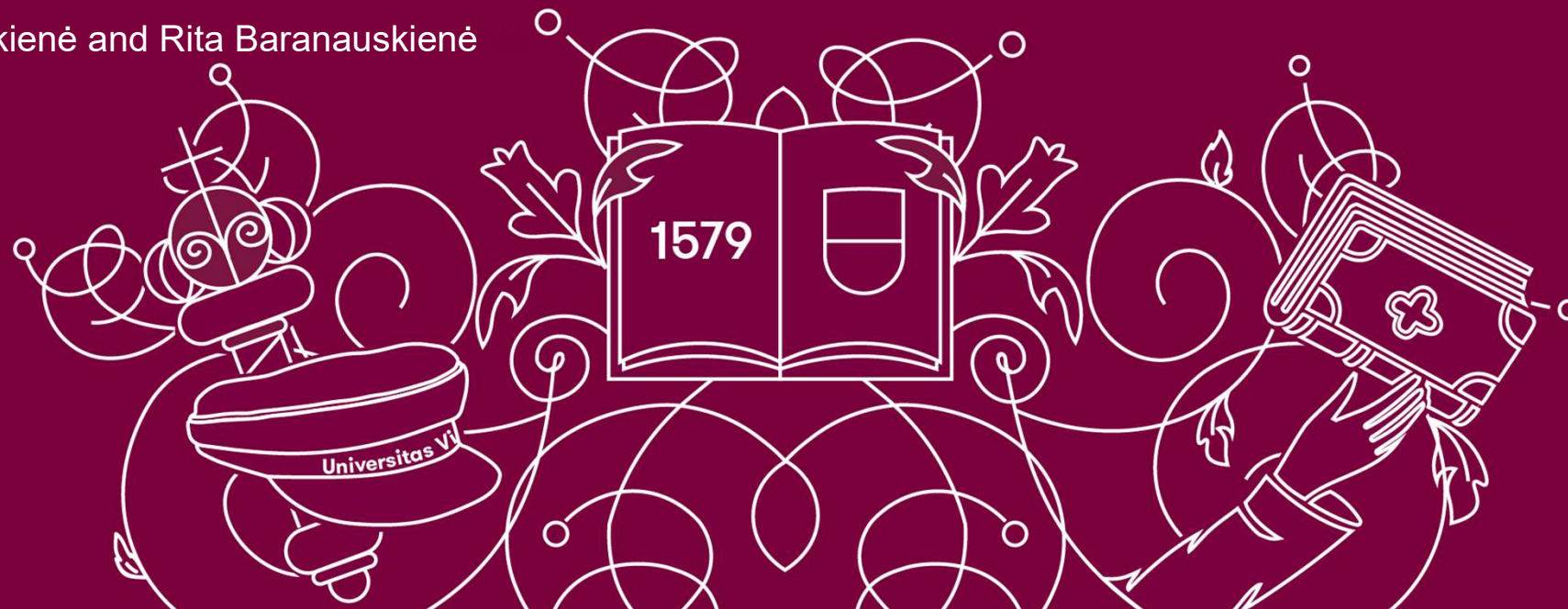


Kaunas (Lithuania) Street Names Originating from Personal Names

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University





Kaunas is the second biggest city in the Republic of Lithuania. It is also a county centre (157 square kilometres) with a population of **304,114** (as of 1 January 2025).

First mentioned in **1361**, the city was granted the Magdeburg rights in 1408.

In **1441**, the city joined the Hanseatic League and remained in it until **1532**.

By the end of the **16th** century, Kaunas had some of the best infrastructure in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.



In **1795**, following the dissolution of the state, Kaunas fell under Russian control.

In **1843**, Kaunas became the center of the newly established Kaunas Governorate.

When WWI began in **1915**, Kaunas was occupied by the Germans.

In **1918**, an independent Lithuanian state was restored.

Kaunas city functioned as a temporary capital of Lithuania between **1919** and **1939**.

The Soviet occupation period (**1940–1990**).

In **1990**, an independent of current Republic of Lithuania was restored.





Street names often carry additional symbolic meanings and mark specific urban territories linked to certain social, political and historical events in the country. By reflecting geographical places and historical facts, street names become signs of national identity.

