

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

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**City Planning Commission Staff Report**

**Executive Summary**

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**Consideration:**

Request by City Council Motion M-15-444 for the City Planning Commission to conduct a study and public hearing to amend its Administrative Rules, Policies, & Procedures relative to the creation of an honorary street name change process.

**Background:**

To date, the City of New Orleans does not have a policy related to an honorary street dedication program. Currently, the City's street naming policy, which is documented in the City Planning Commission's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures, only delineates the procedure for street name changes. An honorary street dedication program, which many other jurisdictions across the country have implemented, allows cities the opportunity to commemorate individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to the community, but without causing any disruption of the existing street grid associated with a modification to the Official Map as would a permanent street name change. According to best practices, honorary street signage is typically a secondary sign that is installed above or below an existing street name sign. The City Council has granted honorary street dedications in the recent past, though without a formalized policy to guide the process.

Following the recent approval of street name changes in the spring of 2015, the New Orleans City Council requested that the City Planning Commission review the City's street renaming rules and explore opportunities to create an honorary street dedication program.

**Recommendation:**

In order to promote clear wayfinding, efficient emergency response and service delivery, as well as accurate address keeping, the staff advises against frequent changes to the City's Official Map. The staff recognizes, however, that cities are ever-changing entities, and from time to time, an official street name change may be warranted. In these circumstances, decisions should consider all associated

impacts. Instituting an honorary street dedication policy could allow the city to honor multiple deserving individuals and groups without requiring an amendment to the Official Map. Honorary or ceremonial street naming programs have been successfully instituted across multiple jurisdictions in the United States as a means of recognizing and memorializing important community members.

In making its recommendation the staff relied on a thorough analysis of street naming practices employed within other communities which is found in Section III of this report. The staff makes a recommendation in two parts. The first part is related to the development of an honorary street dedication program. The second part is related to modifications to the City Planning Commission's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures in order to complement the proposed honorary street naming policy and further delineate the roles of the City Planning Commission and the City Council in the honorary and official street naming process. Because of the inherent relationship between a City Council member and his or her constituents, the staff believes evaluations of honorary street dedications would most appropriately be made by that body as opposed to the City Planning Commission. The staff recommends that the City Council adopt its own policy related to honorary street dedications, as deemed appropriate by its members. However, suggested policy components, based on best practices, are provided in this report as they pertain to an application process and evaluation criteria.

As with the honorary street dedication program, the staff believes it should be the sole responsibility of the City Council to determine the validity of the biography or character of the proposed named party, and to accept or decline the request based on these factors. Therefore, the staff recommends that the evaluative criteria listed in the current street renaming policy should be amended to exclude all language which would give the City Planning Commission authority to evaluate the significance of a named party, and limit the evaluation to only technical matters which the staff believes is the more appropriate responsibility of this body per the Home Rule Charter of the City of New Orleans.

**City Planning Commission Meeting  
February 29, 2015**

**PRELIMINARY STAFF REPORT**

**To:** City Planning Commission

**Prepared By:** Nicolette Jones, Stosh Kozlowski, Laura Baños, and Derreck Deason

**Date:** March 8, 2015

**Consideration:** Request by City Council Motion M-15-444 for the City Planning Commission to conduct a study and public hearing to amend its Administrative Rules, Policies, & Procedures relative to the creation of an honorary street name change process.

**I. Background**

**A. Authority**

The City's current street renaming policy is published within City Planning Commission's Administrative Rules, Policies.<sup>1</sup> This authority is based on an interpretation of the Home Rule Charter of the City of New Orleans which outlines the role of the City Planning Commission. Pursuant to *Article V, Chapter 4* of the Home Rule Charter, the City Planning Commission is authorized to prepare and recommend amendments to the City's Official Map, to be considered by the New Orleans City Council.

Prior to 1994, the City did not have a formal process for considering street name changes, though several public streets had been renamed in prior years through the enactment of ordinances. Due to the questioning of the informal nature of the street renaming process, on November 22, 1994 the City Planning Commission voted to amend the CPC's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures to outline a formal policy related to the renaming of streets. The 1994 policy described the main objectives of street renaming, the procedure by which requests for street name changes could be considered, and the criteria by which the City Planning Commission would evaluate each request. The policy was subsequently amended in 2011 and again in 2014.

The purpose of the 2011 amendment was to update the roles of the agencies involved in the process, provide for public notice and a public hearing, and streamline the procedure. The purpose of the most recent amendment to the street renaming policy in 2014 was to include a fourth approval criterion related to the technical aspects of street naming (e.g., character length, the use of numerals, the use of punctuation marks, etc.).

The 2014 amendments were inspired by concerns expressed by other City agencies who rely on clear street name and addressing information such as the Mayor's Office of Information Technology and Innovation (ITI), which maintains the City's electronic

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<sup>1</sup>Last amended March 11, 2014.

geographic information for streets, the Department of Public Works, and others. The City, to date, has not adopted a policy related to honorary street designations.

## **B. Current Street Name Change Procedure**

The CPC's Administrative Rules, Policies and Procedures currently delineate the process by which a request for a street name change may be submitted and authorized.<sup>2</sup> First, the process requires that an applicant send a written request to the Councilmember of the District in which the street name change is being considered. The Councilmember is then required to consult with both the City Planning Commission and the department which oversees the City's electronic geographic information in order 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. Afterward, if the Councilmember is willing to consider the proposed street name change, the Councilmember will submit the official request to the City Planning Commission and the Department of Public Works.<sup>3</sup> The applicant must subsequently obtain an estimate for the cost to replace street signs from the Department of Public Works, and must deposit the same amount of money to the City through the Department of Finance.

Provided a deposit has been made to the City, the City Planning Commission is to hold a public hearing within 60 days of its receipt of the request. This public hearing process also requires public outreach in the form of mailed letters to all property owners whose properties front the petitioned street and all reported neighborhood organizations whose boundaries contain the petitioned street. Prior to the public hearing, the request is required to be reviewed by the Planning Advisory Committee. Depending on the location of the street name change, the request may also be required to be reviewed by the Vieux Carré Commission or Historic District Landmarks Commission. The CPC staff evaluates the street name change and prepares a report and recommendation for the City Planning Commission. The City Planning Commission holds a public hearing and votes on a recommendation to be sent to the City Council. The City Council then considers the request at its own public hearing. A street name change is effectuated through the adoption of an ordinance by the City Council and the Mayor's signature. However, the approval of a street name change is based on several criteria outlined in the next section of this report. If an ordinance is adopted to effectuate a street name change, the City Planning Commission staff is charged with amending the Official Zoning Map and Official Map of the City.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that procedures and guidelines for the names of new streets are currently outlined in the City's Subdivision Regulations, and are not part of the street renaming policy found in the CPC's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures.

<sup>3</sup> Per the CPC's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures a complete request includes: the name of person or group making the request and their contact information; location of name change; total number of lots affected; total number of residential, commercial, and industrial uses affected; and the proposed street name and reason for change.

### *Street Name Change Evaluation Criteria*

The CPC's Rules, Policies, and Procedures delineate six criteria by which street name change proposals must be evaluated by the City Planning Commission. These criteria generally address technical factors such as street name duplication, character type and length, abbreviation standards, and standards related to the use of prefixes and suffixes, among others. Some of these technical criteria were adopted with the most recent amendments to the policy in 2014. The first criterion stipulates that streets may be named after significant actions, as part of a theme, or after a person who has made a significant positive impact within the city, state, or country. Rather than being technical, this criterion requires the Commission to evaluate significance, which could be considered more subjective in nature. The fifth and sixth criteria are essentially provisions. The fifth criterion allows the City Planning Commission to recommend modifications to the proposed street name change, except for any modification to the boundary of the requested change. The sixth criterion allows the City Planning Commission to waive any of the evaluative criteria for the sake of promoting the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

The CPC's six current evaluation criteria for street name changes are written as follows.

