



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: June 24, 2024

BOB'S DONUTS AND PASTRIES

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-038
Business Name: Bob's Donuts and Pastries
Business Address: 1621 Polk St. and 601 Baker St.
District: District 3
Applicant: Rebekah Ahn, Owner's Daughter
Nomination Date: April 2, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Bob's Donuts and Pastries is a family owned and operated business established in 1953 in the Lower Nob Hill neighborhood at 1621 Polk Street. A second location at 601 Baker Street (aka Bob's on Baker) opened in 2019. Bob's has become a San Francisco staple to Bay Area residents as well as an essential tourist destination. They specialize in a variety of donuts and pastries including their famous apple fritter and novelty giant donut, a delicacy which has gained them national and international recognition via viral videos and other media outlets.

Bob's Donuts is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The business serves people from all walks of life, including neighbors from the Nob Hill community, residents from throughout San Francisco, and tourists from all over the world. Demographics of customers include all ages, races, and economic backgrounds.

The origin of Bob himself is a bit of a mystery though it is believed that the owner of Bob's Donuts – likely Robert N. Nolt – also owned Bob's Diner on the corner of Polk and Sacramento streets (no longer extant) and a few other businesses on Polk Street until he sold them off.

Elinor and Ronald Ahn purchased Bob's Donuts from Bob in 1977. In 1987, Elinor became the sole owner of Bob's Donuts. In 2001, after Elinor passing, her daughter-in-law Aya Ahn and son Donald Ahn took over Bob's Donuts. Aya is the head chef of Bob's Donuts and transformed this business into a place for community gatherings. Aya is well known around the neighborhood for her hospitality, kindness, and empathy. She treats employees like family and customers like old friends, and she is always welcoming new faces in the neighborhood. Since the 2000s, the business has grown in popularity and is now a staple of San Francisco.

Bob's Donuts and Pastries has contributed significantly to the history and identity of the Nob Hill neighborhood. It is the only donut shop located in Nob Hill and possibly the only 24-hour business located in the neighborhood, and it is one of only a few 24-hour businesses remaining in San Francisco. Bob's Donuts is a place of gathering for many people. Customers come by to get a donut to celebrate big achievements and milestones (e.g., after a wedding, on birthdays, first day of new job, etc.) or even just if they are having a bad day.

CRITERION 1

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

Legacy Business Program

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San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
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www.legacybusiness.org





Yes, Bob's Donuts and Pastries has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

1621 Polk St. from 1953 to Present (71 years)
601 Baker St. from 2019 to Present (5 years)

CRITERION 2

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

Bob's Donuts and Pastries has contributed to the history and identity of the Nob Hill 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 fresh donuts and pastries, an American culinary art form.
- The Polk Street property is not listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry. However, it appears significant as a contributor to an identified commercial cluster, per the unadopted Neighborhood Commercial Corridors Survey (2015).

The Baker Street property is located within the Eligible North of Panhandle (NOPA) California Register Historic District. The immediate area surrounding 601 Baker Street, known as the North of Panhandle neighborhood, consists primarily of two- and three-story residential buildings (single-family houses and multiple family "flats") that were constructed during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Single-story, single-family cottages and multiple-family apartment buildings are also present in the area in limited numbers. The area exhibits a predominant "Victorian-era" and "Edwardian-era" architectural character, and includes styles such as Italianate, Stick/Eastlake, Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Classical Revival. The area also exhibits a unifying pattern of development that results from construction of mostly wood-frame, wood-clad rowhouse-type buildings that are two to three stories tall and located on long, narrow residential lots. Most dwellings are located at the fronts of lots, with minimal or no front yard and/or side yards. The area contains a rectangular street grid. The neighborhood is bounded to the south by the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park.

- Bob's Donuts and Pastries has had famous patrons such as Nicholas Cage, Aesop Rock (who wrote a song dedicated to Bob's Donuts/Aya Ahn), Prince, and others.
- There have been several features and articles that mention Bob's Donuts and Pastries including several by accredited food critics in articles by the San Francisco Chronicle, Eater San Francisco, Thrillist, San Francisco Magazine, The Bold Italic, Timeout, SF Weekly, and the DailyMail UK. The business has thrived from local community support as well as national recognition from viral videos.

Bob's Donuts has also been referenced in numerous media sources and featured on the television shows "Silicon Valley" and "Somebody Feed Phil." A video about Bob's Donuts was featured in Yahoo Business in Japan.

- With regard to racial and social equity, Bob's Donuts is one of the last remaining independent donut shops in San Francisco. An immigrant and minority owned business, it serves as a gathering space for community with the mantra, "Meet me at Bob's!" Local drag icon Juanita MORE! has hosted "Coffee with Cops" donut and coffee talks in an attempt to build community trust and relationships with public safety officers. Additionally, Bob's Donuts donates to various organizations throughout the Bay Area such as Extra Foods, the Breast Cancer March, Kiddo, Food Runner, Mill Valley Film Festival, as well as numerous

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schools. Bob's also participates in neighborhood events such as Polk Street Neighborhood Festival, at which the business handed out free donuts. Aya Ahn has had an enormous impact on the community by showing kindness and compassion to all. Her generosity and kindness are unmatched and left an impact on many patrons.

CRITERION 3

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

Yes, Bob's Donuts and Pastries is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Bob's Donuts and Pastries 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:

- Fresh donuts for everyone.
- Open 24 hours.
- Interior seating area.
- Bob's Donut Challenge.

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.

- Bakery featuring donuts.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Bob's Donuts and Pastries currently located at 1621 Polk St. and 601 Baker 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. _____

June 24, 2024

BOB'S DONUTS AND PASTRIES

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District: District 3
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Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Bob's Donuts and Pastries, currently located at 1621 Polk St. and 601 Baker 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 June 24, 2024, 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 Bob's Donuts and Pastries 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 Bob's Donuts and Pastries.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Fresh donuts for everyone.
- Open 24 hours.
- Interior seating area.
- Bob's Donut Challenge.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Bob's Donuts and Pastries on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Bakery featuring donuts.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on June 24, 2024.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

- Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-038
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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?

Yes No

1621 Polk St. from 1953 to Present (71 years)
601 Baker St. from 2019 to Present (5 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

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?

Yes No

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: May 8, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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City and County of
San Francisco



President, Board of
Supervisors

AARON PESKIN

April 2, 2024

Director Katy Tang *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 write to nominate beloved neighborhood small business, Bob's Donuts, for the Legacy Business Registry, currently located in Lower Nob Hill at 1621 Polk Street.

Established in 1960, Bob's Donuts has been operated by the Ahn family since 1977, when the ownership was transferred from the original owner. Aya Ahn, the current co-owner, traces the mythic origins of the shop's namesake to a potential former owner or even the now-closed Bob's Diner that formerly existed next door. The lore of "Bob" as a neighborhood figure has only contributed to the bakery's charm and devoted local following.

Bob's Donuts is well-known not only for their made-from-scratch treats, like their famous apple fritter or S'mores chocolate donut, but also for being one of the last independent donut shops in San Francisco. Bob's Donuts also doubles as a gathering space for community with the mantra, "Meet me at Bob's!" Local drag icon Juanita MORE! has hosted "Coffee With Cops" donut and coffee talks, in an attempt to build community trust and relationships with public safety officers, and the bakery staff take great pride in their famous Bob's Donut Challenge and Hall of Fame.

Neighbors, late-night visitors, and tourists alike can all identify the trademark tantalizing aroma emanating from the 1621 Polk Street super-hot fryer, crisping up its Old-Fashioned donuts and glazed delicacies. Bob's Donuts is also known for its long lines of customers, pressed up against the front windows fogged with donut heat, all waiting for a warm batch of pastries. The walls are covered with local artists, as well as baby photos that depict neighbors' newborns in comparison to the Bob's 1.5 ft. wide Big Donuts. It's truly a neighborhood treasure.

Bob's Donuts would benefit from being added to the Legacy Business Registry, and it is my honor to nominate it for inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Bob's Donuts and Pastries

Business owner name(s): Aya Ahn and Donald Ahn

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

Current business address: 1621 Polk St., San Francisco CA 94109

Telephone: (415) 776 - 3141 **Email:** bobsdonutssf@gmail.com

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: https://www.bobsdonutssf.com/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/bobsdonuts/ **Twitter:** @whatsfreshest

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 1 5 5 8 1 7

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.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Immigrant-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Owned by Person with a Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-Owned Business |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input type="checkbox"/> 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: Rebekah Ahn

Contact person title: Owner's Daughter

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: **Zip Code:**

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

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:**

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: Rebekah Ahn

Signature:

Rebekah Ahn

Date: 3/28/2024

BOB'S DONUTS AND PASTRIES

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

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

Bob's Donuts and Pastries is a family owned and operated business established in the 1950s. They are currently located in Lower Nob Hill of San Francisco at 1621 Polk Street and the North of Panhandle neighborhood at 601 Baker Street. Bob's has become a San Francisco staple to Bay Area residents as well as an essential tourist destination. They specialize in a variety of donuts and pastries including our famous apple fritter and novelty giant donut, mentioned by many accredited food critics in articles by the San Francisco Chronicle, Eater San Francisco, Thrillist, San Francisco Magazine, The Bold Italic, Timeout, SF Weekly, and the DailyMail UK. The business has thrived from local community support as well as national recognition from viral videos.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

Bob's Donuts is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The business serves people from all walks of life, including neighbors from the Nob Hill community, residents from throughout San Francisco, and tourists from all over the world. Demographics of customers include all ages, races, and economic backgrounds.

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

Fresh donuts, open 24 hours.

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.

Bob's Donuts and Pastries was founded at 1621 Polk Street, likely in 1953.

In a review of old telephone and city directories, "Bob's Donut Shop" first appears in the 1953 editions of both the telephone directory and the city directory. The business does not appear in the 1952 telephone directory, and the San Francisco Library does not have a copy of the 1952 city directory.

Per the old directories, the founder of the business is not entirely clear. Following are the names that appear next to the Bob's Donut Shop listings:

- Howard Hackett in the 1953 city directory.
- Howard E. Bobblitt (with an “l” in the surname) in the 1954 city directory.
- Howard E. Bobbitt (without an “l” in the surname) in the 1955-56 city directory.
- Howard E. Bobblitt (with an “l” in the surname) in the 1957 city directory.
- Robert N. Nolt (also Bob Nolt) starting in the 1958 city directory.

It is believed that the owner of Bob’s Donuts – likely Robert N. Nolt – also owned Bob’s Diner on the corner of Polk and Sacramento streets (where Toast is currently located) and a few other businesses on Polk Street until he sold them off.

Spouses Elinor Ahn and Ronald Ahn purchased Bob’s Donuts from Bob in 1977. Elinor and Ronald divorced in 1987, at which time Elinor became the sole owner of Bob’s Donuts.

In 2001, Elinor passed away, and her daughter-in-law Aya Ahn and son Donald Ahn took over Bob’s Donuts. Aya is the head chef of Bob’s Donuts and transformed this business into a place for community gatherings. Aya is well known around the neighborhood for her hospitality, kindness, and empathy. She treats employees like family, our customers like old friends, and is always welcoming new faces in the neighborhood. Since the 2000s, the business has grown in popularity and is now a staple of San Francisco.

Bob’s Donuts expanded to a second location at 601 Baker Street in the North of Panhandle neighborhood in November 2019, and they opened a store at 252 Almonte Blvd. in Mill Valley in Marin County in late October 2022.

Roberto Vallejo joined the Bob’s Donuts family when the Baker Street location opened. Roberto has been working hard on new recipes, such as fruit-filled malasadas, blueberry cake donuts, and a s’mores chocolate raised donut.

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

1953 to 1958:	Uncertain but possibly Howard Hackett, Howard E. Bobblitt/Bobbitt, or Robert N. Nolt
1958 to 1977:	Uncertain, but likely Robert N. Nolt
1977 to 1987:	Elinor Ahn; Ronald Ahn
1987 to 2001:	Elinor Ahn
2001 to Present:	Aya Ahn; Donald Ahn

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

Bob’s has never had to cease operations. During the COVID pandemic in 2020-21, the business didn’t close because they were a food provider (an “essential business”), but the business did struggle due to the “shelter-in-place” order that required people to remain at home. With offices closed and people working from home, people were no longer bringing donuts to the office on their way to work. In addition, all of the bars were closed, so there was no business on

weekend nights. But Bob's Donuts managed to keep all of their employees and their hours; they did not do any lay-offs.

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.

Bob's Donuts and Pastries has contributed significantly to the history and identity of the Nob Hill neighborhood. It is the only donut shop located in Nob Hill, and possibly the only 24-hour business located in the neighborhood. It is one of only a few 24-hour businesses in San Francisco. Bob's Donuts is a place of gathering for many people. Customers come by to get a donut to celebrate big achievements and milestones (e.g., after a wedding, on birthdays, first day of new job, etc.) or even if they are having a bad day. Bob's is also one of the only businesses open after the bars close so people can eat something to sober up.

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

Bob's Donuts was around when Polk Street was San Francisco's most prominent queer neighborhood. On June 27, 1970, a small group of LGBTQ people marched down Polk Street to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the historic Stonewall uprising on Christopher Street in New York City. Organized by the San Francisco Gay Liberation Front, the "Gay Liberation March" saw 20 to 30 people walk from Aquatic Park to Civic Center on Polk Street.^{1 2} There was no parade in June 1971, but in June 1972, San Francisco's first "official" pride parade, called "Christopher Street West," occurred. In 1973, the parade was renamed the "Gay Freedom Parade." By 1977, the Gay Freedom Day Parade moved to Market Street and became the huge spectacle that it has been ever since.³ There is a historic picture featuring police officers standing in front of the Bob's Donuts monitoring the pride parade during one of the years when it occurred along Polk Street.

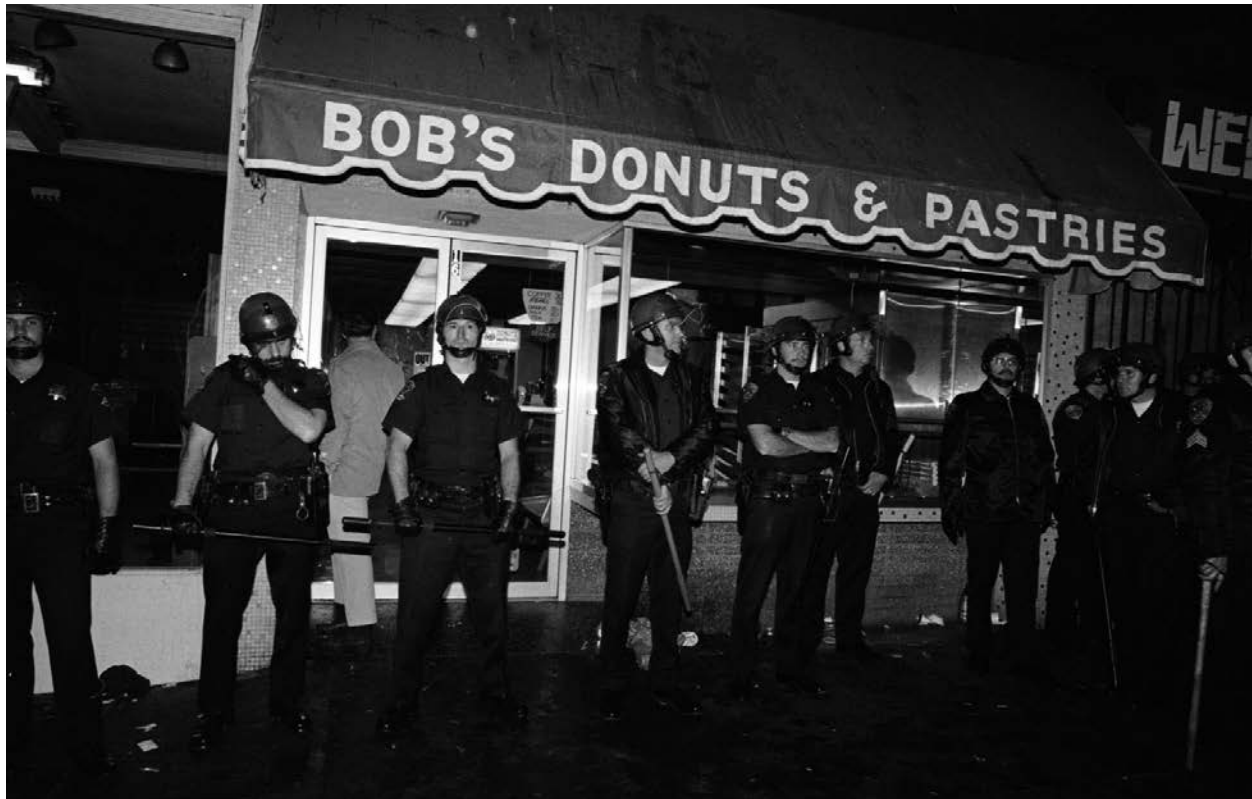
Bob's Donuts and Pastries has had famous patrons such as Nicholas Cage, Aesop Rock (who wrote a song dedicated to Bob's Donuts/Aya Ahn), Prince, and others.

The business features the "Bob's Donut Challenge." Eat one giant donut within three minutes and you win a Bob's Donut's T-shirt and get your name listed on the Hall of Fame. The donut is the size of a salad plate and the equivalent of a dozen regular donuts. If you finish in two minutes, you also get your donut refunded and a free drink.

¹ GLBT Historical Society, 50 Years of Pride, <https://www.glbthistory.org/50-years-of-pride>

² Wikipedia, San Francisco Pride, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Pride

³ OpenSFHistory, The Early Years of SF Pride: A Closer Look, <https://www.opensfhistory.org/osfhcrucible/2020/06/28/the-early-years-of-sf-pride-a-closer-look/>



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

Bob's Donuts donates to various organizations throughout the Bay Area such as Extra Foods, the Breast Cancer March, Kiddo, Food Runner, Mill Valley Film Festival, and various schools, to name a few. Bob's also participates in neighborhood events such as Polk Street neighborhood festival at which the business handed out free donuts.

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

Bob's Donuts has been referenced in numerous media sources and also featured in the "Silicon Valley" TV show and on "Somebody Feed Phil." A video was also made about Bob's Donuts and featured in Yahoo Business in Japan. Following are key media references.

- *Bob's Donuts, San Francisco's famous 24-hour doughnut shop, is the late-night jewel of the city*
SFGATE
July 14, 2022
<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/trying-san-francisco-bobs-donuts-17300426.php>
- *Who's Bob behind Bob's Donuts? It's complicated. And heart-warming.*
SFGATE
May 20, 2020
<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/Bobs-Donuts-Polk-Aya-Ahn-14542971.php>

- *Bob's Donuts Brings the Warm Apple Fritters to NoPa This Week*
Eater San Francisco
November 13, 2019
<https://sf.eater.com/2019/11/13/20963684/bobs-donuts-opens-nopa-sf>
- *Bob's Donuts Opens Second Spot at Baker and Fulton on Thursday*
SFist
November 12, 2019
<https://sfist.com/2019/11/12/bobs-donuts-baker-street-fulton-opening/>
- *Bob's Donuts to open NoPa location this week*
Hoodline
November 12, 2019
<https://hoodline.com/2019/11/bob-s-donuts-to-open-nopa-location-this-week/>
- *Bay Area's love affair with the great American doughnut shop*
San Francisco Chronicle
March 23, 2016
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/restaurants/article/Bay-Area-s-love-affair-with-the-great-American-6985884.php>

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

Bob's Donuts and Pastries has received recognition for having the best donuts in San Francisco by many news outlets and food bloggers.

