

From: [Josh Geyer](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Item 6-B (2021-514): City Facility Naming Policy and Procedures
Date: Friday, February 12, 2021 1:17:32 PM

Mayor and Councilmembers,

The city has recently begun revisiting the names of public facilities named after historical figures whose actions and beliefs are in conflict with our community's values. In 2019, the school board voted to rename Haight Elementary School after it came to light that the school's eponymous figure, Henry Huntley Haight, advanced stridently racist, misogynist and xenophobic views as governor of California. On January 19th this year, City Council voted to rename Jackson Park in recognition of Andrew Jackson's central role in the Trail of Tears and his enslavement of hundreds of Africans. I am heartened to see these continuing efforts to reassess the names of city facilities in the context of growing awareness about the legacy and ongoing harms of institutional racism, most recently by considering revising City facility naming policy and procedures.

I am a member of Rename Jackson Park and have been interested for several years in attempting to rename Jackson Street. Having talked to the Planning Department and activists who have initiated petitions to rename Calhoun Street and Hayes Avenue, I believe that while the City's facility naming policy needs to be expanded and clarified and that the draft policies submitted to the Council has merit, the unique relationship of residents to their street address will prevent effectual use of this policy to initiate street renamings. Further, it highlights a serious drawback of relying on citizen-initiated renaming requests that the draft policy adopts.

Unique among other types of city facilities, the Planning Department's policy is not to proceed with a renaming process without support from over 50% of owners of properties addressed on a street, and the draft policy maintains this threshold. As a result, a small number of property owners can effectively block any street renaming effort. The problem with this policy has become clear now that Alameda has started declaring that the words and deeds of certain historical figures are in conflict with our community's values and disqualifying them from being attached to city facilities. If, for instance, Andrew Jackson's ethnic cleansing and enslavement make his name an unacceptable eponym for a park, shouldn't that same analysis apply to any city facility? The answer is clearly yes, and as such I do not believe the new facility renaming policy should set obtaining majority property owner consent as the bar a renaming process must clear to proceed.

I support the proposal in Rasheed Shabbaz's February 2 correspondence to create a commission on renaming city facilities in the model of the New Orleans Street Renaming Commission, empowered to codify guiding principles for renaming city facilities and provided with sufficient resources to survey all Alameda facility names and identify those

that are potentially in conflict with those principles. However, I believe that establishing this commission should obviate the need for community members to petition to rename city facilities, at least in the near term. Looking systematically at every name that appears on a city facility should catch most if not all examples of names that are in conflict with guiding principles. This is simply far more efficient than potentially requiring activists to initiate separate petitions for each offensive name that then trigger their own renaming processes, burdening already stretched city staff and the Planning Commission.

Moreover, I believe that while circulating petitions has been useful for raising the profile of the most egregious facility eponyms and generating community support for changing them, requiring community members who have experienced generational harm at the hands of figures like Haight and Jackson to convince 500 or 1,000 other people that the harm is real and must be remedied is a flawed model. While the city is to some extent a democracy in which our representatives respond to what the majority of voters want, this principle cannot extend to people's fundamental dignity. Due to events over the past several years, it has been revealed to many of us white people that the presence in their communities of statues and other public facilities dedicated to Confederate generals and racist politicians is an ever-present injury to Black and brown people. It should no longer be necessary for Black and Native Alamedans to gather signatures to validate the harm that figures like Jackson did to their ancestors. In our ongoing efforts to form a more perfect Alameda, one that lives up to our aspiration that "everyone belongs here," we need to take it upon ourselves collectively to recognize the indignity that facility names like Jackson, Haight, and Calhoun impose on our neighbors, and collectively take proactive steps to remove the sources of that harm and open up space to move toward healing.

Thank you,
Josh Geyer

From: [Drew Dara-Abrams](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re Item 6-C Recommendation to Provide Feedback on City Facility Naming Policy and Procedures
Date: Tuesday, February 2, 2021 2:56:42 PM

Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Councilmembers,

I'm pleased to see the City Council thinking through standard policies for how to consider renaming city facilities and streets.

