



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: March 13, 2023

## MR. BING'S COCKTAIL LOUNGE

*Application No.:* LBR-2022-23-015  
*Business Name:* Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge  
*Business Address:* 201 Columbus Ave.  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Seamus O'Halloran, Manager  
*Nomination Date:* September 19, 2022  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge, commonly known as "Mr. Bing's" or "Bing's" is a bar located on the cusp of the Chinatown, North Beach, and the Financial District neighborhoods that has operated for over five decades. Prior to Mr. Bing's, 201 Columbus Avenue first hosted an Italian speakeasy named "Zaza's," which operated during the prohibition era under the guise of a furniture store. In 1967, Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge opened its doors for the first time. The bar was named after its original owner and founder, Henry Grant, who ran the bar from 1967 until his retirement in 2017. Mr. Bing was Henry's nickname.

Upon Henry's retirement the bar was sold to Jacqueline (Jackie) and Peter Cooper, both Irish natives, who continue to operate the bar today. At first, the community disapproved of the change in ownership, but has since proved that the spirit of Mr. Bing's remains true to its origins. Mr. Bing's has continued to remain involved in the local community through support of the North Beach Festival, local sports teams in the neighborhood, as well as by sponsoring an outdoor mural on its parklet by local artists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### CRITERION 1

**Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?**

Yes, Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

201 Columbus Ave. from 1967 to Present (56 years)

### CRITERION 2

**Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?**

Yes, Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge has contributed to the history and identity of the Chinatown, North Beach, and Financial District neighborhoods and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

**Legacy Business Program**  
Office of Small Business  
City Hall Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-6680  
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[www.legacybusiness.org](http://www.legacybusiness.org)





- The business is associated with craft and classic cocktails.
- The property was evaluated in the Department of City Planning's 1976 Survey and rated "2" on a scale of 0-5. The property was later evaluated by the Foundation for San Francisco Architectural Heritage and rated "B-Major Importance." Finally, the property was evaluated as part of the North Beach Survey in 1984 and determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register or California Register. The Planning Department also lists the Historic Resource Status of this property as, "A - Historic Resource Present."

The property itself is notable as it was home to a prominent photographer J.B. Monaco, often referred to as "Dean of North Beach photographers," who was well known for his unique Earthquake and Fire compositions. Additionally, the exterior of the building has been seen in major motion pictures such as "Planet of the Apes" and "Venom." The property is mentioned in the North Beach Historic Context Statement that was adopted December 7, 2022.

- Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge was a notable favorite of the late Anthony Bourdain who featured the bar in his 2013 television show, The Layover, and later listing Mr. Bing's as one the essential dive bars to visit in San Francisco. The late Jack Dempsey, former World Heavy Weight Boxing Champion, was also known to frequent Mr. Bing's.
- Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge has been featured in several publications and television shows:
  - The late Anthony Bourdain featured the bar in "The Layover", 2012, and included the business as one of the essential dive bars to visit in San Francisco.
  - Mr. Bing's was detailed in J.K. Dineen's 2002 book, "High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco."
  - The bar was mentioned in Thrillist and SFist, Top 10 dive bars in San Francisco.

### CRITERION 3

**Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

Yes, Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Illuminated "Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge" blade sign.
- Bing's Old Fashioned.
- Mr. Bing's red and gold wall sign.

### CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Bar.

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## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge currently located at 201 Columbus Ave. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

### Legacy Business Program

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# Small Business Commission

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

March 13, 2023

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*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

**Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge, currently located at 201 Columbus Ave.**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on March 13, 2023, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Illuminated "Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge" blade sign.
- Bing's Old Fashioned.
- Mr. Bing's red and gold wall sign.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Bar.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on March 13, 2023.

---

Katy Tang  
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

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# Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

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**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?  
      X       Yes                No

201 Columbus Ave. from 1967 to Present (56 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?  
      X       Yes                No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?  
      X       Yes                No

**NOTES:** NA

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** January 18, 2023

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

September 19, 2022

Katy Tang, Director *Via email* <Katy.Tang@sfgov.org>  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Tang:

I am writing to nominate Mr. Bing's located at 201 Columbus Avenue for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Established in 1967, Mr. Bing's has been in operation for over five decades. Situated at the locus of the historic neighborhoods of Chinatown, North Beach and Jackson Square, Mr. Bing's has been frequented by Chinatown and North Beach locals and visitors from around the world. Mr. Bing's has been featured in countless print and media articles including on Anthony Bourdain's TV show, *Layover*.

Mr. Bing's deserves to be included on the Legacy Business Registry, and it is my honor to nominate it for inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Peskin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aaron" being more prominent than the last name "Peskin".

Aaron Peskin



# Legacy Business Registry Application



## Business Information

**Business name:** Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge

**Business owner name(s):** Jackie Cooper

*Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business*

**Current business address:** 201 Columbus Ave, San Francisco, CA 94133

**Telephone:** ( ) –

**Email:**

**Mailing address (if different than above):** n/a

**Website:**

**Facebook:**

**Twitter:**

**7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN):** 1 0 6 0 1 4 3

**Do any of these describe your business?** (select all that apply)

*Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.*

☒ **Immigrant-Owned Business**

☐ **Owned by Person with a Disability**

☐ **LGBTQ+-Owned Business**

☐ **Veteran-Owned Business**

☐ **Minority-Owned Business\***

☒ **Woman-Owned Business**

*\*Minority is defined as on or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

## Contact Person Information

**Contact person name:** Seamus O'Halloran

**Contact person title:** Manager

**Contact telephone:** ( ) –

**Contact email:**



Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: 201 Columbus Ave. Zip Code: 94133

Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N): Y

Dates at this location: From: 1967 To: Present

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other Address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

## Applicant Disclosures

**San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.**

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: Seamus O'Halloran

Signature: *Seamus O'Halloran*

Date: 01/14/2023

# MR. BING'S COCKTAIL LOUNGE

## Written Historical Narrative

### INTRODUCTION

#### a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?

Mr. Bing's is a neighborhood bar located on the cusp of North Beach, Chinatown, and the Financial District. The bar is known for its great music, outdoor seating, delicious cocktails, friendly bartenders, and being open seven days a week until 2:00 a.m.

#### b. Describe who the business serves.

Bing's is a place regulars, locals, tourists, and other industry professionals hang out and meet up for friendly drinks.

#### c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.

Bing's Old Fashioned.

### CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years

#### a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge at 201 Columbus Avenue, "Mr. Bings" or "Bings" as it is more affectionally known, first opened its doors in 1967. Previous to that, it was an Italian joint called Zaza's, which dated all the way back to 1907. During Prohibition, it operated as a speakeasy under the guise of a furniture store.

Mr. Bing was named after the bar's founder Henry Grant, who ran the bar from 1967 until his retirement in 2017. Mr. Bing was Henry's nickname.

Spouses Jacqueline (Jackie) and Peter Cooper, both Irish natives, took over the business and continue to operate the bar today. Jackie is the owner. When the Coopers took over the bar, there was a lot of negative press and pushback about the changes that had been made and the "gentrification" of the bar. However, people quickly realized that this was not the case, and the friendly and divey atmosphere was, and still is, at Mr. Bings.

#### b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1967 to 2016:    | Henry Grant       |
| 2016 to Present: | Jacqueline Cooper |

**c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.**

Mr. Bing's only closed during the mandated shutdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic beginning March 2020. It quickly adapted to the new and unfamiliar territory of serving food and drinks outside to accommodate all of its regulars. Mr. Bing's built two outdoor Shared Spaces seating areas, one on Pacific Avenue and one on Columbus Avenue.

**CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community**

**a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.**

Mr. Bing's has been a staple in North Beach and Chinatown for decades. It is a focal meeting point for its surrounding neighborhoods due to its corner location on Columbus and Pacific avenues. Bing's is the local neighborhood bar.

**b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?**

Mr. Bing's was a favorite spot of the late Anthony Bourdain anytime he visited the city. As reported in Eater San Francisco, Anthony Bourdain, "champion of dirty dives and the souls of cities," was a fan of the dark, late-night environs of Mr. Bing's, having visited it during the filming of his show *The Layover* in 2012.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, when the bar was in jeopardy of closing, Eater San Francisco reached out to Bourdain for comment. In "typical Bourdain fashion," he summed up his feelings as follows:

"Just another day in the death spiral ... Another good and noble thing, in this case, a fine drinking establishment, ground under the slow, inevitable, pitiless forward motion of the Terrible Wheel. It will consume us all in the end."<sup>2</sup>

The late former World Heavy Weight Boxing Champion Jack Dempsey also hung out at Mr. Bing's when he came to town.

**c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?**

Mr. Bing's has been a prominent sponsor of the North Beach Festival as well as other local sports teams in the neighborhood. It also sponsored a huge outdoor mural on its parklet during the COVID-19 pandemic to help support local artists in a dire time.

