546 Auburn Avenue
Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site
Historic Structure Report

Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science Division
Southeast Region
546 Auburn Avenue
Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site
Historic Structure Report

May 2017
Prepared by:
WLA Studio
SBC+H Architects
Palmer Engineering

Under the direction of
National Park Service
Southeast Regional Office
Cultural Resources, Partnerships, & Science Division
The report presented here exists in two formats. A printed version is available for study at the park, the Southeastern Regional Office of the National Park Service, and at a variety of other repositories. For more widespread access, this report also exists in a web-based format through ParkNet, the website of the National Park Service. Please visit www.nps.gov for more information.

Cultural Resources, Partnerships, & Science Division
Southeast Regional Office
National Park Service
100 Alabama Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404)507-5847

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site
450 Auburn Avenue, NE
Atlanta, GA 30312

www.nps.gov/malu

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Foreword

We are pleased to make available this Historic Structure Report, part of our ongoing effort to provide comprehensive documentation for the historic structures and cultural landscapes of National Park Service units in the Southeast Region. A number of individuals contributed to the successful completion of this work; but we would particularly like to thank the Project Team who authored the report. The authors would like to thank the staff at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site who assisted with the project, including Chief of Interpretation, Education and Cultural Resource Management Rebecca Karcher, then Acting Facility Manager Gina Belknap, and Museum Technician Leah Berry, the Park staff who assisted with the inspection of historic structures, and Historical Architect Danita Brown, AIA and Historical Architect Jessica Kelly both of the Southeast Regional Office for their assistance. We hope that this study will prove valuable to park management in ongoing efforts to preserve the historic structure and to everyone in understanding and interpreting this unique resource.

Dan Scheidt, Chief
Cultural Resources, Partnerships and Science Division
Southeast Regional Office
2017
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Management Summary

Project Team

*Building Investigation/Building Condition Assessment*
Thomas F. Little, Historical Architect
Grant Cameron, Architect
Richard Bryant, Associate Architect
Nicholas Purcell, Associate Architect
SBC+H Architects, Atlanta, GA

Baku Patel, Structural Engineer
Angela Booth, Structural Engineer
Palmer Engineering Co., Tucker, GA

*Research*
Madie Fischetti, Historical Landscape Architect
Mary Fenwick Parish, Historian
WLA Studio, Athens, GA
Thomas F. Little, Historical Architect
SBC+H Architects, Atlanta, GA

*Building Recordation*
Thomas F. Little, Historical Architect
Grant Cameron, Architect
Richard Bryant, Associate Architect
Nicholas Purcell, Associate Architect
SBC+H Architects
Madie Fischetti, Historical Landscape Architect
Mary Fenwick Parish, Historian
WLA Studio, Athens, GA

*Project Manager*
Jessica J. Kelly, NOMA, Historical Architect
National Park Service
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta, GA

*Program Review*
Judy Forte, Superintendent
Rebecca Karcher, Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Cultural Resources
Leah Berry, Museum Technician
Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site
Atlanta, GA

Jessica J. Kelly, NOMA, Historical Architect
National Park Service
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta, GA
Historic Structure Report: 546 Auburn Avenue, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

Executive Summary

Purpose and Scope
The purpose of this historic structure report (HSR) is to document the construction history and current condition of 546 Auburn Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia, in the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site (MALU) and to provide recommendations for the building’s treatment and use. This HSR will guide the National Park Service in the stewardship of this historic resource.

The report includes Part I.A: Historical Background and Context, Part I.B: Chronology of Development and Use, Part I.C: Physical Description, and Part II: Treatment and Use. Part I includes a brief review of the historical development of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home Block, known historical owner, tenant, and construction information about 546 Auburn Avenue, and transfer of the property to the National Park Service. A chronology of the structure’s physical development and use provides information on the original core of the building. The chronology also explains how the building changed and expanded over time. This information derives largely from physical investigations, with the addition of historical documentation as available. A current physical description based on building investigations and assessment using non-destructive methods provides a systemic accounting of all features, materials, and spaces. A list of character-defining features and a summary assessment of the building’s current condition are also included. Part II provides recommendations for the treatment and use of 546 Auburn Avenue.

A bibliography provides the sources of information that this report references. Appendices include scaled drawings of the period plans, a chain of title document, existing floor plans, and a resource location map.

Historical Overview
Atlanta began as a small town named Terminus that developed around the junction of the Southern Railway and the Western & Atlantic Railroad. Following the devastation in the south during the Civil War, the city, renamed Atlanta, became the capitol of Georgia in 1868 with a population of over 22,000 persons. In the years approaching the end of the 1800s, African Americans constituted about 40 percent of Atlanta’s population. As the population of the city grew, early urban development of Atlanta followed the routes of the rail and streetcar lines that radiated from the railroad terminal.¹

The layout of Auburn Avenue reflects Atlanta’s commercial and residential growth beginning in the 1870s and the impact race relations had on urban and suburban development into the twentieth century. Race relations in Atlanta were tense at the turn of the twentieth century, and as the black middle class thrived, these relations worsened. Heightened racial tensions exacerbated by the Race Riot of 1906 resulted in the relocation of many white residents, who had originally built houses in areas such Auburn Avenue. Because Atlanta’s Fourth Ward residential areas included both black and white neighborhoods, many of the blocks vacated by whites became predominantly black neighborhoods in the following decades. By 1910, many of the residences were either black-owned or rented, and Auburn Avenue thrived as a hub of black businesses, residences, and schools.²

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born at 501 Auburn Avenue in 1929. He lived and attended school in the neighborhood until 1941, when his family relocated because of the decline of the area. The effects of the Great Depression, coupled with overcrowding, led to the dilapidation of many structures within black residential areas in Atlanta during the 1940s and 1950s. On the Birth Home Block, property owners subdivided single-family residences into boarding houses for multiple families and tenants. Many of these structures also became dilapidated because of little maintenance and absentee ownership.

The date of construction of the house at 546 Auburn Avenue is approximately 1890–1900. The developer of this house and the two houses flanking it was Alfred S. Jenkins, a pharmacist

and grocer. The original building footprint of 546 Auburn Avenue recorded in the 1911 Fulton County Sanborn Map. Jenkins died in 1910 and the property remained under the ownership of the Jenkins family until Edward Krick purchased it in 1963. Tenants occupied the house throughout most of the twentieth century, including African American candy-maker, John Watkins, who resided there between 1910 and 1930.

Exterior changes to the house during the Jenkins’ ownership included several alterations to the form of the structure and adjacent buildings. Many of the significant modifications to the house occurred as part of rehabilitation and remodeling projects in the 1980s and 1990s, including major renovations to the interior of the structure to make it available for occupancy as a duplex.

**Statement of Significance**
The structure located at 546 Auburn Avenue is a contributing resource in the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic District (1974). The district became a National Historic Landmark in 1977. Public Law 96-428 created the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. This legislation “authorized a 23.78-acre park roughly bounded by Jackson Street on the west, Old Wheat Street on the north, Howell Street on the east, and the rear property lines on the south side of Edgewood Avenue.” The MLK, Jr. National Historic District, and particularly the Birth Home Block, is significant for its association with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birth Home located at 501 Auburn Avenue. At the time of Dr. King’s birth, Auburn Avenue was “the scene of an industrious black community—a center of racial pride and economic prowess.” 546 Auburn Avenue is a contributing resource to the national and local significance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District (MALU). This property and others include “side-yard retaining walls to hold the grade of the front yard even with Auburn Avenue.” The contiguous stone retaining walls, historic brick sidewalk, and wide 40-foot road width are significant historic landscape features that define the character of the east end of the Birth Home Block. 546 Auburn Avenue is a good example of a one-story Folk Victorian–style house with cut trim porch detailing, a gable front, and wing form.

**Project Methodology**
The scope of work for this HSR defined the required level of the historical research and the architectural investigation, analysis, and documentation as “limited.” The scope of work specified that the consultants conduct research referring to primary-source documents and public records, with most resources derived from the MALU Archives. Readily available persons might be interviewed to answer specific questions. The NPS directed the consultants to conduct “non-destructive” building investigations.

Consultants from several disciplines, including historical architects, structural engineers, and historians, conducted the initial site visit for this project in September 2016 and attended a project kick-off meeting with NPS staff. Documentation of the house began in October 2016 with field drawings of the existing floor plan, notes about exterior and interior materials and architectural features, structural conditions, and digital photographs. Historic research at the MALU Archives, with the help of Archives staff, identified all available information from the park’s repository. The available NPS documents provided information on the historic context of the Birth Home Block, documentation to-date of the structure, and management plans that are guiding the preservation of the park’s historic resources. The project historian also conducted research at local repositories, including Atlanta Fulton County Public Library, Atlanta Branch; Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History; Georgia State University Library; Atlanta History Center, Kenan Research Center; and Fulton County Superior Court Deeds and Records Repository.

The historical architect and staff referred to existing drawings such as Historic American

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3. Deed book O3/436, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Fulton County, GA.
4. Deed book 7051/344, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Fulton County, GA.
8. Ibid., 56.
Buildings Survey (HABS) recordation documents, as available, for the preliminary drawing of the existing floor plan and to inform the fieldwork. The October 2016 site investigation included thorough building investigation, comprised of an examination of construction techniques and building development, complete measurements of the existing floor plan, and digital photography. The consultants also recorded features for measured drawings during this site visit. The historical architect and staff prepared the existing conditions plans based on these field investigations and drafted them using AutoCAD.

In February 2017, the historical landscape architect and historical architect conducted a second site visit for further site and structure documentation and photo recordation of the historic landscape features. Deed research conducted at the Fulton County Courthouse at this time completed the ownership history of the property. The project historian conducted further research on 546 Auburn Avenue using online primary sources. These sources included historical texts, several academic theses, city directories and federal census information, and articles published in numerous academic journals, such as the Georgia Historical Quarterly. The project historian also obtained historic photographs from the Library of Congress and the King Center Archives, as well as historic aerial images and zoning plans of the landmark district.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The 1986 Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site General Management Plan (GMP) stated that “all vacant and tenant-occupied structures on the Birth Home Block will be acquired and rehabilitated by the National Park Service.”¹⁹ The GMP also called for reselling some structures to individuals and allowing current tenants to remain in their houses at stabilized rents. The 2016 Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Draft Foundation Document provides basic guidance for future planning and management decisions. The report addresses the Birth Home Block, its treatment and management. The document also identifies issues with the maintenance and preservation of the numerous historic structures at the national historic site.¹⁰

The objective of the treatment recommendations included in the report is to restore the historic appearance of the building with consideration of the exterior and interior materials and the structural integrity. The recommendations are consistent with GMP and Draft Foundation Document directives for restoring the exterior of this property to the period of significance (1929-1941), when Martin Luther King, Jr. lived on Auburn Avenue. The previous planning documents address only the exterior of the buildings. The current use of the house as a leased residential unit is compatible with the previous plan recommendations. The recommendations in this report allow the NPS to continue to use the structure as a duplex rental unit.

In general, the exterior and interior of 546 Auburn Avenue are in good condition, though this structure does show signs of deterioration, and recommendations for repair are included in this document. The actions listed in the Architectural, Interior, and Structural Recommendations accomplish several goals. These goals are to achieve the recommended treatment of an exterior restored to its appearance during the period of significance (1929-1941), arrest further deterioration of existing features, improve energy efficiency, and upgrade occupant comfort.

A number of the recommendations for 546 Auburn Avenue account for immediate concerns to ensure the preservation of the integrity of the historic property. The first recommendation is prioritization of the restoration of the primary facade at the south elevation. Another recommendation is improving the thermal envelope of the structure and increasing energy efficiency by updating the insulation applied in the basement and exterior walls. In the case of 546 Auburn Avenue, improving thermal performance of exterior walls includes selective demolition and the installation of pressure-fit interior thermal windows, as recommended. The replacement of any wood compromised by rot and the installation of a termite shield and base flashing at the base course are other important recommended actions.


to secure structural integrity. The replacement of the rotted steps at the rear porch with pressure-treated wood and the replacement of the piers at the interior foundations are other recommended immediate actions. Restoration of certain site features in accordance to the Cultural Landscape Report, and the reconstruction of the exterior wall on the south property line, are recommended improvements to rehabilitate and preserve the integrity of the historic landscape.

Also included in the consideration of treatment options are the implications of climate change. A loss of resource integrity may occur over time from conditions related to climate change and its impacts. Typically, documentation is one of the first mitigation techniques undertaken in response to deterioration. This document, which includes a historic narrative, photographs, measured drawings, and recommendations, fulfills this first step in the mitigation process.
Administrative Data

Locational Data

Building Name: 546 Auburn Avenue

Location: Birth Home Block
Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

County: Fulton County

State: Georgia

Related NPS Studies


**Real Property Information**

*Acquisition Date:* 1983

*LCS ID:* 023367

**Size Information**

546 Auburn Avenue

Total Floor Area: 1560 ±

Basement Floor Area: 0

First Floor Area: 1560 square feet ±

Second Floor Area: 0 square feet ±

Roof Area: 1932 square feet ±

Number of Stories: 1

Number of Rooms: 10

Number of Bathrooms: 2

Roof areas include covered porches; porch areas are not included in floor areas.

**Cultural Resource Data**


**Proposed Treatment**

The recommended ultimate treatment is to restore the exterior of 546 Auburn Avenue to its appearance during the period of significance (1929-1941).

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Introduction

“All men and women are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Strength to Love,” (1963)

At the time of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birth, Auburn Avenue was a thriving center of commercial, social, religious, and political activity in Atlanta, Georgia. By 1930, Auburn Avenue featured a bank, six insurance companies, 14 realtors, four drugstores, two hotels, a branch library, three churches, and several restaurants and entertainment venues.12

Auburn Avenue’s vitality in the early 1900s earned it nationwide recognition as a site of African American entrepreneurial achievement and social status. For generations, the residential community of Auburn Avenue functioned as a stronghold of black Atlanta politics, commerce, spirituality, and social life. “Sweet Auburn” is the popularized moniker of the neighborhood; it is attributed to prominent community leader and Grand Master of the Prince Hall Masons, John Wesley Dobbs. The boundaries of the neighborhood encompass the corridor east of Peachtree, to Howell Street, and north of Auburn Avenue, to Houston Street.

