

## MOTION

## PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

New Bethel Baptist Church (503 East Brooks Avenue) has persevered as a vital pillar in the Venice community of Oakwood for over 65 years. New Bethel is one of only two active, Black churches in Venice and is operating out of an original church edifice that was erected in the early 1930s. New Bethel has been a historic fixture in the community, centering its services around counseling and the self-development of local residents.

The congregation that established New Bethel Baptist Church was organized by Reverend Luther McCraw in his home at 628 Indiana Avenue in 1952. As the congregation grew, they eventually moved to a storefront at 1138 Washington Boulevard a few years later. Faced with a growing congregation and mission to serve the community, Reverend McCraw and Deacon Leslie Moore made a personal investment in a property on Westminster Avenue for a new church; however, the zoning at the time would not allow for its establishment and these plans were soon abandoned.

In the mid-1950's, the Church of Nazarene, formerly located at 503 East Brooks Avenue, offered their property to purchase. Through tireless efforts to raise money through small loans and fundraisers, the congregation led by Reverend McCraw purchased the site in 1957. As one of Reverend McCraw's final acts of service to the Church, he shepherded in a remodel and expansion with the Luther McCraw Educational Center. Reverend McCraw passed shortly after pulling permits; however, his successor and son-in-law, Larry K. Reece, took up the mantle in 1974 and led the Church for 12 years until his passing. During his service, Reverend Reece ensured that the Education Center became a reality to provide additional space for educational programming and meeting space for Church business.

In 1987, Reverend Marvis L. Davis, Sr. officially became the Pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church. For over 35 years, Reverend Davis carried forward the legacy of this great congregation and ensured that New Bethel remains a cornerstone and anchor to the Black community. From the Church's role during the Civil Rights era in the 1960's through the community building and revitalization efforts that occurred in the 1990's, New Bethel withstood the test of time and played a central role in the local community.

In recognition of the historic-cultural significance of the New Bethel Baptist Church to the community, it is appropriate that the City initiate proceedings to include New Bethel Baptist Church in the City's list of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

**I THEREFORE MOVE** that the Council initiate consideration of the New Bethel Baptist Church, located at 503 East Brooks Avenue, Venice, CA 90291 as a City Historic-Cultural Monument under the procedures of Section 22.171.10 of the Administrative Code, and instruct the Planning Department through the Office of Historic Resources to prepare the Historic-Cultural Monument application for review and consideration by the Cultural Heritage Commission.

**I FURTHER MOVE** that after reviewing the Historic-Cultural Monument application, the Cultural Heritage Commission submits its report and recommendations to the City Council regarding the inclusion of the New Bethel Baptist Church in the City's list of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

**PRESENTED BY:**



**MIKE BONIN**  
Councilmember, 11th District



**MARQUEECE HARRIS-DAWSON**  
Councilmember, 8th District

**SECONDED BY:**



**ORIGINAL**

SEP 16 2022