



Legislation Text

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File #: 24-1602, Version: 1

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** JANUARY 2, 2024

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**THROUGH:** JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

**FROM:** DANA WEDELES, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES OFFICER

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to amend Section 5-2-62 (CHANGES OF NAMES) of Article C (STREET NAMES), Chapter 2 (STREETS AND SIDEWALKS), Title 5 (TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended, by adding thereto a new subsection (18) to Re-Name Streets Currently Named for Confederate Leaders.

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**ISSUE:** Should City Council rename or rededicate North Breckinridge Place, North and South Early Street, North and South Jordan Street and Jordan Court, and Forrest Street, which were all named for Confederate military leaders.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Authorize the renaming and/or rededication of four streets currently named for Confederate military leaders, as recommended by the City Council Naming Committee; and
- (2) Incorporate the new names into the proposed ordinance (Attachment 2) on first reading and schedule it for second reading, public hearing and final passage on Saturday, January 20, 2024.

**BACKGROUND:** On January 10, 2023, Mayor Justin Wilson introduced a proposal (Attachment 3) to rename streets in the City that are named for Confederate military leaders. Many of these streets were named in 1953 through an ordinance (Attachment 4) that specifically stated that "streets running in a generally north-south direction shall, insofar as possible, bear the names of Confederate military leaders." This ordinance was approved one year following the annexation of Alexandria's West End (west of Quaker Lane) where many streets in the City had not yet been developed nor been named. This ordinance also came to be in anticipation of the landmark Supreme Court *Case of Brown v. Board of Education* - a defining point in the Civil Rights Movement, which, as the Southern Poverty Law Center stated in a 2016 report, "led to a backlash among segregationists," including the naming of streets and civic buildings for Confederates.

To inform the process of renaming streets, City Staff developed a map (Attachment 5) and list of streets confirmed to have been named for Confederate military leaders in the City (Attachment 6), including their original name (if the street existed prior to 1953), and the year of the change, as also documented in City Code Sec. 5-2-62. A few of these streets were named for Confederate military leaders prior to 1953. The list also includes streets that are potentially named for Confederate military leaders, though unverified.

There are also streets named for known segregationists/Klan members that have not formally been identified, such as Taney Avenue.

At the request of the Mayor, the [Historic Alexandria Resources Commission](https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/historic-alexandria-resources-commission-harc) (HARC) developed a list (Attachment 7), with the support of the Office of Historic Alexandria, of individuals and locations worthy of honor by the City. The Commission paid special attention to inclusion of historically marginalized populations, such as women and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities (as well as events and locations significant to populations that have been historically marginalized throughout our history), who have frequently been ignored through history. Additionally, the Commission considered street names that had been retired previously.

The City Council Naming Committee was then charged with overseeing the renaming process and providing a recommendation to Council, as described in the discussion below. The Committee is currently comprised of three (3) members of City Council:

- Councilman John Taylor Chapman, Chair
- Councilmember Sarah Bagley
- Councilwoman Alyia Gaskins

**DISCUSSION:** The Naming Committee held a meeting on September 28, 2023 to narrow down the options for streets to be renamed and for potential new names, and hosted a public hearing on November 30, 2023 to receive feedback on those options.

### **I. September 28, 2023 Meeting**

At its September 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Committee formally received HARC's extensive research on potential names. During this meeting the Committee discussed its recommendation to select five streets for consideration in renaming, with a focus on residential streets of varying length and impact. The Committee also sought to pick a street with a business on it so that going forward it could understand the impact the change may have on businesses and how to help mitigate impacts. Further, the Committee recommended the selected streets be named for African American individuals from the Civil War era and considered the rededication of a street name for a new meaning than its original intent. The recommendations from the September 28<sup>th</sup> meeting included:

- **North Breckinridge Place:** The Committee recommended it be renamed to honor Benjamin Banneker, Sarah A. Gray, Harriet Jacobs, or Ona Judge.
- **North Frost Street:** The Committee recommended it be renamed to honor Benjamin Banneker, Sarah A. Gray, Harriet Jacobs, or Ona Judge.
- **North and South Early Street:** The Naming Committee recommended it be renamed to honor Benjamin Banneker, Sarah A. Gray, Harriet Jacobs, or Ona Judge.
- **North and South Jordan Street & Jordan Court:** The Committee recommended it be renamed to Hughes Street to honor the Hughes family that lived in Foxchase area while being enslaved.
- **Forrest Street:** The Naming Committee recommended that it be renamed Forest Street.

