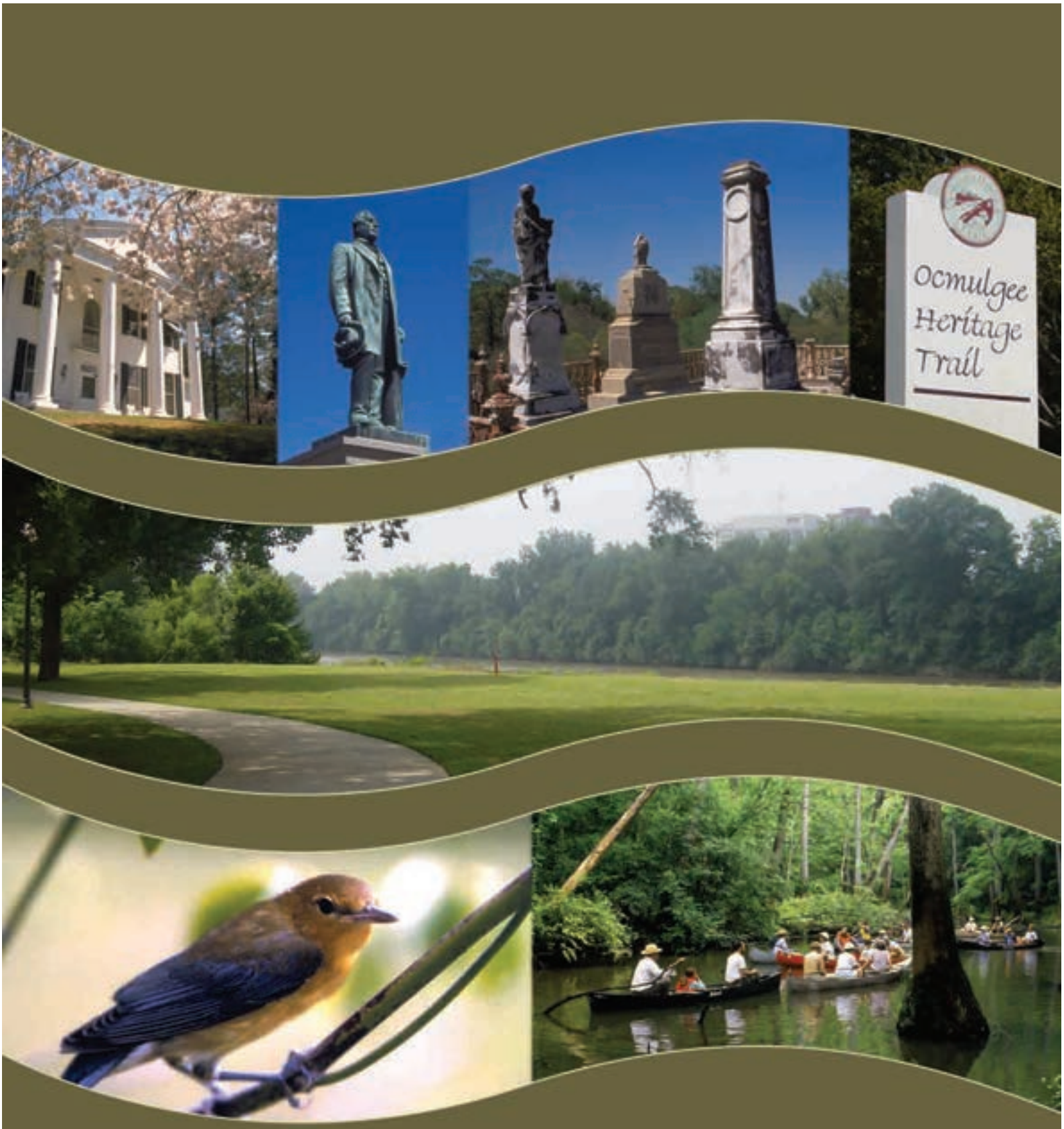

OCMULGEE
NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR
FEASIBILITY STUDY

Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor
Feasibility Study

Prepared by Shelley Mastran, Crystal Jackson, Susan Kidd, and Lenz, Inc.

September 2004

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Georgia CONSERVANCY

GEORGIA CONSERVANCY'S BLUEPRINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

FOREWORD

The Ocmulgee River has been home to a variety of residents for centuries. It has given, and continues to give, residents a sense of place that stands out in middle Georgia and the southeastern United States because of its rich natural and cultural history. The Ocmulgee River is unique in that it not only provides a scenic, recreational resource and a vital supply of drinking water, but it flows alongside an abundance of historically significant treasures such as internationally known archeological remains and the largest collection of National Register of Historic Places listings in the state of Georgia.

These nationally and internationally significant natural and historic resources would be enough for the Ocmulgee River to gain National Heritage Corridor status. Perhaps more important, however, are the people who have worked to protect and promote the river and are willing to see the National Heritage Corridor through to its designation and implementation. Hundreds of individuals, agencies and organizations have been involved in the process of determining the feasibility of this corridor designation. All are committed to its implementation.

We got involved with the Georgia Conservancy's Blueprints for Successful Communities program because it teaches Georgians how to improve their communities by creating ways for conservation and growth strategies to co-exist. It also shows Georgians how to build consensus for action at the local, county, state and regional levels.

Through participation in the Blueprints program, Macon's leaders have united to pursue what one Macon Blueprints Steering Committee member called "the most positive reason for bringing together diverse interests in Macon in a long time." We began the National Heritage Corridor feasibility study with the determination that it would not become another plan that stays on the shelf. We have concluded the study with that same determination. We will continue to pursue designation and will begin implementation as soon as possible.

On behalf of the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee we, as individuals and the organizations that we represent, have agreed to present the feasibility study to the National Park Service and take it through the Congressional approval process. No matter what the outcome, we will see that the nationally significant assets found along the corridor are protected long into the future.

We thank every member of the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee for their hard work at reaching consensus and for helping to document, promote, and protect this great place where we live.

Chris Sheridan
Ocmulgee Heritage Trail

Lynn Cass
Board Member
Georgia Conservancy

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Director
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September 2004

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I. Introduction

A. The Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor Concept

The concept for the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor near Macon, Georgia, is an outgrowth of multiple ongoing efforts by the citizens of Macon and Bibb County to promote, enhance, and conserve the natural and cultural resources of the Ocmulgee River and adjacent lands. The purpose of seeking National Heritage Corridor designation is ***to increase understanding and raise awareness of the Ocmulgee River and the adjacent cultural and natural resources.*** It is an effort to rediscover and reconnect people with the river after decades of neglect.

Several recent initiatives converge in the heritage corridor concept. Over the past seven years, a public-private effort has been underway to develop the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, a proposed ten-mile path along the river, now under construction. Since 1997, NewTown Macon has been working to revitalize downtown Macon and key areas along the Ocmulgee River. Recently, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has become involved with Macon in a project to reconnect historic neighborhoods with downtown and the river via a series of pedestrian walkways and corridors. Each of these efforts provides synergy for the others and contributes to the strength of a National Heritage Corridor designation.

Since December 2001, the Georgia Conservancy has been working with various organizations in Macon and Bibb County on the Blueprints

for Successful Communities project. Blueprints for Successful Communities is an educational and technical outreach program of the Georgia Conservancy, and the idea to seek designation as a National Heritage Corridor is an outgrowth of this program. The Macon Blueprints Steering Committee, representing various public and private stakeholder groups throughout the community, has been working to develop a statement of goals and objectives, as well as the key issues, of a National Heritage Corridor.

As articulated by the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee, the vision for the National Heritage Corridor, *"to increase understanding and raise awareness of the Ocmulgee River and the adjacent cultural and natural resources,"* should be achieved through the following goals:

1. Design and implement approaches to education and interpretation that promote the natural and cultural heritage of the Ocmulgee River.

