

MOTION

ARTS, PARKS, HEALTH, EDUCATION, & NEIGHBORHOOD

Venice would not exist today without the incredible work Arthur Reese and Irving Tabor put into establishing the community as a global tourist destination and cultural center in Los Angeles. The significant role played by these two African-American co-founders of Venice deserve greater recognition from the City of Los Angeles.

The community of Oakwood in Venice was established in the 1920s by African American families and employees of developer Abbot Kinney, who contracted Arthur Reese to help design and build the canals modeled after Venice, Italy. Oakwood was the only area in Venice in the early 1900s that was available for African-Americans to purchase land to build homes on and sits north of Electric Avenue, between Westminster and San Juan. The Oakwood community is home to a rich and unique history that must be preserved for generations to come.

Arthur Reese was a designer and businessman from Louisiana, who built a house for his family in Oakwood and encouraged others from back home to join him in Venice. He designed the original gondola used to take tourists around the canals, and eventually became the head designer of Venice of America, Abbot Kinney's popular amusement park.

In 1910, 17 year-old Irving Tabor was invited by his cousin, Arthur Reese, to come live with him and work on establishing Venice of America. After meeting Abbot Kinney while working on the pier, Irving Tabor was hired as Kinney's chauffeur, leading to a close partnership that lasted until Kinney's death. Kinney left his large villa to Tabor, who because of racist housing covenants, cut the house into three pieces and moved it to the Oakwood community. The Irvin Tabor Family Residences (HCM #1149) represent one of the first residential properties in Venice built by and for African Americans.

Established in the 1950s after residents gave up their land to create the only green space in Oakwood, Oakwood Recreation Center (767 California Avenue) has long been a gathering place for the community. Descendants from the original African American community, existing residents, community leaders, and others strongly request Oakwood Park be renamed in honor of Arthur Reese and Irving Tabor in recognition of the significant contributions African Americans have made to Venice.

I THEREFORE MOVE to request that the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners rename Oakwood Recreation Center to "Reese-Tabor Park and Recreation Center."

 PRESENTED BY:


MIKE BONIN

Councilmember, 11th District


MARQUEECE HARRIS-DAWSON

Councilmember, 8th District

 SECONDED BY:

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