Interpretative Plan Report

Submitted by:

Nishigandha Deokar

Synthesis Studio II

Professor: Becki Retzlaff; Binita Mahato

April 29, 2020

Table of Contents

Creating Significance of Historic Structures in Montgomery, Al to the present-day Community

History

Twelve Million Africans were kidnapped during Transatlantic Slave trade, 2 million of which died from starvation and diseases on slave ships. In southern US, the economy was mainly centered around cotton and tobacco crops that were grown on large plantations, for which the workforce primarily comprised of enslaved. Along with men, women and children were also made to work in these fields and homes of plantation owners. The Montgomery city, Alabama, was shaped by slavery. The Legacy Museum, located on 115 Coosa Street in Montgomery, is built on a site of a former warehouse where slaves were imprisoned. This museum is located near a historic slave market where thousands of slaves were trafficked. The museum showcases the enslavement of black people that began in US in 1600s and which lasted for more than two centuries.

Enslaved suffered extreme physical violence and punishment for running away, failing to do assigned task, visiting their spouse, etc. Domestic slave trade permanently separated nearly half of the black families in US. Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 authorized capture and return of runaway slaves, and penalized officials who did not arrest an alleged runaway slave. In 1840s, Dr. James Marion Sims conducted hundreds of brutal medical experiments on enslaved black women in Montgomery. The surgeries were conducted without anesthesia because Sims believe that black people did not feel pain. These experiments yielded successful medical treatments that were given to white women. Today he is celebrated as father of gynecology and is honored with statue at Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery. Slavery critical led to first white house of confederacy was established.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, passed in 1865, stopped slavery and involuntary servitude, but allowed labor work for criminals as punishment. In southern US enslavement of African American was widely accepted before, and even practiced after the end of civil war and passage of Thirteen Amendment in 1865 by criminalizing the black life. Black children were identified as banned 'criminals' and were forced to work in labor fields, farms, mines, and rail roads across south (Equal Justice Initiative 2013).

Areas of Focus for the Interpretative Plan

The specific locations for the plan would be 1) **The Court Square** where actual slave trading began, 2) **Equal Justice Initiative** is where visitors would be provided with a brief history about slavery and civil war era, 3) **Old Alabama Town** will include the tour of over 30 important historic structures that are preserved by the Montgomery partnering with Landmark foundation, 4) Furthermore, a tour to **The First White House of Confederacy** which was built in 1835 as a historic landmark during civil war era.
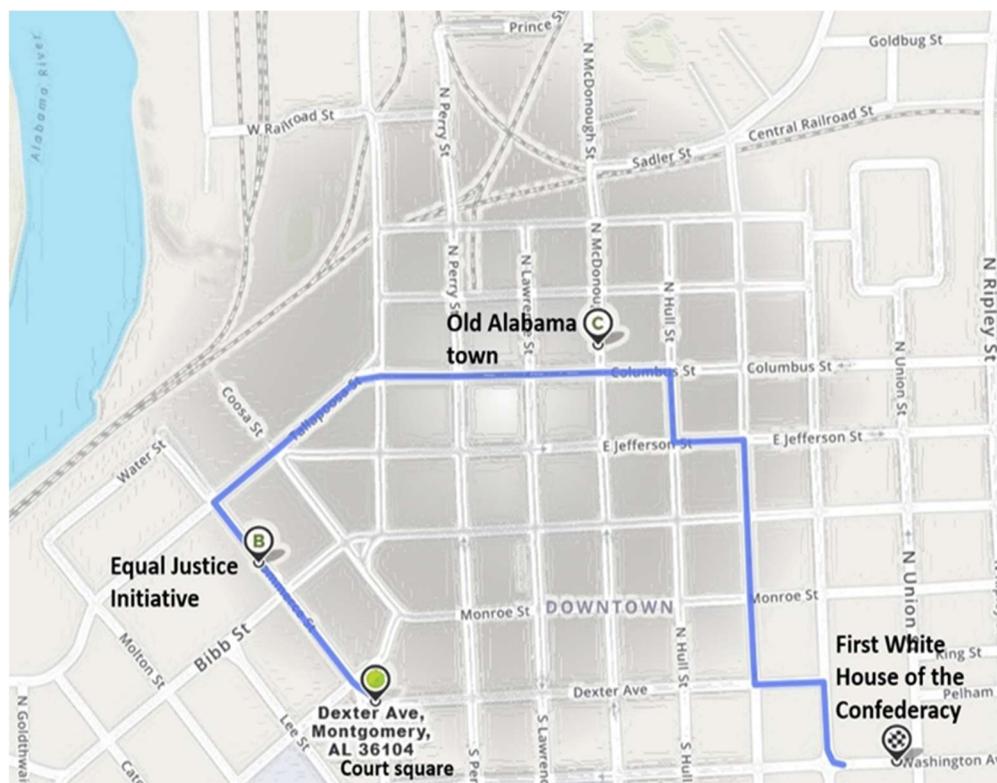

