundary Street

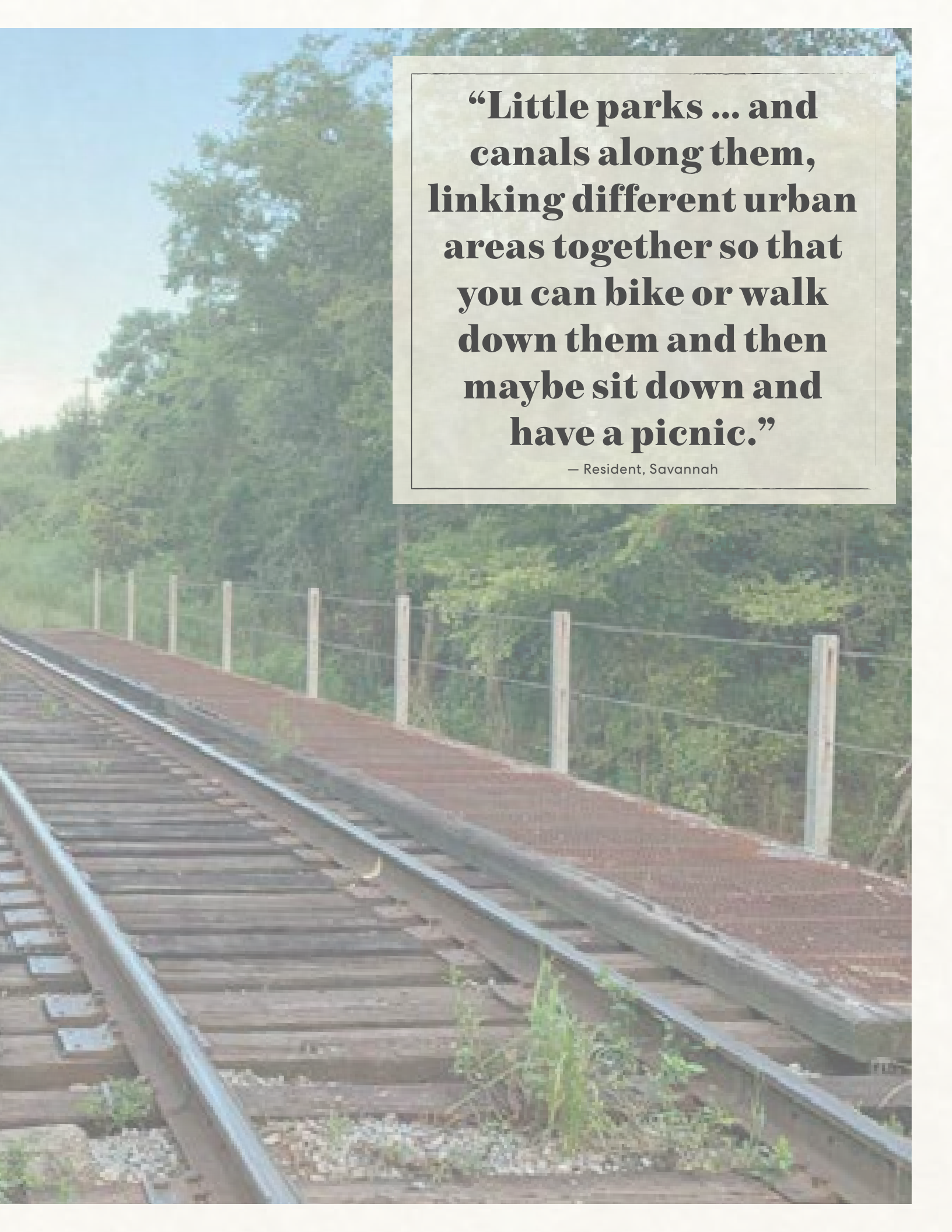
Gwinnett Street

D

Ecological Anchors

- A. Springfield Canal
- B. Savannah-Ogeechee Canal
- C. Retention Pond
- D. Native Wetlands





**“Little parks ... and
canals along them,
linking different urban
areas together so that
you can bike or walk
down them and then
maybe sit down and
have a picnic.”**

— Resident, Savannah

Grow the City

Sustainable development should fill out reclaimed spaces throughout a new central system of paths, streets, and parks.

As the land around the new Savannah Arena is reclaimed, the Canal District needs to be able to grow into a new system of places that still feel like Savannah.

The Canal District Master Plan's design and policy recommendations coordinate the flow of paths, trails, and streets with sustainable infrastructure improvements and development. A coherent, intentional strategy will serve both the people who live there and the people who travel to the District for a destination experience at the new Arena or the new civic park on the Springfield Canal.

“If this project is done right — if it’s done correctly — it could make Savannah be a world-class city.”

— Resident, West Savannah





Louisville Road

Oglethorpe Avenue

C

B

A

Boundary Street


MLK Jr Boulevard

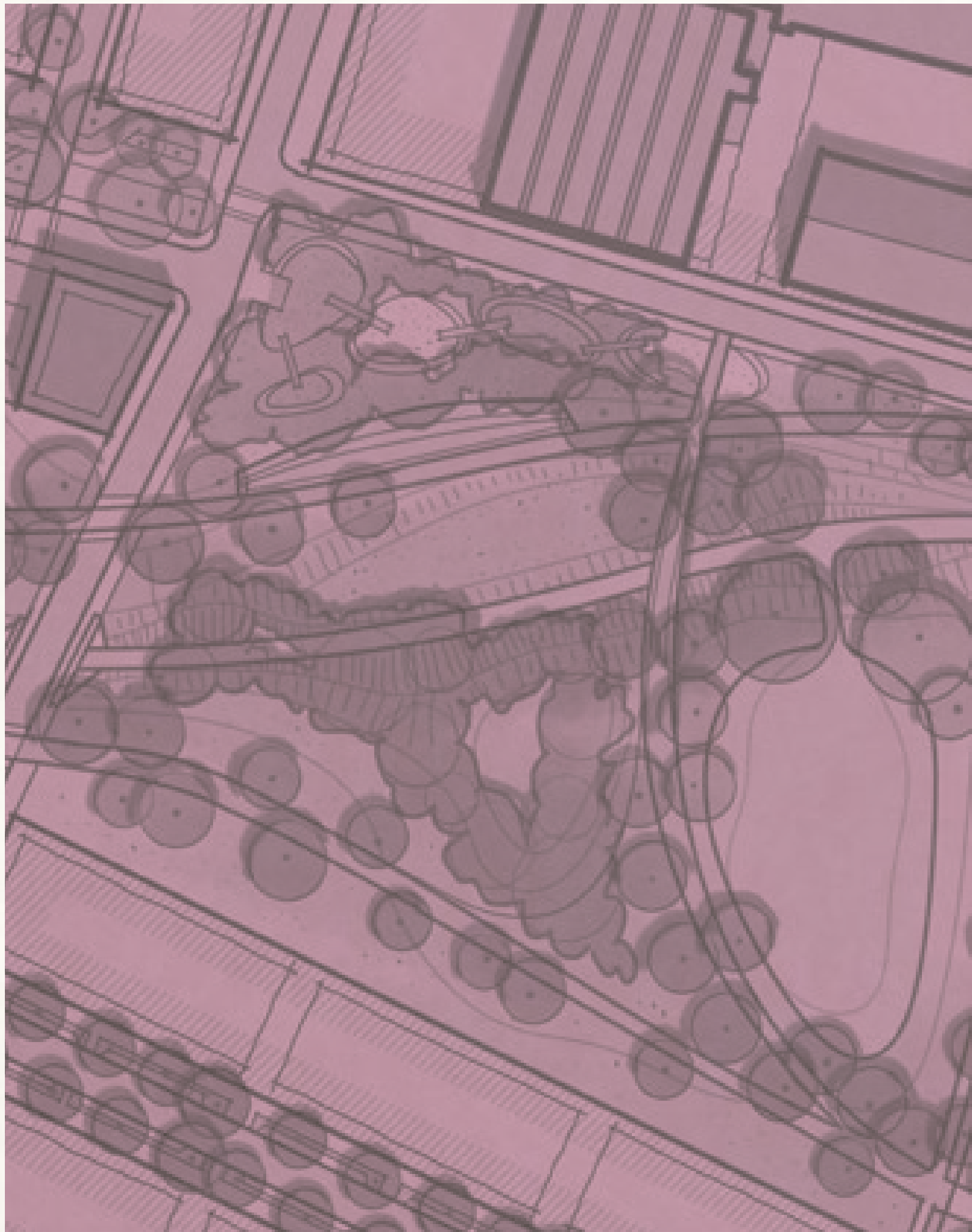
Gwinnett Street

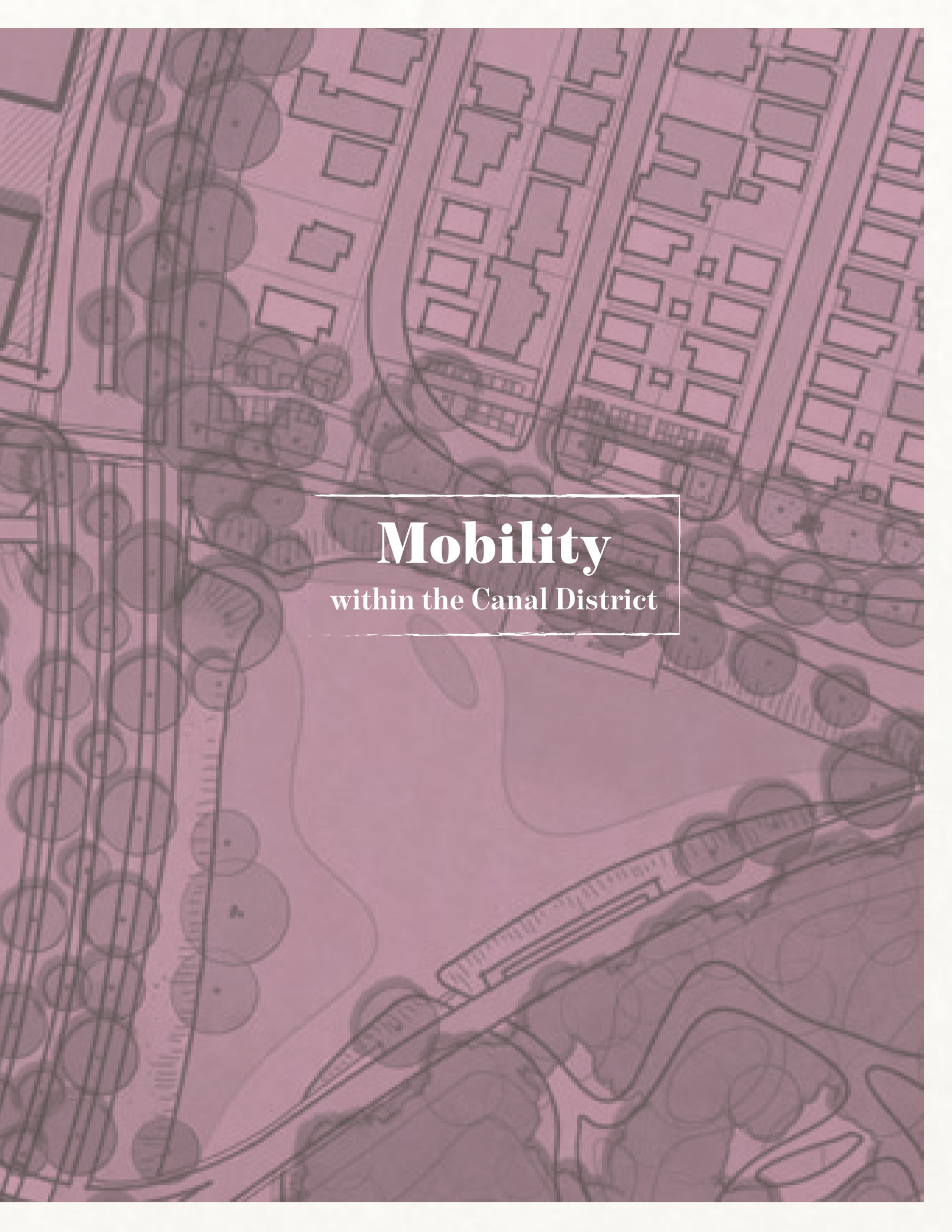
New Civic Space

- A. City Lot
- B. Canal Park
- C. Wetland Preserve Park

Places to Grow

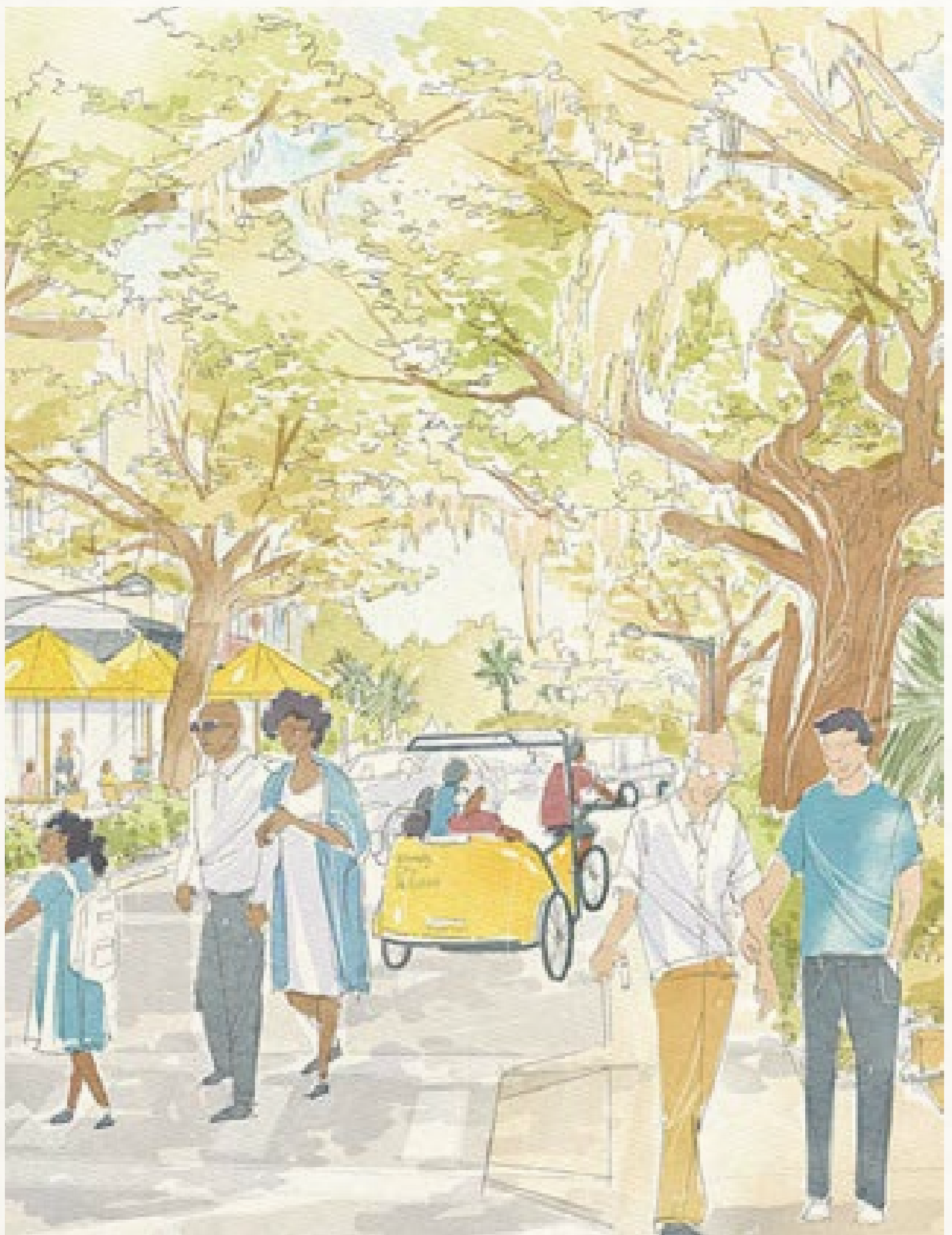
-  City-Owned Lots
-  Intentional Growth





Mobility

within the Canal District



How People Should Connect

This mobility strategy should create a transportation network to meet every Savannahian's needs and minimize the parking required for the new Arena.

Today

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. Much economic inequity stems from the lack of transit parity across the District divide.

Few direct pathways run through the Canal District. Cars are the safest, most

dependable mode of transport, so residents without a car are forced to wait at unsafe stops for limited service on public transit. Even if multiple transit modes were accessible, existing streets could not sustain high-volume use. And just as the prospect of car independence has become desirable, the opening of the Savannah Arena raises new demand for parking.

In the Future

This Plan prioritizes the design of an equitable transportation network throughout the Canal District, creating City-wide connections that have never existed before. When a transportation network is robust, as in Downtown Savannah, urban spaces are better able to sustain long-term growth and increased density. The corollary benefits of decreased reliance on cars and associated parking will lead to a healthier, more resilient City.

The Savannah Arena will require new parking when it opens in 2022. This Plan recommends temporary gravel parking while comprehensive mobility strategies are evaluated during Arena operations. Only after this evaluation should the City commit to building permanent parking.

Existing streets in the Canal District should be improved, and new streets should conform to standards of “complete streets,” that is, corridors designed for all uses and users. New streets should in addition perform essential stormwater conveyance while enhancing the streetscape experience for residents and visitors.

The District should weave into existing proposals for extending path networks, such as Tide to Town, and the greater East Coast and Coastal Georgia Greenways. New paths should extend through developed and natural areas, making distinct Canal District experiences, such as this Plan's proposal for a West Savannah Heritage Trail.

Savannah's Streets

A Savannah Street reflects an investment in the public realm. This should hold as true for every street in the Canal District as it does for every street Downtown.

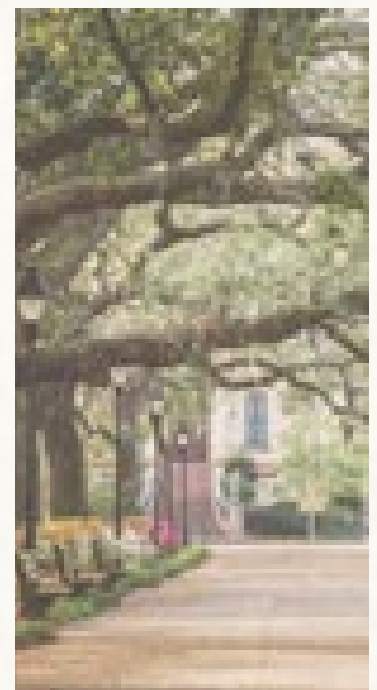
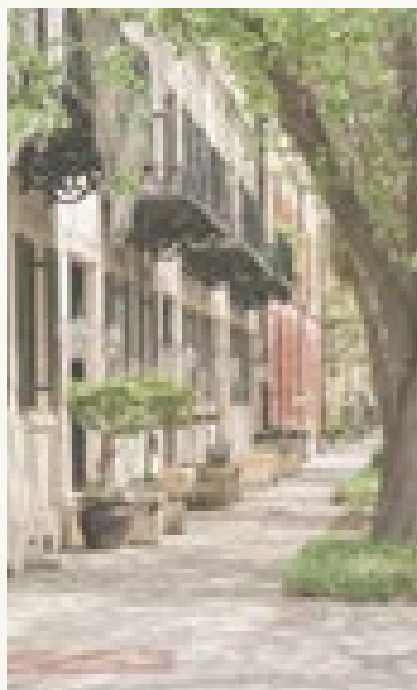
Streets are a city's most important public infrastructure. Improvements to the Canal District's streets and street grid are the first best step toward a diversified economy that sustains all aspects of life in Savannah.

The quintessential Savannah street is lush with shade-bearing live oaks and Lowcountry vegetation. It has sidewalks wide enough to allow walking with a friend or two. Ample lighting makes nighttime navigation safer and more comfortable. Where there isn't a marked bike path, the street is narrow enough to slow traffic to a speed that is safe for cyclists. Crosswalks and signage are well defined. Variety in paving materials, storefronts, and outdoor seating create an urban rhythm street to street. Together these characteristics animate and dignify everyday life.

