

From: ["van Dyk, Donny"](#)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council"](#)

Date: 9/15/2025 3:02:31 PM

Subject: Council Memo - Honouring Trey Helten - Renaming Ashtrey Alley - September 15, 2025 - RTS#18025

Attachments: RTS 18025 - ENG - Council Memo - Honouring Trey Helten - Renaming Ashtrey Alley - Sept 15 2025.pdf

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Dear Mayor and Council,

Please find a memo summarizing the response to RTS 18025 Honouring Trey Helten: Renaming "Ashtrey Alley". A summary is provided below:

- Staff are responding to a May 21, 2025 motion to identify the most efficient way to commemorate the laneway between Hastings and Pender Streets, connecting Cambie and Abbot Streets, in honour of Trey Helten.
- Staff recommend naming the laneway "Ashtrey Alley" (honourific only, not an official street name) and installing custom signage at both ends to honour Trey Helten's contributions to harm reduction and community empowerment in the Downtown Eastside, particularly through the Graffiti Art Wall Pilot.
- Engineering Services will lead the design and installation process, with input from community contacts and a lead artist. Completion is targeted for Fall 2025, with funding from the Uplifting Communities Fund.
- While the laneway will not receive official addressing, "Ashtrey Alley" will be added as an alias in emergency dispatch systems to support response efforts.

For any further questions please contact [Lon.LaClaire@Vancouver.ca](mailto:Lon.LaClaire@Vancouver.ca).

Thanks,

Donny

Donny van Dyk (he/him)

City Manager

City of Vancouver

## MEMORANDUM

September 15, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Donny van Dyk, City Manager  
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Maria Pontikis, Chief of External Relations  
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office  
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Lon LaClaire  
General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Honouring Trey Helten: Renaming "Ashtrey Alley"

RTS #: 18025

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This memo responds to [Council Member's Motion](#) of May 21, 2025 directing staff to report back on the most expeditious way to commemorate the east-west laneway between Hastings and Pender Streets, connecting Cambie and Abbott Streets, in honour of the late Trey Helten. Staff recommend proceeding with a commemorative naming and installation of a custom sign recognizing the community's informal naming of the laneway as "Ashtrey Alley."

### Background

Trey Helten was a deeply respected harm reduction advocate in the Downtown Eastside (DTES), known for his unwavering commitment to saving lives, reducing stigma, and supporting people who use drugs. He collaborated with the Vancouver Native Housing Society and City of Vancouver to envision and implement the Graffiti Art Wall Pilot in the laneway in question, which has since become a meaningful community landmark, a safe space for community expression, as well as mentorship and skill-building. Following his passing in April 2025, community members began informally referring to the laneway as "Ashtrey Alley" in his memory. This name reflects both his legacy and the community's desire to honour his contributions in a visible and lasting way.

## Proposed Commemorative Naming

Staff propose the following approach to implement the commemorative naming of this laneway:

- **Name:** “Ashtrey Alley” (commemorative only; not an official street name)
- **Location:** East-west laneway between Hastings and Pender Streets, connecting Cambie and Abbott Streets.
- **Signage:** A custom-designed commemorative sign will be installed at both ends of the laneway. The design will be distinct from official street name signage to reflect its honourific nature.
- **Design Process:** Engineering Services will coordinate the design and installation of the signage. Input will be sought from a lead artist and a small number of community contacts to help ensure the design is grounded in the spirit of the DTES and Trey Helten’s legacy.
- **Funding:** Approximately \$5,000 will be allocated from the “Uplifting Communities Fund” to cover design, fabrication, and installation costs.
- **Emergency Services Coordination:** Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) supports the commemorative naming. While the laneway will not receive official addressing due to its limited width (under 20 feet) and resulting restrictive access for firefighting and emergency response apparatus, VFRS and E-Comm 911 will add “Ashtrey Alley” as an alias in their dispatch systems to support emergency response.
- **Maintenance:** No additional maintenance funding is currently available. Any future maintenance or replacement of the sign will be managed within existing budgets.

## Considerations

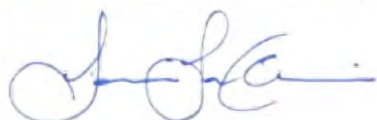
- **Policy Alignment:** The commemorative naming aligns with the City’s longstanding leadership in harm reduction and community recognition practices.
- **Community Support:** There is strong grassroots support for this initiative, and the proposed approach honours the community’s voice while maintaining operational feasibility.
- **Precedent:** This approach is consistent with previous commemorative naming’s where full street naming was not feasible due to infrastructure or emergency response constraints.

## Next Steps

City staff have initiated conversations with community partners regarding the commemorative signage initiative. At present, these partners are operating at full capacity due to existing commitments. As such, the design phase is expected to begin following the conclusion of the busy summer season.

Once a suitable design has been finalized, the fabrication and installation of the custom signage will require approximately three to four weeks. Completion is anticipated in Fall 2025.

If you require any further information or have any questions, please contact me directly at [lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca](mailto:lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca).



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