

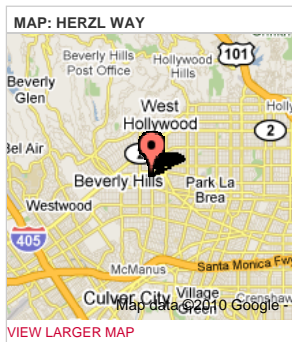
BEVERLY HILLS RENAMES STREET FOR ZIONISM'S FATHER

By WIRE SERVICES

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BEVERLY HILLS -- The 300 block of North Clark Drive in Beverly Hills was renamed Herzl Way on Sunday on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism.



The Beverly Hills City Council voted 4-1 at its Feb. 2 meeting to name the block

where Temple Emanuel is located for Herzl, a Hungarian writer, playwright and journalist who coined the phrase, "If you will it, it is no dream."

The remainder of the street will continue to be called Clark Drive, named for Percy Clark, the first agent who sold land in the Beverly Hills tract, according to the 1934 book "History of Beverly Hills," by Pierce E. Benedict and Don Kennedy.

"This is by far one the best days of my life," Beverly Hills Mayor Jimmy Delshad said at the ceremony. "As a young man, I never dreamed that one day I would be here, as the mayor of Beverly Hills, recognizing the visionary of the state of Israel, Theodor Herzl."

Delshad recalled working in the fields and as a janitor in Israel as a youth and how Herzl "was behind me, talking to me, saying `Nothing is impossible,'" inspiring him to his future business success in the United States.

In an interview, Delshad said he was inspired to have a street named for Herzl during a 2007 visit to Herzliya, the Israeli coastal city he made a sister city of Beverly Hills during his first term as mayor.

Delshad said he has received letters and e-mail saying the name change gives people "who hate Israel and hate Jews gives them a target."

Delshad said he has no fear of an attack.

"If anything had could have happened, it would have happened when I first became mayor" in 2007, for the customary one-year term, Delshad said.

The street renaming means "the bond between Beverly Hills and Israel is not only verbal, it's not only spiritual, but it's also physical," Israeli Consul General Jacob Dayan said.

"Today, every Jew, every Israeli and everyone who supports the relations between our two countries knows that he has a share in Beverly Hills - - and between us, it's not a bad place to have shares," Dayan said.

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"Today, Israel and Beverly Hills are making a statement of mutual respect, friendship and partnership.

"And today, the citizens of Beverly Hills are saying, `Herzl Way is our way. We believe in the strong, vibrant, innovative country of Israel. We believe in the movement that paved the way for millions of Jews to return to their homeland after 2,000 years in the diaspora. We believe in this vision.'"

Temple Emanuel Senior Rabbi Laura Geller said the renaming will prompt children to ask "Who was Herzl? Why was he important enough to have a street named for him?" and learn about him.

Born on May 2, 1860 in Budapest, Hungary, Herzl covered the 1894 trial of French Army Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer unjustly accused of treason, witnessing mobs shouting "Death to the Jews."

Herzl resolved that there was only one solution to anti-Semitism -- the mass immigration of Jews to a land that they could call their own -- leading to the start of Zionism, the movement of the Jewish people to return to their ancient homeland, Israel.

Herzl convened and chaired the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland in 1897, which led to the formation of the Zionist Organization, the political arm of the Jewish people, which Herzl was elected as its president, a position he held for the rest of his life.

Herzl wrote and met with various world leaders in an attempt to fulfill the Zionist goal of a Jewish homeland in Israel, which would be realized in 1948, 44 years after his death in 1904 at the age of 44.