APRIL 2021 SOUTH SALT LAKE, UTAH

Name Change Proposal

Name change proposal for the Columbus Center

SUBMITTED BY

South Salt Lake Youth City Council 2020-2021

PRESENTED TO

South Salt Lake City Council

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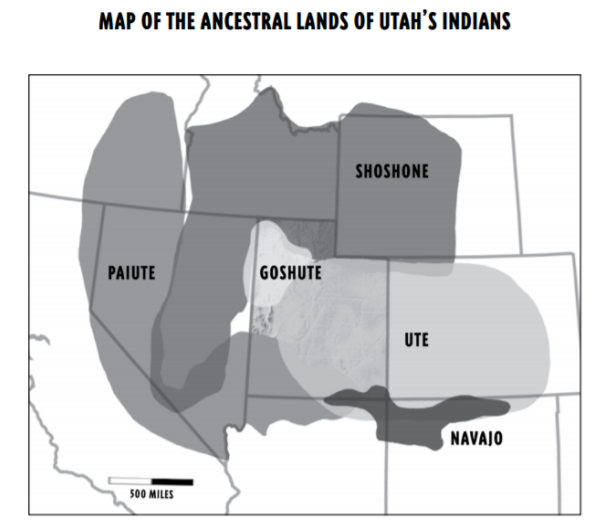
Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

“In countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and among tribal nations in the U.S., it is commonplace, even policy, to open events and gatherings by acknowledging the traditional Indigenous inhabitants of that land. While some individuals and cultural and educational institutions in the United States have adopted this custom, the vast majority have not...

Acknowledgment is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people’s history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth” (Honor Native Land).

This land acknowledgment was put together with research from national and local resources such as the US Department of Arts and Culture, University of Utah, University of Minnesota Duluth, and conversations with Native American SSL residents.



"We collectively acknowledge that the City of South Salt Lake is located on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homelands of the Shoshone, Goshute, Ute Tribes, and other Native peoples from time immemorial, and is a crossroad for Indigenous peoples. We recognize and continually support and advocate for the sovereignty of the Native nations in this territory and beyond. By offering this land acknowledgment, we affirm tribal sovereignty and will work to hold The City of South Salt Lake accountable to American Indian peoples and nations."

Background

The idea of changing the name of the Columbus Community Center in South Salt Lake has been circulating for a long time and for a variety of reasons. Firstly, an identity and logistics issue - there are two facilities with the name Columbus Center in the City which naturally creates confusion. Secondly, as a means to be more inclusive and create community connection - the current name may alienate some people, and as a public facility it should be inviting to all.

The most recent push to change the name came about from one of our city's youth who read a statement to the City Council about their personal feelings about the name. This led the City Council to encourage the South Salt Lake Youth City Council (SSL YCC) to take action. The youth took this opportunity to fulfill their vision of being empowered, educated, and involved in their local government.

We know that the conversations surrounding the Columbus Center name change are important and utilized community dialogue, research, and outreach to not erase history, but work towards an outcome that is reflective of the current work and community that will keep South Salt Lake On The Move.

Ultimately, the words "Columbus School" would remain above the entrance to preserve the architectural and historical significance of the building.

Since the announcement for this project was announced in the November 2020 OTM Newsletter, residents began reaching out to their council representatives. Residents have continued to be encouraged to reach out to their representatives with any feedback they may have about this project at any time.

The Youth City Council solicited feedback to help them narrow down the list of proposed names. A public survey was open from March 5 - March 26, 2021.

History

Architectural plans for the building were submitted in June 1916. It took less than a year to complete at a cost of $77,100, it opened mid-year 1917 as a primary school and closed as a school on June 4, 1968. In our discussion with Mervin Brewer who is the Salt Lake City School District Assistant Custodial Manager and unofficial district historian, he explained to us that the building was in fact named after Christopher Columbus. He said that at the time the district had a list of names which included authors, presidents, and historical figures that they would name the buildings after, which is why we see some names, like Columbus, that have no specific Utah connections.

