

## ORDINANCE NO. BL2020-450

### **An ordinance to amend the Geographic Information Systems Street and Alley Centerline Layer for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, by changing the name of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue N., and Opry Place to "Rep. John Lewis Way N." and by changing the name of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. to "Rep. John Lewis Way S." (Proposal No. 2020M-004SR-001).**

WHEREAS, Congressman John Lewis began his lifelong crusade for civil rights and civic justice in Nashville while a student at the American Baptist Theological Seminary and later at Fisk University. He was a leader in the historic lunch counter sit-ins that lead to Nashville becoming the first Southern city to start the desegregation of public places; and

WHEREAS, while a student, Lewis was invited to attend nonviolence workshops held at Clark Memorial United Methodist Church by the Rev. James Lawson and Rev. Kelly Miller Smith. There, Lewis and other students became dedicated adherents to the discipline and philosophy of nonviolence, which he practiced for the rest of his life; and

WHEREAS, in 1961, Lewis represented the Nashville group of the burgeoning civil rights movement, as one of the 13 original "Freedom Riders." He was also instrumental in organizing bus boycotts and other nonviolent protests to support voting rights and racial equality; and

WHEREAS, Lewis was one of the "Big Six" leaders of groups who organized the 1963 March on Washington, and in 1965, Lewis led the first of three Selma to Montgomery marches across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In an incident which became known as Bloody Sunday, state troopers and police then attacked the marchers, including Lewis; and

WHEREAS, Lewis would later embark on a career in public service, first as an Atlanta City Council member, then as a Congressman representing Georgia's Fifth District from 1987 until his death in 2020; and

WHEREAS, the request for the street name change has been submitted by Councilmember Zulfat Suara on behalf of the Metropolitan Council Minority Caucus, applicant; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed request to change the name of this right-of-way has been submitted to the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and other relevant agencies of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, in accordance with Metropolitan Code § 13.08.015; and,

WHEREAS, the community deems it appropriate that said street name be changed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That the Geographic Information Systems Street and Alley Centerline Layer for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, as enacted by Ordinance No. BL2019-96, be and is hereby amended, as follows:

By renaming Opry Place from Broadway to Commerce St. as "Rep. John Lewis Way N.";  
By renaming 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. from Commerce St. to I-65 as "Rep. John Lewis Way N."; and  
By renaming 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. from Broadway to Oak Street as "Rep. John Lewis Way S.",

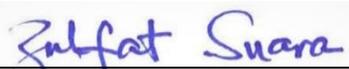
all of which is more particularly described by lines, words and figures on the sketch, which is attached hereto as Exhibit A and made a part of this ordinance as though copied herein.

Section 2. The Director of the Department of Public Works is hereby authorized and directed, upon the enactment and approval of this ordinance, to cause said change to be made on said Map as set out in Section 1 of this ordinance, and to make notation thereon of reference to the date of passage and approval of this amendatory ordinance.

Section 4. Amendments to this legislation may be approved by resolution.

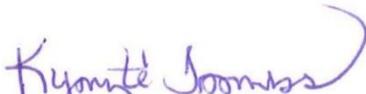
Section 5. This ordinance shall take effect immediately after its passage, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

INTRODUCED BY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Zulfat Suara

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Freddie O'Connell

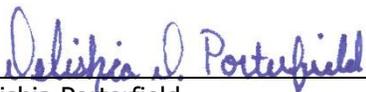
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Russ Pulley

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kyonzte Toombs

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tanaka Vercher

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sandra Sepulveda

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Gamble

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Delishia Porterfield

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joy Styles

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sharon Hurt

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Antoinette Lee

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\_\_\_\_\_

Members of Council

Members of Council



September 7, 2020

The Honorable Zulfat Suara  
Council Lady-at-Large  
Metropolitan Nashville Government  
Historic Courthouse Square  
Nashville, TN 37210

Dear Council Lady Suara,

It is with great honor and respect that I write to extend the support of American Baptist College to the ordinance to rename Fifth Avenue in honor of the late U.S. Representative John Robert Lewis to Representative John Lewis Way. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students and alumni, we proudly join with the Minority Caucus of the Metropolitan City Council with this well-deserved project.