Analysing them through different historical periods can therefore show various political changes in society.





Focusing on Lithuania's second largest city Kaunas, this presentation analyses **the street names which have been restored or changed as a result of various shifts in historical situation.**

The research aims to analyse current street names of Kaunas originating from personal names from semantic, structural, linguistic localness and developmental perspectives, revealing the socio-cultural and historical narrative of Kaunas.





In Lithuania, the urbanonyms of the major cities – Vilnius and Kaunas, have been the most analysed.

Antanas Čaplinskas (2004) investigated the streets in **Vilnius** named after prominent personalities,

Veslava Sidaravičienė (2015, 2018, 2019, 2023a, 2023b, 2024, 2025) studied the non-official urbanonyms of **Vilnius**.





Birutė Sabakonienė (1980) researched the history of the old street names in **Kaunas** Old Town.

Stanislovas Sajauskas and his colleagues (2001) investigated streets of personal-name origin in **Kaunas**.

Memorializing the Famous People of Kaunas (MFPK 2004) is a digital register of all commemorative places and ways of honouring prominent personalities in and around the city of **Kaunas**, dating from 1918.

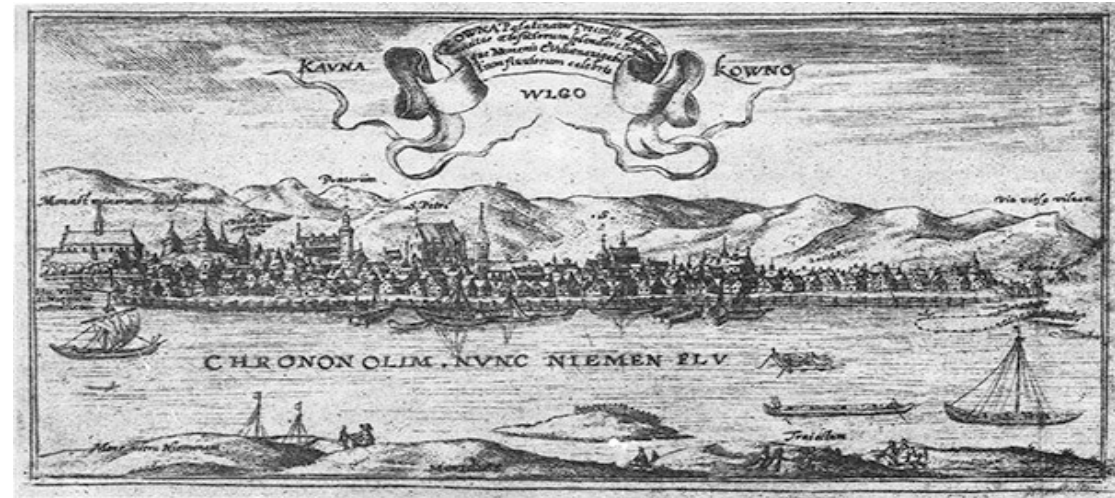
Stasys Samalavičius (2013) studied mostly the original street names in the old town of **Kaunas**,

while Mindaugas Balkus (2020) analysed the **Kaunas** city's street names and their changes between 1918 and 1940.

