

FINAL REPORT

Qualitative Analysis of Public Surveys for the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers

Abstract

The following is the final report for the qualitative analysis of surveys distributed by the New York City Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers. The responses will inform the Commission's advisory recommendations on how the City should address City-owned monuments and markers on City property. This report will offer an in-depth analysis of all 2905 online portal submissions received between October 25 - November 28, 2017. This is the final of three reports in total. The first interim report was submitted on November 28, 2017 and the second interim report was submitted on December 4, 2017.

Introduction

Responses revealed passionate expressions of opinion with a strong presence from those with more preservationist ideals tied to tradition, heritage, and the historical significance monuments hold in their respective communities. Those more privy to radical change and removals or who shared a moderate stance on controversial monuments, cited ethical concerns largely tied to values of equality, social justice, and identity; these emerged equally during the second half of submissions in November. The following analysis provides details on these findings and offers various lenses to capture the particularities and nuances of what may appear to be a polarizing topic of public debate.

Evaluative Framework

Objective

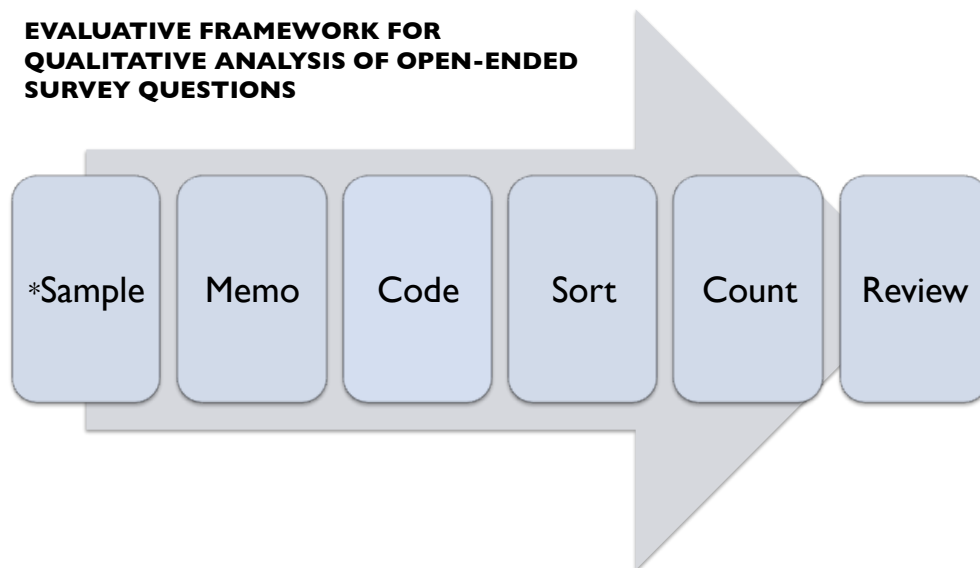
The primary objective of the qualitative analysis of the surveys distributed by the New York City Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers is to offer a comprehensive overview of public sentiment surrounding the role and ethical value of existing monuments and to offer a detailed analysis of opinions on protocol and content for future monuments. This report aims to offer a thorough yet clear understanding of the wide range in public opinion in the 2905¹ online portal submissions in hopes that it will accurately inform: future policy decisions, solutions surrounding existing controversy, and any additional research on the subject moving forward.

Research Ethics

In keeping with standard research ethics and requirements made by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, all responses were kept anonymous and information pertaining to respondents was kept confidential. Given the 15-day time frame for review and analysis, the utmost integrity and care was used to making sure that results and observations were calculated as accurately and thoughtfully, as possible.

Overview

The graph below simplifies the evaluative process detailed in the subsequent text. Please note that random sampling (*) was only used for preliminary analysis. While memoing and reviewing are outlined in a linear format in this illustration, both methods were also important throughout the entire analytical process and were used from beginning to end repeatedly.



¹ This number reflects all submissions including duplicates. There are 129 duplicates in total making the number of the total number of unique submissions 2776.

Random Sampling

First, a randomly selected sample size of 330 responses was drawn from the first 2266² submissions for each open-ended question³. Sample sizes were used to gather preliminary results and observations for Interim Report I and to identify prominent themes and categories that would be used to later code responses. A confidence level of 95% was used to calculate all sample sizes and numbers were rounded up accordingly. For instance, in using 2266 as the actual population size (total number of responses at that given time) the appropriate sample size to achieve a 95% confidence interval with a confidence interval⁴ of 5 was 329. The desired confidence interval never exceeded 5 in calculating the appropriate sample size for the actual number of responses. The formula used to calculate the sample size is as follows: $\text{sample size} = \text{value}^2 * (\text{percentage}) * (1 - \text{percentage}) / \text{confidence interval}^2$.

Memoing

Upon reviewing each of the responses in the samples, analytic memos were drafted identifying recurring concerns, themes, triggers, and key words or phrases (i.e. “commemorate,” “indigenous,” “educate,” etc.). Dominating patterns and concerns were often evident with a cursory review of the samples. For question number one: *What do you think is the role of public monuments in our city’s public spaces?* it was evident immediately just through the initial review of the sample that “Historical Understanding” would be a primary role of monuments for respondents just from the high frequency of appearance of the word “history.” Primary and secondary questions that arose from reviewing responses were also noted as a part of the analysis such as: “How were respondents recruited?” and “What efforts were made to ensure inclusion of under-represented city residents (i.e. low-income city residents) or those who may not have access to the internet in the respondent population? The process of memoing was integral throughout the entire qualitative analysis process and continued to inform the development of observations beyond the creation of categories.

Open Coding and Categorizing

Memos were then used to develop categories and sub-categories according to the most frequently occurring themes in the responses. Each category had a two or three letter code that would be used to sort each answer. For example, “HIS” is the code that represented the “Historical Understanding” category for the first question. Each response was marked with the appropriate code according to triggers identified in recorded memos from the samples and the explicit and implicit content of the responses. Assigning categories was also based on an objective assessment of the respondent’s complete answer and when necessary and appropriate, answers to other questions were referenced for clarity.

² This was the complete number of submissions available on November 20, 2017.

³ For our purposes, open-ended questions refers to questions 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 on the survey.

⁴ Margin of error

The survey responses were analyzed primarily on the basis of open coding. Analytical memos informed codes that were developed for up to twelve sub-categories of responses. Coded segments were then grouped into larger, more general categories in accordance with the frequency of their occurrence. Categories were formed according to the most commonly cited terminology and theoretical concepts that emerged from the recorded memos. In order to avoid conflation or excessive overlap, categories with more disparate meaning and relevance were given some consideration. It is understood that categorizing eliminates some of the particularities of the opinions and ideas respondents expressed. Subsequent descriptions of each category attempt to capture these nuances and outlying sentiments.

Data Ordering, Sorting, and Counting

Once all 2905 responses for each open-ended question were coded, responses for all questions were then isolated according to the particular criterion being analyzed. This was done by ordering the responses not by the time of submission, but other criteria of interest such as zip code. The desired condition was then inputted along with the range being analyzed for that specific category or question. The following formula was used to calculate exact numbers of responses in a specific category and the occurrence of key words: $fx=COUNTIF(\text{test-array}, \text{condition})$. Once exact numbers were calculated, the information was reviewed to identify patterns, specific percentages, and other correlations.

Correlations and Percentages

Correlations between two variables, questions and/or the respondent's inputted criteria were drawn by either inductive assessment through the review of each response or a percentage-based calculation comparing two variables. For instance, Staten Island residents were more likely to believe that changes to existing monuments would have a negative impact on the future than any other borough or region represented in the survey. This was determined due to a 78.1% majority of respondents from Staten Island sharing a response that was not favorable to changes addressed in question number 6.⁵ The formulas used to reach these conclusions were: $fx=COUNTIF(\text{test-array}, \text{condition})$ and $\% = \text{part/whole} \times 100$.

⁵ *If a particular monument is preserved, altered, or removed, what do you think the effect will be in the future?*

General Observations

A primary concern for survey respondents is the state of existing monuments and whether or not they should be removed. Respondents readily expressed their opinion regarding the removal of monuments, frequently out of context. Whether they should be removed or not was a preoccupation that often overrode the nuances of the questions being asked. Any time a survey question offered suggestions in the body of the prompt, results skewed toward the suggested items as those were most salient in the minds of the respondents. If the answers to specific questions were unclear or did not address the question directly, the answers to other questions were referenced for clarity, particularly if the respondent said “see above.” 129 submissions were repeated across all questions.

A significant number respondents discounted the question and so, virtually every question includes this as a category. Those who directly dismissed the question being asked often shared ideas that revealed their desire to keep monuments and policy around monuments unchanged. Issues surrounding the memorialization of institutions and other civic structures (such as naming rights to bridges and streets) is outside of the scope of the Commission’s purview, however, survey respondents did express ethical concerns over Margaret Sanger dedications and the Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge on multiple occasions.

