

Legislation Text

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Also naming Market Street, between Front Street and Eighth Street, as “Avenue of Our Founders”.

WHEREAS, No other City in America rivals Philadelphia for the rich history that has occurred along our streets. It is time to honor Market Street’s central role in American history by designating it “Avenue of the Founders”; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia, America’s first World Heritage City, can claim the only street which was home to *four* famous Founding Fathers: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and George Washington. Market Street was the 18th Century furrow where the founders planted the seeds that grew into America; and

WHEREAS, A young Benjamin Franklin built his successful printing business at several Market St. addresses from Front Street to Fourth Street, and made a name for himself as both an entrepreneur and as colonial America’s man of letters. His highly successful almanac and newspaper became tools of the Enlightenment, which promoted the emerging theory that regular people could improve themselves and rely on each other, instead of subservience to official edicts and the divine right to rule; and

WHEREAS, It was also on Market Street that Franklin reorganized the colonial postal service, deliberately establishing a communications network which drew the thirteen colonies together, eventually propelling them to cut their ties with Britain; and

WHEREAS, Four blocks further west on that same street, Thomas Jefferson crafted the world’s most famous enlightenment document. His Declaration of Independence declared that this new Nation was based on the *consent of the governed*. It would inspire colonial enthusiasm for the American Revolution, as well as subsequent independence movements elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, Presiding at Market and Sixth Streets, first President George Washington carefully transformed the American Constitution from an aspirational document into a working government. Aware that every decision he made would set precedents for future chief executives, he threaded his way through two terms of the Presidency at that house, building the permanent foundations of the new nation; and

WHEREAS, The first peaceful exchange of power took place in Philadelphia’s Congress Hall on March 4, 1797, watched by American journalists and international diplomats alike - clear proof of our working democracy. After the Washington family moved from the President’s House at Market and Sixth St., John Adams, his successor, moved in and took the opportunity to put his own stamp on the fledgling democracy; and

WHEREAS, The presence of this pantheon of founders is certainly reason enough to add the “Avenue of the Founders” name to Market Street it also brings attention to our first founder William Penn. He had a profound influence on this bustling commercial artery of his “Great town”; and

WHEREAS, Market Street was in many ways a base for William Penn’s expansive colonial vision. His insistence on “Liberty of Conscience” - which earned him Jefferson’s praise as the world’s “greatest lawgiver” -

represented trust in the independent decisions of regular people, and established the environment for a working democracy in Pennsylvania. Two different churches and a Quaker meeting house were soon clustered within two blocks of Market (High) Street. Penn himself met with the first assemblies in the small brick Head House at the foot of Market Street; and

WHEREAS, Market Street is also the corridor marking Philadelphia's rise from frontier town to boomtown, soon outpacing Boston and New York as the largest city in colonial America. The initial "Mall of America", America's first great shopping mall, was planned by William Penn himself. In time, it was said to rival London's and Paris' markets for the quality and variety of its goods. While the farmers drove their Conestoga wagons east into Philadelphia for Wednesday and Saturday market days, merchants and furniture-makers from other colonies also headed toward the burgeoning City to set up their booths in the brick pavilions down the center of Market Street; and

WHEREAS, It was at Front and Market Streets that the London Coffee House, America's first stock market, prompted the early success of the wealthy Willing, Bingham and Morris families. Morris' own houses would fill the corner at Market and Sixth Streets, with the larger of his homes serving as the President's House for Washington and Adams in the 1790's; and

WHEREAS, In the 19th Century, John Wanamaker launched his merchandising career at a six-story men's store which shared a wall with the remnants of the President's House site on Market near Sixth Street. It would eventually lead to the behemoth next to City Hall and to Wanamaker's primacy in 1900 as the world's most successful department store magnate - more employees and more income than either New York's Macy's or London's Harrods; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Market Street between Front Street and Eighth Street shall henceforth also be known as the "Avenue of Our Founders".

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of the Resolution be presented to The Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides, further evidencing the sincere support and admiration of this legislative body.