The Court Square and Slave Trade (starting point)

Montgomery's proximity to the Alabama river allowed slave trading where trafficking was done by using the steamboats. In 1851, state of Alabama made enslaved people to construct rail line from Montgomery to Georgia and North. Thus, slave traders started utilizing the trains for trafficking. Hundreds of enslaved people began to arrive in Montgomery each day, and between 1820 and 1860, Montgomery developed as one of the big slave trading sites in the country.

Montgomery drew an increasing number of major slave traders whose existence majorly dominated the city's geography and economy as shown in Picture 1 and 2.

Picture1: Cotton trade scene in Court square   Picture 2: Yearly sale and hiring of slaves

Source: Dep't. of Archives & History. Montgomery Al

Significant Historical Structures

1) The Exchange Hotel

The Exchange hotel old shown in picture 3 was erected in 1848 is situated on the corner of Commerce and Montgomery streets fronting the fountain, and during the slave regime. This hotel served as a meeting place of the civil and military officers of the Confederacy, which included several cabinet offices. It has been the headquarters of Alabama politician since the war and has been renovated many times (McCall 1885). The Exchange Hotel was located off court street. A four-story brick structure, it was the largest and best-chosen hotel in Montgomery at the beginning of the Confederacy. It was owned & operated by Abram Watts along with slave attendants. In 1904 the old exchange hotel was demolished to make the room for the new one as shown in the picture 4. This Exchange hotel was significantly important due to different movements that took place around it, for example The World War Victory parade ("Alabama Department of Archives and History") as shown in the picture 5.

Picture3: Old Exchange Hotel

Picture 4: Demolished old hotel for new one

Picture 5: Victory parade along Exchange Hotel

Source: Dep't. of Archives & History.
Montgomery Al

2) The Slave Dwellings

After the purchase of Ordeman House, the City of Montgomery along with Landmarks Foundation build a partnership which resulted in restoration as well as interpretation of over 50 authentically renovated 19th and 20th century structures which are along six blocks in downtown historic Montgomery. The Ordeman House has become the core around which landmark of Old Alabama Town has expanded. With the help of this historic village visitors are able to view the historic structures which are genuinely restored and with the help of furnished buildings the lives of the people who built Central Alabama is reflected. The slaves worked at the Ordemen House and lived in the slave quarters that were behind Ordeman House at 230 North Hull Street in Montgomery, Alabama ("Slave Quarters behind the Ordeman House" 1968) as shown in picture 6 and 7.

Enslaved people once lived and worked at Mitchell-Shaw Complex in Old-Alabama Town. This two-story slave dwelling was amongst one of the few remaining structures on the original site shown in picture 8 and 9.

Picture 6: Old slave quarters

Picture 7: Original Ordeman House of cotton plantation owners

Source: Dep't. of Archives & History. Montgomery Al

Picture 8: Present day slave quarters structure for visitors.

Picture 9: Present day Ordeman House with slave quarter on its back side.

The majority of slaves in Alabama, however, labored on modest farms, and the typical Alabama slaveholder owned fewer than five slaves. The enslaved performed tasks at their early age of eight and twelve. Children, elderly and disabled maintained and managed the livestock and yard around the plantation house. Slaves were in the fields before the sunrise and worked until sunset. After work before returning to their respective cabins these slaves chopped wood, repaired tools, watched vegetable gardens, along with other activities. The cabins were extremely tiny as compared to the size of the family shown in picture 10. Spring and fall harvest were the exhausting times when the slaves had to work for 14 or more hours daily shown in picture 11. Along with field work the enslaved workers also performed many domestic chores on both the small farms

and large plantations. Generally rich planters had several domestic servants whose major tasks were cooking, cleaning, driving carriages, serving meals, nourishing children.

