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## 37625

Resolution

### Rename O'Bryant Square to Darcelle XV Plaza

Adopted

WHEREAS, the City owns O'Bryant Square (the "Park"), located at 800 SW Harvey Milk Street, which is the city block surrounded by SW Park Ave and SW 9th Ave, and SW Harvey Milk Street and SW Washington Street; and,

WHEREAS, the land was donated by Mr. and Mrs. William E. Roberts in 1971. The site features were mostly built of brick and concrete and were designed by Donald Edmundson and Evan Kennedy of the Portland firm of Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall. The site was dedicated in December 1973; and,

WHEREAS, the site had a dominant feature, a bronze fountain in the shape of a rose, titled "Fountain to a Rose." This fountain was made possible through a bequest from Donald Card Sloan, a prime minister of the Royal Rosarians, and it was surrounded by rose bushes and other plants; and,

WHEREAS, the site was constructed with an underground parking garage that could accommodate up to 90 cars; and,

WHEREAS, in 1976, O'Bryant Square received a national design award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and,

WHEREAS, Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) managed the public Square, while the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) managed the underground parking garage as part of PBOT's SmartPark Garage operations; and,

WHEREAS, in 2018, PP&R and PBOT jointly closed the Square and garage to the public following a structural engineering assessment that recommended the closure due to ongoing water intrusion from the plaza into the garage caused by a failed waterproofing membrane; and,

WHEREAS, Council, through Ordinance 191235 passed on April 12, 2023, authorized the demolition of the plaza and garage; and,

WHEREAS, PP&R is currently working with community partners, including but not limited to the Portland Parks Foundation and Portland State University—to determine a new future for the site, including its features, amenities, and urban activations; and,

WHEREAS, the presence and visibility of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, and other sexual and gender minority (LGBTQIA2S+) communities are vital to the quality of life for all

#### Introduced by

[Mayor Ted Wheeler;](#)  
[Commissioner Dan Ryan](#)

#### Contact

**Darion Jones**  
Policy Advisor & Constituent  
Relations Coordinator

✉ [darion.jones@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:darion.jones@portlandoregon.gov)

**Megan Lehman**  
City Council & Process Policy  
Advisor

✉ [megan.m.lehman@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:megan.m.lehman@portlandoregon.gov)

#### Requested Agenda Type

Time Certain

#### Date and Time Information

##### Requested Council Date

July 13, 2023

##### Requested Start Time

2:00 pm

##### Time Requested

45 minutes

residents and visitors in the City of Portland, a city of bridges that is known as a safe harbor and home for this community; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Portland is committed to diversity, social justice, equity, and mutual respect as fundamental aspects of a healthy community; and,

WHEREAS, Walter W. Cole, born in the Linnton neighborhood of Portland in 1930, acquired a tavern named Darcelle XV Showplace on Northwest Third and Davis in 1967 and operated it as a drag club. Darcelle XV Showcase eventually became the longest-running drag cabaret on the West Coast; and,

WHEREAS, Walter W. Cole's visionary dream captured the spirit of Portland and wove Darcelle XV Showcase into the fabric of our city; and,

WHEREAS, in 2011, at the age of 80, Walter C. Cole served as the grand marshal of the Portland Rose Festival's Starlight parade and received the City's Spirit of Portland Award; and,

WHEREAS, Walter C. Cole was recognized by the Guinness World Record in 2016 as the World's Oldest Performing Drag Queen, at the age of 85; and,

WHEREAS, in the spring of 2016, Oregon Public Broadcasting Company aired a segment on Oregon Experience chronicling the life and work of Walter W. Cole, bringing revolutionary changes during a long working career as Darcelle; and,

WHEREAS, Darcelle XV Showcase was nominated for national historic registry status by the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation, marking the first time an LGBTQIA2S+ establishment was considered in Oregon. It was later listed in November 2020 and is one of only two known drag cabarets to open prior to 1970 in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, Walter W. Cole passed away at the age of 92 on March 23, 2023, and a public memorial was held at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall on April 25, 2023, drawing a packed auditorium and attendees from around the country; and,

WHEREAS, in June 2023, Walter C. Cole was posthumously recognized as the first Oregonian to be named to the National LGTBQ Wall of Honor at the historic Stonewall Inn, a New York City club widely recognized as the birthplace of gay pride; and,

WHEREAS, Portland City Council recognizes that naming a City park is significant and meaningful; and,

