



## CITY OF HOUSTON - CITY COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 9/26/2023  
District C, District D, District I  
Item Creation Date: 9/11/2023

PRD - Deaccession of two Confederate Artworks and "Christopher Columbus" from the City of Houston's Civic Art Collection

Agenda Item#: 27.

### **Background:**

The current movements to remove monuments and symbols of the Confederacy in the United States has its roots in the aftermath of the massacre of nine people by a white supremacist at the historic Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015. After the Charleston massacre, state officials in South Carolina and Alabama ordered the removal of Confederate flags from state capitals and houses. Since 2015, cities and communities across the South and further afield have examined the question of what to do with Confederate monuments, most of which were constructed during the twentieth century, years after the Civil War ended.

In August 2017, a violent nationalist rally in Charlottesville, VA reignited this issue and caused an urgent public debate around removing such symbols across the United States. That same month, Mayor Sylvester Turner asked senior staff members to study whether statues related to the Confederacy should be removed from City of Houston property. To that end, the Mayor's Office convened and facilitated a Task Force that investigated how to most effectively make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on handling several specific items in the City's possession. The Task Force made recommendations on to statues, the *Spirit of the Confederacy* and the *Dick Dowling* statue.

Since the time of the Confederate items Task force study, and after multiple instances of vandalism, the Christopher Columbus statue was similarly deemed to be unsuitable for public display by City of Houston senior staff members.

### **Recommendation:**

The Director of the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs and the Director of the Houston Parks and Recreation Department recommend that the City Council enact an ordinance to deaccess three artworks from the City of Houston's Civic Art Collection, which have been deemed unsuitable for public display due to its subject matter and relationship to the Confederacy and slavery, but that the artworks should not be destroyed.

### **Specific Explanation:**

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD) and the Houston Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (MOCA) request the deaccession of three artworks from the City of Houston's Civic Art Collection. These works include:

District	Artwork	Origin Location
C	Christopher Columbus Joe Incrapera	4800 Montrose Blvd, Houston, TX 77006
D	Dick Dowling Frank Teich 1905, marble statue	6001 Fanin St, Houston, TX 77030
I	Spirit of Confederacy Louis Amateis, 1908, bronze statue	1000 Bagby St, Houston, TX 77002

Artworks of unknown origins or abandoned loans may be considered for deaccession after following guidelines outlined in the Texas Property Code, Title 6A, Chapter 80. The City will follow the acceptable methods of disposal protocols outlined in the Policies and Procedures of the Civic Art Program.

More information on each artwork follows:

### **Christopher Columbus**

After the release of the Task Force's Final Report in March 2018, the Christopher Columbus Statue suffered repeated incidents of vandalism. The Mayor considered and approved a recommendation that the Christopher Columbus Statue should not be displayed on public property as it was unsuitable for public display due to the repeated vandalism of the Statue and because of Christopher Columbus's history as a slave owner, but that it should not be destroyed. The artist, Joe Incrapera, and original donors supported the removal of the Christopher Columbus Statue and its return to Mr. Incrapera. Thus, in September 2021, the City removed the Christopher Columbus Statue and subsequently delivered it to Mr. Incrapera, who will adopt ownership and provide all necessary funding to maintain the artwork henceforth.

**Dick Dowling** (Frank Teich, 1905)

The Statue of Dick Dowling was determined to be unsuitable for public display and removed from public view near Hermann Park on June 17, 2021. It is currently in the possession of the City, and remains at HPARD facilities 6500 Wheeler St., 77023. No plans for transfer of the artwork have been determined.

**Spirit of Confederacy** (Louis Amateis, 1908)

Unsuitable for public display. Agreement for permanent transfer to HMAAC. Spirit of the Confederacy was removed from public display at Sam Houston Park on June 16, 2020, and has since been delivered to and installed at the Houston Museum of African American Culture (HMAAC), on August 17, 2020, with funds provided by Houston Endowment. The HMAAC will adopt ownership of and assume responsibility for the artwork henceforth.

**Fiscal Note:**


No significant Fiscal Operating impact is anticipated as a result of this project.

**DEPARTMENT SIGNATURES / DATE:**

Director's Signature:

DocuSigned by:  
 9/14/2023  
039DCC916030471  
Kenneth Allen, Director  
Houston Parks and Recreation Department

Director's Signature:

DocuSigned by:  
 9/14/2023  
399A2084379942C  
Nicole S. Irvin, Director  
Houston Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs

**Prior Council Action:**

Ord. 2023-596, July 26, 2023

**Contact Information:**

Martha Escalante  
Sr. Staff Analyst  
Houston Parks and Recreation Department  
Phone: 832-395-7069

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Description	Type
Agreement Permanent Transfer of Artwork to HMAAC	Backup Material
Civic Art Program Policies	Backup Material
Ord 2023-596	Backup Material
Task Force Report	Backup Material
Donor Credit Info	Backup Material
Agreement Columbus	Backup Material
RCA	Signed Cover sheet