



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Board Supports Co-naming Drake Boulevard**

*Recommendations to be taken back to working group for final decision*

**San Rafael, CA** – After hearing from hundreds of residents over the past year, the Marin County Board of Supervisors voted to support two options that would add an additional name to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard – one official and one ceremonial – in sections through unincorporated Marin.

Supervisors Dennis Rodoni and Katie Rice, who represent the unincorporated areas through which Drake Boulevard runs, proposed to take both co-naming options back to a working group that has been exploring the renaming issue since summer 2020. The Board's 4-1 vote included a dissent from Supervisor Damon Connolly, who favored a wholesale replacement of the existing name.

Rodoni and Rice both favor one consistent name through the five municipal jurisdictions bisected by the boulevard: Larkspur, Ross, San Anselmo, Fairfax, and the County of Marin.

"The reason I want some flexibility is that one my initial goals with the working group was to work with the cities and town and see if we could come up with one name continuously," Rodoni said. "That's the whole reason we formed the working group, in my mind – to achieve some consensus so it doesn't have different names in different jurisdictions. It will take some work."

Rodoni said co-naming would address concerns of business owners – many cash-strapped because of the COVID-19 pandemic – who shared concerns about the costs associated with an address change.

Drake Boulevard is one of Marin's primary east-west thoroughfares, and the [ongoing public discussion](#) about [possibly renaming](#) portions that run through unincorporated areas of the county. Drake, an English explorer, is believed to have anchored his ship off Marin's Pacific Coast and made landfall in 1579. According to History.com, Drake participated in some of the earliest English slaving voyages to Africa starting in 1567, and he earned a reputation for his piracy against Spanish ships and possessions. He also reputedly redeemed himself later in life.

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The idea of renaming the boulevard surfaced in light of its namesake's documented history as a 16<sup>th</sup> century slave trader, deep public discourse on a national scale about human rights, and the desire to address historical record. An organized grassroots effort to rename the road materialized over the past year as did efforts to retain the existing name.

District 4's Rodoni and District 2's Rice worked with the working group comprised of council representatives from each of the cities and towns the boulevard bisects. Each municipality has road naming authority for its section of the boulevard. The group met several times and guided the process as each jurisdiction engaged with their respective residents about whether to rename the road within that jurisdiction. The five jurisdictions involved agreed to complete the public discussion phase by March 31.

Here were the decisions by the other jurisdictions:

- Ross' council voted January 14 to retain the name.
- Larkspur's council voted February 17 to retain the name and adopt as a co-name the consensus choice of the other jurisdictions and, in the absence of that, explore a historical designation or a ceremonial name.
- Fairfax's council voted March 3 to change the name.
- San Anselmo's council voted March 9 to take no action after two failed motions presented by council members.

On March 9, the five Supervisors agreed on the importance of considering the larger equity issues in Marin and acknowledgement of other equity work being done countywide on behalf of marginalized communities such as the Coastal Miwok indigenous tribe and other communities of color. It's hoped that the chosen option by the working group leads to additional educational opportunities and beyond to address institutional and structural racism in Marin.

"We must learn from our past and commit to improving our future with real actions, improving the lives of all marginalized residents," Rodoni said. "I think dual naming will allow us to do that."

More than 600 comments were received by County contacts on the topic. [Answers to frequently asked questions](#) are online.

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