

## EMERGENCY

DBS

- 2024

**DESIGNATING** the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills located at 2926 Park Avenue in the Walnut Hills neighborhood as a local historic landmark.

WHEREAS, the Cincinnati Preservation Association, Walnut Hills Area Council, First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills, and Vice-Mayor Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney have applied to designate the building commonly known as the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills located at 2926 Park Avenue in the Walnut Hills neighborhood as a local historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills is architecturally significant as a Gothic Revival Style building designed by architect Harry Burbank, constructed in 1908, and featuring a corner square bell tower with a pyramid roof, gothic arched windows, a raised stone foundation, and a split-entry staircase; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills was one of the first African American churches organized in the Walnut Hills neighborhood that remains active today and reflects the history of political, social, educational, and cultural activities of African Americans in the Walnut Hills neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills completed an addition in 1926 dedicated to music and the vital role music played in African American culture with several prominent African American musicians visiting the church resulting in the creation of a music program, led by Clinton Gibbs, that regularly hosted large events that filled the church to capacity and fostered the musical education of community members such as Estella Rowe who became the first African American woman to sing in Cincinnati's Music Hall; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills, with a 500-seat capacity, regularly hosted events beyond religious gatherings, including the convention of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS) in 1915, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) meetings in 1921, and many other national African American-based organizational gatherings; and

WHEREAS, following a public staff conference, the Historic Conservation Board, at its regularly scheduled meeting on October 23, 2023, and upon considering the factors set forth in Cincinnati Municipal Code Section 1435-07-1, recommended designation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills as a local historic landmark and further recommended adoption of conservation guidelines governing the maintenance, rehabilitation, and modification of the proposed historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, upon receipt of the recommendation of the Historic Conservation Board, the City Planning Commission, at its regularly scheduled meeting on November 17, 2023, and upon considering the factors set forth in Cincinnati Municipal Code Section 1435-07-2-B(c)

recommended the designation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills as a local historic landmark and the adoption of conservation guidelines governing the maintenance, rehabilitation, and modification of the local historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, Council finds that the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills has historic significance pursuant to Cincinnati Municipal Code Section 1435-07-1(a)(1) for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and

WHEREAS, Council additionally finds that the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills has historic significance pursuant to Cincinnati Municipal Code Section 1435-07-1(a)(3) because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction, particularly the Gothic Revival Style of architecture; and

WHEREAS, Council finds that the historic designation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills conforms to the “Sustain” Initiative Area goal of Plan Cincinnati (2012) to “[p]reserve our natural and built environment” as described on page 193; and

WHEREAS, Council considers the designation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills as a historic landmark and the adoption of related conservation guidelines to be in the best interest of the City and the general public’s health, safety, and general welfare; now, therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Cincinnati, State of Ohio:

Section 1. That Council approves the Designation Report for the structure located at 2926 Park Avenue (“First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills”), which report is attached to this ordinance as Attachment A and incorporated herein by reference, and Council specifically adopts as its own findings that the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills, as depicted on Attachment B, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, and located on the real property more particularly described on Attachment C, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, has historic significance and qualifies in all respects for designation as a historic landmark under Chapter 1435 of the Zoning Code of the City of Cincinnati (“Zoning Code”); specifically, Council designates the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills as a local historic landmark under Zoning Code Sections 1435-07-1(a)(1) and 1435-07-1(a)(3).

Section 2. That the Zoning Map of the City of Cincinnati is amended to superimpose over the existing underlying zoning district the designation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills as a local historic landmark.

Section 3. That, pursuant to Zoning Code Chapter 1435, Council hereby adopts the “First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills Historic Conservation Guidelines,” attached hereto as Attachment D and incorporated herein by reference, which guidelines shall govern the preservation, rehabilitation, or modification of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills local historic landmark.

Section 4. That the Clerk of Council is directed to promptly notify the Historic Conservation Board, the City Planning Commission, the Director of City Planning and Engagement, the Director of Buildings and Inspections, and the City Solicitor of the local historic landmark designation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills.

Section 5. That this ordinance shall be an emergency measure necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, safety, and general welfare and shall, subject to the terms of Article II, Section 6 of the Charter, be effective immediately. The reason for the emergency is that the designation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills makes the property immediately eligible for Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credits, absent which designation the property cannot otherwise qualify by the pending application deadline of February 29, 2024. The tax credits will assure the rehabilitation of the First Baptist Church of Walnut Hills and will facilitate a project that will contribute to the economic growth and vitality of the Walnut Hills neighborhood.

Passed: \_\_\_\_\_ 2024

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Aftab Pureval, Mayor

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk