



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: July 22, 2024

CHRISTOPHER'S BOOKS

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-036
Business Name: Christopher's Books
Business Address: 1400 18th St.
District: District 10
Applicant: Anita (Tee) Minot, Owner
Nomination Date: March 11, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Shamann Walton
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Christopher's Books is an independent, community-based bookstore selling new books from many genres. It also sells games, toys, and Potrero Hill T-shirts. It prides itself on its curation and ability to quickly order books for the community it serves.

Before founder Christopher Ellison was a bookseller, he worked for a venture capital firm. After a terrible car accident, he reconsidered his life. He wanted to open a business close to his home on Potrero Hill. His love of books and the lack of a neighborhood bookstore inspired him to start Christopher's Books.

In May 1992, Tee Minot joined Christopher as a business partner. Prior to becoming a business partner, Tee had worked at the MIT Press Bookstore in Massachusetts and at Cover to Cover in Noe Valley. In 1994, Chris left the business to fulfill his dream of owning a dairy farm and move back to New Zealand. Soon after, Allyn Stern joined Tee as a business partner. However, since 1996, Tee Minot has been the sole owner of Christopher's Books.

Christopher's Books has been a neighborhood anchor since its opening. The business fosters an intimate atmosphere, drawing in young families and longtime neighbors, offering treats to local pets, and creating lasting friendships with regular customers. The business has also demonstrated their strong commitment to their neighborhood and their city; they provide internships to young adults interested in books, work with schools to support literacy programs, and partner with the Pritzker Psychiatry building to provide books for their youth wellness program, among other things.

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, Christopher's Books has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

1400 18th St. from 1991 to Present (33 years)

CRITERION 2

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

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City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
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Yes, Christopher's Books has contributed to the history and identity of the Potrero 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 the tradition of independent bookstores.
- The bookstore has been associated with at least two films that tourists regularly ask about: Sweet November and Ant-Man and the Wasp.
- Former United States Representative John Burton has been a lifelong patron.
- Christopher's Books is housed in a c. 1904 Queen Anne mixed-use building. The building is a particularly intact example of a transitional building incorporating both Queen Anne and Classical Revival elements. The business's storefront is particularly intact, including a corner pole, mosaic tile threshold and original wood transom. The property is not listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry; however, the building was called out as "appears individually significant" in the Draft Neighborhood Commercial Corridors Survey from 2015.
- There have been a number of features and articles on Christopher's Books, both within and outside the industry. "Yes, San Francisco: We're Still Reading Paper" by The Bold Italic references the importance and the experience of stepping into a bookstore in modern day. The "Best Bookstores in San Francisco" by Culture Trip points out the distinct features of Christopher's Bookstore as being "pet-friendly" and holding "book drives for local charities."
- With regard to racial and social equity, Christopher's Books is an LGBTQ+-owned and woman-owned business. They have demonstrated their commitment to the community in many ways, whether donating books to local shelters and youth wellness programs or coordinating book drives for local schools.

CRITERION 3

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

Yes, Christopher's Books is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Christopher's Books 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:

- Identity as a vibrant, independent neighborhood bookstore.
- Well-curated selection of books.
- Atmosphere of openness, curiosity, and comfort.
- Original fixtures used to feature books.
- Historic photos.

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.

- Book store.

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Christopher's Books currently located at 1400 18th 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. _____

July 22, 2024

CHRISTOPHER'S BOOKS

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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Christopher's Books, currently located at 1400 18th 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 July 22, 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 Christopher's Books 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 Christopher's Books.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Identity as a vibrant, independent neighborhood bookstore.
- Well-curated selection of books.
- Atmosphere of openness, curiosity, and comfort.
- Original fixtures used to feature books.
- Historic photos.

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

- Book store.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on July 22, 2024.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

Legacy Business Program

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2023-24-036
Business Name: Christopher's Books
Business Address: 1400 18th St.
District: District 10
Applicant: Anita (Tee) Minot, Owner
Nomination Date: March 11, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Shamann Walton

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

1400 18th St. from 1991 to Present (33 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: June 18, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 10



City and County of San Francisco

SHAMANN WALTON
華頌善

March 5th, 2024

Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, California, 94102

Christopher's Books
1400 18th St.
San Francisco, California 94107

Legacy Business Nomination for Christopher's Books

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this to express my support for the recognition of Christopher's Books as a Legacy Business.

