

CITY OF SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-__

INTRODUCED BY:

Councilor Carol Romero-Wirth

Councilor Alma Castro

Councilor Amanda Chavez

A RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE CITY MANAGER TO INVESTIGATE THE FEASIBILITY OF RELOCATING THE SOLDIERS' MONUMENT TO THE SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY AND, IF FEASIBLE, TO TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO RELOCATE THE MONUMENT; RECOGNIZING THE DISTINCT PURPOSES OF THE PLAZA AND THE MONUMENT.

WHEREAS, the Governing Body of the City of Santa Fe ("City") recognizes the community's need to move forward after the emotional events of October 2020, when the obelisk located in the Santa Fe Plaza ("Plaza"), also known as the "Soldiers' Monument" or "Obelisk", was damaged and partially torn down; and

WHEREAS, the City sought public feedback and a recommendation regarding the Soldiers' Monument during the "Culture History Art Reconciliation and Truth" ("CHART") process; and

WHEREAS, CHART's final report, published in August of 2022, stated that "Data collected over 11 months of public engagement (including dialogues, meetings, conversations, interviews, phone calls and email communications) and the results of two surveys indicate that the Santa Fe community is still divided about what to do about Soldier's Monument"; and

WHEREAS, ongoing public division about the Soldiers’ Monument was evidenced in the Spring of 2023 when four City councilors introduced a resolution proposing to reassemble it, preserving the cracks as part of history, and incorporating new, more inclusive language around its base; and

WHEREAS, after receiving hours of largely unsupportive public testimony about the proposed resolution, including polarized perspectives, some members of the public describing pain felt regarding the existence of the Soldiers’ Monument and other members of the public describing pain felt as a result of damage to the Soldiers’ Monument, the councilors decided to withdraw the resolution from further consideration by the Governing Body; and

WHEREAS, the Plaza is listed on the National and State Registries of Historic Properties because, in 1975, the City nominated the City park for that recognition with the federal government (“City’s Nomination”); and

WHEREAS, the City’s Nomination was very clear that the property it was nominating was *the Plaza* rather than any particular object then existing in the Plaza:

- The City’s Nomination identifies 1609 as the year of the founding of the City of Santa Fe, when the Plaza began as a “feature” of the City, and 1846 as the year that, from the Plaza, General Kearny proclaimed the annexation of New Mexico into the United States; and
- The City’s Nomination describes the condition of the Plaza as “altered”: having decreased from two city blocks to one and now including landscaping, flagstone, walks, benches, and cottonwood trees”; by contrast, “[i]n Spanish times”, the Plaza was once twice as large and “an open expanse of packed dirt”; and
- The City’s Nomination, states that after 1846, “[u]pon the arrival of the Anglo-Americans, the Plaza was fenced in and planted with alfalfa, then reduced to its present size, and finally enclosed by buildings on the three sides confronting the Palace”; and
- The City’s Nomination described the Plaza as a “site”, rather than a “structure” or

“object”; the “present use” as a “park”, rather than “museum”, “government”, or “military”, among other options; described access as “unrestricted” rather than “restricted”; and described the significance as “transportation”, with the explanation that, beginning in 1821, the trade route to Santa Fe from the United States was opened and “the Plaza provided the final goal for the caravans on their eight- or ten-week journeys” for traders and travelers on the Santa Fe Trail; and

- The City’s Nomination describes the Soldiers’ Monument as present in the Plaza (“a soldiers’ monument erected after the Civil War”), but did not identify the Soldiers’ Monument as the basis for the Plaza’s significance, nor did it identify the significance of the Plaza under any of the following available options: “sculpture”, “military”, “politics/government”, “art”, “exploration/settlement”, or “landscape architecture”; and

WHEREAS, the Soldiers’ Monument’s purpose is distinct from the Plaza’s; the Soldiers’ Monument was funded by the Territorial Legislature of New Mexico in the 1860s and erected on federal land to recognize local veterans: three sides of the base of the Soldiers’ Monument commemorate soldiers who fought in the United States Civil War in battles with Confederate forces, including in the Battle of Glorieta Pass that allowed the Union to retain control of the American Southwest; and the fourth side originally stated "To the heroes who have fallen in the various battles with savage Indians in the Territory of New Mexico" (“Fourth Plaque”); and

WHEREAS, the Soldiers’ Monument, its plaques, and its location on the Plaza have been controversial for at least the last 115 years:

- In 1909, New Mexico Governor Bransford Prince publicly opposed a proposal to cut out the word ‘Rebel’ in three places on the plaques and insert “Confederate”, stating that “”.
- In July of 1973, the City’s Council voted to remove the entire Soldiers’ Monument after receiving a letter from then Governor Bruce King that requested removal of the Fourth Plaque, stating that the “word ‘savage’ was offensive to

Indians and non-Indians".

