

Wilmington, Delaware
May 17, 2018

#4536

Sponsor:

Council
Member
Guy

WHEREAS, pursuant to Wilm. C. § 2-3 the mayor retains authority to sub-name by executive order any city street and designate the appropriate sub-name signage pursuant to subsection 2-298(17); and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the City take steps to properly recognize and pay tribute to Wilmington residents who make a significant impact on history and culture through their exemplary accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, one such resident is the renowned Edward L. Loper Sr., a nationally recognized artist whose paintings are celebrated for their vibrant use of color. His work is displayed in the Philadelphia Art Museum, the Delaware Art Museum, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, the Howard University Gallery of Art, the Museum of African American Art in Tampa, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Clark-Atlanta University Collection of African American Art. His paintings have also held places of honor in the Delaware Governor's Mansion and in the Vice President's official residence at Number One Observatory Circle in Washington, D.C. In the latter case, Vice President Joe Biden paid a personal visit to Dr. Loper's home to accept the work; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Loper was born in Wilmington in 1916 and grew up on Heald Street near Gander Hill. He graduated from Howard High School at a time when it was the only secondary school open to African Americans in the state. In 1936, he became the only African American to work as an illustrator for the Delaware Division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a federally funded program designed to keep artists working during

the Great Depression. The intricately detailed illustrations of American folk art he produced for the project have been preserved and digitized by the National Gallery of Art; and

WHEREAS, inspired by fellow Delaware artists Andrew Wyeth and Howard Pyle, Dr. Loper began teaching himself to paint, visiting the Philadelphia Museum of Art every weekend to observe the brush strokes of great masters. His hard work paid off, allowing him to break barriers facing black artists in the pre-Civil Rights era. In 1937, he became the first African American to enter the Annual Delaware Exhibition at the Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, where his work, “After a Shower,” won an honorable mention award. In 1941, he returned to the Annual Delaware Exhibition and won first prize for “Late Afternoon.” The same year, he exhibited a one-man show at the University of Delaware during a time when the school was still racially segregated. In 1945, he gained national acclaim when his works were included in the historic exhibition “The Negro Artist Comes of Age” at the Albany Institute of History and Art; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Loper, who received many accolades and awards throughout his life, including an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from Delaware State University, an Honorary Degree of Humane Letters from the University of Delaware and the Governor's Award for the Arts, said he made a deal with God that if he could make a living as a painter, he would give back by teaching. He was true to his word and taught for over 60 years, including 25 years at the Delaware Museum of Art. During his time as an instructor, he helped countless aspiring artists to “see color”; and

WHEREAS, City Council wishes to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments and contributions of Edward L. Loper, Sr., the “Prophet of Color” who opened doors for African American artists in Delaware, captured the essence of Wilmington in his celebrated paintings,

and helped shape and inspire generations of Delaware artists through his dedicated work as a teacher. Council therefore encourages the Mayor to sub-name the 1200 block of North Heald Street as “Edward L. Loper, Sr. Boulevard.”

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, that City Council respectfully encourages the Mayor to designate the 1200 block of North Heald Street as “Edward L. Loper, Sr. Boulevard,” in recognition of Mr. Loper’s significant contributions to the City of Wilmington. City Council looks forward to joining the Administration in celebrating this designation.

Passed by City Council,

Attest: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution encourages the Mayor to sub-name the 1200 block of North Heald Street as “Edward L. Loper, Sr. Boulevard,” in recognition of the renowned artist and teacher’s significant contributions to the City of Wilmington.