



Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application Number: LBR-2025-26-020
Business Name: Brava! for Women in the Arts
Business Address: 2781 24th St.
District: District 9
Applicant: Edith Castorena, Marketing and Development Mgr.
Nomination Date: December 10, 2025
Nominated By: Supervisor Jackie Fielder

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes _____ No

4031 25th St. from 1979 to 1980 (1 year)
214 Valencia St. from 1980 to 1996 (16 years)
2781 24th St. from 1996 to Present (30 years)

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

Yes _____ No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes _____ No

FEATURES OR TRADITIONS: Theater

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION: January 21, 2026

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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



Member, Board of Supervisors
District 9



City and County of San Francisco

JACKIE FIELDER

I am writing to offer my recommendation for Brava! for Women in the Arts to be added to the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry. For nearly five decades, Brava has served as an essential cultural anchor in the Mission District, offering high-quality theatrical, musical, dance, film, and multidisciplinary performances while providing year-round education and training for youth and emerging artists. Since its founding and especially since its transformative purchase and restoration of the historic 1926 York Theatre in 1996, Brava has sustained a rare and powerful commitment to both artistic excellence and community accessibility, ensuring that women, LGBTQIA+ creators, BIPOC artists, and neighborhood cultural groups have an affordable, mission-aligned space in which to create, gather, and thrive.

Throughout its continuous operation in San Francisco, Brava has deeply shaped the cultural identity of the lower 24th Street corridor and the Calle 24 Latino Cultural District. Its stages have launched the work of nationally recognized artists such as Cherrie Moraga, Rhodessa Jones, and Marga Gómez, and it continues to support local artists through residencies, fiscal sponsorship, and subsidized rentals. Brava's Mission Academy of Performing Arts (MAPA) and technical theatre training programs provide life-changing opportunities for San Francisco Unified School District youth, especially young people from under-represented communities, offering mentorship, professional pathways, and a creative home. The organization also carefully maintains its historic theater, preserves its iconic neon sign, and stewards a culturally significant architectural resource that reflects the city's long artistic heritage.

The loss of Brava would be an immeasurable blow to the Mission District and to San Francisco's creative ecosystem. Its affordable performance spaces and community-centered programming sustain dozens of neighborhood organizations, strengthen cross-cultural exchange, and help maintain the vitality of Calle 24's local businesses. At a time when funding for the arts is shrinking and costs are rising, Brava's innovative leadership model, plans for long-term financial stability, and unwavering dedication to equity and access show a clear commitment to future generations. Brava! for Women in the Arts is precisely the kind of irreplaceable, community-driven institution the Legacy Business Registry was created to protect, and I wholeheartedly urge its inclusion.

Sincerely,

Jackie Fielder

Supervisor, District 9

12/9/25

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jackie Fielder".



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Brava! for Women in the Arts

Business owner name(s): Kim Acebo Arteche, Interim Executive Director

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

Current business address: 2781 24th St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Business phone number: 415-641-7657

Business email: info@brava.org

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: www.brava.org

Link to social media: www.facebook.com/BravaTheater

Link to social media #2: www.instagram.com/bravatheater

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0303017

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: Edith Castorena

Contact person title: Marketing and Development Manager

Contact phone number:

Contact email:

Business Locations

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location.

Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: 4031 25th St.

Zip Code: 94114

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

Dates at this location: From: 1979

To: 1980

Other address (if applicable): 214 Valencia St.

Zip Code: 94103

Dates at this location: From: 1980

To: 1996

Other address (if applicable): 2781 24th St.

Zip Code: 94110

Dates at this location: From: 1996

To: Present

Other address (if applicable):

Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From:

To:

Other Address (if applicable):

Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From:

To:

Applicant Disclosures

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Brava! for Women in the Arts

Written Historical Narrative

Introduction

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

Brava! for Women in the Arts is a non-profit arts organization located in San Francisco's Mission District on the Calle 24 corridor. It provides a broad spectrum of arts and cultural offerings: quality performances (theater, dance, music, film, multi-disciplinary works), education and training for youth and emerging artists, fiscal sponsorship of community arts organizations, and affordable facilities for rentals and presentations.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

The organization serves the local Mission District community, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) students interested in theater and technical theater training, youth from under-represented backgrounds, women, LGBTQIA+ and people of color artists and audiences, visiting national and international artists, and community groups seeking space and support for presentation of their work.

