

City of Tacoma
Policy on Place Names and Name Changes
Adopted by Council Resolution 41009 (August 2, 2022)

SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

1. In the event that the City of Tacoma wishes to confer a specific name on City-owned interests in real property, rights of way, and infrastructure, the following policy is adopted.
2. The criteria contained within this policy should also be followed in reviewing or preparing the City of Tacoma's official comments or recommendations to State, Federal, and/or intergovernmental boards taking actions regarding geographic names, naming, or renaming.

SECTION 2: SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

1. This policy affects City-owned interests in real property, rights of way, and infrastructure within the boundaries of the City of Tacoma only.
2. The following types of City-owned interests in real property, rights of way, and infrastructure are included within the scope of this policy (referred to hereafter as "property"):
 - a. Buildings and structures, including overpasses, bridges and viaducts.
 - b. Real property, including open spaces and parks.
 - c. Public rights of way that may include, but not be limited to trails, esplanades, and pathways (referred to hereafter as "non-roadway rights of way").
 - d. Public rights of way and portions of real property that serve as public streets, highways, or roadways, whether improved or unimproved (referred to hereafter as "roadways").
3. The process and criteria for naming or renaming municipally owned properties described in this policy do not apply to the following types of property or circumstances:
 - a. Generally, historically designated properties for which a historic name has been indicated on a nomination form and accepted for use on a historic register, are excluded from this policy except when the City Council, in its discretion, determines that such a change supports a broad policy initiative.
 - b. Public art installations that have been commissioned and/or accessioned with a title that serves as the name of the piece.
 - c. Limited access highways operated by the Washington State Department of Transportation such as Interstate 5, Interstate 705, State Route 16, and State Route 167.
 - d. Private facilities, private roadways, roadways owned by other agencies, such as the Port of Tacoma, and roadways operated by other agencies, such as Metro Parks Tacoma. Naming or renaming private roadways and roadways owned or operated by other agencies shall apply the development review process and standards established in the City of Tacoma's Right-of-Way Design Manual.
 - e. Requests to pay for naming rights of property.

SECTION 3: GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING NAMING PROPOSALS AND NAME CHANGES

1. Naming proposals and name changes, including honorary roadway naming, shall be submitted in writing to the Mayor's Office, and should, at minimum, include the following:
 - a. For all naming proposals:
 - i. A map illustrating the area affected by the proposal.
 - ii. Any existing place, right of way or facility names that would be affected.
 - iii. Any common usage names or nicknames for the area or its elements, including topographical landmarks.
 - iv. Representative photographs of the area.
 - v. A statement of the criteria in this policy that apply to the request, and how the proposal meets these criteria.
 - vi. A summary of any public outreach conducted to date, including to neighborhood associations, Neighborhood Councils, Business District Associations, and commercial property owners' groups; include any media coverage or public meetings. This may include any statements of support or endorsement received. Applicants are encouraged to seek public support prior to submitting a naming request. Puyallup Tribal Council or designee initiated honorary requests within the 1873 survey area of the Puyallup Reservation should demonstrate broad community support in the vicinity of the location of the honorary name.
 - vii. A description of all planned actions for interpretive measures if the naming proposal is approved, particularly including any that would require additional permitting. For roadway naming, design review for conformance with federal standards and installation must be conducted by the City's Public Works Department.
 - viii. Consultation with the Puyallup Tribal Council or designee and adherence to appropriate tribal practices or protocols if the proposed name could portray tribal significance, including association with an individual, organization or event.
 - b. Additionally for roadway and non-roadway rights of way naming, including honorary naming, but excluding Puyallup Tribal Council or designee initiated honorary naming within the 1873 survey area of the Puyallup Reservation:
 - i. A signed petition in support of the renaming must be solicited and submitted by the proponents of the renaming prior to consideration by the City of at least two-thirds of property owners abutting the linear frontage of the affected roadway and fifty percent of those property owners within five hundred feet of the proposal. Such a petition shall be implemented at the sole expense of the proponent(s); however, the City may provide a list of affected taxpayers of record. Proponents are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to educate abutting property owners and neighbors about the importance and significance of the naming request. Given the changing makeup of neighborhoods, this step may be particularly important to gain the support of newer members of the community.
2. Naming proposals should be reviewed for consistency with the City's stated policies and goals towards equity and inclusion.
3. Proposals that do not appear to meet the criteria as established in this policy, or that do not appear to be of benefit to the City or its residents, may be removed from further consideration as determined by the Mayor's Office or ad hoc workgroup.

