



Department Source: Community Development - Planning

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: December 21, 2020

Re: Report: Honorary Street Signs

Executive Summary

At the October 19, 2020 City Council meeting, the Council discussed a request for a special street sign to honor the memory of a person who had died as the result of a motor vehicle collision. Council members also discussed whether there should be a formal policy on the assignment of honorary street names, as it was observed that there may be others in the City who wish to propose special street name designations from time-to-time. Toward that end, staff has begun research on honorary street naming practices in other communities.

Discussion

As staff understands the issue, Council may be interested in using special street signs to honor persons, events, or places in the City.

Existing Streets Option

Changes to the names of existing streets or new streets are one way to commemorate persons, events or places, using the procedures of Chapter 24 Streets, Sidewalks and Public Ways. An example of an official street name change was the change of Ballenger Place to Hector Place, which honored the memory of a fallen firefighter, and also resolved the technical issue of Ballenger Place duplicating Ballenger Lane. Several new street names in the Parkside Subdivision honor veterans. In general, however, changing street names, street signs, and addresses is a disruptive process, that should be minimized. Even new street names occasionally create technical issues - Columbia has more than 3,270 street names including a number of duplicate names.

"Honorary" Streets Option

Honorary, historic or memorial street names are secondary names that do not replace the official names used for address identification (for brevity the term honorary will be used). Honorary street signs would be markers of a person, place, or event of such significance to warrant an attachment to a conventional street sign, or alternatively, a separate sign in the street right of way.

The City of Columbia has placed honorary street signs before, however there is no code or formal policy governing the process of proposal, approval, and installation of such signs. In 1987-1988 Council approved "Historic Price Avenue" and "Historic Tandy Avenue" signs that commemorated the streets (and perhaps the persons and families they were named for) that were precursors to sections of College Avenue. The more recent example of "Historic Vianello Way" is not a true street sign, as it is placed in front of the Missouri Theater on 9th near the alley intersection and is not mounted on a standard street corner sign pole.



Staff has done some research on practice in other communities. A study by the New Orleans Planning Commission Staff included a survey of practices in other communities. Some findings of the study:

- Most communities discourage renaming of existing streets in favor of adding secondary names
- Honorary street designations are typically a whole block in length, sometimes longer
- Honorary designations are typically approved by resolution
- Honorees may be persons or groups who have made significant contributions to the community; notable veterans, civic leaders, and public servants. (Council could also consider victims of tragic events, or persons associated with singular acts of heroism or outstanding achievements to be remembered.)
- Some cities require honorees to be deceased and a few have minimum time periods (e.g., deceased for two, five years, etc.)
- A strong relationship between honorees and proposed locations is encouraged.
- The study recommended reserving the decision on the merits of particular names to Council, and limiting planning commission/staff roles to technical issues.

The full study, which includes illustrations of secondary street signs from around the country, is here:

<https://www.nola.gov/city-planning/major-studies-and-projects/honorary-street-name-study/staff-honorarystreetnamestudy/>

Design Considerations

Ordinary street name signs are subject to the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) series D for colors, lettering style and size, and other legibility factors such as reflectivity.

When secondary street names signs are used, there are several options. A sign plate placed above or below the standard street name sign is common. Sometimes a band of smaller type above, or a pictograph beside, the official name occupies the same sign plate. Separate signposts may also be used. The colors brown and blue are typically used to convey cultural (including historical) interest and tourism interest in the standard symbolism. Letters of secondary names should be smaller than official street names to avoid confusion.

Process and Procedure

Original street names on new streets are either handled through the subdivision approval process or the capital improvement process. Street name changes are handled as either a Planning & Zoning Commission recommendation to Council (in cases where there is not unanimous property owner consent) or as a direct action of the City Council (when there is unanimous property owner consent). These are established procedures.

Moving forward, Council may want to adopt a policy or general guidance for honorary street names. Some elements the Council may want to consider:



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

- Eligibility to propose an honorary name (e.g., any person with Council sponsorship; civic and non-profit organizations; the Council itself).
- Eligible honorees (e.g., persons retired or deceased, minimum years retired or deceased; eligible connections to the community).
- Consent requirements (e.g., a percentage of property owners that must concur with the name).
- Vetting process (e.g., involvement of a board or commission on honorees, design, and placement, etc).
- Design of signs (dimensions, colors, etc).
- Locations.
- Costs (responsibility for costs; limitation on number of special signs in a year; policy on maintenance and replacement).
- Recognition of events and places in addition to notable persons, to the extent that street signs are preferred to place-based markers.
- Alternatives to street signs (e.g., memorial parks, building or rooms) and the conditions that occasion them.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: There would be a modest fiscal impact for time and material of additional street signs, unless Council would provide for cost recovery from persons and organizations.

Long-Term Impact: Depending on the frequency of secondary signs requests, there could be a fiscal impact that increases the normal street sign budget.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Secondary Impact: Infrastructure, Tertiary Impact: Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility

Legislative History

Date	Action

Suggested Council Action

Staff will prepare a policy or guidance document on honorary street signs for further review should Council so direct.