- *The 15 Best Places for Donuts in San Francisco*
FourSquare
March 4, 2024
<https://foursquare.com/top-places/san-francisco/best-places-donuts>
- *The Best Donuts in SF*
The Infatuation
October 16, 2023
<https://www.theinfatuation.com/san-francisco/guides/best-donuts-in-sf>
- *Top Doughnuts in the Bay Area*
San Francisco Chronicle
March 14, 2023
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/projects/2023/best-doughnut-sf-bay-area/>
- *13 Gloriously Golden Doughnut Shops in San Francisco*
Eater San Francisco
March 1, 2023
<https://sf.eater.com/maps/best-doughnut-shops-san-francisco>

- *The Best Donuts in the Bay*
Do The Bay
December 27, 2022
<https://dothebay.com/p/best-donut-shops-bay-area>
- *Here are America's 50 Favourite Donut Shops: How Does SF Stack Up?*
Hoodline
July 20, 2017
<https://hoodline.com/2017/07/here-are-america-s-50-favorite-donut-shops-how-does-sf-stack-up/>
- *Top 5 Places in the Bay Area to Grab a Doughnut*
CBS News
June 2, 2016
<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/best-doughnuts-in-the-bay-area/>

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

If the business were to close, the neighborhood would lose its only 24-hour establishment and donut shop. The store is open at all hours of the day to all walks of life. Aya Ahn has had an enormous impact on the community by showing her kindness and compassion to all. Her generosity and kindness is unmatched, which has left an impact on many patrons. There would be about 15 employees out of work if the store were to close down. San Francisco would lose a donut shop that has been around since 1953, which has been a staple to the Nob Hill neighborhood.

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?

There is nothing specific to the significance of the exterior/interior of the business. Bob's Donuts does have a seating area to accommodate patrons. Having a seating area is fun, creates culture, and has enabled crowds of support for individuals attempting the three-minute donut challenge.

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

Fresh donuts for everyone.

c. What is the plan to keep the business open in the long term beyond the current ownership?

Bob's Donuts is committed to keeping the business in the family. It has been in the Ahn family since the 1980s, and there are no plans for a change in ownership.

d. What challenges is the business facing today?

Bob's Donuts is facing issues with permitting in the Planning Department to relocate from 1621 Polk Street to 1720 Polk Street. Bob's Donuts has also been a target of theft since it is open 24 hours a day. The business has also suffered from damage to the property. The front window has been broken 10+ times and costs thousands of dollars to repair every time it is broken.

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.

Bakery featuring donuts.

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 1617-1625 Polk Street is "B - Unknown / Age Eligible." However, per an unadopted Neighborhood Commercial Corridors Survey evaluation in 2015, the building "appears significant as a contributor to an identified cluster."

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 601 Baker Street is "A - Historic Resource Present." The building is a contributor to the California Register-eligible NOPA Historic District.



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INTERNET
NEEDS A
PASSWORD
RESET.
Go to password.com

S
4

Bob's DONUTS PASTRIES

776-3141



Bob's



Voted Best
Crumb Donut
by some guy who
likes donuts.

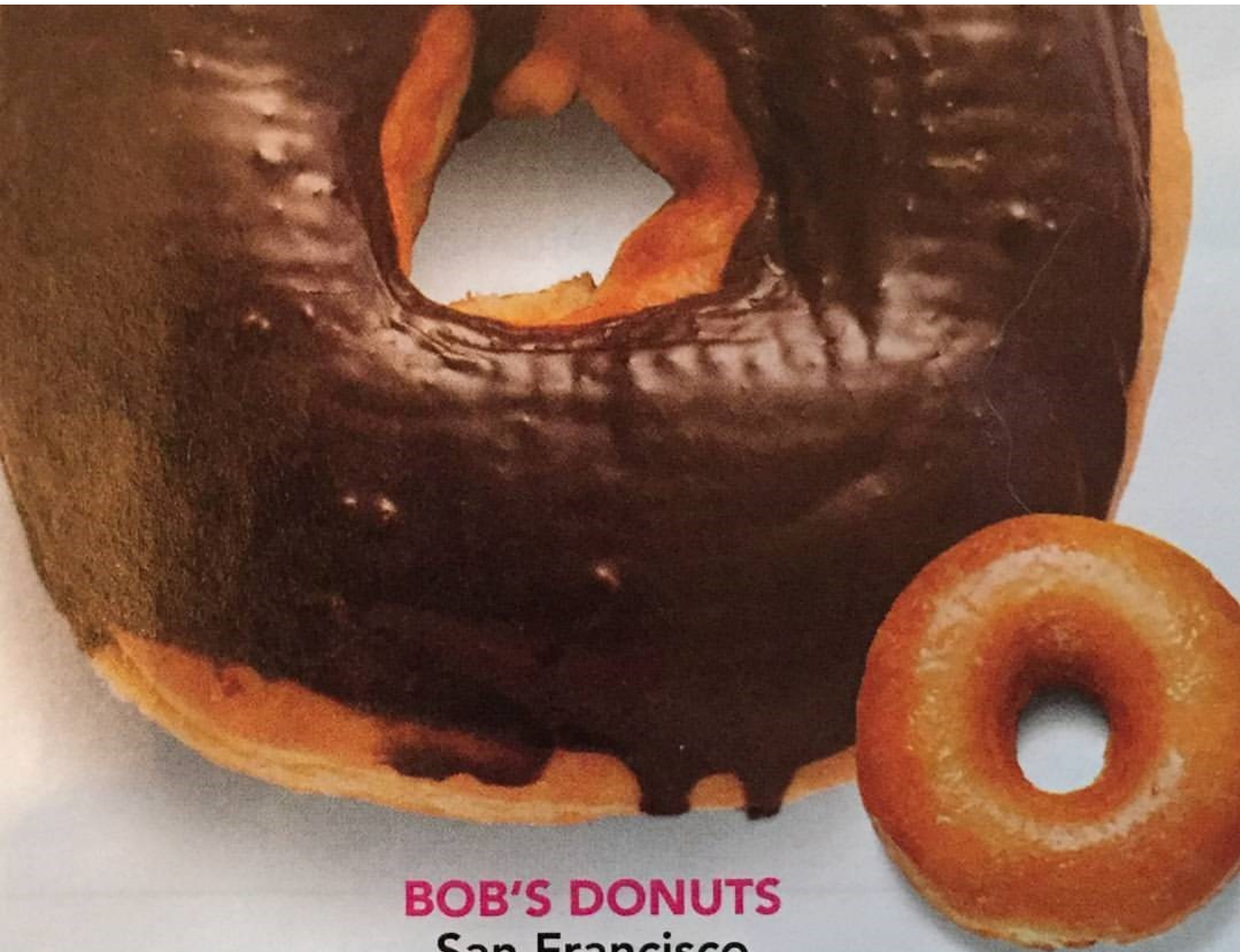
Please,
Don't tap
on the glass.
(It scares the donuts!)











