

ORDINANCE
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

CITY HALL: September 3, 2026

CALENDAR NO. 35,560

NO. _____ MAYOR COUNCIL SERIES

**BY: COUNCILMEMBERS KING, MCCARRON, HARRIS, GREEN, HUGHES,
WILLARD AND MORRELL**

AN ORDINANCE to name the Tremé Recreation Community Center located at 900 North Villere Street the Jerome Smith Recreation Community Center; and otherwise to provide with respect thereto.

WHEREAS, the citizens of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana mourn the passing of legendary civil rights icon, Freedom Rider, mentor, and community champion, Jerome "Big Duck" Smith, who passed away on August 21, 2026, at the age of 87;

WHEREAS, born and raised in New Orleans, Jerome Smith learned courage and dignity from his mother, Mrs. Leona Smith, displaying early defiance against segregation when, as a young boy, he took a seat in the whites-only section of the St. Claude Avenue streetcar;

WHEREAS, Jerome Smith served as drum major for the Joseph S. Clark High School Band, attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, and worked as a dockworker along the New Orleans riverfront, where he first became involved in labor and grassroots organizing;

WHEREAS, answering the call of the Civil Rights Movement, Jerome Smith joined the Congress of Racial Equality and bravely participated in picket lines, demonstrations, and lunch-counter sit-ins along Canal Street to dismantle Jim Crow segregation;

WHEREAS, in 1961, Jerome Smith courageously joined the Freedom Rides to challenge unlawful segregation in interstate travel across the American South, enduring vicious mob violence and severe beatings in McComb, Mississippi, yet refusing to surrender the fight for justice;

WHEREAS, in May 1963, Jerome Smith participated in the historic Manhattan meeting between civil rights figures and U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, where he gave an impassioned, unfiltered account of the suffering and urgency of Black Americans, helping catalyze national action toward the Civil Rights Act of 1964;

WHEREAS, in 1968, Jerome Smith co-founded the Tamborine & Fan youth organization with Rudy Lombard, based at the Tremé Recreation Community Center, establishing a safe haven and creative sanctuary for generations of New Orleans youth;

WHEREAS, through Tamborine & Fan, Jerome Smith connected youth to the city's rich cultural traditions, including Mardi Gras Indian heritage, brass bands, and street parading, while instilling discipline, self-worth, athletic training, and historical awareness;

WHEREAS, he earned the beloved moniker "Big Duck" because neighborhood children affectionately followed him like ducklings through the streets of Tremé;

WHEREAS, Jerome Smith lived by the conviction that his life's work was not merely about civil rights, demanding that human dignity and the light in every child's eye be recognized and respected; and

WHEREAS, Jerome "Big Duck" Smith leaves behind a lasting mark on the struggle for racial equality, having enriched the cultural soul of New Orleans, and touched the lives of countless young people whom he mentored into leaders; **NOW, THEREFORE**

1 **SECTION 1. THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS HEREBY**
2 **ORDAINS**, That the Tremé Recreation Community Center located at 900 North Villere Street
3 shall henceforth be named the Jerome Smith Recreation Community Center.

1 **SECTION 2.** That the Chief Administrative Officer shall direct the appropriate
2 administrative offices and departments, including the Department of Property Management, to
3 implement the name change.

1 **SECTION 3.** That the Clerk of Council shall send a certified copy of this Ordinance to
2 Joseph Giarrusso, III, First Deputy Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer and to Natasha
3 Robinson, Interim Chief Executive Officer, New Orleans Recreation Development Commission.

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS _____

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

DELIVERED TO THE MAYOR ON _____

APPROVED:
DISAPPROVED: _____

MAYOR

RETURNED BY THE MAYOR ON _____ **AT** _____

CLERK OF COUNCIL

ROLL CALL VOTE:
YEAS:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

RECUSED: