



HISTORIC
SAVANNAH
FOUNDATION

BEYOND TOURISM

Historic Preservation in the Economy and
Life of Savannah and Chatham County

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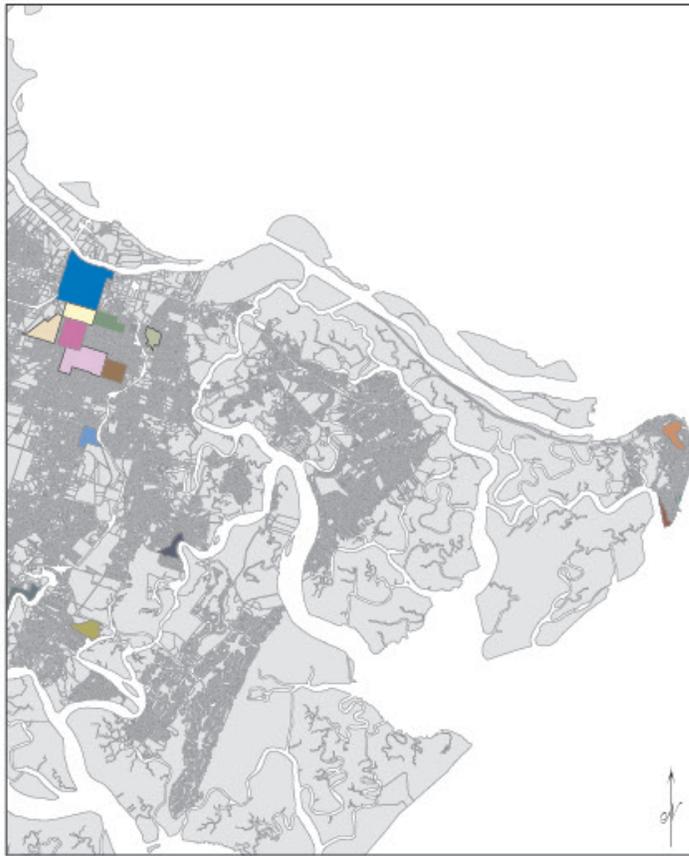
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study looked at the impact of historic preservation on the economy and life of Savannah and Chatham County. Key findings found in the pages of this report include:

- Savannah’s historic districts comprise 8% of the city’s land area, 15% of its buildings; 16% of its population, 24% of its taxable value and 31% of its jobs.
- The rehabilitation of historic buildings in Chatham County, particularly in Savannah and Tybee Island, are an ongoing source of jobs and paychecks.
- Just the work done using the federal historic tax credit has meant an average of 169 jobs and \$7.5 million in labor income each year over the last 15 years.
- Historic districts are a particular attraction for jobs in the arts and culture and other knowledge industries.
- Small firms and start-up firms disproportionately choose to locate in Savannah’s historic neighborhoods.
- Property values in Savannah’s historic districts have outperformed the city as a whole.
- The “preservation premium” from that faster rate of appreciation provides nearly \$10 million dollars each year to Chatham County, Savannah and the school district.
- Emerging quality of life criteria like walkability, bikeability, and proximity to parks are all measurably greater in Savannah’s historic districts than elsewhere in the city.
- The strategic investments of Historic Savannah Foundation and the Savannah College of Art and Design have stabilized neighborhoods and served as a catalyst for additional investment.
- During the recent nationwide real estate chaos, every Savannah historic district has rates of foreclosure lower than the city as a whole.
- The frequent public policy priority of density is much greater in historic districts than elsewhere, but importantly it is density at a human scale.
- The measurable economic benefits of historic preservation are not just apparent in Savannah but significantly in Tybee Island as well, particularly in its Main Street district.

Savannah’s heritage tourism industry is vital to the economic health of Savannah and Chatham County. Less recognized but equally important is the ongoing economic and quality of life contributions that historic preservation provides to the year round residents of the area.

TAKE A SNAPSHOT. PAINT A PICTURE. PRESENT A CANVAS.



