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Also naming the unit block of Lehigh Avenue from 28th Street to 29th Street as “Van R Thomas Way” in memory of Mr. Van R. Thomas’ lifetime of community service and social activism to improve economic opportunities and quality of life for residents of the North Penn community in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Van R. Thomas resided at 2800 West Lehigh Avenue from January 5, 1953 to April 26, 2000, and spent his entire life in service to his community, the North Penn Civic Association located in the Strawberry Mansion area of North Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Van Thomas was a dedicated citizen of the City of Philadelphia serving on may organizations, demonstrating support and leadership for many causes, including the Citizens Committee for Justice, the Anti-Graffiti Network, the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Advisory Council, John F. Street 5th District Advisory Council, and the Residents Coalition that was dedicated to social justice, improving public space and community activism; and

WHEREAS, In 1980, Van Thomas spearheaded the Centennial Census and employed approximately 200 residents from the Strawberry Mansion area to collect census data. His efforts received national attention and recognition for the number of households that were timely and accurately completed under budget; and

WHEREAS, Van Thomas served as a member of the North Penn Civic Association for 20 years, and was serving as its President at the time of his death on April 26, 2000. In this role one of his accomplishments included championing the design and transformation of Chalmers recreational site in the community; and

WHEREAS, The picnic area located within the 29th Street and Chalmers Avenue recreation fields and facility was named, the "Van R. Thomas Memorial Picnic Area" in recognition of Van Thomas’ significant contribution to the revitalization of the recreational area; and

WHEREAS, In response to crime and murder of black youth occurring in the South in the early 1980s, also known as the Atlanta Child Murders, Van Thomas was determined to prevent such an autrocity from striking the City of Philadelphia. He then organized and launched the North Penn Summer Day Camp program which served 175 children ages 5-13 years old which was free of charge for participants and offered employment to approximately 30 adults from the community; and

WHEREAS, The North Penn Summer Day Camp program further provided job readiness training and certification for 150 older youth from zip code 19132. The youth provided mentorship to children at Camp and assisted in neighborhood beautification initiatives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the unit block Lehigh Avenue from 28th Street to 29th Street as “Van R. Thomas Way” in memory of Mr. Van R. Thomas’ lifetime of community service and social activism to improve economic opportunities and quality of life for residents of the North Penn community in the City of Philadelphia.