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<sup>1</sup> "Anthony Bourdain Responds to Sale of Mr. Bing's," Eater San Francisco, July 5, 2016: <https://sf.eater.com/2016/7/5/12101704/anthony-bourdain-mr-bings-north-beach>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?**

Mr. Bing's has been featured in countless print and online news articles. Anthony Bourdain visited Mr. Bing's for his travel television show *The Layover* in 2012 and included the business as one the essential dive bars to visit in San Francisco. Mr. Bing's has also been detailed in J.K. Dineen's book, *The Legacy Bars of San Francisco*. The exterior of Mr. Bing's has also been featured in several major movies including *Planet of The Apes* and *Venom*.

**e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?**

Thrillist ranked Mr. Bing's in its Top 10 dive bars in San Francisco, as did SFist.

**f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?**

The closure of Mr. Bing's would be devastating not only to the neighborhoods it serves but for the city as a whole. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the bar brought together so many people who lived alone, and it kept the community tougher during an unprecedented time in history. Now that the pandemic is essentially over, it is business as usual at Mr. Bing's with the added bonus of some outdoor seating.

**CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business**

**a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?**

The property housing Mr. Bing's is a uniquely designed building. It is a three-story corner property with a castle style look to it. It was built in 1907 and has remained the same ever since. The Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge illuminated sign has been in place since its opened and is a common backdrop to photos of the iconic Transamerica Pyramid.

**b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.**

Local dive bar serving its surrounding neighborhoods.

**c. What challenges is the business facing today?**

The closure of offices in the Financial District and downtown has greatly reduced foot traffic in the area, but hopefully this will change in the near future.

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**Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:**

**a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.**

Bar.

**b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.**

The building at 201-205 Columbus Avenue has a Planning Department Historic Resource Status of "A - Historic Resource Present." It was determined to be of "major importance" in a 1978 survey, and it was determined in 1984 to be possibly eligible for listing in the California Register or National Register, although that determination may be re-evaluated.



















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## Anthony Bourdian's Favorite SF Restaurants

Here's 10 bars & restaurants in the Bay that Anthony Bourdain loved

By [Johnny Funchearp](#) - posted 6/8/2018

[No Comment](#)

We were sad to hear about the [death of Anthony Bourdain](#) who died Friday in France of an apparent suicide.

*Feeling lonely, or know someone in a crisis? [San Francisco Suicide Prevention](#) is here for you 24/7.*

We wish him bon voyage and wanted to look back at some of his favorite restaurants in San Francisco over the course of many seasons of *The Layover*, *Parts Unknown* and *No Reservations*.

### Some of Anthony Bourdian's Favorite SF Restaurants and Bars

#### 4505 Burgers & BBQ

*Parts Unknown* – Season 6, Episode 5

*"Life is suddenly very, very good."*

#### Tadich Grill

*No Reservations* – Season 5, Episode 15

*"I am ashamed we don't have something like this in New York."*

#### Sam's Pizza and Hamburgers

*The Layover* – Season 1, Episode 8

#### Swan Oyster Depot

*Parts Unknown* – Season 6, Episode 5

*"If I read about myself dying at this counter, I'd say to myself, 'That was one lucky guy'"*

#### House of Prime Rib

*No Reservations* – Season 5, Episode 15

*"A temple of old-school meat"*

## Li Po Cocktail Lounge

The Layover – Season 1, Episode 8

*"Named after Li Po, the famous Chinese poet who drowned while attempting to embrace the rays of the moon in the water"*

## Mr. Bing's

The Layover – Season 1, Episode 8

*"What type of psychotic fucking freak would not love this place?"*

## Toronado

The Layover – Season 1, Episode 8

*"This place is f\*cking busy for this time of day"*

## King of Noodles

The Layover – Season 1, Episode 8

*"The thing to eat are the wontons, and of course noodles, made fresh in-house"*

## Trader Vic's – Emeryville

Parts Unknown – Season 6, Episode 5

*"One of the last of its kind"*

# False Alarm: Mr. Bing's Dive Bar Survives Ownership Change

You'll still be able to drink on the cheap at this classic dive

by [Stefanie Tudor](#) | [@stefanietudor](#) | Sep 23, 2016, 12:56pm PDT | 1 comment



Eater Archives

July [brought news](#) that **Mr. Bing's**, the grungy, 50-year-old North Beach drinking institution, had been sold to new owners, and would likely close. The news prompted predictable outrage, and even famed food personality **Anthony Bourdain** [got in on the story](#), telling Eater SF, “Just another day in the death spiral ... Another good and noble thing, in this case, a fine drinking establishment, ground under the slow, inevitable, pitiless forward motion of the Terrible Wheel. It will consume us all in the end.”