BOB'S DONUTS

San Francisco

If you finish this five-pound doughnut in less than three minutes, you'll earn a spot on the shop's Hall of Fame wall. Do it in two minutes and the doughnut is free. bobsdonutssf.com





601

OPEN

Bob's
ON BAKER STREET

CURBSIDE PICKUP



Please do not touch the glass!
Our donuts get nervous.

DOGS WELCOME
PEOPLE TOLERATED

WARNING
CHILDREN LEFT UNATTENDED WILL BE TRADED FOR DONUTS

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Thank You for your support
Bob's

We are accepting Card Payments & Apple Pay
Thank You
WE HAVE HOT CHOCOLATE
WE ALSO HAVE VANILLA ICE CREAM

PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING





<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/trying-san-francisco-bobs-donuts-17300426.php>

SFGATE

FOOD

Bob's Donuts, San Francisco's famous 24-hour doughnut shop, is the late-night jewel of the city

SFGATE's Madeline Wells embarks on a mission to review all the SF treats tourists rave about in a series we're calling 'Eat Like a Tourist'

By [Madeline Wells](#)
July 14, 2022



The 24-hour Bob's Donuts on Polk Street is a San Francisco classic. Photo by Blair Heagerty/Illustration SFGATE

It's 11 p.m. on a Friday, I've had three drinks and I'm staring longingly through the glass at a case of divine-looking [doughnuts](#). Glazed beauties glisten under the shop lights, and a chocolate doughnut with an appealingly toasted marshmallow wedged in its center seems to sing to me.

The line is long, but everyone pouring out from the [Polk Street bars](#) knows the drill: Bob's Donuts is the mandatory last stop of the night. Ending the evening with a fluffy pastry from the 24-hour spot feels like a warm hug to brace you against the cold [San Francisco](#) wind.

Bob's is so ingrained in locals' consciousness, I hesitate to even categorize it as a tourist destination. But it's the sort of place that manages to appeal to pretty much all demographics — 20-something barhoppers in the wee hours and families touring the city in the light of day. Celebrities have even made the [essential doughnut pit stop](#), from [Nicolas Cage to Prince](#).



The late night line for Bob's Donuts, on Polk Street in San Francisco, on Friday, July 8, 2022.
Madeline Wells/SFGATE

Bob's first opened in the late 1950s, although no one named Bob has owned it in many years. In 1977, current owner Aya Ahn's family took over. No one today seems to know much about who the mysterious original Bob figure even was, other than a 1977 San Francisco Examiner article that described him as "a German" who supplied the SFMOMA cafe with "authentic German cookies."

“My daughter says that we’re all Bob,” Ahn told SFGATE in a [2019 interview](#). “We’re all part of it. Everyone has lifted us up to become who we are.”

A lot about Bob’s feels super old-school, from the kitschy collection of framed doughnut art hanging on the walls to the little case of milk cartons by the register (yes, folks, that’s actual cow milk). A hall of fame is also a fixture on the wall, listing everyone who has ever successfully completed the "[Bob’s Donut Challenge](#)": finish a giant doughnut the size of 12 regular doughnuts in under 3 minutes and win a T-shirt.

But a few signs of the times have crept into the otherwise anachronistic eatery. Various trendy flavors, from a maple bacon to a Froot Loops doughnut, have taken up residence alongside the old fashioned and apple fritters. And since the pandemic, diners can no longer plop down on a retro barstool and spill crumbs all over the Formica countertop — Bob’s is still takeout only.



Blair Heagerty and Charles Russo/SFGATE

Even without being able to get the full dine-in experience, my first ever visit to Bob’s still charmed me. I made two trips: once on a weekday afternoon for the family-friendly experience, and a second on the aforementioned boozy Friday night out.

The afternoon I stopped by the Polk Street location (Bob's also opened a [second store](#) on Baker Street in 2019), it was quiet. At first, I wasn't even sure it was open. But soon enough, I spotted the workers in the back dipping yeasted dough into vats of shimmering palm oil.

