



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:

Agenda Item Number: 14

Agenda Date: April 20, 2023

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Department of Arts and Culture

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Krystal Jones

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: District 1

SUBJECT:

San Francesco di Paola Sculpture Donation

SUMMARY:

This ordinance authorizes the City of San Antonio's acceptance of a statue of San Francesco di Paola donated by Sam J. Greco and family.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

San Antonio has a rich history of immigrant communities creating a home in San Antonio and thriving. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Italian community in San Antonio flourished on what is now the northern edge of downtown and founded the Christopher Columbus Italian Society in May 1890, built the Italian Catholic Church (San Francesco di Paola) in 1927, and the Italian Hall in 1928 – making it one of the oldest Italian societies in the country. It was the first Italian Hall in the State of Texas and on October 12, 1957, the Society donated a statue, made in Italy, of Christopher Columbus to the City of San Antonio.

On August 13, 2020, with the support and request of the Italian Society and its Board, City Council

voted to rename Christopher Columbus Park to Piazza Italia Park and permanently remove the Christopher Columbus statue from the park. With the renaming of the park, the City of San Antonio continued to honor the significant contributions Italian immigrants made to San Antonio in the heart of their former neighborhood. To recognize the site of the Italian neighborhood, City Council also voted to connect the Italian Society with the City of San Antonio's Office of Historic Preservation to create a plaque marking the location of the neighborhood that would be placed on the plinth of the removed statue.

With the goal to further honor the contributions of Italian Americans in San Antonio, Sam J. Greco financed the commission of a six-foot bronze statue of San Francesco di Paola, the patron saint of Calabria, Italy and of boatmen, mariners, and naval officers, with the intent to donate the statue to the city for installation on the pedestal where the Columbus statue was once placed. Plaques detailing the history of the area and contributions of Italian Americans in San Antonio are proposed for each side of the pedestal, which will be developed in collaboration with the City of San Antonio's Office of Historic Preservation. All expenses for the sculpture and installation are covered with the donation, as well as five percent of the sculpture's value for any future maintenance of the piece per the City of San Antonio's Public Art Policy.

ISSUE:

On March 7, 2023, and March 14, 2023, the Public Art Committee and the San Antonio Arts Commission voted to recommend the City of San Antonio's acceptance of the San Francesco di Paola sculpture from Sam J. Greco and family, in loving memory of Kathy Fisher Greco. In addition, the Historic Design and Review Commission voted on March 15, 2023, to recommend acceptance of the donation for placement in Piazza Italia Park.

If City Council votes to approve the donation acceptance, the City of San Antonio's Department of Arts & Culture would coordinate with Mr. Greco, the Parks and Recreation Department, and Office of Historic Preservation on all aspects of the donation and installation.

ALTERNATIVES:

If City Council chooses not to approve the donation, the statue will remain in the possession of Sam J. Greco and would not be installed in Piazza Italia Park to honor the Italian American community in San Antonio.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The San Francesco di Paola Sculpture, valued at \$77,000, will be donated to the City and added to the Department of Arts & Culture's art inventory. Five percent of the sculpture's value, totaling \$3,850, will also be donated and held for maintenance of the piece. The donation of the sculpture

and maintenance funds will be recorded in the City of San Antonio's Cultural Donations Fund.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff, San Antonio Arts Commission and its Public Art Committee, and the Historic Design and Review Commission recommend the acceptance of the San Francesco di Paola Sculpture donation by Sam J. Greco and family, in loving memory of Kathy Fisher Greco.