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**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,

1 interviews, phone calls and email communications) and the results of two surveys indicate that the  
2 Santa Fe community is still divided about what to do about Soldier’s Monument”; and

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

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

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

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

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

1 Americans, the Plaza was fenced in and planted with alfalfa, then reduced to its  
2 present size, and finally enclosed by buildings on the three sides confronting the  
3 Palace”; and

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

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

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

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

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

- 1 • a rock sundial in the late 1820s;
- 2 • a pyramid that replaced the sundial, “fifty feet in height”, erected as a “memento” of
- 3 Mexican independence, which came down in 1845; and
- 4 • a bullring that briefly replaced the pyramid; and

5 **WHEREAS**, the City’s Historic District Code does not apply to the Soldiers’ Monument  
6 and associated structures because they are “objects” excluded from the Code’s requirements;  
7 “objects” include “sculpture, monuments, boundary markers, statuary and fountains”. *See* SFCC  
8 1987, § 14-12.1 (emphasis added); and

9 **WHEREAS**, the New Mexico Prehistoric and Historic Sites Preservation Act, NMSA  
10 1978, Sections 18-8-1 to -8 (“PHSPA”), applies to a City program or project if the project would  
11 (1) be an adverse effect on the Plaza; and (2) has a prudent or reasonable alternative. *See* Sections  
12 18-8-7; and 18-8-3(C); and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13           **WHEREAS**, determining the next steps for the Soldiers' Monument requires the  
14 Governing Body to propose a plan; and

15           **WHEREAS**, relocating the Soldiers' Monument to the National Cemetery would not  
16 adversely affect the Plaza; and

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

23           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE**  
24 **CITY OF SANTA FE** that the City is committed to the Plaza's continued use as a City park and  
25 central plaza, accessible to all; and to continuing the Plaza's historic social and economic purposes,

1 featuring community gatherings and celebrations.

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

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

9 PASSED, APPROVED, and ADOPTED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

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ALAN WEBBER, MAYOR

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14 ATTEST:

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16 GERALYN F. CARDENAS, INTERIM CITY CLERK

17 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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20 ERIN K. McSHERRY, CITY ATTORNEY

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