

Date: February 17, 2026

To: Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Dr. Suely Saro, Sixth District

Subject: **Renaming the Central Facilities Center at Martin Luther King Park to The Dale Clinton Facilities Center**

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to request the Parks and Recreation Commission to conduct a study and subsequent recommendation to the Government Operations and Efficiency Committee within 30 days to rename the Central Facilities Center at Martin Luther King Park to the Dale Clinton Facilities Center. Government Operations and Efficiency Committee shall study and consider the recommendation to send back to City Council, following City of Long Beach administrative policy (AR8-7) for name designations of buildings in parks.

BACKGROUND

Dale E. Clinton is a longtime community volunteer, civil rights leader, and advocate for social justice whose work has had a lasting impact on the City of Long Beach. Born in 1927 in segregated Tupelo, Mississippi, Clinton grew up during an era of deep racial inequality and limited economic opportunity. She later became part of the Great Migration, arriving in Long Beach in 1957 as a single mother with young children, seeking better opportunities and a more just future for her family and community.

Soon after arriving in Long Beach, Clinton became actively involved in community organizing and anti-poverty efforts. She enrolled at Long Beach City College and quickly emerged as a trusted community leader during the early years of the federal War on Poverty. In the 1960s, Clinton gained national recognition after writing a powerful letter to President Lyndon B. Johnson advocating for the rights of poor mothers and the continuation of critical social programs. The letter was widely published and entered into the Congressional Record, elevating the voices of low-income families at a national level.

Clinton's advocacy led to extensive work in human relations, civil rights education, and community development. She received advanced training through UCLA and served as an integration trainer throughout the western United States, supporting school districts and institutions as they navigated desegregation. In Long Beach, she worked closely with community organizations, faith leaders, and City departments to address welfare rights, fair housing, racial equality, youth development, and economic opportunity.

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Clinton ultimately built a long career with the City of Long Beach, serving in community relations and human services roles for more than two decades. Her work helped open pathways into city employment and leadership for women and people of color, contributing to the integration of city government and strengthening trust between the city and its diverse communities. She is widely regarded as one of the respected Mothers of the African American community in Long Beach and has mentored generations of civic and community leaders.

The Central Facilities Center at Martin Luther King Park opened in October 1974, with Dale Clinton playing a foundational role in initiating and shaping the center's development. Clinton was directly involved in the early formation of the facility, ensuring it responded to the health and service needs of the surrounding community. She later worked at the Central Health Facility for approximately 5 years, serving in multiple roles focused on community relations and human services.

Naming this facility in her honor recognizes not only Clinton's lifetime of civil rights advocacy but also her direct contribution to the creation and operation of the Central Health Facility itself. Her leadership helped establish the facility as a trusted and accessible space for residents, particularly Black families and historically underserved communities. The proposed renaming reflects the facility's original mission and permanently connects it to the legacy of a community leader who helped bring it into existence.

The community has demonstrated strong support for this naming request, with more than four hundred signatures submitted in favor of renaming the Central Facility Center at Martin Luther King Park after Dale E. Clinton. Clinton was also honored as a Grand Marshal of the Long Beach Martin Luther King Parade in 2025 in recognition of her lifetime of service and dedication to civil rights.

According to City of Long Beach administrative policy (AR8-7), City-owned land, buildings, and facilities are not typically named after living persons unless the City Council determines that an individual has made a significant contribution that warrants an exception. Dale E. Clinton's contributions to civil rights, community development, and the establishment and operation of the Central Facilities Center clearly meet the criteria for such an exception.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact was conducted due to time constraints.

SUGGESTED ACTION

Approve recommendation.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suely Saro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Suely" and the last name "Saro" clearly distinguishable.

Suely Saro, Councilmember, Sixth District