A typical street in the Canal District is an entirely different experience. Historic neighborhoods, consisting of smaller lots, homes, and streets, developed to support the surrounding industries. Today, the area is overwhelmed by traffic on streets used to move cars and trucks from the highways to the adjacent industrial properties.

The Canal District's streets need to make way for all modes of transportation, offering a greater variety of reliable transit choices as well a market for brick-and-mortar business. This single development initiative will set a direction for well-paced growth from the Savannah Arena out through the District to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Generous shade cools wide streets and sidewalks in Downtown Savannah.



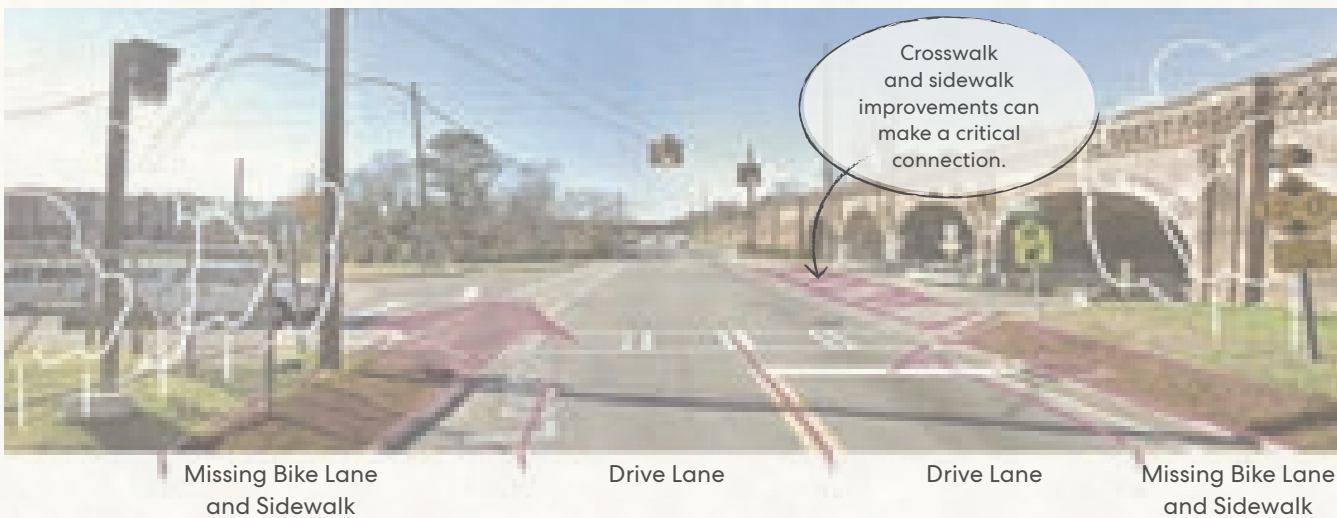
Streetscape along Louisville Road.



Pedestrian Experience under I-16 overpass along West Gwinnett Street.



Intersection at Louisville Road and Boundary Street.



What ambitious Mobility Concepts should the City focus on?

An equitable network, better connections, and fewer cars can change the way Savannahians move.

Mobility Concept

New Ways to Get Around

Complete multimodal streets, path systems, bus and shuttle routes, and ride share should integrate the Canal District into the City and regional systems. A more robust transportation network moves the City toward equitable access to its resources.

Mobility Concept

Car Independence

A range of new mobility options as well as an increase in amenities should reduce automobile reliance and traffic congestion as well as the high cost of infrastructure. It should also minimize the demand for nonessential parking spaces serving the Arena.

How can we achieve these goals?

Our Mobility Tools propose new forms of human-friendly infrastructure.

Mobility Tool

Trail System

An advanced network of trails can connect people within the District and to the rest of Savannah. It can also introduce new forms of public space and recreation, for both visitors and residents.

Mobility Tool

Complete Streets

A number of existing streets within the neighborhood should be improved to work on a par with Downtown Savannah's renowned streets. New complete streets should be built with quality of experience and equitable access in mind.

Mobility Tool

Green Streets

Trees and planting beds can make the Canal District's streets walkable and inviting while they support essential stormwater infrastructure. The use of permeable materials can allow for infiltration and reduce runoff.

Mobility Tool

Temporary Parking

To advance the Canal District through its earliest phases, short-term parking must be constructed for Arena visitors. These parking areas should transform into development plots after an interim period of evaluation.

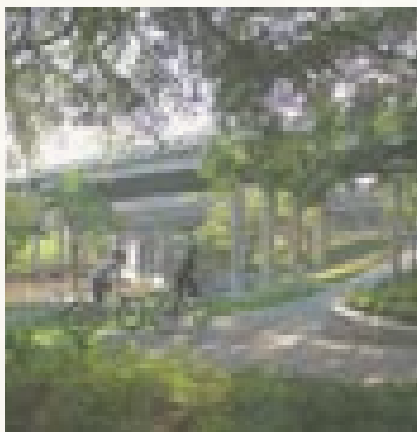
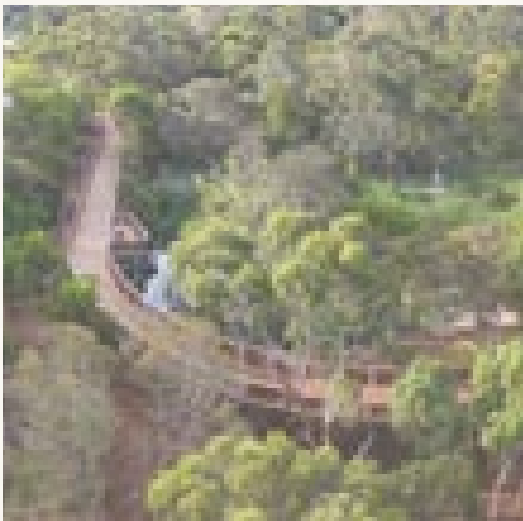
Mobility Tool

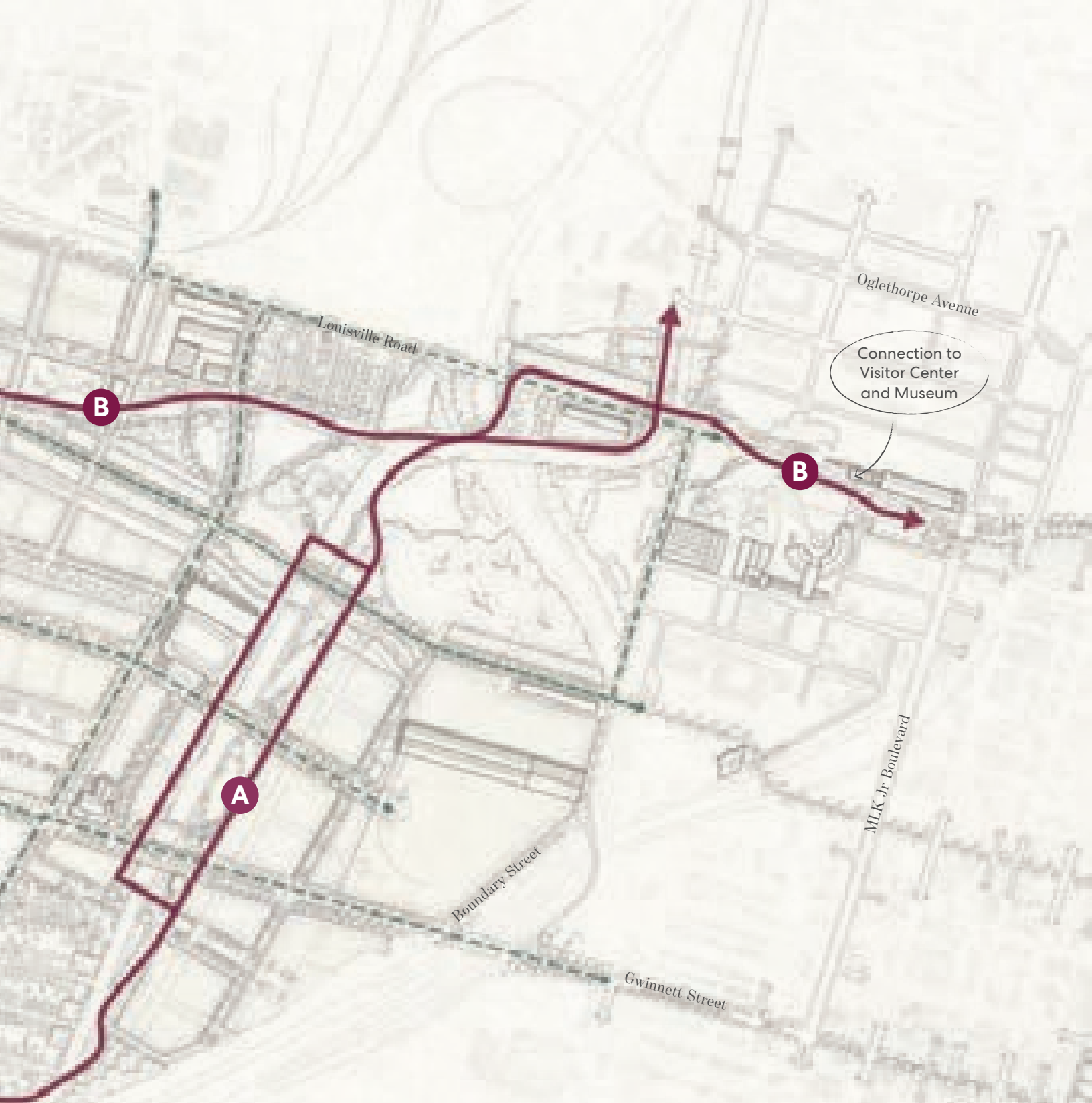
Trail System

An extensive network of pedestrian paths can make the District a central system for the City and region while providing residents and visitors with dignified means of moving through the area.

“I would like to see a lot of open space there that could just be walked around and ... have it just open for people to come down to relax in.”
— Resident, Ardley Park

Trails through the wetlands, forest, and built edges open new City connections.





Essential Paths



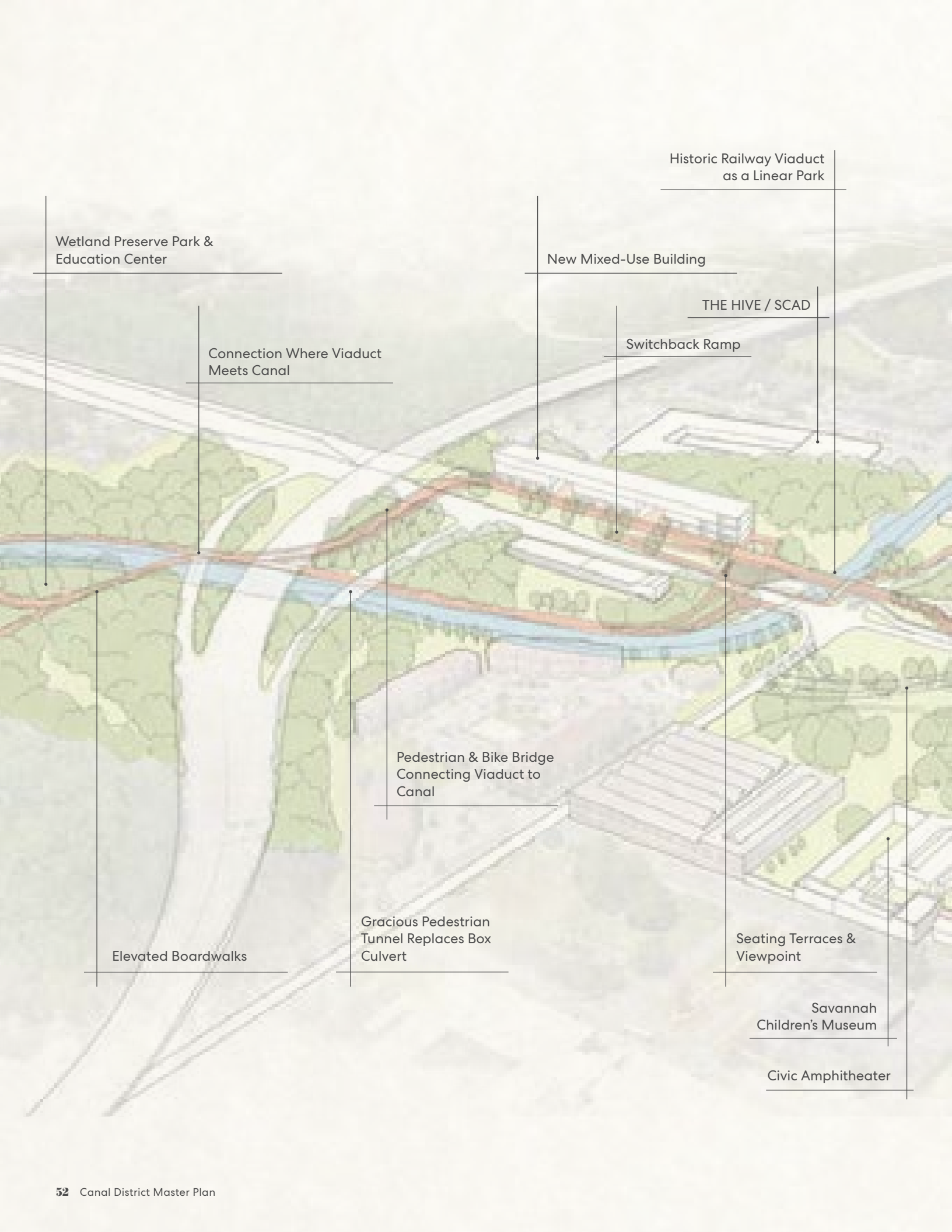
Neighborhood Links



Essential Paths

A. Tide to Town Urban Trail

B. Savannah-Ogeechee Trail Connection



Wetland Preserve Park & Education Center

Connection Where Viaduct Meets Canal

Historic Railway Viaduct as a Linear Park

New Mixed-Use Building

THE HIVE / SCAD

Switchback Ramp

Pedestrian & Bike Bridge Connecting Viaduct to Canal

Gracious Pedestrian Tunnel Replaces Box Culvert

Elevated Boardwalks

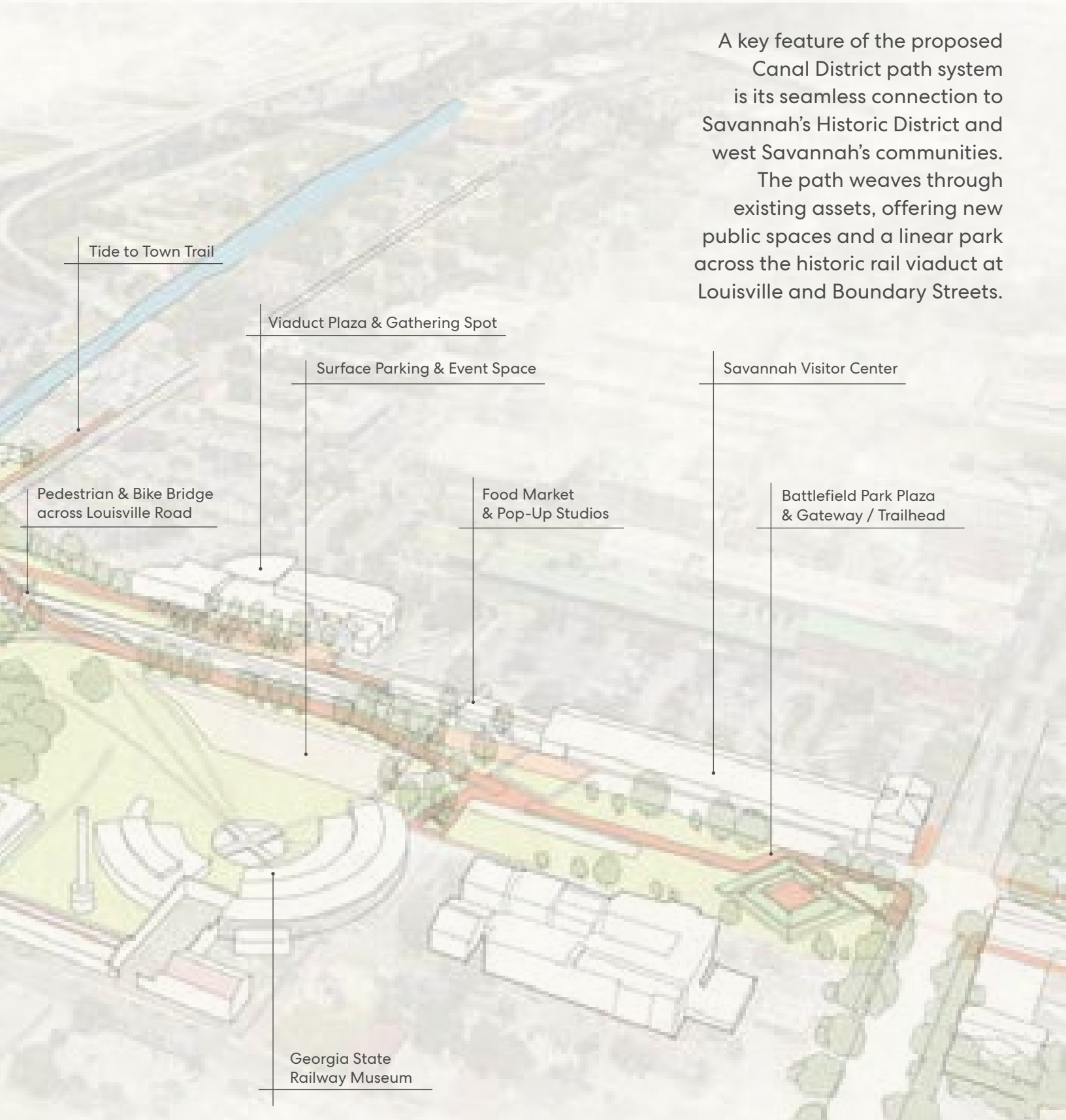
Seating Terraces & Viewpoint

Savannah Children's Museum

Civic Amphitheater

A key feature of the proposed Canal District path system is its seamless connection to Savannah's Historic District and west Savannah's communities.

The path weaves through existing assets, offering new public spaces and a linear park across the historic rail viaduct at Louisville and Boundary Streets.

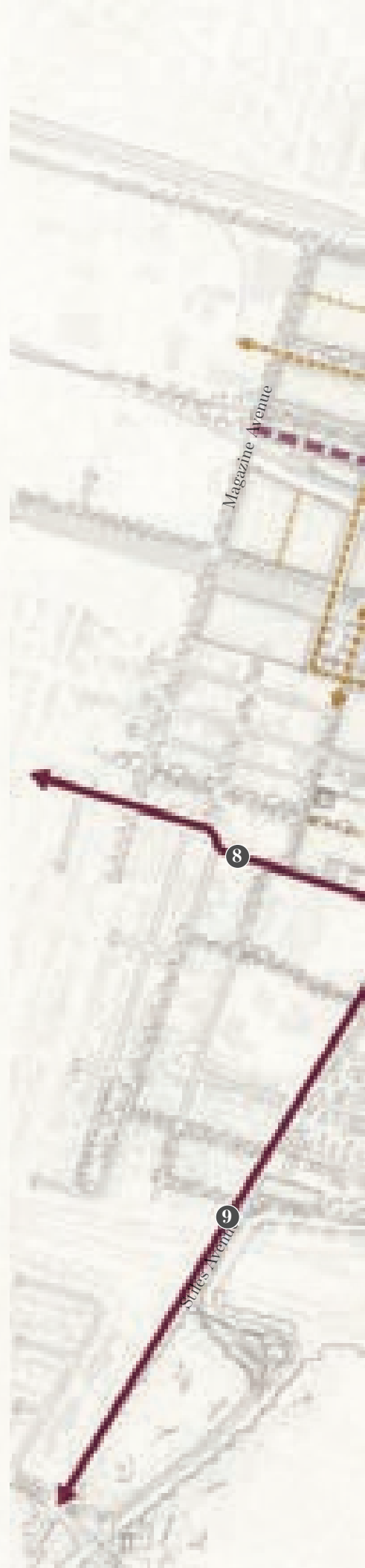
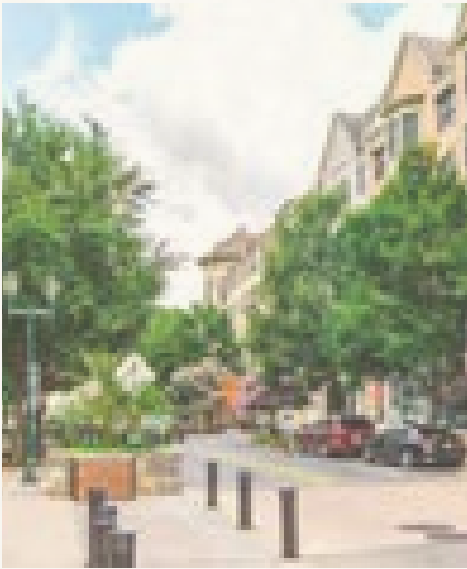


Mobility Tool

Complete Streets

Built on a new, reimagined grid of streets that deliver access to all forms of personal and public transit, the Canal District should foster connection, commerce, community, and comfort.

