



City of Cambridge Department of Public Works

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To: Louis DePasquale
City Manager

From: Katherine F. Watkins
City Engineer

Re: Request to Change Street Names – Dawes Street, Northpoint Boulevard, North Street,
and West Street

I am writing to recommend that the names of Dawes Street, Northpoint Boulevard, North Street, and West Street be changed. The Northpoint / Cambridge Crossing area has a significant number of street names that have directional elements; North First Street, North Street, Northpoint Boulevard and West Street. As the area is becoming developed, there is an opportunity to improve the naming conventions and to continue building on the previous approach of naming streets and parks in the area after historical women; Julia Child and Amelia Earhart. Working with the Historical Commission, we have identified two prominent African American women with Cambridge connections to name streets after; Harriet A. Jacobs and Gertrude Wright Morgan.

North Street Becomes Jacobs Street

Harriet A. Jacobs – Abolitionist, author, and women's rights advocate and educator, was born into slavery in 1813, in Edenton, North Carolina. In 1842 she fled to New York, where she gained her freedom in 1852. She published her autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in 1861. This significant work was ranked with Fredrick Douglass's *My Bondage, My Freedom* as a major contribution in the genre of slave narratives. She used her fame to advantage to do relief work for African American soldiers during the Civil War and helped to create and maintain schools for southern blacks. She purchased the house at 17 Story Street about 1868 and lived there until her death in 1897. She is buried in Mt. Auburn Cemetery.



Northpoint Blvd (between cul-de-sac and Gilmore Bridge) becomes Morgan Ave

Gertrude Wright Morgan – Born in Springfield, Ill in 1861. She was the first black female student to attend the high school in Springfield, which integrated its schools in 1874. She graduated high school third in her class and became a teacher. She married Clement G. Morgan in 1896 and moved to Cambridge soon thereafter. Both Gertrude and Clement were involved in the Niagara Movement and the establishment of the NAACP. They hosted prominent citizens and civil rights leaders in their home at 265 Prospect Street. Gertrude was active in the suffrage movement, representing her ward on a committee for better city government. She was president of the Women's Era Club and member of the board of the Harriet Tubman House. She was appointed by Gov. Cox to represent Massachusetts at the dedication of the Frederick Douglass house museum in 1922.



American women at the 2nd Niagara Movement Conference which took place in the U.S. at Harpers Ferry: Mrs. Gertrude Wright Morgan (seated).

Northpoint Blvd (between Gilmore Bridge and Education Street) becomes Education Circle

This extends Education Circle to the Gilmore Bridge, highlighting the education activities occurring in the area.

Dawes Street (between Water Street and Child Street) becomes Water Street

This extends Water Street and eliminates one street name in the area; reducing the number of street names.

Under Cambridge Regulation, 12.04, Cambridge City Council is the responsible authority for altering street names.

12.04.010 - Street names affirmed—Changes and new designations

The several streets in the City shall continue to be called by the names heretofore given to them, until such names are altered by the City Council. The City Council, subject to any provisions of law relative thereto, shall give names to all streets hereafter laid out and may change the name of a street at any time, except that no street shall be given the designation of any existing street, and no street shall be accepted so long as the name thereof is the same as that of any existing street.

I have consulted with the Historical Commission, the Traffic Department and the Emergency Communications Department regarding this request and have also met with the adjacent property owners of the street. All parties are supportive of the requested changes.

I therefore recommend that the requested street name changes be placed before the City Council for their consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like any additional information regarding this request.

Existing & Proposed Street Names



Key

- Commercial
- Residential
- Retail

Proposed Street Names



Key

- Commercial
- Residential
- Retail