

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 250930)

RESOLUTION

Also naming Oxford Street between Broad Street and 15th Street as “Jake and Sarah Adams Avenue.”

WHEREAS, Since 1978, Jacob “Jake” Adams has owned New Barber’s Hall in North Philadelphia. The Black-owned jazz bar has played host to jazz and R&B acts such as Dottie Smith, Robert “Bootsie” Barnes, Billy Paul, and Grover Washington Jr., and was patronized by the likes of Miles Davis, Isaac Hayes, Patti LaBelle, the Temptations, and “Smokin” Joe Frazier; and

WHEREAS, Built in the 1860s, the three-story building in which New Barber’s Hall would later occupy started as a single-family home before it was renovated to become a clubhouse for the Quaker City Wheelmen, a chapter of a national bicycling organization. In the ensuing decades, the building was used by a variety of progressive social clubs, including the Philadelphia Section of the National Council of Jewish Women. Many of the clubs were organized by ethnic and racial groups; and

WHEREAS, Before Adams purchased the site with his older brother, it was owned by the National Barber’s Sunshine Club, a social organization for Black barbers at which jazz musicians staying in the nearby integrated Chesterfield Hotel would perform. The National Barber’s Sunshine Club emerged as North Philadelphia was becoming a center for the City’s Black population. The group hosted professional development events, such as wig manufacturing courses; and

WHEREAS, As members of the National Barber’s Sunshine Club aged and passed on, the members wanted to sell the building. As the story goes, they had two stipulations in their decision as to whom they would sell the building to; 1. They wanted the new owner to be a Black business owner, and 2. they wanted the new owner to agree to keep the name of the building Barber’s Hall; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jake and his brother sought to purchase the club in 1978. After being denied financing from traditional sources, the National Barber’s Sunshine Club agreed to hold the

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mortgage for the property. According to Mr. Jake, they said, “You can pay us, and we’ll be your mortgage company;” and

WHEREAS, In 1983, Jake Adams bought out his brother and became the sole owner of the jazz club, which became a popular spot for locals and college students; and

WHEREAS, For many Philly musicians, Barber’s Hall has been a stop on their climb to establishing themselves. Boyz II Men once rehearsed on the third floor, and Odean Pope performed many times as a fledgling tenor saxophonist during the late 1950s and 1960s at what was the only available soiree on Sundays because of laws that prevented certain activities on the Sabbath; and

WHEREAS, Adams would rent out the space for social gatherings, from wedding receptions, cabarets, jazz concerts, political fundraisers, birthday parties, anniversaries, retirement events, funeral repasts, and more. To this day, New Barber’s Hall hosts an open mic event every Sunday at 9:00 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, Adams resisted attempts to purchase the property for years, emphasizing the importance of keeping an iconic jazz venue in the hands of the community. However, as the Adams family nears retirement, they made the fateful decision to sell the property to Temple University, which promises to continue the jazz club in operation until Jake Adams retires; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jake is a former Democratic Ward Leader in the 14th Ward. At the time of his election, he was the youngest Ward Leader in the City. He also served as a committee person in the 14th Ward for over 50 years. He was also a Democratic delegate at the 1976 Democratic National Convention; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jake and Ms. Sarah Admas have been married for over 60 years. You can always find Ms. Sarah at the door greeting customers as they come in. As communities change over the decades, it is imperative that the City of Philadelphia leave markers of the hard work of business owners like Jake and Sarah Adams to provide spaces for neighbors and patrons to thrive; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Oxford Street between Broad Street and 15th Street shall also be named as “Jake and Sarah Adams Avenue”

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this Resolution be presented to Jake and Sarah Adams as evidence of the true and sincere admiration and respect of this legislative body.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the thirtieth day of October, 2025.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Young

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Young and Brooks