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

Mission District arts hub.

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.

Brava! for Women in the Arts was founded with the California Secretary of State on August 10, 1979, under the name "It's Just a Stage." Ellen Gavin was listed as founder of the organization. The address on the founding documents was 4031 25th Street, which is a residence in Noe Valley. Current staff do not have information about the organization in its early years beyond the founding documents.

A second address found on the 501(c)3 filings from 1980 is 214 Valencia Street in the Mission District. Based on this information, it is assumed that the address of the organization was 4031 25th Street from 1979 to 1980, then 214 Valencia Street beginning 1980.

In 1986, playwright/activist Ellen Gavin and a group of about 75 women artists led the transformation of the organization into the Brava we know and love today. In 1988, they changed the name of the organization to "Brava! for Women in the Arts." At the time, the

organization produced work at venues such as the African American Art & Culture Complex in the Western Addition and the Victoria Theatre.

In 1996, Brava purchased the shuttered former vaudeville/movie house built in 1926 (the York Theatre) at 2781 24th Street in the Mission District, renamed it Brava Theater Center, and undertook a circa \$3 million renovation to create a 360-seat main theater and a 60-seat studio. From that point on, the organization has owned and operated the venue.

The building and programs have been continuously active since. Over the years, Brava has evolved its programming to include large-scale festivals, youth training programs (e.g., MAPA – Mission Academy of Performing Arts), fiscal sponsorship, and rental venue services.

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

Brava! for Women in the Arts is a nonprofit organization and therefore does not have owners. Following are several key dates in the organization's herstory:

1979:	Founded by Ellen Gavin under the name "It's Just a Stage"
1986:	Managed by Ellen Gavin and collective of women artists including Alleluia Panis
2012 to 2025:	Executive Director Anastacia (Stacie) Powers Cuellar leads the organization (appointed in 2012)
2025 to Present:	Interim Executive Director Kim Arteche brings Brava into the future

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

The organization has not ceased operations in San Francisco since it was founded. It has maintained continuous presence in the Mission District since its establishment in 1979, and since 1996 has owned its principal facility. Many programs were postponed or moved online during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

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.

Brava! for Women in the Arts is integral to the cultural identity of the Mission District, particularly the lower 24th Street corridor (the Calle 24 Latino Cultural District). By rescuing and transforming a historic 1926 vaudeville/movie house into a vibrant, affordable theater facility, the organization anchored a community arts venue in a neighborhood undergoing intense change and gentrification pressures. It provides a hub where community gatherings, culturally rooted celebrations (for example Día de los Muertos events), educational programs for youth,

and performance work by under-represented groups can take place. The affordable rental model supports many local arts and community organizations, amplifies artists of color and women, and strengthens the social fabric of the neighborhood.

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

Notable artists associated with Brava include Cherríe Moraga, Rhodessa Jones, Marga Gómez, Ellen Gavin, among others. The facility was the site of numerous world premieres, international artist presentations, and festivals.

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

Brava provides youth training through its Mission Academy of Performing Arts (MAPA) including technical theatre, dance, music, and design instruction. It offers affordable, well-equipped performance and rehearsal rental space prioritizing women, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and community-based arts organizations. It engages in fiscal sponsorship of community arts groups, supports emerging artists via Artists in Residence programs, and participates in the neighborhood's cultural life as a gathering site for local events.

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

Media references specifically regarding Brava! For Women in the Arts and the Brava Theater Center include the following, listed from most recent to oldest:

- [San Francisco's Near-Century-Old Theater Is A Feminist Powerhouse That's Championing A New Generation Of Artists And Immersive Experiences](#)
Secret San Francisco
November 3, 2025
- [Nonprofit led by San Francisco woman helps revitalize Mission District theater](#)
CBS News
March 26, 2025
- [The Stages Keeping SF's Indie Theatre Scene Alive](#)
KQED
April 27, 2023
- [\(Some of the\) Best Theatre Spaces in the Bay Area](#)
OnStage Blog
December 30, 2017
- [Brava! For Women in the Arts](#)
Time Out
June 29, 2017

- [Changes at iconic Mission theater](#)

El Tecolote

May 28, 2012

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

Brava! for Women in the Arts received the Community Board Leadership Peacemaker Award in 2023 and the Ellen Magnin Newman Award in 2024.

