

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 17 \*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church

P1. Other Identifier: Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Peace Parish

\*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 Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted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 Milpitas Date 2021 T 06S; R 01W;  of  of Sec ; Mt. Diablo B.M.

c. Address 1385 Michigan Avenue City San Jose Zip 95002

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone 10S, 591145.00 mE/ 4142866.00 mN

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

APNs 015-05-024, 015-05-032, 015-05-027

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

Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church is a one-story, irregular plan, wood frame contemporary church on a combined 1.13-acre lot that spans between Michigan Avenue and grand Boulevard in the Alviso neighborhood of San Jose. The building fronts Michigan Avenue and shares the combined lot with two other wood frame buildings. The building was constructed in phases over several decades; the variety of roof forms and intersection of exterior wall surfaces reflect the organic growth of the building over time. The church is primary (northwest) façade features a dramatic butterfly roof-covered porch that projects from the northwest and northeast façades to form a large open and covered area that wraps around the front of the building. The roof overhang is supported by exposed roof framing that rests on two wood-post-supported trusses. The gable peak is topped by a small multitiered tower covered by a pyramidal roof with a slender cross projecting from its upper peak. This part of the building is clad in wood drops siding of various widths. See Continuation Sheet.

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP16 (Religious Building), HP36 - LA (Ethnic Minority Property-Latino)

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



\*P4. Resources Present:

Building  Structure  Object  
 Site  District  Element of District  
 Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5b. Description of Photo: (view, date, accession #) View from Michigan Street, southeast, April 2023

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:  Historic  Prehistoric  
 Both

c.1951 (Church History)

\*P7. Owner and Address:

Roman Catholic Bishop of San Jose  
1385 Michigan Avenue  
San Jose, CA 95002

\*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address) Becky Urbano, ESA

787 The Alameda, Ste. 250  
San Jose, CA 95126

\*P9. Date Recorded: April 2023

\*P10. Survey Type: (Describe) Intensive

\*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey

report and other sources, or enter "none.")

Neighborhood of Alviso Historic Context and Survey

\*Attachments:  NONE  Location Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record

Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record

Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (List): \_\_\_\_\_

# BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Our Lady Star of the Sea Church \*NRHP Status Code 3CS  
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B1. Historic Name: Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Peace Parish  
B2. Common Name: Alviso Catholic Church  
B3. Original Use: Church B4. Present Use: Church

\*B5. Architectural Style: Vernacular

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

1951 – building constructed or moved to the site  
c. 1960 – Church expanded significantly to approximately its current configuration  
See continuation sheet

\*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features:  
Rectory building at 1392 Grand Blvd

B9a. Architect: Unknown b. Builder: Unknown

\*B10. Significance: Theme Social and Religious Development Area Alviso  
Period of Significance n/a Property Type church Applicable Criteria n/a

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

The building at 1385 Michigan Avenue is associated with the migrant farm worker community that settled in Alviso after World War II. It was founded to minister to this community, was located near the agricultural fields and labor camps far from the then-center of Alviso, and served as a community space for meetings, summer programs, festivals, and community organizing efforts. It filled this role from 1951 through to the present day. It evolved with the community. As they grew more numerous and more established, so too did the church expand to its current form. It is associated with religious and spiritual properties as described in *Latinos in Twentieth Century California: A Historic Context Statement* and satisfies the guidance under for **eligibility** for the California Register at the local level under Criterion 1. Should a greater body of archival material be uncovered, it is possible that the building would also meet National Register criterion A. It is also recommended **eligible** as a City of San Jose Landmark under criteria 1. The recommended period of significance is 1951-1988, corresponding to the date the Our Lady Star of the Sea Mission was founded to the date the church provided meeting space for the founding of OCA, a community advocacy group active from 1988 and through the 1990s.

See Continuation Sheet

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) none

\*B12. References:  
See Continuation Sheet

B13. Remarks:  
None.

\*B14. Evaluator: Becky Urbano, ESA  
\*Date of Evaluation: May 2023

(This space reserved for official comments.)