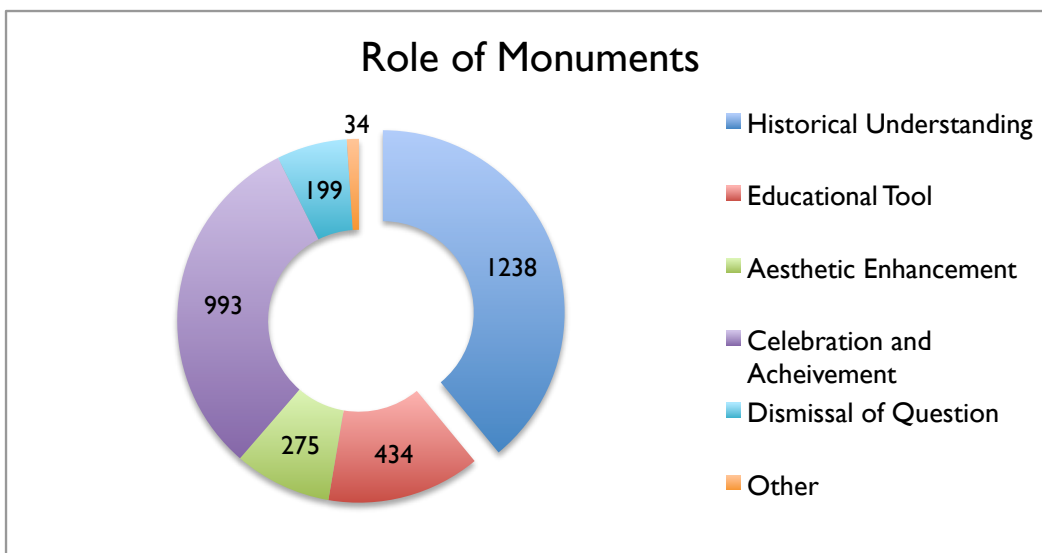
While the scope of this work also does not allow for in-depth analysis of the supplementary public hearings on monuments hosted by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in all five different boroughs, it is worth noting that there was an evident and drastic shift in the nature and content of submissions after the hearings began. Responses submitted beginning on the afternoon of November 22, 2017,⁶ indicated a 90% increase in the mention of Dr. J. Marion Sims across all survey questions.

⁶ The second public hearing in Brooklyn took place on November 21 and the highly attended public hearing in Manhattan took place on November 22.

I. What do you think is the role of public monuments in our city's public spaces?

The first question in the survey elicited a high level of engagement and straightforward responses. The following categories emerged from responses in order from the most frequently occurring to the lowest: Historical Understanding, Celebration and Achievement, Educational Tool, Aesthetic Enhancement, Dismissal of the Question, and Other. All categories with the exception of “dismissal of the question” noted that from both an aspirational and practical perspective, monuments should serve to engage a sense of enrichment among the public whether it be intellectual, historical, artistic, or communal. Responses under “historical understanding” appeared 4.5 times more than those under “aesthetic enhancement” and 6.2 more than those who dismissed the question.

The following graph breaks down the results in each category for the total number of responses in question I of the survey.



Historical Understanding

Total: 1238

The most frequently occurring responses declared that a monument's role is to offer historical context and record the historical importance of an event or figure. Many in this category cited the need to acknowledge both the good and bad, as well as, the importance of acknowledging the past in order to inform the future and not repeat mistakes. Equally, respondents wrote of the necessity for historical truth while others in this category expressed a resistance to changing or removing existing markers since to them history signified permanence. The term “history” appeared a total of 1,330 times in responses to this question. Mentions of monuments attracting tourism and the need to share history with visitors appeared 38 times.

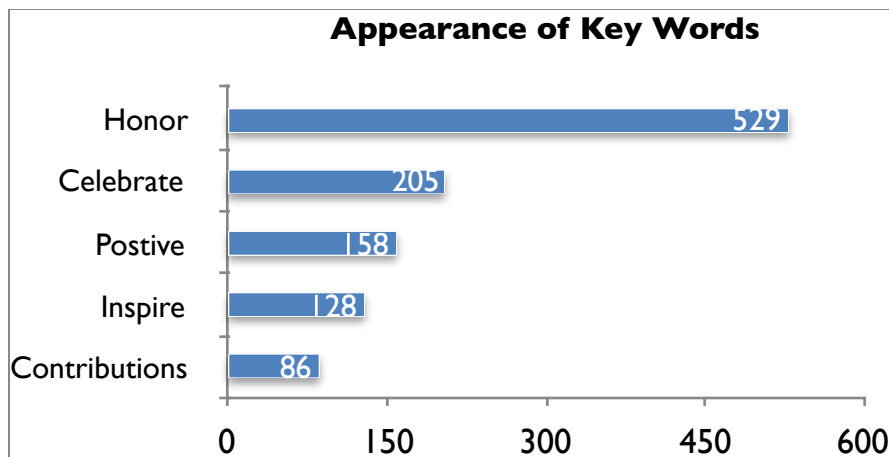
Quotes

- ▶ “to reflect on historical fact”
- ▶ “preserving the good and bad”
- ▶ “to give people a place to reflect on past events”
- ▶ “to promote our society's common historic memory”
- ▶ “to commemorate the history on NY”
- ▶ “recognize significant moments in history”
- ▶ “to serve as history. We can also learn from history, instead of removing these statues and ‘pretending’ like it never took place.

Celebration and Achievement

Total: 993

The second most commonly cited answer was that monuments serve as a means for celebrating extraordinary individuals and collective accomplishments. These comments highlighted the importance of celebration or honorific intentions in preserving the memory of such events or figures. This distinction from “historical understanding” is significant as it focuses on a figure’s positive influence, contributions, and good character. It also denotes the cultural significance of what is being commemorated to a community as a means for inspiration. In addition, monuments were seen as a place to express aspirational and shared values and ideals.



Quotes

- ▶ “to honor heroes”
- ▶ “they help create the culture, identity and feel of the city”
- ▶ “to instill pride in the public”
- ▶ “to honor the accomplishments of people who helped shape our city in a positive way”
- ▶ “to inspire”

- ▶ “a source of pride and inspiration”
- ▶ “celebrate values and diversity”
- ▶ “symbol of peace, love, acceptance and unity”
- ▶ “celebrate impactful events that contribute to the positive psyche of a people”
- ▶ “to foster a sense of community and honor those who have served our community and accomplished positive things for the people”
- ▶ “role is to celebrate the good, not honor or legitimize evil”

Educational Tool

Total: 434

These responses noted that education is the primary role of a monument. On many occasions this was framed in the context of informing future decision-making, educating future generations (the youth), and promoting discussion and debate.

Quotes

- ▶ “to educate residents and visitors”
- ▶ “to accurately inform the public”
- ▶ “educate the citizens”
- ▶ “to educate and enlighten the public”
- ▶ “to stimulate”
- ▶ “inform our youth”

Aesthetic Enhancement

Total: 275

These responses privileged a monument’s role in displaying beauty in a public space. They were viewed to serve as a means of artistic expression, aesthetic improvement, enhancement, or beautification of civic space. There was an evident correlation between those who cited a monument’s aesthetic or artistic importance and its purpose as an educational tool. Those who responded under the aesthetic category paired their answers with a monument’s role in education 43 times. An even more significant correlation was those who cited a monument’s purpose as an art object along with its role as an object that details history; this combination of categories appeared 96 times.

Quotes

- ▶ “aesthetic beautification”
- ▶ “to provide a place for artistic expression”
- ▶ “to be admired as works of art and beauty”
- ▶ “I think that public monuments are art objects that are also meant to memorialize history, all aspects good and bad.”
- ▶ “they make public spaces more enjoyable”
- ▶ “to inform people or to add beauty to the environment”
- ▶ “public monuments are art objects”
- ▶ “they should be either beautiful public art or educational but they should not be reminders to minorities of a time when they were abused and persecuted”

Dismissal of Question

Total: 199

Here, responses directly or indirectly dismissed the question with a comment that did not address the prompt. The majority remained on topic but expressed grievances and opinions without providing a clear answer to the question. Some expressed discontent with the purpose of the Commission in general, while others simply noted their disapproval of existing monuments. Here, a majority of participants that dismissed the question made a statement about keeping the monuments generally and referenced Christopher Columbus 14 times. The final 500⁷ submissions saw a 96% increase in the mention of the J. Marion Sims Statue and 2 did cite its removal independent from answering the question.

Quotes

- ▶ “to offend people”
- ▶ “abolish this foolish commission and spend the money on something useful”
- ▶ “it doesn’t matter what the role is, leave the monuments alone”
- ▶ “I don’t know that there is a role”
- ▶ “monuments to people or events that caused harm should not be in public spaces”
- ▶ “if schools were doing a better job much of this debate would be moot”

Other

Total: 34

Outlying responses noted that monuments are a form of storytelling, continuity, and offer a space for gathering for the public.

Quotes

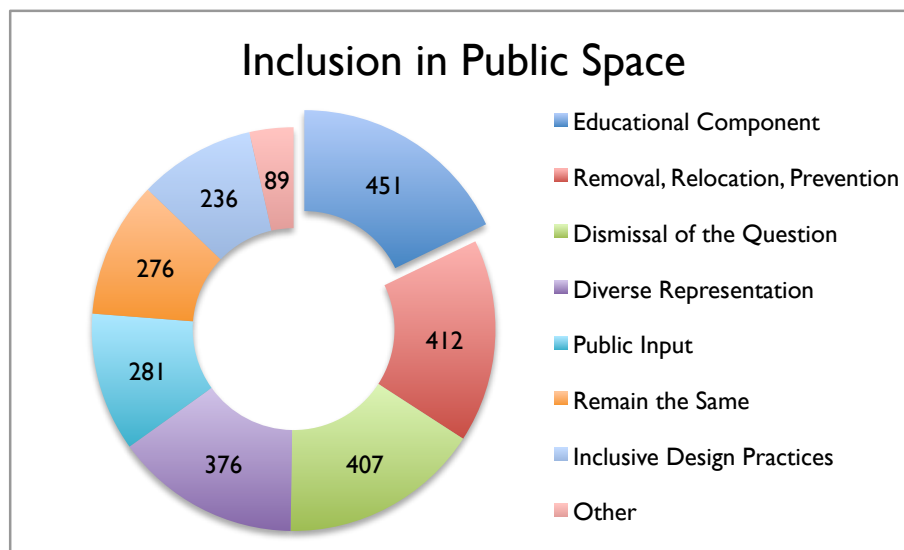
- ▶ “They are among the few non-commercial, open, sometimes quiet gathering spaces for ordinary citizens”
- ▶ “to promote the activation and inclusion of public communal space”
- ▶ “to help create meaning in shared spaces”
- ▶ “Monuments should create inclusive spaces that NYC citizens can feel proud of”

⁷This shift can be noticed from the submission beginning on November 22 at approximately 12:45 pm.

