



February 21, 2023

Dear Members of the City of Santa Fe Governing Body:

On behalf of Artful Life, lead consultant for the CHART (Culture, History, Art, Reconciliation, and Truth) project, we would like to respond to the "[CHART Next Steps Resolution](#)" recently proposed by Councilors Chavez, Rivera, Romero-Wirth, and Villarreal. In addition, we would like to address comments made at two recent meetings, one of the Governing Body (February 8, 2023) and one of the Quality of Life Committee (February 15, 2023).

First, Artful Life is happy that a few of the 53 recommendations in the [CHART final report](#) are addressed in the [resolution](#), namely Recommendation #5 under "Soldiers Monument/Obelisk" on page 89 of the report:

"The City of Santa Fe should be absolutely transparent with the general public about any local, state or federal laws and limitations, or any funding limitations, that affect the disposition of Soldier's Monument/Obelisk;"

and Recommendation #1 under "Racism" on page 116 of the report:

"The City of Santa Fe should fund, create, and staff an office/department specifically dedicated to dismantling systemic barriers to racial, gender, health, socio-economic and other forms of equality."

The former (Recommendation #5) comprises almost half of the resolution and is addressed at length. It's clear that a great deal of attention was paid to fulfilling this recommendation. The latter (Recommendation #1) reflects language in the CHART final report **with the exception** of designating that the proposed "Office of Equity and Inclusion" (OEI) determine the text on the four plaques proposed by the resolution. The latter is not mentioned nor recommended in the CHART report.

The CHART final report **DOES NOT** recommend the following steps that are proposed in the CHART Next Steps Resolution:

"...the City Manager shall hire conservators, designers, and/or historians to determine specific proposals to mend, redesign, and/or reframe the Obelisk (the "Obelisk Proposals") as follows:

1. Use original pieces to show the lines where the Obelisk fractured, by bonding it together with a modern, contrasting material that delineates the fractured lines caused by the toppling of the Obelisk on October 14, 2020;

2. Display an interactive interface, such as a QR Code, where the public may access more information and learn about the varied perspectives about the community's complex history and contribute their own perspectives; and
3. Contemplate updates to the four plaques as described later in this Resolution."

NOR does the CHART final report recommend the following:

- "the City Manager shall take steps to preserve the plaques currently existing in a professional manner and place them in a location accessible to the public (such as a future museum display or exhibit on the history of Santa Fe);"
- "the City Manager shall remove the box covering the broken Obelisk, take down the fence surrounding the Obelisk, and, to the extent permitted under the City's code, install temporary lighting to shine into the sky, representing hope;"
- "upon receiving the Obelisk Proposals and after conversations with the SHPO regarding the Obelisk Proposals, the City Manager shall report back to the Governing Body to obtain approval for the design that is most appropriate for the ongoing use of the Plaza as a community park."

What the CHART final report **DOES** recommend in terms of Soldiers Monument is the following (page 88):

1. "The City of Santa Fe should leave in place the/a place-holder box around what remains of Soldier's Monument/"Obelisk";
2. The City of Santa Fe should add signage on the plaza or on the place-holder box about the process to-date and process to-come for deciding the future of the monument;
3. The City of Santa Fe should immediately begin the process of allocating resources (staff, funds) and implementing a process to:
 - Reach a resolution of the two most favored options revealed by the [CHART] second survey:
 - ☐ "Replace what's left of the monument with something else;" and
 - ☐ "Restore the monument with its original signage and add language that encourages it to be fully understood and assessed";
 - Promote reconciliation as a significant part of the deliberation and decision-making process;
4. The process should engage the diverse citizenry of the city and county of Santa Fe and the four Pueblo nations located in Santa Fe County as well as the Navajo and Mescalero Apache tribes, and other Indigenous communities."

The CHART Next Steps Resolution sides with the option, above, that was slightly less popular among CHART participants--restoring the monument (however "redesigned")--and ignores the option that was the most favored (if by a small margin) by CHART participants--replace what's left of the monument with something else.

Because these two options were dominant and received almost equal support from CHART participants, the CHART final report recommends **NOT** that the Governing Body choose which option they like best, but that a continuing community process (engaging the “diverse citizenry”) that promotes “reconciliation as a significant part of the deliberation and decision-making process” be undertaken immediately.

Choosing one of the options over the other, at this time, does not promote reconciliation as part of the decision-making process.