Shortly after the Columbus School closed it was converted to house a training center for adults with disabilities and used for that purpose for about 20 years. In the late 1980s it was decided that it would be too costly to bring the building up to earthquake safety codes and remove asbestos, so the building was used as a warehouse until 1995. The property was sold to the City of South Salt Lake, and in 1997 the architectural firm Cooper Roberts was hired to do a complete renovation of the building. Four years and 5 million dollars later a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on April 22, 2002 to honor the opening of the Columbus Library. Since the City has had ownership of the building several programs and partners have used the space and changes have been made to the property with ongoing plans for improvement.

Timeline

Salt Lake City School District opens the Columbus Elementary School which was operational from 1917 to 1968.

In 1967, individuals in Utah with disabilities of all ages were attending schools set up for small children because there were no programs that taught them work skills.

A group of parents decided “it was time to stop agonizing and start organizing.” They came together with a new vision for their children - where potential and independence replaced institutionalization.

Dr. Geraldine Clark's advocacy is respected both locally and nationally. She worked with parents to help start Columbus, but she has also worked at the state and national levels to advocate for change.

Parents lease the school from Salt Lake City School District and Columbus opened on June 8, 1968 with 8 students and 3 teachers.

The Columbus Center opened with the sole intention of creating a more inclusive world for children with developmental disabilities. At the time there were no places in Salt Lake County for people with disabilities.

In 1974, Columbus was recognized as “one of the country’s leading rehabilitation and training centers” in the United States.

Columbus expanded its services to provide educational and vocational options for Special Education students attending Salt Lake City School District high schools.

Columbus, in partnership with the Salt Lake City School District and local businesses, was able to provide a variety of educational, vocational, and recreational programs.

In 1975, for the first time in history, a public school experience was available to students with disabilities ages 16-22. Parents remained involved as volunteers, but they finally had formal educational options for their children in a public school setting.

By the 1980's, Columbus was working with families, advocates, businesses, and municipalities to embrace individuals with disabilities in everyday activities that many take for granted.

By the end of the 80's, local businesses were providing contract work and hiring Columbus participants.

Columbus was contracted to provide residential services in a group home.

In the 90's, expanded community-based supported employment and residential models increased opportunities for participants.

The Columbus Center was acquired by the City of South Salt Lake in 1995.

Columbus participants that started with basic educational and vocational opportunities were finding themselves with the dignity and independence that comes from having a career over a lifetime.

In 1999, Columbus broke ground on a new, centralized campus.

SLCo Senior Center moves into the facility in 1999.

Columbus opens its new main campus in 2000.

SSL Recreation department moves into the facility in 2001.

Columbus opens a Day Activity building in 2002.

SLCo Library Services opens the Columbus Library Branch in the building in 2002.

Columbus Production Services opens in 2006.

After a humble beginning in the old Columbus Elementary School building, Columbus begins major capital expansions.

2007 marks Columbus's 40th anniversary.

Alianza Academy Charter School opens inside the Columbus Center in 2012.

Alianza Academy closes in 2015.

In 2018, Promise South Salt Lake's Hser Ner Moo Community and Welcome Center program move into the building.

The Best Buy Teen Tech Center opens in October 2019.

Columbus' Hub of Opportunity, a transit-oriented, 200,000 square-foot commercial/residential development opens in 2020.

The Columbus Library Branch of Salt Lake County Library Services closes in 2020.

Ida and Laurie Bickley All-Ages and All-Abilities Park opens in 2020

Why Keep the Name?

As with any change, objections to this proposal were to be expected. Below are the common reasons we heard for why the name should stay the same.

- The Columbus Center has been a staple in our City for many years
- History of Columbus in public education can present a skewed vantage point
- We should not judge historical figures by today's standards
  - We are where we are today because of sacrifices that were made by people before us
- We shouldn't be forced to bend to popular movements
  - Giving into cancel culture
  - Trying to redefine history
- We can still grow while maintaining our history and traditional precepts
- Changing the name does nothing to right the wrongs of oppression, it merely attempts to erase the history that serves as a lesson for our future

This process has "revealed divisions in our communit[y]. It also sparked important conversations: about the ties between symbols and systems, the links between the present and the past, the differences in how we experience our built environment, and what stories we tell and remember" (Paper Monuments). The last thing we want is to cause more division or tension in the community. We truly believe, after our research and working through this process, that a new name will be beneficial and can unify our community even more.

