



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: January 9, 2023

CAFFE GRECO

Application No.: LBR-2015-16-062
Business Name: Caffe Greco
Business Address: 423 Columbus Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Hanna Suleiman, Owner
Nomination Received: June 1, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Caffe Greco is a quintessential North Beach café known for its superb coffee drinks crafted with Illy coffee, homemade panforte and tiramisu, and classic Italian interior. Caffe Greco is an integral part of the community and one of the last remaining café pioneers that define North Beach and celebrate its Italian heritage. Owners Hanna and Sandra Suleiman opened the café in 1988 and have tirelessly worked since; their son, Sasha, joined the family business in 2009 and plans to maintain it in the future.

Caffe Greco is both a culinary and a community hub. The owners describe it as a second home to many; people savor their daily cappuccino, talk with longtime staff, have conversations in an assortment of languages, read, and experience the warm, inviting nature of North Beach. The café is frequented by local patrons (sometimes generations of the same family), tourists, artists, politicians, and many others. Throughout its 34 years, Caffe Greco has been a gathering spot for neighborhood favorites like artist and poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Beach Blanket Babylon lead Val Diamond, director Francis Ford Coppola and his family, and Saturday Night Live alum Rob Schneider.

Caffe Greco is deeply involved in the North Beach community. They have donated to numerous community events, school fundraisers, and church charities, as well as remained active in the North Beach Chamber of Commerce and the North Beach Festival. In fact, Hanna Suleiman has served as president, vice president, and board member of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce. Caffe Greco is also loyal to its own small community; it prides itself in taking care of its staff, many of whom have worked there for nearly 30 years.

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, Caffe Greco has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

423 Columbus Ave. from 1988 to Present (34 Years)

CRITERION 2

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

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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www.legacybusiness.org





Yes, Caffe Greco 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 Italian coffee, pastries, desserts, and other café fare. Additionally, one of the owners, Hanna Suleiman, is originally from Lebanon and still includes nods to his own culture in the café, such as freshly baked baklava.
- Caffe Greco has been a gathering spot for neighborhood favorites like artist and poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Beach Blanket Babylon lead Val Diamond, director Francis Ford Coppola and his family, and Saturday Night Live alum Rob Schneider. Other famous patrons include Nicholas Cage, Marisa Tomei, Robin Williams, Vince Vaughn, Reese Witherspoon, Don Johnson, Cheech Marin, Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley, ballet legend Mikhail Baryshnikov, local politicians, and numerous others.

Additionally, Caffe Greco has been used as a venue for local musicians, neighborhood poetry readings, and various fundraising events. Perhaps most notably, Lawrence Ferlinghetti held an art auction in the space, donating the proceeds from his drawings and paintings to charity. Caffe Greco has also served as a backdrop for many photo shoots, movies, and television shows.

- The property was evaluated in the 1984 North Beach Survey and determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register or the California Register. It is listed as a "Category A," Historic Resource Present.
- There have been a number of features and articles on the owners and the café. Caffe Greco has been featured in numerous publications such as the North Beach Now, SF Weekly, SF Examiner, San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Focus magazine, 7x7 Magazine, as well more far-reaching publications like Food Arts magazine, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Smithsonian Magazine, various airline magazines, and numerous books and travel guides. Additionally, local television news stations often seek out owner Hanna Suleiman's opinion on local issues in North Beach.
- Owner Hanna Suleiman was presented the Community Enrichment Award from the North Beach Chamber of Commerce in 1996 and another award from the same body in 1997 for his contributions to the city as an innovator and visionary.

CRITERION 3

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

Yes, Caffe Greco is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Bloomers 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:

- Finest coffee drinks.
- Welcoming atmosphere.
- Quality Italian food and pastries.

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- Classically Italian setting.
- Loyal staff culture.
- Original, hand-painted outdoor signage.
- Original, hand-painted gold leaf window signage.
- Original, vintage lithographs.
- Solid mahogany cabinetry and display cases imported from Italy.
- Old ship masts from “Barbary Coast” ships.
- Large menu board created by local artist Noel.
- Posters showcasing local artists and creatives.

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.

- Coffee shop.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Caffè Greco currently located at 423 Columbus 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. _____

January 9, 2023

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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Caffe Greco, currently located at 423 Columbus 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 January 9, 2023, 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 Caffe Greco 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 Caffè Greco.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Finest coffee drinks.
- Welcoming atmosphere.
- Quality Italian food and pastries.
- Classically Italian setting.
- Loyal staff culture.
- Original, hand-painted outdoor signage.
- Original, hand-painted gold leaf window signage.
- Original, vintage lithographs.
- Solid mahogany cabinetry and display cases imported from Italy.
- Old ship masts from “Barbary Coast” ships.
- Large menu board created by local artist Noel.
- Posters showcasing local artists and creatives.

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

- Coffee shop.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on January 9, 2023.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2015-16-062
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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

423 Columbus Ave. from 1988 to Present (34 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: November 9, 2022

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

佩斯金 市參事

May 25, 2016

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi
San Francisco Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
regina.dick-endrizzi@sfgov.org
(415) 554-6134

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

I am writing to nominate Caffè Greco for inclusion in the Legacy Business Registry.

Founded in 1988 by owners Hanna and Sandy Suleiman, Caffè Greco has earned the distinction as one of the most authentic Italian cafés in San Francisco. It has provided patrons with a wide variety of delicious and authentic Italian treats, including Italian coffee and beverages, its world-famous Illy Caffè, as well as award-winning homemade tiramisu, cannoli, gelato, and paninis. It is a charming café that has both indoor and street side seating, that lets the visitor choose either a miniature Italy inside or the splendor of North Beach outside. It is a critical part of preserving North Beach's Italian heritage.

Caffè Greco would benefit greatly from inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry, and it is my honor to nominate it for inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Caffè Greco LLC.