Picture10: Slave Cabins   Picture 11: Slaves in cotton fields
Source: Library of Congress, Montgomery Al

3) Historic Chappell House

The Wharton-Chappell House in Montgomery's is one of the last pre-Civil War cottages survived. This structure has columned entrance stoop which indicates how Greek Revival style had influenced the small as well as large houses. This structure occupied site of General John Scott's 1817 pioneer settlement, Alabama Town. In 1935, the Government of U.S bought this structure and renovated it to serve as Central Office for Riverside housing project and delivering one of Alabama's earliest example of deliberate preservation with the adaptive use ("HISTORIC CHAPPELL HOUSE").

Chappell House before and after renovation
Source: Library of Congress

4) **Mordecai's Cotton Gin: Alabama's First Marker**
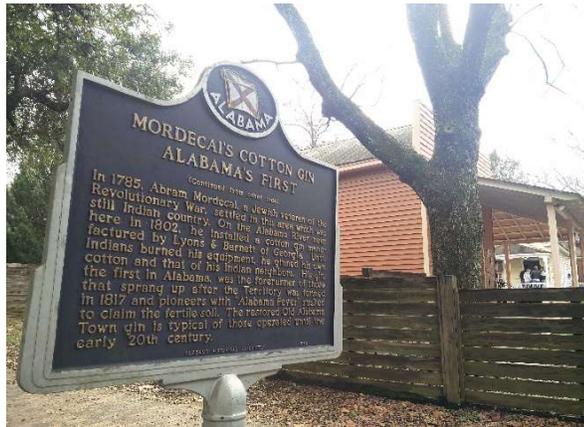
In 1785, Abram Mordecai, a Jewish veteran of the Revolutionary War, settled in the Montgomery area. On the Alabama River 1802, he established a cotton gin manufactured by Lyons & Barnett of Georgia. Until Indians burned his equipment, he ginned his own cotton and that of his Indian neighbors. His gin is the first marker in Alabama.

5) **Old Alabama Town Significant Historical Structures Site Inventory**

Old Alabama town with significant historical structures from 19th and 20th century.

1) Ordeman House

2) Slave quarters

3) Church

4) Shotgun House

5) Doctors office

6) Carriage House

7) Grange Hall

8) Log cabin

9) N Hull street grocery	10) Pole barn Source: Old Alabama Town site inventory map
11) School	12) Herb Garden
13) Lucas Tavern	14) Dogtrot
15) Martin Barnes House	16) Ware-Farley-Hood house
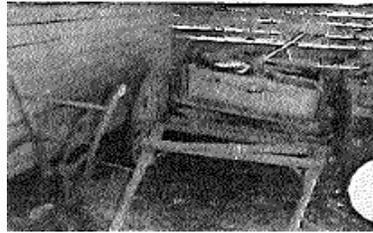
17) Rose-Morris house

These historic buildings in Old Alabama Town are not demolished, rather they are preserved and renovated to offer visitors with a living history experience. These buildings now produce income and serve as museums. People are not very well aware of this site; therefore, it is crucial to include a tour through these historic structures in the interpretative plan to maintain its importance and attract more visitors.

Reason for Preserving Historic Structures

Preserving historic structures in Montgomery is important to maintain the city's heritage and history. In 1961, as the urban activist Jane Jacobs in her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" discussed that there are economic advantages if certain types of business are located in older buildings. These historic structures tend to have higher-quality materials and strong history that can be passed on to the future generations. Historic structures are the reminders of city's culture and complexity. By looking at the historic structures the tourists and the residents are able to witness the aesthetics and cultural history of the area. For instance, the historic building façades makes a significant contribution to the look and feel.

Plan's Audience

The spectators will be the local residents and visitors who want to explore the characteristics of the historic structures.

Major Themes

1) **Provide welcoming atmosphere with historic summary of the site**

   This will include most of the significant structures and a brief that would interest the visitors. For instance, historic timeline, famous people and their contribution, and the important events that happened in the past that led to changes in Montgomery.

2) **Provide cultural information**

   This would include providing ample cultural information. For instance, people and their lifestyle, housing, occupation, and the neighborhoods they lived in.

3) **Guided tours**

   For better experience maintain a flow pattern and provide visitors with actual visits to the sites chosen for the interpretative plan. The guided tours will include actual visits to sites such as monuments, dwellings, structural elements etc.

The historic sites will be interpreted through: -

Activity where visitors enjoy the discovery of a place's unique identity derived from its history.

Walks that consist of visits to a site or area's unique, indigenous culture, heritage, features.

Signage which help to place resource in a broader historical context by linking it to other historic sites in the community.

Tours that would help the visitors to visit different historic sites.

Wayfinding would be a feasible option for the visitors to explore the sites with the help of apps/maps.

