

City of East Lansing, Michigan

RESOLUTION RENAMING ABBOT ROAD PARK TO AZAADIKAA PARK

October 4, 2022

WHEREAS, the City of East Lansing occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Three Fires Confederacy of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples' land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw; and,

WHEREAS, the City of East Lansing understands that government and other public institutions must include and reflect on the experiences of Native Peoples and uplift our country's indigenous roots, history, and contributions; and,

WHEREAS, on September 27, 2016, the City of East Lansing formally recognized the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples Day; and,

WHEREAS, on October 5, 2021, by resolution, the East Lansing City Council officially acknowledged the seven grandfather teachings, Truth, Humility, Respect, Love, Honesty, Courage, and Wisdom and committed to sustaining the current natural woodlands, meadows, wetlands and greenspaces in our parks and trails; and,

WHEREAS, traditional Anishinaabe values elevate humankind's dependence on and responsibility to protect the health and intrinsic rights of the natural world, the area of woods, wetlands, meadows, and wildlife residing in this parkland are understood as relatives; and,

WHEREAS, the language of Anishinaabemowin keeps record of those relationships to the essential character and worth of all living inhabitants of the world, including animals, waters, and plant life; and,

WHEREAS, many indigenous communities are continuing their recovery and healing from the colonizing ravages of ecological devastation, alongside severances from family, community, culture, and language; and,

WHEREAS, this legacy of loss and recovery is inseparable from the treatment of the land, water, and all living inhabitants therein; the quality of the wildlife residing on the parklands is understood as a vital measure of respect for Anishinaabe cultural values; and,

WHEREAS, the East Lansing City Council acknowledges the authority of indigenous communities to rename Abbot Road Park to a name in the traditional Anishinaabemowin language, which is essential to the cultural continuity of the Anishinaabek Three Fires Confederacy; and,

WHEREAS, cottonwood trees are sacred to indigenous nations throughout Turtle Island, also known as the United States, and recognized in kinship among indigenous peoples who come to visit, learn, teach, work, and reside in the East Lansing and Greater Lansing area, as it is named Nkwejong; and,

WHEREAS, the cottonwood trees hold a strong presence throughout the city and especially within the parklands, by virtue of their numbers, height, sound, and distinctive movement of leaves; and,

WHEREAS, cottonwood trees follow and show where waters run and reside, in reflection of how Anishinaabek and other indigenous nations from across the Great Lakes gathered together at these river places converging on the lands named Nkwejong, now known as East Lansing and Greater Lansing; and,

WHEREAS, cottonwood trees are often listed under ordinance and limited in their growth by non-Indigenous values that would label their seed-bearing as a nuisance or inconvenience; and,

WHEREAS, these parklands can be a space from which the valuation, protection, and cultivation of native species, such as the cottonwood tree, can spread, to increase pollinator habitat and species rebound by also controlling the spread of invasive species, eliminating the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides, and replanting native food sources for wildlife; and,

WHEREAS, on Tuesday, September 6, 2022, Mayor Ron Bacon of the City of East Lansing appointed a committee to rename the 130 acre park at 2801 Abbot Road; and,

WHEREAS, the Anishinaabe, Indigenous, Black, and multi-racial women appointed to the Committee for the Renaming of Abbot Road Park came together in a good way, with traditional medicines and humble appeals for guidance from the place they looked to help name; and,

WHEREAS, the chosen spirit name is Azaadiikaa. The word Azaadi refers to the cottonwood tree as a living being whose essential nature is observable by the physical manifestation of movements in the world. The full name Azaadiikaa translates in English to Many Cottonwoods.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of East Lansing, in special recognition of Indigenous Peoples Day 2022 and beyond, hereby renames Abbot Road Park to be known henceforth as "Azaadiikaa Park."

Ron Bacon, Mayor

Jennifer Shuster, Clerk