Why Change the Name?

Through this process we have identified reasons why a name change would be beneficial and how it could help build a stronger sense of belonging and community.

Identity & Logistics: There are currently two "Columbus Centers" in SSL
The City struggles with the confusion of the two "Columbus Centers." One being the property of the City of South Salt Lake, and the other of Columbus, the organization that serves individuals with disabilities. This has caused many people to end up in the wrong location or just plain confused about what the City's building is.

The Columbus Center organization, which used to be housed within the City's facility, continues to thrive and grow so much so that even after they moved out in the year 2000 they have continued to add facilities to their organization's new campus which is still located in South Salt Lake.

With the two locations offering vastly different resources and programs, it is to the benefit of not just the "Columbus Centers," but to everyone for them to be distinctly named.

We also want to consider residents, visitors, or clients, who walk, bike, rideshare, or take public transportation. These forms of transportation can take extra planning, time, and money. When someone commutes in these ways and they end up in the wrong location, it can lead to late or altogether missed appointments of important resources and a possible additional cost to them.

Furthermore, the Columbus Library, which gave an additional way to find the building online, has now closed and the new one at it's new location will be known as the Granite Library.

The Columbus Senior Center is also housed in the City facility, but it is commonly called it's full name unlike the other two "Columbus Centers."

In recent years, new programs have moved into the facility and now that the library space is vacant, the City plans to provide even more opportunities for community use of the space.

Why Change the Name?

Additionally, for many years, the City as a whole has fought for its own identity. There are several people who still don't know that South Salt Lake City is its own municipality. Some residents have said that they feel that South Salt Lake is the heart of the valley and would like for the city to stand out and not just be a place you drive through.

All of this provides the perfect opportunity to write a new chapter of the building and the City to make it much easier to identify, locate, brand, and market.

The building itself is a beautiful landmark in our community and having a name that is unique to it will help show it off. As the City is growing and developing this building should be something that is easily identifiable to everyone.

Why Change the Name?

Inclusion & Connection: The current name is not representative of the community

A public space should be welcoming and inviting to all members of the public. Historically, the City has been vocal about embracing the diversity of individuals who live and work in South Salt Lake. Changing the name is another step in creating an inclusive and connected community.

In 2020, communities around the world protested institutional racism toward Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people—the same people who have experienced disproportionately devastating health effects and economic hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cities and organizations all across the nation are taking this opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to positive change by renaming buildings and removing potentially problematic language that may alienate or otherwise harm some individuals. We would love to see this community center be representative of the beautiful diversity in our city.

We believe there is a name that can better represent all of the members of our community and will have connection to our city. The current name has no ties to SSL. It is acknowledged that Christopher Columbus was the first to establish a back-and-forth connection between mainland Europe and the Americas. But, "Columbus has no connection to Utah other than the general, indirect connection he has to anywhere else in the Americas because his voyage was the one that got followed up with lots of settlement, conquest, etc." says Dr Jeff Nichols who is a professor of history at Westminster College. Along with this connection to Europe, Columbus brought with him European diseases, politics and enslavement of indigenous peoples.

In our conversations with University of Utah's Distinguished Professor of History, Dr. Eric Hinderaker he stated, "The origins of Columbus Day help us see that our historical heroes are always chosen for reasons that make sense in the moment. If Columbus no longer makes sense for your community, I think it’s fine to choose another, better representa[tion] of the collective identity and shared interests of South Salt Lake City."

Why Change the Name?

The City is currently making plans to update and renovate the facility. The new space is being designed to have several uses for the community and would work with multiple partners to offer a variety of programs. The current programs and these new programs will draw a diverse group of people to the space and the City should ensure that everyone who comes into the space feels welcomed.

On multiple occasions, the City of South Salt Lake has stated its commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This is reflected in the visioning of the General Plan 2040. This is an opportunity for the City to put some action behind their words. An effort to make the community more inclusive and diverse could improve the general well being of residents and encourage growth of the city. By fostering inclusivity, we can still recognize the history of the Columbus Center while making people feel safer in their communities.