Following the meeting on September 28, City staff sent an eNews and media advisory out to the public, which included a feedback form. Staff placed yard signs with a QR code about the project at the intersections of all impacted streets. They also sent a postcard with information about the initiative to every address on a potentially impacted street.

In advance of the November 30 Naming Committee public hearing, staff received and reviewed 156 feedback forms and provided Committee members with a report of the comments (attachment #8). The results are not scientific and are based on self-reporting. Of those that completed the form, 99 stated they live or have a business on one of the impacted streets.

### **II. November 30, 2023 Public Hearing**

During the public hearing, the Committee heard from residents of Early Street and Jordan Street, and from individuals both in support of and opposed to the initiative. Many of the Jordan Street residents supported, as an alternative to Hughes Street, a rededication of the street for Thomasina "Redhawk" Jordan. As researched by HARC, Ms. Jordan was the first American Indian to serve in the United States Electoral College and was later an Alexandria resident.

Some residents of Early Street supported rededicating their street in honor of Charity Earley or James Early. Charity Earley paved the way for African American women in the military, in education, and in her community. Her most prominent role was as the commanding officer of the first African American unit of the Women's Army Corps on a tour of duty overseas during [World War II](#)

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.womenshistory.org%2Feducation-resources%2Ftopics%2Fworld-war-ii&data=05%7C02%7CDana.Wedeles%40alexandriava.gov%7C8bd84bea0fb0492177e908dbfc255a1e%7Cfeaa9b3143754aeeadccc76ad32a890b%7C0%7C0%7C638381009588184189%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=6J5fhT09GmDGay%2FeBWS7e5YAzzK97efkRi5mY7erNFk%3D&reserved=0>. James Early was an inventor credited with discovering the Early Effect in 1952, figuring out that junction transistors are node circuits and not loop circuits.

A significant number of residents that provided feedback were unaware of the street being named for Jubal Early and enjoy living on a street that they assumed was named “Early,” as in the time of day, and asked that the street continue to be viewed as that connotation.

Following the public hearing, the Committee made the recommendation to bring the following options to the full City Council body for a public hearing and vote:

Street Name	Potential Action	Name Recommendation
North Breckenridge Place	Rename	In honor of Harriet Jacobs
Forrest Street	Rename	Forest Street
North Jordan Street South Jordan Street Jordan Court	Rededicate or rename	In honor of either: • Thomasina Jordan (preference) • Hughes family
North Early Street South Early Street	Rededicate or rename	In honor of one of the following: • James Early • Charity Earley • Early (time concept) • Sarah A. Gray

Additionally, the Naming Committee asked staff to (1) identify any “red flags” from emergency service agencies in the proposed names, (2) research financial impacts to residents and businesses, (4) investigate the potential for financial assistance to businesses that may experience a burden in changing signage and marketing material, and (5) provide a cost estimate for the proposed changes, as recommended by the naming committee.

*Emergency Service Impacts*

The City’s Geographic Information Services team (GIS) coordinates name changes with all stakeholder agencies, including those involved with emergency services such as the Department for Emergency and Customer Communication (DECC). Their coordination ensures that any calls placed to the call center are routed by geographic location. The 911 calling and dispatching data for cell phones and land lines will be “aliased” for several years to ensure there if someone uses either the old or new name on an emergency call that there is no disruption to service. Adjacent jurisdictions, which sometimes respond to calls within Alexandria, will have access to the renamed streets dataset via the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

GIS reported that emergency service agencies raised concern about using the name Sarah Gray as it may lead to confusion with “Parker-Gray” on calls to dispatch. Other ways to honor Sarah Gray could be considered. They also stated that they are accustomed to clarifying the distinction between “North Early” and “South Early” on calls, but in the future would advise against re-naming non-contiguous streets as “North” and “South.”

