

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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MEMORANDUM

Date: September 25, 2024
To: Jonas Ionin, Commission Secretary, Historic Preservation Commission
From: *ACE* Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board, Board of Supervisors
Subject: Planning Code - Landmark Designation - Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza (File No. 240725)

On September 3, 2024, the Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance No. 223-24, sponsored by Supervisor Rafael Mandelman (File No. 240725, Planning Code - Landmark Designation - Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza); enacted on September 13, 2024.

Please find the attached courtesy copy of Ordinance No. 223-24 for your office's information and consideration.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Office of the Clerk of the Board at (415) 554-5184.

c: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, Board of Supervisors
Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department
Aaron Starr, Manager of Legislative Affairs
Josh Switzky, Planning Department
Pilar LaValley, Planning Department

1 [Planning Code - Landmark Designation - Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza]

2
3 **Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate the Rainbow Flag Installation at**
4 **Harvey Milk Plaza, by Gilbert Baker, located at the southwest corner of the intersection**
5 **of Market Street and Castro Street, as a Landmark consistent with the standards set**
6 **forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code; affirming the Planning Department's**
7 **determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making public**
8 **necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302, and**
9 **findings of consistency with the General Plan and the eight priority policies of Planning**
10 **Code, Section 101.1.**

11 NOTE: **Unchanged Code text and uncodified text** are in plain Arial font.
12 **Additions to Codes** are in *single-underline italics Times New Roman font*.
13 **Deletions to Codes** are in *strikethrough italics Times New Roman font*.
14 **Board amendment additions** are in double-underlined Arial font.
15 **Board amendment deletions** are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.
16 **Asterisks (* * * *)** indicate the omission of unchanged Code
17 subsections or parts of tables.

18 Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

19 Section 1. Findings.

20 (a) CEQA and Land Use Findings.

21 (1) The Planning Department has determined that the Planning Code
22 amendment proposed in this ordinance is subject to a Categorical Exemption from the
23 California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et
24 seq., hereinafter "CEQA") pursuant to Section 15308 of California Code of Regulations, Title
25 14, Sections 15000 et seq., the Guidelines for implementation of the statute, for actions by
regulatory agencies for protection of the environment (in this case, landmark designation).
Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 240725 and

1 is incorporated herein by reference. The Board of Supervisors affirms this determination.

2 (2) Pursuant to Planning Code Section 302, the Board of Supervisors finds that
3 the proposed landmark designation of Rainbow Flag will serve the public necessity,
4 convenience, and welfare for the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission
5 Resolution No. 1395, recommending approval of the proposed designation, which is
6 incorporated herein by reference.

7 (3) The Board of Supervisors finds that the proposed landmark designation of
8 Rainbow Flag is consistent with the General Plan and with Planning Code Section 101.1(b) for
9 the reasons set forth in Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 1395, which is
10 incorporated herein by reference.

11 (b) General Findings.

12 (1) On April 4, 2024, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 170-24,
13 initiating landmark designation of Gilbert Baker's Rainbow Flag Installation (the "Rainbow
14 Flag") at Harvey Milk Plaza as a San Francisco Landmark pursuant to Section 1004.1 of the
15 Planning Code. On April 12, 2024, the Mayor approved the resolution. Said resolution is on
16 file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 240311.

17 (2) Pursuant to Charter Section 4.135, the Historic Preservation Commission
18 has authority "to recommend approval, disapproval, or modification of landmark designations
19 and historic district designations under the Planning Code to the Board of Supervisors."

20 (3) The Landmark Designation Fact Sheet was prepared by Planning
21 Department Preservation staff. All preparers meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional
22 Qualification Standards for historic preservation program staff, as set forth in Code of Federal
23 Regulations Title 36, Part 61, Appendix A. The report was reviewed for accuracy and
24 conformance with the purposes and standards of Article 10 of the Planning Code.
25

1 (4) The Historic Preservation Commission, at its regular meeting of May 15,
2 2024, reviewed Planning Department staff's analysis of the historical significance of the
3 Rainbow Flag set forth in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet dated May 1, 2024.

4 (5) On May 15, 2024, after holding a public hearing on the proposed
5 designation and having considered the specialized analyses prepared by Planning
6 Department staff and the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet, the Historic Preservation
7 Commission recommended designation of the Rainbow Flag as a landmark consistent with
8 the standards set forth in Section 1004 of the Planning Code, by Resolution No. 1395. Said
9 resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board in File No. 240725.

10 (6) The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that the Rainbow Flag has a special
11 character and special historical, architectural, and aesthetic interest and value, and that its
12 designation as a Landmark will further the purposes of and conform to the standards set forth
13 in Article 10 of the Planning Code. In doing so, the Board hereby incorporates by reference
14 the findings of the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet.

15
16 Section 2. Designation.

17 Pursuant to Section 1004.3 of the Planning Code, the Rainbow Flag Installation at
18 Harvey Milk Plaza by Gilbert Baker is hereby designated as a San Francisco Landmark
19 consistent with the standards set forth in Section 1004. Appendix A to Article 10 of the
20 Planning Code is hereby amended to include this property.

21
22 Section 3. Required Data.

23 (a) The description, location, and boundary of the Landmark site consists of the
24 historic structural footprint of the Rainbow Flag, inclusive of the concrete plinth, concrete
25 foundation above the Castro MUNI Station at the southwest corner of the intersection of

1 Market Street and Castro Street at Harvey Milk Plaza in San Francisco's Castro
2 neighborhood.

3 (b) The characteristics of the Landmark that justify its designation are described and
4 shown in the Landmark Designation Fact Sheet and other supporting materials contained in
5 Planning Department Record Docket No. 2023-003679DES. In brief, the Rainbow Flag is
6 eligible for local designation as a traditional cultural property with global recognition under
7 National Register of Historic Places Criterion A and as a significant artwork by the political
8 artist Gilbert Baker under Criterion C. The artist Gilbert Baker (1951-2017) is widely known for
9 creating a six-striped Rainbow Flag artwork based on an eight-striped version made in San
10 Francisco in 1978. Baker's six-color Rainbow Flag rapidly became associated with the greater
11 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer+ (LGBTQ+) community, not only in terms of
12 the diversity of whom it represented but also in its global recognition. For nearly two decades,
13 Baker produced variations on the theme of the six-stripe Rainbow Flag for different
14 anniversaries and events. The Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza, installed in 1997 in
15 commemoration of Harvey Milk's election to the Board of Supervisors twenty years earlier, is
16 a site-specific permanent artwork and is the only such made by Baker. It honors the political
17 achievements of Harvey Milk and the next generation of LGBTQ+ politicians; it serves as a
18 beacon of hope, visibility, and power; and, it is the singular physical manifestation of LGBTQ+
19 pride for everyone.

20 (c) The particular features that should be preserved, or replaced in-kind as determined
21 necessary, are those generally shown in photographs and described in the Landmark
22 Designation Fact Sheet, which can be found in Planning Department Record Docket No.
23 2023-003679DES, and which are incorporated in this designation by reference as though fully
24 set forth herein. Specifically, the following features are character-defining and shall be
25 preserved or replaced in kind:

1 (1) Siting of the flagpole at Harvey Milk Plaza in alignment with Market Street to
2 the Ferry Building;

3 (2) All necessary foundation elements required to maintain the stability of the
4 plinth and flagpole flying a 20-foot by 30-foot flag;

5 (3) Aluminum flagpole with internal halyard;

6 (4) Concrete plinth with beveled corners;

7 (5) Metal plaque mounted on the plinth;

8 (6) 20-foot by 30-foot six-striped Rainbow Flag with the colors red, orange,
9 yellow, green, blue, and violet, flying at full mast 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-
10 round.

11
12 Section 4. Standards of Review for Applications.

