



Department Source: Parks and Recreation

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: April 1, 2019

Re: Public Hearing - African-American Heritage Trail Project

Executive Summary

Public hearing for the African-American Heritage Trail Project. The project includes installation of twenty-one heritage markers that substantially complete African-American Heritage Trail. The African-American Heritage Trail is a two-mile hard surface trail utilizing existing city sidewalks in the central portion of Columbia and walkways within the Columbia Cemetery. The proposed trail route and designated locations for twenty-one African-American heritage markers was designed by members of the Sharp End Heritage Committee working with park planning staff. The total project cost is \$54,600. Funding for the purchase of the heritage markers in the amount of \$52,500 will be provided by private donations from citizens, businesses and organizations in the Columbia community. Force account labor will be used for the design and installation of the remaining heritage markers along the trail. The estimated cost of the concrete to install the markers is \$2,100 and will be funded by the Parks and Recreation operating budget.

Discussion

In May 2015, members of the Columbia community dedicated a historical marker, located on Walnut Street, recognizing the former Sharp End Business District. The historical marker recognizes the history of the Sharp End Business District which served as the cultural and economic heart of Columbia's African-American community for more than 50 years. After the installation of the marker, members of the Sharp End Heritage Committee began to work with city staff to expand the number of markers within the downtown area to highlight other historic African-American locations within Columbia. The Sharp End Heritage Committee and city staff worked together to install two additional historic markers at the J.W. "Blind" Boone Home and at Douglass High School in remembrance of Beulah Ralph.

The development of the project continued with the identification of thirty-nine historic sites within the central portion of the city that highlight Columbia's African-American history. Over the past four years, the committee has been fundraising for the purchase of twenty-one historical markers to highlight the individuals, buildings and/or businesses at each location. To date, eight historic markers have been purchased and installed and an additional four markers have been purchased and are ready for installation. Each historic marker is privately funded. The markers are then ordered and installed by park staff.

During the discussion regarding the locations for each marker, park staff was asked to design a potential route that an individual could take to visit each historic marker. Park staff proposed the potential route for the trail to the Sharp End Heritage Committee and the committee voted to recommend the proposed plan for the trail. Park staff introduced the



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

proposed plans for African-American Heritage Trail to the Parks & Recreation Commission on Thursday, January 18, 2018. After discussion of the project, the commissioners voted to endorse the proposed route for the trail and recommended that Council approve the trail plans as presented. Park staff also held a public input meeting at the J.W. "Blind" Boone Home on February 6, 2019 to gain additional public feedback about the proposed trail and had an online survey available to the public on the como.gov website from February 7, 2019 through February 18, 2019. After considering all citizen feedback, Sharp End Heritage Committee recommendation and the P&R Commission recommendation, staff believes that proposed plans for the African-American Heritage Trail represent a consensus of the public and park staff.

The two-mile trail will utilize existing city sidewalks, a portion of the MKT Trail at Flat Branch Park and internal walkways within the Columbia Cemetery. The heritage markers are placed on public right-of-way at each location. Park staff will need to acquire permanent and temporary construction easements from one property owner to create the trail access into the Columbia Cemetery from East Stewart Road. Within the designated permanent easement, park staff will work with local engineering and construction firms to construct a six-foot wide concrete trail and a small bridge or low-water crossing across an unnamed tributary to Flat Branch Creek. The temporary construction easement is needed for the construction of the trail and placement of the bridge or low water crossing. Park staff will contract with a local engineering firm to determine the size of the necessary easements, correct type of creek crossing and location within the easement. Park staff will return to the City Council at a later date for Council acceptance of the necessary easements and permission to construct the trail and bridge. The construction of the trail and bridge is unfunded at this time and will be completed at a future date when funding is available. Park staff anticipates the trail and bridge will be a fundraising project for the Sharp End Heritage Committee after the completion of the remaining heritage markers.

The fundraising and installation of the remaining heritage markers along the proposed African-American Heritage Trail is an on-going process by the Sharp End Heritage Committee and park staff. Park staff meets with the committee regularly and it is anticipated that four additional markers will be installed in 2019.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total project cost is \$54,600. Funding for the purchase of the heritage markers in the amount of \$52,500 will be provided by the Sharp End Heritage Committee through fundraising efforts. The costs of the concrete in the amount of \$2,100 will be funded by the Parks and Recreation operating budget.

Long-Term Impact: None



Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Social Equity, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

| Date | Action |
|------------|---|
| 02/04/2019 | Ordinance #023774: Appropriating funds received from donations and miscellaneous revenue to the Parks and Recreation Department. https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3838760&GUID=0D3D9538-8EA4-46B8-A1AD-6961E8DE0A33-168A&Options=&Search= |
| 04/18/2016 | REP33-16: African-American Heritage Trail http://meetings.como.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2690800&GUID=CB1F62E5-3650-4606-95DD-44A5F38CE1C7&Options=ID Text &Search=african-american |

Suggested Council Action

After the public hearing, approve the legislation authorizing the installation of heritage markers for the African-American Heritage Trail.