San Francisco has always been a City that embraces community and the entrepreneurial spirit of its citizens. Located in the heart of the Potrero Neighborhood, Christopher's Books first opened its doors in 1991 and has since created an inviting and warm atmosphere for readers of all walks of life. Its shelves are filled with carefully curated stories that are a reflection of San Francisco's diversity, with approachable staff who can deliver knowledgeable recommendations in person and through their monthly newsletters. For 30 years, Christopher's Books has made long standing contributions to the community that are vital in helping people shape their understanding of the world. In commemorating small businesses like theirs, it attests the essence of the city of San Francisco in regard to fellowship and uplifting of people's stories.

Thank you for your consideration,

Supervisor Shamann Walton

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Shamann Walton".

San Francisco Board of Supervisors, District 10



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Christopher's Books

Business owner name(s): Anita (Tee) Minot

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

Current business address: 1400 18th St. San Francisco CA 94107

Telephone: (415) 255 - 8802 Email: chrisbookssf@gmail.com

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: Christophersbooks.com

Facebook: facebook.com/chrisbookssf/ Twitter: instagram: @christophersbooks

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 3 0 5 2 7 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.

- Immigrant-Owned Business
- LGBTQ+-Owned Business
- Minority-Owned Business*
- Owned by Person with a Disability
- Veteran-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: Anita (Tee) Minot

Contact person title: Owner

Contact telephone: () - Contact email: chrisbookssf@gmail.com

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: 1400 18th St **Zip Code:** 94107

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

Dates at this location: **From:** 07/1991 **To:** Present Day

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: Anita Minot

Signature:



Date: 2/12/2024

CHRISTOPHER'S BOOKS

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

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

Christopher's Books is an independent community-based bookstore selling new books on many different subjects. It also sells games, toys, and Potrero Hill T-shirts. It prides itself on its curation and ability to quickly order books for the community it serves.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

The business serves all of San Francisco, with a focus on Potrero Hill and adjacent neighborhoods, including the Bayview, Hunters Point, Mission Bay, Dogpatch, SoMa, Bernal Heights, and the Mission. Demographics are families, young professionals, and anyone who enjoys reading and browsing in a well-curated, independent store.

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

Curated neighborhood bookstore.

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.

Christopher's Books was founded in July 1991 by Christopher Ellison in its present-day location at 1400 18th Street. Before Christopher was a bookseller, he worked for a venture capital firm. After a terrible car accident, he reconsidered his life. He wanted to open a business close to his home on Potrero Hill. His love of books and the lack of a neighborhood bookstore inspired him to start Christopher's Books. Chris built and installed all the fixtures still currently in the store. His wife Mary Ann and their young daughter Claire helped Chris welcome the Potrero Hill community into the store. It soon became a local vibrant meeting place.

In May 1992, Tee Minot became a business partner. Tee met Chris when he was getting the shop ready to open. Tee had recently moved to San Francisco from Massachusetts. On the East Coast, she worked at the MIT Press Bookstore. After her arrival in San Francisco, she worked at Cover to Cover in Noe Valley for two years. After many morning chats while Chris was installing the fixtures, and Tee was recovering from breakfast at Just for You, Chris proposed that they become business partners and run the store together. Tee is married to Lynn Dolce and has two sons, Nicolas and Joseph, both involved with the store over the years. Tee lives on Bernal Hill.

Chris left the business in 1994. Chris and his wife Mary Ann had dreams of owning a dairy farm, and it made sense for them to return to New Zealand to do this. They still have a home in Mill Valley, and Chris is thrilled that Christopher’s Books is still open and thriving. He is always open to taking a shift if opportunity allows.

Allyn Stern joined as a business partner when Chris left the business. Allyn was a lawyer working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency before switching gears and becoming a partner at the store. Allyn loved running the shop and being an indie bookstore owner, but after two years she had some financial concerns that led her back to working at the EPA.

Tee Minot has been the sole owner since 1996.

