

Madison Engineering Division - Street Naming Policy for New Streets

Purpose

There is continued growth and urbanization in the City of Madison and adjacent thereto and it is necessary and desirable that a policy for new street names in the City be established and responsibility for the consistent implementation of such policy be assigned.

The different streets in the City of Madison shall bear the names given on the maps and databases referred to in Sec. 10.34(2) MGO.

The purpose for uniform street addresses (this includes street naming) is to enable emergency vehicles to respond quickly to calls, expedite postal and other delivery services, eliminate confusion, and to locate business places and residences without difficulty or delay. Also, new public and private street names shall be subject to the approval of the City Engineer. (10.34(1) & 10.34(4) MGO)

The City of Madison shall be inclusive in its choice of approving new street names as the City has residents from many diverse cultural backgrounds. Care should be taken to approve street names that are likely not to offend or deter any community of people from living in any portion of the City of Madison.

General Policy - Street Name Approval Criteria

The current policy for approving street names is subject to the following:

1. Chapter 10.34 Street Numbers, of the City of Madison General Ordinances
2. Additional policy and criteria developed by City Engineering

A. Chapter 10.34 MGO:

Portions of 10.34 of the Madison General Ordinances apply to the approval of street names. Those portions are as follows:

1. 10.34(2) - The City Engineer shall establish and maintain a street address for all parcels in the City of Madison in conformance with this ordinance and in consultation with the U.S. Postal Service Addressing Guidelines. Residential buildings shall take their address off the street upon which they front. Commercial buildings shall take their address off the street from which they gain primary access and primary fire apparatus access to the property. Internal building addresses shall be numeric and approved by the City Engineer in consultation with the Fire Marshal. The City Engineer shall maintain records, including maps and databases, of the street address numbers and street names.
2. 10.34(4) - The different streets in the City of Madison shall bear the names given on the maps referred to in Sec. 10.34(2). New public and private street names shall be subject to the approval of the City Engineer who shall consult with the US Postal Service Standard Addressing Guidelines and generally shall use the following criteria:

- a. New street names shall not duplicate or closely approximate street names already assigned within the City of Madison municipal limits or surrounding areas.
- b. Postal suffixes, prefixes and directionals shall not be used as street names (example: Terrace St, East Ave).
- c. Directionals shall not be used as a suffix (Yellow St East). No post-directionals shall be allowed (Yellow East).
- d. Special characters such as apostrophes, hyphens, decimals, or periods shall not be allowed
- e. Use the most common spelling of a street name (example: "Dakota", not "Dacota"; "Wind", not "Wynd" USPS Guideline).
- f. New street names shall be no longer than 17 character spaces including the Postal approved abbreviated suffix

B. Engineering Street Name Policy Criteria:

The following additional street naming criteria are as follows:

- 1. Wherever possible, use naming themes in subdivisions or even larger geographic areas such as quadrants. Choosing names related to a single theme (e.g., birds, flowers, planets, etc.) is suggested as a means of general identification for streets in a subdivision.
- 2. Names (or naming themes) within a development shall not be culturally appropriative.
 - a. Any proposed naming theme by an Applicant shall be provided with the proposed street names.
 - b. Cultural appropriation takes place when members of a majority group adopt cultural elements of a minority group in an oversimplifying, exploitative, disrespectful, or stereotypical way.
 - c. If the Addressing Coordinator reviewing names considers a name or a naming theme to possibly be culturally appropriative, they shall consult with their Manager and City Engineer for appropriate review and determination.
- 3. The Applicant shall include the following information for each proposed name and/or theme.
 - a. The meaning and context of name all names and any proposed naming theme.
 - b. The phonetic pronunciation of each name.
 - c. The original spelling of a name originating from a language other than American-English.
 - d. Any additional information that would be relevant for the review and approval of the name or as requested by Engineering Staff during the review.
- 4. Names which have homonyms (other words pronounced similarly but spelled differently) should not be used. (Days / Daze; Air / Heir, Draught / Draft).
- 5. Two-word names or one-word names that can be confused as two-word names should not be used (compound word related conflicts). This avoids the problem of two words being combined into one word, or vice versa, when entered (Clearlake, Clear Lake, Brookhaven, Baytree). Avoid Compound words.

6. Proper full names shall not be approved. (Joe Montana Rd, John Smith Ln, Ellie Mae Dr). A proper name may only be approved as an Honorary Street Name when submitted and approved via the separate City Honorary Street Name Program and Criteria.
7. Family surnames (last names) or given names (first names) may be used. An alternate spelling of the common spelling of a name may also be used but shall not have a similar pronunciation with an existing street name within Dane County.
8. 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 United States Postal Service requirements.
9. No corporation names or a business name shall be approved.
10. To facilitate the display of street names on maps and mapping programs, short road lengths shall have short street names.
11. Names should be readable and pronounceable, so that the public, and children in particular, can read, spell, pronounce, type, or text, the name in an emergency situation.
12. The Address Coordinator shall determine the appropriate and final street name suffixes based upon the type of road proposed and USPS guidelines.
13. Where a street maintains the same general direction, except for curvilinear changes for short distances, the same street name shall continue for the entire length of the street. Address numbering difficulties shall also be considered in whether an additional street name is warranted.
14. A street name may be changed for through streets at major street intersections or when required to conform to the proposed or existing address numbering in the area.
15. A street name for an existing street which is planned as, but not currently a through street due to intermediate undeveloped lands, that street name shall be continued for those portions of that planned street within any proposed land division or dedication.
16. The desirable maximum number of street names at one intersection shall be four (4).
17. When a street forks into two streets, the fork with the higher traffic volume shall continue the same name.
18. Streets that are reconfigured, realigned, or relocated may require a name change or new street name. Generally, the name retained goes to the street with the larger number of homes, dwellings, or commercial structures in order to minimize the number of people affected.
19. If a portion of an existing street is permanently closed, by barriers or the removal of pavement, two street segments with the same name would result. The street segment with the lesser number of homes, dwellings, or commercial structures should be renamed in order to minimize the number of impacted property owners.
20. Street names shall be assigned so that two intersections shall not have the exact same intersecting street names.
21. Street names shown on an approved or conditionally approved preliminary plat, Certified Survey Map or Final plat shall not reserve the street name. Final written approval of street names is required as per Section C of this policy.