2. Offer implementation strategies for the protection of the Ocmulgee River resources.

3. Promote economic development that incorporates the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the Ocmulgee River corridor.

B. Location and History

Georgia's Ocmulgee River originates at the Lake Jackson reservoir located south of Atlanta. It flows southeast for 180 miles where it joins the Oconee River to form the Altamaha River, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean. Macon is located on the fall line of the Ocmulgee River. The fall line separates the metamorphic and igneous rocks of the Piedmont Plateau from the sand, clay, and limestone deposits of the Coastal Plain. The Macon Plateau is an eroded protrusion of the Piedmont into the Coastal Plain. Humans have lived here for more than 12,000 years. The site offered the river for water, transportation, trade, and fishing; fertile soil; game; and high protective bluffs. Native Americans built large ceremonial earth mounds after A.D. 900, still in existence today. This landscape, both natural and historic, is nationally important.

The fall line area of the Ocmulgee River has been a key settlement place for centuries across cultures and has played a critical role in transportation within Georgia. An ancient Indian trail running northeast to southwest crossed the Ocmulgee River right below the fall line. This trail became the Lower Creek Indian trading path to Fort Hawkins. Subsequently, a road carrying settlers and federal troops through the region followed the same route. The city of Macon was established in 1823 at the site where the road crossed the river, right below the falls.

C. Political, Economic, and Social Context

The public and private sectors of Macon and Bibb County are actively engaged in resource enhancement and economic development initiatives that the National Heritage Corridor concept will bolster. These include downtown revitalization projects located along the waterfront, at Cherry Street Plaza, near the Coliseum, and in the industrial district. Several major transportation projects have been proposed that will affect the Ocmulgee River and adjacent lands. The I-16/I-75 interchange adjacent to the river is going to be substantially enlarged, and the proposed Fall Line Freeway from Augusta to Columbus through Macon has sustained much debate within the community.

Over the last seven years, citizens groups in Macon and Bibb County have been working together for the betterment of the community and its connection to the Ocmulgee River. Revitalization and development initiatives focused on downtown Macon, the effort to create the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, the multiple projects of NewTown Macon, and the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee exhibit a spirit of cooperation and dedication that lay the social and political groundwork for the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor.

These efforts have led to Macon's receiving two recent designations. In March 2004, Macon was named one of Georgia's six Preserve America

Communities. Preserve America is a White House initiative that encourages and supports community preservation efforts and honors places that protect and celebrate their heritage. Macon was also named one of the National Trust's Dozen Distinctive Destinations of 2004.

D. Local Organizations and Commitments

The National Park Service, through its presence at the Ocmulgee National Monument, is a key partner with the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor. Numerous other organizations have been involved in the heritage area as well.

The following public and private entities have supported the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor concept through participation in one or several of the following organizations: the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee, NewTown Macon, the Urban Development Authority, and the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail.

- Bibb County
- Booker T. Washington Center
- CAUTION Macon
- City of Macon
- Community Foundation of Central Georgia
- CORE Neighborhood Revitalization, Inc.
- Friends of the Ocmulgee Old Fields
- Fort Hawkins Commission
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Power
- Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce
- Greenspace Commission
- Historic Macon Foundation
- Intown Macon Neighborhood Association
- Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful
- Macon Arts
- Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
- Macon-Bibb Parks & Recreation
- Macon Economic Development Commission
- Macon Housing Authority
- Macon Motor Boat Club
- Macon Telegraph
- Macon Water Authority
- Mercer University, The Mercer Center for Community Development
- Museum of Arts and Sciences
- NewTown Macon
- Ocmulgee Heritage Trail
- Ocmulgee National Monument (National Park Service)
- Ocmulgee River Initiative, Inc.
- Ocmulgee River Trust
- Organization for the Preservation of Rose Hill Cemetery
- Peyton Anderson Foundation
- Shirley Hills Neighborhood Association
- Tubman African American Museum
- Urban Development Authority
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

E. Public Outreach Program

Although the concept of the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor has received strong support from the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee and the entities its members represent, a broad public outreach campaign is underway to educate and involve a wider audience. The Steering Committee, working with NewTown Macon and the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, has undertaken the following tasks.

1. Public Education Program

A broad public education program that promotes the concept of the National Heritage Corridor through newspaper and magazine articles, and through presentations at public meetings. Presentations have been made at meetings of local organizations and at public venues. Feedback forms were collected from citizens after public meetings and the responses have been supportive of the corridor concept.

2. Celebrations

At established Macon and Bibb County festivals and other events, the Committee has celebrated and publicized the resources and the concept of the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor. The bicentennial of the founding of Fort Hawkins is 2006. This would be an excellent opportunity to celebrate the National Heritage Corridor designation.

F. Initial Actions

Although the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor concept is relatively new and considerable planning is still to come, NewTown Macon, the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee, and other public and private entities are taking actions to enhance the corridor. The Committee has identified the following areas for early actions:

1. Environmental education
2. Economic stimulation
3. Historic preservation
4. Cultural recreation

II. History

A. Overview

The fall line region of the Ocmulgee River has been a focal point of human settlement for more than 8,000 years. The region exhibits evidence of Native American habitation in earthen mounds, trenches, artifacts and other remains. Traces of Colonial settlement are evident as well, and the historic city of Macon displays hundreds of buildings dating from its nineteenth century heyday.

B. Prehistory and Pre-European Eras

Archeological evidence suggests that the earliest Paleo-Indian nomadic hunters arrived in Georgia before 8,000 B.C. Over the next thousands of years, local native cultures continued to rely on hunting and gathering for subsistence, and some developed pottery. By the last century B.C., permanent settlements and intensive horticulture characterized some of the cultural groups of the southeastern U.S. In the coastal plains of Georgia, there was evidence of seasonal migration from shellfish camps on the coast in winter to inland occupation during spring and summer for hunting and gathering.

One of the most significant eras in Native American culture in central Georgia is the Mississippian period (A.D. 900 to A.D. 1650). So named because it is assumed to have originated in the Mississippi Valley, this period featured complex political structures called chiefdoms, consisting of several towns. Around A.D. 900, early Mississippians constructed a large town more than

a mile square on the Macon Plateau above the Ocmulgee River. They constructed a series of earth mounds built for public religious and political ceremonies, along with at least one burial mound. These pyramidal mounds were raised in layers over the years. Several earth lodges were also built.

The Macon Mississippian culture cultivated a number of crops, including corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, sunflowers, and tobacco and relied on an abundance of animals such as deer, raccoon, turkey, rabbit, beaver, and squirrel. Pottery was made in many shapes and sizes; baskets were woven; and various materials were utilized as tools.

As the Mississippian culture of the Macon Plateau waned after A.D. 1200, other towns flourished, including sites down the Ocmulgee River. (Today, one site, Lamar Mounds, is a disconnected unit of the Ocmulgee National Monument; another is Brown's Mount, adjacent to Bond Swamp.) The Lamar culture, named for the Macon location, was prevalent in Georgia and parts of other states, and was characterized by fortified towns surrounded by agricultural fields. Inside stockades of upright logs, people built mounds as bases for temples.

C. Early Settlement to Civil War

In early historic times, most of Georgia was occupied by a confederation of Native American tribes known by the English as the Creeks. (The name derives from the Ochese Creek Indians; the Ocmulgee River was earlier known as Ochese Creek.) By the mid-eighteenth century, the Creeks' largely autonomous towns provided a buffer between the colonies at Charleston, Savannah, and Spanish-dominated Florida. Each town was centered on a public square that included political and ceremonial structures. The Creek economy was largely agricultural, supplemented by hunting, gathering, and fishing.

