

Donna Deegan, Mayor

City Hall at St. James
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Jacksonville, FL 32202
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March 26, 2025

Jason Teal, Acting Council Secretary/Director
The Honorable Joe Carlucci, NCSPHS Chair
The Honorable Will Lahnen, TEU Chair
And Members of the City Council
117 West Duval Street
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

RE: Historic Preservation Commission Advisory Report / Ordinance No. 2025-189 / Proposed Renaming of Oakland Park

Dear Acting Director Teal, Honorable Council Member and NCSPHS Chair Carlucci, Honorable Council Member and TEU Chair Lahnen, and Honorable Members of the City Council:

Pursuant to Sections 122.105(b) and (c), Ordinance Code, the Historic Preservation Section forwards the attached Report and the Historic Preservation Commission's Advisory Recommendation regarding Ordinance 2025-16, the proposed renaming of Oakland Park as the "Eartha M. M. White Historical Park."

JHPC Recommendation:

5-0 APPROVE

Michael Montoya, Chair	Approve
Ethan Gregory, Vice-Chair	Approve
William Hoff, Secretary	Approve
Julia Epstein	Absent
Becky Morgan	Approve
Thomas Love	Approve

Based on the best evidence available, the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission recommends approval of the proposed renaming of Oakland Park to "Eartha M. M. White Historical Park."

Historic Preservation Commission Report

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If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,



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Michael Montoya
Chair
Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission

ATW
Enclosures

**Report of the Historic Preservation Section and
Advisory Recommendation of the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission**

TO: Council Secretary, Jacksonville City Council

FROM: Arimus Wells, City Planner Supervisor – Planning

RE: **Proposed Renaming of Oakland Park – Ordinance No. 2025-189**

DATE: March 26, 2025

On March 11, 2025, Ordinance 2025-189 was introduced to propose renaming “Oakland Park” as “Eartha M. M. White Historical Park.” Consistent with Chapter 122.105 of the Jacksonville Ordinance Code the naming and renaming of public buildings, public facilities and public parks, requires a Report from the Historic Preservation Section and an advisory recommendation on the renaming proposal from the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission. The Report is required to address the following criteria:

1. The origin of the existing public building, public facility, or public park name, if applicable;
2. Any historical significance of the existing public building, public facility or public park;
3. Whether there are any historical structures or landmarks on the subject property
4. Whether the existing building name, name of public facility, or public park name is part of a common theme of names throughout the community where such building, park or facility is located;
5. The age of the public building, public facility or public park name
6. Whether there are other public buildings, public facilities, or public parks with the same or similar name; and
7. Whether the person (or persons) to whom the public building, public facility or public park is proposed to be named or renamed has contributed to the development of, or is a reminder of the history and/or culture of the City, State, or Nation.

Location: 657 East Union Street, RE# 122084-0000

Reason for Change: At the request of City Council to honor the life and legacy of Eartha M.M. White and her dedication to the City of Jacksonville by renaming Oakland Park as the “Eartha M. M. White Historical Park.”

Criteria:

1. The origin of the existing public building, public facility, or public park name, if applicable:

Oakland Park is located at the corner of Ionia and Union Street in the Eastside National Historic District. According to archival records, there has been a park at the subject site since 1869, when the working-class Oakland neighborhood was developed.

2. Any historical significance of the existing public building, public facility or public park:

Oakland Park is historically significant because it possesses the first playground established by the City for African American children. Due to the efforts of Jacksonville humanitarian, Eartha M.M. White, the playground opened on July 4, 1918. To celebrate the park's opening, there was a parade from Stanton High School in LaVilla to the park.

3. Whether there are any historical structures or landmarks on the subject property:

The park is currently designated as a local landmark (Ord. 2010-770; LS-10-01), which is in connection to the Old City Cemetery.