Streets with designated pedestrian, bike, and bus lanes can draw traffic for storefront businesses.





Intersection Improvements

New streets on private lots can add to District connectivity.

Public Streets

Improvements to Existing Streets



Proposed New Street



Privately Developed Streets

Proposed New Street



Planned Street Improvements

- 1. Stiles/Louisville Intersection
- 2. Louisville Streetscape
- 3. Louisville Boundary Intersection
- 4. Boundary Streetscape
- 5. Stiles Widening
- 6. Gwinnett/Stiles Intersection
- 7. Gwinnett Widening
- 8. Gwinnett Streetscape
- 9. Stiles Streetscape
- 10. Cohen to Gwinnett Connection
- 11. Cohen Extension to Magazine

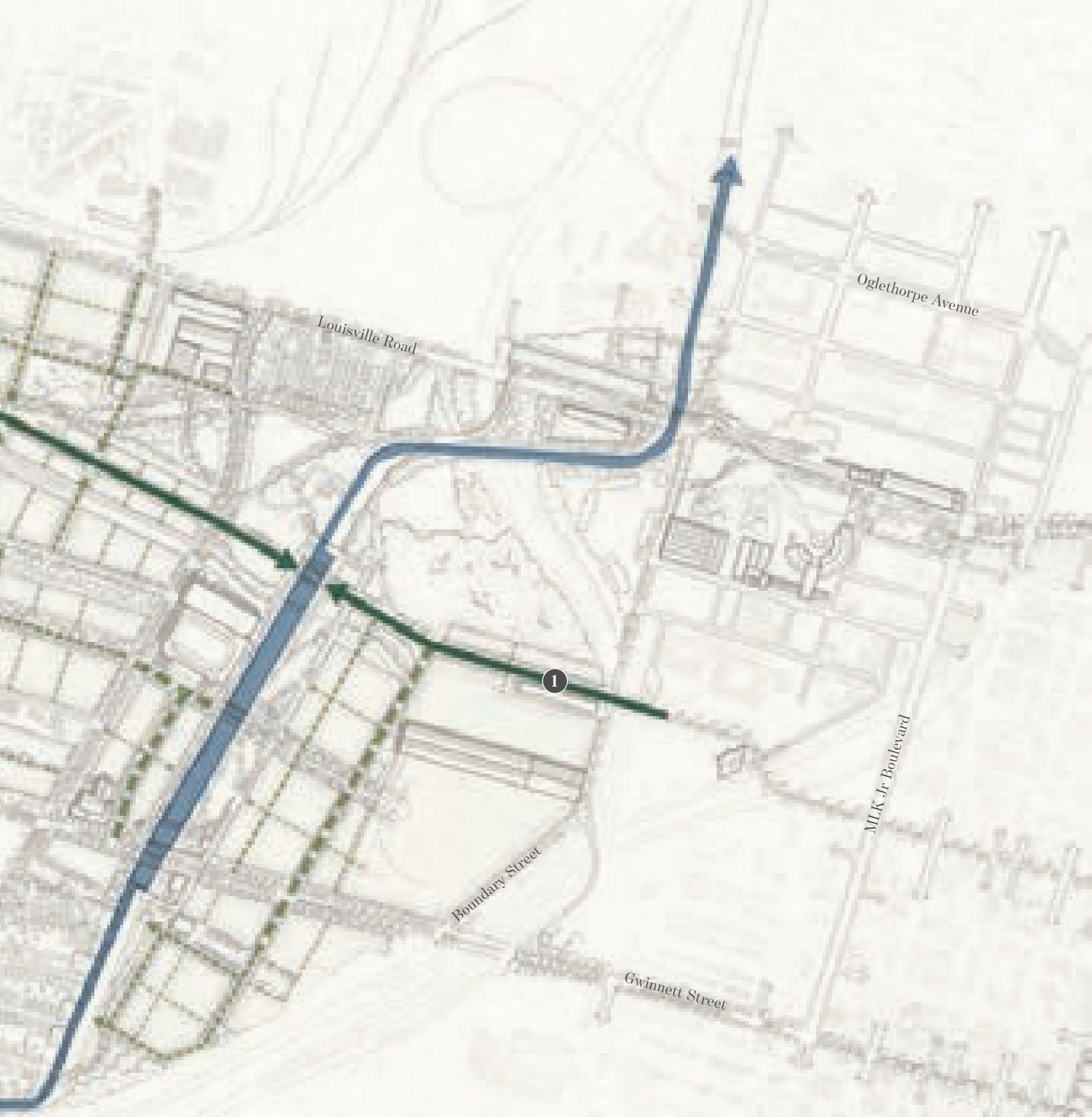
Mobility Tool

Green Streets

Portions of the streets in the Canal District should feature lush planting beds that perform natural functions such as stormwater retention and filtration while beautifying the streetscape experience.

Improved streets can be landscaped to support new stormwater infrastructure.





Proposed Public Street



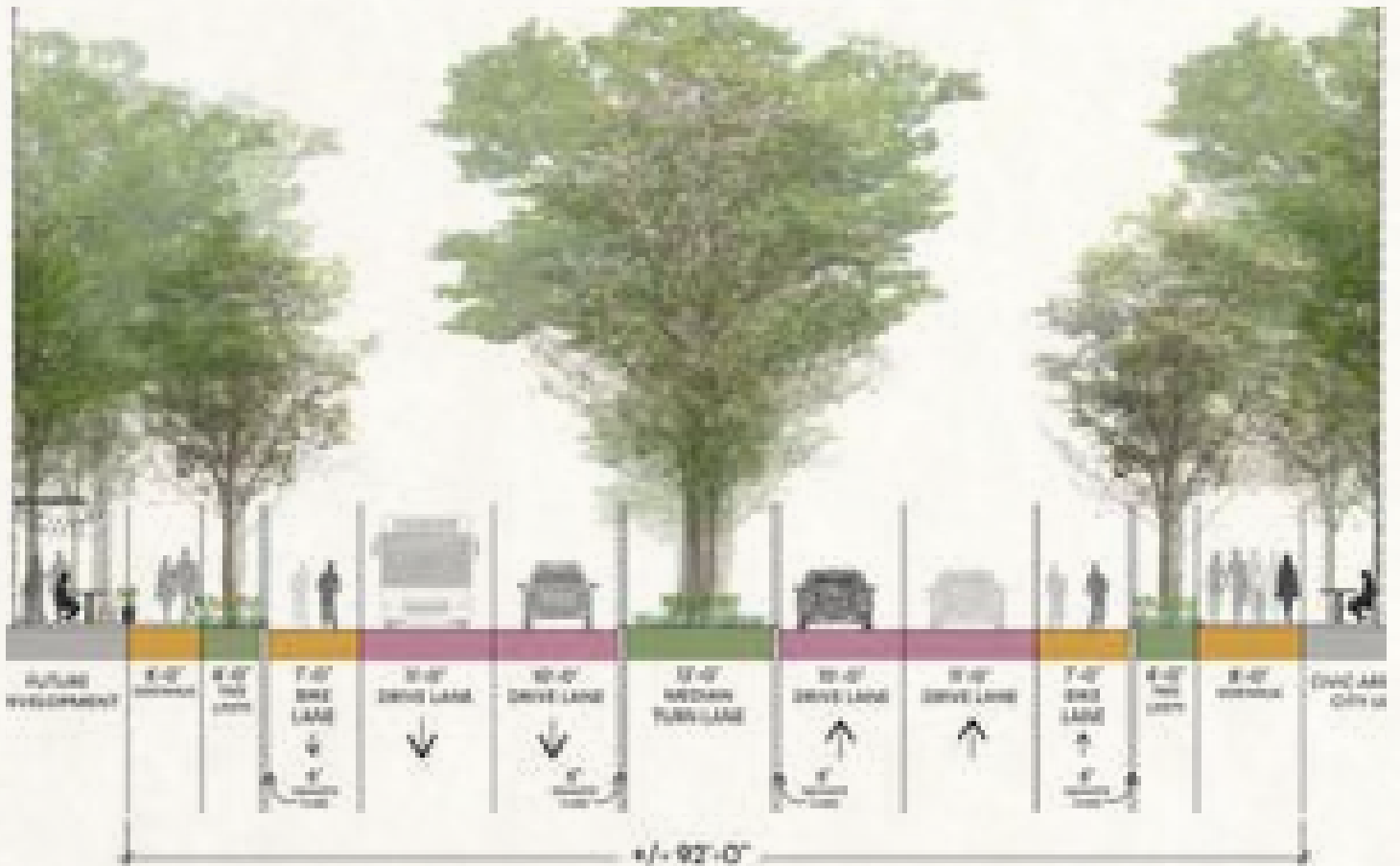
Proposed Privately Developed Street



Planned Green Street Improvements

1. Cohen Street Extension

Stiles Avenue Improvements



Louisville Road Improvements



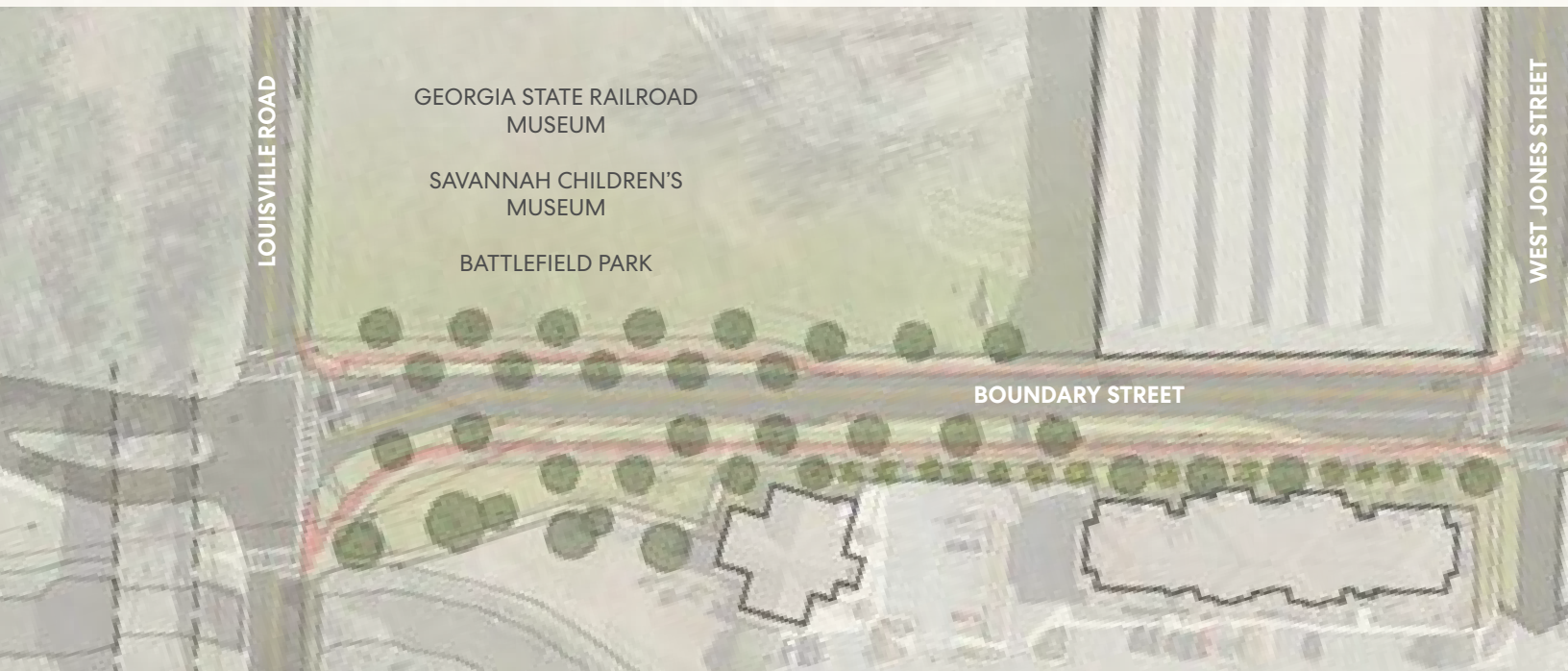
Gwinnett Street Improvements



Boundary Street — Option A



Boundary Street — Option B



Because a number of fixed structures are adjacent to it, Boundary Street requires a strategic intervention.



Boundary Street — Option A



- ① Road diet: 11'-0" drive lanes (each way)
- ② New curb
- ③ Tactile pavers at street edge (3'-0" min.)
- ④ New concrete sidewalk (+/- 7'-0")
- ⑤ Remove fence & plant native grasses / ground cover
- ⑥ Story-wall panels telling the history of the Central of Georgia Railroad
- ⑦ Plant native grasses / ground cover
- ⑧ New street trees
- ⑨ New striping for pedestrian crosswalk

Boundary Street — Option B



- ① Road diet: 11'-0" drive lanes (each way)
- ② New curb
- ③ Tactile pavers at street edge (3'-0" min.)
- ④ New concrete sidewalk (+/- 7'-0")
- ⑤ Remove fence & plant native grasses / ground cover
- ⑥ Story-wall panels telling the history of the Central of Georgia Railroad
- ⑦ Demo existing sidewalk & plant native grasses / groundcover
- ⑧ New concrete sidewalk / multiuse path (10'-0" min.)
- ⑨ Relocate Boundary Street village fencing & build a more pedestrian-friendly fence
- ⑩ New street trees
- ⑪ New striping for pedestrian crosswalk

Mobility Tool

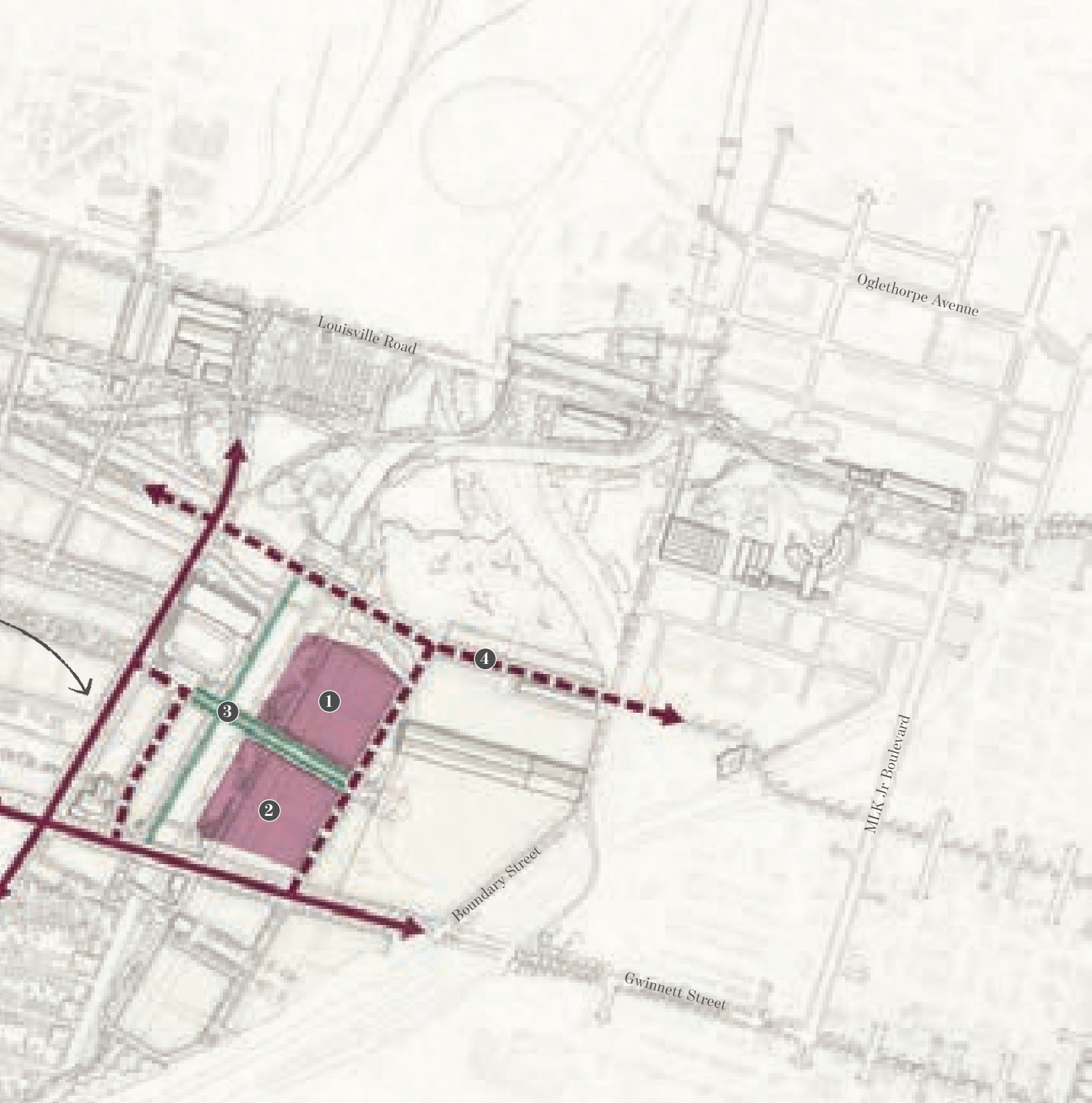
Temporary Arena Parking

Temporary gravel parking should support the opening of the Savannah Arena in 2022 and unlock future development sites. The flexibility of this solution should promote short-term and long-term growth in the District.

Unobtrusive surface-level parking can support catalytic development while more sustainable solutions are studied.

City Lot will temporarily host ride-share pickup and drop-off.





