

1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - Diego Rivera Mural “The Allegory of California”]

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3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**
4 **Diego Rivera’s fresco, titled “The Allegory of California,” painted in 1931 and located at**
5 **155 Sansome Street.**

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7 WHEREAS, Diego Rivera remains one of the most important and famous Mexican
8 artists of all time, whose fresco work helped to establish the thriving Mexican Mural Art
9 Movement in the 1920s, and who painted his first murals in the United States in San
10 Francisco; and

11 WHEREAS, San Francisco is home to three of Rivera’s masterpieces, including the
12 first fresco Diego Rivera completed in the United States entitled “The Allegory of California,”
13 which was painted in 1931 and is located within the grand stairwell inside of the former Pacific
14 Stock Exchange building at 155 Sansome Street in downtown San Francisco, now home of
15 The City Club; and

16 WHEREAS, The fresco depicts classic themes and motifs found in Rivera
17 compositions, namely harmony between nature and machine, a glorification of the past while
18 looking toward the future, and a panorama of historical figures; and

19 WHEREAS, According to Rivera’s autobiography, the large, looming female figure
20 represents Calafia, the Spirit of California, with her right hand mining the earth for hidden
21 treasures of the State of California, and her left hand holding the treasures that grow on its
22 surface; and

23 WHEREAS, The background of the fresco mural shows industries of the Bay Area: the
24 oil refineries of Richmond, the shipping yards facing the Pacific Ocean, and dredging
25 equipment then used in search of gold; and

1 WHEREAS, The forefront of the fresco depicts specific historical figures important to
2 the development of California as a state: James Marshall, who discovered gold at Sutter’s
3 Creek in 1948, famous horticulturist Luther Burbank, sculptor Peter Stackpole, and fellow
4 muralist Victor Arnautoff; and

5 WHEREAS, The Allegory of California fresco attracted immediate criticism and harsh
6 reactions, principally to Rivera’s nationality and Marxist political leanings, and quickly became
7 one Rivera’s most significant and well-known works; and

8 WHEREAS, The Allegory of California fresco is of particular significance to the Latinx
9 and Chicax communities, and, along with Rivera’s other murals in San Francisco, is part of
10 the direct lineage of the Mission Mural movement which remains a significant and vibrant part
11 of San Francisco’s cultural heritage, and it is the responsibility of civic and academic
12 institutions to include these communities in studies and decisions pertaining to the fresco;
13 now, therefore be it

14 RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates a separate landmark designation of Diego
15 Rivera’s masterpiece fresco “The Allegory of California,” created in 1931 at its sole and
16 current location at 155 Sansome Street; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department
18 prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission
19 for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of
20 the fresco; and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Historic Preservation
22 Commission consider whether the Mural warrants landmark designation and submit its
23 recommendation to the Board according to Article 10 of the Planning Code.

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