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

1991 to 1992:	Christopher Ellison
1992 to 1994:	Christopher Ellison; Tee Minot
1994 to 1996:	Tee Minot; Allyn Stern
1996 to Present:	Tee Minot

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

During the COVID pandemic in 2020, the store was closed to the public, and the staff stayed home during the lockdown. Tee found a way to do curbside pickup for the neighborhood. The community was incredibly supportive, many folks purchasing gift certificates for future use and picking up puzzles and books when they were out running necessary errands. Tee was able to participate in the Paycheck Protection Program to keep payroll for the staff in place.

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.

Christopher’s Books has been a central part of the 18th Street / Potrero Hill business district since opening in 1991. Its doors have been open to the community seven days a week, providing a well curated selection of books for all ages. It is housed in one of the oldest large Victorians on the Hill, and it features vintage photos from the Potrero Hill archive project on its walls. Over the years, Christopher’s Books has become a destination for folks visiting the local restaurants.

The business is an anchor for the community, providing an essential service. Many neighbors stop by daily for the free dog treats that Christopher’s provides. The booksellers pride themselves on being an intimate neighborhood institution and providing access to the ideas, culture, and

entertainments that only an independent bookstore can deliver. The bookstore is a draw for young families, providing the vibrant community that keeps folks in the city.

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

The bookstore has been associated with at least two films that tourists regularly ask about: *Sweet November* and *Ant-Man and the Wasp*. In *Sweet November*, Charlize Theron lives above the bookstore. Keanu Reeves was also a lead in *Sweet November* and spent much of his downtime in the shop, browsing the shelves. The main character in *Ant-Man* was under house arrest in an apartment above the store, and many scenes in the movie were filmed at 18th and Missouri streets, the location of the bookstore.

Former United States Representative John Burton has been a lifelong patron.

Christopher's has participated in the Potrero Hill Festival. Over the years, they have sold books and offered free craft activities for families. The most memorable event was with their landlord, Peter Linenthal, an author and illustrator of more than a dozen children's books. The craft was learning simple bookmaking techniques, giving kids the opportunity to take home a handmade book.

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

Christopher's Books demonstrates its commitment to the community in many ways:

- Being open seven days a week.
- Providing a space for people to gather, browse, and share a love of books.
- Consistently engaging with youth who show a real interest in bookselling, writing, and publishing.
- Providing internships to kids and young adults who have grown up in the store.
- Working with local schools and tutoring programs to support various literacy programs.
- Partnering with Umpqua Bank to create a program called Page Turners. Page Turners featured monthly literary events for children, and featured local Bay Area authors and illustrators.
- Working with the Pritzker Psychiatry building to provide books for their youth wellness program.
- Donating bins of toys and books for the Nancy and Stephen Grand Family House.
- Coordinating book drives for nearby Daniel Webster Elementary School and the Hilltop Pregnant Minors Program.
- Handing out free dog treats to all the dogs on walks in the neighborhoods – perhaps 50 or more treats a day.

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

Aside from being featured in the movies *Sweet November* and *Ant-Man and the Wasp*, Christopher's Books has been referenced extensively in the media, particularly in articles regarding Potrero Hill and San Francisco bookstores. Following are some key media mentions.

- *"Yes, San Francisco: We're still reading paper"*
 The Bold Italic
 March 22, 2023
<https://thebolditalic.com/are-we-still-reading-paper-2e104ee99f8a>
- *"The Best Bookstores in San Francisco"*
 Culture Trip
 January 1, 2023
<https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/california/articles/san-francisco-s-10-coolest-bookstores-you-should-visit>
- *"The Ultimate Guide To The Potrero Hill Neighborhood"*
 San Francisco Magazine
 December 6, 2022
<https://sanfran.com/potrero-hill-neighborhood-guide>
- *"More Bay Area Bookstores"*
 Alta
 June 27, 2022
<https://www.altaonline.com/books/bookstore-guide/g40170923/12-bay-area-bookstores-we-love/>
- *"A complete guide to 45 independent bookstores around San Francisco"*
 San Francisco Standard
 April 30, 2022
<https://sfstandard.com/2022/04/30/san-francisco-best-bookstore-map-complete-guide/>
- *"'Last Black Man in San Francisco' poised for splash after 10 years"*
 San Francisco Chronicle
 April 29, 2019
<https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/movies-tv/last-black-man-in-san-francisco-poised-for-splash-after-10-years>
- *"The best bookstores in San Francisco"*
 Time Out
 August 13, 2018
<https://www.timeout.com/san-francisco/shopping/best-bookstores-in-san-francisco>
- *"Christopher's Books Celebrates 25 Years on Potrero Hill"*
 Hoodline
 June 8, 2016
<https://hoodline.com/2016/06/christophers-books-25-years-potrero-hill/>

