Ranch Houses in Georgia are *historic*.

They are *old enough, they are important enough, and they have been studied enough.*

That is the conclusion of our office’s five-year research project to document the history and significance of the Ranch House in Georgia.

We began this project several years ago when we first started encountering Ranch Houses in our programs.

Some of our first encounters came through Section 106 environmental reviews of highway projects.
Others came from environmental reviews of community development projects involving the rehabilitation or replacement of "older" neighborhood housing ...

And weatherization projects including replacement of windows and doors.

Still other Section 106 projects involved the demolition of Ranch Houses in low-lying areas for floodplain clearance.
But other encounters came from proposed National Register nominations for historic neighborhoods that included Ranch Houses intermixed with older houses ...

And from some early interest in nominating entire Ranch House subdivisions.

Our office also was concerned about what we saw happening to Ranch Houses, including drastic remodelings …
Gutting of not just interiors but exteriors as well ...

Adding second floors ...

Converting Ranch Houses to commercial uses along formerly rural roads that have since become commercial corridors ...
Demolishing Ranch Houses in mid-century neighborhoods for new residential development ...

Often followed by constructing out-of-scale and out-of-character "McMansions" in their places ...

And destroying tracts of Ranch Houses for higher-density redevelopment.
Indeed, it began to look like Ranch Houses might be disappearing almost as fast as they had been built!

Prompted by all this, we decided it was time to take a serious look at these ranch houses and their prospects for the future.
The objectives of our Ranch House Initiative were five-fold:

To document the history of the Ranch House in Georgia;

To identify the different types and styles of Ranch Houses in the state;

To chart the geography of Georgia’s Ranch Houses;

To identify their character-defining architectural features;

And to take note of any distinctly "Georgia" or "Southern" Ranch House traits.

Our goal was to determine if Ranch Houses are historically and architecturally significant and if so why.

Some things we did along the way:
We conducted a literature search and discovered a lot of information about the history of the Ranch House nationally and in the Southwest but virtually nothing about the Ranch House in the Southeast.

We carried out some quick windshield surveys in targeted areas of the state to see what was actually out there in terms of Ranch Houses ...

And we supplemented these field impressions with readily available information from on-line property tax assessment files.
We researched dozens of national and regional Ranch House plan books including several published by Atlanta companies or individuals such as the Home Builders Plan Service, Leila Ross Wilburn, and W. D. Farmer.

We took maximum advantage of opportunities for conducting focused research studies of mid-20th-century houses ...

Primarily through the Section 106 process.
We orchestrated a public information campaign to get the word out ...

And solicited public input, particularly from people who had lived in ranch houses all their lives.

Along the way we got some good press coverage.
We held information-sharing workshops with other agencies and their consultants ...

Including the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) ...

And the Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC), one of the state's major electric utility companies ...
And we worked with an interagency task force supported by GTC and GDOT which reviewed our research findings and helped establish protocols for documenting and evaluating the significance of Ranch Houses.

The work group was comprised of GTC and GDOT cultural resources staff and consultants and staff from our office’s survey, National Register, and environmental review programs.

We also went ahead with our state’s first National Register nominations for Ranch Houses:
One for an individual Ranch House in Macon ...

An early "California Contemporary" style house built in 1950;

One for a 1950s Ranch-House subdivision in Savannah ...
With a variety of standard and custom-designed houses;

And one for Collier Heights in Atlanta, the nation's pre-eminent mid-century African-American suburb.

Much of this work was done in conjunction with preservation consultants and graduate students in the Georgia State University heritage education program.
During this past year we worked on a project with the DeKalb History Center and Georgia State University to document Ranch Houses in DeKalb County (the project report is posted elsewhere on this website).

DeKalb County, in the Atlanta metropolitan area, was the epicenter of mid-20th-century ranch-house development in Georgia.

Reference products of the Ranch House Initiative to date include a history of the Ranch House in Georgia ...
In the form of a PowerPoint presentation (available for viewing in two parts here on our office’s website)...

which includes a chronological overview of the Ranch House in Georgia...

A geographical analysis of the Ranch House in Georgia - where Ranch Houses were built in Georgia, as well as when...

A descriptive list of the various architectural styles associated with Ranch Houses in Georgia (also available for viewing elsewhere on our office’s website) ...
A companion list of the various sub-types of Georgia Ranch Houses (also on our website) ...

An account of the character-defining features of the Ranch House in Georgia -- features that make these Ranch Houses architecturally significant ...

Distinctive aspects of the Georgia Ranch House, including screened porches ...
And red brick as the favored construction material

Just recently made available is *The Ranch House in Georgia: Guidelines for Evaluation*...

Prepared by a consulting firm, under contract with Georgia Transmission Corporation, on behalf of the interagency Ranch House task force and our office ...

And available for viewing or downloading right now on our office’s website, and soon to be available in printed form through an on-line on-demand publisher.
The Guidelines explain, step-by-step, in a lavishly illustrated manner, how to identify, document, and evaluate Georgia's ranch houses consistent with the recommendations of the interagency task force and guidance from our office.

Practical written advice is supplemented by period and contemporary visuals.

The Guidelines present a process for identifying, documenting, and evaluating resources -- not a formula!
Release of the Guidelines was accompanied by an all-day workshop directed in part by our office for GTC and GDOT cultural resources staff and consultants.

We hope the information now available on our website will help with the process of identifying, documenting, and evaluating these important mid-20th-century historic houses.

In the near future, we will be expanding the Ranch House Initiative to include additional research into collateral topics such as landscaping and subdivision layouts.
And through the interagency task force we will revisit the current Guidelines and make adjustments and refinements based on increased working knowledge.

We will also be supplementing the historical information about Ranch Houses in Georgia with technical guidance regarding appropriate restoration and rehabilitation techniques.

Our first initiative along these lines will be to address technical issues regarding window repair and replacement.
Subsequent technical guidance may address additions, kitchens, and bathrooms.

Our long-range goals are to not only foster a greater understanding of the history of the mid-20th-century Ranch House in Georgia but also promote its preservation for future generations.