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**CITY OF SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2024-43**

**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 TO REPORT BACK TO THE GOVERNING BODY; 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

1 Santa Fe community is still divided about what to do about Soldier’s Monument”; and

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

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

11       **WHEREAS**, the Plaza is listed on the National and State Registries of Historic Properties  
12 prior to 1975; and

13       **WHEREAS**, the City park was described in a federal nomination form dated May 7, 1975,  
14 which the Keeper of the National Register certified on September 20, 1983 (“City’s Nomination”);  
15 and

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

- 18       • The City’s Nomination identifies 1609 as the year of the founding of the City of  
19 Santa Fe, when the Plaza began as a “feature” of the City, and 1846 as the year  
20 that, from the Plaza, General Kearny proclaimed the annexation of New Mexico  
21 into the United States; and
- 22       • The City’s Nomination describes the condition of the Plaza as “altered”: having  
23 decreased from two city blocks to one and now including landscaping, flagstone,  
24 walks, benches, and cottonwood trees”; by contrast, “[i]n Spanish times”, the Plaza  
25 was once twice as large and “an open expanse of packed dirt”; and

- 1 • The City’s Nomination, states that after 1846, “[u]pon the arrival of the Anglo-  
2 Americans, the Plaza was fenced in and planted with alfalfa, then reduced to its  
3 present size, and finally enclosed by buildings on the three sides confronting the  
4 Palace”; and
- 5 • The City’s Nomination described the Plaza as a “site”, rather than a “structure” or  
6 “object”; the “present use” as a “park”, rather than “museum”, “government”, or  
7 “military”, among other options; described access as “unrestricted” rather than  
8 “restricted”; and described the significance as “transportation”, with the  
9 explanation that, beginning in 1821, the trade route to Santa Fe from the United  
10 States was opened and “the Plaza provided the final goal for the caravans on their  
11 eight- or ten-week journeys” for traders and travelers on the Santa Fe Trail; and
- 12 • The City’s Nomination describes the Soldiers’ Monument as present in the Plaza  
13 (“a soldiers’ monument erected after the Civil War”), but did not identify the  
14 Soldiers’ Monument as the basis for the Plaza’s significance, nor did it identify the  
15 significance of the Plaza under any of the following available options: “sculpture”,  
16 “military”, “politics/government”, “art”, “exploration/settlement”, or “landscape  
17 architecture”; and

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

25 **WHEREAS**, the Soldiers’ Monument, its plaques, and its location on the Plaza have been

1 controversial for at least the last 115 years:

- 2 • In 1909, Territorial New Mexico Governor Bradford Prince publicly opposed a  
3 proposal to cut out the word ‘Rebel’ in three places on the plaques and replace it  
4 with “Confederate”.
- 5 • In July of 1973, the City’s Council voted to remove the entire Soldiers’ Monument  
6 after receiving a letter from then Governor Bruce King that requested removal of  
7 the Fourth Plaque, stating that the “word ‘savage’ was offensive to Indians and  
8 non-Indians”.
- 9 • In September of 1973, the City Manager reported that David King, the State  
10 Planning Officer at that time, requested that the Council rescind its action  
11 regarding the Soldiers’ Monument and the Council voted to rescind.
- 12 • In 1974, someone chiseled out the word “savage” from the Fourth Plaque and,  
13 shortly thereafter, the All Indian Pueblo Council "strongly urged that" the word  
14 savage not ever appear on the Soldiers’ Monument again.
- 15 • In 2000, the NAACP, Santa Fe Branch, submitted a Guest Editorial responding to  
16 the Historic Santa Fe Foundation, defending the NAACP’s proposal to remove the  
17 Soldiers’ Monument from its location in the Plaza, noting that “we . . . have a  
18 beautiful Ve[eteran’s Cemetery w[h]ere we have many ceremonies every year to  
19 honor those killed, as a potential ideal setting for the monument.”
- 20 • Also in 2000, the Historical Society of New Mexico wrote to the City of Santa Fe’s  
21 Mayor, Council, Manager and “People of Santa Fe” that “the words ‘savage  
22 Indians’ excluded the Pueblo Indians who had always been regarded by the  
23 Spanish, the Mexicans and then the ‘Anglos’ as ‘civilized’ Indians, and [i]n that  
24 removal or destruction of the Monument would be akin to ‘book burning’ . . .” .

