

## RESOLUTION 2024-12

### **A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT TO PRESENT THE CITY OF FRANKLIN'S HISTORY TO A FULLER EXTENT THROUGH THE INSTALLATION OF THREE HISTORIC MARKERS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE, HONOR, AND GIVE VOICE TO THE STORIES OF RACIAL INJUSTICE THAT OCCURRED IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY FOLLOWING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.**

WHEREAS, the City of Franklin has a distinct history, being the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the American Civil War; and

WHEREAS, the City of Franklin desires to expand the story of Franklin's shared history through the addition of public markers that present the African American experience; and

WHEREAS, the City of Franklin is recognized nationally for its leadership in telling a complete and honest version of its community's history; and

WHEREAS, the presentation of Franklin's shared history prior to, during, and following the American Civil War provides a further opportunity to educate our community and visitors more fully about our community; and

WHEREAS, the Williamson Remembers Committee has expressed a desire to recognize this shared history through the addition of three historic markers in Franklin's historic downtown, to present such accounts of racial injustice that occurred in the period following the American Civil War, and to enhance the ability to tell a fuller story of Franklin's history – some of which is largely unknown and often untaught.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Franklin, Tennessee, that:

The City of Franklin is committed to telling and preserving our shared history and shall support efforts to present Franklin's history in a fully inclusive manner. The addition of these facts shall provide an opportunity to broaden the story of Franklin's history and is done so with the ambition of unity.

Specifically, the City of Franklin shall support the Williamson Remembers Committee by:

1. Authorizing the establishment of additional historic markers in Franklin's historic downtown as illustrated in the attached exhibits that reflect the actual events related to the experience of African Americans following the American Civil War; and
2. Acknowledging the research and efforts of the Williamson Remembers Project to erect three historic markers as illustrated in the attached exhibit that acknowledge, honor, and give voice to the stories of racial injustice that have long been hidden or untold in Williamson County and Franklin.

[signature page to follow]

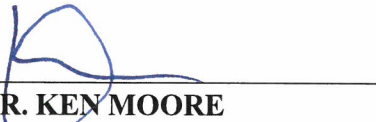
**SIGNATURE PAGE TO RESOLUTION 2024-12**

IT IS SO RESOLVED AND DONE on this 27<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2024.

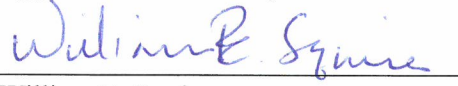
ATTEST:

CITY OF FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE:

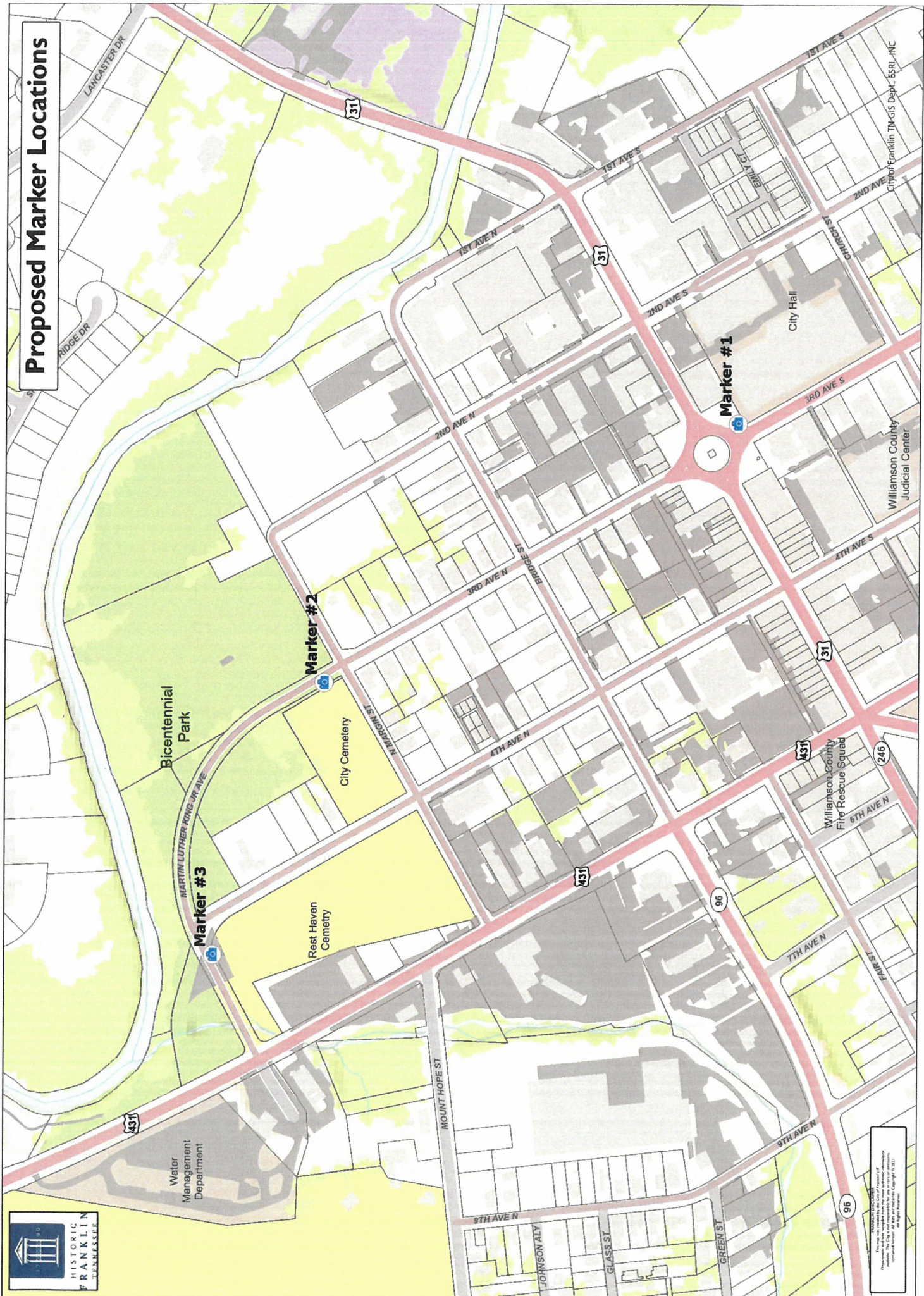
BY:   
**ERIC S. STUCKEY**  
City Administrator