2. When considering the role of public monuments in NYC, what do you think is the best way to achieve public space that is open and inclusive?

Respondents offered a wide range of suggestions on how to create inclusive public spaces. Please note that the larger variety of categories created a more even dispersal of responses, however, responses listing an “educational component,” the most frequently cited solution, still appeared 1.9 times more than “inclusive design practices,” which was the least frequently appearing.

Below is a graph detailing the results from the eight categories of responses for this question.



Educational Component

Total: 451

A diplomatic response for creating inclusive public spaces was to add educational components that address the contested legacy of figures to, particularly controversial monuments. This category is defined by the desire to offer more information and added context to the history associated with existing monuments. Here, there was an explicit need to educate the public in order to generate understanding and create the feeling of inclusion in public spaces. The hope for many was to re-contextualize the history behind disputed monuments via a plaque or digital supplement (app, website, QRS code, interactive kiosk, etc.) that provides comprehensive and accurate facts. In fact, references to a “plaque,” “signage,” or some form of visual explanation appeared 181 times.

This category also included suggestions to create exhibitions addressing the history of figures like Christopher Columbus and other types of public programming around the topic at the site of the monuments.

Quotes

- ▶ “add context to more controversial monuments”
- ▶ “provide web links via a QRS code for people to learn more”
- ▶ “an app or number to text that people can access information about the history at the site”
- ▶ “add any necessary educational information to present the complete story of the person depicted”
- ▶ “using intersectionality as a lens on history and the present moment helps us ask the important questions”

Removal, Relocation, or Prevention

Total: 412

These respondents expressed a desire to address ethical concerns by replacing, relocating, or removing controversial monuments altogether. In addition, the “prevention” aspect of the category includes responses that also expressed a sensitivity for ethical concerns around new monuments being built. In many instances, respondents said that subjects who have stood for questionable values and/or elicited violence against marginalized groups do not invite inclusion and should be removed. Others suggested ensuring that new monuments adhere to stringent ethical codes set out by the city to prevent future controversy. On multiple occasions, some suggested a review of monuments every 10 years to maintain ethics of inclusion.

Quotes

- ▶ “remove controversial images in consideration of their actions and to alleviate triggers”
- ▶ “there should be no monuments celebrating people who have been responsible or complicit (eg, through profit) in slavery, genocide, imperialism, colonialism, etc.”
- ▶ “remove all controversial monuments and symbols of oppression”
- ▶ “relocate them to a museum space that provides context on why we don't celebrate or agree with the troubling issues”
- ▶ “to remove monuments that celebrate those who were complicit in the creation and upholding of white supremacy in our society”

Dismissal of the Question

Total: 407

The term “inclusive” incited a significant volume of confusion and criticism. This includes survey respondents who explicitly indicated not wanting to answer the question or who made a comment that did not address the prompt. Some of these respondents noted that inclusivity is not entirely possible and/or felt inclusivity is not of importance. Even more common was the dismissal of the question in saying that public spaces were

already by definition inclusive and that the question could not be answered. Respondents also felt that other issues were more pressing than addressing inclusivity such as the city infrastructure, high cost of living, etc.

Quotes

- ▶ “this question doesn't make sense. Space is either open or it isn't”
- ▶ “no matter what you choose there will always be some one who disagrees with you”
- ▶ “leave the monuments where they are and instead honor the current residents of NYC by improving infrastructure”
- ▶ “I have no opinion, and leave that to the Lawmakers or citizens who care”
- “All public spaces are open and inclusive, it's people who are pushing each other out”

Diverse Representation

Total: 376

These respondents encouraged a shift of focus on who and what has historically been memorialized via city markers, art, and monuments by adding new works that acknowledge a wider range of identities, communities, subjects, or entities. Inclusion and openness in public spaces in these answers discussed the need for monuments to reflect the powerful diversity of the city. Some in this category expressed an openness for adding new monuments, however, were advocates of keeping existing monuments. Beyond who is being represented in the actual monuments, this category also referred to the representation of those involved in the decision-making and art making for any future monuments being built.

Quotes

- ▶ “I think there should be public spaces that represent all of those who live in this city” “adding statues, particularly of women who made a difference in the history of New York City”
- ▶ “I like the idea of monuments to achievements in science, literature, math, the arts and literature. We can have representation from different ages, backgrounds, races, ethnicities, sexualities, etc.”
- ▶ “Replace statues of problematic white men with statues of women and people of color”
- ▶ “The people and values celebrated in monuments should be as diverse as the people living in the community”
- ▶ “We could use more monuments of animals which were native to this land, before industrialization”
- ▶ “Monuments of people should reflect the composition of NYC”

Public Input

Total: 281

These respondents felt that public input is crucial to achieving inclusion particularly when it comes to decision-making on public spaces. A democratic process such as voting, surveys, town hall meetings, forums, review boards, and others were cited as offering more inclusion both existing monuments under review and those being erected in the future. Seeking input from the residents of the location in question was mentioned at least 64 times. Open public discourse on controversies in order to inform future civic spaces was also noted as a measure for addressing inclusion. Engagement via community boards, open artist calls, participatory planning, and panels that invite scholars, historians, curators, and planners to discuss decision-making and policy with the public were among suggestions in this category. Generally, these respondents advocated for processes similar those already being implemented by the Commission (i.e. public surveys and hearings).

Quotes

- ▶ “Let voters decide”
- ▶ “public surveys seem like a good way to start”
- ▶ “have an open review board to evaluate proposals for the addition or removal of monuments. Incorporate public opinion via public forums, written letters, and online questionnaires, such as this one”
- ▶ “participatory planning - public commissions to choose who the monuments honor”
- ▶ “to achieve open and inclusive space, city officials should work with local institutions and community leaders to determine needs, preferences, and tailor any installations and infrastructure to the community’s needs”

Remain the Same

Total: 276

These respondents explicitly acknowledged no need for new measures for increased inclusion and openness, often accompanied with a preservationist sentiment. They expressed a desire to keep things the way they are and generally advocated against the removal of monuments. Here, there is some overlap with responses that dismissed the questioned: respondents explicitly noted feeling that civic spaces were already open and largely advocated to keep existing monuments. Some cited the danger of removing monuments as the “erasure of history” and likening present-day activism around monuments to the Cultural Revolution, Stalinism, and revisionism. The most commonly used word for those who wanted to keep everything as is was “leave,” as in “leave it alone” or “leave it as is.” A variation of the word “leave” was used 121 times.

Quotes

- ▶ “What has been done so far is just fine”
- ▶ “I think the best way to achieve public space that is open and inclusive is to leave it be”
- ▶ “It’s impossible to have true inclusivity for everyone”
- ▶ “Why does public space have to be inclusive?”
- ▶ “Keep the streets safe for everyone and worry less about the monuments”
- ▶ “By leaving history alone”
- ▶ “We must recognize that civic life does not require universal acceptance any idea or hero”
- ▶ “Vague question”

Inclusive Design Practices

Total: 236

These responses addressed the spatial and practical aspects of public spaces to increase a sense of inclusion. This included suggestions for the design of public spaces and placement of monuments according to demographics and geographic conditions in the city. These respondents were less concerned with the politics of inclusion and more concerned with practical measures that would be achieved. Many encouraged more green space, benches, accessibility for the disability community, and/or other ambient elements that create a more inviting space for the public to interact and engage. The maintenance of the space, in terms of cleanliness and creating a feeling of calm, beauty, and openness were cited as important to inclusion. Some also mentioned the importance of the physical positioning of monuments, addressing their visibility. Respondents also mentioned design practices and urban planning that would minimize crime and promote physical safety away from traffic.

Quotes

- ▶ “we need fountains, trees, tables to chat and chew; we need spaces to help us get to know one another”
- ▶ “statues or monuments should be the center piece in a public space (with wifi in them), surrounded by benches and open grass areas”
- ▶ “accessible to disabled people... and does not include violent architecture”
- ▶ “take into consideration nearby stores, transit, parks, and how that will influence how people interact with and view the monument”
- ▶ “host the monuments in a space that is open and unobstructed by vehicles”
- ▶ “erecting a monument that is not unduly large relative to the public space in which it is placed”

Other

Total: 89

Other suggestions to achieve inclusion included: no admission fees, not privatizing public space, and keeping them open to the public at all times. The most common suggestion in the outlying responses was to not continue dedicating monuments to people and to instead create symbols of unity through public art or other means.