Little is known about central Georgia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries until the British established a trading post on the Ocmulgee River between 1685 and 1690. During that period, several Creek towns that had been located along the Chattahoochee River moved

Ocmulgee National Monument

to Ochese Creek. One of the towns, Ocmulgee, is believed to be the site of the British trading post. The towns returned to the Chattahoochee region some twenty years later, and by the 1730s no one may have been living in the Macon area. Nevertheless, the site remained a place of meeting and exchange for the remainder of the century.

Georgia's first English settlers came to the coast in 1733 and gradually spread westward. Over decades, white settlers took over Indian lands through a series of treaties. By 1783, the state of Georgia negotiated the Treaty of Augusta, seizing Creek lands. Over the course of several decades, the Creeks were gradually pushed westward, and land was surveyed and distributed to white settlers. Between 1733 and 1835, an Indian nation was extinguished and the state of Georgia emerged.

In 1805, through a treaty with the U.S., the Creek Indians sold lands east of the Ocmulgee River, and the river became the southwestern boundary of the nation. The Creeks refused to relinquish a strip along the river that included the ancient mounds and fields, but gave permission for the government to build a fort there. In 1806, Fort Hawkins, on about one hundred acres overlooking the mounds and fields, was constructed to protect the frontier along the Lower Creek Path that crossed the Ocmulgee River nearby.

Fort Hawkins was a stockade connecting two blockhouses and enclosing 1.4 acres. The fort became an active trading center where the Creeks brought animal pelts in exchange for food, weapons, tools, and other goods. White Americans

Historic Downtown Macon

began settling the land surrounding the fort. During the War of 1812, Fort Hawkins was an important site for the housing and distribution of troops. After 1819, however, the fort was no longer in use and the buildings gradually fell into disrepair.

After 1821, the Creeks signed a treaty giving up their lands between the Ocmulgee and Flint Rivers. Reports from early white settlers about the Ocmulgee River's fertile soil, favorable climate, and transportation advantages spread. An act of the Georgia legislature mandated the survey of the town of Macon on the west bank of the Ocmulgee River in 1823. The town was laid out with wide streets and spacious parks. North-south streets were named for trees; east-west streets were numbered. Ample space was planned for public buildings and squares and the first city lots were sold in 1823. (The town was named in honor of Nathaniel Macon, a North Carolina statesman and potential vice presidential candidate in the next election.)

The first bridge across the Ocmulgee River at Macon was built by the state in 1826, roughly at Fifth Street. In the 1820s, flat-bottomed boats (bateaus) ran regularly between Macon and Darien on the coast. In 1829, the first steamboat arrived in Macon from Darien. Industry flourished along the Ocmulgee River, principally cotton milling and warehouses lining Wharf Street along the river. By 1830, Macon had 2,635 residents, about 45 percent were slaves. In antebellum Macon, both free and non-free blacks lived within the city limits, but free blacks were not permitted to move about and needed a sponsor to transact business. Churches, academies, and numerous public and private buildings were built before the Civil War, many of which survive today. These include City Hall and the Woodruff House, both built in 1836.

The railroad built upon and enhanced Macon's transportation advantages. The first short-line rail line from Forsyth was built in 1838, and the Central Railroad between Macon and Savannah was completed in 1843. By 1859, Macon was the railroad center of Georgia, handling more cotton transportation than any other inland city in Georgia. Industry thrived in the area, principally textile mills, machine shops and foundries, furniture factories, flour mills, brick-making enterprises, and warehouses.

During the Civil War, Macon's strategic location and industry contributed to the war effort with an arsenal, factories, and a Confederate depository. The city survived the war largely unscathed. Macon was attacked in July 1864, but the raid was repelled. Later, Sherman's troops briefly threatened, but mostly skirted, the city. (It was during the 1864 raid that a cannonball was shot into what is today known as Cannonball House.)

D. The Modern Period

Like much of the South, Macon and the surrounding area struggled economically after the Civil War during the Jim Crow years. But by the 1870s, improvements were underway. The railroad expanded, and Macon became the hub for lines that extended to Albany, Atlanta, Augusta, Brunswick, Columbus, and Savannah. Central City Park was developed along the river, and Mercer University relocated to Macon. In the 1880s, Macon's Opera House was built. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Macon was not just a prosperous city, but also the cotton capital of Georgia.

Camp Wheeler was built east of the Ocmulgee River in 1917 as a training facility for infantry in World War I. Although the camp closed after World War I, it was rebuilt in 1940 and served to train thousands of soldiers during World War II. Meanwhile, an Army Air Corps depot was established south of Macon. Robins Field would become Robins Air Force Base, the largest air base in the South.

Douglass Theatre

In 1962, the Civil Rights movement began in Macon when fifteen students participated in a bus boycott. Sit-ins and picketing of segregated establishments helped bring an end to discrimination in restaurants and hotels throughout the Macon area.

Today, Macon is a city of more than 97,000 people working with dedication to revitalize its downtown, enhance its waterfront, build on its transportation advantages, develop recreational opportunities, promote the arts, conserve its natural and cultural resources, and reconnect with its river. The principal industry of the metropolitan area is Robins Air Force Base, with more than 17,000 employees. Other major employers include the Medical Center of Central Georgia, the Bibb County Board of Education, and the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company.

Macon boasts of numerous visitor attractions, including the Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, Tubman African American Museum, Children's Museum, and the Douglass Theatre, associated with African American history and music. Only eighty-four miles from Atlanta and served by two interstate highways, Macon is the historic, civic, business, and cultural center of middle Georgia.

III. The Study Area: Resources and Issues

The Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor is an area rich in natural and cultural resources related to the river. Above the fall line, the river runs between steep, forested banks and hills; below the fall line, the river widens and slows through swampland and mixed pine forests. Wildlife abound. The archeological resources of the Ocmulgee Old Fields along the river are some of the finest cultural treasures in the eastern United States, and the city of Macon boasts more acreage listed in the National Register of Historic Places than any other city in Georgia.

Like the Ocmulgee River, many things flow into Macon and flow out: the railroads and the Interstate highways. From this flow came people and events that left a rich variety of cultural resources–from Native American mounds to an urban fabric formed of a diverse economy and architectural styles.

There are many issues confronting the heritage corridor through Macon and Bibb County. The extent to which each is understood and resolved will affect the area's future as a National Heritage Corridor and the quality of life in middle Georgia. These issues present both a challenge and an opportunity, and can be best approached with the integrated initiatives of a National Heritage Corridor.

A. The Ocmulgee River

Ocmulgee means "bubbling waters" in the language of the Creek Indians, which implies the river's importance as a life-sustaining force flowing through the region.

The Ocmulgee River originates at Lake Jackson, a reservoir twenty-five miles north of Macon, and flows southeast to join the Oconee River to form the Altamaha River, which runs to the Atlantic Ocean. Over its 180-mile course, it traverses two distinct geologic and ecological regions, the Piedmont Plateau and the Coastal Plain.

Through the Piedmont Plateau, the river's mild rapids pass through a diverse topography marked by steep hills, lowland pastures, granite, and red clay banks. The woods are full of oak, hickory, sweetgum, and pine. White-tailed deer abound, and fishing in this section of the river brings bream, largemouth bass, catfish, and gar. The plateau, stretching west and north of Macon, was historically the site of fertile cotton farms, which enhanced Macon's transportation systems. Above Macon, the river has little development or industry along its banks, as it wanders through former cotton fields, abandoned mill towns, and the Oconee National Forest.

Macon marks the transition of the Ocmulgee River from Piedmont to Coastal Plain. Just northwest of Macon, the river has mild rapids; just southeast of Macon, the river becomes more sluggish, characterized by wide sloughs and swamps, from which the city's brick industry mines its clay. Through the coastal plain, the Ocmulgee becomes quite another river, as it meanders through swampland, with tall stands of pine, sweetgum, and tupelo. Wildlife includes deer, raccoon, opossum, fox-squirrel, bear, and beaver.

