

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Silvertown Historic District

2. Location: Along both sides of GA Hwy 19 and roughly bounded by O Street and S Street to the west; R Street, Deluxe Circle, and E Street to the north; B Street and A Street to the east; and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Goodrich Avenue, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to the south in Thomaston, Upson County.

3a. Description: Silvertown Historic District is an approximately 407-acre, contiguous district encompassing recreational, commercial, industrial, and residential resources associated with the planned mill village of Silvertown, Georgia, which developed as part of the Martha Mills Division of the B. F. Goodrich Tire and Rubber Company (BFG) beginning in the late 1920s. The district is located within the city limits of Thomaston, Georgia, but was part of the independent municipality of “Silvertown” from 1929 to 1958. The district includes distinct areas defined by both historic and existing land use and spatial organization, including the area known historically as “Town Center,” which includes a modern park known as Greatest Generation Memorial Park, historic Silvertown Ball Park, and other communal/public areas in the center of the district; a commercial area on the east side of US Hwy 19 near the center of the district; the industrial complex, which includes the site of the now-demolished Martha Mills; and four residential areas known as South Village, North Village, Highway Village, and West Village. Primarily designed by the nationally-renowned Robert and Company Incorporated Architects and Engineers (Robert and Company) with consultation from prolific landscape architect and planner Earl Sumner Draper, the district largely features hallmark characteristics of Draper’s mill villages, including curvilinear circulation that conforms to the topography of the site, uniform setbacks on similarly-sized lots, small triangular parks, plentiful greenspaces, and centrally-located commercial and recreational facilities. The plan of the district’s South Village, planned prior to Draper’s involvement and located south of the former mill complex, is the exception as it consists of a more gridded layout. The district includes representative examples of common house types constructed in textile mill towns in Georgia and the South during the 1920s and 1930s—including Bungalows (designed from 1926 to 1929 by Robert and Company) and American Small Houses (designed from 1936 to 1937 by Atlanta architect, Richard Kennon Perry), as defined in the statewide context *Georgia’s Living Places: Historic Houses in Their Landscaped Settings* and 2019 draft versions of *The Bungalow in Georgia* Context and *Guidelines for Evaluation and Georgia’s Small House Context and Guidelines for Evaluation*. Architectural styles represented by the district’s contributing housing and community landmark buildings include Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and English Vernacular Revival. Historic community landmark buildings include the Colonial Revival-style Silvertown West Village School building (c. 1929), two churches (c. 1930), three community store buildings (c. 1930), a Boy Scout Hut building (built prior to 1939), a tennis court, and a baseball field. Although the majority of the Martha Mills complex is no longer extant, two large circular reservoirs, a Pump House, and a Boiler House and Stack remain, providing evidence of the district’s former industrial purpose.

3b. Period of Significance: 1926-1958

3c. Acreage: approximately 407 acres

3d. Boundary Explanation: The boundary includes the intact, contiguous, historic resources associated with the development of Martha Mills and the associated planned mill village of Silvertown.

4a. National Register Criteria: Criteria A, B, and C

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Architecture, Community Planning and Development, Landscape Architecture, Industry

4c. Statement of Significance: In 1926, representatives of the B.F. Goodrich Tire and Rubber Company (BFG) and Fisk Rubber Company, recognizing the benefits of doing business in the South, set out on a tour of Georgia in search of a textile mill capable of supplying a massive amount of tire cord. Following this tour and a deal between the two rubber companies and Thomaston Cotton Mills, another deal was struck between BFG, Thomaston Cotton Mills, and the Atlanta-based Robert and Company Incorporated Architects and Engineers (Robert and Company) to construct a second mill in Thomaston to meet the high demand for tire cord. Robert and Company designed Martha Mills in 1926 along with the houses in accompanying mill village, South Village. During a mill expansion in 1929, Robert and Company consulted with renowned landscape architect and planner, Earle Sumner Draper on the design of three additional mill villages. These mill villages, which along with South Village became the incorporated city of Silvertown in 1929, would represent a shift in industrial town planning practices, as Robert and Company and Draper sought to create a “total-living” environment equipped with the most modern village amenities and plentiful greenspace. The Silvertown Historic District is significant at the state-wide level under Criterion A in the area of industry and under Criterion C in the areas of community planning and development, landscape architecture, and architecture as an excellent example of a planned, company-managed industrial community associated with the expansion of Northern-based industrial operations into the South that exhibits the evolution of theories and design strategies for industrial town planning and management that occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in America. The district constitutes one of Georgia’s and the South’s largest and most-complete examples of a planned industrial community, representative of the work of Robert and Company, Earle Sumner Draper, and Atlanta-based architect Richard Kennon Perry, who designed houses for the 1936-1937 expansion of Silvertown’s West Village. The district’s contributing Bungalows, American Small Houses, and community landmark buildings exhibit distinctive architectural characteristics of dwellings and community buildings found in Southern mill-towns during the 1920s and 1930s. The Silvertown Historic District is additionally significant at the local level under Criterion B in the area of industry for its association with Robert Edgar Hightower, Sr., who’s life’s work culminated in the development of Silvertown and Martha Mills. Hightower was highly influential in the development and management of Silvertown as a cohesive industrial community in the South and the district is the most complete example of the lasting impact he had on the community of Silvertown and, subsequently, Thomaston, Georgia.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The Silvertown Historic District is being nominated at the state and local levels of significance as a good and intact example of a planned industrial town typically found in Georgia, representative of the work of Robert and Co., Earle Sumner Draper, and Robert Edgar Hightower, Sr..

5. Sponsor: This nomination was sponsored by Thomaston Upson Landmark Legacy (TULL), the Silvertown Historic Preservation Project, the West Village Association, and the Upson Historical Society. WLA Studio prepared nomination materials.