

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,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

49 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**
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51 In honor of the work and contributions of Betty Baker and Steve Sadowsky,
52 the Austin History Center Reading Room shall have the honorary name "The Betty
53 Baker and Steve Sadowsky Reading Room" and a commemorative plaque in their
54 honor shall be installed.
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59 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2022 **ATTEST:** _____
60 Myrna Rios
61 City Clerk
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Sources:

<https://www.kut.org/austin/2022-02-25/one-of-austins-first-black-communities-has-largely-been-erased-this-building-tells-its-tale>

<https://library.austintexas.gov/ahc/jacob-fontaine>

<https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=373622>

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<https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2017/02/04/betty-baker-austins-land-use-queen-made-citys-legacy-her-own/10133163007/>

<https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2004-04-02/205068/>

<https://www.austinmonitor.com/stories/whispers/historic-preservation-officer-sadowsky-has-died/austinmonitor>