



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: November 8, 2021

## VJ GROCERY

*Application No.:* LBR-2021-22-001  
*Business Name:* VJ Grocery  
*Business Address:* 1199 Clay Street  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Anastasios Tom Taptelis, Owner  
*Nomination Letter Date:* July 22, 2021  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

VJ Grocery is a family-owned, neighborhood grocery store located in the heart of Nob Hill. It is named after its opening on August 15, 1945, V-J Day (Victory over Japan Day). VJ Grocery is a retail store with tables outside for customers to enjoy coffee and snacks. It stocks a range of everyday items such as groceries, beverages, tobacco products, over-the-counter medications, and toiletries. Beyond its function as an essential neighborhood mart, it serves as a congregating point for the community. In addition to neighborhood locals, VJ Grocery serves guests of the nearby historical Huntington, Fairmont, and Mark Hopkins hotels, as well as the congregation of Grace Cathedral and visitors of the Masonic Auditorium.

Little is known about the first 25 years of VJ Grocery's operation. In 1970, Athanasios (Tom) Tsifourdaris, a recent immigrant from Greece, purchased the store. Soon, Tom's youngest brother, Spiros Tsifourdaris, began working for his brother and became owner of VJ Grocery in 1990. Most recently, in January of 2020, Anastasios Tom Taptelis, the husband of one of Spiros's twin daughters, Helen, took ownership of the store.

VJ Grocery is especially well-known for its role in the movie industry. Beginning in the 1960s, VJ Grocery has gained popularity from being featured in several motion pictures, including the famous film Bullitt (1968), starring Steve McQueen. In the film, McQueen's character frequented VJ Grocery to buy his famous frozen foods. VJ Grocery was also featured in Hereafter starring Matt Damon and directed by Clint Eastwood, as well as numerous commercials.

### 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, VJ Grocery has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

1199 Clay Street from 1945 to Present (76 years).

### CRITERION 2

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

Yes, VJ Grocery has contributed to the history and identity of the Nob Hill neighborhood and San Francisco.

#### Legacy Business Program

Office of Small Business  
City Hall Room 140  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
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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:

- VJ Grocery is associated with the movie industry due to its appearance in numerous films, such as Bullitt starring Steve McQueen and Hereafter starring Matt Damon. In Bullitt, McQueen's character frequented VJ Grocery to buy his famous frozen foods. Due to its prominent role in the movie Bullitt, the business is associated with Steve McQueen, a famous action actor of the 1960s and 1970s.
- The property that VJ Grocery is located within was included in the Department of City Planning 1976 Survey. The surveyors rated the building 2 on a scale of 0-5, with 5 being the highest rating for architecture.
- There have been several features and articles on VJ Grocery, especially related to its role in the film industry. VJ Grocery has been referenced in many Bullitt fanfare publications, as well as in filmography articles. The market was also featured in the local television news (KRON 4) in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **CRITERION 3**

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

Yes, VJ Grocery is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that VJ Grocery 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:

- Exterior of the store.
- Exterior seating area.
- Old-world charm and neighborhood feel.
- Large sign with the name (VJ Grocery) commemorating V-J Day.
- Name of the store, VJ Grocery, as it commemorates V-J Day.
- Photos of the film Bullitt.
- Bullitt Day on October 17.

### **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.

- Grocery store.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include VJ Grocery currently located at 1199 Clay Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager  
Legacy Business Program

#### **Legacy Business Program**

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# Small Business Commission

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

November 8, 2021

## VJ GROCERY

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legacybusiness@sfgov.org

**Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for VJ Grocery, currently located at 1199 Clay Street.**

**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 November 8, 2021, 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 VJ Grocery 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 VJ Grocery.

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- Exterior seating area.
- Old-world charm and neighborhood feel.
- Large sign with the name (VJ Grocery) commemorating V-J Day.
- Name of the store, VJ Grocery, as it commemorates V-J Day.
- Photos of the film Bullitt.
- Bullitt Day on October 17.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain VJ Grocery on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Grocery store.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on November 8, 2021.

