

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

Date: October 15, 2025

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Betsy Anderson – Senior Planner, Parks & Community Services Department

Subject: Park Naming Guidelines
For information and discussion - no Board action requested

Staff will present process updates that the department is considering to better implement the City of Bellevue's current park naming policy, adopted in 2022 as Resolution 10151. Staff will also share an analysis of existing park and open space names in Bellevue.

Background

Bellevue City Council Resolution 10151 establishes the policy for naming public parks and park and recreation facilities in Bellevue (attachment A). The resolution directs that City Council designates the names of parks and park or recreation facilities, and that Council may seek a recommendation from the Parks & Community Services Board (PCS Board) that is informed by public input. Resolution 10151 specifies that proposed names should be based on the following criteria:

- 1) Neighborhood or geographical identification;
- 2) A natural or geographical feature;
- 3) An historical figure or name of historical or cultural significance;
- 4) A corporation, non-profit organization, or an individual (living or deceased) who has made a significant land, monetary, or other contribution to the park system and who has a compelling connection to Bellevue and/or the park system; and
- 5) In naming parks and park and recreational facilities for individuals or historic figures, the City should consider how such name meets other City priorities, including diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The last criterion was added to the city naming policy in 2022 as an overarching requirement for new park names. To operationalize this updated policy, staff identified process improvements to help better meet Council policy guidance.

Current Park Names in Bellevue

A list of Bellevue's 97 named parks and open spaces indicates that the city's parks are predominantly named after naturalistic elements or places (attachment B). In emphasizing natural, geographical, and neighborhood features, many names on the citywide list comply with the council naming criteria 1 and 2. However, the prevalence of naturalistic and neighborhood-based names has also resulted in repetition of names that could be confusing for the public.

A smaller number of parks are named after individuals or families, and both individual and place-based names draw heavily from Anglo-European sources. Many of these names are derived from land claim settlers in the late 1880s or are place names created by developers of residential subdivisions in the 1950s through 1970s. Very few indigenous names exist in the park system, despite the fact that the indigenous community has lived on and used this land for the vast majority of history. In general, this list reveals that as the city names new park facilities, it has an opportunity to better reflect the diversity of cultures in Bellevue and the diverse cultural histories of the land.

Process Modifications

Staff reviewed naming policies and implementation guidelines from peer agencies to inform a list of operational steps to implement the council naming policy. Core elements of the current process remain unchanged, with the City Council making naming decisions. Opportunities for public input will continue through the PCS Board's role in selecting a name recommendation for the council.

Process modifications may include:

- In soliciting community recommendations for names, Parks & Community Services would request a more detailed written description explaining the significance of the name and why it should be considered based on the council naming criteria.
- Name options for PCS Board and council consideration may be provided from sources other than community surveys.
- Additional background research on potential names would be conducted by staff and summarized for names presented to the PCS Board for review and recommendation.
- If an individual or family name is proposed for a park site, additional research and criteria for evaluation would be required from the name proponent and would require consent of the family, if possible.

- Additional outreach or consultation with connected groups would be required for names with cultural significance, including for proposed indigenous names.
- Additional guidance would be provided for certain foreseeable circumstances, including how to approach translation of non-English park names, how to address proposed park names that may be repetitive, and when/why renaming of an existing park might be considered.

Next Steps

With feedback from the board, staff will continue developing implementation guidelines for the naming policy and will begin to incorporate these steps in subsequent naming processes.

Attachments

- A. Resolution 10151 Park Naming Policy
- B. Existing Park, Open Space, and Facility Names in Bellevue