13 (a) The following scopes of work shall not require a Certificate of Appropriateness:

14 (1) Work consisting of "ordinary maintenance and repairs," pursuant to Planning
15 Code Section 1005(e)(3). For purposes of this ordinance, "ordinary maintenance and repairs"
16 for the Rainbow Flag includes known cyclical in-kind replacement of deteriorated 20-foot by
17 30-foot six-striped flags, which generally occurs about four times a year as old ones fray,
18 become faded, or are otherwise damaged by weather events, and corrective actions required
19 to treat acts of vandalism that do not require replacement of the aluminum pole, concrete
20 plinth, or metal plaque;

21 (2) Non-structural interior alterations and maintenance within non-character-
22 defining internal halyard mechanisms, including trucks, pulleys, snaphooks, snaphook covers,
23 finial, and ropes or for dented flash collar replacement at the base where the pole meets the
24 plinth; and
25

1 (3) New plantings, pruning, changes to vegetation, changes to driveways,
2 pathways, retaining walls, or other structures within the surroundings of Harvey Milk Plaza.
3 Nothing in this ordinance shall be construed to regulate maintenance of or changes to
4 vegetation, driveways, pathways, retaining walls or other features aside from those specified
5 herein, within Harvey Milk Plaza.

6 (b) An Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness shall be required for work
7 delegated by the Historic Preservation Commission to Planning Department Preservation staff
8 pursuant to Planning Code Section 1006.2. An Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness
9 shall also be required for restoring the Rainbow Flag after "force majeure" events, including,
10 but not limited to, earthquakes, storms, vehicle collisions, or sabotage which may necessitate
11 replacement of the aluminum pole, concrete plinth, or metal plaque, provided that the
12 replacement also be of the same material and of the same dimensions as the existing.

13 (c) A Certificate of Appropriateness shall be required for the disassembly and/or
14 relocation, without regard to duration, of any of the following: the flagpole; concrete plinth; and
15 metal plaque, provided that the Arts Commission be consulted and its recommendation be
16 presented to the Historic Preservation Commission, in advance of the Historic Preservation
17 Commission hearing or at a joint hearing.

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1 Section 5. Effective Date.

2 This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after enactment. Enactment occurs
3 when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the ordinance unsigned or does not
4 sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board of Supervisors overrides the
5 Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

6
7 APPROVED AS TO FORM:
8 DAVID CHIU, City Attorney

9 By: /s/ Andrea Ruiz-Esquide

10 ANDREA RUIZ-ESQUIDE
11 Deputy City Attorney

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City and County of San Francisco
Tails
Ordinance

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 240725

Date Passed: September 03, 2024

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to designate the Rainbow Flag Installation at Harvey Milk Plaza, by Gilbert Baker, located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Market Street and Castro Street, as a Landmark consistent with the standards set forth in Article 10 of the Planning Code; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and making public necessity, convenience, and welfare findings under Planning Code, Section 302, and findings of consistency with the General Plan, and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1.

July 29, 2024 Land Use and Transportation Committee - AMENDED, AN AMENDMENT OF THE WHOLE BEARING SAME TITLE

July 29, 2024 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED AS AMENDED AS A COMMITTEE REPORT

July 30, 2024 Board of Supervisors - PASSED ON FIRST READING

Ayes: 10 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai and Stefani

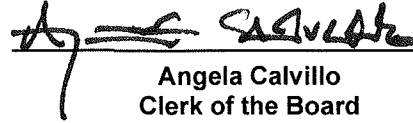
Excused: 1 - Walton

September 03, 2024 Board of Supervisors - FINALLY PASSED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 240725

I hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance was **FINALLY PASSED** on 9/3/2024 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.


Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board


London N. Breed
Mayor

9/13/24
Date Approved



ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION FACT SHEET

Historic Name:	Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza
Address:	Harvey Milk Plaza, Market, Castro and 17 th Streets
Block/ Lot(s):	N/A
Parcel Area:	N/A
Zoning:	N/A
Year Installed:	1997
Artist:	Gilbert Baker
Prior Historic Studies/Other Designations:	None
Prior HPC Actions:	None
Significance Criteria:	A – Traditional Cultural Property C – High Artistic Value
Year of Installation:	1997
Statement of Significance:	The artist Gilbert Baker (1951-2017) is widely known for creating a six-striped Rainbow Flag artwork based on an eight-striped version made in San Francisco in 1978. Baker’s six-color Rainbow Flag rapidly became associated with the greater LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Queer) community, not only in terms of the diversity of whom it represented but also in its global recognition. For nearly two decades Baker produced variations on the theme of the six-stripe Rainbow Flag for different anniversaries and events. ¹ The Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza in 1997 is a site-specific permanent installation and is the only such installation made by Baker. It honors the political achievements of Harvey Milk and the next generation of LGBTQ+ politicians. It serves as a beacon of hope, visibility and power. Finally, it is the singular physical manifestation of LGBTQ+ pride for everyone.
Character-Defining Features:	Concrete plinth with beveled corners; metal plaque with dedication text; unpainted aluminum flagpole with internal rope halyards and a nylon flag measuring 20-feet by 30-feet consisting of six horizontal stripes of equal width in the bold colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet.

¹ <https://gilbertbaker.com/flags/> accessed March 12, 2024.

Photos



Six-striped Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza on aluminum flagpole.



Concrete plinth at the base of the flagpole with metal plaque dedication. Full text of the plaque is transcribed on page 11.

Summary

Gilbert Baker's Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza is a permanent art installation erected to honor Harvey Milk. It consists of a nylon banner of six horizontal colors 20-feet tall and 30-feet long mounted on an aluminum pole on a concrete plinth with a bronze plaque at its base. It is the only permanent installation of Rainbow Flag designed by Baker. Erected in 1997, it was dedicated on the 20th anniversary of Milk's election to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Beginning in the 1970s, the artist Gilbert Baker was part of San Francisco's politically active queer community of San Francisco. Baker was involved in sex worker rights, marijuana rights, and with his personal style, agitated for freedom of gender expression. His vision of the art scene and of politics was always part of his world vision inseparable from any personal life. As sex workers' rights activist Carol Leigh, also known as the Scarlet Harlot, noted in the film *The Scarlet Harlot*, Baker "was the expression of the queer community as a political artist. His art was strategic."² Considered as a work of art, Baker's flag is intertwined with political and cultural expression.

Baker was working with fabric in his art when he, Lynn Segerblom (also known as Faerie Argyle Rainbow), James McNamara and a cadre of volunteer fabricators made decorations for the 1978 Gay Freedom Day parade in San Francisco, the ancestor of today's Pride celebration. The proposal was to create two eight-striped rainbow banners to fly from the two tallest flag poles at United Nations Plaza. These banners were fabricated at 330 Grove Street in San Francisco in a building which was used as the Gay Community Center. The initial decorations can be considered the forerunner of what became a series of artworks by Baker centered on the six-striped Rainbow Flag. In the years since, the six-striped flag has become an international symbol associated with the broader LGBTQ+ community.³

In his memoir, Gilbert Baker wrote: "I began to have an awareness of the American flag because we had just come out of the bicentennial in 1976, and when the bicentennial came around, the American flag was on everything. I thought, 'you know, we could have a flag' because flags become so many different things. They are more than cloth; they are an idea and what I like about the symbolism of the rainbow because it fits us. It's all the colors, so it has lasted because it represents all the genders and all the races — it's everything the rainbow of humanity."⁴

As Baker noted, and Flags are desirable for several reasons. Flags are used to identify membership, affiliation, or support. They are used to distinguish a movement or participation therein for entities and individuals internationally. Flags become a symbol for those that affiliate with it to use to promote themselves and to bond around. For all of these reasons, there is no real motivation for a community not to have a flag.⁵

² Carol Leigh, *The Scarlet Harlot*, a film by Vincent Guzzone and Charley Beal, May 2020. <http://gilbertbaker.com/oralhistory/> accessed 5/11/2023.

³ There is some disagreement over who created or co-created the designs for the first two rainbow banners, but the fabrication was done by several volunteers under the working team of Gilbert Baker, Faerie Argyle Rainbow (Lynne Segerblom) and James McNamara. It is agreed however, that it was Baker alone that continued both production of rainbow flags, marketing them and for a series of artworks of the Rainbow Flag which led to the global recognition of rainbow flags as an emblem.