- In September of 1973, the City Manager reported that David King, the State Planning Officer at that time, requested that the Council rescind its action regarding the Soldiers' Monument and the Council voted to rescind.
- In 1974, someone chiseled out the word "savage" from the Fourth Plaque and, shortly thereafter, the All Indian Pueblo Council "strongly urged that" the word savage not ever appear on the Soldiers' Monument again.
- In 2000, the NAACP, Santa Fe Branch, submitted a Guest Editorial responding to the Historic Santa Fe Foundation, defending the NAACP's proposal to remove the Soldiers' Monument from its location in the Plaza, noting that "we . . . have a beautiful Ve[teran's Cemetery w[h]ere we have many ceremonies every year to honor those killed, as a potential ideal setting for the monument."
- Also in 2000, the Historical Society of New Mexico wrote to the City of Santa Fe's Mayor, Council, Manager and "People of Santa Fe" that "the words 'savage Indians' excluded the Pueblo Indians who had always been regarded by the Spanish, the Mexicans and then the 'Anglos' as 'civilized' Indians, and [i]n that removal or destruction of the Monument would be akin to 'book burning' . . .".

WHEREAS, the Plaza previously featured other structures in its center; a 1992 Archeological Report regarding the Plaza describes at least three prior structures:

- a rock sundial in the late 1820s;
- a pyramid that replaced the sundial, "fifty feet in height", erected as a "momento" of Mexican independence, which came down in 1845; and
- a bullring that briefly replaced the pyramid; and

WHEREAS, the City's Historic District Code does not apply to the Soldiers' Monument and associated structures because they are "objects" excluded from the Code's requirements; "objects" include "sculpture, monuments, boundary markers, statuary and fountains". See SFCC 1987, § 14-12.1 (emphasis added); and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Prehistoric and Historic Sites Preservation Act, NMSA 1978, Sections 18-8-1 to -8 (“PHSPA”), applies to a City program or project if the project would (1) be an adverse effect on the Plaza; and (2) has a prudent or reasonable alternative. *See* Sections 18-8-7; and 18-8-3(C); and

WHEREAS, the City of Albuquerque and Rio Arriba County have recently suffered violence in relation to the placement of controversial monuments spaces; for example, on September 28, 2023, a shooter violently attacked community members celebrating Rio Arriba County officials’ decision to postpone the County’s plans to relocate a statue of conquistador Juan de Oñate to just outside the County Annex building; and, on June, 2020, there was a shooting in Albuquerque during a protest of a statue of the conquistador Juan de Onate; and

WHEREAS, continuing the status quo of a plywood box surrounding the Soldiers’ Monument’s base or reconstructing the Soldiers’ Monument in the Plaza detract from its use as a community gathering space and reconstruction could be a safety threat to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Fe National Cemetery (“National Cemetery”), located approximately one mile northwest from the Plaza, is a national shrine to veterans; it flies the U.S. flag over well-kept grounds and headstones and monuments that commemorate the lives and services of veterans; and

WHEREAS, at the close of the Civil War, the federal government established what became the National Cemetery for the reinterment of Union soldiers who died during the Civil War there.

WHEREAS, initial interments at the National Cemetery were the remains of 265 U.S. soldiers from the battlefields of Glorieta, Koslouskys, and Fort Marcy.

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery also includes monuments and memorials dedicated to groups of veterans, including several memorials honoring veterans who served during the 1800s; a memorial to World War II Glider Pilots; a memorial to Women Who Served in the Navy; and a China-Burma-India Veterans Memorial dedicated to the memory of the men and women who fought in World War II; and

WHEREAS, the National Cemetery’s dedicated purposes and the Soldiers’ Monument’s purposes are aligned; and

WHEREAS, determining the next steps for the Soldiers’ Monument requires the Governing Body to propose a plan; and

WHEREAS, relocating the Soldiers’ Monument to the National Cemetery would not adversely affect the Plaza; and

WHEREAS, there is not a prudent and feasible alternative to relocating the Soldiers’ Monument to the National Cemetery: the relocation would protect both the Plaza and the Soldiers’ Monument and would sustain, if not enhance, the historic basis for the City’s Nomination, including the importance of the Plaza’s location at the end of the Santa Fe Trail and the Plaza’s use as a central and historic town plaza and park that is accessible to all, used as a community gathering place for social and economic purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF SANTA FE that the City is committed to the Plaza’s continued use as a City park and central plaza, accessible to all; and to continuing the Plaza’s historic social and economic purposes, featuring community gatherings and celebrations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager shall investigate whether it is feasible to move the Soldiers’ Monument to the National Cemetery, preferably close to where the Civil War soldiers that the Monument commemorates were laid to rest.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, if the relocation is feasible, the City Manager shall proceed with proposing budget and contracts to expend funds to remove the Fourth Plaque from the Soldiers’ Monument and to relocate the Soldiers’ Monument, including steps to preserve, protect, and minimize harm to the Plaza.

PASSED, APPROVED, and ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2024.

ALAN WEBBER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

GERALYN F. CARDENAS, INTERIM CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

ERIN K. McSHERRY, CITY ATTORNEY

Legislation/2024/Resolutions/Establishing Next Steps for Soldier's Monument