Legacy Business Program Implementation in American Urban Immigrant Neighborhoods:
A Case Study of Little Tokyo and Chinatown, Los Angeles

By

Xiaoling Fang

A Thesis Presented to the
FACULTY OF THE USC SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION /
MASTER OF URBAN PLANNING

MAY 2023

Copyright 2023 Xiaoling Fang
Acknowledgements

When I visited Los Angeles Chinatown for the first time three years ago, I felt like I was in a time machine because the neighborhood landscape looked exactly like the town that I grew up in. The people, the environment sound, and the items displayed at stores, made me feel connected with this place. As a Cantonese speaker, I naturally felt I was already a part of the community. When I returned to Chinatown this spring to celebrate the Lunar New Year, however, I was shocked to find that many buildings along the Broadway, the heart of Chinatown, were replaced by construction fields. Development projects sprang up throughout the neighborhood. Standing in the East Gate of Chinatown Central Plaza, facing the black fabric fence across the street that implies a luxury complex will soon confront the Central Plaza, It is the moment when I knew that I was going to stand with the Chinatown community.

Throughout the journey of learning and understanding the community, I gradually realized that although we speak the same language and have similar taste on foods, Chinatown community grew its roots in Downtown Los Angeles with wounds and tears fighting against racial inequity. The issues she is facing, as well as her stories, is a part of American history and should be examined under the American context. The future of the community would be contingent on how we percept the past and how we carry it to next generation. During this process, innovative heritage conservation strategies would be necessary to adapt to the complex urban context in Los Angeles. My research, therefore, focuses on the intersection of heritage conservation and urban issues.

No acknowledgment would be complete without thanks to my parents and my sister first. I have not been home since the COVID-19 pandemic began three years ago and missed a lot of important moments with my family. I thank them for always sending love and energy across the Pacific Ocean.

I would like to thank my beloved grandma, Chunlan Miao, who left us during COVID. I hoped I was there by your side. I always love you.

I am deeply indebted to Trudi Sandmeier, my professor and thesis committee chair, for her guidance during this work and generous support when I encountered problems. I am likewise grateful to Katie Horak and Dr. Meredith Drake Reitan for their endless patience and thorough comments on my drafts.

Many thanks to my friend Enyu Li for her believing in me all the time.
I am also grateful to my friend Henke Shao who always supports me.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to people who generously offered me assistance and shared their thoughts and experience during the journey, including:

Lindsay Mulcahy from the Los Angeles Conservancy, for her introduction to Dorothy Fue Wong and the Los Angeles Conservancy’s Legacy Business Program.

Dorothy Fue Wong for her willingness to introduce me to the community, to the Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED), and to her incredible views about Chinatown’s future.

Eugene Moy from the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California for sharing his childhood memories in Chinatown and important historical archives.

Peter Ng, the CEO of the Chinatown Service Center (CSC), for taking the time to share his valuable insights about the community and directing me to key stakeholders.

Jon Lin, Community Economic Development Manager at CSC, for giving me a comprehensive introduction about small businesses in Chinatown and the community dynamics.

Janis Yue and Sophat Phea, leaders of CCED’s Small Business Community, for helping me contact legacy business owners and other CCED members and sharing important community survey data. I cannot finish this thesis without your support!

Sabrina Chu, Elise Dang, and Kenia Sanchez Luviano, activists and volunteers at CCED, for taking time to share their touching stories with Chinatown and their endeavor to help community development.

Joyce, Isabel, Sasha, and Trinity, high school students growing up in the San Gabriel Valley and dedicated to protecting legacy businesses in Chinatown, for sharing their family stories.

Bill Watanabe, a respected community leader and the de facto mayor of Little Tokyo, for taking time to share his moving stories about fighting for legacy businesses and affordable housing for the community, giving me a food history tour at Little Tokyo, and introducing me to the Little Tokyo Service Center. I was inspired by his spirit in promoting equitable development for the community.

Michael Okamura, President of Little Tokyo Historical Society, for generously giving me an introduction to Little Tokyo’s history.
Rosalind Sagara, Neighborhood Outreach Manager of Los Angeles Conservancy, for imparting her valuable knowledge and information about communities’ opinions and Los Angeles’s legacy business program.

Desiree Aranda, former San Francisco Heritage employee, for sharing her experience and insights about the iconic San Francisco Registry program.

Pauline, a long-time community activist in her 80s who has lived in Chinatown for 53 years, for spending a day with me wandering and dining in the Chinatown neighborhood.

Cindy Ho, a proud small business owner with Vietnamese-Chinese background, for sharing her touching and inspiring family history from Vietnam to Los Angeles and her genuine concerns about Chinatown’s future.

Michelle, a hard-working restaurant owner with Cantonese roots, for sharing her story and fears about the future.

Ming, a restaurant owner who is proud of his business, for sharing his family and business stories.

James, a giftshop owner who experienced multiple times of displacement, for talking about how he escaped from Vietnam and how he pivoted his family business in Chinatown.

Ken Chan, one of the operators of Phoenix Bakery, for sharing his family history and insights about the other legacy businesses in Chinatown.

Hing, a small business owner in Dynasty Center, for sharing his valuable business insights.

And all residents and shoppers who I encountered in the Chinatown neighborhood for kindly sharing their stories with me.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables ........................................................................................................ vi
List of Figures ......................................................................................................... vii
Abstract ................................................................................................................ viii
Introduction .......................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1 Legacy Business and Heritage Conservation ........................................... 3
  Cultural Significance and Heritage Conservation .................................................... 3
  Legacy Business and Heritage Conservation .......................................................... 8

Chapter 2 Analysis of Legacy Business Programs Based on Examples in San Francisco, CA, Seattle WA, and Los Angeles, CA ......................................................... 15
  Case study 1: San Francisco Legacy Business Registry ........................................... 17
  Case Study 2: Legacy Business Program in San Antonio, Texas ............................. 23
  Case Study 3: Los Angeles’s Legacy Business Registry .......................................... 25
  Conclusions ........................................................................................................... 30

Chapter 3 Neighborhood-scale Case Studies Based on Little Tokyo and Chinatown in Los Angeles, CA ............................................................................................... 33
  Case Study 1: Little Tokyo ..................................................................................... 34
  Case Study 2: Los Angeles Chinatown ................................................................... 43
  Conclusions ........................................................................................................... 64

Chapter 4 Conclusion ............................................................................................. 68

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 73

Appendix A ........................................................................................................... 79
Appendix B ............................................................................................................ 80
Appendix C ............................................................................................................ 86
Appendix D ............................................................................................................ 89
List of Tables

Table 2.1: Summary of characteristics of three major legacy business programs........................ 29
Table 3.1: Part of existing legacy businesses in New Chinatown. .................................................. 53
Table 4.1: Legacy Business Conservation Process Based on Burra Charter Process.................... 72
List of Figures

Figure 1.1: The Burra Charter Process. ................................................................. 7
Figure 2.1: Maps and social media displayed in S.F. Registry website............................ 22
Figure 2.2: Legacy Business logo........................................................................... 22
Figure 2.3: Legacy Business Plaque. .......................................................................... 23
Figure 2.4: Maps and Business Categories of Legacy Businesses in San Antonio................ 24
Figure 3.1: The First Street North block in Little Tokyo............................................. 36
Figure 3.2: Plaque issued by Little Tokyo HistoS....................................................... 36
Figure 3.3: Ondo dancing in Little Tokyo during the Nisei Week Japanese Festival.......... 36
Figure 3.4: Ondo dancing and Uchiwa fan in Little Tokyo........................................... 38
Figure 3.5: A lion dance troupe moves through Old Chinatown.................................... 44
Figure 3.6: Central Plaza in New Chinatown.............................................................. 45
Figure 3.7: Postcard of Sun Mun Way (孫文路).......................................................... 46
Figure 3.8: Far East Plaza in New Chinatown............................................................ 48
Figure 3.9: Dynasty Center in Chinatown................................................................. 48
Figure 3.10: A gift shop operator and his shop in Dynasty Center.............................. 49
Figure 3.11: Chinatown Swap Meet before converted to an office building..................... 50
Figure 3.12: Chinatown Swap Meet after converted to an office building...................... 51
Figure 3.13: An interactive feature on a developer’s website .................................... 51
Figure 3.14: The façade of Phoenix Bakery.............................................................. 56
Figure 3.15: Cathay Bank in Chinatown.................................................................... 57
Figure 3.16: Zen Mei Bistro in Chinatown............................................................... 62
Abstract

Heritage conservation practice has a long history of focusing on the architectural aspects of buildings or subjects and formal aesthetics. More recently, conservation practitioners have expanded their focus to acknowledge the social context and the use of a place. Newly established legacy business programs are one of tools that conservationists developed to push the boundaries of the heritage conservation field as many programs implement technical, marketing, or financial assistance to legacy business owners or commercial landlords. This thesis chooses three legacy business programs run by municipal governments in American cities, including San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, and Los Angeles, California, to review and comparatively analyze regarding program attributes, such as eligibility criteria, implementation processes, and program benefits. In addition, in order to understand the gap between cities’ legacy business programs and needs of long-standing small businesses in urban ethnic neighborhoods, this thesis conducts in-depth exploration on two neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Little Tokyo and Chinatown through observations and interviews with some stakeholders, including business owners, long-term residents, and community-based organizations. This thesis also attempts to examine and construct the association between cultural significance and legacy businesses with case studies in three cities and two neighborhoods.

The first chapter develops a theoretical framework for analyzing the implementation of legacy business programs in urban ethnic neighborhoods in American cities by discussing the concept of cultural heritage, legacy businesses, the relationship between these two concepts, the Burra Charter Process, and context of urban ethnic neighborhoods. The following chapter reviews legacy businesses in three cities, discussing both the limitations and innovations of these case studies. In the third chapter, this thesis demonstrates the histories and socioeconomic milieu of legacy businesses in two famous urban ethnic neighborhoods, Little Tokyo and Chinatown in Los Angeles, and explores the association between legacy businesses and heritage conservation, and demonstrates data collected through ethnographic observations and interviews. This thesis concludes with the discussion of the gap between existing measures of legacy business programs and community needs and the Legacy Business Conservation Process to address the issue in existing legacy business programs adopted by local governments. Finally, this thesis advocates for collaborative efforts with community members to identify, document, and sustain community and regional cultural heritage.
Introduction

Legacy business programs increasingly drew heritage conservationists’ attention as a tool to counteract rising rents that might threaten long-standing, beloved community businesses in more and more American cities.¹ Such programs often incorporate economic development tools such as business performance consultation or education resources to equip legacy businesses with business operational knowledge and skills.² One of the key components of this type of program is massive, city-wide marketing promotions to raise public awareness about the history and culture hidden in the corners that they encounter every day.

Almost all legacy business programs launched by American cities have similar definitions about legacy businesses. A qualified legacy business that is able to get registered in the city’s legacy business program must have a significant contribution to a particular neighborhood/community’s history, culture, and/or identity. However, no clear definitions of this core concept, a significant contribution to a particular neighborhood/community’s history, culture, and/or identity, were provided. The first chapter of this thesis discusses the concept of cultural heritage and how to identify it for legacy businesses. It also introduces the significance of legacy businesses to immigrant ethnic neighborhoods as well as the complex dynamic these neighborhoods are facing in American urban context.

Based on the construction of the core concept of cultural heritage and cultural significance, in Chapter two, the thesis analyzes three Legacy Business Programs of San Francisco, CA, San Antonio, TX, and Los Angeles, CA, from three perspectives: (1) the criteria of a qualified Legacy Business; (2) the process of applying and approving the legacy business registration; and (3) benefits offered by the program. San Francisco’s Legacy Business Registry, as the earliest legacy business program in the United States, was widely drawn as an inspiration by other cities in the country. It shaped the framework of city-wide official legacy business program. It not only introduced the concept of legacy business to the country but also create a variety of tools to support long-standing community businesses, such as financial incentives for both commercial landlords and tenants to encourage long-term leases for the businesses. San

---

² Ibid.
Antonio’s program, on the other hand, is led by the city’s Office of Historic Preservation and pays more attention to cultural heritage inventory and education. (Appendix A) It works closely with citizens and emphasizes the social and use value of legacy businesses. As for Los Angeles’s newly adopted Legacy Business Registry, it was innovatively configured as an economic development tool to address the city’s social equity issues through its weighted selection system that favors legacy businesses located in low-income neighborhoods or business owners from low-income households. (Appendix B) Through the three case studies, this thesis evaluates eligibility criteria, benefits, implementation, and effects of legacy business programs and potential problems lies in them.

The thesis also examines and discusses neighborhood-level bottom-up legacy business preservation practices in two iconic immigrant neighborhoods in Los Angeles - Little Tokyo and Chinatown. After the brief introduction of the community’s history and common cultural practices to maintain their ethnic identities, I identify the ongoing challenges faced by legacy businesses and present actions and solutions taken by the communities. With a close observation and analysis of legacy businesses at the neighborhood scale, the thesis identifies the gap between current criteria and measures that are commonly adopted by official legacy business programs, so that it yields recommendations to close the gap.

**Methodology**

The data for this thesis comes from documents and research focused on heritage conservation, ethnic and immigrant community, urban planning, small business operation, and community development. I spent ten months as a volunteer at Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED) in Chinatown, from March 2022 to present, collecting ethnographic and case study data. Primary data collection includes thirty-four semi-structured interviews with small business owners, residents, historians, community activists, community organization staff, community leaders, former staff at San Francisco Heritage, staff at the Los Angeles Conservancy, and ethnographic observation at community meetings as a volunteer and at store fronts as a customer. Material used to conduct a content analysis on three official legacy business programs includes city council documents, city council minutes, program websites, media reports, books, and published research related to the programs.
Chapter 1 Legacy Businesses and Heritage Conservation

Cultural Significance and Heritage Conservation

The Concepts of Cultural Significance and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Taking care of places or objects of historical value, such as aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, and spiritual values for past, present or future generations is a fundamental goal of heritage conservation professionals. The completeness of the job will shape our understanding of who we are and how we perceive the world. The epistemology and methodology to capture and conserve these values, however, has long been a challenging topic in the industry, especially in the United States.

Under the direction of the National Register Criteria, the standards and guidelines set by the Secretary of the Interior, and common historic designation criteria adopted by state and local governments, heritage conservation practice in the U.S. places a high value on preserving the physical fabric of historic places. The concept of cultural significance, recognizing both the tangible and intangible heritage of a historic place, however, has not gained as much attention in this field. Existing preservation tools with a material focus often fall short of recognizing the role of intangible heritage in reflecting the historic values of a place.

The concept of cultural significance was first developed in the 1964 Venice Charter by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Article 1 of the Venice Charter expands the concept of historic monument from “great works of art” to “more modest works of the past that have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time.” This internationally used guideline, however, does not further discuss the concept nor conservation strategies to safeguard the cultural significance of heritage. Instead, it emphasizes the maintenance of the layout, materials, and decorations of a historic monument (Article 5, 6).

In 1999, the Burra Charter adopted by Australia ICOMOS defined the concept and proposed a set of processes to

---

5 Ibid.
manage a place of cultural significance. Since then, the concept has been widely used by many preservation entities as an effective and flexible framework to protect places of significant physical and non-physical values.

Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual value for past, present, or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

The concept of cultural significance here points out that both physical and non-physical aspects can carry and convey the historical values of a place. Non-physical aspects such as “use, associations, and meanings” can reify historic values in tandem with tangible heritage “fabric, setting, records, related places and objects.” This change implies an expansion of goals of conservation activities from merely preserving physical fabric to managing “the intellectual and emotional connections we make between memory and environment,” as Randall Mason puts it. Moreover, the Burra Charter also acknowledges the diversity of values of a place for different individuals or groups and the potential changes in values over time. Accordingly, the Burra Charter Process (2017) that aims to manage cultural significance consists of three parts: understanding cultural significance, developing policy, and managing in accordance with policy.

Since the 1990s, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Heritage Center (WHC) have required a statement of cultural significance for sites that apply for the recognition of the World Heritage List, further confirming the importance and feasibility of the Burra Charter framework. In 2003, UNESCO started to use the terms of tangible and intangible in regards of heritage conservation in the Convention for

---


The Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Convention defines intangible cultural heritage as:

The intangible cultural heritage means the practice, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.12

Based on the content of the Burra Charter and the definition of the Convention, the Practice Note of the Burra Charter (2013) suggests that intangible cultural heritage has certain defining characteristics as below:

- Intangible cultural heritage is an aspect of the associations that may exist between people and a place, and that contributes to the cultural significance of the place.
- Intangible cultural heritage is a form of knowledge, skills or techniques that is passed from person to person over time, and often across generations.
- Intangible cultural heritage may be known and important to a specific community or group or to a wider community or the society as a whole.
- Intangible cultural heritage may be traditional or contemporary or both, and is part of the life of its community or group.
- Intangible cultural heritage is often dynamic and may be characterised by continuity, adaptation, and revival, along with changes in methods, materials used, and technology.
- Intangible cultural heritage may be enriched through continuing cultural creativity, responses to the environment and nature, and interaction with other groups.
- Intangible cultural heritage is often undertaken, performed or practised by people with specific skills, knowledge or status within the community or group and who may have the responsibility for passing on the knowledge.13

These characteristics of intangible cultural heritage further describe what the diverse reification of intangible cultural heritage could be - It could be the association between people and place, a form of knowledge or skill that passes from generation to generation, or simply the collective memories or emotions shared by the community. The broad and flexible description of

intangible cultural heritage transcends the traditional notion that it is passed down from our ancestors or of aesthetic or historic values acknowledged by the public or institutions. This concept of intangible cultural heritage therefore allows conservation professionals and community members to identify diverse heritage in a more flexible manner.

As the Practice Note mentions, the cultural significance in the Burra Charter encompasses the intangible value proposed by UNESCO. The above discussion about intangible cultural heritage is helpful to clarify related concepts and establish a framework to proceed with the analysis of cultural heritage embedded in legacy businesses in this thesis.

Conserving Cultural Significance

To accommodate the shift of the concept of heritage, the Burra Charter suggests a three-phase process to conserve cultural significance of a place: understanding significance, developing policy, and management based on the policy (Figure 1.1). In addition to traditional heritage analysis, such as physical, documentary, oral, and other evidence (Burra Charter, Article 26.1), and written statements of cultural significance and policy as the basis for management plan (Burra Charter, Article 26.2), the Burra Charter also includes input from “groups and individuals with associations with the place” in identifying and managing cultural significance of the place (Burra Charter, Article 26.3). The inclusion of participation from interested communities could greatly change conservation practices because it (1) enriches the understanding of local context and culture; (2) incorporates personal/collective intellectual and emotional connections into associations; and (3) offers public history/culture education opportunity and thus enhances social cohesion.
Some scholars criticized that the Burra Charter defines *cultural significance* as “embodied in a place”, considering *cultural significance* as a quality attributed to a place and
ignores the nature of cultural significance - a social construct.\textsuperscript{14} It is argued that individuals/communities are subjective agents to determine the cultural significance of a place and therefore a step of “validation among stakeholders” should be added in the phase of “understanding significance” in the Burra Charter.\textsuperscript{15}

While the feedback loop might effectively enhance the understanding of local context and to some extent empower related communities, the role of preservationists in the Burra Charter Process framework is still positioned as central to conservation activities, rather than a facilitator of the connection between people and the environment. Therefore, it may still fall short of conserving certain heritage such as living legacy. On the other hand, the Burra Charter Process framework does not highlight the potential role of heritage conservation in improving other social issues, such as social equity, racial injustice, affordable housing, and environmental sustainability. Synchronizing cultural significance conservation and other social issue solutions can not only expand the feasibility of conservation practices, but also increase the benefits of conservation for communities.

**Legacy Business and Heritage Conservation**

The term "legacy business" has been used informally over the years to describe beloved iconic small businesses that contribute to the character of the local community.\textsuperscript{16} Usually, legacy businesses have been present in a community for long enough to create a sense of place for nearby residents. It is widely regarded as a "third space" other than home and work for people to meet, gather, and interact face-to-face, forming a sense of community, especially in ethnic enclaves where community members can enjoy cultural comfort as well as practice their own traditions and thus maintain their cultural identities. In addition to the contribution to the community’s social fabric, legacy businesses also function as economic mainstay in the neighborhood that provide employment, attract tourists, increase foot traffic, and generate taxes.

Led by San Francisco's preservation efforts, legacy business programs as an emerging conservation tool to protect community cultural heritage have been growing rapidly across


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
American cities since the 2010s. Facing the demise of long-standing community businesses due to gentrification or neighborhood decline, citizens and conservation entities in some cities started to explore strategies and policies to retain these beloved community assets.

The rationale for incorporating legacy businesses as part of community heritage can be traced in the definitions, measures, reports, or legislative codes of legacy business programs adopted by major American cities. San Francisco Heritage, a non-profit heritage conservation organization, described legacy businesses in the city as “mainstays of San Francisco’s cultural landscape” and “our cultural heritage asset” in the report “Sustaining San Francisco’s Living History: Strategies for Conserving Cultural Heritage Assets,” because these long-standing small businesses “sustain a neighborhood’s cultural character” and “[tie] to broader historical, cultural, or societal patterns.”

San Francisco’s Legacy Business Registry, an official legacy business program launched by San Francisco County and City in 2015, requires that a Legacy Business “...has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community. Community does include a business or industry community,” as codified in Criterion 2 of eligibility for the program. In a questionnaire that applicants for the program were required to submit, business owners were asked to elaborate the association between the business and neighborhood history, significant events, or an important person. Similarly, another leading legacy business program implemented by San Antonio, Texas, also requires the business to “represent San Antonio’s culture.” In these two legacy business programs, the cultural heritage of a business plays a central role in determining whether it could be regarded as a “legacy business.”

“Legacy Business Study,” a report published by the Office of Economic Development of the City of Seattle, Washington, defines legacy businesses based on four dimensions:

---

community value, longevity, economic characteristics, and ownership characteristics. For the dimension of community value, the report elaborate on it as follows:

...legacy businesses serve some community function that goes above and beyond the simple sale of goods and services. Legacy businesses fulfill a community role through one or more of the following:

- Providing a community gathering space
- Serving as a linchpin for a distinct cultural community
- Contributing to the community through volunteering, fundraising, or in-kind donations
- Providing an opportunity for diverse people to come together

Strengthening social networks and community cohesion

From the description above, in Seattle, the societal value as a “third place” for community gathering of legacy business was highlighted in addition to the cultural aspect. Similar rationale of identifying and conserving legacy business can also be observed in many legacy business programs across American cities.

In sum, citizens and conservation practitioners value legacy businesses because of its cultural significance that gains from the business’ longevity, association with community/neighborhood history/culture/characteristics, societal and use value as a community gathering place as well as architectural style. Therefore, identifying these attributes should be the focus of legacy business conservation efforts in both research and management phase. Case studies of legacy business programs in San Francisco, CA, San Antonio, TX, and Los Angeles, CA are discussed in the following chapter.

**Legacy business in urban ethnic neighborhood**

Ethnic neighborhoods are an important cultural landscape in many American cities as they demonstrate immigrant history, unique ethnic culture, distinct urban tourist destinations, and reflect a city’s cultural landscape. Due to the long history of systemic racial discrimination practices in the United States, isolation, as well as shared cultural values allow communities in historic ethnic neighborhoods in inner city areas to form tight-knit social relationships and

---


economic connections. Gentrification and suburbanization force many historic ethnic neighborhoods in urban areas to confront population loss and displacement. With distinct cultural significance and urgent threats, the future of legacy businesses in urban ethnic neighborhoods is worrisome. Chapter Three discusses two neighborhoods in Los Angeles, California, Little Tokyo and Chinatown, to explore legacy business conservation in the context of an urban ethnic neighborhood and gentrification.

Ethnic businesses that are owned, operated by co-ethnic community members, and serve other co-ethnic members in an ethnic neighborhood make up an enclave economy.24 Scholars revealed that an enclave economy has cultural components that epitomize the relationships between owners, workers, and patrons for their shared cultural backgrounds and ethnic identity.25 Min Zhou points out that ethnic business owners prefer to partner with kin and co-ethnics as well as hire co-ethnic workers because of the trust based on shared origin and cultural heritage.26 In terms of cultural components in the relationship between business and customers, an example about Chinese restaurant might be helpful to explain. For diners of Chinese background, food quality might be the most important factor when choosing restaurant to patronize, whereas service quality might be the least important one. Chinese restaurants with bad service quality may find themselves difficult to attract and retain patrons outside of Chinese American enclave, but they could be in a very different position when situated in Chinatown where customers shared common dining culture preference. Another crucial aspect of the cultural significance embedded in an ethnic business is its goods and services that relate to ethnic traditions and culture. For instance, the crafts and arts of culture-related items such as moon cakes might be considered an intangible cultural heritage. In this sense, both the production and consumption of culture-related products are culture practices. Besides, ethnic businesses can also be a place where ethnic cultural knowledge can be organically passed down from individual to individual and from generation to generation, and thus contribute to the conservation of community cultural heritage.

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
In addition, for long-standing small businesses in urban ethnic enclave, the history of the business and its owners reflects historical and societal patterns of the ethnic neighborhood and the broader community. For instance, Fugetsu-Do, the oldest family-owned business operated since 1903 in Little Tokyo, witnessed the history of the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and the 1992 riots in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{27} The shop was founded by Seiichi Kito and his friends soon after they immigrated in the United States to serve other Japanese immigrants in Los Angeles with traditional Japanese confections. The shop once closed in 1941 due to the President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 to force Japanese Americans to move to war-era incarceration camps.\textsuperscript{28} After World War II, the Kito family returned to Little Tokyo and reopened the shop.\textsuperscript{29} In 1980, Seiichi’s grandson took over the shop and has operated it since then. Besides, the building that houses Fugetsu-Do in the Little Tokyo Historic District was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1995.\textsuperscript{30} A business like Fugetsu-Do not only reflects the history of the owner’s family, but also the history of Japanese American community in Los Angeles and the United States, which is of cultural significance as historical value. Moreover, its architecture and interior decoration present cultural characteristics of the ethnic neighborhood that exist as an integral part of the community’s cultural landscape.

Apart from the cultural components integrated into ethnic businesses as discussed above, long-standing ethnic businesses also offer a culturally comfortable place where co-ethnic community members can interact with each other face-to-face and forge social networks using their own language in a familiar cultural context. Such spaces are especially imperative for new immigrants who need to develop their social capital with limited knowledge and skills to accommodate the American society. In this sense, long-standing and popular small businesses function as “third places” contributing to community cohesion as well as social mobility for new immigrants. Furthermore, the racially discriminatory external environment may amplify the enjoyment and place attachment that are felt by co-ethnic community members when they own, work, or visit a long-standing ethnic business. The unique cultural characteristics of ethnic

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
businesses in tandem with strong emotional connections between co-ethnic members could therefore ultimately contribute to community identity.

As studies of placemaking in immigrant neighborhood revealed, people re-establish their cultural identity in places where businesses and traditional cultural ceremonies offers “common frames of reference”.\textsuperscript{31} Placemaking is a process for immigrants to exert their agency on their new identity through dealing with conflict, difference, and social negotiation.\textsuperscript{32} As such, long-standing ethnic businesses are places where people negotiate and reproduce their cultural identity. For the broader community, a cultural landscape that consists of ethnic businesses is a kind of reification of a city/area’s diverse cultural characteristics as well as public history of immigrant and racial discrimination.

In sum, cultural significance embodied in a long-standing small business, or a legacy business, could be captured from the following dimensions:

- Relationships between owners/operators, workers, and customers/visitors;
- Arts and crafts, or cultural characteristics of goods or services provided by the business;
- History of the business;
- Architecture or interior design of the building that houses the business;
- Business’s involvement in the community as a third space where people gather and form social relationships;
- Association between the place that business occupies and community’s collective memories and identity construction.

In consequence, conservation efforts for legacy business need to pay closer attention to the six dimensions discussed above when identifying and managing cultural significance. In particular, conservationists should consider community knowledge or narratives as primary cultural resources since available documentation may not tell a complete story.

In American urban context, ethnic enclaves often confront the influence of gentrification as well because of its “exotic flavor” and relatively low property prices compared to their nearby city center. Gentrification is a type of neighborhood change that forces current residents or


businesses to displace because of public or private investment.\textsuperscript{33} Developments from outside investors often cater high-income groups rather than current community members and thus lead to the increase of rent and property prices.\textsuperscript{34} Some literature reveals that gentrification impact communities of color disproportionally as many of them reside in or near downtown area due to the historic racially discriminatory land use policy. There are studies criticizing gentrification will not only exacerbate poverty level of the neighborhood, but also negatively impact the community in terms of psychological and cultural aspects, as residents are forced to experience extreme uncertainty and loss.\textsuperscript{35}

Legacy businesses in urban ethnic neighborhoods may also face unique obstacles including a language/cultural barrier, neighborhood security concerns, a dwindling customer base because of gentrification, lack of access to loans or credit, eviction and displacement, and culture commodification due to ethnic tourism. These challenges require conservationists to seek a more comprehensive strategy when conserving ethnic legacy businesses in such neighborhoods.


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

Chapter 2 Analysis of Legacy Business Programs Based on Examples in San Francisco, CA, San Antonio, TX, and Los Angeles, CA

Following the discussion of the cultural significance embedded in legacy businesses, this chapter analyzes the eligibility criteria, process, and benefits of official legacy business programs in three major cities: San Francisco, CA, San Antonio, TX, and Los Angeles, CA. San Francisco’s Legacy Business Program is the earliest and most well-known one in the country, often considered an inspiration by legacy business programs in other cities. It appreciates the social contributions derived from the cultural heritage of long-standing neighborhood anchors. In terms of the San Antonio’s program, it is a part of a heritage preservation initiative and pays more attention to cultural heritage inventory and education as well as distribution of business education resources. As for Los Angeles, although its newly approved legacy business program has not yet fully rolled out, its attempt at utilizing legacy business program to address the city’s racial inequity and income disparity is worth study.

In this chapter, the term “Legacy Business” with capital initials refers to a business that is qualified and registered by the city’s official legacy business program, and the term “legacy business” is used in a more general sense that refers to a long-standing small business with social contributions but may or may not be qualified or registered on the official legacy business program in its city.

Legacy Business Programs in American Cities

Since San Francisco initiated its first citywide legacy business program in 2015, legacy businesses have gained a lot of attention in the heritage conservation field. Growing numbers of American cities took inspiration from San Francisco's successful program and launched their own to support long-standing small businesses that contribute to local culture and identity.36 In some ways, this trend reflects the increasing interest of conservation practitioners in exploring a broader set of heritage beyond just buildings. As legacy businesses conservation practices are still at their early stages, the definition of legacy businesses, as well as its conservation strategies, vary greatly from city to city. The purpose of this section is to introduce the concept and roots of

---

legacy business program in the American context; technical details of programs are discussed in the following case studies.

