



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RESOLUTION NO. 170573

Introduced May 25, 2017

Councilmembers Blackwell, Parker and Green

RESOLUTION

Adding Sonny Hill Way to the street signs on South 50th between Larchwood and Osage Avenues in recognition of Sonny Hill's remarkable contributions to the basketball community in Philadelphia and his efforts in mentoring young people all over the City.

WHEREAS, Sonny Hill was born in Philadelphia on July 22, 1936. As a naturally gifted athlete, he was the star player for several sports teams at Northeast High School; and

WHEREAS, At Northeast High School, Sonny Hill was mentored by Guy Rodgers, who encouraged Sonny to further develop his natural gift for basketball; and

WHEREAS, Sonny graduated from Northeast High School in 1955 and due to his 5 ft 9in stature he did not expect to further his basketball career. However, a local gentleman named Bob Dabney, who believed in Sonny's talent, helped Sonny get a spot on the Central State Maruaders team, an all black college, that was known for its track and basketball teams; and

WHEREAS, When Sonny first met the coach at Central State University he was not impressed by Sonny's small and slender frame. However, when he saw Sonny's skill he offered him a place on the team. Sonny found success as a college basketball player and was "All-Conference" his freshman year and he also helped to lead Central State to the NAIA Tournament. At that point they were only third Black College team to play; and

WHEREAS, By the time Sonny returned to Philadelphia, basketball was growing in popularity and Sonny soon found himself a part of the Eastern Basketball League, where he spend 10 years of the professional career. In 1958 he joined the Wilmington Jets, and he later played for the Camden bullets; and

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WHEREAS, After his basketball career, Sonny became involved in urban basketball leagues. His first was the “Baker League”, a summer league in Philadelphia featuring top pro talent; and

WHEREAS, In 1968 Sonny Hill started the Sonny Hill Community Involvement Basketball League, which he founded at a time when gang warfare was destroying neighborhoods and communities. Sonny hoped that the league could serve as an outlet for young people and keep them away from joining gangs; and

WHEREAS, The Sonny Hill League uses basketball as a foundation for teaching life skills, and has had numerous NBA stars participate over the years, including Kobe Bryant, Raseed Wallace, Rip Hamilton and Alvin Williams; and

WHEREAS, Sonny Hill has been named one of the top 100 Most Influential People by Sports Illustrated and has received an honorary degree from Temple University. Sonny Hill is a pioneer in the basketball community in Philadelphia. For over 50 years, Sonny Hill has helped to make basketball part of the cultural experience of this City’s social fabric, touching the lives of thousands of young people with his passion and deep connection to the sport; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL, Hereby adds Sonny Hill Way to the street signs on South 50th between Larchwood and Osage Avenues in recognition of Sonny Hill’s remarkable contributions to the basketball community in Philadelphia and his efforts in mentoring young people all over the City.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Sonny Hill and his family as a sincere expression of the Philadelphia City Council’s gratitude and recognition.