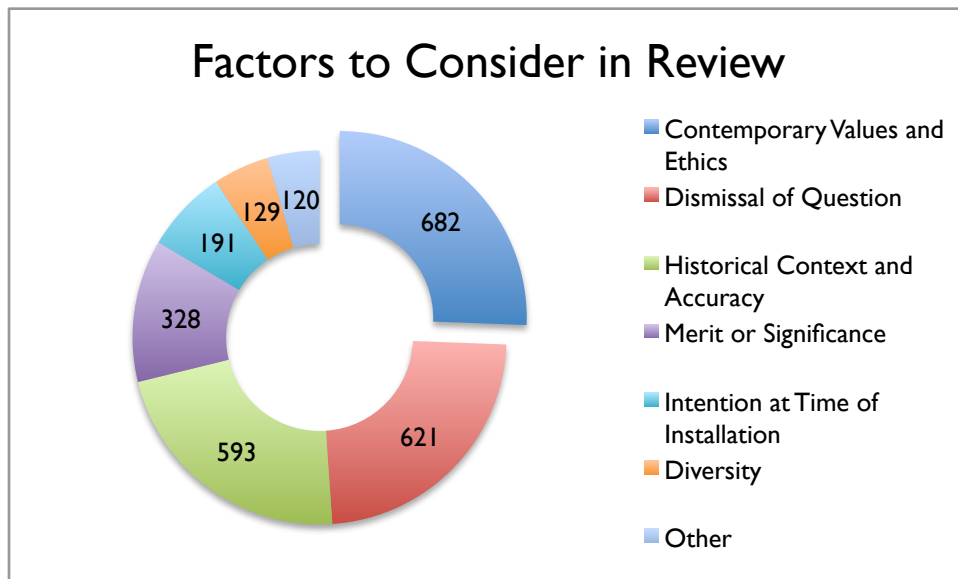
Quotes

- ▶ “name nothing after no one and no one will feel excluded”
- ▶ “let historians decide. Lots of them in NYC from museums, universities and research institutions”
- ▶ “have nonspecific statues such as works of art not pertaining to any particular individual”
- ▶ “free to look at, no admission charges”
- ▶ “plant a tree instead of a statue for the most part”
- ▶ “sadly, have no public monuments at all”

3. What factors should the City consider when reviewing a monument? Consider historical and contemporary context, intention and time of installation, and the values to which New Yorkers aspire.

Factors listed within the question remained most salient for respondents and therefore, revealed a higher occurrence. 137 of the total number of responses cited the importance of considering all of the above factors (historical and contemporary context, intention and time of installation, and the values to aspire to) mentioned in the question. A less significant, but notable number of responses cited a preference for implementing these standards for new monuments but expressed a desire not to review existing monuments. Generally, respondents seemed to be unclear as to whether the review process referred to new monuments or existing ones, so they responded to both.

The most frequently cited answer revolved around the monument’s pertinence with “contemporary values and ethics” appearing 5.3 more times than the least common category “diversity” (excluding “other”). Nearly just as significant was the number of respondents who strongly opposed the review of monuments all together and dismissed the question, which was the second most frequently occurring category.



Contemporary Values and Ethics

Total: 682

Responses in this category noted that monuments should be held to contemporary values and ethical standards during a review. This includes considering why existing monuments offend any groups of people and how a monument’s meaning and legacy measures up to societal expectations and norms today. Emphasis was placed on the monument’s alignment with contemporary aspirational values in this country (for

example, an intolerance for discrimination or violence) and ensuring that what monuments represent were not, directly or indirectly, in violation of universal human rights. Some were at odds with placing too much importance on historical values since facts can be difficult to nail down and often get “murky,” while others noted that both contemporary and historical meaning should be reviewed. These responses generally agreed that a monument should “stand the test of time” and hold aspirational values firmly.

Quotes

- ▶ “will this offend an entire group of people? The Christopher Columbus statue is offensive being that he took credit for land that was occupied as if the people living there didn't matter”
- ▶ “it should not celebrate racism, sexism, homophobia or other people, places or events that honor our worst impulses”
- ▶ “monuments should represent our values today rather than romanticizing the behaviors of the past”
- ▶ “is the monument one that signifies racial power? Or misogyny?”
- ▶ “ask whether this monument speaks to the values to which New Yorkers aspire”

Dismissal of the Question

Total: 621

Respondents here directly or indirectly expressed that the city should not review monuments and that all should remain the same. Some answers noted that resources should be spent on city issues of higher priority such as homelessness and cost of living, among others. These respondents either explicitly expressed displeasure for the question or provided an irrelevant comment. 315 responses within this category outwardly said that no review is necessary and often expressed strong feelings against it, sometimes saying that the City has no place reviewing monuments. Words like, “whitewash” and “political correctness” were often used in defense of the general dismissal of reviews.

Quotes

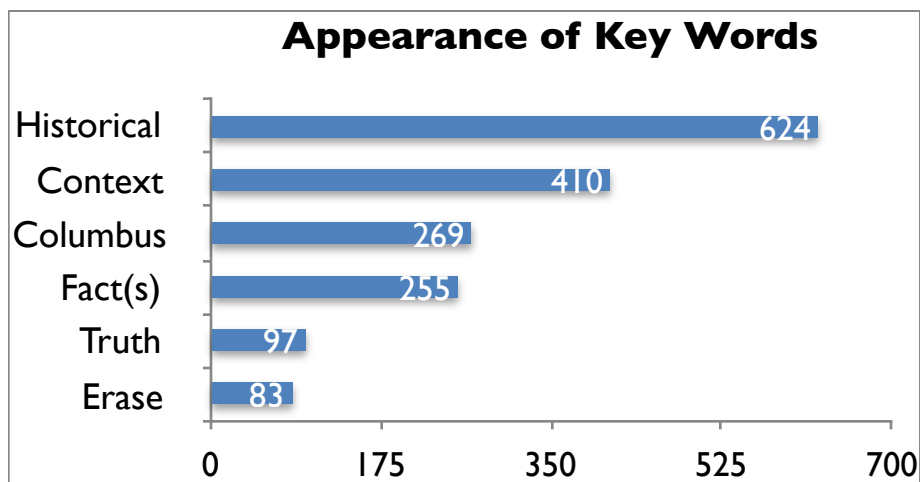
- ▶ “faulty premise. Do not review the monuments. Post-modernist revision of history does dishonor to all who sacrificed in the journey of our country to where it is today”
- ▶ “they shouldn't be reviewing monuments. New Yorkers have different values. This is the opposite of inclusive”
- ▶ “there should be no reviewing of monuments. It is dangerous to rewrite history”
- ▶ “the city should not be reviewing any monuments. This is a popular and political witch hunt to satisfy the mayor and council speaker”
- ▶ “erasing history is heresy! Totalitarian tactics! Current City administration cannot dictate blanket values”

- ▶ “stop pandering to groups who want to erase the contributions of white Americans”

Historical Context and Accuracy

Total: 593

These responses privileged ensuring that historical accuracy and context were primary factors in reviewing new and existing monuments. They acknowledge the complexity of history. Respondents in this category had varying interpretations of historical fact specifically when referencing the most commonly cited monument, the Christopher Columbus statue in Columbus Circle. Respondents were often at odds with each other under this category. This rested on the interpretation of what was “fact” or what some coined as “mythology.” This category and “Intention at Time of Installation” were often paired together in responses and on several occasions there was a clear desire to note that contemporary values were not relevant.



Quotes

- ▶ “if we don't learn from our history, we are doomed to repeat it”
- ▶ “most important is the monument’s historical context: does this person’s life represent something that all New Yorkers can be proud of?”
- ▶ “historic context is important - consider how it can create a dialog,”
- ▶ “all humans have faults. Monuments should be taken for historical context”
- ▶ “historical context is important! Celebrating one figure who did something big, but at the expense of others should not be a monument on public grounds.”

Merit or Significance

Total: 328

These respondents held the subjects being memorialized to high standards of excellence, achievement, and focused on their positive impact. Here “merit or significance” refers to high-caliber advancements that the figure being memorialized accomplished and how it served modern society. The collective significance and impact of what/whom is being memorialized are often cited under this category. Some used what they considered to be merit to defend existing monuments, like that of Christopher Columbus “discovering the New World,” or J. Marion Sims’ “scientific contributions to the field of Gynecology” in spite of any associated costs. Less, but some did use that very same logic for a counter argument emphatically suggesting that the review process consider only wholly good and ethically sound contributions.

Quotes

- ▶ “contribution to larger and overall good or contribution to our city and world”
- ▶ “contemporary values may have changed. The most important consideration, however, is clearly the benefit they brought and bring”
- ▶ “how the person contributed to the advancement of our nation”
- ▶ “the importance of the accomplishment”
- ▶ “consider the good that was done”
- ▶ “how influential was a person”

Intention at Time of Installation

Total: 191

Respondents in this category noted that the original intention or why the monument was originally created is of primary importance. Assuming they were created for good reason, some used this as a justification to keep monuments that have since become controversial. Longevity was noted as a reason both to keep and remove disputed monuments.

Quotes

- ▶ “the original purpose and intention of the monument should be of critical importance”
- ▶ “respect the decisions of those who placed them there. Don't assume you can know previous intentions and present values and aspirations of everyone”
- ▶ “what is the intention of the monument and is that intention clear?”
- ▶ “they should consider the intent when the monument was erected, as well as other information that has subsequently come to light”
- ▶ “intention, and time -- purpose or mission of the monument”

Diversity
Total: 129

Under this category, diversity is broadly defined referring to representation in culture, identity, and disciplines for the monuments being reviewed. Respondents here thought that giving visibility to underrepresented communities in the city is an important factor to consider when reviewing monuments, as well as, the representation of different fields and values. There was a clear desire in these responses to reach a balance in representation beyond the status quo.

Quotes

- ▶ “the City should try to be inclusive, not exclusive, as to whom we as a city honor by erecting a monument to them or to their ideals. Monuments to Gandhi, to Nelson Mandela, to Mother Theresa - these are examples of new monuments that would represent the values all New Yorkers share”
- ▶ “appeal to the cultural histories of New York’s residents, it has always been a mixed bag of different typed of people”
- ▶ “Is the monument *another* old white dude?” “the city should
- ▶ “why are there so many statues of White men in NYC and in the U.S., generally? Where are the statutes of women, individuals of color, statutes that may represent individuals other than those who have achieved high social class status/notoriety, etc?”
- ▶ “to have monuments that recognize varying, wide-ranging views and ideas”

Other
Total: 120

Other noted factors to consider when reviewing a monument included, but are not limited to: appropriateness of location, cost of maintenance, removal or building new objects (total 18), the overall condition of a monument and appearance (total 21), and public sentiment (total 51).

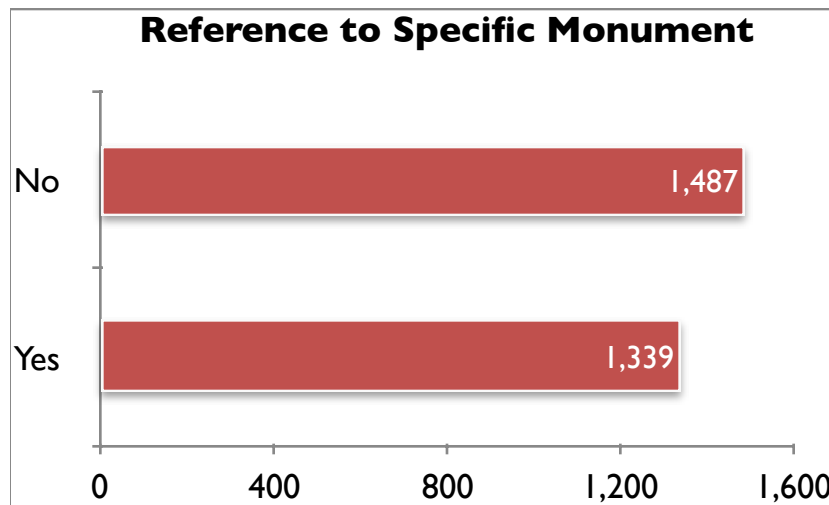
Quotes

- ▶ “reviewers have their own agenda. Get rid of all statues and there will be no favoritism”
- ▶ “consider the aesthetic contribution the monument makes. Does its appearance enhance its surroundings”
- ▶ “beauty, the amount of use it gets, how badly we need the space for other purposes”
- ▶ “the people should have the final say on monuments by a vote .We can not let our message be placed in the hands of elected officials”

4. Does your comment relate to a specific, existing monument in NYC?

If yes, tell us which of the following best describes your proposal.

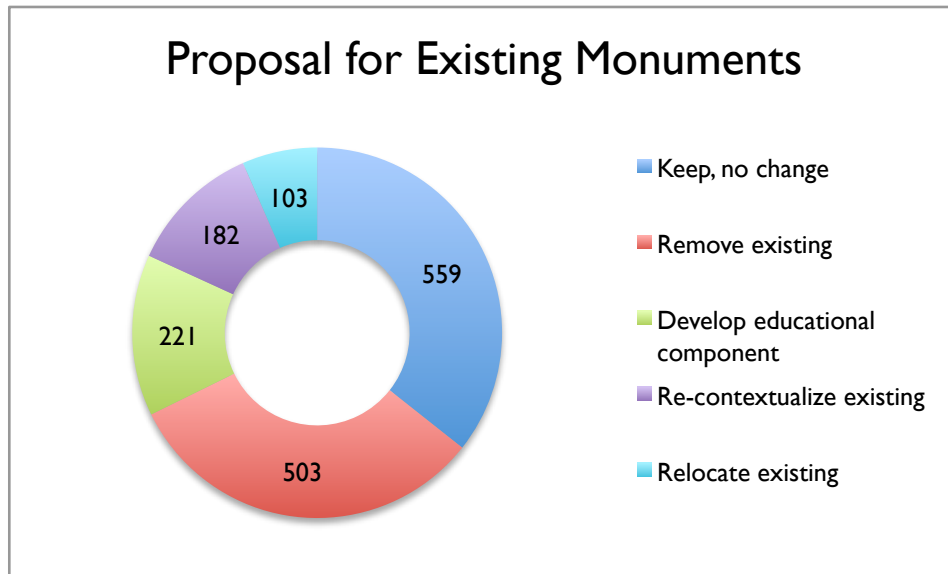
This question revealed close to an even split among those who may or may not be concerned with a specific existing monument. Responses proposing “removing existing” monuments highly correlated with the “Contemporary Values and Ethics” category in question 3. Those who responded “keep; no change” correlated with “Dismissal of the Question” and “None” in question 3.



In terms of proposals, on several occasions, respondents suggested that funds for removal or relocation come from a private source as opposed to public funds. A desire to create more monuments for women, natives/indigenous people, and former slaves was palpable throughout.

Of the 559 respondents who opted to keep monuments, only 42 paired their responses with re-contextualizing and/or developing an educational component. Of the 503 responses vouching for removal of existing monuments, 82 paired their responses with re-contextualizing and/or developing an educational component.

On the next page is a graph and results accompanied by statements reflective of the general sentiment for each proposal.



Keep, no change

Total: 559

- If there is no change, then there is no cost ⁸

Remove existing

Total: 503

- Remove the Columbus statue and reuse the material for a new abstract contemporary art piece
- The Columbus statue in Columbus Circle should be removed and replaced with a statue of Olmsted and Vaux, who created Central Park
- Replace J. Marion Sims with a statue of the women he operated on
- Replace Columbus with a Native American monument

Develop educational component

Total: 221

- New signage and education would be a lot less costly than removal
- Host educational sessions at Columbus Circle teaching about the history of exploration and include educational audio downloads, pamphlets, etc.

Re-contextualize existing (e.g. site signage)

Total: 182

- Add adjoining statues to J. Marion Sims honoring the three enslaved women who first underwent his experimental surgery

Relocate existing

Total: 103

- Put the Columbus statue in a museum, replace it with a less controversial Italian figure

⁸ select proposals are some of the more common ones and are paraphrased for context

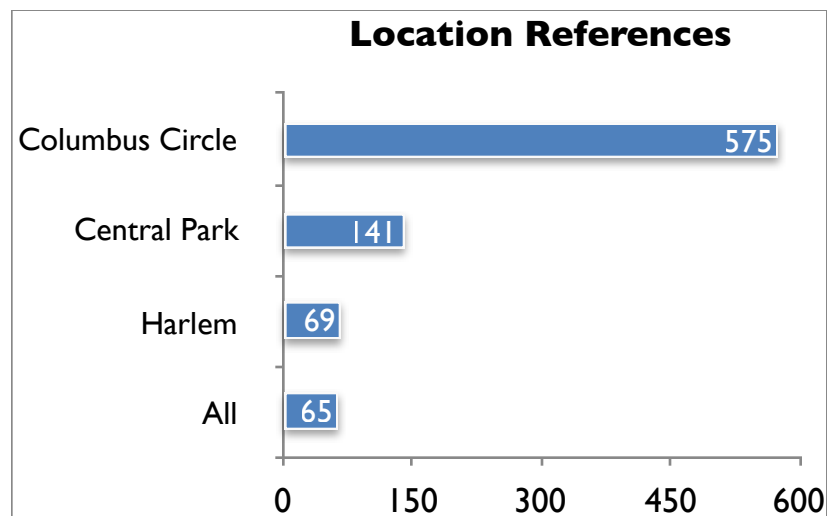
Specific Monuments/Subject + Proposals

Over half of those specifically referring to Christopher Columbus wanted to keep the monuments while approximately 40% were in favor of additive measures or relocation. Less than 1/3rd wanted to remove the Columbus statues. By contrast, 85% of those referring to the J. Marion Sims monument in Harlem proposed removing it altogether. Those mentioning Christopher Columbus were approximately 55% more likely to advocate for keeping the monuments while those who mentioned J. Marion Sims were approximately 80% more likely to advocate for the removal of the statue. This was a visible trend across all questions.

Monument/ Subject	Keep, no change	Remove existing	Develop educational component	Re-context existing	Relocate existing	Total
Christopher Columbus	435	200	138	115	64	790
J. Marion Sims	4	272	29	28	28	317
All	83	24	29	17	8	127
Theodore Roosevelt	15	19	10	7	6	42
Margaret Sanger	0	8	1	0	0	9
Statue of Liberty	2	0	3	3	0	4

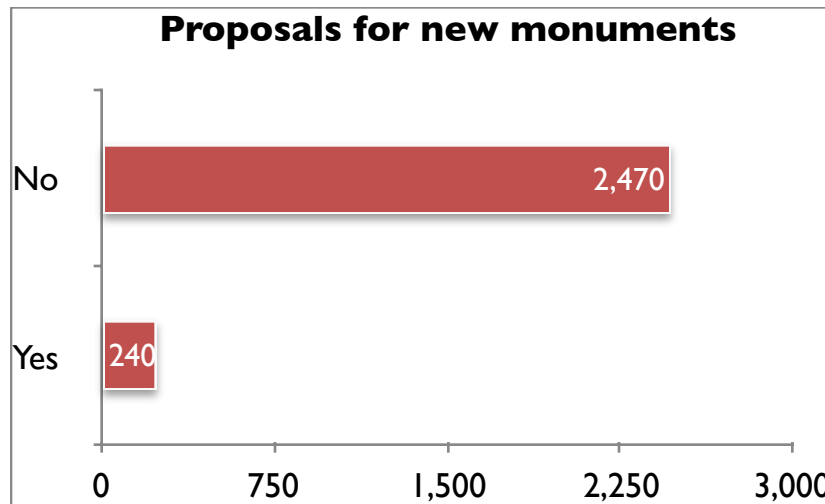
Locations

Please note: Central Park corresponds with references to both Christopher Columbus and Theodore Roosevelt and Harlem corresponds with mentions of J. Marion Sims. All mentions of Columbus Circle referred to the Christopher Columbus statue.