Business owner name(s): Hanna Suleiman, Sandra Suleiman, Sasha Suleiman

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

Current business address: 423 Columbus Ave.

Telephone: (415) 397 – 6261

Email:

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: www.caffegreco.com

Facebook:

Twitter:

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 5 4 8 5 1 0 6

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

☐ Owned by Person with a Disability

☐ LGBTQ+-Owned Business

☐ Veteran-Owned Business

☒ Minority-Owned Business*

☐ Woman-Owned Business

**Minority is defined as on 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: Hanna Suleiman

Contact person title: Owner/Partner Caffè Greco LLC.

Contact telephone: () –

Contact email:

Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

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

Original San Francisco address: 423 Columbus Ave. Zip Code: 94133

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

Dates at this location: From: August 24, 1988 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:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other Address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Applicant Disclosures

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

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

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

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

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

Name: Hanna Suleiman

Signature: *Hanna Suleiman*

Date: 10/24/2022

CAFFE GRECO

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

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

Since its creation in 1988, Caffe Greco has been an innovator and trend-setter, introducing unique Italian espresso drinks using world renowned Illy Caffe, as well as quality food selections available 16 hours a day, 7 days a week, in a quintessentially European atmosphere.

b. Describe who the business serves.

Being in the heart of historic North Beach, Caffe Greco caters to devoted local patrons, exploring tourists, poets, artists, professionals, as well as local politicians and neighborhood police and firefighters. Caffe Greco's reputation makes it a destination for people all around the bay and internationally.

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

Consistently making superb coffee drinks.

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.

Caffe Greco was created as the result of one man's passion to serve the perfect cup of coffee in a beloved, Italian neighborhood.

Owners Hanna Suleiman, a successful businessman and engineer, and his creative, detail-oriented wife Sandra, worked together to envision and design every aspect of the caffe from the ground up. After a tireless year of planning and construction, Caffe Greco finally opened its doors on August 24, 1988, at 423 Columbus Avenue where it has remained since.

Hanna Suleiman emigrated from Lebanon to the United States to study engineering in Michigan, where he met his wife, Sandra. From his childhood, he has fond memories of his mother roasting and grinding coffee beans every morning on their balcony. Throughout his studies and young adult career, he was constantly in search of a good cup of coffee. The closest thing to his mother's Greek coffee was the captivating espresso he first experienced in Rome.

In 2009, Hanna and Sandra's talented, business and design educated son, Sasha, joined the family business, adding updated enhancements in keeping with the established classic character. It is Sasha's goal to operate and maintain Caffè Greco for another generation.

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

1988 to 2012: Hanna Suleiman and Sandra Suleiman
2012 to Present: Hanna Suleiman, Sandra Suleiman, and Sasha Suleiman

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

Caffè Greco has operated continuously at 423 Columbus Avenue since opening its doors in 1988.

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.

Since 1988, Caffè Greco has come to be more than just a caffè, but rather a second home to many. It is a welcoming respite where one can escape the chaos of daily life – a place where one can simply be present to savor their daily cappuccino, to be recognized and greeted by the longtime staff, to relax or engage in conversation, and to hear the hum of different languages being spoken. It is a place to enjoy lunch with a friend, a good book, or endless people watching from a coveted window seat. Perhaps most importantly though, Caffè Greco has a pulse; it belongs to the community, and remains a place where one can still see a reminder of a time before smart phones and laptops.

Some patrons visit daily for at least one meal. Multiple generations have grown up alongside the caffè, celebrating birthdays and milestones and expressing their gratitude that with all the changes in the world, Caffè Greco remains intact. The caffè is a family, and Hanna and Sasha can still be found welcoming patrons.

When Caffè Greco's supplier for panforte stopped making this specialty, Hanna developed his own recipe and started baking. He still occasionally bakes his popular baklava, a nod to his heritage. The most popular dessert by far, however, is Sandra's house-made tiramisu, introduced in 1988, as a first in the neighborhood and perhaps the city.

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

Caffe Greco has been a gathering spot for neighborhood favorites like artist and poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Beach Blanket Babylon lead Val Diamond, director Francis Ford Coppola and his talented family, and Saturday Night Live alum Rob Schneider. Other famous faces to have enjoyed Caffe Greco include noted actors Nicholas Cage, Marisa Tomei, Robin Williams, Vince Vaughn, Reece Witherspoon, Don Johnson, Cheech Marin, Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley, ballet legend Mikhail Baryshnikov, local politicians, and numerous others.

The caffe has been used as a venue for local musicians, neighborhood poetry readings, various fundraising events, and notably hosting a charity Art Auction with Lawrence Ferlinghetti, of his own paintings and drawings. Caffe Greco has also served as a backdrop for many photo shoots, movies, and television shows.

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

Over the years, Caffe Greco has supported and donated to numerous community events, school fundraisers, church charities and many more organizations and causes. When the caffe was only 1 year old, the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake struck the city, and the Suleiman family could be found in front of their caffe offering free food and drinks to neighbors, while their son Sasha, just 10 years old at the time, carried groceries and water home for the elderly from the nearby Rossi Supermarket.

Since opening Caffe Greco, Hanna Suleiman has been actively involved in organizations and projects that would improve and preserve the character and uniqueness of the North Beach community, including:

1990: North Beach Chamber of Commerce

Hanna served as North Beach Chamber of Commerce president for five years – one year as Vice President and over 10 years on the board.

1992: Fought Against Chain Stores

Hanna worked with the Planning Department and Board of Supervisors to create a new ordinance, preventing the invasion of chains from standardizing businesses in historic neighborhoods.

With the help of neighborhood merchants, Hanna collected over 3,000 signatures to aid in successfully keeping Starbucks from opening in North Beach.

1993: Outdoor Seating Permits

Hanna worked diligently with the Department of Public Works and was instrumental in creating a new permit process allowing outdoor tables and chairs throughout San Francisco. This new permit process changed the face of the city and is one of Hanna's proudest achievements.

