



CITY of OAKLAND
OFFICE of PARKS & RECREATION

TO: Jeffrey Taylor, Acting Chair,
Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

FROM: Audree V. Jones-Taylor, OPR Director

DATE: June 9, 2008

RE: Request to re-name The Brookfield Park at Ira Jenkins Community Center the Bill Patterson Park at Ira Jenkins Community Center.

SUMMARY

Bill Patterson was the first center director that opened Brookfield Community Center before it was named after Ira Jenkins. This request is by the community, The NAACP, and a host of friends. Mr. Patterson was instrumental and contributed major time in establishing and safe guarding many of OPR's assets to include Oakland Zoo, Fairy Land, and a number of parks and playgrounds. Bill Patterson has certainly has given extra ordinary service to the city and his community. He has touched the lives of athletic Hall of Famers like Bill Russell, Frank Robinson, Willie Stargell and Joe Morgan, but he also groomed a future mayor in Lionel Wilson and prepared future businessman too. He continues to be an inspiration to city government and community organizations.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no new fiscal impact in regards to naming the site.

BACKGROUND

The position at Ira Jenkins afforded Bill the opportunity to work within the city in various programs changing the lives of youth and young adults. Mr. Patterson continues to breathe life into the OPR and the many youth and parents that are engaged in the programs and services. Mr. Patterson served on the PRAC commission for more than 14 years where he was instrumental in establishing funding resources for OPR.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

There are no key issues or impacts.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

The naming of the park does not provide economic or environmental opportunities, however, naming the park for Bill Patterson does provide for a social equity opportunity in that it honors a man whose good work might not otherwise be acknowledged.


DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS

Naming of the park has no impact for disabled and senior citizens.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission re-name the Brookfield Park to Bill Patterson Park.

Respectfully submitted,


Audree V. Jones-Taylor
Director, Office of Parks and Recreation

CITY OF OAKLAND



250 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA, SUITE 3330 • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612-2032

Office of Parks and Recreation

(510) 238-3092

FAX (510) 238-2224

TDD (510) 615-5883

May 27, 2008

Dear Ms. Beckford:

It is with great pleasure that I support the efforts of the community in the re-naming of The Brookfield Park at Ira Jenkins Community Center in honor of Mr. Bill Patterson.

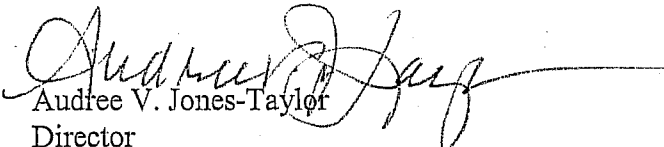
Mr. Patterson was the first Center Director that opened Brookfield Community Center before it was named after Ira Jenkins. Mr. Patterson contributed his energy, devotion and commitment to Oakland youth.

The position at Ira Jenkins afforded him the opportunity to work within the city in various programs changing the lives of youth and young adults. Mr. Patterson continues to breathe life into OPR and the many youth & parents that are engaged in the Programs & Services.

Mr. Patterson served on the Park & Recreation Commission for more than 14 years where he was instrumental in establishing funding resources for OPR, The Zoo and Fairyland.

It is only fitting that the city of Oakland and The Office of Parks and Recreation support the efforts of the community in establishing a legacy for Mr. Bill Patterson by renaming Brookfield Park as The Bill Patterson Park.

Sincerely,


Audree V. Jones-Taylor
Director



Newhouse: Bill Patterson's name should be somewhere in Oakland

Column by Dave Newhouse

Article Created: 04/24/2008 02:42:26 AM PDT
Somewhere in Oakland there's a building, park or playground that should be named after Bill Patterson. Why it hasn't happened already is not only a mystery, it's a mistake.

Oakland hasn't had a more important or influential figure the last 60 years than Patterson, who has seen all sides of this changing, complex city.

Patterson, 75, is the ultimate public servant. He once ran 23 recreation centers in Oakland. He was in charge of the Oakland Zoo, Lake Merritt, Children's Fairyland and the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center.