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

If Brava were to close, relocate, or be sold, the local arts ecosystem in the Mission would lose a deeply affordable, mission-driven performance and rehearsal center. Youth programs such as MAPA and the Running Crew would disappear, depriving San Francisco Unified School District students of high-quality technical theatre access and mentorship. Dozens of community organizations that rely on Brava's rental and fiscal sponsorship services would have to find costlier, less mission-aligned alternatives. Neighborhood vibrancy on Calle 24 would lose a cultural anchor – local restaurants, bars and shops would lose patronage driven by Brava events. The collective voice and visibility of women, LGBTQIA+, and BIPOC artists would be further marginalized in San Francisco's performing arts landscape.

Criterion 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business

a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?

The neon "Brava Theater" sign is a vibrant beacon on the front of the building. The exterior of the building and the Brava mainstage interior were designed by the Reid Brothers, a significant architectural firm in San Francisco's history, in 1926.

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

Affordable performance rentals, youth arts training, diverse professional presentations of under-represented voices.

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

The organization is implementing a two-director model (artistic director and executive director) to share leadership and reduce staff burnout, thereby increasing organizational capacity. Funding is being secured to pay off the mortgage and install solar panels, reducing long-term

operating expenses (especially energy and debt service) and strengthening financial resilience for years to come.

d. What challenges is the business facing today?

Brava is facing ongoing defunding of the arts at the national and state levels, which reduces available grants for mid-sized arts organizations. The after-effects of COVID-19 continue to impact fundraising, attendance, and audience engagement. Rising operating costs, competition for scarce philanthropic dollars, and gentrification pressures in the Mission District (which raise real-estate and rental costs) also pose threats to affordability and community access.

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.

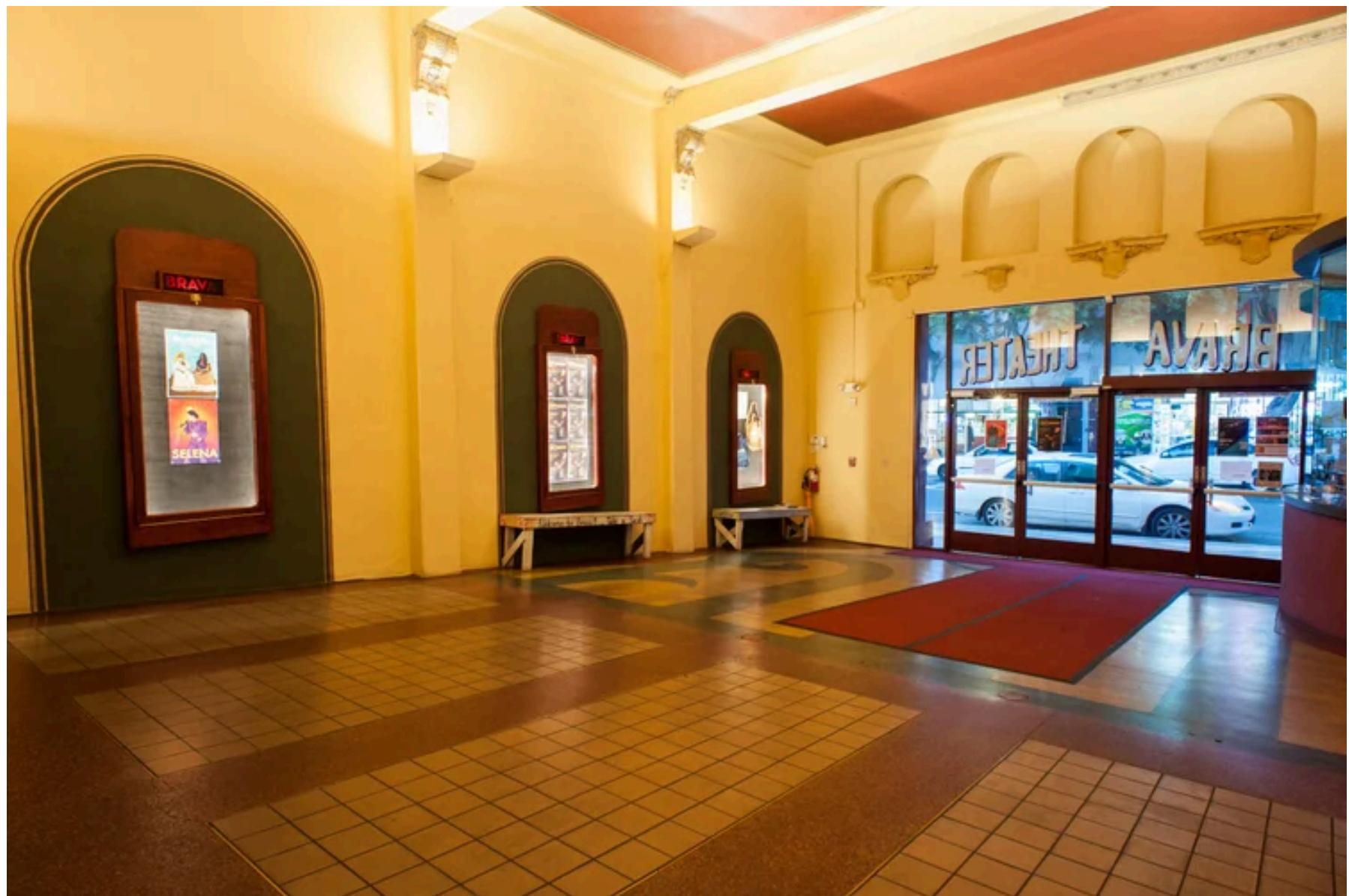
Theater.

