

August 18, 2022

FOR YOUR INFORMATION MEMO – MLK Jr. Memorial Project Update

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: John P. Curp, Interim City Manager



Subject: MLK Jr. Memorial Project Update

In May of 2021, Cincinnati City Council dedicated one million dollars to fund a new memorial project at the northeast corner of MLK Jr. Drive and Reading Road commemorating the life and achievements of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The site was chosen in recognition of a 1987 MLK Jr. memorial dedicated by the Baptist Ministers Conference of Cincinnati, the City of Cincinnati, and Jewish Hospital, which was relocated in 2017. The new memorial was intended both to replace the 1987 memorial and to create a community gathering space honoring Dr. King and the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement in the heart of Avondale.

The City spent nearly a year setting criteria and evaluating proposals for the project. Short listed artists (or artist teams) submitted design proposals with public input in June 2022 for final selection. Approximately a hundred individuals attended community engagement sessions or participated via survey to engage with selected artists and articulate their vision for the proposed memorial. The artists were scored on their record of community engagement and how well they reflected that input. This included community members advising the RFP committee. In July, the City of Cincinnati announced that it had selected Re:site Studio to enter into contract negotiations for the construction of the memorial.

Since that announcement, the City has received overwhelming feedback from community members about the project. Today, the City of Cincinnati informed Re:site Studio that the City is ending the current RFP procurement process on the MLK Jr. Memorial project and will not be entering into a contract with Re:site. In the coming weeks, City Administration will reevaluate how to proceed with a memorial on the site to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The City of Cincinnati remains committed to the construction of a world-class and community-centric memorial honoring Dr. King at the northeast corner of MLK Jr. Drive and Reading Road. The community concerns expressed after the City's announcement indicate a need to reassess how best to achieve this goal. The City of Cincinnati would like to thank the team members at Re:site Studio for their proposal and their willingness to collaborate with the City and the community on this important project. This decision was not made lightly and bares no reflection on the work of Re:site.

Once City Administration has determined how to proceed with the MLK Jr. memorial project, City Council will be updated accordingly.

cc: Chandra Yungbluth, Assistant to the City Manager
Paul Booth, Director of Human Relations