



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Peter Huffman, Planning and Development Services  
**COPY:** Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee; Kurtis Kingsolver, P.E.;  
Rebecca Boydston  
**PRESENTER:** Reuben McKnight, Planning and Development Services  
**SUBJECT:** Amendments to Council Policy on Place Names and Name Changes  
**DATE:** August 7, 2019

**PRESENTATION TYPE:**

Request for Resolution

**SUMMARY:**

This memo provides an overview and outline of recommended amendments to the City Council Policy on Place Names and Name Changes, to better align the policy with Council and City policy priorities, to simplify and streamline the naming review process, and to increase the flexibility for consideration of naming requests by amending the criteria. If the amendments are supported by this Committee, staff seeks a recommendation to the full City Council for the adoption of the amended policy.

**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, and, under certain circumstances, streets. It also describes a review process, which has originated with an application to the Landmarks Preservation Commission since the last policy revision, as well as several criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of a request, and special criteria for consideration of changes to official street names.

The policy is established by City Council resolution and was last updated in 2011 via Resolution No. 38091. On July 23, 2019, the Council adopted Resolution No. 40380, directing the City Manager to review the existing policy and provide recommendations for updates to the policy.

**ISSUE:**

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 councilmembers.
- 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 only those who have passed.



The draft amendments include the following key changes:

1. Proposals originate with the Mayor, not the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Private citizens may also solicit name changes with the Mayor's office. Naming requests are forwarded to the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability (IPS) Committee via the Council Consideration Request (CCR) process.
2. The IPS Committee determines which subject matter experts should be consulted to review the proposal (such as Traffic Engineering for street names, Landmarks Preservation Commission for requests with a historical element) and whether a public hearing is appropriate.

Policy question: What venue is appropriate for soliciting public comment on name changes? Currently, the Landmarks Preservation Commission schedules hearings for all name requests. The draft policy identifies City Council as the hearing forum.

3. New criteria, including naming based on the City's goals of equity, inclusion, and reconciliation, have been added.
4. Restrictions on naming in honor of living persons have been removed.
5. Due to the complexity of such requests, renaming of streets is recommended to be developed as a standalone policy.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The existing policy could remain as is, which would not address the concerns identified in the CCR, namely the lack of criteria addressing social equity and inclusion, and it would continue to present challenges to conducting reviews of naming proposals in the desired timeframe. The Committee could also recommend some of the amendments be adopted, but not others.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no anticipated direct financial impact from these amendments, as there is currently a naming policy in place.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends adoption of these proposal amendments to address the concerns and issues identified in the CCR. By designating the IPS Committee as the primary review body and the Mayor as the initial recipient or originator of naming proposals, it will increase the City Council's discretion and responsiveness to these requests, while providing due process and opportunities for stakeholder and subject matter expert review.