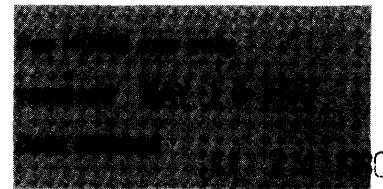


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic      Underground Atlanta Historic District

and/or common      Underground Atlanta; Underground

**2. Location**      Roughly bounded by Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr., Central Ave., Wall and Peachtree Sts.

street & number [see continuation sheet]      \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town      Atlanta      \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of      congressional district      5th-Wyche Fowler

state      Georgia      code      013      county      Fulton      code      121

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name      Multiple Owners (more than 50)

street & number

city, town      \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of      state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.      Clerk of the Superior Court, Fulton County Courthouse

street & number      Pryor Street

city, town      Atlanta      state      Georgia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title      [see continuation sheet]      has this property been determined eligible?       yes       no

date      \_\_\_\_\_ federal      \_\_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_\_ county      \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town      \_\_\_\_\_ state

## **7. Description**

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>		<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site		
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed				

### **Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

#### Summary Description

The Underground Atlanta Historic District consists of several components: an approximately two-block area of buildings bounded by Alabama Street, Central Avenue, Peachtree Street, and the rear lot lines of properties along the north side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive; viaducts on Central, Pryor, Alabama and Wall streets; store fronts along the north side of Alabama Street below the viaduct; the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot at the east end of Alabama Street; and the Zero Mile Post under the Central Avenue viaduct. The buildings within the district are several stories high and built of brick with stone, iron, sheet metal, and terra cotta details. Built during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, they are generally Victorian in style, with some examples of Neoclassical and Functional design. These buildings form continuous business blocks in the area. The viaducts are constructed of reinforced concrete, featuring Neoclassical detailing, and date from the late 1920s. They effectively raise the real street level one story, leaving the original ground floors "underground" in the district. The store fronts along the north side of Alabama Street under the viaduct are the surviving lower portions of buildings demolished to make way for the MARTA rapid-rail line. The Georgia Railroad freight depot is the remaining part of an Italianate railroad facility. The Zero Mile Post is a small stone marker post. Excluded from the district are the rights-of-way for the Georgia Railroad tracks and the MARTA rapid-rail line, the contemporary parking lots and decks between Alabama Street and Wall Street, and Plaza Park to the west of the intersection of Pryor and Wall streets.

#### Historical Development

Originally, the two-and-a-half-block area of the Underground district was a part of the larger gateway to the city. The history of this gateway to Atlanta mirrors the dynamic growth of the city as it expanded from a railroad and pedestrian town of the mid-nineteenth century into a regional automobile and air metropolis of the late-twentieth century. The phases of growth and development may be divided into the following time periods: (1) 1850 to 1864 - antebellum patterning, (2) 1865 to 1900 - post-war growth and rebuilding, (3) 1900 to 1927 - early-twentieth-century advances, (4) 1928 to 1968 - bridging the railroad gulch, (5) 1968 to 1972 - Underground Atlanta redevelopment, and (6) 1972 to the present - Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) rapid-rail destruction and reconstruction. Each of these phases has brought profound changes to Atlanta and each may be witnessed in the Underground district.

[continued]

## **8. Significance**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>							
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) <u>local history</u>				
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention						

<b>Specific dates</b>	<b>Builder/Architect</b>

### **Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

#### Summary Statement of Significance

The Underground Atlanta Historic District is significant primarily as a distinct historic urban environment which was created by a succession of developments that chronicle the postbellum history of downtown Atlanta. A portion of the original gridiron street plan of the city, so typical of nineteenth-century city planning, is still evident in the area. The influence of the railroad is indicated by the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot and the Zero Mile Post. Period commercial architecture, arranged in business blocks, is well represented by the buildings fronting on Alabama, Pryor, and Peachtree streets. These buildings also represent the postbellum commercial center of the city; they constitute one of few such reminders in this largely redeveloped city. The viaducts illustrate a dramatic early-twentieth-century chapter in local transportation history devoted to alleviating downtown congestion and conflict between the automobile and the train. They were part of a largely unrealized City Beautiful plan to fashion a Beaux Arts civic center above the "railroad gulch." Almost incidentally, the viaducts sealed off the original ground floors of buildings in the area which were rediscovered and redeveloped into "Underground Atlanta" in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

#### Local History

Underground Atlanta is a unique place in the city which has called itself the Gate City to the South. The district was once part of the gateway to the city, and part of its historic commercial center. The history of this gateway and this commercial center mirrors the dynamic growth of the city as it expanded from a railroad and pedestrian town of the nineteenth century to an automobile metropolis of the twentieth century. The antebellum patterning of the city's later growth and development, postbellum rebuilding and railroad activity, turn-of-the-century commercial successes, and the early-twentieth -century automobile age are all reflected in the character and appearance of the district. More recent history, such as the shift in the city's prime commercial center toward the north, the revival (and demise) of the Underground area as an entertainment center, and the introduction of rapid-rail transit to the city, are also manifest in the district.

[continued]

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

[see continuation sheet]

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property app. 12 acres

Quadrangle name Northwest Atlanta, Ga.

UMT References

A	1 6	7 4 1	7 1 6 1 5	3 1 7 3 1 7	7 1 1 5
Zone	Easting			Northing	
C	1 6	7 4 1	9 2 0	3 1 7 3 1 7	3 2 5
E					
G					

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

B	1 6	7 4 1 2	0 5 1 5	3 1 7 3 1 7	5 1 2 5
Zone	Easting			Northing	
D	1 6	7 4 1	5 9 0	3 1 7 3 1 7	5 3 0
F					
H					

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the Underground Atlanta Historic District is marked by a heavy black line on the attached "Property/Sketch Map." The boundary is described and justified in the Description (Section 7).

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title a) Timothy Crimmins, professor of history  
b) Richard Cloues, architectural historian

a) The History Group, Inc.

organization b) Historic Preservation Section, Ga. DNR date April, 1979

street & number a) 300 W. Peachtree St., N.W.  
b) 270 Washington St., S.W. telephone a) 404-577-6198  
b) 404-656-2840

a) Atlanta  
city or town b) Atlanta

state Georgia

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Elizabeth A. Lyon

title Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5/1/80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date 7/24/80

Keeper of the National Register

date 7/17/80

Attest: *Sally G. Oldham*

date 6/24/80

Chief of Registration

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## (2) Location

All of those properties in the City of Atlanta, Georgia, fronting on or having access to an area defined by a viaduct system situated between Wall Street on the north, Peachtree Street on the west, Central Avenue on the east, and property lines just north of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive on the south; also included are the viaducts, the Zero Mile Post, and the Georgia Railway Freight Depot.

## (6) Representation in Existing Surveys

Title: (a) Historic Structures Field Survey: Atlanta, Fulton County  
(b) Category One List of Historic Sites, Structures, and Districts

Date: (a) 1976 (a) State  
          (b) 1978 (b) Local

Depository: (a) Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
(b) Atlanta Urban Design Commission

Address: (a) 270 Washington Street, S.W., Atlanta, Georgia  
(b) 10 Pryor Street, Atlanta, Georgia

Underground Atlanta was designated a "Historic Atlanta District" by the City of Atlanta on December 16, 1968.

Underground Atlanta was determined eligible for listing in the National Register on July 19, 1976. This determination of eligibility was requested by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration under the name "Downtown Atlanta Historic District."

The Western and Atlantic Zero Mile Post, located within the Underground Atlanta Historic District, was individually listed in the National Register on September 9, 1977.

The Georgia Railroad Freight Depot was included in the Historic American Engineering Record: Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites in Georgia, 1976.

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1850 - 1864

The Zero Mile Post (1850, listed on the National Register on September 19, 1977) of the Western and Atlantic Railroad marked the beginning point of the State-built line which ultimately made possible the development of the city as a part of a new national transportation network. To the west of this marker, the central passenger station (1853-1864) was built athwart the railroad tracks which ran from east to west and which created a "gulch" which divided the fledgling town in half. The one- and two-story utilitarian frame-and-brick buildings which sprang up on grid street patterns which ran parallel to the railroad tracks north and south of the divide were destroyed in 1864, along with the passenger station, by Union soldiers who were attempting to keep Atlanta from being used as a supply center for the Confederate Army.

1865 - 1900

After the Civil War destruction in late 1864, Atlanta began to be rebuilt almost immediately. A new Union Station, an iron arched shed (1865-1930), was built on the site of the previous terminal. North of the railroad divide, a hotel district developed, anchored on the west by the Kimball House (1870-1883 and 1886-1959) and on the east by the Markham House (1875-1896). The first Kimball House, located on most of the block bounded by Wall, Pryor, Decatur and Peachtree streets, was destroyed by fire in 1883 and rebuilt on the same site. The six-story, High Victorian-styled Kimball House I contained 317 guest rooms, while its smaller, three-story rival, the Markham House, located on the east side of Central Avenue between the railroad tracks and Decatur Street, had only 107. To the south of the railroad divide, the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot (1869) was constructed on Central Avenue (then Loyd Street) as the eastern anchor of a prosperous mixed-use commercial, service, and industrial district which developed along Alabama, Pryor and Peachtree (then Whitehall) streets. As the economy of the city expanded, the one- and two-story brick-and-frame structures constructed in this area in the late 1860s began to be replaced by more substantial masonry-and-steel buildings of the 1880s and 1890s. The significant buildings in Underground Atlanta today date from this phase of expansion, including 50-52 Alabama (c. 1879); the five-story Block Building (c. 1886) at 66-68 Alabama; the Bentley Hotel (c. 1890) at 67-69 Alabama; 62-64, 58-60, 54-56 Alabama (all late 1890s); and 101-103, 104-106, and 102 Pryor Street (all late 19th century).