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### P3a: Description (Continued)

Two wings extend from the central volume to form the remainder of the primary (northwest) elevation. Northwest of the main volume is a one-story, wood frame wing topped by a very low slope asphalt shingle covered roof. This volume is likely the original church building visible in the 1956 aerial photographs. Two solid panel, single-leaf pedestrian doors provide additional entry points from the front parking lot. Two aluminum sliding windows trimmed with flat sawn wood boards are located between these two doors. Northeast of the main entrance is a second wing that is recessed from the front façade and extends the northeast side gable roof. Another pedestrian entrance is centrally located on this façade. Two sets of fixed ribbon windows trimmed in flat sawn wood boards flank the pedestrian entrance. A shed roof porch lines both the front and rear facades of this wing, giving the roof a flared profile. Two fixed windows are located on the northeast (secondary) façade. Both are trimmed with flat sawn wood boards. Both additions are covered with board and batten siding.

Two other buildings are visible from Grand Boulevard: a one-story, rectangular plan classroom building along the southwestern property line and a two story, wood-frame, rectangular plan residence at the southeast corner of the property. The residential building was constructed or moved to this location between 1982 and 1987. It currently serves as the church rectory.



Figure 1. View of the main entrance to the church. Source: ESA, 2023.

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Figure 2. View of the original church building. This portion of the church complex is visible on aerial photographs as early as 1956. Source: ESA, 2023.

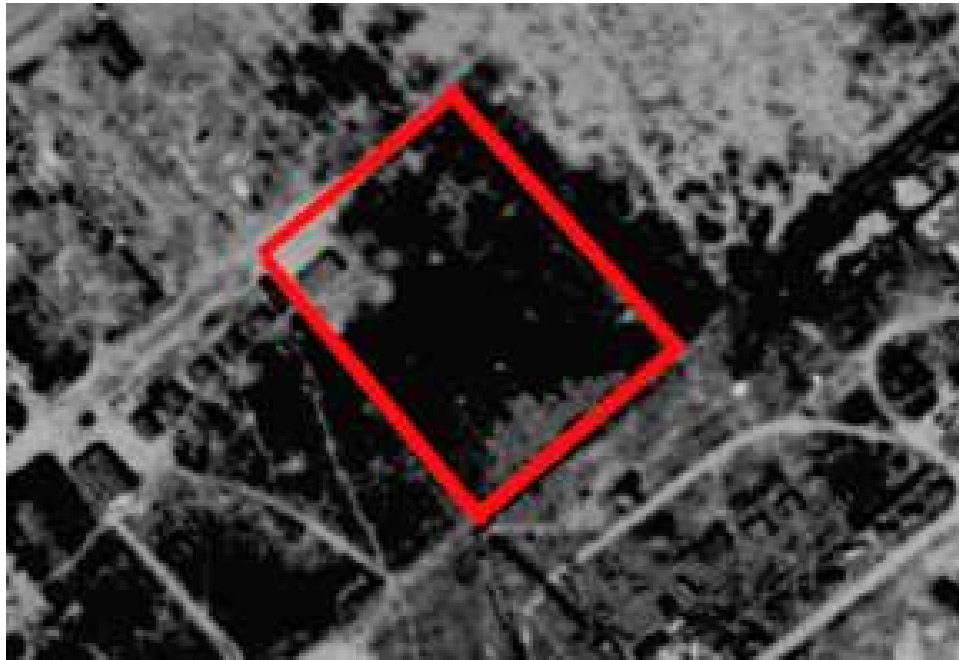


Figure 3. 1956 aerial photograph with the subject parcel outlined in red. Note that Michigan Avenue is graded only as far as the church and the surrounding area is occupied by a number of labor camps. Source: UCSB Geospatial Collection, Flight CIV-1956, Frame 6r-37.

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Figure 4. View of the butterfly porch roof. Source: ESA, 2023.



Figure 5. Church rectory at 1392 Grand Boulevard. Source: ESA, 2023.

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Figure 6. View of the rear of the church as seen from Grand Boulevard. Source: ESA, 2023.

### **B6: Construction History (Continued)**

Unless otherwise noted, the information here is gleaned from comparison of aerial photographs taken between 1948 and 2020.

