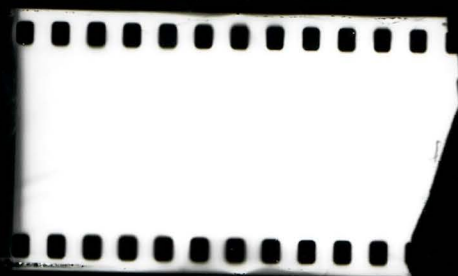


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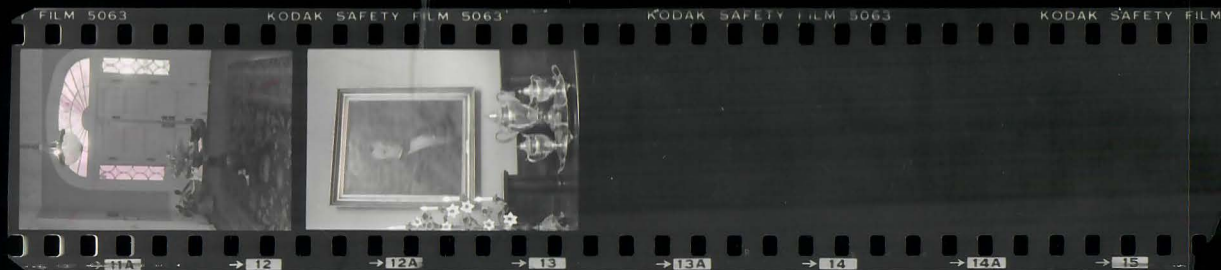














Photo #10

341.  
651.



Photo 5  
701.





2771. Photo # 7





7  
Stallworth Lake, Tuscaloosa, Ala. 16



6025-Birdseye View of Tuscaloosa, Ala.





Sixth Street, Looking East, Tuscaloosa, Ala.

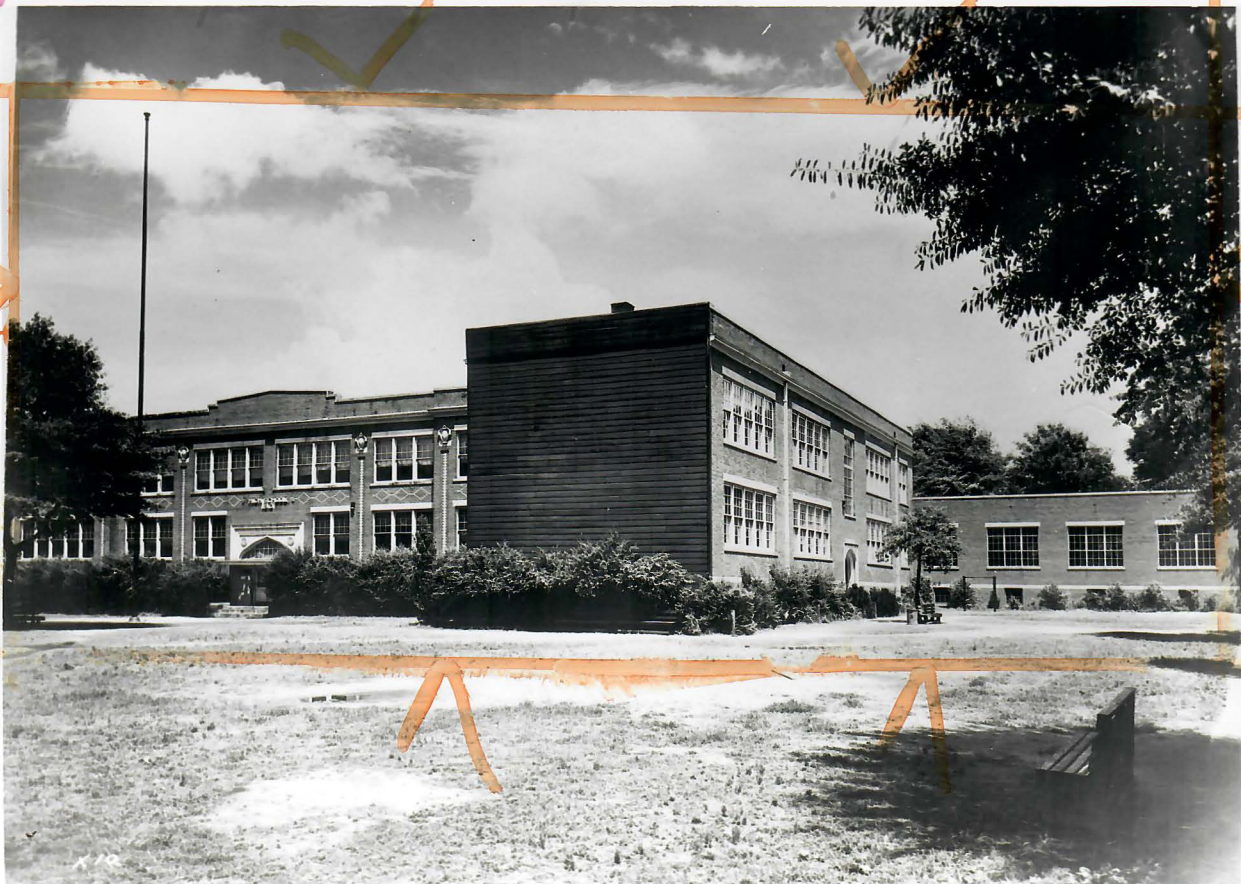




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6









Street Scene, Greensboro Ave., Tuscaloosa, Ala.















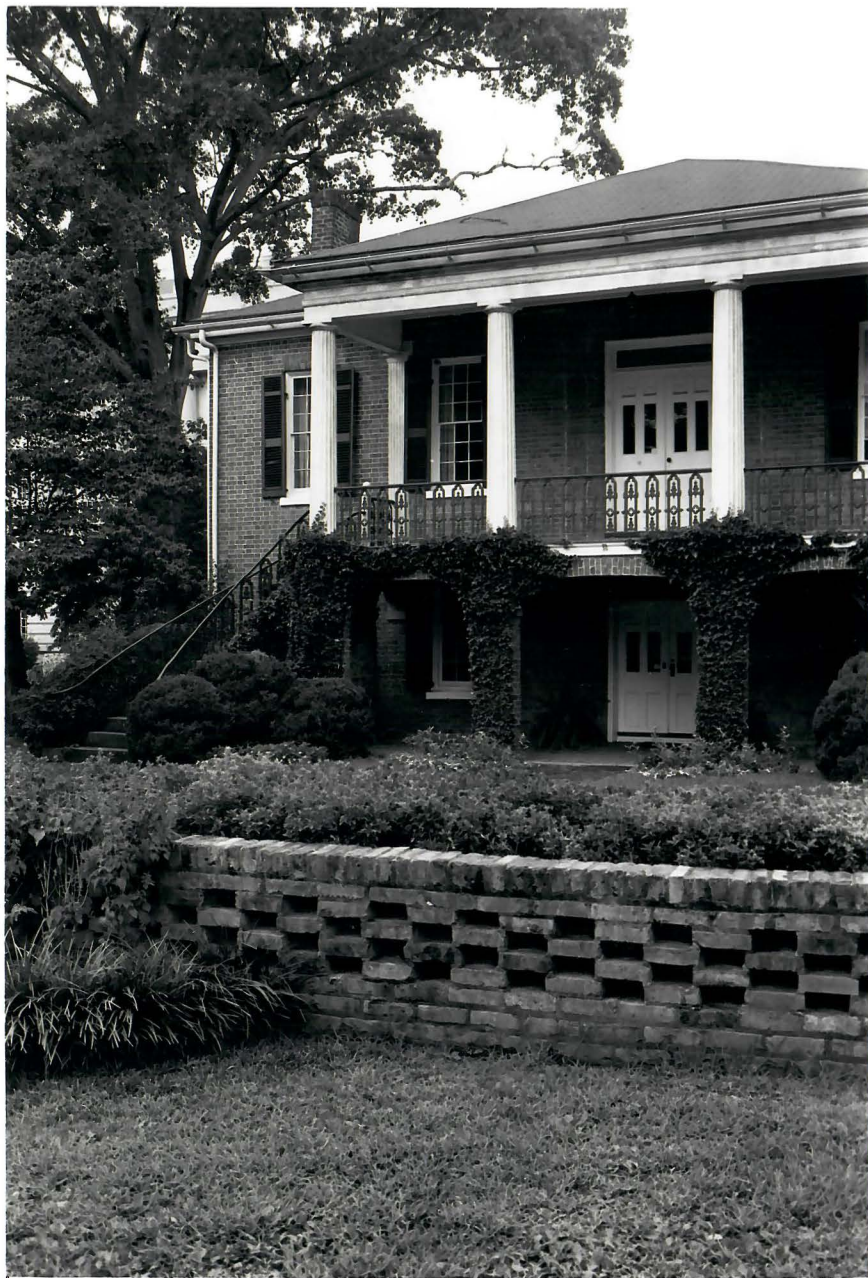












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Greater Downton Tuscaloosa  
**Historic Resources**



