

Communication from Public

Name: Kevin Waite

Date Submitted: 08/24/2026 08:50 AM

Council File No: 24-0751

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Councilmembers, I first want to thank you for the careful consideration that you've given this matter. As the author of the first scholarly biography of Biddy Mason (forthcoming from University of California Press this October), I write to document an important aspect of Mason's history that has not, to my knowledge, been established in the public record – and which bears directly on the motion before you. Biddy Mason owned property abutting what is now Pershing Square. In 1868, Mason purchased large plots between 6th and 7th and Charity (now Grand) and Olive. This was her second major property purchase, two years after she acquired her homestead on Spring Street between 3rd and 4th (and where the Biddy Mason Memorial Park now stands). Members of Mason's extended family also bought properties along Olive Street. In other words, much of what later became the Pershing Square neighborhood was Black-owned. For reference, I attach a map of early Black Los Angeles from my forthcoming book, *The Boundless Biddy Mason*. Some have expressed concern that renaming Pershing Square would somehow diminish the existing Biddy Mason Memorial Park. I see the relationship quite differently. During the course of my research, I frequently visited Biddy Mason Memorial Park, one of my favorite places in all of Los Angeles. Yet rarely did I encounter any other visitors there. Despite its magnificence, the Park remains largely unknown and screened from street view. Rather than competing with or obscuring the Park, a renamed Pershing Square might finally bring broader recognition to this extraordinary memorial. Together, the two sites – located on or immediately adjacent to Mason's major land purchases – would tell a fuller story of the city she helped build. The existence of Biddy Mason Memorial Park doesn't make additional commemoration redundant any more than the existence of the Lincoln Memorial makes the Lincoln Reflecting Pool, Lincoln Park, or numerous public buildings named for the president redundant. Cities routinely commemorate transformative figures in multiple ways because no single site can capture the breadth of their historical significance. Biddy Mason is one such figure. Rev. Dr. Tyler, on behalf of First African Methodist Episcopal Church, has eloquently described many of Mason's major contributions to the civic life of Los Angeles – contributions that merit

commemoration in a prominent, accessible part of the city. I'll refrain from elaborating here, but I would be honored to provide further documentation and consultation should this worthy motion proceed to a full Council vote. Because Mason's connection to Pershing Square has not previously been understood, the current debate has proceeded without a complete historical picture. I hope this additional evidence will assist the Committee in its deliberations. Respectfully, Kevin Waite, PhD The Watson Distinguished Professor of History University of Texas at Dallas Author of The Boundless Biddy Mason: An Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom Across the American West (University of California Press, forthcoming Oct. 2026)

