



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

**MEMO**

**DATE:** April 4, 2012  
**TO:** Historic Preservation Commission  
**FROM:** Rich Sucre, Historic Preservation Technical Specialist, (415) 575-9108  
**REVIEWED BY:** Tim Frye, Preservation Coordinator, (415) 575-6822  
**RE:** **Review and Comment**  
**Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue**  
**Case No. 2011.0420U**

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

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

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## BACKGROUND

The Planning Department seeks the advice of the Historic Preservation Commission on the interior alterations of the proposed project at the Veterans Building at 401 Van Ness Avenue. Pursuant to Article 10, Appendix J, Section 8 of the San Francisco Planning Code, the War Memorial Board of Trustees shall consult with the Historic Preservation Commission on any proposed interior alterations to the publicly accessible spaces within the Veterans Building. As stated in the aforementioned planning code section, all city agencies shall work cooperatively with the Historic Preservation Commission on proposed exterior and interior alterations to ensure that work within the Civic Center Historic District is undertaken in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

As noted in designating ordinance for the landmark and the surrounding historic district, the Historic Preservation Commission may review and approve exterior alterations on the Veterans Building through a Certificate of Appropriateness. The proposed project is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for the exterior alterations as part of Case No. 2011.0420A.

The seismic upgrade and interior alterations do not require Certificate of Appropriateness approval; however, the Historic Preservation Commission may forward comments to the War Memorial Board of Trustees for their consideration.

## PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Veterans Building at 401 Van Ness Avenue is located on a large rectangular parcel at the southwest corner of McAllister Street and Van Ness Avenue (Assessor's Block 0786A Lot 001). Constructed in 1932, the Veterans Building is a four-story, steel-frame and reinforced concrete civic theater and office building designed in a Beaux-Arts architectural style by architects Brown and Bakewell. The Veterans Building, along with the nearly identical San Francisco Opera House and the adjacent Memorial Court, constitute the War Memorial Complex. The Veterans Building features a granite base and steps, terra cotta cladding, terra cotta ornamentation, steel-sash windows, and a leaded copper mansard roof. The Veterans Building contains 230,000 sq ft, and

possesses a variety of uses, including a theater (Herbst Theater), reception space (Green Room), meeting space and offices for various veterans organizations (American Legion Post, War Memorial Trust beneficiaries, and other veterans groups), meeting space and offices for various city agencies, art galleries, and a law library (fourth floor). The Veterans Building is Landmark No. 84, and is designated as “contributory” to the Civic Center Historic District, which is listed in Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code.

## PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The War Memorial Board of Trustees (Project Sponsor) proposes to rehabilitate, refurbish, and seismically upgrade the Veterans Building.

In detail, the exterior would be rehabilitated as follows:

- Cleaning: Cleaning of exterior façade; removal of staining on granite architectural features caused by ferrous and cuprous metals.
- Window Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation of the existing steel-sash windows, including replacement of broken or missing glazing.
- Terra Cotta Repair/Replacement: Repair of the existing terra cotta cladding and features (balustrades, friezes, and balconies), where spalling, cracking and de-bonding is evident. If necessary, replacement terra cotta units shall be manufactured to match the historic terra cotta finish.
- Roof Replacement: Replacement of the existing membrane roof with a new roof membrane, and replacement of the existing lead-coated copper roof panels with new zinc panels.
- Infill Roof Lightwell: Infill of a roof lightwell adjacent to the main skylight through construction of a new steel-frame, new concrete roof slab and new built-up roof.
- Skylight Replacement: Replacement of the existing steel-sash skylights, which are heavily deteriorated, with new aluminum-sash skylights to match. New skylight profiles will match the size and width of historic profiles.
- New Rooftop Equipment: Installation of new energy-efficient rooftop mechanical equipment, in support of the facility modernization/upgrade.

In detail, the interior would be rehabilitated as follows:

- Interior Remodeling/Reorganization:
  - *First Floor*: Construction of a museum/gallery for the San Francisco Arts Commission, as well as a new ticket sales center for the theater and a public café; Refurbishment of the Green Room, including restoration of historic finishes, parquet floor, and chandeliers; Upgrade of Herbst Theater, including refurbishment of the stage-level accessible dressing rooms, stage rigging, and

controls; Construction of support space for the Herbst Theater, which will include removal of the non-historic seating in the theater, construction of new stage-level accessible dressing rooms, rehearsal and warm up areas, and equipment storage. The public corridor on the west side will be enclosed to accommodate support space for the theater.