b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 2761-2791 24th Street is "A - Historic Resource Present." The building appears eligible for the California Register as an individual property through the South Mission Historic Resource Survey in 2010.









Icon Award

Nonprofit led by San Francisco woman helps revitalize Mission District theater

By Sharon Chin

March 26, 2025 / 6:07 PM PDT / CBS San Francisco

This week's CBS News Bay Area Icon Award winner is a woman credited with saving and revitalizing a cultural centerpiece in San Francisco's Mission District.

Anastacia Powers Cuellar remembers the first time she visited the Brava Theater back in 1983.

"I came to see a film about Machito. And John Santos was giving a lecture about the history of Latin jazz and salsa and I was just blown away," Powers Cuellar told CBS News Bay Area.

She has never lost that sense of awe. Since 2012, she's led Brava! for Women in the Arts.

The nonprofit highlights productions by women, the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, youth and other underrepresented voices.

"Whether it was through the movies or live performances, it's always been a vortex of creative energy," Powers Cuellar said.



Anastacia Powers Cuellar

CBS

The theater first opened in 1926 as a vaudeville stage and eventually became a movie house with ownership and name changes before Brava bought the building in 1996.

But some 15 years later, a recession nearly dropped the curtain on the cultural centerpiece.

"It was \$2 million in debt; there were 25 liens on the property. It was very sad," she recalled

Powers Cuellar was hired to save it.

"I knew what this place meant in the community," she explained.

Drawing on three decades' experience in the arts and administration, she secured grants and community partnerships. She led the effort to resuscitate the theater center, renovated its storefronts along 24th Street, and carved a new cabaret space.

Jose Carrasco, director of the Loco Bloco performing arts group at Brava, had a front row seat to the transformative work of Powers Cuellar, also known as "Stacie."

"It takes an important skill set of knowing how to work with people," Carrasco said. "I really couldn't tell you what the secret recipe is for Stacie, but she makes it happen."

Today, 30,000 people come to more than 200 events a year at Brava, showcasing local artists in music, theater, dance and more.

Brava provides affordable rental space to nonprofits. And it's home to youth performing arts and paid internships for teenagers learning production.

Empress Kehinde Koyejo, one of a dozen resident artists at Brava, celebrates Powers Cuellar's gifts of collaboration and innovation.

"As an artist, you need someone who can see and believe in you and say without question, 'Let's go ahead and do it,'" Koyejo said, smiling.

After more than a dozen years as executive director, Powers Cuellar said she is ready to step down in June 2025.

She urges people to continue to support Brava and the arts, especially in today's climate, when costs are rising, and utility bills alone have more than doubled in the last few years.