⁴ Gilbert Baker, *Rainbow Warrior: My Life in Color* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2019)

⁵ Ferrigan, James (2023, December 20). Interview for the Rainbow Flag (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

Preeminent vexillologist James J. Ferrigan III presented the Rainbow Flag in August 1987 at the Flag Congress in San Francisco, combining the 21st annual meeting of North American Vexillological Association (NAVA) and the 12th International Congress of Vexillology. Vexillology is the study of the history, symbolism and usage of flags or, by extension, any interest in flags in general. Ferrigan spoke of its origin by Baker, the first commercial production of the flag at the Paramount Flag Company in the Spring 1979. Baker later claimed to have been recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers – which does not exist; he conflated another organization, FIAV (the International Federation of Vexillological Associations), and the Flag Congress event.⁶ In Ferrigan’s account of the flag’s history, an activist from the 1978 Gay Freedom Day parade decorating committee suggested something that could be used year-to-year — akin to the interlocking circles used for the Olympics — and Baker responded with the rainbow flag.⁷

About Gilbert Baker⁸

Gilbert Baker was born in Chanute, Kansas on June 2, 1951.⁹ He was the oldest child of Lyle Phillip Baker and Patricia Lou Carson and had two sisters, Gail and Ardonna. The family later moved to Wichita, where Lyle opened his own law practice.

“I was born gay and I always knew it,” Baker writes in his biography.¹⁰ He started experimenting with drag as early as kindergarten when he turned bed sheets into billowing skirts and danced to the radio.¹¹ His parents’ attempts to stem nonheteronormative displays by spanking and scolding Baker to “stop acting like a girl” and pleading with him to “just be normal” led Baker to develop suicidal ideations that he fought for the rest of his life.¹² As noted in his memoir:

I started to wonder if I might be mentally ill. This idea that I might be psychotic made me afraid my parents would send me to a mental institution. I struggled to tone down my behavior and pretended to be interested in girls. But I was consumed by the weight of the lies that I told every day just to survive. So I acted as if everything in my waking life conformed to the ordinary. To keep my parents’ love, I pretended to be someone I wasn’t.¹³

Baker recounts developing a passion for fabrics through his childhood drag performances: “Even then, fabric fascinated me; whenever I touched it, I went to another place, a nirvana.”¹⁴ When his family gathered around their first television set to watch the 1956 Republican National Convention, Baker recalls being:

⁶ Alfred Verhoeven, Marketing the Rainbow (3) – Now, about that Rainbow...January, 2015. <https://www.bright.partners/marketing-the-rainbow-3-now-about-that-rainbow-2/> accessed 5/11/2023.

⁷ Ferrigan, J. J. (August 16, 1987). NAVA 21 / ICV 12. Flag Congress (p. Video time stamp: 1:47). San Francisco, CA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S81kVmu7Bgs>. accessed 5/11/2023.

⁸ This biography was edited from research by Shayne Watson of Watson Heritage Consulting.

⁹ Baker, 3.

¹⁰ Ibid. 3.

¹¹ Ibid. 3.

¹² Ibid. 4.

¹³ Ibid. 6.

¹⁴ Ibid. 3.

...mesmerized by the hoopla of bunting and balloons and thrilled by the pageantry. I especially loved the parade of state delegates, each group carrying signs and banners created in crepe paper. There were crazy hats and pretty girls in sashes of stars and stripes, the national anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance. I was especially moved by the sight of the American Flag.¹⁵

He was equally inspired by the Miss America pageants, which were first televised nationally in 1954: “I loved designing elaborate ball gowns for Lee Meriwether, Miss America 1955. She was the most beautiful person I’d ever seen. What I wanted most for my [sixth] birthday was a strapless ball gown in taffeta and tulle.”¹⁶

When he told his parents he wanted to be an artist, they chastised him. Yet Gilbert Baker won a scholarship to an art academy in Wichita after entering an art contest.¹⁷ He left his parents’ home when he was drafted into the Army in June 1970 for basic training at Fort Leonard Wood in the Missouri Ozarks:

Ugly confrontations between me and my parents started to occur with regularity. I was nineteen by then, and I knew it was finally time for me to leave home. ... Getting out of Kansas was my dream. Being an artist—and being gay—was not safe there. If I couldn’t escape, I knew I would end up a suicide.¹⁸

He transferred to Brooks Army Medical Center in San Antonio to join the medic training program to become a nurse for the duration of his two-year enlistment.¹⁹ He was transferred to San Francisco and stationed in the Presidio in a “barracks built on the sandy shores of the bay” with a view of the Golden Gate Bridge.²⁰ He worked temporarily at the Oakland Army Depot to process soldiers disembarking from service in Vietnam. Baker was honorably discharged from the Army in February 1972.²¹ He had come out to his parents during Christmas 1971 and their response was to tell him he “was going to hell.” They didn’t speak for ten years.²² Instead of returning to Kansas, Baker stayed in San Francisco and he noted:

San Francisco is a sweet addiction, a spell cast deep into the blood. Junkie romantics get high on a feeling of being at the center of the universe, fixating on the city’s most precious natural resource: freedom. San Francisco is a city made for lovers. It is providence that homosexuals have lived openly behind its golden gates for more than a century. Lavender tolerance and social acceptance are fabled there as much as its Victorian architecture.²³

Baker developed a close friendship with a fellow Army nurse also stationed in the Presidio, who introduced Baker to LSD on a hike one weekend in the Presidio. Baker recounted the experience as a moment of transformation and commitment to the cause of gay rights:

¹⁵ Ibid. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid. 5.

¹⁷ Ibid. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid. 11.

¹⁹ Ibid. 21.

²⁰ Ibid. 23.

²¹ Ibid. 25.

²² Ibid. 25.

²³ Ibid. 25.

...drunk on the rushing thoughts and images swirling in my brain. Exhilarated, beyond rapture, I ended up flat on my back, looking up through the tall trees to the sun, feeling the earth move under me, tasting tears of unbridled joy that streamed down my face into my mouth. I felt perfect, loved by God... I decided to stay in San Francisco and get involved in gay rights..²⁴

Baker and the Origins of the Pride Flag

Activists agitating for equal rights for gay and lesbian people began with small organizations such as the Mattachine Society, organized in 1950 by Harry Hay, and the Daughters of Bilitis, organized in 1955 by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. These organizations both began a movement and were limited in scope, both serving largely white, cis-gendered members. A distinctly different approach emerged in the summer of 1970, when marches in New York City and Chicago marked the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riot. The gay liberation movement grew quickly, propelled by events such as San Francisco's Gay Freedom Day Parade. As the movement progressed, so did the process of inclusion. Gay Liberation became Gay and Lesbian, then Lesbian and Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), followed by inclusions for other marginalized groups..²⁵

Soon Baker made a decades-long friendship with activist Cleve Jones. Jones recalls having met Baker around 1974. Baker was also friends with Harvey Milk. By 1977, Baker, Jones, Milk, and others in what was known at the time as the Gay Liberation movement began to have conversations about the need for a new symbol to get away from the Nazi-era pink triangle. Prior to the creation of the eight-color initial Rainbow Flag in 1978, banners and flags were used to signify various groups. Gay symbols consisted of the pink triangle a symbol devised by the Third Reich in Germany to identify homosexuals as part of the same code that identified Jewish persons and other groups which they wore to their deaths in Nazi concentration camps. The scientific symbol for Activism, the Greek letter lambda [λ] was also frequently used. Interlaced same-gender symbols were also common..²⁶ There was, however, no universally recognized symbol to represent the gay community.

Baker's work changed that. In 1978, the eight-striped rainbow flags were decorations for a parade. One year later, in the fall 1979, after the original two eight-striped flags were flown for the second and final time..²⁷, the rainbow flag was on its way to becoming that very symbol which was desired by the Gay Liberation movement in 1977..²⁸ By the end of 1979 Baker was working at the Paramount Flag Company in San Francisco and began stocking his six-striped Rainbow Flag..²⁹, starting in motion the rainbow flag gaining popularity among the San Francisco LGBTQ+ community. As an artist Baker had used the simplified six-color rainbow for many installations, most notably the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Riot for the New York City Pride parade, where he unveiled his largest work to date – the Mile-Long Pride Flag.

