

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative:

Town Code Amendment to Codify Street Name Change. The purpose of this agenda item is to amend the Town Code to change all references to Phipps Street to Lavender Street.

Department:

Planning

What are the racial and equity impacts?

For many people street names have special significance, particularly the street on which they live or the street on which they were raised. In his article, “Street Names as Commemorative Landscapes: the Case of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” Derek H. Alderman argues that “Through the street name, public commemoration is made part of the language—visual and verbal—of the city and its inhabitants.” Phipps Street was named for Luther James Phipps, an attorney (for some time serving as Carrboro Town Attorney), judge and known segregationist. In addition to reports of many acts of support for his alma mater and community, Phipps is known to have prosecuted the case against four Freedom Riders in 1947 ([75th Anniversary of the Journey of Reconciliation | Carolina Public Humanities \(unc.edu\)](#)) and been influential in preventing the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from speaking in the University Baptist Church sanctuary during his 1960 visit to Chapel Hill. Replacing this name with another allows negative impacts from this recognition to be reduced.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Residents living along the street corridor will experience the burden and associated costs for changing their address information.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Lavender Street residents who requested and supported the name change will experience the most direct benefit, but all residents will benefit in the desire to support a more inclusive community.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to transportation, as well as residents’ personal experiences with government, can further contribute to a reticence by historically marginalized people to speak in a public setting.

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

The burden of changing address information may be more costly than anticipated. There may be a transitional period where mail is misdelivered, or other challenges associated with directions.

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

Planning Department GIS staff administers the process for assigning street names, including reviewing candidate street names with Orange County EMS to prevent selecting names that are already in use or too similar to existing street names, and shepherding property owners through the various steps and notifications. Cost assistance based on income is proposed for the Braxton Foushee renaming recently initiated by the Town. Town staff plan to explore policy development to provide cost assistance in other street renaming situation, both voluntary and involuntary.