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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Date Approved

5/3/22