**SCHNEIDER**  
Historic Preservation, LLC

411 East 6th Street, Anniston AL 36207 • Phone: (256) 310-  
Alt. Phone: 256-240-9912 • Fax: (334) 323-5631



# Historic Resources

August 15, 2007



## Summary

Historic preservation is increasingly being recognized as an essential component of economic development. Studies indicate that the rehabilitation of existing buildings stimulates a greater economic return per dollar spent than do highway construction, new construction, and the expansion of industry. Historic preservation has additional economic benefits in terms of tourism, the enhancement of property values, and the promotion of community sustainability. The importance of historic preservation to community revitalization has been demonstrated in thousands of towns all across America and the lessons they provide are relevant to the Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa study area.

Donovan Rypkema, a nationally-recognized expert on the economic benefits of historic preservation, has noted that he “cannot identify a single example of a sustained success story in downtown revitalization where historic preservation wasn’t a key component of that strategy. Not one. Conversely the examples of very expensive failures in downtown revitalization have nearly all had the destruction of historic buildings as a major element.”

Despite a considerable amount of modern infill development, the Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa study area retains a wealth of historic resources. The area’s historic buildings help to define its historic sense of place, scale, and overall character. Many of these buildings have been rehabilitated in recent years and continue to contribute to the city’s economic vitality. With proper planning and incentives, the condition of many additional historic buildings can also be significantly improved.

A large number of these buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of either the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District or the Druid Hills Historic District. There are also several individually-listed properties in the area. Historic resource survey work completed as part of this project indicates that the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District can and should be revised and that there is an additional residential area and several additional scattered historic resources that may be eligible for the National Register.

Historic buildings in the Greater Downtown area are generally grouped into three areas: the central downtown commercial district, a large residential area west of Lurleen B. Wallace Boulevard, and a smaller residential district west of Queen City Avenue. The survey completed for this project evaluated 561 properties, including all buildings within the core downtown commercial area. The recorded buildings span a wide period of construction and a diversity of architectural styles.



## ***Recommendations***

### ***Modifications to the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District***

The Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District has lost a number of its contributing resources in recent years. Several buildings have been, or are proposed to be, demolished as part of the redevelopment that will take place for the new Federal building and include: buildings along the north side of Block #4, two buildings on the east side of Block #4, all of the buildings on Blocks #5 and #6, and the buildings at the southeast corner of Block #2. As a result, it is recommended that the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District nomination be revised once these demolitions have been completed. This revision should adjust the district's boundaries to delete portions of Blocks #2 and #4 and all of Blocks #5 and #6. The boundaries should also be expanded to the west as shown on the accompanying map. In addition, the contributing and noncontributing status of all resources within the district should be reevaluated to reflect current conditions and an expanded period of significance. It is recommended that the period of significance for the district be extended to at least 1958. In addition, the revised nomination should document and include any resources within the area that may have significance to local Civil Rights history and if such resources remain the period of significance should be structured to accommodate their inclusion.

Design review should also be implemented within the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District. Local designation by the City of Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission would be the most effective means of protecting and enhancing property values within the district. The process is already in place and has proven effective in the city's residential districts. Specific design review guidelines should be established for the downtown area that respond both to its commercial architectural character and the nature of downtown redevelopment. Please see the discussion of local historic designation and design review later in this report.

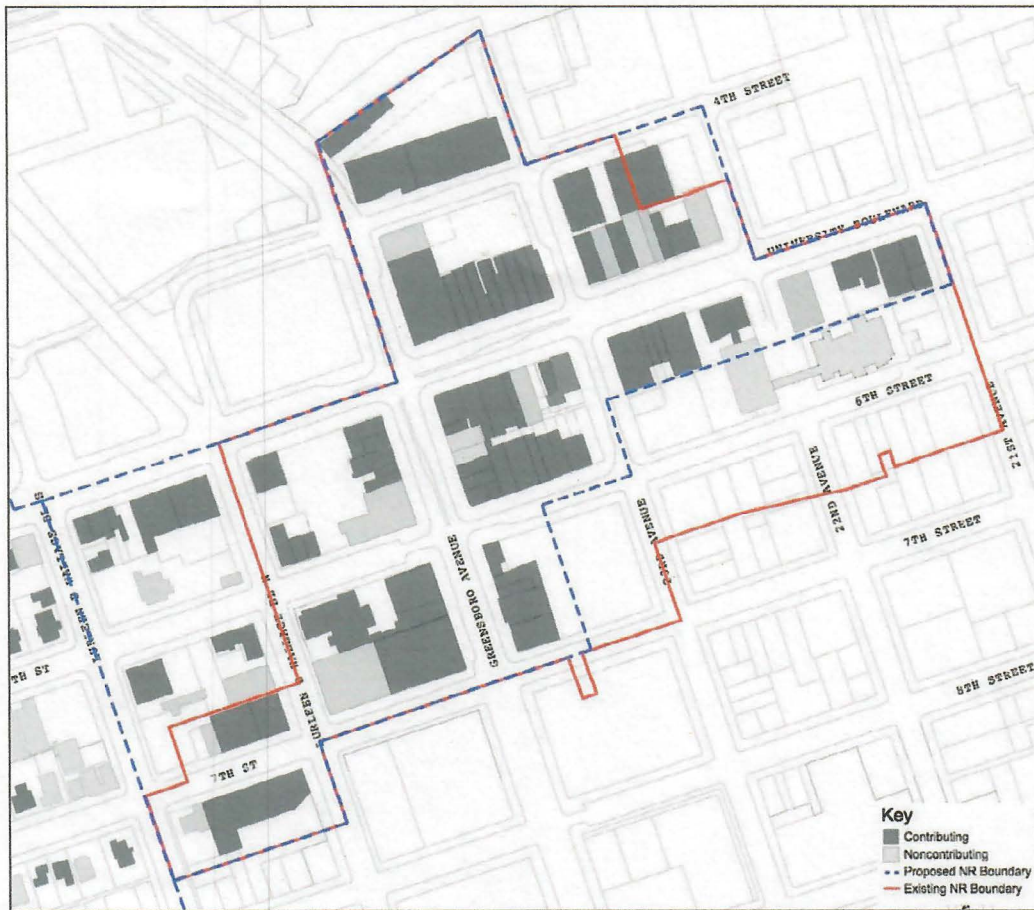
### ***Possible Residential Historic Districts***

The residential area to the west of the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District retains a sufficient concentration of late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century buildings to warrant historic designation and some form of design review protection. The area appears to be eligible for the National Register. Despite the conversion of many of its resources to commercial use and the construction of scattered modern buildings, the character of the area is still residential in scale and appearance with small-scale houses typically retaining integrity of setting. The area is visually divided into two subsections by the railroad cut and the character of resources in each of these sub-areas is somewhat different (please see discussion below). These sub-areas generally correspond to planning sub-areas identified as Capital Park and MLK. The western boundary of the MLK sub-area is shown as Martin Luther King Boulevard (the western boundary of this project area). While the street pattern in the areas to the west of Martin Luther King Boulevard is dissimilar to that of the MLK sub-area, additional historic resource survey work is recommended to determine if the boundaries of any potential historic district should extend to the west of that street.