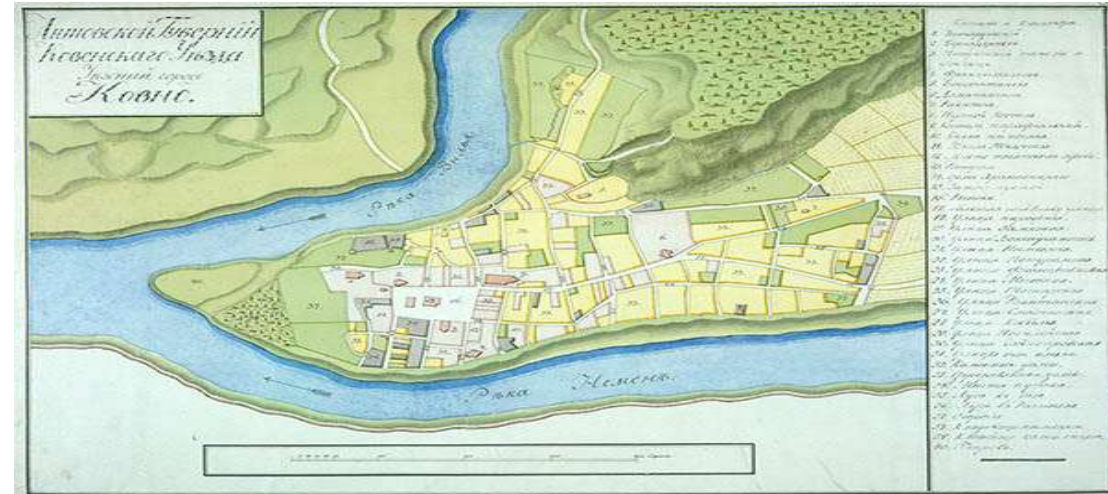


The changing street names in **Kaunas's historical quarter** reflect the major transformations corresponding to the historical periods of:

- 1) Tsarist Russia (1795–1915),
- 2) the German Empire (1915–1918),
- 3) the Independent Republic of Lithuania (1918–1940),
- 4) Soviet Lithuania (1940–1990),
- 5) the current Republic of Lithuania (1990 to the present day).



Kaunas in the years 1600



Kaunas in the years 1795

The data for the analysis were collected from:

- 1) the archival documents of the Kaunas City Municipality,
- 2) the virtual Kaunas Regional State Archive.

Bil. Nr.	Gatvės vardas 1933 mt.	Miesto dalis	Gatvės vardas iki 1933 mt.	Vokiečių okup. metu	Prieš D. karą.
34	Birutės	P.	Birutės	-	-
35	Biržų	Np.	Biržų	-	-
36	Braskių	Ak.	Kedainių	II Burgeš str.	II Meščanskaja
37	Bravoro	K.	Alaus; Bravoro	Lagerhausstr.	-
38	Brolių	V.	-	-	-
39	Butkiškės	V.	-	-	-
40	Botanikos prap.	F.	-	-	-
41	Seržanto J. Bakanausko pl.	P.	Trėdos plentas	-	-
42	Butrimonių	V.	-	-	-

KAUNO REGIONINIO VALSTYBĖS ARCHYVO VIRTUALI EDUKACINĖ ERDVĖ



Kauno regioninis valstybės archyvas

- Pradžia
- Apie projektą
- Saugome
- Temos
- Galerija
- Kontaktai

KAUNO MIESTO GATVIŲ PAVADINIMŲ KAITA iki 1941 m.

Sudarytoja Dokumentų naudojimo skyriaus vedėja Vitalija Girytė

Gatvės pav.	Sovietinio laikotarpio pav.	Lietuvos Respublikos laikotarpio pav.	Pirmojo pasaulinio karo metų pav.	Ankstesni pav.
Aguonų (1989)	N.Černyševskio (1945)	Aguonų (1923), Juodasis skersatvis	Schwarzer Dr.	Čiornij pereulok





Street names originating from personal names serve to distinguish one city from another, revealing their individual features.

It is important to evaluate each street name by assigning a locality score and calculating the average locality score.

Linguistic localness is understood as a reflection of identity, as a historically and/or traditionally formed linguistic environment (cf. Mikulėnienė, 2020).

Based on the model developed by researchers (Mikulėnienė, et al, 2023, p. 98–99; Šidlauskas, 2026, p. 27–28), each street name is assigned a rating from 1 (lowest level of locality) to 9 (highest level of locality).



Street Name Locality Ratings

- 9 – Names of surrounding, thriving, or already extinct villages
- 8 – Names of nearby geographical objects
- 7 – **Names derived from well-known local people**
- 6 – Historically and ethnographically significant names on a national scale
- 5 – Names of Lithuanian geographical objects
- 4 – **Surnames of important Lithuanian figures**
- 3 – Names of geographical objects outside Lithuania
- 2 – Neutral, appellative-based names
- 1 – Names with unclear motivation or non-systematic names

9 indicates the strongest locality, and 1 indicates the weakest locality. The highest ratings are assigned to street names that refer to (existing or extinct) villages (9), local geographical features (8), and well-known people associated with a specific area (7).



