



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: April 25, 2022

HELMAND PALACE

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-030
Business Name: Helmand Palace
Business Address: 2424 Van Ness Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Haytham Hassan, Owner
Nomination Letter Date: December 17, 2020
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Helmand Palace is an Afghani restaurant opened by Mahmood Karzai at 430 Broadway in 1971. In the summer of 2006, the hillside located behind Helmand Palace between Montgomery and Kearny streets caused a landslide that threatened to cause serious damage to the building. The restaurant consequently moved to its current location at 2424 Van Ness Avenue. Named after a southern province and the second largest river in Afghanistan, the restaurant changed ownership in 2007 and was taken over by Daud Zaheer, who was the general manager. In 2015, the ownership was transferred to the current owner Haytham Hassan, who was a long-time employee of the restaurant.

Known for its specialty dishes such as the kaddo, qaubalee, and lamb dishes which are a house favorite, Helmand Palace serves traditional Halal Afghani and Middle Eastern food. The restaurant has maintained its much-loved recipes that were handed down from the original owner. Helmand Palace has a loyal customer base and attracts new customers through positive recommendations and curiosity about Afghani cuisine. Helmand Palace has been the venue of many first dates, first birthday parties, and other joyous occasions that customers still reminisce about. As a family-run restaurant, Helmand Palace regularly sees returning customers even after they've moved away from San Francisco.

The restaurant sponsors events for the festivals of Ramadan and Eid and also donates to the local mosque. During Ramadan and Eid, the restaurant serves food to at least 400 -600 locals at no cost to them. In addition, the restaurant provides chicken and rice meals to students at the local school attended by the owner's son during Christmas and Halloween festivities.

Despite facing impediments to their operations like a landslide forcing a change in location in 2006, reduced traffic to the restaurant due to the Van Ness Improvement Project from 2016-2022, and closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Helmand Palace continues their legacy serving the neighborhood home-style Afghani food.

CRITERION 1

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

Yes, Helmand Palace has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

430 Broadway from 1971 to 2007 (36 Years)
2424 Van Ness Ave. from 2007 to Present (15 Years)

Legacy Business Program
Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
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CRITERION 2

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

Yes, Helmand Palace has contributed to the history and identity of the Russian Hill and North Beach neighborhoods and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with authentic Afghani cuisine.
- The Van Ness Avenue property is a Category A known historic resource and is identified as a contributor to the Van Ness Area Plan.
- The original owner Mahmood Karzai is related to Hamid Karzai, who became an interim leader of Afghanistan in November 2001.
- There have been a number of features and articles on the restaurant. Helmand Palace has been mentioned as the best Afghani Restaurant in the Bay Area in a 2002 article in the San Jose Mercury News. On October 26, 2010, Helmand Palace was awarded a Certificate of Honor from the City and County of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors for its service to the communities of Russian Hill and Nob Hill as well as the greater San Francisco area. In a March 2021 San Francisco Chronicle article by food critic Soleil Ho, the Sabzi Challow dish received praise.

CRITERION 3

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

Yes, Helmand Palace is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Helmand Palace qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Authentic Afghani cuisine.

CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Restaurant featuring Afghani cuisine.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Helmand Palace currently located at 2424 Van Ness Ave. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

April 25, 2022

HELMAND PALACE

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-030
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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Helmand Palace, currently located at 2424 Van Ness Ave.

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 April 25, 2022, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Helmand Palace in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Helmand Palace.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Authentic Afghani cuisine.

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

- Restaurant featuring Afghani cuisine.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on April 25, 2022.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –

Nays –

Abstained –

Absent –

Legacy Business Program

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-030
Business Name: Helmand Palace
Business Address: 2424 Van Ness Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Haytham Hassan, Owner
Nomination Letter Date: December 17, 2020
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin

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

☒ Yes ☐ No

430 Broadway from 1971 to 2007 (36 Years)
2424 Van Ness Ave. from 2007 to Present (15 Years)

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

☒ Yes ☐ No

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

☒ Yes ☐ No

NOTES: N/A

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: March 9, 2022

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

December 17, 2020

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

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

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

Helmand Palace in San Francisco offers Afghan cuisine that is both classic and modern using fresh ingredients for optimal flavor including affordable dishes for over 20 years, first in its original North Beach spot, and now in its mellow Russian Hill locale towards the end of Van Ness Ave. It's named after a region of Afghanistan along the Helmand River running through fertile desert.