1. Streets may be named after historically significant actions, as part of a theme, or after a person who has made a demonstrable and significant positive impact on the city, state or country. In order to reduce any perception of misconduct, favoritism, or bias, no street shall be renamed to honor a person who has been deceased for less than five (5) years.
2. No fragmentation of the name of any continuous street shall be permitted. All street renaming shall occur in such a manner that one of the following two criteria are met: 1) the entire length of a continuous street shall be renamed, or 2) a section of a street shall be renamed only where such section is physically separated or obstructed from other sections of the same street by structures, parks, canals, interstates, rivers, bayous, or other significant objects, or as a result of shifts in the City's street grid pattern that causes a portion of a street to be clearly disconnected for other portions of the street.
3. The creation of duplicate street names shall not be permitted, and preference shall be given to requests for the renaming of existing duplicate street names. Street names shall be considered duplicate even if their suffixes (Street, Road, Circle, Boulevard, etc.) are different or if they have similar spellings (Claire Avenue and Clare Court) or pronunciations (Rayne Drive and Reynes Street).
4. In order to provide for consistency in the naming of streets and to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the community, all street names shall conform to the following standards:

- a. A pre-directional indicator may be included as part of a street name. When used, pre-directional indicators must precede all other components of a street name, and the use of the predirectional indicator shall be consistent with the pattern established by the City (for example, with respect to Canal Street). Only the directions North, South, East, and West shall be used as pre-directional indicators. No post-directional indicators or other direction following a name shall be permitted;
  - b. The use of punctuation marks, including but not limited to the following, are prohibited: apostrophes, brackets, colons, commas, dashes, ellipses, question marks, exclamation marks, hyphens, parentheses, periods, quotation marks, semicolons, and slashes;
  - c. Diacritical marks (for example, ç, é, ô, etc.) and hyphens may be used;
  - d. The use of abbreviations (for example, Cath., Geo., Wm., etc.) are prohibited, except as provided below;
  - e. The use of titles (for example, Empress, Honorable, King, etc.), prefixes (for example, Dr., Mr., Rev., etc.), and suffixes (for example, Esquire, M.D., Ph.D., etc.) are prohibited, with the exception that suffixes forming part of the legal name of a person, and which are necessary to distinguish between two people with the same name, may be used. In such cases, the suffixes Junior and Senior shall be abbreviated Jr. and Sr. No comma shall be used to separate such suffixes from the other portions of a name, and no period shall be used following such a suffix;
  - f. The shortest meaningful version of a proposed street name should be given preference;
  - g. No new street name shall be permitted to exceed a length of thirty (30) characters. For this purpose of this standard, each letter, hyphen, numeral and space between words with a street name, including any pre-directional prefix (for example, North South etc.) and any street type suffix (for example, Avenue, Boulevard, etc.) shall be counted as an individual character. However, no diacritical mark shall be counted as a separate character from that of the letter to which it is added.
5. The City Planning Commission may consider and recommend to the City Council any modification to a proposed street name that is deemed necessary to carry out the provisions of the Street Naming Policy or to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the community. However,

the City Planning Commission shall not recommend any changes to the name of a street or right-of-way that is outside the bounding streets or other boundaries specified on the request submitted to the City Planning Commission by the City Council.

6. The City Planning Commission may waive any of the evaluation criteria in this section as part of its recommendation when doing so is deemed necessary in order to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community.

#### *Recent Street Name Change History*

- 2015 Two street name changes were approved: SNC 1/15 for a four block portion of Carondelet Street to be named Robert C. Blakes, Sr. Drive; and, SNC 2/15 for an eleven block portion of LaSalle Street to be named Rev. John Raphael Jr. Way.
- 2013 Two street name change requests were approved: SNC 1/11 for a one block portion of University Place to be named Roosevelt Way; and, SNC 1/13 for a one block portion of Jumonville Street to be named ForeKids Drive.

### **C. Study Scope**

#### *Council Motion M-15-444*

Council Motion M-15-444 directs the City Planning Commission to conduct a study and public hearing to amend its Administrative Rules, Policies, & Procedures relative to the creation of an honorary street name change process. In light of fact that the City has no written procedure for the approval and installation of honorary street signage, the Council passed the motion in order to formalize a process which would in turn allow constituents a means of honoring or memorializing the great number of community members who have had a profound influence upon the City of New Orleans and its residents.

#### *Study Objectives*

In making its recommendation the staff relied on a thorough analysis of street naming practices employed within other communities which is found in Section III of this report. The staff looked at both the procedures other jurisdictions followed in order to process and implement honorary street signage as well as the criteria used to evaluate such proposals. In addition, the staff looked at the official street renaming policies of these communities to see how they interacted with honorary street naming policies and procedures. In examining both, the staff aimed to produce a coordinated and comprehensive recommendation. The study was guided by the following goals and objectives:

- Ensure accuracy of the City's addressing and GIS systems;
- Facilitate efficient emergency response and service delivery;
- Promote clear wayfinding throughout the streets system;

- Develop a program which affords the City the opportunity to recognize important individuals or groups within the community without impacting residents, businesses, or the provision of City services in a potentially negative way;
- Explore the role of the City Planning Commission in both the street renaming and honorary street naming processes;
- Establish an appropriate structure of governance related to the enactment of official street name changes and honorary street dedications; and
- Develop suitable criteria for the evaluation of honorary street dedication proposals as well as street name changes based on best practices.

## II. Street Renaming and Honorary Street Dedications

City streets are commonly named after people, places, or events because of their significant contributions to, or impacts on the City or community. As explained in the Section I of this report, the process for a street name change is outlined in the City Planning Commission’s Administrative Rules, Policies and Procedures. While the existing CPC policy provides a procedure for street name changes, it does not provide a procedure for honorary street dedications. To date, the City has no formal honorary street dedication policy.

The creation of an honorary street dedication program could allow those people, organizations, or entities, who may have made a significant contribution to the City of New Orleans, the State of Louisiana, or the United States, to be recognized. The difference between an honorary street dedication and an official street renaming is that a street renaming changes the official name of all or a portion of a street and all associated post addresses. An honorary street dedication, on the other hand, is a supplemental sign used to commemorate a person, group or event on a sign post adjacent to or within the primary street sign. An honorary street dedication does not require a change to the official map.

Honorary, also known as ceremonial, street dedication signage typically consists of a secondary sign that may be installed above or below an existing street name sign. An honorary street dedication does not replace the official street name or cause the need for the re-addressing the street. Honorary dedications may encompass all or a portion of an existing street. An honorary street dedication may also be installed for a predetermined period of time and later removed.



*Figure 1. Example of honorary street sign in Algiers neighborhood, installed in 2009.*

The New Orleans City Council has approved honorary street dedications in the past, though by resolution and without a formalized process. The staff found that in 2009, the Council voted to dedicate a portion of Odeon Avenue in Algiers in honor of two local churches



celebrating their anniversaries.<sup>4</sup> The churches were commemorated with the installation of several “dual street name signs” where the honorary name is located at the top of the street sign and the current street name is located at the bottom of the sign. An image of one of the installed signs can be seen in Figure 1.

### *Honorary Street Dedication Sign Components*

Most honorary street name signs in other cities are mounted above or below the primary street name sign, or are otherwise clearly distinguishable from the official street name sign. A dedication sign may also be free standing and installed at a corner or mid-point along a particular street segment. Honorary, or ceremonial, signs usually have a distinct design and a contrasting color to distinguish them from the primary street name. Some street dedication signs may also specify the word “Honorary” or use the suffix “Way” to differentiate the dedication name from the formal street name.



