



Street Naming Policy Proposed Changes 2024

January & February 2024

Policy Research



City of Madison Street Naming RESJI Analysis



City of Madison Underrepresented Communities Historic Resource Survey Report



State of Wisconsin Historic Society Criteria



Other Cities' street naming policy – both legal and honorary



Legal Issues: Maintaining Honorary Program as Government Speech

RESJI Analysis July 2021 findings

Racial and social inequities of the current street naming policy

- Historically streets named for the “elite,” wealthy white men
- Renaming streets is expensive with disparate impacts
 - People with low incomes, unbanked, without IDs, difficulties voting
- Currently new streets not named after people
 - Results in few streets named for traditionally underrepresented people
- Many existing street names appropriate other cultures

Proposed Policy Changes

Legistar # [81590](#)

- Revising Existing Street Naming Policy to be more inclusive
- Revising Policy for Street Name Changes

Legistar # [81515](#)

- Creating an Honorary Street Name Program

Official Street Names Policy Changes

Legistar # [81590](#)

Revise Existing Street Naming Policy to be more inclusive

- Repeals and replaces Resolution No. 12,459, File No. 5055-47, adopted 1967

Revise Policy for Street Name Changes



Proposed Policy Changes for New Street Names

Changes policy to be more inclusive of new street names

- Discourages cultural appropriation
- Applicants to include meaning and context for any proposed street name, phonetic pronunciation, and original spelling if name is from a language other than American-English
- Family surnames (last names) or given names (first names) may be used but shall not have a similar pronunciation to existing streets
- Names may originate from languages other than American-English. The spelling of the name shall utilize the English-Latin alphabet for general sign manufacturing and USPS requirements

Approved by City Engineer

- May ask for input from Board of Public Works

Proposed Policy Changes for Changing Street Names

Simplifies and unifies criteria with proposed new street names policy

Honorary Street Signs Program Proposal

Legistar # [81515](#) Creates new Honorary Street Program



City's only Honorary Street Sign Installed 2021

APM 5-3 – Existing Policy for Honorary Street Names

Only allows honorary street signs for streets that have already been officially renamed

- i.e. Simpson St ➡ Lake Point Dr
- Willie Lou Harris Way installed without an official process

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE
MEMORANDUM NO. 5-3

SUBJECT: HONORARY STREET NAMING

Purpose: Official street names are often changed to reflect a geographic area or as a method of honoring an individual. Where the name of a street has been changed, honorary street name signing may be used to recognize the **original name** of the street.

Background: Changing an official street name can be controversial with opposition due to the old street name being “lost to history.” To recognize the historic name of a street before it was officially changed, the City may install honorary street name signs. These signs may be posted above the standard city street name signs—official street name signing are signs with white letters on a green background—and the honorary street name sign shall be white lettering on a brown background.



Paul R. Soglin
Mayor

Honorary Street Program Historic Criteria:

Honorary Street must meet one of three Historic Criteria:

- 1. *Honoring the historically unrepresented:*** Honorary Street Names shall honor people or events that have not traditionally been recognized or celebrated venerated in street names e.g. people that are BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities and/or women, are part of Madison's hidden histories, and/or and who have made significant contributions to underrepresented communities of Madison in arts, music, literature, science, economics, cultural advancement or humanities or who provided extraordinary civic or humanitarian contributions.
- 2. *Honoring Indigenous Place Names:*** Honorary street name applications must coordinate with Ho-Chunk or other Tribal Nations on the application to honor indigenous place names at their historic locations.
- 3. *Honoring former street names:*** Very rarely, official street names are occasionally changed and can be controversial due to the old street name being lost to history.

Street Eligibility Criteria

Honorary Street must meet all the Following:

1. The proposed designation may not duplicate an official street name
2. Only local or collector streets are eligible, no arterials or highways
3. Should avoid complicated intersections
4. State Street and streets around the Capitol Square are ineligible
5. Streets with shared jurisdiction with another municipality are ineligible
6. If an application is considered and rejected, the same nominee may not be requested for a period of five years
7. Designation covers a maximum of two contiguous blocks and shall be applied to a single street
8. When a section of street has received a designation, no other applications for that section of street shall be considered while it has that designation

Program Guidelines

1. Honorary Street Names should have a demonstrable connection to the location of the street proposed for an honorary name
2. If the Honoree is a person, they must be deceased for at least three years prior to street naming
3. If the Honoree is a person, the applicant should contact relatives of the person to get permission to name the street if at all possible
4. Proposed Honorary Street Names may not honor a person/event/place already honored elsewhere in the city (park, public building, etc.)
5. Approved by City Engineer
 - May ask for input from Landmarks Commission

Nomination Process

1. Nominations must include Alder and family notifications
2. Nomination must include relevant research
3. Forms submitted to City Engineering Office, vetted by staff
4. If staff finds nomination is complete and sufficient, staff will forward to City Engineer for approval
5. City Engineer can request additional input from Landmarks Commission
6. The City retains the right to remove an honorary street sign at any time, for any reason.

Sign Installation

1. Signs shall be brown, located above the green street name sign
2. TE designs, fabricates and installs two signs
 - DOT signs and markings budget
 - Existing budget can pay for up to two Honorary Street Designations per year
3. Maintenance
 - If damaged, stolen, or vandalized, TE shall replace the sign up to three times