Potential District Maps. Dashed line indicates proposed district boundary. Solid line indicates existing district boundary.

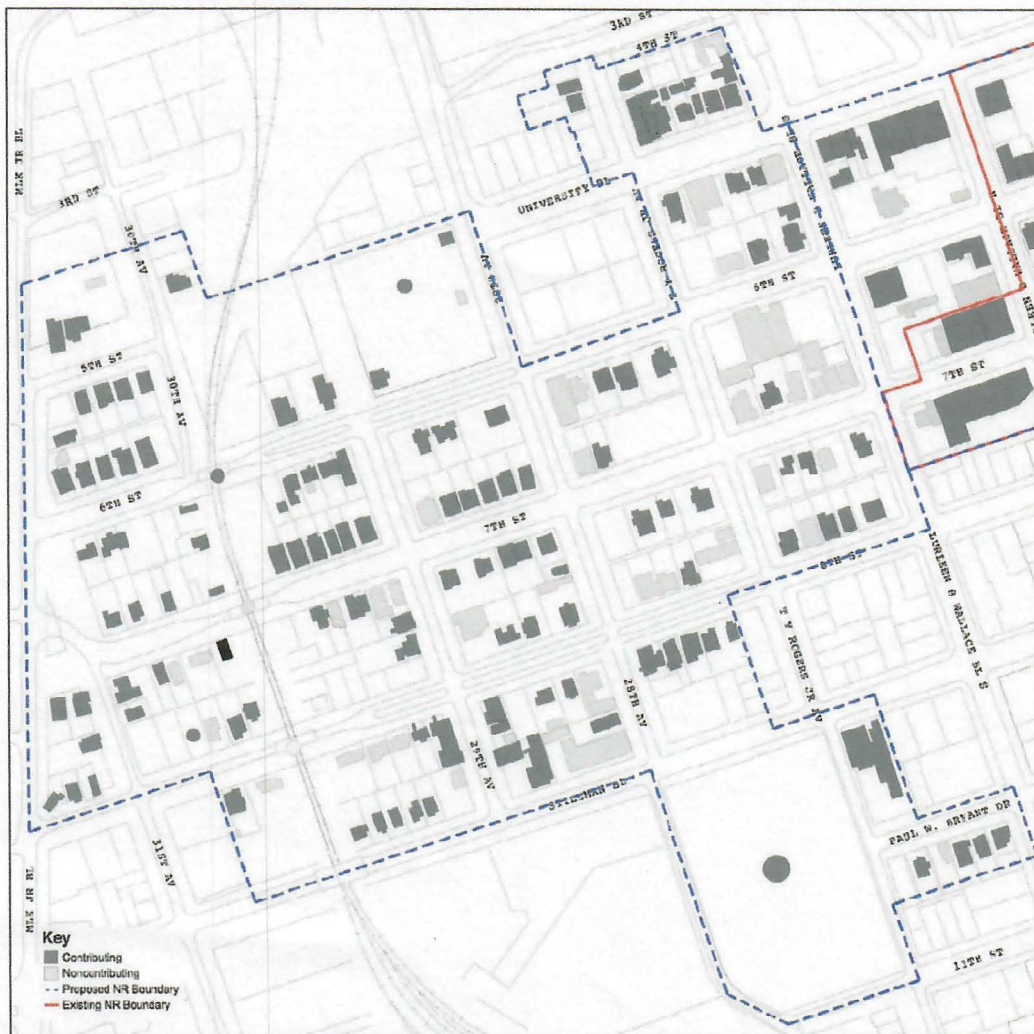


*Revised Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District*





*Possible Residential Historic District West of Lurleen Wallace Ave.*





### *Potential Individually National Register Eligible Resources*

Additional historical research and evaluation is recommended for the following resources that may be potentially National Register eligible (pictured below top to bottom, left to right):

- 1) **Hunters Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church** (site #280). 1105 22nd Avenue.
- 2) **Tuscaloosa First United Methodist Church** (site #373). 800 Greensboro Ave.
- 3) **First Presbyterian Church** (site #374). 900 Greensboro Ave.
- 4) **Greenwood Cemetery** (site #100). 9th St., SW cor. 27th Ave.



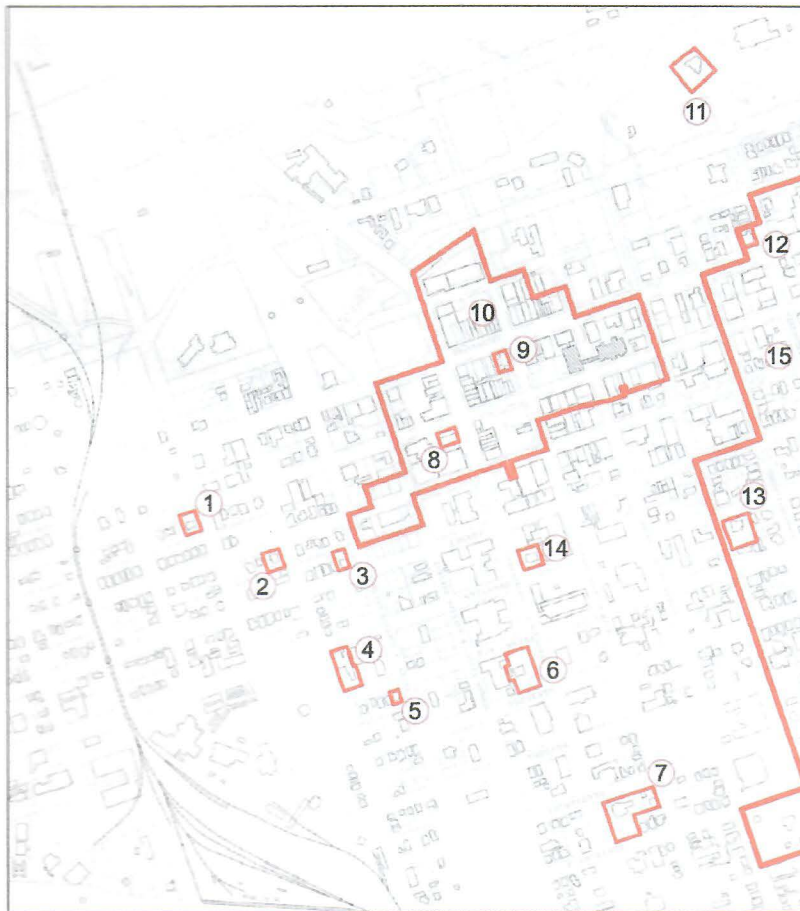


## Historic Resources Within the Study Area

Historic resources within the Greater Downtown are typically designated through listing in the National Register of Historic Places or by local designation through the City of Tuscaloosa's Historic Preservation Commission. More detailed information about these programs is provided later in the report.

### National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is a listing administered by the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Its purpose is to recognize and promote places that are important in American history, architecture, and/or culture. National Register listings typically take two forms: 1) listings of individual properties; or 2) listings of districts encompassing a grouping of contiguous properties. In districts, resources are designated as either being contributing or noncontributing. Noncontributing resources are typically buildings that are not representative of the historic characteristics of the district, that have been significantly altered, or that were constructed outside the district's period of significance. The National Register is essentially an honorary designation, typically placing no restrictions on property owners. However, federally licensed or funded undertakings are required to take into consideration the impact of those undertakings on resources that have been listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in, the National Register.