Rating 7 – Names derived from well-known local people (63%):



K. Būgos gatvė (K. Buga Street), *J. Jablonskio gatvė* (J. Jablonskis Street), *J. Gruodžio gatvė* (J. Gruodis Street), *A. Jakšto gatvė* (A. Jakštas Street), *Vaižganto gatvė* (Vaižgantas Street), *Maironio gatvė* (Maironis Street), *M. Valančiaus gatvė* (M. Valancius Street), *V. Kuzmos gatvė* (V. Kuzma Street), *J. Zikaro gatvė* (J. Zikaras Street), *E. Fryko gatvė* (E. Frykas Street), *P. Eimučio gatvė* (P. Eimutis Street), *A. Mapu gatvė* (A. Mapu Street), *J. Naugardo gatvė* (J. Naugardt Street).





Rating 4 – Surnames of important Lithuanian figures;
names are linked to Lithuania (37%):

Kęstučio gatvė (Kestutis Street), *L. Sapiegos gatvė* (L. Sapieha Street),
D. Poškos gatvė (D. Poska Street), *S. Daukanto gatvė* (S Daukantas
Street), *Vytauto prospektas* (Vytautas Avenue), *Gedimino gatvė*
(Gediminas Street), *K. Donelaičio gatvė* (K. Donelaitis Street), *M.
Daukšos gatvė* (M. Daukša Street), *M. K. Čiurlionio gatvė* (M. K.
Ciurlionis Street);

E. Ožeškienės gatvė (E. Orzeszkowa Street), *L. Zamenhofo gatvė* (L.
Zamenhof Street).



When studying **the structure of a street name**, it is important to consider the elements it is made of and their relationship.

Street names contain two components:

1) **the defining element** (the specific element) which names an individual person:

Vytauto gatvė (Vytautas Street),

Vaižganto gatvė (Vaižgantas Street);

2) **the defined element** (the generic element) pointing to the type of street name, such as avenue, lane, street, square (Sidaravičienė, 2023, 27).



The defining element consists of one or more segments:
a name – *Kęstučio gatvė* (Kestutis Street),
a one-word pseudonym – *Maironio gatvė* (Maironis Street, real name Jonas Mačiulis),
a two-word pseudonym – *A. Jakšto gatvė* (Adomas Jakstas Street, real name Aleksandras Dambrauskas),
a name (or names) and surname – *J. Gruodžio gatvė* (Juozas Gruodis Street), *M. K. Čiurlionio gatvė* (M. K. Čiurlionis Street),
an appellative and name – *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* (King Mindaugas avenue),
a name, a surname and a one-word pseudonym – *V. Mykoliaičio-Putino gatvė* (Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas Street),
two names and two surnames – *I. B. Volfo ir F. Engelmano gatvė* (I. B. Wolf and F. Engelman Street).





The second component defines a street, less frequently an avenue, as in *Karaliaus Mindaugo prospektas* (King Mindaugas Avenue).

The street names are the possessive constructions.





The first component therefore specifies the second element while identifying:

1) kings and dukes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania:

Mindaugas, Kęstutis, Gediminas, Vytautas;

2) Lithuanian writers and poets:

Vaižgantas, Maironis, Motiejus Valančius, Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas, Kristijonas Donelaitis, Adomas Jakštas;

3) Lithuanian linguists:

Jonas Jablonskis, Kazimieras Būga;

4) doctors:

Liudvikas Zamenhofas (Ludwik Zamenhof), Vladas Kuzma;

5) priests and nuns:

Antanas Mackevičius, Vincentas Sladkevičius, Šv. Gertūda (St. Gertrude);





The first component therefore specifies the second element while identifying:

6) **cultural figures** – artists, composers, painters, sculptors, architects – Vladas Putvinskis, Mstislavas Dobužinskis, Tadas Daugirdas, Juozas Gruodis, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, Juozas Zikaras;

7) **volunteer soldiers** – Pranas Eimutis;

8) **international writers, philosophers**: Abraomas Mapu, Imanuelis Kant, Eliza Orzeszkowa;

9) **international businessmen, merchants**: Iser Ber Wolf, Ferdinand Engelman, Johan Naugardt.