The development of Wheat Street (later renamed Auburn Avenue) began as early as 1853. The original name commemorated Augustus M. Wheat, a local merchant.13 German, middle-income families were some of the first occupants of houses constructed along the Birth Home Block—the section of the Auburn Avenue neighborhood designated as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. The immigrants who settled this area built or moved into the houses, beginning in 1886. The demographic in the neighborhood remained consistently that of white, middle-class families until the end of the nineteenth century. By 1900, Auburn Avenue and the entire Old Fourth Ward had the highest degree of racial integration in the city. This integration was short-lived, and by 1910, the residential portion of Auburn Avenue transitioned to mostly black-occupied households.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was born on January 15, 1929, in a two-story, wood-frame house located at 501 Auburn Avenue NE. Constructed in 1895, this house features Queen Anne–style elements. Dr. King’s grandfather, Reverend Adam Daniel Williams, purchased the property in 1909. The majority of the residential architectural resources in the Birth Home Block are Victorian, Folk Victorian, or Queen Anne style. The Victorian era generally refers to the time between 1837 and 1901 (the reign of Queen Victoria in Britain), and this architectural style derived from medieval houses built during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. The style became popular in the United States through the expansion of railroad transportation and the mass production of building materials.14 The Queen Anne style of architecture is characterized by steeply pitched irregularly shaped roofs, an asymmetrical facade, bay windows, and a high porch that may wrap around to the side of the house. Typically, Auburn Avenue houses feature the Folk Victorian style, a vernacular version of the Victorian architectural style. This style features less elaborate detailing than found in the Queen Anne counterparts in the neighborhood. The walls are usually flat planes, without projections or textured shingles. Many of the houses on Auburn Avenue have spindle work or classical detailing of the columns, balustrades, or dentils. Decorative shingles in one pattern or in combinations, as well as attic vents and ornamental details of the gable, are other common elements of this style found on residential structures on the Birth Home Block.15

13. Ibid., 18.
15. Ibid., 33.
The resource within the Birth Home Block, which is the focus of this report, is located at 546 Auburn Avenue. This building is a one-story Folk Victorian gable and front wing house. The resources analyzed in this report typically remained under sole proprietorship of the Jenkins family as depicted in the 1894 Baylor Atlas, well into the twentieth century\(^\text{16}\) (Figure 1).

While all of the structures along Sweet Auburn originally existed as single-family dwellings for middle-income residents, only a few housed one family by the mid-1930s. Later property owners of most of the houses divided them into apartments and leased rooms to multiple tenants.

This unique community influenced the life path chosen by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to successfully lead and organize the united, nonviolent movement to challenge racism, poverty, and the direct infringement upon civil rights.\(^\text{17}\) Dr. King’s family lived on Auburn Avenue until 1941, and he lived nearby until he moved to Pennsylvania to attend Crozer Theological Seminary in 1948. Dr. King’s leadership of the civil rights movement culminated with the March on Washington and his “I Have a Dream” speech, inducing the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The legislation de legitimized statewide codification of segregationist ideologies in all social, business, and civil domains of life in America. Dr. King received numerous awards, including the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of his leadership of the civil rights movement.

The roots of Dr. King’s belief in equality for all people and the foundations of his social activism become more clear through the prism of the neighborhood where he lived as a child. Middle-class professionals, ministers, domestic laborers, and service-industry workers constituted the

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Developed on land ceded by the Creek Indians to the federal government on January 8, 1821, the early settlement was an industrial “boom town” with some 100 inhabitants. The town was renamed Marthasville on December 23, 1843. The name officially changed to Atlanta following the suggestion of city engineer J. Edgar Thomson, on December 26, 1845. On December 29, 1847, local officials expanded the Atlanta city limits to one mile in every direction from the zero milepost of the Western and Atlantic Railroad in order to incorporate the surrounding territory. City officials again expanded the Atlanta city limits from one concentric mile in the 1840s to one and one-half concentric miles in the 1890s. They expanded the city limits later to a two-mile radius after 1899 (Figure 2). By the year 1848, Atlanta’s population numbered about five hundred people, with a majority of the residents associated with the railroad. On December 20, 1853, the state legislature created Fulton County and established Atlanta as the county seat. On January 9, 1854, the city adopted a plan dividing the city into five wards.

In 1868, legislators amended the state constitution to make Atlanta the state capitol; and by the census of 1870, the city had a recorded overall population of over 22,000. Between 1870 and 1900, African Americans constituted about 40 percent of the population in Atlanta. By the 1870s, the early urban development of Atlanta followed the routes of the rail and streetcar lines that radiated from the railroad terminal. Continued growth, spurred by the consolidation of ten rail lines in the 1890s, further established Atlanta’s dominance as the center of commerce in the Southeast. Peters and Whitehall Streets were the

Dr. King returned to Atlanta in 1960 and served as co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, with his father, until his assassination in 1968.

Founding and Growth of Atlanta

Atlanta began as a small town named Terminus that developed around the junction of the Southern Railway and the Western & Atlantic Railroad.

18. Ibid., 3.

Figure 2. Map showing city limits and six wards of Atlanta. The subject of this report is located in the Old Fourth Ward, indicated on this map in blue. (Atlanta. Published by George F. Cram, Chicago, Ill. (to accompany) Cram’s atlas of the world, ancient and modern: new census edition -- indexed).
first roads developed in the city of Atlanta along the railroad tracks at the terminal where Terminus first developed (Figure 3). They bound the present-day, local historic landmark district, Castleberry Hill. Castleberry Hill is the oldest enclave of Victorian commercial buildings that remain in the city of Atlanta, and it connects through the central business district in downtown Atlanta, via Peachtree Street, to Auburn Avenue. The Birth Home Block on Auburn Avenue exists as one of the last remnants of Victorian residential development in the city, representing one of the earliest urban development periods in Atlanta.31

The layout of Auburn Avenue reflects Atlanta's commercial and residential growth beginning in the 1870s, as well as the changing nature of southern race relations into the twentieth century. In 1884, the Gate City Street Railroad Company constructed a streetcar line that traveled from the central business district along Pryor Street to Wheat Street (present-day Auburn Avenue) to Jackson Street and farther north. In 1889, entrepreneur Joel Hurt operated Atlanta's first electric street railway along Edgewood Avenue, linking downtown and the suburb of Inman Park. As Auburn Avenue continued to develop, it became a major east-west thoroughfare to downtown. Granite curbs and brick sidewalks, built along the sides of Auburn Avenue, date back to as early as the 1890s. To accommodate street traffic in the commercial district, city officials established a forty-foot street width, curb to curb, that defines the historic character of present-day Birth Home Block.32 By the mid-1890s, the majority of the single-family residences on the Birth Home Block had been constructed.33 The streetcar lines on Auburn and Edgewood Avenues provided direct access to the Atlanta central business district's retail locations and employment to the west of Auburn Avenue.34 Auburn Avenue, for this reason, was a highly favorable place to live in Atlanta in the late 1890s (Figure 4).

In the mid-1890s, Atlanta's Fourth Ward had not only the greatest concentration in the city of African American population; it also had the highest degree of black and white integration. Forty-six percent of the ward's population in 1896 was African American, and 26 percent of the residences in the Old Fourth Ward were located adjacent to or across from a residence of another race.35 From 1884 to 1900, the racial composition of the area bounded by Old Wheat Street, Howell Street, Edgewood Avenue, and Jackson Street remained consistent at approximately 55 percent white and 45 percent African American.36 On April 17, 1893, the Atlanta City Council responded to the petition to change the name of the neighborhood and renamed Wheat Street Auburn Avenue.37

Reconstruction

Until the end of the Civil War in 1865, non-enslaved African Americans in the South maintained a fine balance between social progress and personal safety. In 1845, the Georgia state legislature passed an act that denied freemen skilled as masons or mechanics the right to contract their services to the public. By similar legislation, African Americans could not own or operate any business, boarding house, or restaurant. African Americans were also subject to

31. Ibid., 13.
32. Ibid., 21.
33. Ibid., 13.
34. Ibid., 2.
36. Ibid.
heightened taxes and resident fees, and they could not own any real or personal property.38 By 1854, movements that opposed slavery succeeded in the Western Hemisphere as several newly independent South American nations—Chile, Colombia, Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, Uruguay, Argentina, and Peru—abolished the institution. In the midst of the Civil War, on New Year’s Day in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. The proclamation declared that all enslaved persons in the states of the Union were “thenceforward and forever free.”

While many citizens, especially in the northern states, rejoiced when the government declared that every citizen was free, the Union Army continued to battle the Confederacy in the Civil War in the South. In 1864, General William Tecumseh Sherman besieged and burned much of the city of Atlanta on his long march to the sea (Figure 5). The entrepreneurial spirit of Atlanta fueled the rise of a new city from the ashes of Sherman’s destruction. In early 1865, President Abraham Lincoln codified the intent of the Emancipation Proclamation by signing the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery. The Civil War ended in April 1865, and after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, Vice President Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency.39 As the reconstruction of the city of Atlanta continued from 1865 until 1877,40 the African American population increased from 20.3 percent to 42.9 percent of the city’s total population between 1860 and 1890.41

Following the Civil War, the social atmosphere in Atlanta, as in other communities across the South, was often antagonistic toward black enterprise and commercial productivity. Emancipation resulted in increased competition for menial labor positions as African American workers entered the job market. Competition also increased for business owners. One year after the end of the Civil War, in 1866, African American James Tate opened a wholesale grocery on Decatur Street42 at the site that is the present-day Grady Hospital. His business became hugely successful over the following year,

40. NPS, “Historical Background Essay,” 8.
amounting to thousands of dollars in retail goods.\textsuperscript{43} By the late 1800s, the first large rise of black enterprise in Atlanta followed the success of Tate, often called the “Father of Black Business” (Figure 6).

Nearing the end of the 1800s, African Americans in Atlanta continued to strive for monetary success and founded many independent businesses. In 1885, most freedmen in Atlanta endeavored to make money as tailors, barbers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and hack drivers in their own businesses, or they worked in service positions. In the 1890s, several former slaves found extraordinary success as businessmen through the companies they founded in Atlanta. For example, Alonzo Herndon became one of the first black millionaires in the nation (Figure 7). Herndon started out as a barber, and he eventually owned three successful barbershops in Atlanta. He later expanded his investments in real estate, cofounded the Atlanta Loan and Trust Company in 1891, and founded the Atlanta Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1905.\textsuperscript{44} By the time of his death in 1927, the Atlanta Mutual Life Insurance Company held a net worth of one million dollars in assets.\textsuperscript{45} Another example of early black entrepreneurial success was Alexander Hamilton, founder of

Alexander Hamilton & Sons. Hamilton became one of the wealthiest men in the country as a contractor, serving both black and white clientele.\textsuperscript{46} One successful enterprise located on Auburn Avenue was Herman Perry’s Service Company. Established in 1890, by 1923 the contracting and building company held a net worth of $11,000,000 and subsidized a number of other corporations.\textsuperscript{47} The Atlanta State Savings Bank, the first chartered African American banking institution in Georgia, was also located on Auburn Avenue. Other widely successful black enterprises in Atlanta, and particularly on Auburn Avenue, included Georgia Real Estate Loan and Trust Company, which was the first African American land company in the state of Georgia (1890), Mutual Savings and Loan Association (1925), and Citizens Trust Company (1921), which became the sixth largest black-owned bank in the nation.

Despite this success of early black enterprise in Atlanta, local and state policies in Georgia continually restricted the civil rights of African Americans and, tragically, lynching incidents peaked during this period. In 1868, African Americans could legally vote in the city of Atlanta, and it marked the beginning of state and city efforts to curtail that vote. The same year, the General Assembly passed a law that switched

\textsuperscript{43} Ambrose, \textit{Historic Resource Study}, 1-3.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 5-9.
\textsuperscript{45} NPS, “Historical Background Essay,” 8.
\textsuperscript{46} Ambrose, \textit{Historic Resource Study}, 3-5.
\textsuperscript{47} NPS, “Historical Background Essay,” 8.
from a ward-based voting system to an at-large system for the election of councilmen, which undermined the vote in wards where the majority of the population was African American. A few years later, President Ulysses S. Grant passed the 1871 Civil Rights Act (also termed the Ku Klux Klan Act) authorizing martial law and heavy penalties against terrorist organizations. The president successfully disbanded the second generation of the KKK but the Klan would prove to be a highly insidious and dangerous group that would continually grow in numbers over the next 50 years. From 1882 to the end of the century, the number of persons lynched per year fell below 100 only once. The total for the 18-year period was 2,743, of which about half of the victims (1,645) were African American. Generally, race relations worsened during the 1890s and into the early 1900s. In Atlanta, parks featured signs that forbade admittance to African Americans. In 1892, the formal segregation of streetcars and public transportation took effect in the city of Atlanta. In 1897, state policy legally barred African Americans from holding any political office in the Atlanta city government. With the codification of Jim Crow laws in the state by 1900, enforced segregation ranged from mandating separate accommodations in public restrooms, to the use of separate Bibles in courtrooms, to designation of separate seats on trains.

Even under these political and social injustices, African Americans in Atlanta continued to forge their own institutions and community organizations to bolster their rights as free citizens. In 1886, Reverend N. J. Jones founded the Colored Men’s Protective Association to confront racial violence by organizing community support. Jones was a successful grocer in the city of Atlanta, and as a minister, he was among the most influential clergy in the state of Georgia (Figure 8). Rev. Jones ministered at Friendship Baptist Church in Castleberry Hill, the first autonomous African American Baptist church in Atlanta. Sophia B. Packard and Harriet E. Giles founded Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, otherwise known as Spelman Seminary, in the church basement in 1881. This esteemed institution of higher learning...

49. USCCR, Freedom to the Free, 71.
50. NPS, “Historical Background Essay,” 3.
53. Ibid., 38-40.
for African American women gained international renown and became Spelman College in 1924.55
It was the sister school to historic Morehouse College, founded in Augusta in 1867, for African American men. Morehouse relocated to Atlanta in 1879.

Founded in 1881, Morris Brown College was the first educational institution established in Georgia by and for African Americans.56 Bethlehem A.M.E. Church (located on Auburn Avenue) helped establish the college. It was originally located on Boulevard, two blocks north of Auburn Avenue57 (Figure 9). For years, this college was the closest institution of higher learning to the Auburn Avenue community. Donations from the African American community in Atlanta and throughout Georgia entirely funded its construction; it formally opened its doors in October 1885. There were 107 students enrolled in the first class, and the liberal arts college remains an operationally historically black college and university (HBCU) in Atlanta today.58

Established in 1847, Bethlehem A.M.E. Baptist Church, endearingly called “Big Bethel,” is a long-standing cornerstone of the downtown African American Atlanta community. It is located on Auburn Avenue approaching the downtown central business district (Figure 10). Furthering the status of African American education and research was the growing influence of Atlanta University. It was founded by the American Missionary Association in 1865 as one of 11 African American institutions of higher learning.59 The distinguished faculty has included Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and Myron Adams of Atlanta University, John Hope and Benjamin Brawley of Morehouse College, and J.W.E. Bowen of Gammon Theological Seminary.60

Atlanta was the setting for the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition, aimed at the promotion of agriculture and new technologies of the region. It was the largest gathering in the event’s history up until that time. The event’s organizers chose Dr. Booker T. Washington to speak on behalf of the African American community. Historians refer to this speech as the “Atlanta Compromise.” According to one historian, “his emphasis on economic goals among blacks and his conciliatory posture toward southern whites made him a perfect complement to the ‘New South’ boosterism concept that underlay the Atlanta enterprise.”61 Washington sought to

57. Ambrose, Historic Resource Study, 4-3.
58. Carter, The Black Side, 47.
60. Ambrose, Historic Resource Study, 4-6.
advance the idea that the rising African American middle class would become indispensable to the economy of the New South. In his speech, Washington praised African Americans as “faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful” and countered a belief among white Southerners that the character and morality of African Americans had declined since slavery.\(^\text{62}\) The most quoted line of the speech was, “In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”\(^\text{63}\) Though inspiring to many, Dr. Washington’s pivotal speech urging citizens to overcome racial controversies in business did little to solve the racial tensions and the mounting political restrictions to civil liberties in Atlanta and throughout the Southeast.

The influence of rising black enterprise in Atlanta nevertheless continued to reach new heights at the end of the 1800s. At this time, President McKinley appointed an African American, Henry A. Rucker, to the position of Georgia Collector of Internal Revenue. He served in this position from 1895 to 1909.\(^\text{64}\) The Bethlehem A.M.E. Church on Auburn Avenue was the headquarters for the National Negro Business League (NNBL), which had its largest meeting in Atlanta in 1906.\(^\text{65}\) The National Negro Bankers Association (NNBA) also held its first meeting in conjunction with the NNBL. The Atlanta Riot of 1906 occurred just 22 days after the NNBL ended its Atlanta meeting.\(^\text{66}\)

**Race Riot of 1906**

The assertion of African American rights and equality upheld by the recent federal acts—the right to vote, the right to equal protection under the law, and the right to education—generally heightened racial tension in the South between 1890 and 1910. By 1894, several southern states, including Georgia, enacted segregationist laws despite substantial opposition by African Americans and some sympathetic whites.\(^\text{67}\) In Atlanta, societal tension rose to violent proportions.

The political atmosphere in Atlanta encouraged the racial tensions leading up to the 1906 riot. As segregationist policies swept across the South, two prominent democratic nominees for political office in Atlanta—Clark Howell and Hoke Smith—used racial propaganda to boost their own political candidacies. Immediately before the riot, *The Atlanta Constitution* (of which Clark Howell was editor) and *The Atlanta Journal* (of which Hoke Smith was publisher) publicized sensationalized stories of sexual assaults on white women by African American men (Figure 11). This political propaganda denigrating and disenfranchising African Americans exacerbated societal conflict, which culminated in the devastating violence of the Atlanta Race Riot of 1906.\(^\text{68}\) On September 22, 1906, a mob of thousands perpetrated acts of racial violence and murder in downtown Atlanta.

A mob targeted the business owners on Marietta and Decatur Streets and many African American residences; the violence lasted for four days (Figure 12).\(^\text{69}\) Historical accounts of the number of assaults vary, but typically estimate in the hundreds. Grady Hospital admitted about three hundred patients to the emergency department the first night of the riot.\(^\text{70}\) Mayor James G. Woodward brought in the state militia to restore law and order, because local police officers were ineffective in stopping the riot. The 1906 riot further fragmented the relations between races in

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\(^{62}\) Norrell, *Up from History*, 125.


\(^{64}\) NPS, “Historical Background Essay,” 10.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 9–10.


\(^{67}\) USCCR, *Freedom to the Free*, 61.

\(^{68}\) Ambrose, *Historic Resource Study*, 1-19.

\(^{69}\) Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, 12.

a corresponding increase in the number of such businesses along Auburn Avenue occurred.”

Also in 1906, a large riot erupted in Springfield, Illinois—President Lincoln’s hometown—that killed six African Americans, burned numerous African American businesses and houses, and drove two thousand people from the city. The violence in Illinois, following the riot in Atlanta, spurred an urgent national forum that led to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP aimed to mobilize and protect African Americans by strengthening networks of support across the nation. In resistance to the disfranchisement measures in the state of Georgia, African Americans organized the Georgia Suffrage League in June 1907.

On October 7, 1908, the Georgia legislature passed legislation that disfranchised African Americans in the state of Georgia. By 1910, every former Confederate state had either disfranchised African Americans by constitutional amendments or deprived them of political participation by means of the political primary. Racial violence continued well into the 1900s. The Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, a federal mandate classifying lynching as a federal felony, won the support of President Warren G. Harding. Even though southern senators

76. Ibid., 52.
filibustered the measure, the bill passed in 1922. By 1938, incidents of lynching had declined steeply across the nation. Throughout the 1930s, the NAACP launched an anti-lynching campaign that combined widespread publicity about the causes and costs of lynching.

The Emerging Middle Class in Atlanta

African Americans owned property along Auburn Avenue as early as 1906. In 1909, the majority of residents along Auburn Avenue were African American, but the surrounding neighborhood remained racially mixed. A major change occurred between 1909 and 1910, when all of the shotgun duplexes on Auburn Avenue changed from white to black tenants and several of the single-family residences were sold to African Americans. As residential segregation increased, African American businesses were forced out of downtown by rising rents and increased social hostility. Due to more favorable conditions on Auburn Avenue, many African American retail establishments relocated between Courtland Street and Jackson Street. In this same period, as white residents moved off the residential east end of Auburn Avenue, successful African Americans purchased the large single-family houses (Figure 13). For example, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home was built circa 1895 and was sold to its first African American owner in 1909—Martin Luther King, Jr.’s maternal grandfather, Reverend A. D. Williams.

From 1910 to 1930, Auburn Avenue functioned as the center for African American business, institutional, and social life in Atlanta. Powerful community leaders continued to foster the growth of Auburn Avenue through the construction of several important buildings. For example, Benjamin Jefferson Davis—editor of the Atlanta Independent—spearheaded the development of the Odd Fellows Building on Auburn Avenue in 1911. The Odd Fellows Building, located between 228 and 250 Auburn Avenue, became a symbol of neighborhood pride and unity. The building contained 42 offices, six stores, six lodge rooms, and an auditorium. It housed the Fulton Social Club, and it offered a meeting space for groups such as the NAACP. The building remained a significant social center in the neighborhood and in Atlanta until the 1970s (Figure 14). Alonzo Herndon also constructed the Herndon Building on Auburn Avenue in 1924-1925.

Concurrent with this expansion of Auburn Avenue’s commercial and institutional life, there was a shift in African American residential development to the west side of Atlanta. In 1910, 33.5 percent of the residential population in Atlanta was black. By 1920, the Old Fourth Ward had a 65.4 percent black population. The neighborhood of businesses and houses on the expanding West End of Atlanta was referred to as “Darktown” at this time. There were at least two reasons that influenced the decision of African American families to move away from Auburn Avenue to other parts of Atlanta. One catalyst for the migration was the tremendous fire that swept across the Old Fourth Ward north of Old Wheat Street in 1917 and destroyed a large number of houses in the area (Figure 15). The second reason

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77. A shotgun duplex (or double shotgun) house is a front gable structure with a party wall dividing the two halves of the building in the middle, lengthwise. Shotgun duplexes typically have two front doors with a symmetrical facade.
78. NPS, “Historical Background Essay,” 11.
80. Ibid., 2-17.
for the migration was the availability of expanded housing choices for African Americans west of the city center. The construction of new housing encouraged most families to move away from Auburn Avenue and other, similarly overcrowded residential areas. A tabulation of the population growth of African Americans demonstrates the shifting social structure of Atlanta in the 1920s (Figure 16). In fact, the west side’s African American population doubled in area every decade from 1920 to 1970.

**Decline of Sweet Auburn**

The City of Atlanta adopted legislation that enforced residential segregation in Atlanta’s neighborhoods in 1913, and city officials incorporated segregationist policies into the first city zoning ordinance in 1922. Though the state supreme court declared these practices unconstitutional in 1925, the state legislature upheld the city’s zoning ordinance by passing supportive legislation in 1928. The following year, state politicians passed a constitutional amendment to uphold segregationist zoning ordinances. In 1930, the KKK marched from Spelman College through the Auburn Avenue neighborhood in support of residential segregation. Covenants containing race restrictions as conditions in deeds and real estate contracts were deemed legal under the Fourteenth Amendment until a Supreme Court ruling in May 1948. City officials also used their zoning ordinances to reinforce residential segregation. Atlanta effectively maintained the racially divided districts established in 1922 until the 1948 court ruling.

By the end of the 1930s, African Americans occupied 100 percent of the Birth Home Block. Additionally, only 13.3 percent of the buildings were owner-occupied, and 67.4 percent of the buildings were dilapidated. By 1934, in the three census tracts that make up the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District, almost 40 percent of the dwelling units were overcrowded. Only seven percent of the dwelling units in the three tracts were vacant. All of the structures in the census tracts that comprise the present-day historic district date back to at least 1919; dilapidation of these structures continually worsened from the 1930s until the 1980s.

Between 1930 and 1940, the number of residents on Auburn Avenue who held professional or skilled occupational positions declined markedly. The occupational structure of the neighborhood shifted, and the majority of African American residents who lived along Auburn Avenue in the following decades held unskilled labor occupations. By 1950, over 45 percent of the employed residents in the current historic district were service workers or domestic servants; another 15 percent were wage laborers in unskilled jobs. In 1950, professional workers accounted for only 4.7 percent of the area’s working population. The shotgun duplexes at the corner of Auburn Avenue and Boulevard (472-488 Auburn Avenue) housed many short-term tenants who were typically employed in semi-skilled, unskilled, or service occupations. Many affluent residents relocated; some families moved to more fashionable west-side neighborhoods.

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83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
86. In Shelly v. Kramer and McGhee v. Snipes, the Supreme Court ruled “such agreements or covenants are not judicially enforceable for the reason that such enforcement would constitute state action within the prohibition of the equal protection provision of the fourteenth amendment.” Shelly v. Kramer, 334 U.S. 1, 68 Superior court 836 (1948).
88. Ibid., 14.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., 2-30.
92. Ibid., 2-34.
93. Ibid., 2-35.
PART I - DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

neighborhoods. In 1941 the King family moved to a larger two-story brick house located at 193 Boulevard, in the “Bishop’s Row” area, in part due to the decline of the condition of the residences along Auburn Avenue.

Although significant African American businesses and institutions, including major churches, continued to draw families back to Auburn Avenue on a regular basis, another factor contributed to the decline of the area. Namely, the subdivision of many single-family houses meant the creation of multiple-family dwellings that increased tenancy on the Birth Home Block and adjacent streets to the point of overcrowding. Developers constructed apartment houses at 509 Auburn Avenue in 1925 and at 506 Auburn Avenue in 1933. Another development that increased residential occupancy was the subdivision of 54 Howell Street into a quadraplex in 1931.94 Though the 1950s were a time of commercial success in the neighborhood, the general decline in occupational status of the neighborhood’s residents and this increased tenancy irrevocably altered the social atmosphere of Auburn Avenue.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the overcrowding in the area encompassed by the present-day Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District worsened and became ranked highest in the city.95 During this period, the area had a vacancy rate of only 0.8 percent in 1940, and 0.9 percent in 1950.96 The 1950 census reports that almost half (43.6 percent) of the dwelling units in the area did not have running water or that the residence was in an overall state of dilapidation.97 County data show the decline of Auburn Avenue and suggest that the housing issue was a significant problem in the neighborhood since the 1920s.98 Additionally, industrial and manufacturing jobs declined, as employers relocated to different areas of the city and country. Owners sold the nearby Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill in 1957, a longtime area employer. Scripto, Inc., which had been a major employer to residents of Auburn Avenue and surrounding neighborhoods, relocated to suburban Gwinnett County in 1977. The relocation of industry, among the other aforementioned factors for decline, further destabilized the residential community of Auburn Avenue99 (Figure 17).

94. Lawliss, Cultural Landscape Report, 14.
96. Ibid., 2-27.
97. Ibid., 2-33.
98. Ibid., 4-17.
Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement

As Martin Luther King, Jr. grew up, he experienced the richness of social life on Auburn Avenue, but the constraints of racial prejudice and civil rights infringement also influenced his outlook. The young Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family lived on Auburn Avenue from the time he was born in 1929 until 1941 (Figure 18). During this period, the neighborhood was a vibrant center of social life and thriving enterprise. The King family witnessed the gradual changes in the neighborhood when it entered into a state of decline.

