

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Planning Code - Landmark Designation - St. Nicholas Cathedral]

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate St. Nicholas Cathedral, located at 2005-15th Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 3558, Lot No. 74, on the south side of 15th Street between Sharon and Church Streets, as a landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302, and findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

Existing Law

Under Article 10, Section 1004 of the Planning Code, the Board of Supervisors may, by ordinance, designate an individual structure that has special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value as a City landmark. Unless prohibited by state law, once a structure has been named a landmark, any construction, alteration, removal or demolition for which a City permit is required necessitates a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission. (Planning Code § 1006; Charter of the City and County of San Francisco, § 4.135.) Thus, landmark designation generally affords a high degree of protection to historic and architectural structures of merit in the City. There are currently more than 300 individual landmarks in the City under Article 10, in addition to structures and districts in the downtown area that are protected under Article 11. (See App. A to Article 10.)

Amendments to Current Law

This ordinance amends the Planning Code to add a new historic landmark to the list of individual landmarks under Article 10: St. Nicholas Cathedral, located at 2005 15th Street, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 3558, Lot No. 74. The ordinance finds that St. Nicholas Cathedral is eligible for local designation because it is significant as an exemplary example of Gothic Revival architecture. Originally St. Luke's German Evangelical Lutheran Church, the building was constructed to serve the religious needs of the growing population in Eureka Valley. By 1931, the church changed its name to Bethel Evangelical Church, and in 1960 the property was acquired by the Russian Orthodox Church and renamed St. Nicholas Cathedral, at which point the onion domed finial and Orthodox cross were added. Gothic Revival style was a popular choice for residential and religious buildings during the early years of San Francisco's establishment and expansion, after initial Gold Rush-era settlement beginning in 1848. Extant examples of Gothic Revival architecture are rare in San Francisco, though most surviving buildings are churches. As required by Section 1004, the ordinance lists the particular features that shall be preserved, or replaced in-kind, as determined necessary.

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