

**NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT**

**RE:** **ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS** designating the northwest corner of Orchard Street and Edgewood Avenue as “Deacon John E. Cotten Sr. Corner”, in honor of his contributions as an anchor, staple, leader, and pillar of the Dwight community and citywide

**Submitted by:** Hon. Frank E. Douglass, Jr.; Ward 2, Alder

**REPORT:** 1670-16

**ADVICE:** Approve

**BACKGROUND**

Deacon John Edward Cotten, Sr. was born on May 19, 1948, in Bethel, NC. He was born to the Late Deacon Edward Lee and Mother Leatha Cotten. He comes from a long line of pastors and deacons. In the early 1950's, he, along with his parents and siblings, migrated to New Haven, CT. He later joined the St. Matthew UFWB Church, under the leadership of the late Rev. Dr. Lloyd Taylor. He attended Winchester School and graduated from Wilbur Cross High School in 1966. After graduating from Wilbur Cross, he was advised by the Rev. Gloria Hope and Bishop Hennan Epps that barbering is a good business and trade and started by enrolling into Vaughn's Barber School in Hartford, CT. After graduation in 1967, Deacon Cotten started his professional career as a barber. In 1970, Deacon John Cotten married the former Sandra J. Bruton and they had 2 sons, Rev. John Cotten, Jr. and Steven T. Cotten. He worked for Worthy's Barber Shop for 22 years from 1967-1989 and subsequently opened his own shop and beauty salon, called Cotten's Barber Shop. From 1989 to 2019, Cotten Barber Shop was a beacon of light and hope to the community of New Haven. Deacon John Cotten, Sr. has in the past received honor and recognition on a local and state level for his business savvy and his professionalism. He has been the barber for people in business, politicians, lawyers, doctors, clergy down to the everyday person.

While serving as a barber and businessman, Deacon John Cotton sang in St. Matthew's Youth & Young Adult Choir as one of its founding members, the Intermediate Choir Male Chorus and as a member of the Men's Club. He was ordained a deacon in 1979. Deacon Cotten served as a Deacon at St. Matthew UFWB Church from 1979-2005. He then joined his son, Rev. John Cotten, Jr., in ministry at the Gospel Mission Baptist Church, Bridgeport, CT. In 2011, Deacon John Cotten, Sr., as Chairman of the Deacon Ministry, was very instrumental in the success of merging the two churches, Gospel Mission and New Hope Baptist Church in New Haven. In 2016, Deacon Cotten became a Senior Deacon at New Hope Baptist Church, where he continues to serve the church and community while encouraging and leading the next generation of deacons and church leaders.

To this day, Deacon John Cotton, Sr. can be seen and observed being an anchor and staple in New Haven Community as a retired businessman and barber, also an active church leader, as well as a pillar in the community.

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 the signatures on the petition do not appear to meet the requirements of Section 18-2(a)(3) and two of the other requirements of the ordinance have not been met (a 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, and proposed wording of the signage were not provided). The commission otherwise recommends approval of the corner renaming, should these ordinance requirements be met.

**ADOPTED:** July 16, 2025  
Ernest Pagan  
Chair

**ATTEST:** DocuSigned by:  
Laura E. Brown  
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Laura E Brown  
Executive Director, City Plan Department