

1 [Initiating Landmark Designation Amendment - Castro Theatre]

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3 **Resolution initiating an amendment to the landmark designation of 429-431 Castro**
4 **Street (aka Castro Theatre), Assessor's Parcel Block No. 3582, Lot No. 085, under**
5 **Article 10 of the Planning Code.**
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7 WHEREAS, Under Planning Code Section 1004.1, the Board of Supervisors (Board)
8 may by Resolution initiate a Landmark designation; and

9 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre was designated as a Landmark, #100, under Article
10 10 of the Planning Code, pursuant to Ordinance No. 355-77, passed by the Board on July 25,
11 1977; and

12 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre, built in the Spanish Colonial architectural style in
13 1922, is an exceptionally fine example of 1920's theatre design and represents a major work
14 by one of San Francisco's more prominent architects, Timothy Pfleuger; and

15 WHEREAS, The symmetrical facade is divided vertically into three roughly equal
16 portions, with the major element of the design being a large mullioned window, nearly as high
17 as the building itself, that is flanked by two smaller ones at mezzanine level; and

18 WHEREAS, The facade is painted a pale buff and pale pink colors, believed to
19 represent the original color scheme; and

20 WHEREAS, The exterior features a free-standing ticket office within a recessed
21 entryway with original tilework, the neon blade sign with animated Castro lettering and
22 intricate marquee over the sidewalk, both dating from the 1930's; and

23 WHEREAS, Publicly accessible interior spaces include a shallow front foyer with
24 stairways on both sides, a mezzanine lounge with a vaulted ceiling and a spacious auditorium
25 with a balcony; and

1 WHEREAS, Notable original features within the auditorium include a highly decorated
2 lintel and pair of columns framing its proscenium opening, organ screens adjacent to the
3 stage with small balconies, sidewalls with large sgraffito murals featuring a pair of colonnades
4 with fountains and a ceiling designed to resemble a tent with cast plaster features including
5 swags, ropes, tassels, wood flooring, interior and exit doors, and other details; and

6 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre's ornate interior exhibits a high level of craftsmanship
7 and continues to convey the feeling of a 1920's era theater; and

8 WHEREAS, Incorporating live organ music into regular film programming is a long
9 tradition unique to the Castro Theatre, with a raisable organ console platform at the front of
10 the stage facing the screen; and

11 WHEREAS, Since inception the Castro Theatre has been under continuous ownership
12 by San Francisco's oldest movie-business family, the Nassers; and

13 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre is located in the heart of the Castro District, an
14 important center of San Francisco's LGBTQ+ movement in the 1970s, which became a
15 national model for the struggle of the LGBTQ+ community for acceptance in the late 20th
16 century; and

17 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre is one of San Francisco's longest operating and most
18 iconic queer social spaces, hosting a myriad of LGBTQ-themed events, including movies, film
19 festivals, concerts, sing-a-longs, drag shows, and other events; and

20 WHEREAS, For decades the Castro has featured films catering to a queer audience,
21 including showcasing works of gay directors including Andy Warhol, John Waters, Jean
22 Cocteau and Pier Paolo Pasolini, and hosting the premiere of the first feature-length
23 documentary about gay and lesbian identity, "Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives" in
24 1977; and
25

1 WHEREAS, Since 1981 the Castro Theatre has served as the primary venue for the
2 San Francisco International LGBTQ+ Film Festival (also known as the Frameline Film
3 Festival), which is the longest running and largest LGBTQ+ film exhibition event in the world;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, Two Oscar winning films on late gay Supervisor Harvey Milk premiered at
6 the Castro Theatre, including “The Times of Harvey Milk” in 1984 and “Milk” in 2008; and

7 WHEREAS, The year 2022 marks the centennial of the Castro Theatre, which remains
8 among San Francisco’s most iconic landmarks and an anchor cultural institution in the Castro
9 neighborhood and LGBTQ+ community; now, therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors hereby initiates an amendment to the
11 landmark designation of the Castro Theatre, located at 429-431 Castro Street (Assessor’s
12 Block/Lot 3582/085); and, be it

13 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors requests that the Planning
14 Department prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation
15 Commission for its consideration of the full historical, architectural, aesthetic and cultural
16 interest and value, including but not limited to the interior, of the Castro Theatre; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors requests that the Historic
18 Preservation Commission consider what amendments to the landmark designation are
19 warranted to capture the property’s full historical significance, and submit its recommendation
20 to the Board of Supervisors, according to Article 10 of the Planning Code.
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