Representative Lewis came to American Baptist College at the age of 17, from his hometown of Troy, Alabama. From his beginning at the College he became involved with Civil Rights; Voter Registration, Lunch-Counter Sit-ins and the Freedom Rides were his foundation to his outstanding public service career. In fact, he was unable to attend his graduation ceremony at American Baptist College in 1961 because he had been jailed in Jackson, Mississippi. He was incarcerated because of his activities with the Freedom Riders.

It is because of Representative John Lewis and others involved in the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s that Nashville became the first southern major city to start the desegregation of public places. This city; Music City, USA, the Athens of the South, the capital of Tennessee should show its strength and tenacity in this first step to honor this great man of humble beginnings, Representative John Lewis.

American Baptist College Baptist College wholeheartedly supports this endeavor.

Sincerely,

***Forrest E. Harris***

Forrest E. Harris, Sr.  
President

FEH:PQ:mac



**FISK**  
UNIVERSITY

*Office of the President*

September 8, 2020

**Via email to [Zulfat.suara@nashville.gov](mailto:Zulfat.suara@nashville.gov) on 09/08/2020 at 8:45am CT**

Zulfat Suara  
At Large Council Member  
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County  
Metropolitan Council Office  
One Public Square, Suite 204  
P.O. Box 196300  
Nashville, TN 37219-6300

Dear Councilwoman Suara:

It is both an honor and a privilege to write a letter of support for the initiative to rename *downtown Nashville's* Fifth Avenue to Rep. John Lewis Way.

To honor our esteemed Fisk University alumnus in such a way would be so befitting of the late Congressman John Lewis, who became dedicated to the civil rights movement while he was a student in *Nashville*. As a Fisk University student, Lewis served as President of the Nashville Student Non-Violent Movement and stood at the forefront of sit-in protests in downtown Nashville. He never allowed his focus on Social Justice, Equality, and Civil Rights to be stunted by the racism and discrimination that he and others experienced. Instead, Lewis reached high as a leader, leaving a most impressive, barrier-breaking, and inspiring legacy in America. Congressman Lewis has often stated that he was inspired to get in trouble. During a visit to Nashville in 2012, he said, "I was inspired to get in the way. For more that 50 years, I've been getting in the way. I've been getting in trouble – good trouble, necessary trouble".

We, at Fisk University, applaud Congressman Lewis, a 'Son Ever on the Altar' for his courage, his vision, his discipline and his "good trouble, necessary trouble".

Sincerely,

Vann R. Newkirk, Sr., Ph.D.  
Interim President



**COLIN V. REED**  
CHAIRMAN & CEO

As the owners and stewards of Ryman Auditorium, we at Ryman Hospitality Properties have a deep appreciation for the rich and layered history of our downtown streets. While many know 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North as the location where fans lined up every Saturday night for more than 30 years for a chance to experience the Grand Ole Opry at its most famous former home, there is another layer of history embedded in these sidewalks that should be recognized and commemorated: Nashville's prominent role in the Civil Rights Movement.

At the center of that legacy is U.S. Representative John Lewis, who was a student at American Baptist Theological Seminary when he successfully led a group of college students to sit-in at downtown lunch counters on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. Following the Nashville Sit-Ins, Rep. Lewis became part of the movement to desegregate interstate bus travel in the south. Lewis was one of the original 13 Freedom Riders who departed Washington, D.C., for New Orleans, Louisiana. Four months later, in Nashville, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. presented Lewis with a scholarship on the Ryman stage at a "Tribute to the Freedom Riders" concert held there during the 1961 annual meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Though Rep. Lewis endured physical and verbal attacks and life-threatening injuries as a leader of the movement, his quest for equality, justice and freedom for Black Americans never faltered. His contributions to our country started here in Nashville, and it is time we honor his legacy on the very streets where the Civil Rights Movement took shape.

The legacy of the Ryman Auditorium is as rich and layered as the streets that surround it, and we are proud that Rep. Lewis and the Civil Rights Movement will forever be part of that history. His contributions to our country started here in Nashville, and today, we call for 5th Avenue North to be renamed Rep. John Lewis Way to honor his commitment to non-violent protest and the ongoing fight for equality and justice.

