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ONONDAGA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES DESIGN COMPETITION FOR SYRACUSE'S HISTORIC SITE

Syracuse, New York (May 1, 2026) — The Onondaga Historical Association (OHA) has announced the [Full Circle Design Competition](#) — a national design competition / invitational “call for ideas” relating to the civic space once known as Heritage Park in downtown Syracuse. Located in the City’s Montgomery Street-Columbus Circle Historic District at the intersections of Jefferson Street, East Onondaga and Montgomery Street, the site includes Columbus Circle and the adjacent vacant space that was once home to the Powelson Business Institute.

“The dialogues about the Columbus Monument initiated by the City of Syracuse in 2018 and 2020 were an important step in thinking about how Syracuse displays our history in our public

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spaces,” said Lisa Romano Moore, Executive Director of the Onondaga Historical Association. “One common outcome of those discussions was a recommendation to develop a heritage and education site that reflects the many people who call this place their home.”

Romano Moore indicated that the competition guidelines will not specify that the Columbus statue and controversial bronze elements of the Indigenous masks and plaques be removed, relocated, or remain in place.

“As a historical association, the preservation and interpretation of historical objects sit firmly within our mission. Even contentious items represent events and perspectives on our City’s history,” explained Romano Moore. “OHA’s job is to tell their stories regardless of their location, and use our resources to shed light on the self-determination of the many people in our community who have fought to maintain their culture and values. Our neutrality allows for the broadest range of creative approaches to achieve this goal.”

OHA has selected Forecast Public Art, a non-profit consulting organization that specializes in design competitions and public art, to assist in the management of the competition — inviting artists and designers to submit ideas for the project site.

A committee of community representatives, and professionals with experience in urban planning, landscape design, curatorial expertise, historic preservation and public art, will evaluate the design

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proposals and select finalists who will be provided with funding to develop a public exhibition of their concepts this fall. The winning design will be presented to the City to use for planning and fundraising purposes. The competition is expected to be complete by the end of the 2026 calendar year.

The Full Circle Design Competition is funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation. The competition will be complemented by a website to keep the public up to date on the project, announce events, and expand access to the public exhibition stage of the competition. The website will also serve as a repository for OHA to provide participating artists and designers access to historic materials and information for their research.

Rounding out these activities, OHA is also planning a series of free public lectures and engagement activities, in addition to partnering with a local media company, Daylight Blue Media, to create a video documentary about the competition.

Celebrated artist, Carrie Mae Weems, whose work explores issues of public memory, will serve as an advisor on the design project. Weems, Artist-in-Residence at Syracuse University, was awarded a National Medal of Arts in 2024, the highest honor given to artists and arts patrons in the United States.

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About the Onondaga Historical Association:

The Onondaga Historical Association (OHA) is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to collecting, preserving, interpreting, storing and exhibiting the history of Onondaga County and the city of Syracuse, NY. Founded in 1863, the organization's comprehensive history museum and its newly renovated Richard and Carolyn Wright Research Center is located in Syracuse's historic Montgomery Street-Columbus Circle Historic District. OHA's mission is to inspire people's understanding that the history we share as a community is the foundation of our future together. Its vision is to uphold the trust and respect of our community as the repository for its history by demonstrating that we honor its diverse cultural heritage. To learn more, visit:

<https://www.cnyhistory.org/>

About Forecast Public Art:

A nonprofit organization based in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Forecast Public Art partners with artists and communities throughout the country to activate, inspire, and advocate for public art that advances justice, health, and human dignity. Forecast consults with decision makers on public art and cultural planning efforts, helps find, select, curate and commission public artists and artwork, and supports public artists with funding, training, and opportunities to advance their public art careers. The nonprofit places particular emphasis on access for BIPOC artists and groups that are traditionally excluded. On the ground, Forecast's work results in policies and initiatives aimed toward addressing inequity and serving the community through public art. As a national organization, Forecast's team aims to set standards for ethical policies, processes, and outcomes in the field. To learn more, visit: <https://forecastpublicart.org/>