There are three attributes widely adopted by official legacy business programs to decide a business’s eligibility, including operation longevity, economic characteristics, and social values. Most programs set a threshold of operation history from twenty to thirty years, with some extending to fifty years.\(^{37}\) In terms of defining business characteristics, small business size (the number of employees) and independent ownership are two key touchstones.\(^{38}\) Some cities require Legacy Businesses to have fewer than twenty employees, but not all programs do. For business ownership, most programs prohibit franchises and affiliations with national corporate chains to get registered as Legacy Business, while others only consider family-owned businesses as Legacy Businesses. Finally, almost all legacy business programs define that Legacy Businesses should contribute to the history, culture, and identity of their communities, while some of the programs go one step further to require the business to contribute “in a unique way.”

Though all legacy business programs require a social contribution to the community, few of them provide guidance or assistance to business owners to identify and maintain the cultural heritage lies in the business. Financial incentives, legal and business consultations, and marketing campaigns are the most common types of assistance offered by legacy business programs. The reason behind this could be that most leading city entities of legacy business programs are economic development department or small business administration rather than historic preservation office. The available assistance therefore focuses on economic or technical aspects rather than heritage conservation. It is also important to note that there are a limited number of programs offering financial assistance to business owners due to insufficient funds or legal restrictions.

Some cities tailor their programs to tackle local challenges. Los Angeles, for example, utilizes a weighted selection process for grants to prioritize businesses in low-income neighborhoods or ethnic communities. (Appendix B) In this way, Los Angeles' legacy business


program attempts to address the city's racial and income disparities as well as protect legacy businesses.

Legacy businesses share many challenges that are faced by small businesses, including rising rents, threats from corporate chains and online commerce, increasing costs (labor costs, food costs), narrow profit margins, and lack of marketing resources. There are also some difficulties more common among legacy businesses than other small businesses, such as succession planning, changing consumer preferences, shifting neighborhood demographics, and the loss of traditional arts or crafts.

**Case study 1: San Francisco Legacy Business Registry**

*Program Background*

When San Francisco residents noticed more and more long-time standing businesses closing their doors, many of them advocated for preserving these neighborhood anchors to sustain their lifestyle and community culture. San Francisco Heritage (S.F. Heritage), a nonprofit historic conservation organization, launched the “Legacy Bars & Restaurant Initiative” to celebrate “San Francisco’s most legendary eateries, watering holes, dives and haunts.” S.F. Heritage documented and publicized the history and highlights of the qualified 100 businesses in foldable brochure maps for tourists and an interactive online map. A “certified” business must meet three criteria:

1. has longevity of at least 40 years;
2. possesses unique architectural or interior design; and
3. and/or contributes to a sense of history in the surrounding neighborhood.

The registered businesses would receive a “Legacy Bars & Restaurant” logo and decal to highlight their visibility. This first-of-its-kind program was inspired by the Bares Notables program in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to raise awareness of the city’s culture and identity.

Building upon the success of S.F. Heritage’s “Legacy Bars & Restaurant Initiative” program, in 2015, San Francisco established an official “San Francisco Legacy Business Registry” (S.F. Registry) that is administered by its Small Business Commission. The new legacy

---

41 Ibid.
business program includes broader business categories, as well as non-profit organizations. What distinguishes the S.F. Registry from other legacy programs is that it established the Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund through a ballot initiative, providing financial incentives for landlords of legacy businesses as well as grants to qualified business owners. By doing so, the program attempts to assist legacy business owners in securing long-term leases and alleviate their financial pressure.

**Eligibility Criteria**

Apart from expanding eligible business types, the program also lowers the longevity threshold from forty years to thirty years. It is important to note that the age requirement could go down to twenty years if the establishment would face “a significant risk of displacement.” The criteria are listed as below:

Criterion 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years.
Criterion 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community. Community does include a business or industry community.
Criterion 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms.42

**Process of Application and Evaluation**

In San Francisco, legacy businesses are nominated by the mayor or a member of the board of supervisors, whereas most cities call for public nominations from residents, regular patrons, visitors, and business owners themselves. Although there are concerns about political favoritism, supporters argue that it is a win-win practice to gain political support for legacy businesses.43

Applicants are required to fill out an Application Form (Appendix C) and an Application Narrative form that is prepared by the Office of Small Business to state their eligibility. (Appendix D) This thesis only discusses the section of “Written Historical Narrative,” which is a long questionnaire about the business’s history, characteristics, and owner’s commitment to maintain those defining characteristics.

---

For Criterion 1, regarding longevity, the questionnaire lists basic questions about business operation history and ownership history.

The questions for Criterion 3 are about defining characteristics of the business and the owner’s commitment to maintaining those characteristics. They suggest applicants describe historical traditions and physical features of their businesses.

When it comes to questions regarding the eligibility of Criterion 2, the form lists as many as eight questions:

Criterion 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community. Community does include a business or industry community.
   a. Describe the business’s contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.
   b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the City, or the business industry?
   c. Has the business ever been referenced in a historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?
   d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?
   e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?
   f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.
   g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/or interior?
   h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?\(^{44}\)

Question a and f require business owners to provide a sketch of the history and identity of the neighborhood, community, or industry where the business is located, while question b, c, and d directly examine the relationship between the business/non-profit organization and the community’s characteristics. Question b suggests that legacy businesses should involve and support the neighborhood or community’s significant events as a way to contribute to the neighborhood/community’s history or identity. It is reasonable to measure community contributions in terms of community engagement as community events foster collective memories. As for question d, it refers to the association between the business and a significant person, but does not specify the scope of the figure's influence, such as at a neighborhood or national level. To some extent, this question is parallel to National Register’s Criterion b.

\(^{44}\)“Written Historical Narrative,” Apply to join the Legacy Business Registry (The City and County of San Francisco), accessed January 16, 2023, https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/LBR%20Application%20Narrative%20Template%202022.07.docx.
"associated with significant persons in or past," although it's less strict. As for question c, it's more a public exposure requirement for the business to prove its social value through media and historical records. Question e and h, on the other hand, direct to the future scenario where Question e is about the owner’s commitment to the community. By the presumption of closing the business, question h measures the level of the significance of the business to its community. Finally, question g focuses on the material aspects of the business.

In sum, the eight questions for Criterion 2 examine both the cultural and physical heritage of the business through past (history) and future (commitment) perspectives. For cultural significance of the business, the questionnaire examines applicant’s involvement in community events, association with significant figures, public exposure, and commitment to maintain its defining characteristics in the future.

In addition to submitting “Business Assessment Questions”, applicants are also required to attach documents or materials to support their statements. Many applications come with supporting letters from customers or community members.

Application assistance is provided by the Office of Small Business. Once the application is submitted, the Small Business Commission, or the Executive Director of the Office of Small Business on its behalf, would ask for advisory recommendations from the Historic Preservation Commission as to whether the business qualifies for Criterion 2. If the application was approved by the Historic Preservation Commission, applicants need to attend a public hearing that decides if the business is qualified for the S.F. Registry.

Program Benefits

S.F. Registry offers Legacy Business a relatively comprehensive package of benefits, including financial and technical assistance. The assistance aims to mitigate problems faced by legacy businesses, such as the risk of being displaced or evicted and lack of marketing promotion resources.

Both legacy business owners and their landlords could gain financial assistance through the program. The Business Assistance Grant offers business owners with funds to pay rents, improve commercial space’s physical features, or implement marketing campaigns. A qualified owner can receive a grant of $500 for each full-time employee up to a maximum of 100 employees. On the other hand, the Rent Stabilization Grant for landlords who offer their tenants at least a 10-year lease term. The amount of the Rent Stabilization Grant equals $4.50 per square
foot, with a cap of 5,000 square feet per location. In addition to these two grants, S.F. Registry also provides Accessibility Grant for Legacy Business owners to improve ADA infrastructure. The highlight of financial assistance offered by S.F. Registry is that it attempts to incentivize landlords to offer tenants a long-term lease, which can effectively prevent the Legacy Business from displacement in the long run. According to the Annual Report of the Office of Small Business of San Francisco (FY 2021-2022), there were 320 businesses on the Legacy Business Registry as of September 2022; 44 Rent Stabilization Grants were awarded to commercial landlords for a total of $724,863.70 in FY 2021-22, while 179 Legacy Business Grants totaled $400,000 for 179 businesses.45

As to technical assistance, the program offers legal, business operation, and real estate market advisory to help Legacy Business owners negotiate with landlords or potential landlords when relocating, obtain loans and credits, and so on. Besides, the program also assists with a business succession plan if the owner cannot find an appropriate person to take over. Employee-owned small business model, for example, is one of the solutions that promoted by the program to stabilize Legacy Businesses. All technical assistance is provided by the San Francisco Small Business Development Center, a city entity.

There is also a city-wide marketing campaign targeting both San Francisco’s residents and tourists. (Appendix C) The marketing campaign was outsourced to a local company who designs and publishes the program logo, decal, certificate, plaque, and brochures for legacy businesses, and a program website features an interactive map and the business’s history or stories. Such massive marketing promotion greatly increases public exposure, attracting media attention and increasing public awareness about the living legacy in the city. (Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)

Figure 2.1: Maps and social media displayed in S.F. Registry website. Image courtesy of San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

Figure 2.2: The Legacy Business logo. Image courtesy of San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.
Case Study 2: Legacy Business Program in San Antonio, Texas

Program Background

In San Antonio, Texas, the Legacy Business Program is a part of the city’s Office of Historic Preservation’s Living Heritage Initiative, an internationally recognized preservation program with its inclusive and sustainable strategies. The Initiative identifies, designates, and implements treatments of local heritage. As it claims in its social media campaign, “preservation is all about People + Place.” Besides the Legacy Business Program that provides financial support and recognition, the Initiative also launched a series of programs to survey, document, and publicize local historical stories, community narratives, and related materials to build a cultural heritage inventory. The Heritage Education, for example, is a program to “promote civic engagement and foster a preservation ethic in grade school students in the San Antonio area” that is run by the Initiative. This section mainly focuses on its Legacy Business Program. (Figure 2.4)

---

San Antonio’s legacy businesses program began with the loss of a once popular restaurant, the Malt House, which was also a long-time community gathering place. Although the business owner owned the commercial property, a building that was designated as a landmark in 2012 through San Antonio’s West Side Cultural Resource Survey, it had to be demolished and sold to 7-Eleven because it failed to meet the health code and the owner cannot afford to modify the building. Realizing preservation tools of the city by then was not able to sustain places such as Malt House that were of social and use value, the city’s Office of Historic Preservation launched the legacy business program to fill the gap. However, unlike San Francisco’s program, San Antonio’s program has not been codified and is largely an honorary program. The program recognizes local living heritage - legacy businesses - and offers

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
educational resources to business owners, enabling them to access legal, business, and technical knowledge to sustain the heritage.

**Eligibility Criteria**

There are two requirements for businesses to get certified as legacy businesses:

(1) the business has to operate in the community for at least 20 years; and
(2) the business has to represent San Antonio’s culture.51

**Process of Application and Evaluation**

In comparison with its counterpart in San Francisco, this program is less complicated for business owners to apply for. Anyone in the community can nominate a legacy program and the applicant only needs to submit a one-page nomination form and a separate page of historic narrative. The narrative requires business owners to describe their business story and why it qualifies based on the two criteria in 250 to 750 words. (Appendix A)

**Program Benefits**

Benefits provided by the Legacy Business Program in San Antonio, as mentioned previously, offers recognition, marketing assistance, and access to business education resources. Although a grant pilot program assisting architectural improvements is available in neighborhoods around World Heritage missions in the city, no funding is available for its legacy business program. Compared to San Francisco, the assistance offered by the program is relatively limited.

**Case Study 3: Los Angeles’s Legacy Business Registry**

**Program Background**

Considering increasing property rents, geographical diversity, and social equity issues in the city, Los Angeles tailored its “Legacy Business Registry” (L.A. Registry) based on San Francisco’s model. The program was adopted in the Fall of 2022 and each council district can designate up to ten Legacy Businesses. Unlike the S.F. Registry, non-profit organizations are excluded from this program. Although it hasn't been officially launched, its innovative preservation strategies are worth studying.

---

The L.A. Registry is led by the City’s Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) and administered in partnership with the Department of City Planning and its Office of Historic Resources (OHR). (Appendix B) It is more complicated in comparison to the other two programs discussed above, which is reflected in its eligibility criteria, complex evaluation process, and the benefit package that aims to mitigate racial inequity and income disparity.

**Eligibility Criteria**

The age requirement for Los Angeles Legacy Business is at least twenty years, the same as San Antonio’s and lower than San Francisco’s. Apart from the longevity requirement, eligible legacy businesses also need to meet at least three out of the four following criteria:

i. it contributes significantly to its community’s history or identity.
ii. it sustains and cultivates distinctive cultural traditions or practices.
iii. the business is not franchised or affiliated with a national corporate chain.
iv. it provides vital goods and services in a language and manner that is culturally accessible to the community.52

Similar to programs in San Francisco and San Antonio, Los Angeles also emphasizes social values and independent business ownership as the first three criteria show. **Criterion ii**, however, requires a legacy business to foster distinctive cultural traditions or practices, implying that the L.A. Registry may favor businesses that reflect minority culture. What makes the program stand out is **Criterion iv** that explicitly supports minority communities without sufficient access to necessary goods and services. It is reasonable to take goods and services along with language into consideration as the long history of racial discrimination in the city. Businesses serve people who speak language other than English (for example, ethnic grocery stores) usually function as culturally significant places for minority groups, especially immigrants, to comfortably practice their culture, maintain their identities on a daily basis when obtaining essential resources and developing social capital.

**Process of Evaluation**

Another groundbreaking measure of L.A. Registry is its weighted selection process, which aims to address racial and income inequity issues. The applicants for grants distributed by the program will be more heavily weighted if:

1. Businesses located in low-and moderate-income communities (50% and 80% of Area Median Income or AMI), as defined by Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
2. Businesses owned by low- and moderate-income owners (50% and 80% of AMI), as defined by HUD.
3. Small businesses with annual gross revenue below $1 million.
4. CalEnviroScreen Map communities with health hazard ranges at 9-9% +
5. Socioeconomic Data Composite Score by Census Tract (i.e., poverty rates, educational attainment, median income, etc.) with the areas with disadvantaged factors received higher lottery weightings.
6. Other criteria as determined by EWDD.53

The weighted selection process explicitly prioritizes legacy businesses located or owned by low-income community. This suggests that goals of the L.A. Registry go beyond heritage conservation and aims to ameliorate income inequality by supporting small businesses in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Program Benefits

Although the detailed processes and measures of the L.A. Registry have not yet been finalized and published, according to publicly available City Council documents, Los Angeles will have a similar benefit package as S.F. Registry in terms of marketing and branding assistance and financial incentives. But instead of soliciting a contractor for marketing promotion as San Francisco, Los Angeles City Planning’s Office of Historic will work with the department’s graphics session to create branding material such as poster, plaque or window decal, social media promotions, and listing on EWDD, City Planning and City of Los Angeles websites. (Appendix B) It seems that L.A. Registry will not have an independent marketing team to publish the program website, online maps, or brochures. Without massive marketing promotion and cultural heritage inventory to share stories of the Legacy Businesses, the program might not gain much public attention that it would have made, nor become an influential public history education program.