Though it is best known for its bold, home-style dishes featuring lamb, it's menu also includes a wide variety of unique dishes. The lamb is a house favorite, whether as dwopiaza, a grilled leg sautéed with yellow split peas and tossed with vinegar-marinated onions, or as chowpa. Helmand Palace would benefit greatly from being listed on the Legacy Business Registry.

I hereby, respectfully, recommend Helmond Palace for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information.

Please provide the following information:

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

NAME OF BUSINESS:	
Helmand Palace	
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
Haytham Hassan	
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE NUMBER:
2424 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94109	(415) 345-0072
	EMAIL ADDRESS:
MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:	MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	
	MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:
WEBSITE ADDRESS:	
www.helmandsf.com	
FACEBOOK PAGE:	
@HelmandPalace	
TWITTER NAME:	
@Helmand_Palace	
APPLICANT'S NAME:	APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:
Haytham Hassan	
APPLICANT'S TITLE:	APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:
Owner	
SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	
1014796	
SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):	

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS	ZIP CODE	START DATE OF BUSINESS
430 Broadway	94133	1971
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?		DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		1971 to 2007

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
2424 Van Ness Avenue	94109	Start: September 2007
		End: Present

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

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

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

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

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

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

Legacy Business Registry Application

Legacy Business Registry

Application

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

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

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

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

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

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

Haytham Hassan
Name (Print):

12/09/20
Date:

Signature:

1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM 140, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-4626
(415) 554-6680 / www.sfosb.org / LegacyBusiness@sfgov.org

HELMAND PALACE

Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

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

Helmand Palace is a unique Afghani restaurant located in the heart of Russian Hill at 2424 Van Ness Avenue. They have been serving up traditional Halal Afghani and Middle-Eastern food since 1971.

The restaurant was originally located at 430 Broadway in the heart of North Beach's entertainment district. Helmand Palace (named after a southern province of Afghanistan and the country's second largest river) was originally owned by Mahmood Karzai, a native of Afghanistan. Mahmood was one of seven brothers, five of whom lived in the United States and worked as college professors, engineers, or restaurateurs. The other two non-U.S. resident brothers lived in Afghanistan.

Mahmood owned other Afghani restaurants elsewhere including one in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and another one planned in suburban Maryland where most of his family resided. He appointed Daud Zaheer as general manager and partner to oversee the Helmand Palaces' day-to-day operations while he ran his other restaurants. No money exchanged hands, and the restaurant was eventually "passed on" to Daud to run in September of 2007.

During the summer of 2006, the hillside located behind Helmand Palace between Montgomery and Kearny streets caused a landslide that threatened to damage the restaurant's building. It took a year to find a new location for the restaurant. Once the new location was found at 2424 Van Ness Avenue it took a month to make some tenant improvements. Helmand Palace re-opened in September 2007.

Daud Zaheer transferred the ownership of the restaurant to Haytham Hassan on June 18, 2015. No money exchanged hands. Haytham had been a loyal long-time employee of the restaurant, and Daud felt Haytham would do a good job of maintaining the quality of the cuisine and the legacy of the restaurant's excellent reputation. Haytham also knew all of the restaurant's loyal customer base, so it was an easy transition. Haytham has always had a passion for quality food and has been a chef for more than 20 years.

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

In 2006, a landslide from the Montgomery Street hill threatened to cause serious damage to the building the restaurant was housed in so the owner decided to move the location to Van

Ness Avenue. It took one year to find a new location and then one month to finalize the move and re-open. Fortunately, the previous customers at the Broadway location followed, and an entire new audience was then introduced to Afghani cuisine. The restaurant's clientele has grown through curiosity as to what Afghani cuisine is and positive word-of-mouth.

The Van Ness Avenue Improvement Project that began at the end of 2016 has caused great hardship to the restaurant. The restaurant's signage and entrance were blocked by construction equipment for more than four years making it difficult for customers to see where exactly the restaurant was located. The placement of a new street light also blocked the visibility of the restaurant's outdoor signage. The already scarce parking available in the neighborhood became non-existent. All this has negatively affected Helmand Palace's business. Although the restaurant did not close during this time, it did slow down traffic to the restaurant.

More recently in 2019, the restaurant had to close temporarily because the building it is housed in had to do seismic retrofitting. Haytham decided to take advantage of the downtime and make some décor improvements to the restaurant and added a wheelchair ramp and expanded the bathroom to be compliant with ADA regulations for public places. There were some inspection issues that caused further delays to the restaurant's opening. Now they are ADA compliant.

The restaurant reopened in December 2019 only to close again due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. In more recent months, the restaurant has been open for take-out only but will soon open for indoor dining once again as COVID restrictions are lifted.