Public Streets

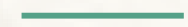
Planned Existing Improvement



Proposed New Street

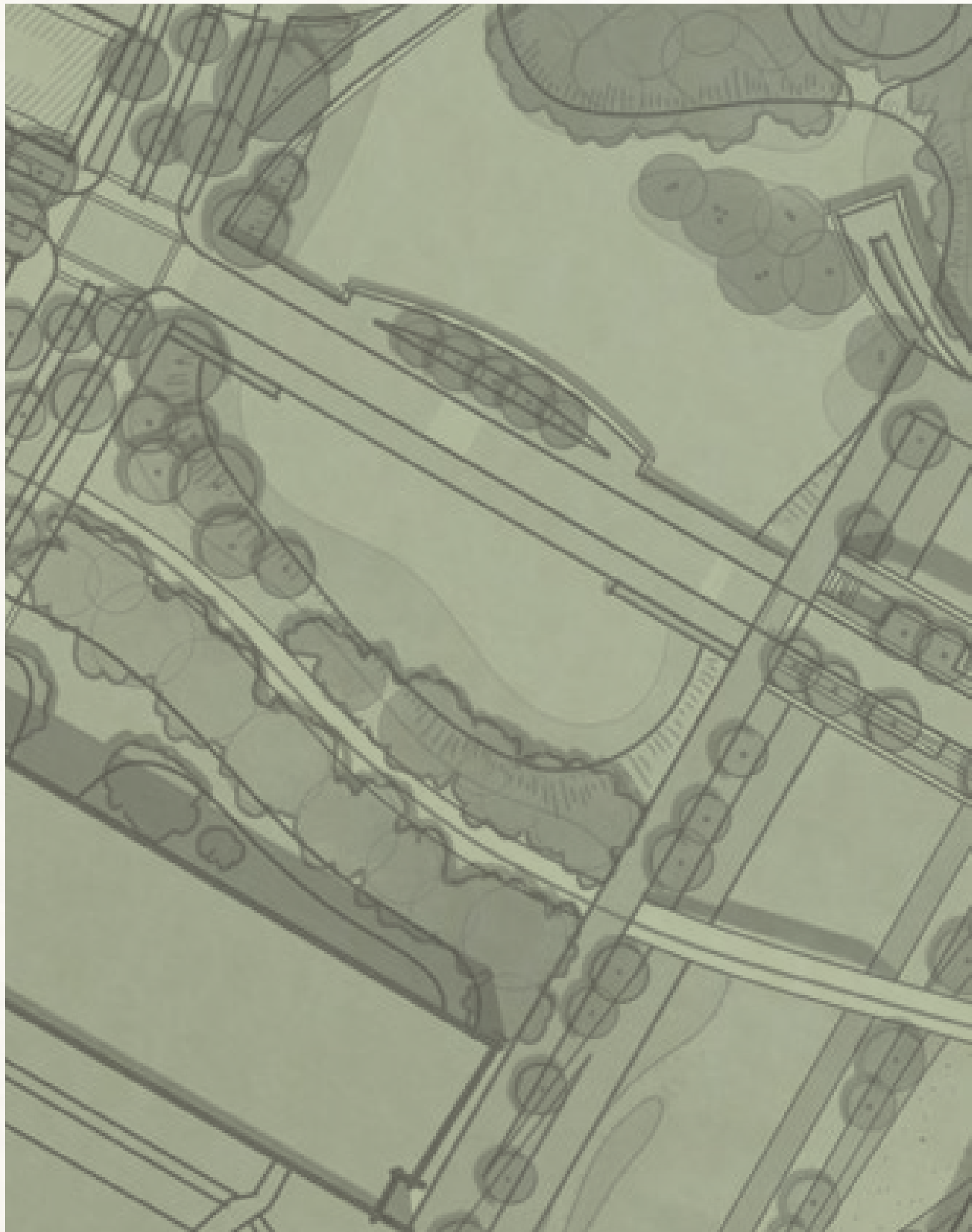


Proposed Pedestrian Path



Temporary Parking System

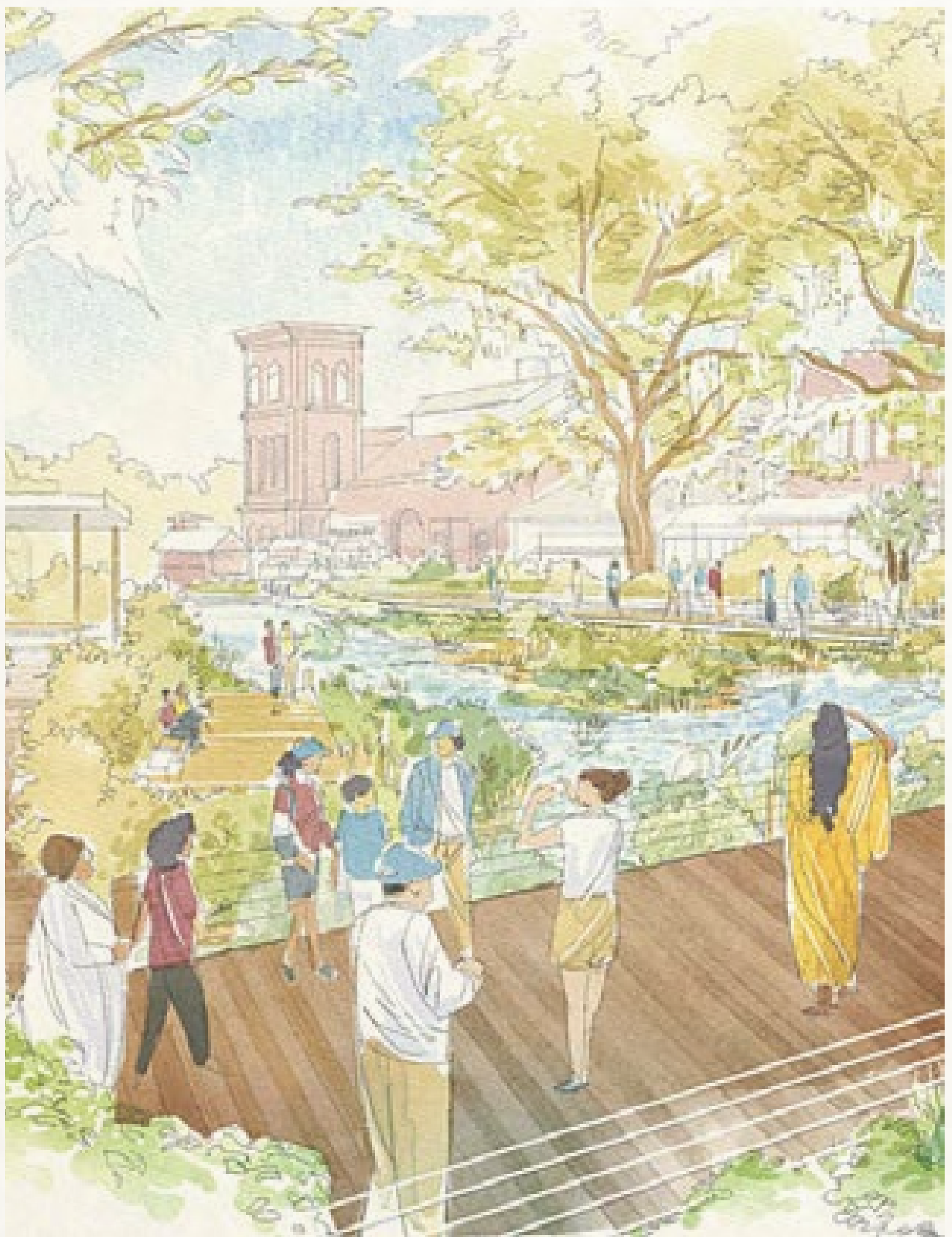
- 1. North Surface Parking Lot
- 2. South Surface Parking Lot
- 3. Pedestrian Access to Arena
- 4. Cohen Street Extension





Public Spaces

within the Canal District



How the Water Should Flow

This open-space strategy should establish more purposeful water management in the Canal District floodplain and create new Lowcountry commons for people in the City and region to gather.

Today

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

Open spaces dedicated to water, including the canals and retention pond,

are challenging to maintain. Flooding sometimes backs up into surrounding neighborhoods, such as Waterworks, Springfield Terrace, and Brickyard, and there is no public access to what remains of the natural forests and wetlands. In short, the existing open spaces are neither natural nor useful for the communities who live nearby.

In the Future

The Canal District should provide public spaces that serve the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods as well as visitors to Savannah and the Arena. This Plan proposes a transformation that should begin with stormwater infrastructure. A new District-serving system can turn vulnerable, flood-prone areas into healthy, stable ecosystems.

Such a stormwater system will first require widening the Springfield Canal. In addition, it will require engineering a Wetland Preserve Park that is functional and beautiful in equal measure. To encourage gathering, playing, relaxing, and socializing, a range of public amenities should be located around the widened canal. These new places then become the

setting for the proposed Heritage Trail, weaving west Savannah's history into the greater City's investment in making its legacies public.

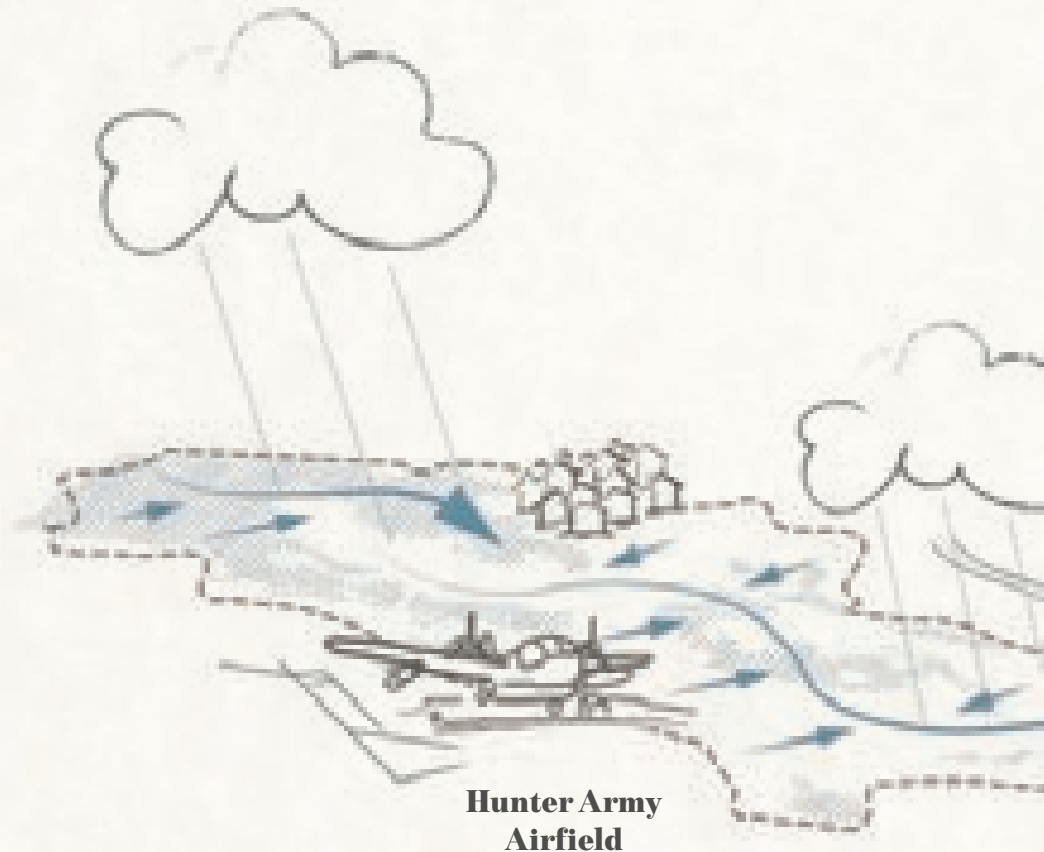
The proposed Canal Park will connect to an accessible system of paths and neighborhood parks that extend the civic spaces of the Canal District into the adjacent neighborhoods. Oriented around the widened canal and renovated stormwater system, the new Park is designed to make Savannah's historic relationship to water ever present.

The Springfield Basin

The Springfield Canal receives water from throughout the Springfield Basin and as far south as the Hunter Army Airfield. The Canal District's stormwater system therefore performs essential conveyance and resilience functions for the entire City of Savannah.

The Canal District is a flat, low-lying area within the greater Springfield Basin. As water flows into the Springfield Canal from many directions across the Basin's large area, it stalls and collects in the District's 100-year floodplain. The stormwater infrastructure needs to convey the water to the Savannah River and out to the Atlantic Ocean, but it doesn't.

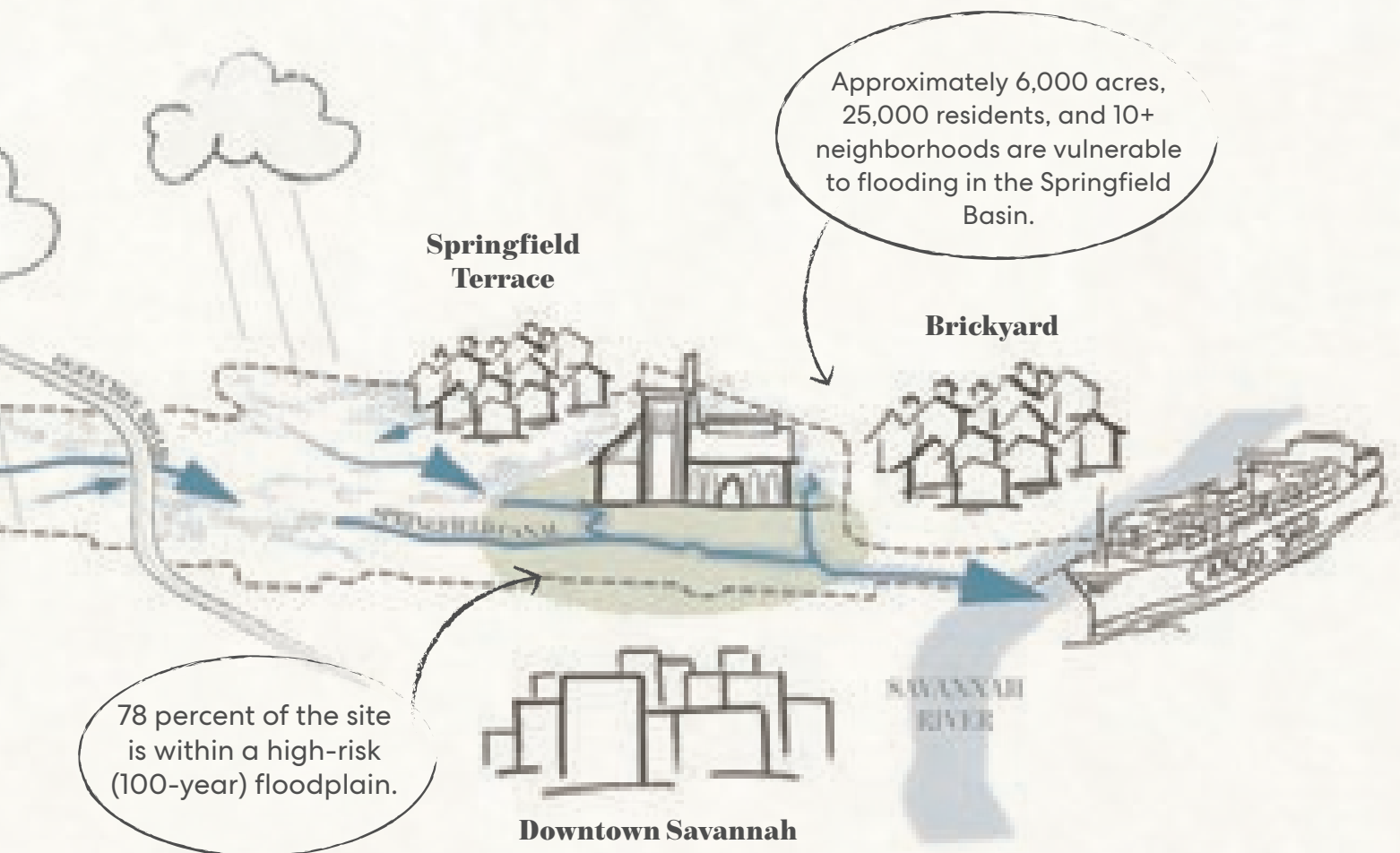
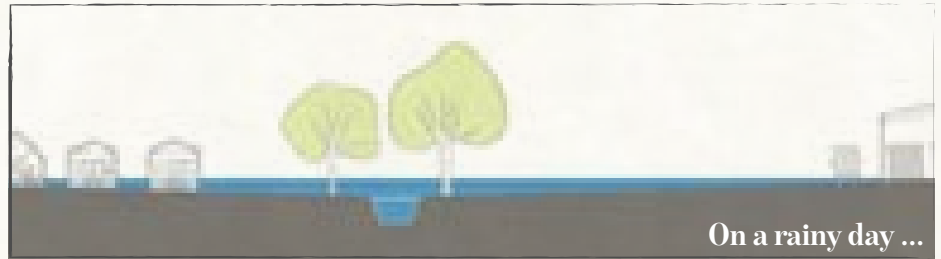
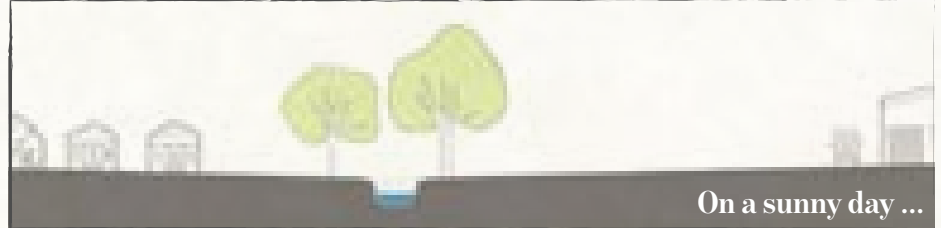
On a rainy day in the Canal District, water often accumulates faster than it can flow toward the river. It pools in the floodplain, as in a bathtub with a slow drain. The section of the Springfield Canal in the new District is just too narrow to manage the volume of water flowing through the floodplain. The water backs up into the streets and surrounding neighborhoods, exposing these communities to overwhelming environmental risk.



Since 1994, individual structures within the Springfield Basin have been flooded 741 times during high-water events.

The Springfield Canal Today

Water is the biggest driver of the Canal District Master Plan. The Canal District is vulnerable to the social, economic, and environmental stresses of repeated and extreme flooding.



Floodplain Mitigation

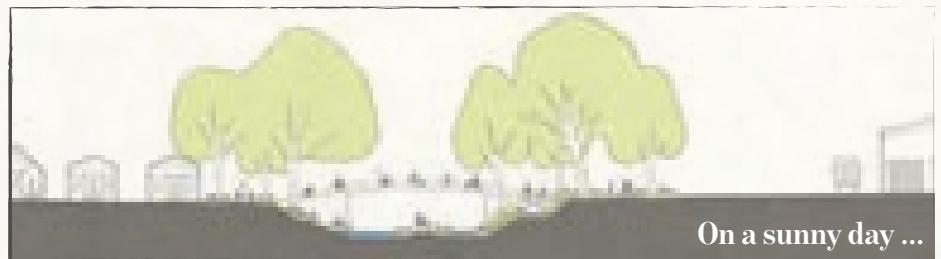
The Canal District needs to manage the rise and flow of water more effectively to develop and grow. Making space for water and the desire growth can bring out the natural features of the landscape to their greatest advantage.

The development of the Canal District will require mitigation of the Springfield Basin floodplain, and mitigation greater will require the redistribution of water throughout the area. The Springfield Canal must be widened to convey water to the Savannah River, and larger spaces will be needed for basins that can effectively mitigate the floodplain under average or extreme conditions.

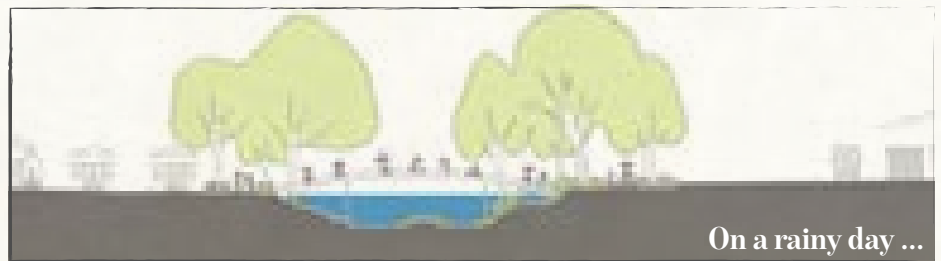
Studies conducted in the course of this master-planning process identified both areas positioned for redevelopment and areas for potential floodplain mitigation. These studies prioritized the use of City-owned land to absorb flood water, directing it away from neighborhoods and private property. On City-owned land, these stormwater ponds will become functional and aesthetic features in wetland nature preserves.

A District Prepared to Flood

The goal is to design the Springfield Canal and the District to accommodate 100-year flood capacity.