Our lady started to see mission was established in 1951.<sup>1</sup> At the time, a small rectangular plan building was either removed or constructed on the site.<sup>2,3</sup> During the 1950s this part of Alviso was still largely used for agricultural purposes. A comparison of aerial photographs shows Michigan Avenue graded only to the location of the church. By 1957 a group of 11 small buildings had been relocated to the area immediately southwest of the church building. These buildings were reportedly moved from the Bayside Canning Company China camp to this location by the Santos family to be used as workers cottages.<sup>4,5</sup> Between 1956 and 1960 the church was expanded significantly. On the northeast elevation of the original building a new cross gable addition was constructed, expanding the footprint of the building by more than four times. The current front elevation on Michigan Avenue dates to this expansion. It is also during this expansion that the church attains the approximate footprint that is present today. Also, by 1960 all the roads in this part of Alviso are graded to the full current extent. By 1963, the church is expanded again with a small connecting wing between the original rectangular plan section and a portion of the 1960s building to the rear. This formed a central courtyard which has since been enclosed. At the same time, a small square plan building was added to the rear of the church near the southeastern property line. For the next 20 years most of the improvements on the church property are focused on landscaping and other outside improvements. By 1980, the small square plan

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.olsalviso.org/nuestraparroquia/>

<sup>2</sup> Alviso Community Assessment document pages 90-91,

<sup>3</sup> Clipping file image

<sup>4</sup> 1957 aerial photograph

<sup>5</sup> Oral history with Tony Santos,

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building in the rear has been expanded to its current rectangular plan shape. The final expansion of the church occurred c. 2005 in the southwestern way of the church was extended slightly and the church attained its full current footprint.

Other changes to the church property over time include the relocation of a building to the southeastern corner of the lot sometime between 1982 in 1987. This building is currently used as the church rectory and has the address of 1350 Grand Ave. it is this building that was used by the OCA organization as a meeting hall. In 2017, the single-family residence that was located at the northeastern corner of the church property was removed.<sup>6</sup>

### B10: Significance (Continued)

Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church at 1385 Michigan Avenue in Alviso was established as a mission of Our Lady of Peace Parish in Santa Clara.<sup>7,8</sup> It was first housed in a small, rectangular plan building that was reportedly moved from Redwood City.<sup>9</sup> This building first appears on aerial photographs in 1956. At that time, most of the area surrounding the church was still used for agricultural purposes (**Figure 7**). This area included a number of labor camps nearby. Immediately adjacent to the church were several small cottages relocated from the Bayside Canning Company's labor camp at 906 Elizabeth Street.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 7. 1957 aerial photograph with the subject parcel outlined in red. Source: UCSB Geospatial Collection, Flight CAS-1957, Frame Alviso.

It was a time of rapid change in the New Chicago area of Alviso. In 1956, Michigan Avenue was graded only as far as the church building and the surrounding area was largely devoid of homes. A year later, numerous homes were sited

<sup>6</sup> Comparison of aerials from 2016 and 2018 with Google Streetview images from the same period.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Scheinin, no title, December 21, 1997, San Jose Public Library California Room, Alviso Clipping File, accessed April 14, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> "Our Parish," *Our Lade Star of the Sea*, accessed May 24, 2023, <https://www.olsalviso.org/nuestraparroquia/>.

<sup>9</sup> Scheinin, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Santos, Oral History Interview, March 22, 2023.

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along Michigan Avenue which was now graded almost to Spreckles Avenue. Father John Coleman was stationed to the Star of the Sea mission by 1958.<sup>11</sup> He is largely credited with founding the church.<sup>12</sup>

Even from these early days, the church functioned as both a place of worship and as a community center for the Mexican community it served. It was sometimes referred to as the "Star of the Sea Catholic Center" and hosted summer educational programs for neighborhood youth.<sup>13</sup> Each summer they ended the summer session with a multi-day "fiesta" that included food, games, and the crowning of a festival queen.<sup>14</sup>

As the community grew, so did the church. Between 1957 and 1960 the original rectangular plan church was expanded with a multi-wing addition on the northeast end of the building. This expansion gave the church its current appearance (**Figure 8**) Also by 1960, the roads were graded to their current extent and the blocks started to fill in with new and relocated houses.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 8. 1963 aerial photograph with the subject parcel outlined in red. Source: UCSB Geospatial Collection, Flight CAS-1963, Frame SCL 2-93.