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

Haytham Hassan is the sole owner of Helmand Palace, but his family helps him with the business. Haytham's brother, wife, and friends have continuously invested time and energy in making Helmand Palace a success. From events in the community to catering opportunities, Haytham's family is by his side.

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

The ownership history of Helmand Palace is as follows:

1971 to 2007:	Mahmood Karzai
2007 to 2015:	Daud Zaheer
2015 to Present:	Haytham Hassan

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

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

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

The historic resource status of the building at 2424 Van Ness Avenue is classified by the Planning Department as Category A, Historic Resource Present, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act. The property was identified as a contributing structure in the 1995 Van Ness Area Plan.

CRITERION 2

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

Helmand Palace has been operating since 1971 and has attracted local neighborhood customers since opening. The owner, Haytham, describes how returning customers are often overheard reminiscing on having their first date there or first child's birthday party. Many customers describe having met their spouse at the restaurant. Helmand Palace's contribution to the neighborhood is that it is seen as a restaurant for families by a family. Many people have moved out of San Francisco, but when they visit, they make sure to return to this neighborhood staple. For example, in February 2022, the owner visited a table to check on how the customers were enjoying the food. Seated were a wife, a husband, and their children. The wife asked the husband if they remember their first date, and the husband replied "no," only to be reminded that their first date was at Helmand Palace. This is just one of many stories overheard at Helmand Palace.

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

Helmand Palace participates in events in the Muslim community. For Ramadan and for Eid, the restaurant sponsors events and donates food to the local mosque. During Ramadan, Helmand Palace serves food to 300-400 San Francisco locals. During Eid, Haytham and his family serves over 600 people for lunch, at no cost to them. Helmand Palace is a staple in the Muslim community and consistently donates to the events centered around Muslim culture.

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

Helmand Palace has received accolades on its cuisine and has been lauded as the best Afghani restaurant in the Bay Area according to an article appearing in the San Jose Mercury News on March 10, 2002.

On October 26, 2010, Helmand Palace was awarded a Certificate of Honor from the City and County of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors for its service to the communities of Russian Hill

and Nob Hill as well as the greater San Francisco area. The certificate was signed by the Board of Supervisors President, David Chiu.

In a March 2021 San Francisco Chronicle article by its Food Critic, Soleil Ho, she praised the Helmand Palace's Sabzi Challow dish.

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

One of original owner Mahmood Karzai's brothers, Hamid Karzai, became an interim leader of Afghanistan in November 2001. Due to the owner's brother's appointment to the Afghani government, Helmand Palace received quite a bit of publicity in the local papers and TV news. This publicity created curiosity in all things Afghani, the country, the culture, and the food. As a result, Helmand Palace gained new customers who were interested in trying Afghani food.

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

In addition to the restaurant's participation in Muslim holidays and celebrations, Haytham demonstrates his commitment to the community by donating food to a local school that his child attends. He is an active parent at the school, and Helmand Palace is known to provide chicken and rice to the school students during Christmas and Halloween festivities.

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

Helmand's Palace serves the Muslim community, the local neighborhood, and the senior community. Most of his repeating customers are people that were born and raised in San Francisco. The restaurant has experienced a loss of business by many repeat customers during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020-2022, but hopes that they will return to have a sit-down dinner soon.

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

The building, located on 2424 Van Ness Avenue, does not have any noteworthy objects.

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

If the business closes, the family would be without their biggest revenue stream. Events like Ramadan and Eid would no longer be served by Helmand Palace. The community and schools would no longer get food donated during special holidays. Also, the employees would lose their jobs. The neighborhood would lose its only fine-dining Afghani restaurant. No other Afghani restaurant can cater to events and family functions since many local ones have only to-go food.

CRITERION 3

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

Helmand Palace has been offering delicious fine dining, takeout, and delivery to San Francisco since 1971. They have been recognized for their fresh, flavorful Afghani cuisine and exceptional service. The food is a modern interpretation of classic dishes, and they only source high-quality ingredients. From dishes like kaddo to quabelee, the menu features a variety of meals to satisfy anyone's palate.

Though it is best known for its bold, home-style dishes featuring lamb, its menu also includes a wide variety of vegetarian options.

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

The business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business. The business has maintained its much-loved recipes that were handed down from the original owner. Their food is considered authentic Afghani cuisine and the interior décor of the restaurant reflects the culture.

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

There are no noteworthy physical features that define the business. The business has undergone a makeover since 2016. The walls were originally adorned with Afghani art, but now the business has a more modern take.

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

Documentation that demonstrates the business has been an Afghani restaurant for 30+ years is included in this Legacy Business Registry application.

HELMAND PALACE

Cuisine from Afghanistan

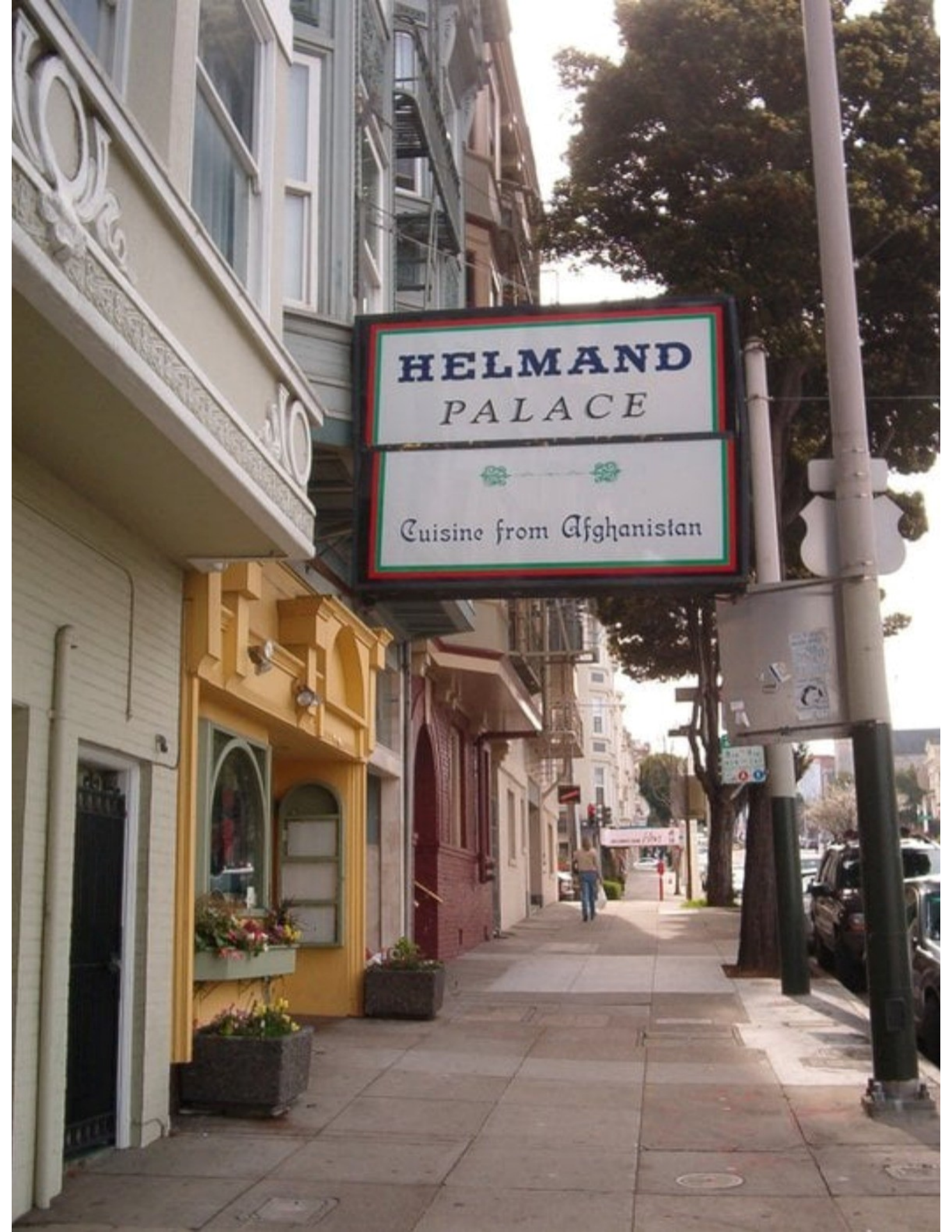


2424



HELMAND PALACE

Cuisine from Afghanistan









HELMAND PALACE VIDEO



Helmand Palace: Check, Please! Bay Area reviews | KQED Food

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJ1LgbNKebA>

Published on Oct 21, 2011

Posted by [KQED Food](#)

Helmand Palace in San Francisco was reviewed on KQED's Check, Please! Bay Area Season 6 episode 12.

<https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/SF-Bay-Area-ethnic-international-world-restaurants-9179705.php#photo-16046362>

SFGATE

Food

Eat your way around the world without leaving San Francisco

Leave your passport at home and experience a United Nations of cuisines in your own backyard.

