

Legislation Text

File #: 080673, Version: 0

Honoring and Recognizing the 25th Anniversary of the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation.

WHEREAS, After decades of being a vibrant commercial corridor bustling with commerce and charm, the 7100 block of Ogontz Avenue began to decline in the early 1970s and by 1981, Ogontz Plaza, the centerpiece of this once mighty block had become a vacant, graffiti-scarred eyesore and the Ogontz Hall apartment building was plagued with undesirable conditions and many other properties on Ogontz and 72nd Avenues were also vacant and dilapidated; and

WHEREAS, In 1983, neighborhood residents, lead by State Representative Dwight Evans, banded together to devise a solution to the Ogontz Avenue problem and created the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation (“OARC”) as their solution to this problem; and

WHEREAS, After its inception, OARC worked with elected officials, government agencies, banks, local universities, and various organizations and institutions, and formed partnerships with private developers to complete and renovate the Ogontz Plaza (completed in 1987), the Ogontz Hall (completed in 1992), and Ogontz III (completed in 1995), helping to restore this commercial corridor to the vibrant, bustling avenue of its past glory; and

WHEREAS, More recently, OARC has continued its efforts by expanding its scope and taking a holistic approach toward making West Oak Lane, a community of choice and this approach includes dozens of programs, initiatives, and development projects in the areas of housing development, home improvement, education, business and economic development, workforce development, arts and cultural event planning, open space greening, grassroots community planning, and tourism development; and

WHEREAS, OARC has been responsible for the development of dozens of housing units, several of the marquee business institutions of West Oak Lane, and the overall improvement in the quality of life in one of Philadelphia’s finest neighborhoods and, since its inception, OARC has grown to include eight entities with at total annual operating budget of approximately \$20 million and development projects valued at over \$24 million. OARC, its related entities and affiliates employ more than 250 people full-time, more than 30 people part-time, and serve approximately 1,000 children annually; and

WHEREAS, OARC is also the executive producer of the internationally-acclaimed West Oak Lane Jazz & Arts Festival and each year, more than 500,000 attendees come to Ogontz Avenue, which is transformed into an exciting festival of vendors offering food, fine arts and crafts, and non-stop entertainment from music icons and hall of fame artists; and

WHEREAS, OARC has also expanded its successful and nationally-recognized revitalization model to other commercial corridors in the Northwest, including Stenton Avenue and Washington Lane, and upper Ogontz Avenue from Washington Lane to Cheltenham Avenue and OARC works with other groups and communities throughout Northwest Philadelphia, including Mt. Airy, Nicetown, and Germantown, to help stimulate neighborhood revitalization; and

WHEREAS, Through valuable partnerships and innovative programs, OARC is a fresh wind in the field of community development, proving that no community goal is too ambitious and, in the process, providing hope and inspiration to residents of all communities; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor OARC on 25 years of success and accomplishment in stimulating economic development while improving the quality of life for the residents of West Oak Lane and other neighborhoods throughout Northwest Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to State Representative Dwight Evans and representatives of OARC as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.