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes the significant contributions made by Walter W. Cole in the long and ongoing struggle to live a whole and fulfilled life, championing, representing, and advocating for LGBTQIA2S+ communities for basic civil and human rights, and providing inspiration to all those who work against discrimination and oppression; and,

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes that the Darcelle XV Showcase is reflective and symbolic of the struggles and inspirations and has been a welcoming place for all people, including those who are part of Portland's, the nation's, and the world's LGBTQIA2S+ communities; and,

WHEREAS, the Council finds that renaming O'Bryant Square to Darcelle XV Plaza engenders a strong, positive image for this park and honors the historical, cultural, and social significance that Walter W. Cole brought to our city; and,

WHEREAS, renaming the Square to Darcelle XV Plaza provides future generations with inspiration to live positively, overcome adversities, strive to champion civil rights, and build a lifetime of work that supports individuality and humanity; and,

WHEREAS, renaming O'Bryant Square to Darcelle XV Plaza gives appropriate regard to this city park asset in light of its adjacency to SW Harvey Milk Street, which was renamed through Ordinance 188808 (passed in January 2018) from SW Stark Street to recognize another LGBTQIA2S+ leader and advocate; and,

WHEREAS, renaming O'Bryant Square to Darcelle XV Plaza would not create any undue commercialization of the site, despite the business nature of Darcelle XV Showcase, because the Darcelle XV name holds iconic and national historic value; and,

WHEREAS, renaming to Darcelle XV Park has broad public support, as Walter C. Cole opened the door to so many people; and,

WHEREAS, the Council specifically exempts this City park renaming from the application and proposal process outlined in PRK 3.03 Sponsorship and Naming Policies at Park Properties; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that City Council hereby renames O'Bryant Square to Darcelle XV Plaza, and this resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City Council directs Portland Parks & Recreation to take all necessary action to publicize and use the new name, including but not limited to installing appropriate signage and carrying out reasonable and necessary administrative or communication actions as soon as practicable; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this renaming decision is final and not subject to appeal.

## **Impact Statement**

### **Purpose of Proposed Legislation and Background Information**

The renaming of O'Bryant Square to Darcelle XV Plaza represents a crucial step towards inclusivity, recognition, and respect for Portland's LGBTQIA2S+ community.

O'Bryant Square, with its deep-rooted history since its dedication in 1973 by Mr. and Mrs. William E. Roberts, has the opportunity to revitalize activation in Portland's downtown Plazas. By renaming the square, Portland can breathe new life into this space and honor the lasting impact of Walter W. Cole, the visionary who transformed drag entertainment and provided a safe haven for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations. Darcelle XV Showcase, the longest-running drag cabaret on the West Coast, carries immense cultural, historical, and social significance.

Renaming O'Bryant Square to Darcelle XV Plaza sends a powerful message of acceptance and recognizes Walter C. Cole's unwavering advocacy for LGBTQIA2S+ rights and his embodiment of strength and resilience. This decision aligns with Portland's values of diversity, social justice, equity, and mutual respect, and serves as a tribute to Walter C. Cole's lifelong commitment to equality and human rights.

The renaming also amplifies the visibility and representation of the LGBTQIA2S+ community in a prominent public space. Darcelle XV Plaza becomes a symbol of acceptance, love, and inclusivity, welcoming residents and visitors from all walks of life. It represents a significant stride towards embracing and uplifting LGBTQIA2S+ individuals while preserving the historical legacy of an establishment of national historic value.

As Portland Parks & Recreation takes necessary steps to implement the new name, Darcelle XV Plaza will stand as a powerful symbol of progress, unity, and resilience. This renaming decision reflects the City of Portland's commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment, where all individuals are respected and can live authentically. It reinforces the idea that diversity is celebrated, and every person deserves dignity, respect, and the freedom to be their true selves.

### **Financial and Budgetary Impacts**

N/A

### **Community Impacts and Community Involvement**

N/A

### **100% Renewable Goal**

N/A

### **Agenda Items**

590 Time Certain in [July 12-13, 2023 Council Agenda](https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2023/7/12)  
(<https://www.portland.gov/council/agenda/2023/7/12>)

Adopted

Commissioner Rene Gonzalez Yea

Commissioner Mingus Mapps Yea

Commissioner Carmen Rubio Yea

Commissioner Dan Ryan Yea

Mayor Ted Wheeler Yea