

Legislation Text

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Recognizing Africatown, a broad-based economic development initiative in Southwest Philadelphia led by the African Cultural Alliance of North America.

WHEREAS, The goal of Africatown is to economically uplift Southwest Philadelphia, and to foster an inclusive cultural hub for the global African diaspora and those interested in African and Caribbean culture and arts; and

WHEREAS, Africatown is in the 2nd and 3rd Councilmanic Districts of the City of Philadelphia, where 84% of the population is Black. Currently there are nearly 500 businesses owned and operated by immigrants, many of them of African origin, that live and work in the community. Their contributions to the local economy are formidable; and

WHEREAS, These economic development efforts are critically important because they create jobs, generate tax revenue, and financially uplift residents in Southwest Philadelphia, one of the most economically depressed communities in Philadelphia. It has been estimated that it will create an economic impact of nearly \$100 million dollars in its first three phases; and

WHEREAS, The African Cultural Alliance of North America (ACANA) has been providing technical assistance to African, Caribbean, and other immigrants that own businesses along the commercial corridors in Southwest Philadelphia, and led the efforts to establish Africatown. They recognized the need for such an area due to African immigrants being the fastest-growing group of foreign-born Philadelphians between 2000 and 2016, according to a study from Pew Charitable Trusts; and

WHEREAS, The project is currently set to take over more than 80 percent of a city block in Southwest Philadelphia and will offer commercial space and residential housing to the local community. ACANA has plans to build a headquarters that will include a community center and health office, and the group is also in the process of acquiring a grocery store that will become a part of the project; and

WHEREAS, On November 25, 2022, community leaders kicked off the construction of Dolakeh Square during a groundbreaking ceremony. The term Dolakeh was adopted from the Mano tribe and translates into English as “community working together”. This project will create jobs in the community for the youth of West and Southwest Philadelphia, provide capital loans for existing businesses, and provided resources for new start-ups and micro-enterprises; and

WHEREAS, In November 2022, ACANA, the organization leading the project, will receive a Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) grant of \$9 million to aid the group in completing its vision for Africatown; and

WHEREAS, This project will uplift the entire neighborhood while celebrating the cultures and economic contribution of the he African and Caribbean communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes Africatown, a broad-based economic development initiative in Southwest Philadelphia led by the African Cultural Alliance of North America.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the ACANA leadership, as evidence of the sincere respect and admiration of this legislative body.