



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: BL2020-450, **Version:** 3

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).

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. Effective January 1, 2021, 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 5th Ave. N. from Commerce St. to Jefferson St. as “Rep. John Lewis Way N.”; and

By renaming 5th 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 3. The Metropolitan Council hereby determines that, notwithstanding the provisions of Section 13.08.015.E.3 of the Metropolitan Code to the contrary, the section of 5th Ave. N. between Jefferson St. and I-65 should retain the street name of 5th Ave. N. given the impact upon residential properties.

Section 4. This ordinance shall take effect immediately after its passage, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

This ordinance, as amended, amends 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.” Representative John Lewis died on July 17, 2020 after battling cancer. He began his lifelong civil rights work while attending the American Baptist Theological Seminary and later at Fisk University in Nashville. He was a leader in the historic lunch counter sit-ins on 5th Avenue that led to Nashville becoming the first Southern city to begin the desegregation of public places. As a student, Congressman Lewis attended nonviolence workshops held at Clark Memorial United Methodist Church by the Rev. James Lawson and Rev. Kelly Miller Smith. In 1961, Lewis was one of the 13 original “Freedom Riders.” He went on to serve as an

Atlanta city councilman and as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives beginning in 1986.

In honor of Representative Lewis, this ordinance would make the following street name changes:

- By renaming 5th Ave. N. from Commerce St. to Jefferson St. as “Rep. John Lewis Way N.”;
- By renaming Opry Place from Broadway to Commerce St. as “Rep. John Lewis Way N.”; and
- By renaming 5th Ave. S. from Broadway to Oak Street as “Rep. John Lewis Way S.”

Although this ordinance originally would have renamed the section of 5th Ave. N. through Germantown and Salemtown, it was amended on first reading to remove that portion given the impact upon a large number of residents.

This ordinance has been approved by the ECD Board and the Planning Commission. The required report from the Historical Commission is available as an attachment to the ordinance.

This ordinance would be effective January 1, 2021.