

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: [ORDER CONCERNING](#) designating the northeast corner of College Street and Elm Street as “John Wilhelm Corner” in perpetuity, for his leadership in the labor movement, his contributions to community organizing, and his lasting service to the City of New Haven

Submitted by: Alder Elias Theodore, Ward 1

REPORT: 1683-09

ADVICE: Approve

BACKGROUND

John Wilhelm is widely recognized for his influential leadership in organized labor and for his longstanding organizing work connected to Yale’s unions here in New Haven. Historical reporting and community accounts have described his important role in strengthening Yale-affiliated union locals and contributing to the broader town-gown organizing efforts that have helped shape civic life in our city. Through his work, Mr. Wilhelm helped advance the rights, dignity, and collective voice of working people, while reinforcing the values of solidarity, fairness, and advocacy in both the workplace and the broader community.

Mr. Wilhelm’s impact extended well beyond organizing labor alone. His leadership strengthened relationships between institutions and neighborhoods and fostered a deeper connection between the university community and New Haven residents. He is being honored not only for his contributions to working people and the City’s rich labor history, but also for the personal impact he made in the lives of so many individuals whom he coached, encouraged, and inspired over the years.

According to Section 18-2(a)(3) of Title III, Chapter 18, Article I of the City’s Code requires, “Each submission shall contain:

- (i) Plan of the site of the proposed location indicating all structures and street features as well as the proposed signage drawn to scale for review by the city.
- (ii) Proposed wording of the signage.
- (iii) A petition of at least two hundred fifty (250) city resident signatures in favor of the proposed naming, of which at least two-thirds (2/3 (one hundred sixty-six ((166))) shall be residents of the neighborhood of the proposed sign location.”

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This proposal in accordance with Title I, Article XIII, Section 2(A) of the New Haven Code of Ordinances states, "Every Ordinance or Resolution of the Board of Alders relating to the location and use of any street, bridge, boulevard, esplanade, square, park, playground, playfield, aviation field, parking space, public building, the facilities or terminals of any public utility, or the establishment or change in the boundaries of or regulations concerning zoning, shall be at once referred to the City Planning Commission and final action shall not be taken on any such Ordinance or Resolution until the commission shall have reported thereon, provided that the Board of Alders may establish by ordinance a period of not less than sixty (60) Days within which the commission shall file its report with the City Clerk and if no report is filed within such period the approval of the commission shall be presumed." Accordingly, the Board of Alders seeks guidance regarding the proposed amendment.

The Board of Alder seeks guidance as to:

- Whether the proposal is aligned with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.
- Whether the proposal is “complete” and meets the criteria set forth in Section 18-2(a)(3) of Title III, Chapter 18, Article I of the City Code.

ADVICE

The Commission notes that this proposal is aligned with the Vision 2034 Comprehensive Plan, in that it promotes storytelling to build community and share culture, which is the fifth goal of the Arts and Cultural Identity focus area. However, this petition does not appear to be complete pursuant to the requirements of Section 18-2(a)(3). The wording for the sign, and a Google maps / street view screenshot have been provided showing the corner where the sign will be placed, but the petition lacks the scale drawing of the proposed sign. Further, staff confirm that over 250 signatures have been included in the submission materials but have not verified whether 2/3 of the signatures are from residents living in the Downtown Neighborhood. Despite this, the commission otherwise recommends approval of the corner renaming, should these ordinance requirements be met.

ADOPTED: June 17, 2026
Ernest Pagan
Chair

ATTEST: _____
Laura E Brown
Executive Director, City Plan Department