

**CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION**

**FILE NUMBER:** 15 – Washington to Ecolab Place/  
Proposed Street Renaming

**DATE:** May 28, 2015

**WHEREAS**, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) is authorized by Chapter 73 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code to review and comment on any proposed name change for a city street which has had its current name for fifty (50) years or more prior to action on the name change by the city council; and

**WHEREAS**, Ecolab, Inc. has requested the HPC review a proposal to rename the portion of Washington Street from Sixth Street to Seventh Place to Ecolab Place; and

**WHEREAS**, Washington Street has held its name for more than 50 years and therefore requires review and comment by the HPC prior to City Council consideration; and

**WHEREAS**, the following is the citation in the City’s Legislative Code concerning HPC review of street name changes:

*Chapter 73.04 (10) Street name changes. The commission shall review and comment on any proposed name change for a city street which has had its current name for fifty (50) years or more prior to action on the name change by the city council. In their review of and recommendations on such street name changes, the commission shall utilize guidelines and criteria as adopted by the commission on April 14, 1988.*

*The resolution dated April 14, 1988 states the following:  
...the Heritage Preservation Commission adopts the following criteria for HPC review of and recommendations on street name changes:*

- 1. The relationship of both the existing and proposed names to the city’s cultural, social, economic, and political history;*
- 2. The significance of both the existing and proposed names and their relationship to the location and prominence of the street; and*
- 3. The representation of both the existing and proposed names in the names of other places, buildings, and objects in St. Paul.*

**WHEREAS**, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, based upon the evidence presented at the May 28, 2015 meeting on said new business item, made the following findings of fact concerning the proposed street name changes:

- 1. *The relationship of both streets to the city’s cultural, social, economic, and political history.***

**Washington Street (shortening):** this downtown street was named in 1849 in Rice and Irvine’s Addition for George Washington, first president of the United States. Washington Street extended from West Seventh Street, along Rice Park (also platted in 1849) pivoting at Third Street (now Kellogg Boulevard) and extending to the bluff between Chestnut and Walnut Streets. It also appears to have picked up below the bluff for a few blocks at Smith Avenue. Only the portion from Kellogg Boulevard to St. Peter Street at Seventh Place (the alignment was curved when the Travelers Building was built) remains. West Seventh Street was also closed and rerouted.

Washington Street is significant as one of the first streets named in St. Paul and its location is

representative of St. Paul's 1849 platting and street grid. The street has value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City of St. Paul [73.05(a)(1)]. Its location represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City of Saint Paul [73.05 (a)(7)].

**Ecolab Place (adding new):** Ecolab was founded by Merritt J. Osborn in 1923 first under the name of Evaporato Company which was then changed to Economics Laboratory, in the Endicott Building (extant). By 1925, the company moved to 2540 University Avenue in the City's Midway district and then a year later to the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company warehouse at 2694 University Avenue (razed).

In the late 1920s, the company then split its operations between Chicago and their new downtown St. Paul location in the Minnesota Building (extant). In 1939, the company moved to the Guardian Building (razed) and by 1963 occupied all but the ground floor. The company continued to grow and expanded to other parts of the country, moving their executive offices to New York City in 1954. In 1968 the 22-story Osborn Building (extant, National Register of Historic Places Urban Renewal Historic District) was constructed of stainless steel, glass and polished black granite centrally located and is where the company still resides. Directed by architect Clark Wold, the building was to project a quality of cleanliness with its steel, polished granite and a reflecting pool encircling the building (razed). In 1986, Economics Laboratory, Inc. changed its name to Ecolab, Inc. In the mid-1990s, Ecolab brought new jobs to downtown St. Paul with Ecolab University. In 1998, the three-building headquarters were renovated and the building was called Ecolab tower.

The Ecolab company has value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City of St. Paul [73.05(a)(1)] but the proposed location for Ecolab Place does not represent an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City of Saint Paul [73.05 (a)(7)]. The Osborn Building (1968) does represent an established feature of downtown and Ecolab, Inc.

2. ***Significance of both streets and their relationship to the location and prominence of the street.***

**Washington Street:** Washington Street has been the current street name since Rice and Irvine's Addition in 1849, the first platting of this portion of downtown. What is left of Washington Street is significant as it encompasses a significant section of Rice Park, the historic Federal Courts Building, Custom House and Post Office (now Landmark Center), the historic Women's Club (now Wild offices) and the historic Central and JJ Hill Libraries. Rice Park with its surrounding buildings has also been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

**Ecolab Place:** Ecolab currently does not have a relationship to the location of the street given they just purchased the building and will be moving there.

3. ***The representation of both streets in the names of other places, buildings, and objects in St. Paul.***

**Washington Street:** There does not appear to be other place names in St. Paul that are named after George Washington except for the Washington Technology Magnet School at 1495 Rice Street on the North End. There also do not appear to be any memorials, statues or plaques at the Minnesota State Capitol. Washington Street has been removed from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Kellogg Boulevard (Science Museum) as well as a set of stairs to navigate the bluff. There are three businesses that will continue to have a Washington Street address if this proposal is approved: the Wild, Ordway and Travelers.

**Ecolab Place:** While their current headquarters is formally called the Osborn Building, many know it as the Ecolab Tower given a sign is at the top of the building. The plaza is also referred to as the Ecolab Plaza. Ecolab also plans to remove the existing sign on their current

building and install a new skyline sign on their new building; now

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Heritage Preservation Commission discussed the following considerations in addition to the findings: 1) renaming a portion of a street that lines up/connects with another street of a different name is not a good policy for a city with an urban grid that already shifts and angles in response to the topography, the River and different stages of development, 2) this section of Washington Street has been altered in its alignment and no longer has the original characteristics when first platted and named, 3) renaming a street after a business that has moved to various locations within St. Paul since it began may result in a future name change if the business moves again, 4) the renaming may establish a poor precedent for other businesses in the urban core that also have a history in Saint Paul and 5) there are examples in Saint Paul that have renamed streets in honor of prominent people associated with Saint Paul companies (i.e. McKnight and Bush streets) but the HPC could not think of instances where the business name was used for a street; now

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, based on the above findings, the Heritage Preservation Commission finds the proposed renaming will generally not have a negative impact on the city's cultural, social, economic, and political history in Saint Paul so long as the portion of Washington Street, south of Sixth Street remains; now

**FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED**, based on the above findings, the Heritage Preservation Commission recommends approval of renaming Washington Street to Ecolab Place from Sixth Street to Seventh Place.

**MOVED BY** Commissioner Hutter-Barnes  
**SECONDED BY** Commissioner Ferguson

**IN FAVOR** Unanimous  
**AGAINST**  
**ABSTAIN**