Interpretative Goals & Objectives

Goal:

Provide welcoming atmosphere, ample historic information about the sites where visitors learn the struggle and feel inspired.

Objectives:

1. Readable site maps, make it user friendly
2. Plan a layout for the themes to maintain flow.
3. Create signages, markers that would reflect the information.
4. Help visitors with media to gain satisfaction/ knowledge after learning about people, culture from the past.

Goal:

Make the sites accessible including signages for people to get to the locations and provide opportunities through formal & informal learning experience to gain multiple perspectives.

Objective:
1. Foster identity if signs go around the community.
2. Make visitors safety a priority
3. Wayfinding through apps/maps
4. Improve Accessibility

5. Proper Signages to guide visitors

Goal:
Create impact on visitors
Objectives:

1. Create impact where visitors learn the struggle of enslaved people
2. Importance of the site
3. Get emotionally attached
4. Feel inspired
5. Feel compelled to visit again or visit more historic sites

Policies
1. Acquiring resource and funding
2. Conducting charrette process that includes community leaders, business owners, Al historic commission, tourist agencies, planners, city officials.
3. Use standard format for the signs or text on the markers.
4. Policies be written in clear and simple language.
5. Planners get together to categorize locations and signs.
6. Without blocking make the signages visible for the visitors.
7. For better accessibility improve the sidewalks and crosswalk.

Implementation
1. Involving different stakeholders like business owners, Al historic commission, tourist agencies, planners, community members, and city officials.
2. Convincing the people or owners who own historic buildings to have markers or signs in front of their building.
3. Negotiating with building owners for better outcomes.
4. Educating the community about the plan through workshops, participatory events.
5. Collaboratively work with the Alabama historic commission, Department of Archives to identify if there are more historic structures in Montgomery.

Design Scheme for the Interpretative Plan

For the interpretative plan there would be four major locations that could be covered in a day. As shown in the map the starting point will be the Court Square followed by the EJI Museum, Old Alabama Town, and First White of Confederacy.

The Court Square (starting point): Visitors will be given a brief history on slavery and their contribution in constructing the structures. The enslaved worked hard in constructing the structures, but their efforts were never recognized, therefore different markers will be proposed at the court square that depict their contribution. The following map showing locations and time taken to reach them will be given out to the visitors.
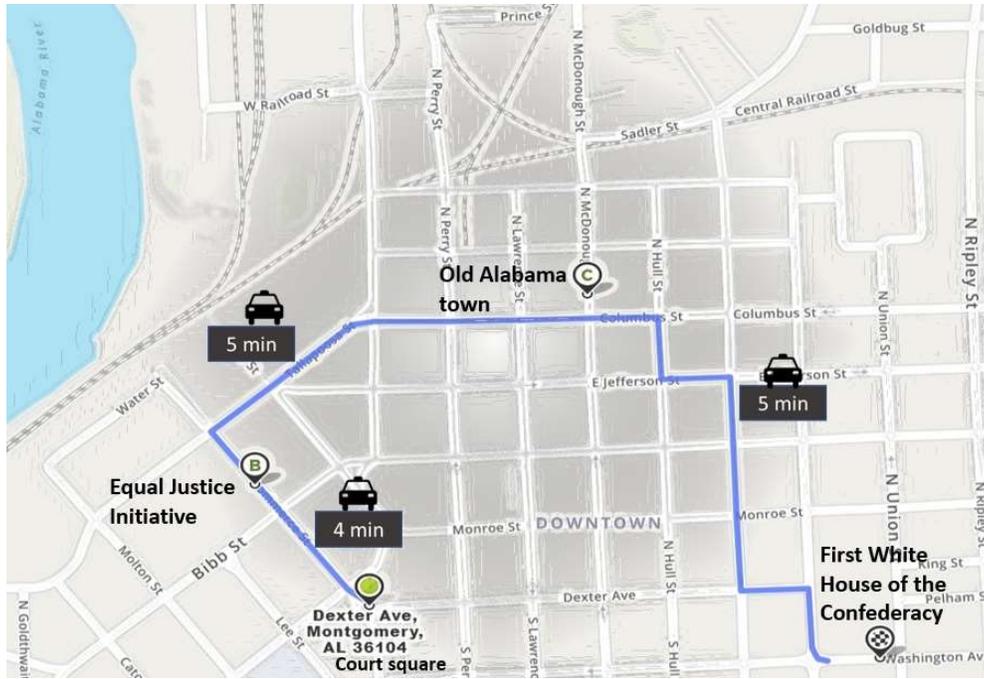
Map showing major locations for the interpretative plan

A visitor center will help to give a pleasing and welcoming atmosphere to the visitors. The visitor center will include brief information of the sites. The visitors will be given self-guided maps with images and short brief about the structures that they will be exploring. The visitors center would also have information desk where visitors can physically interact with the employees and gain information. Also, the center will have refreshment areas if the visitors want to relax before they visit the sites.