Powers Cuellar said she is proud that she helped usher a new period of stability for the arts community.

"And we need it for our heart and soul and well-being," she said.

For saving and breathing new life into the Brava Theater Center, this week's CBS News Bay Area Icon Award goes to Anastacia Powers Cuellar.



Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

February 23, 2026

BRAVA! FOR WOMEN IN THE ARTS

Application Number: LBR-2025-26-020
Business Name: Brava! for Women in the Arts
Business Address: 2781 24th St.
District: District 9
Applicant: Edith Castorena, Marketing and Development Mgr.
Nomination Date: December 10, 2025
Nominated By: Supervisor Jackie Fielder
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Brava! for Women in the Arts, currently located at 2781 24th St.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on February 23, 2026, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

Legacy Business Program
Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
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BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Brava! for Women in the Arts in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Brava! for Women in the Arts.



Physical features or traditions that define the business:

- “Brava” neon sign.
- Two-director leadership model (artistic director and executive director).
- Affordable performance rentals.
- Youth arts training.
- Diverse professional presentations of under-represented voices.
- Terrazzo flooring (interior).
- Murals (exterior).

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

- Theater.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on February 23, 2026.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: February 18, 2026

Filing Date: January 21, 2026
Case No.: 2026-000628LBR
Business Name: Brava! for Women in the Arts
Business Address: 2781 24th Street
Zoning: 24th Street – Mission Neighborhood Commercial Transit Zoning District
55-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Calle 24 Latino Cultural District
Block/Lot: 4266/036
Applicant: Edith Castorena
2781 24th Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Jackie Fielder
Located In: District 9
Staff Contact: Claire Flanegin - 628-652-7361
Claire.Flanegin@sfgov.org

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Brava! for Women in the Arts is a non-profit arts organization located in San Francisco's Mission District along the Calle 24 corridor. The organization owns and operates the Brava Theater, formerly known as the historic York Theater, providing a broad spectrum of arts and cultural offerings including theater, dance, and musical performances, film screenings, multi-disciplinary works, education and training for youth and emerging artists, fiscal sponsorship of other community arts organizations, and affordable facilities for rentals and presentations. With this programming, Brava is able to serve the local Mission District community in addition to San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) students interested in theater and technical theater training, youth from under-represented backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ and people of color artists and audiences, visiting national and international artists, and community groups seeking space and support for presentation of their work.

Brava! For Women in the Arts was founded in 1979 under the name “It’s Just a Stage” by playwright and activist Ellen Gavin and other self-described feminist artists. The organization operated out of 4031 25th Street from 1979 to 1980 and then from 214 Valencia Street from 1980 to 1996. It was during this period, in 1988, that the organization became known as “Brava! For Women in the Arts.” At the time, the organization produced work at venues such as the African American Art & Culture Complex in the Western Addition and the Victoria Theatre. In 1996, Brava purchased the shuttered former vaudeville/movie house built in 1926 (the York Theatre) at 2781 24th Street in the Mission District, renamed it Brava Theater Center, and undertook a circa \$3 million renovation to create a 360-seat main theater and a 60-seat studio. From that point on, the organization has owned and operated the venue. The building and programs have been continuously active since. Over the years, Brava has evolved its programming to include large-scale festivals, youth training programs (e.g., MAPA – Mission Academy of Performing Arts), fiscal sponsorship, and rental venue services under the leadership of Anastacia (Stacie) Powers Cuellar, who was appointed Executive Director in 2012. Since Stacie’s departure in 2025, Kim Arteche has served as the Interim Executive Director and is working to bring Brava into the future.

If Brava were to shutter, dozens of community organizations that rely on Brava’s rental and fiscal sponsorship services would have to find costlier, less mission-aligned alternatives. Neighborhood vibrancy on Calle 24 would lose a cultural anchor – local restaurants, bars and shops would lose patronage driven by Brava events. The collective voice and visibility of women, LGBTQIA+, and BIPOC artists would be further marginalized in San Francisco’s performing arts landscape.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. When was business founded?

The business was founded in 1979.

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

Yes. Brava! for Women in the Arts qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all eligibility Criteria:

- a. Brava! for Women in the Arts has operated continuously in San Francisco for 47 years.
- b. Brava! for Women in the Arts has contributed to the history and identity of the Mission District neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Brava! for Women in the Arts is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. Is the business associated with a culturally significant art, craft, cuisine, tradition?