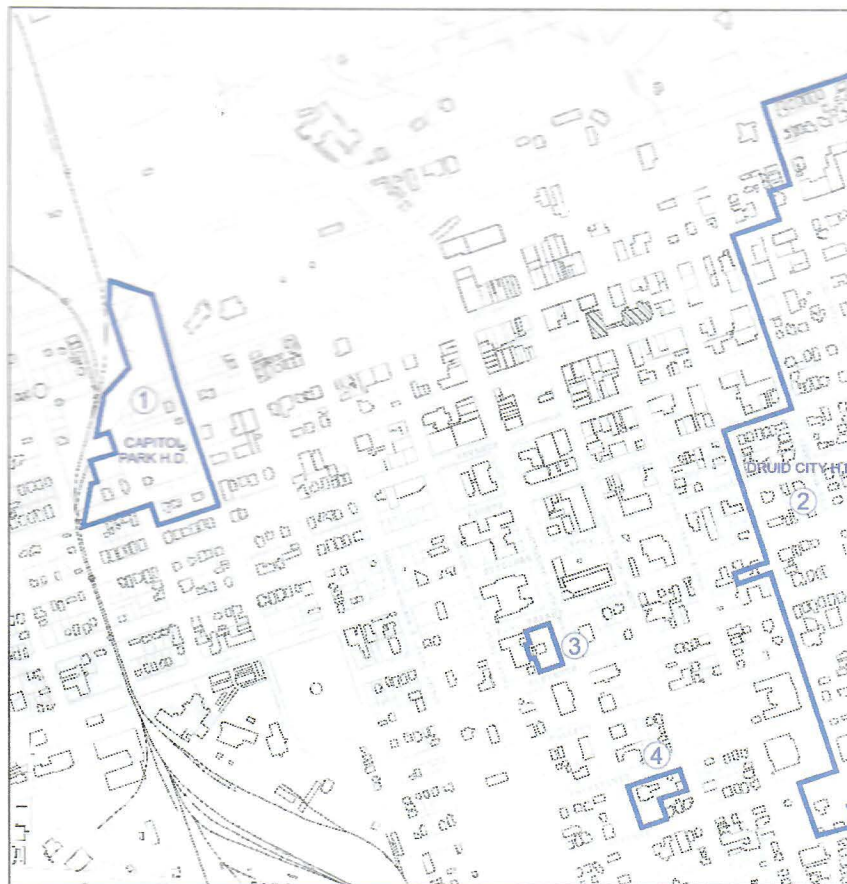
**National Register Listings in the Study Area**

1. Old Tuscaloosa County Jail; 2. Wheeler Hse; 3. Searcy House; 4. First African Baptist Church  
5. Murphy-Collins House; 6. Battle-Freeman House; 7. Jemison House; 8. Bama Theatre; 9. City National Bank  
10. Downtown Tuscaloosa H.D.; 11. Queen City Pool and Pool House; 12. Guild-Verner House  
13. Collier-Overby House; 14. Searcy House; 15. Druid Hills H.D.



## Local Historic Designation

The City of Tuscaloosa, through its Historic Preservation Commission, officially designates local historic districts and has established a design review process to help insure the preservation of the character of these districts. Within each historic district, all projects that result in exterior changes to buildings or their settings are required to obtain a "certificate of appropriateness" from the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission before a building permit may be issued. The Commission is a city board consisting of nine members nominated by the mayor and appointed by the city council.



**Local Historic Designations in the Study Area**

1. Capitol Park H.D.; 2) Druid Hills H.D.; 3. Battle-Freeman House; 4. Jemison House

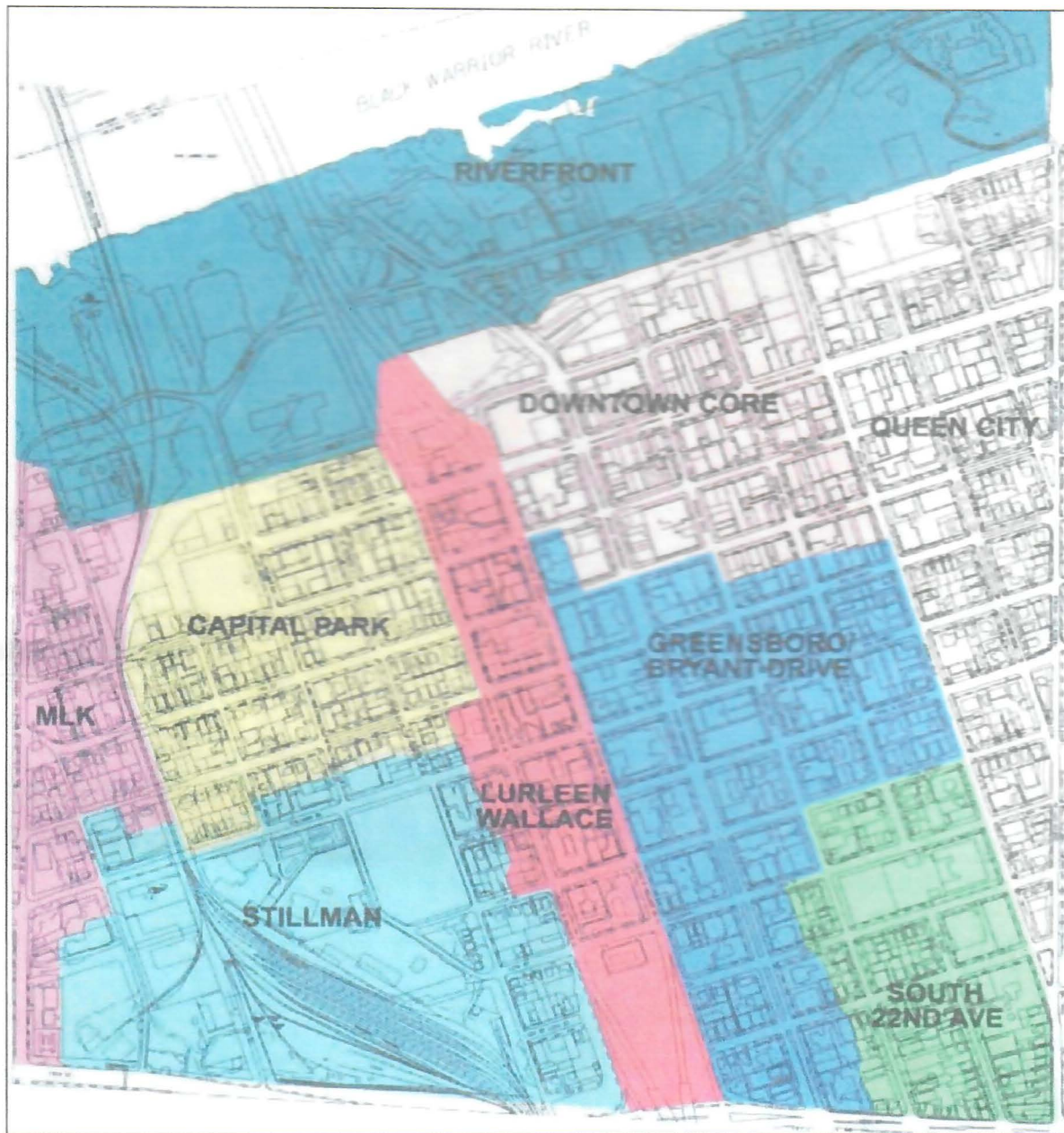
## Other Documentation

In addition to the National Register and local designation, there are a number of additional sites that have been recorded in the Greater Downtown Area by listing in the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The Alabama Register is an honorary designation that is patterned after the National Register, but that recognizes resources that are significant to the state. HABS is a program of the National Park Service that documents significant historic buildings through written narratives, architectural drawings, and photographs.

Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC recently completed for the City of Tuscaloosa HABS documentation for all of the buildings on the blocks bounded by 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets and 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and at the northwest corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue that are proposed for demolition as part of the Federal Courthouse project. In addition to narrative histories of the buildings and large format photography, streetscape elevations drawings were prepared for each block. A summary report also includes information about historic African-American businesses in the downtown area.