All Savannah Area Historic Districts

- Ardsley Park-Chatham Crescent
- Cuyler-Brownville
- Daffin Park-Parkside Place
- Eastside
- Fairway Oaks-Greenview
- Gordonston
- Isle of Hope
- Mid-City/Thomas Square
- Ossabaw Island (not pictured on this map)
- Pin Point
- Landmark Historic District
- Tybee Island Black River
- Tybee Island Fort Screven
- Tybee Island Strand Cottages
- Vernonburg
- Victorian District

ALL SAVANNAH AREA HISTORIC DISTRICTS

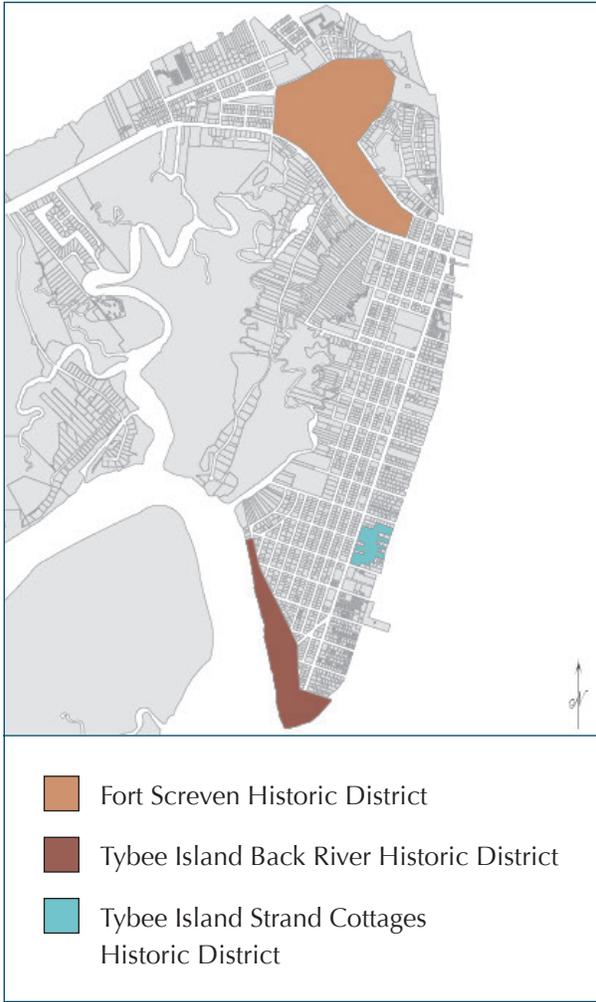
In Savannah, historic districts comprise approximately 8% of the city's land area, are home to 15% of the buildings and 16% of the population, and 24% of the taxable value.

While Savannah has the most and the best known historic areas, other parts of Chatham County have designated historic areas as well. For example, Tybee Island has three National Register Historic Districts and a number of individually designated properties as well.



