

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Chris Burton

SUBJECT: NOMINATION OF
GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
AS A CITY LANDMARK

DATE: April 15, 2024

Approved

Date

4/18/24

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

RECOMMENDATION

- a. Adopt a resolution nominating Grace Baptist Church for designation as a City Landmark.
- b. Direct the City Manager or her designee to initiate the required process and proceedings to designate Grace Baptist Church as a City Landmark.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

Adoption of the resolution would initiate the process to designate Grace Baptist Church as a City Landmark. In 2022, the property was determined by a qualified historic resources consultant to meet the significance criteria for designation under the Envision San José 2040 General Plan and San José Municipal Code Section 13.48.110. The Rules and Open Government Committee voted, on October 4, 2023, to forward the nomination of Grace Baptist Church as a City Landmark to City Council for consideration.

Grace Baptist Church is located at 146 South Tenth Street 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 Church building is in an urban setting, surrounded by university buildings and residential structures from the late 1800s to the 1920s.

The property is listed in the San José Historic Resources Inventory as a Candidate City Landmark, and eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places.

BACKGROUND

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

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 ministration to the underserved, the church holds an essential place in San José's culture.

Through the years, church members have requested that the City of San José designate Grace Baptist Church as a City Landmark. The congregation, its leaders, and its community of supporters have worked tirelessly to preserve this important architectural and cultural treasure.

ANALYSIS

Any potentially historic property can be nominated for designation as a City Landmark by the City Council, the Historic Landmarks Commission, or by application of the owner or the authorized agent of the owner of the property for which designation is requested. Any nomination for designation by the Historic Landmarks Commission and the City Council shall occur after a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed nomination.

Grace Baptist Church was documented and evaluated on Department of Parks and Recreation 523 series forms by a qualified historic resources consultant (**Attachment**). As outlined below, the evaluation establishes that the property meets significance criteria 3, 4, 6 and 7 in accordance with San José Municipal Code Section 13.48.110(H) and is eligible for City Landmark designation.

Criterion 3: Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the local, regional, state, or national culture and history.

Grace Baptist Church is associated with George L. "Shorty" Collins, who worked for peace for more than 70 years and helped found the San José Peace and Justice Center.

Criterion 4: Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the City of San José.

Grace Baptist Church has been an integral part of the religious community in San José since it began to be formed in 1913. When the current building was constructed in 1941, the church significantly expanded its outreach and offered programs and support that made a great difference to the community, aiding migrant families, single parents, seniors, developmentally disabled residents, and more. From the beginning, it offered programs that were open to all races and denominations. Space

was leased to the City of San José Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department to provide an area for therapeutic recreation for clients living in local residential care homes. For 50 years, Grace Baptist Church has been a leader in opening its doors the developmentally disabled and mentally ill residents, as well as the homeless population.

Criterion 6: Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

The main church building is an excellent example of a simplified Gothic Revival style influenced by the Art Deco movement popular in the 1920s through the 1940s. This is a unique style within San José. St. Patrick's School at 51 North Ninth Street is one of the few examples of large-scale Gothic Revival architecture in San José, but St. Patrick's was begun in 1899, when Gothic Revival architecture was more popular and is of a more classical inclination. Grace Baptist Church incorporates Gothic Revival features such as buttresses, lancet windows, and pointed arches, but simplifies the lines and eliminates the heavy ornamentation of standard Gothic Revival. Inspired by the Art Deco movement, the building's design pays homage to the classic Gothic and Gothic Revival churches while achieving a fresh, modern look with its clean lines.

Criterion 7: Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of San José.

Grace Baptist Church is the work of the architectural firm of Binder & Curtis, with Ernest Curtis the architect of record. William Binder (1871-1953) and Ernest Curtis (1889-1956) were partners in one of the most successful and prolific architectural firms in San José, having designed much of downtown San José during 60 years of active work that began in 1897. Many of Binder & Curtis's works are recognized today as significant buildings and a great number of them are listed on the Historic Resources Inventory as City landmarks or structures of merit.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

After the City Council nominates the property for City Landmark designation and directs staff to initiate the designation process, the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement's Planning Division will set a public hearing on the proposed designation required by San José Municipal Code Section 13.48.110 before the Historic Landmarks Commission for its recommendation on nominations made by the City Council. The Historic Landmarks Commission and subsequent City Council meetings are public hearings requiring public notice and publication in a newspaper of general circulation. After the close of the public hearing on the landmark nomination, the Historic Landmarks Commission will recommend to the City Council approval, disapproval, or modified approval of the proposed landmark designation. The City Council, by written resolution, would then approve, disapprove, or give modified approval to the proposed designation.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

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COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

The costs of approximately \$5,000 associated with staff time and public noticing to conduct the required process and proceedings to designate Grace Baptist Church as a City Landmark will be absorbed within the existing budget of the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement Department.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the May 7, 2024 City Council meeting.

In accordance with San José Municipal Code Section 13.48.110 the City Council public hearing to consider the nomination of a City Landmark has been publicly noticed by mail on April 11, 2024 and will be published in the San Jose Post Record on April 22, 2024.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

CEQA

Exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15262 - Feasibility and Planning Studies and 155331. Historic preservation activities that conform with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties will not result in a physical change to the environment.

PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

/s/

Chris Burton

Director, Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement

For questions, please contact Dana Peak Edwards, Principal Planner and Historic Preservation Officer, at dana.peak@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 534-2990.

ATTACHMENT: DPR 523 Series forms for Grace Baptist Church

State of California – The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #
HRI #
Trinomial
NRHP Status Code

Other Listings
 Review Code

Reviewer

Date

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*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Grace Baptist Church

P1. Other Identifier: 146 South Tenth Street

***P2. Location:** Not for Publication Unrestricted

***a. County** Santa Clara **and** (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

***b. USGS 7.5' Quad** San José West **Date** 1980 photorevised **T.** 7S.; **R.** 1E.; Mount Diablo **B.M.**

c. Address 484 East San Fernando Street City San José Zip 95112

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 10S.; 599280 mE/ 4133054 mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

Assessor's Parcel Number: 467-25-099,

south side of East San Fernando Street between South Tenth and South Eleventh Streets; primary building on corner of South Tenth and East San Fernando Streets with main entrance on South Tenth.

***P3a Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The Grace Baptist Church is located at the northern end of the East Campus neighborhood of San José, situated on the corner of East San Fernando Street and South Tenth Street, with an imposing front façade on South Tenth Street. A large addition, constructed in 1958, extends from the rear of the church so the combined structures span the block between South Tenth and South Eleventh Streets.

The church, designed in 1941 by the prolific San José architectural firm of Binder & Curtis, is a simplified version of Gothic Revival architecture, with pointed arches and a 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 1940s, as evidenced by its geometric forms, crenelated parapets, and strong vertical lines with

(Continued on next page DPR523L)

***P3b. Resource Attributes:** (List attributes and codes) HP16. Religious building

***P4. Resources Present:** Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects.)

P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #)

Front façade viewed with camera facing east-southeast. 7/29/2022.

***P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**

Historic Prehistoric Both

1941, 81 years. *San Jose Evening News*, 11/22/1940, 4/1/1941, 7/28/1941.