The activities in the Underground Atlanta district in the 1890s were primarily commercial, but there were also service and industrial uses of the structures. Alabama Street between Central and Peachtree contained a number of wholesalers, including meat ("Packinghouse Row" was the name for the north side of the street near Central), grain and flour, groceries, and cotton, and such retail stores as a

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candy store, a paint store, a saloon, and drugstore. Service activities included a bank, a Chinese laundry, and a barbershop, as well as two hotels. Manufacturing took place in Frank E. Block's candy factory at Alabama and Pryor.

1900 - 1927

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the centrality of the Underground Atlanta district began to diminish. The Markham House burned in 1896 and the newer, more fashionable hotels were built further north. The Piedmont Hotel (four blocks north on Peachtree at Luckie) opened in 1903; twenty-one years later, the Biltmore, the Robert Fulton (now Georgian) and the Henry Grady opened much further north on Peachtree and West Peachtree streets. This shift in the hotel district was made possible by the introduction of the automobile (and automobile cabs) which could move visitors quickly from the train station to places of accommodation and by the building of the new Atlanta Terminal Station (1905-1974) several blocks to the west of the Underground Atlanta district.

The advent of the automobile also brought other important changes to the Underground district. As more people began to use cars, downtown congestion increased and the attractiveness of many retail activities decreased. Parking was a major problem in Atlanta, as well as other major cities, forcing such retailers as grocers to relocate outside of the downtown. But the major problem for the Underground district was its lack of accessibility to businesses on the north side of the railroad gulch. The tracks had been a hazard and an inconvenience with which residents of the small walking and street-car city of the nineteenth century could live, but the tracks were a barrier to automotive passage which twentieth-century citizens wanted removed. Between 1910 and 1930, many plans were suggested for covering over the railroad tracks which divided the city in half. Perhaps the most ambitious plan was that of Atlanta architect Haralson Bleckley, who in 1909 designed a system of viaducts to bridge the railroads with a platform of steel and concrete. No strictly utilitarian scheme, Bleckley's plan called for a series of attractive boulevards, landscaped parks and pedestrian walkways which would be bordered by retail shops, hotels, and office buildings. Problems were encountered with financing and railroad cooperation; as a result, this City Beautiful-styled plan was not realized.

Despite the failure of grand designs and pressures from the automobile, the Underground district did not atrophy in the early-twentieth century. The office tower, which was becoming increasingly important to downtown Atlanta, was constructed in the Underground district during this period. The Century Building (1902-1976), a fourteen-story steel-frame building designed by the Atlanta firm of Bruce and Morgan, was built on the northeast corner of Alabama and Peachtree streets.

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Then, in 1914-1915, the five-story Connally Building (now called the Mark Building) was constructed at the southeast corner of the same intersection. The construction of the elaborately ornamented Mark Building capped a revitalization of commercial structures which had been taking place just south on the same block of Peachtree Street. Built for Atlanta's Rich's Department Store in 1882, 84 Peachtree Street had its four-story facade remodeled in 1907 in the fashionable style of the Chicago School, a style which could also be seen in its neighboring, two-story building at 10 Peachtree Street (c. 1910). By way of contrast, the two-story building at 76 Peachtree Street (c. 1908) was built with a facade reflecting the Beaux Art Classicism popularized by Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

1928 - 1968

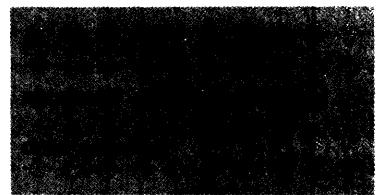
The pressures to provide access over the railroad tracks led in the late 1920s to the construction of the "twin viaducts," a bridging structure which raised the street levels of the north-south streets of Pryor and Central Avenue and the east-west streets of Wall and Alabama. Hardly a City Beautiful scheme, this utilitarian structure was fabricated of reinforced concrete with column-and-girder construction. The effects of the twin viaducts on the Underground Atlanta district were dramatic: first, several buildings were demolished south of Alabama along Central Avenue to build the bridge; second, all of the stores at ground level along Alabama Street became underground basements of buildings whose new entrances had to be constructed at viaduct level; third, several buildings on Pryor (south of Alabama) also had to rebuild entrances at the viaduct level (the second story) of their buildings; fourth, the Union Station was isolated and partially demolished and, in 1930, it was torn down completely, replaced by the new Union Station several blocks west; fifth, an underground network of streets and alleys (which included Alabama and Pryor streets and Ponder's and Kenney's alleys) were created with access being available from Old Loyd Street in front of the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot; sixth, the stores at the underground level had their facades boarded and bricked up to prevent burglary; and seventh, the original street level of Alabama near Peachtree and Pryor south of Alabama was lowered to provide truck access beneath the viaducts.

In the ensuing thirty-five years, the openings over the railroad between Alabama and Wall streets were filled in. Plaza Park was built south of Wall between Peachtree and Pryor streets in 1948, and a parking deck was erected south of Wall between Pryor and Central Avenue several years later. The land beneath these structures was used for parking, with access from Kimball Way. The Kimball House was torn down in 1969. Today, there are no remaining structures of historic significance on the north side of the viaducts.

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1968 - 1972

In 1968, several years of planning came to fruition when construction began to convert the old nineteenth-century stores at the underground level of Alabama Street from warehouses to retail stores and restaurants which were to be part of "Underground Atlanta." This revitalization brought renovation which was not entirely consistent with the historic facades of the structures. Despite many of the cosmetic changes, however, much still remains of the old nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century iron-column facades. Renovation began first along Alabama between Central and Pryor on both sides of the block. Commercial success spurred additional development along Pryor Street, Kenney's Alley and the first half of the block of Alabama west of Pryor Street.

A number of factors slowed the continued expansion of renovation at the underground level. A recession in the early 1970s, the building of a number of competing entertainment centers such as the Omni, Peachtree Center and Colony Square siphoned off customers, and the construction of MARTA's rapid-rail line severely strained the viability of Underground as an entertainment area.

1972 - Present

The construction of MARTA's rapid-rail line which was south of the railroad tracks along an east-west line did more than threaten the economic base of the Underground district; it destroyed two blocks of buildings along the north side of Alabama Street, including the Century Building and Packinghouse Row. MARTA rebuilt facades of buildings along Alabama between Central and Pryor at the underground level, left the facades along Alabama between Pryor and Peachtree at underground level, built a two-foot wall topped by a chain-link fence at the viaduct level, and added several new entrances to Underground, including one from a tunnel to the Five Points Station and one on the north side of Alabama Street from the viaduct level.

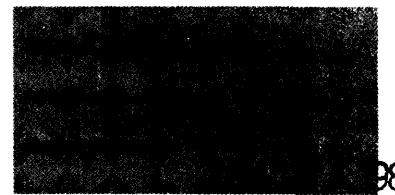
Present Appearance

The Underground Atlanta Historic District consists of: (1) the Zero Mile Post (1850) on the north side of the L & N Railroad tracks beneath the Central Avenue viaduct; (2) the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot (1869) south of L & N Railroad Tracks and facing Central Avenue at ground level; (3) the "twin bridges" viaduct (1928) which spans Wall Street, Alabama Street, Pryor Street, and Central Avenue; (4) the nineteenth and twentieth century buildings on the two blocks bounded by Peachtree Street, Alabama Street, Central Avenue, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive which

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either face on Central, Alabama, and Pryor, or have rear entrances which are accessible from the underground level alleys (Kenny's and Ponder's); and (5) the underground level facades of buildings which once stood on the north side of Alabama Street, but which were torn down and rebuilt by MARTA.

(1) Zero Mile Post: A stone marker measuring forty-two inches in height, twelve inches on two sides, and eleven inches on two sides. One of its inscriptions -- "W & ARR 00" -- gives it the zero-mile-post designation of the Western and Atlantic Railroad. This site is already listed on the National Register.

(2) The Georgia Railroad Freight Depot (1869) is the oldest extant building in the Central Business District and the only remaining railroad building still standing in a downtown which once had over a half-dozen such structures. The front, fifty-four-foot section of the depot was originally three stories high and capped by a cupola. It was a dominant landmark as the city grew and prospered after the Civil War. It was also a significant visual feature to all who patronized the stores along Alabama Street. A fire in 1935 destroyed the top two stories and cupola which were located on the portion closest to Central Avenue. A hipped roof was then placed over the remaining one story of the front of the building; the long shed forms the rear of the building. The Italianate-style red-brick structure has a stone-arched doorway, arched windows, and corner quoins, features which were typical of the city's business and public buildings constructed between 1850 and 1870.

(3) The Twin Bridges Viaducts (1928) were made possible in July of 1925 when the Georgia General Assembly passed a joint resolution which authorized the City of Atlanta to build viaducts over the State's property (the railroad right-of-way) at Pryor Street and Central Avenue. The railroads cooperated in the undertaking by lowering the tracks between Piedmont and Broad streets, a provision which lowered by the height of the viaducts and the length of the approaches. The viaducts were designed by Walter F. Shulz, a consulting engineer from Memphis, Tennessee, and constructed by the MacDougald Construction Company between April, 1928, and March, 1929.

The viaducts were fabricated of reinforced concrete with column-and-girder construction. Steel girders and steel-truss framing were encased in granite and were, therefore, not visible once construction was completed. The structures were designed for loadings as prescribed by the American Railway Engineering Association. Although no significant changes have been made in the viaducts since 1929, the MARTA rail construction in 1977-1978 cut and rebuilt the Central Avenue and Pryor Street bridges in fifty-foot sections which passed over the rapid-rail right-of-way.

