

HISTORY MATTERS

WELCOME TABLE NEW ORLEANS

Central City Circle

PROPOSAL TO THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
October 4, 2016

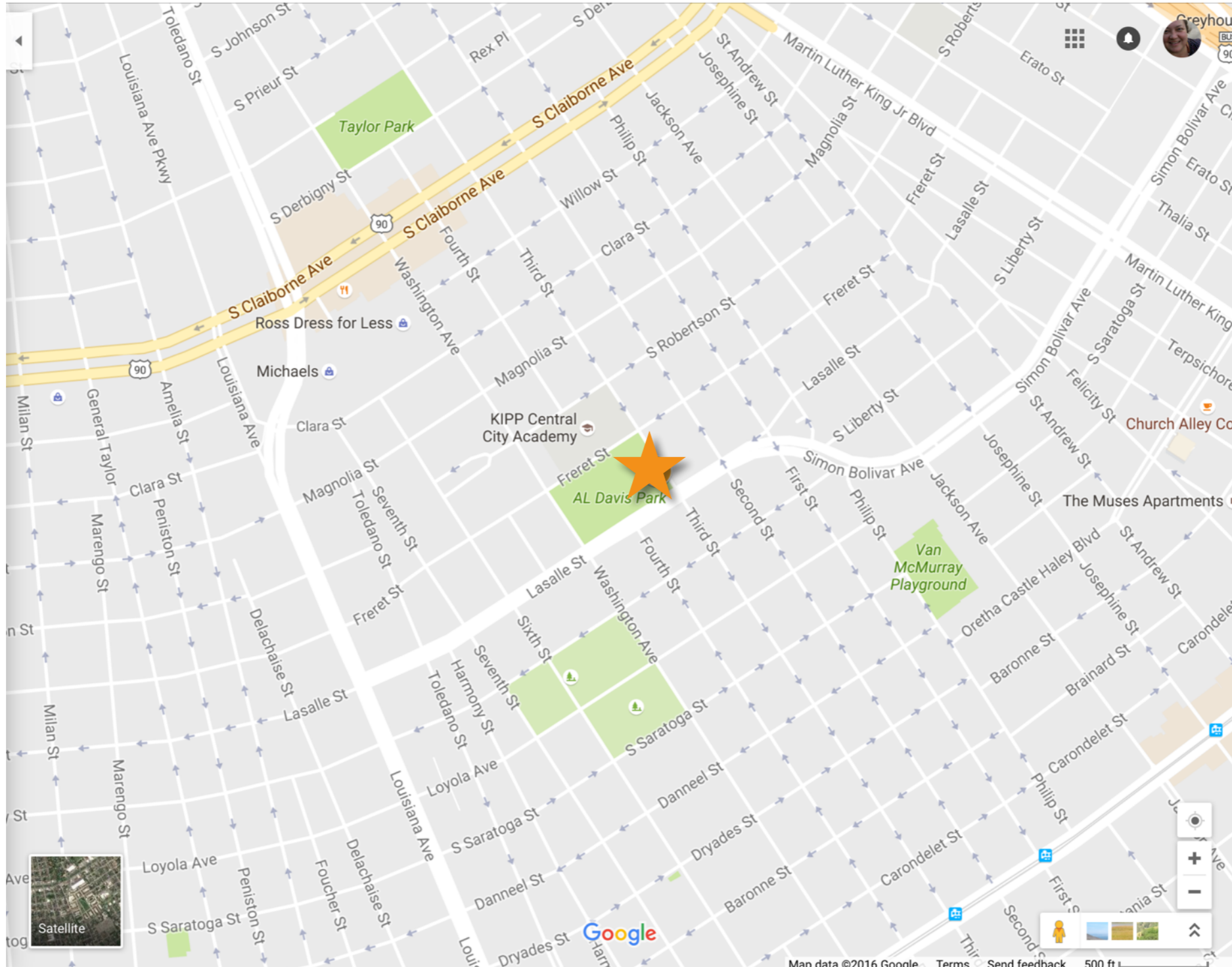
OVERVIEW

- ❖ The Welcome Table New Orleans (WTNO) is an initiative of the Mayor's Office focused on race, reconciliation and community.
- ❖ The program brings diverse groups of New Orleanians together to share experiences and stories, build relationships, listen and learn from each other, and, finally, to create projects that will build a better, more equitable city.
- ❖ The Welcome Table's Central City Circle (WTNO-CCC), as part of its project called "History Matters," has chosen to honor "unsung heroes."

