

DENVER CITY COUNCIL



Proclamation No. 26-0514 Honoring Mary Savina Mendoza

WHEREAS, the City and County of Denver takes pride in recognizing the extraordinary contributions of its citizens who have shaped the cultural, culinary, and entrepreneurial fabric of our great city; and

WHEREAS, Mary Savina Mendoza, known lovingly as "Savina," a name she carries after her mother, was born on April 19, 1943, the youngest of thirteen children, and was raised in East Denver, Colorado, where she attended Manual High School and began building the foundations of a remarkable life; and

WHEREAS, Savina embodied resilience, strength, and determination, qualities that would define her life's journey and after marrying Ronald Dean Sewald, built a family and a life filled with love and purpose; and

WHEREAS, following the tragic and untimely passing of her husband in 1972, Savina demonstrated extraordinary courage and resolve as a single mother of two young children, a six-year old and a six month old, channeling her grief into purpose by using the proceeds of his life insurance to open La Loma restaurant in 1973 alongside her beloved older sister, guided by the cherished recipes passed down by their mother, Grandma Mendoza; and

WHEREAS, Savina cultivated a remarkable and enduring partnership with her sister Vera and brother-in-law Art Padilla, whose collaboration helped grow La Loma into one of Denver's most beloved and enduring culinary institutions; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, partner Sonny Brinkerhoff joined the family business, and together, Savina, Vera, and Art, expanded La Loma to its iconic location "on the hill" in Northwest Denver, further cementing its reputation as a landmark of tradition, flavor, and authentic Mexican hospitality. The name "La Loma," meaning "the hill," a reflection of both its geographic roots and the elevated standard of excellence Savina established; and

WHEREAS, under the administration of Mayor Federico Peña, La Loma earned widespread recognition, winning "Taste of Colorado" honors for eight consecutive years - a testament to its excellence and cultural impact and after these repeated victories, Grandma Mendoza was invited to step aside from competition and instead serve as a judge, allowing others the opportunity to succeed while continuing to elevate the culinary community; and

WHEREAS, the partnership with the Brinkerhoff family has strengthened and sustained the restaurant's legacy, ensuring its continued success for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, throughout many La Loma and Savina's Mexican Kitchen locations, guests are welcomed by the portrait of Savina's mother, Grandma Mendoza, displayed in honor of her enduring legacy and the recipes she created, connecting each guest to the deep roots from which this institution grew; and

WHEREAS, Savina and her family wish to personally thank William, Mark, and Jo (Mendoza) Brinkerhoff for their vision in renaming select La Loma restaurants as "Savina's Mexican Kitchen," honoring a legacy begun over fifty years ago that has provided livelihoods and opportunity for generations of families; and while the beloved house "on the hill" is no longer, its heart endures as Savina's kitchen carrying forward her tradition of exceptional food and outstanding service, and preserving the everlasting history of Mexican and Latino culture, rooted in the cherished recipes that began on the stove of Grandma Mendoza, and ensuring Savina's spirit and story live on for generations; and

WHEREAS, the youngest of thirteen proudly carries her mother's name, Savina Mendoza, a tribute that reflects the deep family legacy and the lasting impact she has inspired across generations.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE DENVER CITY COUNCIL:

Section 1. That the Denver City Council honors Mary Savina Mendoza for her enduring contributions to the City and County of Denver, her pioneering spirit as a Latina businesswoman and founder of La Loma, and her lasting legacy of family, culture, and community.

Section 2. That the Clerk and Recorder of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be transmitted to Mary Savina Mendoza.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL April 13, 2026

PRESIDENT