4. Naming proposals (whose content is described in Section 3, Subsection 1) may be made by the Mayor, members of the City Council, or by the community via the Mayor's Office. Additional steps include:
 - a. For buildings, structures, real property, and non-roadway rights of way:
 - i. When a naming or renaming proposal is received in the Office of the Mayor, the Mayor's policy staff will coordinate with the City Manager's Office.
 - ii. For proposals that pass an initial vetting by the Mayor's Office, the City Manager's Office designated staff shall convene an ad hoc workgroup consisting of representatives from Traffic Engineering; Real Property Services; Office of Equity and Human Rights; the Historic Preservation Officer when the proposal has historical significance; and Government Relations when the proposal has Tribal significance to determine completeness of a submitted application and determine that the criteria as described in this policy has been met. For naming proposals in a language other than English, the ad hoc workgroup may seek translation services. If the workgroup determines an application is incomplete or the criteria has not been met, the City Manager's Office designated staff shall inform the applicant and advise on resubmitting.
 - iii. The City Manager's Office designated staff shall share the recommendations from the ad hoc workgroup with the City Attorney's Office for legal review.
 - b. For roadways:
 - i. When a proposal for an official renaming or honorary naming is received in the Office of the Mayor, the Mayor's policy staff will coordinate with the Public Works Department.
 - ii. For proposals that pass an initial vetting by the Mayor's Office, the Public Works Department designated staff shall convene an ad hoc workgroup consisting of a representative from Traffic Engineering; Real Property Services; the City Manager's Office; the Office of Equity and Human Rights; the Historic Preservation Officer when the proposal has historical significance; and Government Relations when the proposal has Tribal significance to determine completeness of a submitted application and determine that the criteria as described in this policy has been met. For naming proposals in a language other than English, the ad hoc workgroup may seek translation services. If the workgroup determines an application is incomplete or the criteria has not been met, the Public Works designated staff shall inform the applicant and advise on resubmitting. If the workgroup determines an application is complete and the criteria as established in this policy has been met, the Public Works designated staff will solicit feedback from the following, at a minimum:
 - Planning and Development Services
 - South Sound 911
 - Pierce Transit
 - iii. The Public Works Department designated staff shall share the recommendations from the ad hoc workgroup with the City Attorney's Office for legal review.
 - c. Next steps for all naming proposals:
 - i. The Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee is generally the committee that oversees naming requests and makes recommendations to City Council for further consideration.
 - ii. The designated staff as established in Section 3, Subsection 4.a. and b., shall

coordinate with the Executive Liaison of the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee to determine scheduling and present the applicant's proposal along with the feedback from the designated Departments and staff listed in this policy.

- iii. Following the Committee's review, the Committee may defer the proposal if additional information is required, deny the proposal if it does not appear to meet the criteria as established in this policy, or forward to the City Council with or without recommendation for the Council's consideration.
- iv. Upon receiving a recommendation or no recommendation from the Council Committee, City Council will schedule a public hearing to receive public comment for official roadway renaming and may schedule a public hearing to receive public comment for any other naming request, particularly naming requests with significant public interest.
- v. Naming requests proposed in accordance with this policy shall be presented via Council Resolution, except where applicable City, State or Federal regulations require other specific legislation.
- vi. Council approved naming proposals shall be effective immediately, except official roadway renaming, which shall be effective six months after Council adoption.
- vii. Should a naming request be approved by City Council, the designated staff shall inform the following stakeholders of the outcome, at a minimum:
 - South Sound 911
 - Executive Director
 - Pierce Transit
 - Executive Director
 - Special Events Coordinator
 - Scheduling Principal Planner
 - Tacoma Police Department
 - Police Chief
 - Administrative Services Bureau
 - Tacoma Fire Department
 - Fire Chief
 - Fire Department Manager
 - Assistant Fire Chief – Operations Division
 - Fire Communications Center Supervisor
 - Fire Communications Center Captain
 - Office Administrator

SECTION 4: NAMING CRITERIA

The following criteria are recommended for the City Council's consideration when evaluating potential naming proposals:

1. City's discretion. The City will consider naming proposals but is under no obligation to accept a proposal.
2. Avoid duplication. New names should not duplicate or reuse names that are already used in other locations.
3. Context, geographical location and natural or geological features. Names may be based on location or distinctive, predominant and defining natural or geological features of an area. Such proposals should be given names that directly reflect or are contextually related to the history of the site.