1993-1995: North Beach Festival

As chairman of the North Beach Festival, Hanna expanded its location from upper Grant Avenue to include Washington Square Park and Stockton Street, increasing revenues and exposure for the community.

1994/1995: Non-Smoking Ordinance

Today, it's hard to believe that people once smoked cigarettes indoors. But in the early 1990s, being keenly aware of the health effects to patrons and staff, Hanna diligently supported local government efforts in passing a citywide ordinance banning indoor smoking in cafés and restaurants.

2001: North Beach Garage

While President of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce, Hanna supported the concept for rebuilding the existing North Beach Garage. Being an engineer, he reviewed the plans and worked in selling the project to the neighborhood. The state-of-the-art design optimized the number of parking spaces within the same existing space, thus bringing more people to the neighborhood.

2010: New Parklets

Hanna and son Sasha worked closely with the Planning Department to finalize and implement a parklet design prototype at Caffè Greco. Fabricated by ReBar Design firm, that prototype was slated to be used for parklets throughout the city. Sasha made significant contributions to both the design and selection of materials.

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

Local television news stations:

Caffè Greco is often sought out for Hanna's opinions on various issues affecting North Beach and the city, from new proposals and city policies to neighborhood changes.

Publications:

Caffè Greco has been featured in numerous neighborhood publications such as the North Beach Now, SF Weekly, SF Examiner, San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Focus magazine, 7x7 Magazine, as well more far-reaching publications like Food Arts magazine, the Wall Street Journal, the Smithsonian Magazine, various airline magazines, and numerous books and travel guides.

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

1996: Hanna Suleiman was presented the Community Enrichment Award from the North Beach Chamber of Commerce. This award recognized his commitment to the neighborhood and his spearheading of the Chamber of Commerce's float in the annual Italian Heritage Parade, entitled "North Beach Salutes the Beat Generation." The float won First Prize that year.

1997: Hanna was presented with an award from the North Beach Chamber of Commerce in honor of his contributions to the city as an innovator and visionary.

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

Progress and change are essential and inevitable, but it is equally important to preserve well-established anchor businesses that form the foundation of storied, historic neighborhoods. Caffè Greco is an integral part of the fabric of the community and one of the last remaining caffè pioneers that define North beach and celebrate its Italian heritage, while maintaining an inclusiveness that is unmistakably San Francisco.

With the advent of today's tech devices and the pace of our surroundings, it is a comforting rarity to see a place where people still gather to actively engage with one another, debate current events, share a laugh and drink out of a porcelain cup; reminding one that they are savoring something special and not just grabbing another paper cup and rushing out the door.

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?

Caffè Greco has consistently maintained and preserved its original, hand painted outdoor signage and facade, as well as the original hand painted, gold leaf window signage.

Inside the caffè, the walls are adorned with original, vintage lithographs, with their vivid colors and imagery having come to define the space. All the cabinetry and display cases were imported from Italy and made of solid mahogany panels, inlaid with brass accents. The large wooden pillars providing structural support to the center of the caffè are old ship masts from boats abandoned along the "Barbary Coast" during the gold rush. They are original to the building and were installed in the early 1900s.

One of the main focal points in the cafe is the large menu board. It was created by an accomplished local artist, Noel, in the form of an open book with gold leaf edging. The menu book continues to be maintained and handwritten by Sandra Suleiman herself. A vast wall of the cafe is dedicated to local artists and showcases posters from neighborhood creatives, such as Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Louis Biro, and Howard Munson.

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

Caffe Greco is committed to serving the finest coffee drinks, in a welcoming atmosphere, with a skilled staff that continues to create quality food and pastries in a classically Italian setting.

The staff is specifically trained to be welcoming and accommodating to all patrons. Being an aging business, the owners are particularly sensitive to accommodating elderly patrons, many of whom have been devoted customers since the business was founded.

Caffe Greco prides itself on taking care of its loyal staff and many have worked there for nearly 30 years; some are second generation. Regulars frequent the cafe to see a familiar smile from a staff member that already knows their order and greets them by name.

c. What challenges is the business facing today?

Keeping up with rapidly increasing financial pressures, such as rents, food costs, labor costs, permit/license fees, and a changing social culture, all make it extremely difficult to survive today. Caffe Greco has always been sensitive to raising their menu prices, but is also aware of the eroding profit margin that makes it challenging to stay afloat in today's small business climate.

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.

Coffee shop.