For financial assistance, each council district will have at least ten qualified legacy businesses receive Legacy Business Assistance Grants. Legacy Businesses with less than six employees can receive $10,000 of grants, and $20,000 for those with six or more employees. It is

notable that no grants will be provided to Legacy Business’s commercial landlord as S.F. Registry does.

To apply for Legacy Business Assistance Grants, considering small business owners may lack sufficient formal documentation, there is a variety of types of supporting material acceptable by L.A. Registry, including:

1. Employee payroll
2. Rent, utilities, and insurance
3. Working capital to reopen or continue operations
4. Adapting to technologies
5. Payment of outstanding business expenses incurred on or after March 3, 2021

The inclusive terms will likely encourage business owners to submit applications. Thus, those who do not have formal documents due to a long period of time or ownership changes will not be excluded from the L.A. Registry.

Although it seems that no one-to-one technical consultations will be provided through the program, Los Angeles will solicit a contractor to create a Legacy Business Technical Assistance Curriculum, which includes programs and courses tailored specifically to Legacy Business, covering topics such as succession planning and lease contract education, similar to San Antonio’s program.

The following table summarizes characteristics for the three legacy business programs discussed in this chapter. (Table 2.1)

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Leading City Department</th>
<th>Criteria (Condensed)</th>
<th>Application and Process (Condensed)</th>
<th>Benefits (Condensed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Legacy Business Registry</td>
<td>Small Business Commission</td>
<td>i. The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years. (The threshold could be 20 years if the business faces a significant risk of displacement”) ii. The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community. Community does include a business or industry community. iii. The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms.</td>
<td>1. Obtain nomination from a member of the Board of Supervisors or the mayor to be a Legacy Business. 2. Fill out and submit application forms. 3. Attend commission hearings.</td>
<td>1. Financial support: Business Assistance Grant (For business owner); Rent Stabilization Grant (For landlord); Accessibility Grant (For business owner). 2. Technical support: free one-on-one business, legal, and real-estate market consultation session. 3. Promotional support: city-wide marketing campaign with program website, maps, logo, decals, certificates, and plaques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio Legacy Business Program</td>
<td>Office of Historic Preservation</td>
<td>i. The business has to operate in the community for at least 20 years; and ii. the business has to represent San Antonio’s culture.</td>
<td>1. Fill out and submit a Nomination Form, or 2. Tag #legacybizsa on social media to nominate a historic business</td>
<td>1. Promotional support: program webpage and social media platforms; program logo and decal distribution. 2. Educational support: access to business education resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Legacy Business Registry</td>
<td>Economic and Workforce Development Department; City Planning and its Office of Historic Resources</td>
<td>i. it contributes significantly to its community’s history or identity. ii. it sustains and cultivates distinctive cultural traditions or practices. iii. the business is not franchised or affiliated with a national corporate chain. iv. it provides vital goods and services in a language and manner that is culturally accessible to the community.</td>
<td>Not published yet.</td>
<td>1. Financial support: Legacy Business Assistance Grants (evaluated by weighted selection system). 2. Technical support: Legacy Business Technical Assistance Curriculum. 3. Promotional support: branding material such as poster, plaque or window decal, and social media promotions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Summary of characteristics of legacy business program in San Francisco, CA, San Antonio, TX, and Los Angeles, CA. Table by the author.
Conclusions

The analysis of three legacy business programs in San Francisco, CA, San Antonio, TX, and Los Angeles, CA, suggests that all programs highlight the cultural heritage of Legacy Businesses through criteria regarding contribution to the community’s history, culture and/or identity. However, it seems that there are no clear explanations for either the concept of community identity or the contribution to the community. Although the criteria (and application forms) shed some light on this topic, whether the business meets the requirement for social contribution remains largely in the hands of city staff. Therefore, the heritage conservation field may need to further study and address the void of identifying and assessing the cultural significance of a legacy business in practice.

Most measures deployed are economic development strategies rather than heritage conservation, except for the San Antonio’s that launched an initiative to document and educate the public history and stories of Legacy Businesses. Despite all three programs underscoring the importance of maintaining important characteristics and cultural heritage aspects of legacy businesses, they do not provide business owners with guidelines or education resources to identify, document, and sustain the heritage. Here is a list of some recommended conservation strategies to address these problems:

1. Research and identify cultural heritage of each neighborhood, parallel to the work of SurveyLA.\(^5\) Note that this process should be conducted in a collaborative manner to achieve the inclusion goal.

2. Establish cultural heritage inventory for each community and legacy business that works as the source and database for constructing guidance to preserve cultural heritage. It is also a valuable cultural resource for communities.

3. Historic narratives submitted by business owners should be published and channel back to the broader community as part of public history education. Thus, extensive marketing promotion is key to the program.

4. Partner with community organizations and seek feedback from the community.

It is noteworthy to mention that Los Angeles Conservancy, a non-profit preservation organization in Los Angeles, had reached out to community partners for a long time when the

City conceiving its own legacy business program. The Conservancy collected communities’ opinions and channeled them back to city’s policymakers.\textsuperscript{56} Supporting letters with opinions and suggestions from diverse neighborhoods across the city were submitted to the City Council as a critical input of decision making.\textsuperscript{57} The close relationship between policy makers, preservation professionals, and community partners may largely explain the uniqueness of the L.A. Registry model. In addition, the non-profit organization recently launched its own Legacy Business Grant Program that covers long-time businesses in Los Angeles County.\textsuperscript{58}

Except for San Francisco, most legacy business programs exclude non-profit organizations. Acknowledging that non-profit organizations might face very different challenges from small businesses, many of them are critical to sustain and impart community culture. For example, in Chinatowns, family associations are key institutions to maintain kinship, culture, and traditions among residents. Legacy business programs may not suit best to support such organizations, but it is worth exploring conservation strategies to conserve such establishments and conserve community cultural characteristics.

Finally, the financial incentives that programs distribute help strengthen Legacy Business owners’ position in commercial lease negotiation, but it may not be every effective in areas that are experiencing gentrification because the financial assistance of the programs is probably not attractive enough for commercial landlords given the speculative opportunities derived from replacing tenants or selling properties. Gentrifying neighborhoods, especially inner-city neighborhoods, are therefore facing more complex urban issues such as evictions and population loss. The inner-city dynamics warrant more comprehensive conservation strategies to support legacy businesses in this type of neighborhood.

In short, the majority assistance offered by three programs discussed in this chapter concentrates on economic development strategies and to a great extent neglects the research and maintenance of cultural heritage that the Legacy Business bears, but they nonetheless creatively go beyond focusing on architectural aspect and strive for preserving the cultural heritage as well.

\textsuperscript{56} Rosalind Sagara, Interview by author, Los Angeles, June 16, 2022.
as social use of the place. These three programs push the limits of the heritage conservation toolbox and will continue to inspire future programs.
Chapter 3 Neighborhood-scale Case Studies Based on Little Tokyo and Chinatown in Los Angeles, CA

This chapter analyzes the relationship between cultural significance and legacy businesses in urban ethnic neighborhood. Based on the discussion about their cultural heritage, this chapter further explores the difficulties faced by legacy businesses and community strategies to fight against the internal weakness as well as external threats. From history of both community and businesses, to the demonstration of cultural heritage embedded in legacy businesses, to gentrification and anti-gentrification efforts, this chapter aims to show a holistic legacy business landscape in the neighborhood scale through two case studies: Little Tokyo and Chinatown in Los Angeles.

Little Tokyo and Chinatown, two historic immigrant neighborhoods standing in the heart of Los Angeles, both have faced challenges of gentrification resulting in population loss, shifting demographics, commercial and residential affordability, and poverty. Over the years, the two communities demonstrated their resilience and solidarity through grappling with systemic racial discrimination and sustaining their cultural identity. During World War II, residents in Little Tokyo were forced into internment camps, yet they managed to return to the neighborhood and claim their identity through ethnic businesses, public arts, and cultural and spiritual institutes.

Likewise, Old Chinatown once was demolished to pave the way for the construction of Union Station, a railway terminal constructed by the city. While non-white immigrants were prohibited from owning property, the Chinatown community found their way to rebuild a modern, spacious New Chinatown nearby the lost Old Chinatown. Today, owing to the proximity to Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA), these two neighborhoods were both impacted by aggressive development and gentrification. While Little Tokyo is already a gentrified neighborhood, Chinatown is wrestling with the growing high-rises.

The data for this chapter draws from published research, media reports, community organization websites, and ethnographic observations including semi-structured interviews with stakeholders as well as my personal experience of being a community volunteer and visitor.
Case Study 1: Little Tokyo

Neighborhood Context

Little Tokyo is a relatively small neighborhood standing in the heart of Los Angeles, only one block away from City Hall. The roughly 140 years old neighborhood is home to long-time small businesses, churches and Buddhist temples, the Japanese American National Museum, Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, and active community organizations. It has been the largest Japanese American settlement in the mainland United States since 1915.\(^{59}\) Many Japanese Americans in the area have connections with Little Tokyo as they regularly visit the neighborhood for community events, Japanese culture-related goods, or Japanese restaurants. As one interviewee described, “Little Tokyo is a sacred place for JA (Japanese Americans).”\(^{60}\)

By 1915, more than seven-thousand Japanese Americans lived in the Los Angeles and most of them lived near Little Tokyo.\(^{61}\) Many of them were small business entrepreneurs, operating grocery and produce stores, clothing shops, boarding houses, cafes, florists, and two local Japanese newspapers.\(^{62}\) In addition, Japanese immigrants were also major players in Los Angeles agriculture industry, cultivating vineyards, citrus groves, and flower fields.\(^{63}\) By establishing ethnic shops and facilities, Japanese immigrants and their descendants created a cohesive ethnic neighborhood in the core of Los Angeles.

Like many other immigrant neighborhoods in the city, Little Tokyo has experienced destructive challenges over the years: redlining, racial hatred, social isolation, economic recession, forced removal and diaspora during WWII, eminent domain for the construction of a police complex, urban renewal, and consistent pressure from gentrification.\(^{64}\)

During WWII, residents were sent to prison camps across the country by then American government. Little Tokyo once became “Bronzeville,” home to African Americans who migrated from the South for wartime jobs on the West Coast. Jazz clubs flourished on First Street in Little Tokyo as they moved into the empty neighborhood. After the war, Japanese Americans returned

\(^{60}\) Bill Watanabe, interview by author, Los Angeles, June 16, 2022.
\(^{61}\) Ibid.
\(^{62}\) Ibid.
to the neighborhood, but many young people chose to leave for better employment opportunities.\textsuperscript{65} The elders stayed in the communities as cultural organizations and ethnic shops provided them with traditional cultural products.\textsuperscript{66}

In the 1970s and 1980s, as international capital converged with the city’s urban renewal policy, Little Tokyo experienced drastic change – modern hotels and retail complexes sprang up while many residents were pushed out of the community. In response to the gentrification, community organizations such as Little Tokyo People's Right and Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) were formed to fight for affordable housing and traditional ethnic shops. \textsuperscript{67}

By 2010, Little Tokyo had approximately 40% Asian residents, around 25% blacks and 20% Hispanics, respectively, and about 12% whites.\textsuperscript{68} As gentrification progressed in recent decades, many Japanese American residents were displaced from their homes while high-income young professionals moved into brand-new luxury apartments due to the proximity to Downtown and the neighborhood’s distinctive culture. According to Bill Watanabe, a respected community leader and former CEO of the LTSC, most Japanese American residents living in the neighborhood today are elderly people who live in senior housing.\textsuperscript{69} The demographic shift poses pressure for sustaining cultural heritage as well as legacy businesses in the neighborhood.

\textit{Legacy Businesses and Community Development in Little Tokyo}

When first-generation immigrants left Japan to seek a better life in Los Angeles, they brought their tastes and legacy to Little Tokyo too. Small businesses flourished along today’s First Street and comforted the Japanese American community with names such as Kawafuku Cafe, Kyodo Drug, Umeya, Inc., Fugetsu-Do Confectionary, San Kwo Low, and Entoro (Far East Cafe), where people flocked into Little Tokyo for hometown flavors.\textsuperscript{70} The historic First Street North block of Little Tokyo, which used to house these small businesses, remains one of the busiest sections in the neighborhood today. Walking along the pedestrian-oriented First


\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{69} Watanabe, interview.

Street in the neighborhood, you will see plaques outside of some of the storefronts, introducing the history of Japanese-owned businesses once located there. (Figure 3.1) The plaques were issued by the Little Tokyo Historical Society, a non-profit community organization dedicated to preserving and maintaining the neighborhood’s ethnic heritage. (Figure 3.2)

Figure 3.1: The First Street North block in Little Tokyo. Photo courtesy of Sustainable Little Tokyo.

Figure 3.2: Plaque issued by LTHS to recognize the site of first Japanese-owned business in Los Angeles. Photo courtesy of the Little Tokyo Historical Society.
The Little Tokyo community has a long history of preserving legacy businesses as a way to promote economic growth and transmit Japanese cultural heritage to the next generation. In 1934, to boost the community economy from the Great Depression, the second-generation Japanese American immigrant (or Nisei in Japanese) launched the Nisei Week Festival, a famous cultural event to celebrate Japanese heritage that continues today as “a symbol of hope and inspiration to an entire community.” Mom and pop shops in the neighborhood sell Japanese cultural products to support the festival. For example, during the festival, stores would sell *uchiwa* fans, *kachi kachi* and other instruments of *ondo* dancing, an important event of the festival to showcase Japanese culture. (Figure 3.3, 3.4)

![Figure 3.3: Ondo dancing in Little Tokyo during the Nisei Week Japanese Festival circa 1934. Photo courtesy of Nisei Week Japanese Festival.](image)

---

72 Ibid.
Most legacy businesses in Little Tokyo have been owned and operated by their original families over the years, serving Japanese American families for generations. As one business owner put it, “I’ve seen my customers were brought in baby carts or as kids. And now they are bringing their own kids here.”73 Every store has unique stories and legacy because every family is different. The immigrant family histories of fighting against racial discrimination and becoming small business entrepreneurs are the cornerstone of community heritage.

The tradition of supporting legacy businesses in the neighborhood also continues today. According to Watanabe, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic period, the community donated for small businesses, especially legacy businesses owned by seniors who are at risk of COVID, to go through the difficult time, while small businesses also bequeathed the community by delivering free meals to seniors. LTSC played as a key coordinator for mutual support within the community through closely following the legacy businesses, assisting them to pivot to online sales and providing grants for those in need.74 The close bond between legacy businesses and community members defines the character of the community.

---

In sum, the history of the legacy businesses in Little Tokyo is an indispensable part of history of Japanese American community in Los Angeles and the country. A legacy business that produces and serves Japanese culture-related items plays a critical role in preserving the intangible cultural heritage for the community. Long-standing co-ethnic community businesses are also places where community members meet, communicate, and create collective memories that affirm and pass down their cultural identity as Japanese Americans. Besides, legacy businesses have functioned as a glue and economic booster for community members during economic downturns while celebrating their cultural heritage. Finally, legacy businesses in Little Tokyo create leisure places for not only co-ethnics to meet and establish social relationships but also people with other cultural backgrounds to learn Japanese American community history and culture.