Last year here on Calhoun Street, we collected over 700 signatures on an online petition to start a process to re-evaluate the street's name. We've had open discussions across Nextdoor, Facebook, and other online forums. And the question of whether to rename Calhoun Street has been featured on the front page of the Alameda Sun, with multiple letters to the editor inside the paper. However, we still have not been able to get guidance from the city on how to proceed.

There are so many pressing matters for the city these days, so we certainly don't mean to fault city staff! It looks like what is missing here is a policy set by council so that city staff can have clarity of how to advise residents and community stakeholders who are interested in these matters.

Re the proposed policy on street renamings, let me offer two specific suggestions:

- All current residents on a street should be allowed to sign a petition to rename that street. This should include both property owners and renters. One of our neighbors has rented many years longer than we have owned our house here on Calhoun — we should both be able to have a voice on this matter.

- Please consider directing staff to research the practical effects of renaming a street for residents and businesses. Specifically, how would USPS treat mail sent to the old and new street names, how would the county assessor's office handle property records mentioning the street, and how would signage be transitioned from an old to a new name. It's understandable that some residents or businesses may be hesitant to support an effort to rename a street because of practical concerns. Having this information assembled in advance by the city could help to remove some uncertainty and let community members discuss and debate the substance of whether to rename a street.

Thanks to city council, the relevant commissions, and city staff for helping to run such a productive renaming process for the former Jackson Park — and for now working on a policy to enable community-led renaming processes for the handful of places like Calhoun Street that don't speak to Alameda's values in the 21st century.

Sincerely,
Drew Dara-Abrams
Calhoun St.

From: [Rasheed El Shabazz](#)
To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] (6-C) City Facility (Re)Naming Policy & Procedures (2021-514)
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 2:35:06 PM
Attachments: [We sent you safe versions of your files.msg](#)
[renaming commission resolution.pdf](#)

Mimecast Attachment Protection has deemed this file to be safe, but always exercise caution when opening files.

Peace Mayor and City Council,

I am writing to share a few suggestions regarding the City's renaming policy. This is an opportunity to:

- Define community values and embrace inclusive public spaces
- Increase access to local government and empower residents, and
- Create spaces for bridging and authentic community building.

As a member of Rename Jackson Park and the Park Renaming Committee, we worked to create a process that could be transparent and inclusive. As you also know, some people do not feel that goal was achieved. Whether that is because of the outcome or that is a genuine experience, idk.

Personally, I've approached each of the two renaming efforts in Alameda (Haight to Love & Jackson to Chochenyo) as an opportunity to build relationships and engage in public history. My only commitment has been to changing the name, not any specific outcome. While attention often focuses on the good/bad of a place namesake or the outcome (name selected), there is great value in the process itself. I cannot overstate this, yet it can be hard to quantify. (Prime example: [the elementary school entries of the Rename Haight Essay Contest](#).)

Despite renamings being "divisive" (often code for uncomfortable discussing race), these processes can be used for "[bridging](#)." In the conversation about Alameda history and racial justice, that was the lost opportunity during the process to rename Jackson Park.

Currently there are petitions to rename [Godfrey Park](#), [Calhoun Street](#), [Haight Ave](#). As the Council considers a Facility Renaming policy, I encourage the City to explore something similar to what New Orleans has done recently. Following the work of groups like Take Em Down NOLA and Paper Monuments, the City adopted a [Street Renaming Commission](#).

The process started with a [resolution](#) empowering the advisory committee to "provide recommendations" and "guiding principles regarding the renaming of certain public streets, parks and places." The resolution set the Commission size, criteria for membership, and process, and specified a few specific activities and outcomes and due dates. They also used a panel of experts which included researchers affiliated with local and other institutions.

This model, possibly hybrid of Commission/Council vs. Community-led has advantages and possible disadvantages. There are pros and cons of relying on researchers for information about namesakes and proposed names--but it might reduce the ahistorical conversations that have occurred these past four years. The reliance on experts/"expertise" does take some agency from regular folk. The Commission structure could address "transparency" concerns and reduce the burden on volunteers.