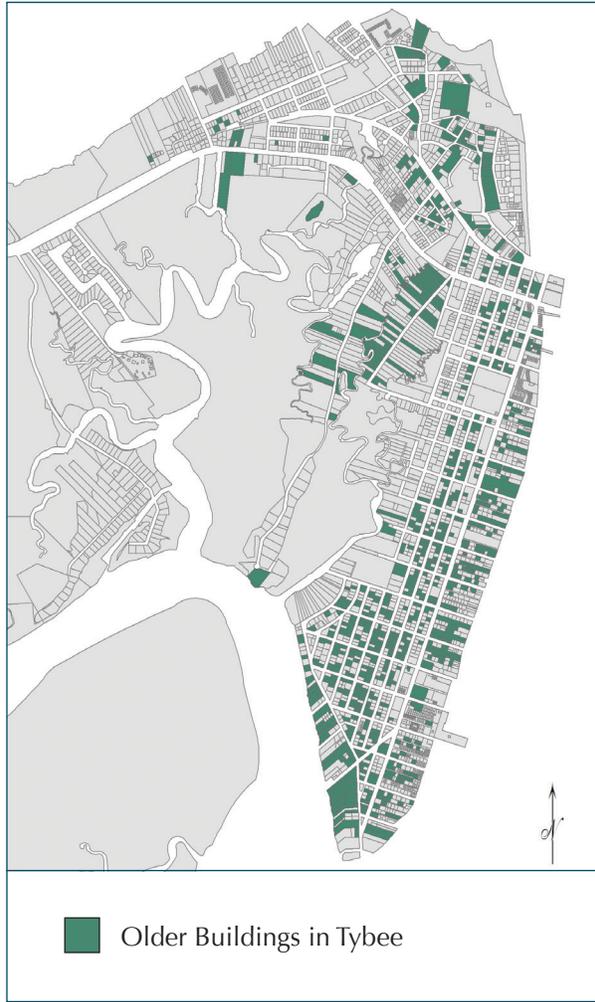
TYBEE ISLAND

While Savannah gets the national and international press, Chatham County has other historic gems and chief among them is Tybee Island. Tybee Island is the only island along Georgia's coast that developed as a middle-class resort. That legacy is reflected in the historic built environment, street grid, and modest architecture. At the time of this study, the island boasts three National Register Historic Districts and eight individually listed National Register sites. The Main Street Program is also Tybee's Development Authority and works within the boundaries of the city limits, as of mid-2014. Tybee also has a local historic commission and a lighthouse museum run by the Tybee Island Historical Society.



TYBEE ISLAND NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICTS

The National Register Districts serve as a constant for the island, which has experienced rapid growth pressure in recent years. Approximately 13% of the island's parcels are included in historic districts and 24% of the buildings were built more than 50 years ago.

