

# APPROVED

MAR 18 2021

## BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

**BOARD REPORT**

NO. 21-042

DATE March 18, 2021

C.D. 4

### BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: GRIFFITH PARK – NAMING OF AN OVERLOOK AREA AT MOUNT HOLLYWOOD AS “TOM LABONGE PANORAMA” — CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION FROM THE PROVISIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III, SECTION 1, CLASS 11(5) [PLACEMENT OF A SIGN LOCATED ON CITY PROPERTY MANAGED BY A CITY DEPARTMENT WHICH HAS A SIGN POLICY ADOPTED BY ITS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS] OF CITY CEQA GUIDELINES AND ARTICLE 19, SECTION 15311(a) OF CALIFORNIA CEQA GUIDELINES

AP Diaz	_____	M. Rudnick	_____
H. Fujita	_____	<i>for</i> *C. Santo Domingo	<u>DF</u>
V. Israel	_____	N. Williams	_____

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 General Manager

Approved   X   Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_ Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve the naming of an area of Griffith Park located near the top of Mount Hollywood as “Tom LaBonge Panorama”, as more fully set forth in this Report (Project);
2. Authorize the installation of appropriate park signage;
3. Determine that the proposed Project, consisting of the placement of a sign located on City property managed by a City Department which has a sign policy adopted by its Board of Commissioners, is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 11(5) [Placement of a sign located on City property managed by a City department which has a sign policy adopted by its Board of Commissioners] of City CEQA Guidelines and Article 19, Section 15311(a) of California CEQA Guidelines and direct Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) staff to file a Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the Los Angeles County Clerk;

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4. Authorize RAP's Chief Accounting Employee or designee to prepare a check to the Los Angeles County Clerk in the amount of \$75.00 for the purpose of filing an NOE; and,
5. Authorize RAP staff to make technical corrections as necessary to carry out the intent of this Report.

### SUMMARY

Griffith Park is located at 4730 Crystal Springs Drive in the Hollywood community of the City. This 4,281.73-acre park provides a wide variety of recreational programs and activities, such as train rides, a merry-go-round, hiking trails, and golf courses, for the local community. Approximately 18,155 City residents live within a one-half (½) mile walking distance of Griffith Park. Due to the facilities, features, programs, and services it provides, Griffith Park meets the standard for a Regional Park as defined in the City's Public Recreation Plan.

Hiking is one of the most popular activities in Griffith Park. Individually, in small groups, or as a part of organized hiking excursion, hikers reach all corners of Griffith Park. Griffith Park contains over 50 miles of trails, roads, and paths that are open and available to hikers. The park's many rugged hills, wilderness areas, and landscaped parklands offer hikers and walkers ample opportunities to experience, enjoy, and appreciate nature.

### Proposed Naming

Griffith Park is home to a number of famous peaks, including Burbank Park, Cahuenga Peak (the highest point in the park), Mount Lee (home to the world famous Hollywood Sign), Mount Chapel, Mount Bell, and Mount Hollywood.

Mount Hollywood, while not the tallest peak in Griffith Park, is certainly one of the most well-known and visited peaks in the Griffith Park. The trail leading from the Griffith Observatory parking lot to the summit of Mount Hollywood is one of the most well-trodden paths in the park. The summit of Mount Hollywood offers incredible views of Griffith Park, the Griffith Observatory and the entire City.

A map of Griffith Park is attached (Attachment 1). The map highlights the location of Mount Hollywood within Griffith Park. At the top of Mount Hollywood is a small overlook area that is fenced and contains several picnic tables.

RAP is proposing to name the Mount Hollywood overlook area as the "Tom LaBonge Panorama" in honor of former City Councilmember Tom LaBonge. A map of area proposed to be named "Tom LaBonge Panorama" is attached (Attachment 2)

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### Background on Tom LaBonge

Born on October 6, 1953 in Los Angeles, Tom LaBonge was an active community member, a valued City employee, and a long time user of, and friend to, Griffith Park. Tom LaBonge grew up in Silver Lake and as a youth played in Griffith Park. He was a graduate of John Marshall High School in Los Feliz and of California State University Los Angeles.

Tom LaBonge served as a City employee or in elected office for almost 40 years. He started his service to the City as a part of Mayor Tom Bradley's Youth Council. He then moved on to serve as a staffer with Councilmember Peggy Stevenson and later with Councilmember John Ferraro. He also worked at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in community relations and served as a special assistant to Mayor Richard Riordan. In 2001 he won a special election to the Los Angeles City Council to represent Council District 4. He served as the Councilmember for Council District 4 from 2001-2015. When he succeeded John Ferraro as the Councilmember for Council District 4 in 2001, he held his Oath of Office ceremony at the Griffith Observatory. When he began his first full term in 2003, he held his Oath of Office at the Old Zoo Picnic area of Griffith Park.