- *“Why I Love Living in Potrero Hill”*
The Bold Italic
September 24, 2014
<https://thebolditalic.com/why-i-love-living-in-potrero-hill-the-bold-italic-san-francisco-e72a08b5e185>
- *“Potrero Hill shops maintain a local feel”*
SFGATE
December 11, 2013
<https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/place/article/Potrero-Hill-shops-maintain-a-local-feel-5052940.php>

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

Christopher’s Books has been recognized by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the Potrero Boosters. Former Supervisor Malia Cohen honored Tee Minot during a ceremony honoring small business owners. Tee believes it was during Supervisor Cohen’s second tenure on the board. Tee does not have the exact year for the Potrero Boosters award, but it was likely in the mid- to late-2010s. Both awards were in recognition of Christopher’s contributions to the Potrero Hill community over the years, and a recognition of Tee’s many years as a sole proprietor running an indie bookstore in San Francisco.

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

There are only a few retail stores on 18th Street, so if Christopher’s had to close it would be a big loss for everyone. A community that has had the same indie bookstore for over 30 years would experience a huge loss. The staff are dear friends with many of their customers. Every neighborhood should have a vibrant and active indie bookstore. Books change lives. Christopher’s is also the only bookstore in the Potrero Hill, Dogpatch, Mission Bay, Bayview, and Hunters Point neighborhoods.

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?

Christopher’s Books is located in a large Victorian at 18th and Missouri street. It is owned by Peter Linenthal who created and runs the Potrero Hill Archives project. The space that the bookstore has been in since 1991 has housed quite a variety of things: a thrift store, a recycling center, two different florists. Back in the 1920s, it was a pharmacy/drugstore called Wulzens. The original fixtures from that shop are still a central part of Christophers Books and are used to feature books.

The French doors and the black tile are mostly original. The architectural details will be maintained. As mentioned before, the historic photos on the walls will never be taken down.

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

Christopher's Books is committed to keeping a vibrant independent bookstore open seven days a week offering a well curated selection of books. They are committed to employing new and seasoned booksellers who want to create an atmosphere of openness and curiosity and comfort, an environment that welcomes whoever walks through the door, and any four-legged friend looking for a daily treat.

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

The current owner is committed to a succession plan with a current staff member who understands what makes Christopher's special and knows the importance of becoming a Legacy Business in San Francisco. Their vision for the future of Christopher's is well grounded in an understanding of what Christopher's has been throughout the years. They grew up in the neighborhood and spent many early days and middle school years at the shop – a true San Franciscan, so of course a diehard Giants fan.

d. What challenges is the business facing today?

Christopher's Books faces the same challenges that many independent retail businesses in San Francisco face today: keeping the neighborhood it resides in a safe and clean and vibrant urban home and destination; providing its employees with wages and benefits that allow them to stay in the city; finding opportunities to partner with other San Francisco cultural institutions that are committed to staying in the city; and having a lease in place that will ensure its future success.

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.

Bookstore.

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 1400-1404 18th Street is "C - No Historic Resource Present."





Christopher's Books

Christopher's
BOOKS

A writer
only begins
a book A
reader finishes
it
SAMUEL
JOHNSON

HOURS









Tee Minot

2h · 👤



Thanks for stopping by Dave Eggers! We've got plenty of signed copies of his newest release. Swing by to pick one up on Saturday, Indie Bookstore Day.