What is conspicuously absent from the action items in the “CHART Next Steps Resolution” (the sections under “BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY”) is language about **CONTINUING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DIALOGUE**. In what seems to be a rush to do *something* with the box and what’s left of Soldiers Monument, the new resolution suggests that community engagement/dialogue around Soldiers Monument/“Obelisk” is no longer important. Why, for example, is there no mention of a public process in response to the “Obelisk Proposals?” Why are there no action items that demonstrate the City’s commitment to continuing and sustained public dialogue?

The “Truth” and “Reconciliation” sections of the CHART final report emphasize, repeatedly, that truth, reconciliation, and healing are ongoing processes that take years and that they demand patience, tenacity, and sustained support by the City of Santa Fe. The final report also contains important recommendations (pp. 131-132) about how a robust community engagement process can be integrated into city government for the long term.

For the reasons discussed above, Artful Life does not endorse the “CHART Next Steps Resolution,” as is, and requests that it be withdrawn. A new resolution should include passages in the current resolution that accord with the recommendations made in the CHART report and new passages which accord with recommendations in the CHART report regarding Soldiers Monument/“Obelisk” and continuing public engagement and dialogue.

In addition, we would like to respond to comments made at the February 8, 2023 meeting of the Governing Body and the Feb. 15 meeting of the Quality of Life Committee. What was striking about public comment at the February 8th meeting (regarding the next-steps resolution) was that it sounded identical to public comment before the CHART process. Those who attended argued either that the Obelisk should be restored in its original form or that it should be removed. There were false characterizations of the CHART project and process just as there were before the project began. It sounded as if nothing had happened in the 18 months since the project began.

But, in fact, so much has transpired since October of 2020 and since the beginning of the CHART project. Largely missing from public comment were the HUNDREDS of voices and perspectives subsequently heard and documented as part of the CHART project. Participants agreed or disagreed with removing or keeping the “Obelisk” *and also* explored a wide range of complexities and nuances related to this difficult issue. In addition, CHART participants made dozens of suggestions about how to grapple with divisive issues with the goal of building a more cohesive community over time.

Over and over again, during the CHART dialogues and listening sessions and interviews and surveys, residents expressed their belief in the possibility of a better Santa Fe and their willingness to engage, together, in a long process of truth, reconciliation and healing, no matter how difficult. These are the views that must always be considered as “public comment” regarding Soldiers Monument/“Obelisk” and CHART, whether they are expressed at city meetings or not. These are the voices that point the way forward.

We would also like to specifically address a few comments made during the February 8th meeting that were ignorant of the facts in the report or a conscious mischaracterization of them and/or the CHART project. This is important as part of a public record:

1. *The CHART project didn't do its work. It was supposed to decide whether Soldiers Monument/“Obelisk” would stay or go. FALSE.* Nowhere in the substitute resolution of January 2021 nor the CHART contract does the City of Santa Fe state that the CHART project would definitively make this decision. See pages 6-10 of the CHART final report.
2. *The CHART process and report does not include/highlight Indigenous voices. FALSE.* Indigenous Santa Feans (living in the city and county) did indeed participate in the CHART project, including the Community Solutions Table, and their views are represented in the body of the report and in its appendices. Public comment to the contrary marginalizes the Indigenous people who participated as well as their opinions and perspectives.
3. *Ninety percent of people who participated in CHART dialogues, not half, said they want it restored. FALSE.* A careful reading of the CHART report, including survey results and appendices, demonstrates that this is patently untrue.
4. *The leader of the CHART project is a “pretendian.” FALSE.* The CHART project had two Co-Directors, Valerie Martínez and Jenice Gharib, and was also led by a diverse team of community facilitators. CHART leaders also include members of the Community Solutions Table who studied project results and formulated many of the final recommendations. This large leadership team, collaborative in nature and responsive to 1,372 CHART participants, was widely diverse and reflects the diversity of the Santa Fe community. Biographies of the CHART facilitation team—in which they state who they are and what they brought to the project in terms of expertise and experience—have been accessible on the [CHART website](#) since the first day of the project.

Finally, we direct you and the general public to continue to revisit the CHART final report—generated by a robust community engagement process supported by taxpayer funds—as a basis for considering and drafting any next steps resolutions. The report is lengthy, yes, but it faithfully serves as a portrait of the current community of Santa Fe—its challenges as well as its devotion to the long and complicated process of truth, healing, and reconciliation.

Sincerely,

Valerie Martínez and Jenice Gharib
Co-Directors, CHART/Artful Life

cc: the Artful Life CHART Mailing List