---

Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Director

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

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

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# Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2021-22-001  
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*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Anastasios Tom Taptelis, Owner  
*Nomination Letter Date:* July 22, 2021  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin

**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

1199 Clay Street from 1945 to Present (76 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:** October 6, 2021

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program

## Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

**AARON PESKIN**

July 22, 2021

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

RE: Legacy Nomination Letter for VJ Grocery

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

It is my honor and privilege to nominate VJ Grocery for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Originally immigrant-owned and family-run, VJ Grocery has been in operations for more than 30 years preserving its charm and uniqueness. Due to the historic neighborhood and iconic hillside scenery of Nob Hill, the store has been featured in multiple films.

The store serves as a convenience store for visitors staying at the City's most historic hotels, a staple for neighbors to get groceries, and a community hub for the neighborhood, where neighbors meet up and build community.

I hereby, respectfully, recommend VJ Grocery for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,

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

Aaron Peskin

# Section One:

## Business / Applicant Information.

Please provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>	
VJ Grocery	
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S)</b> (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
Anastasios Tom Taptelis and Helen Tsifourdaris Taptelis	
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
1199 Clay Street, San Francisco, CA 94108	415-885-3417
	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
<b>MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:</b>	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	
	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:</b>
<b>WEBSITE ADDRESS:</b>	
n/a	
<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	
n/a	
<b>TWITTER NAME:</b>	
n/a	
<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
Anastasios Tom Taptelis	
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
Owner	
<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	
1112349 (new business account number); 0076814 (old business account number)	
<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):</b>	

## Section Two:

### 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. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS	ZIP CODE	START DATE OF BUSINESS
1199 Clay Street	94108	8/15/1945
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?		DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

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		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:



## Section Three:

### Disclosure Statement.

#### 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.

Anastasios Tom Taptelis

9/20/20

Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:



## VJ GROCERY

### Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

#### CRITERION 1

**a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.**

VJ Grocery, located at 1199 Clay Street, got its name because it opened in San Francisco on August 15, 1945, on V-J Day. Victory over Japan Day (V-J Day) was August 15, 1945, the day Imperial Japan surrendered in World War II, in effect bringing the war to an end. This was a significant day for all Americans, and the store opening on that historical day is a significant event in this neighborhood. Thus, the owner at the time named the business VJ Grocery, to commemorate this significant historical event.

Not much is known about the original owners of the business.

Athanasios (Tom) Tsifourdaris was the first person in the Tsifourdaris family to own the grocery store. He was an immigrant from Greece who came with a wave of people from Europe in the 1960s seeking the American dream. In 1970, he bought the store from the previous owners.

Tom's youngest brother, Spiros Tsifourdaris, immigrated to the United States in 1977 with his pregnant wife and began working for his brother.

Tragedy struck on January 30, 1990, when the single Tom Tsifourdaris, also affectionally know as Uncle Tom, had a heart attack at the young age of 45 and passed away that same day. Spiros, the youngest of six brothers, took over ownership of the business and supported his wife and two young twin daughters through the earnings of the store.

A third generation of Athanasios Tsifourdaris' family has just taken over ownership. Anastasios Tom Taptelis, the husband of one of Spiros' twin daughters, Helen, is now the proud owner and is happy to continue the legacy of the store in the family. He assumed ownership on January 15, 2020.

The store is a testament of the American Dream for many immigrants who flee poor circumstances to make a life in America and build a legacy for their future generations.

**b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?**

The business never ceased operations for more than six months due to any circumstances. The most the business ceased operations was just a couple days due to the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, but outside of that, no major closures.

During the COVID-19 pandemic when the city shut down in March 2020, the business never ceased operations, though there was an impact in the overall revenue. Tom Taptelis, the current owner, made sure that the store remained open for all, especially during the several quarantines, so that the neighborhood had a place to buy grocery essentials, as well as disinfecting supplies and masks. He made sure to keep these essential items in stock, so that everyone in the neighborhood felt safe and also provided much sought-after items at a discounted rate. Though his profit was not what it used to be, he took his role as an essential worker to heart to ensure the community's needs were being met in whatever way he could meet them.

