



DATE: September 13, 2021

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Conrad Lee, Councilmember  
*City Council*

SUBJECT:

For special consideration by the Council, I raise an opportunity to honor and celebrate Jim Ellis who was a strong ambassador for the natural environment. Among his accomplishments, he became known as the father of Forward Thrust, which launched voter-approved bonds that paid for expanding the parks system and cleaning up natural areas. As a life-long citizen visionary, a prominent example that represents his legacy is Mr. Ellis' commitment, courage, and perseverance towards cleaning up Lake Washington. He also was a champion of preserving public land, supporting parks, and advancing environmental education in King County and Bellevue. The legacy of Jim Ellis is profoundly positive and enduring.

More specifically, Mr. Ellis was a key emissary for enlisting donors for the construction of Bellevue's environmental center, which educates visitors on Bellevue's various natural areas and habitats. Moreover, he contributed work for preserving the Mercer Slough. Mr. Ellis put words into action that created significant public spaces that benefit and educate generations to come. Former Gov. Dan Evens acknowledged, "He didn't look for credit, he didn't look for anything other than to get the job done. He was a contributor to the very best of what we have now in our community."

Because of the strong connection to environmental issues in Bellevue and a lifetime of devoted service to all people of Bellevue, I propose naming the environmental center after Jim Ellis. To be sure of the proper procedures and the interests of stakeholders, I conducted the research.

In June of 2011, the City Council prescribed a naming procedure in the form of Resolution 8229, and Section 2 reserves authority for the Council to name a park or major building. Additionally, the Council must at minimum deliberate and agree on the public significance. A copy of Resolution 8229 is attached.

Knowing that many donors and sponsors invested in the construction of the environmental center, I spoke with representatives, and they have committed their support for this proposed name change.

Among the top investors is the Pacific Science Center (PSC), which also conducts much of the programming at the environmental center. PSC wholeheartedly endorses honoring Jim Ellis in this way and only asks that, considering the heritage of the area, the City of Bellevue place an acknowledgement of the historic caretakers of the land and respect to generations before us.

Most importantly, I consulted the Ellis family. The relatives embrace the idea of naming the environmental center after Jim Ellis given that the place aligns so well with his life's work and love in action for the community of Bellevue.

Other benefactors who support the name change are Boeing, Master Builders, Puget Sound Energy, and other individuals.

Under "Council Business," I will raise this proposal for Council's consideration to rename the environmental center the "Jim Ellis Environmental Center at Mercer Slough." I believe the public significance is more than justified, and generations to come should enjoy a physical space that honors by name the legacy of Jim Ellis.

If the Council concurs and gives direction, the City Attorney's Office will prepare legislation accordingly for action at a future Council meeting.

Suggested motion language:

I move to direct staff to prepare legislation that will rename the Mercer Slough Environmental Center to become the Jim Ellis Environmental Center at Mercer Slough.

Attachments:

- A. Resolution 8229, Naming a City Space or Building
- B. Biography Summary of Jim Ellis