

City of Piedmont
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: May 16, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Sara Lillevand, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Consideration of Naming the City's Triangle Park at the Intersection of Magnolia and Wildwood Avenues as "Dearing Family Memorial Park", and (2) Direction to the Park Commission to Provide Recommendations to the City Council on Signage and Other Commemorations to Implement the Naming

RECOMMENDATION

By separate motions, take the following actions related to memorializing the family of Irene and Sidney Dearing:

1. Name the City's triangle park at the intersection of Magnolia and Wildwood Avenues as Dearing Family Memorial Park; and
2. Direct the Park Commission to provide recommendations to the City Council on signage and other commemorations to implement the naming.

BACKGROUND

In 1924, Piedmont's first black homeowners, Sidney and Irene Dearing were targeted due to their race, and forced to leave their home as a result of community and governmental actions. Community actions included a 500-person mob outside the Dearing home demanding their removal from the City and the placement of bombs near the Dearing household. The Piedmont Police Department did little to protect the Dearing family during these actions. At one point the Alameda County Sheriff sent deputies in to protect the family, in addition to private security personnel hired by the family.

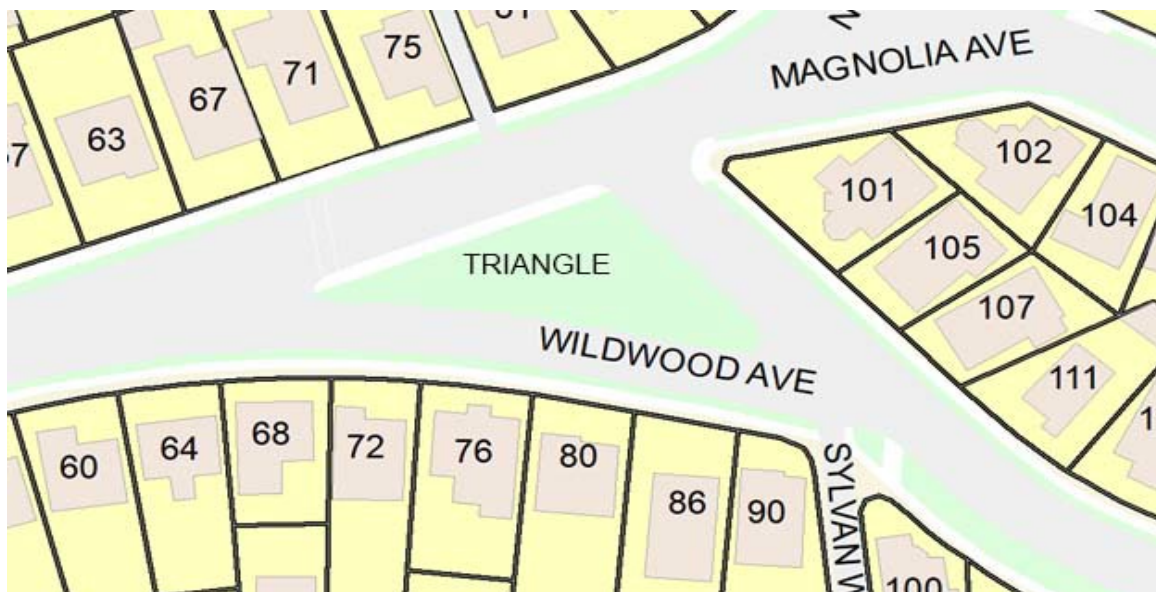
According to contemporary reports, the Piedmont City Council, under threat of eminent domain proceedings, offered to purchase the home from the Dearing family for less than the family had originally paid for the home. The City Council indicated the need to acquire the property was for the purpose of constructing a road between Wildwood and Fairview Avenues to connect these two streets. Following intense pressure from the community, Mr. Dearing sold his home to the City and moved out of Piedmont. The proposed road was never constructed.

In 2020, following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis Police officer, the Piedmont City Council passed Resolution 60-2020, entitled "A Resolution Unequivocally Rejecting

Racism.” This resolution acknowledges “...the overt and institutional racism that affect the lives of our community members of color...” both in Piedmont and around the nation. In this resolution, the Council “acknowledges, apologizes for, and condemns all racially motivated, discriminatory or exclusionary aspects of the City’s history, and deeply regrets the pain or suffering such policies have caused to any person” as well as “unequivocally rejects racism in all its forms.” In addition, the resolution states, “The City of Piedmont City Council and staff will engage in individual and collective work to understand bias and the historical role racism has played in Piedmont and the community at large in order to better lead a city which is a safe, welcoming, and equitable place for all people” among other actions.