I requested a small box of doughnuts, and the helpful person behind the counter guided me through the bakery's most popular (and most delicious) offerings. She filled my pink box with an apple fritter (\$3), a crumb doughnut (\$1.75), a chocolate with sprinkles (\$3.50) and a specialty croissant-doughnut hybrid (\$4.50).



Freshly baked doughnuts call from the window at Bob's Donuts.
Charles Russo/SFGATE

Munching on our treats at a nearby park, SFGATE photo editor Charlie declared his maple bacon confection “very impressive.” I liked my apple fritter, Bob's most popular doughnut, the best — a pleasing textural contrast of crispy glaze, light and fluffy interior, and gooey chunks of cinnamon-y apple. I was less a fan of the cloying sweetness of the vanilla custard oozing out of the croissant doughnut, but every other pastry made a strong case for itself.

My second trip to Bob's, though, felt like the real deal. After a bar crawl consisting of watching my bartender at the [tiniest bar in San Francisco](#) shotgun a White Claw

and ordering a gin and tonic beneath a bunch of bras hanging from the ceiling at [Kozy Kar](#), my friends and I made our way to the bakery.

This time of night, folks lined up down the block for a sugar rush. Despite the alcohol in my system, I restrained myself and ordered only one: that beautiful s'mores doughnut that had called to me from the window. My pals and I congregated on the sidewalk beside the other inebriated sweet teeth with our pink boxes, sinking our teeth into the fluffy pastries.



Bob's Donuts is a late night staple for Polk Street bargoers.
Madeline Wells/SFGATE

I'm going to take a risk here and admit that I am not the world's most passionate doughnut fan — in fact, I rank pretty much any other pastry above them in my dessert power ranking. But I'm being completely honest when I say this: The Bob's s'mores doughnut I ate on the sidewalk at 11 p.m. on a Friday made me believe in doughnuts again.

This doughnut took the comforting simplicity of the chocolate one I'd had earlier and brought it up a notch with a smokier, more complex flavor. Maybe I'm just

nostalgic for childhood summers spent camping with my family, but the toasted marshmallow in the middle felt like the ultimate prize.

My friends, some of whom grew up with Bob's in the city, seemed equally pleased with their doughnuts based on the immediate silence that took over our circle. Only the sound of chewing could be heard, aside from one friend declaring with wonder, "Mine is warm!"



Since the pandemic, Bob's Donuts on Polk Street has been takeout-only.
Charles Russo/SFGATE

Bob's Donuts is the jewel of San Francisco, whether you're a lifelong local or a tourist. But if you are a tourist, I can't recommend Bob's enough. It may be a bit out of the way from the usual tourist haunts, but it won't cost you an arm and a leg like a [Ghirardelli sundae](#) or a [Tonga Room cocktail](#). And the doughnuts taste just as good as the locals say — whether it's 2 p.m. or 2 a.m.

[Bob's Donuts](#), 1621 Polk St. and 601 Baker St., San Francisco. Polk Street location open 24/7, Baker Street open Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday through Sunday, 7 a.m to 9 p.m.



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: JUNE 5, 2024

Filing Date: May 8, 2024
Case No.: 2024-004146LBR
Business Name: Bob's Donuts and Pastries
Business Address: 1621 Polk Street (Primary Address)
Zoning: NCD (POLK STREET NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
65-A Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Not Applicable
Block/Lot: 0622/003
Applicant: Rebekah Ahn
1621 Polk Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Michelle Langlie - 628-652-7410
Michelle.Langlie@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Bob's Donuts and Pastries is a family-owned and operated business established in 1953, in the Lower Nob Hill neighborhood of San Francisco at 1621 Polk Street; a second location at 601 Baker Street (aka Bob's on Baker) opened in 2019. Bob's has become a San Francisco staple to Bay Area residents as well as an essential tourist destination. They specialize in a variety of donuts and pastries including their famous apple fritter and novelty giant donut, a delicacy which has gained them national and international recognition via viral videos and other media outlets.

Bob's Donuts is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The business serves people from all walks of life, including neighbors from the Nob Hill community, residents from throughout San Francisco, and tourists from all over the world. Demographics of customers include all ages, races, and economic backgrounds.

The origin of Bob himself is a bit of a mystery though it is believed that the owner of Bob's Donuts – likely Robert N. Nolt – also owned Bob's Diner on the corner of Polk and Sacramento streets (no longer extant) and a few other businesses on Polk Street until he sold them off.

Elinor and Ronald Ahn purchased Bob's Donuts from Bob in 1977. In 1987, Elinor became the sole owner of Bob's Donuts. In 2001, after Elinor passing, her daughter-in-law Aya Ahn and son Donald Ahn took over Bob's Donuts. Aya is the head chef of Bob's Donuts and transformed this business into a place for community gatherings. Aya is well known around the neighborhood for her hospitality, kindness, and empathy. She treats employees like family, customers like old friends, and is always welcoming new faces in the neighborhood. Since the 2000s, the business has grown in popularity and is now a staple of San Francisco.

Bob's Donuts and Pastries has contributed significantly to the history and identity of the Nob Hill neighborhood. It is the only donut shop located in Nob Hill, possibly the only 24-hour business located in the neighborhood and is one of only a few 24-hour businesses remaining in San Francisco. Bob's Donuts is a place of gathering for many people. Customers come by to get a donut to celebrate big achievements and milestones (e.g., after a wedding, on birthdays, first day of new job, etc.) or even just if they are having a bad day.