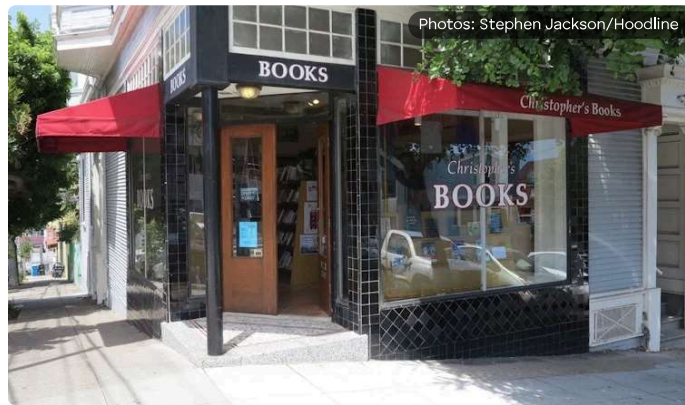


Bay Area / San Francisco / Retail & Industry

CHRISTOPHER'S BOOKS CELEBRATES 25 YEARS ON POTRERO HILL

By Stephen Jackson

Published on June 08, 2016



Next month, [Christopher's Books](#) will turn 25 years old, and for many members of the Potrero Hill community, it will be a birthday worth celebrating.

"It's really a community space that happens to be a bookstore," said owner Tee Minot, who began working there a year after it opened in 1992, and has been the sole proprietor of the shop since 1996.

Minot first met the store's founder and namesake Christopher Ellison in 1992 as a regular at [Just For You Cafe](#), when the diner was still located nearby on 18th Street. Ellison, a former venture capitalist from New Zealand, had originally opened up shop as a local resident that wanted to see a small, independent bookstore in his neighborhood. Although he no longer holds a stake in the business, Minot reports that he still picks up a few shifts a month.

"He's one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet, and you can talk to him about anything," she told us.



Employee Lael Robertson (left) and owner Tee Minot of Christopher's Books.

Minot says the store has always employed an average of about seven people, ranging from folks in their teens to people in their mid-sixties. She's seen many of her customers and employees grow from kids to adults, and attributes a great deal of the store's success to the neighborhood and her staff.

"The store has a great atmosphere. Most of the time we're having a lot of fun while we are working," said Lael Robertson, who has been at Christopher's Books since 2002. She joked that Minot had first offered her a few shifts here and there over the holidays as a respite from running a household with three kids, all of whom would eventually come to work at the shop in some capacity as well.

"Kids grow up in the store," said Minot. "A lot of times, it's the first place they're allowed to walk to alone, and it's where they try to get their first job. It's an extension of my home ... if I could put couches in here, I would."

It's no surprise, then, that Minot and her staff pride themselves on their robust selection of children's

books and are also sure to keep a fair amount of toys for sale on hand. Christopher's Books is also known for its selection of fiction titles and cookbooks.



Running a small, independent bookstore in San Francisco has not been without its challenges. Minot's business has seen the rise of Amazon.com and other online sellers since she began working there in the early '90s, a rise that spelled doom for many similar indie bookstores.

"In the beginning, I kept trying to figure out how I could compete with Amazon," said Minot. "However, I realized that I didn't want to be a chain, but a small, well-curated space where people could have a face to face relationship to their bookseller."



Minot has also had to work to remain a relevant community resource to a surrounding area that is changing drastically. Not all that many years ago, the Mission Bay neighborhood was still in its fledgling stages. Now, it's sprung up into a healthcare epicenter, and Minot felt compelled to contribute to those in need.

To this end, Christopher's Books is sponsoring a book drive benefitting [The Nancy and Stephen Grand Family House](#), an organization that provides housing for families of those hospitalized with life-threatening illnesses. They will also assist the new Mission Bay facility in maintaining a library for kids and adults alike.

In the past, Christopher's Books has held similar book drives for nearby [Daniel Webster Elementary School](#) and [Hilltop Pregnant Minors Program](#).



As for the Potrero Hill community, Robertson told us that while she has noticed more high-limit, metal credit cards being used at the store, the neighborhood's evolution has neither hurt nor drastically improved sales. "The newer crowd is not spending as much time in the neighborhood they live in," she said.

Minot did report that newer restaurants on 18th Street have helped to bring a newer, younger group of people

into the store, especially while they wait in invariably long brunch lines.

"I've enjoyed meeting all the people coming to this neighborhood because of Plow. They love the bookstore. I think people in their twenties are having a reaction to all the technology that surrounds them, and walking into a bookstore is sort of a quaint, retro experience," said Minot.

