



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: December 11, 2023

THAI HOUSE INC.

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-004
Business Name: Thai House Inc.
Business Address: 599 Castro St.
District: District 8
Applicant: Por-Phol Meeriyagerd, Son of Owner
Nomination Date: September 19, 2023
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Thai House is a family-run restaurant serving authentic Thai cuisine. The restaurant offers dishes such as crispy money bags, sweet and tangy pad thai, and rich coconut curries. Fresh and traditional Thai ingredients are used to expertly craft the innovative dishes featured on the evolving menu.

The restaurant was founded by husband and wife, Suraphol and Krittiya Meeriyagerd, who immigrated to the United States from Thailand in 1982 in pursuit of living the American dream. At the time of opening their first restaurant, Thai House, at 151 Noe Street, there were approximately 20 Thai restaurants in San Francisco. Throughout the years, the family had established several Thai House locations in Duboce Triangle, Castro, and Tenderloin.

Prior to opening their own restaurants, Suraphol worked in his brother-in-law's seafood restaurant in Terra Linda as the dishwasher and cook prep, with Krittiya working in the front of the house waiting and bussing tables. Initially unsure if the restaurant business was their passion, they eventually decided to open their own restaurant in San Francisco. With the help of capital expenditures from both sides of the family, Krittiya and Suraphol worked together as a team to open their first restaurant, Thai House, at 151 Noe Street. Krittiya was the businesswoman who focused on the logistics, payroll, and back-end work. Suraphol was the hands-on, in-house handyman, cook helper, employee consultant, and sometimes dishwasher.

In 1991, they opened their second restaurant, Thai House Bar and Café, a higher-end experience. It was located at 2200 Market St. on the edge of Duboce Triangle. In 2001, Krittiya and Suraphol closed Thai House on Noe Street and opened Thai House Express on Geary & Larkin at 901 Larkin St. in the Tenderloin. In 2004, Krittiya and Suraphol opened Thai House Express at 599 Castro St. in the Castro neighborhood. Thai House Express was a fusion of all their restaurant iterations. Despite the success of the three restaurants, having three locations at one time was a heavy lift for Krittiya and Suraphol. Ultimately, Krittiya and Suraphol decided to consolidate the restaurants, closing Thai House Bar & Café in 2005, and selling Thai House Express on Geary & Larkin to their nephew, Pongkran Thowthong, in 2010.

Krittiya and Suraphol's son, Por-Phol Meeriyagerd, started a separate restaurant, Thai House 530, with Krittiya as the co-owner. They opened the restaurant in the summer of 2010 and decided to close in 2014 due to the location not being as busy. In 2011, Por-Phol joined his parents' business as a manager. Krittiya became the sole owner of Thai house when Suraphol retired in 2019.

Legacy Business Program

Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
legacybusiness@sfgov.org
www.legacybusiness.org





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, Thai House Inc. has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

151 Noe St. from 1985 to 2001 (16 years)
2200 Market St. from 1991 to 2005 (14 years)
901 Larkin St. from 2001 to 2010 (9 years)
599 Castro St. from 2004 to Present (19 years)

CRITERION 2

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

Yes, Thai House Inc. has contributed to the history and identity of the Castro neighborhood 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:

- The business is associated with authentic Thai cuisine.
- The property is identified in the Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco. The site is located within the California Register-eligible Castro Street Historic District. The neighborhood displays cultural significance associated with the LGBTQ+ movement in San Francisco. The Castro is an important center of the San Francisco's LGBTQ+ movement in the 1970s, which became a national model for the struggle of the LGBTQ+ community for acceptance in the late 20th century.
- The business has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, Zagat, and Bay Guardian. Thai house is also listed in GayCities and San Francisco Magazine.
- Regarding racial and social equity: Thai House Inc. was founded by husband and wife, Suraphol and Krittiya Meeriyargerd, who immigrated to the United States from Thailand in 1982. The minority- and woman-owned business regularly donates to the San Francisco AIDS Foundation in honor of their regular customers who had died from AIDs in the late 1900s.

