

1 [Initiating Landmark Designation - Kong Chow Temple - 855 Stockton Street]

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3 **Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for**
4 **the Kong Chow Benevolent Association and Kong Chow Temple, located at 855**
5 **Stockton Street.**
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7 WHEREAS, Under Planning Code, Section 1004.1, the Board of Supervisors may by
8 Resolution initiate landmark designation; and

9 WHEREAS, Planning Code, Section 1004.2(b), requires the Historic Preservation
10 Commission to respond to historic district or individual landmark designations initiated by the
11 Board of Supervisors within 90 days, and authorizes the Board, by Resolution, to extend the
12 time within which the Historic Preservation Commission is to render its decision; and

13 WHEREAS, Founded in 1849 by Chinese immigrants, the Kong Chow Benevolent
14 Association and Temple, located at 855 Stockton Street, was one of the first Chinese mutual
15 aid associations and religious temples, making it a foundational institution for the Chinese
16 presence in the United States; and

17 WHEREAS, The California Gold Rush sparked the first major wave of Chinese
18 immigration to the United States, with nearly 300,000 Chinese immigrants arriving between
19 1850 and 1889; and

20 WHEREAS, While initially drawn by the promise of gold, many Chinese miners and
21 laborers were forced into low-wage, dangerous, and often exploitative labor, particularly in
22 mining and later railroad construction, due to discriminatory practices and policies that limited
23 their access to more lucrative opportunities and economic advancements; and

24 WHEREAS, Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush faced extremely difficult living
25 conditions, often relegated to overcrowded and unsanitary living quarters in segregated

1 communities, and were frequently subjected to intense racial discrimination, violence, and
2 theft, with little to no legal recourse or protection from authorities; and

3 WHEREAS, As San Francisco Chinatown began its formation in the mid-1840s, new
4 immigrants often sought support from family associations, which are voluntary organizations
5 formed by Chinese immigrants and their descendants, often according to shared surnames,
6 clans, or common places of origin in China; and

7 WHEREAS, By providing arrival and settlement assistance, mutual aid and welfare,
8 protection and advocacy, and cultural preservation, family associations became cornerstones
9 of the Chinese American community in the United States; and

10 WHEREAS, In response to growing need for a more unified voice to address ongoing
11 widespread anti-Chinese sentiment and discretionary laws, including the Chinese Exclusion
12 Act of 1882 and the Page Act of 1875, the six most influential family associations in San
13 Francisco, including the Sam Yup Benevolent Association, the Kong Chow Benevolent
14 Association, the Yeong Wo Benevolent Association, the Hoy Sun Ning Yung Benevolent
15 Association, the Hop Wo Benevolent Association, and the Yan Wo Benevolent Association
16 banded together to form a joint board of directors, widely known as the Chinese Six
17 Companies and later renamed to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association; and

18 WHEREAS, Kong Chow Association was originally formed by Chinese immigrants who
19 hailed from specific districts within Guangdong Province, China, primarily representing people
20 from Xinhui and Heshan districts, which were historically part of the Kong Chow (Gangzhou)
21 prefecture; and

22 WHEREAS, Kong Chow Temple was founded in 1849, and at its original location, it
23 was one of the first major Chinese temples in the United States to fulfill the cultural and
24 religious needs for the community; and

1 WHEREAS, The Kong Chow Temple practices traditional Chinese Daoism, and the
2 temple is dedicated to GuanDi, a Chinese God of war, literature, wealth, business, and social
3 harmony, and is known as a patron of external harmony and peace; and

4 WHEREAS, The land for the original Kong Chow Temple was donated to the Kong
5 Chow Benevolent Association by Yee Ah Tye, who also facilitated the establishment of the
6 Kong Chow Funerary Chapel at the City Cemetery, with the intention that the property would
7 be used to serve the community; and

8 WHEREAS, The original Kong Chow Temple was destroyed in the 1905 San Francisco
9 earthquake to stop the spread of fires, but it was rebuilt thanks to the donations of community
10 members; and

11 WHEREAS, Today, the Kong Chow Temple still has its original woodcarvings and
12 ornaments, which have been preserved for decades, surviving the earthquake, fire, and
13 temple relocation in 1969; and

14 WHEREAS, The Kong Chow Temple provided solace and release through religion for
15 Chinese immigrants, becoming a space that emphasized safety and harmony, and allowed
16 Chinese migrants to practice their religion; and

17 WHEREAS, The Kong Chow Benevolent Association and Temple continues to be
18 active today, where they organize prayer sessions, create social gathering space for seniors,
19 offer scholarships for students, and hold periodic cultural celebrations in preservation of
20 Chinese tradition, heritage, and the history of Chinese American migration into the United
21 States; now, therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors hereby initiates landmark designation of
23 the Kong Chow Benevolent Association and Temple, located at 855 Stockton Street; and, be
24 it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department
2 prepare a landmark designation report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission for
3 its consideration of the full historical, architectural, aesthetic, and cultural interest and value of
4 the Kong Chow Benevolent Association and Temple; and, be it

5 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors requests that the Historic
6 Preservation Commission consider whether the Kong Chow Benevolent Association and
7 Temple warrants landmark designation and submit its recommendation to the Board
8 according to Article 10 of the Planning Code.