4. Whether the existing building name, name of public facility, or public park name is part of a common theme of names throughout the community where such building, park or facility is located:

The existing name of the park is connected to the 1869 plat for the town of Oakland. The historically black Oakland community is significant for its association with the early residential suburban development in Jacksonville. Located to the north of East Jacksonville, the Oakland community was originally part of the property purchased by steamboat captain Charles Willey in 1842. This 278-acre tract was acquired by Captain Willey as the result of an execution sale based on a judgment against the owner, John Warren. In 1852, Captain Willey and his wife, Francis, deeded four acres to the City of Jacksonville for the purpose of a public cemetery. The cemetery, now known as the Old City Cemetery, was expanded by three acres, with one acre conveyed to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Florida. By 1869, the remaining portions of Captain Willey's properties had come under the ownership of Jesse D. Cole. That same year, Cole filed a plat for the town of Oakland.

5. The age of the public building, public facility or public park name:

According to archival records, Oakland Park existed prior to the establishment of the supervised playground. On the 1869 plat of the Oakland neighborhood, a park is shown at the present location. Furthermore, a newspaper article in 1917 discusses an

upcoming patriotic meeting of African American citizens at Oakland Park, in support of local efforts during World War I.

6. Whether there are other public buildings, public facilities, or public parks with the same or similar name:

There are no other public buildings, public facilities, or public parks with the same or similar name.

7. Whether the person (or persons) to whom the public building, public facility or public park is proposed to be named or renamed has contributed to the development of, or is a reminder of the history and/or culture of the City, State, or Nation:

Prominent humanitarian and philanthropist, Dr. Eartha Mary Magdalene White, has contributed significantly to various endeavors within the City and State. Dr. White is known for the following contributions: establishing an orphanage for African American children; creating the Boys Improvement Club, which was an effort to curb juvenile delinquency; establishing the Clara White Mission, which provides meals for the hungry and transitional housing for homeless persons; founding the Eartha M. M. White Nursing Home; managing several businesses; and many more endeavors.

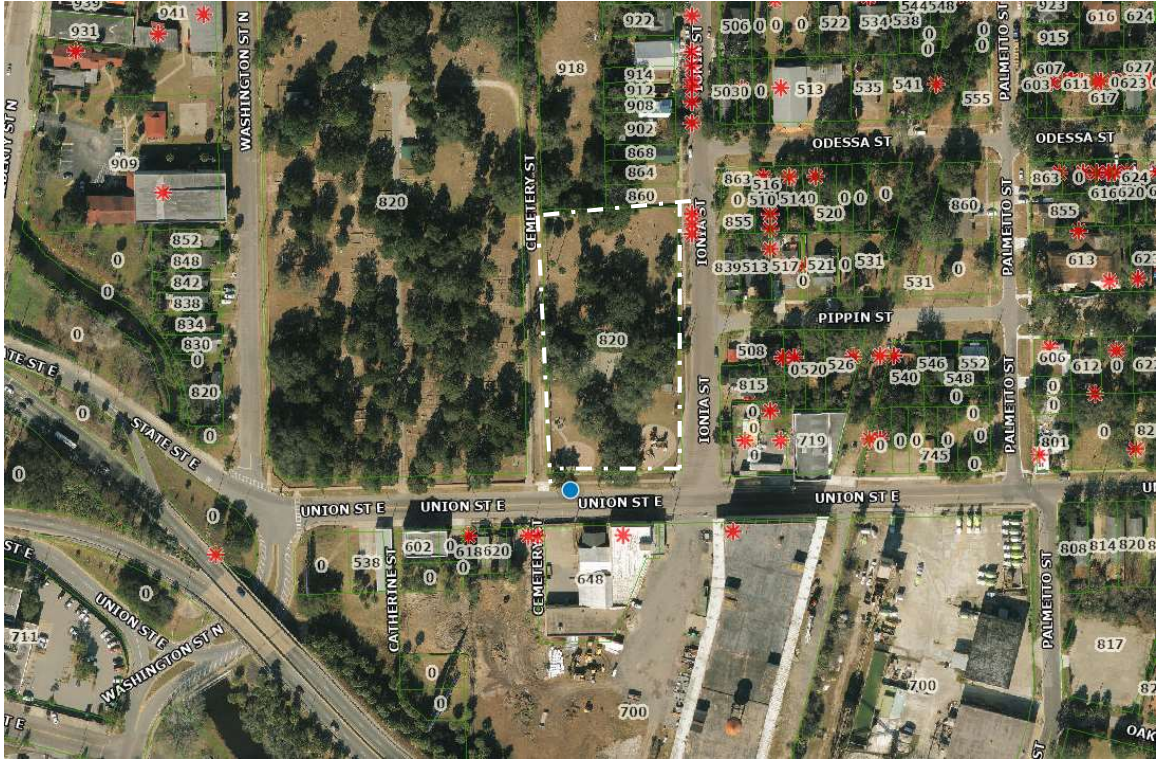
Dr. White was also instrumental in establishing Oakland Park, the first public park for African Americans. She was known to have financed the park for ten years until the City assumed operations.