CRITERION 3

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

Yes, Thai House Inc. is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Thai House Inc. 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.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Restaurant featuring Thai cuisine.
- House-made sauces.
- Exterior channel letters “Thaihouse Express @ Castro.”

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.

- Restaurant featuring Thai cuisine.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Thai House Inc. currently located at 599 Castro St. 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. _____

December 11, 2023

THAI HOUSE INC.

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-004
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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Thai House Inc., currently located at 599 Castro St.

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 December 11, 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 Thai House Inc. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Thai House Inc.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Restaurant featuring Thai cuisine.
- House-made sauces.
- Exterior channel letters “Thaihouse Express @ Castro.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Thai House Inc. on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Restaurant featuring Thai cuisine.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on December 11, 2023.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

- Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-004
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District: District 8
Applicant: Por-Phol Meeriyagerd, Son of Owner
Nomination Date: September 19, 2023
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman

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

151 Noe St. from 1985 to 2001 (16 years)
2200 Market St. from 1991 to 2005 (14 years)
901 Larkin St. from 2001 to 2010 (9 years)
599 Castro St. from 2004 to Present (19 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: September 20, 2023

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 8



City and County of San Francisco

RAFAEL MANDELMAN

September 20, 2023

Re: Nomination of Thai House Express to the Legacy Business Registry

Dear Director Tang,

I am writing this letter to enthusiastically recommend Thai House Express for inclusion in the Legacy Businesses Registry.

Since 1985, Thai House Express has served the Castro neighborhood and LGBTQ community through their delicious dishes inspired by traditional Thai flavors. Loyal customers will point to the crispy money bags, the sweet and tangy pad thai, and rich coconut curries as Thai House Express favorites.

Thai House Express was founded by husband and wife, Suraphol and Krittiya Meeriyagerd, who immigrated to the United States from Thailand in 1982 in pursuit of starting their own businesses. At the time, Thai cuisine was new to San Francisco and much of the United States. Now, the United States is home to over 10,000 Thai restaurants including at least one Thai restaurant in every neighborhood in San Francisco. Entrepreneurs and immigrants like Suraphol and Krittiya helped spur San Francisco's famed reputation for being a culinary capital -- in terms of diversity and excellence.

For Thai House Express, it's not just about the love of food, but also the love of community. According to the Meeriyagerd family, many Thai House Express regulars and customers died during the AIDS epidemic. The loss of community and loyal customers led to Thai House Express donating annually to the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

Thai House Express and the Meeriyagerd family exemplify the values and practices of what makes San Francisco's vibrant small business community so unique. Thai House Express is a fixture of San Francisco's small business community and its continuous contributions to our City have, I believe, entitle it to the designation of Legacy Business.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RJM".

Rafael Mandelman
Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Thai House Inc.

Business owner name(s): Krittiya Meeriyagerd

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

Current business address: 599 Castro St., San Francisco CA 94114

Telephone: (415) 864 - 5000

Email:

Mailing address (if different than above): 2024 Castro St., San Francisco, CA 94131

Website: www.thaihousesf.com

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/thaihousesf/

Twitter:

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 9 4 4 1 7 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 one 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: Por-Phol Meeriyagerd

Contact person title: Son of Owner

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: 151 Noe St. **Zip Code:** 94114

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

Dates at this location: From: 1985 **To:** 2001

Other address (if applicable): 2200 Market St. **Zip Code:** 94114

Dates at this location: From: 1991 **To:** 2005

Other address (if applicable): 901 Larkin St. **Zip Code:** 94109

Dates at this location: From: 2001 **To:** 2010

Other address (if applicable): 599 Castro St. **Zip Code:** 94114

Dates at this location: From: 2004 **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:**

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: Krittiya Meeriyagerd

Signature: *Krittiya Meeriyagerd*

Date: 6/22/23

THAI HOUSE INC.

