

City of Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation Services Park Naming and Re-naming Process

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a set of standard procedures and guidelines for the naming and renaming of parks, recreational areas and facilities owned and/or operated by the City of Ann Arbor. This policy will guide name recognition and establish its uniform application. This policy is to be utilized for newly acquired parks and recreational facilities as well as existing parks when deemed appropriate or necessary.

Objectives

- Naming of city parks, natural areas, buildings and features enhances a sense of community within the city.
- Ensure that parks and recreational areas are easily identified and located.
- Ensure that names given are consistent with the values and characteristics of the local neighborhood served as well as the City of Ann Arbor as a whole.
- Encourage public participation and input in order to fully represent the best interest of the area affected.
- Respect and recognize the dedication of lands, or donations by individuals or groups, but recognize that these actions do not guarantee naming rights.

Definitions

“Parks and Recreation Facilities” will include the following:

Parks – all traditional parks, natural areas, historic sites, golf courses, and specialized parks (e.g., A2 Skate Park) under the department’s jurisdiction or management.

Buildings – all significant park and recreation structures that house parks and recreational programs (e.g., pavilions)

Major Features – Major, permanent components of park and recreational facilities (e.g., ball fields, swimming pools, vehicular bridges, tennis courts, playgrounds, fountains, ponds). Rooms within buildings are also considered to be Major Features.

Minor Features – Smaller components of parks and recreational facilities that may or may not be permanent (e.g., trails, natural features, footbridges, artwork, rain garden, community gardens, stairs). *These features can be re-named through suggestion by Parks staff for approval by PAC and thus not held to the same criteria of this policy.*

Amenities – The dedication of small park amenities with an identifiable lifespan and not intended to be permanent (e.g., benches, small fountains, picnic tables, trees, etc.) shall be addressed under the Parks & Recreation gifts and memorials program.

Additional Features - Any items not included on this list would be reviewed by staff and PAC to determine naming possibilities.

Background

Naming or renaming parks and recreational facilities in the City of Ann Arbor is often complex and emotionally evocative since naming is a powerful and permanent identity for a public place. The names of parks, buildings and major features often tell the important stories of Ann Arbor history. In addition, Ann Arbor has limited public resources for changing names on signs, maps, and literature, and excessive naming of individual features in parks and recreational facilities can be confusing to the public.

It is, however, understood that the naming or renaming of parks may occur for various reasons including but not limited to acquisition of new park land, correcting problematic names or terms as updated details emerge, and addressing unremarkable park names.

Approval of naming requests is a prestigious, cautious process that involves the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, the department, and ultimately the City Council. Consequently, the process for naming or renaming these public places needs to be carefully and thoughtfully undertaken and only when appropriate. Thus, this policy has been designed to develop a process that is objective, considers certain criteria, and includes diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations as part of the naming process.

Criteria

Naming of Parks, Buildings and Major Features

1. City parks, buildings and major features shall generally be named in accordance with geographical, historical or ecological features indigenous to the park site or to the immediate vicinity of the site.
2. Parks, buildings and major features may be named for an individual under the following conditions:
 - a. Naming of parks and recreational facilities is usually reserved only for persons who are deceased. Such naming after a person shall not occur until the person has been deceased for at least (5) years and that person's historical significance and good standing have been secured in the history of the community or nation.
 - b. Where the individual has made a significant gift of land to the City; or
 - c. In memoriam for an individual who has made a significant contribution to the City of Ann Arbor parks and recreation; or
 - i. It should not be assumed that a financial contribution guarantees that a park, building or major feature is named after the individual/organization/business making or associated with the contribution.
 - d. Has made a significant contribution to the protection of natural, cultural, or horticultural resources of the City of Ann Arbor parks department; or
 - e. Has substantially contributed to the advancement of commensurate types of recreational opportunities within the City of Ann Arbor parks system; or
 - f. Has made a significant contribution to the betterment of a specific park, consistent with the established criteria and standards for the designated park classification.
3. Parks and Recreation facilities will not normally be named for living persons. Exceptions to this policy may be made by a simple majority vote of City Council as follows:
 - a. The person nominated has lived a significant period of time in the Ann Arbor Community; or
 - b. The person nominated had made a substantial contribution (monetary or service) to the specific park, recreation area or facility being named; or
 - c. The person nominated has made significant contribution to the community over an extended period of time; or
 - d. The person nominated has received national recognition for activities that impact the local community.
4. Parks, buildings, and major features may also be named for historical events or places under the following conditions:
 - a. The history of a major event or place can play an important role in the naming or renaming of parks and recreational facilities. The ability to preserve and honor the history of the City, its founders, pioneers, and other historical figures, heritage, and its local landmarks and prominent geographical locations by giving

- certain parks and recreational facilities names of historic, social and cultural significance.
- b. Naming of a historical event or place will be carefully reviewed to help ensure that the event is consistent with the City of Ann Arbor values and its emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion.
 - c. Naming of parks, buildings or major features after people or a group of people who perish in or survive a tragic event or war should be considered only well after the public shock generated by the tragic event or war has lessened.
 - i. Potential sites for such memorials should be focused on parks or recreational facilities that are more known for their serene and contemplative nature rather than active recreational locations, such as playing fields.
 - ii. Emphasis should be placed on the contributions or heroic actions of these people during their lifetime, rather than the circumstances of their death or survivorship.
5. The City and the Parks department have benefited from a legacy of community generosity. Families, residents, and businesses have given gifts of their time, skills, resources, products, and financial contributions. Public and private foundations have also invested deeply in our city and the parks and recreation system.
- a. Donations of any kind do not guarantee that a park, building or major feature is named after the individual/organization/business making the contribution.
 - b. The City's gifts and memorial program provides opportunities for recognition and naming of minor features and amenities.