Today, the Ocmulgee River is shallow with lots of silt, a result of substantial runoff and erosion. Since the flood of 1994, sedimentation in the river has been a serious issue. The average depth of the Ocmulgee is between nine and ten feet, but the river changes depth frequently, and in times of drought becomes very shallow. In summer, the river below Macon in the Coastal Plain becomes so low that one can walk across on sandbars.

Near Macon, the quality of the Ocmulgee's water is typical of urban rivers. During heavy rains or spring flow, runoff can contain fecal coliform bacteria, traces of PCBs (from historically dumped industrial oils and coolants), and mercury. For years, the river has been used for dumping, and there are areas along the river, both in the Piedmont and the Coastal Plain, that could benefit from further clean-up of discarded debris.

B. Open Space and Recreation Resources

In general, the Ocmulgee River is underutilized as a recreational resource. Above Macon, in the Piedmont region, fishermen, boaters, and canoeists can access the river from four public boat ramps and two canoe landings, but cannot travel the length of the river from Lake Jackson to Macon because of the dam at Juliette and the shoals below Juliette.

Overall, particularly when the river's water quality improves, the Ocmulgee offers substantial potential for future seasonal recreation through fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and motorboating. There is a public boat launch along the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail near Spring Street in Macon and a takeout area at Gateway Park. Future launch sites are planned for Water Works Park just a few miles north and near Blue Circle Materials Company across from Bond Swamp to the south in the Coastal Plain.

1. Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

Bond Swamp consists of 6,500 acres of wetlands and uplands along the Ocmulgee River about six miles south of Macon. Established as a National Wildlife Refuge in 1989, the area contains a diversity of habitat types ranging from mixed hardwood/pine ridges to bottomland hardwoods and swamp forests. Approximately 200 bird species are believed to inhabit the refuge, including waterfowl, shorebirds, and migrating neotropical songbirds. Bond Swamp and the wetlands around it contain the highest concentration of wintering waterfowl in middle Georgia. Fish species prevalent in the river, creeks, and oxbow lakes of the swamp include largemouth bass, white crappie, bluegill sunfish, red-eared sunfish, channel catfish, and flathead catfish.

Bond Swamp

Mammals of the swamp include black bear, deer, bobcats, raccoons, rabbits, beaver, and mink. Reptilian species include spotted alligators, snakes (cottonmouths, copperheads, and rattlesnakes), turtles, and lizards.

There are some recreational opportunities in Bond Swamp. Two trails, Longleaf Pine Trail and Beaver Swamp Loop Trail, provide access for hikers and wildlife enthusiasts. Guided canoe trips are provided in the Swamp and seasonal fishing and hunting is permitted.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has proposed expanding the refuge by 12,000 acres. Most of this potential expansion land, north and south of the current refuge boundaries, would protect the Ocmulgee River corridor. The proposed Fall Line Freeway would cut through the northern expansion area; this transportation issue needs to be resolved before USFWS can move forward with acquisition there.

2. Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge

Twenty-five miles northwest of Macon is the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, a 35,000-acre habitat preserve established in 1939. This refuge is home to numerous species of wildlife, including ducks, wading birds, white-tailed deer, and wild turkeys, and contains thirty-nine colonies of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers.

3. Ocmulgee Heritage Trail

This proposed ten-mile trail along the Ocmulgee River is planned to run from the Ocmulgee Mounds to the old Water Works Park. The trail, designed by Nimrod Long and Associates and being constructed by the public-private partnership, NewTown Macon, will follow the river's course on both sides.

Trail construction has been completed on three miles of the spur trail from the Otis Redding Bridge to Shirley Hills (the I-75, I-16 interchange). The trailhead is located at Gateway Park, with a seven-foot bronze statue of Otis Redding, who grew up in Macon and made it his home. The trail provides a public boat launch near Spring Street, the only current public access to the river near Macon. The work has been overseen by the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail technical committee of NewTown Macon, city and county engineers, Parks and Recreation, the Urban Development Authority, and private volunteers.

Nearly all of the trail right-of-way has been acquired. It is expected that another three miles of trail will be completed in 2004 from Otis Redding Bridge to the Interpretive Center, and from Central City Park into the Ocmulgee National Monument. The Interpretive Center will open in early 2005 with the rehabilitation of the old Nelson Doctors Building between Otis Redding Memorial Bridge and Central City Park.

C. Historic and Cultural Resources

The historic and cultural resources along the Ocmulgee River are tied to the evolving transportation and economy of the region. With the river, railroads, and highways have come people and events that created the built environment-from early Native American settlements to trading posts to cotton warehouses to grand architectural styles, and finally to contemporary structures.

1. Ocmulgee National Monument & Ocmulgee Old Fields

The Ocmulgee National Monument is a unit of the National Park Service, administered by the Department of Interior. Named a National Monument by President Roosevelt in 1936 and listed in the National Register in 1966, the Ocmulgee National Monument is a memorial to the antiquity of people in North America. The Monument attracts more than 120,000 visitors per year. It celebrates Native American settlement over a 12,000-year period, and has features and artifacts representing a long cultural continuum from early hunter-gatherers through the Civil War. One period of history stands out: the time between A.D. 900 and A.D. 1200, when an elite society supported by skillful farmers, inhabited the region. Visible remnants of this culture include a temple, domiciliary and burial mounds, prehistoric ditches, terraces, and a ceremonial earthlodge.

Expansion of the National Monument has been proposed, but the possibilities are limited. A goal is to make Lamar Mounds, Brown's Mount, and the National Monument accessible to each other.

The Ocmulgee Old Fields, which consists of the National Monument, Bond Swamp, Central City Park, and privately owned lands in the floodplain, was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) in August 1997. A Traditional Cultural Property is one whose significance derives from the role that the property plays in a community's historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices, and in maintaining the continuity of those beliefs, customs, and practices. This is the only Traditional Cultural Property east of the Mississippi River. (Although there is no formal listing of TCPs, the National Park Service estimates that there are at least twenty-seven nationwide. All are associated with Native American cultures, and all except the Ocmulgee Old Fields are west of the Mississippi River.) This determination was based on the site's cultural and historical significance in Native American heritage and its potential for yielding important information about the history of the Macon Plateau and Ocmulgee River. The fact that the Ocmulgee Old Fields is the only TCP east of the Mississippi reflects its significance relative to all other Native American sites in the East.

In January 2003, the National Parks and Conservation Association named Ocmulgee National Monument one of the Ten Most Endangered National Parks in the nation. The threats to the park stem from a lack of funding for maintaining its collection of artifacts and providing education and guidance to the visiting public, as well as from the proposed alignment of

the Fall Line Freeway near the park's boundary. National Heritage Corridor designation will heighten public awareness of the threats to the Ocmulgee National Monument and may help galvanize energy and financial commitment toward mitigating or removing those threats.

2. Related Native American Sites

Indian Springs State Park in Butts County, one of the oldest state parks in the nation, is the site of mineral springs used by the Creek Indians in prehistoric times. In 1800, William McIntosh, a Creek chief and general, built a cabin, and in 1823, an inn there. In 1825, the Treaty of Indian Springs was signed at the hotel, giving up the last of the Creek lands in Georgia. Bullard Mounds in Twiggs County consists of twenty-three mounds of the late Lamar culture, each mound from three to five feet high and thirty to fifty feet wide.

3. National Register Properties and Districts

Macon has fifty-four individual properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places and ten National Register historic districts with more than 5,500 contributing properties. Macon has more acreage listed in the National Register than any other city in Georgia. Among the individually listed structures and sites are Cannonball House, Central City Park Bandstand, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Hawkins Archeological Site, Sidney Lanier Cottage, Ocmulgee National Monument, Riverside Cemetery, and Rose Hill Cemetery.

Following is a description of Macon's ten National Register historic districts.