Yes. The business is associated with several different artistic practices including theater, dance, film, and music.

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

Yes. Notable artists associated with Brava include Cherríe Moraga, Rhodessa Jones, Marga Gómez, Ellen Gavin, among others. The facility has been the site of numerous world premieres, international artist presentations, and festivals.

The theater itself, both the exterior and mainstage interior, was designed by the Reid & Reid architectural firm in 1926. The Reid brothers were prolific architects in the San Francisco during the *City Beautiful* era, with business booming after the 1906 earthquake necessitated rebuilding much of the city.

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

Yes, the site is eligible for the California and National Register as part of the San Francisco Neighborhood Movie Theater Historic District. The building also appears eligible for the California Register as an individual property through the South Mission Historic Resource Survey in 2010. The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 2761-2791 24th Street is “A - Historic Resource Present.”

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

The property is within an area that is currently being surveyed for cultural, social and/or architectural significance related to the Pan Latino Historic Context Statement. This process is ongoing as of the time of this Executive Summary.

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

Yes, both the nonprofit organization and the Brava Theater have been featured in numerous publications locally and nationally. Brava was featured in Secret San Francisco as a “feminist powerhouse” in November 2025, as well as another article published by CBS News in March 2025 highlighting outgoing Executive Director Anastacia Powers Cuellar’s “revitalization” of the theater. The Brava Theater is frequently cited in lists of live theater venues, as seen in a KQED article from April 2023, the Onstage blog in December 2017, and Time Out in June 2017. Hyperlocal publications Mission Local and El Tecolote also frequently feature the organization and its calendar of performances.

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

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

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco’s cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the

city. These businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

Brava! for Women in the Arts was originally founded by feminist playwright Ellen Gavin in 1979 and has continued its legacy of being woman-operated into the present. The organization's purchase and transformation of the historic York Theater into a vibrant, affordable theater facility have helped to anchor a community arts venue in a neighborhood undergoing intense change and gentrification pressures. Brava provides a hub where community gatherings, culturally rooted celebrations (for example Día de los Muertos events), educational programs for youth, and performance work by under-represented groups can take place. Brava provides youth training through its Mission Academy of Performing Arts (MAPA) including technical theatre, dance, music, and design instruction. It offers affordable, well-equipped performance and rehearsal rental space prioritizing women, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and community-based arts organizations. It engages in fiscal sponsorship of community arts groups, supports emerging artists via Artists in Residence programs, and participates in the neighborhood's cultural life as a gathering site for local events.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 2781 24th Street (1996 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 214 Valencia Street (1980 – 1996)
- 4031 25th Street (1979 – 1980)

Recommended by Applicant

- “Brava” neon sign
- Two-director leadership model (artistic director and executive director)
- Affordable performance rentals
- Youth arts training
- Diverse professional presentations of under-represented voices

Additional Recommended by Staff

- Terrazzo flooring (interior)
- Murals (exterior)

Basis for Recommendation

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

Attachments

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

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



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO.

HEARING DATE: February 18, 2026

Case No.: 2026-000628LBR
Business Name: Brava! for Women in the Arts
Business Address: 2781 24th Street
Zoning: 24th Street – Mission Neighborhood Commercial Transit Zoning District
55-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 4266/036
Applicant: Edith Castorena
2781 24th Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Jackie Fielder
Located In: District 9
Staff Contact: Claire Flanegin – 628-652-7361
claire.flanegin@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR BRAVA! FOR WOMEN IN THE ARTS CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2781 24TH ST, BLOCK/LOT 4266/036.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on February 18, 2026, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that Brava! for Women in the Arts qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Brava! for Women in the Arts.

Location

Current Locations:

- 2781 24th Street (1996 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 214 Valencia Street (1980 – 1996)
- 4031 25th Street (1979 – 1980)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- “Brava” neon sign
- Two-director leadership model (artistic director and executive director)
- Affordable performance rentals
- Youth arts training
- Diverse professional presentations of under-represented voices
- Terrazzo flooring (interior)
- Murals (exterior)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business on February 18, 2026.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: February 18, 2026