While these bridges are not of unusual significance from the perspective of bridge-engineering history, they are important to the transformation of Atlanta from a streetcar and pedestrian city to an automotive metropolis. The bridges not only

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provided better thoroughfares for automobiles, they also helped to obscure the railroad features which were so important to nineteenth-century Atlanta. Additionally, they created a two-level downtown, the lower level of the nineteenth century and the upper of the twentieth century. The renovation of Underground Atlanta in the 1960s and the construction of MARTA's rapid rail in the 1970s brought Atlantans back to the nineteenth-century ground level of the original city.

(4) The buildings south of the railroad tracks between Peachtree Street and Pryor Street constitute for Atlanta an important collection of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century business structures. The incursions of time -- including remodeling, demolition, and viaduct construction -- have created a district which includes a cross section of the city's building styles.

Included with this nomination is a cross-section drawing that shows the building forms along Alabama Street from Peachtree Street to Pryor Street and indicates how the viaduct cuts off the underground from the viaduct level. An examination of the structures along Alabama (beginning at Central Avenue) reveals the following features: A two-story brick structure, 34 Alabama Street, was built in 1929 or 1930 on the narrow lot created by the viaduct construction (which took a lot and a half from the original street alignment). 36 Alabama Street is an altered, late-nine-teenth-century structure, which reveals the thin cast-iron columns at underground level so typical of the city's commercial facades at the turn of the century.<sup>44</sup> Alabama Street is a 1960s building constructed to provide mechanical systems for several underground businesses (a small shop occupies the underground storefront). 48 Alabama Street is an 1890s two-story brick structure with granite columns at the underground level.<sup>45</sup> 50-52 Alabama is a three-and-a-half-story brick building built c. 1879 (at the underground level, the Italianate iron columns remain, but remodeling has opened up a staircase behind the 52 Alabama facade, and at the viaduct level, the second story has two recessed bays with paired segmental arched windows and four semi-circular arched lights on the half-story above). 54-56 Alabama is a four-story 1890s brick building which has rounded iron columns enlivened by patterns of small diamonds (the three stories above the viaduct include a remodeled entry level and six windows with sill and lintel coursings of stone on each of the upper two floors). 58-60 Alabama is an 1890s, two-story brick structure which had new facades built at underground level in the late 1960s and at the viaduct level in 1959. 62-64 Alabama is the Old Tripod Paint Company building constructed in the early 1890s (at the underground level, there is a pattern of recessed panels and circles on the iron columns, a common feature of building-front style in Atlanta at the turn of the century, and at the viaduct level, a new facade was put on in 1959). The last structure before Pryor Street is the Block Building at 66-68 Alabama, built by Frank E. Block as a candy factory in 1882. At underground level, brick infilling has altered its appearance, but slender iron columns with wider fluted corner piers are still extant. The windows of the stories above the viaduct are segmental arched with

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terra cotta caps. A mixture of window groupings, shapes and lintels is used across both the Alabama and Pryor Street facades. A high parapet wall above the top story (replacing the original nineteenth-century cornice) is detailed with heavy cornice moldings, including modillions. Sills of light stone and terra cotta are connected along the street facades to form horizontal bands.

Continuing on Alabama from Pryor to Peachtree Street, 74-76 Alabama is the Hotel Jefferson which at viaduct level is a four-story, Neoclassical brick building built in 1930. Beneath this addition, the original base remains of the Gate City National Bank (1883); while there has been brick infilling, there remains rusticated stone pillars, patterned iron window lintels, and some original brick surfaces. ✓78, ✓80 and 82-84 Alabama Street are all 1920s two-story brick buildings, the first two with recently remodeled facades at the viaduct level, the third with its original look. 86-88 Alabama is a three-story brick building built before the turn of the century and remodeled with a more elaborate facade in 1910; thick iron columns remain at the underground level. ✓90 Alabama Street is an early-twentieth-century building which has been remodeled as a Burger King at viaduct level; at underground level, a semi-circular staircase has been added to provide entry. This stairway was made necessary because this end of Alabama Street was lowered four to six feet in the 1920s to provide clearance underneath the viaducts. ✓96 Alabama Street is a three-story brick building with a 1930s facade at viaduct level and plain brick front at underground level. The last building on this block, the Connally (now Mark) Building, was designed by W.L. Stoddard in 1915 as a five-story, stone-faced block of steel-and-frame construction with elaborately ornamented terra cotta shields bearing the initials C-B paired at the building corners beneath strongly projecting string-course moldings across the top of the second and third stories. The second story, above the viaduct, has segmental arched window openings with projecting sills on brackets. On the third story, above the shield patterns, are vertical rectangular inserts with ornamental heads. In the top two stories, the rectangular windows are grouped in pairs with ornamental terra cotta spandrels between vertical piers which extend through both stories to end with a low-profile crenellated pattern along the cornice edge. Due to the increase in the grade of lower Alabama Street, there is no underground facade. The firm of Hentz, Adler and Shutze was responsible for the 1930 remodeling of the first floor and arcade.

Peachtree Street south of the Mark Building is also part of the Underground Atlanta Historic District because the buildings here are linked visually with the Mark Building and because they have rear access to Ponder's Alley at the underground level. ✓64 and ✓66 Peachtree are two-story, 1920s buildings which had new facades built in the 1950s. ✓68 Peachtree is a three-story brick building (c. 1900) which retains iron columns behind its recently remodeled facade. ✓70 and ✓74 Peachtree are thoroughly remodeled two-story, late-nineteenth-century brick buildings. 76 Peachtree was constructed in 1908 and has been used as a millinery shop ever since. Built

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in a Beaux Arts style, it has three bays in its second-story facade, with the end bays crowned with ornate segmental pediments with cartouches. An ornamental entablature contains the name of the original business in the building, "The Mirror." A roofline balustrade crowns the facade with a paneled parapet on either side. 80 Peachtree is an early-twentieth-century Chicago Commercial-style two-story building. 84 Peachtree is an 1882 four-story brick building which was remodeled by the firm of Bruce and Morgan in 1904 for Rich's Department Store and was most recently known as the W.T. Grant Building. Chicago School influence can be seen in the wide window spaces located behind uninterrupted vertical piers. The original wide central entrance and great expanse of glass were innovative at the time. Although the first story has been extensively remodeled, the original features can still be seen in the upper stories.

Pryor Street south of Alabama also has structures which have entrances under the viaducts. On the west side of the street, separated from the Hotel Jefferson by Ponder's Alley, is 97 Pryor Street, a plain two-story brick structure (c. 1910) which has been remodeled at both underground and viaduct levels. 101-103 Pryor is a more substantial four-story, late-nineteenth-century brick building which had its top story added in the 1920s; it has also been recently refaced at the underground level. On the east side of the street, separated by Kenney's Alley from the Block Building, is 94-100 Pryor Street, a two-story brick structure (c. 1885) which has been extensively remodeled; the facade at underground level is a late-1960s addition, and the iron columns at viaduct level were inserted after the viaduct was built. 102 Pryor Street is a four-story brick structure (c. 1899) whose underground facade is also an addition of the late 1960s; at the viaduct level, the first floor has been remodeled as a store front, and on the central bay of the third and fourth stories, there are oriel-type wooden-framed windows in a semi-circular arched frame of ribbed terra cotta with an enlarged keystone. Next door, 104-106 Pryor Street shares elements of the Renaissance Revival style. Built c. 1899, this structure contains cast-iron columns between the rough stone piers at the base of the viaduct entrance. Central bays contain wide windows enclosed in two-story rounded arches with terra cotta spandrels. The top story has two round windows deeply recessed by the moldings in the end bays.

The last structure on the two commercial blocks is 123 Central Avenue, just south of Kenny's Alley. This is part of a turn-of-the-century building, the front portion of which was taken by the viaduct construction of 1928-1929. The 1930s street facade was covered with new brick in the late 1960s.

(5) The underground-level facades on the north side of Alabama Street were either left intact after MARTA construction or torn down and rebuilt. There is a continuous wall extending along the north side of the street from the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot to Peachtree Street. Several sections of this wall are creations

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of MARTA, especially the bricked-up portions at the end of Central Avenue and Pryor Street. From Central to Pryor Street, all of the facades except that of the Bentley Hotel at 67-69 Alabama have been rebuilt by MARTA. While attempts were made to reuse some of the original materials, most of these storefronts were rebuilt with plywood, dimensioned lumber, and other modern materials. The Bentley Hotel (c. 1890) includes the facade and foyer of the hotel. An original, diagonally placed, recessed entrance is located behind a corner column of pink granite with an elaborately carved floral capital. Heavy rusticated stone piers form doorways in the center of the street facade, while iron columns along the Alabama front frame windows. The rebuilt false facades continue for several stores on either side of Pryor Street, north of Alabama. The facades along Alabama between Pryor and Peachtree have been left intact after the buildings behind and above them were torn down. For the most part, these are plain brick facades and lack the interesting iron columns and detailing found elsewhere in the Underground district. The importance of the facades and walls along the north side of the street is primarily that they maintain the enclosure which is so important to Underground Atlanta.

Intrusions

No intrusions have been identified in the Underground Atlanta Historic District. Because of the peculiar character, appearance, and history of Underground Atlanta, the identification of intrusions is problematic and beside the point. In essence, the district as a whole can be characterized as a distinct historic urban environment which was created by a succession of developments that chronicle the postbellum history of downtown Atlanta. Within this overall environment, this history is manifested in a variety of ways, some of which survive largely intact, others of which are but fragmentary. The overall effect is one of historical and environmental integrity. Planning and development decisions and actions need to take into account this complex character, appearance, and history when dealing with either specific parts of the district or the district as a whole.

