



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Landmark Designation Case Report

*Hearing Date:* February 6, 2019  
*Case No.:* 2017-012291DES  
*Project Address:* 2031 Bush Street (aka The Kinmon Gakuen Building)  
*Zoning:* RM-3 (Residential-Mixed, Medium Density)  
*Block/Lot:* 0676/027  
*Property Owner:* Golden Gate Institute  
2031 Bush Street  
San Francisco, CA 94115  
*Staff Contact:* Desiree Smith – (415) 575-9093  
[desiree.smith@sfgov.org](mailto:desiree.smith@sfgov.org)  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822  
[tim.frye@sfgov.org](mailto:tim.frye@sfgov.org)

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

### PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS & SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Kinmon Gakuen Building (APN 0676/027) is located on the south side of Bush Street between Webster and Buchanan Streets in a residential area of Japantown. Completed in 1926 and designed in the Mediterranean Revival style, the subject property was purpose-built as an educational facility for Japanese language and culture school, Kinmon Gakuen (“Golden Gate Institute”). It features two-stories with basement massing, an irregular plan set back from the front property line, and a double stair and raised porch at the entrance. The building was constructed along the property line to the west and north (its primary elevation) and contains a small side yard along its eastern façade that is accessed via a gated entrance along Bush Street. Other prominent features include its flat-capped terra cotta roof, stucco cladding, and wood sash doors and windows. The parcel is located within an RM-3 (Residential-Mixed, Medium Density) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The case before the Historic Preservation Commission is the consideration of the initiation of landmark designation of The Kinmon Gakuen Building as a San Francisco landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code, Section 1004.1, and recommending that the Board of Supervisors approve of such designation.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS

The Planning Department has determined that actions by regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (specifically in this case, landmark designation) are exempt from environmental review, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 (Class Eight - Categorical).

## GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

The Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan contains the following relevant objectives and policies:

OBJECTIVE 2: Conservation of Resources that provide a sense of nature, continuity with the past, and freedom from overcrowding.

POLICY 4: Preserve notable landmarks and areas of historic, architectural or aesthetic value, and promote the preservation of other buildings and features that provide continuity with past development.

Designating significant historic resources as local landmarks will further continuity with the past because the buildings will be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Landmark designation will require that the Planning Department and the Historic Preservation Commission review proposed work that may have an impact on character-defining features. Both entities will utilize the Secretary of Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* in their review to ensure that only appropriate, compatible alterations are made.

### SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1 – GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Planning Code Section 101.1 – Eight Priority Policies establishes and requires review of permits for consistency with said policies. On balance, the proposed designation is consistent with the priority policies in that:

- a. The proposed designation will further Priority Policy No. 7, that landmarks and historic buildings be preserved. Landmark designation of The Kinmon Gakuen Building will help to preserve an important historical resource that is significant for its associations with the development of the Japanese American and African American communities in San Francisco during the twentieth century. It is also an excellent example of an educational building designed in the Mediterranean Revival style.

## BACKGROUND / PREVIOUS ACTIONS

On August 17, 2016, The Kinmon Gakuen Building was added to the Landmark Designation Work Program as part of the Department's San Francisco Sites of Civil Rights Project.

The property was also previously identified as an important building for its association with Kinmon Gakuen in the *Japantown Historic Context Statement* (2011) and in the *Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy* (2013).

## OTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED

If the Historic Preservation Commission decides to initiate designation of the subject property as an Article 10 landmark at its February 6, 2019 hearing, the item will again be considered by the Commission at a future hearing. During this subsequent hearing, the Commission will decide whether to forward the item to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation supportive of

designation. The nomination would then be considered at a future Board of Supervisors hearing for formal Article 10 landmark designation.

## **APPLICABLE PRESERVATION STANDARDS**

### **ARTICLE 10**

Section 1004 of the Planning Code authorizes the landmark designation of an individual structure or other feature or an integrated group of structures and features on a single lot or site, having special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, as a landmark. Section 1004.1 also outlines that landmark designation may be initiated by the Board of Supervisors or the Historic Preservation Commission and the initiation shall include findings in support. Section 1004.2 states that once initiated, the proposed designation is referred to the Historic Preservation Commission for a report and recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve, disapprove or modify the proposal.

Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, if the Historic Preservation Commission approves the designation, a copy of the resolution of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors and without referral to the Planning Commission. The Board of Supervisors shall hold a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation.

In the case of the initiation of a historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission shall refer its recommendation to the Planning Commission pursuant to Section 1004.2(c). The Planning Commission shall have 45 days to provide review and comment on the proposed designation and address the consistency of the proposed designation with the General Plan, Section 101.1 priority policies, the City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation, and the Sustainable Communities Strategy for the Bay Area. These comments shall be sent to the Board of Supervisors in the form of a resolution.

