

## STAFF REPORT

### Street Renaming

November 9, 2021 Town Council Meeting



The purpose of the public hearing is to consider the facts and solicit comments in order to formulate a decision regarding the Town-initiated renaming of “Lynch Street”. According to the *Town of Apex Address Policy*, “The Town shall have the authority to rename streets within its corporate limits as needed for reasons related to public safety or inappropriateness.” An overview of the process used to inform and gather input from the community is summarized in this staff report. Based on this process, Planning and Community Development staff recommends renaming “Lynch Street” to “Justice Heights Street”.

In September 2020, in accordance with the documented procedures, the Town initiated the process of renaming “Lynch Street” by proposing a suitable road name, “Lynn Council Street,” to replace the name of concern. The Town notified affected property owners of the intent to change the road name and requested input regarding the matter.

In a letter from the Town Manager, property owners were asked to designate their preference regarding the proposed renaming of “Lynch Street” to “Lynn Council Street” and were given an opportunity to suggest alternative names. Twenty-four responses were received with the following preferences indicated (one respondent checked both “Lynn Council Street” and “Other”, and is tallied twice).

- 1 respondent preferred no road name change;
- 12 respondents preferred “Lynn Council Street”; and
- 12 respondents preferred other road names.

The other road names suggested, along with a reason for the suggestion, are summarized below. Each of the suggested names was evaluated to determine if it is an approvable name. A name is not approvable if it is an existing road name used in Wake County. A notice of the public hearing was sent to all property owners, with a summary of all responses received by August 28, 2020. “Lynn Justice Street” is an additional alternative suggested since that time.

*Table 1. Suggested Names for Lynch Street prior to September 15, 2020 Public Hearing*

Other Suggested Name	Reason - paraphrased (if provided)	Approvable
Amatour Street	Comes from, or a derivative of, Latin meaning “love”.	Yes
Clarice Atwater Street	To honor Clarice Atwater - the first Black Mayor-Pro-Tem in Apex, a Town Council member for more than 12 years, and a visionary who saw and fulfilled the need for a long-term care facility in the area by building and operating the Atwater Rest Home at 312 Lynch Street.	Yes
Commencement Street	To honor all those who began their life’s journey on this historic street.	Yes
Justice Heights Street	Inferred reason is because this area has historically been known as Justice Heights. See also suggestion for Justice Street below.	Yes
Lynn Justice Street	Lynn Street is preferred, but if two words are needed, Lynn Justice is suggested to recognize the history of the Justice Family ownership of the property, as well as the meaning of the word “Justice”.	Yes
Nairobi Street	Lynn Council Street is not different enough, it sounds like Lynch Street.	Yes

Other Suggested Name	Reason - paraphrased (if provided)	Approvable
Name honoring the Baldwin family	The Baldwin Family donated the land for the St. Mary AME church and the school where Apex Elementary is now. St. Mary AME church is named after Mrs. Mary C. Baldwin.	Yes, although “Baldwin Ridge” is an existing street name and would not be approvable.
Rosewater Place or other nature-based name, avoiding individual names	Rosewater Place is one suggestion of a healing or nature-based name representing reflection and the pleasant gateway of the neighborhood it serves. The request reflects a desire to avoid naming the street after an individual, which necessitates explanation of that individuals’ story by residents. There is concern that retelling the story of what happened to Lynn Council will be a painful reminder of lynching for residents.	No to Rosewater, but other nature-based names may be approvable.
True Way Street		No
Victory Street		No
Abraham Street		No
Atwater Street	To honor the history of the Atwater family in Apex, and Clarice Atwater in particular.	No
Justice Street	Abraham Justice owned and developed the land on Lynch Street where he lived.	No
Liberty Street		No
Lynn Street		No

At a public hearing held on September 15, 2020, the Town Council listened to input from the community regarding the proposed street naming. The Town Council was supportive of renaming Lynch Street but desired additional opportunities for input on the new name before signing the resolution.

One year later, concerns regarding COVID-19 delayed plans to engage the community in a collaborative in-person setting. On September 1, 2021 property owners and tenants along Lynch Street were sent another letter informing them of the next steps in the process to rename Lynch Street. This letter was followed by an invitation to the entire Justice Heights community to participate in a neighborhood meeting. The following steps were outlined for property owners and tenants and followed prior to this public hearing.

- Step 1: Affected property owners and tenants (those who have legal access to Lynch Street) were invited to submit additional names for consideration by September 15, 2021. Names could be submitted either by calling the Department of Planning and Community Development or entering suggested names in an online survey. Previously-submitted names did not need to be resubmitted. No new names were submitted
- Step 2: Town staff created a final list of eligible names for further community input.
- Step 3: All eligible names were presented at a community meeting held outdoors at West Street Park on September 27, 2021 at 6:00pm. During the meeting, all participants had an opportunity to share their preferences among the eligible names. Each participant at the meeting was given three sticker-dots to show their preferences among the list of names.
- Step 4: The top three preferred eligible names were sent by letter to affected property owners and tenants along with the public notice for the public hearing.

The top three preferred names, based on community feedback regarding preferences during the community meeting, are: (1) Justice Heights Street, (2) Mary Baldwin Street, and (3) Amatour Street. The tally of all preferences collected during the community meeting using “dot voting” are summarized in Table 2.

*Table 2. Community Preferences among Suggested Names for Lynch Street*

<b>Suggested Name</b>	<b>Votes – Affected Owners &amp; Tenants</b>	<b>Votes – Other Stakeholders</b>	<b>Total</b>
Justice Heights Street	9	21	30
Mary Baldwin Street	0	11	11
Amatour Street	1	7	8
Clarice Atwater Street	1	5	6
Lynn Council Street	0	3	3
Commencement Street	1	1	2
Lynn Justice Street	0	0	0
Nairobi Street	0	0	0

According to the *Town of Apex Address Policy*, following the public hearing, the Town Council will either approve the road name change or deny the road name change by resolution. A resolution for this purpose is provided as Attachment A.

**Planning and Community Development Staff Recommendation:**

Planning and Community Development staff recommends renaming “Lynch Street” to “Justice Heights Street” based on the community input received throughout the street-renaming process.