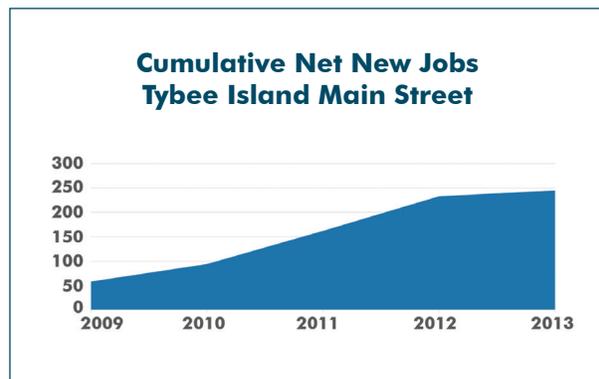


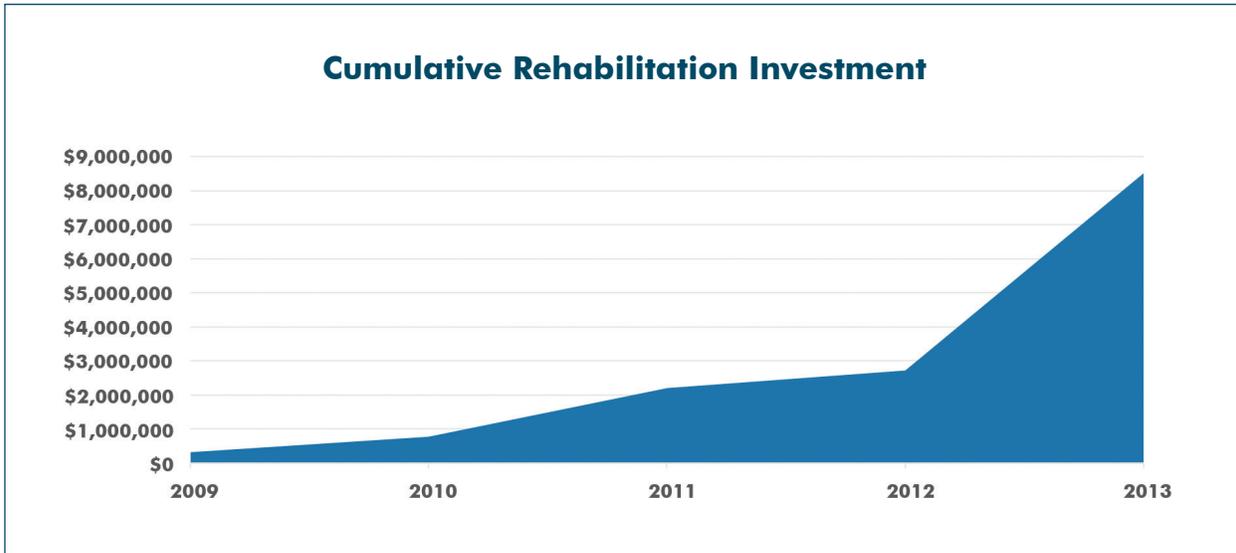
OLDER BUILDINGS IN TYBEE

The year round citizens of Tybee are clearly committed to maintaining the unique character of the Island. In conjunction with the Tybee Island Master Plan, a survey of residents found that 59% believe the city should be doing even more to protect its historic resources.

TYBEE ISLAND MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

While the City of Tybee Island does not have a local historic district protecting its historic built environment, the impact of the Main Street Corridor, National Register districts and tax credit projects are notable. Tybee Island received Georgia's Better Hometown designation in 2010, became a National Main Street designated community in 2013, and most recently was named a Certified Local Government. All of these steps help expand the scope of local responsibilities and opportunities for preservation on Tybee. The concentrated efforts towards Tybee's Main Street Corridor commercial area creates a fertile environment for small businesses. Tybee Island has over 140 businesses open year round. Since 2009, nearly 250 net new jobs have been created in the Tybee Island Main Street Corridor alone. Following this study period, in August of 2014, City Officials activated the (Downtown) Development Authority to enhance opportunities for quality revitalization and redevelopment through financial incentives for property owners. The program, as of this publication's release, is known as the Tybee Island Development Authority/Main Street Program. This step expanded the boundaries of the program to Tybee's city limits.