***P7. Owner and Address:**

Grace Baptist Church of San José
 484 E. San Fernando St.
 San José, CA 95111-3513

***P8. Recorded by:** (Name, affiliation, and address)

Krista Van Laan
 494 Cypress Avenue
 San José, CA 95117

***P9. Date Recorded:** October 4, 2022

***P10. Survey Type:** Intensive



***P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") San José Historic Resources Inventory

***Attachments:** NONE Location Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure and Object Record Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling State Record Rock Art Record Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List)

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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
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*Recorded by Krista Van Laan

*Date October 4, 2022

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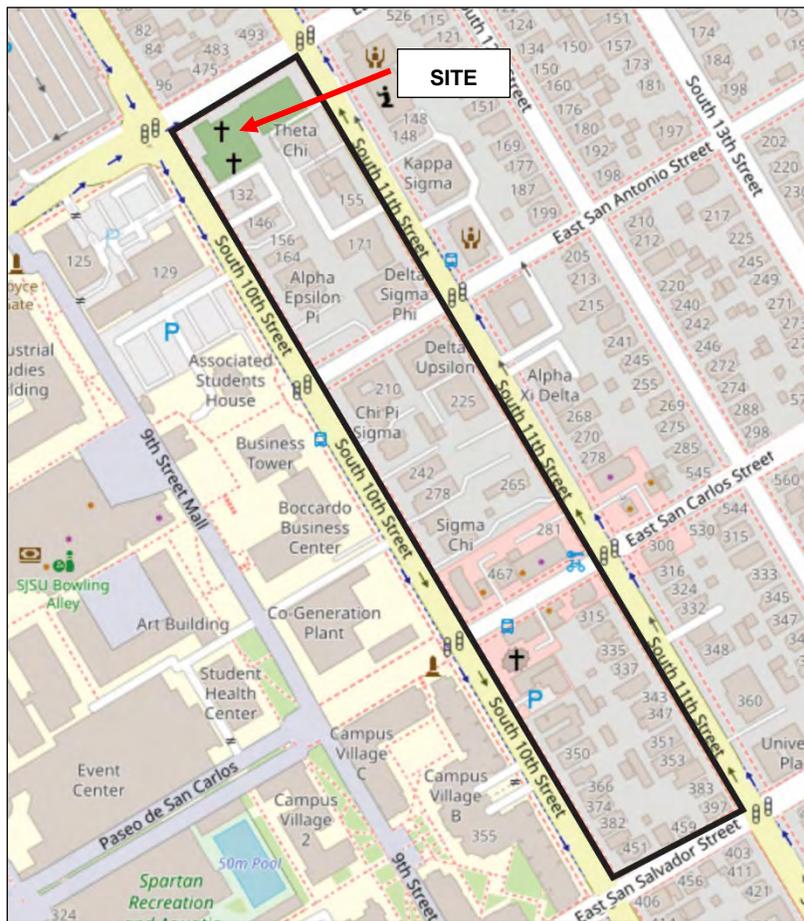
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chevrons and pointed caps. The building today maintains a high level of integrity, with original windows, materials, and many fine architectural details.

The Grace Baptist Church has been an important 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 and with an extensive and on-going history of ministration to the underserved, the church holds an important place in San José's culture.

The church building is in an urban setting, its front façade facing southwest on South Tenth Street, a busy thoroughfare that runs from the northwest to southeast; for ease of reference, the property will be considered as facing nominally west. The church property is surrounded by buildings, mostly residential, of periods ranging from the late 1800s to the 1920s, although many have been converted to multi-family dwellings or housing for San José State University students. Across Tenth Street, the church faces mostly university buildings.



East Campus neighborhood. The subject property is highlighted in green.

The footprint of the church building is roughly rectangular with projecting bays on the north and west sides. The building, clad in smooth stucco, consists of three intersecting gabled wings of varying heights, with moderately pitched roofs sheathed in composite shingles, and a flat-roofed single-story block connecting the two gabled wings in the rear. The side-gabled wing on the northern end holds administrative offices. This wing is three stories, with one

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story below grade, a renovation that occurred in 1966. The three-story tower on the western elevation rises above the gabled wings and is topped with a flat roof with a crenelated parapet.



Western elevation showing primary facade with main entrance on South Tenth Street. Viewed with camera facing east-northeast.

Fenestration consists of many original rectangular and arched windows of varying styles, distinguished by their design and craftsmanship. Most of the windows are original pairs of tall multi-paned casement windows with true divided lights of hammered glass, each pair separated by wide mullions. The windows on the lower story consist of two pairs of casements four panes high, a four-light fixed window above each casement pair. Upper-story windows each contain eight lights. Vertical single casements and casement pairs with or without the upper fixed panes are arranged throughout the church walls on all sides, as are arched windows of various styles.

The western (front) elevation on South Tenth Street is the primary façade and includes the main entrance. A shallow grassy lawn with minimal landscaping separates the church from the sidewalk on both the west and north sides, with a metal pike fence and partial stone wall in front of the northern administrative wing, surrounding the excavated paved concrete terrace that fronts the administrative wing at basement level.

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Basement level of administrative wing. This floor was modified in 1966 by excavating and creating an entrance below grade to lead into the church basement. Viewed with camera facing north-northeast.

The windows on the western wall of the administrative wing are grouped into three decorative bays topped with a hooded ogee molding. Each grouping is comprised of a set of both lower-story and upper-story windows separated vertically by a recessed square and framed by high vertical stucco molding. Between each grouping is a buttress.

The tower is a focal point on the western elevation. A full story higher than the rest of the building, the square tower is set into the juncture of the main block and the transept. It projects outward from the front façade, with soaring stepped setback buttresses with chevron caps and a flat roof with a high crenelated parapet. The main entrance on the western side is accessed by a flight of eight concrete steps with a low capped stucco solid balustrade on either side of the steps. The western and northern sides of the tower are identical, with the exception that the entrance on the northern side has had the original staircase removed and is accessed from an upper walkway above the lower excavated area.

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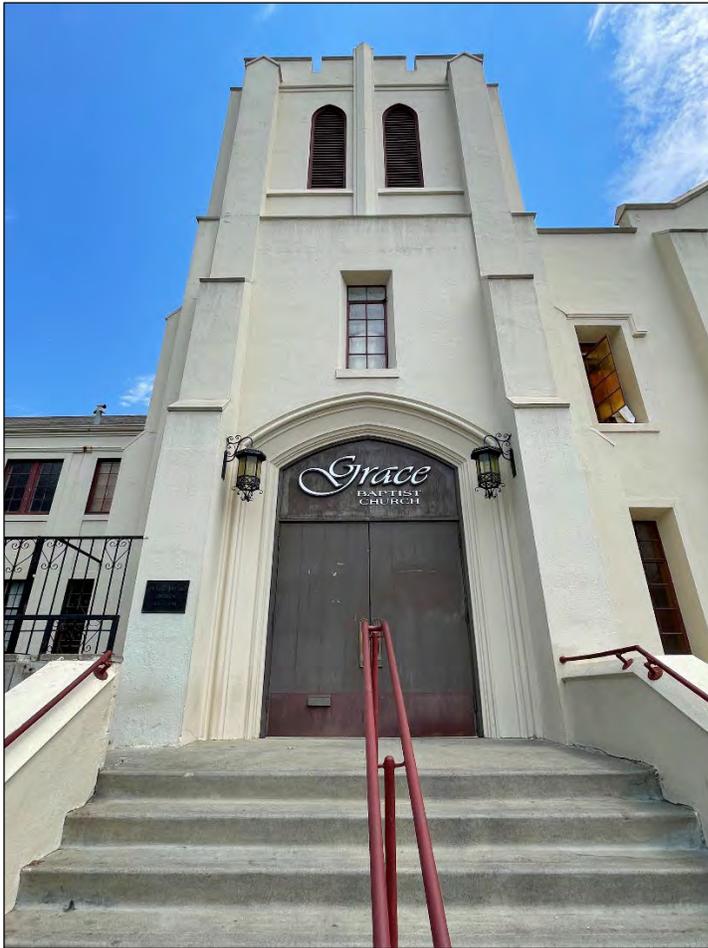
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Front entrance in tower.



Top: Plaque at front entrance commemorates the earlier church, which was at Seventh and E. Santa Clara Streets.



Above: Original hardware on church doors.

Each of the tower's entrances is in the form of a four-centered arch with a pair of doors set in a deeply inset archivolt. The doors are made of wooden vertical planks. Above the transom of the western doors, the upper part of the arch is solid wood with the words "Grace Baptist Church" in stylized lettering. The doors have what appears to be original hardware. Centered above each entrance door is a narrow rectangular horizontal ten-paned window.

On the upper part of all sides of the tower are pairs of lancet windows with louvered covers framed on either side by the buttresses and above and below by square moldings. Centered vertically between the windows, an angled pilaster extends upward, ending in a chevron that pierces the cornice and projects above the parapet.