Throughout the South, civil rights advocacy relied on strong communities led by outspoken religious leaders. A new generation of southern black ministers, including Martin Luther King, Sr., Reverend Ralph David Abernathy (who mentored Martin Luther King, Jr. as a young minister), Reverend C. K. Steele, and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, took the lead organizing protests against segregationist policies at both the local and at the national level. For example, Martin Luther King, Sr. led a large rally and march on city hall in 1935 as part of a voter registration drive and demand for voting rights. The King children grew up with close ties to Ebenezer Baptist Church on Auburn Avenue, where Martin Luther King, Jr. would eventually serve as co-pastor with his father (Figure 19). When asked in an interview how he became interested in civil rights, the younger King responded: “My home influenced me because my father as a minister was always interested in civil rights and helping people who had been treated unjustly or unfairly. As a young college student I was concerned about segregation and I always felt that one of the important roles of a minister is leadership in getting rid of segregation and discrimination.”

100. Ibid., 1.
103. Oppermann, 530 Auburn Avenue Historic Structure Report, 16.
The collective effort that formed the civil rights movement lasted over a fourteen-year period between 1954 and 1968. Legal racial segregation in public places continued after World War II throughout the South, where 70 percent of the national population of African Americans lived. In 1944, only five percent of African American adults in the South were registered voters. The NAACP spearheaded challenges to segregation and disfranchisement and remained the dominant national civil rights organization during the 1940s and 1950s. The major focus of civil rights activists became desegregation. The effect of the widespread protests against segregation in public areas and in schools culminated in the landmark Supreme Court Case Brown v. Board of Education on May 17, 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in schools was unconstitutional. The court ruling began the painful process of desegregation throughout the South, starting with the National Guard–enforced desegregation of a high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. Oftentimes, the process of desegregation in schools during the 1950s and 1960s heightened violent racial tensions and prompted counter-protests.

Dr. King urged civil rights activists to follow the Christian doctrines of nonviolence, redemption through suffering, and love for all during the protests. Dr. King was also deeply familiar with the principles of civil disobedience articulated by Henry David Thoreau and exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi during the India independence movement. He agreed with Gandhi’s use of passive resistance as the most effective means of civil disobedience to create radical change in legal policy and social structure. As the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Dr. King rose to regional leadership in the civil rights movement (Figure 20).

Dr. King developed new strategies of protest: massive marches and nonviolent demonstrations that directly confronted the system of segregation ingrained in American society and politics. The boycott of segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama, from 1955 to 1956 began the widespread organized protests of the civil rights movement. In May 1961, Dr. King was a central participant in meetings conducted at Ebenezer Baptist Church by the SCLC, Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and other community activist organizations to form the Freedom Ride Coordinating Committee. Through the SCLC, Dr. King directed widespread nonviolent protests against segregation in Birmingham and Selma, Alabama; Atlanta and Albany, Georgia; St. Augustine, Florida; and elsewhere. Dr. King and his activists elicited considerable sympathy and support when media coverage showed violent reaction to civil rights activists.

Several years before 1963, the NAACP began to use the motto “Free by ‘63,” alluding to the centennial anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Other groups adopted the motto and focused more attention on the drive for equality. Sit-ins, boycotts, Freedom Rides, and local demands for inclusion in the political process pushed for progress in federal legislation, through the 1950s and early 1960s. On July 2, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, protecting the voting rights of every citizen under the Fourteenth Amendment and the right to vote under the Fifteenth Amendment. It ended unequal application of voter registration requirements as well as racial segregation in all schools, the workplace, and facilities that served the public. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. occurred at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968. King’s family and close advisors returned his body to Atlanta. His funeral procession drew many thousands of supporters who crowded along the edges of Auburn Avenue. Following his death, the SCLC and other black activist organizations continued civil protests. However, these organizations’ beliefs and tactics varied widely, and their subsequent campaigns did not have the powerful cohesion that generally characterized the progressive campaigns led by Dr. King.

Several historic designations identify the significance of the Auburn Avenue area, though each with different boundaries. Two National Register historic districts were established in the 1970s. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District Landmark was established in 1974, and the Sweet Auburn Historic District was established in 1976. The birth home was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976. The historic district became a local historic district, as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District, in 1977. In October 1980, the National Park Service established Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site to commemorate his life and accomplishments. In 1989, the City of Atlanta, through the Atlanta Urban Design Commission, established the local Martin Luther King, Jr. Landmark District, consolidating two existing city preservation districts. On October 30, 1992, the NPS expanded the boundary of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District (as it is typically referred to) (Figure 21). NPS expanded the existing district boundary a second time in 1994, and a third time in 2001. In August 1983, federal legislation was adopted designating the third Monday in January as the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday. The Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC) is a nonprofit community development corporation that was cofounded by Dr. King’s wife, Coretta Scott King; his sister, Christine King Farris; and John Cox in 1980. It is an all-volunteer, neighborhood-based organization dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District. The HDDC is comprised of neighborhood residents, community leaders, community business people, and professional advisors. The HDDC’s goal is to restore the area to the proud, economically diverse, and viable community that once existed, and to maintain its historic character while preventing displacement of long-term residents. The HDDC was active in saving many of the residential resources in the district from complete dilapidation and teardown.

111. Ibid.
In 1994, the NPS completed a historic resource study for the entire Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Preservation District, followed by a 1995 cultural landscape report on the Birth Home Block. The cultural landscape report addressed the streetscape and yards within the Birth Home Block in anticipation of the expanded scope of rehabilitation planned before the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. A significant change in character along the Birth Home Block is the disappearance of commercial structures and the removal of most of its historic secondary structures. The only existing store structure that remains in the area is in the front yard of 521 Auburn Avenue. The store is no longer used for commercial purposes. At present, there is no active commercial structure or interpretation of this once-significant historic feature within the Birth Home Block. Several buildings within the historic district included small shops, including the adjacent lot at 540 Auburn Avenue, which had a small store at the rear of the house and in the basement area. A historic photograph from the Atlanta History Center depicts another type of typical secondary structure, an outhouse, which existed at most of the houses along Auburn Avenue (Figure 22). With the incorporation of modern plumbing, it is understandable why these secondary structures are gone.

NPS has three pieces of legislation that have guided park preservation, management, and facility development. The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Strategic Plan, 2006–2011 briefly summarizes each law as follows:

-Public Law 96-428 established Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site on October 10, 1980. This legislation established the original boundary of the national historic site (NHS). The boundary generally centered on a portion of Auburn Avenue that includes Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthplace, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and the immediate neighborhood.

-Public Law 102-575 (1992) modified the boundary of Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS and Preservation District. The additional land acquisitions authorized by the 1992 legislation have largely been completed, and visitor facilities have been constructed.

116. Ibid., 17.
-Public Law 108-314 (2004) expanded the boundary to enhance emergency street access to the NHS Visitor Center and Museum. The act authorized the Secretary to exchange a vacant lot on Edgewood Avenue (comprising three small tracts) for property owned by the City of Atlanta immediately adjacent to the Visitor Center and Museum.117

-H.R. 2880 (introduced 2016) redesignates the Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS as the “Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park.” The measure also proposes to expand the boundary to include the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge at the corner of Auburn Avenue and Hilliard Street and properties associated with Martin Luther King, Jr. on Sunset Avenue on the west side of the city.118

117. NPS. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Strategic Plan, Martin Luther King Historic Site and Preservation District, National Park Service. 2006–2011, 7.
PART I - CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT AND USE

I.B Chronology of Development and Use

Introduction

The Birth Home Block developed as the southern edge of a substantial late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century middle-class residential community. The boundary of the neighborhood extends from Jackson Street at the west, to Randolph Street at the east, to Forrest Avenue at the north. The most intact historic area of Auburn Avenue lies between Boulevard and Howell; the Birth Home Block is the current name for the neighborhood because it includes the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Birth Home Block of Auburn Avenue contains the oldest residential resources and the highest level of historic integrity.

The Birth Home Block housed boarders and tenants starting as early as 1900, and some houses remained in the ownership of the original property owner until the mid-twentieth century. Important to note are certain gaps in the historical data in public records pertaining to the ownership history of the resources and the occupational status of residents of Auburn Avenue. Census records did not include all of the boarders during the high point of residential occupation of the structures along Auburn Avenue; the multi-tenancy of Auburn Avenue residences peaked throughout the 1930s and 1940s. City directories often do not address these boarders, particularly the weekly or monthly boarders typical among laborers and in this neighborhood. Atlanta city records are limited with respect to this data, and do not encompass the full extent of African American history.

John Lynch owned much of the area that became the Birth Home Block in the late 1800s. Lynch developed a few buildings in these blocks, including a structure near the corner of Wheat and Hogue Streets. Mapping does not indicate additional structures in the triangular-shaped lot (“triangle block”) bounded by [North and South] Wheat and Howland Streets (Figure 23). The height of the early development of Auburn


Figure 23. 1878 map showing holdings by John Lynch along Wheat Street between Hogue and Howland (now Howell) Streets. 546 Auburn Avenue is located in the eastern triangular-shaped block. Southern and Southwestern Surveying and Publishing Company, City Atlas of Atlanta, Georgia. Available from Emory University, http://disc.library.emory.edu/atlantamaps/2012/10/ (accessed February 14, 2017).

Avenue started when the heirs of John Lynch began to divide and sell his properties on Wheat Street between Jackson and Howell Streets (now Howell) in 1880.

Initial Construction

Note: Address 546 Auburn Avenue is the Listed Classified Structure name for this property. City directories and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps list this address as 422 until the mid-1920s. After 1927, this address became 546 Auburn Avenue.

Alfred S. Jenkins was one of the first people to purchase from the Lynch heirs. Jenkins sold several blocks of property in 1894 to Fitzhugh Knox, an early Atlanta real estate tycoon. Jenkins purchased the triangle block in 1880 from Mary Goldsmith, and he began to develop the triangle block bounded by Wheat, Old Wheat, and Howell

121. Ibid.
Streets. The Baylor Atlas from 1894 (Figure 1) recorded the property owners of portions of Auburn Avenue, formerly named Wheat Street, and the street running parallel to it at the north, Old Wheat Street. Jenkins (1842–1910) was a native of Gwinnett County, Georgia, and he lived with his wife Mildred (Millie) nearby on Wheat Street as early as 1891. By 1899 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps depict this block of Auburn Avenue; address 540 (listed on the map as 422) is the only triangle block property included. The map does not include any land east of 540 (Figure 24), therefore 546 Auburn Avenue does not appear on the map. Jenkins was the sole property owner of the lots that comprise the triangle block at the east end of Auburn Avenue since circa 1890 until he sold the property to his son in 1899. The elder Jenkins died in 1910.

The building at 546 is a one-story wood-frame Folk Victorian structure with clapboard siding, built in

![Figure 24. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Fulton County, Georgia, Auburn Avenue, 1899. 546 Auburn Avenue was likely constructed at this date but is not depicted on the map. The closest address depicted is 540 Auburn Avenue (indicated with a heavy dashed line.](image)

![Figure 25. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Fulton County, Georgia, Auburn Avenue, 1911.](image)
Avenue and Howell Street (date unknown) which raised the ground level of the triangle on these two sides three to four feet above the sidewalk grade.”

Appendix A, Sheet A-01 depicts the footprint of the house in 1911.

Early Tenants of 546 Auburn Avenue
The house was tenant-occupied beginning at the turn of the century. Jenkins first rented this house out to a number of short-term occupants, all white. Tenants included George T. and Ida Oxford in 1905. By 1908 the Forrester family occupied the house, including Clifford and his son Samuel, both pressmen at Fulton Bag and Cottom Mill, and Clifford’s wife, Carrie.

The 1910 federal census shows that an African American family occupied the house. John Watkins, a candy-maker, lived at the house with his wife, Beatrice, and daughter, Willie, both laundresses, and his son, Howard, a butler. Fifteen year old twins, Jessie and Bessie Watkins, also lived at the house with their family. The 1920 census shows that the older Watkins children no longer resided in the house. The family then shared the house with two other families, including William E. Letman (also spelled Lettman), a chauffeur, and his wife, Jessie, as well as Carrie Moore and Charlotte Moore, an insurance agent in 1922. The Watkins and Letman families continued to share the house in 1930. The Letmans’ children also resided at the house as well as Charlotte Moore and James Allison. The census lists Moore and Allison as family members (aunt and cousin).

Subsequent residents included Sol (also spelled Saul) and Callie Gresham, who moved to the house in 1936. The Greshams occupied the home for nearly 35 years. Mr. Gresham was a Pullman Company employee born in 1907 in Rayles,

129. Lawliss, Cultural Landscape Report, 104.
Historic Structure Report: 546 Auburn Avenue, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site  

Georgia.

Physical Changes to the House and Lot

The Sanborn map (Figure 25) depicts the footprint of the house in 1911. The 1911 and 1931 Sanborn maps show an outbuilding in the northwest corner of the property (Figure 26). The use of this building is unknown, but consistent with other outbuildings of this size in the neighborhood, it may have been an outhouse. By 1931, the younger Jenkins had extended the back of the house to the current-day footprint. Improvements included a back porch and larger rooms on the north side of the structure. Appendix A, Sheet A-02 depicts the first floor plan ca. 1931. A 1949 aerial image shows evidence of this addition as well (Figure 27). The property had a hedge on the southern property line and a fence along the northern property line. Brick walks with granite curbs lined the street. A Works Progress Administration project recorded site features for the property in 1937 (Figure 28).

Krick Ownership

The house remained in the ownership of the Jenkins family well into the twentieth century, until 1963, when Edward Krick purchased the property and continued to lease the house to tenants. Krick operated a grocery on this same block in the 1950s and 1960s. There is little documentation to changes made to the house during the Krick ownership period. There is evidence that a fire occurred in this structure at some point. The date of this fire is unknown. Rehabilitation plans and on-site investigation revealed that roof members showed historical signs of fire. This structure remained a single-family residence with multiple tenants until the 1990s, when the NPS converted the building into a duplex for tenant-lease.

In an effort to revitalize and stabilize the Birth Home Block, Ebenezer Baptist Church began acquiring dilapidated houses in the area in the late 1970s. On September 12, 1978, Edward Krick sold the house to the church. EBeneezer Baptist in turn sold the house to the Trust for Public Land (TPL) on January 12, 1981. TPL was working toward plans to establish the national historic site. According to an interview with former TPL president Martin Rosen, the organization spent a time in Atlanta examining property records and purchasing key parcels to help protect resources on the Birth Home Block. The organization stopped demolition permits for dilapidated houses with the vision of making “this a historic district, to display the best of Reverend King’s neighborhood when it was alive and vibrant.” Efforts to stabilize the house and upgrade it for future residential use commenced.