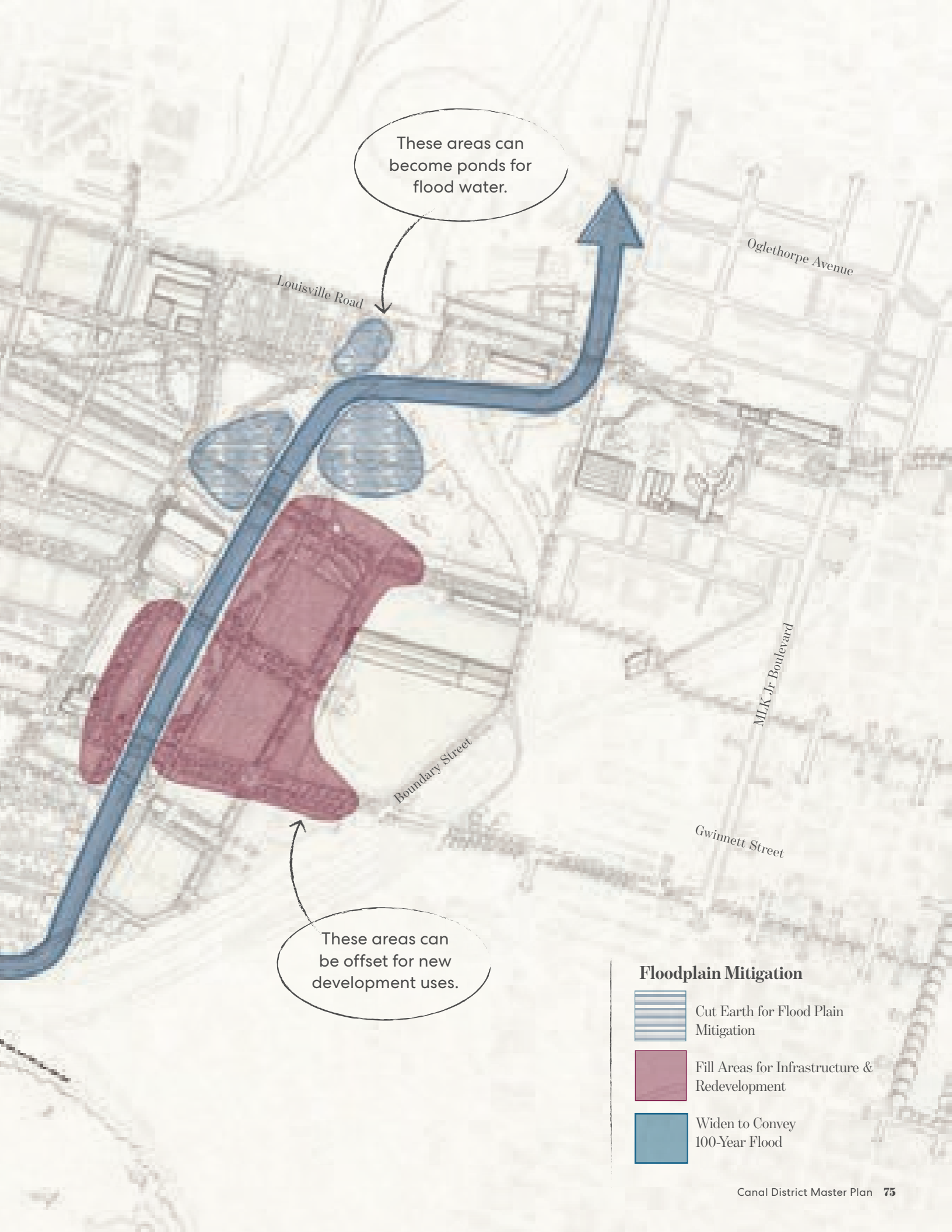


On a sunny day ...



On a rainy day ...





These areas can become ponds for flood water.

Louisville Road

Oglethorpe Avenue

MLK Jr Boulevard

Boundary Street

Gwinnett Street

These areas can be offset for new development uses.

Floodplain Mitigation



Cut Earth for Flood Plain Mitigation



Fill Areas for Infrastructure & Redevelopment



Widen to Convey 100-Year Flood

Open Space Framework

Lowcountry features can assist filtration and contribute to the stormwater management that makes possible a new network of community amenities that support daily and seasonal activities.

This Plan proposes a comprehensive open space framework, including a range of new parks as well as improvements to existing public spaces, such as Bowles C. Ford Park. Creation of a Canal District path network should improve access and connections for the surrounding neighborhoods, the City, and the larger region.

Wetland Preserve Park

The Springfield Canal and the water it distributes shape the look and feel of the Canal District. The construction of wetland preserves can work as ecological anchors in two locations: where water moves into the District from the south and where it flows out to the north. Wetland nature preserves use natural systems, ponds, and constructed wetlands to absorb and clean stormwater. A series of low-impact trail networks and stations would connect people to nature and create opportunities for educational and recreational spaces.

Canal Park

A grand new civic park adjacent to the Arena is the proposed civic core of the Canal District. Intended to be the most urban public space in the District, the Canal Park would be lined on all sides with residences and new destinations.

Promenades

These linear pathways will connect people from within the neighborhoods to the Canal Park, the Savannah Arena, and the heart of the Canal District.

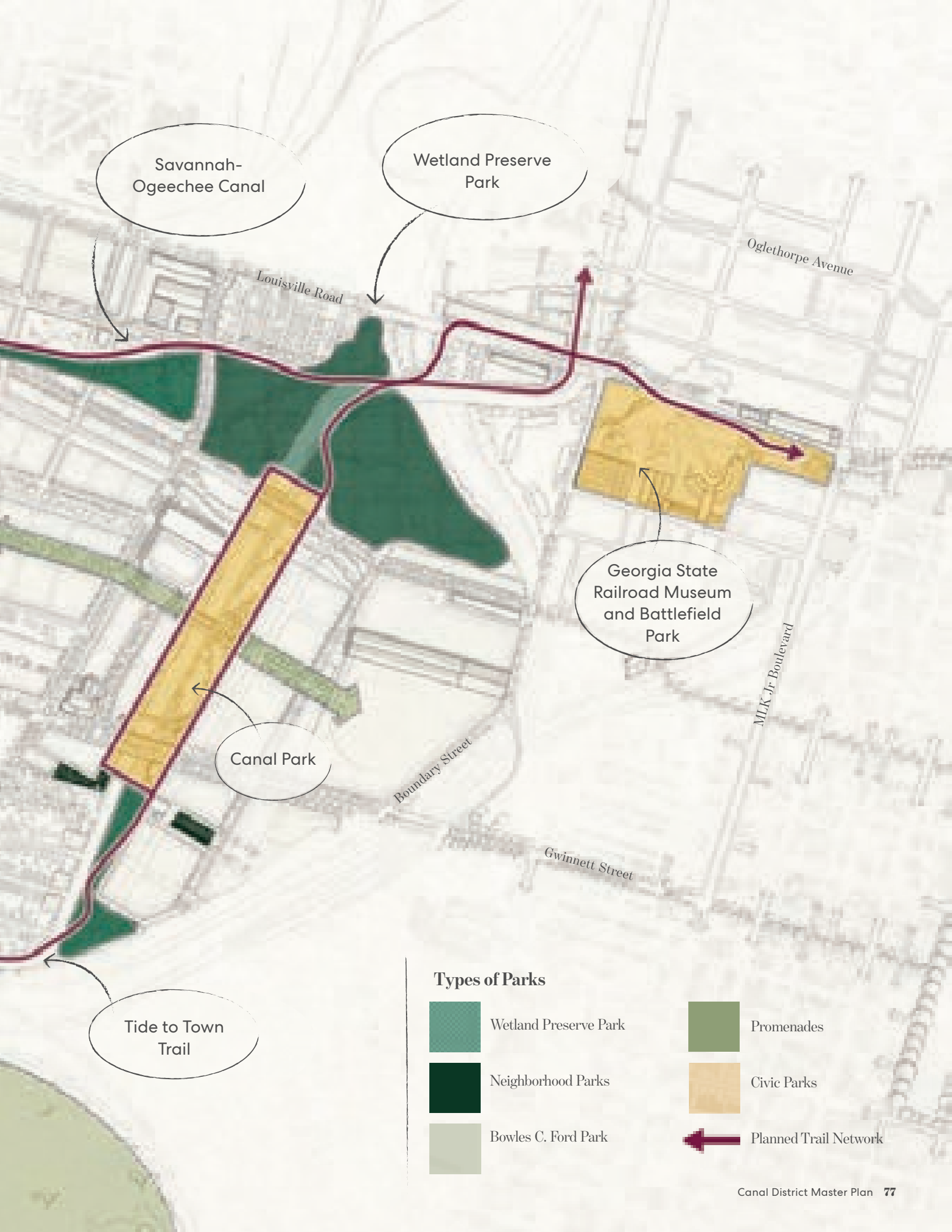
Neighborhood Parks

Smaller-scale parks should be introduced into the Canal District neighborhoods. These new spaces welcome healthy community activities, such as outdoor play and picnics. An evaluation of existing amenities in surrounding parks should follow adoption of this Master Plan, and upgrades should then be done in accordance with the recommended Community Benefits Framework.

Bowles C. Ford Park

Celebrated by many neighborhood residents, Bowles C. Ford Park is a community asset that was never fully built out. It should connect to the greater park system and receive care and maintenance at the standard of parks Citywide. Linked to the planned Tide to Town Trail, it can become a City anchor just south of the District.





Savannah-Ogeechee Canal

Wetland Preserve Park

Louisville Road

Oglethorpe Avenue

Georgia State Railroad Museum and Battlefield Park

Canal Park

Boundary Street

MLK Jr Boulevard

Gwinnett Street

Tide to Town Trail

Types of Parks



Wetland Preserve Park



Promenades



Neighborhood Parks



Civic Parks



Bowles C. Ford Park



Planned Trail Network

What ambitious Public Space Concepts should the District focus on?

Improved infrastructure and new cultural landmarks can change how Savannahians gather and play.

Public Space Concept

Reduced Flooding

Improved stormwater infrastructure should address neighborhood drainage concerns and minimize flood risks through the engineering of new amenities.

Public Space Concept

More Civic Spaces

A choreographed public realm should introduce compelling civic spaces and elevate the places and structures most valued by the community.

Public Space Concept

History on Display

The most important civic spaces in the Canal District should highlight the histories of west Savannah's neighborhoods in prominent public exhibits.

How will we achieve these goals?

Our Public Space Tools propose new civic spaces, naturescapes, and neighborhood parks.

Public Space Tool

The Canal Park

A large public park anchored to the Springfield Canal can manage stormwater, enhance the Arena experience, and become the centerpiece of the new District.

Public Space Tool

Wetland Preserve Park

The design of new wetlands can support local ecosystems and make natural settings newly accessible to people in the District.

Public Space Tool

Neighborhood Parks

Scattering smaller-scale “pocket” parks throughout the District can introduce a range of new activities into the day-to-day life of surrounding communities.

Public Space Tool

Heritage Trail

The new system of paths can record and celebrate West Savannah’s history and culture and link those stories to the larger story of Savannah’s growth.

Public Space Tool

The Canal Park

The Canal District's signature public space can support new stormwater management, add to the City's beautiful gathering places, and exhibit community culture and history.

"We can have a free-flowing walkway, waterway, and a good box in place so that we can drain the water off ... It's a win-win for everybody: the City, the community, and people 10 years down the road."

— Alderman, City Council

A grand civic space can set the tone for open spaces throughout the District.





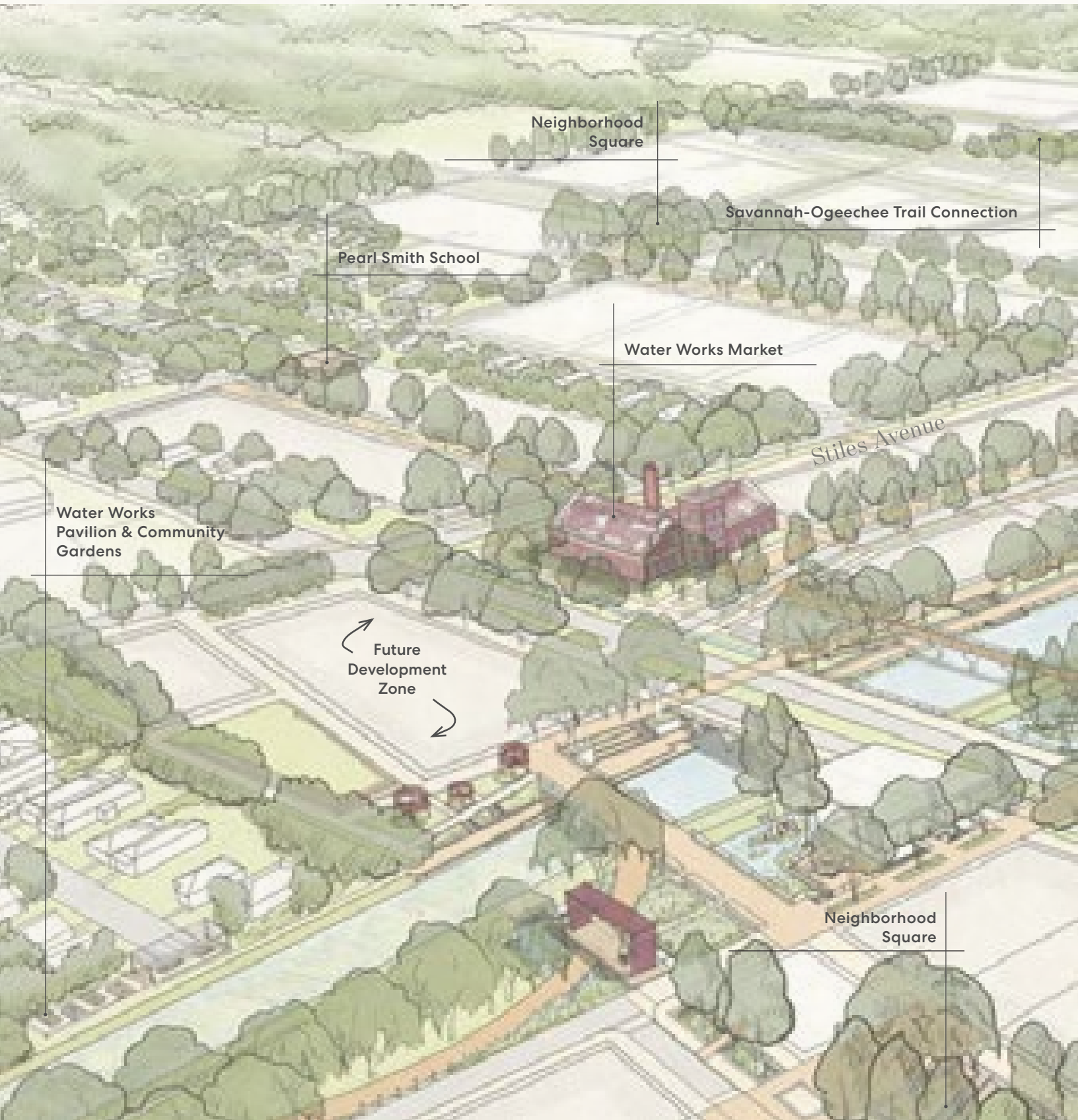
Savannah
Arena

Canal Park

Wetland
Preserve
Park

Cohen Street

Gwinnett Street



Neighborhood Square

Savannah-Ogeechee Trail Connection

Pearl Smith School

Water Works Market

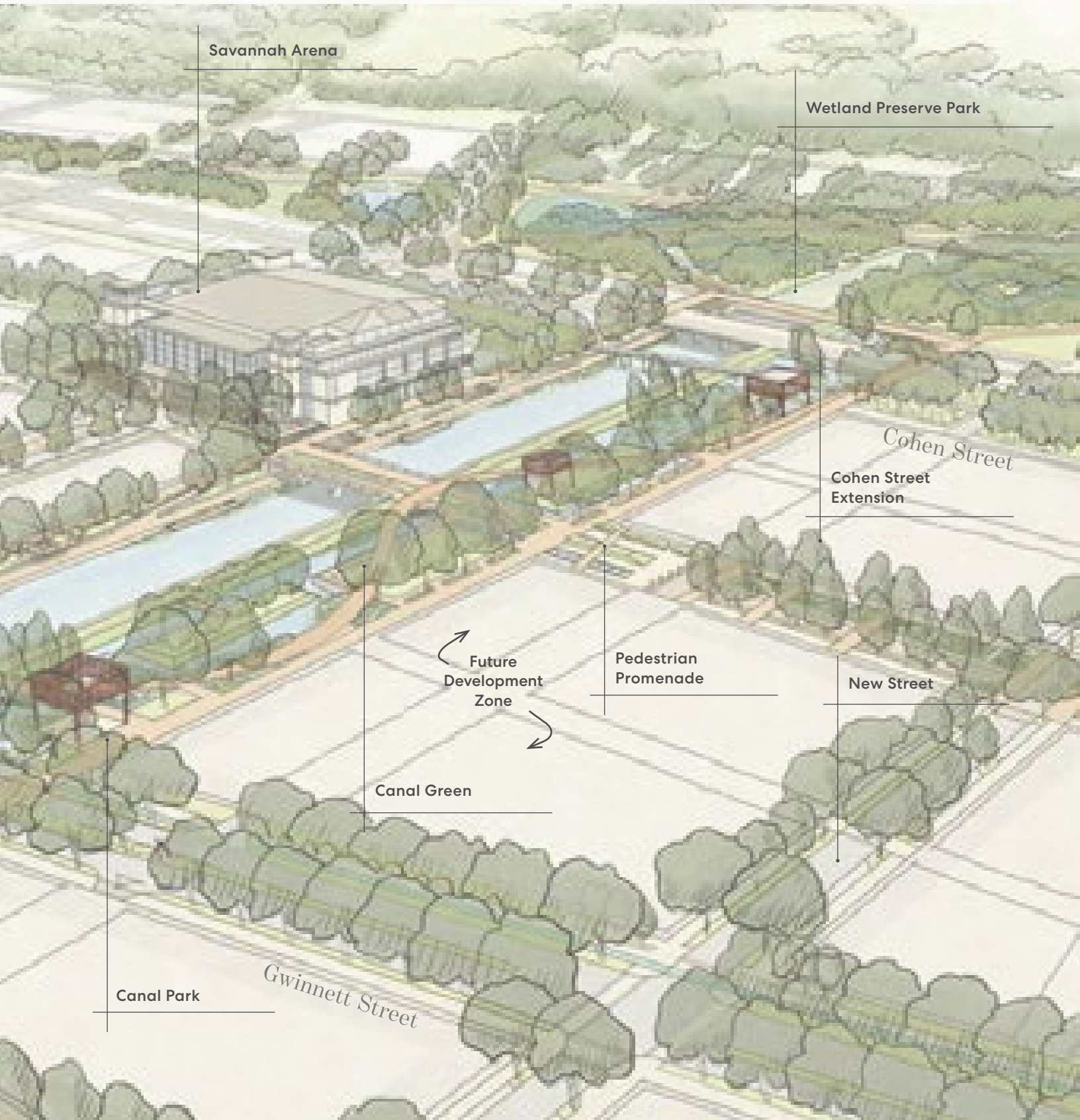
Stiles Avenue

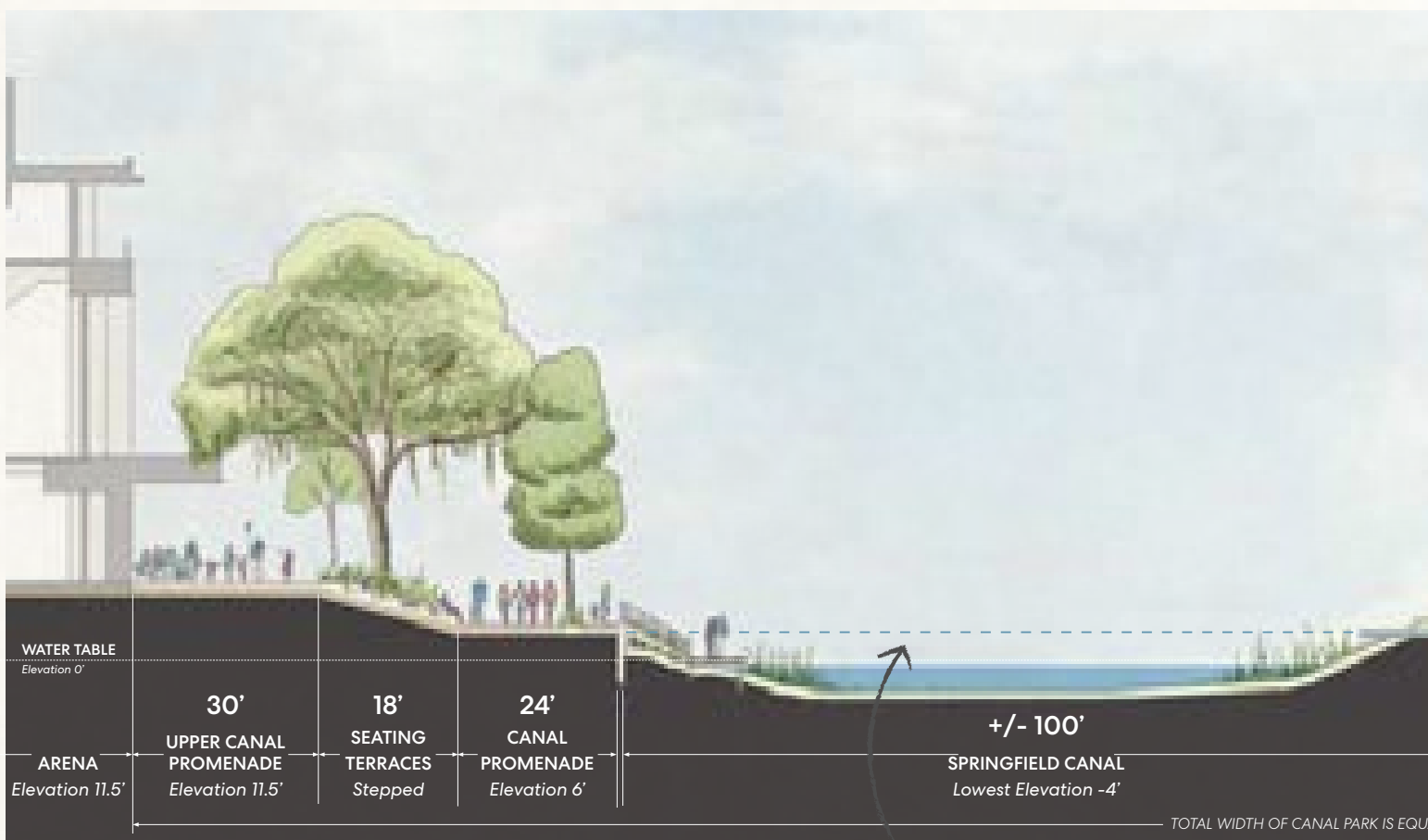
Water Works Pavilion & Community Gardens

