



Foundation Document Overview

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

Georgia



Contact Information

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Purpose



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE and Preservation District, located in Atlanta, Georgia, preserves, protects, and interprets for the benefit, inspiration, and education of present and future generations, the places where Martin Luther King, Jr. was born, lived, worked, worshiped, and is buried; while interpreting the life experiences and significance of one of the most influential Americans in the 20th century.



Significance

Significance statements express why Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the most prominent leaders of the American Civil Rights Movement, changed the course of U.S. history and is known and honored throughout the world for his leadership in the struggle for social justice and the philosophy of nonviolent social change.
- 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.
- Coretta Scott King was instrumental in the memorialization and preservation of Dr. King's legacy through the establishment of The King Center and Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. The King Center includes the tomb of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King and holds the largest repository of primary source materials in the world on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the American Civil Rights Movement.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site preserves historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, the spiritual home of Dr. King, where he followed his grandfather and father to become ordained and served as co-pastor preaching social change grounded in Christian faith. After he was slain, Dr. King's body was brought home to Ebenezer Baptist Church for funeral services.
- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Preservation District protects core elements of one of the most prosperous and influential African American streets in segregated America from 1910 to 1960, the Sweet Auburn commercial district. Sweet Auburn included many organizations and businesses that actively supported the American Civil Rights Movement, including the headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge, for which Martin Luther King, Jr. was the founding president.

Fundamental Resources and Values



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home**
- **Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church**
- **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home Block (Including Fire Station No. 6) Cultural Landscape**
- **Partnerships with The King Center and Ebenezer Baptist Church**
- **Museum Collections**

Related resources are not owned by the park. They may be part of the broader context or setting in which park resources exist, represent a thematic connection that would enhance the experience of visitors, or have close associations with park fundamental resources and the purpose of the park.

- **Preservation District**
- **234 Sunset Avenue**

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Segregation and Struggle.** The life of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his death were central to the transformation of America's segregated past and the promise of equality and justice for all citizens.
- **Childhood and Character.** The development of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s character was the result of a solid family structure and spiritual commitment that began in the home and was influenced by the Sweet Auburn Community.
- **Church and Community.** Ebenezer Baptist Church was the Christian foundation of Dr. King's spirituality, values, philosophy, and social activism.
- **Leadership and Legacy.** Dr. King's visionary leadership of the modern American Civil Rights Movement, as shown through his philosophy, words, and works, changed the course of U.S. history and redefined the American promise to include all citizens and continues to have national and international influence today.



Description

On October 10, 1980, Congress established Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Preservation District in Atlanta, Georgia, in order to protect and interpret for the benefit, inspiration, and education of present and future generations, the places where Martin Luther King, Jr. was born, where he lived, worked, worshiped, and is buried (Public Law 96-428). The park consists of 38.38 acres, 13.08 of which are federally owned. Portions of the park are also part of a national historic landmark district. Approximately 700,000 to more than one million national and international visitors come annually to learn about the life experiences and the significance of one of the most influential men of the 20th century. Visitors to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site have spent \$38.5 million in the local area, resulting in 649 jobs and a cumulative benefit to the state economy of \$58.2 million.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a leader of the modern American Civil Rights Movement, is known for his work on equal rights and for his philosophy of nonviolent social change. In 1964, Dr. King won the Nobel Peace Prize and became the second African American to hold this honor. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site commemorates King's lifetime achievements. The park preserves the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home and the immediate historic neighborhood where King spent his youth. The larger "Sweet Auburn" community served as the economic, cultural, and religious center for Atlanta's segregated black population from 1910 through the 1960s and greatly influenced King throughout his life.

The park manages, by ownership or agreements, 31 historic structures, most of which were built between 1890 and 1910. Resources of the park include:

- **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home at 501 Auburn Avenue**
- **Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church**
- **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (The King Center)**
- **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home Block**
- **Historic Fire Station No. 6**

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Preservation District surrounds the national historic site and encompasses Dr. King's broader childhood environment. The area includes 230 historic structures in both commercial and residential portions of the Sweet Auburn and Old Fourth Ward neighborhoods. While private entities own the land and structures within the preservation district, the National Park Service assists the owners of historic structures to preserve and interpret their properties. The Prince Hall Masonic Lodge, the first headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for which Martin Luther King, Jr. was the founding president, is within the preservation district and is currently owned and in use by the Masonic Lodge.