References:

140. A detailed Chain of Title is located in Appendix B.
141. NPS, “Backs of Building Inventories for 526, 550, 540, 546 Auburn Avenue,” 2.
143. Deed book 7051/344, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Fulton County, GA.
144. Deed book 9222/448, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Fulton County, GA.
NPS and Trust for Public Land Changes

HUD Self-Help Grant 1981
The Atlanta Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC) and the King Center obtained a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to fund architectural rehabilitation plans to repair the dilapidated state of several houses on the Birth Home Block. The rehabilitation project included addresses 540, 546, 550, 568, and 568-A Auburn Avenue. The sponsors for this project included HDDC, whose mission is to “facilitate the preservation, revitalization and non-displacement of residents in the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic District.” HDDC granted TPL a preservation easement prior to the commencement of this work.

The rehabilitation plans for 546 Auburn Avenue involved extensive renovations to both the interior and exterior of the structure. Prior to the rehabilitation, photographic evidence shows that the house was in extremely poor condition from decades of neglect, thus recommendations included in the Martin Luther King Historic District, Self-Help Project documents are extensive (Figure 29). Recommendations include the following:

Old Wheat Street (North) Elevation
- Demolition of entire existing burned out roof.
- Rebuild of roof to match original in shape, pitch, and soffit details.
- Demolition and rebuild of roof and back porch addition to match original (retention of undamaged ceiling joists).
- Repair of existing chimneys; retention of existing fireplaces.
- Removal and retention of all salvageable interior features, including interior doors, windows, and trim.
- Retention of exterior clapboard siding and trim on addition.
- Demolition of interior partitions.
- Removal of existing sawn decorative trim on porch for use as a template for new trim.
- Demolition of all existing brick piers, rebuild of 16" × 16" brick piers at house corners with concrete footings, reuse of brick where possible, rebuild of intermediate brick piers with concrete block infill.
- Demolition and rebuild of concrete steps at front porch.
- Replacement of exterior windows to match original.
- Demolition of existing back porch and porch roof and rebuild to match (reuse of original material where possible).

East and West Elevations
- Removal and replacement of all clapboard on east and west elevations.
- Replacement of soffit and fascia damaged by fire as needed.

Interior Recommendations
- Refinish and sand entry floors.
- Addition of sheet vinyl to kitchen, bath, and laundry rooms.

Auburn Avenue (South) Elevation
- Removal and rebuild of entire existing burned out roof to match existing.
- Replacement of exterior windows to match original.
- Rebuild of exterior wall.
- Replacement of existing clapboard, fascia, window and door trim, and architectural details to match existing (reuse of existing materials where possible).
- Replacement of existing corner piers and rebuild to match original.
- Installation of flashing at all valleys, chimneys, and porch connections.
- Installation of galvanized drip edge on all roofs.
- Retention of existing door.
- Demolition of concrete steps and rebuild to match original.

149. The term “Self-Help Project” refers to these plans throughout this HSR.
Removal of wrought iron railing from steps (without replacement).
- Demolition of existing stair wall and rebuild to match original.
- Demolition of foundation in specific locations.
- Repointing of retaining wall as necessary.

Environmental compliance and planning for the execution of the Self-Help plans occurred over the subsequent years beginning in 1982.

Undated photos show the house during extensive rehabilitation (Figure 30 and Figure 31). Figure 32 shows the house shortly after the NPS completed rehabilitation efforts. Appendix A, Sheet A-03 depicts the first floor plan of the house in prior to execution of the plans in 1982.

The NPS acquired the structures on the triangle block in 1983. In 1985, the Washington, D.C., Office of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Southeast Regional Office undertook a recordation of sites associated with the Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS. The project recorded “the interrelationship of residential, commercial and religious architecture of the Birth Home Block and sites associated with Dr. King.”

This project documented the front facades of addresses 472–550 Auburn Avenue. Figure 33 shows this HABS illustration.

The NPS purchased the preservation easement for these properties from HDDC in 1986. Subsequently, rehabilitation efforts of the structure and the surrounding site continued under the NPS. In 1987 NPS began planning work for the repair

150. According to the American Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) website, before commencing projects involving historic properties, “Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment. The historic preservation review process mandated by Section 106 is outlined in regulations issued by ACHP.” At MALU, extensive projects require an additional clearance from the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
153. Deed book 10325/411, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Fulton County, GA.
of the stone wall in front of all of the properties within the triangular block along Auburn Avenue. This project included rehabilitation of the stone retaining wall and brick sidewalk that run along the south property lines of 540, 546, and 550 Auburn Avenue adjacent to the public right-of-way. Construction of the stone wall was to match “historic fabric” complete with drainage behind the wall. The NPS proposed a brick walkway set in sand on a mortar or concrete base. Archeologists consulted prior to the project recommended archeological monitoring during the construction project due to the potential disturbance of “currently unidentified archeological resources or historic fabric.”

546 Auburn Avenue was listed in the National Register of Historic places in 1994. Changes to the site continued in 1994, when the NPS planned for the reintroduction of hedges and a fence at address 546 Auburn Avenue. The 1937 Cadastral Survey provided the fence and hedge locations. According to correspondence with the State Historic Preservation Office, “because of a lack of documentation on the exact type of fence present during the historic period” the type of fence proposed in the rear yard was based on findings in the cultural landscape report.

The NPS commenced a project to repair and replace damaged gutters, downspouts, and fascia boards on the structure in 2016. The work order specifies that “all replacement work should match in-kind the historic character-defining feature in material, profile, [and] all other characteristics.” Archeologists consulted prior to the project recommended archeological monitoring during the construction project due to the potential disturbance of “currently unidentified archeological resources or historic fabric.”

After this repair project, the NPS painted the exterior of the structure at 546 Auburn Avenue. Appendix A, Sheet A-04 depicts the evolution of building footprints, outbuildings, and site features at addresses 540–550 Auburn Avenue.

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155. Ibid., 5-7.
156. Ibid., 16-17.
157. Deputy Associate Regional Director, Cultural Resources, Southeast Region to Superintendent, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, April 11, 1994.
158. Paul B. Hartwig to Dr. Elizabeth Lyon, February 3, 1994.
159. NPS, PEPC – NHPA/CRM Cultural Specialists Reviews, Emergency Replacement of Gutters and downs on 546 Auburn Avenue, 63535, March 1, 2016.
Timeline

1871  Ruger’s bird’s-eye map of Atlanta shows little development on Wheat Street (later Auburn Avenue) east of Butler Street.

1880  Alfred S. Jenkins purchases property on Wheat Street from the heirs of John Lynch.

1890s  Jenkins constructs buildings on Wheat Street including current day 546 Auburn Avenue.

1890–1920  Brick sidewalk constructed on north side of Wheat, east of Howell Street.

1891  Alfred S. Jenkins lives on Wheat Street.

1893  After petitions from residents, the Atlanta City Council approves renaming Wheat Street to Auburn Avenue. Name change apparently anticipated when 1892 city directory and Sanborn map list Auburn Avenue.

1895  Booker T. Washington delivers the Atlanta Compromise, one of the most influential speeches on race in US history, at the Cotton States and International Exposition.

1899  Sanborn map shows portions of Auburn Avenue and Old Wheat Street; only a portion of the 500 block of current-day Auburn Avenue is included.

1906  In a four-day race riot, incited, in part, by gubernatorial campaign and related sensationalized news stories of black crime, white mobs attack black people and property in Atlanta, killing dozens and physically injuring hundreds.

1908–1910  Most houses on this block of Auburn Avenue, formerly owned or occupied by whites, become owned or occupied by African Americans.

1910  Alfred S. Jenkins dies.

1910–1930  Long-time tenant John Watkins and his family occupy 546 Auburn Avenue.

1911  Sanborn map shows house footprints omitted from the 1899 map, including 546, Auburn Avenue (listed as address 422 on this map) and the triangle lot. It depicts an outbuilding at the northwest corner of 546 Auburn Avenue.

1911–1928  Several duplex residences constructed behind the larger houses on Auburn Avenue.

5/21/1917  Great Atlanta Fire starts a few blocks away but does not reach this block.

1920  The Moore and Letman families share the residence at 546 Auburn Avenue with the Watkins family. Additional tenants are listed in federal census.
1920s  River stone aggregate sidewalk is set on a large portion of Auburn Avenue east to the intersection at Howell Street.

c. 1922  Matthew Jenkins constructs a triangular-shaped flat-iron building at the intersection of Old Wheat and Auburn Avenue.

1924–27  Auburn Avenue street numbers change: 422 becomes 546 Auburn Avenue.

1929  Martin Luther King, Jr. is born and lives at 501 Auburn Avenue.

1930  US Coast & Geodetic Survey map, prepared 1927–29, depicts Auburn Avenue.

1931  Matthew Jenkins adds an extension to the rear of 546 Auburn Avenue, expanding the building footprint to its current size.

1932  Sanborn map shows Auburn Avenue.

1936  Sol and Callie Gresham move into 546 Auburn Avenue.

1937  Landscape features at 546 Auburn Avenue include a hedge on the southern property line and a fence along the northern property line.

1941  Twelve-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr. moves from his birth home at 501 Auburn Avenue.

1948  King leaves Atlanta to study at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania and at Boston University.

1949  Atlanta Negro Voters League is founded.

1956  Dr. Matthew Jenkins dies. The property is inherited by his daughter Ruth Jenkins Vickery.

1963  Edward Krick purchases addresses 540, 546, and 550 Auburn Avenue.

1963–1990s  During the Krick period of ownership, a fire causes damage at 546 Auburn Avenue.

1964  Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed.

1968  Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated.

1973  Maynard Jackson becomes Atlanta’s first black mayor.

1974  MLK, Jr. National Register Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1980 Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS established.

1980 Historic District Development Corporation organized.

1980s Trust for Public Land (TPL) begins buying properties in Auburn neighborhood.

1980s Self-Help plan recommendations implemented to rehabilitate 546 Auburn Avenue; building becomes a leased duplex residence.

1983 NPS purchases 540, 546, and 550 Auburn Avenue from TPL.

1985 HABS recordation of the resources along Auburn Avenue, including facade drawings of 546 Auburn Avenue.

1986 GMP for MALU completed.

1989 MLK, Jr. Landmark District designated by the City of Atlanta.

1994 Historic resource study of the NHS completed.

1995 Cultural landscape report on the Birth Home Block completed.

1990s NPS converts the single-family residence at 546 Auburn Avenue into a duplex for tenant-lease.

Mid-1990s NPS purchases several properties in preparation for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

2001 National Register boundary increased.

I.C Physical Description

The Old Fourth Ward and Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site

The Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS is located within the historic Old Fourth Ward, a historically mixed-use neighborhood situated 1.25 miles east of Atlanta’s business district. The Old Fourth Ward developed in the late-nineteenth century. By the 1900s, the area became an important social, economic, and cultural center for Atlanta’s African American community. A large number of historically significant civic, religious, and business institutions located themselves in Old Fourth Ward, in particular in the area around Auburn Avenue, historically known as “Sweet Auburn.”

Dr. King’s birthplace is located at 501 Auburn Avenue. The 500 block of Auburn Avenue, between Boulevard and Howell Street, comprises the Birth Home Block. Today, the Birth Home Block retains its historic residential character and setting. The majority of the structures in the neighborhood and within the Birth Home Block currently are owner-occupied, tenant-occupied, or used and managed by the NPS. Historic houses line both sides of the 500 block of Auburn Avenue. These houses are all frame structures that occupy narrow lots. The buildings reflect a variety of architectural forms and styles, including the two-story Queen Anne–style house of King’s birth and Victorian shotgun duplexes. Most of the lots on the 500 block feature shallow front yards planted in grass. Some of the yards feature shrubs and the occasional shade tree. The houses occupy most of the lot width, leaving only narrow side yards. Several of the houses feature wooden fences along the front property line or low retaining walls that create terraced front yards.

Auburn Avenue itself runs east-west and is part of the grid system that is characteristic of the overall neighborhood. The road accommodates two-way traffic. It is approximately 40 feet wide, with parallel parking spaces on either side. Brick sidewalks, 7.5 feet wide, occupy both sides of this area of the 500 block of Auburn Avenue. There are low curbs consisting of Stone Mountain granite between the sidewalks and the streets. There are overhead utility lines suspended from utility poles located near the curbs on both sides of the street.

The blocks north and east of the 500 block continue the residential character of the neighborhood. The area west of the Birth Home Block features several significant commercial and civic buildings, including the Atlanta Life Building, Bethlehem A.M.E. Church, and Butler Street YMCA.

546 Auburn Avenue: The Site

One of three houses located on a triangular block bound by Auburn Avenue to the south, Howell Street to the west, and Old Wheat Street to the north, the house located at 546 Auburn Avenue faces south toward Auburn Avenue (Figure 34). Set between houses at 550 and 540 Auburn Avenue, it shares its east and west side yards. A stone retaining wall that abuts a herringbone brick sidewalk along Auburn Avenue defines the front yards (Figure 35). Twelve concrete steps with an intermediate landing lead from the sidewalk to the front porch. The stair
is flanked by two ornamental shrubs, and a mature tree grows to its west. All yards are covered with grass.

The yard to the east is open to the adjacent house, except for a short length of wood picket fence. This fence runs from the rear yard of the property southward. Two HVAC condensing units, one for each apartment, sit on concrete pads in the east yard.

The rear yard is enclosed by a short wood and welded metal mesh fence, typically set back 6'-0" south of a granite curb. A gate at the far west end of the fence provides access to the yard from Old Wheat Street (Figure 36).

546 Auburn Avenue: The House

Measured drawings depicting existing conditions at 546 Auburn Avenue are located in Appendix C of this report.

This house is a single-story structure of light wood framing built on brick foundations over an unfinished crawl space. The structure includes two residential apartments.