The transept is a front-gabled wing that houses the sanctuary and is taller and wider than the other two crossed gables. A high pointed parapet edged with angled coving extends above the ridge. (A smaller version of this peaked parapet appears on each of the building's four gabled ends.) The parapet walls project outward to the north and south of the rake edge at stepped right angles and wrap around the southeast corner, a false front of the type made

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popular in post-Gold Rush western towns. On a false-front building, the parapet would typically extend above and beyond the roofline, hiding a sloping roof and giving a building more visual substance with a squared front facade. In the case of the Grace Baptist church, the false front and side not only give more mass and substance to the important sanctuary, but they create a harmonious horizontal line that echoes the roofline of the long administration building, as well as providing a finishing wall portion on the south end to hold a buttress.



Western façade. Viewed with camera facing northeast.

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Focal window centered between two buttresses.

The dominating feature of the transept wing is a very large pointed arch, also known as a Gothic arch, recessed with a simple archivolt and hood molding and centered under the peaked parapet between two buttresses. The arch, which spans nearly the entire height of the gable end, is comprised of three rows of windows separated horizontally by wood panels and vertically by wide wood mullions. The topmost set of windows is a triptych of fixed multi-light

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panes set into the pointed arch. The lower two sets of windows align horizontally with and echo the pattern of the two rows of casement windows on the administrative wing. The bottom row consists of two sets of casement pairs flanking a center pane of leaded glass that contains a tribute to the 1931-1941 term of Dr. Elbert Hicks, the pastor who was responsible for first commissioning the church.



The central leaded glass window acknowledges Reverend Elbert Hicks, seen in reverse from the outside.

On either side of the arch are two pairs of narrow vertical windows. The upper-story pair features architraves that match the hooded ornamentation on the arched window.



Southwest corner of the church shows the false front and wall with buttress. Viewed with camera facing north-northeast.

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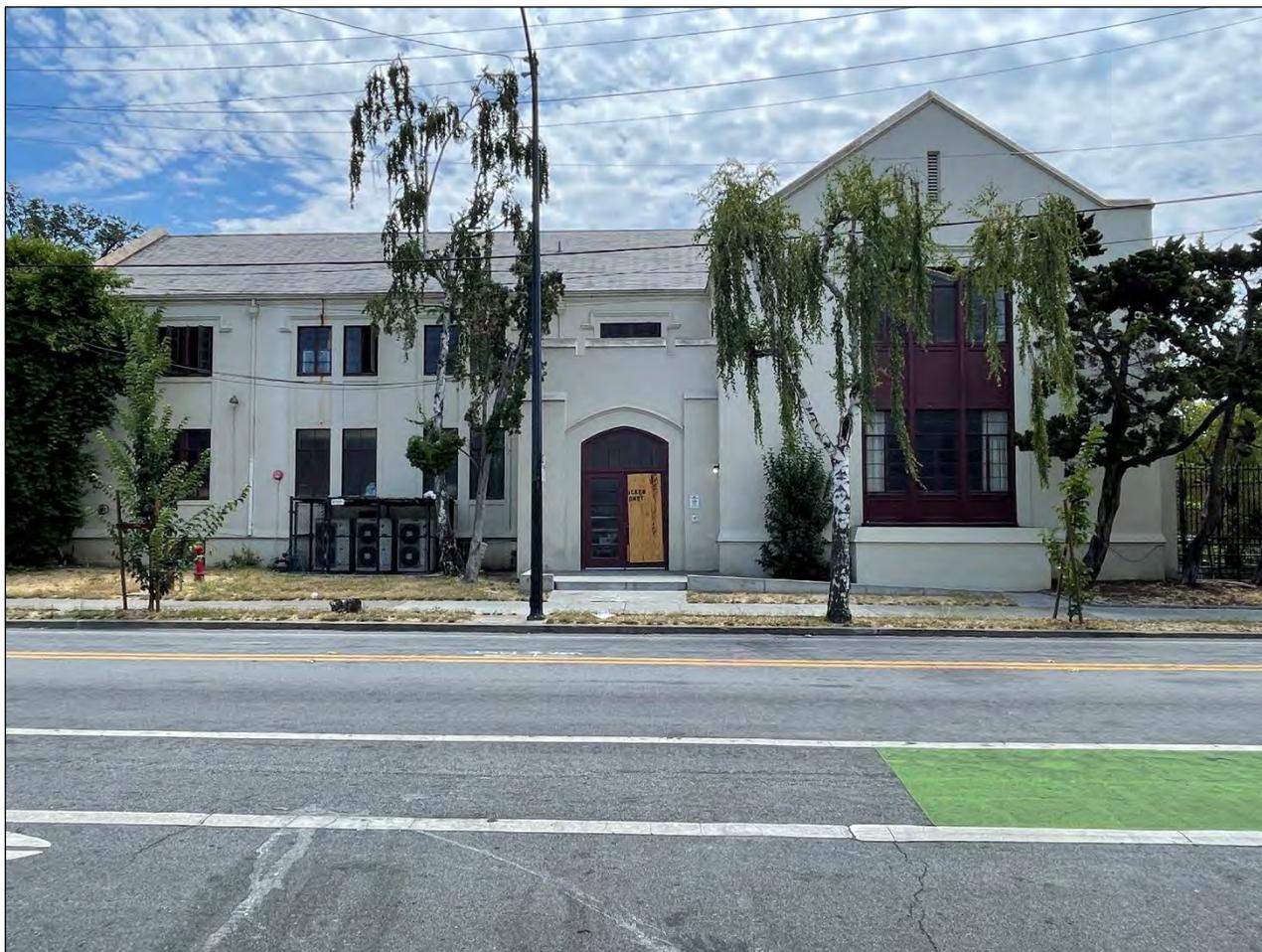
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The northern elevation is a more simplified version of that of the west, echoing the transept wing with a projecting gabled end with pointed parapet. A large rectangular window with two rows of three multipaned casement windows alternating with wood panels duplicates the lower two-thirds of the focal arched window on the western gable. Set into the juncture of the two wings is an entryway with crenelated parapet, and a double door with a transom in a four-centered arch surround, flanked by two square capped pilasters. The pair of doors is comprised of horizontal glass panes and the transom comprised of vertical glass panes. Two rows of window pairs run along the wall of the west-east wing, their hooded moldings and framed settings matching those of the western façade with the exception that there are no buttresses on the northern elevation.



Northern elevation. Viewed with camera facing south-southeast.

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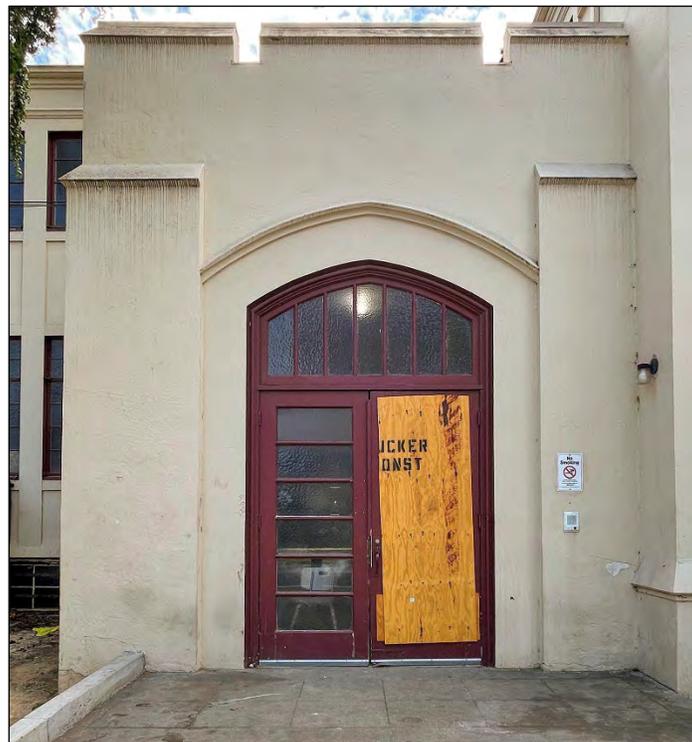
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Northern elevation. Viewed with camera facing southwest.



