

## MEMO

**TO:** Ald. Ronald D. Hart, Chairman  
Public Works and Services Committee

**FROM:** Richard M. Jones  
Commissioner of Public Works

**DATE:** April 9, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Street Name Changes

As directed, city staff developed the following consensus policy regarding the request to change the name of a city street.

The name of a street has an important impact upon the persons residing and the businesses located along the street. Street addresses are used to help identify individuals and to identify a space within a geographic area. Street names are the basis for providing directions to any particular location. In addition, street addresses are used to identify individuals in a multitude of business transactions. The address of a property is not only important to the individual or business, it is critical to local, state and federal governments, the postal service, school districts and numerous utilities. In this age of computer technologies and geographic information systems, an address of a property is a means by which countless databases are linked. In today's world of Map Quest, Google Earth and numerous other map services, changing a street name substantially impacts their accuracy and creates confusion and difficulty for their users.

Therefore, the change of a street name is a significant event that ripples through countless records, maps, files and databases. Changes to these records cannot be guaranteed to be seamless or painless to the impacted parties. The changing of street names can lead to confusion for the public and even for various government providers of services. For example, the end of Sate Street and the beginning of Northwestern Avenue is not clearly understood by most citizens. Similar situations exist for Fourth Street and Christopher Columbus Parkway and State Street and Gaslight Pointe. Other difficulties present themselves when similar street names exist such as Jones Street and Jones Avenue.

It is within this context that a consensus was reached that street names should be considered permanent by city officials unless there are overwhelming reasons to consider a change. The emphasis is on overwhelming. Factors to be considered in reviewing proposals to change the name of a street should include the following:

1. Historical context of existing street and street name.
2. Similarity to existing street names.
3. Continuity of street names.
4. Number of properties involved.
5. Number of property owners. A minimum of 90% of property owners must be in agreement.
6. Number of residents involved. A minimum of 75% of all residents must be in agreement.
7. If the street is to be named in honor of a person, that individual should be someone of national importance who had a profound positive impact on the country.
8. If the street is part of a redevelopment, the impact of the development on the city may be considered
9. If the street is part of a redevelopment, the impact of exterior improvements shall be considered.
10. If the street is part of a redevelopment, the impact of streetscape improvements shall be considered.

Proposals should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Requests to change the name of a city street shall be submitted to the Common Council. The request shall be accompanied with a petition of all affected property owners or tenants. The petitioner shall be charged a non-refundable fee of \$500.00 to pay costs to research the issue and for the city to hold a public hearing including the publishing of a class 1 notice.

If approved, the petitioner shall pay all costs incurred by the City to change its records and signs estimated at \$1500.00. This cost would rise dramatically if all paper records or maps are required to be reprinted.