Challenges Faced by Legacy Businesses in Little Tokyo

According to a LTSC report, by 2021, Little Tokyo had more than 400 small businesses, fifty of which are older than twenty years.\(^75\) For legacy businesses, there are a variety of business types, including gift shops, sweet shops, newspapers, hardware stores, barber shops, restaurants, cosmetic stores, and others. Some of them cater primarily to tourists as Little Tokyo is a popular urban destination, while others mainly serve local Japanese American families. Among legacy business owners, over 40% of them are more than 60 years old and many of them are non-native English speakers. Considering the demographics of business owners, succession planning becomes be a concern.\(^76\) *Rafu Shimpo*, for example, is the nation’s leading Japanese American newspaper serving the Japanese American community since 1903. It is currently owned and operated by a couple who are in their 80s. According to Watanabe, the owners recently considered closing this historic bilingual Japanese-English newspaper.\(^77\)

Another major challenge for legacy business owners in Little Tokyo is fast-rising rents. Most legacy businesses in the neighborhood are on a month-to-month lease and therefore businesses are not locally stabilized. The hot real estate market in the Downtown area structures the unbalanced negotiating power that favors commercial landlords. It is extremely difficult for legacy business owners to secure long-terms lease amidst gentrification.

---


\(^{76}\) Ibid.

\(^{77}\) Watanabe, interview.
In addition, the influx of luxury apartment residents who are mostly young, high-income professionals raises challenges for legacy business owners as well. It is vital yet not easy for business operators to pivot and attract new residents while sustaining their cultural characteristics, especially for those traditionally serving Japanese American community.

Furthermore, language barriers as well as the lack of skill to accommodate online business also challenge legacy business owners. As a significant part of legacy business owners are elders, language barriers may prevent them from obtaining funds, loans, credit, or other resources. Also, varying consumer preferences and retail markets make online commerce a crucial part of business, posing pressure on many legacy business owners.

**Bottom-up Community Strategies**

In Little Tokyo, community organizations are the principal facilitator in helping legacy businesses cope with gentrification and various challenges. This section focuses on actions and strategies taken by some community-based organizations to support legacy businesses.

1. Follow up with legacy businesses’ needs and offer technical assistance

   Little Tokyo community organizations have made great efforts in helping small businesses and established close ties with them. For example, LTSC’s Small Business Program holds free one-to-one consulting sessions, networking opportunities, and workshops for business owners in both Japanese and English. It also conducted a survey to learn small businesses’ needs during COVID-19 and managed to organize staff and volunteers to assist business owners pivot through the difficulties. According to Watanabe, during the pandemic, LTSC matched two to three staff or volunteers who are mostly young people with each legacy business to help them set up and use online payment systems, websites, social media webpages, and delivery platforms that allow customers to order items remotely.\(^{78}\) Besides, LTSC helped fundraise and distribute grants to legacy businesses in need. These supportive efforts were helpful to sustain legacy businesses on the ground.\(^{79}\)

2. Cultural heritage inventory, preservation, and education

   There are multiple cultural organizations and institutes in the community that have preserved and promoted Japanese as well as African American heritage for a long time. Little

---

\(^{78}\) Watanabe, interview.

Tokyo Historical Society, for example, is dedicated to community history and heritage research, exhibition, education, and historic designation. It led the efforts of promoting the historic designation of Kame Restaurant, the first Japanese owned business in Little Tokyo in 1884, and the Finale Club, a popular jazz club among the African American community in Los Angeles during war time.\(^{80}\) The Japanese American National Museum and the Japanese American Cultural & Community Organization are two other cultural heritage conservation drivers in the community, as they offer various programs and exhibitions that are easy for the public to access. Cultural events such as Nisei Week Grand Parade and LA Tanabata Festival, a traditional Japanese festival celebrated with cultural decorations, are powerful instruments to sustain and transmit community cultural heritage.\(^{81}\) Besides, there are rich public art works that express community history and identity displayed in the neighborhood’s public space that organized by these groups. These diverse cultural events and programs not only impart community culture to future generations, but also to the new residents, improving community cohesion while sustaining community characteristics.

3. Neighborhood Marketing Campaign

As a popular urban destination with rich transit facilities, the Little Tokyo community utilizes tourism to support its small business and showcase Japanese American culture. Marketing campaigns thus become a critical strategy of local community organizations. Little Tokyo Community Council, for example, worked with L.A. Metro, a regional transportation agency, and launched marketing campaigns such as Go Little Tokyo and Delicious Little Tokyo to attract tourists and provide them with guidance to navigate small businesses in the neighborhood.\(^{82}\) History and stories of legacy businesses are principal components of marketing activities.

4. A platform to include different stakeholders


As a community that has a long history of fighting against gentrification, the Little Tokyo community understands the importance of involving in the development process. Organizations such as Little Tokyo Community Council represent the community to actively collaborate with key stakeholders including the Los Angeles City, Metro, outside for-profit developers, and non-profit organizations to convey community’s vision and opinions. For example, Little Tokyo Community Council has worked with Metro on a joint development near the Metro Regional Connector station site to promote its community vision of equitable development.

5. Innovative financial tools to secure key properties

Recognizing that property ownership is crucial to securing legacy businesses, Little Tokyo community leaders have explored methods to purchase properties that are important to the community. Since 1993, LTSC has been building affordable housing, community facilities, and commercial spaces. According to its real estate portfolio, LTSC controls the Daimaru Hotel and Far East Building in the historic First Street North block through Neighborworks Capital Corporation.83 Although the community does not actually own the property, it managed to control the use of the building by leveraging financial tools. Little Tokyo Community Impact Fund (LTCIF) led by Bill Watanabe is another example of securing property ownership. LTCIF raises money from interested community members, then buys properties that house low-income residents or legacy businesses, and eventually leases apartments or storefronts at lower rates. Accordingly, it distributes dividends at relatively low interest rates to its investors.84 So far, the program is still in its infancy and has not completed the first round of fundraising.

Conclusions

The case study of Little Tokyo analyzes the cultural significance of legacy businesses in Little Tokyo and demonstrates how bottom-up community efforts can contribute to the neighborhood's cultural heritage conservation, legacy business revitalization, and equitable development. Little Tokyo has suffered population loss and struggled with gentrification but managed to continue to thrive. Active community organizations, cultural heritage inventory and promotion, collaboration with key stakeholders, and proactive involvement in the urban planning

process, together generate a synthesis effect to sustain community legacy in an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable way.

**Case Study 2: Los Angeles Chinatown**

*Neighborhood History and Context*

1. Old Chinatown

The history of Los Angeles Chinatown can be traced back to the 1880s when more than half of the Chinese population in Los Angeles dwelled on the narrow street south of the Los Angeles Plaza, Calle de Negros, a former Mexican American neighborhood then called Negro Alley. According to the United States Census, by 1880, Los Angeles had 605 Chinese residents, who migrated from the overcrowded Chinatown in San Francisco, CA, and settled in Los Angeles to look for new opportunities when employment in mining and railroad construction dwindled in the 1870s. Many of them worked near the Plaza as laborers and laundry workers. The majority of them are Chinese immigrants from Tai Shan, Guangdong (or Canton), speaking Taishanese and Cantonese, and also shared similar cultural backgrounds due to the geographical proximity of their hometowns. Hence, Chinatown at that time was a closed-knit homogenous village that served as a gateway for immigrants to gather social and economic capital through kinship groups, family associations, or clans such as tong.

Chinatown later expanded to Apablasa Street near railroad tracks and gas works. The neighborhood was commonly called Old Chinatown to distinguish it from the New Chinatown that was built in the 1930s. Due to intense racial hatred and systematic oppression (for example, the Los Angeles Chinese Massacre of 1871), Chinatown served as a geographical and identity boundary for Chinese immigrants and their descendants through constructing a physically and culturally safe environment. Even in the face of extreme conditions, the Chinese community managed to thrive and became key players in the agriculture, produce wholesale, and retail industry in the city. Small businesses in Old Chinatown that sold cultural-related items and

---

86 Ibid.
restaurants that served Cantonese cuisine also sprang up. In addition, community facilities such as Chinese temples, churches, Chinese schools, recreational facilities, clubhouses, theaters, and a Chinese-language weekly newspaper were established in the neighborhood.  

However, Angelenos were concerned about the built environment and sanitary conditions in Old Chinatown at that time, despite the fact that undesirable conditions were the result of racial land use policy and intentional civil neglect. The stigmatization of the neighborhood that was caused by racial discrimination was eventually escalated to the municipality as well as the State’s decision to demolish Chinatown. Although the community made a lot of effort to save the neighborhood, it was eventually demolished and replaced by today's Union Station in 1936.

---

Figure 3.5: A lion dance troupe moves through Old Chinatown on February 2, 1930 (Lunar New Year). Photo courtesy of LAist.

---

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
2. New Chinatown

In response to the demolition, community leaders such as Peter Soo Hoo led community efforts to elude land ownership prohibitions targeting non-whites and secured a land parcel to the north of the original Old Chinatown.94 To remove the stigma of Old Chinatown's crooked alleys, dense residences, and unsanitary environment, the urban form of New Chinatown was designed to be neat and modern.95 With wide avenues and spacious two- to three-story buildings that reflect Chinese architectural style, the New Chinatown community intentionally expressed their identity through neighborhood landscape.96 Central Plaza, an outdoor shopping mall, however, was designed on a smaller scale to recall the nostalgic scene in Old Chinatown. (Figure 3.6, 3.7)

Figure 3.6: Central Plaza in New Chinatown. Photo courtesy of Chinatown Central Plaza.

---

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
Small businesses continued to prosper after relocating to New Chinatown. With urbanization sweeping Los Angeles, the emerging working-class people who worked and lived in the city were passionate about exploring urban destinations, which fueled the flourishing retail businesses in the neighborhood.\(^97\) However, it is important to acknowledge that the prosperity of small businesses in the neighborhood during this time was largely the result of racial discrimination, since Chinese immigrants and their descendants were not able to find employment outside of Chinatown.\(^98\)

During WWII, some discriminatory laws against Chinese Americans were lifted considering international relationships because China was regarded as the United States’ ally at that time. The ending of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and the enactment of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act reopening doors to non-European immigrants greatly impacted demographics in New Chinatown. Many residents left the neighborhood for job opportunities and a suburban living environment outside New Chinatown while a huge influx of Chinese immigrants from China and Southeast Asia countries, diversifying the community's Cantonese culture. During this period, new immigrants in New Chinatown had different cultural


backgrounds and spoke different languages, although many of them are also of Chinese descent. Many new immigrants speak the Teochew dialect, Vietnamese, Khmer, Laotian, etc. Arriving in the new environment, they have established their own social networks through kinship, family association, industry association, and religious institute.\textsuperscript{99}

The new immigrants’ diverse backgrounds are also reflected in business types and styles. Southeast Asian groceries, jewelries, restaurants, and bookstores selling books and videos in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Laotian mushroomed across the neighborhood. Taishanese origin merchant community was in clash with the aggressive business strategies of those who are of Teochew and Southeast Asian backgrounds.\textsuperscript{100} By 1984, businesses owned by Southeast Asians became dominated Chinatown economics, representing half of Chinatown’s estimated 1,400 businesses.\textsuperscript{101}

During the 1970s and 1980s, Chinatown also saw a wave of urban renewal and international investment that paralleled Little Tokyo. During this period, many modern shopping centers were built, such as Mandarin Plaza, Bamboo Plaza, Dragon Plaza, Saigon Plaza, Chinatown Plaza, Far East Plaza, BC Plaza, Dynasty Plaza, and Asian Center.\textsuperscript{102} (Figure 3.8) Buying culture-specific items at shopping centers, chatting with shopkeepers in mother tongue, and wandering through the hustle and bustle of markets were once part of the Chinese American community's lifestyle, consisting of the community’s collective memories.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
Dynasty Center, for example, has about a hundred stalls that sell culture-specific goods, clothing, gifts, jewelry, plants, and so on. (Figure 3.9) Often, shops may look identical because many of them sell similar items and the ways they stack goods are similar as well, yet the stalls together consist of an irreplaceable place for residents to purchase vital goods and experience the sense of community. You can easily hear Vietnamese news reports on television and Cambodian songs on radios in the shopping mall. Customers bargain with shopkeepers in their mother tongues while chatting about recent news. When there aren't many visitors, shopkeepers gather in the hallway or stalls to chat and sip tea. The unique cultural atmosphere as well as the affordability of items attract visitors from surrounding neighborhoods. A business owner I encountered during community outreach speaks fluent Spanish which he learned from his customers over the years.
Many people I interviewed, from college students to the elders, were all nostalgic for the memories they have in Chinatown’s extensive shopping malls, where they spent a lot of time with families or friends on weekends. Chinatown at that time was the commercial and cultural
center of Chinese Americans in the area, seeing a constant influx of immigrants from China and Southeast Asian countries.¹⁰³

In 2003, the Chinatown Gold line Metro station was completed, which sits at the west gate of the neighborhood. The completion of the Metro station sparked not only the influx of tourists but also transportation-oriented developments (TOD) in the neighborhood. Comparatively low property prices in Chinatown and its proximity to Downtown Los Angeles make it a hot market for developers. A luxury apartment and retail complex called Blossom Plaza was built on North Broadway across from Central Plaza in 2013, renting for more than 2,000 dollars per month for a studio. Another example is the six-story Jia Apartment that includes a Starbucks. Outside developers began to aggressively acquire large buildings and land in the neighborhood. Most of the once popular and symbolic shopping malls in Chinatown were eventually converted into up-scale housing and retail complexes, office spaces to welcome young, high-income working professionals. (Figure 3.11, 3.12, 3.13) Many small businesses were evicted. Some relocated to nearby malls, while others closed permanently. As of today, small business owners in Dynasty Center, the last shopping center remaining in the neighborhood, are facing eviction. For many of them, this is the second or third time of being eviction in the neighborhood.

Figure 3.11: Chinatown Swap Meet before converted to an office building. Photo courtesy of Redcar Real Estate.

Figure 3.12: Chinatown Swap Meet after converted to an office building. Photo courtesy of Redcar Real Estate.

Figure 3.13: An interactive feature on a developer’s website to showcase the before/after scene of a project in Chinatown. The left picture is The Shop, a former popular community shopping mall, and the right one is an office building under construction. Photo courtesy of Redcar Real Estate.
For over 150 years, Chinatown has served as a gateway for Chinese and later Southeast Asian immigrants and their descendants. In the neighborhood, they can comfortably start their businesses and practice cultural traditions. Ethnic restaurants and groceries, herb shops, schools, churches, and temples are places where the community rebuild their social relations and culture practices that were disrupted by the immigration. In addition, community organizations are instrumental when immigrants develop social relations and reinforce community identity. For example, family associations in Chinatown have a long history of serving as social clubs or lodges to support new immigrants. They also provided a united voice to fight against racial discrimination. The influential community associations/organizations in Chinatown include the Wong Family Association, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Los Angeles (CCBALA), Chinatown Service Center (CSC), and the recent Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED).

**Legacy Businesses in Today’s Chinatown**

Except for the aforementioned stalls housed in community shopping malls such as the Dynasty Center, according to a survey conducted by CCED (see Table 2), there are nineteen small businesses in Chinatown that are still operating and have a history over twenty years, including nine restaurants, five bakeries, two jewelries, two gift shops, and a hotel, among which the oldest small business is F. See On, a jewelry store with more than 150 years of history. There are two restaurants, Philippe’s and Hong Kong Noodle, that have more than a hundred years of history. Philippe’s, however, is a historic French dip restaurant forced to move to its current location in 1951 because of the construction of the Hollywood-Santa Ana 101 Freeway.

The average longevity of these small businesses is over 60 years. Most of the legacy businesses are located in the commercial core of the neighborhood, along North Broadway and Gin Ling Way, and some of them are still run by the original same families. As many small business owners don't necessarily know the history of the business over the years, the age of small businesses may not be accurate.