Boundaries

The historical geography of the Underground Atlanta Historic District consists of railroad facilities, the street layout, the buildings along the streets, the viaducts, and the redeveloped area known as "Underground Atlanta." The boundaries for this historic district have been determined by overlaying these various historical

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geographical components. Essentially, the district boundaries are defined by the 1920s viaduct system which, more than anything else, created the "underground" character and appearance of the district. A network of ground level alleys extends the "underground" area into the interiors of two city blocks.

To the northeast, the boundary of the historic district is the northeast edge of the Wall Street viaduct and the northeast ends of the Pryor Street and Central Avenue viaducts. To the southeast, the district boundary is the southeast edge of the Central Avenue viaduct and the Old Loyd Street retaining wall, with a south-eastward extension at ground level to include the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot. To the southwest, the district boundary is the southwest end of the Pryor Street viaduct, the southwest end of the Central Avenue/Old Loyd Street retaining wall, and a property line running roughly parallel to and northeast of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive (Hunter Street) that separates those properties having access to the "underground" streets and alleys from those to the southwest that do not. To the northwest, the district boundary is the northwest end of the Wall Street viaduct, the northwest edge of the Pryor Street viaduct, the northwest end of the Alabama Street viaduct, and the curb line along the southeast side of Peachtree (Whitehall) Street.

Excluded from the Underground Atlanta Historic District are the rights-of-way for railroad and rapid-transit tracks which run between Alabama and Wall Streets at ground level. The railroad tracks have been rebuilt and relocated slightly in the twentieth century, and represent only a portion of Atlanta's historic railroad system; furthermore, their immediate historical context has been lost since the 1930s. The rapid-transit line is an obvious non-contributing and unrelated feature. Also excluded from the district are Plaza Park, built in 1948 on an elevated platform at the viaduct level between Wall, Peachtree, and Pryor streets, and a 1950s parking deck built on an elevated platform at the viaduct level between Wall and Pryor streets and Central Avenue. Neither has a strong historical association or a direct environmental relation with Underground Atlanta.

North of the Underground Atlanta Historic District is the modern commercial center of the city. East is Georgia State University. To the south are city, county, and state government buildings and several churches. To the west are the remains of Atlanta's historic commercial center.

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Commerce

Underground Atlanta was once part of Atlanta's historic commercial center, an area that stretched for several blocks along either side of the east-west railroad tracks. This area developed most strongly during the postbellum rebuilding of the city and achieved its greatest economic prominence at the turn of the century. Land development pressures plus the appearance of the automobile led to a northward shift of the city's prime commercial center in the mid-twentieth century.

Within the Underground Atlanta Historic District, the business history of Atlanta can be found in the historic mixed-use activities of the two blocks south of Alabama Street. In the late-nineteenth century, wholesalers took advantage of the rail proximity to establish meat, grain and flour, cotton and dry-goods stores. Retailers operated grocery, candy and drugstores, and there were also such services as barbershops, banks, and laundries. There were even a few small hotels which catered to the passenger traffic from Union Station; of these, only the first-floor entrance of the Bentley Hotel (c. 1890) and the viaduct-level Hotel Jefferson (1930) still remain. Along Peachtree Street as well, there was a concentration of dry-good and department stores. The most notable, the W.T. Grant Building, was originally the home of Rich's Department Store. The back of this L-shaped building which extends onto Ponder's Alley contains a rear facade on which the original store logo of "M. Rich and Bros." remains.

Community Planning

Community planning and development activities throughout the history of Atlanta have left their mark on the Underground Atlanta Historic District. These activities are intertwined with the course of local history. Evident in the Underground district are the antebellum patterning of the city's growth and development, postbellum rebuilding and railroad development, turn-of-the-century commercial development, and early-twentieth-century accommodation to the automobile. More recently, the shift in the city's prime commercial center toward the north, the revival (and demise) of the Underground area as an entertainment center, and the introduction of rapid-rail transit to the city have left their mark on the historic district.

More specific examples of historic community planning and development are also present in the Underground Atlanta Historic District. Part of the original gridiron city plan, oriented to the alignment of the railroad tracks, is included within the district. The railroad gulch itself, with the adjacent Zero Mile Post and Georgia

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Railroad Freight Depot, stand as reminders that Atlanta was founded and developed during the nineteenth century as a railroad town. The viaducts represent a mammoth public-works project on the part of city government to accommodate early-twentieth-century automobile traffic and maintain the economic viability of this part of the city. The viaducts are also significant for having been conceived originally as part of a largely unrealized comprehensive City Beautiful plan for a downtown civic plaza by Atlanta architect Haralson Bleckley in 1909.

Architecture

In general, the Underground Atlanta Historic District is significant in terms of architectural history as a distinct historic urban environment which was created by a succession of juxtaposed developments. The district includes part of the original gridiron city plan, railroad facilities including the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot and Zero Mile Post, period commercial architecture of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and early-twentieth-century automobile viaducts. These distinct historic components, so unusually combined in this district, create an overall environmental character and appearance that is virtually unique not only in Atlanta but also throughout the United States.

The Underground Atlanta Historic District is also architecturally significant in more traditional terms: the presence of examples of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century commercial architecture. Some of these examples are virtually intact, such as the multi-story, Victorian Eclectic, Neoclassical and Chicago-style buildings along Alabama, Pryor and Peachtree streets; others survive only partially, such as the fire-damaged Georgia Railroad Freight Depot, the partly-demolished Bentley Hotel, and the storefronts along the southwest side of Alabama Street at ground level; still others are but fragmentary, such as the cast-iron columns, stone and iron doorway and window surrounds, and cut-stone details that enliven the Alabama and Pryor street facades beneath the viaducts. All of these architectural representations are vitally important in the architectural history of a city whose dynamic growth in the mid-twentieth century has obliterated much of its environmental heritage.

Engineering

The Zero Mile Post, located in the Underground Atlanta Historic District under the Central Avenue viaduct just northeast of the railroad tracks, is significant in terms of nineteenth-century railroad engineering and surveying. It marks the final

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southeast terminus of the state-owned Western and Atlantic Railroad. Its location was determined by C.F.M. Garnett and F.C. Ames in 1842, and the marker was emplaced in 1850 by Bodwell E. Wells, civil engineer for the W & A Railroad. From this point all final mileages and other measurements for the railroad survey were made.

The viaducts which define the Underground Atlanta Historic District are significant in the history of twentieth-century bridge building. While the viaducts were not innovative in terms of their engineering, they do represent a large-scale application of early-twentieth-century urban bridge design. Represented here are examples of both reinforced concrete and steel truss construction. Although essentially utilitarian, the viaducts acknowledge their origins in a largely unrealized City Beautiful civic plaza design by their Classically-derived parapet walls and railings.

Transportation

The Underground Atlanta Historic District contains elements which are important to the city's transportation history. The earliest remnants of the railroad, which brought Atlanta into existence, can be found in the district; these include the Zero Mile Post (1850) and the Georgia Railway Freight Depot (1869). Besides the railroad tracks, these are the only physical remains of railroad activity which are present in downtown Atlanta. In addition, the Georgia Railway Freight Depot is the oldest extant building in the downtown. The automobile age of the city is well represented in the "Twin Bridge" viaducts (1928-1929). Needed to facilitate the flow of twentieth-century automobile traffic over the nineteenth-century railroad gulch, these structures are utilitarian in design and function. The bridges encase the space over the railroad right-of-way for which plans were proposed but never implemented for a string of City Beautiful-style parks and civic plazas.

The construction of the MARTA rapid-rail line and Five Points Station in the late 1970s brought the newest transportation technology into the Underground district (even if it is actually an update of an early-twentieth-century mode -- the electric subway and elevated). The increase in access to the Underground district which MARTA will bring will result in additional land use changes. The open space over the railroad right-of-way which is currently vacant or used for parking is now prime real estate for development. In sum, the railroad, automobile, and rapid-rail transit have all had a dramatic influence on the character and appearance of the Underground district.

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Preservation Activity: The Historic Atlanta Local Development Corporation

The Historic Atlanta Local Development Company (HALDC) was formed in October, 1978. It is a quasi-public organization dedicated to the restoration and revitalization of the historic Underground Atlanta business neighborhood. HALDC is charged with the responsibility for carrying out programs to aid, assist and foster the planning, redevelopment and improvement of the historic Underground Atlanta district. Its activities are intended to focus attention on the historic, economic and cultural value of the neighborhood to the city of Atlanta and its citizens.

HALDC is specifically organized as a local development company under Section 502 of the Small Business Investment Act of 1958. The Corporation is a non-profit organization. The board of trustees consists of representatives of the Underground merchants, property owners, the city of Atlanta and the community-at-large.

HALDC has been initially funded by grants from the federal government and the City of Atlanta. The grant revenues are being used to conduct a study of the feasibility of revitalizing Underground Atlanta and the historic district and to prepare a development package as to the area's economic viability.

The HALDC staff coordinates the overall redevelopment plan, hiring and directing activities of the existing Underground Atlanta Restoration Commission's efforts at maintenance and physical improvements. The staff also serves as liaison among interested parties, including the Underground Atlanta Merchants Association, the City of Atlanta, and others.

HALDC is the sponsor of this National Register nomination, which it views as an integral part of its restoration and revitalization activities.

