

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee
Report From: Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services
Meeting Date: September 23, 2026
Report Code: CS-26-079
Subject: Park Naming at 823 5th Avenue East – Report 3

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-079 respecting the concluded voting and public input for the park naming at 823 5th Avenue East, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to:

1. Provide public notice of the intention to name the park Niisinabe-ki by posting on the City website a minimum of 10 days in advance of a by-law being approved to adopt the name;
2. Bring forward a by-law to name the park at 823 5th Avenue East following the notice period; and
3. Request Communications staff to review the requirement to provide identifying information that would limit duplicate voting and input.

Highlights:

- [Policy CS-087](#) provides a policy-driven and transparent approach to considering requests for naming and renaming of parks and facilities in the City.
- Engagement to collect naming suggestions was completed using the City's OurCity platform, as well as in person with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation Environment Office.
- Through the City's online engagement platform, 70 unique submissions were received. After removing duplicates, staff compiled a list of proposed names for possible ranked voting.

Honourific names were identified, but are not recommended for voting as the policy gives this option a lower priority and Council has requested a name with locational reference.

- City staff consulted with representatives from the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, including an on-site meeting in the park. From that engagement, the name Niisinaabe-ki was proposed, translated as "Person lowered to earth". SON representatives requested that this name be considered on its own merits rather than through ranked voting.
- The public was engaged using the OurCity Public engagement platform to vote for their top 5 names. Council has the final decision which is to be adopted by by-law.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Celebrating and Embracing Culture - Uplifting all aspects of the City's local culture, including Indigenous Peoples' cultural histories and practices, the cultural histories and practices of all residents, and formal institutional arts and culture.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Policy CS-087 Naming and Re-Naming Policy for City Parks and Facilities](#)

[Report CS-25-047 from the Director of Community Services Re: Request Under Policy CS087 to Rename Ryerson Park](#)

[Report CS-25-061 from the Director of Community Services Re: Request to Rename Ryerson Park](#)

[Minutes: Owen Sound City Council, July 7, 2025](#)

[Report CM-25-037 from the City Manager Re: Ryerson Park Renaming – Working Group Overview and Recommendation](#)

[Report CS-26-009 from the Director of Community Services Re: Park Naming – 823 5th Avenue East](#)

[Report CS-26-058 from the Director of Community Services Re: Park Naming – 823 5th Avenue East – Report 2 – Submitted Names](#), which included resolution no. CS-260624-005 that was approved by City Council on July 13, 2026, as follows:

"THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-26-058 respecting the submitted names for the park naming at 823 5th Avenue East, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to proceed with Option 2 as outlined in the report, to move forward with ranked voting including the provided Anishinaabe name."

Background:

The City's Naming Policy provides a transparent framework for renaming and naming City parks and facilities

In 2021, the City of Owen Sound adopted Policy No. CS087, establishing transparent and consistent criteria for naming and renaming City parks and facilities. This policy ensures that any review or change to existing park names follows a structured process, with clear requirements for applicants and opportunities for community and expert consultation. The recent request to rename Ryerson Park was the first to be considered under this policy.

The Policy also covers requests for Naming a City Park or Facility.

As noted in the Previous report/authority section, Council directed the process to name the Park proceed in accordance with Policy No. CS-087 with the next phase by February 2026.

At the conclusion of the renaming process, Council directed that the naming process be commenced

The Working Group recommended and Council directed that work be initiated to rename the former Ryerson Park.

This report was requested by Council and, in accordance with the policy, is to set out the proposed naming, together with information from the application. In this case, Council itself, by resolution, has directed the naming process to commence.

Policy CS-087 has relevant policy considerations regarding naming of a park or facility

At its meeting in March, Council directed that public engagement be undertaken to obtain names suggestions in addition to 4 names that had been suggested through the earlier renaming process (which included Eighth Street Park, Boyd Street Park, Old School Park and Ningaawendam Mikkana (Friendship Land) followed by ranked voting.

Additional input was received and reported to the Committee in June of 2026. There were 70 unique inputs to this process, and based on the June report, a list of 24 names plus the Anishinaabe name of Niisinaabe-ki (translation: "Person lowered to the earth.") were considered for voting.

Analysis and Options:

Residents were invited to participate in a second phase of public engagement through voting to help identify a new name for this Neighbourhood Park. Voting was completed using the OurCity Public Engagement platform over the summer months (July 15 to August 28, 2026).

