



Community Planning and Economic Development Department

# News Release

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*Minneapolis City Goals: A Safe Place to Call Home ▫ Jobs & Economic Vitality ▫ Eco-Focused ▫ Livable Communities, Healthy Lives ▫ Many People, One Minneapolis ▫ A City That Works*

El comunicado de prensa en español esta adjunto al correo electrónico.  
*Press Release in Spanish attached to email.*

## **Mexican General Emiliano Zapata Statue Finds Permanent Home in Minneapolis's Plaza Centenario during Mexican Independence Day Celebration** **Council Member Gary Schiff and Alberto Fierro of the Mexican Consulate to Share Remarks During Brief Program**

**Friday, September 13 (Minneapolis, MN)** – As part of the September 14-15 Mexican Independence Day festivities on East Lake Street, the City of Minneapolis will be recognizing a special donation received from Morelos, Mexico – a statue of General Emiliano Zapata. The statue was designed by Germán Michel Leal and donated to Minneapolis in 2007. During the years since its arrival, it has spent much of its time on display in La Alborada Mercado, a Mexican grocery about 10 blocks from Plaza Centenario where it was installed this week.

A brief program will take place at 5:00 pm on Sunday, September 15 at Plaza Centenario located at 1200 Lake Street East. Council Member Gary Schiff, Minnesota based Mexican Consulate Director Alberto Fierro, local artist Maria Cristina Tavera, and Rolando Borja President of the Minneapolis Cuernavaca Sister City Association will each share brief comments. This program is part of the month long Latino Heritage Month Celebration which goes from September 15-October 15. This is the second year in a row that Mayor Ryback has declared this time period Latino Heritage Month in Minneapolis.

“The City of Minneapolis is grateful for this significant gift from our sister city, Cuernavaca, Morelos. The Zapata statue on Lake Street will stand as a proud tribute to the contributions of tens of thousands of people of Mexican heritage who live and work in Minneapolis,” said Council Member Gary Schiff. “Today, over 200 Latino-owned businesses on Lake Street contribute to our economic vitality and serve as the backbone of a growing Latino community in Minnesota. The relationship between Minneapolis and Morelos will continue to grow in the decades ahead.”

Hispanics/Latinos make up 10.5% of Minneapolis's population or account for 41,252 residents (2010 US Census data) with nearly two-thirds of them being of Mexican origin (2007 Chicano Latino Affairs Council report). Many of Minnesota's Mexican natives hail from Morelos. In 2008, to celebrate that connection, Cuernavaca, the Capital of Morelos, Mexico became a sister city to Minneapolis. The placement of General Zapata's statue in Plaza Centenario is a physical representation of the connection between Minneapolis and Cuernavaca and a celebration of the importance of the Mexican culture within Minneapolis.

"The Consulate of Mexico is thrilled to see the completion of Plaza Centenario," said Consul Alberto Fierro Garza, "It will become Minneapolis's symbol of friendship between our two countries, and in particular, with its sister city Cuernavaca, capital of the state of Morelos, where many of the Mexicans in the city originally come from."

Born in Morelos, General Zapata is a national hero of the Mexican Revolution which took place from 1910-1920. He was responsible for mobilizing populace against the harsh dictator Porfirio Díaz who was overthrown after more than three decades of repression, severe poverty, and social injustice. Afterward, Zapata opposed Díaz's opponent and eventual President Francisco Madero for not supporting true land reform. In 1914, he led the fight to defeat the political dictator General Victoriano Huerta.

Zapata was known for the slogan, "Tierra y Libertad!" (Land and Liberty!), representing his passion for social and agrarian land reform until he was assassinated. His legacy continues to be celebrated in Mexico because of his bravery in fighting for the peasants and indigenous people. A plaque on the Zapata statue details the General's story for visitors to the plaza.

Plaza Centenario was designed after a traditional Mexican village plaza, a gathering place for local festivities and civic events. The committee that helped design the plaza hopes that Plaza Centenario will serve a similar function in South Minneapolis as well as share information about Mexico's history and cultural heritage.

The event is sponsored by Minneapolis Cuernavaca Sister City Association, City of Minneapolis Art in Public Places, Minneapolis Arts Commission, Bloomington Lake Service District, The Rotary Club of Minneapolis, and Global Citizens Network.

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