



**CITY OF MONROVIA
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING
AGENDA REPORT**

DEPARTMENT: Community Services

MEETING DATE: January 9, 2024

PREPARED BY: Tina Cherry, Director

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-1

TITLE: Recommend to the City Council to name the New Park at 1111 Encino Avenue as Satoru Tsuneishi Park

OBJECTIVE: To consider staff recommendation to name the City's newest park at 1111 Encino Avenue to Satoru Tsuneishi Park

BACKGROUND: In September 2016, the City Council approved an Administrative Policy related to the naming or renaming of City facilities. The Policy outlines the guidelines, criteria, and process for naming or renaming a City facility, with the City Council having the ultimate authority on all naming decisions. The Policy can be found on Attachment A.

More specifically, the procedure is as follows:

- Any request for naming / renaming a City facility or street shall be submitted to the City Manager's Office on the City Facility Naming Application Form.
- If the proposed facility or street naming request is to recognize a person or organization, the applicant is required to provide clear evidence that the person or organization to be honored has made a significant and lasting contribution to the betterment of Monrovia.
- If the proposed facility to be named / renamed is connected or associated with a park or the Community Center, the application must first be reviewed by the Community Services Commission.
- Following the Community Services Commission review, the City Manager shall then place the facility naming / renaming proposal on a future City Council agenda for formal consideration and review.

In July 2023, as a part of the development of the former Claim Jumper site, *The Hale Corporation* donated approximately 8,600 square feet to the City for the purpose of a new park in South Monrovia.

As staff began the park development process, it became apparent that naming the facility would become important in planning for features, amenities and designs at the facility. The name of the park could influence the design decisions and therefor staff requested that the Facility Naming Policy be used early in the park development process.

On September 5, 2023, staff provided the City Council with an overview of the Facility Naming Policy including renaming of public parks like Evergreen Plaza, Lucinda Garcia Park, Julian Fisher Park,

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Rotary Park and Kiwanis Park at Grand Avenue. Additionally, staff shared a brief historical overview about this segment of our community. The research conducted by staff exposed three emerging themes about this neighborhood. The first theme related to this neighborhood is the popular Route 66 corridor along Huntington Drive that took travelers west to the beach and east to the desert. The second theme was the history of fruit and citrus orchards in this area. The third theme related to the many Japanese farmers who were important to the produce industry and often remain unrecognized in our City history and more broadly, California and U. S. history.

The City Council approved the launch of the Facility Naming Process for the new park development with the deadline for submittals on September 28, 2023.

ANALYSIS: At the close of the nomination period, staff received nineteen (19) applications, some with multiple recommendations. A full list of the name recommendations is available on Attachment B. Several of the recommendations focused on recognizing and honoring Asian Americans for their contributions to Monrovia. As staff studied the nominations and further conducted research related to this neighborhood, the predominate recommendation leaned towards honoring Japanese Monrovians. While there were a few Japanese Monrovians to consider, one name stood out for many reasons, Satoru Tsuneishi.

Mr. Satoru Tsuneishi immigrated to California in 1907, and in 1914 he was the first Asian American to graduate from Monrovia Arcadia Duarte High School. In addition, Mr. Tsuneishi (Satoru Tsuneishi - far left in second row from top) was a school classmate of Julian Fisher as seen in the photo below (Julian Fisher - top row fourth from left), courtesy of the Monrovia Legacy Project.



The Tsuneishi family were farming strawberries and running a fruit stand on Route 66 in Monrovia before World War II. Mr. Tsuneishi wrote, "Selling my strawberry crop at \$700, and on the 15th of May, I went to Pomona Assembly with my wife and seven of my children; the eldest boy had already been in the army." In fact, four of the Tsuneishi boys served in the military during WWII. The photo below (courtesy of Prof. Susie Ling and the "Monrovia's Asian American History") is of Mrs. Tsuneishi (left) holding the 4 Blue Stars Flag.



Following the end of the war and after their internment, having lost their farm and land, Mr. and Mrs. Tsuneishi returned to Monrovia and lived on Almond Avenue, next door to Louis and Lucinda Garcia where Mr. Tsuneishi once again planted strawberries. The Garcia children remember Mr. Tsuneishi allowing them to take all the strawberries they desired from the first row only. The Garcia children also fondly remember enjoying mochi rice cakes with the Tsuneishi family.

In the 1980's, Mr. Tsuneishi was invited to participate in the Monrovia Days Parade as the oldest living graduate from MAD High School. Mr. Tsuneishi died in 1987 at the age of 99.

The City has a history of naming park facilities after notable community members such as Julian Fisher Park and Lucinda Garcia Park, both contemporaries of Satoru Tsuneishi. In honoring Mr. Tsuneishi and his family, the City would also honor Asian Americans who have lived or remain living in Monrovia and contribute significantly to our City's quality of life.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: There are no Environmental Impacts related to naming of a City park

FISCAL IMPACT: There are no Fiscal Impacts related to the naming of a City park

OPTIONS: The following options are presented for consideration:

1. Recommend City Council approve "Satoru Tsuneishi Park" as the name for the new City park located at 1111 Encino Avenue.
2. Reject the proposed name and provide staff with additional direction.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Staff recommends Option 1.

COMMISSION ACTION REQUIRED: If the Commission concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion to recommend City Council approve "Satoru Tsuneishi Park" as the name for the new City park at 1111 Encino Avenue.