## Planning Sub-Areas

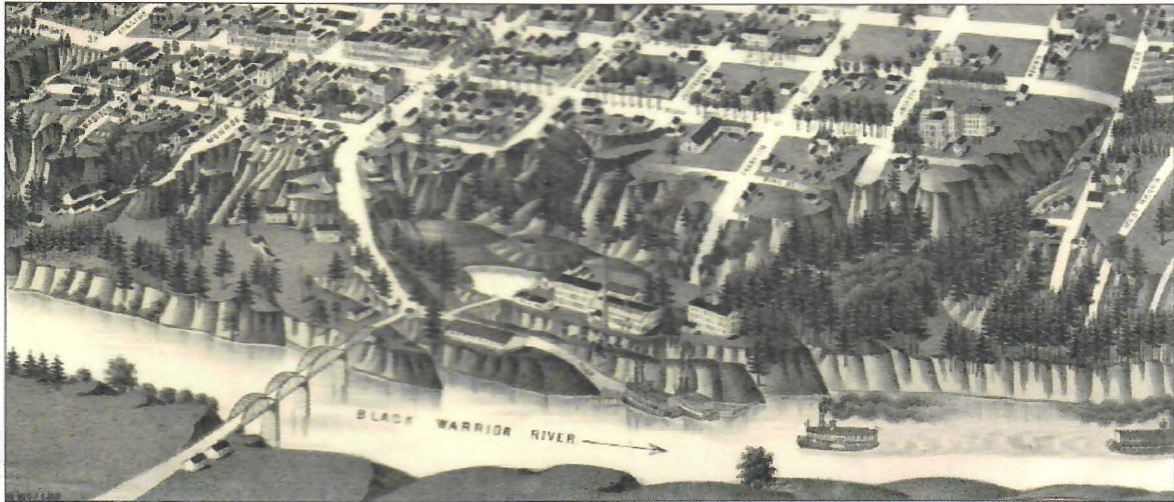




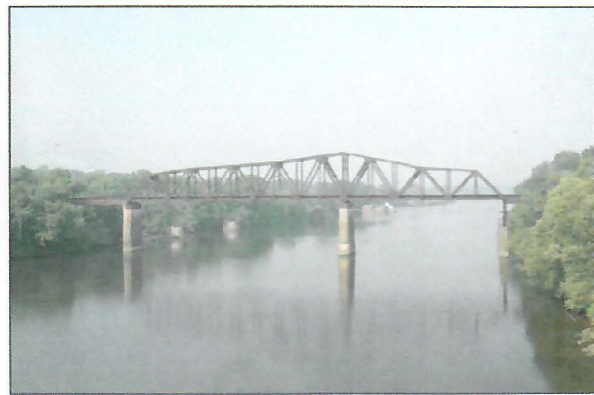
## Riverfront

Despite the importance of the river to Tuscaloosa's history, only two resources were eligible for survey within this planning sub-area. The Queen City Bathhouse on Queen City Avenue is individually listed in the National Register. The Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad Bridge and its associated trestles were recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey and are eligible for listing in the National Register.

Despite successive eras of redevelopment, the nature of known historical development along the riverfront suggests that there is a likelihood that significant archaeological resources remain.



Perspective Map of Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1887



Queen City Bathhouse (Left), Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad Bridge (Right)



## *Downtown Core*

The downtown core is Tuscaloosa's traditional central business district and it has a dense concentration of historic resources, particularly in the blocks along University Boulevard between Lurleen B. Wallace Boulevard South and 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Sixth Street between Lurleen Wallace and 24<sup>th</sup> Street. This area retains a rich and varied collection of predominantly late-19<sup>th</sup> to early-20<sup>th</sup> century buildings representing a wide variety of historic architectural styles. Together with the two blocks roughly bounded by 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, these areas formed the core of the Downtown Tuscaloosa National Register Historic District.

The Downtown Historic District was recognized through listing in the national register both for its historical significance as the city's primary historic commercial area and its architectural character. Many of the buildings within the district are excellent examples of period commercial architecture and the overall grouping of these buildings gives the Downtown Core its unique and recognizable historic character.







**Commercial Properties Between University Blvd. And 7<sup>th</sup> Street, From Top, Left to Right:**  
 Kress Building (1939), 2223 University Blvd.; Bama Theatre (1938), 600 Greensboro Ave.; First National Bank (1925);  
 2330 University Blvd.; Louisville & Nashville Railroad Station (1912), 301 Greensboro Ave; Allen & Jemison Hardware  
 Store (1903), 620 Greensboro Ave.; Commercial Building (ca. 1910), 516 Greensboro Ave.; Alston Building (1909), 2400 6<sup>th</sup> St.



**Existing Downtown Historic District**



The planned demolition of the buildings along the south side of 6<sup>th</sup> Street between 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue with considerably alter nature of the district. In addition to the loss of these buildings, the demolitions will also remove a series of buildings along the southern halves of the blocks that would have been eligible for an expansion of the district's boundaries and will isolate a block of additional buildings to the south that might also have been eligible for such an expansion. As a result, it is recommended that the National Register nomination for the district be updated and its boundaries adjusted to remove the blocks where demolition will occur and to expand the district to include additional areas that now appear to be eligible.



**Some of the Buildings to be Demolished as Part of the Federal Courthouse Project**  
Alta Apartments (1900/1939), 2127-2129 6<sup>th</sup> St.; 6<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape;  
Austin Motor Co. (circa 1910), 2201-2209 6<sup>th</sup> St.; Diamond Theatre (1946), 634 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave.





**Proposed Downtown Historic District**

The proposed demolitions for the courthouse project will physically isolate a small concentration of buildings along the southwest side of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues and along 7<sup>th</sup> Street that would otherwise have been eligible for inclusion in the expanded Downtown historic district. Several of the buildings along 7<sup>th</sup> Street were traditionally the home of African-American businesses and, together with the Diamond Theatre and other buildings to be removed, formed the core of a small historic mid-20<sup>th</sup> century African-American commercial area. The surviving buildings should be documented and may remain eligible for the Alabama Register.



**Remnants of a Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century African-American Commercial District**

Dr. Andrew D. McKenzie/Dr. Marshall P. Gilmer Office (circa 1945), 2234 8<sup>th</sup> St.; building at right is listed in the 1950 city directory as Cain' Billiard Parlor



## Queen City

The Druid Hills Historic District (National Register, local) covers most of the southern portion of the Queen City Planning Sub-area. This district is typified by a diverse collection of mid-19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century residences of a variety of architectural styles and differing scale. Common housing types include bungalows, Tudor Revival style cottages, Greek Revival houses, Victorian cottages, and Victorian houses. There area also a scattering of apartment houses, predominantly in the Tudor Revival style.

The majority of residential buildings in the Greater Downtown Area generally fall into three stylistic categories: Victorian, early twentieth century bungalow/Craftsman or gable front forms, and a mix of mid-twentieth century styles. There are also isolated examples of Greek Revival and other 19th century styles. Most of the residential resources are of frame construction.

Victorian dwellings were typically built between circa 1880 and 1915 reflect national architectural trends. Typical variants including larger houses with hipped cores with cross gable projections and smaller cottages including gable-front-and wing, gable front, side gable massed plan, and ell and tee plans. Stylistically, the houses are loosely based on Queen Anne patterns but generally of a more folk character with common decorative details including decorative wood shingles and/or window and vent combinations in gable ends, simple and limited sawn decorative trim, and turned or chamfered porch posts occasionally with simple gingerbread trim.

Early twentieth-century bungalow/Craftsman or gable front form dwellings are scattered throughout the city. Bungalows and gable fronts tend to be relatively simple in design and detailing with many exhibiting simple Craftsman style details such as exposed rafter ends, angle bracketed eaves, porch pillars or supports on pedestals and apron walls. A number of examples are stylistically more developed and can be classified as good examples of the Craftsman style.







**Typical House Types, Druid City Historic District**

Top-Bottom, Left-Right: modest gable-front bungalow (circa 1925), 1204 Queen City Ave.; Tudor cottage (circa 1920), 2017 11<sup>th</sup> St.; Greek Revival (circa 1835), 21<sup>st</sup> Ave.; Victorian (circa 1895), 820 20<sup>th</sup> Ave.; Victorian cottage (circa 1895), 1928 7<sup>th</sup> St.; Tudor style apartment building (circa 1925), 1926-1930 8<sup>th</sup> St.