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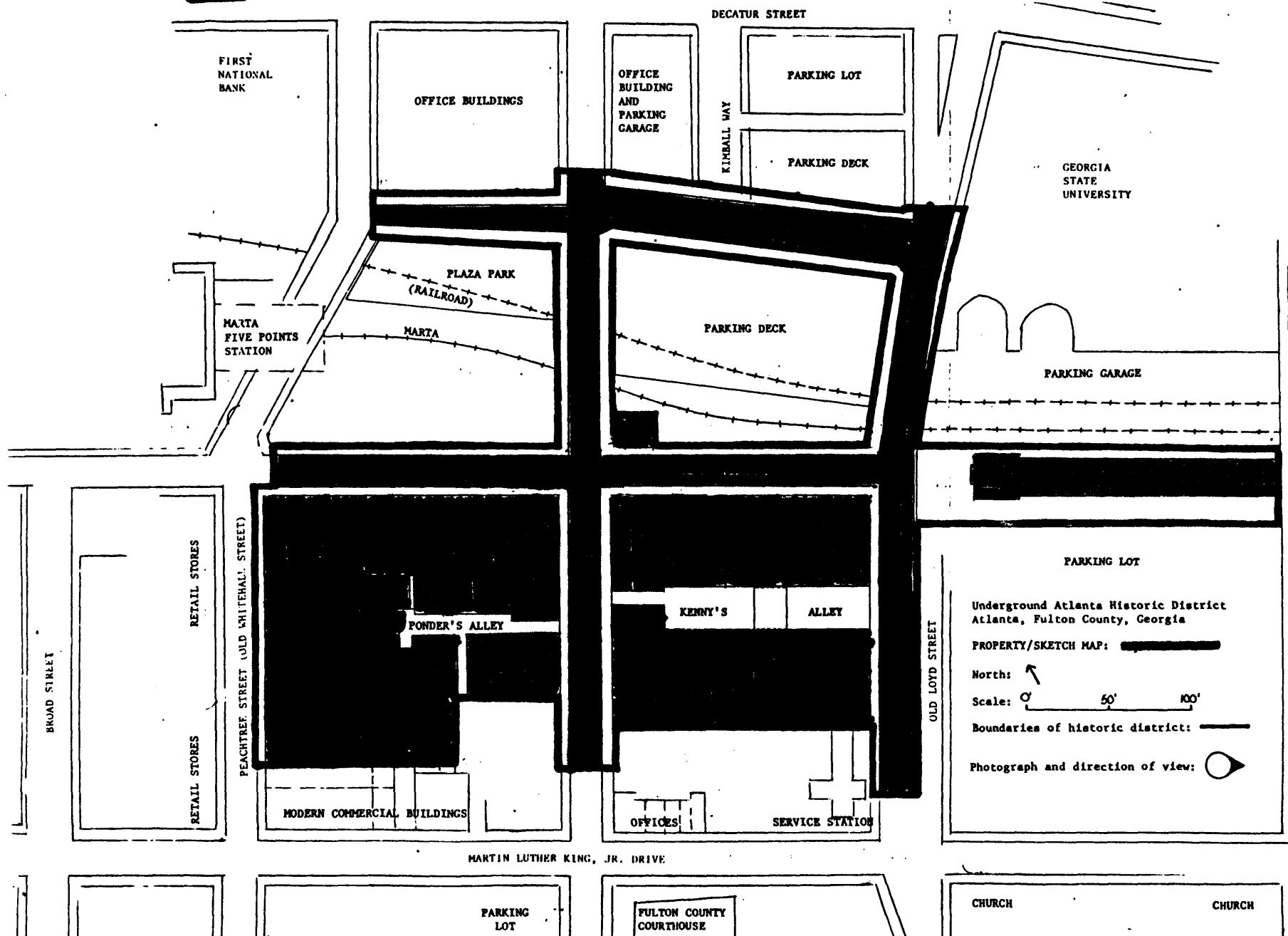
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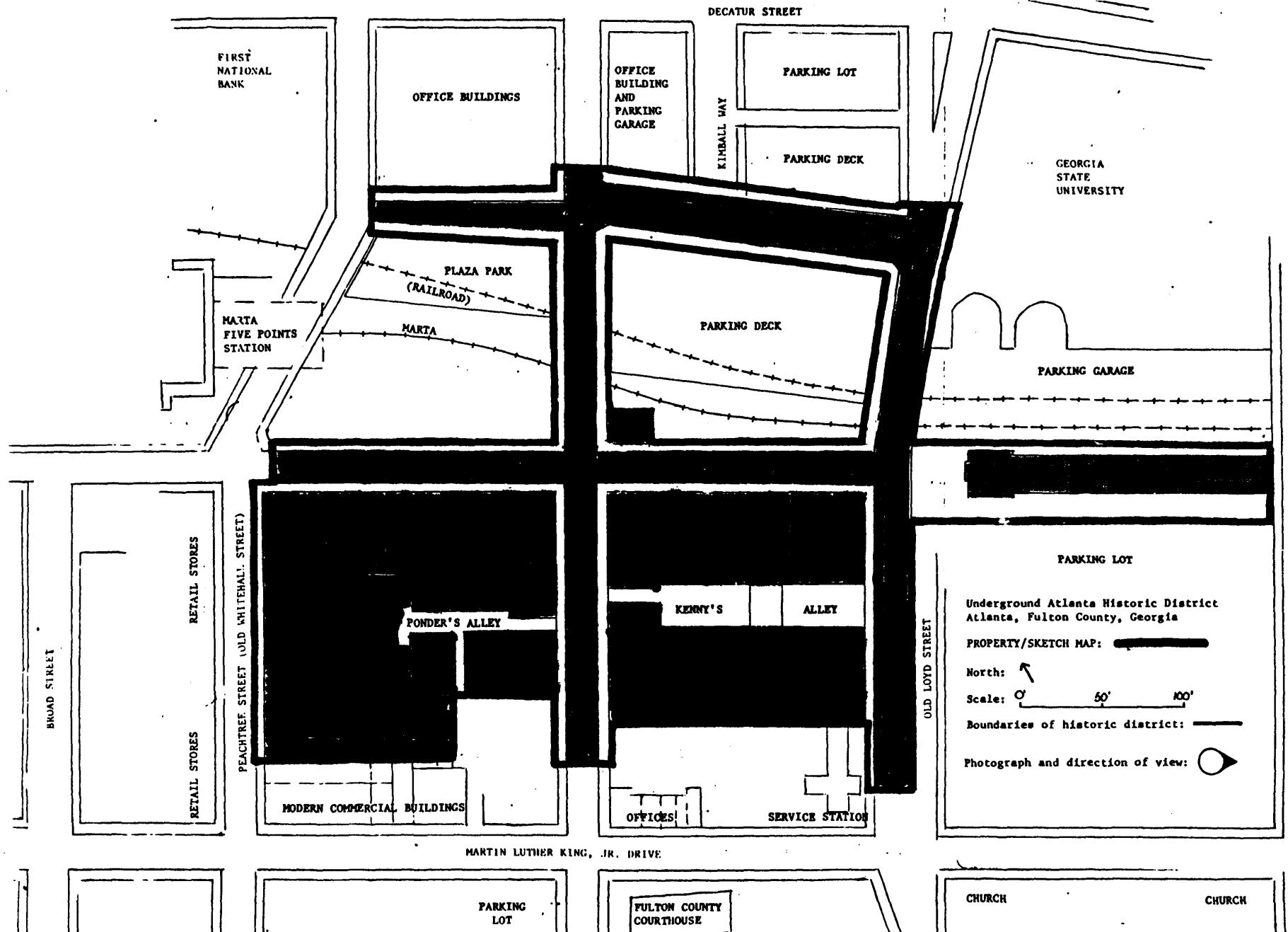
# MAP I -- UNDERGROUND ATLANTA WHEN LISTED (1980)

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**■ NONCONTRIBUTING " "**



# MAP 2 -- UNDERGROUND ATLANTA TODAY (1989)

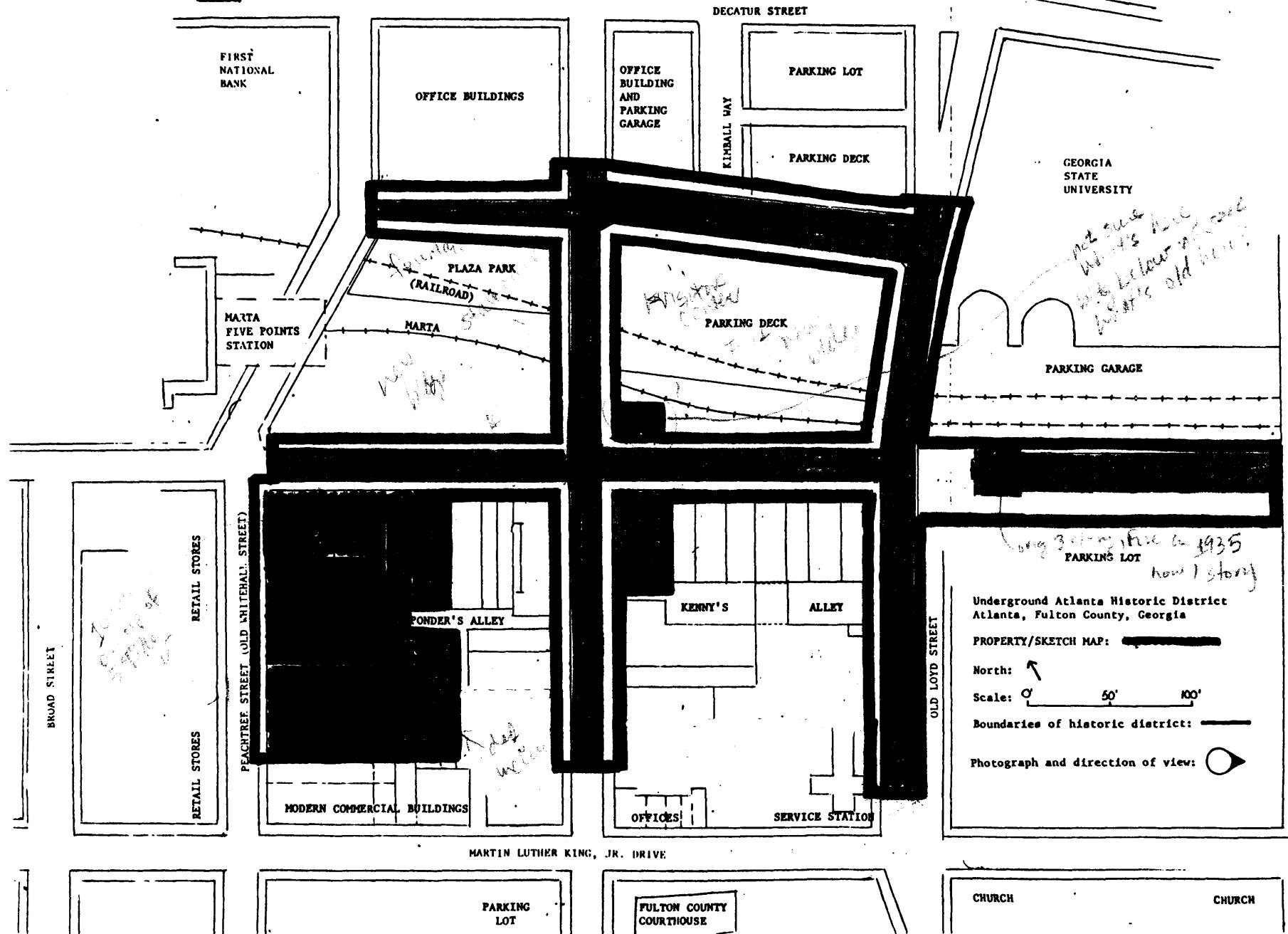
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# MAP 3 - PROPOSAL #1 - BOUNDARY REDUCTION

