



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Barry Ng

**SUBJECT: RELOCATION OF CHRISTOPHER
COLUMBUS STATUE**

DATE: January 8, 2018

Approved

Date

1/18/18

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

RECOMMENDATION

Consider options regarding the potential relocation of the Columbus statue and direct staff accordingly.

BACKGROUND

On October 12, 1958, the Christopher Columbus statue was presented to the City of San José during a public ceremony at the former City Hall. The statue was carved in Italy by the Milani Marble Company of San José through its facilities in Pietrasanta, Italy. It was carved from a combination of different hued marble by Delfo Guidi, member of the Fine Arts Academy of Tuscany. The statue was donated to the City by the San José Civic Club and the Italo-American Societies of San José.

Rules and Open Government Meeting and Council Information Memo

At the Rules and Open Government Committee meeting on September 20, 2017, Councilmember Peralez's memorandum (attached) was adopted with the recommendation to "relocate the Christopher Columbus statue from the San José City Hall Lobby to a more appropriate location, with input from the community..." The Rules Committee accepted the memorandum, with direction for this item to return to the Rules and Open Government Committee in November 2017, following the dialogue hosted by San Jose State University (SJSU) in October 2017.

A Council information memorandum was distributed on November 29, 2017, by the Department of Public Works (DPW) titled *Relocation of Christopher Columbus Statue*. As stated in the memorandum, due to the complexities and sensitivities surrounding relocation options as well as the holiday, staff was unable to return to the Rules and Open Government Committee in November. This action returns the item to the full City Council with relocation options and continues the public discussion.

San Jose State University Forum Recap

On October 17, 2017, SJSU hosted a panel and community forum at Martin Luther King Library regarding the Columbus statue. The panel included four professors: Dr. Dore Bowen (Art History and Visual Culture), Dr. Libra Hilde (History), Dr. Marco Meniketti (Anthropology), Dr. Manuel Callahan (Mexican-American Studies), and two students, Michael Roman, and Martin Madrigal. The panel was moderated by Dr. Melinda Jackson, Chair of SJSU's Political Science Department. The panel discussed their various perspectives on the historical context of the Columbus statue as well as the history of Mr. Christopher Columbus. Approximately 50 members of the public attended the forum. While there was not much time allocated for everyone who attended to speak, those who did speak were all in favor of removing the Columbus statue from City Hall.

ANALYSIS

DPW is responsible for security, maintenance, repairs, and event management at City Hall, and the Columbus statue has required increased security measures toward protection from vandalism.

Security Issues

The Columbus statue is located in an alcove on the first floor lobby of the City Hall Tower between the public elevators and the Information Desk. The Columbus statue is made of marble, is six feet tall, weighs up to 2,000 pounds and is attached to a three-foot diameter base that weighs approximately 2,000 pounds. The overall statue including the base is nine feet tall and weighs approximately 4,000 pounds.

Historically, the Columbus statue has experienced some vandalism. On March 8, 2001 at the former City Hall, a member of the public entered the building and proceeded to vandalize the statue with a sledgehammer, shattering portions of the statue's legs, right arm, left hand, and torso. On September 21, 2017, a member of the public entered City Hall Lobby and smeared red and black ink on the front side of the statue. To minimize potential acts of vandalism to the Columbus statue or City Hall's infrastructure, a curtain was installed behind the statue on October 5, 2017, blocking the exterior window view of the statue. On October 12, 2017, a handful of protesters entered the City Hall Tower, and confronted City Hall visitors and City staff while expressing their opposition to the Columbus statue. The incident required Security staff and Police assistance to disperse the protestors.

Location Analysis

DPW evaluated two potential sites to relocate the Columbus statue publicly, and one for storage. After initial investigation, all locations listed below most likely meet the minimum requirements for structural integrity of the floors, and physical characteristics of the facility such as ceiling heights, square footage, ADA access, and building security. Further investigation and engineering would be required to confirm the placement of the statue in its final location. Due to

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the likelihood of vandalism and damage, it is not recommended that the statue be displayed outside at an open location such as a park or in front of a building. After staff analysis, the City Council is presented with the follow options:

Option 1: Store the statue at the History San José Collection Center located at the City's Central Service Yard, and then donate and relocate the statue when an appropriate recipient is identified.

Pros: The statue would be protected from further vandalism until a suitable location was identified.

Cons: The statue would likely be in storage for an extended period of time, perhaps years.

Cost Associated: The cost to crate, transport and store the statue at the History San José Collection Center is approximately \$6,000. The estimated cost to transport the statue from storage to a new location in the future is an additional \$6,000.

