



TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager

FROM: Jeffrey A. Jenkins, Director, Public Works

COPY: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee; Ramiro A. Chavez, P.E. PgMP, Environmental Services Director/City Engineer

PRESENTER: Brennan Kidd, P.E. PTOE, Assistant Division Manager, Public Works

SUBJECT: Consideration of an Honorary Street Naming Request (“Willie Adams Way”) for East Alexander Ave at/west of Alexander Avenue East

DATE: October 22, 2025

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PRESENTATION TYPE:
 Request for Resolution

SUMMARY:
 Public Works Staff is facilitating an honorary street naming request submitted by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee on October 22, 2025. As requested by IPS, staff is providing this memorandum that includes additional background information in support of a recommendation to forward the Honorary Street Naming Request to the full City Council for review and approval.

In accordance with Resolution No. 41009, which is related to the City’s Policy on Place Names and Name Changes, honorary street naming requests for roadways are to be reviewed as follows:

- an ad hoc work group consisting of representatives from designated City Departments determines if the City’s naming criteria has been met and makes a recommendation in support of or against the naming application (Section 3, Subsection 4.b.ii);
- the work group’s recommendation is shared with the City Attorney’s Office for legal review (Section 3, Subsection 4.b.iii);
- the naming request is presented to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee and the Committee makes a recommendation and forwards the request to Council for further consideration (Section 3, Subsection 4.c.i.-iii.).

The request for honorary street naming of East Alexander Avenue (one block in length, intersecting and west of Alexander Avenue East) as “Willie Adams Way” has been reviewed by the entities designated in Resolution No. 41009. These departments have confirmed the application meets the City’s naming criteria, have given recommendations in support of the naming application, and therefore request the IPS to forward this honorary street naming request to the City Council. If adopted, a single two-sided honorary street name sign—with a brown background color as expected for street naming of this type—will be added atop the existing Stop sign, along with an official (but private street) two-sided East Alexander Avenue street name sign with the customary green background.

BACKGROUND:
 Willie Adams is the 7th President of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). The ILWU is a labor union that was founded in 1937, and represents over 45,000 longshore and warehouse workers, mechanics, hospitality workers, farmers, nurses, miners, bookstore workers, daycare and veterinary workers—amongst others—in the States of Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii,



and in British Columbia, Canada. The ILWU has a long history of advocating for workers' rights and has been at the forefront of the civil rights movement throughout its history.

President Adams' home local is Local 23, based in Tacoma, WA. He started on the waterfront in Tacoma in 1978, and as a rank-and-file member, he was active in the community. In 2003, Willie was elected as the International Secretary-Treasurer of the ILWU, and in 2018, as the International President. Adams served five terms as International Secretary-Treasurer and two terms as President by his retirement on January 1, 2025.

How the Proposal Meets Resolution No. 41009 Criteria

Resolution No. 41009 recommends the City Council consider a number of criteria when evaluating naming proposals, including historical significance; civil service; and equity, inclusion, and reconciliation.

Historical Significance

4.4.a. Name is associated with a historically significant event or for events reflecting broad patterns of Tacoma's history.

Willie Adams has been an integral part of shaping the history of ILWU Local 23. Upon his retirement, Willie Adams had been an active member of ILWU for more than half of its history. The history of Tacoma has been inextricably linked to its status as a port city and ILWU's vanguard status in social movements; Willie Adams, in turn, left an indelible mark on the Port of Tacoma and ILWU.

Civil Service

4.5.a. Leadership in civic organizations devoted to community improvement

Willie Adams led ILWU through some of the organization's most challenging times. Adams drew upon his commitment to workers, ILWU members, and their families to weather threats to ILWU's very existence, including legal battles, unprecedented supply chain crises, and fiscal strife. ILWU's collective advocacy and organizing power has real, tangible consequences in the lives of its members. It is thanks to Adams' and the ILWU's persistence through the recent half-decade that its members have been able to benefit from the wins achieved through the latest contract negotiations, including improved wages and working conditions and upgrades for pensioners and widows.

Adams expanded ILWU's service to its members while simultaneously navigating numerous external threats. ILWU welcomed 700 new members between 2021 and 2024, and ILWU's Organizing Department grew under Adams' leadership.

Equity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation

4.6. Proposals may be conferred as a part of the City's ongoing efforts toward improving social and racial equity, inclusion, and reconciliation

Willie Adams became ILWU's first Black president upon his election, and his long-spanning career has been characterized by advocacy for and dedication to a labor community where all workers are welcome – regardless of their background. Between 1991 and 1993, and again from 2001 to 2005, Adams and fellow ILWU member Mike Chambers produced an annual event titled "Celebration of Black History and Labor." The Celebration honored the accomplishments of Black workers in Tacoma and also those who battled discrimination and fought for equal opportunities for all workers. The event has recently been revived and has always been popular, featuring notable



features over the years including, Danny Glover, Yolanda King, Cicely Tyson, Betty Shabazz, and Ossie Davis.

Affected Facility Names, Rights of Way, or Existing Places

No facility names, rights of way, or existing places are affected by this proposal.

Common Usage Names or Nicknames

The relevant roadway has not developed any common usage names or nicknames over its history.

Summary of Public Outreach

The two business (ILWU Local 23 Union Hall, and Tacoma Longshoremen's Credit Union) on the roadway proposed for the honorary naming both support the proposal.

The Port of Tacoma Government Affairs Office has been contacted and confirmed support of the proposal. Please also see appendix for the letter of support from Port of Tacoma Executive Director, Eric Johnson.

Description of Planned Actions

Applicants have not made plans for actions following Council approval.

Detailed information, including required naming application components, and responses from the ad hoc work group, can be found in the appendix to this memo.

ISSUE:

In accordance with Resolution No. 41009, honorary street naming requests for roadways are required to be presented to the IPS for consideration. Upon review of the proposal, IPS can recommend forwarding the request to City Council for further consideration or approval.

ALTERNATIVES:

If the honorary name is not approved by the IPS or City Council, there would be no changes to City infrastructure.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact of an honorary street naming request is described in Section 5, Subsection 2 of Resolution No. 41009 which says, "City costs involved in the name changes of a roadway, including honorary naming, shall generally be the responsibility of the applicant." The primary cost is associated with fabricating and installing the new signs; the expected cost for this proposal is approximately \$500. The applicant has been made aware of these estimated costs and will either bear the costs or will submit a statement of financial need as allowed by the resolution.

RECOMMENDATION:

Honorary naming of this specific city block is fitting and appropriate due to Mr. Adams' presence within, and influence on, the ILWU and the Port of Tacoma. In congruence with Resolution 41009 Policy on Place Names and Name Changes, staff recommend the IPS Committee support establishing the honorary street naming of "Willie Adams Way" for the one-block segment of East Alexander Avenue west of Alexander Avenue East in honor of the Mr. Willie Adams.

ATTACHMENT: Appendix