

**City of Tacoma**  
**Policy on Place Names and Name Changes**  
**Adopted by Council Resolution 40408 (August 20, 2019)**

**SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

1. In the event that the City of Tacoma wishes to confer a specific name on a municipally owned property, the following policy is adopted.
2. The criteria contained within this policy should also be followed in reviewing or preparing the City of Tacoma's official comments or recommendations to State, Federal, and/or intergovernmental boards taking actions regarding geographic names, naming, or renaming.

**SECTION 2: SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

1. This policy affects municipally owned property only.
2. The following types of municipally owned property are included within the scope of this policy (referred to hereafter as "property"):
  - a. Buildings and structures, including overpasses, bridges and viaducts
  - b. Real Property, including open spaces and parks
3. The process and criteria for naming or renaming municipally owned properties described in this policy do not apply to the following types of property:
  - a. Generally, historically designated properties for which a historic name has been indicated on a nomination form and accepted for use on a historic register, are excluded from this policy except when the City Council in its discretion determines that such a change supports a broad policy initiative.
  - b. Public art installations that have been commissioned and/or accessioned with a title that serves as the name of the piece.
  - c. Rights of Way and streets.

**SECTION 3: GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING NAME CHANGE REQUESTS**

1. Naming proposals may be made by the Mayor or members of the City Council, or by the community via the Mayor's Office. When a proposal is received, the Mayor's designated staff will coordinate with the Executive Liaison to determine scheduling and next steps, as outlined in this policy:
  - a. The Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee is generally the committee that oversees the naming request process and makes recommendations to City Council for naming requests.
  - b. When a proposal is received, Council Committee may, at its discretion and depending on the nature of the request, seek input and feedback on the request with appropriate City Departments, Divisions, and Boards and Commissions, including:
    - Public Works, Traffic Engineering and the Transportation Commission
    - Tacoma Fire Department, Police Department and other appropriate public safety agencies
    - Office of Equity and Human Rights
    - Planning and Development Services, Historic Preservation Office and the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

- c. Following its review, the Committee may make a recommendation to City Council to adopt the proposal, or the Committee may defer if additional information is required, or deny the proposal if it does not appear to meet the criteria in this policy.
  - d. Upon receiving a recommendation from Committee, City Council may schedule a public hearing to receive public comment for items of significant public interest.
  - e. Names given under this policy shall be presented via Council Resolution, except where applicable City, State or Federal regulations require other specific legislation.
2. Naming requests from the community shall be submitted to the Office of the Mayor, who shall determine whether the proposal is appropriate according to the criteria in this policy for additional consideration to the Council Committee as described above. Proposals that do not appear to meet the criteria or that do not appear to be of benefit to the City or its residents may be removed from further consideration.
  3. Requests to the Mayor made by the community shall be submitted in writing, and should, at minimum, include:
    - a. A map illustrating the area affected by the proposal.
    - b. Any existing place, street or facility names that would be affected.
    - c. Any common usage names or nicknames for the area or its elements, including topographical landmarks.
    - d. Representative photographs of the area.
    - e. A statement of the criteria in this policy that apply to the request, and how the proposal meets these criteria.
    - f. A summary of any public outreach conducted to date, including to neighborhood associations, Neighborhood Councils, Business District Associations, and commercial property owners' groups, media coverage or public meetings. This may include any statements of support or endorsement received. Applicants are encouraged to seek public support prior to submitting a request for name changes.
    - g. A description of any plans for interpretive measures to be taken by the sponsor if the naming request is approved, including signs, interpretive panels, or markers.
  4. Naming proposals should be reviewed for consistency with the City's stated policies and goals towards equity and inclusion.
  5. At its discretion, the City Council may adopt alternate or special procedures for council-sponsored name changes.

#### **SECTION 4: NAMING CRITERIA**

The following criteria are recommended for the City Council's consideration when considering potential naming proposals:

1. New names should avoid duplicating or reusing names that are already used in other locations.
2. Context, geographical location and natural or geological features. Names may be based on location or distinctive, predominant and defining natural or geological features of an area. Such proposals should be given names that directly reflect or are contextually related to the history of the site.
  - a. Common usage names that have developed over time shall be favored. Facilities may be given official designations based on common usage by residents of an area, such as

topographical features, nearby schools, or historical plat names.

- b. Names of features indicated on general usage maps for fifty years or more should only be changed when the proposed name is supported by other City policies, priorities or initiatives.
3. Historical Significance. A facility may be given a name based on historical significance if it meets one of the following criteria:
  - a. The name is associated with a historically significant event or for events reflecting broad patterns of Tacoma's history
  - b. The name is associated with the lives of persons of citywide significance in Tacoma's past;
  - c. The name reflects a distinctive architectural or engineering achievement;
  - d. The name is related to an existing or proposed registered historic property or district; or
  - e. The name would highlight previously under documented or poorly understood historical narratives.
4. Equity, inclusion, and reconciliation. New names and name changes may be conferred as a part of the City's ongoing efforts toward improving social and racial equity, inclusion, and reconciliation.
5. Contributions. New facilities may be named for an individual or organization if that individual or organization has made a significant direct property or monetary contribution to the City of Tacoma, consistent with the City's relevant acceptance policies, for purposes of developing that particular building or facility, and the naming is a stipulation of the donation.
6. Civil Service. Properties may be names for individuals who have enhanced the quality of life for Tacoma residents through outstanding public service, including:
  - a. Leadership in civic organizations devoted to community improvement;
  - b. Outstanding humanitarian work, such as to assistance for the underprivileged, economically disadvantaged, and the disabled populations of the city; and
  - c. Leadership in events and programs that have broadly enriched the quality of life for Tacoma residents.
7. Portions of a facility may have another name than that of the entire facility or features may be dedicated to or in honor of a person such as "Tide Pool – Cecil Brosseau" and "Owen Beach" at Point Defiance.