Unfortunately a large flood inundated the area in 1962, turning the whole area into a muddy mess. The community was slow to rebuild and repair. It was often the subject of community service projects and mission outreach from other catholic churches in the area. Newspaper articles from the time are condescending when they describe conditions in Alviso. One even went to far as to describe volunteer work in the neighborhood performed under a Mexico-United States volunteer exchange programs as a "peace corps project" for the wealthy Mexican student participants. The same article describes the "Star of the Sea Mission, all but abandoned and gradually disintegrated

<sup>11</sup> "Priest Transfer Called 'Routine,'" *San Jose Evening News*, July 6, 1966, p.4.

<sup>12</sup> Scheinin, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> "Star of the Sea," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 20, 1960, p.10.

<sup>14</sup> "14 Queen Candidates for Alviso Spanish Fiesta," *San Jose Evening News*, August 20, 1959, p.11.

<sup>15</sup> Phil Peters, "Envisage Alviso as Alvisans Do," *San Jose Evening News*, April 11, 1966, p.25.



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from lack of care.”<sup>16</sup> Yet in spite of the condescension, floods, and general lack of diocese support, the church continued to grow and thrive.

Part of the resiliency of Our Lady Star of the Sea parish was due to the leadership of its priest, Father Robert Gorman. Father Gorman took over from Father Colman in 1963. Robert Gorman learned Spanish during the summers he worked as a laborer in Mexico and routinely shared breakfast with one or more of his parishioners in Alviso. He joined the board of Santa Clara County’s Economic Opportunity Commission (EOC) to advocate for Alviso.<sup>17</sup> It was this political involvement that made him popular with Alvisans but it also drew unwanted attention from the Bishop. In 1966, Father Gorman was transferred to San Francisco. It was then that Father Coleman returned to Alviso where he stayed until 1997 when he was replaced by Father Steve Brown.<sup>18</sup>

However Gorman was not the only priest to advocate for the citizens of Alviso. The leaders of the Alviso church were part of the group demanding roads be paved in the aftermath of the consolidation with San Jose.<sup>19</sup> They worked with the Red Cross and community groups to administer aid after each of the floods that regularly occurred. They worked with community groups to advocate affordable housing and provided meeting space for the community to plan for events.<sup>20</sup>

Like many churches, Our Lady Star of the Sea is a reflection of its community. It was founded as a mission to serve the growing Mexican migrant workforce that moved into the Alviso neighborhood in the 1950s. As this population grew and settled, so did the church. It expanded its physical footprint as well as the services it provided to the community. From the beginning it operated in Spanish, a practice that it continues today. It is the one church in Alviso that has been consistently part of the community since the middle of the twentieth century and it both represents and supports the strong presence of the Mexican culture in the area.

### Catholic Church in San Jose

The Catholic Church has a long and influential role in the history of San Jose and California. Alviso is located between two of thirteen Spanish missions established in Alta California at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: Mission San Jose and Mission Santa Clara de Asis. The current Diocese of San Jose traces its history back to the founding of the Mission Santa Clara.<sup>21</sup> It was originally part of the Diocese of Sonora in Mexico before becoming part of the Diocese of Alta and Baja California, headquartered in Santa Barbara, in 1840. When the Archdiocese of San Francisco was formed in 1850, San Jose became part of that unit of church governance.<sup>22</sup> The Diocese of San Jose was not formed until 1981 and it encompassed all of Santa Clara County.<sup>23</sup>

As the immigrant population of the area changed, parish churches were established to administer the Catholic rites to specific populations. The Italian neighborhood in the Ryland neighborhood Holy Cross Catholic Church, an Italian

<sup>16</sup> Dick Floor, “A ‘Peace Corps’ Target: Alviso,” *San Jose Mercury News*, January 21, 1963, p.17.

<sup>17</sup> “Priest Transfer Called ‘Routine,’” *San Jose Evening News*, July 6, 1966, p. 24. The EOC was briefly housed in the former Schoolhouse annex building at 1568 Liberty Street before it became the office for the Alviso chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO).