PROPOSAL

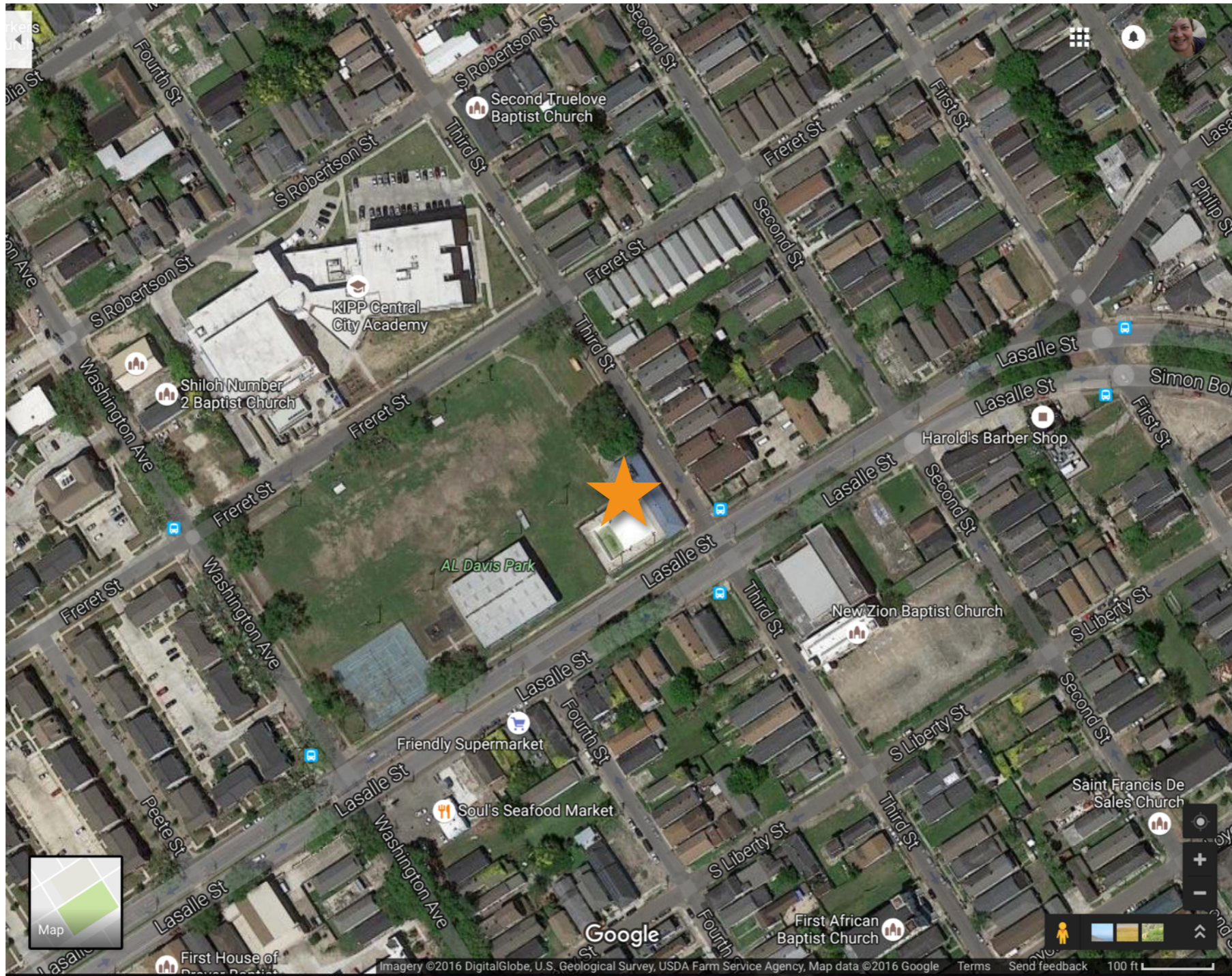
- ❖ WTNO-CCC proposes to mount a bronze marker for Ernest John Wright (1909-1979) to commemorate his contributions to the citizens of New Orleans.
- ❖ A brave, courageous, dynamic speaker, and Civil Rights activist, Wright founded the People's Defense League, worked with labor unions, organized voter registrations, and even ran for Lieutenant Governor in 1960. His "pulpit" was at Shakespeare Park in Central City (now called A.L. Davis Park).
- ❖ The proposed location of the marker is on the exterior wall of the NORDC clubhouse at A. L. Davis Park. WTNO-CCC will work with NORDC (and others) to appropriately place the marker.

