

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: [ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS](#) designating the southwest corner of Dixwell Avenue and Henry Street as “Wilhelmina and James A. Perkins corner” in perpetuity, for their love, commitment, great contributions and service to people in the Dixwell neighborhood.

Submitted by: Alder Troy Streater, Ward 21

REPORT: 1672-08

ADVICE: Approve

BACKGROUND

James A. Perkins, born on July 7, 1928, in Cuthbert, Georgia, was the beloved son of Johnnie Mae West-Ellis, a schoolteacher, and Alex “Buddy” Perkins, a funeral director and mortician. Mr. Perkins served honorably in the Korean War, defending his country with courage and dignity before pursuing his higher education at Morehouse College and later at the Atlanta School of Embalming. In 1963, Mr. Perkins founded Perkins Funeral Home, through which he ministered to countless New Haven families in their time of grief, providing comfort, compassion, and dignity to all who entered its doors.

Wilhelmina V. Hilton Perkins, a licensed funeral director, worked alongside her husband in the operation of Perkins Funeral Home, providing professional care and steadfast support that strengthened the institution’s reputation for excellence and service to New Haven families. Mr. Perkins distinguished himself not only as a business owner but also as a dedicated community leader, a proud member of the International Free and Accepted Masons, and a man who built bridges of trust and fellowship across neighborhoods. Mr. Perkins lived as a devoted husband and father, raising two daughters, Alexis W. Perkins and Sharon Perkins Boyd, and nurturing a legacy carried forward by his grandchildren Mychal Boyd, Deveron A. McLaughlin, Maceo Troy Streater, and great-granddaughter Denaja M. McLaughlin. Mr. Perkins was preceded in death by his wife, Wilhelmina V. Hilton Perkins—herself a licensed funeral director—who was his faithful partner in life, love, and community service, and who stood beside him throughout his journey as they together built a family rooted in faith, dignity, and care for others.

The contributions of both Wilhelmina and James A. Perkins extend far beyond their family, as their presence strengthened the fabric of New Haven, providing leadership, fellowship, and a legacy of service that remains an inspiration. The Perkins family has long been a pillar of the New Haven community, embodying the values of service, resilience, and compassion, and has touched countless lives through their example.

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 petition appears to meet all the requirements of Section 18-2(a)(3). A Google earth screenshot showing the corner where the sign will be placed has been included in the petition material, as well as the wording for the sign which would read “Wilhelmina and James A. Perkins corner.” The petition signature list appears to have at least 250 signatures, but zoning staff have not verified whether 2/3 of the signatures are from residents living in the Dixwell Neighborhood. The commission otherwise recommends approval of the corner renaming, should that ordinance requirement be met.

ADOPTED: October 15, 2025
Ernest Pagan
Chair

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