

1 [Urging the Recreation and Parks Commission to Remove the Name of Justin Herman from
2 the Plaza on The Embarcadero]

3 **Resolution urging the Recreation and Parks Commission to remove the name of Justin**
4 **Herman from the plaza located at the intersection of The Embarcadero and Market**
5 **Street.**

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7 WHEREAS, In 1972, the plaza at the foot of Market Street, adjacent to The
8 Embarcadero was opened and named after Justin Herman; and

9 WHEREAS, Justin Herman was the executive director of the San Francisco
10 Redevelopment Agency between 1959 and 1971; and

11 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency relied on funding from the
12 federal government’s Housing and Home Finance Agency (now known as the Department of
13 Housing and Urban Development); and

14 WHEREAS, The California Redevelopment Act of 1945 allowed cities and counties to
15 create redevelopment areas to combat so-called “urban blight”, which was defined by income
16 level of residents, dilapidation of building structures and social conditions, including the size of
17 non-white populations; and

18 WHEREAS, To combat “urban blight”, the redevelopment agencies promoted “urban
19 renewal” which assumed that the method to “improve” a neighborhood was to destroy it, and
20 accumulated properties through eminent domain; and

21 WHEREAS, These misguided development projects, called “slum removal”, did not
22 recognize and value the existing vibrant neighborhoods – mostly, low-income and of people of
23 color – being destroyed; and

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1 WHEREAS, During Herman’s tenure as director, he oversaw the second phase of the
2 redevelopment of the Western Addition, that displaced approximately 4,000 residents, small
3 businesses, and bull-dozed 60 square blocks of the City; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1970, Herman said “This land is too valuable to permit poor people to
5 park on it”; to give credibility to this “urban renewal” project that sought to buy up buildings
6 and evict people who were poor, old, black and brown; and

7 WHEREAS, The redevelopment of the Western Addition also included the building of
8 the Geary Expressway that divided and separated the largely African-American Fillmore
9 District from the Japanese community to its east; and

10 WHEREAS, Not only did the Japanese community suffer displacement during
11 redevelopment but it had recently reestablished its roots in the City after being forcibly
12 removed to internment camps during World War II; and

13 WHEREAS, Despite robust African-American community opposition and litigation,
14 Phase 2 of the Western Addition redevelopment was implemented; now, therefore, be it

15 WHEREAS, According to Recreation and Park Department officials, the estimated cost
16 to change the name of Justin Herman Plaza is \$5,200 which includes replacing two signs
17 bearing the name of the Plaza and could be paid for from the Department's materials and
18 supplies budget.

19 RESOLVED, That given its location, the plaza on The Embarcadero, particularly since
20 the demolition of the Central Freeway in 1991, is a key public space for residents and tourists,
21 and provides an important connection between downtown and the waterfront; and, be it

22 RESOLVED, That if the plaza on The Embarcadero be named for a honored resident,
23 that this person should embody San Francisco values of equity, inclusion and forward-
24 thinking; and, be it

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1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Recreation and
2 Parks Commission to remove the name of Justin Herman from the plaza at The Embarcadero
3 and Market Street; and, be it

4 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the plaza be known as the “Embarcadero Plaza” until a
5 suitable honoree has been agreed upon.

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