SITE



Approximate location of proposed Ernest J. Wright marker
A.L. Davis Park • 2500 LaSalle St. • Central City

SITE



Approximate location of proposed Ernest J. Wright marker
Exterior wall of Clubhouse on Third St and LaSalle

LOCATION




The proposed location for the marker is at the side of the clubhouse with the concession windows, just off the entrance to the pool. WTNO-CCC will work with NORDC and others to appropriately place the marker.

MOCK-UP

28"

ERNEST JOHN WRIGHT
July 25, 1909 – Oct 29, 1979
People's Defense League



As founder of the People's Defense League, Ernest John Wright became one of the preeminent leaders in Black New Orleans. From the 1930s through the 1960s, with the Central City neighborhood as his base, Wright organized voter registration drives, advocated for the rights of working people, and inspired many with his speeches, writings, and fearless activism. Established in 1941, his People's Defense League employed many of the same strategies and objectives of the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s. "A Voteless People Is a Hopeless People" became the league's battle cry as Wright and the PDL energized neighborhoods throughout New Orleans with rallies in churches, parks, barber shops, and union halls.


Wright became "The People's Champion." He exhorted crowds to action at weekly rallies in Shakespeare Park. As a social worker, he counseled individuals on obtaining their goals despite the obstacles of a Jim Crow society. He penned a newspaper column called "I Daresay" in the *Louisiana Weekly* and documented mistreatment of workers. He organized labor unions, while bringing intellect and passion to the cause of Black progress. Wright's accomplishments became formidable when one considers the temper of the times in which he operated.

In 1963, Wright ran for lieutenant governor of Louisiana and received nearly 40,000 votes in a campaign based on little more than name recognition. People remembered that it was Wright who pushed back the mountains to plant the seeds of black political participation. He remained visible in political and civic circles. In 1960, he was at the forefront of a group called Frontiers, Inc., which supported school integration efforts. Wright lived long enough to see New Orleans elect Dutch Morial as its first black mayor.

"The big difference between you and me in this fight for rights is that I am not afraid to die for a principle and you are. What we need is 10,000 unafraid men as members with their money paid who are unafraid to present themselves to vote and unafraid to present themselves for jobs which they are entitled. We can't get anywhere by being afraid. Let's stand in our own shoe leather and [walk] ye like men."

"Nothing like this happened in my lifetime and in the lifetime of others of us. It is up to us to join progressives and liberal-minded white people to bring about a new day in Louisiana."

RACE • RECONCILIATION • COMMUNITY
SPONSORED BY THE HISTORY MATTERS PROJECT OF
THE CENTRAL CITY WELCOME TABLE CIRCLE



30"

The exact layout of the marker has yet to be determined.

COST

- ❖ The marker will cost approximately \$4,800 for manufacturing and installation. The estimate has been provided by Ed Smith's Stencil Works.
- ❖ Thanks to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the WTNO-CCC has been awarded a grant that will support the manufacturing and installation of the marker.
- ❖ A maintenance fund of \$1,000 is also available as part of the grant.

