



## *Historic Preservation in Athens-Clarke County*

### **ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY: A BRIEF DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY**

The City of Athens has a history that is closely aligned with the development and growth of the University of Georgia. The University of Georgia is the nation's oldest chartered state university.

The University received its charter in 1795 but existed only 'on paper' until 1801 when the State Legislature appointed a committee called the *Senatus Academicus* to find a location for the campus. The Committee settled on 633 acres of high ground above the Oconee River. John Milledge, later governor of Georgia, purchased the acreage from Daniel Easley and donated the property as the site for the University. The town, incorporated in 1806, was named Athens after the Greek center of culture and learning.

The first homes in Athens were on Front Street (now Broad) and faced the campus. The city expanded in a westward direction and by the 1830s, Athens had its first suburb, Cobbham, when John Addison-Cobb subdivided his farm and offered residential lots for sale south of Prince Avenue. Athens grew as a cotton manufacturing center and for a time became the "Manchester of the South." The University, businesses, and manufacturing companies continued to attract residents to the town.

By the 1880s another subdivision, Bloomfield, developed adjacent to Milledge Avenue. The arrival of the streetcar in Athens increased mobility and enabled the Athens Parks and Improvement Committee to develop the town's first streetcar suburb, Boulevard in the 1890s. Other areas, including Woodlawn (located adjacent to the streetcar line along Milledge Avenue), soon offered homesites to a more mobile populace. These three neighborhoods, Bloomfield, Boulevard, and Woodlawn, are now locally designated historic districts. In recent years, several other residential neighborhoods have joined the list of locally designated historic districts in Athens-Clarke County. Dearing Street, Henderson Avenue, West Cloverhurst/Springdale, and the Rocksprings Shotgun Row are among a total of eight historic districts now recognized and preserved for their unique character and heritage.

In 1990 a merging of both city and county governments was approved, and in January 1991, with the exception of Winterville, a governmental unification went into effect. For what is now known as *Athens-Clarke County Unified Government*, all planning activities including historic preservation are coordinated for the broader area.

### **THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE**

The Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Ordinance, passed by the City Council in 1986, is the vehicle by which the Historic Preservation Commission can protect local historic districts and landmarks. Historic Preservation Commission members are appointed by the Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission. The Ordinance provides for a design review process for exterior changes to designated properties.

The Historic Preservation Commission and the Athens-Clarke County Planning Commission developed the following guidelines, the first in a series, as an aid for historic preservation in Athens. The guidelines address specific rehabilitation and design issues regarding our historic landmarks and districts. The guidelines in no way prevent growth or development; rather they encourage orderly, creative and compatible development within historic areas.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

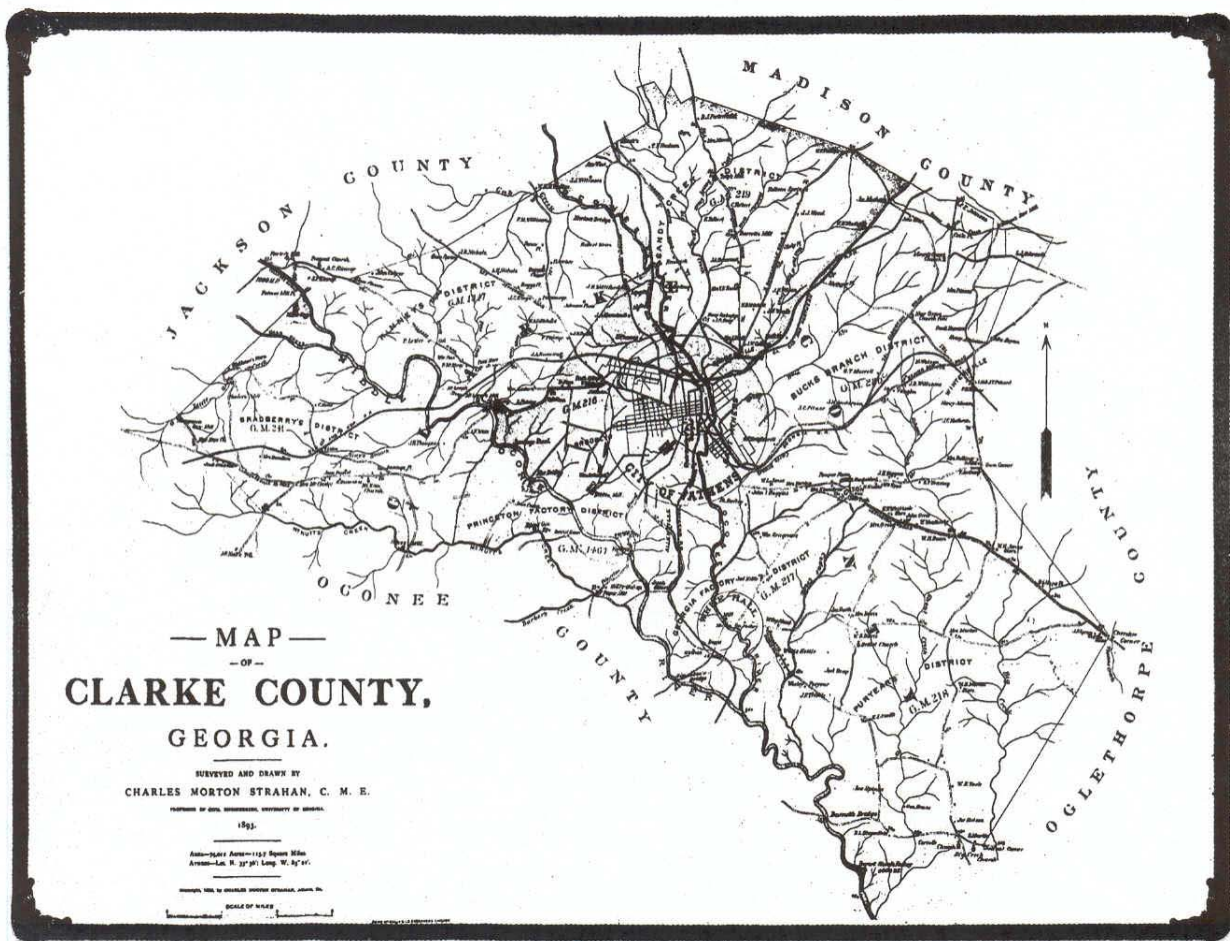
**120 West Dougherty Street • Athens, Georgia 30601 • (706) 613-3515**

## THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is charged with promoting, protecting and preserving the cultural, historical, and aesthetic heritage of designated historic areas. The HPC is also responsible for hearing and deciding upon all applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. The Ordinance requires Certificates of Appropriateness for projects that physically alter designated properties. Such projects include demolitions, building additions, renovations, or other alterations. If the HPC denies an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the petitioner has the right to appeal the decision within thirty days to the Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission. Questions about the application process should be directed to the Historic Preservation Planner (tel.: 706-613-3515), at the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department, located at 120 W. Dougherty Street; Athens, Georgia 30601. The Historic Preservation Commission is ultimately responsible for preserving the qualities of designated properties in Athens-Clarke County and it plans for the protection of its heritage. The HPC encourages compatible and creative development within designated historic areas.

### FOR FURTHER READING:

Reap, James. *Athens: A Pictorial History*. Norfolk: The Donning Co., 1985.  
The Athens Historic Preservation Ordinance, as amended, August 1993.



### **MAP of CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA - 1893**

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