Signed,

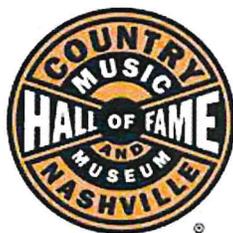
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Colin Reed", written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Colin Reed

## Suara, Zulfat

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**From:** Kyle Young <KYoung@CountryMusicHallofFame.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 14, 2020 5:03 PM  
**To:** Sam Reed  
**Subject:** Letter in support of John Lewis Way



HONOR THY MUSIC®

August 14, 2020

Dear committee:

First things first: the question of whether it is appropriate and right to re-name a major Nashville thoroughfare (Fifth Avenue, from Korean Veterans' Boulevard at the south end, across Broadway to Jefferson Street on the north side), "John Lewis Way," in honor of the recently deceased congressman and Civil Rights leader, would seem to have been answered long ago.

Mr. Lewis, after strapping on his "marching shoes," transferred that shoe leather to dirt roads, small-town streets, and the intimidating shoulders of highways throughout the South, in an arduous, lifelong hike toward his goal of spreading love in pursuit of truth, justice, and equality for all people.

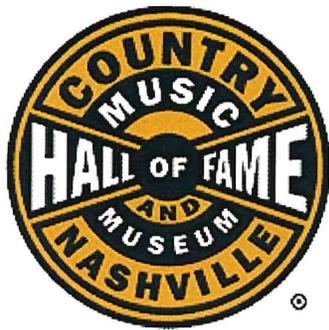
Really, given the number and nature of his accomplishments, Mr. Lewis's name should already be on many streets, in many cities, and certainly, it will be someday. Few persons in history have enjoyed such universal acclaim and respect while working to dislodge the status quo.

Had he never come to Nashville at all, it still would be appropriate to name a Nashville street for Lewis, in recognition of his many accomplishments, but Lewis, who grew up in the country near Troy, Alabama, (Martin Luther King often called him, affectionately, "the boy from Troy") did come North, to study at Nashville's American Baptist College. He also attended Fisk University and on February 13, 1960, with coaching and instruction in non-violent resistance

from Jim Lawson, Lewis sat down at Woolworth’s lunch counter, and ordered a Coke and a hamburger. All hell broke loose—for the next ten plus years.

Certainly the most important walk Lewis took came over five years later in Selma, when he led a group on a treacherous stroll across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The march to Montgomery that ensued was a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement. Now Lewis has taken his last “long journey home.” We should celebrate him in every way we can. Lest we forget.

KY



August 13, 2020

Councilmember Zulfat Suara  
One Public Square, Suite 204,  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219-6300

Dear Councilmember Suara,

As a developer who has contributed the skyline in Nashville over the last 30 years, most recently adding 505 at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Church, I have a deep appreciation for the rich and layered history of our downtown streets. While many know 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North for historic venues like The Ryman Auditorium, there is another layer of history embedded in its sidewalks that should be recognized and commemorated: Nashville's prominent role in the Civil Rights Movement.

At the center of that legacy is U.S. Representative John Lewis, who was a student at American Baptist Theological Seminary when he successfully led a group of college students to sit-in at downtown lunch counters on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. Following the Nashville Sit-Ins, Rep. Lewis became part of the movement to desegregate interstate bus travel in the south. Lewis was one of the original 13 Freedom Riders who departed Washington, D.C., for New Orleans, Louisiana. Four months later, in Nashville, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. presented Lewis with a scholarship on the Ryman stage at a "Tribute to the Freedom Riders" concert held there during the 1961 annual meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Though Representative Lewis endured physical and verbal attacks and life-threatening injuries as a leader of the movement, his quest for equality, justice and freedom for Black Americans never faltered. His contributions to our country started here in Nashville, and it is time we honor his legacy on the very streets where the Civil Rights Movement took shape.

I am proud that Representative Lewis and the Civil Rights Movement will forever be part of that history. His contributions to our country started here in Nashville, and today, we call for 5th Avenue North to be renamed Rep. John Lewis Way to honor his commitment to non-violent protest and the ongoing fight for equality and justice.