*Figure 2. Honorary street signage within other communities.*

<sup>4</sup> See Resolution R-09-458.

### III. Best Practices

#### *Assessment of Policies in Other Communities*

As part of this study, the City Planning Commission staff reviewed numerous municipalities with street renaming policies and honorary street naming programs. The following sample cities were chosen as examples of street renaming or honorary street dedication best practices based on their having long-established or comprehensive policies which are easily accessed within published sets of rules. Below the staff provides an account of each municipality's street renaming policy and procedure as well as an account of the process each city has followed in creating honorary street dedications.

#### **Shreveport, LA**

In recent years, the City of Shreveport's Council has authorized several honorary street name dedications through resolution.<sup>5</sup> If approved, dedication signs are typically placed at a midpoint of the roadway between two intersecting streets, and measure two feet by four feet so that the sign is legible to passing cars. Council members of Shreveport have expressed that honorary street sign dedications are a preferable way to honor individuals based on the amount of requests received and the confusion which could arise with frequent and numerous official street name changes.<sup>6</sup> Although the honorary program has become a common practice of the City of Shreveport, no formal process or evaluation criteria for such practice exist. However, in adopting a resolution, Council members usually provide a justification for the proposed honorary designation such as the honoree's contributions to the community, which is also a requirement of an official street name change.<sup>7</sup>

The City of Shreveport does have an official street naming and renaming policy which is codified in *Chapter 78 – Streets, Sidewalks, and Other Public Places* of the City's Code of Ordinances.<sup>8</sup> The code outlines the following evaluative criteria for street name changes:

1. No public street or other public property may be named for an individual until the person has been deceased for at least two years.
2. No public street or other public property that memorializes (is named for) a person shall be renamed. Only streets or public property that have generic or geographical names may be renamed.

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<sup>5</sup> The staff found several recent examples such as the dedication of the 3200 block of Lakeshore Drive in honor of Dr. Ricky J. More, Sr. in 2012, the dedication of Hutchinson Street in honor of Bishop Larry L. Brandon in 2010, and most recently, in 2015, the dedication of the 3600 block of Milton Street in honor of Joyce Bowman who served as a council member and who had passed away in 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Council Proceedings of the City of Shreveport, Louisiana February 11, 2014

<sup>7</sup> Verified by City of Shreveport Clerk of Council, Arthur G. Thompson on January 6, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Shreveport's policy and procedures are found in *Chapter 78, Article IX – Naming and Renaming Public Property*.

3. No public street shall be renamed unless the owners of two-thirds of the linear feet of the abutting property agree to change the name of a street.
4. The name of a street that is located within a designated historical district shall not be changed unless there are compelling reasons for the change.

The City of Shreveport’s Code of Ordinances also outlines the following procedural requirements for a street name change<sup>9</sup>:

1. No public property shall be renamed unless an ordinance been introduced before the city council, which shall include, as a minimum:
  - a. If the property to be named or renamed already has a name, the origin and the significance of the existing name and any historical facts about the name.
  - b. The proposed new name.
  - c. The reasons for the proposed change, including biographical information about the person if the property is to be named for an individual. The biographical information shall include any significant contributions that the person has made to the city, state, or nation, whether the person was a generally recognized community leader, the history of the person's public service, if any, and other ways the person has demonstrated outstanding service, brought recognition to, or otherwise enhanced the community.

### **New York, NY**

According to the New York City Administrative Code, no streets which are currently laid out upon the city map are to be formally renamed.<sup>10</sup> However, the City has adopted a policy in which existing streets may be “co-named,” which in other words allows them to acquire an additional honorary name. Street co-naming requests must be approved by the New York City Council. The City Council generally approves of honorary street names in batches, two to four times a year.<sup>11</sup> In June 2011, for instance, 56 thoroughfares and



*Figure 3. Example of honorary street sign in NYC.*

<sup>9</sup> Per *Chapter 78, Article IX, Section 78-452 – Procedure* of the Shreveport Code of Ordinances.

<sup>10</sup> New York City Administrative Code § 25-102.1

<sup>11</sup> Verified by Brooklyn Community Board 2 website, accessed January 7, 2016.

public places, were given honorary names.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the City Council's consideration, however, a request is reviewed by the Community Board of the borough in which the street is located. The Community Board will vote on a recommendation to send to the City Council. The City Council has adopted its own street co-naming standards, while individual community boards have also adopted additional standards for approval of honorary street names. Some approval standards outlined by the New York City Council and various community boards are as follows:

- If subjects are individuals, they must be: deceased; New York City residents or natives or individuals of particular importance to New York City; of enduring or lasting interest to large segments of the city's population or have undertaken an act or acts of enduring or lasting interest to their community; and whose importance to the city or whose enduring interest is a result of exemplary acts or achievements which reflect positively on the city.
- If subjects are organizations, they must be: of particular importance to New York City; of enduring or lasting interest to large segments of the city's population that have undertaken acts of enduring or lasting interest; and whose importance to the city or whose enduring interest is a result of exemplary acts or achievements which reflect positively on the city.
- Individual prospective honorees must be deceased for at least two years prior to consideration. Exceptions may be made however for individuals who die under infamous circumstances of crime, accident, disease, social circumstance, military service or the like, or if the death itself leads to a greater awareness within society of the cause of death and a concerted effort to address that problem.
- An application to co-name a street for an individual already honored in a similar fashion will be discouraged.

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<sup>12</sup> Legislation Text File #: Int 0590-2011, Version: A

## Charleston, SC

The City of Charleston does not have a formal honorary street naming process; however, the City recently created an honorary street district to memorialize victims of a tragic mass shooting at a church which occurred in August of 2015.<sup>13</sup> The Council could not officially rename the street because it was under the jurisdiction of the State of South Carolina.<sup>14</sup> The

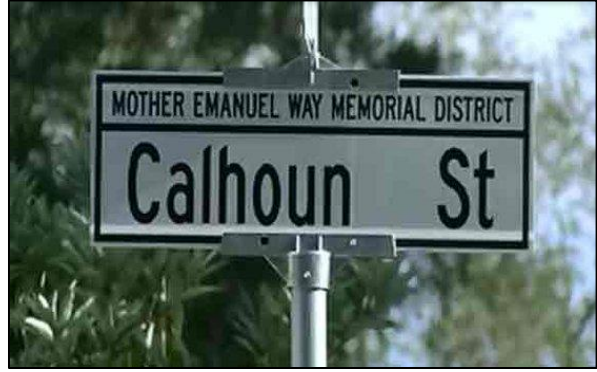


Figure 4. Honorary street sign in Charleston, SC.

honorary district, which was adopted by resolution of the City Council, spans five municipal blocks and is demarcated by a large banner sign suspended at the center of the street. The honorary name is also imprinted at the top of all relevant street signs. See Figure 4.

Though the City of Charleston does not have a formalized honorary streets program, it does have an official street naming policy which is an appendix to the City's zoning ordinance.<sup>15</sup> Charleston's zoning ordinance also outlines street design standards within a section assigned to their subdivision regulations article.<sup>16</sup> Newly proposed street names and suffixes are subject to the final review of the GIS Division of the City, while the changing of an existing street name requires the approval of Charleston's Planning Commission as well as a petition with signatures of 75% of the property owners in favor of the name change. The Charleston City Council is not involved in the process to authorize a street name change.

The City of Charleston's street naming and renaming policy outlines the following four approval criteria. The criteria are technical in nature and do not require the planning commission to evaluate the significance of the named party.