Below is an email I shared with the Park Renaming Committee along with a draft/model resolution that Alameda could use. Hopefully the policy adopted will maximize community engagement, account for the different power differences and unequal participation in public policy, and ensure that anti-racism and equity and diversity are principles for the process and what we honor publicly through public space names.

Rasheed

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Rasheed El Shabazz** <rasheed@berkeley.edu>
Date: Thu, Jan 28, 2021 at 8:10 AM
Subject: Re: Park Renaming Committee today at 3:30pm
To: Amy Wooldridge <AWooldridge@alamedaca.gov>

Peace Amy & all,

I wanted to share some thoughts I shared earlier during our renaming process and respond specifically to this proposal and Jim's question. But, I sent so many long (winded) essay-emails, I can't find it.

So, here's my last renaming email:

1) Guiding Principles and Values for Public Spaces. First, Amy, I think your statement in the staff report about the importance of names and public spaces is awesome. I think it would be useful for the City to discuss, define, and adopt principles to guide the naming of public spaces. UC Berkeley recently denamed Kroeber Hall following a demand from Indigenous/Native American students (Remember our conversation re: "Ishi"?). Their Principles may be [useful model](#). They also have proposal and process that is sort of a hybrid of the two approaches proposed.

Among those principles, a discussion question can be: should public spaces be named after human traffickers/enslavers and colonizers? What do we value and accept?

2) "City Facility Renaming Application Process" I support an accessible application process. I reached out to you in March 2018, you invited me to speak at the first meeting, I declined. I ("someone") wrote a letter and later had an opportunity to discuss it. The 1,000 signatures seems cumbersome. RJP's petition was 198 for like 1 1/2 years until George Floyd/Breonna Taylor police murders. Even with 1,200+, barely 1,000 had Alameda zip codes. Many early signatories were displaced and former Alameda residents who cannot afford to move back. For AUSD, their policy for a school/facility was 100 signatures. Perhaps 500 signatures is enough to start a conversation? Maybe something like "3-5 percent of the total votes cast in the last mayoral race." It's all arbitrary. A guiding principle could be accessibility + "effort."

3) Alameda City-wide Renaming Commission: Finally, I want to propose a third "Model" for renaming as a hybrid between the community-led and commission/board led. Considering

ARPD has [at least four more parks](#) named for racists, enslavers, and colonizers (Godfrey, Washington, McKinley, etc.) and in addition to the petition to rename Godfrey Park, there are active petitions for Calhoun St, Jackson St, and Haight Ave, evaluate them in one swoop. Similar to [New Orleans](#), Alameda can develop a Renaming Commission. This Commission is a result of the work of Take 'Em Down NOLA. It is charged with: list places to be renamed and why, proposing new names, and doing public education/engagement work.

This hybrid model could reduce "renaming fatigue" by addressing a number of these places at one time. (I'm tired y'all). It could also provide space for community education and engagement, and as a Commission, address the alleged/perceived transparency issues. This could also be space to hire professional researcher to conduct research desired by the Commission and utilize virtual or in-person (insha'Allah) activities around values, principles, criteria, and possible names).

Lastly, perhaps there could be different models for different types of places: Maybe the Community-led model would be best for Godfrey Park, for example. Perhaps the Citywide Commission for all those enslaver street names on the East End, with specific "neighborhood" focus groups. I don't know. But I think Eric's point yesterday, and a central tension related to TPFKAJP/Chochenyo Park and Park Ave neighbors: Are park neighbors a special "stateholder" group? Sure, there's Jackson Park Watch, but are other parks/neighborhoods similarly organized?

Attached is a draft resolution for a [renaming commission](#) that could be utilized.

Thanks for bearing with all my long emails. It's been helpful productive procrastination from writing my thesis.

Be well. Be on lookout for invite to virtual celebration :)

Peace,

Rasheed

City Council Parks and Streets Renaming Commission

City Council Parks and Streets Renaming Commission

An advisory body to host a public process to make recommendations for streets, parks, and places in Alameda that honor white supremacists.

The Commission will consist of seven members with each Councilmember appointing one member. The Planning Commission, Recreation and Parks Commission will appoint the remaining two members.