There have been calls in the community and from members of the City Council for the abhorrent treatment of the Dearing family to be publicly acknowledged and commemorated. One of the suggestions has been to name the triangle at the intersection of Magnolia and Wildwood Avenues in honor of the Dearing family. This piece of City land is located across from the former Dearing home and staff believe it is an appropriate place to formally recognize the reprehensible actions of this community’s past and to affirm the inclusive direction we strive toward. This symbolic action would be intended as a meaningful step on the journey to achieving the vision laid out by the City Council in Resolution 60-2020.

Triangle at Wildwood and Magnolia Avenues



The triangle at the intersection of Magnolia and Wildwood Avenues has been in existence for many years. It is a verdant piece of land with a stand of Redwood trees, ground cover, and other plants. There is an existing path from the sidewalk leading to a bench surrounded by the trees. Honoring and commemorating the Dearing family in this piece of public land would be a meaningful gesture that would generate healthy community conversation and awareness as well as provide a foundation for the City’s commitment to examining and owning the City’s history.

Naming Policy

At the May 2, 2022 meeting of the City Council, the Council approved a Donation and Naming of City-Owned Facilities Policy. The policy provides that all naming of City facilities or City land must be approved by the City Council. In staff's view, the naming of the triangle park area as Dearing Family Memorial Park is consistent with criterion 3.A.1 of the policy: "Naming which enhances the values and heritage of the City of Piedmont and that will be compatible with community interest".

Park Commission

If Council approves the naming of the park, Staff recommends the Council direct the Park Commission to examine how best to honor and commemorate the Dearing family history in the Dearing Family Memorial Park. The Park Commission could consider and make recommendations on the design and content of signage as well as a public dedication ceremony and would allow for community engagement in this effort to acknowledge and raise awareness of the abhorrent treatment of the Dearing family in Piedmont in 1924.

ATTACHMENT

A: City Council Resolution 60-2020



CITY OF PIEDMONT
RESOLUTION NO. 60-2020

A RESOLUTION UNEQUIVOCALLY REJECTING RACISM

WHEREAS, recent and historical incidents of violence against Black people highlight the overt and institutional racism that affect the lives of our community members of color; and

WHEREAS, these incidents have led many in our community to reflect again on our values, who we are as City leaders, and who we are as Americans, noting that while we may have differing backgrounds, lived experiences, and beliefs, we each at our core, value diversity, respect, and inclusivity; and

WHEREAS, systemic and institutional racism, spread and perpetuated through overt actions and unconscious bias, has taken a large toll on Black people in our community and across the nation; and

WHEREAS, many in Piedmont have recently come to understand that in order to do our part to unravel systemic racism we must take a proactive anti-racism stance; and

WHEREAS, we must listen to those who have endured centuries of discrimination and exclusion as they share the truth of their lived experiences; and we must seek solutions to remedy racial harm; and

WHEREAS, we are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive and civil community through our policies, our programming, and our leadership; we stand firm in our collective belief that a safe and civil environment for all across Piedmont is paramount; and

WHEREAS, we stand in support of all in our community, honoring and protecting every person regardless of race, creed, color, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, ability, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge Piedmont is a predominantly White community, with a high socio-economic status; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that Black Lives Matter and recognize the need to place focus and intent on racial equity as we work to change the culture within Piedmont to ensure that all persons are welcome and valued; and

WHEREAS, by focusing on our shared values of respect and inclusivity, as well as to acknowledge historical racism in Piedmont and to examine existing systems through an anti-

racist lens, we have an opportunity to come together to strengthen our community in support of equity and justice for all;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council does hereby resolve, declare, determine and order as follows:

1. The City of Piedmont acknowledges, apologizes for, and condemns all racially motivated, discriminatory or exclusionary aspects of the City's history, and deeply regrets the pain or suffering such policies have caused to any person.
2. The City of Piedmont unequivocally rejects racism in all its forms.
3. The City of Piedmont City Council and staff will engage in individual and collective work to understand bias and the historical role racism has played in Piedmont and the community at large in order to better lead a city which is a safe, welcoming, and equitable place for all people.
4. The City of Piedmont will promote inclusion and equity, and will stand up to bigotry, hatred, intolerance, racism, and violence.
5. The City of Piedmont will strongly enforce all laws and policies prohibiting discrimination, hate-motivated incidents and hate crimes, hazing, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive or violent behaviors in our city.
6. The City of Piedmont will review and revise its policies, procedures, ordinances, values, goals, and missions through an anti-racism lens to foster an unbiased and inclusive environment that is free of discrimination, harassment, and negative stereotyping toward any person or group.
7. Staff is hereby directed to fly the Black Lives Matter flag throughout the month of August 2020 in the manner as described in the agenda report.



I certify that the foregoing resolution was passed and adopted at a regular meeting of the Piedmont City Council on August 3, 2020, by the following vote:

Ayes:	Andersen, Cavanaugh, King, McBain, Rood
Noes:	None
Absent/Abstain:	None

Attest: _____
John O. Tulloch, City Clerk