Painted weatherboards with typical 5-inch exposure clad exterior walls above brick piers; at the south elevation, a solid brick wall supports the front porch. Installed during the Self-Help Project, stucco-covered concrete block walls fill spaces between brick piers on all elevations. Wood trim, scrollwork, handrails, guardrails, and porch framing are painted, with minimal molding, decorative trim, and detailing.

The roughly square main block of the house includes a single projecting bay to the west end of the south elevation and two projecting bays on the north elevation. A variety of roof forms are present: The main block of the house is covered by a hipped roof with additional gabled roof facing east; the western bay is covered by a gable running north to south, projecting beyond the hipped main roof to the south. Added wings extending north are covered by hipped roofs, and a low-slope shed roof covers the small rear porch between the north wings.

As shown in the 1982 Self-Help Project demolition plans and supported by period photographs and maps, the original plan of the house included a central hallway running north to south with four
rooms opening directly to the hallway (Figure 37). The secondary gabled wing to the northwest and a smaller room located to the northeast likely opened directly to the rear porch, since demolished and reconstructed (Figure 38).

Presently, the front door opens directly into a small rectangular vestibule with doorways to the east and west opening into living rooms of the two residential apartments (Figure 39). To the west, the living room is linked directly by a small kitchen to the north, further north are located a bedroom and a bathroom. The easternmost apartment includes two bedrooms and a bathroom north of the kitchen and living room.

The projecting bay to the west and original front porch dominate the asymmetrical south elevation. Centered on the projecting gable is a wood louvered vent, and below it a two-over-two double-hung window. Although partially reconstructed as part of the Self-Help Project, the porch keeps its original form, size, and location.

The east elevation includes an east-facing gable end to the south and a hipped roof to the north. A vertical wood board interrupts the weatherboards below the valley created by the hipped and gable roof. The materials and finishes are typical. The two northernmost windows are approximately four inches shorter than the window centered about the
gable end. A louvered wood vent is at the center of the gable above this window (Figure 40).

The west elevation includes the hipped roof of the projecting wing to the north and the north-south gabled roof of the main block’s west bay (Figure 41). A vertical wood board interrupts the weatherboards where the main block of the house and north wing meet. Two windows are located in the main block of the house and one at the north wing, the latter approximately 4 inches shorter with a 4-inch lower sill height. All windows have insect screens.

On the north elevation, the small rear porch between the two north-projecting wings is covered by a shed roof (Figure 36). A typical double-hung window is centered under the ridge of each hipped roof. A smaller double-hung wood window is roughly centered between the two wings. A wood access door, located to the west of the porch, provides access to an unfinished crawl space.

All original interior plaster wall and ceiling finishes, wood lath, wood door and window trim, and most floor finishes were removed or obscured as part of the Self-Help Project. Original fireplaces remain behind gypsum wallboard finishes, and original chimneys extend above the main roof.

**Structural Systems**

**Foundation/Basement**

The foundation consists of brick piers with concrete masonry unit (CMU) infill sections around the perimeter of the building and mortared brick or dry stacked CMU piers supporting beams at the interior of the building. Judging by their appearance, the owners added the CMU piers over the years (Figure 42). There are signs of previous termite damage, but no active termites were observed.

A mortared stacked stone wall runs along the sidewalk on the south side of the building. The wall retains approximately 5'-0" of soil to create the front yard and shows signs of overturning and cracking in the mortar on the portion west of the front stairs. The lower portion of the concrete stair to the sidewalk has settled and a crack has formed in the riser between the lower portion and the upper portion (Figure 43). The front porch is constructed of wood joists, beams, and tongue and groove deck boards supported by brick and CMU knee walls. The roof is 2 × 4 rafters supported by 2 × 8 beams on 6 × 6 wood columns. The rear porch is constructed of wood posts and beams supporting wood joists and deck boards. The porches are connected to the building with ledgers nailed to the building framing. At both porches, the steps are wood stringers and treads with wood railings and posts. The wood stringers and post at the east side of the front porch and at the rear porch are in contact with the ground and do not appear to be pressure-treated. One of the posts at the rear porch bears on top of the stringer and the connection does not appear to be stiff enough to resist minimum design loads.

161. Note: This report uses does not use the double prime symbol (") when describing nominal lumber sizes. An × symbol means “by” in the nominal description. Descriptions of actual lumber dimensions use the double prime symbol.
Exterior & Interior Wood-Framed Walls
The wall framing is 2 × 4 studs.

Flooring System
The floor joists run east-west and are 2 × 8 set at 24" on center. These are supported by four lines of beams running north-south. The floor beam at the northwestern bay of the building appears to be twisted, possibly due to inadequate support from the CMU pier.

Roofing System
The roof framing of the eastern section of the building consists of 2 × 6 rafters at 16" on center connecting to a ridge, with hip beams and live valley beams that bear on support posts bearing on wall framing below. There are kickers at the mid-span of the rafters that bear on the interior load-bearing wall below running north-south (Figure 44). There is evidence of a fire with soot-stained rafters and beams under newer plywood roof sheathing.

The roof framing of the western section of the building consists of 2 × 6 rafters at 16" on center connecting to a ridge, with hip beams and live valley beams that bear on support posts bearing on wall framing below. There is a beam at midheight of the rafters with kickers at 4 feet on center that bear on the interior load-bearing wall below running north-south. There are two layers of ceiling joists, the higher approximately 16 inches above the lower, to which the ceiling is attached. Possibly one was added when the roof was rebuilt after the fire.

Utilities
Mechanical System
Four fireplaces once provided heat for the house. Now covered with gypsum wallboard, the fireplaces are not visible from the interior. The brick bases of the fireplaces are visible from the crawl space, and the chimneys are visible in the attic and extend above the roof.

Modern split-system air-conditioning equipment provides heating and cooling to interior spaces via insulated ductwork routed in the attic. Condensing units are located on grade in the east side yard and air-handling units are in the attic, mounted (Figure 45).

No exhaust fans are located in bathrooms.

Electrical System
Georgia Power provides electrical service to the house. Service enters the house from a meter located on the west elevation near the middle of the house (Figure 46).

Interior and exterior lighting fixtures and other devices are modern in style, material, and period.
of manufacture, and generally consistent with the 1980s Self-Help Project. Later additions include updated ceiling fans in living rooms and bedrooms.

Components of a monitored security, smoke, and fire alarm system were observed; however, the operation of the system was not confirmed.

**Plumbing System**
The City of Atlanta provides water and sewage services. All fixtures, pipes, and fittings located in the house are modern in style, material, and period of manufacture and consistent with the Self-Help Project period or later.

Kitchens each include a double-bowl stainless steel sink. Bathrooms include a pedestal-mounted porcelain lavatory, toilet, and bathtub, all modern in design. Fixture designs are consistent with work performed during the Self-Help Project.

A natural gas meter is located on the west elevation near the northwest corner of the house (Figure 47). Gas water heaters are located in the attic (Figure 48).

**Exterior Features**

**Roofs and Drainage**
A variety of roof forms are present. The main block of the house is covered by a hipped roof with an additional gabled roof facing east, and the western bay is covered by a gable running north to south, projecting beyond the hipped main roof to the south. Two wings to the north are covered by hipped roofs, and low-slope shed roofs cover the small rear porch between the north wings and the front porch.

Rectangular composite shingles cover all roofs, and attic vents are located at all ridges.

Half-round painted-metal gutters and round downspouts carry runoff to grade. Cast concrete splash pans help to direct drainage away from foundations.

**Chimneys**
Two brick chimneys extend above the roof. To the west, the chimney is roughly centered about the main block of the house, and to the east, roughly centered about the hipped roof to the east. The brick is exposed with a corbelled detail at the top, with a clay flue extending above. Erosion of mortar joints is visible on chimneys above the roof.

**Windows and Doors**

**Doors**
The exterior of the house includes two doorways, both serving the front porch; one door is fixed in place. Both are 3'-0" wide by 7'-0" tall raised-six-panel solid wood doors. The fixed door is located 5'-10" from the east corner of the house.

**Windows**
Typical across all elevations, windows are 65" tall two-over-two double-hung wood windows. Minor variations in height, width, and sill height exist and are noted in room descriptions. Wood-framed windows are located in all rooms.

**Figure 47.** West elevation, gas meters.

**Figure 48.** Water heater in attic.

**Figure 49.** South elevation prior to Self-Help Project (MALU Archives, Slide 546_06, undated).
insect screens are mounted at all windows and are secured with metal hooks and brackets at the head and by metal fasteners accessible from the interior at sills.

**Porches and Steps**

Partially reconstructed as part of the Self-Help Project, the asymmetrical hipped roof front porch generally retains its original form, size, and design (Figure 49).

The front porch measures 5'-6" deep and 21'-8" wide and sits at first-floor level on the north elevation. The 1 ½" wide by 3 ½" deep wood roof joists and 3 ½" wide by ¾" deep roof deck are exposed to below. The roof is covered with rectangular asphalt composite shingles with a metal drip edge, and a painted-metal half-round gutter runs east-west along the full width of the porch. Decorative scrollwork, cut from 2 × wood, runs between wood posts and the face of the house underneath a 9" deep by 5 ¼" wide wood beam. The three porch posts are 3 ½" by 3 ½" wood and are chamfered above the top of the wood railing and include trim cut from 1 ¼" wood with a crown molding, underneath the decorative scrollwork.

A porch railing includes two horizontal wood rails with an intermediate support span between porch posts. Railings measure 1 ½" by 3 ½" (Figure 50 and Figure 51). The top rail is at roughly 28" above the porch deck and the bottom rail is centered vertically on the space between these two elements.

There is no access from the interior of the house to the rear porch. Five wood steps to the east lead
up from the north yard to a rectangular wood deck framed with wood picket rails. A shed roof of exposed 2× wood rafters and plywood roof decking, exposed below, partially covers the porch (Figure 52).

The front porch has two sets of stairs. Twelve cast-in-place concrete steps, with an intermediate landing, provide access to the front porch from the sidewalk along Auburn Avenue. Simple handrails of 4 × 4 wood posts and 2 × 4 rails flank the steps. A set of three wood steps leads down from the east edge of the front porch to the east side yard, added after completion of the Self-Help Project (Figure 51). Access to the rear porch is provided by five wood steps with a wood handrail.

**Interior Features**

**Self-Help Grant**

Significant interior modifications to the house occurred during the 1980s as part of the Self-Help Project and to a lesser extent, later repair and remodeling projects. The extensive nature of this work renders difficult identification of any remaining original doors, wood trim, and windows and their locations based solely on a visual survey. Future paint analysis and selective demolition may reveal more about the vintage and location of original doors, windows, and walls.

Notable Self-Help Project alterations include: removal of existing interior wall finishes and wood trim, including all plaster walls, removal and replacement of doors and other interior features, modification of room configurations, and installation of new electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems throughout. All new hollow-core interior doors with modern hardware were installed.

**Interior Finishes**

New interior finishes were also installed at this time and include: ½” thick gypsum wallboard covering walls and ceilings; painted flat 1 × 4 wood window and door casings; painted flat 1 × 6 wood baseboards; and broadloom carpet with pad installed over existing or new wood subflooring. No decorative wood moldings remain and all wood trim, doors, and windows are painted.

Exceptions to the Self-Help Project standards are noted in the following individual room descriptions.

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**Vestibule 101**

This 6'11” by 4’-5 ½” vestibule provides access to both apartments. The addition of a wall to the north during the Self-Help remodeling project created this space; the front door originally opened directly into a central hallway.

**Flooring**

The floor is covered with 3 ½” width wood tongue and groove dark-stain finished floorboards.

**Baseboards**

The baseboards are 1 × 6 wood base with 1” quarter round shoe mold.

**Moldings (crown/picture rail, etc.)**

None existing.

**Ceiling**

The ceiling is covered with ½” thick gypsum wallboard. The ceiling is 10’-5” above the finished floor.

**Doorways**

The front door to the house is at center in the south wall; to the east and west are 3’-0” wide by 6’-8” tall modern flush wood doors with screened wood doors, providing access to each apartment.

**Windows**

None.

**Mechanical System**

None.

**Electrical System**

Two surface-mounted incandescent fixtures provide light to the space.
PART I - PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Living Room 102
This roughly square room measures 16’-1” wide east to west by 14’-11” north to south, and generally maintains its original configuration (Figure 53). This room is accessed from the west from Vestibule 101 and the room connects to Kitchen 103 to the west and Hall 104 to the north via gypsum wallboard openings.

Ceiling
The ceiling is 10’-6 ¼” above the finished floor.

Doorways
A single 3’-0” wide by 6’-8” tall flush solid-core wood door swings into the space from Vestibule 101. Hardware includes a modern brass lock set and deadbolt and peephole. A two-panel wood screened door swings into Vestibule 101, the bottom panel louvered and the upper panel framed in scrollwork (Figure 54).

Windows
Two double-hung two-over-two wood windows, 31” wide by 65” tall are located in this room, one roughly centered on the east wall, the second about 4’-7 ½” to centerline from the southwest corner of the room.

Mechanical System
Conditioned air is supplied via ceiling-mounted grilles connected to flexible insulated ducts above the ceiling. A thermostat is located on the north wall.

Electrical System
A single ceiling fan roughly centered on room with integral light fixtures provides light for the room. There is a doorbell mounted to the south wall (Figure 55).

Kitchen 103
The compact rectangular kitchen measures 9’-9 ½” north to south and 5’-11” east to west and connects directly to Living Room 102 through a 2’-9” wide by 6’-8” tall opening in the wall (Figure 56 and Figure 57).

Flooring
Faux-stone patterned sheet vinyl flooring cover wood subfloors. This flooring is modern in design and manufacture. A metal threshold is located at the entrance to the room.
Baseboards
Baseboards are a flat ¾" by 5 ½" wood base with a 1" diameter quarter round shoe mold.

Ceiling
The ceiling is covered in gypsum wallboard at a height of 10’-6" above finished floor.

Doorways
There are no doorways in this room.

Windows
None existing.

Mechanical System
Conditioned air is supplied via a ceiling-mounted stamped-metal grille from a flexible insulated duct in the attic.

