REPORT IN BRIEF
The current City policy for naming City-owned lands and facilities does not address the process for renaming facilities or parks and does not include a role in the recommendation process for the Parks and Recreation Commission or other appropriate commissions. This report presents recommendations for revisions to the policy that will add criteria for selecting names, incorporate appropriate commissions into naming recommendations and define the process for renaming a City-owned land or facility. This report also provides alternatives to naming parks or facilities in order to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to the community.
RECOMMENDATION
Staff recommends that the Policy and Services Committee:
1. Recommend that Council adopt the revised policy for the naming and renaming of City-owned land and facilities.
2. Direct staff to explore alternative methods, other than naming of facilities, for recognizing individuals who have made a significant contribution to the community.

BACKGROUND
On February 2, 2004, Council considered a proposal to rename the Arastradero Preserve in honor of former City Council member Enid Pearson, referring it to the Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA). PAHA subsequently recommended that the name of the park be changed to the Enid Pearson Arastradero Preserve.

In considering the request for a name change, Council asked whether the current policy addresses the renaming of a facility or whether there were defined criteria for helping to determine an appropriate name for a facility or park. Staff explained that the current policy only discusses the naming of new facilities and does not specifically discuss the process for renaming existing facilities or City-owned lands.

The current policy for naming City-owned land or principal facilities requires a recommendation by the Palo Alto Historical Association, based on suggestions offered by the public, staff or members of PAHA. PAHA has the responsibility of determining whether the suggested name meets the criteria of appropriate geographical or historical significance. A list of fitting names that are deemed to warrant serious consideration are presented to the City Council by PAHA in ranked order, with a recommended name for Council to adopt. The recommendation is placed on the consent calendar of the Council agenda and is approved by Council resolution. There is a provision in the policy that if the resolution to name a facility is pulled from the consent calendar, the matter is then referred to the Policy and Services Committee for further review and recommendation to Council.

Council directed staff to review and revise the current policy so that it would:
  • include additional specific criteria for the naming of lands or facilities in honor of individuals
  • include a role in the name recommendation process for the Parks and Recreation Commission, or other appropriate commissions
  • provide a process for transmitting historical information on the facility to Council as part of the recommendation process
  • determine criteria that should be used for naming or renaming land and facilities
  • provide an alternate method besides the naming of lands or facilities for honoring individuals who have made a significant contribution to the community.
The intent of the policy is to guide the naming of City facilities in a fair, objective and consistent manner and to aid in the selection of names that are suitable to the property or facility, respectful of the history of the site and useful to the public in locating a park or facility.

**DISCUSSION**

At Council direction, staff researched appropriate alternatives to the current naming policy. Staff studied the policies of 42 cities, counties and park districts for criteria and reviewed processes that would enhance the City’s policy. Specifically, the role that historical associations and appropriate commissions play in the naming of facilities, the criteria used in consideration of names, and explicit guidelines for renaming parks and facilities were reviewed to formulate the attached revised policy (Attachment A). On the attached revised policy, staff has highlighted new language by shading and underlining.

**Criteria For Naming Parks And Facilities In Honor Of Individuals**

The vast majority of Palo Alto parks and sub-areas within parks are named for individuals. Only six of thirty-two parks are named for geographic associations and two are named for landmark or historical connections. In contrast, most community centers and libraries are named for their geographic location, such as the Mitchell Park Community Center, College Terrace Library and Downtown Library. Only the Lucie Stern Community Center and the Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center are named for individuals.

In order to ensure a historical connection between the name of an individual and the park or facility that is named in honor of the person, the first naming criteria is proposed to be modified to put an emphasis on the association between the person and the particular site, and secondarily to the City as a whole.