Amy Graff, SFGATE

Aug. 24, 2016

The cuisines of dozens of nations are represented by these Bay Area restaurants. How many of them have you visited? Which favorites have we left off the list?





AFGHANISTAN

Helmand Palace, San Francisco.

Every meal at this little slice of Afghanistan in Russian Hill starts with a basket of flatbread accompanied by a trio of delectable dipping sauces that will make your taste buds sing. Next, try the Kaddo, caramelized baby pumpkin and ground beef served in a pool of garlic-spiked yogurt. 2424 Van Ness Ave., helmandpalacesf.com

SF Eats: Brown Sugar Kitchen closes, popular Dogpatch bagel shop coming to Ferry Building, more



By [Alisa Scerrato](#) - Published on January 13, 2020.

[San Francisco](#)

[Embarcadero](#)

[Financial District](#)

[Russian Hill](#)

Here's the latest in SF food news. In this edition, a popular Southern eatery will close in the Ferry Building while a bagel shop plans to expand there. Plus, an Afghan restaurant reopens after closing for renovations.

Closings

Embarcadero

Brown Sugar Kitchen (One Ferry Building, Suite 4)





Photo: Stephanie Joyce D./Yelp

After less than a year, Oakland's popular Brown Sugar Kitchen will close its Ferry Building location. The eatery, known for its buttermilk fried chicken and waffles, will have its last day of service on January 19. (The [flagship Brown Sugar Kitchen](#) in Oakland is not affected, and will remain open.)

Holland confirmed the closure to [Eater SF](#), but did not provide a reason. She told Eater that she is working on some new projects in 2020.

Despite the closure, "I'm personally deeply proud to have established the first black female-owned restaurant in the iconic San Francisco Ferry Building," she told Eater.

The news of the closure seems to indicate a bit of trouble for female restaurateurs at the Ferry Building. Last week, Traci Des Jardins [shuttered her Ferry Building Mexican restaurant](#), Mijita, which had operated for 15 years.

Openings

Embarcadero

Daily Driver (One Ferry Building)



Photo: Daily Driver/Facebook

However, there's also some good news at the Ferry Building: six-month-old Dogpatch bagel shop Daily Driver plans to expand there. It's taking the space that formerly housed Chris Cosentino and Mark Pastore's [Boccalone Salumeria](#), which closed in 2017.

[As reported by the Chronicle](#), Daily Driver's duo of husband-and-wife teams —David & Hadley Kreitz and Tamara Hicks & David Jablons — will debut the new shop as a pop-up, with the goal of going permanent.

Unlike the original Daily Driver, the Ferry Building shop will focus on a limited menu of take-out items, with no seating. The centerpiece will be hand-rolled, wood-fired bagels, with build-your-own topping combos of housemade cream cheese or cultured butter, sliced tomato, onion and capers.

Also on offer: pretzels and drip coffee from Red Bay Coffee. Bagel sandwiches could be added down the line.

A representative for the company told Hoodline the new location could open as early as next weekend. Once it debuts, it will open at 6 a.m. seven days a week; closing times are TBD.

Russian Hill

Helmond Palace (2424 Van Ness Ave.)



Photo: Helmand Palace/[Yelp](#)

After a nearly nine-month closure for a seismic retrofit, [Helmand Palace](#), one of SF's only Afghan restaurants, reopened its doors in mid-December.

During the closure, the owners decided to spruce up the space, and diners will see new floors, new paint, and a relocated bar, which was moved from the front of the restaurant to the side wall.

Most of the menu items, like baked baby pumpkin and chargrilled leg of lamb, have stayed the same. But there are a few new items, such as a Mediterranean plate with fresh hummus, tabouli and baba ganoush.

A representative for the restaurant said it's nice to be open again, and to see many of the restaurant's old customers returning.

Hours are 5:30 – 10 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 – 11 p.m. on weekends.