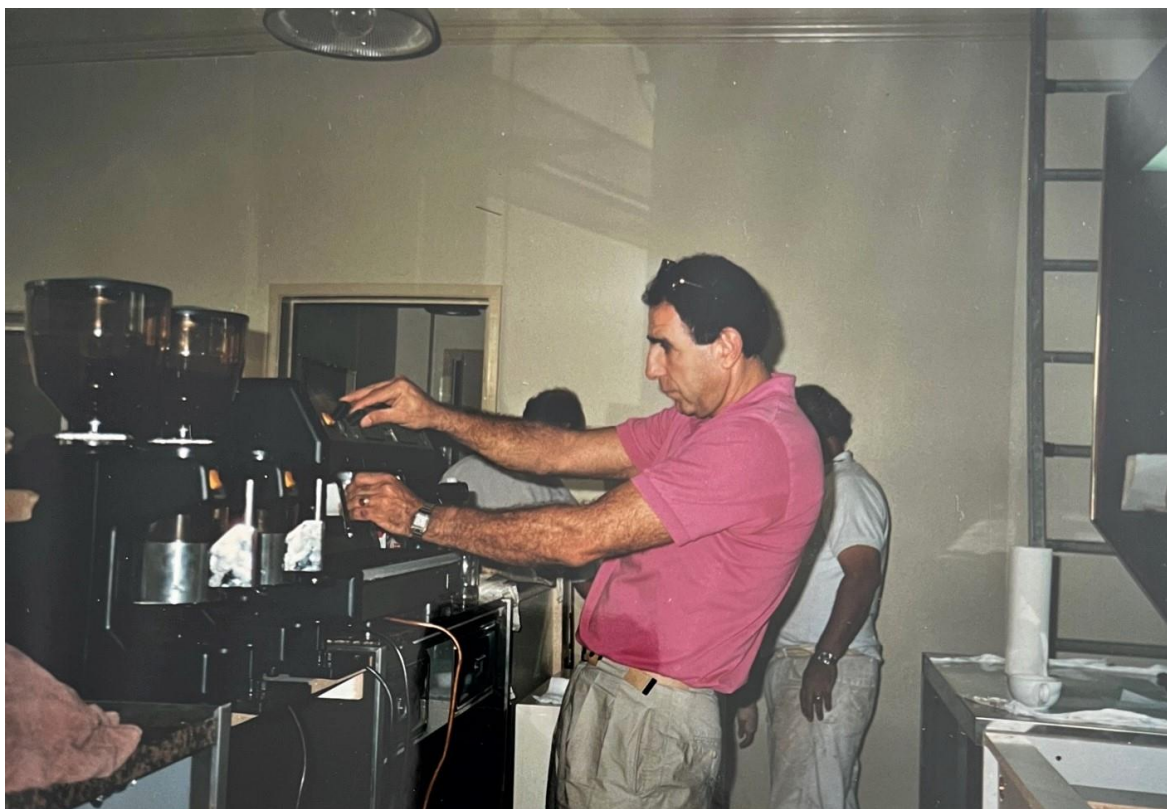
b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status for the building at 401-453 Columbus Avenue is "A - Historic Resource Present." The property was determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register or the California Register through a North Beach survey in 1984.



Construction finally begins! 1987





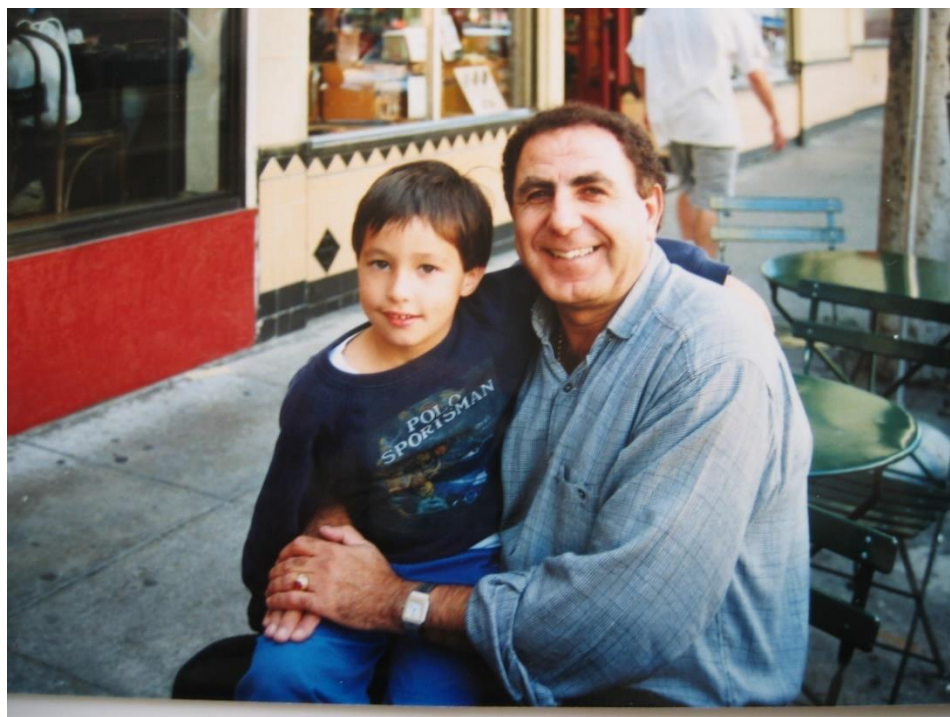
The first cup of coffee in Caffè Greco!



We did it!!
8/24/88



Caffe Greco opens its doors!



Hanna with Nicholas Ferris, c.1993



Sandra with Lawrence Ferlinghetti at his charity art auction hosted by Caffè greco, 2008