<sup>18</sup> Scheinin, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Scheinin, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> The current church rectory building was moved to the site between 1982 and 1987. It became the headquarters for the Organizacion de la Comunidad de Alviso (OCA), when the group was established in 1988. National Economic Development and Law Center, *Organizacion de la Comunidad de Alviso*, 1991, p.3.

<sup>21</sup> “40 Years of History: Before 1981,” *Diocese of San Jose*, accessed May 25, 2023, <https://www.dsj.org/40th-anniversary/40-years-of-history/>.

<sup>22</sup> “40 Years of History: Before 1981.”

<sup>23</sup> “40 Years of History: 1981-1990.”

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National Parish.<sup>24</sup> The Portuguese community near Roosevelt Park had The Church of the Five Wounds, a Portuguese National Parish.<sup>25</sup> Often services were conducted in the community's native tongue as well as Latin.<sup>26</sup> However, even though San Jose was originally populated by Spanish speakers, into the 1940s, there were only two Catholic churches that offered masses in Spanish within Santa Clara Valley.<sup>27</sup>

As the Spanish-speaking population increased after World War II, the need for Spanish-speaking churches was difficult to ignore. The growing population in East San Jose, in the Mayfair neighborhood, petitioned the archbishop in San Francisco for a Spanish speaking church in their neighborhood. The request was denied. It took the efforts of a single priest, Father Donald McDonnell, to petition the archbishop on behalf of the people of East San Jose. The result was Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission, established in 1953 on Kammerer Avenue.<sup>28</sup> The church became a central part of community life in the neighborhood, hosting numerous religious and advocacy groups. This included the Community Service Organization (CSO). It was at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission that Father McDonnell met Cesar Chavez and introduced him to Fred Ross, the CSO, and principals of community organizing.<sup>29</sup>

It was during this same time, in the early 1950s, that Our Lady Star of the Sea mission was established in Alviso to minister to the growing number of Spanish-speaking migrant farm workers moving to the area. The church was located on the then-fringes of Alviso, away from port and the cannery, and closer to the residential labor camps. As the community grew and the neighborhood became more firmly established, so did the church. Like at Our Lady of Guadalupe, the priests at Our Lady Star of the Sea were advocates for their parishioners, joining regional boards, providing educational support, and serving as a center for community celebrations.

### Regulatory Framework

As part of the Alviso Neighborhood Historic Context and Survey project, the property at 1385 Michigan Avenue has been evaluated for eligibility for listing at the national, state, and local levels. The criteria used for this evaluation are presented below and are followed by an analysis of eligibility.

#### National Register of Historic Places

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (U.S. Code Title 54, Section 306108), and its implementing regulations established the National Register of Historic Places as a comprehensive inventory of known historic resources throughout the United States. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior. It includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, archaeological, engineering, or cultural significance. A property is considered significant if it meets the criteria for listing in the National Register at Code of Federal Regulations Title 36, Section 60.4 (36 CFR 60.4), as stated below:

*The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and that:*

A. *Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, or*

<sup>24</sup> "History," *Holy Cross Parish*, accessed May 25, 2023, <https://holycrosssj.org/index.php/history/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Home," *Five Wounds Portuguese National Parish*, accessed May 25, 2023, <https://fivewoundschurch.org/>.

<sup>26</sup> Even today these churches offer materials in multiple languages to fit their populations.

<sup>27</sup> Estella Inda, "East Side Revelations – Our Lady of Guadalupe Church," *San Jose Public Library*, November 24, 2021, <https://www.sjpl.org/blog/east-side-revelations-our-lady-guadalupe-church>.

<sup>28</sup> Inda, "East Side Revelations," November 24, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> National Park Service, "Historic Overview and Resource Description," in *Cesar Chavez Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2013), p.10.

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- B. *Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, or*
- C. *Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or*
- D. *Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.*

### California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register is "an authoritative listing and guide to be used by state and local agencies, private groups, and citizens in identifying the existing historical resources of the state and to indicate which resources deserve to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change" (PRC Section 5024.1(a)). Certain resources are determined by law to be automatically included in the California Register, including California properties formally determined eligible for, or listed in, the National Register.

