



Department Source: Cultural Affairs

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: June 6, 2022

Re: "Look Out Point" sculpture in Stephens Lake Park decommissioning

## Executive Summary

The public art sculpture "Look Out Point" in Stephens Lake Park has sustained continual maintenance issues over the last six years. Notably the tallest column's top piece has detached numerous times, creating a public safety hazard to users of the park. The entirety of the allocated maintenance fund for this artwork along with additional City funds have been spent on repairs over the years. Because of the continued deterioration and the public safety risk, City staff along with the Commission on Cultural Affairs have recommended the sculpture's decommissioning and removal from the park.

## Discussion

### **BACKGROUND**

The sculpture "Look Out Point" by artist Carol Fleming Marks was commissioned as a Percent for Art project in Stephens Lake Park and installed in 2005. The artwork is a site-specific installation of twelve hollow ceramic columns ranging in height from one to nine feet. The columns are mounted on individual concrete footings, arranged in an open spiral that progresses from the shortest to tallest column. Each column is hand-built of several fired ceramic sections, one to two or more feet in height, that are joined together after firing. Some areas of the column surfaces are glazed while others are not, creating visually interesting and varied surfaces.

Upon installation in 2005, six of the twelve columns required repairs due to various components being loose. The artist made initial repairs to these columns and extended her warranty to three years after installation to handle any issues that would arise in that time. Parks and Recreation and Office of Cultural Affairs staff have regularly checked the columns to ensure they remain sturdy and secure.





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## BUDGET

The artist commission was \$18,500, paid to Carol Fleming Marks for designing, fabricating and installing the artwork. Maintenance funding allocated to the project was approximately \$6,000. By 2016, the maintenance funding designated to the Percent for Art project had been depleted. The major repair in 2019 (described below) and other recent maintenance was paid for with available funding from the OCA annual budget.

## RECENT MAINTENANCE ISSUES

### 2016 Repairs

In 2015, the tallest column was damaged with the top section detaching, weighing approximately 50 pounds.



Russell-Marti Conservation Services repaired the sculpture in 2016. The following steps were taken to repair the tallest column (column 12):

- Removed caulk from previous repairs.
- Excavated holes (3 ½ inches in depth by 1-inch diameter) in the pea gravel at each corner of column cross-section.
- Mounted All Thread stainless steel rods (6 inches in length by ¼-inch diameter) in the corners of upper loose portion with 3 inches of rod extending outward from portion's edge.
- Filled the drilled 1-inch diameter holes in pea gravel with Sika anchoring epoxy and after aligning rods, secured the upper portion in place.
- After Sika anchoring epoxy was cured, a clear silicone was applied in the remaining open joint to complete the seal.



*Example of repairs in progress for column 12*



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- In addition to the repair to the tallest column, tapered spacers were pinched between the bottom edge and the concrete pedestal on all four sides of column 10 to secure it.



*Spacers on column 10 to prevent wobbling*

## 2019 Repairs

In 2019, the sculpture sustained damage and additional vandalism. Column 12 (tallest column) was once again broken, with the top section detaching but not completely falling off of the pedestal. Column 11 (second tallest) appeared to have been vandalized with many of the ceramic pieces shattering.



*Column 12 (far left) and Column 11 (middle, far right) damage*

Creative Sculpture and Restoration, Inc. repaired the columns. They used the salvaged ceramic pieces to reconstruct Column 11, and had to recreate many ceramic sections to fill in the gaps when rebuilding. The conservators had the unique challenge of best matching the original design and glazing colors.



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*Column 11 repairs in progress*

## *2021 Damage and Maintenance*

In 2021 while preparing to do some maintenance on the sculpture (filling in new cracks with clear silicone), the hired contractor encountered the tallest column once again damaged with the top section detached.



Currently, the tallest column has had a tarp covering the hole and the top section is in storage while City staff has evaluated the best approach to handling this most recent damage.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT**

The City's Risk Management office has made the following assessment:

The unstable nature and frequent construction issues present a public liability risk to the City of Columbia. While the sculpture is not covered under the City's property insurance, the



repair/replacement costs appear to exceed the value of the artwork. It is the recommendation of Risk Management that in order to protect the City and individuals using Stephens Lake Park that the sculpture be removed. If there is a decision not to remove this sculpture, an enclosure restricting access is recommended.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The sculpture "Look Out Point" has become increasingly unstable over the last several years. There is no longer a dedicated maintenance fund for this sculpture that was set aside at the beginning of the Percent for Art project. Recent repair attempts have not prevented the sculpture from continuing to sustain damage, most notably to the tallest column whose top section has broken off multiple times. City staff agrees there is a high risk of continuing to maintain this public art sculpture, given its vulnerability to be interacted with by members of the public who may be injured while climbing and/or falling from the sculpture. The weight of the top piece of the tallest column which has become detached several times weighs approximately 50 pounds, and this poses a great risk to the public if it were to detach again in the future.

Staff recommends decommissioning and removing the artwork from Stephens Lake Park.

### **COMMISSION ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS RECOMMENDATION**

At its May 9, 2022 meeting, the Commission on Cultural Affairs were presented this report. The 12-member Commission unanimously voted to recommend to City Council that the sculpture "Look Out Point" be decommissioned and removed from Stephens Lake Park.

#### Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: Parks and Recreation would handle the removal of the sculpture.  
Long-Term Impact: None.

#### Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

#### Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Safe Neighborhoods, Secondary Impact: Reliable Infrastructure, Tertiary Impact: Organizational Excellence

#### Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Inter-Governmental Cooperation, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

#### Legislative History

Date	Action
5/9/22	The Commission on Cultural Affairs unanimously recommended the decommissioning and removal of the sculpture "Look Out Point" from Stephens Lake Park.



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## Suggested Council Action

Parks and Recreation staff will plan to remove the sculpture from Stephens Lake Park unless City Council gives different direction to the City Manager.