Turns out all the angst was for naught, though. Today, Hoodline [reports](#) that the new owners (who also own Irish Bar Ireland's 32 in the Richmond) purchased the rights to the name, and will simply close in mid-October for some renovations. Namely, the space will be made ADA-compliant and receive floor repairs and a new coat of paint.

But that's it. That's the extent of the changes planned to the historically grungy bar, though as bartender **Chandra Walker** notes, “There are always changes to character. This is what happens with any change of ownership.”

As for the new owner, **Pete Cooper**, he inscrutably told Hoodline of the changes that, “For those who understand, there is no explanation necessary; for those who don't understand, there is no explanation possible.” Take from that what you will.



## Mr. Bing's Back In Business Following Renovation



By [Nathan Falstreau](#) - Published on December 30, 2016.

[San Francisco](#) [North Beach](#)

The fate of famed North Beach dive bar Mr. Bing's has been in question since earlier this year, when we first [reported](#) that the business was set to be sold. When new owner Pete Cooper, of [Irelands 32](#), bought the bar, it wasn't certain whether the bar would retain its dingy charm or be transformed into a new concept altogether.

Now, after some major renovations, the bar is back in business: the interior has a completely different look, but the exterior remains, including the iconic sign.

Originally, Cooper told us that he wasn't planning on making major changes to the bar beyond fixing the crumbling floors, adding some paint and making the bathrooms ADA compliant. But after sitting down with his team and head bartender Daire O'Conner, the team realized that some drastic changes needed to be made in order to make the project more viable.



Daire O'Conner behind bar.

"Owning a bar is like having a child," Cooper told us. "You try and give it direction but it often goes in another way." He said that it all depends on the neighborhood and the clientele to determine what a bar ultimately becomes. But the bottom line, he told us, is that sometimes change is inevitable.

Not everyone is happy with change. Upset former customers have been ringing him complaining about his decisions, Cooper told us. "But everyone is entitled to their opinions, aren't they? The rent is the rent is the rent," he said. "We have

to be flexible and do what's best for us. The bar was for sale and I bought it. Now it's my turn to make a go of it."



Inside Mr. Bing's, pre-renovation. | Photo: Michael D./Yelp

Chandra Walker, a former employee at Mr. Bing's and now head bartender at Brandy Ho's next-door, told us that "everyone knew with the sale that they were going to have to make some changes. But if you are thinking that it is going to be the same place where people place dice, it won't be. I think that it will eventually be moving its way towards something more like the vibe at Ireland's 32."

The most notable change inside Mr. Bing's is the removal of the triangle bar that once filled most of the space. But Jack Yaghubian, infamous North Beach denizen, Vesuvio bartender and author of [The Dim Light Bar Guide](#), told us that it had to go. "The bartender took up 50 percent of the bar," he said. "It wasn't efficient."

The space now features several tables, a long wooden bench, and a bar along the left-hand side of the room.





While the bar is Irish-owned, O'Conner notes that there are other Irish pubs in the area, such as Bar Nua, Chief Sullivan's and Kell's, and he doesn't want Mr. Bing's to be categorized as such.

Instead, he envisions the pub as a neighborhood spot for locals, tourists, and members of the service industry, regardless of the upgrades. "We might be changing the style of the bar," he said. "But we still want it to be homey and cozy. We're not going to be a mixology bar, but we'll still have great cocktails. We want this to be a local North Beach pub. If you want a PBR and a shot, we'll have that."

Mixing it up even further, they're mulling the possibility of having live music and a DJ once they look into securing the proper entertainment permits.

And while some have lamented the loss of another historic dive bar in San Francisco, "They didn't destroy Bing's, they changed it." Yaghubian said. "It still has a funky vibe that will settle in over time."

Cooper and O'Conner are still adding some finishing touches during the daytime and opening around 6pm, but will soon extend the bar's opening hours to 2pm-2am daily.



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: FEBRUARY 15, 2023**

*Filing Date:* January 18, 2023  
*Case No.:* 2023-000669LBR  
*Business Name:* Mr. Bing's  
*Business Address:* 201 Columbus Avenue  
*Zoning:* NCD (Broadway Neighborhood Commercial) Zoning District  
65-A-1 Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0162/004  
*Applicant:* Seamus O'Halloran  
201 Columbus Avenue  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Dakota Spycher – (628) 652-7588  
Dakota.Spycher@sfgov.org

**Recommendation:** Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

## Business Description

Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge, commonly known as "Mr. Bing's" or "Bing's" is a bar located on the cusp of the Chinatown, North Beach, and the Financial Neighborhoods that has operated for over five decades. Prior to Mr. Bing's, 201 Columbus Avenue first hosted an Italian speakeasy named "Zaza's", which operated during the prohibition era under the guise of a furniture store. In 1967, Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge opened its doors for the first time. The bar was named after its original owner and founder, Henry Grant, who ran the bar from 1967 until his retirement in 2017. Mr. Bing was Henry's nickname.