Section 1004(b) requires that the designating ordinance approved by the Board of Supervisors shall include the location and boundaries of the landmark site, a description of the characteristics of the landmark which justify its designation, and a description of the particular features that should be preserved.

Section 1004.4 states that if the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days.

### **ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK CRITERIA**

The Historic Preservation Commission on February 4, 2009, by Resolution No. 001, adopted the National Register Criteria as its methodology for recommending landmark designation of historic resources. Under the National Register Criteria, the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association, and that are associated with events that have made a significant

contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or properties that have yielded, or may likely yield, information important in prehistory or history.

## **PUBLIC / NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT**

The Department is not aware of any opposition to the landmark designation of 2031 Bush Street. The Department has received one letter of support, which is included in this packet.

## **PROPERTY OWNER INPUT**

The property owner, the Golden Gate Institute/Kinmon Gakuen, is supportive of landmark designation. On July 27, 2017, the property owner requested that the HPC prioritize landmark designation for The Kinmon Gakuen Building. That letter is included in this packet.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

The case report and analysis under review was prepared by Department preservation staff. The Department has determined that the subject property meets the requirements for Article 10 eligibility as an individual landmark. The justification for its inclusion is explained in the attached Landmark Designation Report.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

The subject property gains its significance from its association with the social, cultural, and educational enrichment of Japanese Americans in San Francisco during the twentieth century as the home of Japanese language and culture school, Kinmon Gakuen. It was one of four purpose-built community facilities whose construction was funded by the local Japanese American community in San Francisco's *Nihojinmachi* ("Japanese People's Town"), later known as Japantown.

The building is also associated with the evacuation, relocation, and incarceration of U.S. citizens and residents of Japanese descent during World War II. Following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order No. 9066, Kinmon Gakuen was forced to cease operations and its building was taken over by the federal government for use as a processing center where citizens and non-citizens of Japanese ancestry were required to report before they were incarcerated and relocated to concentration camps across the United States.

During Japanese internment, the African American community stewarded many of the properties that had been vacated by Japanese Americans in Japantown, including The Kinmon Gakuen Building. 2031 Bush Street, thus, is also significant for its association with community organizing and activism among African Americans in San Francisco during the twentieth century, as home of the Booker T. Washington Community Services Center from 1942 to 1952. The center provided African Americans, especially youth, with a space for social, educational, and recreational

opportunities. The organization supported Japanese Americans upon their return to the neighborhood after the war by establishing hostels for those in need of housing. In 1952, Kinmon Gakuen reoccupied the building and the Booker T. Washington Community Services Center moved into its new permanent location at 800 Presidio.

The building is also an excellent example of an educational building designed in the Mediterranean Revival architectural style in San Francisco.

#### UNDERREPRESENTED LANDMARK TYPES

The proposed landmark designation addresses one previously identified underrepresented landmark types: landmarks significant for cultural associations. Specifically, The Kinmon Gakuen Building is significant for its association with Japanese American history in San Francisco. There are currently no designated San Francisco landmarks specifically related to Japanese American history.

#### INTEGRITY

The Kinmon Gakuen Building maintains a high level of integrity. See page 25 of attached Landmark Designation Report for further analysis.

#### CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Exterior and interior character-defining features of the building are identified in the attached Landmark Designation Report beginning on page 26-27.

#### BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK SITE

The proposed Landmark site consists of Assessor's Parcel Block. No. 0676, Lot No. 027.

#### PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Based on the Department's analysis, The Kinmon Gakuen Building is individually eligible for Article 10 Landmark designation for its association with Japanese American and African American history of the twentieth century, as described above, and as an excellent example of an educational and community facility designed in the Mediterranean Revival style. The Department recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission initiate the proposed designation of **2031 Bush Street** as a San Francisco landmark.

The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend approval, disapproval, or approval with modifications of the proposed initiation of The Kinmon Gakuen Building as a San Francisco landmark under Article 10 of the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Planning Code Section 1004.1. If the Historic Preservation Commission approves the initiation, a copy of the motion of approval is transmitted to the Board of Supervisors, which holds a public hearing on the designation and may approve, modify or disapprove the designation (Section 1004.4). If the Historic Preservation Commission disapproves the proposed designation, such action shall be final, except upon the filing of a valid appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days (Section 1004.5).

## ATTACHMENTS

- A. Exhibits
- B. Draft Resolution initiating designation
- C. Draft Landmark Designation Report
- D. Draft Ordinance
- E. Letters of Support