25 **WHEREAS**, for over 12,000 years, people of different cultures have lived in the area today

1 known as Santa Fe, and there is evidence of settlements dating between about A.D. 600 and 1425  
2 on the Santa Fe Plaza that were inhabited by ancestors of today’s pueblo people; and

3         **WHEREAS**, the Preamble of the City’s Municipal Charter recognizes the City as a city  
4 that has for centuries been “a community with rich and lasting multi-cultural traditions and a history  
5 of tolerance towards all peoples, cultures, traditions, and lifestyles”, and the Charter goes on to  
6 state in Article II, Section 2.02, that no "action shall be condoned which discriminates on the basis  
7 of ethnicity, race, age, religion, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, sexual  
8 orientation, physical or mental disability, medical condition or citizenship status" and that the  
9 “governing body shall preserve, protect and promote human rights and human dignity, and shall,  
10 through all of its activities...prohibit and discourage” discrimination; and

11         **WHEREAS**, the Plaza previously featured other structures in its center; a 2005 Cultural  
12 Landscape Report refers to a bandstand being located in the center of the plaza prior to the  
13 monument; a 1992 Archeological Report regarding the Plaza describes at least three other prior  
14 structures:

- 15         • a rock sundial in the late 1820s;
- 16         • a pyramid that replaced the sundial, “fifty feet in height”, erected as a “momento” of  
17 Mexican independence, which came down in 1845; and
- 18         • a bullring that briefly replaced the pyramid; and

19         **WHEREAS**, the City’s Historic District Code does not apply to the Soldiers’ Monument  
20 and associated structures because they are “objects” excluded from the Code’s requirements;  
21 “objects” include “sculpture, monuments, boundary markers, statuary and fountains”. See SFCC  
22 1987, § 14-12.1 (emphasis added); and

23         **WHEREAS**, the City of Albuquerque and Rio Arriba County have recently suffered  
24 violence in relation to the placement of controversial monuments spaces; for example, on  
25 September 28, 2023, a shooter violently attacked community members celebrating Rio Arriba

1 County officials' decision to postpone the County's plans to relocate a statue of conquistador Juan  
2 de Oñate to just outside the County Annex building; and, on June, 2020, there was a shooting in  
3 Albuquerque during a protest of a statue of the conquistador Juan de Onate; and

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

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

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

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

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

21 **WHEREAS**, the National Cemetery's dedicated purposes and the Soldiers' Monument's  
22 purposes are aligned; and

23 **WHEREAS**, determining the next steps for the Soldiers' Monument requires the  
24 Governing Body to adopt a plan; and

25 **WHEREAS**, conversations and consultation with State experts such as the State Historic

1 Preservation Officer (“SHPO”) could benefit the City’s next steps involving the Soldiers’  
2 Monument, even without required involvement.

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

7 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City Manager shall investigate whether it is  
8 feasible to move the Soldiers’ Monument to the National Cemetery, without the fourth plaque,  
9 preferably close to where the Civil War soldiers that the Monument commemorates were laid to  
10 rest and shall consult with the SHPO regarding whether moving the Soldiers’ Monument to the  
11 National Cemetery would be an adverse effect on the Plaza.

12 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that, if the SHPO opines that the relocation of the  
13 Soldiers’ Monument to the National Cemetery would be an adverse effect on the Plaza, then a  
14 public hearing shall be held and accept written comments regarding the proposed relocation,  
15 feasible and prudent alternatives to the relocation, and steps to mitigate adverse effects caused by  
16 the relocation.

17 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City Manager’s feasibility investigation shall  
18 include, but not be limited to:

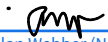
- 19 1) Formally asking the United States Department of Veterans’ Affairs to accept the  
20 Soldiers’ Monument, without the fourth plaque, into the National Cemetery;
- 21 2) Hire experts, as necessary, to evaluate the services and cost to rebuild the monument  
22 without the fourth plaque; and
- 23 3) Hire qualified experts to evaluate the steps and cost to move the Soldiers’ Monument.

24 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City Manager shall report to the Governing  
25 Body the results of the consultation with SHPO, public hearing and comments regarding

1 alternatives and mitigation, if applicable, and the feasibility investigation. In addition, the City  
2 Manager shall report to the Governing body regularly regarding the status of the consultation,  
3 public feedback, and feasibility investigation, including any reports or expert analysis that are  
4 produced as part of the feasibility investigation.

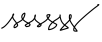
5 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that, after receiving the City Manager's reports, the  
6 Governing Body will determine next steps regarding the Soldiers' Monument.

7  
8 PASSED, APPROVED, and ADOPTED this 30<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2024.

9  
10   
[Alan Webber \(Nov 7, 2024 18:05 MST\)](#)

11 ALAN WEBBER, MAYOR

12  
13 ATTEST:

14   
\_\_\_\_\_

15 GERALYN F. CARDENAS, INTERIM CITY CLERK

16 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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18  
19 ERIN K. McSHERRY, CITY ATTORNEY

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21  
22  
23  
24 *Legislation/2024/Resolutions/Establishing Next Steps for Soldier's Monument*