Tom LaBonge was a long-time champion of the City's park system and of Griffith Park. Throughout his years of service to the City he played a large part in the improvement of Griffith Park. His long work and advocacy for the Griffith Observatory was instrumental in the efforts to secure funding and support for the eventual renovation and expansion of that facility. He was heavily involved in the creation of the "A Vision for Griffith Park", which was developed with the input of community working group that he help to put together. He also helped guide the creation of Griffith Park's Berlin Forest, the Griffith Park Adult Community Center, the naming of the Charlie Turner trailhead, and he helped to get the Trails Cafe in Western Canyon open.

Tom LaBonge also helped lead the efforts to expand Griffith Park. In 2010 he spearheaded the effort to acquire the 138 acre Cahuenga Park property. That acquisition was accomplished with the help of the Trust from Public Land, various government agencies, and private donations. In 2013 he helped to secure the donation of the 135 acre Cahuenga Highlands property from Forest Lawn. He also helped to guide the creation of the nearby 3.4 acre Sunnynook River Park, which connected Griffith Park with the Los Angeles River and the Los Angeles River Bike Path.

Tom LaBonge was actively involved in helping to improve RAP's operations and programming as well. He was a strong supporter for the creation of a new Superintendent position to oversee the operations of Griffith Park. After the devastating Griffith Park Fire of 2007 he worked to make sure that RAP had the resources and support to assess the damage in the park and manage the recovery efforts. And he also, for example, assisted RAP's Senior Section in starting the 50 plus Fitness Jamboree, which was long time a 1k and 5k race/walk event for seniors in Griffith Park where over 2,000 seniors from across the City attended to walk, exercise and enjoy health care booths.

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Tom LaBonge had a lifelong connection with Griffith Park. On almost any day he could be found in the park. He was known for his daily hikes to Mount Hollywood. He often spent time in places like Fern Dell, the Bird Sanctuary, or Dante's View, assisting RAP maintenance staff and volunteers with the upkeep of the park. His tireless efforts worked to ensure that Griffith Park served as a destination for both City residents and for visitors from across the world.

Tom LaBonge passed away on January 7, 2021 at the age of 67.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Over the last two months RAP staff has had discussions with various Griffith Park stakeholder groups and area community leaders regarding a potential naming for Tom LaBonge in Griffith Park. These discussions have been with community leaders from the Griffith Park Advisory Board, the local neighborhood councils (Hollywood United Neighborhood Council) and Los Feliz Neighborhood Council) and various stakeholder groups (Friends of Griffith Park, Griffith Trust, and the Los Feliz Improvement Association).

At the Griffith Park Advisory Board meeting on January 28, 2021, RAP staff alerted the group and the community about a potential naming for Tom LaBonge on Mount Hollywood.

News of the potential naming was noted in both the January and February Griffith Park Newsletters, which go out to a list of over 300 subscribers. The February Newsletter noted the specific area at the top of Mount Hollywood that is proposed to be "Tom LaBonge Panorama" and included a picture of the proposed signage.

On February 25, 2021, the Griffith Park Advisory Board, at its regularly scheduled public meeting, approved a letter of support of the proposed naming of an area of Griffith Park located near the top of Mount Hollywood as "Tom LaBonge Panorama" and subsequently sent RAP a letter of support (Attachment 3).

### BOARD NAMING POLICY

On June 5, 2013 the RAP adopted a Naming Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Parks and Recreational Facilities (Policy) for the naming of parks, recreation facilities, park amenities, landmarks and other park assets (Report No. 13-161). This Policy enumerates the criteria and guidelines for use when evaluating proposed park names (Attachment 4). Several of the adopted guidelines applicable to this application are as follows:

- The Naming of parks after individuals shall be limited to those who are deceased and have made exceptional contributions to the park or community within which the park is located.
- The Naming engenders a positive public image which does not unduly commercialize the park or recreational facility.
- The proposed name for the park or recreational facility, and/or contributor, must be compatible with the Mission of RAP.