²⁴ Ibid. 24-25.

²⁵ For further reading: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT>

²⁶ Szala, J. R. (1977, April-June). gay Symbols. NAVA News, x(2), 2.

²⁷ San Francisco Chronicle photo archives from the 1979 parade depict the two flags being flown for a second year. In an interview, Lee Mentley stated that the two flags were presumed lost in 1980. <https://www.lgbtghp.org/post/rainbow-flag> and https://www.sfchronicle.com/chronicle_vault/article/Rainbow-gold-mine-Early-SF-Pride-Parade-photos-14040289.php both accessed 14 February 2024.

²⁸ Jones, Cleve (2023, December 02). Interview for Rainbow flag. (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

²⁹ Ferrigan, James (2023, December 20). Interview for the Rainbow Flag (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

Baker's history, and that of the rainbow flag, is tied to another San Francisco icon: The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. The group of activists "first appeared on the scene at an anti-nuke rally" in San Francisco in March 1980, and in June, ten members of the group marched in the Freedom Day Parade.³⁰ By 1982, there were about 20 active Sisters, including Bobbi Campbell, described at the time by the Bay Area Reporter newspaper as "victim and articulate spokesman of the new diseases which have hit the Gay community recently."³¹ Gilbert became an early member of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence: Sister Chanel 2001 (aka Sister Space 19.99).³²

Baker continued using the rainbow flag as a marker of activism. He decorated Kezar Pavilion for a charity basketball game between the Sisters and the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus in February 1982.³³ In July 1982, Baker adorned the grand gathering area of City Hall with rainbow flags, "converting the rotunda to the haze of color Dorothy discovers Somewhere Over the Rainbow" to celebrate a recent legal win: the overturning of an anti-gay immigration ban by the U.S. Attorney General and the Immigration and Naturalization Service.³⁴

In 1983, Baker was elected to the Board of Directors of the Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Committee for the 1984 parade. The Bay Area Reporter recognized Baker as the artist behind the flag in an article profiling the incoming Board members: "Gilbert Baker, Queen of Flagamania (formerly Sister Chanel 2001), the Betsy Ross designer/seamstress of both the giant rainbow flag carried in the Parade every year (with the help of a gang of SSI queens also stitching), and the hot pink backdrop of the stage raised across the front of City Hall the last two years. Baker has worked with the Parade Committee for six years through two corporations."³⁵ By this point, Baker's work had become intertwined with the visual expression of the lesbian and gay community.

Baker's Rainbow Flag: A Symbol of Humanity and Inclusivity

Gilbert Baker and others fabricated a pair of eight-striped rainbow flags, one with tie-dyed stars in one corner in 1978. Baker alone subsequently simplified the design of the flags to six-colors for production reasons. This simplification didn't affect Baker's feelings that the flag was for everyone. As initially designed all eight colors represented not sub-communities, but rather traits of humanity. The colors represented hot pink for sex, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, turquoise for art, indigo for harmony, and violet for spirit. It was intended to be a flag for all.³⁶

Two of the creators and fabricators of the original 1978 rainbow flags for UN Plaza have repeatedly stated since their inception that the intent of the rainbow was to be all-inclusive, Baker being the first. Lynn Segerblom (Faerie Argyle Rainbow) thought that "the rainbow represents everyone, no matter what gender or race you are; that's how I looked at it. Rainbows are in nature and beautiful. People love them, and I love them. I knew they

³⁰ Allen White, "Sisters of P.I. Cause Pleasure and Pain: What Does Their Political Debut Augur?," *Bay Area Reporter* Volume 12, Number 28 (July 15, 1982) 9.

³¹ Allen White, "Sisters of P.I. Cause Pleasure and Pain: What Does Their Political Debut Augur?," *Bay Area Reporter* Volume 12, Number 28 (July 15, 1982) 9.

³² Allen White, "Red Party: Big on Color, Low on Cash," *Bay Area Reporter*, Volume 12, Number 18 (May 6, 1982) 8.

³³ Allen White, "Sisters of P.I. Baptize Kezar Pavilion," *Bay Area Reporter* Volume 12, Number 7 (February 18, 1982) 4.

³⁴ Konstantin Berlandt, "Rotunda Cocktails for INS Rollback," *Bay Area Reporter* Volume 12, Number 30 (July 29, 1982) 11.

³⁵ Konstantin Berlandt, "Parade Committee Adopts '84 Theme: New Board Elected, Few New Faces," *Bay Area Reporter* Volume 13, Number 50 (December 15, 1983) 16.

³⁶ NBC News. (2016, June 23). How The Pride Rainbow Flag Came To Be. Retrieved from youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_bzpr2jalQ accessed March 7, 2024.

would be great color healing. I was thinking that rainbows encompass everybody, the whole group, unity.”³⁷ Add second attribution here with quotation or paraphrase. Add concluding sentence.

In an interview for this report, Bevan Dufty, who was on Mayor Brown’s staff and later a Supervisor for the area observed about the rainbow flag:

For so many people, particularly if they are living in areas that are inhospitable to LGBTQ people, it at least in the early years, you could see a sticker on a car or something, and you could know they were also. It let you know someone was gay around you. It was a while before the homophobic people knew what it was. It was nice to have what was then a secret code. It was such a tribe identifier. The feeling that you aren’t alone when you see it.”³⁸

As the flag became recognizable to outsiders as a symbol of the LGBTQ+ community, it took on additional layers of meaning that may not have been intended or anticipated by its creator. New York’s Museum of Modern Art added Baker’s six-color Rainbow Flag to its permanent collection in 2013, making a political statement by displaying it for the first time on June 26, 2015, the day when the U.S. Supreme Court announced its landmark decision on marriage equality.³⁹ Other flags emerged with the intent to communicate inclusiveness. For example, a flag commissioned in 2017 by Philadelphia’s pride event added black and brown stripes to symbolize communities of color; other flags use additional colors to indicate alignment with the subgroups within the broader queer community. This use of color and symbolism to represent groups and subgroups of people differs from Baker’s intent for the colors on the eight and six-color flags to represent commonly held human traits and distinguishes Baker’s flag from others.

In 2023, writer, activist and filmmaker Leo Herrera wrote an essay “A Flag Not Yet Earned” wrote:

While the 1970s in considered a victorious golden era, we must remember the Queer shadows of the time: Trans exclusion (“Pride” was the “Gay and Lesbian” parade for a very long time). Intersex, Nonbinary, Asexual awareness was practically non-existent.
Is [the rainbow flag] a misplaced nostalgia for a Queer time that never existed (for all of us)?
Like our community, *the rainbow is a palimpsest*, an unfinished evolving piece. We may be moving steadily toward the dreams of the “pure” rainbow flag but maybe it represents a promise not fulfilled. A flag we have yet to earn.⁴⁰

Here it is helpful to look at the difference between the object at hand, Gilbert Baker’s Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza from the abstract noun representing the rainbow flag, an emblem in the public domain that is derived directly from Baker’s artwork which has become a thing unto itself. As an artwork that has flown over Harvey Milk Plaza and borne witness to countless protests, celebrations, festivals, and daily life, Rainbow Flag the object is significant for its on-going contributions to a shared social history. As an abstract noun, it can be acknowledged that some feel unrepresented by it, which gave cause for the creation of other emblems.

³⁷ Segerblom, Lynn The Rainbow Flag and Farie Argyle Rainbow interviewed by August Bernadicou for the LGBTQ History Project (undated) <https://www.lgbtqhp.org/post/rainbow-flag> Accessed March 7, 2024.

³⁸ Dufty, Bevan. (2024, January 16). Interview for Rainbow Flag. (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

³⁹ <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/192373> accessed 6/15/2023

⁴⁰ Herrera, L. (2023). Post. Tukwila, WA: Blurb Publishers.