Sofia & Roman Coppola, c.1990



Caffe Greco façade, 2022



The lights beginning to glow; Dusk in North Beach, 2022



Caffè Greco Parklet, 2021



A peaceful Tuesday afternoon in North Beach, 2021

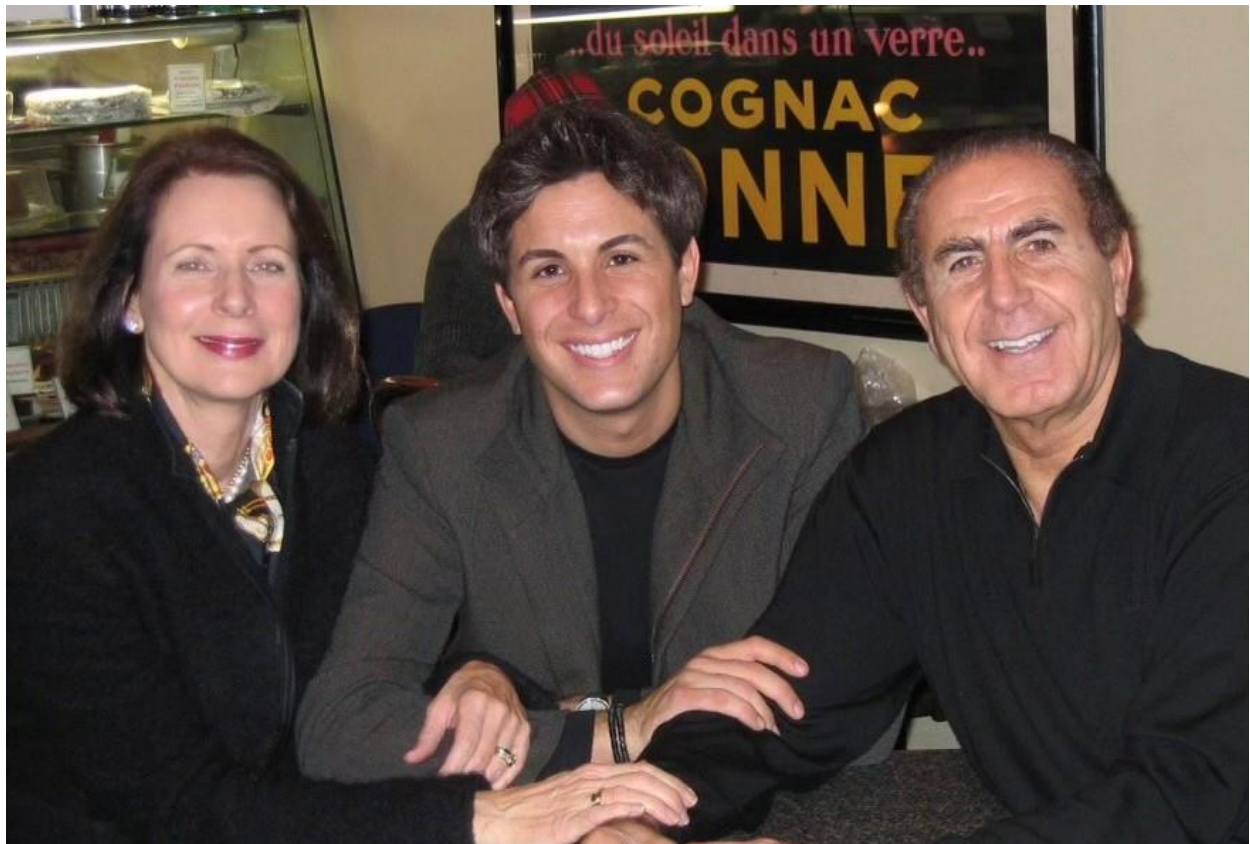


Caffè Greco interior, 2022





Then and now: Hanna, Sandra, and Sasha Suleiman

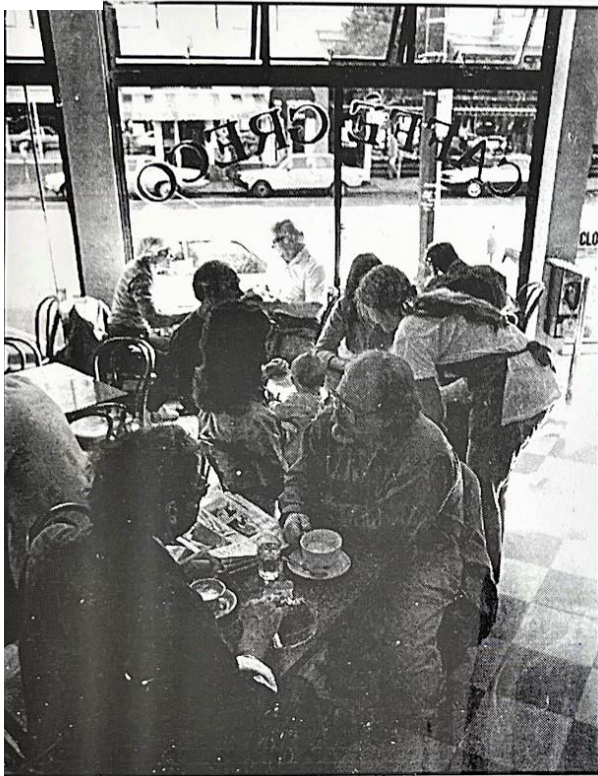


The New York Times

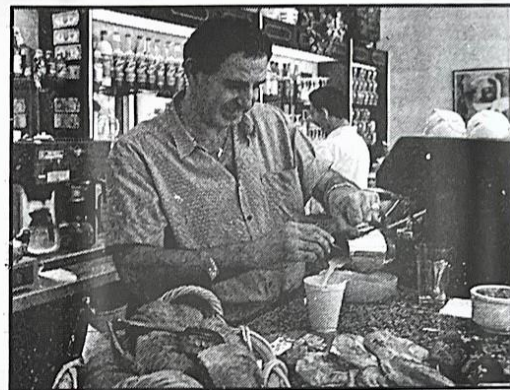
SUNDAY, JULY 16, 1989

Cappuccino by the Bay

San Francisco's North Beach is dotted with Italian coffeehouses



Caffè Greco, a year old, showed there was room for one more in the area.



Terrence McCarthy

Caffè Greco

"We've been devoted customers of North Beach for 15 years," said American-born Sandy Suleiman, explaining why she and her Lebanese husband, Hanna, opened an Italian cafe on Columbus Avenue last year.

With a convert's zeal, the Suleimans have taken pains to make their place irreproachably Italian, hoping also to silence competitors who had argued at the permit hearings that there were already too many cafes in North Beach. The Suleimans even import their coffee from Italy, making them the only local cafe to do so.

The full-bodied illy caffè costs them about twice as much as the locally roasted beans, but they are convinced it's worth it.

Enormous lithographs promoting French and Italian spirits grace the walls of the cafe. A rack of international newspapers invites customers to linger.

Caffè Greco, 423 Columbus Avenue; 415-397-6261. Open Sunday to Thursday from 7 A.M. to "around midnight"; Friday and Saturday, 7 A.M. to about 2 A.M.

One year old Caffè Greco hits the New York Times, July 1989

North Beach 'no' to coffee chains

Planning panel hopes vote will save area of The City from corporate 'Formica bars'

By John D. O'Connor
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

In coffee-mad North Beach the sanctity of a daily ritual was preserved in one sweeping vote by The City's Planning Commission.

Traditionalists who haunt the coffeehouses up and down Columbus Avenue applauded Thursday's decision to restrict intrusion of so-called "coffee bar" chains into North Beach.

"It's a great thing," enthused Allen D'Amico, nursing a cappuccino the size of Mount Etna outside Caffe Puccini in the 400 block of Columbus. "We don't want the Formica bars in North Beach."

D'Amico was referring to chains like Starbucks and Spinelli's, perfectly respectable establishments anywhere but in North Beach — where the locals place meeting and talking over cappuccino just one notch below going to Mass on Sunday.

Under the terms of Thursday's decision, North Beach would become the only neighborhood in The City where Planning Commission approval — a potentially long and costly process — would be needed before a coffee bar could open.

Critics called the move exclusionary, although neither Starbucks nor Spinelli's expressed serious displeasure at the Planning Commission decision. Supporters say they have halted the cultural erosion of a neighborhood.



Marsha Garland and Mark Romeo of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce appear at hearing on coffee shops.

Supervisor Angela Alioto, who brokered a compromise between North Beach coffeehouse owners and the companies that have found themselves welcome in every other part of The City, called the process "a real wrestling match."

"It started out quite belligerent," Alioto said Thursday. "People were shouting, people were yelling. But by the end of it everyone was hugging."

The controversy began innocuously enough. City planning rules stipulate that a coffee bar without seating could open as a "specialty retail store" without having to seek a conditional use permit.

But if the store owners want to put chairs in the establishment, they must first obtain the permit, a

scenario that requires a public hearing and could add months to the permit process.

On April 29, in a move supported by the Starbucks chain, the Planning Commission decreed that coffee bars with 25 or fewer seats would no longer require the special hearing.

But when the amendment went to the Board of Supervisors for final approval, a minor rebellion began to gain momentum in North Beach. Coffeehouse owners like Caffe Greco owner Hanna Suleiman saw deep-pocketed competition looming on their horizon.

That's when the fireworks began, with both sides launching petition drives and Starbucks hiring a lobbyist and a high-powered law firm to represent its case.

When it was revealed that the chain was eyeing a property at Green Street and Columbus — in the heart of Cappuccino Country — the North Beach Chamber of Commerce joined the fray.

"There were several issues to consider," said Marsha Garland, the chamber's executive director. "A big corporation could drive up rents in the neighborhood and would certainly be able to devote more to marketing than smaller independent businesses. We felt their presence would adversely impact a neighborhood we are fighting to preserve."

After Alioto stepped in, a compromise was reached in which only cafes with 15 seats or more would require a conditional use permit. In exchange, any "retail coffee store" trying to open its doors in North Beach would require a public hearing.

Suleiman was vacationing in Hawaii when Thursday's decision was reached, but Caffe Greco's temporary manager, Karim Mechri, said his boss would be pleased with Thursday's decision.

"It's a good thing for North Beach," he said. "When tourists come here, they say it looks like Europe, and we want to keep it that way. No one wants to see a McDonald's everywhere they go."

Now that it has been passed by the Planning Commission, the amended coffeehouse resolution must go to the Board of Supervisors for final approval.

Christopher Calkins, president and CEO of Spinelli Coffee Company, said the decision would have little effect on his business.

"We don't have any tables or chairs," he said. "... But I understand North Beach's point of view. Starbucks is getting in everybody's face and they don't do any good taking those profits out of town."

Starbucks' lobbyist, Marsha Smolens, said Friday that the commission's action would not prevent Starbucks from establishing a coffeehouse in North Beach. She also said it neither made it more difficult nor costlier for Starbucks to set up shop there.

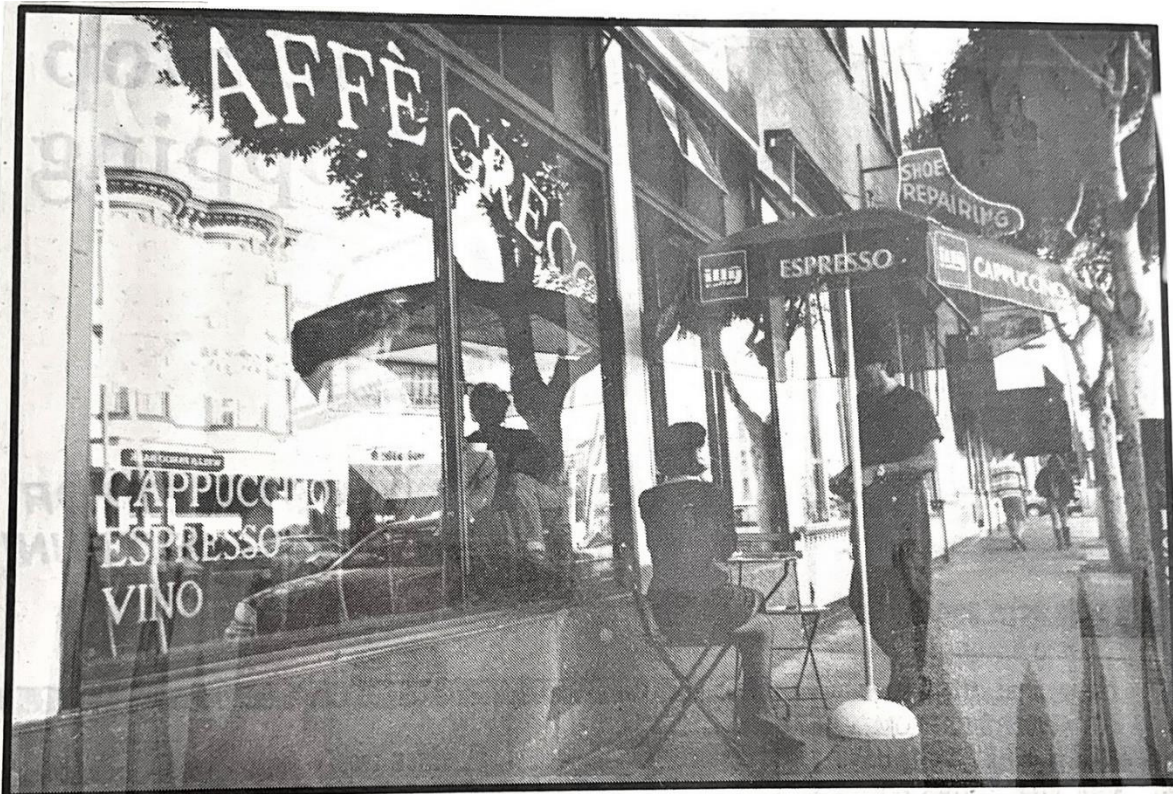
"Nothing's really changed," she said.