San Francisco / Potrero Hill - Retail & Industry ▾



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: July 17, 2024

Filing Date: June 18, 2024
Case No.: 2024-005656LBR
Business Name: Christopher’s Books
Business Address: 1400 18th Street
Zoning: NC-2 (NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL, SMALL SCALE) Zoning District
 40-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Not Applicable
Block/Lot: 4003/033
Applicant: Anita Minot
 1400 18th Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Shamann Walton
Located In: District 10
Staff Contact: Rogelio Baeza –628-652-7369
 Rogelio.Baeza@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Christopher’s Books is an independent, community-based bookstore selling new books from many genres. It also sells games, toys, and Potrero Hill T-shirts. It prides itself on its curation and ability to quickly order books for the community it serves. Before Christopher was a bookseller, he worked for a venture capital firm. After a terrible car accident, he reconsidered his life. He wanted to open a business close to his home on Potrero Hill. His love of books and the lack of a neighborhood bookstore inspired him to start Christopher’s Books.

In May 1992, Tee Minot joined Chrisopher as a business partner. Prior to becoming a business partner, Tee had worked at the MIT Press Bookstore in Massachusetts and at Cover to Cover in Noe Valley. In 1994, Chris left the business to fulfill his dream of owning a dairy farm and move back to New Zealand. Soon after, Allyn Stern joined Tee as a business partner. However, since 1996, Tee Minot has been the sole owner of Christopher’s Books.

Christopher's Books has been a neighborhood anchor since its opening. The business fosters an intimate atmosphere, drawing in young families and longtime neighbors, offering treats to local pets, and creating lasting friendships with regular customers. The business has also demonstrated their strong commitment to their neighborhood and their city; they provide internships to young adults interested in books, work with schools to support literacy programs, and partner with the Pritzker Psychiatry building to provide books for their youth wellness program, among other things.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1991.

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

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

- a. Christopher's Books has operated continuously in San Francisco for 33 years.
- b. Christopher's Books has contributed to the history and identity of the Potrero Hill neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Christopher's Books 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 the tradition of independent bookstores.

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

Yes. The bookstore has been associated with at least two films that tourists regularly ask about: Sweet November and Ant-Man and the Wasp.. Former United States Representative John Burton has also been a lifelong patron. Additionally, Christopher's Books is housed in a c. 1904 Queen Anne mixed-use building. The building is a particularly intact example of a transitional building incorporating both Queen Anne and Classical Revival elements. The business's storefront is particularly intact, including a corner pole, mosaic tile threshold and original wood transom.

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

No. However, the building was called out as "Appears individually significant" in the Draft Neighborhood Commercial Corridors Survey from 2015.

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 a number of features and articles on Christopher's Books, both within and outside the industry. "Yes, San Francisco: We're Still Reading Paper" by *The Bold Italic* references the importance and the experience of stepping into a bookstore in modern day. The "Best Bookstores in San Francisco" by *Culture Trip* points out the distinct features of Christopher's Bookstore as being "pet-friendly" and holding "book drives for local charities."

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.

Christopher's Books is an LGBTQ+-owned and woman-owned business. They have demonstrated their commitment to the community in many ways, whether donating books to local shelters and youth wellness programs or coordinating book drives for local schools.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 1400 18th Street (1991 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Identity as a vibrant, independent neighborhood bookstore
- Well curated selection of books
- Atmosphere of openness, curiosity, and comfort
- Original fixtures used to feature books
- Historic photos

Additional Recommended by Staff

- N/A

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 DRAFT RESOLUTION NO.

HEARING DATE: July 17, 2024

Case No.: 2024-005656LBR
Business Name: Christopher’s Books
Business Address: 1400 18TH ST
Zoning: NC-2 (NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL, SMALL SCALE) Zoning District
 40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 4003/033
Applicant: Anita Minot
 1400 18th Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Shamann Walton
Located In: District 10
Staff Contact: Rogelio Baeza – 6286-52-7369
Rogelio.Baeza@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR CHRISTOPHER’S BOOKS CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1400 18TH ST (PRIMARY ADDRESS), BLOCK/LOT 4003/033.

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 July 17, 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 Christopher’s Books 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 Christopher’s Books.

Locations

Current Locations:

- 1400 18th Street (1991 – Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- Identity as a vibrant, independent neighborhood bookstore
- Well curated selection of books
- Atmosphere of openness, curiosity, and comfort
- Original fixtures used to feature books
- Historic photos

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 July 17, 2024.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: July 17, 2024