



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H36(2255)

AUG 9 2007

Dear Tybee Island City Council,

Thank you for an opportunity to address your deliberative body concerning the crucial and important nature of the contributing resources to the Fort Screven Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This military complex and landscape achieved the ranking of National significance. I understand that since that evaluation and listing in 1982, several of the key contributing resources have been lost. Further, Battery Backus is one of the six batteries that witnessed the sea coastal defense of the Savannah River. Of the four criteria used to characterize Fort Screven for its National significance and preservation priority, all four were met. This is remarkable.

The history of the site is rich and varied. Of particular note, in the National Register nomination in Section 8 it states that "Fort Screven is significant because it constitutes a virtually intact turn-of-the-century federal coastal defense installation." It is very concerning that such a key character defining feature like one of the last remaining batteries might be at risk. The loss of this kind of military structure of defense and the landscape setting have a direct and dire impact on the premise of listing the historic district at all. At some point loss of historic fabric may indeed result in the loss of the district's listing. On a local level, you are perhaps far more aware than I am of the losses in the district since 1982 and can consider the loss of the gun batteries impact on this military vestige.

Historic districts that are well-preserved however have real economic value. I am happy to send you examples of the financial value of historic places in jobs, amenities and tourism revenue. This site appears to still be eligible for a Federal grant program, the Save America's Treasures Grants, that can help communities identify, delineate and preserve their precious historical resources. Please feel free to contact our office if we can be of assistance in applying for a community grant to help protect your historic district.

Many of our military historic districts are now under extreme distress and threats from development. Our patriotic and military past requires stewardship on a local level where recreation, open space and tourism is most valued. We look forward to encouraging your city in preserving those dwindling resources.

Sincerely,

Kristen L. McMasters
Archeologist Planner and Grants Manager
American Battlefield Protection Program

202-354-2037