Northern entrance detail with crenelated parapet.

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The southern elevation faces a lot surfaced in asphalt with marked parking spaces next to the building. Four windows on the southern façade are in the form of yet another type of arch—an ogee arch—commonly associated with the Moorish Revival style. These arched windows are distinctive in that they consist of thirty-six divided lights, grouped into sections of four panes, the ones in the center row hinging at the top to open outward.



Above: Southern elevation. Viewed with camera facing north-northwest.



Window detail on southern façade.

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The eastern yard is paved in concrete, with a ramp and railing leading to the entrance of the rear annex. Two sets of concrete steps lead up to doors on the eastern wall, which has two rows of multi-paned windows.



Eastern elevation. Viewed with camera facing northwest.

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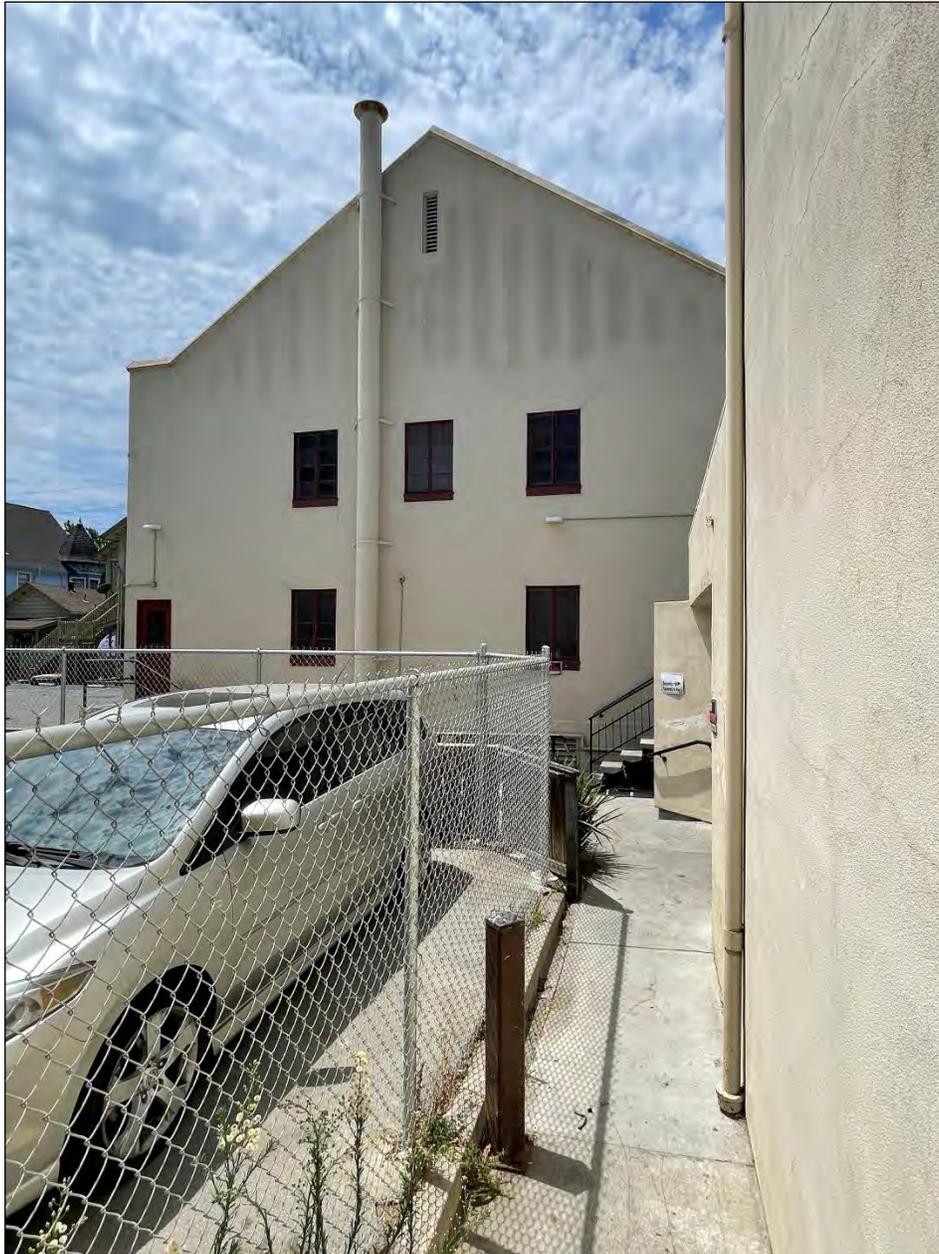
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Eastern elevation. Viewed with camera facing southwest.

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The rear assembly building, built as an annex in 1958 with its main entrance on East San Fernando Street, is a two-story building with a flat roof. The upper story has a wide horizontal band of flush-mounted aluminum windows on all sides. This building lacks the architectural significance of the main church building.



Assembly building north elevation. Viewed with camera facing southeast.

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Assembly building annex southeast corner. Viewed with camera facing west.

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Assembly building annex east elevation. Viewed with camera facing southwest.

Interior

The interior of the church contains many original materials and architectural details. The sanctuary features a soaring vaulted ceiling with exposed timber frame scissor trusses. The ogee arch style seen on the southern façade of the church exterior is repeated within the sanctuary.

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.

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Interior of sanctuary.

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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
LOCATION MAP

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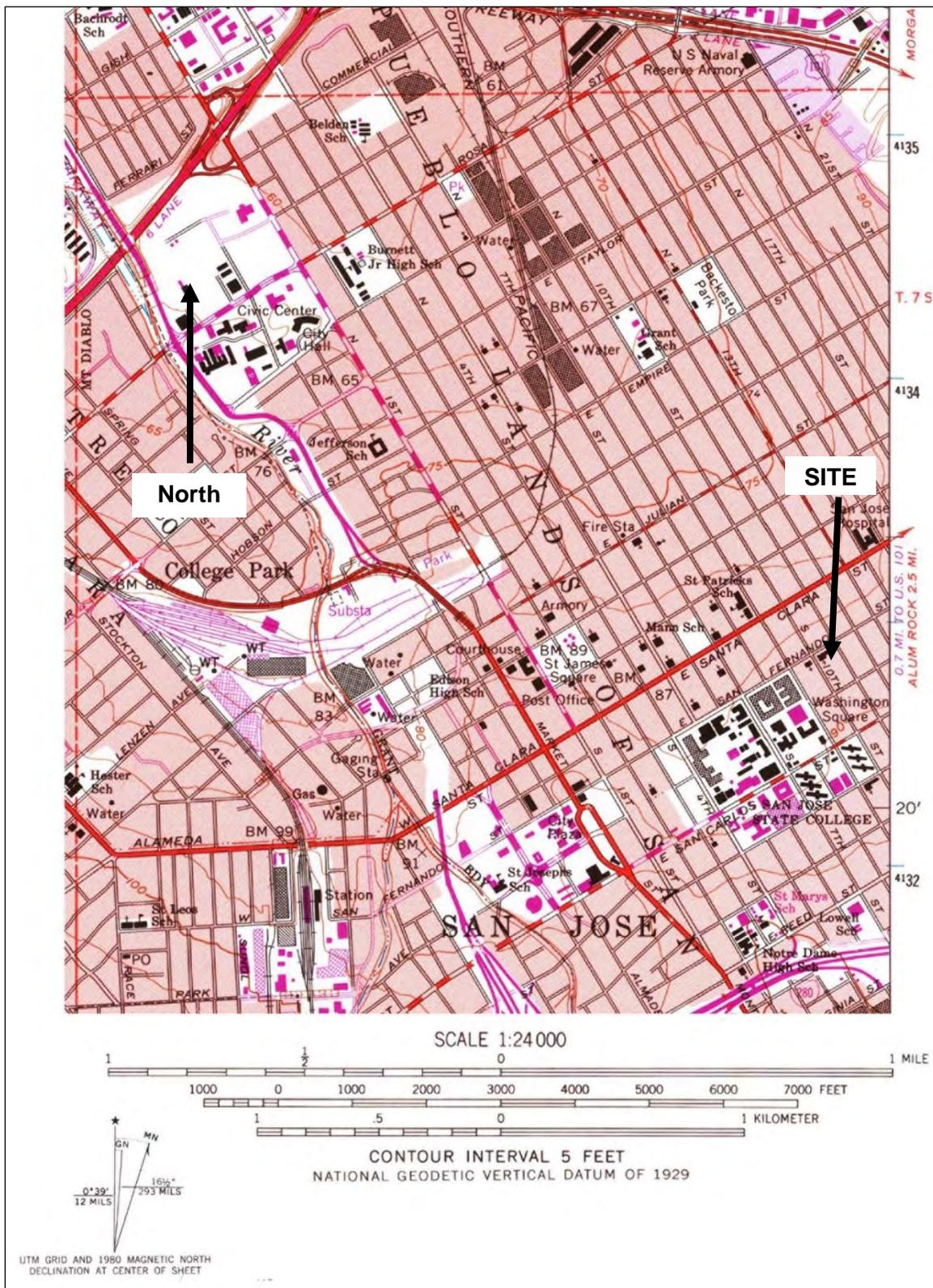
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*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Grace Baptist Church