### *Greensboro/Bryant Drive*

The Greensboro/Bryant Drive Planning Sub-area retains only scattered historic resources. The Tuscaloosa First United Methodist Church and the First Presbyterian Church visually dominate the northwest corner of the area. Other prominent landmarks in this part of the city include: the Battle-Friedman House (1835, National Register) and the Jemison House (circa 1862, National Register) on Greensboro Avenue, Hunters Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church (1881) at 1105 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, and the Tuscaloosa High School (circa 1925).



**Landmarks in the Greensboro/Bryant Drive Planning Sub-Area, From Top, Left to Right:**  
First United Methodist Church; First Presbyterian Church; Battle Friedman House; Jemison House;  
Hunters Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church; and the Tuscaloosa High School (circa 1925)

## Lurleen Wallace

The area between Lurleen B. Wallace Drives North and South (the Lurleen Wallace Planning Sub-Area) has generally lost much of its historic character, as many blocks have been developed with modern restaurants and other highway-related business. Despite these changes, the area is the location of the National Register-listed Murphy African-American Museum at 2501 Paul W. Bryant Drive. The block roughly bounded by University Boulevard and 7<sup>th</sup> Street is potentially eligible as part of a proposed revision to the boundaries of the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District.



**Murphy African-American Museum, 2501 Paul W. Bryant Drive**



**Commercial Properties Between University Blvd. And 7<sup>th</sup> Street, From Top, Left to Right:**  
2501 University Blvd.; 2523-2529 University Blvd.; 2504 7th St.; and 2501 7th St.



## Capitol Park

The Capital Park Area includes the locally designated Capitol Park Historic District and a surrounding residential area to the south. The historic district encompasses the old Alabama Capitol site, the Old Tavern, the McGuire-Strickland House, and two other houses. There are three sites that are individually listed in the National Register in this area: the Old Tuscaloosa County Jail (circa 1839), 2803 6th Street; the Wheeler House (circa 1890) 2703 7th Street; and the Searcy House (circa 1830), 2606 8<sup>th</sup> Street.



**Capitol Park, Left to Right:**

Old State Capitol (circa 1827), Old Tavern (circa 1827), and Wheeler House, and the McGuire-Strickland House (circa 1820)



**National Register Listings in Capitol Park, Left to Right:**

Old Tuscaloosa County Jail, Wheeler House, and Searcy House

The remainder of this planning sub-area is typified by a mix of larger and smaller scale Victorian dwellings interspersed with bungalows. Although architecturally similar to the adjacent MLK sub-area, the resources in Capitol Park tend to be, on average, somewhat more architecturally sophisticated. The railroad cut is also a major visual demarcation between the two areas. A potential National Register Historic District in Capitol Park area was identified by the survey. While the potential district extends westward into MLK, further evaluation of the areas to the west of MLK is needed to determine whether or not two districts are indicated. In any case, it is recommended that the potentially National-Register eligible portion of the Capital Park sub-area be locally designated by the City of Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission. This designation will help to ensure that the historic architectural character of the neighborhood is preserved and should help to stabilize and enhance property values.



**Selected Historic Resources in the Capitol Park Sub-Area, Left to Right:**

2626 University Blvd. (circa 1890); 2620 University Blvd. (circa 1905); and Maxwell-Hellums House (circa 1905), 2703 6<sup>th</sup> St.





**Selected Historic Resources in the Capitol Park Sub-Area, Left to Right:**  
House on 7<sup>th</sup> St. (circa 1890); 2715 8<sup>th</sup> St. (circa 1890); 2723 8<sup>th</sup> St. (circa 1920); 2920 7<sup>th</sup> St.; House on 7<sup>th</sup> St. (circa 1885)

### Potential Historic District





## MLK

Predominantly developed with bungalows and scattered small-scale Victorian cottages, the MLK Planning Sub-area is architecturally similar to Capital Park, although with a larger percentage of bungalows and with resources that tend to be architecturally more modest in both design and scale. The street grid of the adjacent Capital Park area continues through MLK. However the railroad cut is a major visual demarcation between the two areas. This, coupled with the noticeable change in architectural character between the two, suggests that they be treated as two distinct districts. While the street pattern shifts to the west of Martin Luther King Boulevard, additional historic resource survey work in that area is recommended to determine the appropriate boundaries of any potential historic district that might include resources from the MLK Planning Sub-area.



**Houses in the MLK Sub-area, From Top, Left to Right:**

3106 8<sup>th</sup> St.; 708 31<sup>st</sup> St.; 3113 7<sup>th</sup> St.; 3027 7<sup>th</sup> St.; 3022 6<sup>th</sup> St.; 3014 6<sup>th</sup> St.; 509 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.



## Stillman

Two significant individual historic resources are located within the Stillman Planning Sub-Area: the First African Baptist Church is individually listed in the National Register and the Greenwood Cemetery is individually eligible for that designation. A small scattering of modest older dwellings and commercial buildings is located to the south of Eleventh Street. None of the buildings possesses a level of significance sufficient for individual listing in the National Register, nor does the grouping retain sufficient integrity to be considered as a district. However, many of the houses are of modest historic character and worthy of repair and preservation.



**First African Baptist Church, 2621 9th Street**



**Greenwood Cemetery, 9th St., southwest corner 27th Ave.**





**Buildings South of 11<sup>th</sup> Street, From Top, Left to Right: 2601 11th St.; 2623 11th St.; 2628 Twelfth St.; 2625 Twelfth St.; Commercial Buildings on 27<sup>th</sup> St.**



## ***Historic Preservation Resources***

### ***City of Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission (City Commission, Regulatory)***

Tuscaloosa's historic resources make an important contribution to the city's character, economy and quality of life. In recognition of this, the City of Tuscaloosa officially designates local historic districts and has established a design review process to help insure the preservation of the character of these districts. Within each historic district, all projects that result in exterior changes to buildings or their settings are required to obtain a "certificate of appropriateness" from the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission before a building permit may be issued. The Commission is a city board consisting of nine members nominated by the mayor and appointed by the city council. As property owners and members of the community themselves, commission members recognize their responsibility to promote the commission's purposes through a cooperative and reasonable approach to working with applicants and the owners of the city's historic resources. Through their efforts, the city's historic preservation ordinance has proven to be a highly successful tool for maintaining and enhancing both the character and value of the designated historic neighborhoods since its adoption in 2004.

### ***Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society (Nonprofit, Advocacy Group)***

The Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society is a private advocacy organization that was founded in 1966 to preserve and promote Tuscaloosa County's historic resources. The Society's mission is to "develop an awareness and appreciation of the historical and cultural heritage of our community." Specific objectives of the Society include: 1) identifying and preserving historic structures and sites; 2) maintaining an endangered structures list and seeking preservation solutions for these structures; 3) promoting heritage education and awareness; 4) maintaining information files regarding the heritage of the community; 4) promoting heritage tourism; and 5) working with local governments and agencies to promote historic preservation. The Society operates and maintains four historical landmarks: The Old Tavern, the Battle-Friedman House, the McGuire-Strickland House and the Murphy African-American Museum. The TCPS Research Library, which features collections focusing on local history and local architecture, is housed in the The Old Tavern.

### ***Heritage Commission of Tuscaloosa County (Nonprofit, Advocacy Group)***

The mission of Heritage Commission of Tuscaloosa County is to advocate and promote preservation of the area's history and heritage. They are developing an electronic archive to provide information and imagery over the internet to bring closer understanding and appreciation of local history and historic resources. Secondly, Heritage Commission seeks to provide information and assistance on historical matters, and to promote preservation-oriented solutions.

### ***Original City Association (Neighborhood Association, Advocacy Group)***

According to their website, the Original City Association acts as a representative organization for the families and individuals who live in the Downtown Neighborhoods of Tuscaloosa. They organize events (monthly meetings, special meetings, picnics, and call programs) and employ mediums (web site, email campaigns, newsletters, advertising, and attendance at political and administrative City, County, State and other relevant meetings) to provide communication and information sharing opportunities for members, neighborhoods, and interested parties about issues, concerns, and opportunities facing the Downtown Neighborhoods. They also act as a focal point for governmental officials and others who wish to reach citizens of the Downtown Neighborhoods in an efficient and effective manner.

### ***Alabama Historical Commission (State Agency, Some Regulatory Authority)***

The Alabama Historical Commission is the state agency charged with safeguarding Alabama's historic buildings and sites. Created by an act of the state legislature in 1966, it consists of 20 members appointed by the Governor, or serving ex officio, who represent a broad cross section of Alabamians. The Commission acts as the statewide partner for a variety of federal historic preservation programs, including: the National Register



of Historic Places; Certified Local Governments; the rehabilitation tax credit program; and Section 106 and other environmental reviews. In addition, the commission holds conservation easements and also operates a number of historic sites across the state.

### ***Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation (Nonprofit, Advocacy Group, Statewide)***

The Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation is a statewide advocacy group for historic preservation. The Alabama Trust is Alabama's only statewide historic preservation organization available for membership. The Alabama Trust is a Statewide Partner of the National Trust, and the two organizations have a strong ongoing relationship. The Alabama Trust also works closely with the AHC, a state agency, to present the annual preservation conference and other workshops. While the National Trust represents preservation interests at the national level, the Alabama Trust's focus is on the needs of Alabama. As a grassroots citizens' group, the Alabama Trust provides a statewide voice for preservation efforts. The Alabama Trust assists local groups around the state in seeking viable alternatives to demolition and making presentations to public officials concerning the value of preservation.

### ***National Trust for Historic Preservation (Nonprofit, Advocacy Group, National)***

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a national advocacy group for historic preservation. Supported by individual and corporate members, the National Trust works with statewide and local partners to "advocate for public policies that benefit historic preservation by: passing legislation and implementing policies that preserve the historic and cultural fabric of our nation's communities; protecting historic and cultural resources from inappropriate legislation, regulatory rulings, or court decisions that hinder preservation; preserving community input in the policy-making process; and researching and documenting best practices and model preservation policies." Headquartered in Washington, the National Trust has six regional offices including the Southern Regional Office in Charleston.

## ***Historic Preservation Tools***

### ***National Register of Historic Places***

The National Register of Historic Places is a listing administered by the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Its purpose is to recognize and promote the places that are important in American history, architecture, and/or culture. The National Register program has strict requirements regarding eligibility and the documentation required for eligibility. Listing of a property or a district on the National Register does not require property owners to obtain approval for change to their properties unless they are using federal or state funding, licensing or assistance.

#### **Benefits of National Register Designation**

- Recognition can enhance property values.

While National Register designation does not carry with it the documented economic benefits associated with local historic districts that have design review controls, the recognition of properties through National Register listing often provides a degree of exclusivity that can enhance value. In this regard, the finite nature of National Register designation is similar to the value people place on antiques and collectables.

- Special Property Tax Assessment

Section 40-8-1 of the Code of Alabama includes within the Class III designation of property taxed at ten percent of assessed ratio historic buildings and sites regardless of the use to which such property is put. Historic properties are defined as "all buildings or structures (i) determined eligible by the state historic preservation officer for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; or (ii) located in a registered historic



district and certified by the United States Secretary of the Interior as being of historic significance to the district.”

- **Federal Tax Incentives.**

There are two primary tax incentives offered by the federal government.

**Conservation easements** – Conservation easements are a very effective historic preservation tool. In donating an easement, a property owner transfers certain development rights in their property to a qualified charitable or governmental entity. Typically this involves the recipient organization having review authority over changes the exterior of a historic building, but easements can also limit other types of development on the site. The Internal Revenue Services recognized that the donation of these rights impacts the value of the property and recognizes this value as a charitable deduction against federal income tax. In most cases the easement donor can deduct the value of the easement for up to thirty-percent of their adjusted gross income in a single year. Any excess value of the deduction may be carried forward up to five years. The value of the easement is based on the difference between the appraised fair market value of the property prior to conveying the easement and its value after the the easement restrictions have been put in place. Under most circumstances the value of an easement depends upon the property's development potential, but in most cases the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines suggest that the value be in the range of ten to fifteen percent of the value of the property. A professional appraiser with specific experience working with historic preservation easements should be consulted. Federal estate taxes for property heirs can may be reduced because the fair market value of the property was reduced during the donor's lifetime by the easement restrictions. Please see Appendices #11 and #12 for additional information.

**20% tax credit** – A federal tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic income-producing buildings in the amount of 20% of the cost of rehabilitation is available for qualifying expenditures involving National Register-listed properties. At present, this program does not apply to owner-occupied dwellings. All work must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

### **Local Historic Districts**

One of the most effective and commonly used historic preservation tools is the local designation of historic districts. Alabama law allows communities to designate local historic districts and landmarks and to make the alteration and/or demolition of those resources subject to the review and approval by a municipal commission. The City of Tuscaloosa has established such a commission and the commission has jurisdiction over several historic districts outside the Greater Downtown area.

The use of design review in historic districts is hardly a new concept, having been first successfully adopted in Charleston in 1931. Since that time, thousands of communities all across America have implemented similar programs and they have proven to highly beneficial, not only in preserving the character and livability of those communities but also by stabilizing and often increasing property values. While there is sometimes a trade-off that individual property owners must make between their ability to make changes to their properties and the benefits of historic designation, the cumulative experience of historic designation in America has been overwhelmingly positive.

In many communities, local historic district designation has been very successful in enhancing the historic character of neighborhoods and in promoting the stability of property values. It is important to state again that local districts and landmarks are designated differently from those listed in the National Register. While many communities adopt boundaries for their local historic districts that are the same as their National Register districts, it is not essential that they be the same. Design review, through a mandatory process involving a historical and architectural review board occurs only within locally designated historic districts. Where such a process has been adopted, property owners typically must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (see Appendix #6) for all exterior work that is visible from a public street. In such districts, a review board examines proposals and comments on the appropriateness of proposed work.



Local historic districts can take several forms. The most effective type of district from a historic preservation standpoint is a district with design review control, as mentioned above. Many communities are also experimenting with other types of designation and design review. The use of "conservation districts" which promote a looser set of design criteria is an example. Another approach is to utilize a review board where compliance by the applicant is voluntary. This approach typically requires an applicant to appear before the review board to discuss his or her proposal, even though the applicant is not required to follow the board's recommendations. While this is perhaps the least effective method for preserving a district, the process often works very well, as applicants and the review boards often work cooperatively to find a solution that works for both the applicant and the community.

#### Benefits of Local Historic District Designation

- Local historic districts protect against incompatible development through a design review process that requires a certificate of appropriateness be issued by an appropriate review board before alterations can be made to properties with designated historic districts or that have been individually designated.
- Provides alternatives to the inappropriate alteration or demolition of historic resources.
- Stabilizes or enhances property values – Several technical studies of the economic impact of local historic designation and design review have now been completed and they have consistently shown that properties in locally designated historic districts appreciate faster than in neighborhoods without this protection. Similar findings were documented in a study by the Alabama Historical Commission entitled "Property Value Appreciation for Historic Districts in Alabama."

#### Planning & Zoning Tools

Effective community preservation strategies must be integrated with other aspects of the community planning process. In many communities, planning and zoning ordinances based on suburban models often do not adequately take into consideration the traditional development pattern of historic communities. As a result, the application of these regulations to historic districts results in conflicts between the purposes of the various ordinances. Often it is not possible to recreate the historic pattern of development within the historic area under municipal planning and zoning ordinances. This can cause particular problems when new construction is proposed to fill vacant lots or to replace historic resources that are lost. In order to meet setback requirements and other criteria of the planning and zoning ordinances, the new development is forced to be inconsistent with the surrounding historic properties. Coordinating historic preservation tools with planning and zoning ordinances can allow the traditional development pattern in historic districts to continue.

