



HERITAGE PARK FACT SHEET

City of Syracuse | Community Engagement and Final Procedural Steps | August 2021

Community Engagement

In September 2018, Mayor Walsh initiated a community conversation about Columbus Day, Indigenous People’s Day, and the monument that sits in Columbus Circle in response to tensions within the community. These “dialogue circles” were moderated by InterFaith Works of Central New York, who issued a report in September 2019 that cataloged the community concerns regarding these issues.

InterFaith Works then moderated a 23-member mayoral appointed committee—the “Columbus Circle Action Committee”—which convened from July to October 2020 to recommend specific action steps. At the conclusion of those deliberations, InterFaith Works issued a final report and recommendation on October 7, 2020, which proposed five scenarios for the future of St. Mary’s Circle.

Taking the Columbus Circle Action Committee’s recommendations under advisement, Mayor Walsh issued a October 9, 2020 press release describing “a path forward” for St. Mary’s Circle that indicated an intent to go through those steps required under local and state law to create a year-round education and learning heritage site. The changes to be implemented at the site would recognize the contributions to the community by the Onondaga Nation, and others integral to the City’s heritage, including Black and Brown Americans, Italians, and other past and present immigrants.

In May 2021, Mayor Walsh announced the formation of a “Heritage Park Advisory Commission”—facilitated by the Onondaga Historical Association (OHA)—to guide the creation of the heritage and education site at St. Mary’s Circle and in an adjacent open space now known as the Powelson Site. The Mayor also assembled an “Italian American Task Force,” consisting of representatives of the local Italian American community, to provide ideas and recommendations regarding the relocation of the Columbus statue and related symbols and the permanent recognition of Italian Americans at the Circle.



Proposed Heritage Park Location – Powelson Site

Final Procedural Steps

The City will take the following steps to reach a final determination regarding the creation and design of Heritage Park:

1. *Conclusion of Heritage Park Advisory Commission Process:* OHA, the moderating entity, will collect remaining input from the “Heritage Park Advisory Commission” and the “Italian American Task Force” and provide guidance to the City regarding the creation of Heritage Park, including: (a) the design of a heritage and education site at St. Mary’s Circle and the Powelson Site; (b) a concept that permanently recognizes Italian Americans at the circle; and (c) a recommendation regarding the Columbus Statue.
2. *City Parks preparation of the Heritage Park Plan:* The Commissioner of Parks, as the delegee of the Mayor, will create and sponsor the preliminary Plan/Application for the design and creation of Heritage Park, which will thereafter be submitted for further administrative approval to the appropriate agencies, City boards and commissions.
3. *Syracuse Public Arts Commission (“SPAC”) Review:* The Commissioner of Parks will submit the Heritage Park Plan/Application to SPAC for review and advice. The Commissioner, with the Mayor’s approval, may alter the Heritage Park Plan/Application based on SPAC’s review and comments.
4. *City Planning Commission (“CPC”) Review:* The Commissioner of Parks, after review of any advice or recommendations by SPAC, will then submit the preliminary Heritage Park Plan/Application to the CPC to seek its “recommendation” as required by the City Charter. The recommendations will be issued in the form of an approved resolution from a regularly scheduled CPC public meeting.
5. *Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board (“LPB”) SEQR Review and Vote:* After receiving recommendations from SPAC and CPC, the Commissioner of Parks will then submit the Heritage Park Plan/Application to the LPB, who will conduct an environmental review pursuant to the SEQR process. Upon the conclusion of SEQR process, the Landmark Preservation Board would consider the Plan at a subsequently scheduled public meeting and vote on whether to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Plan.
6. *Final Administration Determination:* Only after the above process is complete will the Mayor’s office make a final determination regarding the design of the Heritage Park, prior to engaging in any public procurement process for design and construction services.