The Commission will serve for [time period] with the responsibilities of making the following recommendations:

A list of streets, parks, and places that should be renamed, accompanied by a detailed explanation;

A proposed list of replacement names for each recommended street, park, or place, accompanied by a detailed explanation;

A process to facilitate both educating residents and receiving public feedback on the proposed changes.

Once members are appointed, the Commission has no more than [xx] months from its first meeting to provide an initial report with its recommendations, and hold a public meeting on that report a month later. The final report incorporating public feedback will be submitted to the Council within [xx] months, and serve as a basis for the Council to direct the renaming process.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION BASED ON NEW ORLEANS

WHEREAS; [statement about the importance of names representing alameda];

WHEREAS; [statement about power of racist nameakes];

WHEREAS; [statement on global effort of removing symbols of racism and genocide]

WHEREAS; [statement on renaming of haight school, who also has a street]

WHEREAS; [statement on Jackson Park, who also has a street];

WHEREAS; histories of enslavement, racism, and exclusion remain hidden on the names of streets and places in the City of Alameda and their presence hinders the health, safety, and general welfare of the community by justifying white supremacy and racial inequality;

WHEREAS; these ongoing travesties -- along with Alameda's troubling history of exclusion, segregation, and unequal treatment towards various racialized groups, which are upheld by this glorification of white supremacy, does not respect the contributions to the growth and

development to this city by the diverse populations that have and continue to contribute to Alameda, require remedy, through true reconciliation and healing, which can only occur through transparent, public conversations about who we choose to honor and recognize; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ALAMEDA,

That an advisory committee is hereby established to provide recommendations and guiding principles to the Council of the City of Alameda regarding the renaming of certain public streets, parks and places. The advisory committee (hereafter named the City Council Street Renaming Commission (Commission)) shall be established as follows:

The Commission shall consist of 7 members and be appointed as follows: one member will serve as an appointee of the Mayor and one member will serve as an appointee of the Executive Director of the City Planning Commission Office. The remaining four appointees shall be selected by the City Council, with each Councilmember selecting one appointee.

Each member of the Commission shall have a demonstrable record of interest or concern in the betterment of the history and geography of the City of Alameda, especially in relation to traditionally underrepresented communities.

All appointees shall be confirmed by Council motion.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED, That the Commission shall be responsible for making recommendations regarding:

The initial list of streets, parks, and places that should be renamed. These recommendations should be accompanied by a detailed explanation of why each street, park, or place was chosen.

A proposed list of replacement names for each recommended street, park, or place. These recommendations should be accompanied by a detailed explanation of why each proposed name represents a preferable replacement.

A process to facilitate both educating residents on the preceding processes as well as receiving public feedback on the proposed changes.

Any recommended changes to the street renaming process established in [renaming policy] of the Municipal Code of the City of Alameda..

BE IT FURTHER MOVED, That the Commission is authorized for one year, from [time period].

BE IT FURTHER MOVED, That, no more than three months from its first meeting, the Commission shall be required to issue an initial report with its recommendations.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED, That the Commission shall be required to hold a public hearing on its initial report within [time period] of its issuance, and shall provide a final report, incorporating any changes deemed necessary, to the Council no later than [time period] from the Commission's first meeting. The City Council should use this report as the basis for beginning the street renaming process, based on the [reference City Planning Commission and Historical Advisory Commission], as well as renaming parks and other places.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED, that the Commission shall elect a chair from among its members.

The Commission chair shall hold meetings at least once a month, at hours as may be fixed by the Commission. The Commission is also authorized to establish subcommittees in furtherance of providing aforementioned recommendations. All such meetings shall be subject to the

provisions of the California Open Meeting Law. Special meetings may be held on call of the chair upon 24 hours' notice to the members of the Commission and the public. A copy of the minutes of all meetings shall be sent to the Council of the City of Alameda. The Commission shall have no legislative powers of its own but shall be an advisory body of the Council of the City of Alameda concerning the matters with which it is charged, and the Council of the City of Alameda will receive and consider the Commission's recommendations and report in determining to further this measure.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ALAMEDA, That the Clerk of Council deliver certified copies of this motion to the City Council, Planning Board, Parks Commission, and Historical Advisory Commission..