



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**20-4329

---

**Agenda Item Number:** 30.

**Agenda Date:** 8/13/2020

**In Control:** City Council A Session

---

**DEPARTMENT:** Parks and Recreation

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Homer Garcia III, Director

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** District 1

### **SUBJECT:**

Acknowledging and approving the removal of the Christopher Columbus Statue from Columbus Park; Conveyance of the statue to the Christopher Columbus Italian Society; and Renaming Columbus Park to Piazza Italia Park

### **SUMMARY:**

An ordinance acknowledging and approving the removal of the Christopher Columbus statue from Columbus Park; conveyance of the statue to the Christopher Columbus Italian Society; and renaming of Columbus Park to Piazza Italia Park located at 500 Columbus Street in Council District 1.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

A Council Consideration Request (CCR) was sponsored by Councilmember Treviño on June 15, 2020, requesting the return of the Christopher Columbus statue located at Columbus Park to the Christopher Columbus Italian Society (Society) and the renaming of Columbus Park to Piazza Italia Park. He has worked diligently with the Society and local indigenous groups to reach an understanding that would unify the community in this public green space.

San Antonio has a rich history of immigrant communities creating a home and thriving in the community. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Italian community in San Antonio flourished on what is now the northern edge of downtown and founded the Christopher Columbus Italian Society in May 1890 and built the Italian Catholic Church (San Francesco di Paola) in 1927 and the Italian Hall in 1928 making it one of the oldest Italian societies in the country. It was the first Italian Hall in the State of Texas and on October 12, 1957, the

Society donated to the City of San Antonio a statue made in Italy of Christopher Columbus. In recognition of this rich history, the Society proposes to work with the Offices of Arts & Culture and Historic Preservation on the creation of a plaque marking the location of the Italian community to be placed on the plinth in place of the statue.

On June 25, 2020 the Christopher Columbus statue located in the park was vandalized. The statue was removed from the park on July 1, 2020 in the interest of public safety and to prevent further vandalism to the City-owned asset. The cost associated with this administrative action totaled \$5,000.00 and was covered by the adopted Fiscal Year 2020 Parks Department operating budget.

To facilitate the renaming process of Columbus Park, a committee was established to hold a public hearing on this proposal. The committee consisted of Homer Garcia III, Parks and Recreation Director; Shanon Miller, Office of Historic Preservation Director; Paolo Cristadoro, Christopher Columbus Italian Society; and Erik Sanden, District 1 Parks and Recreation Board Member. Notice of the public hearing was advertised in the San Antonio Express-News on July 12; advertised through digital ad in the Rivard Report daily from July 9 through July 16; advertised in La Prensa in Spanish on July 12, 2020; and advertised in the Southside Reporter on July 14, 2020. Notice was also posted on the City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation and the City's [SASpeakUp](#) websites in addition to the distribution of multiple media releases. Direct notification was mailed to residents and businesses within a 200-foot radius of the park.

The public hearing was held via videoconference on Thursday, July 16, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. Public input was read on the proposed park renaming, which 34 individuals commented in favor of renaming the park and 22 were in opposition. The committee unanimously voted to recommend to the City Council that Columbus Park be renamed to Piazza Italia Park located at 500 Columbus Street.

## **ISSUE:**

This ordinance acknowledges and approves the removal of the Christopher Columbus statue and its conveyance to the Italian Society along with the renaming of Columbus Park to Piazza Italia Park located at 500 Columbus Street in Council District 1. This item was presented to the Governance Committee on June 30, 2020 which directed staff to proceed with the proposed action to bring forward for City Council consideration in August 2020.

Staff followed a naming process consistent with Ordinance No. 2011-03-31-0239. However, in an effort to act expeditiously in accordance with the direction of the Governance Committee, staff adopted a compressed timeline that incorporated all requirements for public input and review of the proposed name change to be considered on the August 13, 2020 City Council agenda. Approval of the name change by City Council will waive specific timing requirements within the City Code and approve the compressed timeline.

## **ALTERNATIVES:**

The City Council may elect to not approve conveyance of the Christopher Columbus statue and renaming of Columbus Park at this time to allow for further dialogue on the item.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no additional General Fund impact associated with this action.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends acknowledging and approving the removal of the Christopher Columbus statue from Columbus Park; conveyance of the statue to the Christopher Columbus Italian Society; and renaming of Columbus Park to Piazza Italia Park located at 500 Columbus Street in Council District 1.