

1 [Commemorative Street Plaques - Childhood Homes of Jerry Garcia in the Excelsior District]

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3 **Resolution authorizing the placement of sidewalk plaques in front of the two childhood**
4 **homes of Jerry Garcia located in the Excelsior District in accordance with Public Works**
5 **Code, Sections 789 et seq., the Commemorative Street Plaque Ordinance.**

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7 WHEREAS, As singer, lead guitarist, and unofficial spokesperson for the Grateful
8 Dead, Jerry Garcia became a reluctant cultural icon of psychedelic music and the hippie
9 movement that helped define San Francisco in the 1960s; and

10 WHEREAS, The excitement and optimism of the San Francisco counterculture in that
11 era was perhaps best summarized by Hunter S. Thompson, who wrote, “there was a fantastic
12 universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning. And that, I
13 think, was the handle—that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in
14 any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply prevail. There was
15 no point in fighting—on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest
16 of a high and beautiful wave;” and

17 WHEREAS, The Grateful Dead were the house band for the Acid Tests organized by
18 Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, where the lines between performers and audience were
19 blurred, and they enjoyed the freedom to experiment with their concept of group
20 improvisation; and

21 WHEREAS, The Grateful Dead’s commitment to group improvisation, their ever-
22 expanding catalog of songs, and the intense connection many fans felt to the music led to the
23 phenomenon of fans, known as “deadheads,” following the band on tour, that grew to become
24 an itinerant community whose culture and appearance remained largely unchanged through
25 the 1990s and even onto the modern day following related bands; and

1 WHEREAS, Throughout their 30-year career, the Grateful Dead pioneered a number of
2 advancements in live audio technology: they were the first band to use onstage monitors in
3 the 1960s; their ambitious 1974 "Wall of Sound" speaker system was the first large-scale
4 example of the line array systems that are now the industry standard; they made extensive
5 use of digital MIDI instruments in the 1980s; and in the 1990s, they were one of the first bands
6 to use in-ear monitors; and

7 WHEREAS, The Grateful Dead is widely considered to be the most recorded band in
8 history with more than 9,000 different recordings of their shows in public circulation; and

9 WHEREAS, In recent years, the Grateful Dead has been the subject of much academic
10 study with the establishment of the Grateful Dead Archive at the University of California at
11 Santa Cruz, the publishing of numerous volumes of academic papers, and the convening of
12 multiple symposia to discuss Grateful Dead scholarship; and

13 WHEREAS, In addition to playing more than 2,000 shows with the Grateful Dead from
14 1965 to 1995, Garcia played a wide array of musical styles from rhythm and blues and reggae
15 with the Jerry Garcia Band, to avant-garde fusion jazz with Howard Wales, to bluegrass banjo
16 with Old and in the Way, to pedal steel guitar with the country rock band, the New Riders of
17 the Purple Sage, to gypsy jazz with mandolinist David Grisman; and

18 WHEREAS, Bob Dylan once said of the breadth of Garcia's music, "there are a lot of
19 spaces and advances between the Carter family, Buddy Holly and, say, Ornette Coleman, a
20 lot of universes, but he filled them all without being a member of any school;" and

21 WHEREAS, Jerry Garcia was born in San Francisco on August 1, 1942; and

22 WHEREAS, While Garcia and the Grateful Dead are most commonly associated with
23 the Haight-Ashbury District where they lived in the 1960s, much of Garcia's formative years
24 were spent in the Excelsior District; and

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1 WHEREAS, Garcia lived his first five years at 121 Amazon Avenue in the Excelsior
2 District; and

3 WHEREAS, After Garcia’s father drowned in a fly-fishing accident and his mother
4 began working full-time to provide for the family, Jerry and his brother Tiff moved in with his
5 maternal grandparents at 87 Harrington Street, also in the Excelsior District; and

6 WHEREAS, The Harrington Street house was such an important part of his childhood
7 that the only book Garcia ever wrote was an illustrated memoir of his childhood, titled
8 *Harrington Street*; and

9 WHEREAS, Garcia’s childhood was surrounded by music: his father José was a swing-
10 band leader, his mother Ruth played the piano, and Garcia said he learned to love bluegrass
11 and country music through his grandmother Tille’s habit of listening to the Grand Ole Opry on
12 Saturday nights; and

13 WHEREAS, Garcia was also a gifted visual artist who studied at the California School
14 of Fine Arts and produced nearly 500 pieces of art between 1985 and 1995 using watercolor,
15 gouache, pencil, ink, airbrush and digital media; and

16 WHEREAS, Garcia attributed his early interest in drawing and pursuing art as a career
17 to encouragement from his third grade teacher at Monroe Elementary School; and

18 WHEREAS, “Jerry Day” is as an annual concert, begun in 2002, celebrating the music
19 of Jerry Garcia at the amphitheater at McLaren Park; and

20 WHEREAS, On July 21, 2005, the amphitheater at McLaren Park was officially
21 renamed the Jerry Garcia Amphitheater—the first public facility in the United States to be
22 named after Jerry Garcia; and

23 WHEREAS, Jerry Garcia’s legacy lives on through newly released recordings, the new
24 bands formed by the surviving members of the Grateful Dead, and numerous tribute bands,
25 many of which are accompanied across the country by new generations of deadheads; and

1 WHEREAS, Commemorating the childhood homes of Jerry Garcia will celebrate
2 Garcia’s unique contributions to the social and cultural life of the City and help promote the
3 significant role the Excelsior District played in the formative years of this unique San
4 Franciscan; now, therefore, be it

5 RESOLVED, That the Board, in accordance with Public Works Code, Sections 789 et
6 seq., the Commemorative Street Plaque Ordinance, authorizes the placement of plaques on
7 the sidewalk in front of Jerry Garcia’s childhood homes at 87 Harrington Street and 121
8 Amazon Street; and, be it

9 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board directs the Department of Public Works to
10 complete the process for reviewing and permitting the installation of plaques in the
11 abovementioned locations and placing the abovementioned addresses on the City's official list
12 of commemorative sites.