Source: static1.squarespace.com

The tours will be done by partnering with the owner and operator of "More than Tours" Michelle Browder. The guided tours by Michelle are not only just visits to the specific sites but also, she provides brief history to the visitors about the sites.

Source: usatoday.com

Partnering with Old Alabama Town. The city of Montgomery along with Landmark Foundation build a partnership that has resulted in restoration of over 50 authentically renovated structures from 19th and 20th century. The Old Alabama Town village would not only provide a brief vision of the structures from 19th and 20th century but also the enslaved people who lived and worked there. Old Alabama Town has a pace bicycle service that can be booked by the visitors to explore different sites.

Source: Oldalabamatown.com

Old Alabama Town with 19th and 20th century structures. This map will help visitors to maintain a flow pattern and guide through different historic structures that includes an image and short brief description of the structure.
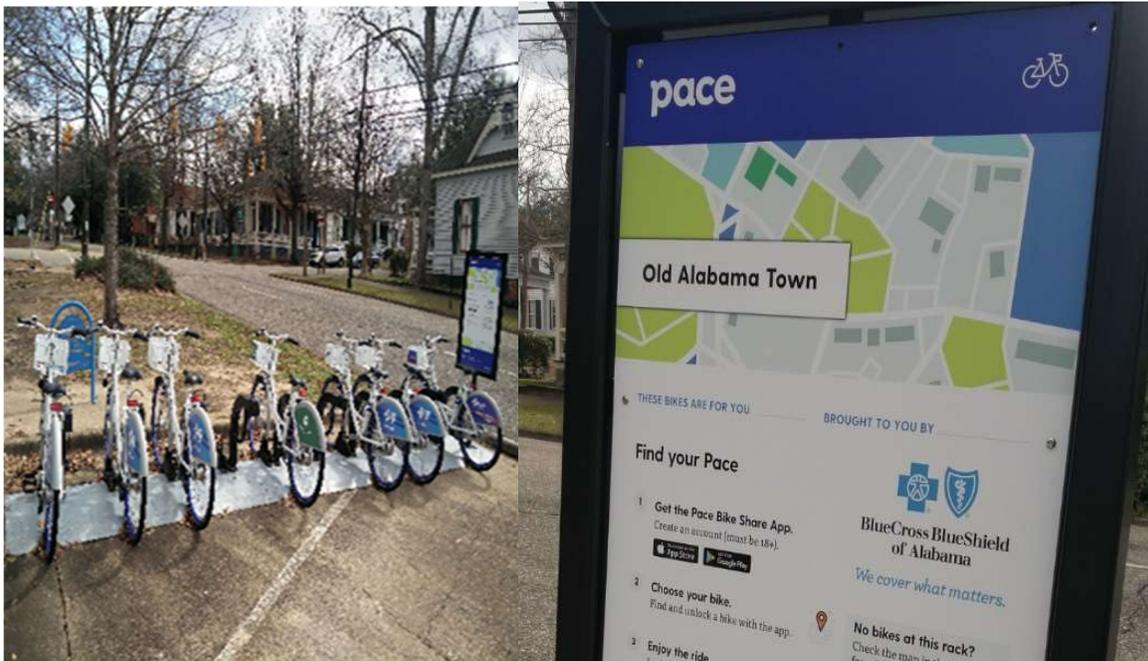
Pace bicycle service available to explore historic sites

In Old Alabama Town as shown in the image below, it is essential to have improvements in the streetscape design, adding more signages, provide accessibility for disabled through curbs or ramps, allotted bike lane, street furniture so that visitors can explore the historic sites more efficiently.

Old Alabama Town

Source: nacto.org

Equal Justice Museum: After Court square the visitors will be directed to the EJI museum where they would get brief about slavery and thousands who were lynched. Visitors will also get to look at the sculptures from the artists that represent slavery, segregation, and contemporary issues of racial inequality.

Free Shuttle Service from EJI museum to Memorial

Periodic events will be conducted to attract different visitors, college, school students where they will be given ample information about the historic structures and events through different sessions or activities.

Source: static1.squarespace.com

Source: babyccinokids.com

Encouraging kids or students to involve in the activities such as spatial thinking and furthermore draw or map the city with its significant features.