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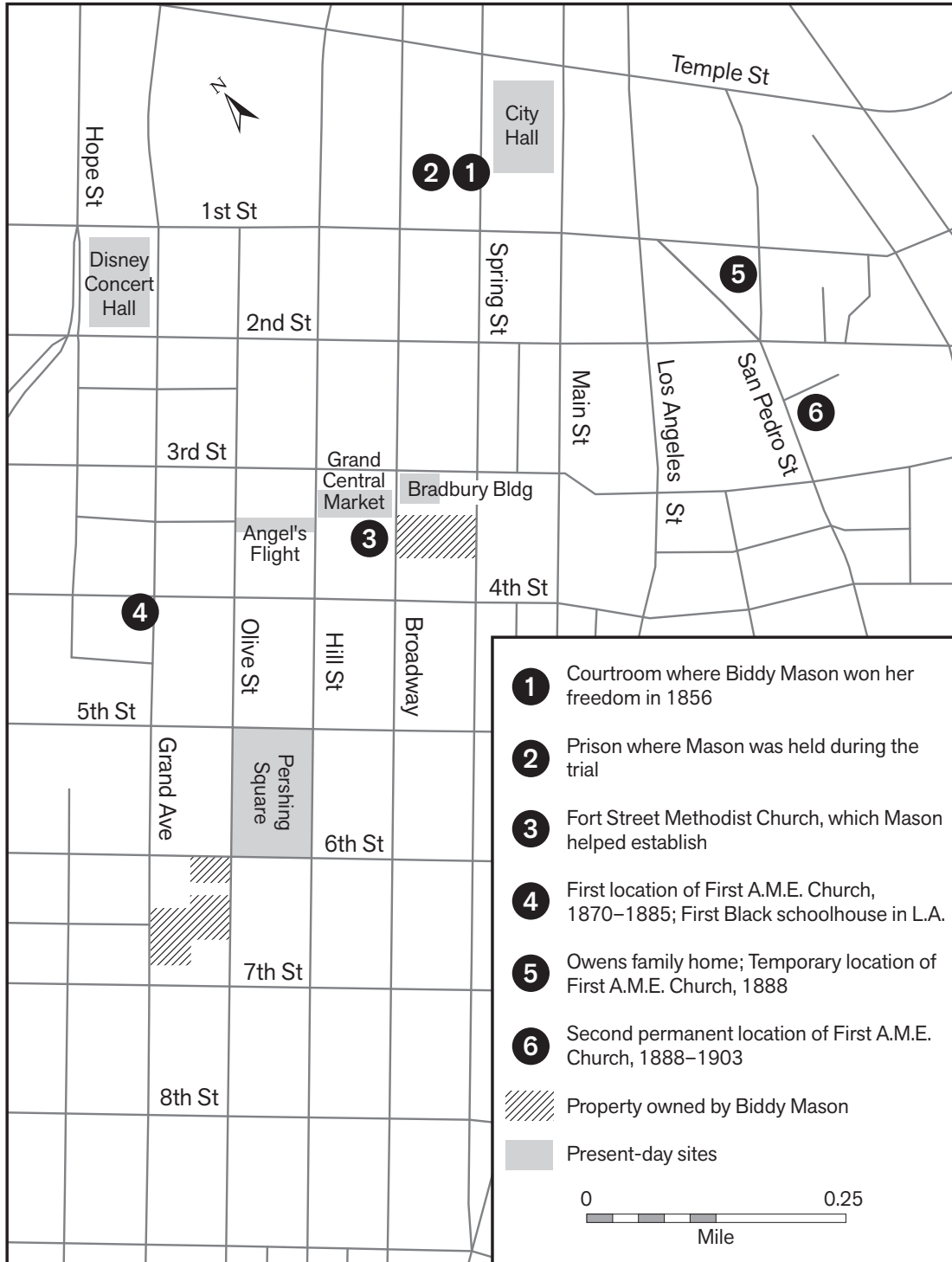
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Kevin Waite, PhD
The Watson Distinguished Professor of History
University of Texas at Dallas
Author of *The Boundless Biddy Mason: An Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom Across the American West* (University of California Press, forthcoming Oct. 2026)



Communication from Public

Name: Amy Ludwig

Date Submitted: 08/24/2026 08:53 AM

Council File No: 24-0751

Comments for Public Posting: I respectfully ask the City Council to pause the proposal to rename Pershing Square as Biddy Mason Park. Biddy Mason is an extraordinary Angeleno who deserves to be honored and remembered. But Los Angeles already has a beautiful Biddy Mason Memorial Park, a remarkable work of public art and historical interpretation on the site of her former homestead. Please restore and properly maintain Biddy Mason Memorial Park, respect the artists who created it, and implement the City's September 2024 action designating the Biddy Mason Legacy Corridor on Spring Street and directing LADOT to install permanent ceremonial signs. Where are those signs? Please complete the Biddy Mason commemorative projects the City has already approved before undertaking another duplicative renaming effort. I also ask the City to respect Pershing Square's history as a war memorial associated with General John J. Pershing and the more than two million soldiers of American Expeditionary Forces. Finally, please use the City's commemorative powers to honor important Angelenos who don't already have a park or other civic place named for them, and ask local historians who they think should be recognized.