Future Development Zone

Neighborhood Square

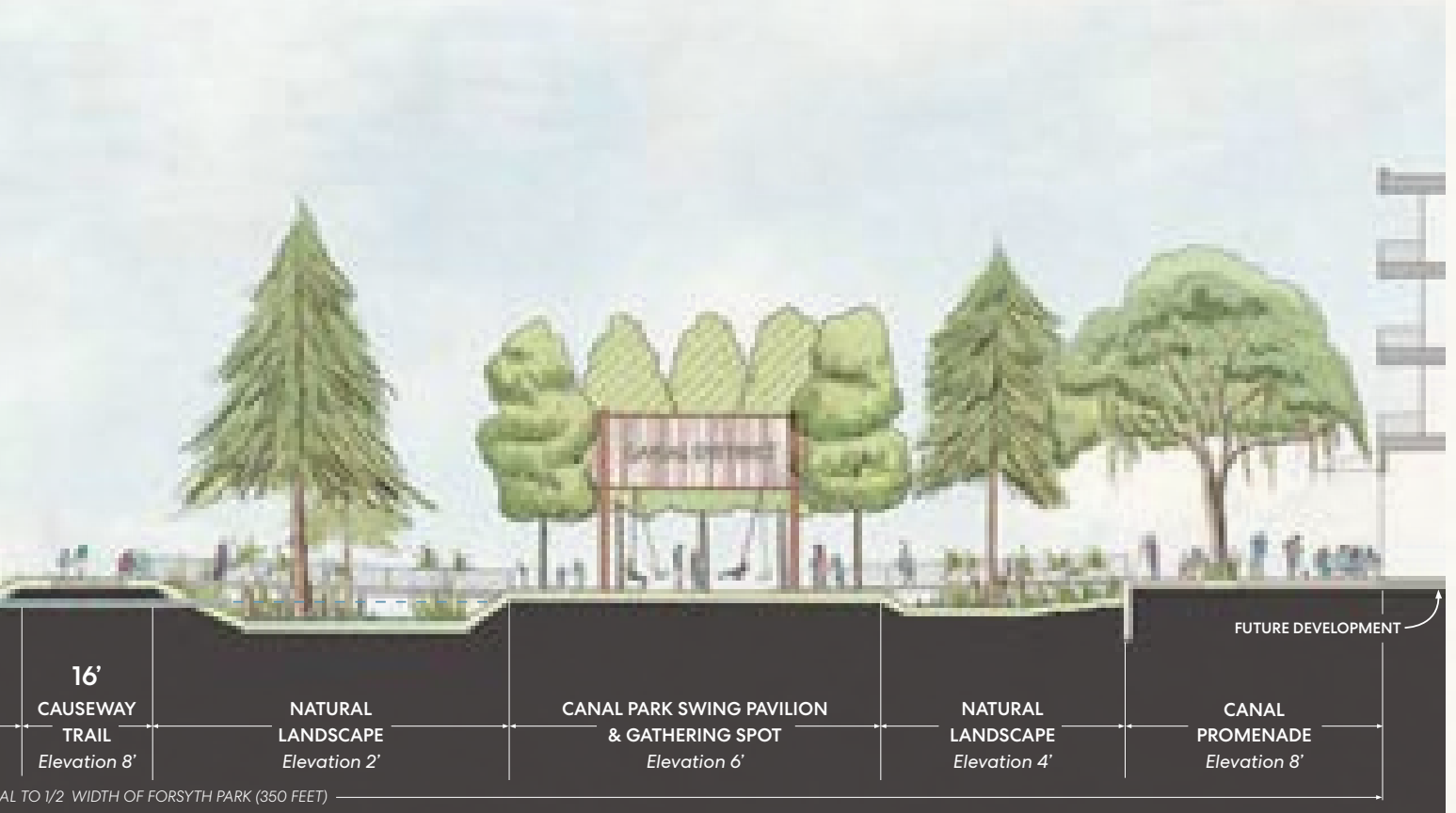
The Canal Park is envisioned as a City destination that will organize the core of the new District around the edges of the Springfield Canal.



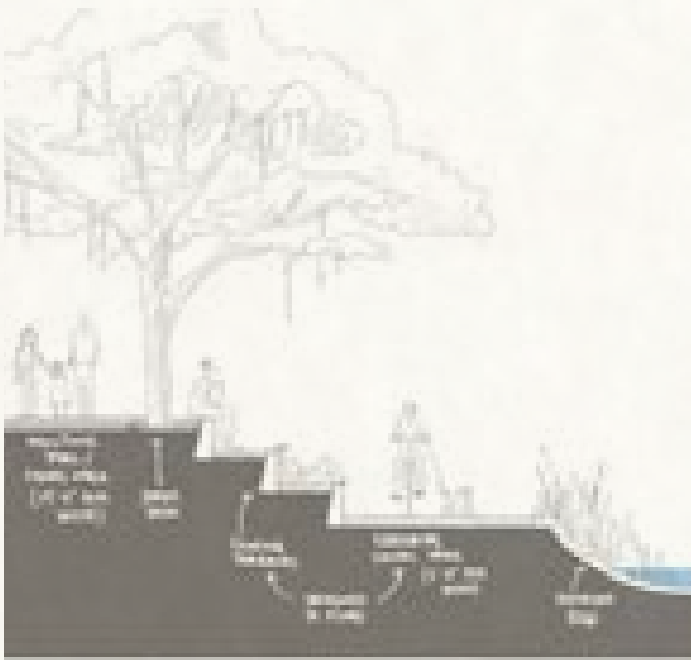


Water level during flood events

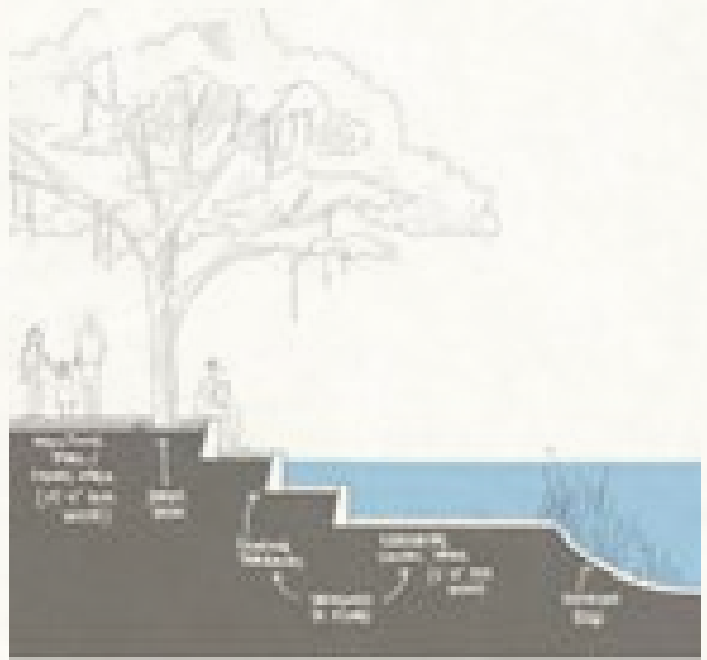
The proposed Canal Park will be essential infrastructure and a new City amenity: It can convey stormwater for the entire Basin in a widened Springfield Canal while growing the City's collection of beautiful civic spaces.



Terraced Stairs — Adjacent to Urban Development

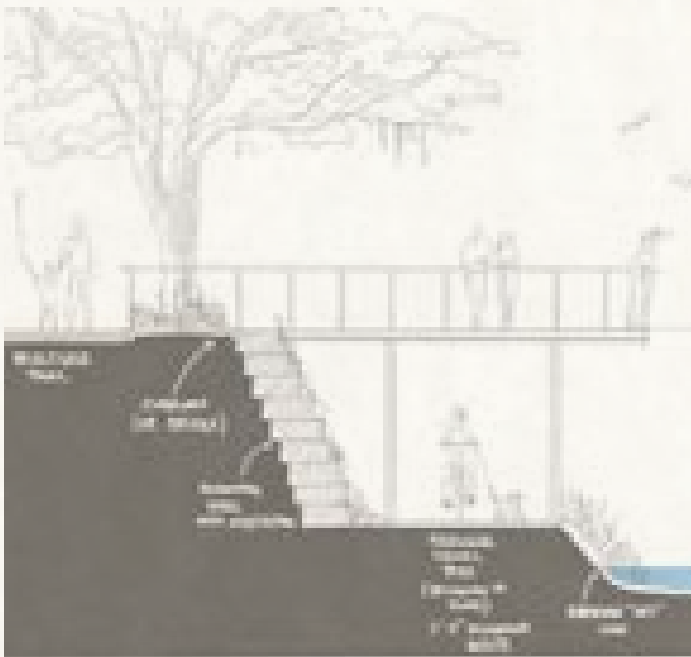


Typical Water Level

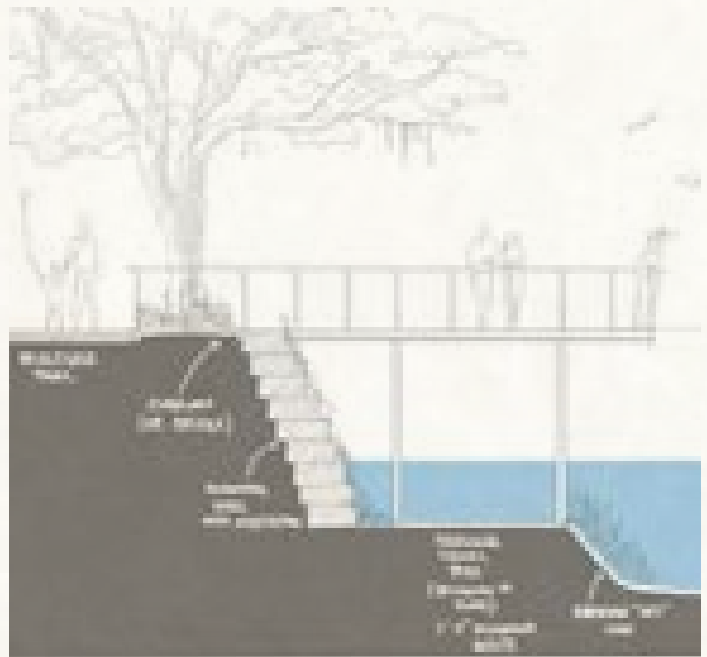


High-Water Event

Overlook & Lower Trail — Adjacent to Urban Development



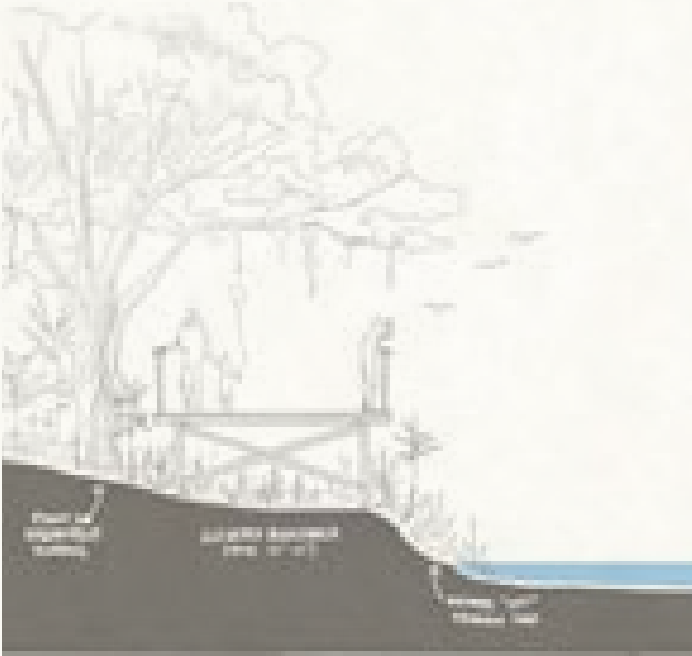
Typical Water Level



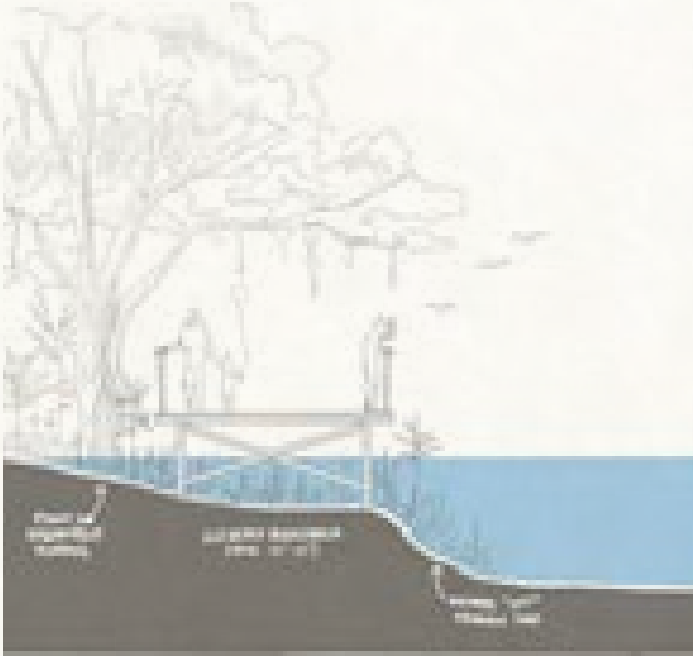
High-Water Event

Canal-edge configurations can be designed to flood safely during high-water events. Along urban development, the retaining walls will be made of concrete piling or facade-covered sheet piling.

Elevated Boardwalk — Adjacent to Parks and Preserves

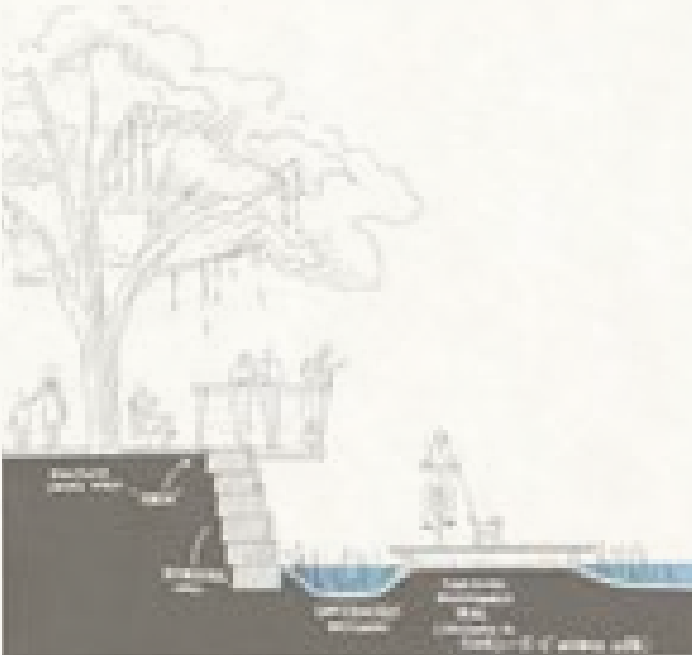


Typical Water Level

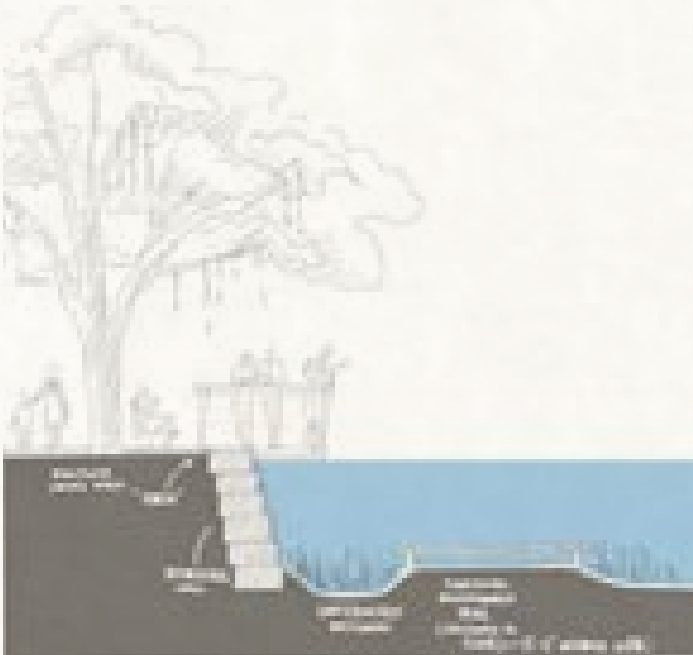


High-Water Event

Porch & Sunken Boardwalk — Adjacent to Parks and Preserves



Typical Water Level



High-Water Event

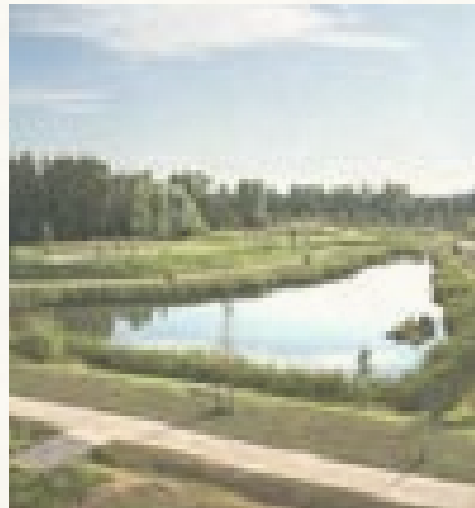
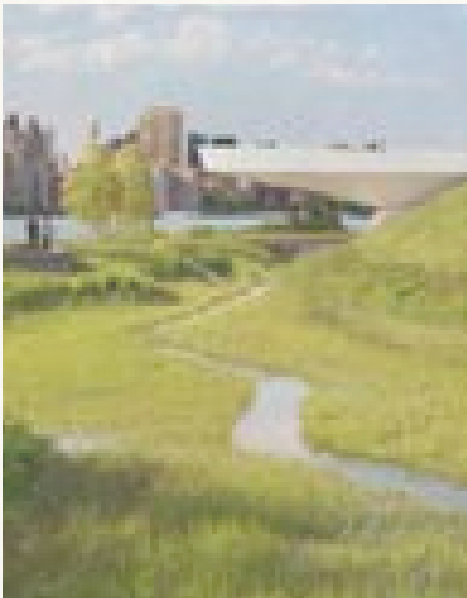
Public Space Tool

Wetland Preserve Park

Expanding vital ecosystems can contribute to stormwater management and translate into beautiful natural settings for walking, observing wildlife, and taking in Lowcountry sounds.