Gilbert Baker himself was not blind to this argument either. In the script for his speech to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the creation of the rainbow flag, he wrote: “In my view the rainbow flag is unfinished, as the movement it represents, an arc that begins well before me, its breadth far broader than all of our experiences put together, reaching the farthest corners of the world with a message of solidarity and a beacon of hope for those who follow in our footsteps.” He continued: “All revolutions start with a word, and the word is NO. No to injustice, no to discrimination, no to oppression, no to slavery, no to violence, no to lives dictated by fear. Yes to love. The defiant colors of the evolving people who raise this symbol of hope, have unfurled that idea for thirty years.”⁴¹ In another text, Baker states: “In the beginning the Rainbow Flag was about liberation, about breaking free of an existence limited by fear and conformity, the right to express the spectrum of love and sexuality without shame or retaliation but truthfully, freely, and equally.”⁴²

As alluded to in the previous section and elsewhere in this report, Baker’s Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza is not only his only permanent installation but also it is located in the heart of the words of the Gay Liberation movement as Milk knew it “gayborhood” within the “gay Mecca” that is San Francisco. As such, it can be interpreted as the most logical physical embodiment of the abstract concept of pride. The only enduring physical public display of the internationally known symbol of pride made by the artist who devised and popularized the symbol is significant on an international level. Visitors to San Francisco often include a pilgrimage to Harvey Milk Plaza to visit and photograph this Rainbow Flag specifically.

Finding a Home for the Flag in Harvey Milk Plaza

To this point, much like the artwork of the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Baker’s artwork was ephemeral. Baker had never succeeded in the permanent installation of his Rainbow Flag anywhere. He had been attempting to get traction for an idea for an installation at Harvey Milk Plaza since its 1985 dedication. In a 2012 Interview with friend Cleve Jones, Baker in reflecting upon the dedication ceremony for the Harvey Milk Plaza stated:

“One of the things I didn't like about it [the Plaza] was that it was underground; and one of the things I learned from Harvey was the importance of visibility. I mean Harvey was an incredibly theatrical character and really had an appreciation of art and theater and the power and impact of visuals. That he shared, and really informed and taught me, so I always felt that the plaza needed something soaring. Of course the Rainbow Flag is something I love, and I thought – well, it would fit very perfectly there.”⁴³

Traction arrived one afternoon at the Castro Street Fair in 1997. That afternoon, a convergence of art, politics and power set the stage for Baker’s most enduring contribution to San Francisco and the international LGBTQ+ community. That afternoon, Gilbert and his friend Jon Katz were at Café Flore and spotted Mayor Willie Brown and his entourage which included Dean Goodwin, Mayor Brown’s official liaison to San Francisco's gay, lesbian

⁴¹ Baker, Gilbert, text for 30th anniversary rainbow flag speech, Zurich 2007 for Interpride Conference: <https://glbt.i8.dgicloud.com/30thanniversaryrainbowflagspeech> Accessed March 6, 2024.

⁴² Baker, Gilbert, Autobiographical speech June 16, 2011 <https://glbt.i8.dgicloud.com/autobiographicalspeech> Accessed March 6, 2024.

⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSwKvIsHKiQ> Accessed March 12, 2024.

and bisexual community, and Bevan Dufty, also a gay official with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services⁴⁴. At this time the group was walking to the booth managed by the Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club. Jeff Sheehy was then president of the Club. Baker and Sheehy engaged the mayor in conversation about a permanent installation of the Rainbow Flag in the Castro.⁴⁵

Mayor Brown interviewed for this report recalled meeting Baker at the fair, listening closely to what he was saying about the prospect for a flag and embracing the idea with enthusiasm. Adding: "I was so fascinated with Baker. I didn't have an option" to turn down the proposal.⁴⁶ Within minutes of his decision, Brown, turning to Goodwin said: "Make it happen." With that, Goodwin enlisted the aid of Mark Primeau, the new (and gay) Public Works Director appointed by Brown.

Primeau assembled a team and met with Baker who showed his drawings and shared his vision. In his autobiography, Baker mythologized that a flagpole was taken from UN Plaza and that there was a spare one in a Public Works stockyard. Neither of these are true according to Primeau. Public Works was able to source a new pole from a supplier in Long Beach California which was trucked up. Engineers from that company worked with Public Works to design a base that would support the pole and deal with strong wind forces on a 20-by30-foot flag in the Pacific winds above a transit center. Meanwhile Baker worked to produce the first of the Rainbow Flags, likely at the warehouse owned by his friend and benefactor Tom Taylor at 39 Isis Street, although it is also possible that it was fabricated at the Paramount Flag Company's workshop.⁴⁷

Six weeks after the Castro Street Fair where the project first had mayoral approval, the flagpole was installed and dedicated. Baker did not take the spotlight – while his artwork was unveiled that day, the November 8th, 1997 ceremony was a celebration and remembrance to mark 20 years since Harvey Milk was first elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Before the Rainbow Flag was raised upon the pole installed for the occasion, it was paraded through the neighborhood on the raised arms of dozens of friends and volunteers. Mayor Brown himself hoisted that first Rainbow Flag.

Baker described his personal meaning to this specific installation of his artwork in the 2012 interview with Cleve Jones:

"One of the things I particularly loved about that project was the way that we dedicated it on November 7th which was [20-years to] the day Harvey was elected. Usually people commemorate his death, and his assassination, but we wanted to remember the moment he really became a very powerful important Civic leader. More importantly, a global leader so that was really an exciting moment to be able to finally see the Rainbow Flag up over the Castro in such a huge and glorious way. And, like in 5 seconds it was like, oh yeah it's been there forever – instantly!"⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Katz, Jonathan D. (2024, January 18). Interview for the Rainbow flag. (M. Corrette, Interviewer); Dufty, Bevan. (2024, January 16). Interview for Rainbow Flag. (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

⁴⁵ Sheehy, Jeff. (2024, January 8). Interview for Rainbow Flag. (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

⁴⁶ Brown Jr., Mayor Willie. (2024, February 29). Rainbow Flag Interview. (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

⁴⁷ Artist Russell Blackwood, a friend of the late Baker and of Tom Taylor stated in an email to M. Corrette on April 24, 2024 that Taylor had told him that the Rainbow Flag indeed was crafted at the Isis St. warehouse.

⁴⁸ Gilbert Baker, interviewed by Cleve Jones 2012, at the San Francisco LGBT Historical Society. Transcript provided by Gilbert Baker Foundation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSwKvlsHKiQ> accessed April 26, 2024.

Photographs show the flag bearing six stripes. Gilbert Baker wrote in his essay “The Rainbow Flag” as well as the photograph (from 2000) on the cover of the book in which it appears, *Out in the Castro: Desire, Promise, Activism*, that the first flag flown was the eight-striped Rainbow Flag as that was the version that Harvey had known. However photographs from that day depict the standard six-striped flag; therefore it seems that the eight-striped flag was a special version which is not commonly flown.

It should be noted that the Brown Administration was focused on outcomes over documentation. The flagpole was erected for a purpose, but inquiries for this report to the Department of Public Works has not yielded a maintenance agreement or easement. It does not appear in the inventories of either Public Works, the Arts Commission or the Mayor’s Office. Keys to the flagpole were retained by Public Works, Gilbert Baker, Tom Taylor and the Castro Merchants Association. It is clear however that the pole installation was done with Public Works funds on their property.

Flags wear out. Wind frays the edges and tears seams. Sun fades the vivid colors. At present, the Rainbow Flag’s cyclical maintenance necessitates full replacement every three months, starting with a fresh flag in the days leading up to San Francisco Pride in late June of each year. Maintenance for the replacement Rainbow Flags was done initially by Baker, but by 1998 had turned it over to Tom Taylor who managed until health issues necessitated transfer to the Castro Merchants who order, pay-for, and install replacement six-color flags to the time of this writing. Flags themselves are manufactured in San Francisco by L. Ph. Bolander & Sons and are replaced four times a year. A minor detail to reduce the noise of the flag whipping in the wind in deference to the neighbors is that the leeward edge of the flag is purposefully frayed before raising.

The full appreciation for the Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza needs to take into account two additional aspects of this site-specific installation which together with the international symbol that is the Rainbow Flag itself. First: the location is a historic plaza at an intersection where civic agitation and celebration have occurred and will continue to occur. Second: the plaque itself which, as an integral component of the artwork, provides context to the added significance of political power of a community in the most overt way possible.

