

STREET NAMES ARE A CITY WIDE CONCERN – Ed Sebesta 6/19/2018

The City of Dallas has as one requirement for a street name change that 51% of the residents who have that street as an address approve a name change. The underlying rationale for this is entirely wrong and likely was adopted to block street name changes. Street names are not the sole concern of the residents along a street and they should not be privileged in the naming of the street.

The purpose of this essay is to show how this idea of street resident control over street names is wrong in multiple ways.

Public streets are the property of the city. They are maintained by the city.

Traffic on them and the use of them is regulated by the city as to the speed limit, direction, one-way or two-way, allowed passing, allowed lane changing, stop signs, caution signs, possible parking signs, and other possible signs regulating their use. Additionally the city may define how a street will be used by pedestrians in terms of cross-walks. There may be lanes for bicycle rides. There are also street signs and possibly other additional signs indicating routes and local attractions. In all these rules and regulations the city defines the use of the streets.

Streets are owned and operated by the city, they are city operations.

City streets are for the use of the whole city and persons outside the city. Automobiles, bicyclists, motorcycles, pedestrians and others transit along the length of the street. A city street is potentially experienced by all the residents of the city and those who live outside of the city. The name of the street is also potentially experienced by everyone. They are not private driveways or parking lots.

City names exist on maps both electronic and printed and are viewable by many. Additionally correspondence often goes to addresses on a street and sent from addresses on the street. In this street names are perceived by many.

Some names are just those adopted by developers for marketing, such as maybe Whispering Meadow Lane. Other developers have named streets to give themselves or their family surnames prestige or a friend or relative prestige. Some are adopted to honor an individual. Whatever the reason the street is named the city by the continued use of the street name indicates acceptance of the street name and the reason for the street name.

When the city itself gives a street a name for a person or a theme, or something historical, it is indicating an endorsement of a set of values. In this the concern over a street name is a citywide concern and not just the residents.