Upon Henry's retirement the bar was sold to Jacqueline (Jackie) and Peter Cooper, both Irish natives, who continue to operate the bar today. At first, the community disapproved of the change in ownership, but has since proved that the spirit of Mr. Bing's remains true to its origins. Mr. Bing's has continued to remain involved in the local community through support of the North Beach Festival, local sports teams in the neighborhood, as well as by sponsoring an outdoor mural on its parklet by local artists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The business's primary location at 201 Columbus Avenue is a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the northwest corner of Columbus Avenue, Pacific Avenue and Kearny Street in the Chinatown neighborhood. It is within the Broadway Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District and a 65-A-1 Height and Bulk District. 201 Columbus Avenue was found to be of major importance in 1978 Foundation for San Francisco Architectural Heritage Survey and was identified as eligible for listing on the California Register or National Register in the 1984 North Beach Survey.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1967.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Mr. Bing's qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Mr. Bing's has operated continuously in San Francisco for 56 years.
- b. Mr. Bing's has contributed to the history and identity of the Chinatown, North Beach, and Financial District neighborhoods and San Francisco.
- c. Mr. Bing's is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with craft and classic cocktails.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Yes. The property itself is notable as it was home to a prominent photographer J.B. Monaco, often referred to as "Dean of North Beach photographers", who was well known for his unique Earthquake and Fire compositions. Additionally, the exterior of the building has been seen in major motion pictures such as "Planet of the Apes" and "Venom".

Mr. Bing's was a notable favorite of the late Anthony Bourdain who featured the bar in his 2013 television show, The Layover, and later listing Mr. Bing's as one the essential dive bars to visit in San Francisco. The late Jack Dempsey, former World Heavy Weight Boxing Champion, was also known to frequent Mr. Bing's.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

Yes. This parcel was surveyed during the 1984 North Beach Survey and was determined to be eligible for National Register of California Register. The property was evaluated in the Department of City Planning's 1976 Survey and rated "2" on a scale of 0-5. The property was later evaluated by the Foundation for San Francisco

Architectural Heritage and rated "B-Major Importance." Finally, the property was evaluated as part of the North Beach Survey in 1984 and determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register or California Register. The Planning Department also lists the Historic Resource Status of this property as, A - Historic Resource Present.

**6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?***

Yes. This property is mentioned in the North Beach Historic Context Statement that was adopted December 7, 2022.

**7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?***

Yes. Mr. Bings has been featured in several publications and television shows. The late Anthony Bourdain featured the bar in "The Layover", 2012, and included the business as one of the essential dive bars to visit in San Francisco. Mr. Bing's was also detailed in J.K. Dineen's 2002 book, High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco. The bar was also mentioned in Thrillist and SFist, Top 10 dive bars in San Francisco.

**Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business**

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 201 Columbus Avenue (1983 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Illuminated "Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge" blade sign

Additional Recommended by Staff

- Bing's Old Fashioned
- Mr. Bing's red and gold wall sign

**Basis for Recommendation**

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
  - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
  - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
  - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics

- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1308

**HEARING DATE: FEBRUARY 15, 2023**

*Case No.:* 2023-000669LBR  
*Business Name:* Mr. Bing's  
*Business Address:* 201 Columbus Avenue  
*Zoning:* NCD (Broadway Neighborhood Commercial) Zoning District  
65-A-1 Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0162/004  
*Applicant:* Seamus O'Halloran (Manager)  
201 Columbus Avenue  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Dakota Spycher – (628) 652-7588  
[Dakota.Spycher@sfgov.org](mailto:Dakota.Spycher@sfgov.org)

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR MR. BING'S CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 201 COLUMBUS AVE, BLOCK/LOT 0162/004.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on February 15, 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that Mr. Bing's qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Mr. Bing's.

*Location(s):*

Current Locations:

- 201 Columbus Avenue (1967 – Present)

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:*

- Illuminated "Mr. Bing's Cocktail Lounge" blade sign
- Mr. Bing's red and gold wall sign
- Bing's Old Fashioned

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2023-000669LBR to the Office of Small Business on February 15, 2023.



Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES: Wright, Black, Foley, So, Nageswaran, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: Johns

ADOPTED: February 15, 2023