



MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR MICHAEL B. HANCOCK, CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: ALLEGRA "HAPPY" HAYNES
SUBJECT: RE-NAMING OF COLUMBUS PARK (BETWEEN W. 38TH AVE., W. 39TH AVE., NAVAJO ST., AND OSAGE ST.) TO LA RAZA PARK
DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 2020
CC: SCOTT GILMORE, COUNCILWOMAN AMANDA SANDOVAL

I am pleased to recommend that Columbus Park (between W. 38th Ave., W. 39th Ave., Navajo St., and Osage St.) be renamed La Raza (Spanish for "the people") Park, a name that has been used by visitors to the park, community members and neighbors for over 60 years.

This area in Northwest Denver has a strong Chicano and Latino population and was the epicenter of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s and '70s. To this day there are many celebrations in the park that honor the culture and victories that this movement created. Some of these events include Dia de los Muertos, immigrant rights events, cultural events and social justice marches. While the current name has been official since 1931, the growing Chicano population began to call it "La Raza" in the '60s as part of a larger movement to celebrate their history and remove symbols of oppression.

At one time the namesake of the park, Christopher Columbus, was considered a significant figure in the founding of this country. But as more of his ruthless legacy is being learned, cities all over the world are reconsidering the honoring of this individual. This includes removing statues and renaming landmarks. Proponents of these efforts do not consider these actions as rewriting history, but rather as an understanding that not all historical figures are worthy of being honored and celebrated. They further believe these actions are not intended to diminish or dishonor Italian culture and heritage and have recommended naming another park or city asset to reflect Italian-American culture and pride.

Community members have long requested the renaming of this park to "La Raza," including in the 1980s when a compromise was reached by naming the park plaza "La Raza." Many activists, elected officials and supporters have continued to request the park be renamed since that time. With the most recent marches for racial equity in the summer of 2020, Councilwoman Sandoval along with other elected officials, community organization and members made an official request for renaming in June. The public process was championed by the Councilwoman with a complete petition packet that included:



- 701 complete signatures (401 more than required), gathered within two days.
- 45 letters or emails of support, including letters from Colorado Senator Julie Gonzales, Colorado Poet Laureate Bobby LeFebre and Leadership Council Spokesperson for the American Indian Movement of Colorado Glenn Morris. Letters/emails of support were mostly from residents near the park focused on the cultural importance of the name La Raza and the atrocities committed by Columbus.
- DPR also received 16 letters in opposition of the renaming. Of these letters/emails, only a few had addresses to confirm residency. Many of these letters focused on the history of the Italian community in the area, Columbus' importance to the Italian community, and the fear that history is being erased.
- The citywide Renaming Committee at HRCP consisting of members of each of the City's Commissions included Columbus Park as one of the assets that should be renamed.

There were 14 speakers at the public hearing held on November 16, 2020, with 11 in favor, 2 in opposition and 1 with no opinion. Following the public hearing the Denver Parks and Recreation Advisory Board unanimously voted to recommend that this park be renamed La Raza Park.