C. Street Naming Policy Goals:

The policy seeks to accomplish goals as follows:

1. Making sure emergency services can understand and navigate to an address quickly.
2. Street names that fit on street signs
3. Facilitate mail/delivery getting to the correct location.
4. Facilitate mapping of streets
5. Ensure the City is welcoming to all people by using street names that are inclusive and diverse.
6. Provide straightforward instruction to the developers and corporations submitting the names (small number of people in Madison)
7. Maintaining a process to verify that the requirements and criteria are met.

Approval Process

A. Submittals

1. A land division is prepared and/or submitted to City of Madison Planning under the below scenarios.
 1. A Developer / Owner (hereinafter "Applicant") may make contact with the Addressing Coordinator prior to making a submittal for approval of a Certified Survey Map, Preliminary Plat or Final Plat.
 2. An Applicant makes a Preliminary Plat or Certified Survey Map submittal to Planning.
 - a. Proposed street names are typically included on the face of the Preliminary Plat or Certified Survey Map. Although, the Subdivision Ordinance (16.23 MGO) does allow the labeling of the streets with a letter of the alphabet for preliminary plat consideration.
 3. An Applicant makes a Final Plat submittal to Planning.
 4. An Applicant makes a site development / redevelopment submittal (Conditional Use, Rezoning or Permitted use applications) for approval with Planning and/or Zoning. Some sites require named internal private streets/accesses for proper addressing, emergency services and wayfinding.
2. Upon occurrence of any of the above, the Address Coordinator shall provide the Applicant the required street name request forms and information that includes the requirements for approving street names within the City of Madison.
 1. Alternatively, any Applicant can access the street name application forms and make an application. All documentation is available on the City of Madison Website webpage as follows: [\(www.to be determined\)](#) and request street name review directly with staff.

B. Street Name Vetting:

1. Upon the receipt of all of the proposed street names and required application materials, the Address Coordinator reviews the proposed street names to determine if they are approvable.
 - a. Do the proposed street names meet the requirements of the Ordinance?
 - b. Do the proposed street names meet the criteria of the Street Naming Policy. Some checks and sources used include but not be limited to.
 - o Check the character length for conformance with the Madison General Ordinance

- Check if there is a duplicate street name with Dane County per Access Dane. <https://accessdane.countyofdane.com/street>
 - Is the name a compound word? Avoidance of having a two-word name essentially duplicating a compound word.
 - It is a homonym or does it sound like any other street in Dane County. Words that sound the same do cause confusion per the Madison Police Department.
 - Verify that the proposed street name isn't a business.
 - Trademark issues.
 - Is it a local company – possible conflict of interest as the name could be viewed as marketing, promotional or competition?
 - Is it a common business name that is used for various businesses elsewhere?
 - Also search in Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions for business names. <https://wdfi.org/apps/corpSearch/Search.aspx>
 - Confirm that the name is not a proper noun.
 - Confirm the definition (if applicable). Staff shall determine and utilize appropriate sources of information to obtain adequate definitions.
 - Confirm if the words in the proposed street name have vulgar, offensive, or controversial meaning(s). Or does it have derogatory alternate meaning(s). Staff shall determine and utilize appropriate sources of information to search for alternative meanings.
- c. Do the proposed street names accomplish the goals of the Street Naming Policy. Some items to address:
- If there are concerns, particularly on possible items of confusion that may occur with a proposed street name, contact Dane County 911 for input and thoughts of any issues.
 - Also, any emergency services confusion concerns should be reviewed by and coordinated with Madison Fire Department.

C. Street Name Approval:

1. After vetting the street name:
 - a. If the street names are approved, notify the Applicant those names are approved and can be used on the Final Plat, Certified Survey Map or Development Plans.
 - b. If a street name or names are not approved, notify the Applicant and request alternative name suggestions and submittal of required materials.

- Address coordinator provides the basis of a name not being initially approved.
 - Continue to coordinate with the Applicant alternate names until all of the names for the land division or development have been approved.
- c. If the Applicant still wants to pursue a street name that was not approved by the Addressing Coordinator, they may appeal to the City Engineer for review.
 - The City Engineer may approve or not approve the proposed street name(s) or refer to the Board of Public Works for a recommendation regarding the street names. The Applicant shall be notified of the time, location, and agenda item for the Board of Public Works meeting at which the street names will be considered.
 - The Board of Public Works shall deliberate and provide a recommendation of approval or non-approval of all street names for the City Engineer to consider for their final decision.
 - The decision of approval or non-approval by the City Engineer shall be provided to the Applicant with explanation.
- d. Upon the final approval of the proposed street names, the Address Coordinator and /or Land Information Staff shall review the Final Plat, Certified Survey Map or site plans confirming the approved names before final sign off for the land division or development plans.