*Map Name: USGS San José East

* Scale: n.t.s

*Date of Map: 1980 photorevised



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BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

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*NRHP Status Code 3S

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Grace Baptist Church

B1. Historic Name: 110 South Tenth Street
B2. Common Name: Grace Baptist Church
B3. Original use: Church B4. Present Use: Church

*B5. Architectural Style: Gothic Revival

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

Construction date: 1941. See page 28 for list of exterior alterations, including the rear addition built in 1958, the basement excavation in 1966, and ADA improvements.

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: N/A Original Location: N/A

*B8. Related Features: None

B9a Architect: Binder & Curtis b. Builder: William H. Schwartz

*B10. Significance: Theme Religious Architecture Area East Campus neighborhood in downtown San José
Period of Significance 1941-present Property Type Church Applicable Criteria (1), C (3)

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

The Grace Baptist Church of San José is a member of the Evergreen Association of American Baptists and American Baptist Churches USA. Its mission is “to forge a spiritual community using our God-given resources in service of restoring and nurturing wholeness in all of creation.” With a rich history of mixing social action with Christianity, Grace Baptist Church holds an important place of cultural and historical significance in San José. Housed in a Gothic Revival building designed in 1941 by the well-known architectural firm of Binder & Curtis, the church and its buildings have been the site of early civil rights, peace, and labor activism as well as a safe space for the needy.

The Grace Baptist Church of San José began to form in 1913 when a group of 129 members of the First Baptist Church, unhappy with the behavior of their pastor, left to start their own house of worship. The church was formally organized in May 1914 under the leadership of Dr. James Sutherland and on November 5, 1914 was recognized by the San Jose Baptist Association as a separate Baptist church.

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) N/A

(Continued on next page, DPR523L)

*B12. References:

Arbuckle, Clyde. *History of San Jose*. San Jose: Memorabilia of San Jose, 1986.

“Baptists Preparing to Establish New Church.” May 25, 1913. *San Jose Mercury News*. May 25, 1913, 8.

Bayer, Patricia. *Art Deco Architecture*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1992.

Building and Engineering News. December 11, 1920 and January 22, 1921.

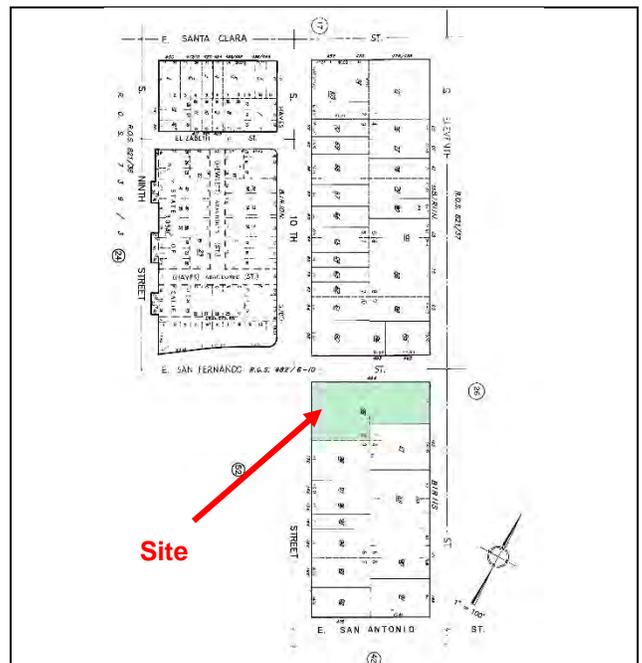
(See References continued on page 30)

B13. Remarks: Proposed reclassification to Candidate San José City Landmark

*B14. Evaluator: Krista Van Laan

*Date of Evaluation: October 4, 2022.

(This space reserved for official comments.)



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*Recorded by Krista Van Laan

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The Grace Baptist Church started its existence in a building at 57 South Third Street which was shared with the German Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1916, the congregation raised enough money to buy property at the corner of Seventh and Santa Clara Streets. Volunteers built the first church by merging two houses together, so that services could be held in June of 1914. The following year, the volunteers constructed a simple sanctuary.

In December of 1921, the church hired the local architectural firm Binder & Curtis to design a one-story Mission Revival style frame and plaster church. Modeled after the Moody Tabernacle in Chicago, it was meant to be a building without ostentation. The new church had its grand opening on March 15, 1921.

In 1924, Dr. Sutherland's successor, Reverend Charles Spurgeon Knight, had a lighthouse installed on top of the church. Designed *pro bono* by local architect Howard Wetmore Higbie, it attracted much attention and the church became known as the Lighthouse Church. The lighthouse stayed on top of the church until 1930, when it was torn down because of worries that an earthquake or windstorm could cause it to topple.



Original Grace Baptist Church built in 1921 at Seventh and Santa Clara Streets. Photo courtesy of History San José.

In 1930, Dr. Knight retired and the Grace Baptist Church asked Dr. Elbert Hicks, pastor of the Fremont Baptist Church in Seattle, Washington, to succeed him. Hicks served as pastor of Grace for ten years. During Hicks's tenure, the membership grew rapidly and in August 1937, the decision was made to accommodate the growth by building a new church. Just two months later, the membership increased even more when the Santa Clara Baptist Church burned down and many of its members joined the Grace Baptist Church. Under Reverend Hicks, the congregation paid off all its existing debt, approved the decision to build a new church, and pledged enough money to create a building fund. By the end of 1938, the church had acquired the property at Tenth and East San Fernando Streets, a large parcel located between the residential subdivision of Naglee Park and San José State University.

In January of 1939, the church's young people's society launched a drive to raise \$5,000 to buy the pipe organ from the Liberty Theater, an instrument that is still installed in and in use in the Grace Baptist Church today. The

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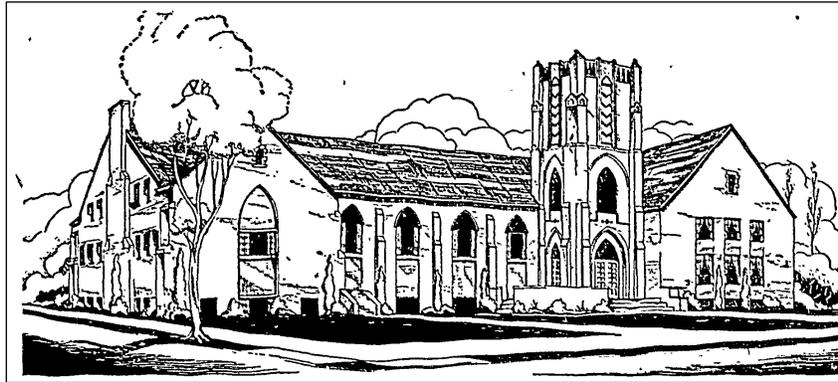
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organ, which cost \$25,000 when the Liberty Theater had bought it in 1921, is an eighteen-rank three-manual Robert Morton organ. (The Robert Morton Organ Company of Van Nuys, California was a producer of theater pipe organs second only to Wurlitzer.) When the “talkies” replaced silent movies, the organ fell into disuse. The church youth removed the organ pipe by pipe, numbering each pipe to transport it to its new location. The organ was dedicated to Arthur Williams, the church’s recreational chairman who had died in 1937 from a ruptured appendix.

