



R-7

Rex Richardson
Long Beach City Councilmember, 9th District

Date: December 22, 2015

To: Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Rex Richardson, Ninth District *RR*
Vice Mayor Suja Lowenthal, Second District *SL*
Councilwoman Suzie Price, Third District *SP*
Councilmember Al Austin, Eighth District *al*

Subject: Naming the new north branch library- the "Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library"

RECOMMENDATION:

Request the City Council to consider naming the new north branch library, the "Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library," in honor of her contributions to youth, education, literacy, and the United States and refer this item to the Housing and Neighborhoods Committee for consideration;

Request the Library Services Department and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine to conduct further outreach to engage youth and library patrons around the naming of the library; and

Direct the City Manager to work with the White House to invite the First Lady to the city of Long Beach for a naming dedication ceremony if approved.

Discussion

Slated to open in the late summer of 2016, the North Branch Library will be the largest neighborhood branch library in the city and serve as state-of-the-art focal point for North Long Beach. The 25,000 square foot facility will offer educational opportunities, such as an expanded children's library, a story time theater space, a teen center and community center with spaces for large and small gatherings.

According to City of Long Beach administrative policy (AR8-7), "City-owned land, buildings and facilities will not normally be named after living persons unless the City Council deems it appropriate to take such action on the basis of a significant contribution, monetary or otherwise, which warrants a deviation from this policy guideline." The First Lady Michelle Obama most certainly meets the exception to this policy. Naming the library after Mrs. Obama will create not only a source of local pride, but national pride. The naming would be a historic first for Long Beach as the only library in the city named after a person of color.



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Mrs. Obama is the first African-American First Lady of the United States, and is a role model for women and young girls everywhere. Her life work as an advocate for poverty awareness, higher education and health living supports the values of the Long Beach community. In addition, she is strongly committed to improving outcomes for young people and those most at-risk.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, First Lady Michelle Obama shares many similarities with the youth of North Long Beach and is a shining example of who they can become with hard work and a dedication to their education. A product of public schools, Mrs. Obama studied hard and earned degrees at Princeton and Harvard Law School. She spent her career as a lawyer, the executive director of an Americorps program encouraging youth to pursue careers in public service, and in higher education.

As First Lady, Mrs. Obama has continued her efforts to support and inspire young people. Her main initiatives have been Let's Move, Joining Forces, and most recently, Reach Higher, a campaign to encourage youth to pursue their education beyond high school. The Reach Higher Initiative is directly in alignment with the library and the continued Uptown Renaissance. The new library is a catalyst that will transform the surrounding neighborhood with enriched academic opportunities and increased civic engagement. Naming the library after First Lady Michelle Obama will serve as inspiration to encourage youth to reach higher towards their goals by utilizing the services this facility will offer for many years to come.

The North Long Beach community has shown strong support for the new north branch library, and is eagerly anticipating its opening. The Ninth District Council office was initially approached by youth from the Jordan High School WRAP Program to consider naming the library after First Lady Michelle Obama. The Ninth District Council office further discussed this idea with youth from Hamilton Middle School and the Andy Street Community Association. While initial outreach has been strong, more outreach should be conducted to build consensus within the community.

In addition, the naming of the library after First Lady Michelle Obama has support from the following community leaders and neighborhood association presidents:

- Hon. Steven Neal
Former Ninth District Councilmember
- Board Member Megan Kerr
Long Beach Unified School District
- LaVerne Duncan, Executive Director
Andy St. Community Association



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- Debra Shelton, President
College Square Neighborhood Association
- Dan Pressburg, President
Deforest Park Neighborhood Association
- Eileen Oien, President
St. Francis Neighborhood Association
- Jeff Rowe, President
Grant Neighborhood Association
- Hilda Gaytan, Chair
Hamilton Neighborhood Association
- Otis Hogan, Co-President
Houghton Park Neighborhood Association
- Julia Brown, President
Longwood Neighborhood Association
- James McWhorter, Co-President
Ramona Park Neighborhood Association
- Jimmy Murray, President
Starr King Neighborhood Association

Fiscal Impact

The estimated fiscal impact is \$30,000-\$40,000. Potential costs include architectural services to design library branch signs and plaques with new name, increased cost of larger signs and plaques, reprinting branch publications, and relabeling the library collections for the new library. Ninth District one-time funds may be utilized to cover costs if no other city resources are deemed available.