



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT



November 1, 2022

ITEM TITLE

Christopher Columbus Statue and Discovery Park Task Force Recommendations and City Council Action Regarding: Columbus Statue Disposition, Discovery Park Renaming, and a Proposed Framework for Future Related Actions

Location: Discovery Park, 700 Buena Vista Way, Chula Vista, CA 91910

Department: Administration

Environmental Notice: The activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the activity qualifies for an Exemption pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines.

Recommended Action

The Christopher Columbus Statue and Discovery Park Task Force recommends that City Council develop a policy for the Installation, Removal, and Disposition of Monuments and Naming and Renaming City Assets; consider proposals to rename Discovery Park; and consider proposals for marker language to former site of Columbus Statue. City Council may take alternative action(s) as deemed appropriate.

SUMMARY

Over the course of seven meetings, the Christopher Columbus Statue and Discovery Park Task Force (Task Force) (a) solicited and considered proposals for disposition of the Columbus Statue, (b) adopted a Framework for Monument Installation and Naming and Renaming City Assets, (c) adopted four recommended names for the renaming of Discovery Park, and (d) adopted proposed language for a marker that should be placed at the former site of the Columbus Statue at Discovery Park.

The Task Force recommendations on these items are now presented for City Council consideration and action.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it will not result in a physical change in the environment;

therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Thus, no environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Not applicable.

DISCUSSION

At a Special Meeting of the Chula Vista City Council on May 25, 2021, the City Council voted to permanently remove the Christopher Columbus Statue (Statue) at Discovery Park, designated October 12 as Indigenous Peoples Day in the City of Chula Vista and later, on September 28, 2021, appointed members to serve on the Christopher Columbus Statue and Discovery Park Task Force (Task Force).

The Task Force was made up of members of the Human Relations Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Cultural Arts Commission, Kumeyaay community, Sons and Daughters of Italy, scholar/historian, and an at-large community member. The Task Force was charged with recommending (1) disposition of the Christopher Columbus Statue, (2) proposals for replacement of the existing Columbus Statue with a marker/art piece at the Statue site and language for site marker/art piece, (3) proposals for renaming of Discovery Park, (4) proposals for framework for receiving and/or installing of public memory, monuments, and gifts, and (5) proposals for a framework for naming parks and/or other City facilities.

The members of the Task Force are listed in the chart below:

Name	Commission/Perspective
Ricardo Medina, Chair	Human Relations Commission
Beatrice Zamora, Vice Chair	At-Large Community Member
Briana Conser	Parks and Recreation Commission
Salvatore Denaro	Sons and Daughters of Italy
Chairwoman Angela Elliott-Santos	Kumeyaay Nation
Nicole Enriquez	Parks and Recreation Commission
Roberto Hernandez	Scholar/Historian
Lee Kohse	Cultural Arts Commission
Nadia Kean-Ayub	Human Relations Commission
Lorise Maynard	Cultural Arts Commission
Chairwoman Erica Pinto	Kumeyaay Nation

The Task Force held its first meeting on November 15, 2021 and adopted a Work Plan and established two Ad-Hoc Subcommittees, Disposition Ad-Hoc Subcommittee and Framework Ad-Hoc Subcommittee, to implement the Work Plan.

During the time the Task Force began their work, the City received communication from Angeles Meza, the daughter of the Statue sculptor- Mario Zamora. Angeles Meza resides in Mexico City and inquired about the status of the Statue. After several attempts to contact her, the City has not received a response. The most recent attempt was October 25, 2022.

Due to an inability to communicate with Angeles Meza, the Task Force decided to move forward with their deliberations on Statue disposition.

On October 20, 2022, the Task Force concluded their deliberations, and their recommendations are detailed in the sections below.

Statue Disposition and Framework Recommendation

The Task Force approved a Request for Statements of Interest (RFI), included as Attachment 1, for acquisition of the Columbus Statue which was advertised for 60 days. The Task Force received one Statement of Interest from the Sons and Daughters of Italy included as Attachment 2.

While a Statement of Interest was not received by any other organization, the Task Force did receive a public comment from Vincent Ferrer at McMillin Companies expressing interest in ownership of the Statue. See Attachment 3.

At its final meeting on October 20, 2022, after deliberation, the Task Force rejected the proposal from Sons & Daughters of Italy based on the lack of a permanent location and limited details on how the organization would contextualize the Statue. The Task Force deferred disposition of the statue using the recommended framework.

The Task Force adopted a Framework for Monument Installation and Naming/Renaming of City Assets (Framework) included as Attachment 4. The Framework includes, among other things, tenets, values, guidelines, processes and procedures for monument installation, removal, and disposition, as well as naming and renaming of City Assets.

Per the adopted Framework, and due to the inability of the Task Force to make an advisory recommendation to City Council regarding disposition, the Statue is recommended to remain in City storage for three years or as determined by the City Manager. After three years, the City Manager will initiate a new cycle of the monument disposition process which could entail a reiteration of the process followed by this Task Force.

Proposals for Renaming Discovery Park

The Task Force's intention is that the proposed names for renaming Discovery Park would be submitted through the renaming process identified in the proposed framework. The Task Force adopted a list of four recommended names for Discovery Park listed below in order of priority:

1. Name: Kuuskilsh

Rationale: means "thick lipped" from the giant face in the landscape starting at the Kuchamaa mountain as the forehead, Otay mountain as the nose and San Diego Bay the mouth. It is a Kumeyaay honoring of geographic locations and topography of the area.

Nominated by: Mike Connolly Miskwish, Kumeyaay tribal member and adjunct professor at San Diego State University

2. Name: Mat Tipaay "The Peoples Land"

Rationale: Honoring the original peoples and acknowledging their presence.

Nominated by: Dr. Stan Rodriguez, member of Santa Ysabel Band of the Iipay Nation, Tribal Councilman, Director of Kumeyaay Community College

3. Name: Kanap Uuyaw “Telling Knowledge”

Rationale: Correcting falsehoods of the past.

Nominated by: Martha Rodriguez, member of the Kumiai Nation from San Jose de las Zorras, known as Mat’perhaw, located in Baja California, Mexico

4. Name: Kumeyaay Park of Chula Vista

Rationale: Original peoples or the first people.

Nominated by: Lorise Maynard, Chula Vista Cultural Arts Commission & Task Force Member

Proposals for Marker Language

The Task Force adopted two recommended versions of marker language to be placed at the site of the former Columbus Statue. The first option would be used if a new monument has not been selected. The second option would be used if a new monument has been selected.

Option 1: Marker language without new monument

This park lies on the land of the Kumeyaay, the original caretakers of the territories extending from present-day Ensenada to Oceanside and from the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado River.

[Park Name] honors the _____. [Elaborate on new name]

On this site, previously named Discovery Park upon its founding in 1990 as part of the commemoration of the quincentennial of the so-called “discovery of the new land”—stood a statue of Christopher Columbus.

After years of protests by local Kumeyaay, other Indigenous peoples, supporters, and city residents, in 2021 the Chula Vista City Council voted to remove the statue and rename the park.

We offer this in the spirit of not “erasing history” but rather as a necessary and reciprocal healing of the harms and injustice of colonial erasure and the distortion of history.

Option 2: Marker language with new monument

This park lies on the land of the Kumeyaay, the original caretakers of the territories extending from present-day Ensenada to Oceanside and from the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado River.

[Park Name] honors the _____. The monument ____ points to ____.

[Elaborate on the monument and new name]

* * * * *

On this site, previously named Discovery Park-- upon its founding in 1990, as part of the commemoration of the quincentennial of the so called “discovery of the new land” -- stood a statue of Christopher Columbus.

After years of protests by local Kumeyaay, other indigenous peoples, supporters, and city residents, in 2021 the Chula Vista City Council voted to remove the statue.

We offer this in the spirit of not “erasing history” but rather as a necessary and reciprocal healing of the harms and injustice of colonial erasure and the distortion of history.

No further consideration or action was taken regarding a marker/art piece to replace the Statue.

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the decision contemplated by this action and has determined that it is not site-specific and consequently, the real property holdings of the City Council members do not create a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.). Staff is not independently aware and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT

N/A

ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT

Adoption of the disposition process recommended by the Task Force would require significant amount of staff time.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Request for Statements of Interest for Columbus Statue
2. Sons and Daughters of Italy Statement of Interest
3. Public Comment- Vincent Ferrer, McMillin Companies
4. Framework for Monument Installation and Naming/Renaming City Assets
5. Draft- Christopher Columbus Statue and Discovery Park Task Force Oct. 20, 2022 Meeting Minutes

*Staff Contact: Adrianna Hernandez, Special Projects Manager, City Manager's Office
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