Binder & Curtis, the architectural firm that designed the original church at Seventh and Santa Clara Streets, was the designer of today’s Grace Baptist Church as well, although that almost did not happen. In early 1939, Reverend Hicks hired architect Walter E. Kelly of Portland, Oregon to design the new church. Kelly, who was a member of the First Baptist Church and acclaimed as a designer of churches, would have been well known to Hicks, who had been a pastor in Oregon before his time in Seattle. Kelly, born in 1880, had started his architectural career working for Henry Ford before moving to Portland in 1927. Many of his residential and commercial buildings are noted today for their architectural significance, but his main legacy is his renown as a designer of churches; he was ultimately responsible for more than sixty churches in Oregon and Washington before his death in 1967.

In July 1939, Walter Kelly submitted his plans for the Grace Baptist Church of San José to the city’s building inspector. They had already been approved by the church’s building committee headed by congregant Fred Millard and in May 1940, the plans were approved by the congregation. The May 29, 1940 edition of the *San Jose Mercury Herald* announced an upcoming ground-breaking ceremony on June 9 and published an illustration of Kelly’s church design.



Original church design by Walter E. Kelly. May 29, 1940 *San Jose Mercury Herald*.

Before the groundbreaking ceremony could occur, plans changed. Reverend Hicks became ill and retired suddenly to his home state of Tennessee, where he died less than a year later. Fred Millard, chairman of the building committee died suddenly on May 26. Church officials made an offer to Reverend Harold Bottemiller of Coalinga to become the new pastor, starting his new position July 1.

Bottemiller considered himself something of an expert in church design, having had experience with the building of several other new churches. He chose to hire a different architectural firm to design the new Grace Baptist Church—the local firm of Binder & Curtis, the architects who had been responsible for the earlier 1921 Grace Baptist Church on South Seventh Street. Ernest Curtis was the chief architect on the project.

Binder & Curtis provided a more streamlined, simplified design with an Art Deco flavor (called “modified California design” in the *San Jose Evening News*) than that of Kelly, whose church was more traditionally Gothic with its many pointed arches, but both buildings had similar footprints. The sudden change of architect and architectural plan was not addressed in any of the local newspapers, but the reason for the change may have been because

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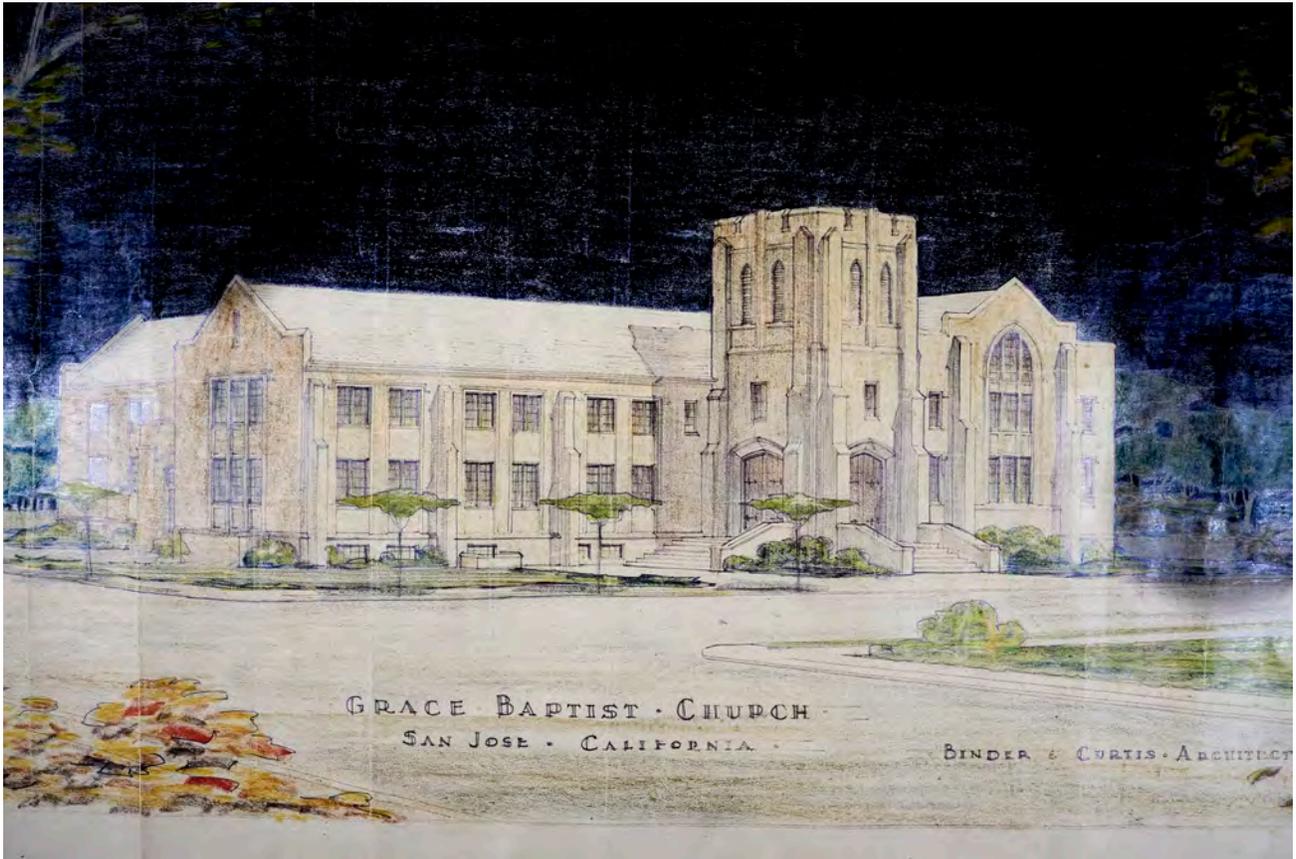
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Bottemiller wanted to make revisions and the Kelly design was already complete and had been approved; as well, Binder & Curtis, unlike Kelly, were local and therefore easier to work with.

Newspaper articles and the church's history, *Memories of Grace 1914-2004*, implied that Bottemiller designed the church. However, *Memories of Grace 1914-2004* states that Bottemiller designed the church "in general" while plans were made by Binder & Curtis. Those plans still exist today. The booklet goes on to say that Bottemiller's input was responsible for the "conveniences necessary to a full church program." Bottemiller's changes included increasing the size of the youth hall and the number of classrooms and assembly rooms.



Original drawing of the church in 1941 plans by Binder & Curtis.

The firm of Binder & Curtis had been in business since 1917 when William Binder, a practicing architect, partnered with draftsman Ernest N. Curtis. By 1940, when Binder & Curtis were hired to design the Grace Baptist Church, they were the preeminent local architectural firm and were already responsible for many of the commercial, residential, and civic buildings that made up and today still comprise San José's urban landscape.

At the same time as Binder & Curtis were hired, church treasurer William Schwartz was appointed as the contractor for the new building. Schwartz was a skilled builder and designer in his own right, at that time recently responsible for a number of very fine residences in the Vendome Grounds subdivision, one of which, 16 Ayer Avenue, has been designated as a candidate City Landmark. Schwartz was lauded for his abilities to keep costs down in the construction of the church, providing many extras without increasing the cost.