5. Does your comment relate to a proposal for a new monument in NYC?⁹

While respondents had a clear and prevailing interest in existing monuments over new monuments, those who did propose new monuments focused on figures that made powerful contributions in the realm of social justice and wished to widen the range and diversity of subjects being memorialized.



Respondents were largely uninterested in an additive approach to existing monuments and proposed monuments for figures and groups that are underrepresented or have not been previously memorialized in New York City. The vast majority looked to course correct what they believed to be faulty standards of memorialization through a lens of justice proposing monuments for more women, artists and leaders of color, activists, members of the LGBTQIA community, and most notably native/indigenous leaders and groups. Noted locations corresponded with the sites pertinent to the figures or subjects being memorialized.

Some of these proposals are on the next page.

⁹ a more in-depth analysis of this question will be provided in Interim Report 2

Proposals Considering Feasibility and Cost

Barack Obama in Central Park	Honoring Native Americans	Honoring indigenous people of Caribbean	Tribute to NYC Union Construction Workers at Central Park or Times Square
Taino leaders in Columbus Circle	Statues of women all over the 5 boroughs	Public call to replace Sims with women	Dorothy Day at Tompkins Square Park
A changing exhibition	LGBTQ leaders	Maya Angelou	Elizabeth Burgin Monument in Fort Greene Park or Navy Yard
Create an outdoor historical museum	James Baldwin in Central Park North	Marsha P. Johnson in Greenwich Village	Bartolomé de las Casas at Columbus Circle
Change Robert E. Lee to Spike Lee	Slavery Emancipation Monument at Battery Park	Have annual contests for schools to nominate historical figures as future subjects for monuments	Nathanial Greene in Prospect Park
More women statues	Rosa Parks at Columbus Circle	Stonewall Riots and Freedom Fighters at 103rd and 5th	Retired Monuments Outdoor Museum

6. If a particular monument is preserved, altered, or removed, what do you think the effect will be in the future? What would be the effect on your experience in New York City with or without changes to a particular monument? What would be the effect on our collective experience with or without changes to a particular monument?

A vast majority of responses to this question primarily addressed changes as they related to the removal or alteration of existing statues. 50% did not respond favorably to such changes to existing monuments. There was confusion and inconsistency with how the word “preserved” was interpreted; some used it in terms of maintenance while others saw it as being stored away from a public area. 79.1% of the responses had strong opinions that lied on a clear binary, the remaining displayed a level of understanding for varying opinions and factors.

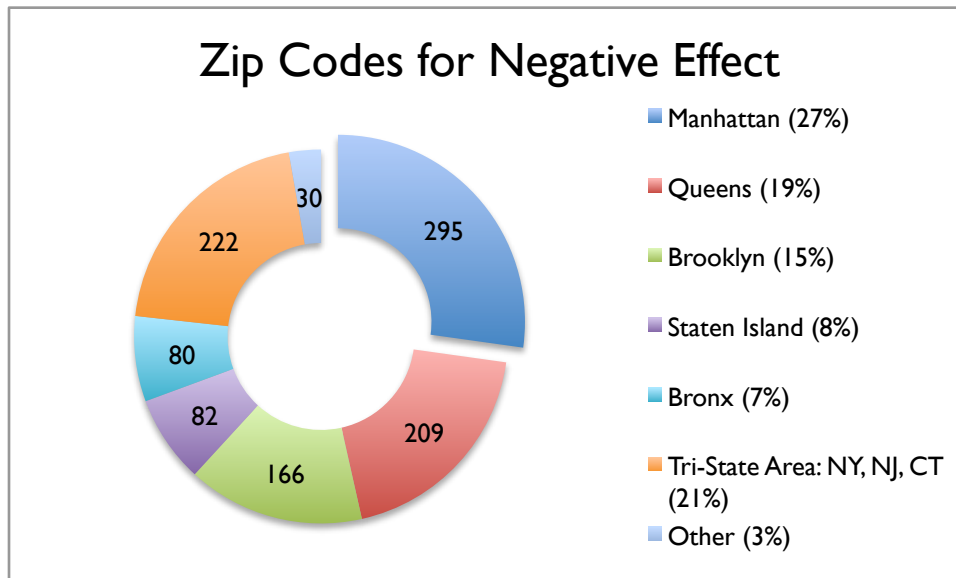
Respondents who expressed discontent with making changes to existing monuments (removal or otherwise) occasionally made negative associations with the current Mayoral administration or leftist ideology. Throughout all responses to all questions, negative references to Mayor De Blasio were made approximately 230 times. Those expressing some level of sensitivity to ethical concerns around existing monuments generally did not make political associations for those holding the opposing view.

Change will have Negative Effect

Total: 1095

Respondents in this category used phrases such as: “rewrite history,” “bad precedent,” “erasing history,” “divisiveness” “revisionist history,” and “loss” to describe their reaction to any change to existing monuments. Some likened monument removals to totalitarian regimes, “communism,” and frequently made Orwellian references. Those in this category also cited political correctness as being “unnecessary and unhealthy” and noted changes to be a “slippery slope.” On several occasions, the demolition of the original Penn Station was referenced to as an example of the effect that the removal of existing monuments would have.

Approximately 6 out of every 10 responses in this category (primarily addressing relocation and removal), had a favorable response to the addition of educational materials (see question 7) agreeing that adding plaques or contextualizing controversial figures would be beneficial. The most commonly cited of these was a “plaque” detailing all sides of the history. Negative sentiments toward change highly correlated with favorable responses to adding educational materials specifically a plaque in question 7.



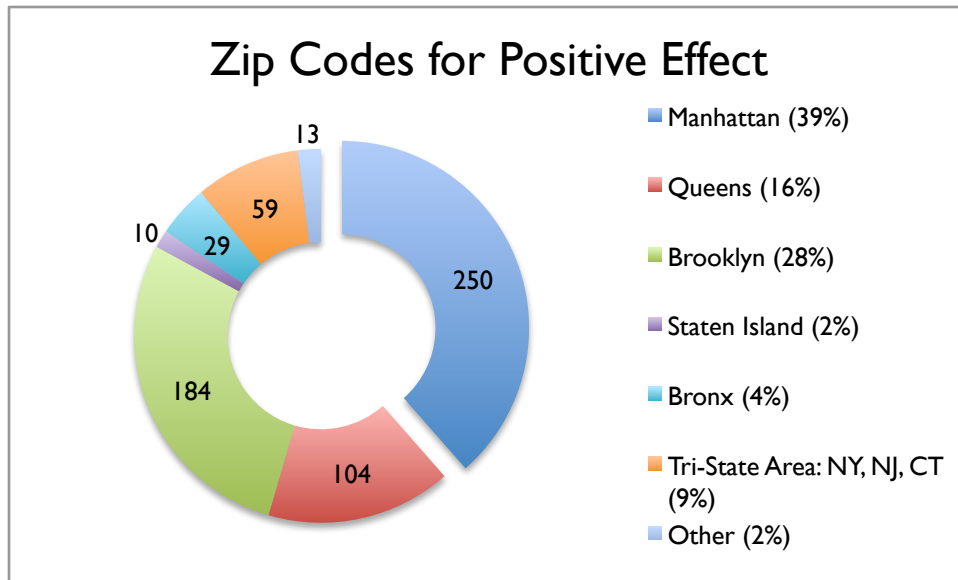
Quotes

- ▶ “once you start removing monuments you are trying to erase the souls and identity of the people in order to further your communist agenda”
- ▶ “the effect is a whitewashing of history, like it never happened. How sad would that be”
- ▶ “It will widen the radical divide we have”
- ▶ “totalitarian Regimes get rid of monuments, change histories, rewrite or burn books”
- ▶ “removal and/or alteration, is akin to cutting off one's toe with a hatchet”
- ▶ “again, if you erase history, people will never know what happened. It's communist tactic, not worthy of New York”

Change will have Positive Effect

Total: 621

Responses in this category were favorable to change. These encouraged replacing monuments to reflect the diversity of the city, inclusion, and openness, in order to, as one respondent put it, “send a message of growth and maturity as a nation and a city.” Equally, many in this category mentioned that change and progress is a part of the fabric of New York City. Positive reactions to change, correlated with the desire to “Replace, Remove, or Relocate” monuments in question 7.