The flag’s site, Harvey Milk Plaza, has been found historically significant and eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources in a 2020 Historic Resource Evaluation prepared for the planned renovations to the Plaza.⁴⁹

Harvey Milk Plaza appears individually eligible for listing in the CRHR under Criterion 1 for its association with gay liberation, pride, and politics as a gathering place for exceptionally important vigils and marches.

Harvey Milk Plaza is located in the Castro neighborhood of San Francisco. Originally a late 19th and early 20th century streetcar suburb, the neighborhood became the national destination for the LGBTQ identity movement in the United States in the 1970s. During this period, openly LGBTQ community members started businesses, established institutions, developed a social network, and gained political power in the Castro. Harvey Milk Plaza is associated with the LGBTQ movement in the Castro and San Francisco during the 1970s since it was a major gathering place for celebrations, marches, protests, and memorials. The prominent location at the intersection of Market and Castro streets and easy access to

⁴⁹ TRENORHL. (2020). Project Name: Harvey Milk Plaza HRE. San Francisco, Planning Department. San Francisco: TRENORHL.

public transportation (Muni Metro, F-line, and multiple bus lines) made this plaza an ideal meeting spot for civic events.

The night of November 27, 1978, after Dan White shot and killed George Moscone and Harvey Milk, a mourning crowd gathered there and marched down Market Street. Six months later, on the night of May 21, 1979, after White's conviction, thousands of furious protesters marched down Market Street from the Castro, known as the White Night Riot, overwhelming the San Francisco Police, shattering windows at City Hall, and setting police cars on fire. The neighborhood has also been the focal point for celebrations such as the annual Gay Pride Parade, the Castro Street Fair, and the marriage equality celebrations.⁵⁰

In addition to the above, Harvey Milk Plaza is significant location of hundreds of other protests to both assert rights, and a collective gathering place for mourning collective losses such as that of Propositions 22 (2000) and 8 (2008), which banned same-sex marriage in California. Prior to this, the Plaza was also important in the community's response to AIDS, also as a site of protests by ACT UP, countless memorials to individuals who lost their lives to the virus and other rallies which either were stationary or moved to other parts of the neighborhood or beyond to Civic Center.

As part of the artwork, the plaque Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza is easy for the casual observer to not approach the base of the flagpole and fail to notice this part of the artwork. Because of this, are unaware of this layer to the memorial. The plaque is a marker of official legitimacy by government of the presence of the artwork, it can itself also been seen as a symbol of LGBTQ+ victory and of hope beyond the mere documentation of the political successes of the named individuals on the plaque.

Plaque language: (the following is a transcript of the language on the plaque which is in all capital letters.)

ON NOVEMBER 8, 1997, THIS RAINBOW FLAG WAS INSTALLED TO COMMEMORATE THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION OF HARVEY MILK TO THE SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BY VOTERS OF DISTRICT 5. THIS VICTORY BY AN OPENLY GAY MAN WAS A WATERSHED FOR THE QUEER RIGHTS MOVEMENT. SINCE THEN, OPEN LESBIANS AND GAY MEN HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO MANY LEVELS OF PUBLIC OFFICE THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. AFTER MILK'S ELECTION IN NOVEMBER 8, 1977, THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF SAN FRANCISCO'S LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN ELECTED OR APPOINTED TO OFFICE:

CAROLE MIGDEN	CALIFORNIA STATE ASSEMBLY
SUSAN LEAL	TREASURER, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
HARRY BRITT	SUPERVISOR, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
ROBERTA ACHTENBERG	SUPERVISOR, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
TOM AMMIANO,	SUPERVISOR, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LESLIE KATZ	SUPERVISOR, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
ANGIE FA	MEMBER, BOARD OF EDUCATION
DR. JUANITA OWENS	MEMBER, BOARD OF EDUCATION
DR. TIMOTHY WOLFRED	TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD

⁵⁰ ibid

LAWRENCE WONG	TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD
ANDREA SHORTER	TRUSTEE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD
HON. DONNA HITCHENS	MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGE
HON. KEVIN MCCARTHY	MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGE
HON. HERB DONALDSON	MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGE
HON. KAY TSENIN	MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGE
TOM RADULOVICH	DIRECTOR, BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT (BART)

THE RAINBOW FLAG CREATED BY GILBERT BAKER, WHICH REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF A COMMUNITY, AND IS A [SIC] INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SYMBOL REPRESENTING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

DEDICATED BY MAYOR WILLIE BROWN, JR.; ASSEMBLYWOMAN CAROLE MIGDEN; THE SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, MARK PRIMEAU, DIRECTOR; THE HARVEY MILK LESBIAN/GAY/BISEXUAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB, JEFF SHEEHY, PRESIDENT.

The language on the plaque was developed as a group effort which included Baker, Jeff Sheehy of the Milk Club, and Dean Goodwin within Mayor Brown’s office.⁵¹ Installations of major artworks intended to be permanent are often accompanied by a plaque to signify the artist and their intent. Here Baker with some help did just that. A secondary political act of this installation is that the individuals named on the plaque then have a vested interest in seeing their names perpetuated and defend the installation should it be proposed for removal.

Evaluation of significance as a Traditional Cultural Place

The National Park Service has provided a framework for assessing places with traditional cultural practices. This is the Traditional Cultural Place (TCP) framework described in National Register Bulletin #38 which is in its final stages of revision as of this writing.⁵² A TCP is defined as a building, structure, object, site, or district that may be [designated] for its significance to a living community because of its association with cultural beliefs, customs, or practices that are rooted in the community’s history and that are important in maintaining the community’s cultural identity. The Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza is an object. The term "object" is used to distinguish from buildings and structures those constructions that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed. Although it may be, by nature or design, movable, an object gets its meaning through its location and association with a specific setting or environment.

To be considered eligible a traditional cultural place must have all of the following characteristics:

TCP Essential Characteristics	Rainbow Flag
1) The place must be associated with and valued by a living community.	The rainbow flag was designed in 1978 when two massive banners were flown on the tallest flagpoles in UN Plaza as decorations for the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day celebration. By 1980-1981 the rainbow flag became a widely adopted symbol for sexual and gender minorities to which it has grown to become a powerful unifying international symbol, which is globally associated with the LGBTQ+ community.

⁵¹ Goodwin, Dean. (2024, January 12). Interview for Rainbow Flag. (M. Corrette, Interviewer)

⁵² <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?projectId=107663> Accessed March 7, 2024.

	<p>Gilbert Baker simplified the original design of eight stripes to six in this period, giving rise to his series of rainbow Flag artworks which continued to his death.</p> <p>The transition from physical to abstract starting around 1980 grew over a short span of years as more LGBTQ+ people adopted it as a public indication of membership of a “tribe”. Harvey Milk Plaza the physical location for artist Gilbert Baker’s Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza was and is itself a stage for LGBTQ+ political protests starting in the early 1970s and continues to this day. Not only is the immediate area of the Plaza significant as a hub for protests, but as the imagined central node of the SF queer community, and through that, extending far beyond San Francisco itself. The public transit station which is below the plaza was named for the slain Supervisor in 1985, Baker’s Rainbow Flag installation occurred in 1997.</p>
<p>2) The community that values the place must have existed historically, and continue to exist in the present.</p>	<p>LGBTQ+ people have existed as far back as we have documentation for humanity (Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum, manicurists in the Palace of King Niuserre during the Fifth Dynasty of Egyptian pharaohs, c. 2400 BCE). San Francisco has long-served as a destination for sexual and gender minorities, from the arrival of the ’49-ers who were overwhelmingly male and single, with larger concentrations of LGBTQ+ people in the early 20th century, and further increasing after WWII and the Summer of Love.⁵³. Today San Francisco’s Castro neighborhood is one of the most internationally recognized LGBTQ+ enclaves, with its epicenter at the intersection of Market and Castro, which holds special significance as the location of many protests and celebrations from the early 1970s to present. This is the location of Gilbert Baker’s Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza.</p>
<p>3) The community must share beliefs, customs, or practices that are rooted in its history and held or practiced at present.</p>	<p>Since its inception in 1978, the Rainbow Flag has been self-adopted by millions across the globe. A scientific study in 2023⁵⁴ found that approximately 9% of the populations of 30 countries identify as any of lesbian/gay/homosexual, bisexual, pansexual/omnisexual, or asexual, AND/OR describing themselves as any of transgender, non-binary/gender non-conforming/gender-fluid, or differently but neither male nor female. While different customs of expressions vary between cultures, one unifying symbol globally has been the six-stripe Rainbow Flag. The flag was rapidly adopted internationally after 1994 when Gilbert Baker made a mile-long Rainbow Flag for the 25th annual New York City Pride Parade. That object was divided into sections and was given to many international contingents that took it to their home countries where it was adopted by individuals and communities. In order to affiliate with the Rainbow flag, an individual must to some degree be “out,” either publicly or to themselves.</p>
<p>4) These shared beliefs, customs, or practices must be important in continuing</p>	<p>The shared symbol of the innumerable variations of LGBTQ+ culture are unified by the Rainbow Flag. While some 50 variations of flag-as-symbol have been created by others, most represent a specific affinity or membership to a sub-category on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. Other flag-symbols have been created to advance specific</p>

⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_culture_in_San_Francisco

⁵⁴ <https://www.ipsos.com/en/pride-month-2023-9-of-adults-identify-as-lgbt>

<p>the cultural identity and values of the community.</p>	<p>inclusion rather than the tacit inclusion of the original Rainbow Flag which remains the most used unifying association with the larger community. The Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza is in a very real sense visible. It is visible not only from within the Plaza, but also from great lengths of Market Street eastward, the Twin Peaks Overlook, hundreds of homes in the neighborhood and can even be easily seen from passing airplanes, all of which serve as an ongoing cultural identity.</p>
<p>5) The community must have transmitted or passed down the shared beliefs, customs, or practices, including through spoken or written word, images, or practice.</p>	<p>The international community’s most enduring physical symbol of unity – Gilbert Baker’s Rainbow Flag’s continued presence at Harvey Milk Plaza is due to the stewardship by the local community, through acting as caretakers of the required cyclical maintenance which was first done by the artist himself, then to Baker’s friend and benefactor, Tom Taylor and presently the Castro Merchant’s Association. As symbol, the image of the Rainbow Flag has been transmitted down from the 1970s to subsequent generations which continues today as it is used by persons not alive at the time of its creation. Additionally, the image of the flag has been applied to all manner of commercially produced products and clothing as a means of expression of belonging.</p>
<p>6) These shared beliefs, customs, or practices must be associated with a tangible place.</p>	<p>While the rainbow flag as a symbol is repeated internationally, the only extant permanent site-specific Rainbow Flag installation by Gilbert Baker is located at Harvey Milk Plaza. With limited temporary exceptions, the Rainbow Flag at this location has flown 24-hours a day 7-days a week, year-round at full mast as it was intended by the artist.</p>
<p>7) The place must meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.</p>	<p>The Rainbow Flag installation by Gilbert Baker at Harvey Milk Plaza is significant under Criterion A for its long association with significant events in gaining and maintaining LGBTQ+ civil rights and recognition on a national and international scale. The Rainbow Flag is also significant under Criterion C as a work of high artistic value which has garnered international recognition and has been included in the permanent collections of several museums around the world.</p>

Significance: Hope, visibility, and power

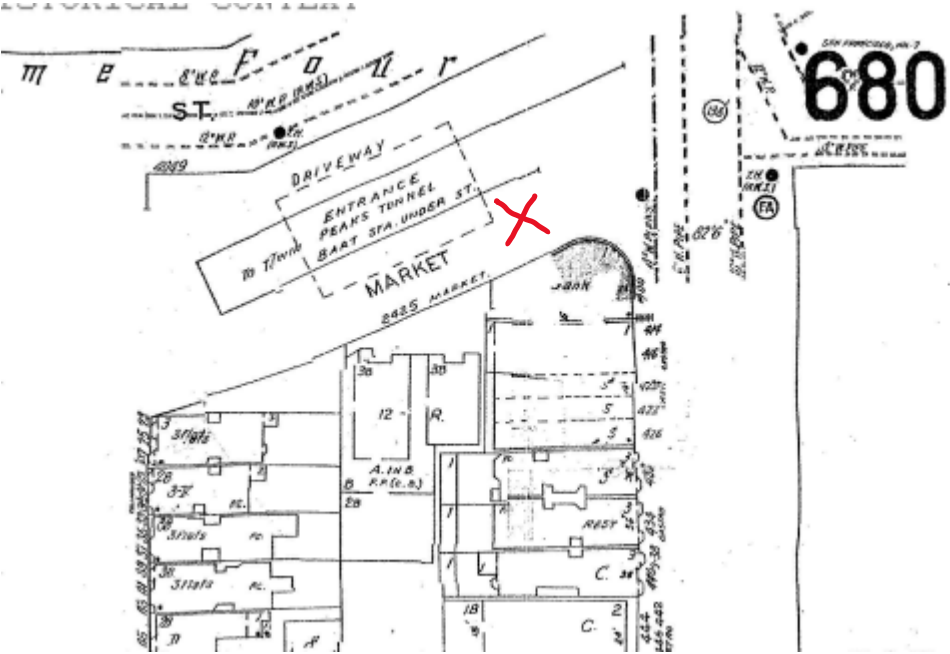
The Rainbow Flag installation at Harvey Milk Plaza as a large-scale artwork dedicated to Harvey Milk carries with it Milk’s legacy in several ways. The artwork represents three pillars of Milk’s values which he taught: hope, visibility and power.

Hope was the theme of one of Milk’s most well-known speeches which he delivered in 1978, which discussed the theme of LGBTQ+ people being able to be elected to political office. That was very much reflected in Baker’s installation here, as evidenced by the language of the plaque. Hope that the names on the plaque were just the beginning. This has come true, with many more LGBTQ+ people being elected to hold public office.

Visibility as a theme of the artwork is perhaps self-evident: a 20-foot tall, 30-foot-long bright rainbow flag towering 80-feet above the neighborhood is hard to not see. As with the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Baker worked his art on a large-scale, always trying to have his works as big as possible given other physical constraints. The bigger the rainbow, the more visible it is. Visibility is also one of the pillars of Milk's personal platform. To be out is visibility. As the Rainbow Flag has become an internationally recognized symbol for the LGBTQ+ community, visibly of the Rainbow Flag artwork itself has been the background for photographs and selfies taken by locals and tourists alike.

Power is inherently on display with Rainbow Flag at Harvey Milk Plaza – the power of the LGBTQ+ community to have such a massive artwork installed publicly. Power of the collective LGBTQ+ community to display a powerful symbol of such a massive scale as to be visible from many parts of the City as well as from aircraft. Power of the tribe to elect public officials who are themselves LGBTQ+ to represent them. Political power of those individuals chosen to serve the public. When interviewed, Mayor Brown discussed his views about the purpose of public art:

“I care enough about the city to know that the love for the city ought to be on display and shown to the world, and that it makes the city as interesting for those of us who are here and now as our predecessors made it for us. And having known Harvey [Milk] and having been familiar with the growth in that community over the last several years, I thought it highly appropriate. Concluding: I'm just as enthusiastic now and watching the growth and the incredible amount of contributions, socially, politically, academically and culturally that have been made to the community of San Francisco. I'm pleased and enthusiastic. The fact that we now have representation from the gay and lesbian community in every respective category, and it's the explosion the talent has contained there end to people who were shut out, like black people were shut out for years. That's really important and I'm pleased.” (Brown Jr., 2024)



Sanborn Map showing the southwest corner of Market and Castro Streets, the location of the Rainbow Flag is marked with a red "X"