PD Recommendation:

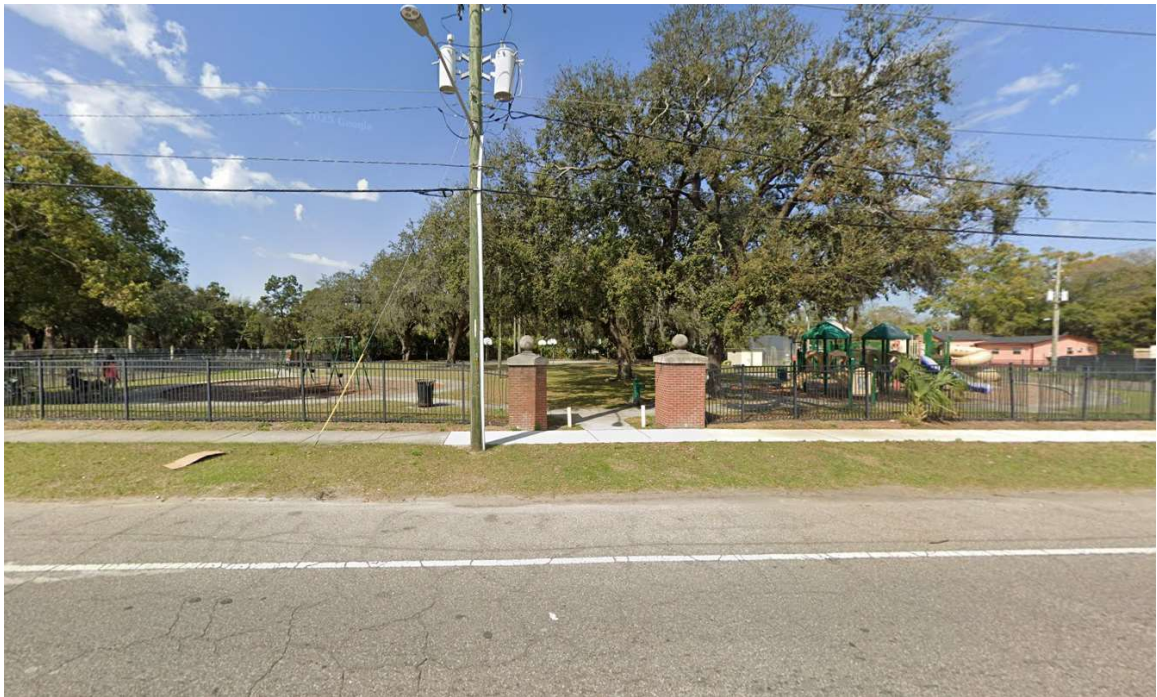
It is the opinion of the Planning Department (PD) that the proposed renaming of Oakland Park as the “Eartha M. M. White Historical Park” will be named after a person that has made significant contributions to the development of the city as outlined in Ordinance 2025-189.

JHPC Advisory Recommendation:

On March 26, 2025, the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission (JHPC) will review and issue an opinion on the proposed renaming of Oakland Park as the “Eartha M. M. White Historical Park.”



Aerial view of park



Entrance to the park