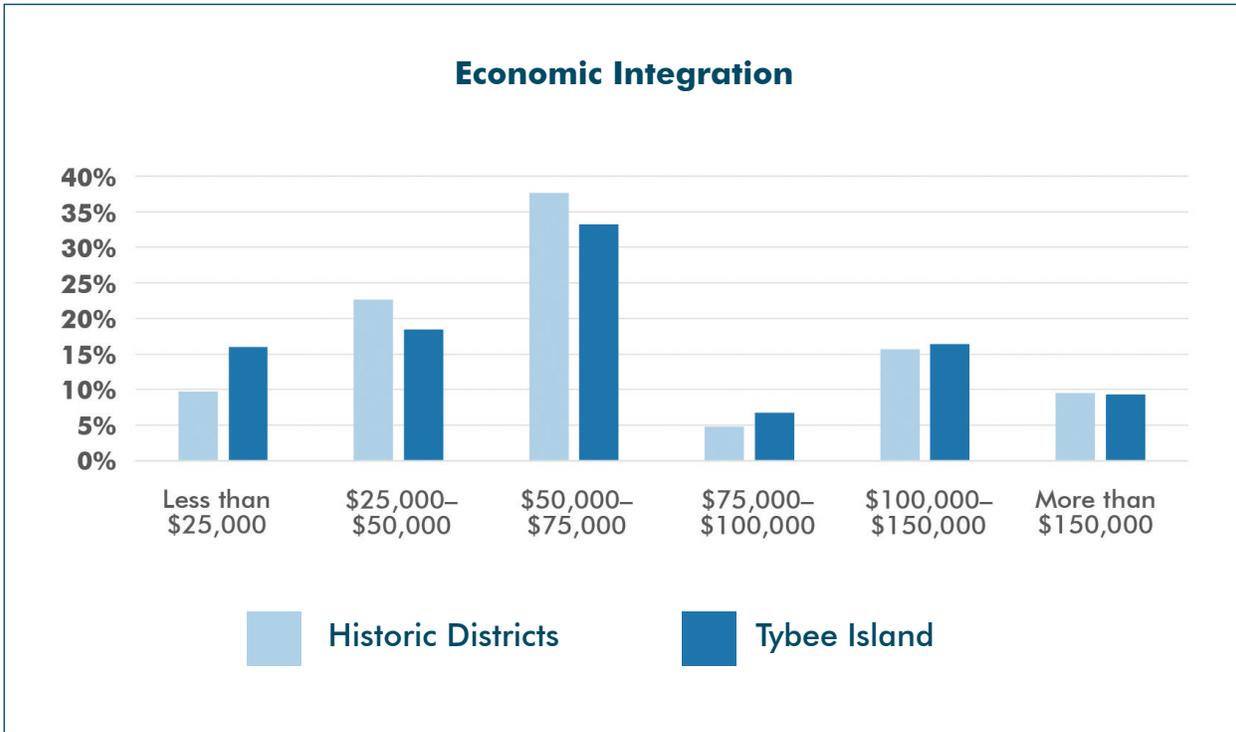


TYBEE ISLAND REHABILITATION INVESTMENT

In 2014, the Tybee Main Street Program developed a Façade Improvement Grant, assisted with updating the sign ordinance to allow for murals with guidelines, and continues to educate on historic preservation. These efforts support the rehabilitation of the island’s commercial corridor historic buildings. Between 2009 and 2013, over \$8.5 million in rehabilitation investment was reported within the Main Street District.

While sometimes a full-fledge rehabilitation is required to make an older or historic building competitive in the real estate market, in other cases some repair work and a few cans of paint are required. The graph below shows that the average rehabilitation investment spent on a building in the Tybee Island Main Street Corridor is modest.





ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

In addition to the Main Street Corridor on Tybee Island, historic preservation efforts are also represented in private investment through the use of Historic Preservation Tax Credits. Between 2002 and 2013, over \$2.7 million was invested in Tybee’s historic buildings through the use of tax credits.

The historic districts on Tybee Island are desirable places to live for families...

The historic districts on Tybee Island are desirable places to live for families in every income range. From a demographic standpoint, Tybee’s historic districts are nearly a mirror image of the Island as a whole.

As Tybee Island continues to deal with the environmental and development pressures of coastal communities, the Island’s historic districts are a constant that draw people to Tybee first to visit, then to invest, and then to stay.

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METHODOLOGY

This analysis relied on data from the City of Savannah, City of Tybee Island, Chatham County, Historic Savannah Foundation, Savannah College of Art and Design, state and federal databases, online research platforms, on-site tours, and in-person and phone interviews.

- Jobs and employment industry data based off Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, Center for Economic Studies at the US Census Bureau
- Property and Parcel data from Savannah Area Geographic Information System, Chatham County – Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- Construction investment data from City of Savannah Development Services Department
- Tax Credit investment data from the Historic Preservation Division – Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Historic Savannah Foundation provided data on their loans and investments
- Tybee Island Main Street provided data on their investments
- Savannah College of Art and Design provided data on their investments
- Housing Affordability data based off US Census and Housing + Transportation Affordability Index
- Walkability based off Walkscore.com
- Historic District data from City of Savannah – Metropolitan Planning Commission, National Park Service
- Neighborhood level data from PolicyMap and US Census
- Calculations for jobs and income created through rehabilitation based on IMPLAN, an input-output econometric model.

PROJECT TEAM

This report was prepared and written by Donovan Rypkema and Briana Paxton with research assistance from Reina Chano. Rypkema is principal of PlaceEconomics, a Washington D.C.-based real estate and economic development consulting firm. He is author of *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide* and an adjunct professor in the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Pennsylvania. Paxton is Director of Research at PlaceEconomics. She holds a master's degree in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania and an undergraduate degree from the College of William and Mary. Chano is a GIS specialist and a recent graduate in Historic Preservation from the University of Pennsylvania.