A number of tools can be integrated into planning and zoning ordinances to promote historic preservation.

**Exceptions.** One simple tool is to include language that allows the appropriate board to grant reasonable exceptions to planning and zoning ordinance provisions that might adversely impact historic properties. Some communities find it useful for their historic preservation commissions to review and make recommendations to the appropriate planning or zoning boards regarding exceptions that might be necessary to preserve a particular historic resource.

**Incentives.** All planning, zoning and historic preservation ordinances are designed to enhance the general welfare of the public through their implementation. It is therefore appropriate in many circumstances to allow greater flexibility for historic resources in recognition of their special circumstances. In some cases, incentives might be used to offset the economic disadvantage a historic property suffers when the preservation of historic resources on that property restricts development potential that might otherwise be allowable on a similar property without a historic resource. Incentives might also be used to help encourage the preservation of historic resources by helping to offset the cost of rehabilitation. Incentives that have been successfully used by other communities have included density bonuses, lot coverage bonuses, additional allowable uses (bed and breakfast units, accessory dwellings or offices, etc.), and exemptions for pre-existing historic conditions.



## **Easements**

A historic preservation easement is a means by which the owner of a historic building can insure its preservation while at the same time retaining possession and use of the building. Through an easement, a property owner transfers to another party certain rights and privileges pertaining to that property. The historic preservation easement is in the form of a deed, granted in perpetuity to a qualified recipient organization which specifies the restoration and maintenance requirements for the building, imposes restrictions upon modifications to one or more facades of the building, and provides for monitoring and enforcement of the easement.

Typically, historic preservation easements involve physical maintenance and possible alterations to a historic building's facade, and/or other features. Easements generally do not involve restrictions on the use of the property. Easements can be donated by a property owner to a qualified entity, can be purchased from an owner by a qualified entity, or can involve partial donations and purchase arrangements. Typically, those donating easements either do so because of their interest in preserving a particular property. The donation of an easement to qualified nonprofit or governmental entity can qualify the donor a tax deduction from federal income taxes based on the easement's value as a charitable contribution. Easements can also be purchased by qualified entities or, more commonly, can be placed by such an entity that has acquired a historic property and places the easement as a condition of the property's resale. This latter situation is commonly used by revolving funds.

The gift of an historic preservation easement may have income, gift, estate, and real-property tax consequences that may be beneficial to the donor of the easement. The determination of the tax consequences of a gift of a historic preservation easement is made by the donor, assisted by their attorney and tax advisor, and the appropriate taxing authorities. A qualified independent appraisal must be made of the value of the easement and must conform to the requirements for a qualified appraisal as set forth in the Internal Revenue Code.

While any suitable historic building can be the subject of a preservation easement, Internal Revenue Code regulations restrict charitable deductions for easement contributions to properties individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or certified as contributing to a National Register Historic District. An easement can be for any length of time the parties agree to. However, the Internal Revenue Code allows charitable deductions to be taken only for easements donated in perpetuity.

The tax consequences of a gift of an easement are, for the most part, directly related to the value of the gift. The value of an historic easement is equal to the loss in value of a property which results from subjecting the property to the restrictions imposed in the easement. This value should be determined by an independent qualified real estate appraiser who is familiar with historic preservation easements.

## **Revolving Funds**

A typical historic preservation revolving fund is established for the purpose of purchasing or accepting donations of historic real estate. The properties are then typically sold to purchasers who agree to maintain and preserve the properties, typically through the use of conservation easements placed on the property at the time of sale. The proceeds of the sale are returned to the fund to be used for subsequent purchases.

Unlike regulatory historic preservation tools, the revolving fund works through the marketplace. When coupled with regulatory tools, they provide an alternative for property owners who projects might be at odds with aspects of the design review process. More importantly, a revolving fund can be a proactive tool in that it can be used to acquire properties that might pose difficult preservation challenges. Appropriate rehabilitation and reuse strategies can then be developed and implemented either through action of the revolving fund or by reselling to a purchaser who agrees to improve the property in accordance with a specified development plan.

Revolving funds can be established by nonprofit or governmental entities. Successful revolving funds have been used to restore buildings and revitalize neighborhoods in Charleston, Beaufort, Savannah and many other cities across the nation.



Capital for revolving funds is often raised by private donations of cash or property or through a variety of municipal funding avenues such as bond issues or special taxes. Since the purpose of a revolving fund is to revolve, the assets of a successful fund should grow over time or at the very least not diminish. Careful management of the such a fund should generally make it possible to purchase and resell properties subject to conservation easements without losing money on them. Donations and fundraising can be used to supplement the fund for the purchase of properties that might have a high preservation priority but that might lose money on resale because of preservation restrictions.

## *Historic Resource Survey Methodology*

### *Literature & Records Review*

Background historical research was available through the National Register nomination for the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District and the 2004 survey by FuturePast.. Additional research was completed for this project, primarily to document the historical development of the community in the mid-20th century. Appropriate archival sources were reviewed as were the collections of the Alabama Historical Commission, the National Register of Historic Places and HABS/HAER. The results of the research was included on the individual field survey forms.

### *Field Inventory*

Fieldwork for this project was completed by David B. Schneider between March and May 2006. An intensive historic sites inventory was conducted within the project area to record resources that were eligible for survey but not included in the 2004 study. In addition, the survey forms were prepared for sites located in the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District that were excluded from the 2004 study. Sites recorded in the 2004 survey were also revisited and information was updated to reflect changes that had occurred since the completion of that project.

The survey was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Alabama Historical Commission and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for identification. All above-ground buildings, structures, and objects that were constructed prior to 1956 were recorded. For each site inventoried, a unique inventory number was assigned, a survey form was completed, a digital photograph was taken, and the site was indicated on an appropriate base map.

All field survey work was entered into a FileMaker Pro computer database. Information from the 2004 survey report was also digitized and added to the database, although this information is limited to geographic information, narrative descriptions and historical information.

### *Report*

This report summarizes the project's methodology, geographic coverage and survey results. The report describes the historic resources and related landscape features identified and assesses the potential eligibility of any or all of the identified resources for the National Register of Historic Places. A "fair and reasonable" approach was taken to determine the eligibility of resources for the National Register and all resources were evaluated utilizing appropriate National Register Bulletins.



## Products

**Survey Report** This document.

**Database** A computer database was prepared utilizing Filemaker Pro software. The survey was provided as both a database and as Adobe portable document format (pdf) files.

**Maps** One survey map were prepared:

*Greater Downtown Study, Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Historic Resources Map*

**Photographs** Digital photographs were taken of each site and were provided on computer compact disks.

## General Information

**Surveyor** Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC  
411 East 6th Street  
Anniston Alabama 36201

Field Survey, Architectural Evaluation: David B. Schneider

**Dates:** March 1 - May 31, 2006

**Geographic Area:** Greater Downtown Study Area, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

### Sites Surveyed

561

110 resources had been identified in a 2004 historic sites survey conducted by FuturePast. These sites were revisited as part of this project, survey information was updated and new digital photographs were taken. An additional 44 resources were identified in the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District that are outside the survey area of the FuturePast study. Each building was incorporated into the survey database along with a current photograph.

## Previous Documentation

**Commercial District** The Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District was listed in the National Register in 1986 and was expanded in 1989 and 1997. The nomination form contains a brief historical narrative and description of the district as well as an inventory of contributing and noncontributing resources. New survey forms and digital photographs for each resource were prepared during this project.

**2004 Survey** A historic resource survey of the Tuscaloosa Downtown Urban Redevelopment area was conducted in 2004 by FuturePast. 110 resources were recorded in a narrative format. This information was scanned and entered into the database for this project. Survey numbers for each project were cross-referenced and both numbering sets were indicated on survey maps,

**National Register** Nomination forms are on file with the Alabama Historical Commission for sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Alabama Register** Nomination forms are on file with the Alabama Historical Commission for sites listed in