



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember Torres

SUBJECT: NOMINATION OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH FOR DESIGNATION AS A CITY LANDMARK

DATE: September 21, 2023

Approved

Date: 9/21/2023

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Agendize for discussion and consideration at an upcoming City Council meeting:

1. Nominate Grace Baptist Church for designation as a City Landmark, and
2. Direct the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement or designee to complete any necessary nomination documentation and begin the process for City Landmark designation by setting a public hearing before the Historic Landmarks Commission.

DISCUSSION:

The Grace Baptist Church is located at the northern end of the East Campus neighborhood of San José. The church is situated on the corner of East San Fernando Street and South Tenth Street, with an imposing front façade on South Tenth Street. The Grace Baptist building is in an urban setting, surrounded by university buildings and residential structures from the late 1800s to the 1920s.

The church was designed in 1941 by the prolific San José architectural firm of Binder & Curtis, a simplified version of Gothic Revival architecture, with pointed arches and three-story-high tower with stepped setback buttresses on the corners. The church also exhibits the influence of what is today known as Art Deco, a decorative style that was popular in the 1920s through the 1940s

The Grace Baptist Church has been an essential part of San José's spiritual and social community since it was formally established in San José in 1914. Home to early civil rights and peace activism with an extensive and ongoing history of ministrations to the underserved, the church holds an essential place in San José's culture.

The church's interior retains many original materials and architectural details. A key feature of the sanctuary is its intact Robert Morton organ, built in 1921 and acquired in 1940 from San José's Liberty Theater.

Through the years, church members have pushed the city to designate the church as a historic landmark. The congregation, its leaders, and its community of supporters have worked tirelessly to preserve this important architectural and cultural treasure, and I urge my colleagues to formally start the process of designating the Grace Baptist Church a Historic Landmark.

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.