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

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

Thai House Express Restaurant has been spreading love in San Francisco since 1985. Whether you go for the Pad Thai or stay for the Green Curry, Thai House has an extensive menu with something to satisfy everyone's taste buds. Their food is inspired by traditional Thai flavors that keep their customers coming back for more. The menu is always changing and evolving as they strive to bring innovative dishes to the table, so no two visits will be the same. Their dishes will tantalize your taste buds while giving you a unique culinary experience that you won't forget!

b. Describe whom the business serves.

Thai House Express Restaurant has had five locations since it was founded in 1985, three of which were in the Castro or adjacent Duboce Triangle adjacent to the Castro. As such, they have always served the LGBTQ community with love and care. The demographics of their core customers are LGBTQ at around ages 30 through 60.

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

Money Bags, Pad Thai, and Yellow Curry.

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.

Thai House Inc. (a.k.a. "Thai House Express Restaurant" or "Thai House Express") was established in 1985 and has had four locations, and one additional related location, over the years:

Four Thai House Inc. locations:

- Thai House, 151 Noe St., Duboce Triangle, 1985 to 2001 (SF Station listing: <https://www.sfstation.com/thai-house-b1818>)
- Thai House Bar & Café, 2200 Market St., Duboce Triangle, 1991 to 2005
- Thai House Express on Geary & Larkin, 901 Larkin St., Tenderloin, 2001 to 2010
- Thai House Express, 599 Castro St., Castro, 2004 to Current

One additional business related to Thai House Inc.:

- Thai House 530, 530 Valencia St., Mission, 2010 to 2014

The business was founded by Krittiya and Suraphol Meeriyagerd, who are husband and wife. Krittiya and Suraphol immigrated to the United States from Thailand in 1982 in pursuit of starting their own businesses and living the American dream. At first, they didn't know if the restaurant business was their passion. Suraphol's first job was working for his brother-in-law at a seafood restaurant in Terra Linda as a dishwasher/cook prep; Krittiya was in the front of the house waiting and bussing tables. They later decided that they wanted to open a Thai restaurant in San Francisco with the help of capital expenditures from both sides of the family. Krittiya is the business woman who kept up with the logistics, payroll, and backend work while Suraphol was more of a hands-on, in-house handyman, cook helper, employee consultant, and sometimes dishwasher. They were a great team.

The original restaurant was Thai House at 151 Noe Street, located at the corner of Noe and Henry streets in Duboce Triangle. When it opened in 1985, there weren't a lot of Thai restaurants in the city.

Instead of having one restaurant, the Meeriyagerds opened several over time, dominating the Thai food scene. Their second restaurant was Thai House Bar and Café, a higher-end experience. It opened in 1991 and was located at 2200 Market St. on the edge of Duboce Triangle.

In 2001, Krittiya and Suraphol closed Thai House on Noe Street and opened Thai House Express on Geary & Larkin at 901 Larkin St. in the Tenderloin.

In 2004, Krittiya and Suraphol opened Thai House Express at 599 Castro St. in the Castro neighborhood. Thai House Express was a fusion of all their restaurant iterations.

While the three open restaurants were successful, having three locations at one time was too much work for Krittiya and Suraphol. In addition, the change in cuisine dining over the years and take-out really changed the landscape of restaurants. Krittiya and Suraphol decided to consolidate the businesses. In 2005, they closed Thai House Bar & Café at 2200 Market St. Five years later in 2010, they sold Thai House Express on Geary & Larkin at 901 Larkin St. to their nephew, Pongkran Thowthong, who renamed it House of Thai.

In the summer of 2010, Krittiya and Suraphol's son Por-Phol Meeriyagerd started a separate but related restaurant as a co-owner with his mother Krittiya called Thai House 530 in the honor of his parents' legacy and building something new for himself. The ownership was an S-CORP by the name of Meeriyagerd Inc. Thai House 530 closed in 2014 because it was not as busy, and Por-Phol wanted to try making it in other fields of business.