[San Francisco](#) [Embarcadero](#) [Financial District](#) [Russian Hill](#)

Show Comments

Helmand Palace

Restaurants

Russian Hill

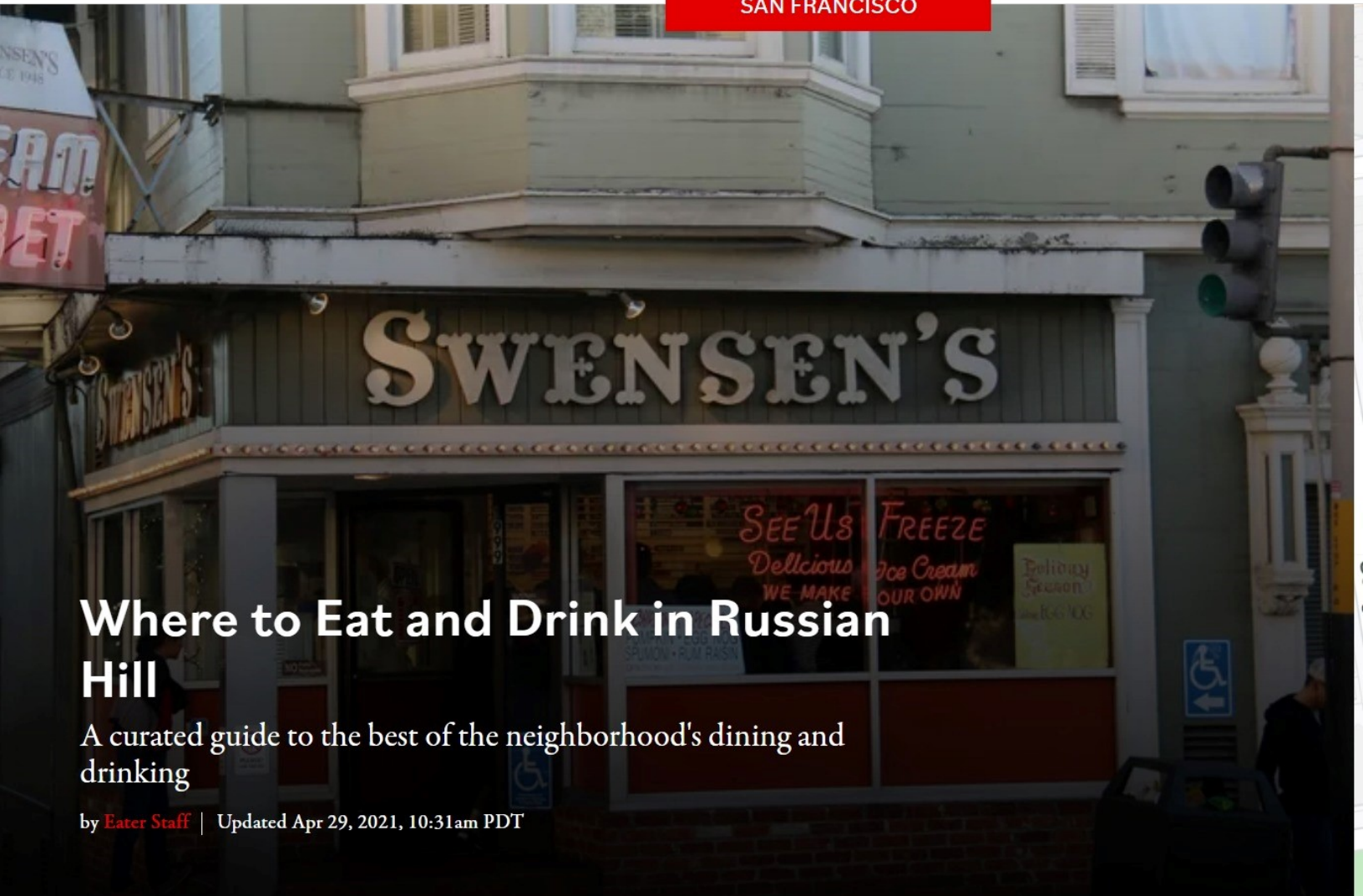
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Time Out says

The Helmand - the city's only Afghan restaurant - moved from North Beach and added 'Palace' to its name, but it's still as good as it ever was. Influenced by the flavours of India, Asia and the Middle East, the food is deliciously aromatic, with marinades and fragrant spices. Specialities include leek ravioli and lamb lawand (leg of lamb sautéed with garlic, onion, tomatoes, mushrooms, yoghurt and spices).

Monday September 22 2014



A photograph of the Swensen's Ice Cream storefront. The building is a two-story structure with a green-painted upper floor and a brick lower floor. The name "SWENSEN'S" is mounted in large, white, serif capital letters above the entrance. To the left, a vertical sign also displays "SWENSEN'S". The entrance has a dark door. To the right of the door is a large window with a red border. Inside the window, there are signs: one says "SEE US FREEZE Delicious WE MAKE Ice Cream OUR OWN" in red and white, and another yellow sign says "Holiday Season". A blue handicapped parking sign is visible on the right side of the building. A traffic light is visible on the far right.

