


STAFF REPORT



PUBLIC WORKS

DATE: June 27, 2023

TO: Justin Hess, City Manager

FROM: Ken Berkman, Public Works Director 
VIA: Daniel Rynn, Chief Assistant Public Works Director – City Engineer
BY: David Null, Senior Civil Engineer

SUBJECT: Adoption of a Resolution Renaming a Portion of Empire Avenue between Victory Place and Wilson Avenue to Estrella Way; Finding of CEQA Exemption (14 CCR §§ 15061(b)(3), 15301, 15302)

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BURBANK RENAMING A PORTION OF EMPIRE AVENUE, BETWEEN VICTORY PLACE AND WILSON AVENUE, TO ESTRELLA WAY (Attachment 1).

BACKGROUND

The Interstate 5 North High Occupancy Vehicle / Empire Interchange Project was recently completed by Caltrans. A major component of the project included the construction of a new interchange at Empire Avenue, which added new on- and off-ramps to the freeway at Empire Avenue and reconfigured several City streets to accommodate the interchange.

As part of the project, Empire Avenue was realigned so that it became grade-separated with Victory Place, the adjacent Metrolink / Union Pacific railroad tracks, and Interstate 5. The realignment also created a small City street fragment of the old alignment of Empire Avenue that extends from Victory Place to Wilson Avenue. This fragment is a new local City street with two-way traffic and parking located on the north side. It provides access to one studio business, Estrella Media, Inc. located at 1845 Empire Avenue, but it no longer connects to the realigned Empire Avenue. While the street is now colloquially called “W Old Empire Avenue”, it is still technically named Empire Avenue and serves Empire Avenue property addresses. This street name duplication with the larger Empire Avenue, and the disconnect between this street and the realigned Empire Avenue, creates confusion for roadway users trying to navigate between Victory Place and Empire Avenue and to access businesses along the 1800 address block of Empire.

To resolve the confusing situation, the Estrella Media, Inc. property owner Estrella Media, requested the name change in a letter to the Public Works Department dated April 20, 2022 (Attachment 3). They are requesting that this "Empire Avenue" street fragment be renamed to "Estrella Way" to eliminate confusion that is affecting access to and from their property.

DISCUSSION

The main entrance to the Estrella Media, Inc. property comes from old "Empire Avenue." No existing street addresses are affected except for the petitioner. The proposed section of existing street is illustrated in Attachment 2, and the request for a street name change is shown in Attachment 3. The street name will differentiate the old "Empire Avenue" from the larger, realigned Empire Avenue, will clarify way finding for Estrella Media, and will also highlight the presence of Estrella Media's business location with the public. The renaming of "Empire Avenue" does not affect any other property addresses other than that of Estrella Media, Inc. because Estrella Media, Inc. owns all properties located on this street.

The Burbank Municipal Code (BMC) Section 7-3-1001 (Street Name Change Requests) specifies that all requests for street name changes shall be filed with the Public Works Director and that the Public Works Director shall review the request and file a report and recommendation with the City Clerk. The Clerk will then set a public hearing before City Council. (BMC § 7-3-1002.) Criteria for naming a street include the following:

- A. When a duplication, confusion, uncertainty, or similar problem exists or will occur,
- B. When a name of local significance is used for the purpose of honoring or calling attention to persons or places having special prominence and significance to the culture or history of the city. (BMC § 7-3-1003.)

The proposed street name change would fall under both categories. The applicable sections of the BMC are included as Attachment 4. In accordance with the BMC, the Public Works Director reviewed the request on January 25, 2023, and recommends approval of the street name change to avoid confusion and allow for a name of local significance.

Estrella Media representatives and adjacent property owners have been notified about the hearing per municipal code. According to staff's research, Estrella Media is the only property abutting this street segment and would be the only property affected by the street name change. While Estrella Media, Inc. requests the street name to match the name of their private business, the "Estrella Way" street name also has local historic and geographical significance that justifies the choice of name for "Old Empire Avenue." The property located on the south side of Empire Avenue was formerly the Lockheed Plant B-1 military aircraft manufacturing plant that produced several important military aircraft during World War 2 and throughout the post-war period. One notable aircraft produced at the B-1 Plant was the Lockheed P-80 "Shooting Star" combat aircraft. This aircraft was notable as being the United States' first jet-powered fighter aircraft and entered service

at the end of World War 2. Estrella means “star” in Spanish and therefore “Estrella Way” is also referencing the historic aerospace history of the immediate area. Thus, this name change meets the criteria set forth in the BMC.

In coordination with the possible renaming of “Empire Avenue” to Estrella Way, City staff have also been working with Caltrans to coordinate the installation of a new traffic signal at the three-way intersection located at the eastern end of “Empire Avenue” and Victory Place. The new signal has been installed and was activated in late May 2023. Required wayfinding signage needed at this signalized intersection is currently referencing “Empire Avenue” which is confusing given that roadway users cannot access the main Empire Avenue from Victory Place. This signage will be modified if the City Council approves the street renaming request. With approval by the Council, replacement street signage will be installed within one month.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Staff recommends that the City Council find adoption of this resolution exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Sections 15061(b)(3) (because the renaming of a portion of an existing street has no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment), 15301 (because installation of signs are minor alterations of existing public facilities with no expansion of the existing use), and 15302 (because replacement of existing signs would not result in any new environmental effect beyond the previous sign being replaced). Further, no exceptions under 14 CCR § 15300.2 or unusual circumstances apply to preclude these exemptions. As a result, the adoption of this resolution is exempt from CEQA and no further environmental review is necessary.

FISCAL IMPACT

The cost to rename the “Empire Avenue” street fragment to “Estrella Way” includes fabrication and installation of two conventional street name signs located at each end of the new street, and the installation of two larger overhead street guide signs on the new traffic signal at Victory Place. The cost for these signs can be accommodated within the current fiscal year’s budget allocated to signing and striping maintenance. In addition, these costs are partially offset by the \$4,881 fee paid by Estrella Media, Inc. to request the street name change.

CONCLUSION

Staff respectfully recommends that Council adopt the attached resolution to enable this street name change.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Resolution
- Attachment 2 – Exhibit A to the Resolution (Project Location Map)
- Attachment 3 – Letter Requesting Name Change
- Attachment 4 – Burbank Municipal Code Article 10
- Correspondences