In 2011, Por-Phol joined his parents in the Thai House Inc. business as a manager.

In 2019, Suraphol retired from the business, leaving Krittiya as the sole owner. Por-Phol is currently the manager but basically acts as an owner because Krittiya is more hands-off with the business.

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

1985 to 2019: Krittiya Meeriyaygerd; Suraphol Meeriyagerd
2019 to Present: Krittiya Meeriyaygerd

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

The restaurant closed for a couple days and opened again after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. The restaurant, as an essential business, never closed during the COVID pandemic.

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.

Thai House Inc. has been serving Thai food to customers since 1985. When they opened, there were approximately 20 Thai restaurants in San Francisco. In time, there were as many as 120+ Thai restaurants in the city. Thai House has persevered and has become an integral part of the Castro neighborhood.

The food at Thai House Express Restaurant is inspired by traditional Thai flavors, and the menu is always changing and evolving. Their expert chefs use only fresh and traditional Thai ingredients that come together in perfect harmony. They strive to bring innovative dishes to the table from savory Pad Thai to sweet Green Curry.

Everything from the décor to the friendly staff adds to the unique atmosphere of the restaurant. Thai House Express Restaurant is suitable for a quick lunch on your break, an elegant dinner with family and friends, or just a place to share some good conversation and warm hospitality. Its cozy atmosphere and fantastic menu items make Thai House Express offers a memorable dining experience and a contributor to the identity of the Castro and San Francisco.

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

Thai House Express participated in Halloween in the Castro one year in the late 1990s and also in 2010. In 2010, they had a tent setup and served Pad Thai, Chicken Sate, and Thai Iced Tea.

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

Thai House Inc. has been a strong supporter of the LGBTQ community since it was founded in 1985. Many of their regular customers died of AIDS during the epidemic in the late 1900s, and the restaurant donates annually to the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

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

Thai House Inc. has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, Zagat, and Bay Guardian over the years. The business is also listed in [GayCities](#) and [San Francisco Magazine](#) online.

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

Thai House Inc. has received Zagat awards for Best Pad Thai over multiple years.

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

If Thai House Express were to close, the city would lose another one of its longstanding businesses that survived the COVID pandemic and a restaurant that contributes to the identity of the Castro neighborhood. Thai House chefs have an average age of 60+ years. Customers would definitely miss the business if it were to close.

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 had been identified for its association with LGBTQ history: San Francisco Arts and Athletics was formerly located at 597 Castro Street.

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

Thai House Inc. is committed to continuing as a restaurant serving authentic Thai food and supporting the LGBTQ community.

c. What challenges is the business facing today?

San Francisco is ever-changing. The fact that there are fewer people living in the city, more homeless people now than ever before, and more drugs has been really hard for all small businesses. There was a mass exodus of tech workers that moved out of San Francisco, and now the city feels a little empty.

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.

Restaurant featuring Thai cuisine.

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 Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 597-599 Castro Street is “A – Historic Resource Present.” This property had been identified for its association with LGBTQ history: San Francisco Arts and Athletics was formerly located at 597 Castro Street. It is a contributor to the California Register-eligible Castro Street Historic District.



