

# Policy Briefing Summary

## City Council



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<b>Regarding:</b>	<b>Resolution to Endorse the Location for the Swords Into Plowshares Project</b>
<b>Staff Contact(s):</b>	James Freas, Deputy City Manager
<b>Presenter:</b>	<b>James Freas, Deputy City Manager</b>
<b>Date of Proposed Action:</b>	May 18, 2026

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### Issue

The Swords Into Plowshares project, led by the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, includes three different proposals for new sculptures making use of the materials remaining after the deconstruction of the Robert E. Lee statue to be placed in various City parkspaces. City Council is being asked to endorse the use of City parkspace for this purpose in advance of the completion of the artist selection and final design process, after which City Council would make a decision as to whether to formally accept the resulting art work into the City's public art collection. This endorsement does not bind the City Council to accepting the final art piece, but does allow the design process to proceed with the understanding that the City is willing to consider incorporating sculptures into the parks endorsed by this resolution.

### Background / Rule

In December, 2021 the Charlottesville City Council conferred ownership of the City's Robert E. Lee statue to the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center (JSAAHC). The submitted proposal described JSAAHC's intention to melt down the statue and remold it "into a new work of public art that expresses the City's values of inclusivity and racial justice." [Quote from JSAAHC's proposal submitted to City Council] The proposal also highlights an extensive community engagement program toward the final design of the new public art/sculpture, which aligns with the current process.

In order for a new work of public art to be incorporated into a park or other City-owned space, the City Council must vote to accept the art piece into the City's public art collection. This vote is anticipated to occur at the end of the community engagement and design phase of the Swords Into Plowshares project, projected to be sometime in the fall of 2027. Given the extensive artist/designer selection process and community led design process, staff has proposed two Council check-ins and endorsements - the first related to allowing the proposed project to be placed in identified parks and the second contemplating the scale and specific location within a given park. These endorsements are non-binding, but give the project team some direction allowing the community engagement and design process to move forward.

More detailed information about the Swords Into Plowshares project, the current community engagement program, and the three design teams and their proposals can be found at <https://www.sipcville.com/>.

### Analysis

There are three artist/designer teams, each with their own vision for the project. Each vision incorporates multiple City Park locations.

1. Hood Design Studio - This proposal calls for an initial installation at Market Street Park. After some period of display, the installation would be separated out into its component parts and each part relocated to a neighborhood or plantation-based location. These locations would be identified through a

community engagement process.

2. MASS - This proposal calls for a primary installation in the Market Street Park with the potential for secondary installations in other locations such as Booker T. Washington, Belmont, Forest Hills, and/or Tonsler parks.

3. PUSH Studio - This proposal includes sculptural pieces at six park locations: Market Street, Court Square, Booker T. Washington, Tonsler, Forest Hills, and Belmont.

The task for Council, at this time, is not to pick an individual proposal, but is to decide which park or parks the Swords Into Plowshares public art piece(s) may be located. At this stage of the design process, during which JSAAHC is conducting a community engagement process to select an artist/design team with a corresponding vision, all of the potential visions are still adjustable.

Staff recommends that Council consider, for each park, what is the balance of local use verse city-wide or tourist destination use?

At this point in time, staff do not have any technical concerns arising from park operations that would suggest any of the proposed parks could not host a component of the Swords Into Plowshares project. Staff across multiple departments will have the opportunity to meet with the selected artist/design team to discuss the specifics of each design and work through design details and logistics beginning shortly after the selection process is complete. Following this meeting or meetings with the artists/design team, staff is proposing that there be a second Council endorsement related to the scale of the project and other specifics. Again, the intent would be to give Council an opportunity to discuss and provide feedback before the design work is finalized and presented for acceptance by the City,

#### **Financial Impact**

None

#### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends at a minimum that Council endorse the Market Street and the Court Square Parks as locations where JSAAHC can place elements of the Swords Into Plowshares project. Both of these parks are centrally located in the City and already places where citywide interests are expressed

#### **Recommended Motion (if Applicable)**

#### **Attachments**

1. Resolution\_LocationEndorsement - Revised