



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2022-1374, **Version:** 1

A resolution recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Centennial Art Center.

WHEREAS, Spring 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the historic Centennial Art Center located on 25th Avenue North; and

WHEREAS, the Centennial Art Center (CAC) was established in the summer of 1972 and has been recognized as one of Nashville's leading community art education institutions; and

WHEREAS, the building was originally constructed in 1932 and served as Nashville's premier swimming facility; and

WHEREAS, the complex was a "Whites-only" pool and boathouse and was abruptly shut down in 1961 in response to an effort to integrate the pool led by two African American students, Kwame Lillard and Matthew Walker, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, the city went on to close all Nashville public pools, blaming the sweeping closures on budgetary concerns. When Nashville and Davidson County consolidated into a Metropolitan Government in 1963, many neighborhood pools eventually reopened, but the CAC building sat vacant for nearly ten years - to some, a daily reminder of the city's racial divide; and

WHEREAS, on April 23, 1972, the CAC became the first Metro Nashville owned structure that was rehabilitated for adaptive reuse reopening as an art gallery and visual arts teaching facility; and

WHEREAS, the former deep end of the swimming pool was preserved as a sunken lawn in the rear portion of the building's courtyard where events are now regularly hosted; and

WHEREAS, the CAC art gallery showcases the art of local and regional professional and emerging artists and is open to the public free of charge; and

WHEREAS, the CAC building is also home to art studios and hosts 23 weekly pottery and painting classes; and

WHEREAS, over the years the CAC has become the hub of Metro Parks' Visual Arts Program; and

WHEREAS, this year, Metro Parks will shed light on the little-known history of the building's origins and use the 50th anniversary as a time of both reflection and celebration; and

WHEREAS, a historical marker will be placed at the front of the building acknowledging the site of the former swimming pool complex and explain the reasons for the city-wide pool closures during the Civil Rights movement, despite efforts to desegregate; and

WHEREAS, educational signage and interpretive panels will be installed in the courtyard so that visitors can learn more about Kwame Lillard and Matthew Walker, Jr.'s efforts to integrate the pools; and

WHEREAS, Metro Parks encourages the public to get involved and share their memories of this important

time in the city's history; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Centennial Art Center and recognizes the history of its origins.

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

Section 1. The Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Centennial Art Center.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.