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COUNCILMEMBER AT-LARGE

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New Orleans City Council

June 9, 2020

Robert Rivers
Director
City Planning Commission
1300 Perdido Street, 7th Floor
New Orleans, LA 70112

Re: Street Name Change Request for Jefferson Davis Parkway

Dear Mr. Rivers:

In accordance with City Code § 146-759.5, we would like to formally request the City Planning Commission commence proceedings to change the name of Jefferson Davis Parkway (North and South), in its entirety, to Doctor Norman Francis Parkway.

Our staff has met with the staff of the City Planning Commission and the staff of the City's designated steward of electronic geographic information to become familiar with the procedure and standards for street name change requests and to review the proposed name change in the context of the City's system of street names and other geographic features in the vicinity of the subject street.

Please find the information required by the CPC to process the request:

- a. Name of person or group requesting the street name change:
Councilmembers Helena Moreno and Jason Williams, on behalf of the A.P. Tureaud Sr. Legacy Committee
- b. Contact person and address:
Mark Raymond, Jr.
Address: 3121 Pauger St., New Orleans, LA, 70119
Phone: (504) 982-5268
E-Mail: APTureaudLegacy@gmail.com
- c. Location of the proposed name change, including total length of the street to be affected and bounding streets or other boundaries:
The *entire* length of Jefferson Davis Parkway from its beginning at the intersection with Octavia Street/Walmsley Avenue to its termination at Lafitte Street, as well as that portion designated "N. Jefferson Davis Parkway" extending from Lafitte Street to Orleans Avenue. The total length of street subject to the change is approximately 2 miles.

- d. Total number of lots affected by proposal:
According to the City’s “Property Viewer,” approximately 150 lots of record abut Jefferson Davis Parkway.
- e. Total number of residential, commercial, and industrial uses affected by proposal:
According to the City’s “Property Viewer,” Jefferson Davis Parkway includes the following zoning classifications: C-2, C-3, EC, LI, HU-MU, MU-1, MU-2, OS-N, HU-RD-2
- f. Proposed street name change:
Doctor Norman Francis Parkway
- g. Reason for the change:
Jefferson Davis Parkway currently honors the first and only president of the Confederate States of America – a confederation of Southern states that took up arms against our nation to preserve the institution of slavery. Originally named Hagan Avenue, the parkway was renamed for Jefferson Davis in the 1910s, at the height of the Jim Crow era, to reinforce white supremacist values. In 2015, the City Council voted to remove the statue of Davis from the parkway neutral ground pursuant to City Code §146-611, declaring the monument a public nuisance.

It would be difficult to find a New Orleanian – living or dead – who stands in starker contrast to the ideas of Jefferson Davis than Dr. Norman C. Francis. The A.P. Tureaud Sr. Legacy Committee has rightly called Dr. Norman C. Francis “an American hero and pillar of the New Orleans African American community.” He served in the United States Army and worked tirelessly during the civil rights movement. He housed the Freedom Riders on their stop in New Orleans. He served as the President of Xavier University of Louisiana for nearly 50 years and spearheaded efforts to create the state’s first African American-owned bank, Liberty Bank. He was on the advance team that helped bring the Saints to New Orleans and was a minority owner of the team. When Louisiana was devastated after Hurricane Katrina, Dr. Francis led the Louisiana Recovery Authority. He has dedicated his life to the education and advancement of African Americans and people of underserved communities. He has likely awarded more college degrees to black people than any other college president in American history. He has received over 40 honorary degrees from distinguished institutions of higher education. In 2006, Dr. Francis received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor given to an American citizen.

As policymakers, we must ensure that this is a city where people feel uplifted and welcome, which means we have to take a close look at the message our city is sending and be intentional in making necessary changes. Changing the name of Jefferson Davis Parkway to Doctor Norman Francis Parkway is a small step – in fact, one that should have been taken far earlier than today – to recognize and confront the deeply embedded systematic racism in our institutions. And we cannot mean those words if we continue to sustain landmarks to white supremacy on our city’s streets.

We are aware the CPC’s rules provide that “no street shall be renamed to honor a person who has been deceased for less than five (5) years.” Although this evaluation criterion does not deprive the Council of its plenary authority to name a street for *any* person, we nevertheless believe that renaming Jefferson Davis Parkway in honor of a living luminary like Dr. Francis promotes the general welfare. Accordingly, we would ask that the CPC formally waive this evaluation criterion insofar as it is deemed by your staff to be inconsistent with our request. *See* CPC Rule Ch. I(G)(4)(C)(6).

We are told by CPC staff that the cost to replace the signs is \$30 each. We are also attaching the petition started by the A.P. Tureaud Sr. Legacy Committee for your review.

Sincerely,

Jason Rogers Williams
New Orleans City Council President

Helena Moreno
New Orleans City Council Vice President