Also naming 15th Street, between Lombard and South Streets, “Wesley Way” to honor the historic Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church.

WHEREAS, Wesley A.M.E Zion Church, also known as “Big Wesley,” was created on June 6, 1820. Researchers have identified it as one of the first five independent African American churches in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The original meetings were held in a carpenter’s shop on Lombard Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets. In time, the church grew to have the second largest membership of all black churches in the city. As a hub of the Black community, it hosted anti-slavery rallies, lectures, worship, and other community activities; and

WHEREAS, In 1885, the Church relocated to the 1500 block of Lombard Street. The members diligently worked toward the founding of the first hospital in the city for Black Philadelphians, formed literary societies, supported civil rights, pushed voter registration, promoted equal employment opportunities, and more; and

WHEREAS, A new church was designed by architect George Savage and built in 1926 in the Gothic Revival style, with a corner bell tower, spire, and pointed arch windows with tracery; and

WHEREAS, The Church has been a historical leader in the development of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church denomination and influential in civil rights and social reforms in the 1950s and 1960s. The Church’s contributions to these larger movements is documented in archival collections at Temple University, the Philadelphia Historical Society, and the American Philosophical Society; and

WHEREAS, Among the Church's notable leaders was the Right Reverend Alfred G. Dunston, who served the church from 1952 until 1963, and later became an influential bishop in the A.M.E. Zion Church. Reverend Dunston not only served his congregation, but also his city and his country. A World War II veteran, he was a leader in the struggle for liberation, civil rights, and equity throughout his life. Over the years, he was a member of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, the Mayor’s Committee on Civil Rights, and the 400 Pastors Selective Patronage. He was also a co-founder of the Opportunities Industrialization Center (better known as OIC). Other notable former pastors include the Right Reverend Louis Hunter, Sr., who also became a bishop of the A.M.E. Zion Church; and

WHEREAS, The Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. It also appears in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and the Pennsylvania State Historic Resource survey; and

WHEREAS, More than 200 years after its founding, despite the ongoing challenges of rapid gentrification, Wesley A.M.E Zion Church has maintained its historic house of worship at 15th and Lombard Streets. Among its ongoing programming areweekly worship service, bible study, and outreach ministry activities. The current pastor is Reverend Michael A. King; and

WHEREAS, The Church's longevity, importance, and continued contributions to the community over more than two centuries are deserving of recognition; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Also names the 15th Street, between Lombard and South Streets, "Wesley Way," to honor the historic Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to leadership of Wesley A.M.E Zion Church as evidence of the admiration and respect of this body.

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