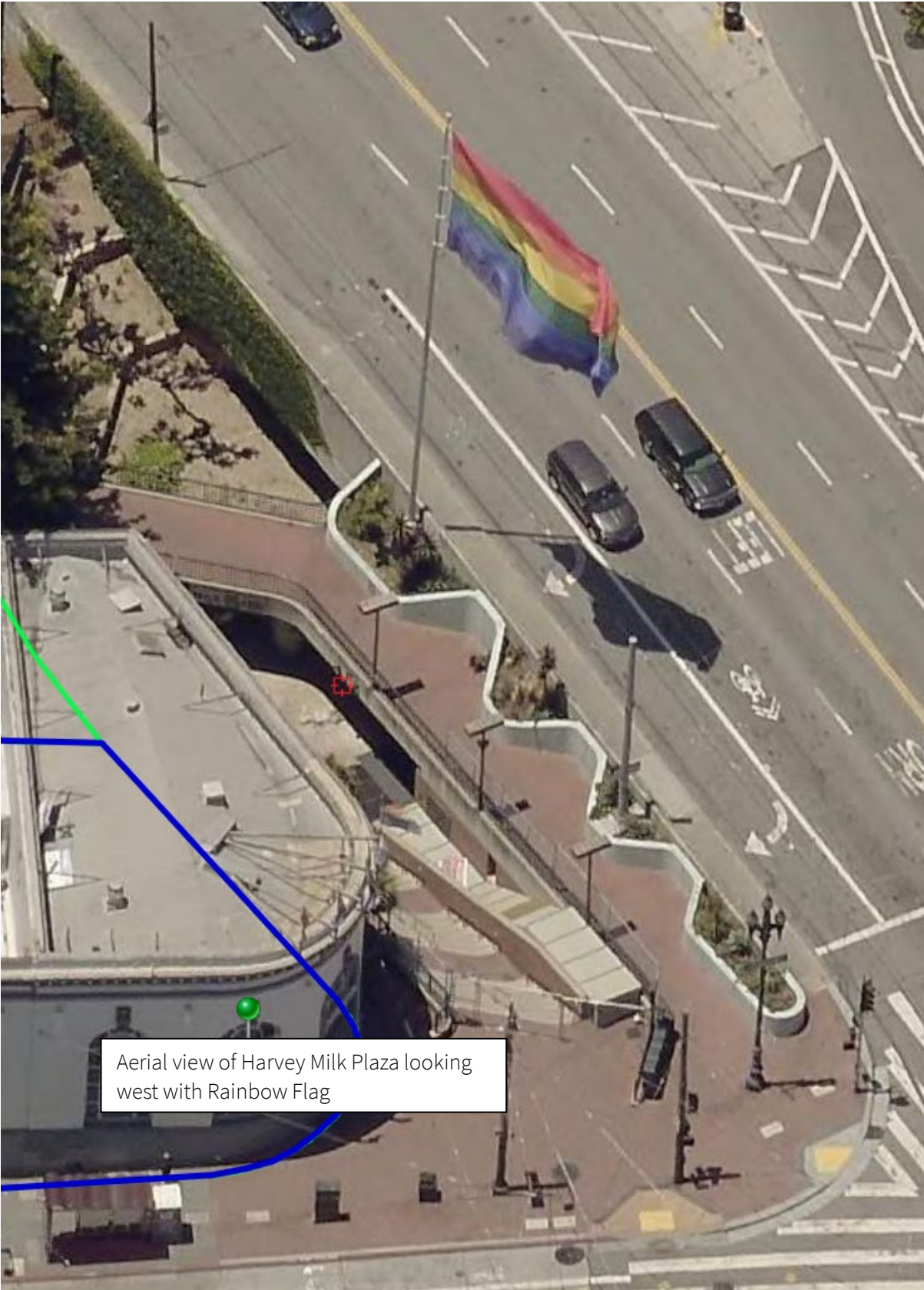
Aerial view of Rainbow Flag looking north. Photo courtesy of Gilbert Baker Foundation.



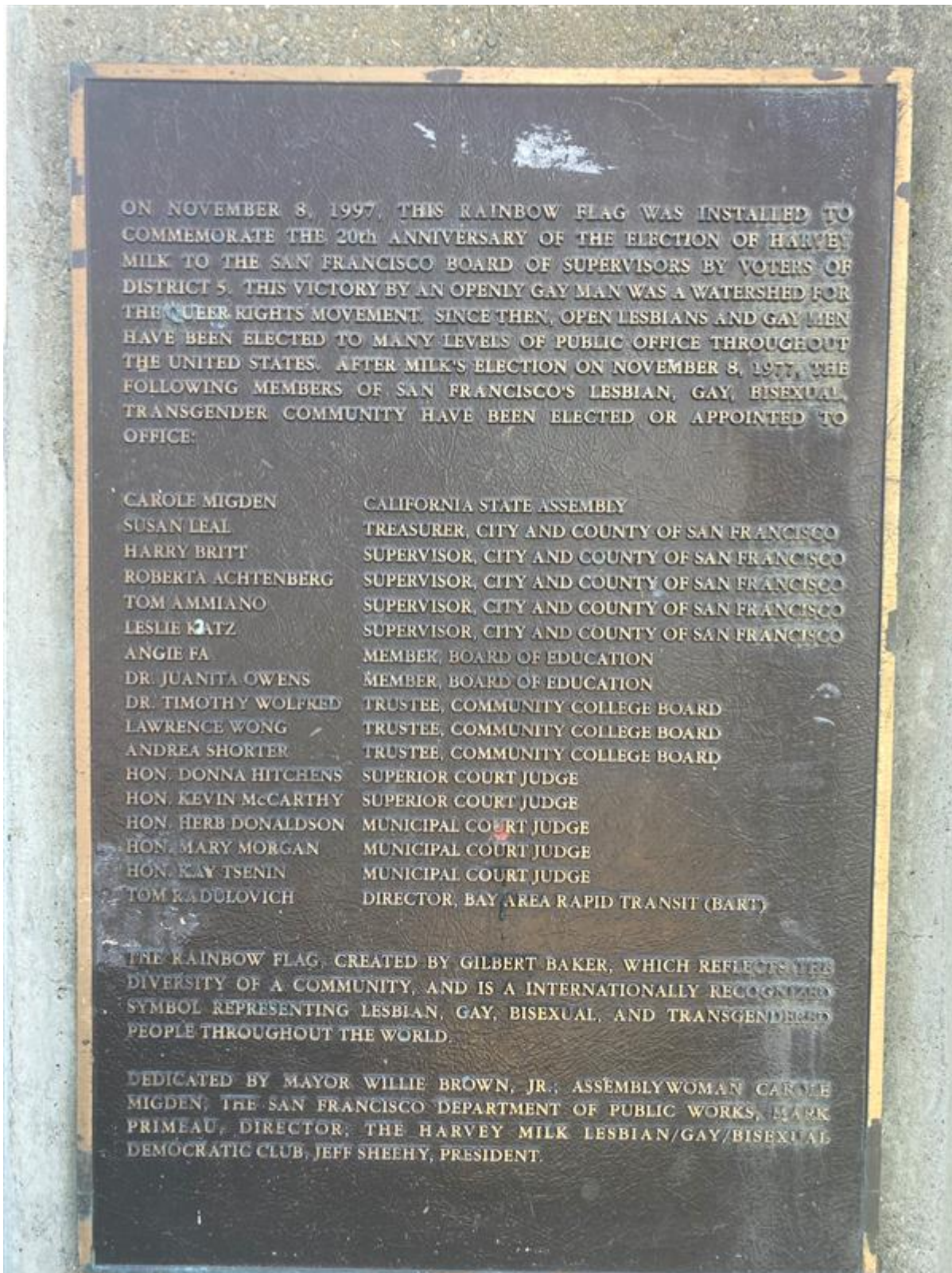
Concept painting
By Gilbert Baker
Visualizing the Rainbow
Flag with the Pink Triangle
On Christmas Tree Point
c. 1996, private collection.



Mayor Willie M. Brown Jr. and artist
Gilbert Baker at the 1997 Castro Street
Fair, where Brown signed-off on the
project.



Aerial view of Harvey Milk Plaza looking west with Rainbow Flag



Plaque mounted on concrete plinth at the base of Rainbow Flag. A transcript of the text of the plaque is on pages 11 of this report.



Rainbow Flag from Market Street looking south.