**c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.**

Yes, this business has been owned by the same family since it was acquired in the mid-1970s. This store is still living on through the same family today. Please see Criterion 1A for a detailed explanation of the historical ownership of the Tsifourdaris/Taptelis family.

**d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.**

The ownership history of VJ Grocery is as follows:

1945 to 1970	Unknown
1970 to 1990:	Athanasios Tsifourdaris
1990 to 2020:	Spiros Tsifourdaris
2020 to present:	Anastasios Tom Taptelis

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application.

The Business Account Number on the Business Registration Certificate is 0076814.

**f. Note any 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 historic resource status of the building that houses VJ Grocery is classified by the Planning Department as Category B, Unknown / Age Eligible, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act.

## **CRITERION 2**

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

The corner of VJ Grocery, along with Huntington Park, is the congregating intersection of the quiet Nob Hill neighborhood. Because of its location up a very steep hill and surrounded by other steep hills, there is a feeling of a close-knit small town, where almost everybody knows everybody, despite being in a large metropolitan city. This neighborhood is the type of neighborhood where neighbors know each other and say hello on the sidewalk and stop to catch up for “small talk.” It has a special homey feel, though it is right smack in the middle of San Francisco. The store itself is a key contributor to this feeling, as it is a gathering place where these neighbors can grab a cup of coffee and snack, sit outside next to the fresh flowers with their dogs, and build the close-knit community known as Nob Hill, as well as shop for essential groceries.

From the late 1960s to now, VJ Grocery has gained popularity from being featured in several motion pictures, including the famous film Bullitt (1968), starring Steve McQueen and directed by Peter Yates. Steve McQueen’s character’s apartment (<http://reelsf.com/reelsf/bullitt-bullitts-apartment>) was directly across the street from the store, and he would frequent the store in the film; there are even scenes with the inside of the store featured where he buys his famous frozen foods, and, of course, the famous timeless car chase scene took place in the surrounding streets and hills ([link](#)). Ever since then, many fans and tourists of the Bullitt film have visited the location to take pictures and even buy frozen TV dinners from the store.

### **b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?**

Because of the store’s location in the city, after Bullitt, there have been several more films filmed outside and inside the store, as well as commercials. These are always fun events for the residents of the area who get to see the production of a film or commercial, as well as spot famous actors. Below is a list of a few of the major motion pictures filmed at the store:

- Bullitt starring Steve McQueen
- Hereafter starring Matt Damon and directed by Clint Eastwood
- The Wedding Planner starring Jennifer Lopez and Matthew McConaughey
- George of the Jungle starring Brandon Frasier
- San Andreas starring Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson
- Several commercials, including Stella Artois, Cheez -It, etc.

**c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?**

VJ Market has been referenced in many Bullitt fanfare publications and filmography articles. It has also been featured in the local news (KRON 4) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?**

Yes, the business is associated with Steve McQueen, a famous action actor of the 1960s and 1970s.

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

The business is a neighborhood market that serves the residents in the area. The neighborhood itself is a high “foot-traffic” area, and the store is one of the very few corner stores in the area. Residents and passersby stop in to grab a quick refreshment, snack, etc., as well as buy groceries from there. Several people walk their dogs and sit at the tables outside to drink their coffee and/refreshments. It is truly a neighborhood store that serves the residents in the area.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the store stayed open, gave masks to the residents in the area for free, delivered groceries to high-risk populations, and so forth. The business considers all the residents in the area its customers, and continues to serve the community in any way it possibly can. The store was also featured at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in the local news (specifically KRON 4, [link](#)) which aired on March 31, 2020. In this news piece, the owner spoke about the impact the pandemic had on business and other small grocery stores. Despite all the hurdles, his community and customers are a priority, and he found innovative ways to meet their needs.

**f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.**

The business serves the residents and passersby of the neighborhood in Nob Hill. It is a neighborhood grocery store. It also serves visitors and people staying at the nearby historical Huntington, Fairmont, and Mark Hopkins hotels, as well as the congregation of the Grace Cathedral and members of the Masonic temple – all famous historical buildings in the area.

**g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?**

Outside of VJ Grocery representing the Greek immigrants who came to America for a better life, no there is no other cultural significance to the store.

