

June 26, 2018

Jacksonville City Council  
117 West Duval Street, Suite 425  
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Dear Council Members:

Since 1898, Hemming Park – “Jacksonville’s official public square and the front door to City Hall” – has been home to a 62-foot monument to Confederate soldiers.

In the last 120 years, the Confederate monument has seen a lot of history. National political figures have given speeches in Hemming Park. On August 27, 1960 – “Ax Handle Saturday” -- civil rights advocates were viciously attacked by a mob. Downtown Jacksonville has grown up around the monument, meaning that today it is within sight of City Hall, the main public library, and an increasingly bustling arts district.

The fate of that monument was not a part of the charge to the Task Force on Civil Rights History. Although the subject was discussed in meetings, this letter is not a recommendation by the Task Force as a whole rather it is a suggestion provided by individual citizens of Jacksonville.

However, as community members who have spent the last few months (and in some cases, years or decades) working to preserve and highlight the people, events and landmarks which have given Jacksonville its rich and unique civil rights history, we would be remiss if we did not ask you to seek community input toward resolving a matter which undermines our city’s efforts to be fully inclusive. Our hope is simply for Jacksonville to have a Downtown public square that is open and welcoming to all.

Many Jacksonville citizens believe the reason for the Confederate monument’s placement was to serve as a reminder to former slaves and their descendants of their ‘place in society’. Others feel that continuing to provide the statue a central placement in the heart of Downtown sends a message of divisiveness.

Like other landmarks of our city, the monument is and will always be a part of Jacksonville. We do not believe that people want to see the statue destroyed nor history forgotten. However, the monument should be installed in a place more befitting for an artifact of the time in which it was erected.

We recognize that other Jacksonville residents feel differently about the monument location, which is why we encourage you to establish a process and hold public meetings to determine the future of the Confederate monument, including where it should be located and how it should be contextualized. We believe that opening this public dialogue will provide all members of our community the opportunity to be heard.

Thank you in advance for considering our recommendation, and for your public service to the people of the City of Jacksonville.

With kind regards,

<u>Nana Brown</u>	<u>Robert Thompson</u>	_____
<u>Rodney L. Hurst</u>	<u>William J. Adams</u>	_____
<u>Tim Gilmore</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	_____
<u>Brenda Fienks</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	_____
<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	_____
<u>Angela Miller</u>		_____
<u>Loyd Westbrook</u>		_____
<u>Hope McMurth</u>		_____
<u>Don Murray</u>		_____