In order to analyse any **changes in Kaunas' street names**, both their current and previous variant(s) are provided.

The data collected for this research shows that the oldest street names in Kaunas go back to the rule **of the Tsarist Russia (1795–1915)**.

During this period, the city's street names were in Russian and reflected the realities of Tsarist Russia:

Donskaja, Ekaterino-slavskaja bolšaja, Tverskaja II, Novobazarnaja, Provianstskaja, Michailovskaja, Garnizonaja, Mal. Tatarskaja, Gornaja, Malaja Sadovaja, Vilijampolskaja, Michailovskij pr., Pažeskaja.





Interestingly, **under the German rule (1915–1918)**, Russian street names in central Kaunas:

1) were either translated into German:

Gornaja → *Berg Str.*;

Novobazarnaja → *Basar Str.*;

Novaja → *Neue Str.*;

Michailovskaja → *Michael Str.*;

Vilijampolskaja → *Wiliampol Str.*;





2) or changed to German names:
Kijevskaja → *Ludendorff Strasse*;
Puškinskaja → *Hindenburg Strasse*;
Michailovskij pr. → *Deutscher Ring*;
Ekaterinoslavskaja bolšaja → *Schloss Strasse*;
Donskaja → *Hansa Strasse*.





The examples show how certain cultural elements of a particular nation (Russia or Germany) modified the cityscape of central Kaunas during different historical periods.

Streets named after Russian writers **Leo Tolstoy** and **Alexander Pushkin**, the Russian empress **Catherine the Great**,

the German military officer and politician Erich Friedrich Wilhelm **Ludendorff**.





When in 1919 Kaunas became the temporary capital of Lithuania the city focused on replacing its German street names with Lithuanian ones, starting with the main arteries of the Old Town.

The Tsarist-period *Donskaja Street* became *Hansa Strasse* during the German rule, was renamed *M. K. Čiurlionio gatvė* (M. K. Ciurlionis Street) in 1919 and still carries this name today;

Novobazarnaja → *Basar Strasse* → *S. Daukanto gatvė* (S. Daukantas Street);

Proviantskaja → *Inžinernaja* → *Pushkinskaja* → *Hindenburg Strasse* → *K. Donelaičio gatvė* (K. Donelaitis Street).





During the period of the Independent Republic of Lithuania, several streets were named after prominent personalities who were still alive at the time:

Maironio gatvė (Maironis Street),

Aleksandro Stulginskio gatvė (Aleksandras Stulginskis Street),

Kazio Griniaus gatvė (Kazys Grinius Street).





During this period street names in Kaunas were written not only in Lithuanian, in order to accommodate the country's ethnic minorities: *Laisvės alėja* (Freedom Avenue) was also known as *Aleja Wolności* in Polish) (Balkus, 2020, 53).

However, in 1923, a decision was made that all street names must be written only in the official language of Lithuania (Balkus, 2020, 60).





In 1940, Lithuania was annexed by the Soviet Union and incorporated into it. This marked another period of renaming streets in Kaunas:

E. Fryko gatvė (E. Frykas Street) was changed to *M. Lermontovo gatvė* (M. Lermontov Street) during the Soviet period to honour the Russian writer;

P. Lukšio gatvė (P. Luksys Street) became *K. Požėlos gatvė* (K. Pozela Street) after one of Lithuanian communist party founders and leaders;

Vytauto prospektas (Vytautas Avenue) → *Lenino prospektas* (Lenin Avenue);

I. Kanto gatvė (I. Kant Street) → *V. Majakovskio gatvė* (V. Mayakovsky Street) after the Russian poet.





When Lithuania **regained its independence in 1990**, the street names were restored to those from the period of the Independent Republic of 1918–1940,

while other streets were given new names commemorating prominent personalities.