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

The store is a staple of the neighborhood. It is a congregating point for the residents in the area, a place where people can get together, chat, walk their dogs, and build a neighborly

community in a large city like San Francisco. The store contributes to the small town feel of Nob Hill because of its location, and it provides the residents with the opportunity to get to know each other despite living in a large city.

### **CRITERION 3**

#### **a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.**

The exterior of the store has not changed significantly at all since the business was established. Through the decades, it has kept its old-world charm and neighborhood feel. There still is a large sign with the same name, VJ Grocery, commemorating V-J Day. The store is also reminiscent of the famous movie that was filmed there, Bullitt. The store is easily recognized by the many tourists and fans that make the trip to the neighborhood just to take a photo of the building.

#### **b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)**

The business is committed to keeping the name VJ Grocery for V-J Day. There are also photos of the film Bullitt displayed in the store, including stills from the film showing both the exterior and interior of the store. There are also plans for a Bullitt Day on October 17th, when the store plans to celebrate the anniversary of the film's release date and provide fun activities, like winning a week's worth of frozen dinners while entering a drawing.

#### **c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).**

The overall architectural design of the store has not changed, including the awning and the exterior signage, which were recently painted. The owner does not want to change the look of the store because of its significance to the film industry and the charm it offers the neighborhood, including keeping an exterior sitting area to promote community in Nob Hill.

#### **d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.**

Documentation that demonstrates the business has been a grocery store for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.





200  
TAYLOR

VJ GROCERY 1199

ATM  
VJ GROCERY  
LIQUOR

ATM

1199







COUNTER DOOR



WARN NG  
This is a warning sign posted on a pillar. The text is partially obscured but appears to contain safety information.





Displayed at the store  
to commemorate  
the film.

1152 1160 Taylor St Way  
street address

222  
block number

24  
lot number

2  
summary

R/C 3 floors

building type/use/number of floors

landmark number

RELATIONSHIP WITH SURROUNDING BUILDINGS

Relationship of setting to building -2 -1 0 1 2 (3) 4 5

Importance as contribution to a cluster/streetscape -2 -1 0 1 (2) 3 4 5

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN VALUATION

Facade proportions -2 -1 0 (1) 2 3 4 5

Richness/Excellence of detailing/decoration -2 -1 0 (1) 2 3 4 5

Unique visual feature of interest 0 (1) 2 3 4 5

Example of a rare or unusual style or design (0) 1 2 3 4 5

Overall architectural quality -2 -1 0 (1) 2 3 4 5

PROPOSED FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

CORNICE, PARAPET, APPENDAGE  
Importance of cornice to building design -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Cornice contribution to streetscape -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

FACADE CONDITION  
Physical condition -2 -1 0 1 2 (3) 4 5

Paint/Material color -2 -1 0 1 2 (3) 4 5

REMODELING  
Appropriateness of improvements -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Engle 7-14-74  
date

Field Notes

13



photo 278-22

Review Notes

- Junior League Listing
- text  index  file
- Northern California Guide
- Other Listing \_\_\_\_\_

B-7

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# REEL SF

*San Francisco movie locations from classic films*

SAN FRANCISCO, USA  
CITYSLEUTH@REELSF.COM

## BULLITT - BULLITT'S APARTMENT

December 23, 2010 / CitySleuth

Below, director Peter Yates captures one of San Francisco's many vistas on a misty morning as Bullitt heads east down Broadway from Taylor on his way to his apartment (locals will recognize he's actually heading *away from* his apartment).

***Then ...*** The Bay Bridge is in the distance and there's a small twin-domed church on the left.



... **and Now**, the church, Nuestra Senor de Guadalupe, was built in 1906 to serve the local Catholic community. It's now a Chinese day school.



**Then ...** He drives his Mustang down Clay Street, crosses Taylor, then makes a slick reverse (below) in front of the cream Austin Healey (CitySleuth is salivating

- he used to own one). Bullitt's apartment house, 1153 Taylor Street, is the dark blue house on the corner of Clay - his place is on the top floor.



... **and Now**, the building is repainted a light color and a garage has been added at the front corner.