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- All forms of signage placed on or within a Park Asset shall meet RAP's graphic and sign standards.
- Parks should not be subdivided for purposes of Naming, unless there are readily-identifiable physical divisions in the park (major roads, waterways, hillsides, etc.) which facilitate or warrant a subdivision; or there exist other compelling reasons for having more than one name connected to a park. This should not prevent independently Naming a recreational facility or amenity located within a park, as long as the selected name will not cause confusion for park patrons.

RAP staff has determined that the criteria and guidelines of the Policy have been met.

### CONCLUSION

As noted in this report, Tom LaBonge has clear and direct connection to Griffith Park and was a long time promoter, enthusiast, and champion of the park. The area proposed to be named "Tom LaBonge Panorama" is a place where he walked almost every day. He led countless public hikes to this location and could often be found there.

The proposed name "Panorama" also has a strong connection with Tom LaBonge as it is the name of the street in Silver Lake that he grew up on and where members of his family still reside.

For all the reasons stated in this Report, RAP staff recommends the naming of an area of Griffith Park located near the top of Mount Hollywood (as shown in Attachment 2), to "Tom LaBonge Panorama".

Upon approval of this report, RAP staff would purchase a standard redwood facility sign that would say "Tom LaBonge Panorama" and install it at the overlook area.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed Project consists of the placement of a sign located on City property managed by a City department which has a sign policy adopted by its Board of Commissioners. As such, RAP staff recommends that the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners (Board) determine that it is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 11(5), of City CEQA Guidelines as well as to Article 19, Section 15311(a) of California CEQA Guidelines. RAP Staff will file an NOE with the Los Angeles County Clerk upon the Board's approval.

### FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

There will be a minor fiscal impact to RAP's General Fund due to the cost to purchase and install the new signage.

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This Report was prepared by Darryl Ford, Superintendent, Planning, Maintenance and Construction Branch.

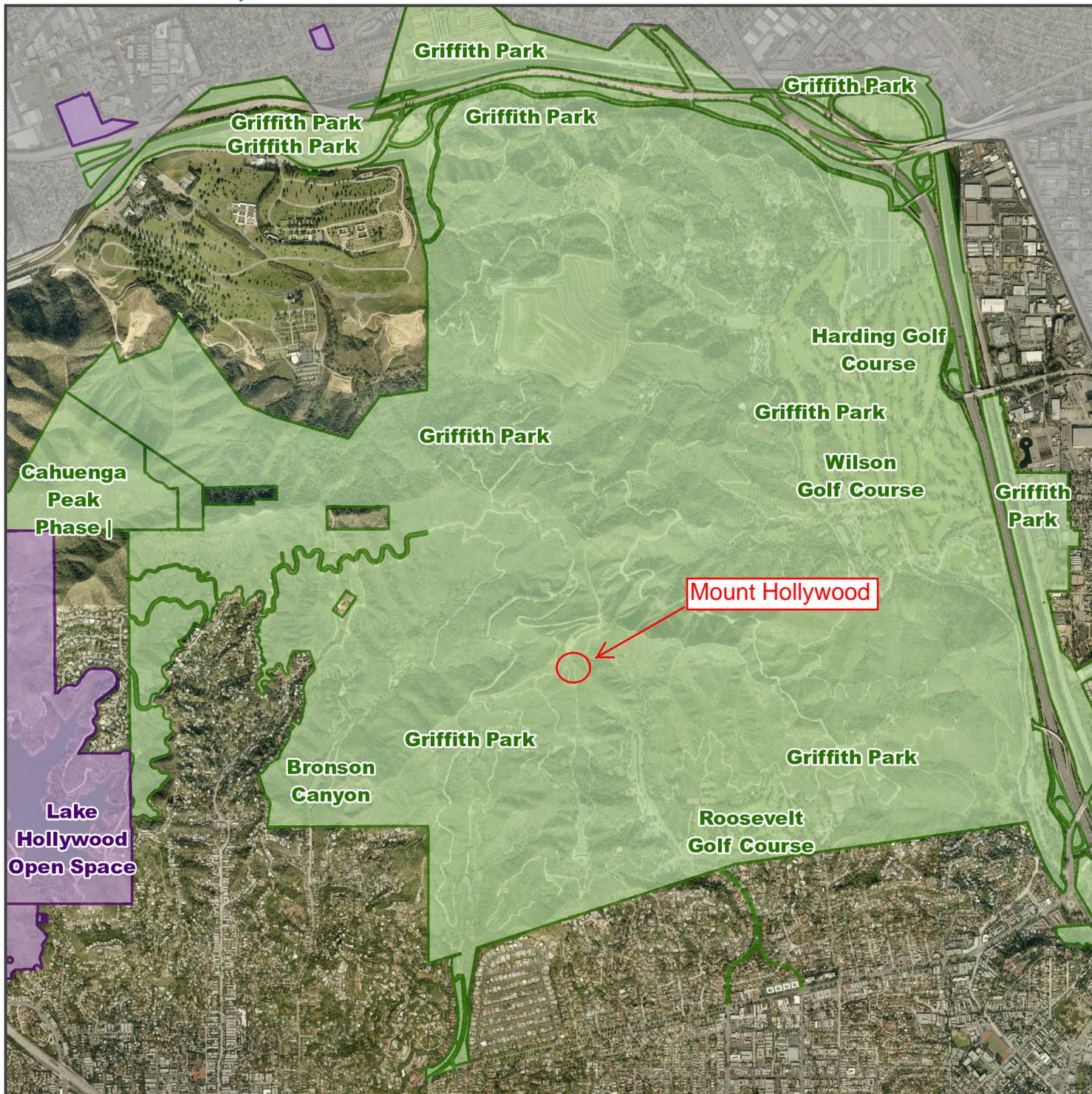
### LIST OF EXHIBITS

- 1) Map of Griffith Park
- 2) Map of Area Proposed to be named "Tom LaBonge Panorama"
- 3) Proposed Signage
- 4) Letter of Support from Griffith Park Advisory Board
- 5) RAP Naming Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Parks and Recreational Facilities



EQUITABLE PARKS & AMENITIES  
DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM

# Griffith Park



Disclaimer: This map is for informational purposes only and relies on data from a variety of sources, which may or may not be accurate or current. The City of Los Angeles assumes no responsibility arising from the use of this map. The map and associated data are provided "as is" without warranty of any kind.

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SCALE 1: 36,112



### NOTES

Griffith Park Proposed Tom Labonge Panorama



# Griffith Park

## Tom LaBonge Panorama Location



Location

**TOM LaBONGE**

**PANORAMA** *Welcomes You...*

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES - RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT**



**PARK PROUD LA**



## **Griffith Park Advisory Board**

*Community Stewards of LA's Largest Park & Great Urban Wilderness*

Department of Recreation and Parks, City of Los Angeles

[www.laparks.org/griffithpark/advisory](http://www.laparks.org/griffithpark/advisory)

March 3, 2021

LA Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners

Re: Tom LaBonge Panorama

Dear Commissioners,

The Griffith Park Advisory Board fully approves and enthusiastically endorses the proposal to proclaim Mount Hollywood Summit the Tom LaBonge Panorama.

Since its founding, Griffith Park has had no greater advocate, more enthusiastic booster, more active or frequent visitor, more stalwart steward, or deeper appreciator of its natural gifts and vital importance to the residents of Los Angeles than Tom LaBonge.

Tom's passing is a great loss to anyone who knew him, but his memory will remain a blessing for everyone who visits the park. His warmth and friendliness, his care and concern, and his enthusiasm and optimism will forever be associated with Griffith Park's rugged hills, deep green grasses, and genteel attractions. His booming voice will forever echo in its canyons. His beaming smile will forever warm the trails and plateaus. His showman's bluster will forever rustle the tree leaves. And his great love for all things Griffith Park will forever nurture every living thing within its boundaries.

It is only fitting that our collective remembrance of Tom's indomitable and infectious spirit should sit high above the park. So that even with his passing, we may continue to look up to the man.

Sincerely,

Ron Deutsch  
Past Chair, Griffith Park Advisory Board

Jason Greenwald  
Chair, Griffith Park Advisory Board

cc: Mike Shull; AP Diaz; Stefanie Smith; Darryl Ford; Tracy James; Sarah Tanberg

*BOARD MEMBERS: Chair – Jason Greenwald; Vice Chair – Michelle Cramos; Secretary – Bryan Mercke;  
Past Chair – Ron Deutsch; Gene Gilbert; Mike Hain; Chris Laib; Alex Phillips; Karen Thornton*

**City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks**  
**Naming Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for**  
**Parks and Recreational Facilities**

The mission of the Department of Recreation and Parks (“RAP”) is to enrich the lives of the residents of Los Angeles by providing safe, welcoming parks and recreational facilities and affordable, diverse recreation and human services activities for people of all ages to play, learn, contemplate, build community and be good stewards of our environment.

One of RAP’s objectives under the Mission is to enhance and expand recreational programs, services, and significant financial support and contributions through public and private collaborations.