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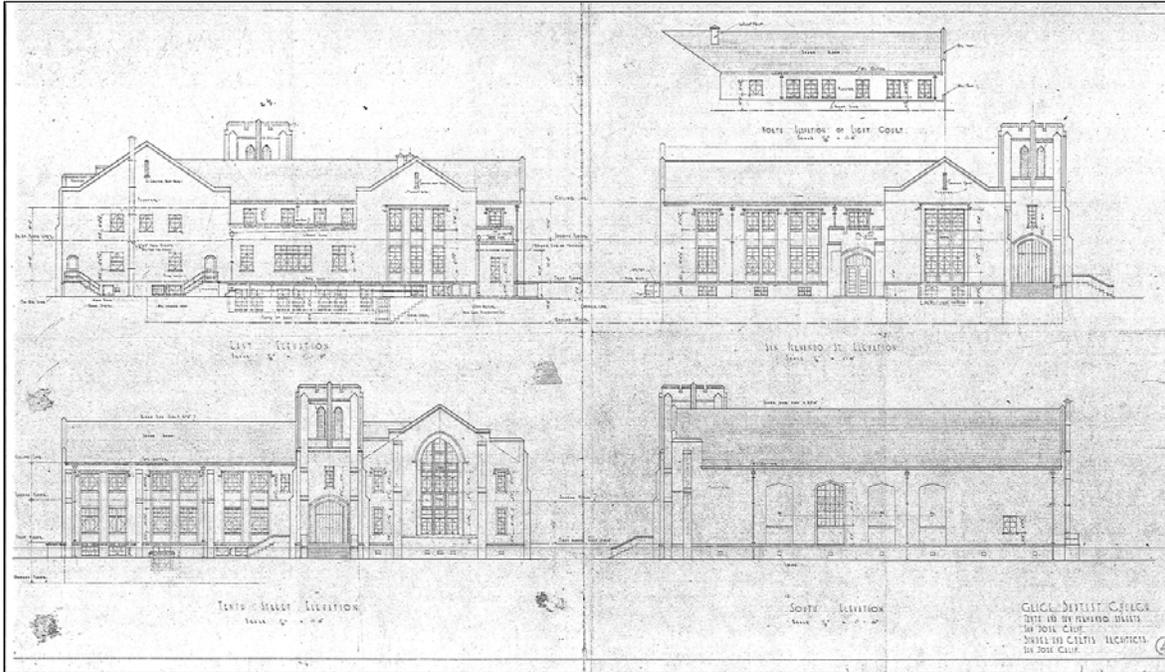
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A page of the Binder & Curtis plans.



Early photograph of the Grace Baptist Church. Photo courtesy of History San José.

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The permit was approved for the new Binder & Curtis plans on November 21, 1940, and the ground was broken the following day. (Another such ceremony was said to have occurred, or had been scheduled to occur, August 25, but as the plans had not yet been approved, the building did not begin at that time.) A sketch of the new design, matching today's church building and based on the existing signed plans by Binder & Curtis, was published in the *San Jose Evening News* on November 22.

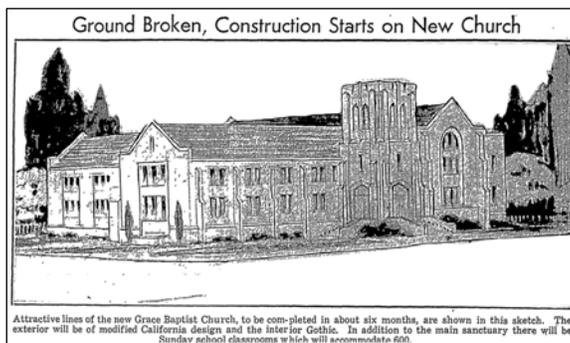


Illustration in November 22, 1940 *San Jose Evening News*.
The accompanying article stated that Binder & Curtis were the architects.

Eight months later, on July 27, 1941, the new church was dedicated, accompanied by a record-setting attendance of 550 in the morning service and 685 in the evening. The Robert Morton organ was installed by Schoenstein & Co. of San Francisco, the oldest organ builder in the west. The installation was done as closely as possible to the original configuration from the Liberty Theater, although at the time a number of pipes were omitted. (Since then, the organ has been restored with the missing pipes.) Guest organists were invited to play the celebrated organ (called the Arthur Williams memorial organ) in the sanctuary. Today, the organ, the only surviving pipe organ from San José's silent film theaters, is described on the Grace Baptist Church website as "one of only two known early Robert Morton theater pipe organs still playing in a public venue."



The shop at Grace Baptist Church is dedicated to the maintenance of the historic organ.

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Postcard of Grace Baptist Church ca 1940s.



Subject property in 1950.

The 1950 Sanborn map shows the church, nine years after it was built, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from San Jose, Santa Clara County, California. Sanborn Map Company, Reprinted 1950; Vol. 1, 1950. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn00817_006/.

In 1958, the church, with a membership of more than 800, expanded further with the addition of the two-story educational wing. Built by Warren Crinklaw at a cost of \$150,000, the annex added classrooms, offices, a kitchen, and gym in a style distinctly different from the design of the main church building. Around this time, the main address of the church was changed from 110 South Tenth Street to 484 East San Fernando Street.

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In 1966, the basement was remodeled and expanded to create a youth center, which welcomed students and young people from the community to join in fellowship and recreation. Students were encouraged to minister at Juvenile Hall, tutor local children, and help single-parent households. Later, the youth center space was leased to the City of San José Recreation Department to provide an area for therapeutic recreation for clients living in local residential care homes. In January 1975, Grace received a District IV award from the California Parks and Recreation Society stating that the community center at Grace had made a “greater contribution to the field of recreation for the handicapped than any other agency in Santa Clara County.” The church also acquired the houses directly south of the property, addressed as 132 and 146 South Tenth Street.



Grace Baptist Church was founded in 1913. The present church building was completed in 1941. This building is one of the most beautiful in the State and its membership draws from San Jose, Santa Clara, and surrounding areas. It is a church with an extensive missionary outreach, and well known for its enlistment of young men and women in various forms of Christian Ministry. Several localities in its area have Sunday Schools and places of worship as a result of its church extension program.



The commemorative plate ca 1950s for the Grace Baptist Church describes the church as “one of the most beautiful in the State” on the back of the plate.

Community Outreach

From its inception, the Grace Baptist Church has served both internationally and locally, reaching the neediest members of its community with continual education, volunteer help, meeting space, and financial support. In the past eighty years, Grace has also been notable in its inclusiveness—offering events as far back as the 1940s that were open to attendees of all races and denominations as well as renting and donating space to organizations such as the gay Metropolitan Community Church from 1983-1992. Grace also has been unafraid to tackle the hard subjects, and has traditionally fostered open discussion of topics such as racial, anti-war, and LGBTQ issues.

In 1970, Grace became known for its help to board-and-care residents who met at the church premises. This evolved into the Grace Community Center in 1974, operated by the City of San José to provide stimulating activities and fellowship for developmentally disabled and mentally ill adults. In 1972, the church began to address the need to help the homeless by first partnering with other churches to offer what they called urban ministry. The Urban Ministry project was housed at Grace until 1984, when it incorporated as a nonprofit, later called InnVision. Since 2016, Grace’s nonprofit partner, Grace Solutions, has operated a homeless shelter on church property.

Grace has extended its reach throughout its 108 years, continuing to fulfill its mission as it met the challenges of a changing world despite a shrinking congregation, the challenges of the pandemic, financial difficulties, and rising

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crime and violence in its urban environment. In November 2020, a double murder occurred in the homeless shelter operated by Grace Solutions, further adding to the church's difficulties.

"Shorty" Collins

In 1957, the church hired Reverend George L "Shorty" Collins as its university chaplain. Shorty Collins (1892-1991) is remembered as a tireless worker for peace and a symbol of Grace Baptist Church's "dimension of the American Christian movement that is not well-known" by Reverend Andrew Kille, pastor of Grace between 1979 and 1988. Active in civil rights as early as 1920 and an active ambassador for peace until shortly before his death at age ninety-nine, Collins was titled "The Most Peaceful Man in San José" by the Human Relations Committee of Santa Clara County. Collins had become a pacifist soon after a stint in the US Army in World War I. He became an inter-church college minister and joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a religion-based peacemaking organization. In the 1920s, he traveled throughout the country working for peace and racial harmony. In 1927, Collins was ordained by the Northern Baptist Convention and became campus minister at the University of Wisconsin, a post he held for thirty years before coming to San José to serve as an assistant pastor and college chaplain until his retirement as Campus Pastor Emeritus in 1986. In 1971, Collins received the Edwin Dahlberg Peace Award of the American Baptist Churches. Reverend Collins and his wife Evelyn helped to found the San José Peace and Justice Center at 48 South Seventh Street, today housed in what is known as the Collins House.