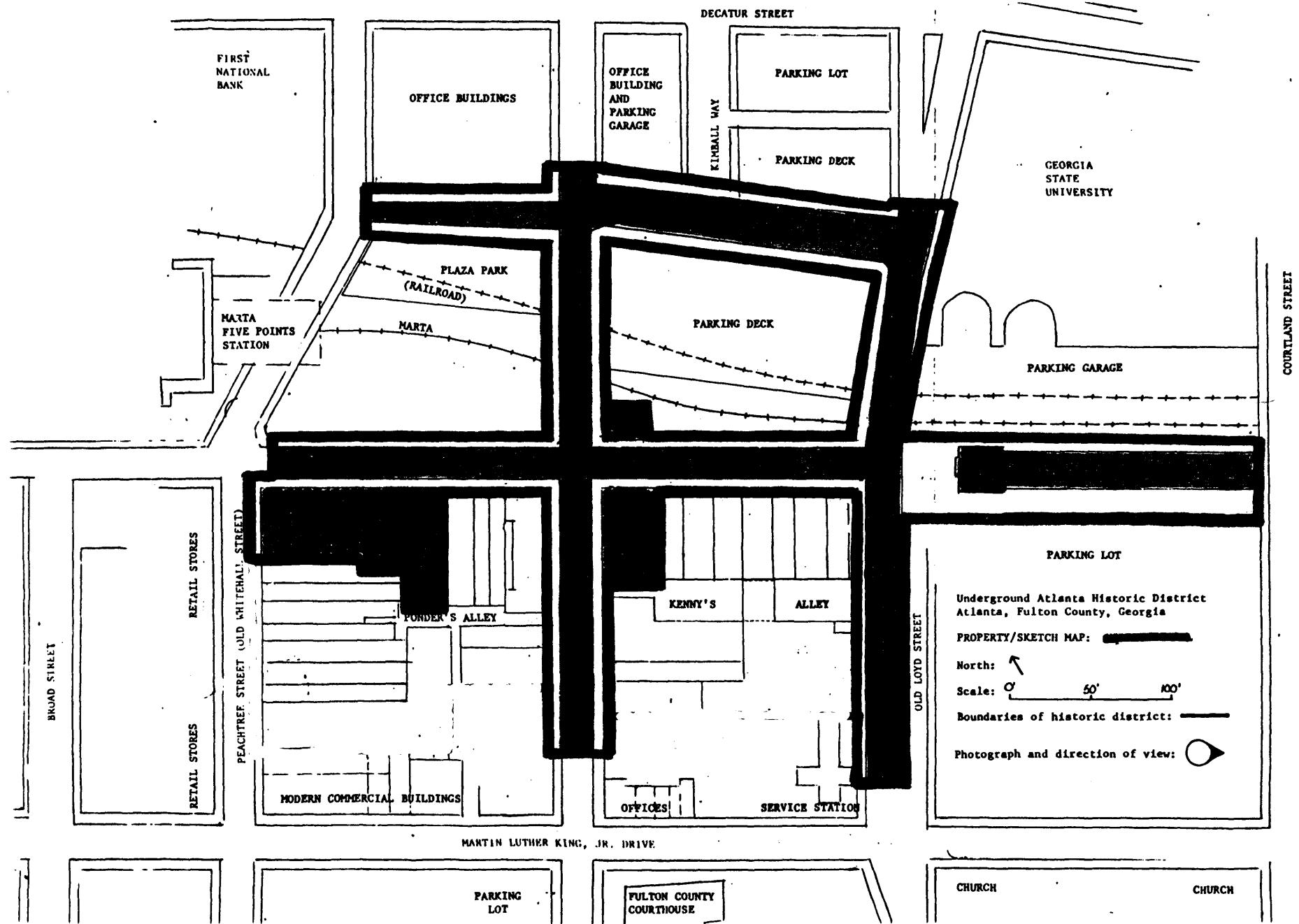
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■ NONCONTRIBUTING " "

~~100' HISTORIC DISTRICT~~  
~~100' HISTORIC DISTRICT~~  
~~100' HISTORIC DISTRICT~~



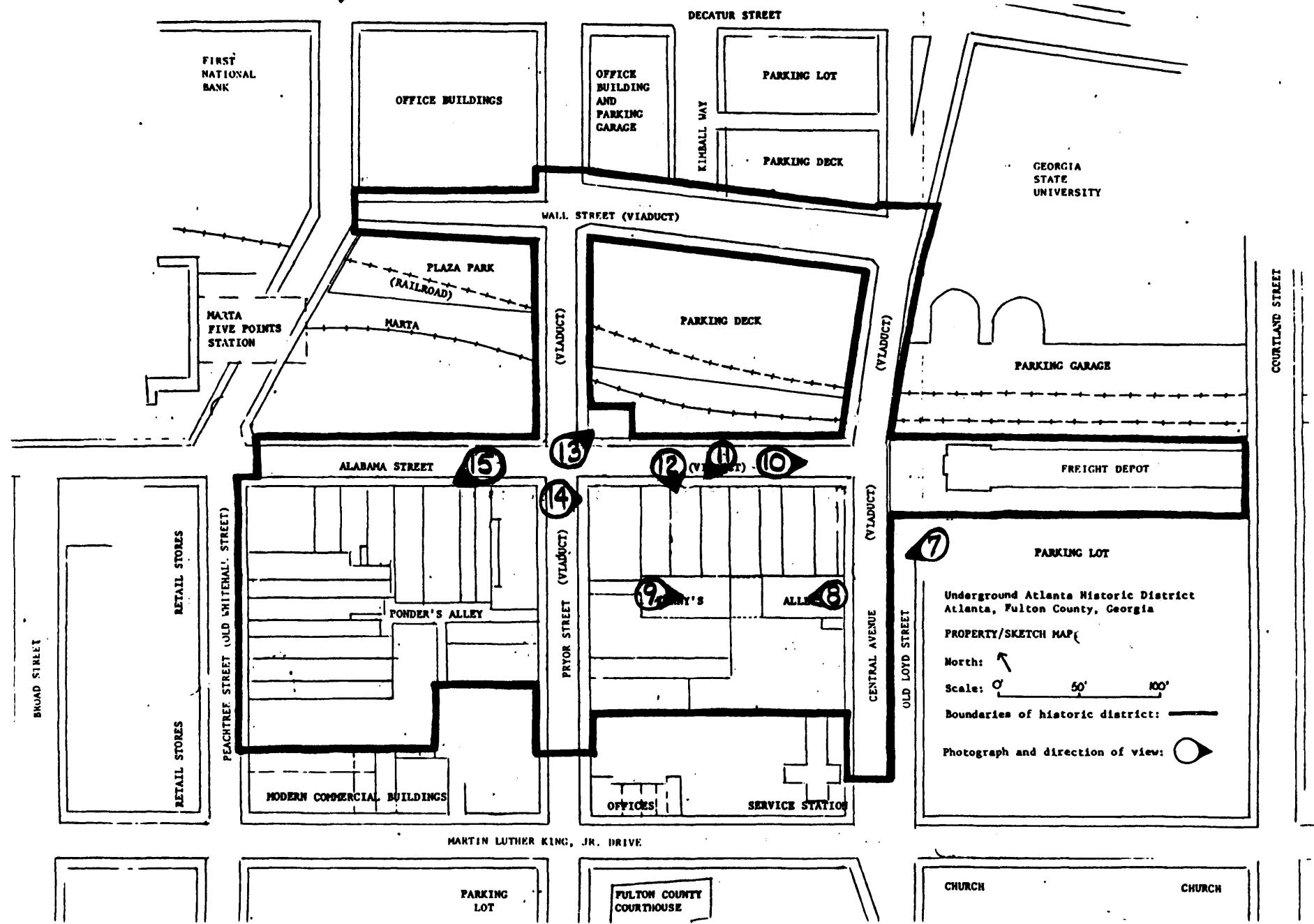
# MAP 4 - PROPOSAL #2 - BOUNDARY REDUCTION

