Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera’s fresco, titled “The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,” painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

WHEREAS, Diego Rivera remains one of the most important and famous Mexican artists of all time, whose fresco work helped to establish the thriving Mexican Mural Art Movement in the 1920s, and who painted his first murals in the United States in San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco is home to three of Rivera’s masterpieces, including the second Diego Rivera fresco completed in the United States entitled “The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City” (the “Mural”), which was painted in 1931 and remains in its original home at the Diego Rivera Gallery inside the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut Street; and

WHEREAS, The mural was commissioned by then-San Francisco Art Institute President William Gerstle and took a month to complete, and depicts a fresco within a fresco in which various real life figures, including Rivera himself, general designers, builders, painters, architects and laborers construct a building, and, at its center, a gigantic worker — the colossal proletarian — symbolizing the entire international working class, powerfully demonstrating a familiar theme in Rivera’s work of the critical importance of labor in the artistic and creative process; and

WHEREAS, The mural also includes depictions of real-life figures including Timothy Pfleuger (designer of the San Francisco Stock Exchange), William Gerstle (banker, philanthropist, and president of the San Francisco Art Institute who commissioned the mural),
Arthur Brown (architect who designed Coit Tower, the San Francisco Opera House, and San Francisco City Hall), and Marion Simpson (mosaic artist in Berkeley who designed murals for the Alameda County courthouse); and

WHEREAS, As with his immediately-preceding fresco in San Francisco, the Allegory of California, the Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City attracted immediate criticism and harsh reactions to Rivera’s Marxist political leanings, and quickly became one Rivera’s most significant and well-known works; and

WHEREAS, The Mural is of particular significance to the Latinx and Chicanx communities, and, along with Rivera’s other murals in San Francisco, is part of the direct lineage of the Mission Mural movement which remains a significant and vibrant part of San Francisco’s cultural heritage, and it is the responsibility of civic and academic institutions to include these communities in decisions pertaining to the Mural; and

WHEREAS, In 1977, the City and County of San Francisco designated pursuant to Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code the San Francisco Art Institute at 800 Chestnut Street as Landmark Number 85; and

WHEREAS, The official case report for Landmark No. 85 makes extensive reference to and describes the Rivera Mural, and can be read as intending that Article 10 protections extend to any alteration, removal, or demolition of the Mural itself; and

WHEREAS, Since its creation, the Mural has been made available for free, public viewing, has inspired generations of artists, including alumni of the San Francisco Art Institute, and countless members of the public, alike; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board hereby initiates separate landmark designation of Diego Rivera’s masterpiece fresco “The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City,” created in 1931 at its sole and current location at the San Francisco Art Institute building at 800 Chestnut Street (Landmark No. 85); and, be it
FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Planning Department prepare a Landmark Designation Report to submit to the Historic Preservation Commission for its consideration of the special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value of the Mural; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board requests that the Historic Preservation Commission consider whether the Mural warrants landmark designation and submit its recommendation to the Board according to Article 10 of the Planning Code.
Resolution initiating a landmark designation under Article 10 of the Planning Code for Diego Rivera's fresco, titled "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," painted in 1931 and located at 800 Chestnut Street.

January 11, 2021 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED AS COMMITTEE REPORT

January 12, 2021 Board of Supervisors - AMENDED, AN AMENDMENT OF THE WHOLE BEARING SAME TITLE
   Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

January 12, 2021 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED AS AMENDED
   Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 210016

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED AS AMENDED on 1/12/2021 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

London N. Breed
Mayor

Date Approved 1/22/21