Finally, there are a handful of community stakeholders and changemakers who have already provided letters of support for this proposal. Below is the list of those who are in support of and see the benefits of a name change.

- Catholic Community Services
- Columbus Community Center
- The Clubhouse Network
- Department of Workforce Services - Refugee Services Office
- English Skills Learning Center
- Help Me Grow Utah!
- International Rescue Committee
- Millcreek Promise
- Refugee and Immigrant Center - Asian Association of Utah
- United Way of Salt Lake
- Utah International Charter School
- Utah Refugee Connection
- Westminster College

Budget

After interviewing City staff, we discovered that changing the name of the Columbus Center would only require one major expense for adding a new main sign. According to Police Chief Jack Carruth, a new, modern, backlit sign cost the Police Department around $10,000 when they renamed the "David P. Romrell Public Safety Building." Sharen Hauri, Urban Design Director, said other changes, such as updates to the website and branding changes can be done in-house by the City of SSL and only require minimal changes to the text.

Proposed Names

Different names have been circulating since before the Youth City Council took on this project. We compiled all the names that had:

- Been mentioned prior to the announcement of this project
- Been suggested to City Council members and other city staff after the announcement of this project
- Came up in our Youth City Council meetings

All Proposed Names

The following is is the list of all the names that came up along with and explanation of why they were suggested. Names are listed in alphabetical order.

- Amani Community Center: Amani is the Swahili word for peace

- Bridges Community Center: Inspired by the idea that bridges are built to overcome obstacles and symbolize unity

- Buehner Center: The Buehner Family has been a presence in SSL business history

- Cannon Community Center: Inspired by Martha Hughes Cannon, the first Utah female senator and a suffragist

- Clark Center for Inclusion: Inspired by Dr. Geraldine Clark who helped to found the Columbus Center School and was a disability rights advocate in the 60s and 70s

- Columbia: Female personification of America

- Hser Ner Moo Community and Welcome Center

- Jesse Fox Jr.: An early resident of SSL. He named Central Park following a trip to New Your City and the streets just to the north after his daughters Vidas, Beryl and Leslie.

- Neal A Maxwell: Member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

- Promise Center: Inspired by the 3 Promises representing the City's highest hopes for SSL residents. 1) Every child has the opportunity to attend and to graduate college 2) Every resident has a safe, clean home and neighborhood 3) Everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and to prosper

Proposed Names

- South Salt Lake Community Center: Many community centers in other cities are simply named after the city's name.

- Welcome Center or Community Welcome Center maybe with the word Welcome or Community in another language

- Toussaint Louverture: A Haitian general and the most prominent leader of the Haitian Revolution

The following were additional names suggested through the open survey and comments to city staff within the timeframe that the YCC was collecting feedback.

- Aloha Center: Aloha means Hello, Goodbye, Peace, and I Love you

- Harmony Center

- International Center

- Multicultural Center

We researched and discussed the benefits of value-based names or figurative-based names (those named after an individual). We concluded that having a value-based name would better serve our community, by providing more meaning to our ever-expanding and diverse demographic, and bring stability and endurance. Public opinion is relative and as we know opinions of historical figures can change over time. The YCC hopes to present a new name that is more relevant and true to our community's history, identity, and values - one of which we can be proud of for generations to come.

Value-based Names

- Aloha Center

- Amani Community Center

- Bridges Community Center

- Center for Advancement

- Harmony Center

- International Center

- Multicultural Center

- Promise Community Center

- South Salt Lake Community Center

- South Salt Lake Welcome Center

Proposed Names

Final Proposed Names
After extensive research and working through this process these are the final names the YCC is proposing that the name be changed to. We believe any of these will give us a community center that is easily identifiable and welcoming to all:

Amani Center

- The Swahili word for "Peace"

Bridges Center

- Inspired by the idea that bridges are built to overcome obstacles and symbolize unity

Promise Center

- Inspired by the 3 Promises representing the City's highest hopes for SSL residents. 1) Every child has the opportunity to attend and to graduate college 2) Every resident has a safe, clean home and neighborhood 3) Everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and to prosper

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SSL Youth City Council 2020-2021

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This is not a vision for tomorrow, but the job for today

- Harvey Mason Jr