



The city council approved the panels by resolution in late May. The history center paid \$11,000 for the panels to be produced. Throughout the spring and early summer, representatives from the Historic Oakland Foundation, the history center, the city's office of historic preservation and City Council Member Carla Smith, who has led the monument committee, worked on language for each sign.

Cities across the South have convulsed over how to deal with their Confederate iconography. From New Orleans, where then Mayor Mitch Landrieu made an impassioned case for removal as a moral imperative, to Charlottesville, where Heather Heyer was murdered by a white supremacist, the legacy of the Confederacy has been a cause of conflict and violence. In the aftermath of Heyer's murder, protesters defaced the Piedmont Park monument with red spray paint. That led the state legislature to pass a law this year strengthening the penalties against vandalizing the monuments and making it harder to remove them.



Photo: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Reed's blue-ribbon commission led to the creation by Mayor Keisha Lance Bottom's administration of a three-member panel led by Smith, along with fellow Council Members Natalyn Archibong and Michael Julian Bond. One of the recommendations was completed earlier this year: renaming the former Confederate Avenue to United Avenue. Another was the contextual panels.

"It is now real," said Smith on Wednesday of the new markers. "It means we actually didn't drop the ball."

At least one member of the original blue-ribbon commission, however, said that while he was happy to see the city follow through on the panels and renaming Confederate Avenue, he felt more work should be done.

"This approach to mediate or add context is an excellent starting point," said Douglas Blackmon, a Pulitzer-Prize winning author. "But we can't ignore that there are a couple dozen other streets that glorify slave owners and slave traders."

Though the panel is finished with this phase of its work, Archibong said, people will still debate the legacy of the war. And that is the point, she said.

"We've balanced this history with context the will allow the public to understand our collective journey," Archibong said. "We're not rewriting history, we're giving it context."