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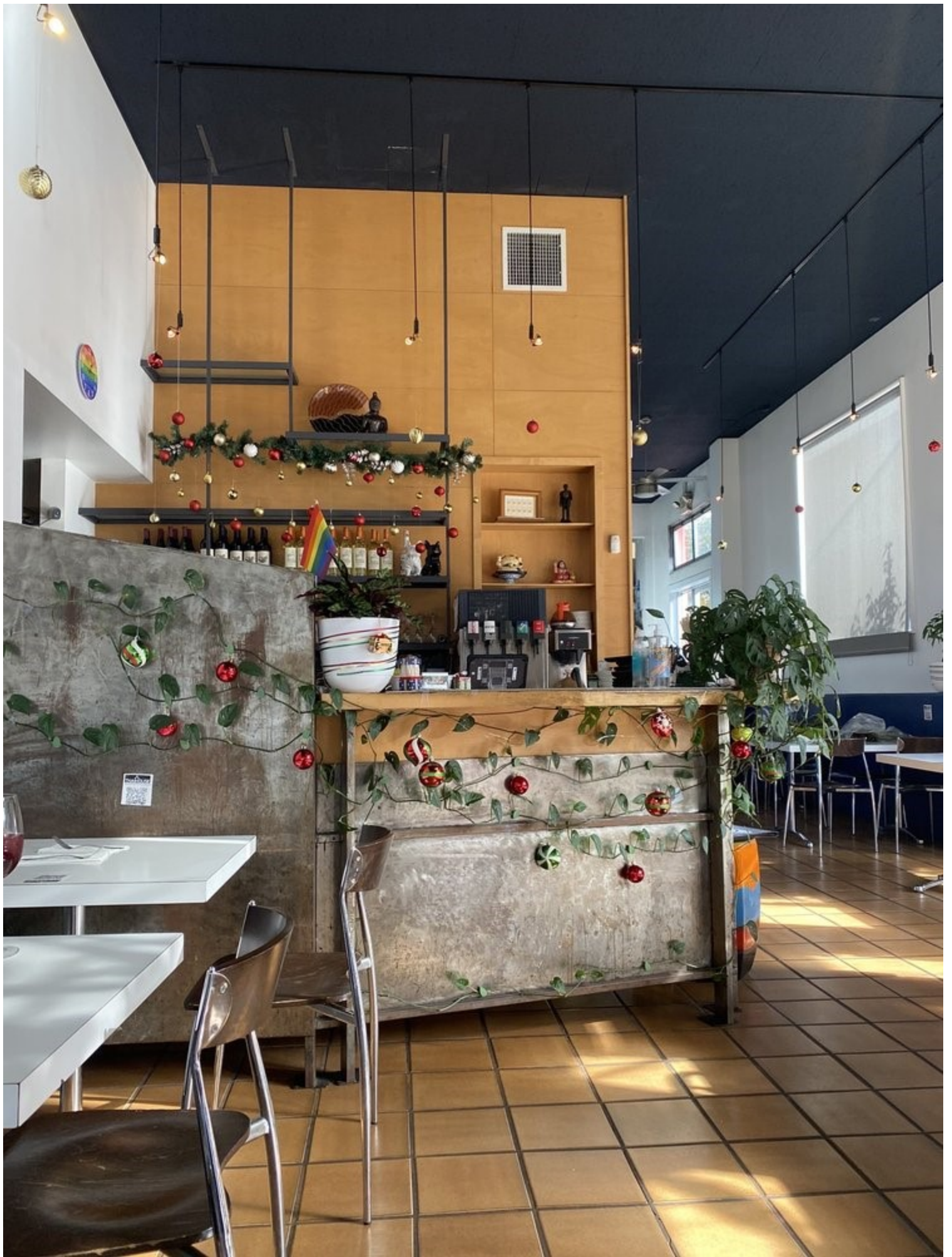


Thaihouse Express @ Castro

599













Diners enjoy the unique regional dishes served at Thai House Express.

THAI HOUSE EXPRESS

This bright and perky restaurant on the edge of the Tenderloin offers a more casual and less expensive menu than its two sister restaurants, Thai House and Thai House Cafe, both in the Castro. What makes this place unique are the regional dishes seldom seen in other Thai restaurants, such as *kao soy*, a northern curry noodle dish, and *sai ouu*, a northeastern spicy sausage appetizer. Most people order the rice

plates such as *kao ka moo* (sweet slow-braised pork leg over rice) or *kao mun gai* (poached chicken with soy-ginger sauce over oil-cooked rice). The food is regarded by many Thais as the most authentic street food in the Bay Area.