- *Second Floor:* Reconfigure the office and meeting space allocated to the San Francisco Posts of the American Legion, including removal of some interior historic finishes and installation of modern finishes. The majority of the interior historic finishes within the original meeting rooms will be retained, though the elevated platforms will be removed in some of the rooms.
  - *Third Floor:* Relocation of the War Memorial Department to this floor level, and new offices for the Art Commission.
  - *Fourth Floor:* Reconfigure the fourth floor to accommodate the San Francisco Opera (rehearsal, production and office space), and construction of a new 300-seat rehearsal/event space and gallery.
  - *New Restrooms:* Construction of new restrooms on all four floors and basement level.
- Seismic Upgrade:
    - Addition of concrete shear walls at various locations throughout the building, including the public corridor walls surrounding the Herbst Theatre and at the four main stair wells;
    - Strengthening of the existing concrete stage walls by epoxy injecting cracks and increasing wall thickness by reinforced concrete;
    - Strengthening of existing perimeter walls in northeast and southeast corners of the building by increasing wall thickness with reinforced concrete;
    - Strengthening of diaphragm collectors at all floor levels by adding new steel members;
    - Strengthening of third and fourth floor diaphragm by addition of bracing members;
    - Strengthening of roof diaphragm by addition of bracing members on all four sides of the building and reinforced concrete at local areas;
    - Addition of lateral bracing to the existing plaster ceilings at the Herbst Theatre, the Main Lobby, the main corridors and the Fourth floor;
    - Addition of bracing to hollow clay tile walls;
    - Provision of adequate support of the stone veneer at Herbst Theatre; and
    - Crack repair of walls, floors and the roof through epoxy injection.

- Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing Upgrades:
  - Upgrades to mechanical (heating, ventilation, air conditioning, fire protection, domestic and drinking water, and computerized building management), electrical (including emergency power supply), and telecommunication cabling systems; and
  - Replacement of two main passenger elevations and renovation of a freight elevator
- Infrastructure: Replacement of attic catwalks and service platform.
- ADA Upgrades: Various improvements to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, including clarification of path of travel, new drinking fountains and accessible restrooms.
- Hazardous Materials Abatement: Asbestos and lead abatement, where necessary.

Detailed information on the proposed project is provided in Case No. 2011.0420A.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

The Department would like the HPC to consider the following information:

Based upon a review of the proposed project per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Rehabilitation Standards), the seismic upgrade and interior alterations would not remove character-defining features of the Veterans Building or the Civic Center Historic District. All work, particularly the retention of historic finishes and repair of historic materials, is being undertaken according to state and national historic preservation standards.

As noted in Rehabilitation Standard 2, "The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided." As analyzed by staff:

In general, the proposed project maintains the historic character of the Veterans Building and the surrounding Civic Center Historic District, since many of the alterations are planned for the interior of the Veterans Building and since exterior work is limited to preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of existing features, such as the steel-sash windows, skylights, and terra cotta. The exterior work will not remove historic materials that characterize the property and district. The exterior work will replace some historic features, including the historic skylights and lead-coated copper roof panels, but the replacement features will be a compatible substitute material and will match in design, color, shape, and profile. Within the interior, the proposed project would largely avoid removal of historic materials, as evidenced by the extensive plan to repair, rehabilitate, and reinstall many of the existing interior features, such as the



electrical switches and faceplates, doors and hardware, and light fixtures. The project would impact the configuration of the west end of the first floor corridor, which would be altered to accommodate a larger dressing room and other support spaces for the Herbst Theater. The corridor would be altered in such a manner to be easily reversible, and to maintain a semblance of the building's original layout and finishes.

Therefore, the proposed project complies with Rehabilitation Standard 2.