According to the same survey conducted by CCED, for community organizations in Chinatown, there are 7 of them that have served Chinatown for over a hundred years; the oldest association is the Wong Family Association with 152 years of history. Fong Lun Association and Lung Kong Tin Yee Association have also existed in the community for over 133 years. The
long history of community organizations reflects the history and social network of the Chinatown community as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization Type</th>
<th>Est. Year</th>
<th>Longevity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F. See On</td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jin Hing Jeweler</td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>K. G. Louie Co.</td>
<td>Gift Shop</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chew Yuen Co.</td>
<td>Gift Shop</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Metro Plaza Hotel</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Phoenix Bakery</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Queen's Bakery</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Wonder Bakery</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>KBC Bakery</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kim Hung Bakery</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Philippe’s</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Hong Kong Noodle</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Paul’s Kitchen</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Golden Dragon Restaurant</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Full House</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hop Li</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ocean Pacific</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Home Boy Industries</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Hop Woo</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Part of existing legacy businesses in New Chinatown. Courtesy of CCED.

 Legacy Businesses and Community Development

Frist, for Chinese immigrants and their descendants living in the neighborhood, legacy businesses where owners, employees, and customers share similar cultural backgrounds allow them to comfortably obtain ethnic goods and services and develop social relationships in the host society. Second, for middle-class Chinese residents living in surrounding suburban neighborhoods, legacy businesses in Chinatown are anchors to attract them back to the inner-city community and boost the neighborhood economy. Third, for residents with no Chinese
background in the neighborhood, legacy businesses are long-standing establishments where
cross-ethnic and -cultural communication happens naturally. Finally, for tourists from other
neighborhoods in Los Angeles and beyond the city, legacy businesses in Chinatown are primary
places in which people experience Chinese and Southeast Asian culture, such as legacy
restaurants with signage written in Chinese or Vietnamese, jades and bamboos in giftshops along
Broadway, or the maze-like Dynasty Center filled with affordable cultural items along with
Chinese or Vietnamese songs.

Particularly, legacy businesses are key places for residents to form social relations and
build a sense of community. As an interviewee put it: “When I am in Chinatown, I don't need to
explain myself to others, and neither do they.”104 On my walk with Pauline Chau, a lady in her
80s who has lived in Chinatown for fifty-three years, I observed that all shopkeepers and servers
knew her and chatted with her in Cantonese when we bought groceries in the Dynasty Center and
dined at a Cantonese restaurant. Another interesting observation is that Chinatown natives can
even distinguish the shopkeeper’s background by a glimpse of the storefront. One interviewee
told me that business owners with Southeast Asian background prefer not to display price tags,
while those with Cantonese origin do.105 Ethnic businesses in Chinatown serve as the “third
place” for people to interact with, to maintain cultural identity on a daily basis, and function as
an informal culture exhibition with culture-related items or even invisible price tags.

In sum, legacy businesses in Chinatown foster distinct social relationships between
owners/operators, workers, customers/visitors (both with or without a Chinese cultural
background) and promote cross-culture communication. Moreover, the arts and crafts embodied
in the culture-related items offered by legacy businesses in Chinatown are themselves a type of
intangible cultural heritage. The experience of purchasing and consuming such items can be
regarded as cultural practices. Common origins, cultural backgrounds, languages spoken, and
repeated encounters together heighten the association between legacy businesses and community
members in Chinatown. For many interviewees, visiting legacy businesses is a necessary
lifestyle that to some extent infuses into their identity. In addition, the history of legacy business
in Chinatown is not only a critical component of Chinese American community history in Los
Angeles and immigrant history of the US, but also an epitome of Los Angeles development

104 Interview with a college student studying at Cal State LA, Los Angeles, June 20, 2022.
105 Interview with a Chinatown resident, Los Angeles, June 20, 2022.
history that spans over the agricultural period in the late 1800s to recent globalization and gentrification in the inner city. Not to mention the architectural and interior design of many legacy businesses in Chinatown reflect the cultural characteristics of Chinese American culture. Finally, for visitors with no Chinese cultural background, it is also a cross-cultural experience and therefore, the experience of visiting or patronizing legacy businesses in Chinatown reflects the cultural diversity in the broader community.

**Challenges Faced by Three Types of Legacy Business in Chinatown**

Chinatown has a variety of small businesses that meet the longevity criterion of L.A. Registry which is at least 20 years of history. Many retail establishments, restaurants, and professional services such as dental clinics have their roots in the community and define the neighborhood characters. Some of them are popular and well-known city-wide, others may be less famous but vital to residents. In addition to traditional mom-and-pop shops, hundreds of independent stalls inside shopping malls also together contribute to the community cultural heritage and neighborhood economy. Although these establishments could be considered as legacy businesses, their situations differ greatly depending on their commercial space ownerships, customer base, industry, online commerce adaptation, etc.. In addition, they have all faced challenges stemming from neighborhood gentrification.

In order to better examine the various milieu and challenges legacy businesses are facing, this section demonstrates and analyzes three different types of small businesses through three case studies: the well-known Phoenix Bakery with over 80 years of history on Broadway, Zen Mei Bistro near the Alpine Recreation Center serving generations of residents and office workers in Downtown Los Angeles, and Cindy’s Shop in Dynasty Center whose clientele includes residents and tourists. The case studies were based on interviews with business owners, community organization members who have experience working with business owners directly, and published media reports.

1. Phoenix Bakery

   Founded in 1938 and still operated by the Chan Family, Phoenix Bakery has served the Chinatown community for 84 years. (Figure 3.14) Its founders Fung Chow Chan and his wife Wai Hing were originally from Guangzhou, China. They established Phoenix Bakery (雙鳳餅

---

106 This section was all derived from an interview conducted with Kenneth Chan, one of Phoenix Bakery's operators, on June 20, 2022, in Los Angeles, California, unless otherwise noted.
with the idea of “creating a gathering place for the community where people can enjoy traditional Cantonese pastries and cookies”\textsuperscript{107}. Later, Lun Chan, Fung Chow’s brother, who studied baking at Hong Kong and Los Angeles Trade-Technical College, joined the bakery and developed western-style cakes that cater to the Chinese community and beyond.\textsuperscript{108} Over the years, its signature Cantonese-style almond cookies and western-style strawberry cake found favor within the community. In addition, having wedding cakes, birthday cakes, and festival pastries from Phoenix Bakery became a tradition in Chinatown. For example, the bakery’s handmade mooncakes made with natural ingredients have been very popular during the Autumn Festival (a traditional Chinese festival pastry when people worship the moon and celebrate family reunions). From people in Chinatown to workers in Downtown Los Angeles, to the Lakers and Dodgers, Phoenix Bakery registered in many Angelenos' memories. As Barbara Hansen from the Los Angeles Times commented Phoenix Bakery: “It is an L.A. classic.”\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{Figure 3.14:} The façade of Phoenix Bakery. Photo courtesy of The Infatuation.


\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.

The founder Fung Chow Chan was also a visionary and respected leader in the Chinese American community. He moved to Los Angeles from Guangzhou, China, to join his father, who had already established a silk business here. In addition to establishing and running Phoenix Bakery, he also played a leading role in founding two important Chinese American financial institutions, Cathay Bank and East-West Bank, two of the oldest banks owned by Chinese Americans. When Chan found it extremely difficult to obtain a bank loan for his bakery in the 1970s, despite its enormous success, he and other community leaders in Chinatown decided to establish a bank to serve the Chinese American community who were often rejected by mainstream banks due to racial discrimination.

The bakery used to be located in Central Plaza for forty years (1938 – 1977). It later relocated to its current location at 969 N Broadway since 1977. The bakery gained its loyal customers in the city by the 1970s, selling about a thousand desserts every Saturday. Ken Chen, the second child of the founders Fun Chow Chan and Wai Hing, shared a story about one of their customers: “One customer who had lived in Chinatown for many years and moved to

---

Nevada insisted on buying the Signature Strawberry Cake for every birthday. Her family managed to travel interstate on every birthday to buy our cakes because “it is not a real birthday without the cake from us.”

Phoenix Bakery was also welcomed by the community as an employer. “Generations of kids living in Chinatown earned their allowance and tuition by working part-time in our bakery,” said Ken. Except for part-time employees, most full-time employees have worked here for more than a decade. Employees were of various backgrounds, including Chinese, Southeast Asian and Mexican immigrants. Ken mentioned that one employee who worked here for more than thirty years who “retired recently but came back and asked us for job again because he missed us.”

According to Ken, his parents never talked about succession plans with him and his siblings. “But they also did not talk about selling the bakery, so we just knew it. Our uncles and aunts always lecture us to keep the family business,” said Ken. So far, it is Ken and his siblings taking care of the bakery together, although all of them have a full-time job. Ken visits the bakery once a week, and so do his siblings. Ken said: "Honesty, none of us are interested in taking over the bakery, but we have to. It is our responsibility." The second generation of the Chan family has not yet determined the future of Phoenix Bakery. When asked about his opinion on an employee-owned plan, he said they have been considering training and promoting long-term employees to management roles, but the bakery would highly likely be family-owned.

In Ken’s opinion, Phoenix Bakery’s biggest challenge was the increasing labor costs due to complicated baking process that requires long hours of hard work and many workers. Labor therefore occupied a large portion of their cost. The other problem that he worried about was inflation, which has driven up the cost dramatically.

As for rents, Ken thought it would not be a matter of problem because the building that the bakery occupies owned by one of his family members. But he also acknowledged that rent would be a huge pressure for other legacy businesses that do not have such privilege.

Ken emphasized that language barriers and the lack of knowledge could pose challenges to business owners. He offered an example of obtaining reasonable deals with point of sale (POS) payment systems, banks, and internet service providers. They are important businesses infrastructure for small business, but it is also a time- and energy-consuming process to bargain for a reasonable price. He said that business owners could be charged unreasonable bills that they

112 Kenneth Chan, interview by author, Los Angeles, June 20, 2022.
could not afford if they did not have the knowledge and energy to negotiate. Considering the relatively low profit margin for most small businesses, such issues could have a huge financial impact on them. In many cases, due to the high costs and the lack of energy to negotiate, some business owners simply refuse credit card payment or internet service, limiting their customer base and their capability to accommodate the changing market.

2. Zen Mei Bistro

Zen Mei Bistro (珍美海鮮燒臘麵家) is a family-run Cantonese restaurant located in the Alpine Recreation Center, a popular community gathering place. (Figure 3.16) Authentic flavors and friendly service make it a beloved restaurant among residents. Lunchtime is usually the busiest time window when Downtown office workers rush in for a satisfying Chinese meal. Kids frequent Zen Mei after basketball games in the recreation center; They enter the restaurant, walk directly to the refrigerator, and grab a carbonated beverage while having small talk with the owners, Michelle, and employees about families and school. Some of them are childhood friends of Michelle's daughter and son.

Michelle moved to Los Angeles from Guangzhou, China in 2001 with her daughter and son to reunite with her husband who worked in Chinatown. She remembered the day they arrived was right after the tragic September 11 Attack occurred, and they had to spend a whole day at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) before they were approved to enter the country. After

---

113 This section was all derived from an interview conducted with Michelle, owner of Zen Mei Bistro, on June 20, 2022, in Los Angeles, California, unless otherwise noted.
settling in Chinatown, she worked as a garment worker for a long time and her husband worked at a Chinese restaurant. With years of hard work, she and her husband managed to save enough money to buy the Zen Mei Bistro from its last operator, who is also a Chinese American of Cantonese origin. Michelle is not sure how long Zen Mei Bistro operated before she took it over. CSC’s CEO Peter Ng, who is also the cousin of Zen Mei Bistro's previous owner, said in an interview that the restaurant had operated for more than 30 years before Michelle bought it. The chef was replaced by Michele’s husband after they took over the restaurant. The restaurant so far has five employees who all have a Cantonese background.

The rapid increase in rents has been a major concern for the restaurant. The landlord kindly offered Michelle a rent cut during the COVID period, but the discount would end soon as of the interview conducted. Michelle was worried about the restaurant’s future since the number of lunch diners has reduced substantially due to the working-from-home trend and she felt pessimistic about the return of lunch diners who were mostly Downtown office workers. Even worse, the number of visitors and tourists has also declined. She said, “Because of COVID, foot traffic dropped drastically. The neighborhood has become a lot quieter than before.” The increasing prices of labor and materials made it even harder. For example, the price of a bucket of oil rose from $20 to over $50 in a month. To compensate for the loss, she had to extend business hours to 12 hours, resulting in more than 15 working hours a day.

When asked about online commerce adaptation, Michelle said although she has worked with online food delivery and ordering platforms, the commissions for these tech companies were so high that she was considering withdrawing from the platforms. In addition, Michelle mentioned the changing demographics of her clientele: While the number of customers has dwindled, the proportion of non-Asian diners has increased, who she said were new residents in the neighborhood.

Over the years, Michelle has not been able to obtain a formal lease agreement with her landlord. Although she did not believe that her landlord would evict her soon, she still wanted a formal signed lease that would make her feel a lot more secure. “I am not sure if I should discuss this topic with my landlord, because I am afraid that she will straight up kick me out when I propose the idea,” said Michelle.

Besides, Michelle also worried about safety issues. She used to think that the location of Zen Mei Bistro was ideal because the popular Alpine Recreation Park is just across the street and
people there would keep an eye on the restaurant. In early 2021, however, the restaurant was robbed, which raised concern about safety. Fortunately, the Chinatown community, led by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, quickly raised funds to support the restaurant after the robbery. Still, she believed that the safety problem became more and more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The story of Michelle and the nearby unhoused people is well known in Chinatown. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the Alpine Recreation Center has seen an increase in the unhoused population. Michelle regularly offered them water, food, clothes, blankets and let them use the bathroom in the restaurant. Theo, one of the unhoused people who once received support from Michelle, used to occasionally assist Michelle’s son with his schoolwork in return. Theo later left Chinatown but still frequented Zen Mei Bistro once a week to express his gratitude to Michelle.

Talking about the future of Zen Mei Bistro, Michelle and her husband were considering retiring in four years after their son graduates from college. “We work more than 12 hours a day. The culinary industry is so cruel. I can’t wait to retire.” She shared her feeling of guilt with her children due to the limited time spent with them. “It is my obligation to earn college tuition for my kids and it will end after my younger kid graduates from college. After all these years of hard working, I just want to enjoy my life with family.”

3. Cindy’s Shop

Cindy Ho just relocated her shop to Dynasty Center from The Shop several years ago. She has sold jewelry, accessories, and cultural-related items in Chinatown for over 30 years. Cindy is from Vietnam with Cantonese origin, so she can speak Cantonese and Vietnamese. She and her family emigrated from Vietnam in the 1970s to escape war and then settled in Los Angeles Chinatown for a better life. She is proud to establish her own business from scratch and nostalgic about the good old times in the neighborhood before.

But this is the second time she was forced to relocate. The Shop, another community shopping center opened during the 1980s and where her store was originally located, was converted into an office building by an outside developer. She was shocked by facing the second-time eviction in Dynasty Center so soon from the same developer who pushed her out of

---

114 This section was all derived from an interview conducted with Cindy Ho, the owner of Cindy’s Shop, on February 25, 2022, in Los Angeles, California, unless otherwise noted.
The Shop. (Figure 20) This caused her a lot of concerns since her last relocation experience was not a pleasant one. For commercial tenants, the developer is hard to reach and there is almost no communication between them. She said that there were various accounts and rumors about the eviction plan which might be intentionally spread by the developer, leading to huge uncertainty hanging over every shopkeeper’s head. “Last year, there was a rumor that the developer would kick us out by the end of 2021. But when coming to 2022, it changed to March, and then again it was changed to by the end of 2022. Now I heard that the deadline was push to the next year. I really don’t know what is going on,” said Cindy. Another conflict between her and the developer is about rent. She used to pay 50% of the rent to the previous landlord throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, she had to pay full rent for the new landlord who issued 3-day notice. Cindy felt extremely uncertain about her business’s future because she found that there is no other community shopping mall like Dynasty Center in Chinatown to move in after being evicted again and she did not want to leave the neighborhood. As she put it, “All the goods I am selling are related to Chinese culture. Chinatown is where my store should stay.”

