

## Nancy McPeak

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**From:** Drew Dara-Abrams <dda@dara-abrams.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 12, 2021 11:38 PM  
**To:** Nancy McPeak  
**Cc:** Josh Geyer; Michael Hulihan; Rasheed Shabazz  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] comment for Planning Board meeting on 9/13 re facility/street renaming policy

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Dear Ms. McPeak,

I am not sure if I will be able to call into Monday's Planning Board meeting to give a public comment. Would you be able to share this email with members or include it in the packet? Thank you.

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Dear Planning Board members,

I'm pleased to see the Planning Board take up the city's policies for reconsidering street names. In 2019, I wrote to the city manager's office to ask for information on the process for street renamings — no response. In July 2020, my neighbors and I on Calhoun Street emailed to this board (along with planning staff) [a petition to reconsider the name of Calhoun Street signed by hundreds of Alameda residents](#), asking to have it added to a meeting agenda — no response. It's good to see City Council, HAB, and Planning Board actively look into turning this moribund policy into one that can work.

The revised policy has great goals and end outcomes: using each new name for a facility or street in Alameda to expand the range and diversity of people and references honored; using each naming process to involve many residents, so both the process and the name can contribute to the sense of community in Alameda; expanding beyond a single set of allowed names managed by HAB. Seeing how well the Chochenyo Park renaming process went and how it brought newly engaged residents into committees and meetings, and became a positive reason to have new events and programs.

However, the revised policy in its current draft has an upfront process that we just cannot see actually succeeding, making the positive second half of the process irrelevant in practice:

- Renters are excluded: In its current draft, to apply for a street renaming, residents have to collect signatures from 50% + 1 of property owners on a street. This does not seem fair. For example, our neighbors have rented their house many years longer than my family has owned ours. In the case of multi-family buildings, is the entity that owns the building the most appropriate or only one to involve in this process? The overarching goal should be to engage as many Alamedans as possible in the life of the city.
- Practical questions: At the recent HAB meeting, the staff presentation mentioned practical challenges and questions for residents who decide to rename their street, but did not provide clarifying answers or options for support from the city. For how many years will USPS honor both the old and new names of a street when delivering mail? Are any steps necessary with the county for property records? Can the city display two street names for a period of time? Very reasonable questions to ask, but without having

answers already in hand, all of the upfront burden and uncertainty is shifted to residents of a street with any attempt at beginning the qualification process.

If judged on the criteria for renaming a city facility (rather than a street), our effort to bring Calhoun Street to the city for reconsideration and discussion has met the application thresholds. We can easily assemble the petition text, names and ZIP codes of the hundreds who signed online, an article from the front page of the Alameda Sun, multiple letters to the editor of the Alameda Sun from Calhoun Street residents, a Nextdoor discussion threads (quite civil, in fact!), the discussion threads on the Alameda Peeps Facebook page, even discussion threads on the Alameda Reddit site. People signed that petition with an understanding that practical details and support from the city through any resulting street renaming would be figured out in due time. To now go back again and say that we're restarting the petition process again with the formality of verifying if the resident owns their residence, and despite the new upfront formality have no more information to share about any practical questions — that does not sound welcoming or likely to be successful.

Please either substantially rework the upfront qualification step for street renamings, or remove it from this revised policy.

Thank you for your time,  
Drew Dara-Abrams  
Calhoun Street

## Nancy McPeak

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**From:** Josh Geyer <joshm.geyer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 13, 2021 12:08 PM  
**To:** Nancy McPeak  
**Cc:** Drew Dara-Abrams; Michael Hulihan  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Planning Board item 7-B (2021-1270)

Ms. McPeak,

I'm writing to comment on Item 7-B (2021-1270) on tonight's Planning Board agenda regarding the draft City Facilities and Street Naming Policy that will be discussed. I support all the points made in Drew Dara-Abrams' correspondence regarding street renamings and I think the Board should take up his specific questions regarding the exclusion of renters and the onus on the city to do the research and provide guidance on the actual costs and procedures a street renaming entails.

I very much agree with the Purpose of the renaming policy that "All facility names should reflect everyone in our community and intentionally broaden representation." I do not believe however that the application process for renaming a city facility or street proposed in this draft is not consistent with this stated purpose.

While I appreciate that the thresholds for a facility or street to be renamed reflects a democratic impulse, having some minimum number of community members or residents publicly agree something is offensive and harmful is not what makes it the case. When city belatedly responded to Rasheed Shabazz's petition to rename Jackson Park only after--as Rasheed pointed out in his remarks at the Chochenyo Park renaming ceremony--there was a worldwide uprising around the murders of George Floyd and Brianna Taylor, the renaming committee's research and analysis affirmed that having Andrew Jackson's name on a city facility was an affront to people of color and indigenous people in our community. Jackson's historical and ongoing harm and the harm of having him honored by the city long predated the historical moment when Americans and Alamedans were in a position to actually listen to those who have been harmed. In other words, the harm was real before anyone signed the petition.

The continued existence of Jackson Street epitomizes the problem with this quasi-democratic approach to facility renamings. We have already decided as a community that Jackson's name is not in keeping with our values, but under this proposed renaming policy that name will be preserved until such time as at least 50% of property owners self-organize and submit a letter or petition essentially agreeing with this decision. This is a high threshold for undertaking an action that is the logical and necessary conclusion of the Jackson Park renaming process.

I propose that the only way to resolve this contradiction is to undertake the renaming of facilities when it is called for on the merits, rather than via petition. I understand this may not be popular among some residents of Jackson Street (as well as Calhoun and others) who are opposed to their street being renamed and the tangible costs that may impose on them. My response is that this is a community-level issue, and as such it merits a response that balances the community's needs as a whole with the potential costs to the limited number of community members in direct proximity. We do not allow residents of a given street to opt out of street improvements because they impose some transitory inconveniences, because we recognize that we as a community need a working street network. Likewise, in this case I do not believe we should allow residents of a given street to block reconsideration of the name of their street name, because we recognize--and have previously determined--that having facilities bearing the names of genocidaires and enslavers is detrimental to our entire community.

The question then becomes what process would the city adopt to identify city facilities whose names we now recognize are not consistent with our stated values of equity and inclusion. The City of New Orleans has had success with a committee that was tasked with identifying all the streets with potentially harmful names and evaluating them jointly. One obvious benefit of this approach is eliminating the need for having a separate round of analysis, public consultation, deliberation for each facility that needs to be renamed, reducing redundancy and meeting fatigue and conserving valuable staff time.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Josh Geyer  
Broadway

## Nancy McPeak

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**From:** Lorin Laiacona Salem <lolasa29@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 27, 2021 1:02 PM  
**To:** Nancy McPeak  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 9/27 meeting - item 2021-1270

Members of the Planning Board,

I am writing in regards to the proposed process for renaming Alameda streets. I take issue with the proposal to require 50%+1 of street property owners to agree to a name change before it can be reviewed. A single racist or otherwise offensive street name is an affront to our whole community, not only those whose properties abut it, just as the name of the former Jackson Park reflected badly on the entire city. Also, I see no reason why the power to ask for a new street name should lie solely with property owners, when renters and non-owner residents on a street have to live with the name just as much. I ask that you eliminate the requirement to restrict street name change petitions to adjacent property owners and allow all Alamedans to have a voice in the matter.

Thank you,  
Lorin Salem  
Alameda resident