

San Francisco Public Library Commission Policy Manual

Library Facilities Naming Policy

Policy #601

Section: Facilities

Adopted: June '96

Revised: June 2002

It is the policy of the San Francisco Public Library to name libraries according to geographic location and to identify each branch facility with the neighborhood where it is located or the neighborhood it primarily serves. This Policy enables anyone interested in finding a library to easily ascertain its location by its geographic or neighborhood name. This policy does not address the naming of rooms or other areas or features within branch libraries or within other library facilities.

It shall be the general policy of the San Francisco Public Library not to name any library facility for any person, living or deceased. However, in the rare instance where there are reasons so compelling that adding the name of a person to the geographic name of a specific branch library, or to another library facility, may be appropriate, it shall be the policy of the San Francisco Public Library not to name any library facility for any living person, or for any person deceased less than one year. This restriction permits the Library Commission to evaluate the lifetime contributions and accomplishments of a proposed honoree, and protects from making decisions in reaction to transitory or emotional considerations.

The Library Commission shall approve adding the name of a person to the geographic name of a specific branch library, or to another library facility only where:

- the proposed honoree is associated with a myriad of services and has dedicated a substantial amount of energy, time, resources, leadership and/or volunteer service to improve and benefit the San Francisco Public Library system or the library facility in question. The depth and breadth of the contributions must be obvious and compelling and must reflect a dedication and beneficence to the San Francisco Public Library system or the library facility in question over a great span of time;
- there must be a strong consensus among library users and, in the case of branch libraries, residents of the surrounding neighborhood, to add the name of the proposed honoree to the library facility in question;
- the proposed honoree should reflect the spirit of the San Francisco Public Library's mission of free and equal access to information for all;
- the new name should avoid controversy and not carry the banner of a transitory cause, no matter how worthy, but rather, reflect the tradition and stability of the Library as an institution, and
- it must be in the public interest to approve the proposed name.

In summary, adding the name of a person to a library facility is reserved for the rare individual whose dedication and service to the San Francisco Public Library system or the library facility in question is extraordinary, unique and of the highest quality.

PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING PROPOSALS TO ADD THE NAME OF A PERSON TO THE GEOGRAPHIC NAME OF A LIBRARY FACILITY

1. Any member of the Library Commission or member of the public may propose a name to be added to the geographic name of a specific branch library, or to another library facility, by submitting a request in writing to the Library Commission, or by making an oral request during public open time at any regularly scheduled meeting of the Library Commission. The proponents of the name addition must submit thorough and rigorous written research demonstrating that the proposed honoree meets the stringent criteria set forth in this Policy.
2. The President of the Library Commission, in his or her sole discretion, shall determine whether a proposal is sufficiently documented to warrant further consideration by the Library Commission. Where a proposal does not appear to meet the criteria of this Policy, or where the proposal lacks sufficient documentation to determine whether it satisfies the criteria, the President shall advise its proponents of the deficiencies and provide a reasonable opportunity for the proponents to supplement the request. The President shall keep the Library Commission advised as to the existence and status of pending naming requests.
3. The President of the Library Commission shall place any proposal that appears to meet the criteria set forth in this Policy on the Library Commission agenda for general discussion and public comment at one or more regular or special meetings of the Library Commission. Where the proposal involves a branch library, the President shall schedule a meeting in the branch library facility for which the name is proposed or elsewhere in the neighborhood served by such facility, to obtain direct testimony from members of the public living in the neighborhood of the facility.
4. At any time after giving proponents of the name addition and the public an opportunity to be heard, after obtaining direct neighborhood testimony (in the case of branch library proposed name additions), and upon proper notice, the Library Commission shall call for a vote on the issue of whether the proposal meets the criteria set forth in this Policy and whether it is in the public interest to add the proposed name to the geographic name of a neighborhood branch library, or to another library facility. The affirmative vote by a majority of the members of the Library Commission shall be required to approve the addition of a person's name to a library facility. In all cases involving branch libraries, the geographic name of the facility shall precede the honorific name.
5. The Library Commission shall, either at the time it approves the addition of an honorific name, or in a subsequent meeting, designate the method of display of the name addition, which may be by exterior building signage, interior plaque, or any other means appropriate to the specific site. The party who proposed the name to be added to the geographic name of a branch library or other library facility shall bear all costs associated with adding the honorific name, including staff time and material expenses, unless the Commission finds it in the public interest to waive this requirement in whole or in part.