Figure 3.17: Dynasty Center. Photo courtesy of Chinatown Community for Equitable Development.

Over three decades of operating giftshops in Chinatown, Cindy met countless tourists who visited the neighborhood to experience Chinese culture. “In Chinatown, I met people from all over the world. Some of them returned to visit me after years, appreciating the cultural items I
sold and Chinese culture. But it will never happen again due to the frequent relocation,” said Cindy.

Cindy hoped that the voice of small business owners in the neighborhood could be heard by the broader community and governments. “I don’t know if County or City should take care of this issue. But I think there should be a way to intervene. I hope that the developer can give us three to five more years when most of us (small business owners in Dynasty Center) are ready to retire, otherwise we cannot find jobs elsewhere. It would be great if the developer could leave some space as a community shopping mall for us to continue to run business in the future.”

**Analysis on Three Case Studies**

Except for Phoenix Bakery whose operator owns its commercial space, the other two businesses were both facing the risk of being evicted. The owner of Zen Mei Bistro failed to obtain a formal lease from her landlord, which left her in a vulnerable position to protect her rights as a commercial tenant. The motivation for not signing a leasing contract for the landlord could be (a) eluding landlord’s obligation, such as property maintenance; and (b) securing an advantageous position for the flexibility of selling property to potential buyers in the hot real estate market. Due to the unbalanced negotiation power between the commercial tenant and landlord, the business owner even feared bringing the matter to the landlord. In Cindy’s case, although she has a month-by-month contract with the current landlord, the developer is in a favorable position where it can issue eviction notices in a very short period. The speculative potential of the Chinatown real estate market left property owners huge bargaining power against commercial tenants, letting legacy business owners in a difficult position. Without a stable long-term lease, owners cannot come up with long-term business plans due to the uncertainty, nor can they obtain loans or credit from banks.

Moreover, the shifting client base and consumer preferences require businesses to pivot. Due to suburbanization in the regional context and the lack of affordable housing in the neighborhood, many long-term residents moved out of Chinatown for spacious and affordable residences. People who stay in Chinatown are generally poorer and older than the average level in the city. While Chinatown still serves essential goods and services for residents at affordable prices and in a culturally comfortable manner, many small businesses started adapting

---

to preferences of visitors and tourists. However, they still need to confront fierce competition from online platforms. For example, a gift shop on Broadway near the Central Plaza shifted to sell cultural items and plants from books and videos imported from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and China. As its owner who is a Vietnamese-Chinese immigrant said, “No one goes to bookstore today, and no one buys DVDs because everyone watches YouTube and Netflix.”116

In addition, many business owners have not yet formed a communal vision for Chinatown's future, although many of them realized that the historic Chinatown has been reshaped rapidly by new developers. Many of them did not feel they were able to confront powerful developers. There are some community-based organizations, however, established to organize commercial tenants as well as residential tenants to negotiate with landlords and developers, such as CCED and Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA). But long working hours drain tenants' energy, making it difficult to organize. Nevertheless, the emergence of such grassroots community organizations could empower the community to negotiate and envision an equitable future.

Finally, the competition from the ethnoburbs in the San Gabriel Valley that attract recent Asian immigrants as well as residents who used to live in Chinatown also affects the neighborhood.117 According to several interviewees who are or were long-time Chinatown residents, many ethnic groceries, Asian supermarkets, and herb stores moved to suburban cities as they have a broader client base there. The relocation of such major and key facilities further pushes people out of the neighborhood, making it harder for small businesses to sustain.

**Conclusions**

History of business or the family who owns the business in urban ethnic enclaves such as Little Tokyo and Chinatown in Los Angeles is an epitome of immigrant history in the United States as well as regional development history. It is also a critical source as a part of public history in the progress of racial reckoning. Therefore, researching, preserving, and displaying the history of those small businesses should be integrated into legacy business conservation practices as an essential component. Non-profit professional organizations such as local historic societies,

---

116 Interview with a gift shop owner on Broadway, Chinatown, Los Angeles, May 30, 2022.
community service centers, community-based organizations, and business associations could play as community partners when collecting and studying historical information.

Rooted in a solidified community where many people share a common cultural background, legacy businesses in urban ethnic enclaves that serve culture-related goods or services are places where people practice cultural traditions and maintain their cultural identity through everyday life. In addition to goods and services, the language spoken, settings of commercial spaces, relationships between shop operators, employees, and customers are all cultural practices that the community may not be able to enjoy outside of the ethnic neighborhood. Therefore, legacy businesses are part of the cultural institution in urban ethnic enclaves.

As community gathering places, legacy businesses in ethnic neighborhoods also foster social relationships among community members organically through daily encounters and interactions, which is especially important for new immigrants who just started establishing social capital. Besides, employment opportunities offered by ethnic businesses are critical to new immigrants as well because such working places may to some extent exempt cultural barriers.

Moreover, legacy businesses in ethnic enclaves serve as places for natural cross-culture communications for the broader community. With a long and rich history standing in the neighborhood, legacy businesses are linchpins for visitors or residents outside of the ethnic community to learn local history and culture, enhancing social cohesion for the region.

The urban context of ethnic neighborhoods, however, gives pressure on the existence of legacy businesses as shown in two case studies above. The lucrative real estate market in the downtown area brings powerful developers into the ethnic claves along with luxury offices, residential, or commercial buildings that might replace historic legacy businesses. The displacement or closure of legacy businesses will result in the erosion of the social and cultural fabric in the neighborhood.

Compared to Little Tokyo which has already been gentrified, Chinatown is still in the process of gentrification.\textsuperscript{118} Therefore, the conflict between commercial tenants and landlords is more pronounced in the latter neighborhood, which calls for community organization and, if

possible, public agency intervention. Although the urban contexts are different, legacy businesses in both neighborhoods share many challenges. First, the rapid increase in rent is a major pressure poses on businesses. Thus, securing a long-term lease is a key to stabilizing legacy businesses. Little Tokyo is exploring diverse methods to tackle this problem, including community land trust. The other shared challenge is language barriers. Many business owners in these two neighborhoods are not native English speakers, therefore they may not be able to access necessary resources to help them develop businesses or fight for their own rights. Besides, a substantial portion of legacy business owners are seniors who may need additional assistance to learn knowledge and skills to accommodate the changing market. Moreover, many legacy business owners have not yet identified or realized the historical values and cultural heritage embedded in their businesses, and do not have the awareness of archiving documents or documenting family history. This issue suggests legacy business programs need to begin with raising public awareness and educate business owners about heritage conservation, otherwise the program will be dominated by those already well-known and well-documented businesses, failing to represent neighborhood characters and history. It also entails assistance to legacy business owners in writing historic statements during the application phase for legacy business programs.

As discussed in this chapter, the urban context is a major force in reshaping a community's cultural landscape, which involves a variety of stakeholders including developers, landowners, tenants, residents, governments, and community organizations. Therefore, cultural heritage practices in rapidly changing urban neighborhoods would not succeed if the conservation strategies were isolated to traditional historic preservation, simple financial incentives, and technical assistance. Working with the community, learning challenges and concerns, forming collective vision for the community, and seeking collaboration with various stakeholders are necessary for legacy businesses conservation in an equitable manner.

Legacy business conservation cannot become successful without historical research and conservation efforts on the ground. Both Chinatown and Little Tokyo have their own historical association (Chinese Historical Society of Southern California and Little Tokyo Historical Society, respectively), they play a central role to survey, identify, and document historic accounts of families, business, and community groups. It is also critical to channel this
knowledge back to the community through education programs or youth programs, acting as a catalyst to raise public awareness and sustain cultural heritage of the community.
Chapter 4 Conclusion

Chapter 1 develops theoretical frameworks that provide a foundation for the analysis and discussion in following chapters, including the relationship between cultural heritage and legacy businesses, the Burra Charter Process as a widely adopted conservation framework, ethnic entrepreneurship, and gentrification in urban context. It conduct an in-depth discussion of the relationship between cultural significance and legacy businesses in American cities, particularly those in urban ethnic neighborhoods; Its main attributes include:

1. Relationships between owners/operators, workers, and customers/visitors;
2. Arts and crafts, or cultural characteristics of goods or services served by the business;
3. History of the business;
4. Architecture or interior design of the building houses the business;
5. Business’s involvement in the community as a third space where people gather and form social relationships;
6. Association between the place that business occupies and community’s collective memories and identity construction.

The characteristics and complex urban issues confronted by legacy business warrant more complex conservation strategies that may be helpful in mitigating social equity issues beyond the traditional conservation scope. In addition, for ethnic legacy businesses, related community members should be the primary source of cultural knowledge as available historic documents may not be sufficient, which requires deeper collaboration between conservation experts and the community.

The case studies of legacy programs in three American cities - San Francisco, CA, San Antonio, TX and Los Angeles, CA in Chapter 2 revealed that longevity and cultural contribution to the community are two major standards for legacy businesses to get registered, while the process of assessing cultural contribution is not clarified. The highlights of legacy business programs are its expansion of historic objects to small business of historic, social and use value and innovative conservation strategies such as marketing and financial incentives that sync with improving social equity. Therefore, legacy business programs in American cities bring about more opportunities in the field in regards to conserving living legacy, intangible cultural heritage, and involving in mitigating broader social issues.
In the discussion of two neighborhood scale case studies – Little Tokyo and Chinatown in Los Angeles, the thesis analyzes neighborhood context and the relationship between the legacy business and the symbiotic cultural heritage of the community. Legacy businesses here serve beyond commercial establishments selling goods and services and play an active role in preserving, transmitting community culture on a daily basis as well as community identity. They also function as a “third place” for community interaction and gathering where people create collective memories, cultivate place attachment, and reinforce cultural identity. In addition, the history of legacy businesses in these two communities reflects historical and social patterns in the city of Los Angeles and the broader community in terms of immigrant history, the history of city development and the region’s character of cultural diversity. The wave of gentrification and the real estate market, however, threatens the continuity of legacy businesses in these neighborhoods.

In America, the disappearance of urban neighborhoods is not an uncommon phenomenon. Under this context, the strategy for conserving and revitalizing ethnic legacy businesses – irreplaceable places for immigrant communities to access vital goods and foods as well as maintain cultural identity – needs input from diverse agents and flexible measures. Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs), for example, are legal contracts negotiated between developers or companies moving into a neighborhood and the community who is impacted. It is a useful tool for the community to convey their concerns, mitigate negative effects brought about by gentrifiers, and channel resources back to the community.

While offering financial grants to legacy business owners is an innovative approach, it is difficult to enhance their negotiating power with commercial landlords as the lucrative property market. Neighborhoods such as Little Tokyo are exploring community land trust funds to secure property ownership to counteract rising rents. Los Angeles Chinatown started to unite voices from both commercial and residential tenants to resist evictions. Both attempts are still in their infancy, but they are worthy of further research.

Recognition and marketing promotion are popular assistance offered by legacy business programs, which were also regarded as a part of public history education. Extensive city-wide marketing campaigns can attract media as well as the public’s attention. By doing so, the program can encourage citizens and business owners to rediscover cultural heritage embedded in establishments where they encounter every day and empower them to explore their unique
stories and culture. The spillover effects of massive scale marketing activities can also promote other small businesses in the neighborhood.

Another popular benefit provided by legacy business programs is technical consultation or business education resources. Immigrant communities, however, many of whom struggle with language barriers may require the program to collaborate with community organizations for better program outcomes. Thus, collaboration between city entities and community organizations is recommended, particularly for immigrant neighborhoods, to distribute benefits as well as offer application assistance.

Prioritizing legacy businesses which face risk of being evicted is adopted by S.F. Registry and L.A. Registry, while the latter one goes one step further to prioritize businesses in low-income neighborhoods. Marketing campaigns and application assistance should therefore pay more attention to traditionally underserved neighborhoods.

There is a major issue, however, lying in many legacy business programs of American cities: There is insufficient support or guidance provided to business owners about how to discover, identify, document, and sustain the history and cultural heritage of their businesses. Identifying and documenting the cultural heritage of a business is normally limited to the application process in which business owners need to describe their history, contributions to the community, and plans to maintain cultural heritage. Although some programs, such as S.F. Registry, offer application assistance by its Small Business Commission staff, it may still pose challenges for business owners, especially immigrant communities whose history and cultural heritage may not have been sufficiently documented and studied. Therefore, it requires collaboration between historians, heritage conservation practitioners, and community members to establish and maintain a cultural heritage inventory to lay a foundation for legacy business programs implementation.

The Burra Charter Process could be a starting point to establish the framework for conserving legacy businesses with deeper and broader collaboration with community and diverse stakeholders to identify cultural significance, issues in the local and regional context, available resources. It also helps recognize potential alliances and establish a monitoring mechanism.119

Based on the discussion, this thesis proposes a conservation process for legacy businesses in urban ethnic neighborhoods in American cities that demonstrated as Table 4.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Burra Charter Process</th>
<th>Added Processes Proposed by this Thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Understand     | 1    | Understand the place: define the place and its extent, investigate the place including history, use, associations, and fabric. (Articles 5-17, 12, 26) | (a) Partner with community members or organizations for cultural significance information, especially for the following:  
  • Relationships between owners/operators, workers, and customers/visitors;  
  • Arts and crafts, or cultural characteristics of goods or services served by the business;  
  • History of the business;  
  • Architecture or interior design of the building houses the business;  
  • Business’s involvement in the community as a third space where people gather and form social relationships;  
  • Association between the place that business occupies and community’s collective memories and identity construction.  
(b) set up reasonable and effective conservation goals for the business;  
(c) Identify opportunities and threats faced by the legacy business; |
|                | 2    | Assess cultural significance: assess all values using relevant criteria and develop a statement of significance. (Article 26) | (a) Validate information collected in the Step 1 with the community;  
(b) Research community and regional historical and cultural significance.                                                                                                                                                |
| Develop Policy | 3    | Identify all factors and issues: identify obligations arising from significance, future needs, resources, opportunities and constraints, and condition. (Articles 6, 12) | (a) Assess opportunities and threats confronted by the legacy business through following dimensions:  
  • Urgency of the opportunities or threats;  
  • Where do the opportunities/threats come from? Are they business-specific or regional context issue?  
  • If they are business-specific opportunities, what kind of available resources or support can be directed to the business?  
(b) If opportunities/threats stem from community/regional issues, what policies need to be revised or proposed? For example, unreasonable zoning, gentrification, the lack of affordable housing in the neighborhood, ineffective economic development policies, etc.  
(c) Identify and consult with stakeholders and potential allies, such as other government departments, interested developers, preservation entities, community organizations, interested groups and individuals, etc. |
|                | 4    | Develop policy (Articles 6-13, 26)                                                     | (a) Based on the consultation from last step, develop policy and collaboration mechanisms among stakeholders and allies;  
(b) Ensure the participation of community members.                                                                                                                 |
|                | 5    | Prepare a management plan: define priorities, resources,                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
Table 4.1 Legacy Business Conservation Process Based on Burra Charter Process, table by author.