Cuisine: Thai

Vitals: 901 Larkin St. (at Geary); (415) 441-2248. Lunch, dinner daily.

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In Info

สุดยอด 50 ร้านอาหารไทยในอเมริกา

In Restaurant

สูตรเด็ดร้านดังในอเมริกา

In Travel

กินไปเที่ยวไปในอเมริกา

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Thai House Express

599 CASTRO ST. (AT 19TH ST.),
(415) 864-5000

THE FIND: This longtime 'Loin joint recently opened a second location on a happening Castro corner. Walled in windows and sparsely decorated, this well-run place can get chilly—so dress warmly or order up the steaming platters of say-how-spicy food quickly. Thai House understands its clientele—in a neighborhood known for keeping late hours, it serves until 1 in the morning on weekends.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT: \$5.95 for four vegetarian spring rolls to \$10.95 for catfish with green beans.

CHEAP THRILL: Four fat chive cakes, lightly fried and plumped with sautéed greens, for \$5.95.

WHAT A DEAL: There's an actual wine list, and all bottles are less than \$26.

DON'T MIND: The watery curries that have no kick. Stick with shrimp pad thai.

Smoked salmon
and red onion
pizza from
Rigolo

p.133

San Fran's at Home with Thai House Express

by Paige Frisone



Above: The entire Thai House staff in September 2019

The longstanding family-run Thai House operation's rippled through San Francisco since 1985. After the Meeriyagerd family's 35 years in the restaurant business, son and 16-year Owner Por-Phol maps out the many lives Thai House Express had before this one.



Phol's cousin when he bought it in 2010. The fourth Thai House was Thai House 530, which led to the fifth and current Thai House Express – a humble fusion of all its iterations. Whew.



Inside Thai House Express

Por-Phol suggests that his parents, Krittiya and Suraphol, honored San Francisco's rapid evolution. He states that his parents have been "pretty successful throughout the process. The city's always changing pretty fast...there weren't a lot of Thai restaurants in the city at that time." Instead of having one restaurant, the Meeriyagerds opened several over time to dominate the Thai food scene.

While the shops were successful, the Meeriyagerds grew tired of managing the masses. Excluding House of Thai, they closed the other locations to focus on one strong service at Thai House Express. In a diverse food city, it's been advantageous to consolidate the Thai



Thai Food Takeover

Thai House Express is like the scavenger hunt you never knew you needed. All former Thai House roads currently lead to Thai House Express – and what a journey it's been.

The former Thai Houses equipped the current Thai House Express crew for a smart dining experience. Por-Phol describes, "It's so fast. Almost fast-food...We wanted something that would change the way the dining experience would be. We got this idea from downtown... people in the Castro District. We try to make it as efficient as possible."

Por-Phol mentions that while the pandemic's been incredibly difficult, the transition to online orders aligns with the restaurant's mission being one of quality and efficiency.

Additionally, the family's experience serving San Francisco has informed their current menu. "Our menu's been consistent for the last 30+ years," Por-Phol says, "The same style. We've had a couple of Thai restaurants that try to copy what we do."



Pad thai shrimp

At the same time, the former Thai Houses resulted in one *big* menu. Por-Phol shares his goal to minimize their current offerings. “It used to be over 100 things. It’s good to have a smaller menu now,” he states. The ongoing refinement of the food and food choices reflects the Thai House Express crew’s character to a “T.”

Thai Spicy Fights Pandemic

Por-Phol mentions popular dishes including their Dungeness crab pad thai and their salmon wrapped in grilled banana leaves. He adds that they make all their sauces from scratch, which prompts me to ask about their use of *Thai spicy*.

Por-Phol laughs and answers, “Yes. We do mild, medium, hot, and Thai spicy. The chefs eat spicy so it goes on their scale. We can’t change that. We have to warn [customers] that it’s ridiculously hot.”