Very truly yours,

GIARRATANA, LLC

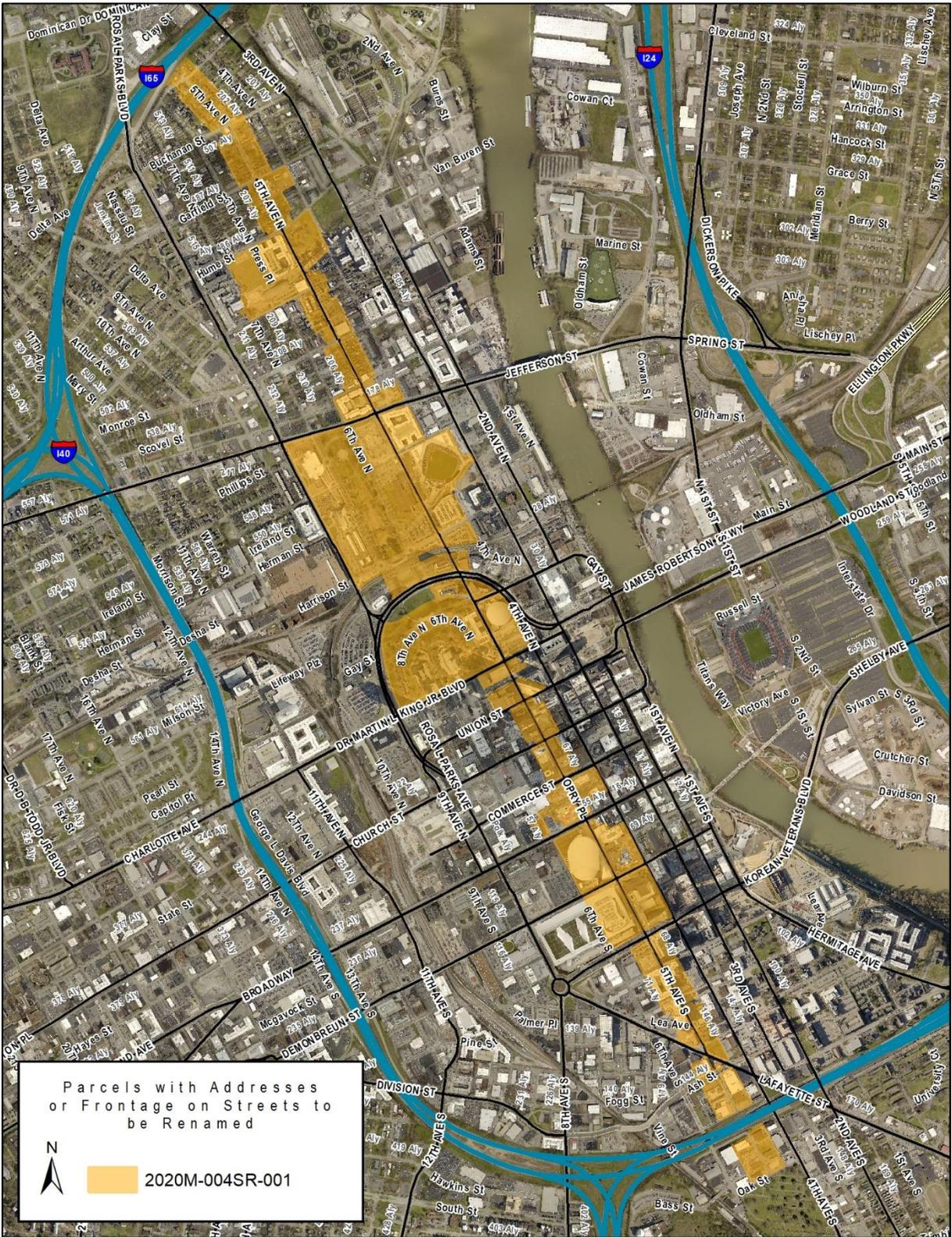
By: \_\_\_\_\_



Anthony D. Giarratana, President

cc: The Honorable John Cooper

# Exhibit A



# ORIGINAL

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*METROPOLITAN COUNTY COUNCIL*

Bill No. \_\_\_\_\_

**An ordinance to amend the Geographic Information Systems Street and Alley Centerline Layer for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, by changing the name of 5th Avenue N., and Opry Place to "Rep. John Lewis Way N." and by changing the name of 5th Avenue S. to "Rep. John Lewis Way S." (Proposal No. 2020M-004SR-001).**

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*Introduced* \_\_\_\_\_

*Passed First Reading* \_\_\_\_\_

*Amended* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Passed Second Reading* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Passed Third Reading* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Approved* \_\_\_\_\_

*By* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Metropolitan Mayor*

*Advertised* \_\_\_\_\_

*Effective Date* \_\_\_\_\_

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