The Legacy Business Conservation Process improves the existing Burra Charter Process in four aspects: (a) It specifies characteristics of cultural significance of legacy businesses and steps of identifying them; (b) it emphasizes the step of identifying potential partners/stakeholders related to legacy business conservation, such as community partners, developers, and government entities; (c) it encompasses broader issues in conservation practice, including business/economic development, cross-culture communication, urban planning, and social equity; and (d) it goes beyond the conservation scope to the broader community/regional context.

Breaking down silos and incorporating diverse stakeholders and allies can bring more opportunities to legacy business conservation practices. As it can simultaneously take care of other social issues, legacy business programs may gain more visibility and support from city councils, government entities, and the public.

The findings of this thesis have to be seen in light of some limitations. First, the community-level case studies only cover two neighborhoods in the same city, Little Tokyo and Chinatown, and lacks examples from different American cities or other ethnicities. Therefore, it might not be applicable to other urban ethnic neighborhoods. Second, while ethnographic observations and interviews are helpful in exploring needs and difficulties of legacy businesses, large scale survey for small business owners, employees, residents, and visitors can further understand the dynamic of maintaining culturally significant small businesses from more diverse perspectives. Finally, this thesis does not include sufficient empirical research on stakeholders such as developers and municipal governments. For future research, the characters and functions of various long-standing and culturally significant small businesses across American cities needs further documentation and discussion. In addition, analysis on interaction between city-wide legacy business programs and neighborhood-scale cultural heritage conservation efforts and the role of conservation professionals is worth discussing more.
Bibliography


# Appendix A

San Antonio, TX, Legacy Business Program Application Form

## SAN ANTONIO LEGACY BUSINESS

### NOMINATION FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Business Name:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Date Established:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Business Owner(s) Name (may also be the CEO or President):</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Business Address:</strong></th>
<th><strong>ZIP</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>No. of Locations:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Business Phone:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Business Email:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Business Website:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Facebook:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Twitter:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Type of Business:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name of Nominator (if different from business contact):</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Nominator's Email and Phone:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Is this the original business address? If not, please list all previous addresses and years of operation at each address (please include other addresses at the end of the historical narrative)**

**MY BUSINESS HAS EXISTED FOR 20 YEARS OR MORE AND MEETS THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA** *(check all that apply, must meet at least one)*

- [ ] Owned by generations of the same family
- [ ] Located in a landmark or historic district
- [ ] Provides authentic goods or services
- [ ] Eligible and willing to be a landmark
- [ ] Cultivates tradition and culture

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

Please provide a short historical narrative of the business. Take a look at our guides and tips for writing the narrative. Your historical narrative should tell us the story of your business and why it is eligible, based on the criteria. Please use a separate page to write a narrative between 250 and 750 words.

I am authorized to submit this nomination on behalf of the above-named business and give the City of San Antonio permission to publish images, documents and other supporting materials submitted with this form to promote the nominee and the Legacy Business Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Signature of business contact:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Date:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**PLEASE SEND THIS NOMINATION FORM AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS TO:**

San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation 1901 S. Alamo San Antonio, TX 78204 Or email to: OHP@sanantonio.gov
Appendix B

Los Angeles, CA, Legacy Business Registry Council Documents (File No.19-0781, Nos. 2, 6, and 7 of Exhibit B of the March 3, 2022 Economic and Workforce Development Department Report)

File No. 19-0781

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOBS COMMITTEE REPORT relative to the establishment of a legacy business program in the City of Los Angeles.

Recommendations for Council action, SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE MAYOR:

1. ADOPT and APPROVE a Los Angeles Legacy Business Program as detailed in Recommendation Nos. 2, 6, and 7 of Exhibit B of the March 3, 2022 Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) report, attached to the Council File, with the following criteria:

   a. The EWDD will create an application process for businesses to be included on the Legacy Business Registry, quarterly review applications, and provide a staff recommendation to the Small Business Commission for inclusion on the Registry.

   b. A “Legacy Business” will be defined as a business that has been in operation for 20 years or more within the same community, and which meets three of the following four criteria:

      i. It contributes significantly to its community’s history or identity.

      ii. It sustains and cultivates distinctive cultural traditions or practices.

      iii. The business is not franchised or affiliated with a national corporate chain.

      iv. It provides vital goods and services in a language and manner that is culturally accessible to the community.

   c. The EWDD will give prioritization for inclusion on the registry to businesses that face an imminent threat of displacement, and those businesses who are located in low-income communities (defined as those with median incomes under 50 percent Area Median Income).

   d. The Legacy Business Assistance Grants will include the use of funds to help Legacy Businesses negotiate long-term lease agreements with their landlords.

   e. The EWDD will solicit a contractor to assist with marketing and branding of the program.

2. AUTHORIZE the EWDD to be the lead entity to implement the Legacy Business Program, including providing technical assistance and assistance grants, subject to funds availability.
3. AUTHORIZE the Controller to transfer funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Business Assistance Programs Fund No. 64N, Account No. 22V835, Legacy Business Program, to the new US Bank account for the disbursement of grants to approved small businesses, upon presentation of proper documentation by EWDD.

4. RESOLVE and AUTHORIZE one position of Project Coordinator (Class Code 1537) in the EWDD from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024, subject to position allocation by the Personnel Department and pay grade determination by the City Administrative Officer (CAO).

5. AUTHORIZE the General Manager, EWDD, or designee, to prepare Controller instructions and/or make technical adjustments that may be required and are consistent with this action, subject to the approval of the CAO; and, AUTHORIZE the Controller to implement these instructions.

6. AUTHORIZE the EWDD to establish and implement a Legacy Business Registry, including soliciting and reviewing candidates for designation as a Legacy Business, transmitting recommendations for designation to the Small Business Commission for approval.

7. INSTRUCT the EWDD to:
   a. Report to the Economic Development and Jobs Committee on a bi-annual basis with a list of designated Legacy Businesses, assistance that has been offered, results of the program, and recommendations for improvement.
   b. Work with the City Attorney, Department of Building and Safety, Planning Department and other relevant City entities to developing ways to assist Legacy Businesses and report to Committee on progress of these efforts.

8. AUTHORIZE the use of up to $5M of ARPA funds as follows:
   a. Legacy Businesses Assistance Grants- $4,000,000
   b. Technical Assistance Curriculum, Marketing and Community Engagement- $500,000
   c. EWDD program costs- $500,000

9. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of EWDD, or designee, to negotiate and execute professional services agreements with third-party consultants for up to $500,000 for assistance in implementation of the Program.

   Fiscal Impact Statement: The EWDD reports that the March 3, 2022 EWDD report, attached to the Council File, provides information relating to an analysis of various Legacy Business Programs including recommendations for a Citywide Legacy Business Program.
that will have no negative impact on the City General Fund, as all proposed programming will be funded with ARPA funds.

Community Impact Statement: Yes

For:
Mid City West Neighborhood Council
Palms Neighborhood Council
Silver Lake Neighborhood Council

Summary:
On March 22, 2022, your Committee considered a March 3, 2022 EWDD report relative to the establishment of a legacy business program in the City of Los Angeles. According to the EWDD, in September 2019, Council directed the EWDD to report with an analysis of Legacy Business Programs implemented by other cities, and to make recommendations regarding the implementation of a Legacy Business Program in the City of Los Angeles. The EWDD is reporting back on Legacy Business Programs managed by the cities of San Francisco, San Antonio, and Seattle, and providing recommendations to implement a Legacy Business Program in the City of Los Angeles. The EWDD recommends that the City Council authorize the creation of a Los Angeles Legacy Business Program, including allocation of ARPA Funds and staffing in EWDD and the DCP necessary to implement the program. The recommended program will include establishment of a Legacy Business Registry, with the assistance of the Department of City Planning and the Cultural Heritage Commission, as well as technical assistance and grants to support designated Legacy Businesses.

After consideration and having provided an opportunity for public comment, the Committee moved to continue this matter. Subsequently, the Committee further considered item and after consideration and having provided an opportunity for public comment, the Committee moved to make a series of recommendations as detailed in the above recommendations. This matter is now submitted to Council for its consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Economic Development and Jobs Committee
COUNCILMEMBER
KREKORIAN        YES
BLumenfield      YES
RAMAN           YES
HARRIS-DAWSON   YES

ARL
6/14/22

-NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL COUNCIL ACTS-
No. 2 of Exhibit B of the March 3, 2022 Economic and Workforce Development Department Report

2) Technical Assistance

Businesses that have been included on the Legacy Business Registry will be offered a suite of enhanced technical assistance services from EWDD. To better support Legacy Businesses, EWDD will solicit a contractor to develop and implement a “Legacy Business Technical Assistance Curriculum” with programs and courses specifically targeted for Legacy Businesses, addressing topics such as successful succession planning and lease education.

No. 6 of Exhibit B of the March 3, 2022 Economic and Workforce Development Department Report

6) Vendor Procurement

EWDD will work with City Departments to identify and provide priority procurement opportunities for eligible Legacy Businesses. Procurement contracts to Legacy Businesses will ensure City resources are being spent to retain longtime businesses, increase jobs and expenditures with the City of Los Angeles.

No. 7 of Exhibit B of the March 3, 2022 Economic and Workforce Development Department Report

7) Legacy Business Assistance Grants [AMERICAN RECOVERY PLAN ACT (ARPA) - COVID BUSINESS RECOVERY FUNDS]

Through the Legacy Business Program, EWDD will deploy up to $3,682,310 million in grants to support up to approximately 245 businesses throughout the city. Each Council District will have a minimum of ten (10) businesses that receive Legacy Business Assistance Grants. Grants of up to $20,000 will be awarded to eligible Legacy Businesses. For Legacy Businesses with one to five employees the grant amount of $10,000 will be provided. Grant amounts of $20,000 will be provided for Legacy Businesses with six or more employees.

To receive a grant, a business must be included on the Legacy Business Registry and would be required to participate in a business assessment and attend recommended courses offered in the “Legacy Business Technical Assistance Curriculum.” These funds must be used to cover expenses that comply with American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) requirements that were incurred on or after March 3, 2021. Eligible uses of funds include programs addressing negative economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 crisis, including:

1. Employee payroll
2. Rent, utilities, and insurance
3. Working capital to reopen or continue operations
4. Adapting to technologies
5. Payment of outstanding business expenses incurred on or after March 3, 2021
6. Adaptive business practices needed to operate the business

All funds will be expended by the allocation deadline of December 31, 2024.

EWDD will utilize a weighted selection process for grants to ensure equitable distribution across the selection of finalists and prioritize City of Los Angeles geographic diversity and low-to-moderate income neighborhoods. Grant application submissions made from the following demographics will be more heavily weighted:

1. Businesses located in low-and moderate-income communities (50% and 80% of Area Median Income or AMI), as defined by HUD.
2. Businesses owned by low- and moderate-income owners (50% and 80% of AMI), as defined by HUD.
3. Small businesses with annual gross revenue below $1 million.
4. CalEnviroScreen Map communities with health hazard ranges at 9.9% +
5. Socioeconomic Data Composite Score by Census Tract (i.e., poverty rates, educational attainment, median income, etc.) with the areas with disadvantaged factors received higher lottery weightings.
6. Other criteria as determined by EWDD.

Legacy Business Grants will have an equitable geographic distribution throughout the City of Los Angeles based on the above methodology.

Legacy Business Assistance Grants will be available until all funds are expended. Future funding to provide Legacy Business Assistance Grants is not certain.

After funds have been expended, any business that desires to become a Legacy Business will have the opportunity to be on the Legacy Business Registry and receive the Program's benefits and services, including promotion and technical assistance. If future funds are identified to provide additional Legacy Business Grants, those Legacy Businesses that did not receive funding and that are on the Registry will be able to apply for grant funding.
Appendix C
San Francisco, CA, Legacy Business Registry Application Form

Legacy Business Registry Application

Business Information

Business name: 
Business owner name(s):
Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business
Current business address: 
Telephone:    Email:
Mailing address (if different than above):
Website: 
Facebook: Twitter:
7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN):

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: 
Contact person title: 
Contact telephone:    Contact email: 

legacybusiness@sfgov.org  |  (415) 554-6680  |  sf.gov/legacybusiness
Legacy Business Registry | Application

Business Owner Demographic Detail

Instructions: Please complete the form below with the demographics of the business owner.

For non-profits or businesses such as worker-owned cooperatives, please select the demographics of the main point person for the Legacy Business Program (e.g. Executive Director, Board President, Founder).

This information does not affect your eligibility or priority for services. The Legacy Business Program office uses it to understand and improve how it is serving all San Franciscans. Individual demographic information will be kept private and will not be shared.

What is your preferred language? (select one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other language, please specify:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which best describes your race or ethnicity? (select all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>Middle Eastern or North African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>Not listed, please specify:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your gender identity? (select the one that best describes your current gender identity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Trans Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Trans Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer/Gender Non-Binary</td>
<td>Not listed, please specify:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you describe your sexual orientation or sexual identity? (select one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation/Identity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>Straight/Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian/Same-Gender Loving</td>
<td>Decline to Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning/Unsure</td>
<td>Not listed, please specify:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original San Francisco address:</th>
<th>Zip Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates at this location: From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other address (if applicable):</th>
<th>Zip Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates at this location: From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other address (if applicable):</th>
<th>Zip Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates at this location: From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other address (if applicable):</th>
<th>Zip Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates at this location: From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Address (if applicable):</th>
<th>Zip Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates at this location: From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other address (if applicable):</th>
<th>Zip Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates at this location: From:</td>
<td>To:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applicant Disclosures


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 owed 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:

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Appendix D
San Francisco CA, Legacy Business Registry Application Narrative Template

BUSINESS NAME HERE
Written Historical Narrative

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

Please refer to the business in the third person (using “it”) instead of first person (“I” or “we”).

b. Describe who the business serves.

In general, who are the customers of the business? What neighborhoods or region does the business serve? What are the general demographics of the average customer?

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

Like “World-famous Irish coffee,” or “Wholesale produce.”

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.

If the business had 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Founding Year to Year:</th>
<th>Co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year to Year:</td>
<td>Co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year to Year:</td>
<td>Co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year to Year:</td>
<td>Co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year to Present:</td>
<td>Co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name; co-owner’s name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Provide a brief explanation of when, why, and for how long operations shut down.
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.

What’s the business’ role in its community and neighborhood? Is it the “first of something” or the “last remaining” of its business type?

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

List any significant or historical people associated with the business (e.g., owners or patrons). Is it linked to any major event or historical movement?

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

Does the business provide services to the public? Donate to nonprofit organizations or schools? Participate in neighborhood events? Provide second-chance hiring or a training program? Does the business owner serve on any neighborhood groups, City commissions, or similar?

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

If so, provide some notable examples.

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

If so, provide some notable examples.

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

“If the business were to close …” what would happen? Would the neighborhood lose something such as the only grocery store in the neighborhood? Would San Francisco lose something? Would a number of employees be without work? Would customers be without a place to buy something specific?

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?

List here anything that is significant about the exterior or interior of the business.

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

For example: “Restaurant serving Vietnamese cuisine,” or “Services for the elderly.”

c. What challenges is the business facing today?

Your honest answer will improve services to Legacy Businesses by helping the Office of Small Business design programs that most directly address the challenges businesses are facing.

If the business is older than 20 years but less than 30, also explain that the business is at risk of immediate displacement and describe why.

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.

This will be 1-7 words.

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.

Information in this section comes from the City’s Property Information Map.