1. *Macon Historic District.* The historic district of downtown Macon encompasses the heart of the settlement that was established on the banks of the Ocmulgee River in 1823. It is the historic commercial, institutional, and residential development that grew out of Macon's original town plan and forms the city's historic core. Laid out by surveyor James Webb, downtown Macon served a vital role in river trade between the piedmont and the coast. The first rail line reached Macon in 1838, and the city became a rail hub for central Georgia. The Beaux Arts-style terminal building, constructed in 1916, still stands, a symbol of an era of commercial greatness.

   The original plan for Macon included a courthouse square located at Mulberry and Fifth Streets. Although this part of the plan no longer exists, Macon's role as a governmental center is evident in the Bibb County Courthouse (1870), City Hall (1836 and remodeled in 1933), the City Auditorium (1924), and the former U.S. Post Office and Federal Building (1908).

   The downtown district is also the commercial core of Macon, containing blocks of attached and freestanding commercial and institutional buildings in a wide range of architectural styles. The streets of the district are balanced with carefully landscaped parks and medians. The area contains a range of architectural styles, from Greek Revival to Italian Renaissance Revival, and shotgun housing can be found in several locations. Within the district are Macon's two National Historic Landmarks: the Carmichael House and the Hay House.

   African American history is evident in the downtown district in several prominent structures, including the First Baptist Church (established in 1887), the Washington Avenue Presbyterian Church (the oldest black Presbyterian church in the state), and the Douglass Theater (1921). The theater, constructed in 1921, served as the area's top African American movie and vaudeville hall, hosting such jazz greats as Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Duke Ellington. In the 1960s the theater featured rhythm-and-blues stars Otis Redding, Little Richard, and James Brown. Renovated in 1997, the Douglass Theater is nationally significant for its African American cultural history.

2. *Cherokee Heights.* This planned residential suburban community was built primarily over the first two decades of the twentieth century.

It includes small rectangular lots with one- to two- story houses in a mixture of styles: Georgian Revival, English Tudor, Spanish Mission, and Craftsman/Bungalow.

3. *East Macon.* On the east side of the Ocmulgee River, this district encompasses mid-nineteenth century to early-twentieth century residences as well as commercial and industrial structures. It includes remnants of the mostly wood frame houses of the mill village that surrounded Bibb Mill, most of which has been demolished. Architectural styles include Queen Anne, Italianate, Neoclassical Revival, and Craftsman.

4. *Fort Hill Historic District.* Listed in the National Register in 1933, this district exhibits a range of architectural styles from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1940s. Styles include Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, and Craftsman. Encompassing more than 130 acres, the Fort Hill Historic District includes religious structures of significance as well as several historic commercial establishments.

5. *Macon Railroad Industrial District.* With warehouses and commercial buildings, this 260-acre district stretches on low, flat terrain south of the Ocmulgee River and southeast of the central business district. Most of the structures are brick, although some are metal, tile, and wood frame. Buildings date largely from the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries.

6. *North Highlands.* This residential area on the east side of the Ocmulgee River was built between the 1890s and 1940s as a planned suburb on a hill overlooking Macon. Its curving streets radiate from North Avenue, which runs through the center of the district. A variety of styles, types, and sizes of housing is represented, including Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical Revival, and Craftsman.

7. *Pleasant Hill.* This historic district near College Street includes largely vernacular homes of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. It is one of the most intact African American historic districts in Georgia and was one of the first to be listed in the National Register. Started in the 1870s as an area to house servants of white families nearby, Pleasant Hill has been home to a large portion of, and some of the most prominent, black residents of Macon. Single story wood frame houses predominate, including shotgun houses and ell-shaped cottages.

8. *Shirley Hills Historic District.* Developed primarily between 1922 and 1941, this historic district along the east side of the Ocmulgee River is a rare example of an Olmsted-based, landscaped neighborhood. It boasts examples of early-twentieth century revival styles, including Georgian Revival, Neoclassical Revival, English Vernacular Revival, and Italian Renaissance Revival, among others. It also includes an array of Craftsman-style houses.

   One of two examples of Georgia's "garden" suburbs, Shirley Hills is filled with shade and ornamental trees. Houses are set back from the street, and two parks complement the overall landscaped appearance. The neighborhood contains several homes designed by prominent Macon architects.

9. *Tindall Heights.* With residential as well as commercial and industrial buildings, this district was built between the 1870s and 1940s. It includes a variety of building styles, mostly wood framed.

10. *Vineville Historic District.* A late-nineteenth century, early-twentieth century suburb of Macon, the Vineville Historic District is nationally significant for its architectural history and diversity. Located on a hilly plateau just north of Macon, the Vineville district's park-like setting is attributable to the numerous trees: elms, oaks, sugarberries, magnolias, crepe myrtles, and others, planted along the streets in the late-nineteenth century. House styles include Greek Revival, Georgian Revival, Italianate Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Craftsman.

4. National Historic Landmarks

Macon has two National Historic Landmarks: the P.L. Hay House, a twenty-four-room Italian Renaissance Revival mansion (1860), 16,000 square feet in size, originally built with bathrooms, central heating, and a ventilation system, and the Carmichael House (1848), built in the shape of a modified Greek cross and noted for its rotunda.

5. Local Historic Districts

Macon has three historic districts governed by a historic zoning ordinance, which serves as an overlay zone in the city's zoning ordinance. The three districts are Macon Historic District, Vineville, and Cherokee Heights. Proposed design changes in these districts are approved by an Architectural Review Board.

6. Central City Park

Central City Park, laid out along the banks of the Ocmulgee River soon after the founding of Macon in 1823, was established in 1826 as a public park.

Rose Hill Cemetery

It includes 250 acres, with a National Register-listed bandstand, exhibit hall, pond, picnic areas, and the early-twentieth century Luther Williams baseball field. The bandstand, constructed in 1871, is a rare, completely wooden, oriental style, hexagonal structure with a sheet metal roof.

With the loss of the Macon Braves baseball team, Central City Park and Luther Williams Field became underutilized; although with the Macon Peaches, the field will now stay in use. Both areas should be listed in the National Register, revitalized, and expanded. It is hoped that parts of the park can be restored to their early-twentieth century appearance. Macon's Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Master Plan (1999) recommended a multi-use sports complex, including a gymnasium, golf driving range, lighted basketball courts, and new stadium, among other elements of park revitalization and expansion.

7. Rose Hill Cemetery

With terraced hills sloping to the banks of the Ocmulgee River, the Rose Hill Cemetery (c. 1840) is a classic example of a picturesque cemetery/park. Designed by Simri Rose (for whom it is named), Jerry Cowles, J. Williams, and Isaac Scott, the cemetery is modeled after Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts. More than fifty acres in size, it is the burial site for numerous prominent Maconites. It also contains two Jewish sections and a section with approximately 600 Confederate and Union soldiers' markers. Two Allman Brothers Band members are buried there. The cemetery is managed by the city.

8. Riverside Cemetery

Also located on Riverside Drive along the banks of the Ocmulgee River next to Rose Hill Cemetery, Riverside Cemetery is a 125-acre rural, picturesque cemetery designed by Calvert Vaux and established in 1887. It is privately managed.

9. Water Works

Three miles up the Ocmulgee River from Macon, the Macon water works plant was established in

Central City Park

1897 to provide clean and affordable water to the city. It is an exemplary late-nineteenth century water works facility. Ownership of the plant changed in 1926. It was remodeled in 1936. In 1994, the plant was seriously damaged by the Ocmulgee River flood and its function was abandoned. Nevertheless, 250 acres of the water works property may be donated to the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority for the Ocmulgee River Trail trailhead, and the area will serve as a public regional park and recreation area for boating, hiking, and camping.

D. Land Use and Transportation Network

1. Floodplains and River Access

Since the 1994 flood, restrictions for the one hundred-year floodplain have been strengthened. Riparian buffers of one hundred feet are protected as well.