To be eligible for the California Register, a historical resource must be significant at the federal, state, or local level under one or more of the following criteria (PRC Section 5024.1(c)):

- (1) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage.
- (2) Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past.
- (3) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values.
- (4) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### City of San Jose Historic Resources Inventory

The City of San José HRI identifies known and potential historic resources of varying significance, including individual properties and districts listed in or eligible for listing in the California and National Registers, City Landmarks, Candidate City Landmarks, City Landmark Districts (and their contributing sites/structures), and Candidate City Landmark Districts (and their contributing sites/structures). In addition, the HRI identifies Structures of Merit, Identified Sites/Structures, Conservation Areas, and Conservation Area Contributing Sites/Structures. HRI properties are classified into one of 16 categories, depending on how they were evaluated at the time they were added. The HRI serves as a resource for conducting environmental and project review related to demolition permits, as well as for land use and development approvals. It is not a definitive list of all historic resources in the city of San José, and it is continually updated as new information, project-related evaluations, and neighborhood surveys are completed. The purpose of the HRI is to promote awareness of community resources and to further preservation of historic resources and community character.

For clarity and simplicity, this property is evaluated under the criteria for the two major categories of historical resources in the City of San Jose: City Landmarks and Structures of Merit

#### *City Landmark /Candidate City Landmark*

As presented in Municipal Code Section 13.48.020(C), designated or candidate City Landmarks and City Landmark Districts (and their contributors) are highly significant historic resources. They are designated by the City Council through a formal process as defined in the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code Section 13.48.110(H)). These resources are considered historic resources under CEQA.

Eligibility of a city landmark must consider:

- 1. Its character, interest, or value as part of the local, regional, state, or national history, heritage for culture;

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2. Its location as a site of a significant historic event;
3. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the local, regional, date, or national culture and history;
4. Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the city of San Jose;
5. Its portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
6. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen;
7. Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city of San Jose; and
8. Its embodiment of the elements of architectural or engineering design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represents a significant architectural innovation, or which is unique.

### *Structure of Merit*

A structure of merit is an important historic property or feature of lesser significance that does not qualify as a city landmark or for the California or National Registers. Attempts should be made for the preservation to the extent feasible under the City of San Jose 2040 General Plan goals and policies.<sup>30</sup> While there is no formal designation process for a structure of merit, it is generally understood to follow the same criteria as that for city landmarks, but with a lower threshold eligibility.

### Integrity

In addition to meeting one or more of the criteria above, a property must also retain integrity. Integrity is the authenticity of a historic resource's physical identity as shown by the survival of characteristics that existed during the period of significance. For a resource to be eligible for the California Register, it must also retain enough integrity to be recognizable as a historic resource and to convey the reasons for its significance. Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A resource that does not retain sufficient integrity to meet the National Register criteria may still be eligible for listing in the California Register or as a local resource.

The assessment of integrity is often weighted toward specific aspects traits and that weighting is depending on the reasons for historical significance. Properties significant for design (C/3) generally would have greater importance given to integrity of design, materials, and workmanship while properties significant for events or cultural associations (A/1) would have greater emphasis on feeling and association.

### **Evaluation**

For simplicity, 1385 Michigan Avenue is evaluated first within the criteria of the National and California registers. Because the criteria are nearly identical they are evaluated for both registers simultaneously. A discussion regarding City of San Jose criteria is presented after.

### *Criterion A/1 (Events)*

Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church has served a central role in the lives of the Spanish-speaking Alviso population since it was established in 1951. It was located in the fields at the edges of Alviso where migrant workers were living in labor camps or in the New Chicago area of town. At the time, nothing was located in this area besides the camps and many of the present-day roads were not yet graded. It was a very simple building, possibly relocated from another location, just like many of the buildings around it. From the beginning it provided opportunities to the community: hosting summer educational sessions, sponsoring festivals, and providing a local place to worship in the community's

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<sup>30</sup> "Historic Resources Inventory," City of San Jose Planning, Building & Code Enforcement, accessed April 28, 2023, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/planning-building-code-enforcement/planning-division/historic-resources/historic-resources-inventory>.

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native language. While the outside world often looked down upon the simple church and its parishioners, the community worked together to maintain and expand the church to its current form.

Like Our Lady of Guadalupe in East San Jose, the church at 1385 Michigan Avenue was a place of advocacy and pride. Its leadership joined the regional EOC board to advocate for programs in Alviso. Even in the 1990s, the church was used for community meetings, providing space for OCS and their advocacy efforts.