In keeping with the City’s history of naming parks in honor of individuals, staff proposes to amend the criteria that provides for naming City-owned land for a benefactor who contributed the land, or funds for purchase of the land or facility, by clarifying that donation of land or resources does not constitute an obligation by the City to name the land or facility for the person. Similarly, while it has been a tradition to name parks in honor of persons, it would be a significant change from tradition to name a park in honor of a benefactor business, group or organization. For this reason, staff recommends that the name of a business, group or organization not be used for a park or City-owned facility.

Following the example of neighboring cities and what has generally been the practice of the City of Palo Alto, staff recommends that names honoring individuals be in memoriam, except in unusual circumstances. With the exception of parks or facilities named in honor of the benefactor who provided the land or funds for the site, almost all of the parks or facilities in Palo Alto were named in memoriam for the individual. An
exception to this practice was Mitchell Park, which was named for J. Pearce Mitchell, who served on the Palo Alto City Council for 31 years. The revised policy allows for an exception in extraordinary circumstances, such as in honor of Mayor Mitchell’s extraordinary service.

A new criteria encourages the recognition of names that reflect the City’s ethnic and cultural diversity. It is hoped that this recognition will contribute to greater respect and understanding of different cultures within the Palo Alto community.

Two additional criteria were added to prohibit naming parks or facilities for elected officials who are in office at the time or City employees whose principle contribution to the community was through the course of their employment with the City. While an exception can be made for employees who volunteer beyond the scope of their job duties to serve the community, staff has provided alternative methods of recognition (see below) that are deemed more suitable than dedicating the name of a park or facility to the person.

Role Of Advisory Commissions Or Committees In Reviewing Names
The current naming policy does not include a role for City commissions. Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission have a role in the review of names for parks, City-owned lands and recreation facilities; the Library Advisory Commission a review role in names for libraries; the Public Arts Commission in names for art facilities; and the Policy and Services Committee in the review of names for police, fire, utility or other civic facilities. The Commission or Committee would provide a forum for public comment, and would ensure that the name of the park or facility properly reflects the history and culture of the neighborhood or user group that the facility will serve.

All of the cities and agencies who were surveyed on their naming policies included a review process by the Parks and Recreation Commission or another commission whose sphere of influence is most closely associated with the facility in question.

The inclusion of the Parks and Recreation Commission or other appropriate commission is not intended to diminish the role of the Palo Alto Historical Association in the review of suggested names. While the Historical Association will continue to assess the historical or geographical context of the name, the appropriate commission will help to determine whether the suggested name is helpful to the public in identifying the location of the facility and whether the name is consistent with the character of the park or facility.

Documentation Of Past History And Justification For Name Selection
The Palo Alto Historical Association will continue to be the first level of review of park and facility names. The process of name review will be enhanced by requiring the person or group making a naming suggestion to document the reasons for the particular
suggestion; the historical connection between the name and the park or facility; and, in the case of a proposal to name a facility for a person, the contributions that the individual has made to the community. Using a suggestion form will help standardize nominations.

Three surveyed agencies who use a suggestion form have found that the form is beneficial in encouraging a well thought-out résumé of the suggested name.

Criteria For Renaming Parks And Facilities
Many Palo Alto parks have been renamed in honor of persons who have made significant contributions to the community or who have historically been associated with the area where the park is located. Seven of the twelve City parks that have been renamed in honor of individuals originally had geographic names, such as Meadow Park, Mayfield Park and Amarillo Park. After the death of Lucie Stern, the Palo Alto Community Center was renamed the Lucie Stern Community Center in honor of the benefactor of the center and many other City facilities.

The advantage of renaming a park or facility is that it provides a process for the recognition of persons who have made an outstanding contribution to the community. In cases where the test of time indicates that a person was unsuitable or that there is not a proper historical connection between the park and the individual, a new name can be chosen.

The disadvantage of renaming a park or facility is that when the site is recognized by the community or it serves as a geographical reference point, changing the name can cause confusion to the public in finding the site. This is generally more of a problem for popular destinations that are regionally known than small neighborhood or mini-parks.