1. **Choosing a proper street name.** Proposed street names will be checked with the most current list of existing street names in Charleston County and Berkeley County. Proposed street names which duplicate or might be confused with existing street names in either County will be rejected.
2. **Choosing a proper street suffix.** Street suffixes should be chosen based on the width and design of the proposed street. Within neighborhoods, street suffixes should be used to reinforce the neighborhood's street hierarchy. The GIS Division is responsible for approving proposed street suffixes. The

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<sup>13</sup> Knich, Diane. "City Council designates portion of Calhoun Street as Mother Emanuel Way Memorial District." *The Post and Courier*. September 8, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Verified by Charleston City Attorney's Office, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> *Chapter 54, Appendix I* of the Code of the City of Charleston (Zoning Ordinance).

<sup>16</sup> *Chapter 54, Article 8 – Subdivision* of the Code of the City of Charleston (Zoning Ordinance).

following is a list of acceptable street suffixes. Suffixes other than those listed may be used with the approval of the GIS Division.

Alley	Avenue	Bend	Bluff
Boulevard	Circle	Court	Crescent
Crossing	Drive	Expressway	Highway
Landing	Lane	Loop	Parkway
Pass	Path	Pike	Place
Point	Road	Row	Run
Spur	Street	Terrace	Trace
Trail	View	Walk	Way

3. **Properly applying street names to a proposed street layout.** Street names must be applied to a proposed street layout in accordance with the following procedures. The GIS Division is responsible for approving the application of proposed street names.
  - a. Street names shall not change within a street. Extensions of existing streets should use the same name as the existing street. Streets should not change names except in the following circumstances: (offsets and 90 degree turns).
  - b. Thumbnail cul-de-sacs with a depth of more than 50 feet and four or more lots fronting on the cul-de-sac may require a separate street name if the GIS Division determines that the configuration of the lots and street would prevent the thumbnail cul-de-sac lots from being visible from the through street.
  - c. Existing patterns of applying street names within the area surrounding the proposed subdivision should be considered.
  - d. The application of street names should be as simple and sensible as possible. Unnecessary changes in street names create more confusion.
  
4. **Changing an existing street name.** The changing of an existing street name requires approval by the Planning Commission.

### **Los Angeles, CA**

Like other cities mentioned above, the City Council of Los Angeles has recently approved of ceremonial names for streets and squares without a formal honorary street naming process in place. In 2015, the Los Angeles City Council moved to place a ceremonial name at the intersection of West 24<sup>th</sup> Street and South Vermont Avenue to honor the Korean Culture Center at its centennial anniversary.<sup>17</sup> In 2014, the Council moved to install honorary street signs for all police officers who had been killed in the line of duty in the approximate location of each incident.<sup>18</sup> In

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<sup>17</sup> “LA names street corner Korean Cultural Center Square.” The Korea Times Los Angeles. October 26, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Los Angeles Council File No. 14-0560

2013, the Council moved to place an honorary title of “Sylvester Washington Court” to a portion of Wilton Place.<sup>19</sup>

The official street naming policy and process for the City of Los Angeles is outlined within the Bureau of Engineering’s Land Development Manual.<sup>20</sup> To change the name of existing street, a public hearing and approval by ordinance of the City Council is required. Generally, the City Council must determine that it is in the public interest, necessity, or convenience to change the name of a public street. The Council may initiate a motion to change a name of a street, or owners and occupants of property abutting the street may submit a petition to the City, which must be signed by a majority of property owners and occupants on the street. The City of Los Angeles has adopted evaluative criteria which are similar to those adopted in 1967 by the County of Los Angeles.

The approval criteria listed in the Los Angeles Land Development Manual are as follows:

- Historic names or names referring to applicable geographic features should be used whenever possible.
- Names of existing streets should be used on new streets which are continuous alignment with, or are continuations of existing streets.
- Duplicated names within the County should not be used for new street names.
- Streets shall not be named for any commercial organization or in a manner to honor any living person.
- The use of suffixes such as Drive, Place, Way, Boulevard, Street or Avenue should not be considered as a part of the basic name. (In the City of Los Angeles they are considered as a part of the record name and are shown on Navigate LA, the District Map and in the Official List of City Streets as such).
- The use of prefixes such as North, South, East or West should not be used, if possible, as part of the official name of the street. The Post Office uses these prefixes for mail delivery.

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<sup>19</sup> Los Angeles Council File No. 13-0238

<sup>20</sup> Land Development Manual accessed here: <http://eng.lacity.org/techdocs/landdev/index.htm>



- East and West thoroughfares shall be called “Streets”, North and South thoroughfares shall be called “Avenues”. Northwest/Southeast thoroughfares are “Streets”, Northeast/Southwest thoroughfares are “Avenues”.
- Streets adjacent to a freeway or other permanent division other than a divided highway, such as a railway, should have two different names on the two sides of such permanent division.
- The maximum length of a street name should be 16 letters including the spaces between words.
- The use of compound names shall be discouraged.
- Alleys, walks and other substandard public ways shall not be named.
- Names of streets shall be easy to pronounce or spell and should be distinctive to prevent confusion. Avoid using a name that sounds like another name. No obscenities, in any language shall be used.
- Private street names shall conform with those of public streets and shall follow the same guidelines.

### **Boston, MA**

The City of Boston has implemented very few honorary street designations in recent years. In 2007, the Boston City Council approved to give Centre Street in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood the ceremonial name of “Avenida de las Americas” in honor of the community’s Latin heritage. The honorary name is displayed on a separate sign above the official street name sign. See Figure 5. The Council has since moved away from a ceremonial street naming program because of noted confusion experienced by the local Fire Department.<sup>21</sup> They have, however, developed a square dedication program to honor local veterans and significant local leaders, which the City has dubbed as the “Hero Square” program. With this



*Figure 5. Honorary street sign in Boston’s Jamaica Plain neighborhood.*

<sup>21</sup> Conversation with Chief of Staff for Councilor At-Large, Michelle Wu, February 10, 2016.



program, an honorary designation is applied to one intersection and demarcated with a single honorific sign and plaque. The designations are approved by resolution of the City Council. To date, the city has installed over 1,000 of these honorary designations. A database of the recognized heroes is published on the City's Veterans Services website.<sup>22</sup>

Official street name changes in the City of Boston are administered solely by the Public Improvement Commission (PIC), and do not require approval by the Boston City Council. The Boston PIC adopted an official street name change policy in 2011. The policy outlines the following evaluation criteria or requirements of a street name change:

- The street name(s) shall not be eligible for change until and unless such name has been in use for twenty-five (25) years or more.
- The changed street name shall not be identical to those of the existing public and/or private ways, whether under the title of street, avenue, way, court, place, alley, or other descriptive title.
- The street name change shall not be used to honor any living person.
- The PIC shall also take the following additional factors into consideration, including but not limited to (1) public safety, (2) rights of way management and public travel, (3) historic preservation, (4) potential impact on abutting community, and (5) other legitimate concerns.

The policy also outlines a petition requirement where at least 50 percent of all adjacent property owners must sign in approval of the proposed name change. This petition must be submitted with the initial application. The PIC is then required to hold a public hearing. The PIC is not to approve of a street name change unless 100 percent of "qualified abutters" consent to the change.<sup>23</sup>

## **Chicago, IL**

The naming of new public streets in the City of Chicago is done at the discretion of the Commissioner of Transportation through the Office and Maps and Plats. It is the policy of the Office of Maps and Plats that whenever possible, street names will be assigned in keeping with existing streets in the same plane, elsewhere within the City.<sup>24</sup> The City rarely allows for the changing of existing street names because of long length of most streets and the sheer impact on the number of abutting properties which would be

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.cityofboston.gov/veterans/herosquares/>

<sup>23</sup> City of Boston Public Improvement Commission's Policy for Name Changes and Square Dedication for Public Way and Private Way, August 11, 2011.