As the pandemic continues, Por-Phol's transparent about their difficulties. "It's been really, really hard. It's already so hard to make a living [in the city] if you're not in tech..." While Por-Phol explains that they're open 360 days out of the year, that has new meaning now. There's more pressure to get the word out, make sales, and keep making them.

A Glimpse of Thailand

If anyone knows how to do Thai food in San Francisco, it's the Meeriyagerds. When Por-Phol's parents moved from Bangkok, Thailand in 1982, their food ventures began at Corte Madera, a local seafood restaurant. They didn't know owning their own restaurant was in the cards, but "life just turned them in that direction," Por-Phol states.



Papaya salad



Tom kha

Por-Phol mentions his birth year was 1985 – the same year of the first Thai House opening. As his parents transition into retirement, it's clear Por-Phol was literally born into his parents' legacy.

These days, safety and supporting local businesses remain at the top of Por-Phol's list. "We're still here and our food's very affordable. We haven't increased the price of anything. So many restaurants have closed. It's so sad to see businesses that have been open 70-80 years close down suddenly. We're just trying to keep afloat, trying to gain more business..."



It's easy to support Thai House Express with their quality menu, service, and staff. Bring some Thai House back to *your* house for a safe, yummy, and preferably spicy Thai night in.



Paige Frisone

Paige is a freelance writer, poet, and writing coach stationed in Boulder, CO. Her work's informed by body, earth, and energetic-based practices. She's featured in *Rebelle Society*, *Elephant Journal*, *Entropy's Enclave*, *Rogue Agent*, *streetcake* magazine, *Metapsychosis*, *indicia*, *The Health Journal*, and elsewhere. [LinkedIn](#)

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LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: OCTOBER 18, 2023

Filing Date: September 20, 2023
Case No.: 2023-008838LBR
Business Name: Thai House Inc.
Business Address: 599 Castro Street
Zoning: NCD (CASTRO STREET NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
 40-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Castro LGBTQ Cultural District
Block/Lot: 3583/056
Applicant: Por-Phol Meeriyagerd
 599 Castro Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
Located In: District 8
Staff Contact: Maggie Dong - 628.652.7426
 Maggie.Dong@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Thai House is a family-run restaurant serving authentic Thai cuisine. The restaurant offers dishes such as crispy money bags, sweet and tangy pad thai, and rich coconut curries. Fresh and traditional Thai ingredients are used to expertly craft the innovative dishes featured on the evolving menu.

The restaurant was founded by husband and wife, Suraphol and Krittiya Meeriyagerd, who immigrated to the United States from Thailand in 1982 in pursuit of starting their own businesses and living the American dream. At the time of opening their first restaurant, Thai House, at 151 Noe Street, there were approximately 20 Thai restaurants in San Francisco. Throughout the years, the family had established several Thai House locations in Duboce Triangle, Castro, and Tenderloin.

Prior to opening their own restaurants, Suraphol worked in his brother-in-law's seafood restaurant in Terra Linda as the dishwasher and cook prep, with Krittiya working in the front of the house waiting and bussing tables. Initially

unsure if the restaurant business was their passion, they eventually decided to open their own restaurant in San Francisco. With the help of capital expenditures from both sides of the family, Krittiya and Suraphol worked together as a team to open their first restaurant, Thai House, at 151 Noe Street. Krittiya was the businesswoman who focused on the logistics, payroll, and back-end work. Suraphol was the hands-on, in-house handyman, cook helper, employee consultant, and sometimes dishwasher.

In 1991, they opened their second restaurant, Thai House Bar and Café, a higher-end experience. It was located at 2200 Market St. on the edge of Duboce Triangle. In 2001, Krittiya and Suraphol closed Thai House on Noe Street and opened Thai House Express on Geary & Larkin at 901 Larkin St. in the Tenderloin. In 2004, Krittiya and Suraphol opened Thai House Express at 599 Castro St. in the Castro neighborhood. Thai House Express was a fusion of all their restaurant iterations. Despite the success of the three restaurants, having three locations at one time was a heavy lift for Krittiya and Suraphol. Ultimately, Krittiya and Suraphol decided to consolidate the restaurants, closing Thai House Bar & Café in 2005, and selling Thai House Express on Geary & Larkin to their nephew, Pongkran Thowthong, in 2010.