The street names were restored **from the Independent Republican period of 1918–1940:**



E. Fryko gatvė (E. Frykas Street) → *M. Lermontovo gatvė* → *E. Fryko gatvė* (E. Frykas Street, after Edmundas Frykas (1876–1944), Lithuanian engineer, architect who designed many of Kaunas' buildings);

Vytauto prospektas (Vytautas Avenue) → *Lenino prospektas* (Lenin Avenue) → *Vytauto prospektas* (Vytautas Avenue, after Vytautas the Great (c. 1350–1430), Grand Duke of Lithuania, one of Europe's most prominent political and military leaders);

A. Mapu gatvė (A. Mapu Street) → *I. Laukaitytės gatvė* (I. Laukaityte street) → *A. Mapu gatvė* (A. Mapu Street, after Abraham Mapu (1808–1867), Jewish writer who was born and worked in Kaunas).



Other streets were given **new names commemorating prominent personalities**:



I. Snitko gatvė (I. Snitko Street) was renamed *J. Naugardo gatvė* (J. Naugardt Street, after Johan Naugardt, a wealthy merchant in Kaunas who purchased some of the buildings in the Old Town. Some of them currently house the Kaunas Faculty of Vilnius University);

Ažuolų gatvė (Oak Street) became *J. Zikaro gatvė* (J. Zikaras Street, after Juozas Zikaras (1881–1944), Lithuanian sculptor who lived and worked in Kaunas for a while).





This research shows that, during the 18th–21st centuries, most of Kaunas' central streets underwent multiple name changes, with some being renamed:

a) with three modifications:

Donskaja (Tsarist Russia) → *Hansa Strasse* (under German rule, 1915–1918) → *M. K. Čiurlionio gatvė* (M. K. Čiurlionis Street, since 1919);

b) with seven modifications:

Poiezuitska → *Poturemna* → *Gimnazialnaja* → *Vtoraja Portovaja* (this name was changed four times during Tsarist rule for unknown reasons) → *Hafen Strasse II* (under German rule, 1915–1918) → *Pranciškony gatvė* (Franciscan Street) → later *T. Daugirdo gatvė* (T. Daugirdas Street, since 1919).





c) with 5 modifications:

Michailovskij prospekt (during Tsarist rule) →

Deutscher Ringstrasse (under the German rule (1915–1918)) →

Vytauto prospektas (Vytautas Avenue) (during the Independent Republic period) →

Lenino prospektas (Lenin Avenue) (Soviet era) →

Vytauto prospektas (Vytautas Avenue) (current name).

These street names are unique monuments from different periods in Lithuania's history.

They reflect the political views and language policies of the occupying government.

As noted by Oliviu Felecan and Nicolae Felecan (2021), the “reconfiguration of street names was one of the simplest and cheapest instruments”.



From a gender perspective, only 6% of street names are related to women:

Šv. Gertrūdos gatvė (St. Gertrude Street) and
E. Ožėškienės gatvė (E. Orzeszkowa Street).

Studies show that „[u]rban micro-toponymy is an androcentric one, as public life has belonged, throughout history, almost exclusively to men.” (Felecan and Felecan, 2021)

Conclusions



One of the strategies of proposed street names is to preserve the socio-cultural memory of the city, build and strengthen local identity, or *genius loci* – the spirit of the place – so important during a particular historical period.

Street names originating from personal names are also expressions of the residents' rights to the space that is being created, demonstrating that the people living here are members of the same communicative space.





Structurally, the street names of Kaunas are the possessive constructions and consist of two interdependent elements.

The specific element mostly contains two segments (77%) one segment (14%) or more parts (9%) naming an individual person.

The generic element, the element that is being defined, points to a street, less frequently an avenue. The first component determines the second part of the street name, narrowing its meaning.





Semantic analysis shows that Kaunas' current street names originating from personal names are memorial.

They refer to prominent historical or cultural figures: Lithuanian dukes and king, writers, poets, linguists, priests, artists, doctors, volunteer soldiers; international authors, philosophers, doctors, businessmen, merchants.

Male names dominate the street names of Kaunas. This tradition is typical of other Lithuanian towns and cities too.





The changing street names of Kaunas's Central Eldership show that the transformations from 3 to 7 modifications took place during the periods of:

- 1) Tsarist Russia,
- 2) German Empire,
- 3) Independent Republic of Lithuania,
- 4) Soviet Lithuania,
- 5) The current Republic of Lithuania.

The findings indicate that street names were intended to be restored to their forms used during the period of Independent Lithuania or to be named in commemoration of prominent figures.



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