



DEPARTMENT OF LOUISVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION  
LOUISVILLE, KY

CRAIG GREENBERG  
MAYOR

MICHELLE KING  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To: Councilman Ken Herndon

From: Michelle King, Executive Director, Louisville Parks and Recreation

DS  
SMK

3/22/2026

Subject: Ballard Park Re-naming Proposal

Date: March 20, 2026

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In the spring of 2024 and again in the spring of 2025, the Parks Alliance of Louisville (PAL) conducted community outreach to gather feedback on the design and history of Ballard Park in the Smoketown neighborhood. Following this engagement, PAL contacted Louisville Parks and Recreation (LPR) to express interest in renaming the park "Smoketown-Ballard Park."

In response, I provided PAL with guidance on the process outlined in *Parks and Recreation Facility Renaming: Process for Preparing and Submitting Proposals*. This document establishes LPR's role in the renaming process as set forth in LMCO §39.033 and is further supplemented by *Park and Recreation Facility Renaming Proposals: Considerations for Parks and Recreation Support*. Both documents are attached for reference.

In support of the renaming proposal, PAL communicated with your office and received your support, which resulted in the attached draft renaming ordinance.

As part of its due diligence, PAL conducted historical research on the existing park name and determined that the property deed includes a condition imposed at the time of donation requiring the name "Ballard" to remain part of the park's name. Failure to do so would result in the land reverting to the Board of Trustees of the Diocese of Kentucky. The proposed name, "Smoketown-Ballard Park," satisfies this requirement.

Further research clarified that this provision refers to the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky. PAL contacted the Diocese, shared evidence of strong community support for the name change, and received the attached letter of support. In its response, the Diocese confirmed that the legal requirements would be met and noted the value of recognizing the "rich heritage of the Smoketown community."

LPR also requested a review of the historical appropriateness of the proposed name from the Louisville Metro Office of Planning's Historic Preservation Officer, Savannah Darr. After reviewing the historical context, Ms. Darr provided the attached letter expressing support for the proposed renaming.

PAL demonstrated substantial community support for the proposal through extensive outreach, summarized in the attached *Ballard Park Renaming & Storytelling Summary*. A majority of respondents



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(55%) supported the name "Smoketown-Ballard Park," with an additional 8% favoring the similar option "Ballard-Smoketown Park." Only 18% preferred no name change. The remaining responses were distributed among several alternatives, each receiving no more than 2.2% support and none of which would satisfy the deed restriction. Overall, the survey indicates strong community support for incorporating the neighborhood name "Smoketown" into the park's name, with only a small minority opposed to any change.

In light of the demonstrated community support, confirmation of legal compliance, and affirmative reviews by both the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky and Louisville Metro's Historic Preservation Officer, I recommend approval of the proposed renaming of Ballard Park to Smoketown-Ballard Park.



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OFFICE OF PLANNING  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

CRAIG GREENBERG  
MAYOR

BRIAN DAVIS, AICP  
DIRECTOR

**To: Michelle King, Executive Director, Louisville Parks and Recreation**

**From: Savannah Darr, Historic Preservation Officer, Office of Planning**

**Subject: Ballard Park Renaming**

**Date: March 11, 2026**

Based on historic research, Ballard Park was named after the Ballard family who purchased the property, donated it to the City, and spent additional funds for a shelter and playground. The park was specifically selected in the Smoketown Neighborhood, a historically African American neighborhood, for the use of African American residents during segregation. On October 23, 1919, the park was dedicated with a ceremony featuring members of the Ballard family, Mayor George Weissinger Smith, and Albert Meyzeek, principal of Booker T. Washington School, an African American school.

While the deed for the park requires the continued use of the Ballard name, it is a good idea to add further neighborhood-specific recognition or historical context to the park name. The proposed Smoketown-Ballard Park does just that. It still recognizes the donation of the Ballard family and with research allows one to understand that naming choice and the history of segregation in Louisville. By adding Smoketown to the name, it honors the history of the Smoketown Neighborhood and provides placemaking by letting visitors know they are in Smoketown. As this area has a rich, unique, and resilient history, I recommend historic context information be added to the park design.



10 March 2026

Michelle King  
Louisville Parks & Recreation  
1297 Trevilian Wy  
Louisville, Kentucky 40213

RE: Letter of Support – Renaming of Ballard Park

Dear Director King,

On behalf of the Diocese of Kentucky, I am pleased to offer our formal support for the proposed renaming of Ballard Park to Smoketown Ballard Park.

The Diocese recognizes the deep historical and cultural significance of the Smoketown neighborhood, and we believe that honoring this community through the park's name is a meaningful and appropriate step forward.