- a. Common usage names that have developed over time shall be favored. Property may be given official designations based on common usage by residents of an area, such as topographical features, nearby schools, or historical names.
 - b. Names of property indicated on general usage maps for fifty years or more should only be changed when the proposed name is supported by other City policies, priorities or initiatives.
4. Historical significance. Naming proposals with historical significance should meet one of the following criteria:
- a. The name is associated with a historically significant event or for events reflecting broad patterns of Tacoma’s history;
 - b. The name is associated with the lives of persons of citywide significance in Tacoma’s past;
 - c. The name is related to an existing or proposed registered historic property or district;
 - d. The name would highlight previously under-documented or poorly understood historical narratives; or
 - e. Specific to buildings and other infrastructure, the name reflects a distinctive architectural or engineering achievement.
5. Civil service. Property may be named for individuals who have enhanced the quality of life for Tacoma residents through outstanding public service, including:
- a. Leadership in civic organizations devoted to community improvement;
 - b. Outstanding humanitarian work, such as service to persons who are underprivileged, economically disadvantaged, or have a disability; or
 - c. Leadership in events and programs that have broadly enriched the quality of life for Tacoma residents.
6. Equity, inclusion, and reconciliation. Naming proposals may be conferred as a part of the City’s ongoing efforts toward improving social and racial equity, inclusion, and reconciliation.
7. Contributions. Exclusive of public roadways, property may be named for an individual or organization if that individual or organization has made a significant direct property or monetary contribution to the City of Tacoma, consistent with the City’s relevant acceptance policies, for purposes of developing that particular piece of property, and the naming is a stipulation of the donation.
8. Segments of property. For buildings and facilities, portions of a facility may have another name than that of the entire facility or features may be dedicated to or in honor of a person such as “Tide Pool – Cecil Brosseau” and “Owen Beach” at Point Defiance.

SECTION 5: ADDITIONAL NAMING CRITERIA FOR ROADWAYS

1. Official renaming general principles. In general, official renaming of existing roadways is discouraged except when:
- a. A naming effort is part of a larger, coordinated and planned effort involving multiple segments of roadway; or
 - b. A naming effort has historical significance including at least one of the following:
 - i. The name is associated with a historically significant event or for events reflecting broad patterns of Tacoma’s history;
 - ii. The name is associated with the lives of persons of citywide significance in Tacoma’s past; or
 - iii. The name would highlight previously under-documented or poorly understood historical narratives.

2. Costs. City costs involved in name changes of a roadway, including honorary naming, shall generally be the responsibility of the applicant. Should the applicant be unable to pay, the applicant shall include a statement outlining financial need in the application materials submitted. Costs for materials and installation typically range from approximately \$200 to \$500 per location for post-mounted signs.
3. Specific rules. Roadway names, including honorary names, shall not:
 - a. Impair the ability of emergency services to respond to emergencies or impair the City's ability to deliver services;
 - b. Be renamed, or receive an honorary name, if the roadway has been named, renamed, or assigned an honorary name within the previous 15 years - only one honorary roadway name shall be permitted at a time for each roadway segment;
 - c. Result in, or be perceived to confer, any competitive advantage, benefit or preferential treatment or advertisement to the named party, or a product, service or a particular business;
 - d. Be or be perceived to be discriminatory or derogatory of race, color, ethnic origin, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, creed, political affiliation, disability or other social factors;
 - e. Result in inappropriate abbreviations or acronyms; or
 - f. Result in any duplicate named intersections.
4. Special consideration. In recognition that the City of Tacoma rests on the traditional lands of the Puyallup People where they make their home and speak the Lushootseed language, Puyallup Tribal Council or designee initiated proposals within the 1873 survey area of the Puyallup Reservation will be given special consideration as described in Section 5, Subsection 5.a. of this policy.
5. Languages other than English.
 - a. All areas within the 1873 survey area of the Puyallup Reservation within the City of Tacoma shall also be eligible for honorary names in the Lushootseed language as proposed by the Puyallup Tribal Council or designee. Naming proposals in Lushootseed shall undergo the same process as honorary naming and adhere to the same criteria as honorary naming, except as described in Section 3, Subsection 1. Puyallup Tribal Council or designee initiated honorary naming shall be exempt from the signed petition requirement, and instead, proposals shall demonstrate broad community support in proximity of the honorary naming proposal. The Lushootseed language shall be prioritized for honorary naming proposals within the 1873 survey area of the Puyallup Reservation within the City of Tacoma.
 - b. Proposals for honorary names in languages other than English are allowed.
 - c. Proposals for names in languages other than English may require translation services to support City review.
6. Prefixes and suffixes for streets. Prefixes and suffixes for street names are assigned by the Public Works Department to ensure the appropriate title is used to describe the type, function, length and configuration of the street.
 - a. The street name prefix shall consist of "N," "S," or "E," according to the following:
 - i. "N" – All streets north of Division Avenue/6th Avenue between Commencement Bay and Tacoma Narrows
 - ii. "S" – All streets south of Division Avenue and west of 'A' Street except for those areas included under west end streets
 - iii. "E" – All streets between 'A' Street and Marine View Drive
 - b. The street name suffix shall consist of "W" or "NE" according to the following:

- i. "W" – All streets south of South 19th Street and west of Orchard Street
 - ii. "NE" – All streets east of Marine View Drive
- c. The street type suffixes shall be assigned based on the following:
- i. "Avenue" - May only be used for north/south oriented streets or when streets are skewed from actual north/south, shall only be used when parallel streets are of the same type.
 - ii. "Street" - May be used for north/south or east/west oriented streets; may not be used for north/south numbered streets; and when streets are skewed from actual north/south or east/west, shall only be used when parallel streets are of the same type.
 - iii. "Drive," "Blvd," "Way," "Lane," "Road," and "Place" - May only be used for meandering streets which cannot conform to "Avenue" or "Street" criteria shown above.
 - iv. "Court" - May only be used in conjunction with "Street" or "Avenue" where alignment is slightly offset from the street or avenue.
 - v. "Terrace," "Circle," and "Loop" - Not allowed.
7. Roadway grid layout. Renaming of existing rights of way shall only occur at existing shifts in the roadway grid layout or where there are clear topographical or geographical shifts in the grid layout.
8. Length of time. For honorary naming, the length of time the honorary name shall remain in place is generally 15 years. After 15 years, should the applicant or applicant's designee wish to extend the time for which the honorary name is in place, a formal request may be made to the Mayor's Office. The applicant or applicant's designee shall submit a letter requesting the extension stating the exact location of the request and the honorary name in place. The Public Works representative shall convene the ad hoc workgroup for feedback on the request and follow the same process for approval as new honorary naming requests as described beginning in Section 3, Subsection 4.b.ii. The lifespan of a sign for honorary naming is generally between ten and 15 years. If the Public Works representative determines the honorary name sign requires replacement, the costs for replacement are generally the responsibility of the applicant or applicant's designee.
9. Right-of-Way Design Manual. Naming and renaming of rights of way shall be consistent with the criteria outlined in the current version of the City's Right-of-Way Design Manual, which could, if appropriate, supersede the information listed above in Section 5, Additional Naming Criteria for Roadways.

SECTION 6: ALTERNATIVES TO ROADWAY RENAMING

1. Interpretive plaques. Interested parties are encouraged to consider alternatives to roadway renaming for the commemoration of individuals or organizations. For example, with applicable permitting, interpretive plaques at key locations on buildings or sites, or where appropriate, with sidewalk environments (space permitting) or other visible pedestrian areas.
2. Honorary naming. Applicants are advised that while any change to roadway names are significant, historic and honorary names face fewer process hurdles as underlying legal descriptions and addressing do not need to be modified.
 - a. An honorary naming designation may be given to certain sections of existing roadways to commemorate the lives of important community members. A commemorative sign, with applicable permitting, may be mounted with the official name for a defined length of the roadway, if approved, and generally at the expense of the applicant(s). Should the applicant be unable to pay, the applicant shall include a statement outlining financial need in the application materials submitted.
 - b. The City shall develop and provide a standard sign specification for approved proposals.
 - c. The same process for consideration and approval, required application materials, and naming criteria for official roadway name changes shall be used for honorary naming.