**Then ...** At the corner market opposite his apartment he isn't above helping himself to a newspaper when he's short of change.



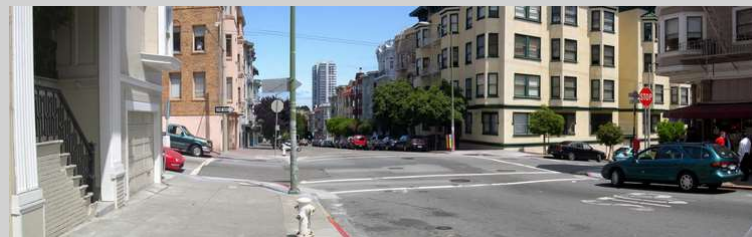
**... and Now**, the recent photo finds a market, V-J Grocery, still at the same location, 1199 Clay Street, where customers can still get their daily paper out front.



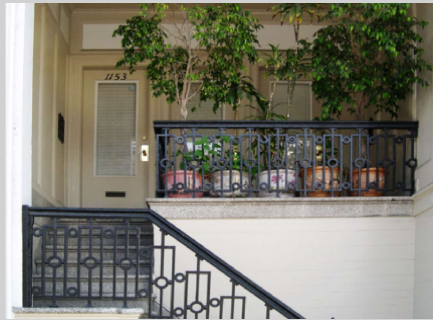
**Then ...** In the composited image below, Bullitt crosses Taylor and climbs the front steps to his apartment door.



**... and Now**, today's view, north along Taylor across Clay, is pretty much unchanged in over 40 years.



**... and Now**, below are the entrance steps of 1153 Taylor leading to the building's three apartments, 1153, 1155 and 1157. Bullitt's was 1153, the door on the left, which leads up to the top floor.



Inside the apartment Cathy has breakfast in the living room. The corner window view looks east down Clay Street - San Francisco Bay and part of Yerba Buena Island can be seen in the distance.



> [Previous Location](#)

> [Next Location](#)



<http://movie-locations.com/movies/b/Bullitt.php>



[HOME](#) > [FILMS](#) > [B](#) > BULLITT

## Bullitt | 1968



**Bullitt location: Frank Bullitt's apartment: Taylor Street, San Francisco**

### LOCATIONS

San Francisco, California

### DIRECTOR

Peter Yates

### CAST

Steve McQueen,  
Robert Vaughn,  
Jacqueline Bisset,  
Robert Duvall,  
Simon Oakland



Brit director **Peter Yates** set the industry standard for car chases in this **San Francisco** based police actioner.

The brief prologue is set in **Chicago** with the briefest establishing shot of the **Chicago Sun Times Building** and the **Marina City Towers** – though the action itself was, like the rest of the movie, filmed in **San Francisco**.

Detective Frank Bullitt (**Steve McQueen**) has to track down a hit squad before the fact leaks out that their target, prize witness Johnnie Ross, has already been offed.



Bullitt location: Ross is spotted in the hotel lobby: Mark Hopkins Hotel, 1 Nob Hill, San Francisco

The doomed informant Ross is first spotted by the baddies in the lobby of the de-luxe **InterContinental Mark Hopkins San Francisco**, 999 California Street atop Nob Hill.

This grand **San Francisco** institution, built on the site of what was once one of the city's most prestigious mansions, is also featured in **Harold Robbins'** 1978 motor industry potboiler **The Betsy** and 1969 shocker **Daddy's Gone a-Hunting**.

The hotel stands alongside two other cinematic landmarks: the Fairmont Hotel (**The Rock**; **Family Plot**) and the Brocklebank Apartments (**Vertigo**; **The Woman In Red**).

It's downhill for Ross from here: the rather less grand 'Daniels Hotel' in which he's installed for his safety stood on **Embarcadero**, at **Howard Street** opposite Pier 18 beneath the foot of the double-deck **Oakland Bay Bridge**. The whole area has since been massively redeveloped and both the hotel and pier are gone.