As noted in Rehabilitation Standard 5, "Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of fine craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved." As analyzed by staff:

The proposed project would preserve all distinctive materials, features, finishes or construction techniques that characterize the subject property, including the historic interior finishes found within the Herbst Theater, Main Lobby, and first floor corridors. As part of the seismic upgrade, the proposed project would strengthen the existing corridor walls on each of the floors either with concrete shear walls or with hollow clay tile bracing. To accommodate this seismic scheme, the proposed project would remove, catalog, clean and reinstall all significant interior features finishes found on each of the floors, including historic wainscots, base molding, wood office partitions, drinking fountains, telephone closets, doors, etc. For any historic plaster impacted by the seismic scheme, new plaster would be designed to match. In general, removal or impact to significant ornamental features would be avoided by the proposed project. Similarly, gilded features would be re-gilded in-kind to match the original color and luster. To ensure compliance with Standard 5, the project sponsor is working with a qualified professional with experience in historic architecture, who will monitor the preservation and treatment of distinctive features, finishes, construction techniques and fine craftsmanship.

Therefore, the proposed project complies with Rehabilitation Standard 5.

The new interior work preserves and maintains the defining characteristics of the Veterans Building, and does not impact the property's status as a Landmark No. 84, nor its justification for inclusion within the Civic Center Historic District. Further, the proposed project appropriately addresses the deteriorated state of the existing building and seeks to correct the material deficiencies with the existing windows, terra cotta exterior, roof, and structural capacities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department finds the proposed project to be in compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Further, the Department finds that the proposed project would further the viability and use of the existing building and correct material deficiencies caused by the building's age and past tenants. This project would improve the viability of preserving the subject building. In addition, the new use being introduced into the building would maintain and not impact the building's historic integrity and historic status.

#### **REQUESTED ACTION**

The Department is requesting adoption of a resolution from the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the proposed interior alterations, in order to provide a recommendation to the War Memorial Board of Trustees, as stated in Article 10, Appendix J, Section 8 of the San Francisco Planning Code. In addition, the Department seeks confirmation on the project's compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Exhibits, including Parcel Map, 1998 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Zoning Map, Aerial Photograph, and Site Photos
- Draft Resolution