<sup>24</sup> City of Chicago, Street and Site Plan Design Standards.

impacted.<sup>25</sup> However, for a long time the City has had in place an honorary street name program, and Chicago is known for its prolific amount of honorary streets. The Honorary Street Name Ordinance was passed in December of 1984, and since then several other communities in the greater Chicago area have adopted similar ordinances and standards for the implementation of honorary street names. Honorary street designations are initiated by an alderman at his or her discretion and then passed onto the entire Council for final approval by ordinance. If approved, the Department of Transportation is charged with the installation of the signage. According to the Department of Transportation, an honorary street sign is posted for a period of three years.<sup>26</sup>

### **Milwaukee, WI**

The City of Milwaukee has both an official street name change and honorary street naming policy which are codified within its Code of Ordinances.<sup>27</sup> The policy stipulates that official street names “may be changed only in exceptional cases and only when compelling reasons for change are evident.” It also requires that “priority shall be given to names reflecting the city's cultural diversity and the contributions of groups underrepresented in the existing nomenclature” with regard to an official street name change as well as an honorary street name designation.

The policy outlines the creation of a *Citizen Advisory Committee* with the specified task of making a recommendation to the Milwaukee City Council regarding proposals to name or rename streets or to assign honorary street names. The committee consists of seven members who are residents of the city of Milwaukee and who hold no other public office or public employment. Committee members are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the council to serve staggered 3-year terms. Members of the committee include at least one recognized local historian, one representative of a local business association or chamber of commerce, and one employee of a local nonprofit community organization. The Citizen Advisory Committee must hold a public meeting at which a proposal for a street name change or honorary street designation is discussed. The Citizen Advisory Committee then makes a recommendation which is presented at another public hearing of the City Council.

Milwaukee's Code of Ordinances details a comprehensive application process for both street name change requests and honorary street dedication requests. Part of the approval process for a street name change includes the mailing out of post card surveys to all residents, businesses, and owners of property along the street. The council will not consider a request that has received less than 50 percent of petition

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<sup>25</sup> Verified in conversation with a staff member of the Office of Maps and Plats, February 16, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Verified in conversation with Deputy Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Transportation, February 16, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> *Ch. 113 – Arrangement of City Streets* of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances

responses in support of the name change request. The policy also outlines several evaluation criteria which must be considered by both the City Council and the Citizen Advisory Committee. The criteria are illustrated as follows:

Milwaukee's City Planning Commission is not a part of the approval process for a proposed honorary street designation or for a proposed street name change. Milwaukee's Code of Ordinances does call for the City Planning Commission to evaluate changes to the City's Official Map; however, these changes do not relate to names of streets, but to the establishment of new exterior lines for new streets, or the widening, narrowing, or closure of existing streets.

### *Key Findings*

#### **Street Name Change Best Practices**

With regard to street name change approval processes, the staff found the following best practices among the communities surveyed in this study.

- Most communities do not allow for the renaming of existing streets. If they do, most involve exceptional cases where a compelling reason for renaming exists.
- In most cities, if streets are to be named after an individual, the person should be of importance to the community or have made a significant contribution to society.
- Several communities require a certain percentage of support from abutting properties for a street name change proposal, even though the means of obtaining such information may be difficult.
- Most street name change policies are effectuated through the adoption of an ordinance by the jurisdiction's city council. The exceptions to this finding include the City of Charleston, where the Planning Commission is the sole entity to approve of street name changes, and the City of Boston, where its Public Improvement Commission is the sole entity which approves of street name changes.
- Street name change policies are housed in varying sets of laws or rule documents. Some are housed within a zoning ordinance, while others are located with a "Streets" chapter of the city code.
- Several street name change policies stipulate that approval by the jurisdiction's GIS department is required.
- Most cities do not require approval or consideration by a planning department.

#### **Honorary Street Dedication Best Practices**

With regard to honorary street naming programs, the staff found the following best practices among the communities surveyed in this study.

- An honorary street designation typically encompasses a one block portion of a street, or a single intersection if the dedication is an honorary square.
- Most honorary street designations are enacted by resolution of a city council.
- Most cities require honorees to be individuals or groups who are of particular importance and who have made a substantial positive contribution to the

community. Honorees have included veterans, civic leaders and public servants, victims of crime, among others.

- Some, though not all, cities require honorees to be deceased.
- Most cities prohibit corporations as candidates for an honorary designation.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

The creation of an honorary street name dedication program provides city officials the opportunity to commemorate citizens who have made significant contributions to the community in a tangible way. Further, the installation of honorary street signage provides a lasting memorial to those important community members, but without causing any of the potential burdens associated with a modification to the Official Map as would a permanent street name change. However, the adoption of an honorary street designation program would not preclude the City from making an official street name change if such were necessary.

The frequent renaming of streets as a method of honoring proves problematic as it has a substantial financial impact on the City and adjacent residents and businesses. Though the design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance costs associated with an honorary street sign would be similar to those associated with an official street name sign, the implementation of an honorary street name would not result in the multiple indirect costs associated with an official street name change, such as the costs of changing maps and records incurred by the City, the costs of ancillary signage, and the costs of changing stationary, checks, subscriptions, billing, etc. incurred by affected businesses and residents. The renaming of a streets which would result in street fragmentation or which disrupt the City's existing historic theme-name systems could also impair the provision of essential services by creating difficulties for emergency vehicles, utility distribution, trash collection, and mail delivery. For these reasons, the staff believes that an honorary street dedication program could provide the Council with an alternative which could avoid the above mentioned complications.

The staff found that several jurisdictions across the country have instituted some form of an honorary street dedication program. Further, all jurisdictions reviewed in this analysis, with or without a formal honorary street naming process, have recently approved of ceremonial street names for existing streets as a means of paying tribute to community members or groups. Honorary street naming programs have proven successful in that they have allowed each city to honor numerous deserving individuals and groups, more than would be possible without such a policy.

The staff recognizes, also, that cities are living and changing entities which, from time to time, need adjustment in order to mirror the moral sense of the community as well as its culture, its social institutions, and its historic events. For this reason specifically, the staff believes that an existing street name may warrant an official change as opposed to an honorary designation. The staff believes the existing street name policy could, with minor amendments, sufficiently govern the City's street renaming process when necessitated.

Below, the staff makes a recommendation in two parts: one part related to the development of an honorary street dedication program, and the second part related to modifications to the City Planning Commission's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures in order to complement the proposed honorary street naming policy as well as further delineate the separate roles of the City Planning Commission and the City Council in the honorary and official street naming process.

**A. Honorary Street Dedication Program Recommendation**

The staff believes the Council should adopt a policy which sets out criteria as well as an approval process for the implementation of an honorary street dedication. Because of the inherent relationship between a City Councilmember and his or her constituents, the staff believes evaluations of honorary street dedications would most appropriately be made by the Council as opposed to the City Planning Commission. Further, because per the Home Rule Charter the City Planning Commission is to oversee the Official Map, and because the creation of an honorary street name would not affect the Official Map, the recommendation of the City Planning Commission is not necessitated in this process. Therefore, the staff recommends that the proposed honorary street dedication policy not be placed within the City Planning Commission's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures. The staff believes the Council should adopt their own honorary or ceremonial street dedication policy. Based on best practices of other communities and based on the precedent already set through Council's previous honorary street name approvals, the staff offers the following guidance related to the evaluation and approval process for proposed honorary street dedications.

