

Report to Council



Date: March 11, 2024
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Update on City Naming Policies Review
Department: Communications

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Community Communications Manager dated March 11, 2024, with respect to the naming of new civic assets;

AND THAT Council directs staff to prepare an updated naming of new civic assets policy based on current practices and consultations.

Purpose:

To consider reviewing and renewing the City's new civic assets naming policy

Background:

Conceptually, naming touches on many areas of Council and Corporate Policy; however, there are three Council Policies which discreetly give direction to naming of new civic assets:

- Park Naming – [Policy No. 251](#)
- Civic Community Facility Naming – [Policy No. 343](#)
- Naming, Street Name/Address Changes and Compensation – [Policy No. 363](#)

The policies were last updated in 1997, 2008 and 2012 respectively. Recognizing that the existing policies have not been updated for some time, the City is at an appropriate interval to review and modernize these policies so that they reflect current practices. There are also many examples across the country of municipalities reconsidering their approach to naming in recent years, in terms of specific monuments and assets or in terms of overall policy frameworks.

The proposed focus of this project is to clarify the approach to how the City names new assets. At this time, re-naming policy changes are only being contemplated in the context of routine asset renewal re-naming procedures that are currently covered in existing policy. This approach allows for the timely completion of a new asset naming policy, which is needed before the City can take steps to address unnamed completed assets. There is a potential that some of the procedures and tools developed to

modernize how the City names new assets could eventually be expanded by Council to serve re-naming needs in the future.

Discussion:

Potential foundations for policy revision exist in our community vision, Imagine Kelowna, our Official Community Plan, and our Cultural Plan. All three of these plans acknowledge multiple histories and fostering an inclusive future for all. The City’s community vision contains a discreet goal of focusing on how to honour shared and distinct cultural histories and experiences:

<i>Imagine Kelowna (Community Vision)</i>		
Principle 1 – Collaborative	Goal: Engage with the Okanagan’s traditional past and heritage as foundations for building a fair and equitable community	<i>We will honour our rich heritage while also following the lead of our local Indigenous communities towards a path of reconciliation.</i>

The City’s Official Community Plan [Chapter 2 \(Planning Context\)](#) includes a jointly authored Community Histories section, which blends together syilx and settler perspectives on the history of our lands and the development of our City. Evolving to acknowledge multiple cultures and histories has also begun to permeate project level work at the City, such as public art installations and facility and park design.

The City’s Cultural Plan [Goal 5: Learn from our Past](#) sets out multiple strategies to preserve our heritage while expanding how we honour, share and celebrate the history of diverse cultural communities, with a specific focus on syilx/Okanagan history and Indigenous artists and creatives.

The City’s current naming policies refer to the prioritization of settler and pioneer names for civic assets or “acclaimed residents”. In addition, the policies direct that adjacent neighbourhood naming conventions be used, which can further perpetuate the predominance of naming according to settler history, as settler names have already been widely adopted for streets, parks, neighbourhoods and other assets throughout the City for decades. If settler history is to continue as a consideration for the naming of new assets, the policy should also have flexibility for other factors to be considered and clearer process steps for routine or exceptional circumstances. For example, the policies indicate that for major facilities and civic community facilities, public input and public acceptance will be considered when selecting a name but there is little in the way of defined procedures or process direction on when and how public acceptance is to be determined.

Further, it is contemplated that an updated, modernized naming policy would benefit from input from syilx/Okanagan people, which is currently not a consideration. This form of new strategic direction will help ensure the City’s naming policy is aligned with current social, historical and political contexts; and enhance the way we build and animate our community today. Naming should continue to be an important part of the celebration and pride that we generate when we open new facilities, parks and public spaces, for all of our residents.

Jurisdictional Trends

In addition to initial policy review by staff who interpret and apply the existing policies on a day-to-day basis, a scan was completed of 13 local governments across Canada, with a primary focus on BC and

Alberta local governments which had renewed their policies in the past 5-7 years. Trends and practices within their policy, tools and governance structures include:

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:	Recognizing a diversity of past, present and growing cultural communities and histories is common place, as is avoiding names which are culturally divisive or are connected to the oppression of a cultural community. Identifying opportunities for naming which advance visibility of the diversity of cultures within the community was also found.
Reconciliation:	Recognizing Indigenous history, culture and traditions is often a key consideration in conjunction with other policy statements. About half of the reviewed local governments directly enshrine their naming policies and practices within an Indigenous Reconciliation commitment or lens. This is sometimes accompanied by reference to the preservation of Indigenous languages as a fundamental element of Canadian culture and society, per the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #14, as in the recently revised RDCO Board Policy on Parks Naming, Renaming and Dedications.
Wayfinding	Broadly speaking, municipal policies tend to affirm the primacy of wayfinding, navigation and avoiding confusion for emergency response personnel in the selection of names.
Sponsorship and Commemorative Naming:	Municipal naming policies are not generally intended to supersede the consideration of sponsorship opportunities and separate policy exists for handling commemorative naming requests. Sponsorship and honourific or commemorative naming are treated in policy as distinct and valid approaches to naming, alongside core municipal asset naming policy.
Co-naming	Under limited circumstances, municipal naming policies allow for the co-naming of civic assets or naming of different monuments, spaces or assets within an area.
Procedures for naming, name review and validation	The City's existing policies provide inconsistent and ambiguous procedures for when and how names are selected, reviewed or validated. Municipalities employ a variety of procedures that involve staff community and third-party or partners.

Conclusion:

As suggested by the above analysis, a new civic asset naming policy could be structured around a series of core policy statements that describe the multiple factors the City considers when selecting a name for a new civic asset. Chief among those could be wayfinding and the use of adjacent neighbourhood naming conventions, where such choices are not culturally divisive or historically contested, with additional considerations reflective of the approaches taken in other jurisdictions.

The policy may also consider levels of assets or asset values when determining procedures for naming, so that a more robust process is applied when naming City-wide assets, with a view to balancing the investment of taxpayer dollars as part of naming procedures.

Pending feedback from Council, the planned next steps in the project include:

- Complete internal and external consultations on draft policy directions

- Draft policy language
- Identify key implementation steps and success factors
- Present revised policies to Council for consideration in Q4

Internal Circulation:

- Parks and Building Planning
- Real Estate Services
- Development Planning
- Policy and Planning
- Partnerships
- Cultural Services

Existing Policy:

- Park Naming – [Policy No. 251](#)
- Civic Community Facility Naming – [Policy No. 343](#)
- Naming, Street Name/Address Changes and Compensation – [Policy No. 363](#)

Related Official Community Plan city-wide policies:

- Chapter 2 – The Planning context (community histories)
- Chapter 9 – Equitable community (9.2)
- Chapter 11 – Heritage (11.2 ; 11.3.1 ; 11.4)

Consultation and Engagement:

Focused engagement with invested organizations and syilx host nation representatives are planned as part of this project.

- WFN staff have agreed to facilitate opportunities for City staff to engage with representatives of the nation through Q2.
- Additional engagement with Okanagan Indian Band and other host nation representatives is anticipated through Q2/3, building on initial engagement with WFN as the host nation representative that initiated collaboration with the City on naming of new civic assets.
- Engagement opportunities for heritage and cultural community organizations will also be set up as part of the next phase of the project, so that groups that wish to have input on the policy elements can share their suggestions and feedback.

Communications Comments:

The City will keep residents informed of project updates by way of reports to Council and by way of the communications strategies being deployed for new civic assets currently under development, so that as residents are kept informed of the progress on new assets, there is information available on the status of this policy work that will impact eventual naming decisions for those same assets.

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Approved for inclusion:

cc:

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