“Generally speaking, my excitement is the green space that will surround the canals.”
— Resident, Savannah

Natural landscapes can be varied to create a range of observational and interactive Lowcountry experiences.





Louisville Road

Wetland
Preserve
Park

Cohen Street

Canal
Park

Public Space Tool

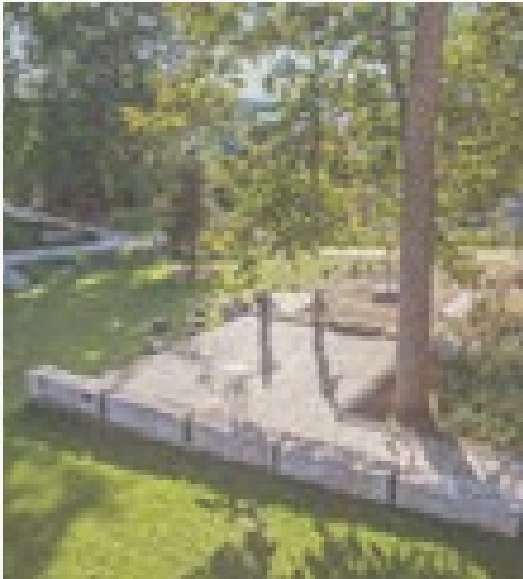
Neighborhood Parks

A network of smaller civic spaces can diversify the opportunities for outdoor recreation and community celebration in landscapes that add to the distinctive character of the immediate vicinity.

“I think of a space where the community has the opportunity to be active and get out and walk in a more beautiful environment than currently exists.”

— Executive Director, Healthy Savannah

Neighbors choose the activities that make their community space their own.





Types of Parks

 Neighborhood Park

 Community Garden

 Planned Trail Network

Public Space Tool

Heritage Trail

The District's new system of paths can publicly celebrate the history of Savannah's African American communities with a West Savannah Heritage Trail, installing art and cultural exhibits throughout the proposed Canal Park and open spaces.

"When I think of the vision of what the Canal District can be, I would like to maintain that community spirit, the one that's already been there. There's so much history associated with the current residents."

— Resident, Savannah

New public spaces throughout the Canal District can become mini stages for Savannah culture.



Proposed display sites:
The community should
vet the public art
installations and cultural
exhibits for the trails.



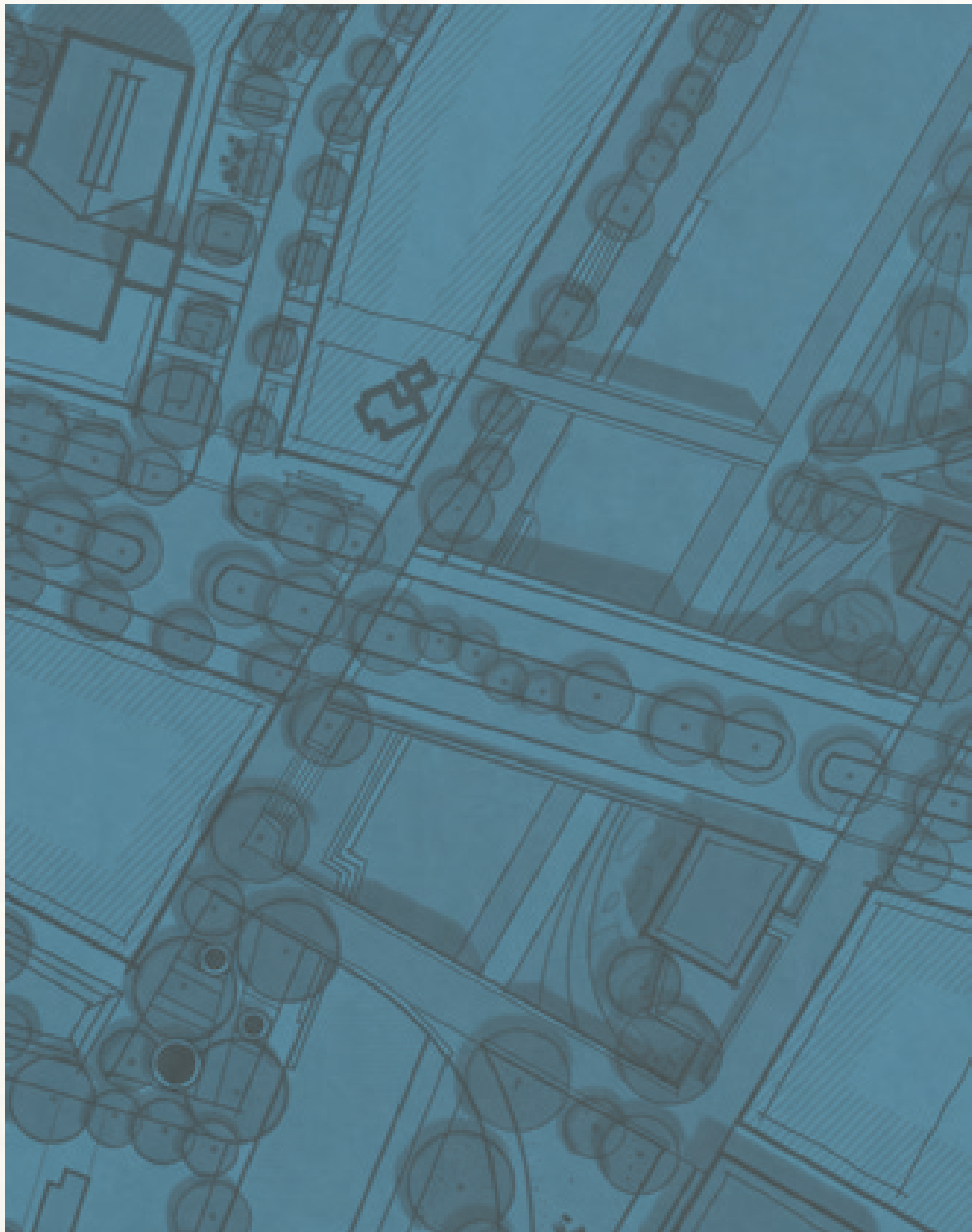
Louisville Road

Oglethorpe Avenue

Boundary Street

Gwinnett Street

MLK Jr Boulevard





Development

within the Canal District



How Savannah Should Grow

This development strategy promotes a concentration of residential and commercial uses that can fulfill the Canal District's potential as an important center of City life.

Today

It can be easy to miss the fact that the Canal District is in the heart of Savannah. A 10-minute walk from Downtown in one direction and a 10-minute walk from west Savannah's historic African American neighborhoods in the other, this central area is devoid of the businesses and activities that energize in-town streets and deliver the benefits of dense urban living.

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. Where once there were businesses that met the residents' daily needs, there is now a dearth of such basic services.

In other words, the Canal District is among the most logical places for the City to plan for its urban, economic, and civic growth. At the juncture of a strong residential workforce and the City's commercial core, its central location makes the land especially valuable. It is exactly where a smart planner would look to expand local commerce, diversify housing stock, and build new amenities.

In the Future

Construction of the Savannah Arena gets underway in 2020, bringing with it new development, which should translate into greater security for the multigenerational residents of west Savannah as well as a high-profile destination for the region.

This Plan strategizes the creation of a mixed-use Canal District neighborhood that respects the scale, character, and history of the existing communities to its east and west. It proposes projects and regulation that secure resources, heed

transition zones, and protect the homes and livelihoods of longtime residents.

These proposals advocate for development that is dense with small enterprise and housing for residents of varied incomes. This development should also put long-absent services back within walking distance of surrounding neighborhoods.

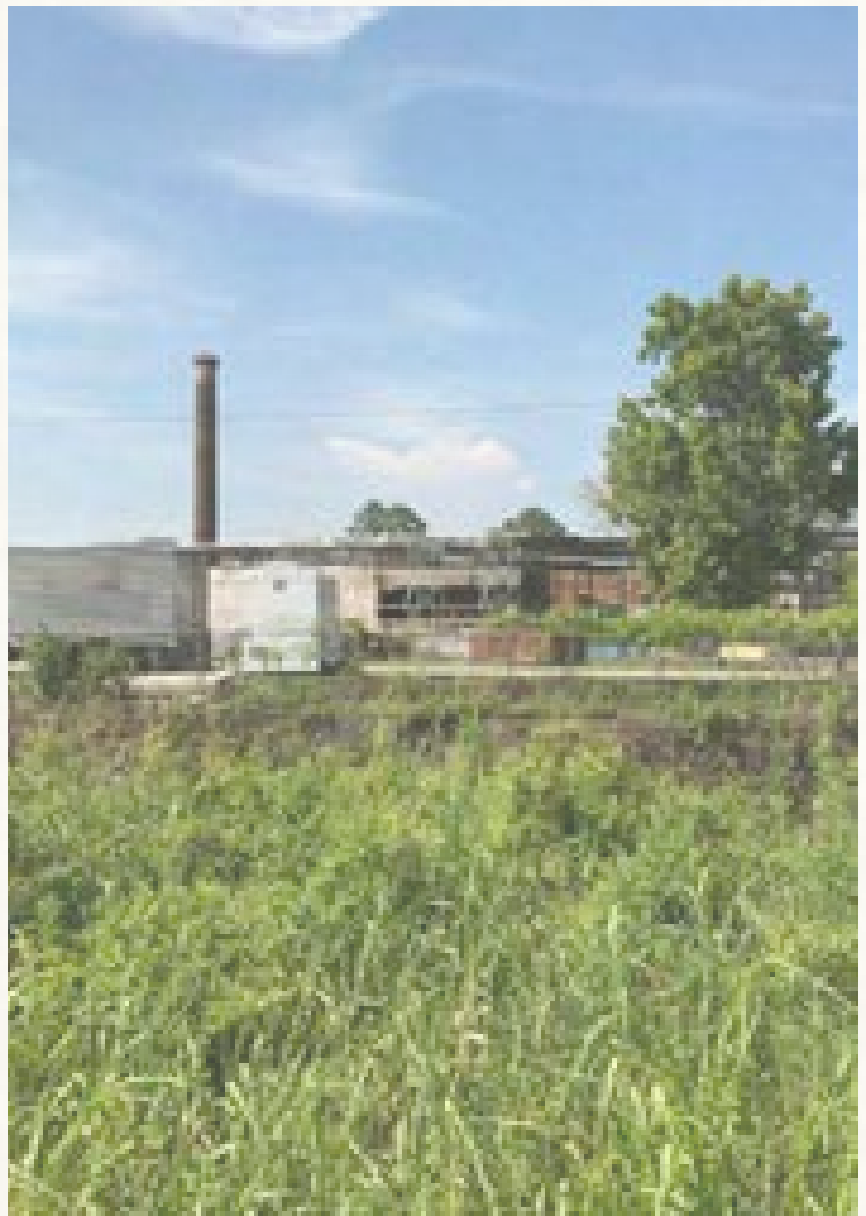
Development Potential

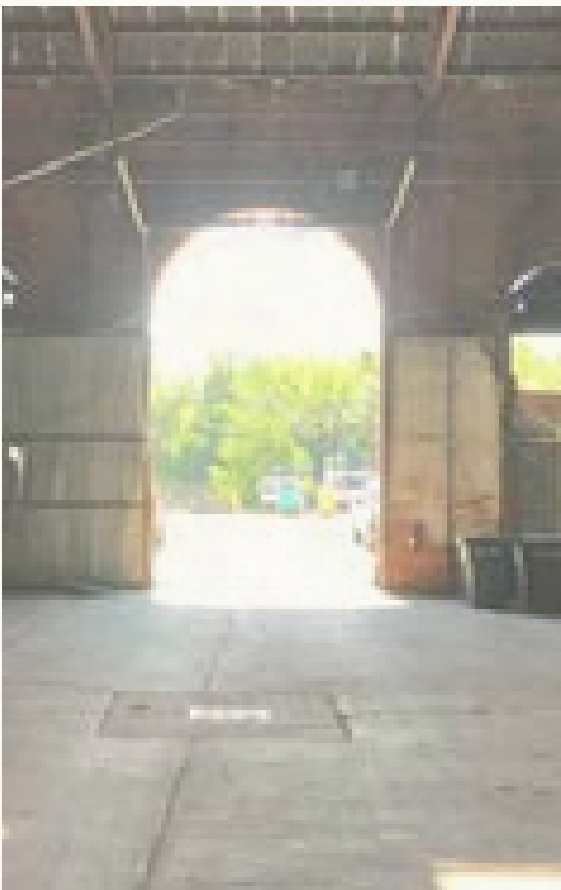
New uses for existing structures, in addition to the proposed infrastructure initiatives, will drive equitable growth for the City, its communities, and the larger region.

The Savannah Arena broke ground in September 2019, and it has already set new development in motion. This Plan's proposed new mobility and open space systems are designed to build connections across the City and throughout the Canal District, leading people to distinctive places and memorable experiences. Activation of City-owned property throughout the District will further this phased process of development.

The City of Savannah owns several parcels in the Canal District. Some of these parcels have already been designated for civic purposes, among them the site of the new Arena and the Water Works Building. Development of these parcels is critical to meeting the near-term needs and expectations of the residents most directly impacted by the new Arena. It is also critical to exciting early interest and activity in the Canal District.

Photos of conditions at the Savannah Arena site and the historic Water Works Building on City Lot were taken in 2019.





What ambitious Development Concepts should the District focus on?

A mix of uses, paced and scaled for equitable access to the benefits of growth, can change the way Savannahians thrive.

Development Concept

Expanded Opportunity

A dynamic mix of uses should better address the community's needs and aspirations and introduce missing services, amenities, and outlets for small business.

Development Concept

Sensitive Design

The design of all additions to west Savannah's built environment should respect the form, scale, and character of the adjacent neighborhoods.

Development Concept

Sustained Well-Being

Human-centered development strategies should promote healthy growth and elevate the neighboring communities' quality of life.

How will we achieve these goals?

Our Development Tools propose urban growth that respects neighboring communities' goals and priorities.

Development Tool

Catalytic Projects

Key early infrastructure and development projects can bring resources and visibility to the new District and start to build momentum behind the long-term vision for its growth.

Development Tool

Transition Zones

Identifying the zones where new development edges onto valuable existing places can lead to sensitive design choices for Canal District's built environment.

Development Tool

Zoning & Land Use

Enforceable zoning and land-use regulations should development toward only those uses and forms that support the community's vision for the Canal District.

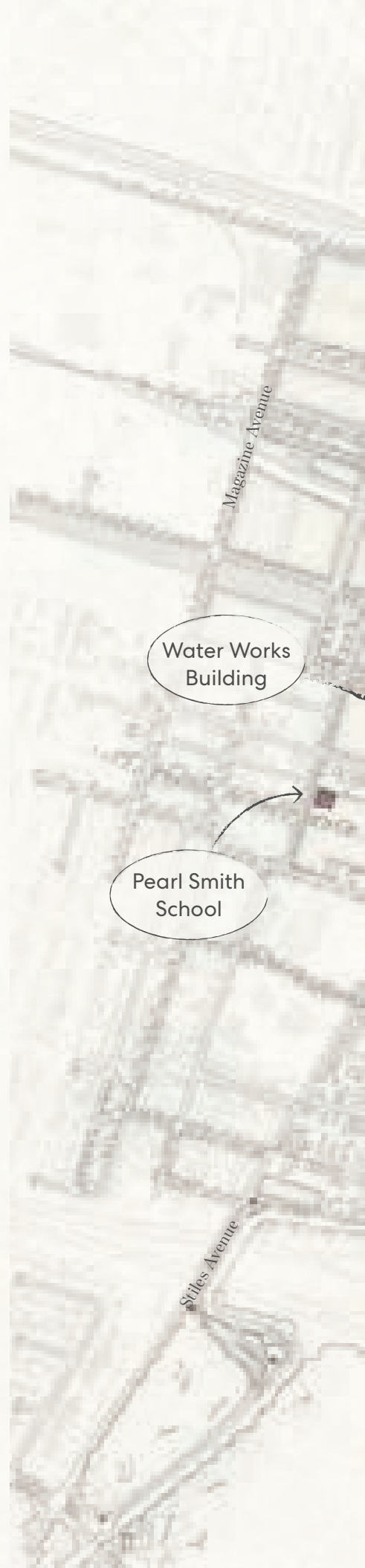
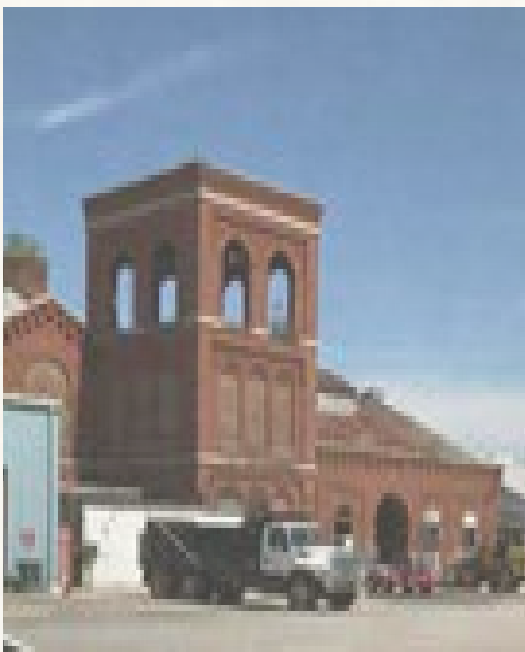
Development Tool

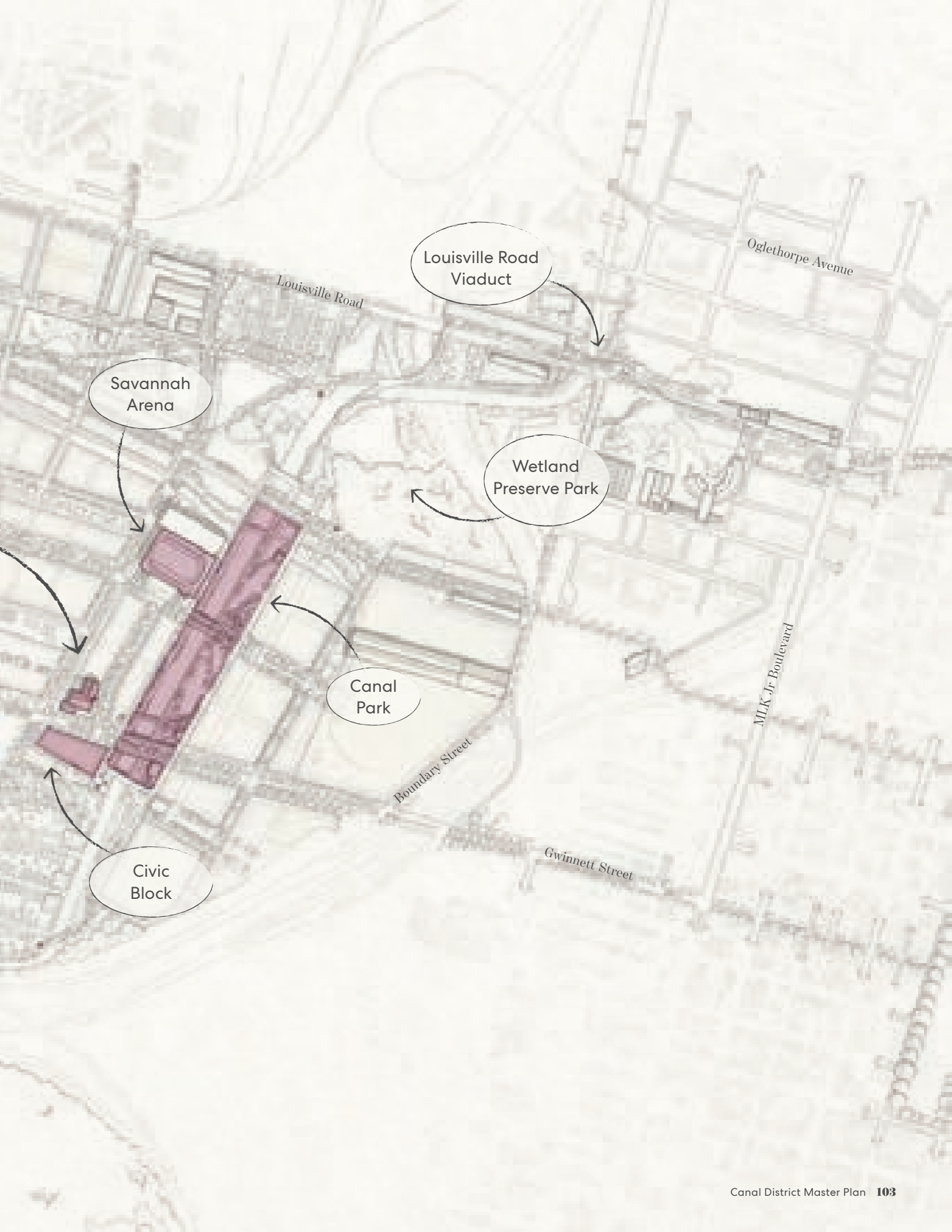
Catalytic Projects

The Savannah Arena is just one of a few key infrastructure, adaptive-reuse, and preservation projects that should set the Canal District on a course for economic and cultural success.