Caffe Greco hits the front page!

Fighting against the chains to preserve North Beach's character

Caffe Greco spearheading the sidewalk seating movement

NORTH NOW BEACH
ALL ABOUT NORTH BEACH ... AND MORE
MAY 1993



NOT TAKING THIS SITTING DOWN

A Department of City Planning hearing held on April 23 has paved the way for a new, streamlined and less expensive sidewalk seating permit process. In a few weeks the Department of Public Works should receive final approval from the City Attorney's office, and a final public hearing will be held by the Board of Supervisors.

The new guidelines call for sidewalk seating to be located in the area fronting the applicant's business. It must be contained by diverters, such as flower boxes, and it must allow for a minimum of 6 feet of unobstructed pedestrian clearance.

Hana Suleiman, owner of the Caffe Greco on Columbus Avenue, whose lone sidewalk cafe table and chair pictured above have become a rallying symbol for the sidewalk cafe movement, has been a local catalyst in getting City Hall to come up with a sensible permit process. He attended last month's hearing and gave his full support for the proposed guidelines, as did Marsha Garland, representing the North Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Roberto Abele

HANNA SULIEMAN
Caffè Greco, North Beach
423 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA

Café Culture

By Steven Kolpan



North Beach, San Francisco's large and famous Italian neighborhood, is so proud of its heritage that a map of Italy accompanies its major street signs. A first-time tourist to the City by the Bay might think that a map of San Francisco would be more helpful, but that visitor would be missing the most important message of North Beach. Relax. Have a bite to eat. Sip an espresso.

The coffee bars of North Beach are known as places where San Francisco residents and visitors can sit and talk with a friend over an espresso, and when one of the friends must leave, the other stays behind to read the newspaper over another espresso. Like this and like that; such is the daily rhythm of life in North Beach.

Of the dozens of coffee bars in North Beach, one stands out among the coffee cognoscenti – Caffè Greco. A visit to Caffè Greco is a quiet and relaxed pilgrimage whose reward is the finest espresso in San Francisco. For the last fourteen years, seven days a week, from 7 a.m. to midnight, old and new customers alike have lined up at the bar of Caffè Greco to savor the flavor of great coffee prepared by trained baristas who serve the perfect espresso – close to 1,000 cups of perfection every day.

Hanna Sulieman, is the owner of Caffè Greco, and is connected to his coffee bar by more than commerce. "I love the café. It is like my little baby, and people in the neighborhood seem to feel the same way – some of them come in three times a day. They have their preferred baristas, and will wait to be served by them. Their passion for Caffè Greco is second only to mine."

Sulieman believes that while his customers enjoy the ambience of his coffee bar, it is the coffee that draws them to Caffè Greco again and again. "I wanted to serve coffee as good as the best served in Italy. I tasted so many, but none approached the quality of illycaffè. It is a superior product, and I was one of the first small cafés to use illycaffè exclusively. We are able to promote its quality simply by the virtue of its taste, so I'm really committed to this product, and so are my customers."

Sulieman, who was trained as a chemical engineer in Italy, admires the highly technical approach to coffee taken by Dr. Ernesto Illy and his company. "I have learned so much about the chemistry of coffee and coffee making from Dr. Illy. From the sourcing and selection of quality beans, always 100 percent Arabica, to the roasting process, this has been especially exciting educationally for me. Dr. Illy is driven by the scientific model of a perfect cup of espresso, and that is why illycaffè is so good."

Food Arts Magazine, 2012

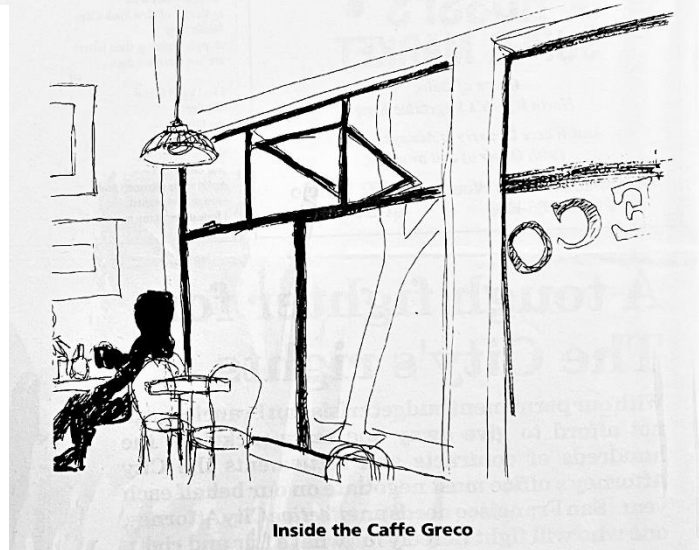
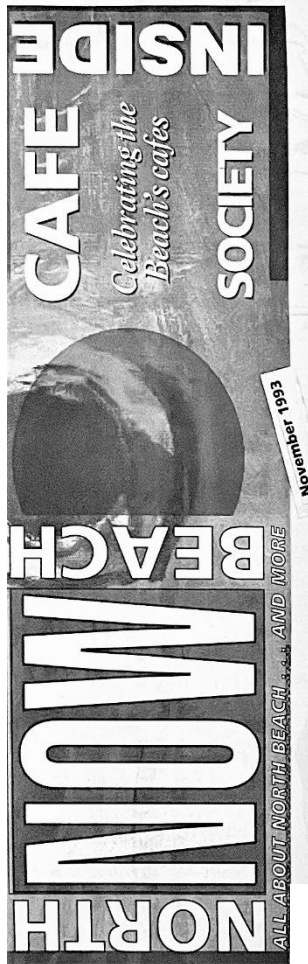
Scenes from Cafe Life