Where to Eat and Drink in Russian Hill

A curated guide to the best of the neighborhood's dining and drinking

by [Eater Staff](#) | Updated Apr 29, 2021, 10:31am PDT



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Presented by The Alaska Airlines logo, featuring the word "Alaska" in a stylized blue font with a wing-like shape above the 'A', and "AIRLINES" in a smaller, plain blue font below it.

Russian Hill is an excellent place to live, boasting some of the city's top views and idyllic settings. And once you know where to go, you can find much of what you want to eat within this neighborhood, and not at terribly high prices, either. Are they the city's most inventive spots? Not generally. But they're the kinds of places you'd want to live near, and that works for locals.

On this list you'll find Afghan food, refined French fare, Vietnamese, sushi, and plenty of good old neighborhood joints.

1. Helmand Palace



2424 Van Ness Ave
San Francisco, CA 94109

(415) 345-0072

[Visit Website](#)

There aren't many Afghan restaurants in SF, making Helmand Palace a true gem. Lamb is the specialty here, so choose from any of the many lamb-focused dishes, such as chowpan, or a half rack of lamb marinated, grilled, and served with Afghan bread, sauteed eggplant, and pallow rice. The interior here is a little staid, but taking it to go is also an excellent option.



Heart, Hustle, and Hope: Helmand Palace Hangs On

by Marcos Chisholm



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Everything about Haytham Hassan’s journey was supposed to embody the American Dream. He left Egypt in search of a new lifestyle. He worked tirelessly to achieve his goals, even if it meant scrubbing pots and pans and working as a cook until the end of time.

We usually know how this narrative ends: His dreams come true, he succeeds, and life turns out great.

But in Hassan’s case, his sacrifices are yet to reward him. He’s still working on the front lines of his restaurant Helmand Palace every day just like he did in 2005. And 15 years into his tenure, he’s scraping by just to survive more than ever.

“In San Francisco, we break even because there’s a lot of competition in the city,” said Hassan.

Restaurant competition in the Bay Area is notoriously intense. It’s not as if Helmand Palace offers an inferior dining experience — the restaurant has four-and-a-half stars on Yelp and over 800 reviews. Customers rave about the qabeli and kaddo and banjan challow. Plus,

some even call it a “neighborhood gem.” For a restaurant that’s been around since 1971, it’s easy to see why.

External forces make it harder than ever for Hassan to navigate life as the owner of Helmand Palace.

Even before COVID-19, Helmand Palace’s location in Russian Hill was changing. A construction project on its Van Ness Ave block remains unfinished after four years, making it difficult for pedestrians to walk. The city’s zoning changes have sparked higher rents in the area. And suddenly, survival has become more than just hyperbole: For Hassan, it’s now a way of life.

“It’s cheaper for me to close,” said Hassan.

Despite receiving a \$5,000 business loan in January, Hassan still cannot afford to pay rent. Most days Helmand Palace opens, the restaurant loses money, and its foot traffic on weekends is not enough to help him break even the way other owners have.

Since the pandemic and city-wide shutdowns forced restaurants to operate differently, Hassan’s regular day-to-day challenges have exponentially worsened. He’s found limited success with online ordering, an important way for restaurants to recuperate any financial losses from the pandemic. He loses close to 30 percent of item profits when taking online orders and deliveries, leaving him without a reliable revenue stream in the short-term.

With or without answers, Hassan fights with the spirit of a boxing champion in the twelfth round. Even if this bout has lasted for years.

“I love what I do. I enjoy when people say ‘Wow, this food is great,’” said Hassan. “I want to keep it for my kids. I love the restaurant, and I want to keep it open. Why close the store for these people?”

For Hassan, Helmand Palace is an old car he loves and refuses to get rid of – it always breaks down, causes problems, and leaves him with more work to do than he expected. Yet it keeps

him engaged and provides him with a purpose that focuses more on the journey and less on the destination.

If anything, Hassan perfectly encapsulates what makes a great restaurant owner: Someone who chefs up more than a nice meal by bringing the right people together. Following a decade-and-a-half of hiring family, friends, and others who needed an opportunity, he still prides himself on his staff and having the courage to take on whatever burden comes up next. Luckily, that will not go away any time soon.

“I hope people stay healthy. I hope people stay well,” said Hassan.



