

By: Flores

H.R. No. 25

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, El Mercado in Austin is celebrating its 40th  
2 anniversary on August 13, 2025; and

3 WHEREAS, Established by the Villegas family in 1985,  
4 El Mercado originated as a Mexican market on South First Street,  
5 just blocks from their home in a corridor that was largely  
6 residential; customers who came in for masa, spices, and other  
7 groceries could also pick up food prepared in a small kitchen; and

8 WHEREAS, The popularity of its Tex-Mex dishes led Camilo  
9 Villegas and his son, Tony, to clear out some shelves and add  
10 seating for diners; they ultimately transitioned to exclusively  
11 offering restaurant service and added patio dining; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1990, the restaurant opened another location on  
13 Burnet Road in North Austin, and three years later, it expanded to a  
14 site on Lavaca Street, near the State Capitol; at one point, the  
15 Villegas family operated five locations; and

16 WHEREAS, Camilo Villegas greeted customers and took care of  
17 any repairs until he died in 2007, at the age of 82; his wife,  
18 Gudelia Villasana Villegas, continued to drive herself to work at  
19 the restaurant's office, and she passed away in 2019 at the age of  
20 92; rising real estate values downtown prompted the sale of the  
21 El Mercado site on Lavaca in 2022, and the employees there  
22 transferred to other locations; and

23 WHEREAS, Today, Tony Villegas remains an able steward of the  
24 company's two oldest restaurants; El Mercado South also encompasses

1 a popular live music venue, the Backstage, where long-running  
2 residencies include the Monday Night Supper Club, Durawa Tuesdays,  
3 and the Purgatory Players gospel brunch, which raises funds for the  
4 Central Texas Food Bank; and

5 WHEREAS, While the Austin restaurant scene has changed  
6 dramatically over the course of four decades, El Mercado remains  
7 one of its stalwarts, to the great delight of its loyal following  
8 among fans of both Tex-Mex cuisine and local music; now, therefore,  
9 be it

10 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 89th Texas  
11 Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby congratulate El Mercado on  
12 its 40th anniversary and extend to Tony Villegas and all those  
13 associated with the restaurant sincere best wishes for continued  
14 success; and, be it further

15 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
16 prepared for the restaurant as an expression of high regard by the  
17 Texas House of Representatives.