

Don't rename Kansas City Police Department's East Patrol Division

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Proposed artwork near the entrance to Kansas City's under-construction East Patrol police station.

Honoring the memory of Leon Jordan — a former police lieutenant and founder of the black political group Freedom Inc. — is a worthwhile cause. But naming the Kansas City Police Department's new East Patrol Division after him, as a new petition envisions, is problematic.

Over the decades, no other city police station has taken on the name of a historic figure. As Mayor Sly James said in an interview this week, "We need to have some uniformity when it comes to these kinds of buildings." He correctly doesn't want to set off a rush to rename other stations. James also sits on the police board, which would have a big say in the matter, though any City Council decision likely would be binding.

Jordan was slain in 1970 near a lounge on Prospect Avenue. The Police Department in recent years identified the gunman as an organized crime figure. The Star has reported that Jordan's associations with organized crime figures likely contributed to his death — a legitimate obstacle to naming a police building after him.

But for good reasons, Jordan is held in high regard by many in neighborhoods around the under-construction police campus, which includes a new crime lab, at 27th Street and Prospect Avenue. As James and others have mentioned, another possibility is naming the station's community room or some other aspect of the project after Jordan.

City Council member Jermaine Reed says future generations need to know about Jordan's accomplishments. That's true, though naming a police facility after him is not the only way to do that.