

1 Introduced by Council Members Carlucci, Diamond, Becton, Clark-
2 Murray, Pittman and Salem:

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5 **RESOLUTION 2022-802**

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

10
11 **WHEREAS**, the building now known as the St. James Building,
12 located at 117 West Duval Street downtown facing James Weldon Johnson
13 Park, originally opened in 1912 as the home of Cohen Brothers
14 Department Store, nicknamed "The Big Store" because it occupied a
15 full city block; and

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

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

1 the city was a major tourism destination; and

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

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

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

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

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

30 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby recognizes and
31 commemorates the 25th anniversary of the restoration and reopening of

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

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

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9 Form Approved:

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11 /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos

12 Office of General Counsel

13 Legislation Prepared By: Jeff Clements, City Council Research

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