It is acknowledged that the City tool was somewhat limited in its ability to support ranked voting, however, respondents were allowed to identify their top 3 name choices.

Based on the inputs (1203 responses), the following are the top 3 names identified:

- Niisinaabe-ki (401 votes, 33.3%)
- Ryerson School Park (344 votes, 28.6%)
- 8th Street Park (189 votes, 15.7%)
- Hillside Park (165 votes, 13.7%)
- Old School Park (142 votes, 11.8%)

The decision not to require participants to register or provide personal information, such as their name, email address, or phone number, was based on recommendations from the City's Communications staff informed in part by previous community engagement surveys. Experience showed that participation rates were lower when respondents were required to provide personal information. Because the park renaming survey was intended to encourage the broadest possible participation from residents, it was designed to be anonymous and accessible without registration.

Staff has become aware of concerns that people were voting more than one time. Examining the background data with the survey, a unique identifier for each vote is associated with an IP address.

Based on 896 votes, with duplicate submissions removed, the following top names are identified:

- Ryerson School Park (281, 31.4%)
- Niisinaabe-ki Park (221, 24.7%)
- 8th Street Park (171, 19.1%)
- Hillside Park (152, 17%)
- Old School Park (131, 14.6%).

It is worth noting that although this approach removes duplicates, it also most certainly would remove legitimate votes that have 2 different family members voting from the same IP address or multiple individuals using the same Wi-Fi network (eg. At the North Grey Union Public Library).

With the duplicates removed, 896 inputs or votes is still a relatively high level of engagement from the community.

The rankings of the third to fifth place nominations remain unchanged with the removal of duplicates.

Committee is asked to put forward a recommended name for Council approval.

Once recommended, staff will provide the 10-day public notice and report any additional input to Council for consideration prior to the by-law being passed to adopt the name.

The decision by Council is final.

Given the challenges raised by duplicate voting, Committee may wish to consider the following alternatives:

1. Initiate a new voting process for the names put forward previously. Require that a person sign up with their email address and name.

It should be acknowledged that the City's engagement platform does not support ranked voting in a more sophisticated fashion than to allow people to vote for their top 3 choices. In other words, a first choice is not given more weight than a third choice.

If this option is suggested, given the previous direction of the working group and council, Ryerson School Park should be removed as an option for voting.

2. Use the data as it is presented, with and without duplicates, to make a recommendation to Council.

Considering the direction of the working group and council to rename the park, staff do not recommend Ryerson School Park as an option.

The four names that are in the top 5 include the same 4 names in differing orders. Removing Ryerson School from the recommended name options leaves Niisinaabe-ki Park as the preferred alternative. Staff recommends this option.

Lessons Learned

Consistent with the [Community Engagement Policy](#), the survey was conducted at the Consult level of engagement, with the objective of gathering public feedback to inform decision-making.

The survey was designed with accessibility and ease of participation in mind. Residents were able to rank their preferred park names anonymously, creating a simple and user-friendly experience while protecting participants' privacy. While this approach supported inclusive participation by reducing barriers to engagement, it also was open to misuse of the participation process by some voters that has impacted the credibility of the outcome as well as resulted in legitimate votes also being discounted. Staff will review protocols for future engagement that may involve community engagement base voting.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

There has been a financial cost associated with the staff, Committee, and Council time allocated to this project.

A new park will have a cost of approximately \$2000 (sign, posts, locates and installation). The ability to re-use the existing sign posts will be evaluated.

Human Resources

The process to rename and then name the Park has required significant staff, Committee and Council resource.

Staff time has been required for staff reports, setting up and administering the Our City Engagement page and the survey, and preparing for consultation with the representatives from SON, and preparing the follow-up report.

Time and Scheduling

The Committee will consider this report September 23, 2026.

Council will consider the minutes on September 28, 2026.

Prior to a by-law to approve the name, 10 days public notice will be provided. Any additional feedback received will be provided to Council prior to the name being approved by by-law.

Technology and Infrastructure

The City's online engagement platform was utilized to obtain feedback and name suggestions and voting.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Communication and Engagement:

The renaming and naming processes have followed the City Policy and provided opportunities for feedback, including name suggestions and voting.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

N/A

Attachments:

None

Reviewed by:

Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Pamela Coulter, Director of Community Services at pcoulter@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 x. 1252.