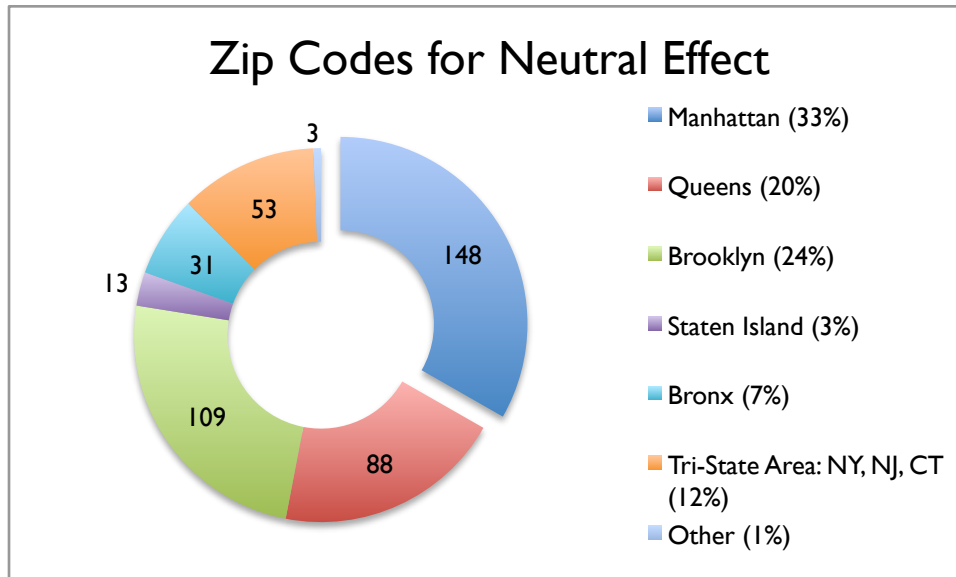
Quotes

- ▶ “I think the removal of Columbus’ statue will help people educate themselves on his actual legacy”
- ▶ “by the changing a monument we will show future generations that we have evolved, we ask a higher standard of ourselves and our heroes”
- ▶ “monuments should not be forever”
- ▶ “excluding hurtful statues that is a psychological affront to large sectors of our community is beneficial to the wellbeing and continued prosperity of our community”
- ▶ “change is always happening... it will be a step to make the city more inclusive”

Change will have No Effect/Neutral

Total: 451

These responses expressed a need to examine the situation on a case by case analysis. They also tended to offer thoughts that were more diplomatic in nature and expressed an understanding of multiple views, often advocating for more moderate methods of addressing controversy. Equally, some respondents viewed discussion and controversy as a healthy part of social progress and thought that it encourages more civic engagement. Comments included: using this as an opportunity to employ more of the city’s artists to develop proposals and solutions to contested monuments, a rotating display of works that present varying values, and voting as a means to identify the best ways to move forward.



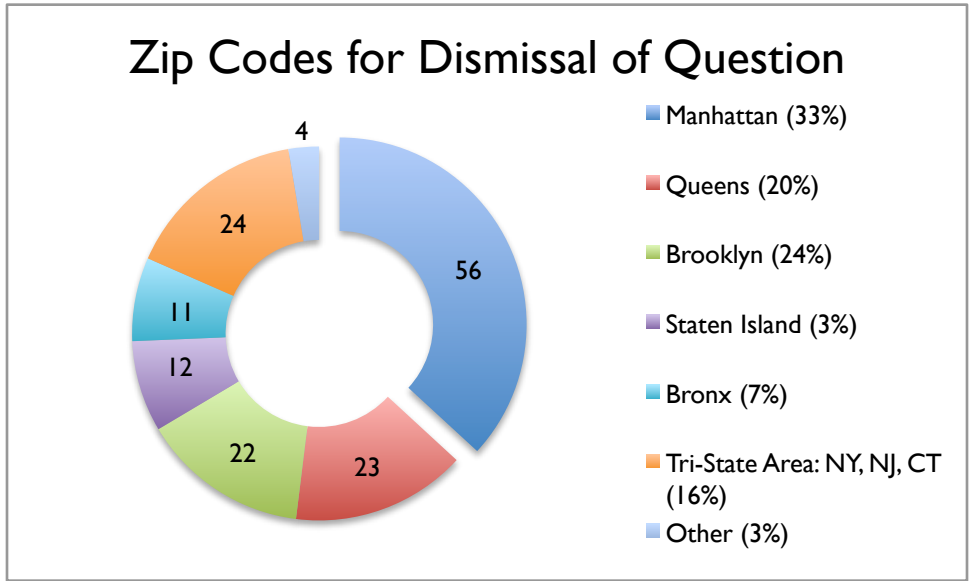
Quotes

- ▶ “I don't think there will be any effect”
- ▶ “moving or removing a monument doesn't change history”
- ▶ “I love the conversations they evoke. Unfortunately, many have no historical perspective”
- ▶ “rotation of displays can be arranged in each location so that all history is available to the changing viewers and many will learn new things”
- ▶ “the discussion and controversy is good, it brings light to history and how we were as a people at one time and how we changed as we became a more inclusive society and how our population changed over years.”
- ▶ “it's all about perspective”
- ▶ “I don't think it would have any huge effect at all”
- ▶ “it depends on the monument”

Dismissal of Question

Total: 132

These comments expressed a lack of desire to address the question either explicitly or via statements that generally disregarded the topic. For this particular question, responses dismissing the questions carried a strong tone of disapproval for city government and expressed their political views openly instead of answering the question.



Quotes

- ▶ “Again, DeBlasio panders to minorities and treads over others. He’s a terrible mayor. He’s done well dividing the city. He talks about unification, but does the opposite”
- ▶ “Stop trying to be politically correct and leave history alone. Columbus was not the only one that abused our Native Americans all of white men did before Columbus”
- ▶ “We’ve got lots bigger problems than statues! Leave them alone.”

Responses by Zip Code

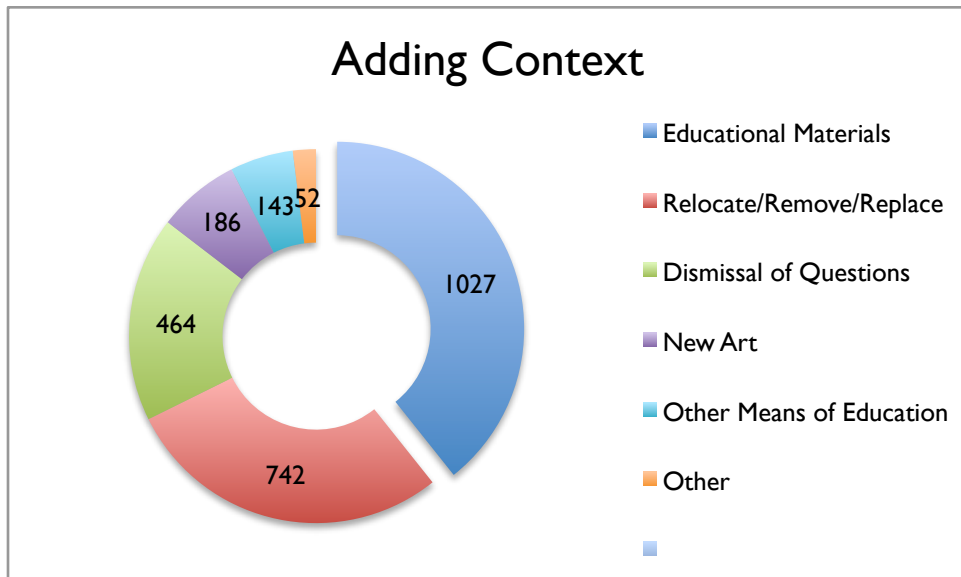
Brooklyn residents were more likely to believe that change would have a positive effect on the future. Brooklyn is the only borough or region in which the majority of responses were favorable to change with 40%. Respondents in Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island, the Tri-State area, and other states were more likely to have a response that was not favorable to change. Staten Island (78.1%) and New York State outside of New York City (73.9%) had the highest rate of respondents who did want to change the state of existing monuments.

Borough	Positive	%	Negative	%	Neutral	%
Manhattan	250	36%	295	43%	148	21%
Queens	104	26%	209	52%	88	22%
Brooklyn	184	40%	166	36%	109	24%
Staten Island	10	10%	82	78%	13	12%
Bronx	29	21%	80	57%	31	22%
Tri-State Area	59	19%	222	73%	53	17%
Other	13	16%	30	67%	3	17%

7. There are many possible ways to address the meaning of public art and monuments, such as adding supplementary and educational materials like a plaque, relocating objects to another public or private space, or commissioning new public art either in response to an original or on its merit. *How might you best add context and tell a more complete story of a particular monument?*

It's worth noting that respondents often said that solutions for a "more complete story" depended on the specific monument in question. The most common response was to add supplemental educational materials to controversial monuments for context, understanding, and learning. Education appeared again in another category, but outside of the monument grounds via independent research, adjustments made to school curricula, and other types of related public programming. The need for the public to be adequately informed about historical events was unanimous regardless of any political underpinnings. The points of disagreements, however, lied primarily in which narratives were accurate or rather what the "complete story" actually is.

Here respondents were clear that the severity of measures taken should differ case by case. Most advocating for removal referred to J. Marion Sims statue in Harlem and most advocating for keeping a certain statue referred to the Columbus statue at Columbus Circle.



Educational Materials

Total: 1027

The majority of respondents advocated for additional information via signage, a QR code, a podcast walking tour, website, app, interactive digital kiosk, and plaques. Plaques were the most commonly cited; the word appeared 812 times.

These respondents insisted on the need for accuracy, objectivity, and comprehensive factual information from both sides and diplomatic language in any texts shared on site. Some did note concerns over who would write the accompanying narratives and educational texts. Some responses in this category offered educational materials as a compromise to keep existing monuments intact and placate those with ethical concerns, while others identified it as means to hold memorialized figures accountable to the unjust acts they committed. In addition, some simply found it necessary to highlight the complexity of the country's history to inform the future.