*Policy Considerations*

**Approval Criteria**

The Council should adopt its own evaluation criteria for honorary street designations, as deemed appropriate by its members. These criteria should primarily relate to the honoree's significance within the community. Of the cities researched in this study, those with a written honorary street naming policy consistently require that the honoree, whether a group or individual, to have made a demonstrable and significant positive impact on the community. Other policies stipulate that a candidate for an honorary street designation shall have been a continuing contributor to the cultural, economic, educational, intellectual, political or scientific vitality of the community, or have made an extraordinary contribution in the service of humanity. The staff found that it is also common for cities to reject proposals which would honor commercial or corporate entities as it could confer competitive advantage, benefit, or preferential treatment to the named party. Similarly, the Council may want to prohibit honorary designations for corporate entities, as well as exclude candidates who may be already honored within the city in a similar fashion. The staff also found that it is common practice that an individual being honored must be deceased, though not all cities researched require this condition. For example, the City of Milwaukee specifies that honorees are required to be at least 70 years in age.

### **Length of Street Designation**

The Council may consider a policy to limit the length of an honorary street designation. The staff found that in other communities where honorary street names have been implemented, most were limited to a portion of a street, commonly ranging from one block to five blocks long. The Council may also opt to implement an honorary square designation program, as opposed to an honorary street designation program, as is practiced in the City of Boston.

### **Signage Design**

The cities researched in this analysis appear to employ varying methods of signage design in order to differentiate honorary street signs from official street signs. Some cities inscribe the honorary name on the same sign where the official street name is printed, though with a smaller font size or color in order to differentiate between the two. Other cities, such as Chicago and New York, inscribe an honorary name on a sign of its own, and place it above or below the official street name sign. The City of Shreveport places a large honorary plaque at the midpoint of a block, as opposed to at an intersection near the regular street sign. In most cities the honorary street name sign is a different color, making it easily distinguishable. The Council should establish standards related to the design and fabrication of the honorary street signage. Since there is precedent within the city, the Council may want to adopt the same style for future honorary signs as the style of those signs already installed (i.e., Odeon Avenue).

### **Use of Prefixes and Suffixes**

In order to promote consistency the Council may consider a policy related to the use of prefixes and suffixes for honorary street names. In Chicago, for example, all honorary street name designations use “honorary” as a prefix, such as Honorary Ann “Eppie” Landers Way. Several other cities appear to use “way” as a suffix for all honorary street designations. Using consistent prefixes and suffixes also helps travelers easily distinguish honorary signs from regular street name signs.

### **Number of Dedications Approved**

The staff found that a possible disadvantage of an honorary street name program is that it could potentially cause confusion to the public by virtue of multiple additional and different street names.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, the staff would advise that the Council consider placing limits on the number of honorary street designations approved per year. Some cities limit the number of honorary street sign installations per year to one per district. To cut down on time spent processing honorary street dedications, the New York City Council only considers requests in batches limited to two to four times per year. If the number of times or dates when honorary street dedications could be considered were to be limited, then the Council would have to set deadlines for applications.

### **Period of Designation**

On account of the fact that signage will degrade over time and may require replacement, the Council may consider a policy to limit the period of time in which an honorary street designation is effective (e.g., 5, 10, 20 years, etc.). The City of Chicago’s policy stipulates

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<sup>28</sup> This problem was noted by several communities researched in this study.

that honorary signs are valid for a period of three years. If such a policy were to be put into place, the Council may also want to consider establishing a procedure related to the renewal of an honorary street dedication.

### **Fees**

Most communities with established honorary street dedication programs require applicants to supply the cost of the design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of honorary signage. Some cities also assess an application fee in order to cover associated administrative costs of a review. For example, the City of Milwaukee Code of Ordinances requires an application fee of 100 dollars for both a street renaming and honorary street designation request. For the recent honorary street name approvals in New Orleans, the Department of Public Works valued the cost of the signage, labor, and associated parts and equipment to approximately 60 dollars per sign. The staff recommends the Council consult with the Department of Public Works in order to establish a standard honorary street sign design and then determine its value.

### *Suggested Application Process for Honorary Street Dedication*

Below are suggested procedural guidelines for requests for honorary street designations. The suggested language includes application submittal requirements and a process for review. The staff suggests that the primary review and evaluation be administered by the City Council. However, the staff suggests that the Department of Public Works should review technical aspects of the request such as compliance with traffic design standards. The staff also suggests that proposals located within the Vieux Carré or within a local historic district be reviewed by these respective commissions, similar to the process for a street name change request. Because the installation of an honorary street designation would not change the Official Map, the staff does not recommend review by the City Planning Commission.

The suggested honorary street dedication application process is illustrated as follows.

### **Procedure**

1. Requests for the consideration of an honorary street designation on public property shall be sent in writing to the Councilmember or Councilmembers in whose district the subject street is located. All requests must include the following information:
  - a. Name of person or group requesting the street name change;
  - b. Contact person and address;
  - c. Location of proposed honorary street dedication, including total length of the street to be affected and bounding streets or other boundaries;
  - d. Proposed honorary designation;

- e. A biography of the person to be honored, or a description of the organization, object, or event to be honored, whichever is applicable;
  - f. An explanation of the reason for the honorary designation; and
  - g. A statement of cost from the Department of Public Works for the installation and maintenance of the proposed honorary street signs.
2. Upon receipt of a complete request, the City Council staff will conduct a background analysis of the proposed honoree, evaluate the street dedication request in terms of the approval criteria contained in this section, and produce a statement of findings. The statement and all other relevant information shall be forwarded to all Council members, who have up to 30 days in which to comment. If there is objection to the proposal, the Council member may flag a candidate as in need of further consideration.
  3. Upon receipt of a complete request, the Council staff shall also forward the proposal to the Department of Public Works for review, who will have 30 days to respond. The Department of Public Works shall consider impacts such as the impact of multiple signs on the street and shall ensure that the proposed signage would not be confusing to the public.
  4. If the proposed street dedication is located within the Vieux Carré or one of the city's designated local historic districts, the Council staff shall forward the proposal to the Vieux Carré Commission, the Historic District Landmarks Commission, or the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission, and shall request their review and comment. The respective agencies will have up to 30 days to comment. If there is objection to the proposal, the Council member may flag a candidate as in need of further consideration.
  5. If a resolution to effectuate the proposed honorary street dedication is adopted by the City, then the party requesting the dedication shall deposit funds for the cost of the signage with the City of New Orleans in such manner as is deemed appropriate by the Department of Finance. Upon receipt of funds the signage will be supplied and installed by the Department of Public Works in accordance with the City's existing design standards.

**B. Proposed Amendments to Current Street Renaming Policy**

The staff believes the City Planning Commission's current street renaming policy, which was recently amended in 2014, will sufficiently govern the street renaming process for future requests to change the Official Map. The staff, however, recommends that the policy be amended in order to be consistent with the presumptions described in the previous section regarding the suggested honorary street dedication program. As stated previously, the staff believes it should be the sole responsibility of the City Council to determine the validity of the biography or character of the proposed named party, and to accept or decline



the request based on these factors. Therefore, the staff recommends that the evaluative criteria listed in the current street renaming policy should be amended to exclude all language which would give the City Planning Commission authority to evaluate the significance of a named party, and limit the evaluation to only technical matters which the staff believes is the more appropriate responsibility of the CPC per the Home Rule Charter.

The staff recommends the following changes to the policy which would distinguish both the roles of City Council and the City Planning Commission in evaluating street name change proposals, and which would limit the CPC's evaluation to only those pertinent technical matters. Additions to the CPC's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures are shown below as **underlined, bold** text and deletions are shown in ~~strike through~~ text:

#### 4. **Street Naming Policy**

[...]

##### B. Procedure

1. All requests must be channeled through the respective Councilmember. A written request for consideration of a street name change must be sent to the Councilmember or Councilmembers in whose district the subject street is located. **The written request shall include an explanation of the reason for the street name change, and if applicable, the biography of the individual, or a description of the organization, object, or event, to be named. The City Council shall evaluate whether or not the named individual or organization has made a demonstrable and significant positive impact on the city, state, or country.** The Councilmember(s) shall in turn request that the City Planning Commission and the Department of Public Works review the proposal. Prior to submitting such a request, the Councilmember or his or her designee must first meet 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 geographical features in the vicinity of the subject street. All requests for consideration by the City Planning Commission must include the following information:
  - a. Name of person or group requesting the street name change;
  - b. Contact person and address;
  - c. Location of proposed name change, including total length of the street to be affected and bounding streets or other

boundaries;

- d. Total number of lots affected by proposal;
- e. Total number of residential, commercial, and industrial uses affected by proposal;
- f. Proposed street name; and
- g. Reason for the change.

[...]

### **C. Evaluation Criteria**

- 1. Streets may be named after ~~historically significant~~ **historic** actions or events, as part of a theme, or after a person ~~who has made a demonstrable and significant positive impact on the city, state or country. In order to reduce any perception of misconduct, favoritism, or bias, no street shall be renamed to honor a person who has been deceased for less than five (5) years.~~

[...]

### **V. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 1. Instituting an Honorary Street Dedication Policy would allow the City to honor deserving individuals and groups without resulting in the possible fragmenting of the street network or eliciting the multiple indirect costs associated with an official street name change.
- 2. Eliminating the requirement that the City Planning Commission evaluate the significance of individuals or groups of the proposed street name change would allow the CPC to evaluate each request solely based on technical criteria.

### **VI. City Planning Commission Meeting (February 29, 2016)**

The City Planning Commission considered the study at the February 29, 2016 meeting. The staff summarized the study and the staff's recommendation. There were no speakers on the attached public hearing speaker sheet.

Commissioner Wedberg stated that the recommendation regarding honorary street dedications should be amended to include emphasis on the importance of establishing a pre-paid fee which also takes into account the opportunity costs associated with the installation of honorary signage. In other words, the fee should reflect the staff time and

cost or loss associated with the giving up of an alternative public service more aligned with the public good (e.g., street repairs and pothole filling).

Commissioner Mora proposed an additional amendment to the recommendation regarding official street changes. The Commissioner recommended that CPC's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures be amended to prohibit streets from being named after a juridical person, or corporation.

Commissioner Brown made a motion for approval with the above mentioned amendments, which was seconded by Commissioner Mora.

Motion:

BE IT MOVED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION THAT THE HONORARY STREET NAME STUDY IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS AMENDED. BE IT FURTHER MOVED THAT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO NOTIFY THE CITY COUNCIL OF SAID ACTION.

YEAS: Allen, Brown, Duplessis, Marshall, Mora, Steeg, Wedberg

NAYS: Mitchell

ABSENT: None

The motion passed. The final recommendation of the City Planning Commission including all amendments are shown below. The City Planning Commission amendments are shown in red, **additions are shown in bold** and eliminations are shown in ~~strike through text~~.

### **Part I: Honorary Street Dedication Program Recommendation**

The Council should adopt a policy which sets out criteria as well as an approval process for the implementation of an honorary street dedication. Because of the inherent relationship between a City Councilmember and his or her constituents, evaluations of honorary street dedications would most appropriately be made by the Council as opposed to the City Planning Commission. Further, because per the Home Rule Charter the City Planning Commission is to oversee the Official Map, and because the creation of an honorary street name would not affect the Official Map, the recommendation of the City Planning Commission is not necessitated in this process. Therefore, it is recommended that the proposed honorary street dedication policy not be placed within the City Planning Commission's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures. The Council should adopt their own honorary or ceremonial street dedication policy. Based on best practices of other communities and based on the precedent already set through Council's previous honorary street name approvals, the following guidance is offered related to the evaluation and approval process for proposed honorary street dedications.

#### *Policy Considerations*

### **Approval Criteria**

The Council should adopt its own evaluation criteria for honorary street designations, as deemed appropriate by its members. These criteria should primarily relate to the honoree's significance within the community. Of the cities researched in this study, those with a written honorary street naming policy consistently require that the honoree, whether a group or individual, to have made a demonstrable and significant positive impact on the community. Other policies stipulate that a candidate for an honorary street designation shall have been a continuing contributor to the cultural, economic, educational, intellectual, political or scientific vitality of the community, or have made an extraordinary contribution in the service of humanity. The staff found that it is also common for cities to reject proposals which would honor commercial or corporate entities as it could confer competitive advantage, benefit, or preferential treatment to the named party. Similarly, the Council may want to prohibit honorary designations for corporate entities, as well as exclude candidates who may be already honored within the city in a similar fashion. The staff also found that it is common practice that an individual being honored must be deceased, though not all cities researched require this condition. For example, the City of Milwaukee specifies that honorees are required to be at least 70 years in age.

### **Length of Street Designation**

The Council may consider a policy to limit the length of an honorary street designation. The staff found that in other communities where honorary street names have been implemented, most were limited to a portion of a street, commonly ranging from one block to five blocks long. The Council may also opt to implement an honorary square designation program, as opposed to an honorary street designation program, as is practiced in the City of Boston.

### **Signage Design**

The cities researched in this analysis appear to employ varying methods of signage design in order to differentiate honorary street signs from official street signs. Some cities inscribe the honorary name on the same sign where the official street name is printed, though with a smaller font size or color in order to differentiate between the two. Other cities, such as Chicago and New York, inscribe an honorary name on a sign of its own, and place it above or below the official street name sign. The City of Shreveport places a large honorary plaque at the midpoint of a block, as opposed to at an intersection near the regular street sign. In most cities the honorary street name sign is a different color, making it easily distinguishable. The Council should establish standards related to the design and fabrication of honorary street signage. Since there is precedent within the city, the Council may want to adopt the same style for future honorary signs as the style of those signs already installed (i.e., Odeon Avenue).

### **Use of Prefixes and Suffixes**

In order to promote consistency the Council may consider a policy related to the use of prefixes and suffixes for honorary street names. In Chicago, for example, all honorary street name designations use "honorary" as a prefix, such as Honorary Ann "Eppie" Landers Way. Several other cities appear to use "way" as a suffix for all honorary street

designations. Using consistent prefixes and suffixes also helps travelers easily distinguish honorary signs from regular street name signs.

### **Number of Dedications Approved**

The staff found that a possible disadvantage of an honorary street name program is that it could potentially cause confusion to the public by virtue of multiple additional and different street names.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, the Council could consider placing limits on the number of honorary street designations approved per year. Some cities limit the number of honorary street sign installations per year to one per district. To cut down on time spent processing honorary street dedications, the New York City Council only considers requests in batches limited to two to four times per year. If the number of times or dates when honorary street dedications could be considered were to be limited, then the Council would have to set deadlines for applications.

### **Period of Designation**

On account of the fact that signage will degrade over time and may require replacement, the Council may consider a policy to limit the period of time in which an honorary street designation is effective (e.g., 5, 10, 20 years, etc.). The City of Chicago's policy stipulates that honorary signs are valid for a period of three years. If such a policy were to be put into place, the Council may also want to consider establishing a procedure related to the renewal of an honorary street dedication.

