

BOARD of SUPERVISORS




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## MEMORANDUM

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Date: June 16, 2022  
To: Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department  
Jonas Ionin, Commission Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission  
From:  Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board, Office of the Clerk of the Board  
Subject: Initiating Landmark Designation Amendment - Castro Theatre  
(File No. 220550)

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On May 24, 2022, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 249-22, sponsored by Supervisors Mandelman, Chan, Peskin, Preston, and Dorsey; and approved by Mayor London N. Breed on June 3, 2022.

A copy of the Resolution is being forwarded to you pursuant to Resolution No. 249-22.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Erica Major, Assistant Clerk, at (415) 554-4441 or by email at: [Erica.Major@sfgov.org](mailto:Erica.Major@sfgov.org).

cc: Scott Sanchez, Zoning Administrator  
Lisa Gibson, Environmental Review Officer  
Corey Teague, Zoning Administrator  
Devyani Jain, Deputy Environmental Review Officer  
AnMarie Rodgers, Legislative Affairs  
Aaron Starr, Manager of Legislative Affairs  
Andrea Ruiz-Esquide, Deputy City Attorney  
Joy Navarrete, Major Environmental Analysis  
Laura Lynch, Environmental Planning  
Marcelle Boudreaux, Principal Planner

[Initiating Landmark Designation Amendment - Castro Theatre]

**Resolution initiating an amendment to the landmark designation of 429-431 Castro Street (aka Castro Theatre), Assessor's Parcel Block No. 3582, Lot No. 085, under Article 10 of the Planning Code.**

WHEREAS, Under Planning Code Section 1004.1, the Board of Supervisors (Board) may by Resolution initiate a Landmark designation; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre's ornate interior exhibits a high level of craftsmanship  
8 and continues to convey the feeling of a 1920's era theater; and  
9

10 WHEREAS, Incorporating live organ music into regular film programming is a long  
11 tradition unique to the Castro Theatre, with a raisable organ console platform at the front of  
12 the stage facing the screen; and  
13

14 WHEREAS, Since inception the Castro Theatre has been under continuous ownership  
15 by San Francisco's oldest movie-business family, the Nassers; and  
16

17 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre is located in the heart of the Castro District, an  
18 important center of San Francisco's LGBTQ+ movement in the 1970s, which became a  
19 national model for the struggle of the LGBTQ+ community for acceptance in the late 20th  
20 century; and  
21

22 WHEREAS, The Castro Theatre is one of San Francisco's longest operating and most  
23 iconic queer social spaces, hosting a myriad of LGBTQ-themed events, including movies, film  
24 festivals, concerts, sing-a-longs, drag shows, and other events; and  
25

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

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.



# City and County of San Francisco

## Tails

## Resolution

City Hall  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

**File Number:** 220550

**Date Passed:** May 24, 2022

Resolution initiating an amendment to the landmark designation of 429-431 Castro Street (aka Castro Theatre), Assessor's Parcel Block No. 3582, Lot No. 085, under Article 10 of the Planning Code.

May 23, 2022 Land Use and Transportation Committee - AMENDED, AN AMENDMENT OF THE WHOLE BEARING SAME TITLE

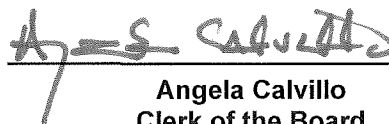
May 23, 2022 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED AS AMENDED AS A COMMITTEE REPORT

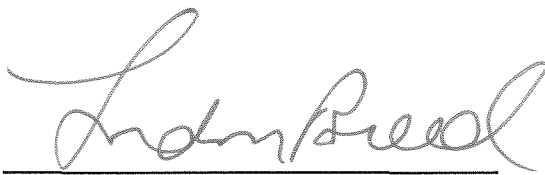
May 24, 2022 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

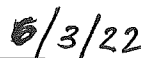
Ayes: 11 - Chan, Dorsey, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 220550

I hereby certify that the foregoing  
Resolution was ADOPTED on 5/24/2022 by  
the Board of Supervisors of the City and  
County of San Francisco.

  
Angela Calvillo  
Clerk of the Board

  
London N. Breed  
Mayor

  
6/3/22

Date Approved