"I think of the Arena being the anchor in that area and that being an economic engine that could basically bring about and create wealth in a low-wealth community."
— Resident, West Savannah

Canal widening, pedestrian enhancements, and a repurposed Water Works are the first steps in this Plan.





Louisville Road Viaduct

Oglethorpe Avenue

Louisville Road

Savannah Arena

Wetland Preserve Park

Canal Park

MLK Jr Boulevard

Boundary Street

Gwinnett Street

Civic Block

Development Tool

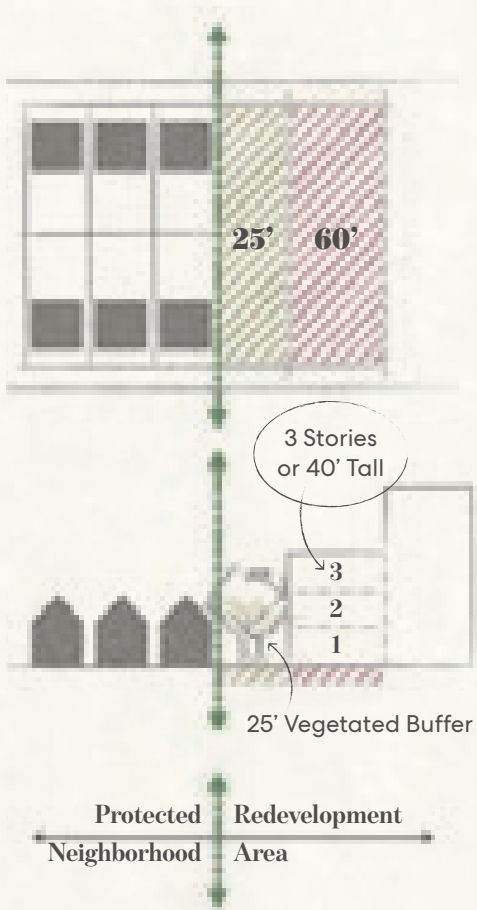
Transition Zones

The edges where Canal District development transitions into the adjacent neighborhoods demand special attention and design that blends the new comfortably into the character of historic places.

“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.”
 — Resident, West Savannah

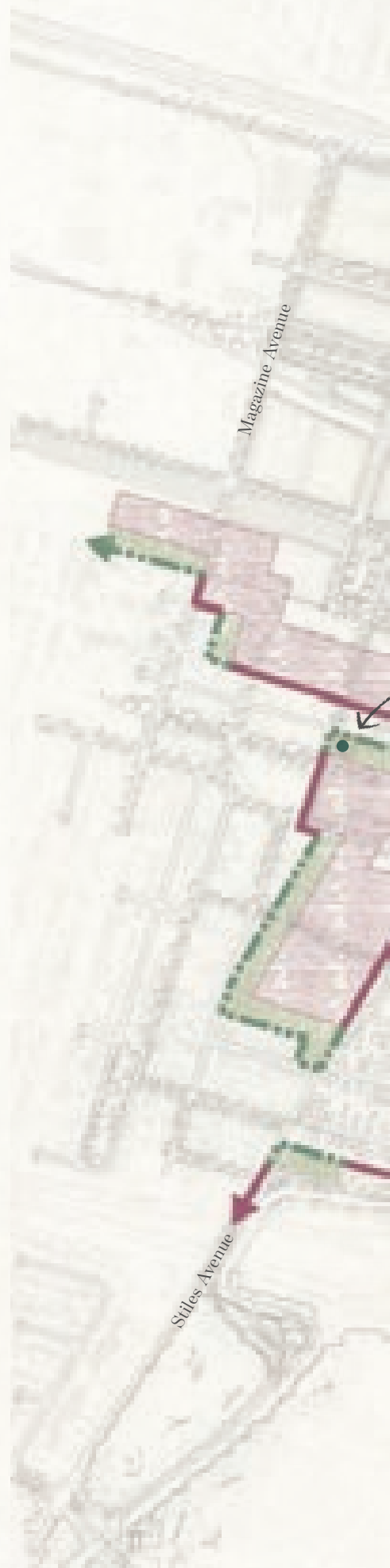
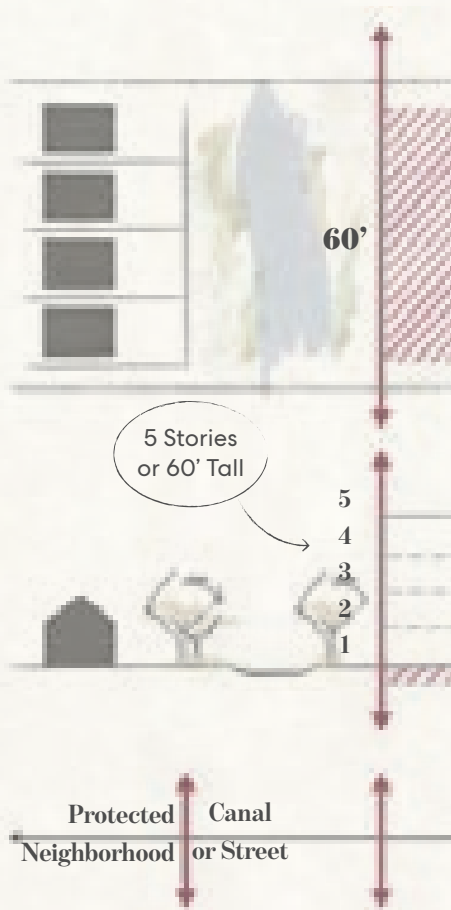
Transition 1

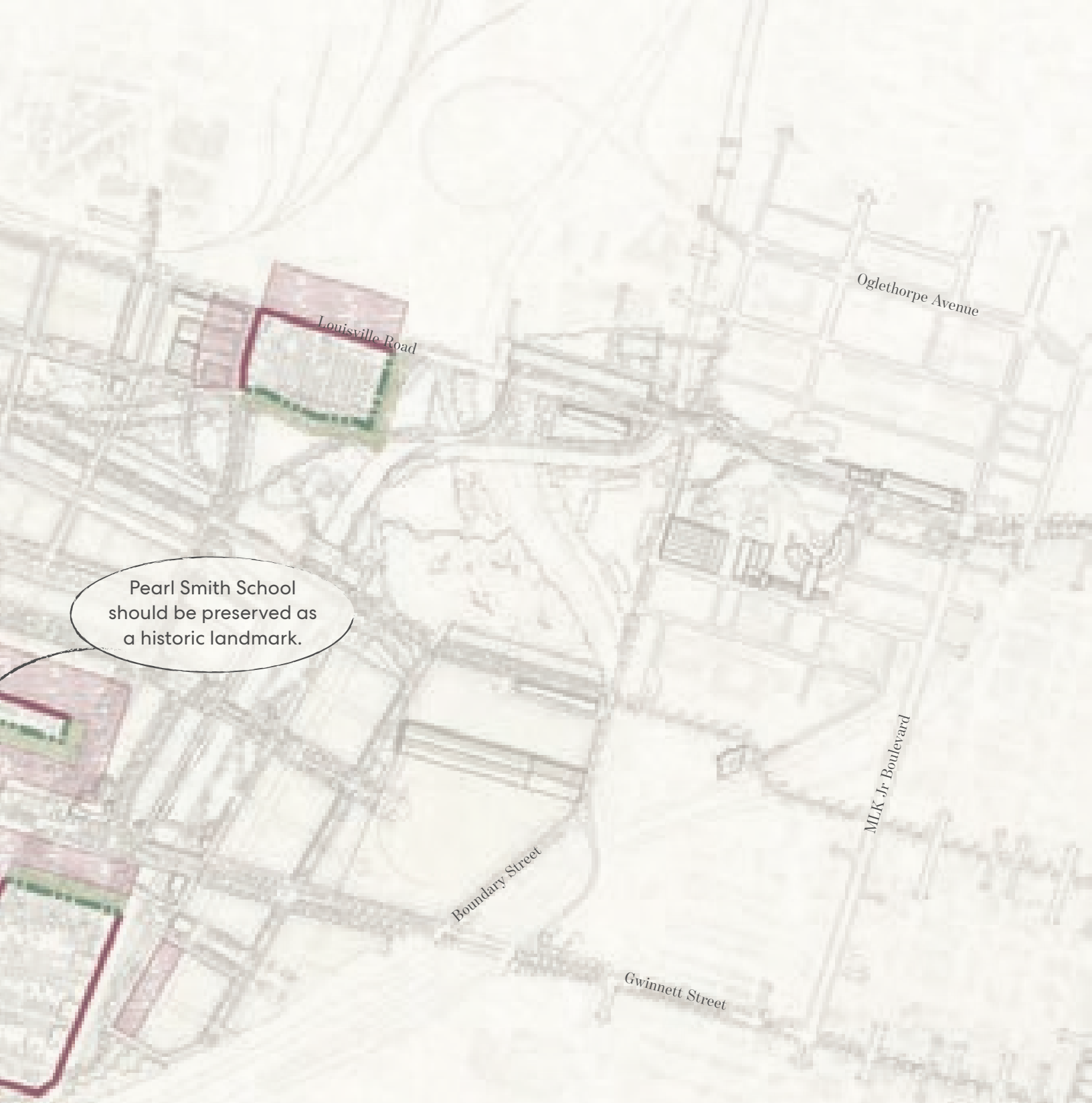
In this situation, there is no intervening public right-of-way along the transition. Fenestration or screened parking should be used.



Transition 2

In this situation, there is an intervening public right-of-way along the transition. The width of the right-of-way should determine the appropriate height.





Pearl Smith School should be preserved as a historic landmark.

Residential Transition Zones

-  Transitional Zone
-  Transition 1
-  Transition 2

Development Tool

Zoning & Land Use

Development guidelines, in the form of zoning and land-use regulation, can coordinate the needs and objectives of the area's many stakeholders and safeguard the process of realizing their collective vision for the District.

"I'd like to see that area have services ... a grocery store, you know, dry-cleaning, things that community needs to sustain itself, which also bring about jobs and infrastructure."
— Resident, Savannah

A zoning and land use strategy is the foundation of the Canal District planning process. It will create some of the essential policies needed to protect and promote community and culture; enhance natural systems and mitigate flooding; and preserve and create celebrated places and spaces within the Canal District. Its regulatory framework is designed to ensure that private development reflects the intent and goals of the Canal District Master Plan.

Additionally, a Canal District Overlay District will be established to provide specific design standards, development guidelines, and land-use regulations that encourage dense, sustainable, mixed-use development with appropriate architecture and human-scaled public spaces. The goal is to preserve some of Savannah's most well-established communities while protecting historic structures and carefully transitioning between uses. It will also support essential improvements to mobility and stormwater infrastructure.

The Canal District Overlay will apply in combination with the base zoning districts to reflect the vision of the Canal District and protect the features and resources the base zoning districts do not directly address. When a conflict exists between the overlay district and the base zoning district, the requirements of the overlay district will apply.

The proposed zoning districts and overlay will be vetted with the public prior to adoption by the City.





Louisville Road

Oglethorpe Avenue

Boundary Street

MLK Jr Boulevard

Gwinnett Street

Canal District Zoning

-  Transitional Zone
-  New Zoning





Three-Year Arena Area Plan

for the Canal District



How the Vision Should Unfold

The Canal District Master Plan puts forward a Playbook of actions and policies that set benchmarks for accountability and should align long-term expectations with immediate needs.

Today

The new Savannah Arena is going to drive the initial phases of growth in the Canal District. When it opens in 2022, its most basic operations need to be in place, and essential area improvements need to be completed.

As of now Arena construction and site-level stormwater infrastructure are funded.

The widening of Gwinnett Street has been designed and is expected to begin construction soon as well.

These changes are already impacting the security and health of the communities in the historic neighborhoods to the west.

In the Future

The immediate action required to open the Arena and its supporting features on schedule should not hinder the long-term vision the City, as a community, articulated for the Canal District Master Plan. That vision for a new and worthy Savannah destination only begins with the success of the Savannah Arena.

The Canal District Master Plan supports the community's greater vision by proposing an ambitious set of Actions, including policy recommendations, that should manifest an incremental process of development through clearly communicated benchmarks of accountability. These Actions are intended to focus the implementation of projects, so that the pace and scale of the coming change align with the needs of the City and its communities as they grow and

strengthen with the District. The Actions should elicit the continued participation of Savannahians, as a community, and empower in particular the residents of the directly impacted neighborhoods to take part in the growth of the City.

To guide this crucial early phase of alignment, the first proposed Action is an embedded Three-Year Plan to coordinate multistakeholder collaboration on the area around the Arena. It identifies catalytic projects for the Arena site, adjacent City Lot, and nearby streets and greenspaces. These projects emphasize flexible features, supportive of Arena operations in the short term as well as the long-term integrity of the surrounding neighborhoods and communities.

Three-Year Plan for Change

A series of catalytic projects at the Canal District's core can galvanize energy and resources around the highly visible Arena phase of the vision. These projects also set the expectations for participation, communication, and accountability throughout implementation of this Plan.

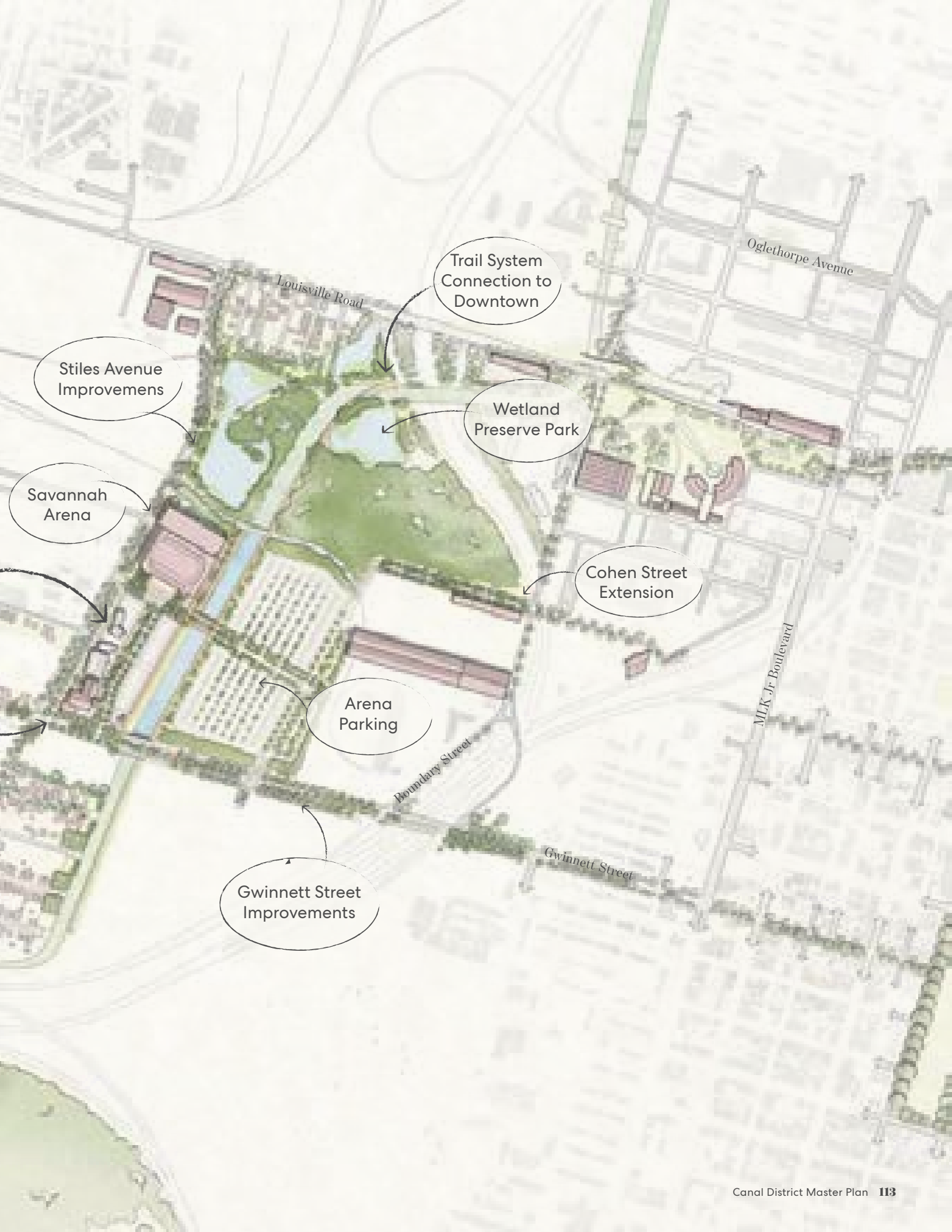
As the Canal District grows into the proposed systems of paths, trails, and open spaces, people all over Savannah will discover new ways to connect with each other and their City's history. As the Savannah Arena and its immediate area go up over the next three years, key infrastructure projects should be completed to put the complex and the City's communities on common ground.

The Three-Year Plan proposes building connections between the Arena and the neighboring communities first by repurposing the Water Works Building as a community market and small-business center. The designation of a visible civic space for community events and newly accessible services should draw local residents into the nascent District. As a center of local business development, the repurposed Water Works should jump-start workforce development and economic activity in the area.

The Three-Year Plan also proposes building Citywide connections by means of sidewalk improvements and new pedestrians paths that take eventgoers safely from the parking lots, adjacent neighborhoods, and Downtown to the front door of the Arena. The proposed plan includes a stately pedestrian bridge across the Springfield Canal, offering Savannahians a grand promenade view of the whole District.

The Three-Year Plan further recommends activation of interim structures and events on City Lot, to complement Arena and repurposed Water Works programming. Hosting ride-share services on City Lot can support the activation and Arena activity.





Trail System
Connection to
Downtown

Oglethorpe Avenue

Louisville Road

Stiles Avenue
Improvements

Wetland
Preserve Park

Savannah
Arena

Cohen Street
Extension

Arena
Parking

MLK Jr Boulevard

Boundary Street

Gwinnett Street
Improvements

Gwinnett Street