That's not all. He has been the NAACP branch president in Oakland, he helped build the Oakland Raiders' first home at

Frank Youell Field and he's served on the East Bay Municipal Utility District Board of Directors for the last 10 years.

Patterson has impacted more Oakland children's lives than Santa Claus, and he has served adult causes, too, with his heavy civic involvement.

He was chosen Oakland's Outstanding Young Man of 1962 and Oakland Citizen of the Year in 1995.

He is an Oakland treasure, so why hasn't some structure — some lifetime monument — been christened with hisname?

"I've heard some inklings of doing that," he said Wednesday. "One of the things that happened in Oakland — we're changing that now, and I'm part of the change — they really want you to die and then name something for you."

Patterson deserves something now — deserves it more than anyone.

He first came to Oakland in 1948, thus starting a 60-year connection with this city. He returned to his native Arkansas briefly, then decided to make Oakland his permanent home.

He has touched the lives of athletic Hall of Famers — Bill Russell, Frank Robinson, Willie Stargell and Joe Morgan — but he also groomed a future mayor in Lionel Wilson and prepared future businessmen, too.

And not by accident.

DeFremery Recreation Center, where Patterson worked, stressed leadership and social development. Businesses were invited there to hold roundtable discussions with youngsters, eventually hiring some of them.

"They created a whole new work force," said Patterson. "Bill Russell talks about what he learned at DeFremery, how it prepared him for the world."


Interestingly, the first African-American coach in the National Basketball Association — Russell — and the first African-American manager in Major

League Baseball — Robinson — came from Oakland's DeFremery Rec Center.

Patterson remembers an Oakland when kids had role models and stability at home, largely because of a thriving local economy. Now he's seeing the other

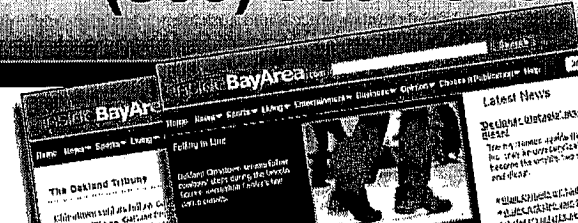
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side with fewer jobs, broken homes and undisciplined lives.

"For me, as a kid, Oakland was a hustling, bustling city," he said. "Downtown was the center of commerce. For the most part, African Americans were constrained to West Oakland. Many people came here to work during World War II. There were factories everywhere. The canneries were all here."

With jobs a-plenty, it was possible to work 20, 25 years and retire with a pension. By the 1970s, most factories had shut down or left town, creating an unstable environment undermined by unemployment, crime and drugs.

Another setback was Proposition 13, which led to the shutting down of Oakland's rec centers, leaving kids with no after-school mentoring and too much free time on their hands.

"They're leading themselves now," said Patterson.

It saddens him to think what Oakland has lost.

"What I found when I came here was how helpful people were," he said. "It was a real sense of community. We all worked together. Every neighborhood reflected pride. It was a whole different frame of life."

With the Rumford Fair Housing Act, housing opened up and folks from West Oakland moved to East Oakland, breaking up neighborhoods. Next came that migratory movement known as "white flight" into the suburbs.

"That's how Oakland changed its complexion," said Patterson.

If he had his way, he would instill rec centers all over town.

"What they're doing now," he said of Oakland, "is funding public safety. But even the police chief believes we need to do more for the kids' development, because the (parental) relationships aren't there."

He used one word to describe Oakland 60 years apart: Challenging.

"Oakland's resources aren't the greatest, so how do we get the most out of them?" he said. "If we can be creative how we use them, and if we can be creative about kids, we can champion their cause and they will emerge as winners. That's what keeps me going."

While Oakland considers how to honor Patterson, he feels no need to decelerate and turn over his varied civic responsibilities to someone else.

"As long as it lasts, what can I say?" he said. "I have good health and everything is working. And so I just keep on ticking along."

Let's be truthful: Oakland would be lost without him.

Dave Newhouse's columns appear Monday, Thursday and Sunday, usually on the Metro page. Know any Good Neighbors? Phone 510-208-6466 or e-mail dnewhouse@bayareanewsgroup.com.

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