

1 Introduced by Council Members Carlucci, Diamond, Becton, Clark-
2 Murray, Pittman and Salem and Co-Sponsored by Council Members Howland
3 and Morgan:
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6 **RESOLUTION 2022-802-A**

7 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND COMMEMORATING THE
8 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RENOVATION OF THE ST.
9 JAMES BUILDING AS THE HOME OF JACKSONVILLE'S
10 CITY HALL; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
11

12 **WHEREAS**, the building now known as the St. James Building,
13 located at 117 West Duval Street downtown facing James Weldon Johnson
14 Park, originally opened in 1912 as the home of Cohen Brothers
15 Department Store, nicknamed "The Big Store" because it occupied a
16 full city block; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the St. James Building was purchased in 1993 by the
18 City of Jacksonville under the auspices of Mayor Ed Austin's forward-
19 thinking River City Renaissance program for use as a new City Hall.
20 The relocation of City Hall from Bay Street on the riverfront was
21 part of the overall vision of Mayor Austin and the City Council at
22 the time to centralize city government buildings around the downtown's
23 "Central Park", to add value to the redevelopment of the core of
24 downtown, and to open up Jacksonville's exceptional waterfront for
25 revitalization and new public access; and

26 **WHEREAS**, the current building was designed by famed architect
27 Henry John Klutho in the Prairie School style during Jacksonville's
28 rebuilding boom in the aftermath of the Great Fire of 1901, and took
29 the name "St. James Building" because it stands on the site of the
30 luxurious St. James Hotel that was consumed by the fire. The hotel
31 had been constructed in the latter half of the 19th century to cater

1 to the Northern tourist clientele that wintered in Jacksonville when
2 the city was a major tourism destination; and

3 **WHEREAS**, the building with its large atrium and glass skylight
4 was operated as a mixed use building with the department store
5 occupying several lower floors and rental office space on the upper
6 floors, including Mr. Klutho's architectural practice. He vacated the
7 building in 1927 never to return in protest of the owner's decision
8 to remove the skylight, which was at the second story level, and to
9 extend the floors across the atrium to create more merchandise display
10 space; and

11 **WHEREAS**, the Cohen Brothers Department Store operated until 1958
12 when it was purchased by the May Department Stores Company and was
13 renamed "May Cohens" until the store closed in 1987 with the advent
14 of the migration of department stores and other retail out of downtown
15 to suburban malls and shopping centers; and

16 **WHEREAS**, the building was carefully restored to very near its
17 original design, with the exception of the skylight being raised to
18 the roof level and the installation of the decorative flooring in the
19 atrium, and many of Mr. Klutho's exquisite architectural details,
20 including cornices, column capitals, elevator cages, herculean
21 figures, decorative embellishments, etc., were all meticulously
22 restored or recreated to bring back the full splendor of the 1912
23 construction; and

24 **WHEREAS**, after several years of design and construction, City
25 employees moved into the new City Hall at the St. James building in
26 December of 1997 and welcomed access to its new, larger, more
27 accessible and better equipped City Council Chamber, public meeting
28 rooms and beautiful atrium space to transact the peoples' business
29 in an inspiring and historic setting; now therefore

30 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

31 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby recognizes and

1 commemorates the 25th anniversary of the restoration and reopening of
2 the St. James Building as Jacksonville's new City Hall and commends
3 the generation of public and private sector leaders of the 1990s who
4 had the vision and persistence to rescue this landmark building and
5 restore its grandeur for public use.

6 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become
7 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
8 without the Mayor's signature.

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10 Form Approved:

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12 /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos

13 Office of General Counsel

14 Legislation Prepared By: Jeff Clements, City Council Research

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