**Policy:**

RAP recognizes that parks and recreational facilities are an essential and integral part of the communities they serve, and that the names of parks and recreational facilities, and park amenities within them, play a significant role in fostering identities in the surrounding communities. This Naming Policy (“Policy”) establishes the criteria and requirements, and sets forth the guidelines and procedures, for the naming and renaming (collectively, “Naming”) of parks, recreational facilities, landmarks and any other assets determined appropriate by RAP (collectively referred to herein as “Park Assets”), which are owned, managed or controlled by RAP.

Pursuant to this Policy, the initial name of a new park or recreational facility, which may be temporary for purposes of administration and accounting, shall be administratively assigned by RAP staff in the traditional manner utilized prior to the establishment of this Policy, based on geographic features such as street and community names or prominent features. In addition, the Naming of existing Park Assets, pursuant to a RAP recommendation relevant to a Naming proposal received from a private or public entity, shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners (“Board”), as described herein. In accordance with this Policy and pursuant to RAP recommendations, the Board shall consider the following two types of Naming proposals. The first type encompasses situations in which RAP receives or is offered a donation, gift, sponsorship, and/or other contribution from an outside entity that presents a decisive benefit and shows a direct connection to a Park Asset and serves the interests of the City and its residents. This type of Naming proposal would require a Naming Agreement to summarize the terms and conditions necessary to effectuate the financial or other benefits connected to the Naming proposal with a term (time period) recommended by the GM and approved by the Board, depending on the scope or nature of the agreement, and value, visibility, and lifespan of the donation, gift, sponsorship and or other contribution. The second type comprises Naming proposals to use a major historic event and/or unique significance of a specific place or person, as the basis for the proposed Name; again with the requirement that there be compelling and impressive substantiation demonstrating how the interests of City and its residents were served or impacted. The key in both types of Naming proposals is the importance of demonstrating direct connections to the Park Asset and clear community benefits as a foundation for considering any Naming proposal.

For purposes of this Policy, and with the exception of the temporary Naming of new Park Assets, the authority to approve the Naming of existing Park Assets shall be solely with the Board. Any exceptions to this Policy shall be subject to the prior approval of the Board.

### **Criteria and Guidelines for Evaluating Park Asset Naming Proposals:**

For purposes of this Policy, the following shall be considered when evaluating the appropriateness, feasibility, and implementation of Naming proposals:

- The Naming of parks after individuals shall be limited to those who are deceased and have made exceptional contributions to the park or community within which the park is located.
- Parks shall only be named after living persons under circumstances requiring such naming as a condition precedent of a grant deed or covenant.
- The Naming of a park after a major historic event must be based on a direct connection between the park and such event.
- The Naming engenders a positive public image which does not unduly commercialize the park or recreational facility.
- The proposed name for the park or recreational facility, and/or contributor, must be compatible with the Mission of RAP.
- Park Assets that are held by RAP through a lease or use agreement may be considered for Naming under this Policy, subject to any requirements or restrictions contained in such document.
- RAP reserves the right to limit the duration of time a Name will be in place and/or in effect.
- No specialized signage or advertisement containing a commercial message to purchase a good or service shall be authorized for use on park property.
- All forms of signage placed on or within a Park Asset shall meet RAP's graphic and sign standards.
- There shall be no religious symbols included on Naming signage.
- Park Assets not under the operation of RAP (shared or exclusive), although under the ownership or jurisdiction of RAP, shall not be subject to this Policy; such as for example, the Los Angeles Zoo in Griffith Park.
- Parks should not be subdivided for purposes of Naming, unless there are readily-identifiable physical divisions in the park (major roads, waterways, hillsides, etc.) which facilitate or warrant a subdivision; or there exist other compelling reasons for having more than one name connected to a park. This should not prevent independently Naming a recreational facility or amenity located within a park, as long as the selected name will not cause confusion for park patrons.
- RAP shall seek to inform the public with regard to the Naming of a park in their community.
- Any exception to the above shall be subject to the Naming criteria contained herein, and the Board's prior approval.

**Procedures:**

The Board retains the authority to name or rename Park Assets situated on park property. The following shall be the protocol for evaluating, considering and denying or approving Naming proposals:

1. A written proposal for the Naming of a Park Asset must be initially submitted to the RAP Board Office, to the attention of the Board Secretary. In accordance with this Policy, the Board Office shall forward the proposal to the RAP General Manager (“GM”) for consideration.
2. Prior to any form of Naming Policy being implemented, sponsorship proposals shall be evaluated by RAP staff, with recommendations to the GM for possible consideration.