Quotes

- ▶ “add supplementary educational materials. Promote education and critical thinking about the role these figures played in our history. You can't move forward if you deny your past”
- ▶ “add an informational plaque that tells the story warts and all”
- ▶ “interactive monitor”
- ▶ “have an audio or video component”
- ▶ “be sure to leave the development of the supplemental educational plaque to someone whose ancestors were directly affected by Columbus and who can thus speak authentically of the truly horrific acts he committed or directed”

Relocate/Remove/Replace

Total: 742

This category highlights those who wanted to remove controversial monuments from their current positions altogether or via a relocation or replacement. For those advocating for relocation, many cited museums as an appropriate place to display comprehensive information on contested historical issues alongside of the statues. The creation of a monument park for retired statues, such as Memento Park in Budapest, was also suggested on several occasions as a relocation option. Several self-professed activists from the New York chapter of NARAL, as well as, residents of Harlem expressed their discontent with the J. Marion Sims statue and advocated for its removal entirely. They encouraged replacing the Sims statue with the enslaved women he experimented on. A similar sentiment was shared with those advocating for the removal of the statue in Columbus Circle, suggesting it be replaced with a work that honors the native population.

Quotes

- ▶ “remove it and rename Columbus Circle to: Seneca Village Circle”
- ▶ “create a monuments park or space where retired monuments

- ▶ can be kept for view and open to the public”
- ▶ “use the removed monuments and melt them down into scrap metal, etc.”
- ▶ “create a hall of shame for relocation, to remind us and warn future generations of what occurs when we do not respect and value others”

Dismissal of Question

Total: 464

As this was the last question in the survey, responses indicated that the ways in which questions were framed were one-sided and dismissed the question. 259 of these responses indicated that no measures were necessary. Here, again responses expressed a discontent with the general focus of the survey explicitly or by simply not addressing the question and instead offering an irrelevant or dismissive comment.

Quotes

- ▶ “cut the B.S. and leave them alone”
- ▶ “how about stop trying to sanitize history and historical moments. Erasing history or culture as the Nazi, Communists and ISIS have done”
- ▶ “this is a waste of resources. The false assumption here is that anyone really cares at this point”
- ▶ “please find something more constructive to do”
- ▶ “leave them alone. Stop pandering to ideologues who are trying to rewrite history in their own image.”

New Art

Total: 186

Respondents in this category felt that the most viable option for adding context and creating a more comprehensive narrative was to create more monuments and art that narrated the “other” side of the story. In this category some suggested new art and monuments in place of existing ones, while others advocated for new art in new locations in addition to keeping existing statues as they are. Respondents also suggested additions of new works to existing ones or in close proximity to them. Several offered the example of the *Fearless Girl* that was added in front of the statue of the Wall Street Bull as a successful and empowering addition to a pre-existing historic statue.

Quotes

- ▶ “we can add monuments in public places that better reflect NYC values”
- ▶ “you cannot have Columbus anywhere without adding a statue of an indigenous person who represents the thousands assassinated by Columbus”
- ▶ “why don't we celebrate someone else from Italian American history instead? Like an artist?”

- ▶ “commission new art. let it stand on its own merit. let the communities have their own

hearings to discuss who or what deserves a statue”

Other Means of Education

Total: 143

Responses in this category suggested other means of education outside of the monument sites either through formal education by updating the city’s educational curricula or via self-initiated research. A significant number of responses in this category noted that with many people owning smart phones, seeking information is fast and easy; they mentioned simply pointing monument visitors to a resource where the public can seek additional information on their own. Others were more pronounced with their suggestions saying that adding context is the responsibility of the education system in the city and those that work within it. One respondent also suggested the creation of an online monument map similar to the City Parks Department’s tree map as a means of education, empowerment, and inclusion.

Quotes

- ▶ “people should do research of their own, everyone's face is buried in a smartphone looking at social media. Why not use it to learn something about what you think hurt your feelings”
- ▶ “monuments are not the best place for rebuttal. That is better handled in classrooms and mass media”
- ▶ “consider developing a series of programs on counter-narratives”

Other

Total: 52

Outliers for this question varied from live speakers at the monument site to other forms of activating the monument. Respondents in this category commonly suggested some kind of a forum that would allow the public to share their opinion.

Quotes

- ▶ “have a log book at the site”
- ▶ “LIVE speakers. Have dialog so the people can hear it from a living breathing person (not just a plaque or recording)”
- ▶ “allow space for people to display their comments regarding the monument for all to read”

Zip Codes Represented

Of the total 2776 *unique* responses, the most commonly represented zip codes among respondents were in Manhattan. These results were not, however, representative of actual population size in each borough.

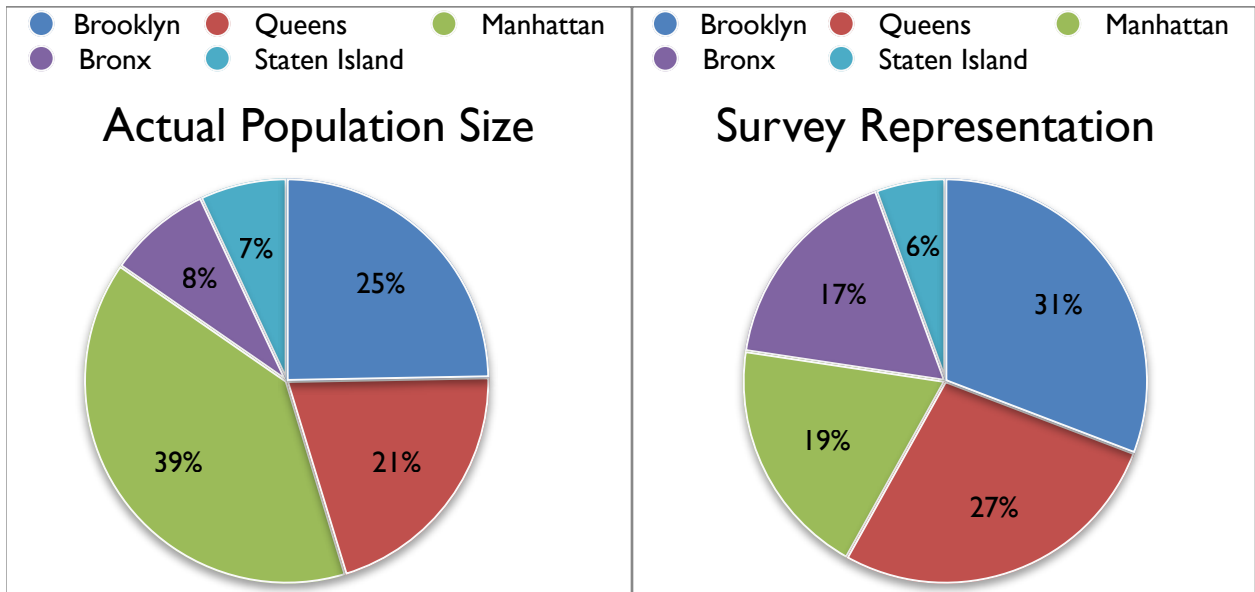
For instance, Staten Island (174) and the Bronx (204) have a fairly close range of respondents, however, the population size of the Bronx is 1.455 million whereas Staten Island has less than 1/3rd of that population with about 476,015.¹⁰ In addition, Staten Island's average household income is the highest of all five boroughs while the Bronx's is the lowest. The median household income in Staten Island in 2016 was \$74,021; in the Bronx median household income was less than half that amount at \$35,302, alluding to issues of access, time, and resources.¹¹ While Manhattan represented the largest group of residents with 39%, it only represents 19% of the New York City population.

Borough	Actual Population Size	Survey Respondents
Brooklyn	2,629,150	616
Queens	2,330,054	513
Manhattan	1,643,734	981
Bronx	1,455,720	209
Staten Island	476,015	174

It is important to note that the zip code representations reveal a need for more extensive outreach to boroughs that were not well represented in the survey, primarily historically under-represented areas like the Bronx. Understanding limitations in capacity and resources, an effort to extend the opportunity to complete the survey to non-English speakers and those who may not have regular access to the internet would have offered more robust results. Equally, a longer period of analysis allowing for more analysis of associative patterns throughout the survey responses would also have also offered a more comprehensive and beneficial take on the subtleties and deeper implications of the data.

¹⁰ All population estimates are as of July 1, 2016 according to the United States Census Bureau.

¹¹ According to the United States Census Bureau. Collected between 2012-2016.



Other regions represented outside of New York City include:

- ▶ New York State: 332
- ▶ New Jersey: 73
- ▶ Connecticut: 18
- ▶ California: 13
- ▶ DC, MD, VA: 16
- ▶ Pennsylvania: 9
- ▶ Other: 34 (FL, NC, OH, WI, TX, CO)

Conclusion

While the divisive nature of this topic elicited a large volume of emotionally-driven, polarizing responses, additional engagement via the public hearings hosted by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in all five boroughs between November 17 and November 28, were evidence of the powerful influence of public dialogue. The drastic shift in survey responses, both the increased level of engagement and increased variety of content, during the days following the first several public hearings is a testament to the importance of civil discourse. Information from these hearings, inspired hundreds of respondents that may not have otherwise expressed their opinion and aided in allowing surveys to be more reflective of the wide-ranging opinions in the city. The role of public discourse in raising collective awareness and informing the public is precisely what prompts meaningful forms of civic engagement and can play an integral role in improving public spaces.