

## **LEGISLATIVE DIGEST**

[Planning Code - Landmark Designation - 171 San Marcos Avenue (the Cowell House)]

**Ordinance designating 171 San Marcos Avenue (known as the Cowell House), Assessor's Block No. 2882, Lot No. 035, as a Landmark under Planning Code, Article 10; and making environmental findings, public necessity, convenience and welfare findings, 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. 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 ("HPC"). (Planning Code Section 1006; Charter of the City and County of San Francisco, Section 4.135.) Thus, landmark designation affords a high degree of protection to historic and architectural structures of merit in the City. There are currently more than 250 individual landmarks in the City under Article 10, in addition to other structures and districts in the downtown area that are protected under Article 11. (See Appendix 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: 171 San Marcos Avenue (known as the Cowell House).

The ordinance finds that 171 San Marcos Avenue is eligible for designation as a City landmark under National Register of Historic Places Criteria B and C (as it is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; and represents the work of a master architect). Specifically, designation of the Cowell House is proper given its association with innovative composer and pianist Henry Cowell and Olive Thompson Cowell who founded the International Relations Department at San Francisco State University, one of the first such programs in the United States and fostered a salon atmosphere at the house. It is also architecturally significant as one of San Francisco's earliest single-family houses of a fully expressed Modern design by master architectural firm Morrow & Morrow.

As required by Section 1004, the ordinance lists the particular exterior and interior features that shall be preserved, or replaced in-kind as determined necessary.

Background Information

The landmark designation was initiated by the HPC pursuant to its authority under the Charter to recommend approval, disapproval, or modification of landmark designations and historic district designations under the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors. The HPC held a hearing to initiate the landmark designation of 171 San Marcos Avenue (the Cowell House) on July 15, 2011. On October 7, 2015, after holding a public hearing on the proposed designation and having considered the Landmark Designation Case Report prepared by Planning Department staff Mary Brown, the HPC voted to recommend approval of the proposed landmark designation of 171 San Marcos Avenue to the Board of Supervisors.

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