

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 329

Approved July 17, 2024

WHEREAS, The City of Providence prides itself on its rich tapestry of ethnic cultural diversity, which has been woven over centuries by the contributions of immigrant communities; and

WHEREAS, In the early 20th century, Cape Verdeans, escaping the severe drought and poverty of their homeland, emerged as pioneering sub-Saharan Luso-Africans to voluntarily migrate to America, in pursuit of better opportunities and livelihoods, most notably securing positions on the waterfront as longshoremen in the Port of Providence, as factory workers, domestics, cooks, and small business entrepreneurs; showcasing their expertise and resilience, and playing a crucial role in the economic development of the city; and

WHEREAS, The Cape Verdean community has been an integral part of the City of Providence's ethnic diversity, particularly in the Tockwotton Fox Point neighborhood and along South Main Street, contributing significantly to the cultural, economic, social and religious fabric of Providence since the late 19th century; and thereby playing a pivotal role in the development and prosperity of the city; and

WHEREAS, Beyond their economic contributions, the Cape Verdean community has enriched Providence with a vibrant cultural heritage, including music, cuisine, and annual celebrations that highlight their unique ethnic identity and traditions; and

WHEREAS, The Tockwotton Fox Point neighborhood, in particular, has been a central hub for the Cape Verdean community, serving as a place where families have settled, businesses have flourished, and cultural traditions have been preserved and celebrated; and

WHEREAS, Cape Verdeans have been instrumental in the establishment and growth of local businesses along South Main Street and throughout the Fox Point neighborhood, contributing to the economic vitality and entrepreneurial spirit of Providence; and

WHEREAS, The Cape Verdean community has been an integral part of the City's history, contributing significantly to the cultural, social, economic and religious fabric of our community, particularly in the Fox Point neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Fox Point, through the 1950s, was a vibrant, self-sufficient community, home to a robust Cape Verdean population, characterized by its intimate community life, weekend dances, Kriolu language, and the aroma of Monchupa/Kachupa-a traditional Cape Verdean dish - wafting through the streets; and

WHEREAS, To city planners, the perception of tenements as "urban blight" in the Tockwotton Fox Point neighborhood appallingly justified the seizure of buildings and the construction of Route 195, which tragically sliced through the heart of the community, displacing numerous Cape Verdean families, and severing the neighborhood's vital connection to the waterfront; and

WHEREAS, Historical accounts reveal that community leaders established a "freeway watch" in an effort to mitigate the decline surrounding the highway area, yet despite these efforts, the construction and completion of the highway in the 1960s led to the displacement of 300 families, the loss of 172 homes and 32 businesses, and the demolition of two schools, significantly altering the landscape of the Cape Verdean community which once flourished from Planet Street and South Main Street through to India Point Park, with South Main Street serving as its vibrant core despite being labeled as "one of the worst slum areas in the city" by the Providence Redevelopment Agency in a 1951 report; and

WHEREAS, The construction of Route 195 in the 1960s ultimately resulted in the displacement of hundreds of Cape Verdean families in Fox Point, severing the community from its waterfront and erasing a significant part of its heritage; and

WHEREAS, This displacement was carried out with little to no consultation with the affected community members, many of whom were renters and were not informed of the impending demolitions until it was too late, as noted by Dr. Claire Andrade-Watkins, a respected Emerson College professor, historian, filmmaker, and former resident of the area; and

WHEREAS, The Cape Verdean community of Fox Point, despite facing such adversity, has continued to strive for recognition and preservation of their rich cultural legacy, as evidenced by the efforts of individuals and organizations such as the Tockwotton Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Place Project at India Point Park; and

WHEREAS, The story of the Cape Verdean community in Fox Point is a testament to resilience, community, and the enduring spirit of a people who, despite displacement and challenges, have continued to contribute to the city's diversity and strength; and

WHEREAS, The cultural contributions of the Cape Verdean community have significantly enriched the social tapestry of Providence, through the introduction of Cape Verdean music, dance, and art, which have become integral parts of the city's cultural identity; and

WHEREAS, The Cape Verdean community has maintained a strong tradition of community service and civic engagement in Providence, contributing to local charities, participating in community development projects, and holding positions of leadership that have positively impacted the city as a whole; and

WHEREAS, The Cape Verdean festivals and celebrations, including the Cape Verdean Independence Day Festival, have become key cultural events in Providence, drawing people from across the city, Southeastern New England, and the world to celebrate Cape Verdean heritage, fostering unity, and promoting cultural exchange; and

WHEREAS, The Cape Verdean community has been a cornerstone of the educational landscape in Providence, with generations of Cape Verdean Americans excelling in academics and athletics and contributing to the diversity and enrichment of the city's schools and institutions of higher learning; and

WHEREAS, The enduring spirit, resilience, and contributions of the Cape Verdean community have inspired countless individuals and communities within Providence to strive for success, embrace diversity, and work together for the common good; and

WHEREAS, Renaming South Main Street to Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Way would serve as a lasting tribute to the contributions of the Cape Verdean community to Providence, recognizing their enduring legacy and the role they continue to play in the city's cultural and social landscape; and

WHEREAS, This honorary designation would not only celebrate the past and present contributions of the Cape Verdean community but also inspire future generations to learn about and appreciate the diverse heritage that shapes our city.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council hereby recognizes the historical and cultural significance of the Cape Verdean community in Fox Point and the broader city; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That South Main Street is hereby given the ceremonial designation Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Way, in honor of the Cape Verdean community's enduring legacy and contribution to Fox Point and the city's cultural mosaic; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this act of providing this ceremonial designation is a step towards acknowledging the injustices faced by the Cape Verdean community due to urban renewal policies and is part of a broader effort to preserve and celebrate the rich tapestry of cultures that make up our city; and

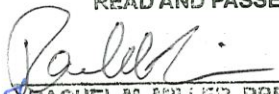

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council directs the appropriate city departments to take all necessary actions to implement this resolution, including the updating of street signs, maps, and official documents to reflect the ceremonial designation of Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Way; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of Providence hereby honors the significant contributions of the Cape Verdean community by designating South Main Street as Fox Point Cape Verdean Heritage Way; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this designation reflects the City's commitment to acknowledging and celebrating the diverse ethnic cultures that contribute to the vitality and richness of Providence, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation among all its residents.

IN CITY COUNCIL
JUL 11 2024

READ AND PASSED


RACHEL M. MILLER, PRESIDENT

CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.


Mayor

Date: 7/17/2024