Many of the agencies surveyed discouraged the renaming of parks unless there was no other facility or land that could be named for an individual, or except in the case of an extraordinary event, such as recognition of a war or major calamity. There was generally less reservation about the renaming of buildings or sub-areas within parks or open space areas.

Staff recommends that City policy discourage the renaming of existing park or recreational facilities, particularly one whose name has regional significance, unless there are extraordinary circumstances, and no other new facility or portion of an existing park or facility can be named. The revised policy suggests that if a park or facility is to be renamed in honor of a person, that this only be done when the person or persons have made “major, overriding contributions to the City and whose distinctions are as yet unrecognized.” These extraordinary contributions would be detailed on the name suggestion form and would be expanded upon by the review of the Historical Association.
The policy of renaming facilities incorporates three additional criteria to the list of established factors for general park naming, i.e. that the person:
1. Has made lasting and significant contributions to the protection of natural or cultural resources of the City of Palo Alto
2. Has made substantial contributions to the betterment of a specific facility or park, consistent with the established standards for the facility
3. Has made substantial contributions to the advancement of recreational opportunities within the City of Palo Alto.

Alternative Methods Of Honoring Individuals
As an alternative to naming or renaming a park or facility for an individual, staff offers the alternative of creating a central monument for the recognition of people who have made significant contributions to the community.

Recognizing that few individuals, though deserving of significant recognition for their service to the community, are likely to qualify to have a facility named in their honor, a community “Walk of Fame” or “Wall of Fame” could be established. The cities of San Jose, Burlingame, Foster City, and Rancho Palos Verdes have established criteria for recognizing individuals on a walk or wall of honor. Such a tribute is a permanent honor, consisting of a marker describing the honoree’s accomplishments, placed along a selected pathway. Generally, these cities require that the person honored have contributed ten or more years of service to the community; had a positive impact on the lives of City residents; be considered an appropriate role model; made a significant impact on the continuation and or enhancement of established community programs; and/or created new opportunities for the community through new facilities or programs.

If the Policy and Services Committee directs, staff could further explore the feasibility of creating a walk of honor, perhaps along Centennial Way or in the plaza of City Hall.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATION
One option that was not incorporated into the attached revised policy but that is used by other agencies is the practice of taking no action on a name suggestion until at least six months from the receipt of a suggested name change or the adoption of the naming policy. This “cooling-off period” helps to ensure that decisions related to naming parks or facilities are objective and not swayed by emotion or sentimentality. Staff feels that this practice is not necessary because of the thoroughness of the selection criteria and the objective review by both the Palo Alto Historical Association and appropriate commission.

RESOURCE IMPACT
The changes recommended in this report will have minimal resource impacts. Some additional staff time will be required in reviewing suggested facility and park names or new names with the appropriate commission before adoption by City Council. The
process for gathering suggested names from the public or staff through the office of the City Clerk remains unchanged, and therefore will not result in any additional expense.

The renaming of facilities may result in the need for changing facility signs, maps, plans or other documents. The cost of this alteration would vary with facility and would be reported under the Resource Impact section of the staff report presenting the name recommendation.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
This revised policy is consistent with Council direction. The recommendations presented enhance and clarify existing policies and are not contrary to other City policies.

TIMELINE
March 9: Policy and Services Committee review of draft revised policy.
April 12: Council review and approval of revised policy.
May 5: Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA) reviews the renaming of Arastradero Preserve and the naming of SOFA Park. PAHA forwards ranked suggestions to the Parks and Recreation Commission.
July 12: City Council reviews Parks and Recreation Commission recommendations. Park names are adopted by Council resolution.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
The adoption of policy on the naming or renaming of facilities is not considered a project under the definitions of the California Environmental Quality Act of 2001 (CEQA).

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A: Revised Draft Policy 1-15
Attachment B: Draft Application For Naming or Renaming City-owned Lands or Facilities
Attachment C: Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes- 2/24/04
Attachment D: Palo Alto Historical Association Minutes- 3/3/04