Electrical System
A single ceiling-mounted fluorescent light fixture with an acrylic lens, roughly centered about the space, provides light. Ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) duplex outlets are located above the countertop.

Closet(s)
None.

Other Elements
Continuous modern wood veneer kitchen base and wall cabinets with plastic laminate countertops are located along the north and west walls, and a double-bowl stainless steel sink is located to the east. Appliances include a refrigerator, range, and range vent hood. Ceramic tiles (4” x 4”) are installed above a continuous plastic laminate backsplash.

Hall 104
Oriented north to south, this hallway connects Living Room 102 to the two bedrooms, Utility Room 106, and Bath 107 and measures 3’-7” by 11’-1" (Figure 58 and Figure 59).

Ceiling
The ceiling is 9’-9” above the finished floor. A 30” by 30” plywood attic access hatch is located at the north end of the room.

Doorways
Five doorways are located in this room. A 2’-6” wide by 6’-8” tall door with an 18” × 18” louver opens from Utility 106. A 2’-6” wide by 6’-8” tall door opens toward Bedroom 105. A two-leaf 4’-0” wide by 6’-8” sliding door serves the closet. A 2’-6”
PART I - PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Bedroom 105
This small bedroom is roughly square in plan, measuring 8'9" east to west by 8'8" north to south, and is accessed from Hall 104 to the west.

Windows
None.

Mechanical System
A return air grille is located in the southwest corner of the ceiling (Figure 58).

Electrical System
The electrical panel serving this apartment is located on the east wall. A single ceiling-mounted incandescent fixture provides light and a ceiling-mounted smoke detector is located in the room.

Closet(s)
One closet measuring 28" deep by 4'3" wide (with shelf and clothes rod) is located in this room.

Other Elements
None.

Bedroom 106
An entry alcove for the door measures 3'-8" by 2'-8 ½" (Figure 60).

Ceiling
The ceiling is 9'-8" above the finished floor.

Doorways
Two doorways are located in this room. A two-leaf 3'-10" wide by 6'-8" tall sliding door serves the closet and a 2'-6" wide by 6'-8" tall door opens into the room from Hall 104.

Windows
One two-over-two double-hung wood window, 31 ½" wide by 61 ½" tall with a sill height of 31 ½" is located on the east wall at the southeast corner of the room. Mini-blinds cover the window.

Mechanical System
Conditioned air is supplied to the room through a single ceiling-mounted stamped-metal grille roughly centered over the window on the east wall.

Electrical System
A ceiling fan with integral light fixture provides light.

Closet(s)
A single closet located in the southeast corner of the room, 21” deep by 74” wide east to west, includes a wood shelf and clothes rod.

**Other Elements**
None.

**Utility 106**
Accessed from Hall 104 to the east and serving as the laundry room for the easternmost apartment, this rectangular room measures 6’-7” wide east to west by 4’-1” north to south.

**Flooring**
Faux-stone patterned sheet vinyl flooring covers wood subfloors. This flooring is modern in design and manufacture. A metal threshold is located at the entrance to the room.

**Baseboards**
Baseboards are a flat ¾” by 5 ½” base with a 1” diameter quarter round shoe mold.

**Ceiling**
The ceiling height is 8’-0” above finished floor.

**Doorways**
A 2’-6” wide by 6’-8” tall door with an 18” by 18” louver opens to Hall 104.

**Windows**
None.

**Mechanical System**
No supply or return grilles are located in the space. A recessed wall-mounted drain and water supply is located on the west wall.

**Electrical System**
A single ceiling-mounted incandescent light fixture with glass diffuser, roughly centered about the space, provides light.

**Closet(s)**
None.

**Other Elements**
A residential washing machine is located in the space.

**Bath 107**
A small bathroom measuring 6’-8 ¾” east to west by 6’-9 ¾” north to south, this room includes an alcove for the bathtub at the north wall, and access is from Hall 104 to the east (Figure 61).

**Flooring**
Faux-stone patterned sheet vinyl flooring covers wood subfloors. This flooring is modern in design and manufacture and was installed in 2014 or 2015. A metal threshold is located at the entrance to the room.

**Baseboards**
Baseboards are a flat ¾” by 5 ½” base with a 1” diameter quarter round shoe mold.
Walls
Walls are typically painted gypsum wallboard, with a 4” by 4” square ceramic tile wainscot with coved ceramic tile cove cap extending 44” above the finished floor.

Ceiling
The ceiling height is 8’-0” above finished floor.

Doorways
A 2’-6” wide by 6’-8” tall door opens from Hall 104.

Windows
None.

Mechanical System
No supply or return grilles are located in this space. Plumbing fixtures located in the space include a modern pedestal lavatory, toilet, and bathtub with molded acrylic surround and shower curtain rod. No exhaust system exists.

Electrical System
A chrome-finished modern wall-mounted light fixture with four incandescent lamps is centered above the lavatory. A single GFCI outlet is roughly centered about the lavatory at 48” above the finished floor.

Closet(s)
None.

Other Elements
A mirrored metal medicine cabinet is centered above the lavatory.

Bedroom 108
A rectangular bedroom, measuring 15’-4 ¼” east to west and 10’-1” north to south is accessed from Hall 104 to the south. A closet wall forms a small alcove for the doorway (Figure 62).

Ceiling
The ceiling is 10’-1” above the finished floor.

Doorways
Two doorways are located in this room. A 2’-8” wide by 6’-8” tall door opens from Hall 104 and a two-leaf 3’-11” wide by 6’-8” tall sliding door provides access to the single closet.

Windows
Two two-over-two double-hung wood windows 27 ½” wide by 61” tall are located in this room. One is centered on the north wall 8’-6 ¾” from the northeast corner of the room with a sill height of 30” and one is on the east wall, centered at 3’-7 ½” from the northeast corner of the room with a sill.
Historic Structure Report: 546 Auburn Avenue, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

height of 28 ½”. Mini-blinds cover both windows (Figure 63).

**Mechanical System**
Conditioned air is supplied through a ceiling-mounted stamped-metal grille centered above the window on the north wall.

**Electrical System**
A ceiling fan with an integral light fixture located roughly in the center of the room provides light. A telephone outlet is mounted to the baseboard on the east wall.

**Closet(s)**
A single closet measuring 5’-10 ½” wide north to south and 2’-1 ¼” deep is located in the northwest corner of the room and includes a wood shelf and clothes rod (Figure 63).

**Other Elements**
None.

**Living Room 109**
This roughly square room measures 14’-5 ½” east to west and 13’-6 ¾” north to south and generally maintains its original size and shape. Access is directly from Vestibule 101 (Figure 64).

**Ceiling**
The ceiling height is 10’-1 3/8” above the finished floor.

**Doorways**
There are two doorways located in the room. A 3’-0” by 6’-8” solid-core flush wood door provides access from Vestibule 101 and includes a modern deadbolt and knob set with brass finish and door viewer. A screened door is mounted to the exterior of the frame. Access to the closet is through a pair of 23 ½” wide by 6’-8” tall louvered folding wood doors (Figure 65).

**Windows**
Two two-over-two double-hung wood windows are located in the room, both 27” wide by 61” tall. One window, centered on the south wall, is installed with its sill located 5” above the finished floor. The second window is located on the west wall 8’-1 ½” from the southwest corner of the room, with a sill height of 31 ½” above the finished floor.

**Mechanical System**
Conditioned air is provided through a ceiling-mounted stamped-metal grille to the east, and a ceiling-mounted return air grille is located at the northwest corner of the room. A thermostat is mounted on the partition separating the room from Kitchen 110, facing south.

**Electrical System**
A modern ceiling fan with an integral light fixture is roughly centered about the room. An alarm control panel is mounted adjacent to the closet on the north wall and a motion detector is mounted at the southwest corner of the room.

**Closet(s)**
One closet, measuring 2’-2” deep by 4’-9 ¾” wide is located in the northeast corner of the room, and has a shelf and clothes rod.

**Other Elements**
None.
PART I - PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Kitchen 110
This roughly square kitchen measures 13'-6" north to south and 14'-3 ¼" east to west (Figure 66). The room roughly maintains its original size and shape. The room is accessed directly from Living Room 109 to the south and from Bedroom 111 to the north.

Flooring
Carpet and pad covers roughly the western third of the room and faux-stone patterned sheet vinyl flooring covers the remainder of the room. The vinyl flooring is modern in design and manufacture.

Baseboards
Baseboards are a flat ¾" by 5 ½" wood base with a 1" diameter quarter round shoe mold at carpeted areas only.

Ceiling
The ceiling height is 10'-1 3/8" above the finished floor. An approximate 36" x 36" plywood attic access hatch is located over the north wall of the room.

Doorways
Three doorways serve this room. A pair of 2'-0" wide by 6'-8" tall doors opens from the laundry room. A 1'-6" wide by 6'-8" door opens from the mechanical closet. This door has two louvers centered horizontally on the door: a 10" by 10" louver integral to the door located low on the door and a 16" by 16" surface-mounted stamped-metal supply register for the air-handling unit high on
the door. A 2'-8" wide by 6'-8" tall door opens into Bedroom 111.

Windows
A single two-over-two double-hung wood window, 32" wide by 61" tall with a sill height of 32", is located in this room, centered 9'-0" from the northwest corner of the room on the west wall (Figure 67).

Mechanical System
A thermostat is installed at approximately 60" above finished floor and centered along the 3' wide wall facing west between Living Room 109 and Kitchen 110. Conditioned air is supplied to a ceiling-mounted stamped-metal grille roughly centered in the space. Return air flows through a door-mounted louver to the air-handling unit located in the northeast corner of the kitchen.

Electrical System
The electrical panel serving the apartment is located on the west wall of the kitchen (Figure 68). Two ceiling-mounted fluorescent light fixtures with acrylic lens, roughly centered north to south over the space, provide light to the room.

Closet(s)
Two closets are located in the room. Roughly centered on the north wall, a laundry closet measures 31" deep by 63" wide and includes a wire shelf mounted above a residential washer and dryer. A mechanical closet located in the northeast corner of the room houses an air-handling unit and measures 26 ¾" wide by 25 ¼" deep. Finishes in the closets match those in the kitchen, including sheet vinyl flooring.
Other Elements
Modern wood veneer kitchen base and wall cabinets with plastic laminate countertops with integral backsplash are located along the east and south walls, and a double-bowl stainless steel sink is located to the east. Appliances include a refrigerator, range, and range vent hood (Figure 69).

Bedroom 111
This bedroom measures 13'-3 ¼" east to west and 12'-1 ¾" north to south and is accessed from Kitchen 110 to the south. A closet wall creates a small alcove for the doorway (Figure 70 and Figure 71).

Baseboards
Baseboards are a flat ¾" by 5 ½" wood base.

Ceiling
The ceiling height is 9'-11 ½" above the finished floor.

Doorways
There are three doorways located in this space. A 2'-8" wide by 6-8" tall flush hollow-core wood door provides access from the adjacent Kitchen 110. A 2'-6" wide by 6-8" tall flush hollow-core wood door serves the single closet. Roughly centered about the east wall, a 2'-6" wide by 6-8" tall flush hollow-core wood door provides access to Bath 112 (Figure 72).

Windows
Two two-over-two double-hung wood windows are located in this space, each measuring 28" wide by 61" tall with sill heights of 28" above the finished floor. One is roughly centered on the west wall, the other centered about the north wall.

Mechanical System
Conditioned air is supplied to a ceiling-mounted stamped-metal grille centered about the north wall above the window.

Electrical System
A ceiling fan with an integral light fixture located roughly in the center of the room provides light. A telephone outlet is mounted to the baseboard on the east wall.

Closet(s)
A closet is located in the southeast corner of room, measuring 31 ¼" deep by 57" wide, with wood board shelf and rod. Finishes in the closet match those in the bedroom.

Other Elements
None.
Bath 112
Accessed directly from Bedroom 111 to the west, this bedroom measures 7'-10 ¼" east to west and 7'-1" north to south. The bathtub is placed in an alcove on the east wall (Figure 73).

Flooring
Faux-stone patterned sheet vinyl flooring covers wood subfloors. This flooring is modern in design and manufacture. A metal threshold is located at the entrance to the room.

Baseboards
Baseboards are a flat ¾" by 5 ½" wood base with a 1" diameter quarter round shoe mold.

Ceiling
The ceiling height is 7'-10 ½" above the finished floor.

Doorways
A single doorway is located in the room. The 6'-8" tall by 2'-6" wide flush hollow-core wood door opens from Bedroom 111.

Windows
One window is located on the north wall of the room: a two-over-two double-hung wood window measuring 24" wide by 36 ½" tall with a sill height is of 49 ¼" above the finished floor (Figure 74).

Mechanical System
A combination incandescent light and exhaust fan with plastic housing is centered on the ceiling. The modern porcelain plumbing fixtures, bathtub, vanity, and water closet are located along the south wall. The bathtub has a modern acrylic bathtub surround and shower curtain rod.

Electrical System
A modern three-lamp chrome-plated metal incandescent light fixture is centered above the lavatory and medicine cabinet.

Closet(s)
None.

Other Elements
A mirrored surface-mounted medicine cabinet is mounted on the south wall, centered above the lavatory.
Attic
Access panels located above spaces Hall 104 and Kitchen 110 below provide entry to this tall unfinished space (Figure 75 and Figure 76).

Flooring
Loose-laid sheets of unfinished plywood provide limited access for equipment maintenance. Batts of fiberglass insulation fill cavities between ceiling framing below.

Baseboards
None.

Walls and Ceilings
Roof framing members and roof decking are exposed to the attic space below.

Doorways
None.

Windows
Louvered openings with insect screens are located in gables on the south and east elevations.

Finishes
None.

Mechanical System
Insulated flexible round ducts serve spaces below through ceiling-mounted grilles. An air-handling unit serving the easternmost apartment is located in the space.

Electrical System
A single modern keyless porcelain light fixture with an exposed incandescent lamp provides light and is controlled by a toggle switch.

Plumbing
A water heater for each apartment unit below is installed above the ceiling in the attic.

Closet(s)
None.
II Treatment and Use

Recommendations

The house is in general good condition on the exterior as well as the interior. Exceptions to this are as noted in the conditions assessments.

