

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Naming Laurel Avenue, Honorary Strayhorn Drive

The purpose of this agenda item is to consider a community request to name Laurel Avenue, Honorary Strayhorn Drive and install signage based on the historical impact of the family and location.

Department: The Manager's Office – Race and Equity

What are the racial and equity impacts?

In considering this first community request - Nellie and Toney Strayhorn were believed to be the first African American family to settled in what is now Carrboro. Both were born into slavery. They purchased land and built a log cabin on Jones Ferry Road in 1879. Nellie died in 1950 at about age 100. Her great-granddaughter Delores Clark lives in the house today. Public information regarding Laurel Avenue seems to be limited however, there is a warranty deed that was provided by Delores Clark showing a different street name, Strayhorn Drive, now known as Laurel Drive. This honorary street sign request is recommended by the town's Racial Equity Commission. By deciding to add an honorary street marker to this street, the Town of Carrboro is acknowledging and honoring the lost history of the family, town and other marginalized communities within Carrboro.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Staff are not aware of any burden on residents, businesses, traffic or the environment as it relates to fabrication and installation of the sign. Public Works should be able to install the sign without disrupting the day-to-day flow of the community. People who do not agree with the historical impact of the home, family or street may not approve of the decision to put the honorary street sign in the community.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Community members who are aware of the historical and racial significance of the family, home and street will benefit. If the request is approved, the honorary marker will send a message of support for the history and racial impacts of the street and the Strayhorn family. This may also benefit those who may also feel marginalized by showing support for equity throughout the community.

What are the root causes of inequity?

The lack of written history is a phenomenon that has always affected the minority and underserved communities. In this case, there is a record of Laurel Drive previously being named Strayhorn Drive. However, there are records that are difficult to find or missing showing the name change and reason for the change of name. The loss of property for marginalized communities in the United States could be a reason for the lack of documentation.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

There could be unknown consequences to community members that may not agree with the honorary sign designation.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

Honorary naming requests will follow the same policy and be evaluated equitably. The street occupants will also be notified of the honorary designation and that it will not change or have an impact on the official street name or numbering of buildings and street addresses. The postal addresses for honorary streets remain the primary name of the street.