

# City of Tacoma

## Policy on Place Names and Name Changes

### 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 or street, 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
  - c. Rights of Way, including under certain circumstances, streets
3. The process and criteria for naming or renaming municipally owned properties described in this policy do not apply to the following types property:
  - a. Historically registered properties for which a name has been indicated on a nomination form and accepted for use on a historic register, including property on the Tacoma, Washington State, or National Registers of Historic Places

Public art installations that have been commissioned and/or accessioned with a title that serves as the name of the piece.

### SECTION 3: INITIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING NAME CHANGE REQUESTS

1. Requests for name changes to existing property may be submitted by any Tacoma resident, property owner, or City official. Such a proposal shall be made in writing to the Landmarks Preservation Commission and include:
  - 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. An overview of any public outreach or support received for the proposal to date, including media coverage and meetings; and
  - f. A statement of the criteria in this policy that apply to the request, and how the proposal meets these criteria.
  - g. A summary of any public outreach conducted to date, including to neighborhood associations, Neighborhood Councils, Business District Associations, and commercial property owners' groups. 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.
  - h. 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.

2. The Landmarks Preservation Commission, upon receiving such a request, shall review the proposal for completeness at its next available Commission agenda.
3. If the request is considered complete, the Commission may take action to schedule the request for a public hearing following its normal public hearing procedures.
4. If more information is required, the Commission shall defer scheduling of the request and describe to the proponent what information is needed to complete the request.
5. If no action is taken to schedule the request for a public hearing within 60 days of the first consideration of the request, it is considered denied. The Commission may also vote to deny the request.
6. If the Commission denies the application by vote or by failure to act, the Commission shall not consider the request for the period of one calendar year.
7. If the Commission denies a request, the Mayor may, for any reason, direct the Commission to reconsider its action.
8. Following its public hearing, there shall be a mandatory 30 comment period.
9. After the close of the comment period, the Commission shall review the testimony and written comments, and the criteria contained within this policy, and forward a recommendation to the appropriate City Council Committee for further consideration.

#### **SECTION 4: INITIAL PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING NAMING REQUESTS FOR NEW NAMES**

1. For new or unnamed City-owned properties, the City Council may make a new naming request directly to the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
2. When so directed, the Landmarks Preservation Commission shall publicly solicit ideas for naming new facilities, except where otherwise indicated in this policy.
3. Such a call for proposals shall minimally take the form of a press release, website posting, and distribution of an announcement to the Commission's mail and electronic distribution lists. The call for proposals shall state a timeline for submission and review, as well as the criteria for naming contained in this policy.
4. The purpose of the solicitation is to develop a broad array of ideas, and to encourage community participation in the naming process.
5. While an individual may directly propose to the Landmarks Preservation Commission consideration of a particular name for a property, such a request is not required to initiate the naming process for new facilities, nor is the Commission's consideration of names limited to that proposed by an individual.
6. The naming process shall be initiated as soon as practical in the development process.

#### **SECTION 5: PUBLIC HEARING REQUIRED**

1. For both renaming requests, and names for new facilities, the Commission shall hold a minimum of one public hearing to receive comments on all naming requests.

2. Notice shall be published in the newspaper as well as sent via regular mail and electronic mail to interested stakeholders no less than 14 days ahead of the scheduled hearing.
3. Interested stakeholders include property owners and occupants within a 400' radius of the subject property, recognized neighborhood and business groups, and parties included on the Landmarks Preservation Commission's contact lists. Other groups or individuals may be contacted as well.
4. Following the public hearing, the Commission shall keep the public record open for 30 days minimum to allow for additional comment.
5. Following the close of the comment period, the comments received shall be compiled by the Commission and findings made relative to the proposal and the applicable criteria, and a recommendation made to the Council via the appropriate Council Committee.

**SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL**

1. Based on the findings and recommendation of the Commission, the City Council Committee, at its discretion, may accept, modify, reject or remand the recommendation of the Commission, or may recommend to the full Council that an additional public hearing should be held.
2. If the Council Committee finds that the Commission should reconsider the proposal due to errors in application of criteria or procedure, or if relevant factors were not considered, the Council Committee may remand the decision for further consideration.
3. If the Commission recommendation is accepted, a resolution will be prepared with

a sponsor, incorporating the Commission's recommendation.

4. Otherwise, if the Commission recommendation is modified or rejected, the Council Committee may send an alternative proposal to full Council as a sponsored resolution.
5. In all cases, the City Council will have the prerogative of accepting or rejecting the proposal.
6. The City Council shall approve or disapprove of any naming or renaming action by resolution.
7. Once a name has been officially approved by the City Council, changes should be strongly discouraged.

**SECTION 7: CRITERIA FOR THE CITY COUNCIL AND LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION TO CONSIDER**

The City Council and Landmarks Preservation Commission shall use the following criteria when considering proposals to name or change the name of a public facility or building.

1. To avoid duplication, confusing similarity or inappropriateness, the Commission, in considering name changes, shall review existing building and facility names.
2. Context and geographical location. Sites and facilities 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 (National Register age criteria) should only be changed under exceptional circumstances.
- 3. Natural or Geological Features. Names may be based on distinctive, predominant and defining natural or geological features of an area.
- 4. 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; or
  - 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.
- 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, a for purposes of developing that particular building or facility, and the naming is a stipulation of the donation.
- 6. 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.

**SECTION 8: SPECIAL CRITERIA  
CONSIDERATIONS**

- 1. Individuals. Except where otherwise indicated, facilities and public property ordinarily shall not be named for living individuals.
- 2. Streets. Official renaming of existing streets, in general, is discouraged except when:
  - a. A naming effort is part of a larger, coordinated and planned effort involving multiple streets or blocks; or
  - b. Proposals to rename existing streets for individuals may be considered for those persons that have a broad, regional or national significance that is generally recognized by Tacoma residents
- 3. Street Renaming Requirements.
  - a. Renaming of existing streets shall only occur at existing shifts in the street grid or where there are clear topographical or geographical shifts in the grid.
  - b. The City Real Property Services Division, Public Works Traffic Engineering, Community and Economic Development Buildings and Land Use Service Division, and the Law Enforcement Support Agency shall be given a copy of any street naming request prior to the scheduling of a public hearing on the matter.
  - c. A signed petition of 51% by linear frontage of the affected property owners in support of the renaming must be solicited and submitted by the proponents of the renaming prior to consideration by the City. Such a petition shall be implemented at the sole expense of the proponent(s); however, the City may provide a list of affected taxpayers of record.

4. Street Renaming Alternatives.

- a. Organizations are encouraged to consider alternatives to street renaming requests for the commemoration of individuals or organizations. For example, interpretive plaques at key locations on buildings or sites, or where appropriate, in sidewalks or other visible pedestrian areas.
- b. In some cases, an "Honorary Street" designation may be given to certain sections of existing streets to commemorate the lives of important community members. A commemorative street blade sign may be mounted below the official street name for a defined length of the street, if approved, at the expense of the applicants. "Honorary designations" of streets may be considered as requests for renaming of facilities.
- c. For "Honorary Street" designations, the City shall develop and provide a standard sign specification for approved requests.