



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, Planning and Development Services  
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution – Amending the Council Policy on Place Names and Name Changes  
August 27, 2019  
**DATE:** August 9, 2019

**SUMMARY:**

A resolution amending the existing Council Policy on Place Names and Name Changes as recommended by the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee.

**STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:**

This resolution is most closely aligned with the following strategic policy priorities:

- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.
- Assure outstanding stewardship of the natural and built environment.
- Encourage and promote an efficient and effective government, which is fiscally sustainable and guided by engaged residents.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Tacoma has a policy in place that sets criteria and parameters around the naming of municipally owned property and streets. The scope of the policy includes buildings and structures, including overpasses; bridges and viaducts; real property, including open spaces and parks; and rights-of-way, including under certain circumstances, streets. The policy was first established in 1989 by Resolution No. 30525 and last updated in 2010 by Resolution No. 38091.

Since the policy was last updated, certain issues with the policy and its procedural process have been identified. Such issues include:

- The naming policy criteria are not well aligned with current City policy priorities, including the concepts of equity, inclusion and reconciliation, although a growing number of requests are driven by these goals.
- The current policy limits the discretion of the City Council, and instead provides for the Landmarks Preservation Commission as the primary forum for the process, regardless of whether or not there is a historical component to the request or whether the name change request is sponsored or endorsed by the Mayor or Council Members.
- The current policy is not well suited for time sensitive or noncontroversial requests that already have the stated support of the City Council.
- The section of the policy pertaining to the naming of property after individuals limits the practice to those who have passed away.



At the July 23, 2019 City Council meeting, Mayor Woodards and Council Member Mello co-sponsored Resolution No. 40380, directing the City Manager to undertake a review of the policy to address the issues identified above and implement improvements to reduce the bureaucracy involved in the process.

On August 7, 2019, the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee reviewed a series of staff recommendations to address the City Council's direction. Key changes recommended for the policy include:

- Naming requests should be initially sent to the Mayor, instead of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
- Requests deemed appropriate for further consideration are referred to the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee for review. The Committee may solicit input and feedback from relevant departments, commissions and committees as appropriate to the request.
- New criteria encouraging and supporting initiatives focusing on equity, inclusion and reconciliation are proposed.
- The limitation on namings that honor living persons is removed.
- Street renaming is removed from the scope of this policy, due to the complexity and impacts of such requests. A separate review of street renaming will be conducted by the Public Works Department.

**ISSUE:**

Since the policy was last updated in the 2010-2011 timeframe, the following issues concerning the policy have been identified:

- The policy is not well-aligned with current City policy priorities, including the concepts of equity, inclusion and reconciliation;
- The current policy limits the discretion of the City Council, and instead provides for the Landmarks Preservation Commission as the primary forum for the process regardless of endorsement by the City Council;
- The current policy is not well-suited for time sensitive or noncontroversial requests that already have the stated support of the City Council; and
- The current policy restricts the naming of property after individuals to those who have passed away.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The City Council could choose not to support the resolution updating the City's Policy on Place Names and Name Changes, in which case no changes would be made to the existing policy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee recommends adoption of the proposed amendments as reviewed on August 7, 2019.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct fiscal impact.