Source: afsb.org

Summer camps for students where they will be given a tour of Montgomery's significant structures explaining when and why they were built, who built them, materials that were used, and the reason why it is important to preserve them. Later students will be provided with supplies where they will be encouraged to build their own structure. These periodic events or fun activities will not only attract the students but also help the young generation to learn about Montgomery's culture and history.

Outdoor fair events will be conducted, and the location chosen for these events would be around the historic structures so that visitors are attracted to attend these events. By giving the local community a chance to sell their products through these events will help to grow the local economy.

hiddencharleston.com

Interpreting History through Building Facades

There has been a significant amount of contribution by the enslaved people in the construction of Montgomery's significant historic structures. Having a mural would help the present-day community to recognize their struggle and their contribution.

Source: Armando Trull / WAMU.org

The below image is from Kansas City public library with a book façade. Having such facades would attract the visitors to explore buildings from outside as well as inside. Such facades could be designed to attract the visitors to Montgomery where they become aware of Montgomery's history.
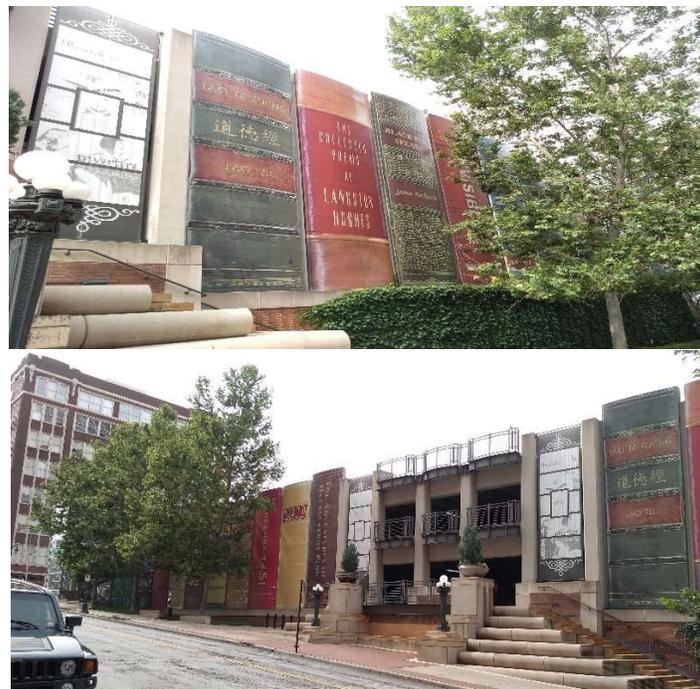
Due to the current Covid-19 outbreak people are unable to move outside their homes. All the museums, and historic sites are closed. Having a virtual tour could be one of the options to interpret Montgomery's historic sites. These virtual tours would not only help people to view the different structures sitting at their homes but would also be safe and less time consuming during such pandemic situations.

Source: gfycat.com/separatefeistyharpsea

Source: gifer.com/ed/2vCH

Recommendations

Innovation in Architecture is important but it is also crucial to restore and preserve old buildings as these old structures are reflection of history, they help us to understand and respect the citizens

who lived in different eras with different traditions, and the changes that took place in the society. Old buildings are the face of the cities which signify the changes that took places over the period of time which includes conflicts, wars, prosperity, economic and political conditions of that era. With the help of these three themes (Provide historic summary, Cultural information, and guided tours) it would be helpful to attract the visitors who like to experience the spirit of the city.

Based on these theme visitors would be attracted which in return would create more local jobs and help improve the economic prosperity of the city. If historic structures are appropriately portrayed to the tourists, they will bring character and charm to the neighborhood that people live in.

Reference:

"Alabama Department of Archives and History." Accessed February 1, 2020.

https://archives.alabama.gov/searchcoll.html.

Equal Justice Initiative. 2013. *Slavery in America: The Montgomery Slave Trade*. Equal Justice

Initiative. https://eji.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/slavery-in-america-report.pdf.

"HISTORIC CHAPPELL HOUSE." Accessed January 20, 2020.

https://www.montgomeryal.gov/city-government/departments/economic-and-community-

development/development/project-areas/historic-chappell-house.

McCall, H.G. 1885. *A Sketch, Historical and Statistical, of the City of Montgomery*. Authority of

City Council of Alabama. Auburn University Archives

"Slave Quarters behind the Ordeman House." 1968.

http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/photo/id/31348. Alabama

Department of Archives and History