Public access to the Ocmulgee River is limited. There is a public boat launch along the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail near Spring Street and a takeout area at Gateway Park. The Ocmulgee Heritage Trail will soon provide a walkway and open vistas along the river for seven miles, and new boat launches are planned at Water Works Park and across from Bond Swamp. Nevertheless, it will be years before adequate public access to the Ocmulgee River is available north and south of the trail area.

2. Transportation

The transportation network in the Macon area includes major roadways that parallel and/or cross the Ocmulgee River, most prominently I-16 and I-75, along with many state and county roads. This roadway network helps provide access to the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail and to Macon. No current or future highway construction projects will impact the boundary decision for the Ocmulgee River National Heritage Corridor.

E. The Economic Development Framework

1. Ocmulgee National Monument

The National Park Service, through its presence at the Ocmulgee National Monument, is a key partner in the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor. Inadequate funding helped to put Ocmulgee National Monument on the National Parks Conservation Association's 2003 List of America's Ten Most Endangered Parks. Although the Ocmulgee National Monument is home to one of the largest archeological collections in the national park system, no curator is on staff to monitor the collection. The park also lacks staff for guided tours of the earthen mounds.

The Ocmulgee National Monument staff believes that the National Heritage Corridor designation has merit and is worth pursuing. The Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor will work in conjunction with the Ocmulgee National Monument to efficiently leverage resources so that the monument benefits from the designation. The addition of this designation will help bring

more attention to the National Monument and the role it plays in the history and preservation of middle Georgia. While staff is limited, Ocmulgee National Monument is willing to provide continued assistance in the planning of the heritage corridor. When possible, the National Monument personnel would provide expertise in issues related to interpretation activities and to cultural and natural resources.

2. Cherry Street and Plaza

The city of Macon, Bibb County, and NewTown Macon continue to work on the redevelopment of Cherry Street Plaza, a public gathering space in front of Terminal Station, Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, the Tubman African American Museum, the Georgia Children's Museum, and the Douglass Theater. The area needs more retail and residential uses and there are plans for studios, small-scale offices, and stores.

3. Riverside Development

Ten acres of blighted properties along the river have been assembled between the Second Street Bridge and Spring Street for primarily residential, mixed-use development. NewTown Macon, with the support of Bibb County and the city of Macon, working in concert with the Urban Development Authority, is managing the area's redevelopment. Riverside development will include the relocation of the Transit Authority facility and an overlook promenade between the development and the river.

4. Macon Centreplex

NewTown Macon has prepared a feasibility study and preliminary plans for a full-service hotel adjacent to Macon's Convention Center, the second largest meeting facility in Georgia outside Atlanta. Macon's central location next to two interstate highways is ideal for state conventions with a convenient hotel nearby. The hotel plan, if implemented, could serve as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the property across from Coliseum Boulevard, once known as Bibb Mill. A pedestrian trail from the Convention Center to Ocmulgee National Monument, through the Bibb Mill property is part of the redevelopment plan.

5. Terminal Station

The Terminal Station, built c. 1916 in Roman classical style, is one of Macon's architectural treasures. Once a passenger station, it now houses the Macon/Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Welcome Center, and several city offices.

6. Industrial District and Brownfield Site

Adjacent to the central business district and Central City Park, the site is 1,700 acres, approximately 500 of which are vacant. Proposed uses for the site include a new sports stadium, the expansion of Central City Park, a passenger rail maintenance yard, and further redevelopment of the industrial district.

IV. The Proposed National Heritage Area Concept

The city of Macon and its surroundings are on the threshold of a renaissance focused on the Ocmulgee River. In the last five to ten years, the groundwork has been laid for this revival. The public-private effort to build the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, the revitalization undertaken by NewTown Macon, the National Trust project to reconnect Macon's historic districts with the downtown and the river–all are part of this groundwork. The Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor, highlighting the importance of the river and the city of Macon, will draw further public attention and investment to the area. It will provide the vehicle for a celebration of natural and cultural resources that together will lead to their greater appreciation, enhancement, and protection.

A. Interpretive Themes

The heritage corridor is centered on the fall line of the Ocmulgee River, a crossroads of history and geography. Here is the division between two geomorphic regions, two ecologies with different combinations of natural resources, and two kinds of river. Here is where water and land transportation routes intersect. Here is where a continuum of human settlement has resided for more than 12,000 years, building monuments both ancient and modern.

Based upon this crucial geography, the following interpretive themes of the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor emerge:

1. Native American History and Culture
2. Transportation
3. Architecture and Urban Fabric

1. Native American History and Culture

The Ocmulgee Old Fields, and the Ocmulgee National Monument in particular, tell the story of Native American settlement over a period of 12,000 years. Along the Ocmulgee River, a succession of Native American cultures made their home, and evidence of that cultural evolution is abundant on the land. Temple mounds, funeral mounds, prehistoric trenches, and hundreds of archeological treasures give testimony to the richness of the cultures that long occupied the Macon Plateau. It is a cradle of southeastern U.S. archeology–a focal site for the early Mississippian Period Macon Plateau culture, the widespread late-Mississippian Lamar culture, and the historic Creek Ocmulgee Fields culture.

The Ocmulgee Old Fields is the only Traditional Cultural Property listed in the National Register of Historic Places east of the Mississippi River. There are only about thirty known Traditional Cultural Properties, and all but the Ocmulgee Old Fields are west of the Mississippi. As such, the area is highly significant as a Native American cultural site, reflecting traditional customs, beliefs, and practices, and serving to keep those cultural elements alive today. The Ocmulgee National Monument serves as a center for prehistoric research and survey for the southeastern U.S.

2. Transportation

The Ocmulgee River has served as a means of travel and transportation for centuries. The falls of the river mark the high point of navigation, and it is here where overland transportation and water transportation intersect, where products produced on the land are conveyed to the river for transport. Long ago, the falls of the Ocmulgee River marked the site where a historic Native American trail crossed the river. Similarly, Colonial settlers and soldiers used that route, and today the route is roughly approximated by the proposed Fall Line Freeway.

Here, where river and overland routes intersect, Macon was established. There are other fall-line cities in Georgia–Augusta at the falls of the Savannah River and Columbus at the falls of the Apalachicola–Chattahoochee–but neither city is centrally located in the state or bears evidence of such prolonged human habitation.

Macon's first railroad was built in 1838. By the time of the Civil War, Georgia led the South in railroad development, and Macon was the railroad hub of Georgia. Its central location made Macon a prime manufacturing, storage, and distribution point. Although Atlanta subsequently became the railroad hub of the state, Macon remained a critical railroad nexus, providing access to the vast cotton economy of Georgia. Today, two interstate highways, I-16 and I-75, meet at Macon, and the Macon-to-Atlanta commuter rail line is planned to be one of the first developed.

The Cannonball House

3. Architecture and Urban Fabric

Built on a series of high hills overlooking the river and the Coastal Plain, Macon is a city of well-preserved, sophisticated architecture. Macon's hills offer prime locations with excellent vantage points for homes and public buildings, which inspired unusually fine design and craftsmanship. Railroad entrepreneurs, cotton growers, and businessmen came to Macon in the nineteenth century from other parts of the country. Well-educated and well-traveled, they brought cultural influences from New York, Chicago, New England, and Europe–many of which are reflected in Macon's architecture.

Macon has one of the finest collections of historic resources in Georgia, with more than 5,500 properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Macon's architecture spans decades and styles, including Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Folk Victorian, Queen Anne, Neoclassical Revival, Italian Renaissance Revival, Stripped Classical, and Art Deco. Yet, Macon also has its own unique architectural elements. Many of its buildings were constructed from locally made bricks (the brick-making industry continues in Macon today) or local pine.

