



March 25, 2026

TO: Council President Rebecca Noecker, Saint Paul City Council

FROM: Andy Rodriguez, Director, Department of Parks & Recreation

SUBJECT: Project Background for Renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park

Osborn Plaza, the city-owned park at Wabasha Street and 5th Street in downtown Saint Paul, is currently being renovated by the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department and is expected to reopen in fall 2026.

Since the City acquired the land in 1979, the property has had several name changes tied to adjacent property owners. The Department believes these changes have caused confusion about the park's identity and ownership. In search of a clearer identity, the project team conducted a community engagement process in fall 2025 to explore a potential name change.

Local stakeholders were first notified and asked to share information about public surveys. In a September 2025 public survey with 106 responses, 61 name ideas were submitted, with "Wabasha Park" or "Wabasha Plaza" suggested most frequently. In a second survey in October 2025 with 89 responses, over 90% supported the name "Wabasha Park."

Because "Wabasha" comes from the Dakota language, City staff consulted leadership from the four Dakota communities in Minnesota and Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi. None expressed concerns about the proposed name.

Some community comments included suggestions to use "Wabasha Plaza" instead of "Wabasha Park," but the Department believes "Park" better reflects the space as a public park and aligns with naming conventions used for other downtown parks. The name is considered geographic, referencing Wabasha Street, rather than memorial, under the Parks & Recreation Commission Policy #7, Naming Parks and Recreation Sites, 2012 Update.

Given their historic connection to the property and former owner Merritt Osborn was who the current name was based from, City staff also confirmed that leadership at Ecolab supports renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park.



CapitolRiver
Council

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Saint Paul, MN 55102

(651) 221-0488
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February 3, 2026

Dear Council President Noecker and Councilmembers,

As the executive director of CapitolRiver Council (District 17), I am writing to express my support for renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park.

Public parks are important gathering places, and they create a distinctive sense of place, which has multiple benefits for people who live, work, and visit this neighborhood. The name of a park and the ways that it is used often influences the overall perception of a neighborhood.

I have been invited by City staff several times over the years to engage the community in discussions to redesign the City park at 5th and Wabasha streets. People are often surprised that it is a City park, because the design makes it seem like an entryway to a privately owned building, and not necessarily a place where everyone is welcome. I appreciate the fact that City staff asked for CRC's collaboration in helping solicit feedback that has led to the new design and the new name -- Wabasha Park. The recommended name helps reinforce that the space is public, although some people still might wonder where there is a park downtown on Wabasha Street. Having a name that clearly identifies the park's location and the fact that it is a public space will make it more welcoming and more strongly connected to the broader community it serves.

I appreciate your consideration of this change and your continued commitment to accessible, inclusive public spaces. Thank you for your time and leadership in our community.

Respectfully,

Sincerely,

Jon Fure, Executive Director
CapitolRiver Council
(phone) 651-221-0488
(email) office@capitolrivercouncil.org



February 23, 2026

Re: Renaming of Osborn Plaza

Dear Council President Noecker and Councilmembers,

We, the undersigned owners of the Osborn370 building, are writing to express our support for renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park. Rich Pakonen, designated owner representative signature on behalf of all owners of Osborn370, LLC.

We recognize that public parks are important gathering places, and their names help shape how people understand and use them. Wabasha Park, a name which was recommended by the public, is a space for public use and is located off Wabasha Street. A clearly defined name that reflects the park's location and emphasizes its status as a public space will foster a stronger sense of welcome and deepen its connection to the broader community it serves.

We appreciate your consideration of this change and your continued commitment to accessible, inclusive public spaces. Thank you for your time and service.

Respectfully,

Richard Pakonen

Richard Pakonen

On behalf of all the owners of Osborn370, LLC

Tanya Bell

Clint Blaiser

John Bergstrom

Scott Burns

Brad Schafer

Steve Norcutt



January 16, 2026

TO: Kaohly Her, Mayor
Jodi Pfarr, Assistant Mayor
Rebecca Noecker, Council President
Hwajeong Kim, Council Vice President
Nelsie Yang, Councilmember
Molly Coleman, Councilmember
Anika Bowie, Councilmember
Saura Jost, Councilmember
Cheniqua Johnson, Councilmember

FROM: Jazmin Glaser-Kelly, Chair
Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission

RE: Parks and Recreation Commission – Transmittal of Resolutions:

- Res 26-01 District 10 Lease Agreement
- Res 26-02 Renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park

On Thursday, January 8, 2026, the Parks and Recreation Commission passed the following resolutions:

- Res 26-01 District 10 Lease Agreement
 - The Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission recommends that the City Council of the City of Saint Paul authorize the appropriate City officials to enter into the Lease Agreement.
- Res 26-02 Renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park
 - The Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission recommends 'Res 26-02 Renaming of Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park' go to the Saint Paul City Council for recommendation for approval.



**RESOLUTION # 26-02
Renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park**

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission ("Commission") is an appointed body established to advise the Mayor and City Council on city-wide matters related to the Department of Parks and Recreation ("Department"); and

WHEREAS, Osborn Plaza is located at the corner of Wabasha Street and 5th Street; and

WHEREAS, Osborn Plaza is currently undergoing a major renovation scheduled to reopen in the Fall of 2026; and

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department has learned that residents and visitors are not aware that this space is a City-owned park open for public use because the park shares a name with the adjacent privately-owned office building; and

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department solicited names from the public, a majority of whom suggested Wabasha; and

WHEREAS the City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission Policy #7, Naming Parks and Recreation Sites, 2012 Update, provides criteria for naming of parks, and this request complies with the Geographic Names criteria of the policy; and

RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the Renaming of Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park go to the Saint Paul City Council for recommendation for approval.

Adopted by the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission on January 8, 2026:

Approved:	Yeas	<u>6</u>
	Nays	<u>0</u>
	Absent:	<u>2</u>

Resolution #26-02

Attested to by:

Elizabeth Lee McDonald

Staff to the Parks and Recreation Commission

Resolution # 26-02

Renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Renaming Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park

STAFF COMMENTS:

Osborn Plaza, the city-owned park space at the corner of Wabasha Street and 5th Street, is currently undergoing a major renovation. This project is being led by the Design and Construction Division within Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation. The new space is scheduled to reopen in the Fall of 2026.

The plaza, which has been owned by the City since 1979, has undergone several name changes during this time, in conjunction with changes in adjacent landowners. The Department believes that the frequent name changes have resulted in confusion over the ownership of the park and have yielded a lack of identity for what should but had not previously been a popular downtown gathering space.

Interested in solidifying the identity of this park space, the City project team lead a community engagement process during the fall of 2025 to discover how the public would respond to a possible name change.

The first step the City project team took was contacting the leadership at Ward 2, the Capitol River Council, the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance, the Parks & Recreation Commission, Shafer Richardson (development team of neighboring Osborn 370 building), and the Kaeding Group (property of neighboring Stella building). The purpose was to notify local stakeholders of the engagement process, the possibility of a name change, and to ask them for their support by distributing information about upcoming public surveys to their community groups.

The first public survey was open for the month of September 2025 and yielded responses from 106 residents and visitors. 61 unique name ideas were gathered; the two most popular by far were “Wabasha Park” or “Wabasha Plaza,” which combined were suggested 34 times. Multiple respondents noted the straight-forward nature of names using the Geographic criteria of the Parks & Recreation Commission’s naming policy help with navigation and recognition. The next most popular names were “Osborn Park” being suggested five times, and “Saint Paul Park” and “Melvin Carter Park” each being suggested three times.

The second public survey was open for the month of October 2025 and yielded responses from 89 residents and visitors of Saint Paul. Over 90% of respondents approved of the name change to “Wabasha Park.”

Though the intent given by survey respondents was to assign the park a Geographic name (the plaza being located on Wabasha Street), given that Wabasha is of the Dakota language, the City project team reached out to leadership at each of the four Minnesota Dakota communities (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux, Lower Sioux, Upper Sioux, Prairie Island) as well as the leadership at Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi to hear if there were any issues or concerns about the City moving ahead with the name “Wabasha Park”

and also to share the public survey with their community groups. None of the leadership expressed opposition.

Finally, the Parks & Recreation Commission Policy #7, Naming Parks and Recreation Sites, 2012 Update, states, "Parks which have had another name for at least 50 years shall also be submitted by the Parks and Recreation Commission to the St. Paul Historic Preservation Commission, for its review and comment before renaming." The plaza was most recently change from Ecolab Plaza to Osborn Plaza in 2022 (Res # 22-276), and review by the St. Paul Historic Preservation Commission is not required.

REQUEST OF THE COMMISSION:

Adopt Resolution # 26-02 recommending the Renaming of Osborn Plaza to Wabasha Park and send the recommendation to Saint Paul City Council.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

Input was received during the community engagement process through two public surveys which included an open comment section at the end of the survey. A few respondents noted that they believed it should be named "Wabasha Plaza" instead of "Wabasha Park" because they believe that the space is not recreation focused. The Department Parks and Recreation's rationale is that passive recreation is also recreation, and that using the "Park" moniker over the "Plaza" moniker better indicates that it is a space for public use. In addition, using "Park" follows a naming convention similar to other downtown parks such as Rice, Mears and Pedro Park. One community member noted that renaming the park with anyone's family name, such as Wabasha, is a risk, and that it should be given a more abstract name. The Parks and Recreation Department's rationale is that the name is based on the street name, deeming it a Geographic name and not a Memorial name under the naming policy.



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