**Bullitt location: Bullitt stocks up on TV dinners: VJ Groceries, Clay Street, San Francisco**

You can see Bullitt's apartment, unchanged, at **1153-1157 Taylor Street**, a stylish 1906 three-story frame building at the corner of Clay Street. And across the road you can still shop at **VJ Groceries**, where loner Bullitt stocks up on TV dinners.

Bullitt does chill out with girlfriend Cathy (**Jacqueline Bisset**) in the jazzy ambience of what was the groovy Coffee Cantata but has since been revamped to become Mexican restaurant **Flores**, **2030 Union Street** at Buchanan Street in **Cow Hollow**.



# San Francisco Interfaith Council

*Celebrating our diverse faiths & spiritual traditions  
Bringing people together to build understanding  
Serving our community*

P.O. Box 29055  
San Francisco, CA 94129  
Phone: 415.474.1321  
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*University of San Francisco*

September 29, 2020

Office of Small Business  
Attn: Legacy Business Program  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
City Hall, Room 140  
San Francisco, 94102

Re: Legacy Business Program Nomination Letter

To whom this may concern:

I am writing this letter to nominate VJ Grocery, located at 1199 Clay Street, San Francisco, CA 94080, for the Legacy Business Program in San Francisco, CA. I've known the family who has owned this business for over 15 years, and have been a patron myself whenever I have been in the neighborhood. The family and the store provide a welcoming atmosphere in the heart of the city. In addition, please see below how this business meets the eligibility criteria for the program:

1. The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years with no break in operations exceeding two years.
  - a. VJ Grocery has been in business since V-J Day, August 15, 1945, and the owners just celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their opening day this past August. Since that date, the business did not cease operations for any significant amount of time. Since the late 1970s, this business has been run by the same family for three generations.
2. The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community.
  - a. This grocery store symbolizes several key historical events in San Francisco and the neighborhood. Its initial grand opening was on V-J Day, the day that officially ended WWII, but also commemorates a difficult time in San Francisco history, during one of the deadliest riots ever in the city. It is a standing landmark of the juxtaposition of a time of victory as well as civil unrest, and many years later, is still standing as a testament to the City's perseverance. Additionally, the store has gained fame amongst fans of the film, Bullitt, as it was a key location in the film. Since then, it is on Hollywood's short list of San Francisco film locations, where several films (Hereafter, The Wedding Planner, San Andreas, to name a few) have been filmed. As such, it continues to make history and provide character to the beautiful Nob Hill neighborhood of San Francisco.



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September 29, 2020  
Page 2

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**Swami Vedananda**  
*Vedanta Society*  
**Dr. Mary Wardell-Ghirarduzzi**  
*University of San Francisco*

3. The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms.
  - a. Since its opening in 1945 and its debut in the film, Bullitt, this store has not changed the face and overall appearance of the store, outside of some cosmetic improvements in the interior. It is still very easily recognizable to the many fanatic Bullitt fans that come to take photos of the location where actor Steve McQueen bought his TV dinners in the film. Additionally, the name, V-J Grocery, has remained for over 75 years, and is still proudly displayed in the exterior.

Please kindly review and provide your recommendation for legacy registration at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards,

Michael G. Pappas, M.Div.  
Executive Director  
San Francisco Interfaith Council  
(415) 425-9631  
mgpappas@sfinterfaithcouncil.org





# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: November 3, 2021**

*Filing Date:* October 6, 2021  
*Case No.:* **2021-010341LBR**  
*Business Name:* VJ Grocery  
*Business Address:* 1199 CLAY STREET  
*Zoning:* RM-3 - Residential- Mixed, Medium Density Zoning District  
65-A Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0222/024  
*Applicant:* Anastasios Tom Taptelis  
1199 Clay Street  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Elena Moore - 628-652-7322  
[Elena.Moore@sfgov.org](mailto:Elena.Moore@sfgov.org)

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

## Business Description

VJ Grocery is a family-owned, neighborhood grocery store located in the heart of Nob Hill. It is named after its opening on August 15, 1945, V-J Day (Victory over Japan Day). VJ Grocery is a retail store with tables outside for customers to enjoy coffee and snacks. It stocks a range of everyday items such as groceries, beverages, tobacco products, over-the-counter medications, and toiletries. Beyond its function as an essential neighborhood mart, it serves as a congregating point for the community. In addition to neighborhood locals, VJ Grocery serves guests of the nearby historical Huntington, Fairmont, and Mark Hopkins hotels, as well as the congregation of Grace Cathedral and visitors of the Masonic Auditorium.