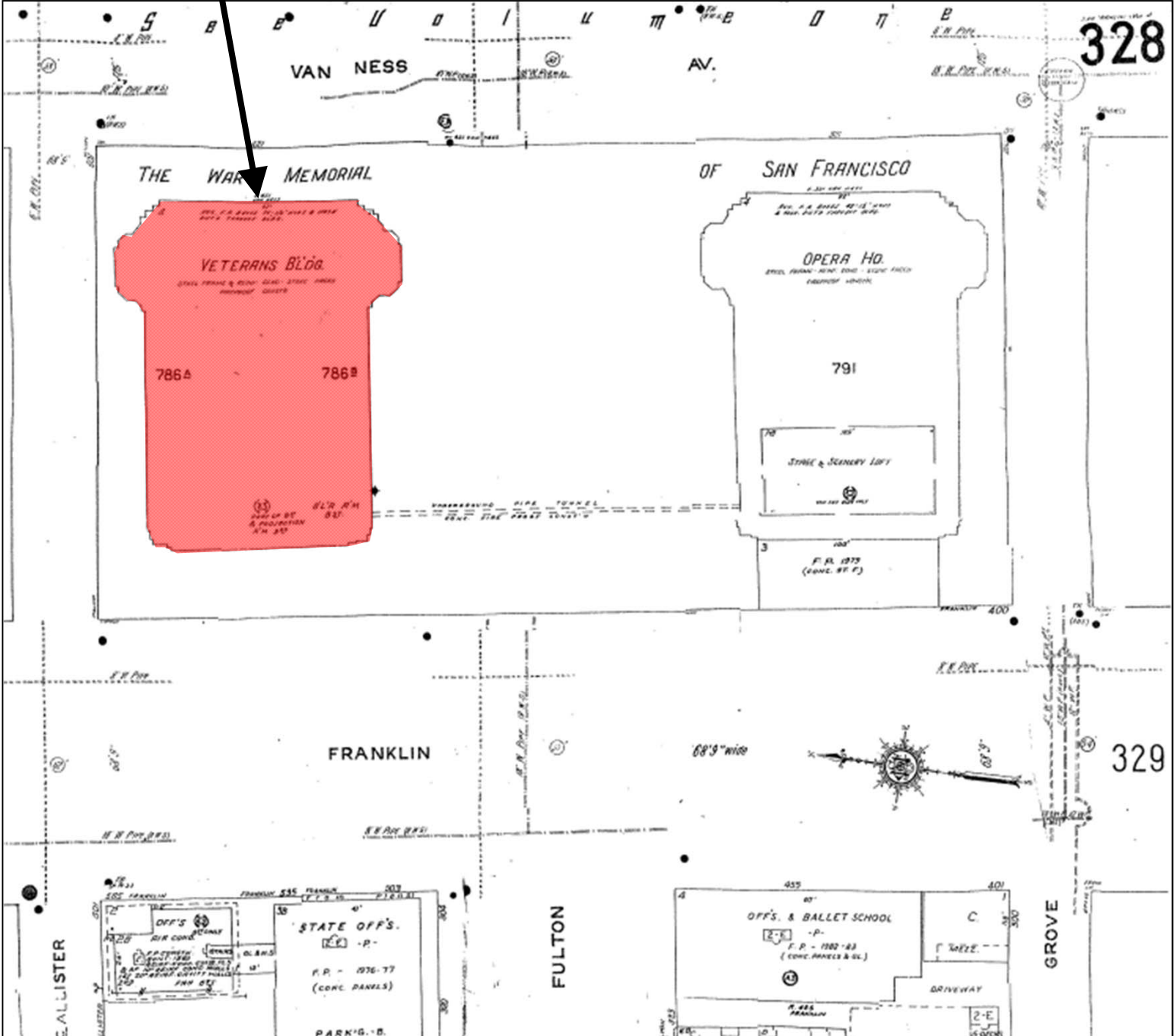
# Parcel Map

SUBJECT PROPERTY



# Sanborn Map\*

SUBJECT PROPERTY

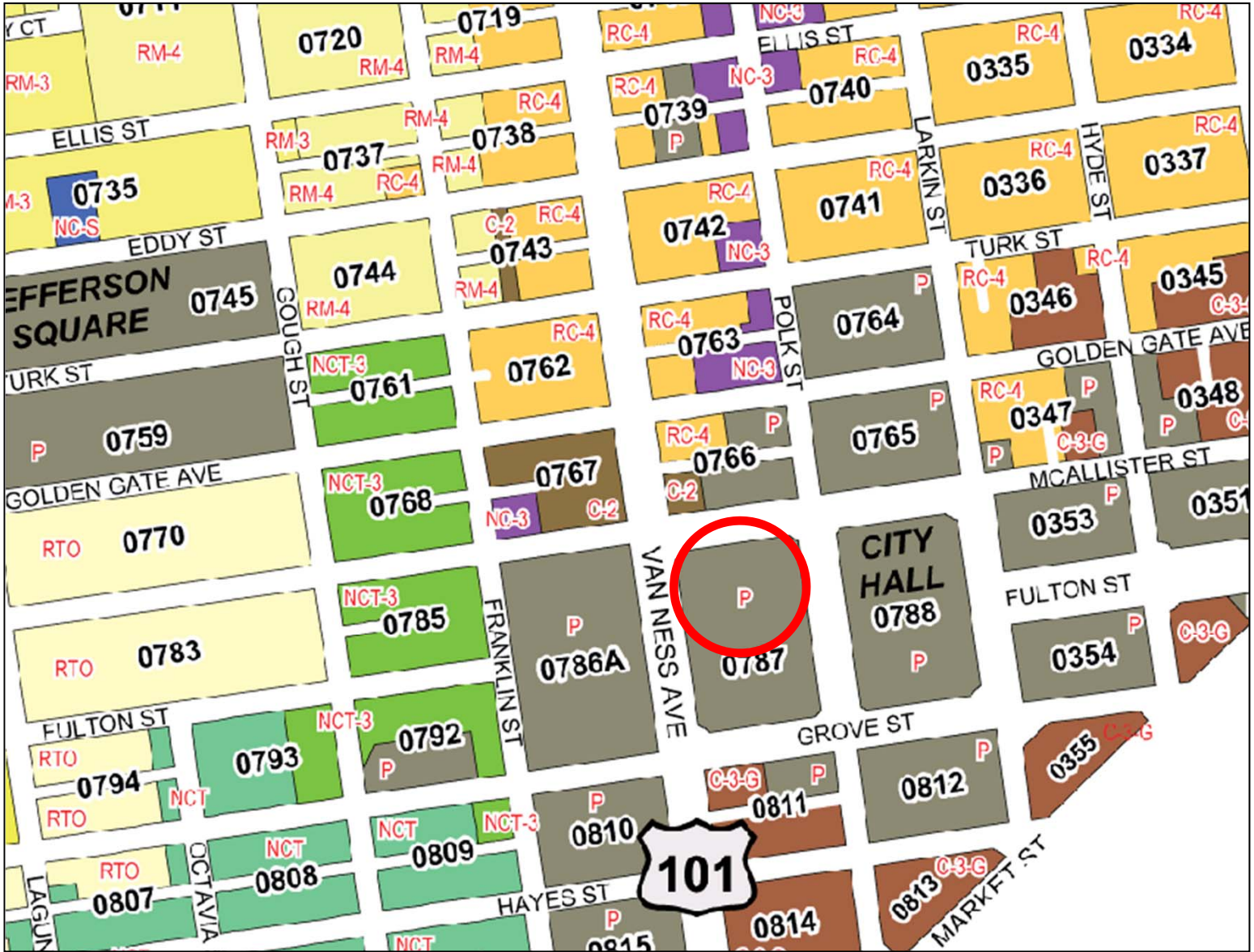


\*The Sanborn Maps in San Francisco have not been updated since 1998, and this map may not accurately reflect existing conditions.



Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
 Case Number 2011.0420AU  
 Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue

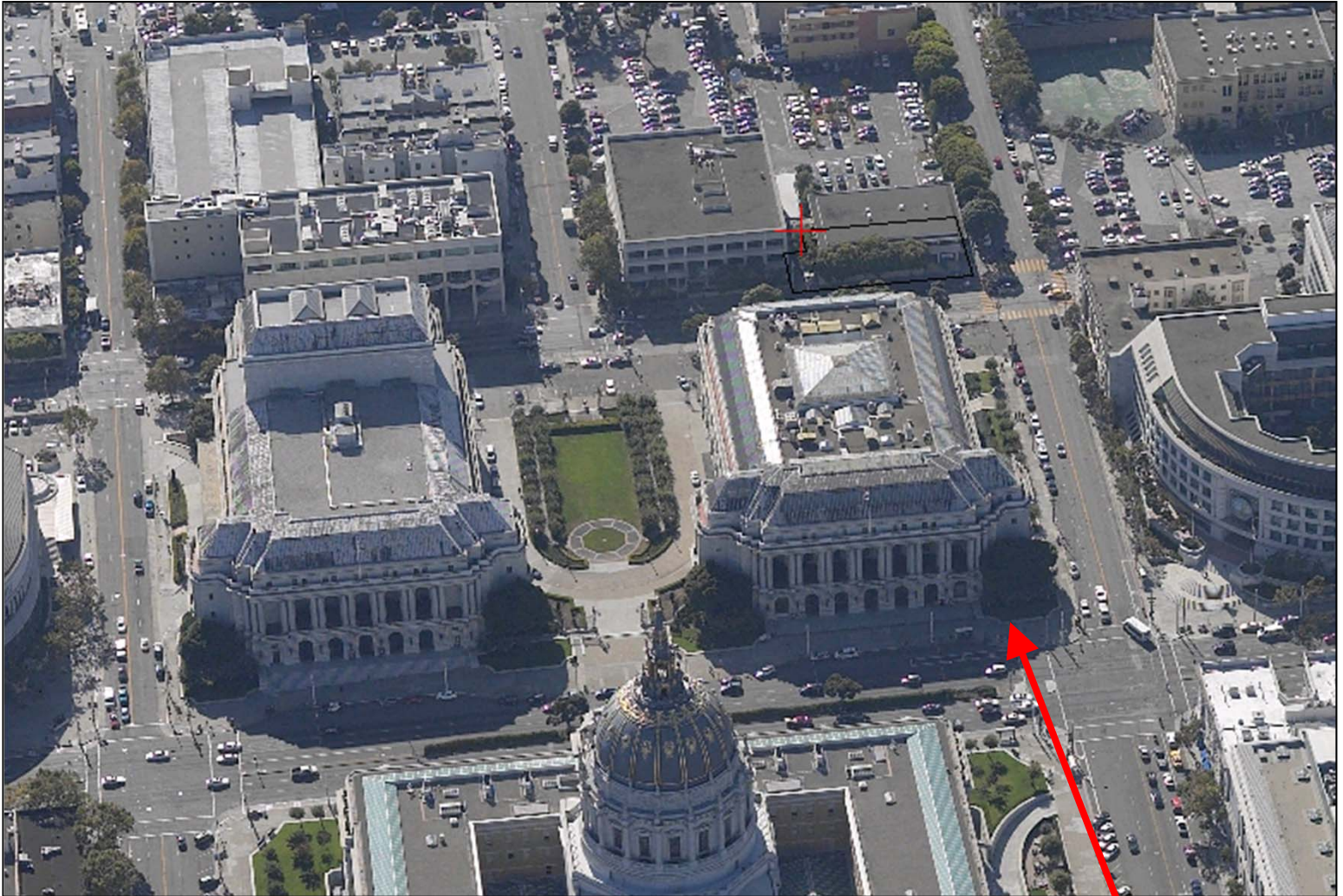
# Zoning Map



Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Aerial Photo



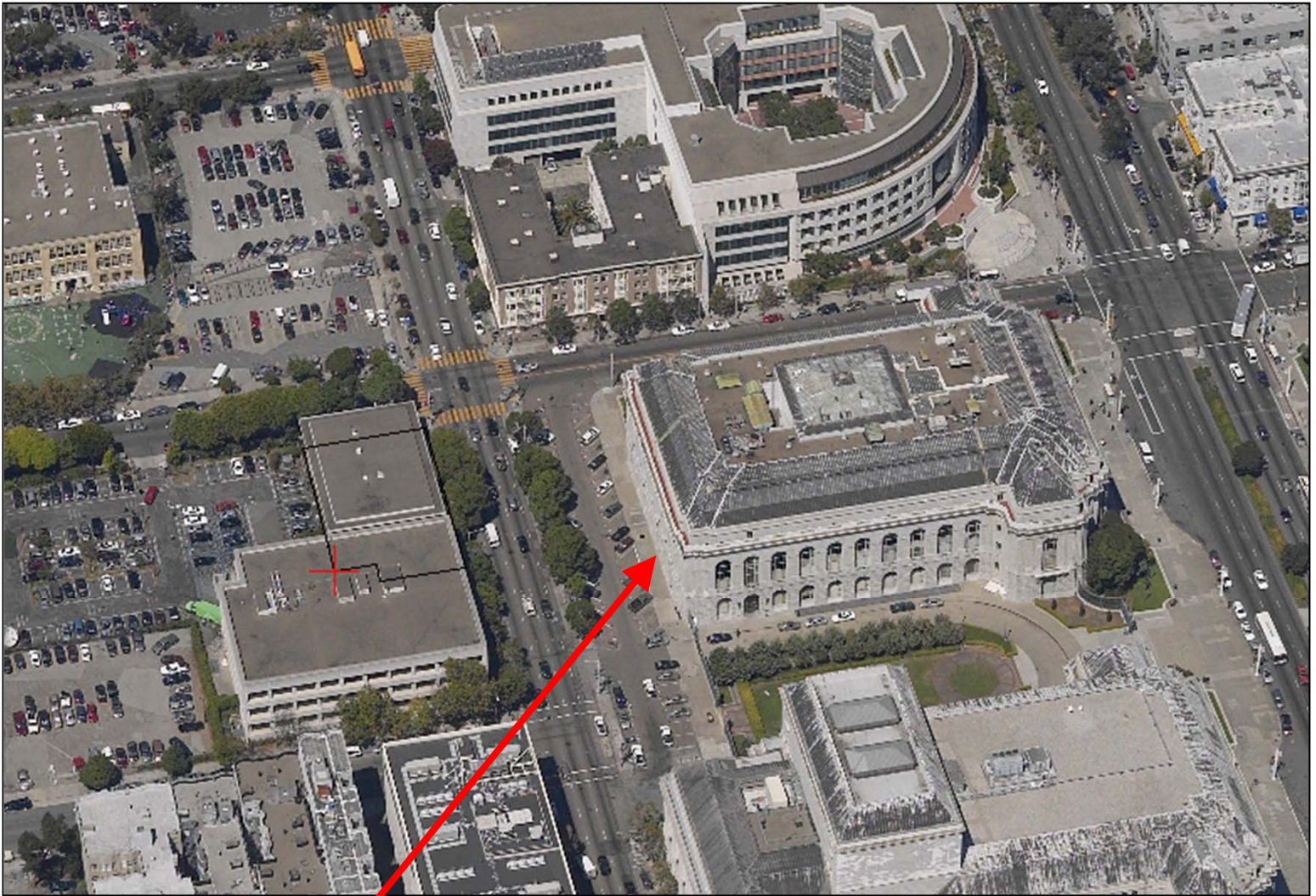
**SUBJECT PROPERTY**



Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Aerial Photo



**SUBJECT PROPERTY**



Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



View of Veterans Building along Van Ness Avenue

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



View of Veterans Building , North and West Facades

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue

# Site Photo



View of Veterans Building Roof

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



View of Veterans Building, Northwest Corner, Rust Staining

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue

# Site Photo



Veterans Building, View of Cracked Balustrade

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



Veterans Building, View of Glaze Spalling in Frieze

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



Veterans Building, View of Deteriorated Window Frame

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



Veterans Building, View of Deteriorated Leaded-Cooper Roof Panels

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue

# Site Photo



Veterans Building, View of Main Entry Lobby

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



Veterans Building, View of Historic Office Woodwork, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue

# Site Photo



Veterans Building, View of Green Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# Site Photo



Veterans Building , View of Veterans Meeting Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue

# Site Photo



Veterans Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, View of Laylights

Certificate of Appropriateness Hearing  
Case Number 2011.0420AU  
Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. XXXX

HEARING DATE: April 4, 2012

*Date:* April 4, 2012  
*Case No.:* 2011.0420U  
*Project Address:* Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue  
*Zoning:* P (Public) Zoning District  
*Block/Lot:* 0786A/001  
*Project Sponsor:* Tara Lamont, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Architecture  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Sucre – (415) 575-9108  
richard.sucre@sfgov.org  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye, Preservation Coordinator  
[tim.frye@sfgov.org](mailto:tim.frye@sfgov.org)

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

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ADOPTING FINDINGS FOR THE INTERIOR ALTERATIONS AND THE PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION AT THE VETERANS BUILDING AT 401 VAN NESS AVENUE (ASSESSOR'S BLOCK 0786A, LOT 001; LANDMARK NO. 84), LOCATED WITHIN CIVIC CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT, P (PUBLIC) ZONING DISTRICT AND OS/96-X HEIGHT AND BULK DISTRICT.

### PREAMBLE

1. WHEREAS, on March 3, 2012, the Project Sponsor (Tara Lamont of the City and County of San Francisco, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Architecture) on behalf of the San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center submitted information on the proposed project to the San Francisco Planning Department for the Veterans Building at 401 Van Ness Avenue (Block 0786A, Lots 001).
2. WHEREAS, Article 10, Appendix J, Section 8 of the San Francisco Planning Code states that the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board shall be consulted on any proposed interior alterations to the publicly accessible spaces of properties owned and operated by the Art Commission, the War Memorial Board of Trustees, the Library or the Asian Art Museum, regardless of whether a Certificate of Appropriateness is required.
3. WHEREAS, City Charter 4.135 established the Historic Preservation Commission. All duties and responsibilities of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board ("LPAB") are under the purview and responsibility of the Historic Preservation Commission.
4. WHEREAS, on April 4, 2012, the Department presented the proposed project to the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission's comments on the interior alterations associated with the proposed project would be forwarded to the War Memorial Board of Trustees for consideration.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Historic Preservation Commission has reviewed the proposed project at the Veterans Building at 401 Van Ness Avenue, on Lot 001 in Assessor's Block 0786A, and this Commission has provided the following comments:

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**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Recording Secretary to transmit this Resolution, and other pertinent materials in the Case File No. 2011.0420U to the Planning Commission.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was **ADOPTED** by the Historic Preservation Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on April 4, 2012.

Linda D. Avery  
Commission Secretary

PRESENT:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: April 4, 2012