[Planning Code - Landmark Designation - Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios]

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios, located at 737 Buena Vista Avenue West, Assessor's Parcel Block No. 1256, Lot No. 078, on the west side of Buena Vista Avenue West between Frederick Street and Central Avenue, 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.

NOTE: **Unchanged Code text and uncodified text** are in plain Arial font.
Additions to Codes are in *single-underline italics Times New Roman font*.
Deletions to Codes are in ~~*strikethrough italics Times New Roman font*~~.
Board amendment additions are in double-underlined Arial font.
Board amendment deletions are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.
Asterisks (* * * *) indicate the omission of unchanged Code subsections or parts of tables.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. Findings.

(a) Environmental and Land Use Findings.

(1) The Planning Department has determined that the Planning Code amendment proposed in this ordinance is subject to a Categorical Exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq., hereinafter "CEQA") pursuant to Section 15308 of California Code of Regulations,

Title 14, Sections 15000 et seq., the Guidelines for implementation of the statute, for actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (in this case, landmark designation). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 260587 and is incorporated herein by reference. The Board of Supervisors affirms this determination.

(2) Pursuant to Planning Code Section 302, the Board of Supervisors finds that the proposed landmark designation of the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios will serve the public necessity, convenience, and welfare for the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 1574, recommending approval of the proposed designation, which is incorporated herein by reference.

(3) The Board of Supervisors finds that the proposed landmark designation of the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios is consistent with the General Plan and with Planning Code Section 101.1(b) for the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 1574, which is incorporated herein by reference.

(b) General Findings.

(1) On March 3, 2026, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 101-26, initiating landmark designation of the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios as a San Francisco Landmark pursuant to Section 1004.1 of the Planning Code. On March 6, 2026, the Mayor approved the resolution. Said resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 260054.

(2) Pursuant to Charter Section 4.135, the Historic Preservation Commission has authority "to recommend approval, disapproval, or modification of landmark designations and historic district designations under the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors."

(3) The Landmark Designation Fact Sheet dated May 20, 2026 was prepared by Planning Department Preservation staff. All preparers meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for historic preservation program staff, as set forth in

Code of Federal Regulations Title 36, Part 61, Appendix A. The report was reviewed for accuracy and conformance with the purposes and standards of Article 10 of the Planning Code. A copy of the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 260587 and is incorporated herein by reference.

(4) The Historic Preservation Commission, at its regular meeting of May 20, 2026, reviewed Planning Department staff's analysis of the historical significance of the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios set forth in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet.

(5) On May 20, 2026, after holding a public hearing on the proposed designation and having considered the specialized analyses prepared by Planning Department staff and the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended designation of the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios as a landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Section 1004 of the Planning Code, by Resolution No. 1574. Said resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 260587.

(6) The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios has a special character and special historical, cultural, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value, and that its designation as a landmark will further the purposes of and conform to the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code. In doing so, the Board of Supervisors hereby incorporates by reference the findings of the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet.

Section 2. Designation.

Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios, located at 737 Buena Vista Avenue West, Assessor's Parcel Block

No. 1256, Lot No. 078, is hereby designated as a San Francisco landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Section 1004. Appendix A to Article 10 of the Planning Code is hereby amended to include this property.

Section 3. Required Data.

(a) The description, location, and boundary of the landmark site consists of the footprint of the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios, located on Assessor's Parcel Block No. 1256, Lot No. 078, on the west side of Buena Vista Avenue West between Frederick Street and Central Avenue in San Francisco's Haight Ashbury neighborhood, as shown in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet.

(b) The characteristics of the landmark that justify its designation are described and shown in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet and other supporting materials contained in Planning Department Record Docket No. 2026-001915DES. In brief, the Richard Spreckels Mansion / Buena Vista Studios, located at 737 Buena Vista Avenue West, is eligible for local designation as an intact example of a Classical Revival home with exemplary features, as the residence of Blanche and Gertrude Partington, and for serving as an early recording studio for 1960s counterculture bands who exemplified the "San Francisco Sound". The property was constructed in 1897 in its present location in the Haight Ashbury neighborhood and designed by Architect Edward J. Vogel. The property's original owner was Richard Spreckels, manager of the Western Sugar Refinery in Potrero Hill, and member of the Spreckels family, who accumulated great wealth from the sugar industry. Spreckels resided at the property until circa 1922. From 1922-1955, sisters Blanche Partington and Gertrude Partington Albright resided at the property. The sisters were San Francisco pop culture notables, with Gertrude associated with the California Impressionism art movement due to her career as a teacher and painter. Located in the Haight-Ashbury, a neighborhood which gained global attention as

the hub of hippie counterculture in the 1960s and early 1970s, the subject property is also significant as the location of Buena Vista Studios, known as one of the first hippie-friendly recording studios. While under the ownership of Gene and Sara Estribou, the top floor ballroom was converted into a recording studio. Notably, the Grateful Dead made some of their earliest recordings, known as the Scorpio Records sessions, out of the studio in 1966. Other quintessential San Francisco Bands, including Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Steve Miller Band, also recorded in the studio.

(c) The particular features that should be preserved, or replaced in kind as determined necessary, are those generally shown in photographs and described in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, which can be found in Planning Department Record Docket No. 2026-001915DES, and which are incorporated in this designation by reference as though fully set forth herein. This designation does not identify any interior character-defining features. Specifically, the features that are character-defining and shall be preserved or replaced in kind are the exterior elevations, form, massing, structure, rooflines, architectural ornament, and materials of the property, identified as:

(1) Location of the house on the property with front setback;

(2) Four-story height;

(3) Projecting shingled roof with dormers, including central pedimented east and north facing dormers and two smaller east facing dormers;

(4) Cornice line with brackets, dentils, and floriated chains;

(5) Horizontal wood siding;

(6) Prominent entryway accessed by front steps, with double wooden entrance doors with transoms and sidelites with leaded glass, and four composite pillars below curved entrance canopy with floriated chains, and denticulated cornice;

(7) Above story front balcony with decorative wood balustrades and decorative urns accessed through double doors below palladian windows;

(8) Several sets of rectangular windows with floriated designs, flanked and divided by decorative wood colonnettes, below arched transom wood windows with spiderweb muntins, and crown moldings;

(9) Smaller round windows at north side with classical inspired moldings and wooden double hung windows with colonnettes and crown molding;

10) Classically inspired full height corner facade columns; and

11) Rear side double height square bay with wood windows, crown moldings, and classically inspired decorative features.

Section 4. Effective Date.

This ordinance shall become effective on the 31st day after enactment. Enactment occurs when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the ordinance unsigned or does not sign the ordinance within 10 days of receiving it, or the Board of Supervisors overrides the Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
DAVID CHIU, City Attorney

By: /s/ Peter Miljanich

PETER MILJANICH
Deputy City Attorney