Little is known about the first twenty-five years of VJ Grocery's operation. In 1970, Athanasios (Tom) Tsifourdaris, a recent immigrant from Greece, purchased the store. Soon, Tom's youngest brother, Spiros Tsifourdaris, began working for his brother and became owner of VJ Grocery in 1990. Most recently, in January of 2020, Anastasios Tom Taptelis, the husband of one of Spiros's twin daughters, Helen, took ownership of the store.

VJ Grocery is especially well-known for its role in the movie industry. Beginning in the 1960s, VJ Grocery has gained popularity from being featured in several motion pictures, including the famous film *Bullitt* (1968), starring Steve McQueen. In the film, McQueen's character frequented VJ Grocery to buy his famous frozen foods. VJ Grocery was also featured in *Hereafter*, starring Matt Damon, and directed by Clint Eastwood, as well as numerous commercials.

The business's primary location at 1199 Clay Street is a Category B (Unknown/ Age Eligible) structure on the southeast corner of Taylor and Clay streets in the Nob Hill neighborhood. It is within a RM-3 - Residential- Mixed, Medium Density Zoning District and a 65-A Height and Bulk District. 1199 Clay Street was included in the 1976 Department of City Planning Survey, where it received a rating of 2 on a scale of 0-5, with 5 being the highest rating for architecture.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

**1. *When was business founded?***

The business was founded in 1945.

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

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

- a. VJ Grocery has operated continuously in San Francisco for 76 years.
- b. VJ Grocery has contributed to the history and identity of the Nob Hill neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. VJ Grocery 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?***

No. The business is not associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition.

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

Yes. VJ Grocery is associated with the movie industry due to its appearance in numerous films, such as *Bullitt*, starring Steve McQueen, and *Hereafter*, starring Matt Damon. In *Bullitt*, McQueen's character frequented VJ Grocery to buy his famous frozen foods.

Due to its prominent role in the movie *Bullitt*, the business is associated with Steve McQueen, a famous action actor of the 1960s and 1970s.

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

No. However, the property that VJ Grocery is located within was included in the Department of City Planning 1976 Survey. The surveyors rated the building 2 on a scale of 0-5, with 5 being the highest rating for architecture.

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 on VJ Grocery, especially related to its role in the film industry. VJ Grocery has been referenced in many *Bullitt* fanfare publications, as well as in filmography articles. The market was also featured in the local television news (KRON 4) in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 1199 Clay Street (1945 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Exterior of the store
- Exterior seating area
- Old-world charm and neighborhood feel
- Large sign with the name (VJ Grocery) commemorating V-J Day
- Name of the store, VJ Grocery, as it commemorates V-J Day
- Photos of the film *Bullitt*
- *Bullitt Day* on October 17

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

## Basis for Recommendation

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

### ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

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



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###

**HEARING DATE: November 3, 2021**

*Case No.:* 2021-010341LBR  
*Business Name:* VJ Grocery  
*Business Address:* 1199 CLAY STREET  
*Zoning:* RM-3 – Residential- Mixed, Medium Density Zoning District  
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*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Elena Moore – 628-652-7322  
[Elena.Moore@sfgov.org](mailto:Elena.Moore@sfgov.org)

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR VJ GROCERY CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1199 CLAY STREET, BLOCK/LOT 0222/024.

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 November 3, 2021 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 VJ Grocery 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 VJ Grocery.

*Locations*

- 1199 Clay Street (1945 – Present)

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business*

- Exterior of the store
- Exterior seating area
- Old-world charm and neighborhood feel
- Large sign with the name (VJ Grocery) commemorating V-J Day
- Name of the store, VJ Grocery, as it commemorates V-J Day
- Photos of the film *Bullitt*
- *Bullitt Day* on October 17

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 2021-010341LBR to the Office of Small Business November 3, 2021.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: November 3, 2021