BY:   
**DR. KEN MOORE**  
Mayor

Approved as to form by:

  
William E. Squires  
Assistant City Attorney

# Proposed Marker Locations



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## **MARKER NO. 1**

### **LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL DENIED**

The end of the Civil War in 1865 led to a period of opportunity and equal rights known as the Reconstruction Era, 1865-1877. By the 1880s, federal troops had left the South and neither Congress nor the federal courts took steps to protect civil rights of Black people. In Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) the Supreme Court ruled separate but equal was the law of the land. "Jim Crow" segregation was the result in politics and the courts for the next 70 years. Schools and most public spaces were segregated by race. The right of Black men to vote, to serve on juries, and to hold public office were severely limited, if not eliminated. Nor did government protect Black citizens from extra-legal violence and domestic terrorism. Denied free and impartial trials, too many Black citizens became victims of White lynch mobs. Lynchings of African Americans were one of the most public and brutal forms of racial terrorism. Across the United States, at least 4,000 such lynchings occurred.

Williamson County did not escape this brutal period in history. Racially motivated lynchings, murder and violence targeted Black residents. The Remembrance Project believes that by confronting with honesty this history, our community will be stronger and more united in its quest for Liberty and Justice for All. In 2021, Congress approved the Emmett Till Antilynching Act which became effective in 2022.

This Marker is the first of three Markers of the Williamson County Remembrance Project. Others are located at the City Cemetery and Bicentennial Park.

### **PROPOSED LOCATION:**

Northeast Corner of Third Avenue South/Public Square

## **MARKER NO. 2 – CITY CEMETERY**

### **LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, DENIED**

In the summer of 1868, a series of documented racially motivated terror killings occurred in Williamson County. On July 19<sup>th</sup>, local Ku Klux Klan members lynched an African American, William Guthrie, for allegedly assaulting Mary Ezell, a White woman. In response, unidentified African American residents killed John Ezell, Mary's brother, who they believed guilty of Guthrie's lynching. The Klan escalated the violence by lynching an unidentified African American by hanging near the Bostick home, known as Everbright, on Carter's Creek Pike. The Klan next attacked White Jewish merchant, Samuel A. Bierfield, at his Franklin business, located at the present-day intersection of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Main Street. It is believed that Bierfield was attacked because some Klan members suspected he was present when John Ezell was killed, and others believed Bierfield sympathized with the town's African American residents. The Klan lynched Bierfield by shooting him to death and leaving his body in the street. During this event, the Klan shot Bierfield's employee and formerly enslaved African American, Lawrence Bowman who died the following day from wounds sustained in the attack. Bierfield has since been recognized as the first Jewish person lynched in the United States.

This Marker is second in a series sponsored by the Williamson Remembrance Project, which believes that by confronting with honesty this history, our community will be stronger and more united in its quest for Liberty and Justice for All. In 2021, Congress approved the Emmett Till Antilynching Act which became effective in 2022.

Other Williamson Remembrance Project Markers are located in Franklin's Square and at Bicentennial Park.

### **PROPOSED LOCATION:**

Northwest Corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave./N. Margin St.

### **MARKER NO. 3 – BICENTENNIAL PARK**

#### **LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, DENIED**

Between 1877 and 1891, the following five horrific racially motivated terror lynchings of African American men took place in Williamson County. On March 18, 1877, masked men violently took Jim Walker, accused of rape and murder, from the County Courthouse and hanged him, without a trial. In 1878, a White lynch mob took Calvin Beatty from the county jail for allegedly raping a child and hanged him at a location near Moores Lane. In October that year another White lynch mob chased John Thomas, who it alleged raped a White child, for 3 miles before hanging him outside Franklin. On August 10, 1888, members of the local Ku Klux Klan violently removed Amos Miller, who was accused of the rape of a White woman, from the courtroom at the County Courthouse and hanged him from the courthouse's second story rather than allow him a fair trial. On April 30, 1891, a White lynch mob took Jim Taylor, accused of shooting a police officer, and hanged him on the Murfreesboro Road Bridge near downtown Franklin.

This Marker is the third in a series sponsored by the Williamson Remembrance Project, which believes that by confronting with honesty this history, our community will be stronger and more united in its quest for Liberty and Justice for All. In 2021, Congress approved the Emmett Till Antilynching Act which became effective in 2022.

Other Williamson Remembrance Project Markers are at Franklin's Square and at the City Cemetery.

#### **PROPOSED LOCATION:**

Southwest Corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave. / N. Margin Street