With many styles, Macon's architecture makes a statement about the evolution, diversity, consistency, and growth of the town and people who lived there. Ocmulgee National Monument was once "an ancient town," as described by William Bartram in 1777, with "artificial mounts or terraces, squares and banks, encircling considerable areas." Macon's commercial center still maintains the wide avenues laid out by surveyor James Webb in 1823. Many of Macon's historic neighborhoods came about as historical suburbs with streets converted from old farmland. And unlike typical "cookie-cutter suburbs," Macon's newer neighborhoods grew with a variety of architectural styles, each house reflecting the interests of its architect, builder, or owner. The urban fabric of Macon, much of it carefully planned, supports and complements its architecture.

Like the Ocmulgee River, many things flow into Macon and flow out: the railroads, and the interstate highways. From this flow came people and events that deposited an impressive catalog of architectural styles. The Ocmulgee River sets the pace of this flow, sometimes swift, other times slow and easy. The architecture in Macon reflects a similar tempo, serene and strong in the Beaux Arts Terminal; wide and serviceable in the town center's historic layout; rich in Hay House; energetic in Victorian gingerbreads; and steady and reliable in the apartment complexes and workers' homes.

Downtown Macon

B. Boundary Alternatives

Several boundary alternatives for the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor have been proposed, but were narrowed down to two boundary alternatives, varying in length along the river.

Alternative A

This boundary includes the river corridor, the historic districts of Macon, and some of its most

important historic resources, including Ocmulgee National Monument, Fort Hawkins, Central City Park, Rose Hill Cemetery, and Riverside Cemetery. It extends along the river to the ends of the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, from the Ocmulgee National Monument to the Water Works Park. It encompasses only two political jurisdictions: Macon and Bibb County. This is the shorter and more concentrated boundary. It contains virtually all of the resources that contribute to the Architecture and Urban Fabric interpretive theme.

Alternative B

This boundary includes the entire area of Alternative A, but extends from Water Works Park along the river to Bond Swamp. Thus, it includes the historic districts of Macon, and some of its most important historic resources, including Ocmulgee National Monument, Fort Hawkins, Central City Park, Rose Hill Cemetery, Riverside Cemetery, and the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, but it extends up and down the river beyond them. Bond Swamp with Brown's Mount, site of an early Mississippian village, provides a logical connection to the Ocmulgee National Monument. The boundary encompasses three political jurisdictions: Twiggs and Bibb Counties as well as the city of Macon. The boundary of Alternative B contains more resources that reflect the Native American History and Culture interpretive theme, as well as more of the Transportation theme. It also includes other nationally significant natural resources.

C. Related Resources

Beyond the resources contained within the two potential Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor boundaries above are related resources that contribute to the Native American History and Culture theme. These include three important resources: Indian Springs, Town Creek Reservoir, and Bullard Mounds. Indian Springs State Park in Butts County, one of the oldest state parks in the nation, is the site of mineral springs used by the Creek Indians in prehistoric times. In 1800, William McIntosh, a Creek chief and general, built a cabin and, in 1823, an inn there. In 1825, the Treaty of Indian Springs was signed at the hotel, giving up the last of the Creek lands in Georgia. Town Creek Reservoir bears archeological evidence of a Creek settlement. Bullard Mounds in Twiggs County consists of twenty-three mounds of the late Lamar culture, each mound from three to five feet high and thirty to fifty feet across.

In addition to the related Native American resources, many significant natural resource sites occur in proximity to the heritage corridor boundaries. For example, the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge is a 35,000-acre wildlife preserve located only twenty-five miles northwest of Macon.

D. Management Alternatives

Across the U.S., management entities of National Heritage Corridors take different forms, including commissions appointed by federal or state government, legislated authorities, or non-profit organizations governed by a board of directors. Whatever structure the heritage corridor management entity takes, it should represent all of the stakeholders in the community who have a vested interest in the area.

The management entity should include representatives from the entire geographic region with a wide range of interests, so that natural resource conservation, historic preservation, recreation, tourism, and economic development concerns are balanced. The entity should include representatives of at least four partnership groups:

- federal and state government
- local government
- the private sector, and
- the non-profit sector.

In the case of the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor, the National Park Service (Ocmulgee National Monument) is obviously a key player. The management entity would also include representatives from all of the political jurisdictions, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, local businesses and business groups, economic development agencies, and non-

profit organizations whose interests range from conservation of the river to historic preservation to tourism.

In addition to the management entity, it may also be useful to consider establishing some form of management network, e.g., an advisory council or "friends" group to broaden representation and support.

For the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor, several alternative forms of management entities were proposed, including a heritage corridor authority and a new public-private partnership. After careful consideration, the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee selected the existing organization, Ocmulgee Heritage, L.L.C., as the most appropriate management entity.

Ocmulgee Heritage, L.L.C.

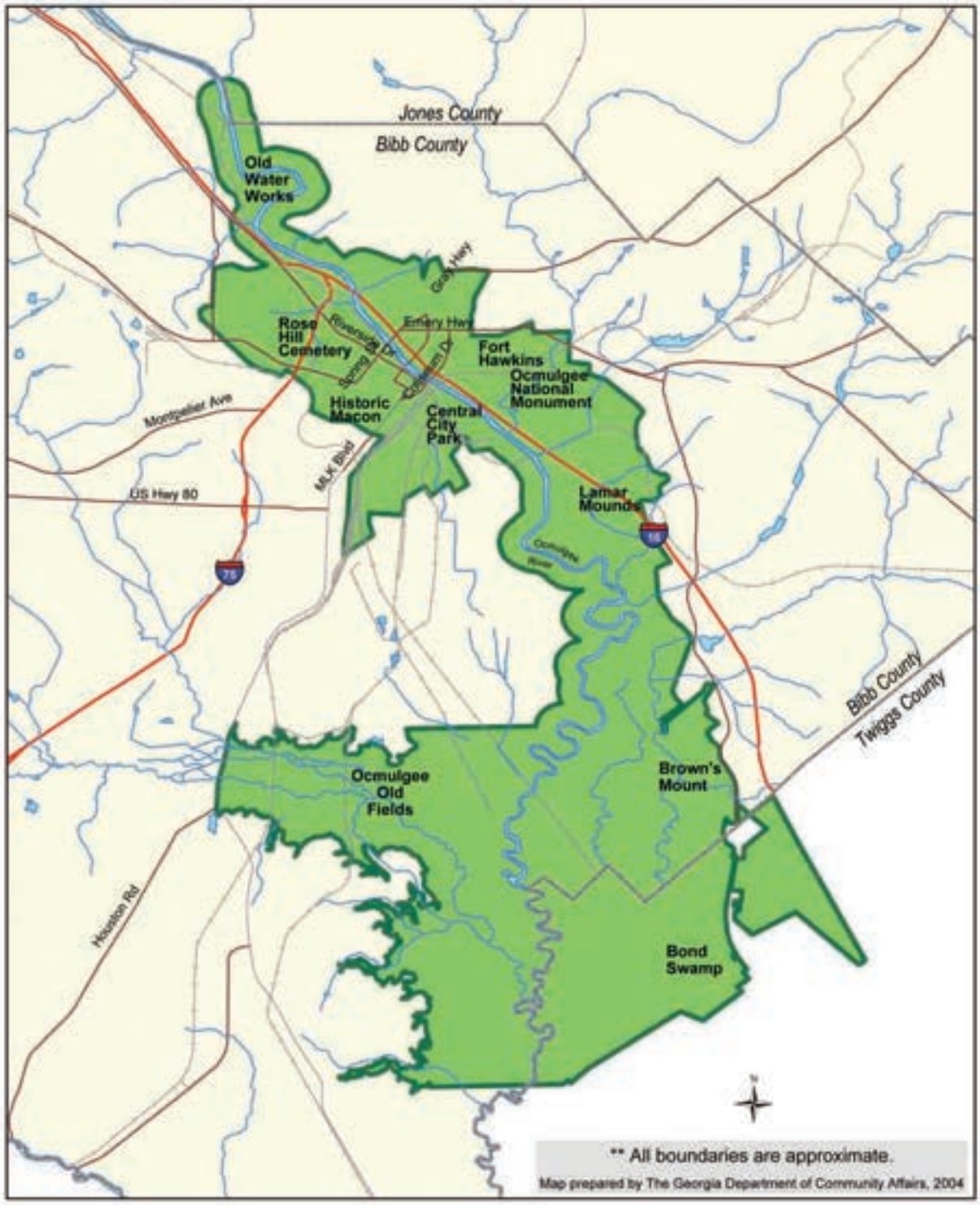
The groundwork for this limited liability company was formed by NewTown Macon and the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority to operate and manage the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail as a focus of community activity and development. It is planned that the L.L.C. will take over for the current Executive Committee of the trail. Its board of directors includes the director of the City of Macon Department of Parks and Recreation, the chairman of the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority, the chairman of NewTown Macon, and appointees from the following entities: the city of Macon, Bibb County, the Ocmulgee National Monument, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, NewTown Macon, and the Peyton Anderson Foundation.