*Financial Impacts to Residents*

The Naming Committee requested that staff provide research on the financial impacts to residents that live on renamed streets. These cost estimates are not intended to serve as legal advice. Even if impacted residents are

not required to update certain information, they should make decisions about whether to update certain information based on their individual circumstances and needs.

Item Being Changed	Required To Update?	Cost
Car Registration and/or DMV record	Yes	Free
Drivers License/Real ID Card	No - may wait until existing license expires	\$20 for drivers' license replacement/\$30 for REAL ID replacement
Passport	No - may wait until existing passport expires	Starting at \$130
Will/Trust	No	Certified letter from City: Free
Social Security	Yes	Free
Banks and Investment Services Loan Issuers Credit Card Companies Insurance	Depends on individual policies	This depends on the individual services, but changes of addresses are typically free.

*Financial Impacts to Businesses*

There are a total of five brick-and-mortar businesses located on the streets being considered for renaming. This includes one hotel on Breckenridge Street, and two convenience stores, a dry cleaner, and a Chinese take-out restaurant on South Jordan Street. There is also a record of twenty-eight home-based businesses. If their street is renamed, businesses may need to change their address on:

- Business listings on the internet and navigational maps,
- Websites,
- Business cards,
- Promotional items,
- Social media,
- Directory listings, and
- Certifications.

The financial impact will vary based on the size and marketing reach of the business. When the City changed Jefferson Davis Highway to Richmond Highway in 2018, the City did not provide financial support to businesses. To gain perspective on what the change was like at that time for a small business, staff spoke to two businesses on the Highway. Affordable Signs and Banners said they incurred the cost for business cards, envelopes, and website changes. They stated that the hassle was minimal and cost under \$500. While the renaming occurred five years ago, they still receive mail on occasion addressed to Jefferson Davis Highway and, as far as they are aware, nothing has been lost in the mail as a result of the change. Your Dog's Best Friend, located on Richmond Highway responded that they updated their business cards and other collateral materials. They stated it was "not a significant financial burden."

In 2021, the City of Fredericksburg renamed Jefferson Davis Highway and offered \$500 grants to any

businesses impacted by the name change. To be eligible the business had to be in operation on Jefferson Davis Highway (verified by the Commissioner of the Revenue), and in the City of Fredericksburg (22401). The business also had to be compliant with all City of Fredericksburg taxes and permits.

In July 2023, Loudoun County offered grants to businesses affected by road name changes. This included up to \$500 for home-based businesses and up to \$750 for businesses in commercial spaces or non-profits. They also offered a Sign Reimbursement Grant of up to \$5,000 for businesses or nonprofits that required modification or replacement of storefront or free-standing or vehicle signs that show the full address of the business or property. To date, they have not received any requests from businesses for sign replacement and found that almost none of the businesses had their address shown on their signage.

In both the City of Fredericksburg and Loudoun County the business grants were managed by their economic development authorities.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** City staff have developed cost estimates based on “in-kind” changes of the existing signs on all four streets, totaling \$15,225. In addition to street, bus, and bikeshare signs, the estimate also includes signage at the City-owned Lebanon Cemetery on Breckenridge Street. The cost estimates only include the production and placement of a sticker over the sign at South Early Park, which has never been formally named. A full sign replacement may be considered if the Park is named.

The cost estimate does not include a small business grant, nor does it include new signage to educate the public on historical figures that may be honored. Educational signs may range from \$500 to \$10,000 depending on the size and scale of the scope of work.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- (1) Ordinance Cover
- (2) Proposed Ordinance
- (3) January 10, 2023, Street Re-naming Proposal
- (4) Ordinance No. 769
- (5) Map of Streets named for Confederate Military Leaders
- (6) List of Streets named for Confederate Military Leaders
- (7) HARC list of potential names
- (8) Community feedback from public hearing held November 30, 2023

**STAFF:**

Jack Browand, Deputy Director, RPCA and Staff Liaison to the Naming Committee  
Gretchen Bulova, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria  
Lindsay Dubin, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney’s Office  
Corinna Nowak, GIS Program Manager, Information Technology Service