General Principles

In considering any proposal to name or rename a park, building, or major feature, the following questions shall be considered individually and collectively:

- a) Will the name have historical, cultural and social significance for generations to come?
- b) Will the name engender a welcoming and positive image for the community?
- c) Will the name memorialize or commemorate people, places or events that are of enduring importance to the community or the nation?
- d) Will the name engender significant ties of friendship and mutual recognition and support within the community or with those outside of the community?
- e) Will the name be identified with some major achievement or the advancement of the public good within the community or the nation?
- f) Will the name be consistent with the City's values and emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion?
- g) Will the name be particularly suitable for the park or recreational facility based on the location or history of the park, recreational facility or the surrounding neighborhood?
- h) Will the naming request result in the undue politicization of the park or recreational facility?
- i) Will the naming request that accompanies a donation result in the undue commercialization of the park or recreational facility?

City led procedure leading to name or rename park

1. *New Park* - Any new park or facility is referred to by the site's address until a name has been reviewed and approved through the city naming process.

2. *City Re-Naming due to internal review* - If through internal review or management, City Staff identify that a Park name is problematic, unremarkable or inconsistent with City values.

Resident sponsored procedure for requesting a renaming of a park

1. To ensure that City of Ann Arbor parks maintain the values and connection to the city and its residents, requests for re-naming must be issued by a City of Ann Arbor resident or sponsored by a City of Ann Arbor resident.
2. Residents desiring to request a name change regardless of reason must contact the City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Services Manager or designee in writing to notify their intent to request a name change and to request research on the history of the name of the property, e.g., historical data such as minutes documenting the official or initial naming, deed restrictions, historical designations, etc.
 - a. If through review of a park name, it is determined that the name is problematic or inconsistent with City values, the process will move to a City led process.
3. If there are no restrictions on the park to prohibit a name change and the requestor determines that the proposed name change meets the criteria outlines in this policy, a written, community-based request shall be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Manager. The request should include the following information:
 - a. State the reason for the proposed name change.
 - b. Show community support for the proposed name change.
 - i. The number of signatures required as follows: Signatures must include the name, age (must be 18 or older), address, zip code and telephone number of each signer as proof of residency.
 1. Smaller parks less than 5 acres will require 25 signatures within a 1/8-mile radius.
 2. Larger parks greater than 5 acres, or parks with park facilities will require 50 signatures from City of Ann Arbor residents.
 - c. Donations to support improvements and maintenance to the re-named park will be welcomed.
4. The Parks Manager and/or designated staff will review the petition in accordance with the nomination criteria set forth in this policy. If the petition does not meet the policy criteria, the matter will be referred back to the nominator stating the reason for the denial.
5. If the name change request meets the criteria as outlined in this document, the Parks Manager will begin the public process for selecting a new park name detailed in this policy.

Public process for selecting name regardless of City or resident sponsored

1. Parks and Recreation Services will hold an open public comment period of not less than two weeks and shall not exceed thirty days.
2. City will determine the best methods to engage public based on the park in question.
3. Parks staff will receive the public comments and any related materials from the public engagement process. Staff will make a recommendation to the Parks Advisory Commission based on the feedback from public engagement.
4. If supported, PAC will recommend approval of naming to City Council.
5. City Council will make an official decision regarding the renaming.
6. If approved, the City will determine appropriate signage indicating the new name. Unless there is a previously planned renovation of the site that included new signage, the City

will either place a new sign with the new name on the site or retrofit an existing site to show the new name.

7. If approved, the City will change the name of the park and/or facility on all printed and digital material including the City's website and program guide map.
 - a. Re-naming of a park would need to be communicated broadly to ensure various agencies update and change as appropriate.
8. When appropriate, the city will look at putting on a naming or re-naming event to commemorate the name change.
9. Requests to Defer or Withdraw: At any point during the review process, the applicant may request that the request be deferred or withdrawn entirely. All requests to defer or withdraw must be submitted in writing. A request may also be put on hold for up to six months. It is the responsibility of the applicant to notify staff to re-process any request placed on hold. If there is no activity within six months, the request shall be withdrawn by staff.

Suggestions of name for future park names

In an effort to collect potential names for parks, residents may suggest names of individuals, groups or events of historical significance at any time. Residents need to contact City staff in writing with proposed name along with reasoning why the name meets the above criteria. These names will be vetted by Parks staff and included as necessary to City-led naming lists when appropriate.