### **Fees**

Most communities with established honorary street dedication programs require applicants to supply the cost of the design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of honorary signage. Some cities also assess an application fee in order to cover associated administrative costs of a review. For example, the City of Milwaukee Code of Ordinances requires an application fee of 100 dollars for both a street renaming and honorary street designation request. For the recent honorary street name approvals in New Orleans, the Department of Public Works valued the cost of the signage, labor, and associated parts and equipment to approximately 60 dollars per sign. The Council should consult with the Department of Public Works in order to establish a standard honorary street sign design and then determine its value. **It is also recommended that fees for honorary street dedications not be so low as to exclude a value for the opportunity costs associated with the City's implementation of honorary street signage. In installing honorary signage, the City may forego or delay carrying out other important public services, such as pothole filling or repairs to other public infrastructure. Fees should encompass this opportunity cost.**

### *Suggested Application Process for Honorary Street Dedication*

Below are suggested procedural guidelines for requests for honorary street designations. The suggested language includes application submittal requirements and a process for review. The primary review and evaluation should be administered by the City Council. However, it is suggested that the Department of Public Works should review technical

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<sup>29</sup> This problem was noted by several communities researched in this study.

aspects of the request such as compliance with traffic design standards. Proposals located within the Vieux Carré or within a local historic district should also be reviewed by these respective commissions, similar to the process for a street name change request. Because the installation of an honorary street designation would not change the Official Map, review by the City Planning Commission is unnecessary.

The suggested honorary street dedication application process is illustrated as follows.

### **Procedure**

1. Requests for the consideration of an honorary street designation on public property shall be sent in writing to the Councilmember or Councilmembers in whose district the subject street is located. All requests must include the following information:
  - a. Name of person or group requesting the street name change;
  - b. Contact person and address;
  - c. Location of proposed honorary street dedication, including total length of the street to be affected and bounding streets or other boundaries;
  - d. Proposed honorary designation;
  - e. A biography of the person to be honored, or a description of the organization, object, or event to be honored, whichever is applicable;
  - f. An explanation of the reason for the honorary designation; and
  - g. A statement of cost from the Department of Public Works for the installation and maintenance of the proposed honorary street signs.
2. Upon receipt of a complete request, the City Council staff will conduct a background analysis of the proposed honoree, evaluate the street dedication request in terms of the approval criteria contained in this section, and produce a statement of findings. The statement and all other relevant information shall be forwarded to all Council members, who have up to 30 days in which to comment. If there is objection to the proposal, the Council member may flag a candidate as in need of further consideration.
3. Upon receipt of a complete request, the Council staff shall also forward the proposal to the Department of Public Works for review, who will have 30 days to respond. The Department of Public Works shall consider impacts such as the impact of multiple signs on the street and shall ensure that the proposed signage would not be confusing to the public.
4. If the proposed street dedication is located within the Vieux Carré or one of the city's designated local historic districts, the Council staff shall forward the proposal to the Vieux Carré Commission, the Historic District Landmarks Commission, or the Central Business District Historic District

Landmarks Commission, and shall request their review and comment. The respective agencies will have up to 30 days to comment. If there is objection to the proposal, the Council member may flag a candidate as in need of further consideration.

5. If a resolution to effectuate the proposed honorary street dedication is adopted by the City, then the party requesting the dedication shall deposit funds for the cost of the signage **and the fee for installation** with the City of New Orleans in such manner as is deemed appropriate by the Department of Finance. Upon receipt of funds the signage will be supplied and installed by the Department of Public Works in accordance with the City's existing design standards.

## **Part II: Proposed Amendments to Current Street Renaming Policy**

The City Planning Commission's current street renaming policy, which was recently amended in 2014, will sufficiently govern the street renaming process for future requests to change the Official Map. The Commission, however, recommends that the policy be amended in order to be consistent with the presumptions described in the previous section regarding the suggested honorary street dedication program. As stated previously, it should be the sole responsibility of the City Council to determine the validity of the biography or character of the proposed named party, and to accept or decline the request based on these factors. Therefore, it is recommended that the evaluative criteria listed in the current street renaming policy should be amended to exclude all language which would give the City Planning Commission authority to evaluate the significance of a named party, and limit the evaluation to only technical matters which the staff believes is the more appropriate responsibility of the CPC per the Home Rule Charter.

The City Planning Commission recommends the following changes to the policy which would distinguish both the roles of City Council and the City Planning Commission in evaluating street name change proposals, and which would limit the CPC's evaluation to only those pertinent technical matters. Additions to the CPC's Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures are shown below as **underlined, bold** text and deletions are shown in ~~strikethrough~~ text:

### **4. Street Naming Policy**

[...]

#### **B. Procedure**

1. All requests must be channeled through the respective Councilmember. A written request for consideration of a street name change must be sent to the Councilmember or Councilmembers in whose district the subject street is located. **The written request shall include an explanation of the reason for the street name change, and if applicable, the biography of the individual, or a**

**description of the organization, object, or event, to be named. The City Council shall evaluate whether or not the named individual or organization has made a demonstrable and significant positive impact on the city, state, or country.** The Councilmember(s) shall in turn request that the City Planning Commission and the Department of Public Works review the proposal. Prior to submitting such a request, the Councilmember or his or her designee must first meet 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 geographical features in the vicinity of the subject street. All requests for consideration by the City Planning Commission must include the following information:

- a. Name of person or group requesting the street name change;
- b. Contact person and address;
- c. Location of proposed name change, including total length of the street to be affected and bounding streets or other boundaries;
- d. Total number of lots affected by proposal;
- e. Total number of residential, commercial, and industrial uses affected by proposal;
- f. Proposed street name; and
- g. Reason for the change.

[...]

### C. Evaluation Criteria

1. Streets may be named after ~~historically significant~~ **historic** actions or events, as part of a theme, or after a person, **but not a corporation**. ~~who has made a demonstrable and significant positive impact on the city, state or country. In order to reduce any perception of misconduct, favoritism, or bias, no street shall be renamed to honor a person who has been deceased for less than five (5) years.~~

[...]



**VII. Reasons for Recommendation**

1. Instituting an Honorary Street Dedication Policy would allow the City to honor deserving individuals and groups without resulting in the possible fragmenting of the street network or eliciting the multiple indirect costs associated with an official street name change.
2. Eliminating the requirement that the City Planning Commission evaluate the significance of individuals or groups of the proposed street name change would allow the CPC to evaluate each request solely based on technical criteria.

**VIII. Next Steps**

This study, conducted at the request of City Council Motion M-15-444, has been considered City Planning Commission and a recommendation has been approved. This recommendation is now forwarded to the City Council. If the Council chooses to adopt an honorary street naming policy as recommended by the City Planning Commission, its members could elect to either amend the City Council’s Rules and Regulations to include a new honorary street dedication policy, or amend the Code of Ordinances in order to codify the new honorary street dedication policy.<sup>30</sup> If the City Planning Commission chooses to move forward with the recommended amendments to the Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures as stated in this report, the Commission would have to act in accordance with *Chapter 2, Article XI, Section 2-1000 – Departmental Regulations* of the Code of Ordinances. Amendments to the City Planning Commission’s Administrative Rules, Policies, and Procedures are ultimately considered by the City Council and approved by means of a resolution.

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<sup>30</sup> In accordance with Chapter 1, Section 1-10 – Amendments to Code.

**MOTION**

**NO. M-15-444**

**CITY HALL: September 3, 2015**

**BY: COUNCILMEMBER  CANDRELL**

**SECONDED BY:**

**BE IT MOVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That**  
the City Planning Commission is directed to conduct a study and public hearing to amend its  
Administrative Rules, Policies & Procedures relative to the creation of an honorary street name  
change process.

**THE FOREGOING MOTION WAS READ IN FULL, THE ROLL WAS CALLED**  
**ON THE ADOPTION OF THEREOF AND RESULTED AS FOLLOWS:**

**YEAS:**

**NAYS:**

**ABSENT:**

**AND THE MOTION WAS ADOPTED.**