The existing Macon Blueprints Steering Committee would like to act as an advisory committee to the Ocmulgee Heritage, L.L.C.

(The Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority was created in 1974 by the Georgia General Assembly and a local referendum to facilitate the financing and implementation of development projects, both public and private. The Authority has been involved in Macon's historic facade and rehabilitation program, the Cherry Street Improvement Project, and the Broadway Redevelopment Project, for example. The Authority is the ownership entity of the L.L.C. and would work cooperatively with a responsible entity that would manage the trail on its behalf.)

Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor - Alternative A

Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor - Alternative B



V. National Heritage Corridor Feasibility and Suitability

A. Findings about the Study Area

The Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor contains a substantial collection of natural and cultural resources that comprise a nationally distinctive landscape. The region tells the story of thousands of years of human settlement, still visible on the land. The people of Macon and Bibb County have been working steadily to revitalize and celebrate the resources of the Ocmulgee River and are building ways to reconnect with the river. The Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor concept is a perfect framework to promote these efforts.

B. National Importance of the Area and Its Resources

The National Park Service has developed ten interim criteria for evaluation of potential National Heritage Areas. These are listed below with a discussion of how the proposed Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor meets the criteria.

1. *An area has an assemblage of natural, historic, or cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed as such as assemblage through partnerships among public and private entities, and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities.*

The combined natural and cultural resources of the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor, focused on the fall line of the river, form a nationally distinctive landscape. Although portions of that landscape are already protected through the Ocmulgee National Monument and Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, other portions of the area are not. The entire corridor is worthy of further conservation, recognition, interpretation, and use. Although several groups are working to enhance the corridor and provide greater access to it, considerable success could be achieved from integration of those efforts with a National Heritage Corridor designation. The designation would tie all of the existing preservation, conservation, economic development, heritage tourism, and beautification efforts together, providing a synergy to carry the region forward.

2. *Reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the national story.*

The Ocmulgee Old Fields provide tangible evidence, through earthen mounds, trenches, and archeological artifacts, of the traditions and ways of life of multiple Native American cultures. It is arguably the most important Native American site in the eastern United States, telling the story of centuries of Indian culture. From the archeological remains, the traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife of the peoples who inhabited the Macon Plateau are interpreted for the public at the Ocmulgee National Monument. The monument serves as a center for prehistoric research for the southeastern U.S. It is a preeminent site, the only Traditional Cultural Property east of the Mississippi River.

3. *Provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic features.*

The Ocmulgee River has been ignored and forgotten as a valuable resource over the last decades, and today there are multiple opportunities to conserve the natural, cultural, historic, and scenic features of the heritage corridor. Both the Ocmulgee National Monument and Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge are proposed to expand. The Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, part of which has been developed and the rest of which is underway, is the beginning of an opportunity to provide access to the Ocmulgee River and its features. A National Heritage Corridor designation of the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of the area could provide a much-needed boost to conservation efforts.

4. *Provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.*

Today, the Ocmulgee River and its adjacent lands are underutilized recreational resources, but present ample opportunity for local citizens and visitors to enjoy the river. Kayaks, canoes, and other types of boats can provide views of quiet, scenic, and varied landscapes as well as abundant fishing opportunities.

Although the Ocmulgee National Monument has a dedicated educational program to teach the public about the cultures of the Ocmulgee region, the program is underfunded. Because of the richness of the resources that the monument contains, the potential to expand the educational and interpretive program is enormous.

National Heritage Corridor designation can draw attention to the recreational and educational opportunities and provide an impetus for further related efforts and investment.

5. *The resources important to the identified theme or themes of the area retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation.*

Largely because of the protection provided through the Ocmulgee National Monument, the Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, and the efforts of historic preservationists in the city of Macon, the core resources of the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor have retained

their integrity. They are tangible, visible, and accessible for further interpretation.

The Native American History and Culture theme is intact and already interpreted at Ocmulgee National Monument. Rich archeological resources are intact and interpretable at related sites nearby, including Brown's Mount. The Transportation theme is intact and interpretable through the Ocmulgee River, various riverside developments, and the railroad station. And the Architecture and Urban Fabric theme is intact through the ten National Register historic districts and related properties. Many of these cultural themes are already interpreted through walking tours, exhibits, museums, galleries, and guidebooks.

6. *Residents, business interests, non-profit organizations, and governments within the proposed area are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants including the federal government, and have demonstrated support for designation of the area.*

The sponsoring organization, NewTown Macon, a public-private partnership, has been active in downtown revitalization since 1997. It organized and helped fund the Georgia Conservancy's Blueprints for Successful Communities project for Macon. The Macon Blueprints Steering Committee, having met for more than two years, involves business interests, public agencies, non-profit organizations, and local citizens who have been involved in planning a National Heritage Corridor. Because the final form of the management entity has not been selected, a formal business plan has not yet been prepared.

However, Ocmulgee Heritage, L.L.C. has developed a business plan, which may serve as a preliminary conceptual financial plan for the National Heritage Corridor. The Macon Blueprints Steering Committee will ensure that the conceptual financial plan for the heritage corridor is developed.

7. *The proposed management entity and units of government supporting the designation are willing to commit to working in partnership to develop the heritage area.*

The work of the Macon Blueprints Steering Committee clearly demonstrates the willingness of citizens groups of Macon and surrounding areas to support the National Heritage Corridor. Strong precedent exists in NewTown Macon and the public-private partnership formed with Macon and Bibb County and the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority in planning, funding, building, promoting, and maintaining the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail. Private and public interests have exhibited an unusual spirit of cooperation and partnership, which promises to carry forward through the National Heritage Corridor development.

8. *The proposal is consistent with continued economic activity in the area.*

The chief economic development initiatives in Macon are focused on revitalization efforts along the Ocmulgee River and downtown, and plans to reconnect the historic districts of Macon with the river and adjacent lands. Consequently, these initiatives bolster the National Heritage Corridor concept and will work to support it.

9. *A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public.*

The Macon Blueprints Steering Committee has had several meetings to discuss proposed National Heritage Corridor boundary alternatives. The boundary maps for Alternatives A and B have been agreed upon, both reflective of the area's rich natural, cultural, and historic resources as described in Section IV.B.

10. The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.

The management entity of the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor - the Ocmulgee Heritage, L.L.C. - is described in Section IV.C.

C. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based upon the findings of the preceding sections, there is clear evidence that the Ocmulgee National Heritage Corridor is a concept that bears further development, and that seeking National Heritage Corridor designation is appropriate. There are many nationally distinctive natural and cultural resources with coherence and integrity that are readily interpretable. There is a special story to tell about the Ocmulgee River corridor. The National Heritage Corridor concept is wholly compatible with economic, tourism, and recreational development efforts in the area; and there is substantial public and private support and enthusiasm for attaining National Heritage Corridor designation.

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