Krittiya and Suraphol's son, Por-Phol Meeriyagerd, started a separate restaurant, Thai House 530, with Krittiya as the co-owner. They opened the restaurant in the summer of 2010 and decided to close in 2014 due to the location not being as busy. In 2011, Por-Phol joined his parents' business as a manager. Krittiya became the sole owner of Thai house when Suraphol retired in 2019.

The business' primary location at 599 Castro is a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the east side of Castro Street, at the corner of Castro and 19th St in the Castro/Upper Market neighborhood. It is within the Castro Street NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District; 40-X Height and Bulk District; Castro LGBTQ Cultural District; Central Neighborhoods Large Residence Special Use District; and Castro/Market Community Benefit District.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1985.

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

Yes. Thai House qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Thai House has operated continuously in San Francisco for 38 years.
- b. Thai House has contributed to the history and identity of the Castro/Upper Market neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Thai House 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 authentic Thai cuisine.

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

Yes. The site is located within the California Register-eligible Castro Street Historic District. The neighborhood displays cultural significance associated with the LGBTQ+ movement in San Francisco. The Castro is an important center of the San Francisco's LGBTQ+ movement in the 1970s, which became a national model for the struggle of the LGBTQ+ community for acceptance in the late 20th century.

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

No.

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

Yes. The property is identified in the Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco.

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

Yes. The business has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, Zagat, and Bay Guardian. Thai house is also listed in GayCities and San Francisco Magazine.

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

On July 15th, 2020 the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission adopted [Resolution No. 1127](#) centering Preservation Planning on racial and social equity. Understanding the benefits, burdens, and opportunities to advance racial and social equity that proposed Preservation Planning documents provide is part of the Department's Racial and Social Equity Initiative. This is also consistent with the Mayor's Citywide Strategic Initiatives for equity and accountability and with the Office of Racial Equity, which required all Departments to conduct this analysis.

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco's cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the city. These businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

Thai House was founded by husband and wife, Suraphol and Krittiya Meeriyargerd, who immigrated to the United States from Thailand in 1982. The minority and woman-owned business regularly donates to the San Francisco AIDS Foundation in honor of their regular customers who had died from AIDs in the late 1900s.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Location:

- 599 Castro Street (2004 - Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 901 Larkin Street (2001 – 2010)
- 2200 Market Street (1991 – 2005)
- 151 Noe Street (1985 – 2001)

Recommended by Applicant

- Restaurant featuring Thai cuisine
- House-made sauces
- Exterior channel letters “Thaihouse Express @ Castro”

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

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. 1351

HEARING DATE: OCTOBER 18, 2023

Case No.: 2023-008838LBR
Business Name: Thai House Inc.
Business Address: 599 Castro Street
Zoning: NCD (CASTRO STREET NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 3583/056
Applicant: Por-Phol Meeriyagerd,
599 Castro Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
Located In: District 8
Staff Contact: Maggie Dong - 628.652.7426
Maggie.Dong@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR THAI HOUSE INC. CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 599 CASTRO ST, BLOCK/LOT 3583/056.

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 October 18, 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 Thai House Inc. 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 Thai House Inc.

Location(s):

Current Location:

- 599 Castro Street (2004 - Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

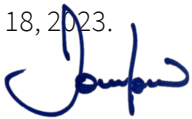
- 901 Larkin Street (2001 – 2010)
- 2200 Market Street (1991 – 2005)
- 151 Noe Street (1985 – 2001)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Restaurant featuring Thai cuisine
- House-made sauces
- Exterior channel letters “Thaihouse Express @ Castro”

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 to the Office of Small Business on October 18, 2023.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Vergara, Wright, Foley, Nageswaran, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: October 18, 2023