SPECS

- ❖ The plaque will be mounted to the building with concealed bolts and adhesive.
- ❖ The plaque is: 28" wide x 30" tall x 1/2" thick
- ❖ Material: Cast bronze plaque, background color & texture to be determined. Options include Pebbled Light Oxide, Leatherette Dark Oxide and Sculpted Antique (See top photo.)
- ❖ Details: Single line border, 10" tall image cast of photo (See bottom photo for image cast example.)



MARKER HEADING

Ernest John Wright

[160 PT FONT, ALL CAPS, CALIBRI, BOLD]

July 25, 1909 – Oct 29, 1979

[60 PT FONT, TITLE CASE, CALIBRI, BOLD]

People's Defense League

[80 PT FONT, TITLE CASE, CALIBRI, BOLD]

Image of Ernest J. Wright [TOP LEFT OF MARKER, 7.222" X 10"]

MARKER TEXT

- ❖ The WTNO-CCC engaged historian Keith Medley to write the text

TEXT BODY [43 PT FONT, CALIBRI, REGULAR, JUSTIFIED LEFT]

As founder of the People's Defense League, Ernest John Wright became one of the preeminent leaders in Black New Orleans. From the 1930s through the 1960s, with the Central City neighborhood as his base, Wright organized voter registration drives, advocated for the rights of working people, and inspired many with his speeches, writings, and fearless activism. Established in 1941, his People's Defense League employed many of the same strategies and objectives of the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s. "*A Voteless People Is a Hopeless People*" became the league's battle cry as Wright and the PDL energized neighborhoods throughout New Orleans with rallies in churches, parks, barber shops, and union halls.

Wright became "The People's Champion." He exhorted crowds to action at weekly rallies in Shakespeare Park. As a social worker, he counseled individuals on obtaining their goals despite the obstacles of a Jim Crow society. He penned a newspaper column called "I Daresay" in the *Louisiana Weekly* and documented mistreatment of workers. He organized labor unions, while bringing intellect and passion to the cause of Black progress. Wright's accomplishments became formidable when one considers the temper of the times in which he operated.

TEXT CONT.

In 1963, Wright ran for lieutenant governor of Louisiana and received nearly 40,000 votes in a campaign based on little more than name recognition. People remembered that it was Wright who pushed back the mountains to plant the seeds of black political participation. He remained visible in political and civic circles. He also was at the forefront of a group called Frontiers, Inc., which supported school integration efforts. Wright lived long enough to see New Orleans elect Dutch Morial as its first black mayor.

QUOTES [BELOW TEXT, 40 PT, CALIBRI, REGULAR ITALICS, CENTER ALIGNMENT] **

“The big difference between you and me in this fight for rights is that I am not afraid to die for a principle and you are. What we need is 10,000 unafraid men as members with their money paid who are unafraid to present themselves to vote and unafraid to present themselves for jobs which they are entitled. We can’t get anywhere by being afraid. Let’s stand in our own shoe leather and [walk] ye like men.”

“Nothing like this happened in my lifetime and in the lifetime of others of us. It is up to us to join progressives and liberal-minded white people to bring about a new day in Louisiana.”

TEXT CONT.

WTNO INITIATIVE TAGLINE [BELOW QUOTES, ALL CAPS, 45 PT FONT, CALIBRI]

RACE • RECONCILIATION • COMMUNITY

SPONSORSHIP INFO [BELOW TAGLINE, ALL CAPS, 35 PT FONT, CALIBRI]

**SPONSORED BY THE HISTORY MATTERS PROJECT OF
THE WELCOME TABLE NEW ORLEANS CENTRAL CITY
CIRCLE**

WTNO LOGO [4"-DIAMETER, BOTTOM RIGHT CORNER]



RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

Welcome Table New Orleans - Central City Circle

- ❖ Lynette Adams
- ❖ Marvin Beaulieu
- ❖ Lisa Collins
- ❖ Rosalind Condoll
- ❖ Alva Edwards
- ❖ Nancy Freeman
- ❖ Brian Hunter
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- ❖ Caletha Powell
- ❖ Ann Sayas
- ❖ Hilairie Schackai
- ❖ D.K. Smith

For questions regarding marker specifications, contact Ann Sayas (abwsayas@gmail.com)
or Hilairie Schackai (hschackai@gmail.com)