Architects

The local architectural firm of Binder & Curtis designed the 1941 Grace Baptist Church building, with Ernest N. Curtis the architect of record. William Binder (1871-1953) and Ernest Norton Curtis (1889-1956) were partners in one of the most successful and prolific architectural firms in San José, having designed much of downtown San José during sixty years of active work. Many of Binder & Curtis's downtown buildings have been demolished as downtown San José has undergone extensive development, but those that remain are recognized as significant buildings, a great number of them San José City Landmarks or entries on the Historic Resources Inventory.

William Binder moved to San José in 1890 at age nineteen to work as an apprentice draftsman before going into business as an architect in 1897. Credited by historian Jack Douglas as San José's first major modern architect, Binder, with and without partners, was responsible for many of San José's most important early business buildings. His work included the 1904 Jose Theater and 1911 Montgomery Hotel (both City Landmarks today) and the 1907 American Trust Building, which was considered San José's first "skyscraper," demolished in the 1970s. He was also a skilled residential designer, responsible for, among others, the 1911 Latta House at 445 North Third Street, a City Landmark.

In 1917, Binder formed a partnership with his twenty-eight-year-old draftsman Ernest Curtis. From 1917 to 1953, Binder & Curtis went on to fulfill the needs of a booming San José, designing hospitals, commercial and civic buildings, theaters, and residences. The firm designed many buildings that are today City Landmarks, among them the Twohy Building, Civic Auditorium, San José Water Works, Towne Theater, Wilder-Hait house at 1190 Emory Street, the Curtis House at 254 South Seventeenth Street, and the San José Central Fire Station at 201 North Market Street. In the 1930s, William Binder went into semi-retirement, and Curtis was the architect of record for nearly all of the firm's work, including the Grace Baptist Church.

The subject property was not the only church designed by Binder & Curtis. The firm was also responsible for the original Grace Baptist Church built in 1921 on the corner of South Seventh and Santa Clara Streets. Binder & Curtis religious buildings still standing include the 1937 First Christian Church at 80 South Fifth Street and the 1949 distinctive Mission Revival style First Immanuel Lutheran Church at 374 South Third Street. The partners were also the architects for mausoleums at Oak Hill Cemetery and the Santa Clara Catholic Cemetery.

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Build History and Exterior Alterations at 485 East San Fernando Street

The following alterations are those that have been shown to affect the exterior of the main church building.

1941: Original build date. Architects Binder & Curtis, builder William Schwartz.

1958: Two-story assembly building added to church. Builder Warren Crinklaw.

1966: Building permit (basement) excavated to create a youth center. David Harkness, architect.

2000: Exterior remodeling for ADA improvements.

Survey Status

The subject property is currently designated in the San José Historic Inventory as a Structure of Merit.

In 2022, a group of parishioners and interested citizens has organized to try to reclassify the church building from a Structure of Merit to a Candidate City Landmark. The change in classification would mean that if there was an attempt to demolish or significantly modify the building, it would require a CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) review which would require a redevelopment proposal to investigate viable preservation alternatives. On April 6, 2022, Bill Brooks and Dr. Penny Hogg gave a presentation to the Historic Landmarks Commission of San José that showed why they believed the church met the criteria of City Landmark. Church representative Reverend George Oliver objected to the proposal and asked the Historic Landmarks Commission to take no action on the reclassification.

A change in classification requires the acceptance of the church. While the California Government Code Section 25373(a) states that “The board of supervisors may acquire property for the preservation or development of a historical landmark,” Section 25373(d) provides the “Religious Exemption” stating that “Subdivision (b) shall not apply to noncommercial property owned by any association or corporation that is religiously affiliated and not organized for private profit, whether the corporation is organized as a religious corporation, or as a public benefit corporation, provided that both of the following occur:

- (1) The association or corporation objects to the application of the subdivision to its property.
- (2) The association or corporation determines in a public forum that it will suffer substantial hardship, which is likely to deprive the association or corporation of economic return on its property, the reasonable use of its property, or the appropriate use of its property in the furtherance of its religious mission, if the application is approved.

This law was upheld in 2000 by the California Supreme Court and again in 2009 by the California Court of Appeal.

Integrity

The subject property retains a high level of integrity as per the National Register’s seven aspects:

Location. The building is in its original location at 484 East San Fernando Street.

Design. Early photographs show that the main church building retains nearly all of its original design and features. A two-story assembly building was added in 1958 and in 1966, the basement was excavated to create a below-grade entrance for a new youth center. These modifications are sixty-four years old and fifty-six years old respectively; both by now are historical parts of the building and do not detract from nor obscure the architectural features and character of the main church building.

Setting. The neighborhood has kept a great deal of its original setting since the church was built.

Materials. Virtually all the church’s exterior materials are original, including stucco walls and moldings, wood, and in particular, original windows with hammered glass,.

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Workmanship. The church has a distinctive character and composition, a modern simplified version of Gothic Revival representative of the work of local master architects Binder & Curtis.

Feeling. South Tenth Street and the surrounding houses and buildings retain the original feeling of 1941 when the church was built. Most of the surrounding houses on the block between South Tenth and South Eleventh Streets and on East San Fernando Street were built between 1880 and the first half of the twentieth century.

Association. While Grace Baptist Church has had a number of visionary leaders, its best-known pastor was George “Shorty” Collins, who worked for peace for nearly seventy years and helped found what is today called the San José Peace and Justice Center.

Evaluation

The subject property appears to be eligible for Landmark status in the City of San José based on the following criterion as set out in Chapter 13 of the San José Municipal Code Section 13.48.110(H), *Procedure for designation of a landmark*:

Criterion 3: Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the local, regional, state or national culture and history;

The church is associated with George L. “Shorty” Collins, who worked for peace for more than seventy years and helped to found the San José Peace and Justice Center.

Criterion 4: Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the city of San José;

The church has been an integral part of the religious community in San José since its founding in 1913. When the current building was constructed in 1941, Grace significantly expanded its outreach and offered programs and support that made a great difference to the community, aiding migrant families, single parents, seniors, developmentally disabled residents, and more. From the beginning, it offered programs that were open to all races and denominations. Space was leased to the City of San José Recreation Department to provide an area for therapeutic recreation for clients living in local residential care homes. For fifty years, Grace has been a leader in opening its doors the developmentally disabled and mentally ill as well as the homeless population.

Criterion 6: Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

The main church building is an excellent example of a simplified Gothic Revival style influenced by the Art Deco movement of the 1930s. This is a unique style within the city of San José. St. Patrick’s School at 51 North Ninth Street is one of the few examples of large-scale Gothic Revival architecture in the city, but St. Patrick’s was begun in 1899, when Gothic Revival architecture was more popular and is of a more classical inclination. The Grace Baptist Church incorporates Gothic Revival features such as buttresses, lancet windows, and pointed arches but simplifies the lines and eliminates the heavy ornamentation of standard Gothic Revival. Inspired by the Art Deco movement, the building’s design pays homage to the classic Gothic and Gothic Revival churches while achieving a fresh, modern look with its clean lines.

Criterion 7: Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of San José.

The subject property is the work of the architectural firm of Binder & Curtis, with Ernest Curtis the architect of record. William Binder (1871-1953) and Ernest Curtis (1889-1956) were partners in one of the most successful and prolific architectural firms in San José, having designed much of downtown San José during sixty years of active work that began in 1897. Many of Binder & Curtis’s works are recognized today as significant buildings, a great number of them San José City Landmarks or Structures of Merit on the Historic Resources Inventory.

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