

**From:** [Sarah Driggs](#)  
**To:** [Dandridge, Alex - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** UDC meeting 6/10  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 9, 2021 10:29:11 PM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)

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My name is Sarah Driggs and I am a former chair of the UDC. I called and wrote the main office of Planning on Tuesday to ask for the correct link for the meeting on Thursday, but I never heard back from anyone today. I was not sure who was the secretary for the UDC now, but this evening someone sent me your name.

I would like to attend and speak about the pedestal questions, and like many others, I had a very hard time getting into the CAR meeting last month. I think it is wrong that the CAR continued with a vote when they knew because of texts and emails how many people were trying to reach them to speak and they knew that the links they were sending were not working. I even question the legitimacy of the vote. I realize the city will not step back and reexamine the issue, but if it keeps happening I'm sure there will be a challenge.

I don't know if the UDC has been having the same problems the CAR has been having, but I thought I'd try to get in touch and get the correct information to participate. Please forward it to me. I don't want to imply that the UDC will ignore public comment like the CAR did, but I'd like to have every opportunity to speak to the pedestal questions.

I would also like to attach my statement so that if I can't get through, you will have it to read to or hand out to the commission. I'm sure you would've preferred to have it several days ago, but I am only asking this because the websites don't seem to be reliable.

Thanks very much,

Sarah Driggs

My statement is as follows:

My name is Sarah Driggs and I am the co-author of a book on Monument Avenue, I wrote the National Historic Landmark nomination for the street and I served on the Monument Avenue Commission. I am speaking to you today to urge you not to approve a process for the removal of the pedestals until there is a plan in place for reimagining Monument Avenue and the other Confederate monument sites. I do not suggest we keep all of the pedestals forever, but we need to know which pedestals could help us see the spaces anew. I hope that the original statues are never reunited with their plinths because of the power of their scale.

My point is that the pedestals can also offer **other** statues power, and the symbolism of removing Confederate heroes from them and then repurposing them to support other heroes or ideas is immense. The pedestals could be reused for specific people, ideas or a variety of them by being used for temporary projects. The removal of the plinths indicates an end to the conversation that has taken place there without a plan for moving forward together. Many of the plans that have been proposed include the re-use of various of the old pedestals. They provide modern artists with potential inspiration and a head start, and the city with significant financial savings on a new project. There is significant cost in building a plinth the size and scale of which would dominate a space like these monuments commanded. At the very least, we should coordinate with the VMFA, who have been tasked by the Commonwealth with reimagining Monument Avenue. They can't possibly know already that none of the pedestals there would contribute to the redesign.

There should be serious public discussion given to how we handle the removed monuments and the spaces that were designed for them. Perhaps the permanent removal of the pedestals will be the result, but without a public process, nothing will have been solved except that the City will have brushed a festering problem under the rug. If the City thinks that a focus on slavery in Shockoe Bottom will be enough to address racism, we are not considering the actions that have been taken since the end of slavery in 1865. These statues represent racism that occurred long after that.

Please take your time with this huge decision. Ask City Council to do the hard work of discussing, planning and beginning to repair the damage before the pedestals are removed. This has social, moral and financial implications far beyond your actions. What the City decides to do with these sculptures and pedestals will tell everyone how seriously we want to repent for the damage they have done while on display in our city for over a century. Thank you.

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