

Legislation Text

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Renaming the 700 Block of N. 39th Street “Hon. Charles L. Durham Way” to honor the life and legacy of the late Common Pleas Judge, Civil Rights Leader, community advocate, and Philadelphia City Councilmember, the Honorable Charles L. Durham.

WHEREAS, Charles L. Durham was born on October 12, 1924 in West Philadelphia, and was a product of the School District of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Judge Durham received his JD from the Temple University Beasley School of Law in 1955, and began his storied legal career at the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office in 1956; and

WHEREAS, After leaving the District Attorney’s Office, Judge Durham set up a legal practice in his native Mantua, and during this time played an integral role in advancing the rights of Black Philadelphians, traveling to serve as legal counsel for the Philadelphia, Mississippi branch of the NAACP during its 1963 voter registration drive; and

WHEREAS, Judge Durham also served as an attorney for the NAACP’s Legal Redress Fund and its Legal Defense Fund, focusing on complex discrimination cases and championing the 14th Amendment Equal Protection rights of Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, Charles Durham became a Philadelphia City Council member in 1967, and served in this role until 1974. Durham was a member of Council’s first Black Caucus, and fiercely advocated for quality-of-life improvements, sponsoring legislation for streetlight improvements that would illuminate not only Mantua, but other neighborhoods across the City; and

WHEREAS, Following his time on Council, Durham was appointed to the bench in Philadelphia’s Court of Common Pleas in 1974, and remained in this role until his death in 1991; and

WHEREAS, To honor Judge Durham’s many contributions to the City of Philadelphia, the Mantua Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia was renamed the Charles L. Durham Free Library in 1995; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby renames the 700 Block of N. 39th Street “Hon. Charles L. Durham Way” to honor the life of late Common Pleas Judge, Civil Rights Leader, community advocate, and Philadelphia City Councilmember, the Honorable Charles L. Durham.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the community of Mantua in honor of the life and work of lifelong Mantua resident, the Honorable Charles L. Durham, as a sign of the respect and admiration of this legislative body.