



Department Source: Parks and Recreation

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: May 20, 2019

Re: Report on the African-American Heritage Trail Route and Other Sites

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide information about the potential expansion of African-American historic markers within the city of Columbia and to make the City Council aware of a change in the final route of the African-American Heritage Trail. At the April 1, 2019 City Council meeting, Council Member Karl Skala asked park staff to evaluate the possibility of expanding historic markers to other parts of Columbia beyond the African-American Heritage Trail route. Park staff discussed the expansion of historic markers with Sharp End Committee members, and they indicated that the priority for the group is the completion of the 21 markers along the African-American Heritage Trail. Upon completion of the trail marker project, members of the group said they would be willing to assist other individuals who would be interested taking the lead in expanding the historic marker project to other areas of Columbia.

This report also provides an update related to the route of the trail through the Columbia Cemetery. Park staff has had discussions with members of the cemetery board; and due to concerns from the members, it was decided that the trail will not route through the cemetery. The revised route will follow Providence Road north to East Broadway, leading trail users past the front of the Columbia Cemetery. Historic markers for the Columbia Cemetery and Cemetery Hill will be placed in the right-of-way outside of the cemetery.

Discussion

At the April 1, 2019 City Council meeting, the Council approved the placement of 21 historic markers along the proposed route for the African-American Heritage Trail. During the discussion about the project, Council Member Skala asked park staff to consider the placement of African-American historic markers in other locations in the city of Columbia. The original concept of the African-American Heritage Trail started with the placement of the Sharp End District historical marker. The placement of the marker was coordinated by members of the Sharp End Heritage Committee and City staff. After the placement of the marker, discussions about additional markers and a trail connecting all of the markers continued with the committee. The final project will include 21 historic markers highlighting 39 historic sites in the central area of Columbia. The trail is designed to be a walking/biking trail to provide both education and fitness to users. The trail will be used to highlight and complement downtown historic features, such as the Blind Boone Home and former location of the Sharp End District. As a walking/biking trail, it should allow users the ability to walk it in a reasonable time frame. For example, the committee originally considered historic locations along Business Loop but that distance exceeded the walking/biking expectations.



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Park staff also contacted members of the Sharp End Heritage Committee to gather feedback about the expansion of historic markers in the city of Columbia. Members from the committee indicated that they are focused on the fundraising and installation of the historic markers along the African-American Heritage Trail project at this time, but would be willing to assist other community members interested in taking the lead in marker placement in other areas of Columbia upon completion of the African-American Heritage Trail. The process for the installation of one historic marker includes fundraising, research, drafting text for the marker, editing, marker procurement, and installation. Members said they would be willing to assist with the final editing of each marker, and park staff would assist with the installation of any additional markers in the future. The Sharp End Heritage Committee meets monthly, and they will add historic marker expansion in Columbia to their agenda for upcoming meetings. They also said they would be willing to discuss the process with Mr. Skala and any other citizens that have an interest in the placement of additional markers at other locations, such as Indian Hills Park.

At the City Council meeting on April 1, 2019 park staff requested permission from the City Council to proceed with the placement of markers along the African-American Heritage Trail. The route of the proposed trail was also discussed at the meeting, and the plans presented to the Council showed a potential route through the Columbia Cemetery. Park staff let the Council know that they would need to return at a later date to acquire easement and appropriate funding for this section of the trail. After further discussion and an on-site meeting with Columbia Cemetery board members, it was decided that the route of the trail will not include a guided tour through the cemetery. Trail users will now walk north on the Providence Road sidewalk from Stewart Road and then turn onto East Broadway in front of the Columbia Cemetery. This change in the route will eliminate concerns from members of the Columbia Cemetery Board related to a second unmonitored entrance into the cemetery; reduce the costs associated with easement acquisition (a low water crossing, gate and concrete trail into the cemetery); while still allowing for historic markers in the areas of the cemetery. Park staff is proposing to set the Cemetery Hill marker in road right-of-way in front of Lucky's Market and will work with the Cemetery Board to place their marker near the front entrance of the cemetery. The marker will include a map directing trail users to different historic areas of the cemetery grounds but nothing will be placed within the cemetery boundaries.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Long-Term Impact: None



Vision & Strategic Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

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

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
04/15/2019	B93-19: Appropriating funds received from donations, misc. revenue and Parks Sales Tax revenue to the Parks and Recreation Department
04/01/2019	PH11-19: Public Hearing – Proposed installation of twenty-one (21) historical markers along the African-American Heritage Trail
04/01/2019	B74-19: Authorizing the installation of twenty-one (21) historical markers along the African-American Heritage Trail
03/18/2019	R37-19: Setting a public hearing: proposed installation of twenty-one (21) historical markers along the African-American Heritage Trail
02/04/2019	B22-19: Appropriating funds received from donations and miscellaneous revenue to the Parks and Recreation Department
04/18/2016	REP33-16: African-American Heritage Trail Report

Suggested Council Action

Parks and Recreation will proceed with this plan unless otherwise directed by City Council.