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■ NONCONTRIBUTING " "



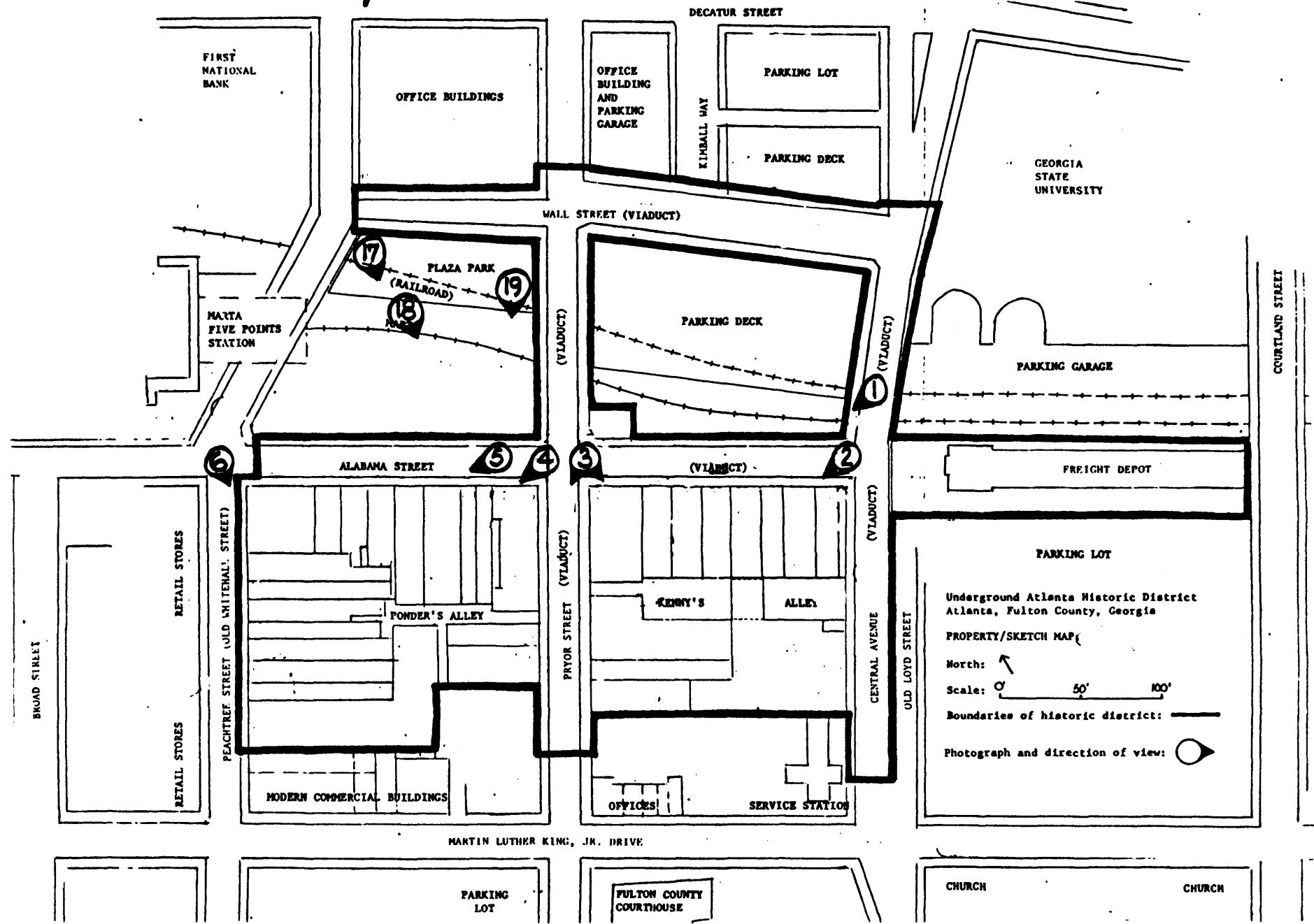
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o slide / direction of view