We wish to make clear for the record that the Diocese is fully supportive of the name change, which is consistent with the intent of condition number (1) of the Deed dated June 13, 1919 and recorded in Deed Book 916, Page 255. As stipulated in the original deed of conveyance, the Ballard name must remain in perpetuity as a condition of the property transfer. Should the Ballard name be removed entirely, the deed provides that ownership of the property would automatically revert to the Trustees of the Diocese of Kentucky.

With that legal obligation clearly noted, we enthusiastically support the spirit of this renaming effort and commend Louisville Metro for its commitment to honoring the rich heritage of the Smoketown community.

We trust that this letter addresses any questions regarding the Diocese's position and we welcome any further dialogue as this process moves forward.

Sincerely,

+ Terry A White

The Rt. Rev. Terry Allen White  
VIII Bishop of Kentucky

**Application to Name  
Metro Government  
Owned Property**



**Office of Facilities and Fleet**

Address:

Ballard Park - 525 Caldwell St. Louisville, KY 40203

Additional Details:

See attached

Request By:

Parks and Recreation

Request Date:

April 7, 2026

Justification of Request:

See Attached

Additional Comments:

**Approved**

Sean C. Woods

Director of Facilities and Fleet

4/8/26  
Date

Dana Mayton

Deputy Mayor

4-8-26  
Date

### **Park and Recreation Facility Renaming Proposals: Considerations for Parks and Recreation Support**

- **Current name**
  - Historical and current context for the name
  - Longevity of the name, i.e., how long has it been in place
  - Relationship to community, e.g., geographic association, community “brand”
  - Relevance
  - Demonstrated community support
  
- **Proposed name**
  - Historical and current context for the name
    - If named for individual: Is this a historic, deceased individual with a significant beneficial impact on the community?
    - Please provide primary and/or secondary sources for the context information.
    - If the individual has surviving family members, please provide documentation that they were consulted and have no objections to the use of their relative’s name.
    - Note – It is recommended that a person be deceased for at least 30 years before considering use of their name on public assets, though this is not a requirement.
  - Relationship to community, e.g., geographic association, community “brand”
  - Relevance
  - Demonstrated community support
  
- **Community Engagement Process Outcomes**
  - Has community engagement process identified significant support for the current name? Alternatively, has this process demonstrated significant concern with the current name?
  - Has the community engagement process demonstrated significant support\* for the proposed name?
  - For Olmsted Parks, was a letter of support from the Director of the Olmsted Parks Conservancy included in the proposal?

\*Significant support will generally be demonstrated as follows:

- Provide at least 200 signatures/survey responses of residents living within a ½-mile service radius or 50% of the surrounding neighborhood, whichever is less, of a Neighborhood Park in support of the Park name change.
- Provide at least 600 signatures/survey responses of residents living within a 2-mile service radius or 50% of the surrounding neighborhood, whichever is less, of a Community Park in support of the Park name change.
- Provide at least 1,000 signatures/survey responses of residents from throughout Louisville Metro in support of the Major Urban Park name change.



# Ballard Park Renaming & Storytelling Summary

## Background:

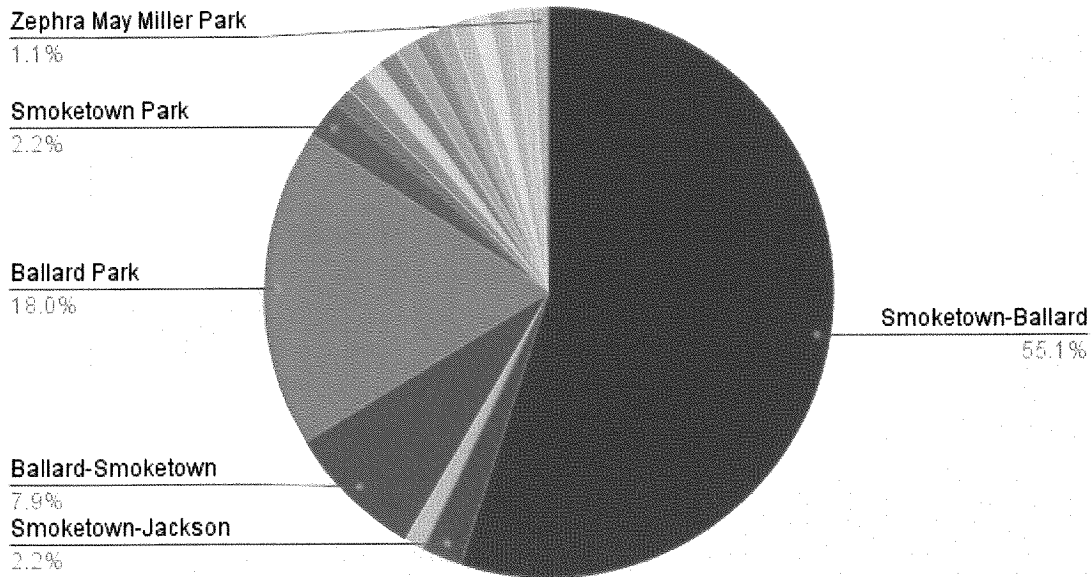
Over the past year, the Parks Alliance of Louisville has gathered community feedback on renaming Ballard Park and how best to honor Smoketown’s history in the park’s design. Input was collected through two direct mail surveys sent to 1,076 addresses, online surveys conducted in spring 2024 and spring 2025, and outreach through local organizations, flyers, yard signs, social media, and email newsletters.

