DENVER CITY COUNCIL

Proclamation

Proclamation No. 25-0718
A Proclamation Recognizing Michelle Jeske for 23 Years of Service to Denver Public Library

WHEREAS, Michelle Jeske joined the Denver Public Library 23 years ago and served in various roles, making an impact every step of the way. By the time she became Denver's City Librarian, Michelle understood firsthand what the City and County of Denver needed from its public library system — reevaluating the organization's philosophy to better fit those needs. Rather than leading Denver Public Library's 27 locations with a blanket strategy, Michelle understood each community required specialized care. She made herself a visible figure, becoming a leader the community and library staff could trust and count on to share their thoughts; and

WHEREAS, public libraries offer cost-free resources that are relied on by the city's most vulnerable populations, they are often underfunded. Michelle's understanding of what a well-funded public library system can do for its community energized her advocacy. Her successful advocacy led to new funding opportunities for the Denver Public Library, from which District 1 has seen direct benefits. Smiley Branch Library, a historic Carnegie library, saw a much-needed renovation thanks to the voter-approved 2017 Elevate Denver Bond and Michelle's advocacy to city officials. The Berkeley neighborhood now enjoys added study rooms, an improved community room, and improved accessibility features. Michelle's leadership navigated the library through a successful dedicated funding voting initiative in 2022 called the Strong Library, Strong Denver, leading to the creation of the DPL Fund. Libraries across Denver have been able to hire more staff, giving the city better access to its libraries; and

WHEREAS, District 3 is one of Denver's most blended and culturally distinct communities, it requires foresight and care. This is precisely what Michelle has done. In 2020, when the world shifted its perspective when faced with injustices, Michelle asked herself whether the Denver Public Library was doing enough to represent its values. Her sensitivities led to in-depth research on the names of every library location. After surveying the community, Michelle rallied her staff to rename two libraries to reflect the communities they serve. The Byers and Ross-Barnum are now the John "Thunderbird Man" Emhoolah Jr. Branch Library and the Ross-Phyllis Bigpond Branch Library, respectively. Each step involved community input, something that Michelle Jeske thought was vital. Beyond renaming, Michelle saw a need for an additional library in the Westwood neighborhood. With funding made possible through the 2021 RISE Denver Bond, she began work to fulfill this promise to the District 3 neighborhood. Using community feedback as the backbone in its creation, the Lena Archuleta Branch Library will open later this year thanks to her efforts; and

WHEREAS, the Denver Public Library serves many populations, Michelle's intuitive thinking recognized that the library can serve its community at every stage of life. In District 5, the Schlessman Family Branch Library and the Ross-Cherry Creek Library are often filled with children's excitement and laughter, and sights of older adult communities enjoying library programming, supporting each other. A library serving multiple purposes is a wonderful thing. This is thanks to Michelle's push for improved youth and teen-focused programming and the creation of the Older Adults Department that focuses on the needs of the 50-plus population. Thanks to Michelle's advocacy, Schlessman is undergoing a renovation that will include an improved dedicated Teen space, giving the neighborhood youth a space to call their own; and

WHEREAS, the Denver Public Library has had great leaders in the past, there is no doubt that Michelle's impact on the City and County of Denver is remarkable. When zooming in, the details of Michelle's work are intricate, and when zooming out, her impact is cohesive and consistent. Today, we wish Michelle Jeske all the best as she embarks on new journeys, and we thank her for leaving the Denver Public Library well-equipped for success. Her vision, dedication, and influence will impact the Denver Public Library for years to come, and her work will be a helpful blueprint for successors to follow. Michelle, your jubilation is much deserved, and we can't wait to see what's next.

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

Section 1. That the Denver City Council, recognizes the outstanding career and service of Denver City Librarian Michelle Jeske and her dedication to Denver Public Library.

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 Michelle Jeske.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL May 12, 2025

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PRESIDENT