

MEMPHIS AND SHELBY COUNTY OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
STAFF REPORT **# 6**

CASE NUMBER: SNC 08-801 **L.U.C.B. MEETING:** September 11, 2008

STREET NAME: Auction Avenue to A.W. Willis Avenue

LOCATION: Beginning at the east side of Island Avenue
extending to the west side of Danny Thomas
Boulevard

OWNER OF RECORD / APPLICANT: Archie W. Willis

REPRESENTATIVE: Archie W. Willis

REQUEST: Street Name Change from Auction Avenue to
Archie W. Willis Avenue

LENGTH: 4,229 feet

EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING: Street right-of-way ~ Mixed Use (MU) District

SURROUNDING LAND USE & ZONING:

North: Commercial and residential uses ~ Mixed Use (MU) District

East: Commercial and residential uses ~ Mixed Use (MU) District

South: Commercial and residential uses ~ Mixed Use (MU) District

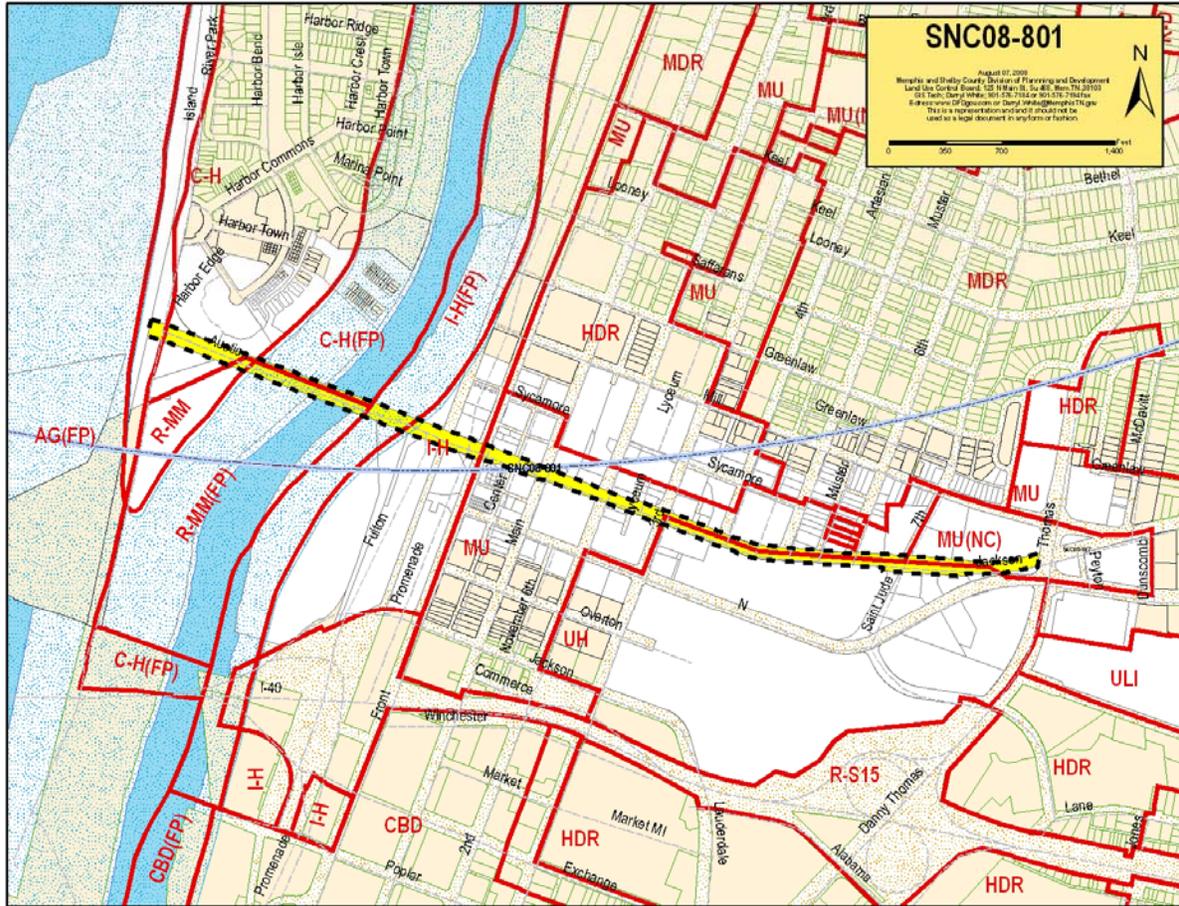
West: Commercial and residential uses ~ Mixed Use (MU) District

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATION:

Hold

CONCLUSIONS

1. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Campus and the City of Memphis own the majority of lots located along this proposed street name change area. The request is a street name change from Auction Avenue to A.W. Willis Avenue. This request is being made to honor A. W. Willis for his achievements and community involvement in Memphis as a civil rights activist, business leader, and political strategist.
2. This request to change the street name of Auction Avenue to A.W. Willis Avenue is recommended for a thirty (30) day hold. The applicant would like an opportunity to have more collaboration with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. In addition, the applicant is working with Memphis Light Gas and Water who has concerns about the use of a proper name, based on the current street naming guidelines.



St. Jude Children's Research Hospital **Campus Map**



STAFF ANALYSIS

This section of Auction Avenue between Island Drive and Danny Thomas contains approximately thirty eight (38) lots. Lots located along the west side of the Auction Avenue Bridge (A.W. Willis Memorial Bridge) contain multiple-family uses. Lots located along the east of the bridge contain various commercial and institutional uses to Fifth Street. Residential uses are located along the north side of Auction from Fifth Street to Danny Thomas. The south side of the Auction Avenue contains St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Campus. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Campus and the City of Memphis own the majority of lots located along this proposed street name change area. The request is a street name change from Auction Avenue to A.W. Willis Avenue. This request is being made to honor A. W. Willis for his achievements and community involvement in Memphis as a civil rights activist, business leader, and political strategist.

Summary of Accomplishments

- United States Army – Honorable Discharge.
- Graduate, Talladega College – 1950.
- Graduate, University of Wisconsin Law School – 1953.

(Willis attended law school in Wisconsin because schools in the south had not yet been integrated.)
- Co-Founder and Partner – Ratner, Sugarmon, Lucas and Willis, the first integrated law firm in Memphis.
- Civil Rights Attorney in the case of Northcross versus Board of Education in 1960. This case led to the desegregation of the Memphis City Schools.
- Represented NAACP in desegregation lawsuit to integrate the Memphis Public Library and other public facilities.
- Represented James Meredith in his efforts to integrate the University of Mississippi.
- Elected to Tennessee State Legislative, the first African American to be elected since Reconstruction – 1964.
- Unsuccessful candidate for Mayor of Memphis, the first African American to seek the office of Mayor – 1967.
- Co-Founder of Mutual Federal Savings and Loan Association in 1956.
- Co-Founder of Supreme Mortgage and Realty Company in 1966. Supreme became the first minority-owned FannieMae (Federal National Mortgage Association) approved lender in Tennessee.
- General Counsel to the Church of God In Christ.
- Spearheaded the development of Linden Plaza, the first minority-owned large scale mixed use development in what is now the South Main Historic District.
- Orchestrated the funding strategy to obtain funding for the development of the National Civil Rights Museum.
- Spearheaded effort to create the Shelby County Homebuyers Revolving Loan Fund.
- New bridge to Mud Island named the “A.W. Willis, Jr. Bridge.”

Changing a street name requires that written public notice be given to all abutting property owners along the street in question. Reviewing and approving street names is not an isolated activity. The MLG & W Address Assignment Department works closely with the U.S. Postal Service and the Shelby County Emergency Communications (E-911) on an ongoing basis to make sure addresses and street names are clear and concise for postal carriers and emergency personnel. While an honorary street name change would be less disruptive since it would not require the printing of new business stationary or changing directory listings such as the Yellow Pages or street sign blades, a permanent street name change can be approved by the City Council as well. This request to change the street name of Auction Avenue to A.W. Willis Avenue is recommended for a thirty (30) day hold. The applicant would like an opportunity to have more collaboration with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. In addition, the applicant is working with Memphis Light Gas and Water who has concerns about the use of a proper name, based on the current street naming guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION: Hold

GENERAL INFORMATION

Planning District: Downtown-Medical Center

Census Tract: 24

Municipal Annexation Reserve Area: Memphis City Limits

Intersecting Streets: **Island Drive, N. Front, N. Main Street, N, Second Street, N. Third Street, N. Forth Street, N. Fifth Street, Muster Alley, N. Sixth Street, N. Seventh Street and Danny Thomas Boulevard**

Zoning Atlas Page: 1930

DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

The following comments were provided by agencies to which this application was referred:

City Engineer:

City Fire Division:

Is there a reason for not using the name North Parkway rather than Auction to Island Dr? The portion of North Parkway thru the St. Jude campus seems as if it will not be in use as NPW. For giving directions, using NPW would be helpful to residents and visitors to Memphis. It seems against usual practice to name a street for the bridge over which a portion of the roadway passes.

City Real Estate: None.

City/County Health Department: The Water Quality Branch has no comments for OPD Case Number SNC 08-801 Action Avenue to AW Willis Avenue.

City Board of Education:

The subject property does not appear to be adjacent to any property which has been identified as belonging to Memphis City Schools (MCS). No identifiable impact on MCS' school-aged population nor MCS' property interests. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Construction Code Enforcement: No comments received.

Memphis Light, Gas and Water:

MLGW has reviewed the referenced application, and has no objection, subject to the following comments:

- **STREET NAME REJECTED:** MLGW–Address Assignment has rejected the use of “AW Willis Ave.”. MLGW cannot approve the use of a proper name, based on the current street naming guidelines. Please contact Ms. Sherra Russell, with MLGW @ 528-4628 with any questions.

AT&T / Millington Telephone: AT&T has no comment.

Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA): No comments received.

OPD-Regional Services:

This application was reviewed by the MPO staff/Department of Regional Services on August 22, 2008. The Memphis MPO has no objection regarding the rezoning of this August 22, 2008. The Memphis MPO has no objections regarding the renaming of this facility.

OPD-Plans Development: No comments.

911 System: No comments received.

N. Mphs. Concerned Citizens:

Downtown N.A.: This all looks like very sensible improvement to me. I support it completely.

Uptown N.A.: **No comments**

N. Memphis CDC: **No comments**

SW-CMc