The business' primary location at 1617-1625 Polk Street is a Category B (Unknown / Age Eligible) structure on the west side of Polk Street between Clay and Sacramento streets in the Nob Hill neighborhood. It is within the Polk Street NCD (Neighborhood Commercial) Zoning District and a 65-A Height and Bulk District. Per the unadopted Neighborhood Commercial Corridors Survey evaluation in 2015, the building "appears significant as a contributor to an identified cluster." Bob's Donuts and Pastries currently maintains one additional location in San Francisco (601 Baker St.; Category A ("known historic resource").

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. **When was business founded?**

The business was founded in 1953.

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

Yes. Bob's Donuts and Pastries qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Bob's Donuts and Pastries has operated continuously in San Francisco for 71 years.
- b. Bob's Donuts and Pastries has contributed to the history and identity of the Nob Hill neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Bob's Donuts and Pastries 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 fresh donuts and pastries, an American culinary artform.

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

Yes. The Polk Street property appears significant as a contributor to an identified commercial cluster, per the unadopted Neighborhood Commercial Corridors Survey (2015).

Also, Bob's Donuts and Pastries has had famous patrons such as Nicholas Cage, Aesop Rock (who wrote a song dedicated to Bob's Donuts/Aya Ahn), Prince, and others.

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

The Polk Street property is not listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry.

The Baker Street property is located within the Eligible North of Panhandle (NOPA) California Register Historic District. The immediate area surrounding 601 Baker Street, known as the North of Panhandle neighborhood, consists primarily of two- and three-story residential buildings (single-family houses and multiple family "flats") that were constructed during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Single-story, single-family cottages and multiple-family apartment buildings are also present in the area in limited numbers. The area exhibits a predominant "Victorian-era" and "Edwardian-era" architectural character, and includes styles such as Italianate, Stick/Eastlake, Queen Anne, Craftsman, and Classical Revival. The area also exhibits a unifying pattern of development that results from construction of mostly wood-frame, wood-clad rowhouse-type buildings that are two to three stories tall and located on long, narrow residential lots. Most dwellings are located at the fronts of lots, with minimal or no front yard and/or side yards. The area contains a rectangular street grid. The neighborhood is bounded to the south by the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park.

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

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

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

Yes. There have been several features and articles that mention Bob's Donuts and Pastries including several by accredited food critics in articles by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Eater San Francisco*, *Thrillist*, *San Francisco Magazine*, *The Bold Italic*, *Timeout*, *SF Weekly*, and the *DailyMail UK*. The business has thrived from local community support as well as national recognition from viral videos.

Bob's Donuts has also been referenced in numerous media sources and featured on the television shows "Silicon Valley" and "Somebody Feed Phil." A video about Bob's Donuts was featured in Yahoo Business in Japan.

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.

Bob's Donuts is one of the last remaining independent donut shops in San Francisco. An immigrant and minority-owned business, it serves as a gathering space for community with the mantra, "Meet me at Bob's!" Local drag icon Juanita MORE! has hosted "Coffee with Cops" donut and coffee talks, in an attempt to build community trust and relationships with public safety officers. Additionally, Bob's Donuts donates to various organizations throughout the Bay Area such as Extra Foods, the Breast Cancer March, Kiddo, Food Runner, Mill Valley Film Festival, as well as numerous schools. Bob's also participates in neighborhood events such as Polk Street Neighborhood Festival, at which the business handed out free donuts. Aya Ahn has had an enormous impact on the community by showing kindness and compassion to all. Her generosity and kindness is unmatched, and left an impact on many patrons.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 1621 Polk Street (1953 – Present)
- 601 Baker Street (2019 – Present)
- 252 Almonte Boulevard, Mill Valley (2022 - Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Fresh donuts for everyone
- Open 24 hours
- Interior seating area
- Bob's Donut Challenge

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. 1400

HEARING DATE: JUNE 5, 2024

Case No.: 2024-004146LBR
Business Name: Bob’s Donuts and Pastries
Business Address: 1621 POLK STREET (Primary Address)
Zoning: NCD (POLK STREET NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
 65-A Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0622/003
Applicant: Rebekah Ahn
 1621 Polk Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Michelle Langlie - 628-652-7410
 Michelle.Langlie@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR BOB’S DONUTS AND PASTERIES, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1621 POLK ST (PRIMARY ADDRESS), BLOCK/LOT 0622/003; 601 BAKER STREET AND BLOCK/LOT 1177/058.

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 June 5, 2024, 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 Bob's Donuts and Pastries 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 Bob's Donuts and Pastries.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

- 1621 Polk Street (1953 – Present)
- 601 Baker Street (2019 – Present)
- 252 Almonte Boulevard, Mill Valley (2022 - Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Fresh donuts for everyone
- Open 24 hours
- Interior seating area
- Bob's Donut Challenge

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 June 5, 2024.



Richard Sucre
Commission Secretary

AYES: Baldauf, Campbell, Vergara, Wright, Foley, Nageswaran, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: June 5, 2024