Marcos Chisholm

Marcos is a freelance writer from North Carolina, where he furthered his insatiable appetite for the game of basketball without losing his cravings for croquetas and pastelitos. [Website](#) | [Twitter](#)

All Posts



Restaurant Rating





LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: APRIL 6, 2022

Filing Date: March 9, 2022
Case No.: **2022-002236LBR**
Business Name: Helmand Palace
Business Address: 2424 Van Ness Avenue
Zoning: RC-3 (RESIDENTIAL- COMMERCIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY) Zoning District
80-D Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0547/009
Applicant: Haytham Hassan
2424 Van Ness Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Kalyani Agnihotri - 628-652-7454
Kalyani.Agnihotri@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Helmand Palace is an Afghani restaurant, opened by Mahmood Karzai at 430 Broadway St in 1971. In the summer of 2006, the hillside located behind Helmand Palace, between Montgomery and Kearny Streets, caused a landslide that threatened to cause serious damage to the building. The restaurant moved to the 2424 Van Ness Avenue location in 2006. Named after a southern province and the second largest river in Afghanistan, the restaurant changed ownership in 2007 and was taken over by Daud Zaheer, who was the general manager. In 2015, the ownership was transferred to the current owner Haytham Hassan, who was a long-time employee of the restaurant.

Known for its specialty dishes such as the kaddo, qaubalee and the lamb dishes which are a house favorite, Helmand Palace is known to serve traditional Halal Afghani and Middle-Eastern food. The restaurant has maintained its much-loved recipes that were handed down from the original owner. Helmand Palace has a loyal customer base and attracts new customers through positive recommendations and curiosity about Afghani cuisine. Helmand Palace has been the venue of many first dates, first birthday parties and other joyous occasions

that customers still reminisce about. As a family-run restaurant, Helmand Palace always sees returning customers even after they've moved away from San Francisco.

The restaurant sponsors events for the festivals of Ramadan and Eid and also donates to the local mosque. During Ramadan and Eid, the restaurant serves food to at least 400-600 San Francisco locals, at no cost to them. In addition to this, the restaurant provides chicken and rice meals to students at the local school attended by the owner's son during Christmas and Halloween festivities.

Despite facing impediments to their operations like a landslide forcing a change in location in 2006, reduced traffic to the restaurant due to the Van Ness Improvement Project in 2016 and closure due the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Helmand Palace hopes to open to in-person dining soon and serve the neighborhood home-style Afghani food.

The business's primary location at 2424 Van Ness Avenue is a Category A (Known Historic Resource Present) structure on the east side of Van Ness Avenue between Union and Green streets in the Russian Hill neighborhood. It is within the RC-3 (Residential- Commercial, Medium Density) Zoning District and an 80-D Height and Bulk District.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1971.

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

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

- a. Helmand Palace has operated continuously in San Francisco for 51 years.
- b. Helmand Palace has contributed to the history and identity of the Russian Hill and North Beach neighborhoods and San Francisco.
- c. Helmand Palace 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 authentic Afghani cuisine.

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

Yes, the Van Ness Avenue property is a Category A known historic resource and is identified as a contributor to the Van Ness Area Plan. The original owner Mahmood Karzai is related to Hamid Karzai, who became an interim leader of Afghanistan in November 2001.

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

No.

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

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

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

Yes. There have been a number of features and articles on the restaurant. Helmand Palace has been mentioned as the best Afghani Restaurant in the Bay Area in a 2002 article in the San Jose Mercury News. On October 26, 2010, Helmand Palace was awarded a Certificate of Honor from the City and County of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors for its service to the communities of Russian Hill and Nob Hill as well as the greater San Francisco area. In a March 2021 San Francisco Chronicle article by food critic, Soleil Ho, the Sabzi Challow dish received praise.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 2424 Van Ness Avenue (2007 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 430 Broadway Street (1971 – 2007)

Recommended by Applicant

- Authentic Afghani cuisine

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

Basis for Recommendation

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

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

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



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1238

HEARING DATE: APRIL 6, 2022

Case No.: **2022-002236LBR**
Business Name: Helmand Palace
Business Address: 2424 Van Ness Avenue (Primary Address)
Zoning: RC-3 (RESIDENTIAL- COMMERCIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY) Zoning District
80-D Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0547/009
Applicant: Haytham Hassan
2424 Van Ness Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Kalyani Agnihotri - 628-652-7454
Kalyani.Agnihotri@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR HELMAND PALACE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2424 VAN NESS AVE, BLOCK/LOT 0547/009.

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 April 6, 2022, 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 Helmand Palace 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 Helmand Palace.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

- 2424 Van Ness Avenue (2007 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 430 Broadway Street (1971 – 2007)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Authentic Afghani cuisine

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 2022-002236LBR to the Office of Small Business April 6, 2022.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Wright, Black, Foley, Johns, So, Nageswaran, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: April 6, 2022