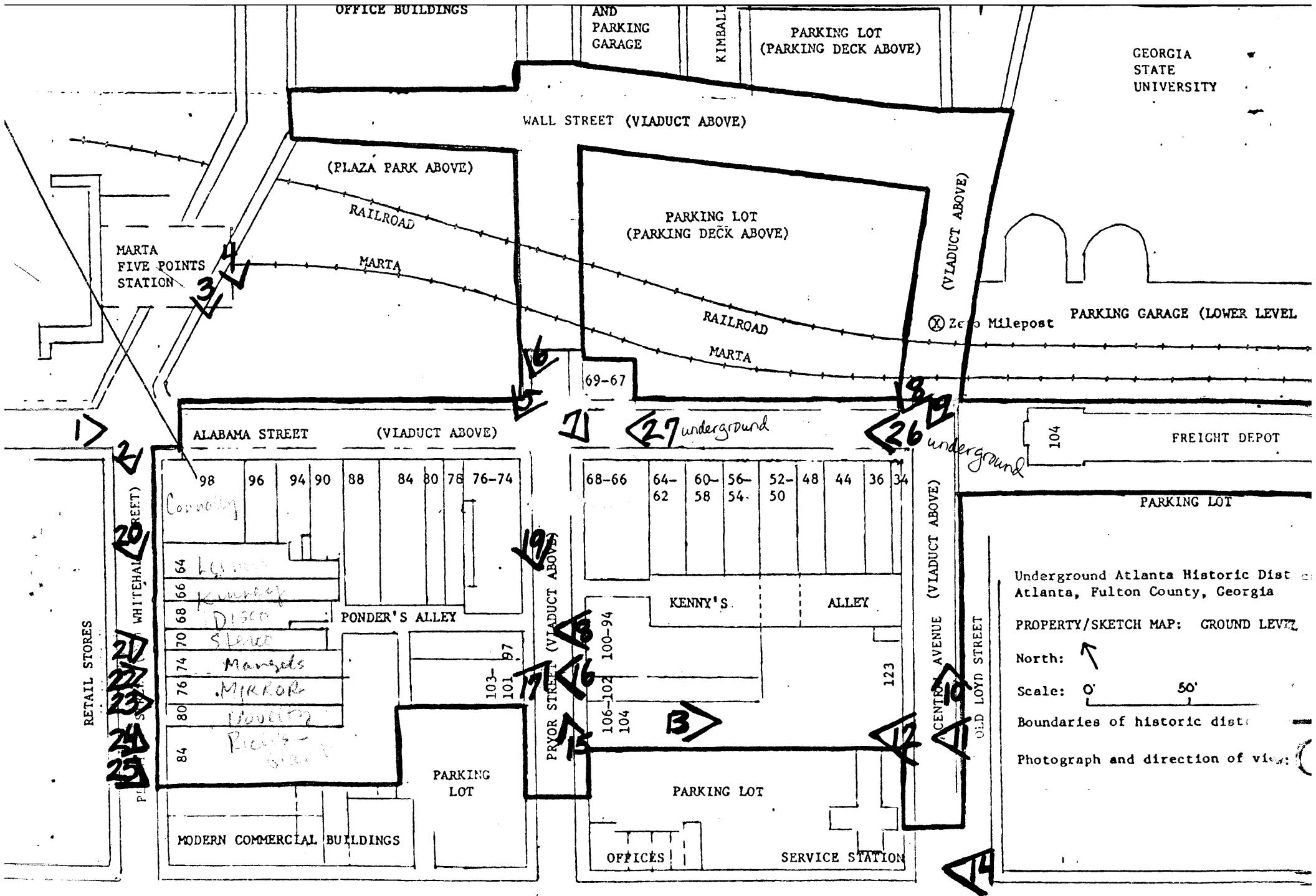


# KEY TO SLIDES (1980) (1989) - UPPER LEVEL

slide/direction of view



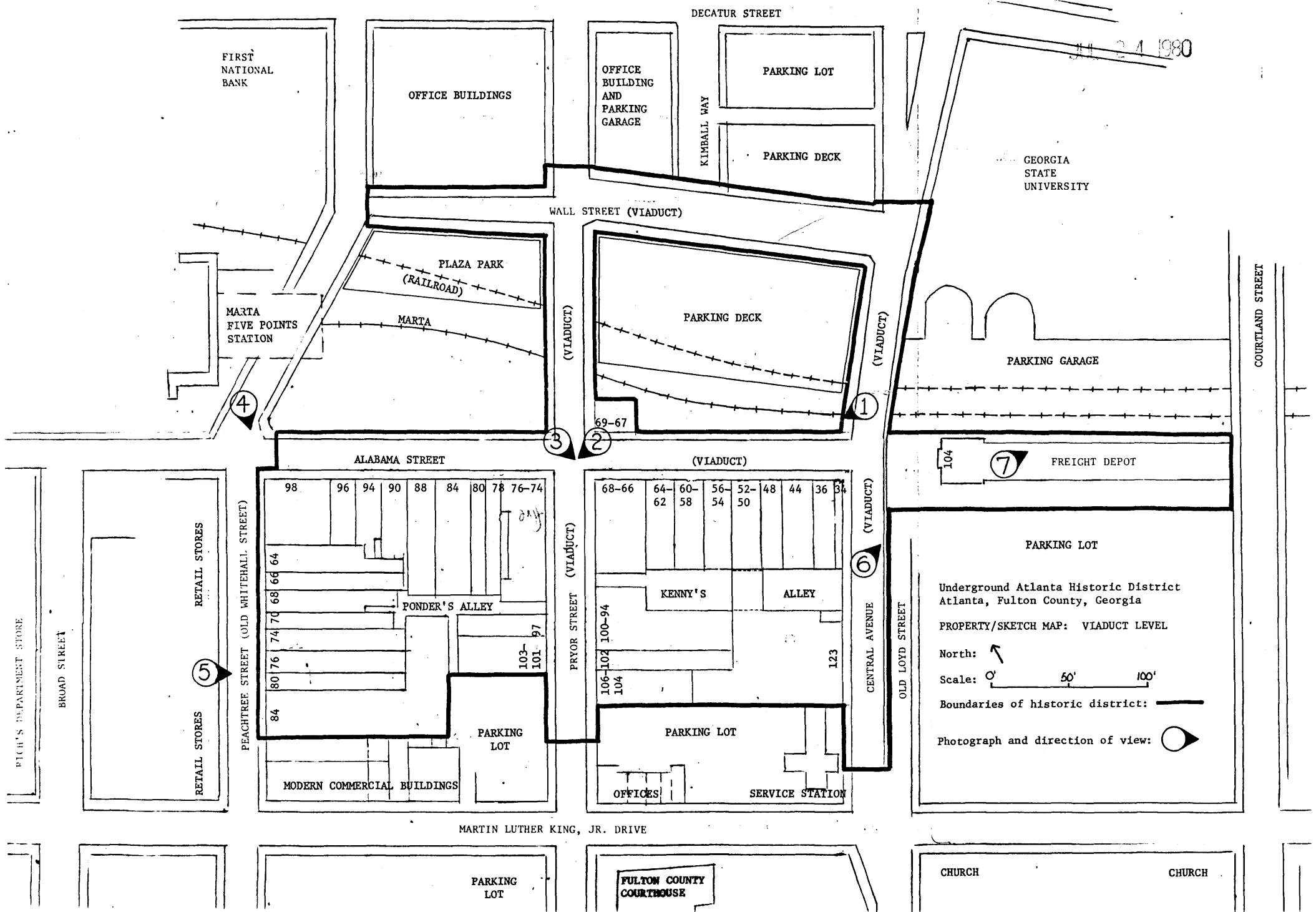
GEORGIA  
STATE  
UNIVERSITY

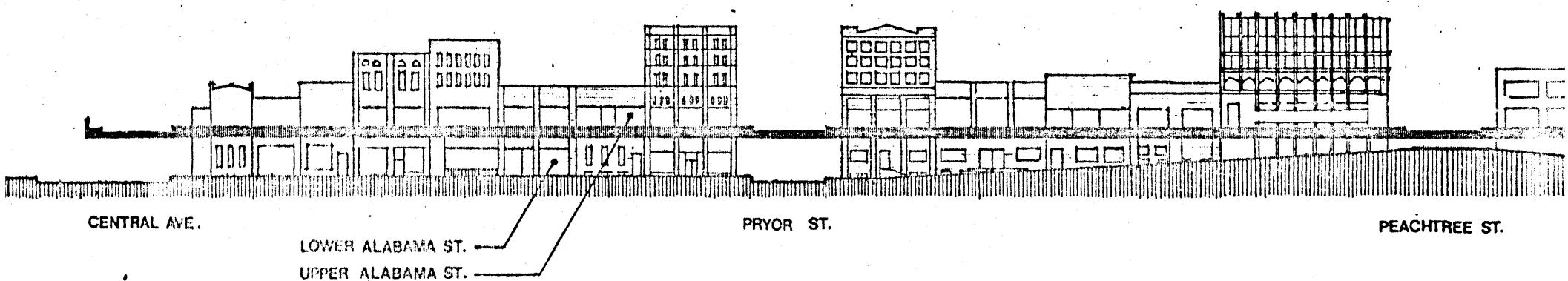


MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DRIVE

MAY 13 1980

JUL 24 1980

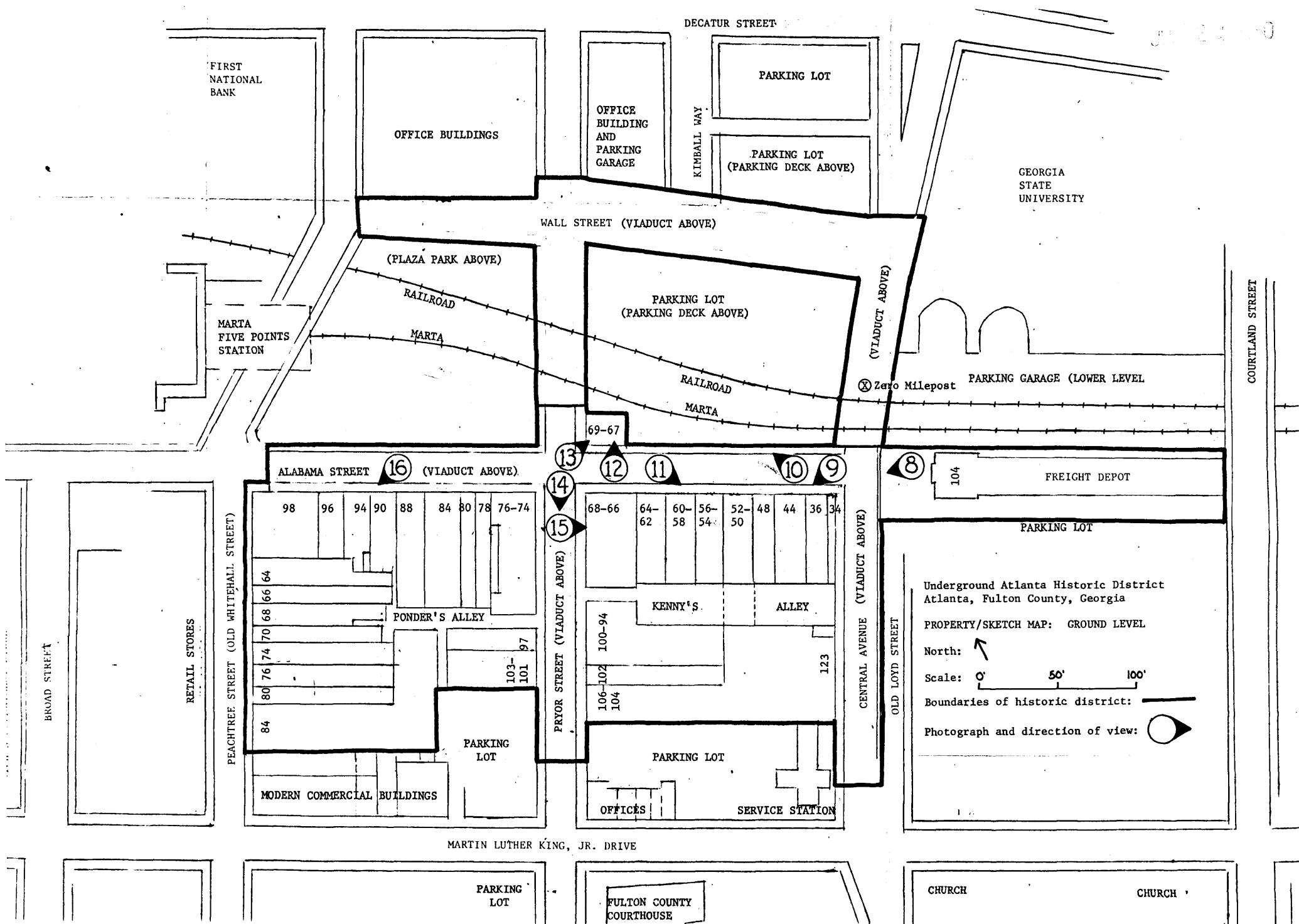




CUTAWAY VIEW OF ALABAMA STREET VIADUCT --  
SHOWING UPPER & LOWER FLOORS OF BUILDINGS IN "UNDERGROUND  
ATLANTA"



MAY 13 1980



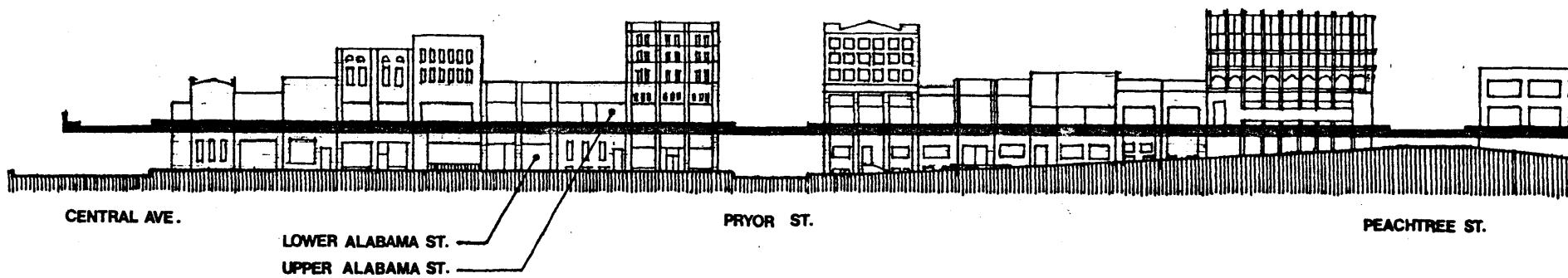
MAY 13 1980

JUL 24 1980

Underground Atlanta Historic District  
Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia

CUT-AWAY VIEW OF ALABAMA STREET  
BETWEEN CENTRAL AVENUE AND PEACHTREE STREET  
SHOWING GROUND LEVEL AND VIADUCT LEVEL

Illustrator facing southwest.



34 36 44 48 50- 54- 58- 62- 66-68  
52 56 60 64

74-76 78 80 84 88 90 94 96 98