*Note:* The original deed requires “Ballard” to remain in the park’s name, or ownership would revert to the Archdiocese of Louisville. Parks Alliance consulted Father Fred Klotter of the Archdiocese, who indicated a hyphenated name would satisfy this requirement and avoid legal complications.

## High-Level Summary:

According to Metro United Way’s June 2022 Smoketown [Neighborhood Profile](#), there are approximately 948 households in Smoketown. We received **feedback from 173 individuals**. In the Spring 2024 survey, **81% supported changing the park’s name**. In the Spring 2025 survey, **55% selected “Smoketown-Ballard Park”** as their preferred name.

## Ballard Park Renaming Breakdown



n=89



## Ballard Park Renaming & Storytelling Summary

Beyond naming, residents consistently expressed the importance of celebrating the history of Smoketown in the new park—lifting up stories, community leaders, cultural landmarks, and achievements in sports, the arts, and activism. There is strong support for recognizing the neighborhood’s resilience through challenges such as segregation, urban renewal, and gentrification, as well as honoring Smoketown’s enduring legacy of African American culture and community spirit.

### Key Historical Themes Identified by Residents:

#### 1. Athletic Heritage:

- Deep basketball tradition at Ballard Park, home to local legends like Larry O’Bannon Jr., George Tinsley, Allan Houston, the O’Bannon family, and others.

#### 2. Prominent Community Figures:

- Muhammad Ali, Ed Hamilton, Shirley Mae Beard, Dr. Bruce Williams, Fred Stoner, Albert Meyzeek, Mrs. Ruby Hyde, Joe Martin, William Henry Sheppard, Ellen Sloan “The Candy Lady,” Nachand Trabue, Ashlee Philips, and Mark Anthony Mulligan. Everyday heroes contributing to community-building and youth mentorship, notably from Blueprint 502 (formerly known as YouthBuild) and local stores.

#### 3. Community and Cultural Resilience:

- Smoketown’s role as Louisville’s oldest historically Black neighborhoods, marked by resilience in the face of segregation, redlining, urban renewal, and ongoing gentrification. Strong emphasis on Black self-sufficiency, creativity, education, and entrepreneurship.

#### 4. Landmarks and Architectural Heritage:

- Recognition of historical sites like St. Peter Claver, Royal Eastern Colored Library, Ballard Flour Mills, alley houses, shotgun architecture, and historical structures, lost and preserved. History of brickmaking, agriculture, and neighborhood businesses.

#### 5. Family and Community Life:

- Smoketown as a “Village,” emphasizing community spirit, intergenerational support, local businesses, and neighborhood events like Old Timers Day and community cookouts.

**Park and Recreation Facility Renaming Proposals:  
Process for Preparing and Submitting Proposals**

1. Select proposed name
  - a. If multiple names are under consideration, community engagement should be undertaken to choose the most supported option. All options should be evaluated according to the criteria listed in *Park and Recreation Facility Renaming Proposals: Considerations for Parks and Recreation Support*
2. Gather community feedback and input
  - a. The new name recommendation should be presented to any neighborhood associations, councilmembers, and major park stakeholders for review. Any proposal involving an Olmsted Park must include approval from the Olmsted Parks Conservancy.
  - b. A community survey, with signage posted in the park, should be conducted to get feedback. Minimum number of responses should correspond with the size and nature of the Park or Recreation Facility in question. See *Park and Recreation Facility Renaming Proposals: Considerations for Parks and Recreation Support* for more information.
  - c. At least one public meeting should be held regarding the name change.
3. Approval by Parks and Recreation
  - a. The proposed name, criteria evaluation, and community engagement process documentation, outcomes, and feedback should be submitted to Louisville Metro Parks and Recreation via email to [parks@louisvilleky.gov](mailto:parks@louisvilleky.gov).
  - b. Proposal should address the criteria listed in *Park and Recreation Facility Renaming Proposals: Considerations for Parks and Recreation Support*.
  - c. Staff review and determination of a complete proposal that meets minimum community engagement criteria.
  - d. Final review and approval by the Executive Director of Parks and Recreation.
4. Metro Council adoption of the new name (LMCO §39.033)