The *Latinos in Twentieth Century California: National Register of Historic Places Context Statement* includes guidance on the evaluation of property types associated with religion and spirituality.<sup>31</sup>

Buildings associated with this context were used by religious institutions that ministered to the Latino community. They may include churches, parochial schools, settlement houses, and offices for charitable organizations affiliated with religious institutions. Church buildings were constructed throughout the state to serve Latino communities. In other cases, existing church buildings were adopted by Latinos as their numbers rose in the community. Their size, style, and architectural detail will be based upon the location and date of construction, and are less important factors in the evaluation of eligibility under Criterion A... The earliest church buildings constructed specifically for Latinos are typically small in scale and modest in design. They were often referred to on Sanborn Maps and City Directories as missions, implying that these were outposts designed to serve foreigners...

Religious buildings associated with the history of Latinos may qualify for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at the local or state level... By mid-century, Latinos began to form their own churches, which allowed them to freely express their religious beliefs and traditions. The Catholic Church and Protestant denominations became more responsive to the needs of the Latino population in the 1970s and became active in supporting Central American immigrants in the 1980s...

To meet eligibility requirements for inclusion in the National Register, religious properties must satisfy Criteria Consideration A, and derive their primary significance from architectural distinction or historical importance to avoid any appearance by the government about the validity of a religion or belief... Religious properties may be eligible under Criterion A if they are significant in a context other than religion, such as ethnic or social history.

Religious buildings that meet Criteria Consideration A and Criterion A are those that played a larger role in the history of the Latino community in which they are located. For example, the Sacred Heart Mission in Anaheim was established in 1926, and was the spiritual, social, and cultural center of the Colonia Independencia. The original church building still stands and is used as the parish center.

Applying this guidance to Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church, the building is recommended **eligible for listing on the California Register under Criterion 1** for its long-standing role in the Spanish-speaking community in Alviso. The historical record on the importance of this role requires greater investigation. There is enough evidence to support its significance as a community space, and not as a religious institution, at the State level but more research is required to establish this role to a degree that would support inclusion on the National Register. It is therefore recommended **not eligible** for listing as in individual resource under Criterion A on the National Register at this time.

The recommended period of significance under Criterion 1 is 1951-1988, representing the date the church was founded as a mission through the date that OCA was founded and was provided meeting space on church property. If additional connections to more recent community advocacy groups or efforts is discovered, the period of significance may change to accommodate that association as well.

### Criterion B/2 (People)

<sup>31</sup> California State Parks, *Latinos in Twentieth Century California: National Register of Historic Places Context Statement*, (Sacramento: California Office of Historic Preservation, 2015), p.126-127.

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Father Coleman is the priest with the longest association with Our Lady Star of the Sea church. He was part of the founding of the church in the 1950s, returned to the church in the 1960s, and served in the community until 1997. No other individuals with long or significant association with the church or the congregations were found in the archival record. In spite of the long-lived association, very little is known about the accomplishments or contributions that Father Coleman made within the Alviso community. His role as priest and spiritual leader is well remembered but does not appear to have unusual or significant influence on the larger community. Therefore, the building at 1385 Michigan Avenue is recommended **not eligible** for individual listing on the National or California registers under Criterion B/2 for its association with Father Coleman.

### *Criterion C/3 (Design)*

The design of the Our Lady Star of the Sea church is unusual within the context of its neighborhood. No other building in Alviso has a butterfly roof. However, the building does not appear to represent a particular architectural style, tradition, building technique, or technological innovation. No designer or engineer is associated with its design. Limited personal accounts suggest that the building was constructed and has been maintained by the community and is not reflective of a particular master plan or overall design. Because of this, the building at 1385 Michigan Avenue is recommended **not eligible** for individual listing on the National or California registers under Criterion C/3 for its design.

### *Criterion D/4 (Information Potential)*

Criterion D/4 is most typically applied to archaeological sites. As applied to buildings and structures, it is necessary for the building or structure to have been a principal source of information that could not be gathered from other sources nearby or elsewhere. The building at 1385 Michigan Avenue is constructed of common materials using standard building techniques. The building is unlikely to provide additional information on its construction methods, the history of Alviso, or the Perkins family. As such, 1385 Michigan Avenue is recommended **not eligible** for listing on the National or California registers under Criterion D/4 for its information potential.

