



# AGASSIZ NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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Re: Community process around changing the name of Agassiz / Neighborhood 8  
From: Agassiz Neighborhood Council

June 15, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui and Councillor E. Denise Simmons

In January 2020, Agassiz resident May Counter, then a senior at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, introduced her effort to change the neighborhood's name. Prior to coming to the Agassiz Neighborhood Council, she reached out to Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui and Councillor E. Denise Simmons, to discuss renaming the neighborhood. Ms. Counter's proposal was considered in connection with a City Council Policy Order to compile a list of landmarks with ties to the American slave trade, intending to rename them.

Around thirty residents were at that initial ANC meeting; many expressed interest in beginning an inclusive process to determine whether there was interest in renaming the neighborhood and, if yes, which name should be chosen. They voted in favor of the following:

"There is a strong consensus in the neighborhood council in support of a name change, to be discussed in forums over the coming months with an opportunity to educate neighbors about the relevant issues, with the objective to come up with a recommended name from the neighborhood."

Although responding to the COVID-19 pandemic necessarily paused the process, ANC was active between October 2020 and April 2021, engaged in the following:

- Outreach (January-February 2021): Explain process and invite input from the neighborhood, the Baldwin School community, universities, religious institutions, and other neighborhood stakeholders; create digital 'context library,' and invite name submissions
- Flyer and Survey (March 2021): With support from Community Development, deliver flyers to households; via flyer residents invited to visit 'context library' and respond to a digital survey
- Community Discussion (April 2021): Discuss survey results and identify next steps at ANC Meeting

Between 97-100% of the neighborhood population received a flyer, representing around 1,652 total households and 5,382 individuals. At the April 2021 ANC Meeting, residents discussed survey results and demographics.

- Of the 447 total survey respondents, 88.4% said they are in favor of changing the name, 7.2% said they are not, and 4.5% said they are unsure.
- 385 offered a preference for a new name, and of those, three options received more than 10% of the vote: Maria L. Baldwin, Baldwin Neighborhood, Maria Baldwin Neighborhood.
- Of those living in the neighborhood, 81.82% want to rename. Of those living outside the neighborhood, 97.03% want to rename.
- Of Black, Indigenous, and people of color, 95.37% want to rename. Of white-identifying people, 90.72% want to rename.
- 69.8% of respondents identified as a woman or a girl, 4.21% of respondents identified as genderqueer or nonbinary, 25.5% of respondents identified as a man or a boy.
- 12% of respondents identified as under 18, 33.58% as 18-24 years old, 11.5% as 25-34, 7.6% as 35-44, 9.56% as 45-54, 9.31% as 55-64, and 16.42% as 65+
- 80.12% of Agassiz Neighborhood resident respondents age 25 and older indicated they would like to change the neighborhood name. For those age 55 and older (still just neighborhood residents), that figure is 74.12%.

In addition to the above, this process met with a number of tensions, some of which may not be resolvable, including:

- For some residents, changing the name has been a “long-time coming,” for others the current name holds meaning
- Desire to uplift Maria L. Baldwin, especially during this cultural moment
- Desire to honor Louis Agassiz’s scientific legacy
- Acknowledgement and redress of the harms resulting from racism and white supremacy developed and espoused by Louis Agassiz
- Coordination, education, outreach, and timing during a pandemic

On behalf of ANC, I submit to you the above information which represents approximately sixteen months of discussions and process focused on the question presented by Ms. Counter. We eagerly look forward to the next stage of this effort and humbly await Cambridge City Council's reflections and response. Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully submitted,  
Agassiz Neighborhood Council