The 2016 Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Draft Foundation Document provides basic guidance for future planning and management decisions. The report addresses the Birth Home Block, its treatment and management. A portion of significance statement for the national historic site reads, “Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site preserves the home and immediate neighborhood where Dr. King was born and lived until the age of 12, where his family life and values laid the foundation for his leadership during the American civil rights movement.” The document lists the Birth Home Block cultural landscape as a “critical component of the Birth Home Block where Dr. King was born and lived until the age of 12. Significant intact features include the spatial organization, historic circulation patterns, historic views and vistas, and remnants of historic vegetation and small-scale features.” The document identifies conditions, trends, threats, and opportunities associated with the Birth Home Block cultural landscape and its features. Identified threats include extreme fluctuation of weather causing moisture problems and pests in Birth Home Block structures, age and deterioration of the structures, and increased residue from vehicle exhaust. The document recommends implementing the treatment recommendations noted in the MALU Cultural Landscape Report for the Birth Home Block “in collaboration with the NPS Denver Service Center.” The document also identifies issues with the maintenance and preservation of the numerous historic structures at the park. The document states, “the ongoing need to maintain these structures is overwhelming current management resources...a goal for the national historic site is to establish a friends group to partner with and help with fundraising for projects such as maintaining historic structures.”

The use of the structure as part of the residential leasing program is a compatible use with Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Park Draft Foundation Document recommendations. Recommendations in the document specifically address the residential leasing program as a burden on staff time. The document recommends the development of a residential/commercial leasing plan “to identify strategies and alternatives for management of these properties such as the sale of the properties with stipulations and/or hiring a management company.”

The goals of the treatment recommendations are to achieve an exterior restored to reflect the period of significance (1929-1941), arrest further deterioration of existing features, improve energy efficiency, and upgrade occupant comfort. Some recommendations may require more extensive modifications to existing floor plans, and might be undertaken as part of a comprehensive restoration and rehabilitation project. Per Public Law 96-438 Section 7(c), the NPS must submit plans for construction, exterior renovation, and demolition of this structure to the Atlanta Urban Design Commission “for its review and comment in a timely fashion.”

Some recommendations might require relocation or modifications to existing floor plans, and might be undertaken as part of a comprehensive remodeling project.

Laws, Regulations, and Functional Requirements

Applicable laws, regulations, and requirements that apply to the treatment recommendations include the following:

163. Ibid., 5.
164. Ibid., 14-15.
165. Ibid., 21.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid., 8.
• Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This act mandates that federal agencies, including the National Park Service, take into account the effects of their actions on properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment.

• National Park Service Cultural Resources Management Guideline (Director’s Order 28), which requires planning for the protection of cultural resources on park property.

• Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes

• Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
• International Building Code (IBC), 2015
• International Existing Building Code (IEBC), 2015
• 2015 International Plumbing Code
• 2015 International Energy Conservation Code
• NFPA 70 National Electrical Code (NEC)

The National Park Service, Denver Service Center references the 2015 IEBC as a standard. The 2015 IEBC includes the following statement in paragraph 408.1, Historic Buildings: “[t]he provisions of this code that require improvements relative to the building’s existing condition or, in the case of repairs, that require improvements relative to a building’s predamage condition, shall not be mandatory for historic buildings unless specifically required by this section.”168 Paragraph 408.2, Life safety hazards states, “[t]he provisions of this code shall apply to historic buildings judged by the building official to constitute a distinct life safety hazard.”169

Executive Order 13514 issued in 2009 directs all federal agencies to implement sustainable design and construction practices. For 526 Auburn Avenue, the relevant guidelines in this executive order require:

... managing existing building systems to reduce the consumption of energy, water, and materials, and identifying alternatives to renovation that reduce existing assets’ deferred maintenance costs ... [and] ensuring that rehabilitation of federally owned historic buildings utilizes best practices and technologies in retrofitting to promote long term viability of the buildings.170

It is recommended that the NPS consult archeologists prior to execution of any exterior modifications that may involve potential disturbance of currently unidentified archeological resources or historic fabric.

Architectural Recommendations

• Prioritize historic restoration work at primary south facade.
• Prior to commencement of any work, conduct hazardous materials assessments; perform materials abatement as required.
• Evaluate slope of existing yards for proper drainage; adjust grades as required for drainage.
• Restore yards in accordance with the cultural landscape report.
• Install termite shields and base flashing at base course of wood weatherboards.
• Perform further archival research for visual evidence of the original configuration of the front door, porch, porch balustrades, and porch columns.
• Conduct paint analysis to identify historic paint and finish colors and locations; use this evidence to assist with identification of historic door and window locations.
• Repair any damaged or rotted exterior wood.
• Paint exterior architectural features based on paint analyses.
• Assess exterior lighting requirements; replace any modern fixtures with less visually obtrusive fixtures, consider use of site-mounted light fixtures for improved security.
• Install vapor barriers over exposed soil in crawl spaces to control moisture.

169. Ibid.
Install sealant and perform repairs as required to reduce air infiltration and limit rodent and insect infestations.

Assess current insect and rodent control protocols, revise, or implement new as required.

**Interior**
- Confirm adequacy of existing security and fire alarm system; based on this assessment, replace or upgrade system.
- Upgrade attic insulation.
- Reinstall and upgrade thermal insulation below conditioned spaces.
- Install thermal insulation at uninsulated exterior walls in basement spaces.
- Through selective demolition, identify strategies for upgrading thermal performance of exterior walls at occupied spaces; install additional thermal insulation based on findings.
- Confirm adequacy of attic ventilation; upgrade ventilation as required.
- Clean and repair existing wood window sashes and selectively install historic hardware (as required) for proper operation.
- Conduct a limited paint analysis of window sashes, exterior doors, and door frames. Use evidence gathered in paint analyses to help identify historic doors, windows and window components, and wood trim; consider use of paints and finishes of the historic period.
- Remove modern closures at historic fireboxes; repair as required; consider restoration of fireboxes to historic designs.
- Upgrade heating and air-conditioning equipment to more efficient designs as equipment is replaced.
- Upgrade plumbing fixtures to high-efficiency designs as equipment is replaced.
- Consider installation of pressure-fit interior thermal windows at interior to improve thermal efficiency and comfort and reduce energy use.
- Replace incandescent and fluorescent light fixtures with high-efficiency light fixtures.
- Install occupancy-sensing lighting controls.

**Structural**
- Replace rotten wood post at rear porch steps and rework connection so posts and stringers bear on concrete footing.
- Replace all exterior wood in contact with the ground with wood that has been pressure-treated for ground contact.
- Rework piers in crawl space, and replace with mortared CMU or brick piers. Investigate twisted beam and rework pier to provide adequate bearing.
- Repoint exterior and interior brick piers, as well as stone site wall.
- Repair failing exterior site wall on south side of property by demolishing the area and rebuilding.

**Climate Change**

Cultural resources, including historic buildings, “are fixed in place or derive much of their significance from the place within which they were created. Many are non-living, and all are unique. As a result, the capacity of cultural resources to adapt to changing environments is limited.”

As stated in the Director’s Policy Memorandum 14-02, “NPS cultural resource management must keep in mind that (1) cultural resources are primary sources of data regarding human interactions with climate change; and (2) changing climates affect the preservation and maintenance of cultural resources.”

There has not been a study on the effects of climate change on cultural resources completed by NPS for MALU, but there is a brief for nearby Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CHAT). Figure 77 depicts the results for temperature and moisture data, including areas...
within 30 km of the CHAT boundary. (MALU is approximately 20 km south of the southern border of the CHAT park unit boundary.) This report concludes that extreme variables in the park include events with extreme warm temperatures and extreme dry precipitation rates. The brief summarizes “key points for interpreting these results...ongoing and future climate change will likely affect all aspects of park management including natural and cultural resource protection as well as park operations and visitor experience...climate change will manifest itself not only as changes in average conditions...but also as changes in particular climate events (e.g., more intense storms, floods or drought.) Extreme climate events can cause widespread and fundamental shifts in conditions of park resources.”

MALU’s draft foundation document concludes that “climate change is projected to bring more large storms as well as increases in average annual temperature and extreme heat events, increasing potential for flooding and damage to structures.” The document continues, “moisture problems in the plaster of the walls, partially due to the age of the structure and the humid climate of Atlanta” may be a problem for structures such as the Birth Home, a similar aged structure to the subject of this document.

Implications—Adapting to Change
According to NPS documents, impacts to buildings and structures related to temperature and drought extremes include deterioration, conflagration, and desiccation. A loss of resource integrity may occur over time from conditions related to climate change and its impacts. Typically, documentation is one of the first mitigation techniques undertaken in response to deterioration. This document, which includes narrative, photographs, measured drawings, and recommendations, fulfills this first step in the mitigation process. This structure does show signs of previous deterioration, and recommendations for repair are included in this document. At this time, it is not anticipated that the NPS needs to take action to prevent conflagration or desiccation at 546 Auburn Avenue. However, if atmospheric temperatures continue to rise, the NPS should explore the need for additional mechanical equipment such as HVAC and humidity monitoring systems to maintain structural and historic integrity.

176. Ibid.
Hazardous Materials

The recordation team did not encounter or document any hazardous materials at 546 Auburn Avenue. Invasive investigation, such as lead-based paint testing or testing for residual lead paint, was not conducted during the course of the property documentation. Due to the age of the structure, the park should assume that hazardous materials such as lead paint and asbestos may be present in the structure. Recommendations include testing for lead paint and asbestos before commencement of extensive work on the building, especially prior to demolition. A team of qualified abatement contractors should remove any of these items. Any plumbing upgrades should include testing of galvanized pipes for lead.
Page intentionally left blank.
Bibliography

Books and Reports


Moore, Dan, Sr. *Sweet Auburn, Street of Pride, A Pictorial History*. Self-published, nd.


**Primary Sources and Archival Collections Investigated**

Atlanta City Directories

Atlanta Department of Community Planning and Development

Atlanta-Fulton County Public Library’s Black Studies Photographic Collection

Atlanta History Center Auburn Avenue subject files, photographic collection, maps, etc.

Federal Census records

Fulton County Property Records

Georgia State University Special Collections

MALU Archives documentary materials, maps, property files, City of Atlanta Building Permits

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Fulton County, Atlanta, Georgia

**Selected Websites**


Appendix A: Period Plans

Sheet A-01: First Floor Plan, c. 1911
Sheet A-02: First Floor Plan, c. 1931
Sheet A-03: First Floor Plan, c. 1982
Sheet A-04: Site Evolution Plan
FIRST FLOOR PLAN: C. 1911

APPENDIX A:

CENTRAL HALL

NORTHWING

NORTHWEST ROOM

SOUTHWEST ROOM

EAST WING

FRONT PORCH

LIGHT GRAY LINES REPRESENT HOUSE CONDITIONS AS FOUND IN 2016.
FIRST FLOOR PLAN: C. 1931

CONDITIONS AS FOUND IN 2016.

LIGHT GRAY LINES REPRESENT HOUSE CONDITIONS AS FOUND IN 2016.

APPENDIX A:
02
Appendix B:
Chain of Title
# CHAIN OF TITLE

## 540, 546, 550 Auburn Avenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Book/Page</th>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Grantor</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/5/1880</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary J. Goldsmith</td>
<td>G.W. Adair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/22/1880</td>
<td>O3/436</td>
<td>Alfred S. Jenkins</td>
<td>Mary J. Goldsmith</td>
<td>(Recorded November 14, 1889) $236; &quot;lots 15 &amp; 16 of the Goldsmith property&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/1899</td>
<td>134/337</td>
<td>Matthew K. Jenkins</td>
<td>Alfred S. Jenkins</td>
<td>Conveyance is made subject to a deed given to Mary Gabriella Cammack on 2/1/1899 to secure a loan of $1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/7/1902</td>
<td>145/514</td>
<td>Matthew K. Jenkins</td>
<td>Alfred S. Jenkins</td>
<td>Reference to loans dated 3/1/1902 and Feb 1899; notes that Alfred S. Jenkins and Mildred Jenkins may occupy a home on the lot free of rent for the rest of their natural lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/6/1956</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ruth Jenkins Vickery</td>
<td>Matthew K. Jenkins</td>
<td>Assumed Quit Claim Deed; Matthew Jenkins passes away, deed not located in Fulton County Court records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8/1963</td>
<td>4009/325</td>
<td>Edward Krick</td>
<td>Mrs. Ruth Jenkins</td>
<td>Ruth Vickery was Matthew Jenkins daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/12/1978</td>
<td>7051/344</td>
<td>Ebenezer Baptist Church</td>
<td>Edward Krick</td>
<td>Addresses in this sale are listed as 540, 546, 552.5, 554, 556, 556.5 Auburn Ave and 53, 57 Howell Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/1980</td>
<td>9222/488</td>
<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
<td>Ebenezer Baptist Church</td>
<td>Memorandum of Option for Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/1981</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
<td>Ebenezer Baptist Church</td>
<td>Warranty Deed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Book/Page</td>
<td>Grantee</td>
<td>Grantor</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21/1981</td>
<td>8041/498</td>
<td>Historic District Development Corporation</td>
<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
<td>Preservation Easement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/1982</td>
<td></td>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
<td>Easement Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/30/1983</td>
<td></td>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
<td>Warranty Deed &quot;Filed 1/18/1982&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/23/1984</td>
<td></td>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>Historic District Development Corporation</td>
<td>Lease for 546 and 550 Auburn Avenue, includes repairs to structures (may have been lease of easement?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/16/1986</td>
<td>10325/411</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>Historic District Development Corporation</td>
<td>Fee Simple for Preservation Easement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Documentation Plans

Sheet C-00: Foundation Plan
Sheet C-01: First Floor Plan
Sheet C-02: Roof Plan
Sheet C-03: South Elevation
Sheet C-04: North Elevation
Sheet C-05: East Elevation
Sheet C-06: West Elevation
Sheet C-07: Details
Appendix D:
Resource Location Map
Map of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site with 546 Auburn Avenue noted. Adapted from National Park Service Park Map, Harpers Ferry Center.