### *Integrity*

An assessment of integrity is necessary if the resource is found to be historically significant under one or more criteria for listing on the National or California registers. Because 1385 Michigan Avenue is recommended eligible under Criteria A/1, a further assessment of integrity is presented below.

Our Lady Star of the Sea church is located in its original location and the building remains as part of the now much larger building. Since it was started in 1951, the area around the church has evolved from open farmland and migrant worker camps to an established neighborhood full of single- and multi-family homes. However, this evolution occurred during the period of significance. The growth of the community and its relative affluence is mirrored in the growth of the church and the expanded church building. As such, the building retains integrity of **location, setting and feeling**.

The building has been modified since 1951 through a series of additions, both major and minor. Oral history accounts suggest that much of this work was done by the church community. All change occurred within the period of significance. Overall, 1385 Michigan Avenue retains integrity of **design, workmanship, and materials**.

The building is associated with the Spanish-speaking community in Alviso. It was established in its location because it was close to the migrant labor camps. Today, the community continues to be primarily Spanish-speaking and it is the only catholic church in the area to serve this population. It therefore retains integrity of **association**.

Overall, the building retains sufficient integrity for listing on the California register under Criterion 1 for its association with the Spanish speaking population of Alviso and for the role the church played in providing support, opportunity, and advocacy for the rights and well-being of the Alviso community..

### City of San Jose Historic Resources Inventory

1. Its character, interest, or value as part of the local, regional, state, or national history, heritage for culture;

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The building at 1385 Michigan Avenue is part of the social and cultural fabric of the Mexican and Mexican-American community in Alviso. From its beginning it has ministered to the population in Spanish, provided social supports through educational programs and cultural celebrations, and participated in community advocacy directly and indirectly by providing meeting space. When Alviso had no community center, the church filled that role.

2. Its location as a site of a significant historic event;

Research did not suggest that 1385 Michigan Avenue was the location of a significant historical event.

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

Father Colman was a long-time priest ministering to the community at Our Lady Star of the Sea church. However, research did not suggest that Father Coleman significantly contributed to the local, regional, state, or national culture or history.

4. Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the city of San Jose;

The building at 1385 Michigan Avenue does not appear to exemplify a particular cultural, social, or historic heritage with the city of San Jose. It served as place of worship and as a community gathering space but it does not represent a particular cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage.

5. Its portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

The building at 1385 Michigan Avenue does not portray the environment of a particular group nor is it characterized by a distinctive style. While more dramatic in form than the residential neighborhood around it, the building does not represent a particular style or architectural tradition.

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

There is no specific overall style or distinctive character to 1385 Michigan Avenue.

7. Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city of San Jose; and

No designer has been identified with 1385 Michigan Avenue.

8. Its embodiment of the elements of architectural or engineering design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represents a significant architectural innovation, or which is unique.

There is no specific overall style or distinctive character to 1385 Michigan Avenue.

Overall, the building meets the criteria for consideration as a City of San Jose Landmark under criteria 1.

### Summary

The building at 1385 Michigan Avenue is associated with the migrant farm worker community that settled in Alviso after World War II. It was founded to minister to this community, was located near the agricultural fields and labor camps far from the then-center of Alviso, and served as a community space for meetings, summer programs, festivals, and community organizing efforts. It filled this role from 1951 through to the present day. It evolved with the

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community. As they grew more numerous and more established, so too did the church expand to its current form. It is associated with religious and spiritual properties as described in *Latinos in Twentieth Century California: A Historic Context Statement* and satisfies the guidance under for eligibility for the California Register at the local level under Criterion 1. Should a greater body of archival material be uncovered, it is possible that the building would also meet National Register criterion A. It is also recommended eligible as a City of San Jose Landmark under criteria 1. The recommended period of significance is 1951-1988, corresponding to the date the Our Lady Star of the Sea Mission was founded to the date the church provided meeting space for the founding of OCA, a community advocacy group active from 1988 and through the 1990s.

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