Option 2: Relocate the statue to the San José International Airport at Terminal A, Gate 9, in the sterile location (beyond the security check point).

Pros: The statue will be in a heavily secured location in Terminal A, near Gate 9, and will highlight the exploration/traveling aspects of Christopher Columbus. The risk of vandalism should be minimized.

Cons: The statue will be displayed in a public location where some visitors may not appreciate it, or may have negative reactions.

Cost Associated: The cost to relocate the statue is approximately \$12,000, requiring the construction of a special crate to transport the statue and may require two days for dismantling and reassembly.

Option 3: Relocate the statue to History Park at Kelly Park at the Bank of Italy building.

Pros: The statue will be in a locked and somewhat secured location and the facility has an Italian theme.

Cons: The statue will not be accessible most of the time because the Bank of Italy building is not routinely opened to the public. In addition, History Park at Kelly Park can easily be broken into during non-operational hours because of the secluded location, the large perimeter, and its adjacent location to Coyote Creek. The Executive Director of History San José is opposed to displaying the statue at the Bank of Italy because it does not fit with the historic nature of the bank.

Cost Associated: The cost to relocate the statue is approximately \$12,000, requiring the construction of a special crate to transport the statue and may require two days for dismantling and reassembly.

Option 4: Keep the statue at its current location in City Hall.

Pros: No additional funding is required to keep the statue at its current location.

Cons: Continued security concerns and community protests that may result in permanent damage to the statue and may distract from official City business.

Cost Associated: \$0

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Depending on the option selected, additional follow-up from staff may be required.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

SJSU facilitated a panel and community forum regarding the Columbus statue at MLK Library on October 17, 2017, which approximately 50 members of the public were in attendance. In addition, the City Manager's Office and DPW met with a representative of the Italian-American Community to discuss possible long-term locations for the statue. This memorandum will also be posted on the City's website for the January 30, 2018, City Council meeting.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the Airport, the Office of Cultural Affairs, the City Manager's Budget Office, and the City Attorney's Office.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

1. AMOUNT OF RECOMMENDATION/COST OF PROJECT: None

2. COST OF PROJECT:
Options 1, 2, or 3 \$12,000
Option 4 \$0
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (ESTIMATED): \$12,000

3. SOURCE OF FUNDING: General Fund

4. OPERATING COSTS: This project has no significant impact on the General Fund operating budget; the cost of this project will be absorbed within the Public Works Department's existing budget.

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CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP10-069, City Organizational and Administrative Activities.

/s/ Jon Cicirelli for
BARRY NG
Director of Public Works

For questions please contact Joe Garcia, Deputy Director, at (408) 535-1298.

Attachment: Councilmember Raul Peralez's Memorandum, dated September 13, 2017.



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE **FROM:** Councilmember Raul Peralez

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW **DATE:** September 13, 2017

Approved

Date 9/13/17

SUBJECT: RELOCATION OF THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS STATUE

RECOMMENDATION

Relocate the Christopher Columbus statue from the San José City Hall Lobby to a more appropriate location, with input from the community, especially our Italian American community including but not limited to the Italian American Heritage Foundation and Little Italy San José.

BACKGROUND

In 1958, the City of San José was gifted the Christopher Columbus statue by one of the local Italian American community groups and placed in the old City Hall Lobby. When the new City Hall was built in 2005, the statue was relocated and placed in the new City Hall Lobby without any community input or guidance.

The City Hall Exhibits Policy provides for the temporary display of artwork and artifacts within San José City Hall. These displays can range from exhibits illustrating the visual and performing arts in San José to providing exhibit space for the City's own art and cultural material collection. Considering that the Christopher Columbus statue was given to the City as a gift, it does not fall under the City's art and cultural material collection or under the Exhibits Policy as a temporary display.

With San José being a welcoming city, being conscious of what the statue of Christopher Columbus represents to some groups in our community is something we must take into consideration when it comes to its location. The history of Christopher Columbus has long been a controversial discussion for many Americans, especially Native Americans, who are the original inhabitants of the Americas. Subsequently the Christopher Columbus statue at City Hall has also been a controversial topic. As people walk into City Hall, a public place where they come to receive resources and support, having the statue as a

main focal point in our lobby can provide some individuals with a feeling of oppression and frustration thus making them feel unwelcomed and discouraged to come to City Hall.

My office has reached out to some of our leaders within the Italian American community and one of the suggested locations for relocation is Little Italy San José's future Italian Cultural Center and Museum. I am confident that with input from the community, we can work together to find a more appropriate location for the Christopher Columbus statue to be located.