

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Betty Baker served the City of Austin for 30 years and spearheaded the creation of the City's Historic Preservation Office, and Steve Sadowsky served as the City's Historic Preservation Officer for 21 years; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Office promotes awareness of our cultural and architectural heritage and helps shape a more sustainable, equitable, and livable city in collaboration with other City departments and community partners; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Baker advocated for preservation at a time when many wanted to raze historic structures to make room for big development, and today many buildings now taken for granted, such as those in our Sixth Street National Register Historic District or along Congress Avenue, would not be standing had it not been for Ms. Baker; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Baker started as a stenographer in the City's Planning Department in 1974, rose to city planner, later served with the Austin Convention and Visitor's Bureau, then became the first volunteer Chair of the City's Zoning and Platting Commission and held that position for 14 years; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Baker's proudest accomplishments involved multiple efforts to recognize contributions of African Americans to Austin's history,

21 including designating the home of Baseball Hall of Fame inductee and Negro League
22 star Willie Wells as a historic landmark; and

23 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Baker preserved more than 400 landmark structures,
24 included saving and rehabilitating Austin's Moonlight Towers, now the only
25 moonlight towers left in the world; and

26 **WHEREAS**, among his many other achievements, Mr. Sadowsky led the
27 successful effort to rename the structure at 2402 San Gabriel Street so that it became
28 the "Rev. Jacob Fontaine Gold Dollar Building," a name reflecting its roots as home
29 of *The Gold Dollar*, the first African American newspaper in Austin, founded in
30 1876 by Rev. Jacob Fontaine, a man who had been enslaved; and

31 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Sadowsky received a City of Austin Distinguished Service
32 Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award from Preservation Austin, an
33 organization whose purpose it is to "empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive,
34 resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation"; and

35 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Sadowsky promoted adaptive reuse as an important tool so
36 that buildings can be both preserved while economically viable for the owner as
37 well; and

38 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Sadowsky's service coincided with unprecedented growth
39 in Austin, and Mr. Sadowsky personally prepared, reviewed, and presented hundreds
40 of applications for historic landmark status; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sadowsky and Ms. Baker mentored many City of Austin employees and were willing to share their knowledge with anyone who was interested; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Austin History Center is to procure, preserve, present, and provide the historical records that make up Austin’s unique story, and Ms. Baker and Mr. Sadowsky loved and exhaustively used the Austin History Center and its reading room throughout their lifetimes; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

In honor of the work and contributions of Steve Sadowsky and Betty Baker, the Austin History Center Reading Room shall have the honorary name “The Steve Sadowsky and Betty Baker Reading Room” and a commemorative plaque in their honor shall be installed.

ADOPTED: _____, 2022 **ATTEST:** _____

Myrna Rios
City Clerk

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84 *Sources:*

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86 [erased-this-building-tells-its-tale](https://www.kut.org/austin/2022-02-25/one-of-austins-first-black-communities-has-largely-been-erased-this-building-tells-its-tale)

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