Illustrations and Notes by C.M. Evans

North Beach

Caffe Grecco

The cappuccino at the Caffe Grecco was so good, I just had to hold still for a few seconds. Really. One specialty of the cafe is the espresso bean that they use—Illy—imported from Italy. I'm told by the people at Caffe Grecco that in Italy this is the leading espresso bean. I've never been to Italy (alas) but I do know that this particular brand has a wonderful flavor and aroma. Besides the wonderful European atmosphere of the Caffe Grecco, Hanna, the owner said that they are the only cafe in North Beach which uses Illy espresso beans.



Inside the Caffe Grecco

SAN FRANCISCO FOCUS

FEBRUARY 1989

A DEMITASSE OF NORTH BEACH

San Francisco's espresso enclave still has the best cafés this side of the Piazza Navona.

CAFFÈ GRECO, 423 COLUMBUS AVENUE The six-month-old Caffè Greco is the first coffeehouse for American-born Sandy Suleiman, a former computer analyst, and her Middle Eastern husband, Hanna, a chemical engineer. What they lack in native blood they make up for with a passion for all things Italian. The 1920s lithographs on the walls are by Italian poster artist Cappiello. Even the coffee, the costly illy caffè, is imported from Italy in pressurized cans.

This pristine café is prettily furnished and filled with natural light. The menu is small but tempting: salads from Auntie Pasta, sandwiches made on the superb focaccia from Oakland's Grace Baking (try the spicy *coppa*, smoked mozzarella, and roasted pepper sandwich), tantalizing bundt cakes, and La Tempesta *biscotti*. With large windows facing Columbus, the new café offers a pleasant setting for a mid-morning cappuccino and conversation.

San Francisco Chronicle

August 13, 1989

DINING OUT

Cafe Greco

Simple Pleasures Added in North Beach

Cafe Greco

423 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco.

Open 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Beer and wine. No credit cards. No reservations. 397-6261.

FOOD ★★

PRICES Inexpensive

PLUSES Coffee, croissants and raisin rolls, focaccia sandwiches and calamari salad

MINUSES Pasta salads, cramped seating, no table service

★★★ EXCELLENT ★ GOOD
★★ VERY GOOD □ FAIR

Cafe Greco

Cafe Greco has everything to do with North Beach. It joins a slew of other cafes in the area but distinguishes itself by making consistently excellent coffee. It may seem odd that it is hard to find a great cappuccino in North Beach, but too often the coffee will be bitter or too weak and the proportion and texture of the steamed milk will be wrong. Whatever fortuitous coming togeth-

er of espresso machine, coffee grinders, coffee beans (Greco uses Illycaffè), brand of milk and machine operators has occurred at this small cafe, the result has been delicious.

Greco also buys good pastries. Their croissants (\$1.50) and raisin rolls (\$1.50) are some of the best I've tasted, buttery, flaky and crisp. The chocolate truffle cake (\$3.50) is fresh and moist.

Sandwiches (\$5.95) come on crusty toasted focaccia bread, quite different from the softer versions used in other cafes. Filled with different combinations of mozzarella, Gruyere, prosciutto, peppers, ham, basil and tomatoes, they're warm, crunchy and savory. Pickled vegetables are served on the side.

White dishes of attractive salads (\$4.75 for one; \$5.95 for three) are on display in a refrigerated glass counter. The calamari salad stands out for the tenderness and freshness of the squid; its dressing is appropriately piquant. Several pasta salads are offered, but they don't taste as appealing as they look.

Though Cafe Greco is the newcomer on Columbus Avenue, it is

perpetually full already. With large windows facing the street, the small cafe draws tourists and regulars alike. One problem is that the chairs and tables are so tightly packed that you can barely sit down or get up, which is required often because there is no table service. Customers wait in a line at the counter to order. Coffees are made on the spot, but sandwiches and salads are brought to your table later, usually without enough silverware or napkins. It seems as if you are always squeezing through the small room in circuitous ways for the sugar or a napkin or a fork. That's life in North Beach. The best places are the most eccentric and difficult.

San Francisco Focus article (top left) and San Francisco Chronicle review (bottom right)

THE NORTH BEACH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PRESENTS ITS


COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT AWARD

TO

CAFFE GRECO

AND GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES CAFFE GRECO'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE NORTH BEACH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S 1996 ITALIAN HERITAGE PARADE FLOAT, OCTOBER 13, 1996. THE NORTH BEACH CHAMBER FLOAT ENTITLED, "**NORTH BEACH SALUTES THE BEAT GENERATION**" WON FIRST PRIZE, PROFESSIONAL DIVISION.

October 17, 1996


Marsha Garland, Executive Director
North Beach Chamber of Commerce



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2022

Filing Date: November 9, 2022
Case No.: 2022-011009LBR
Business Name: Caffè Greco
Business Address: 423 COLUMBUS AVE
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0131/026
Applicant: Hanna Suleiman, Sandra Suleiman, Sasha Suleiman
423 Columbus Ave
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Elena Moore – 628-652-7322
Elena.Moore@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Caffè Greco is a quintessential North Beach café known for its superb coffee drinks crafted with Illy Caffè, homemade panforte and tiramisu, and classic Italian interior. Caffè Greco is an integral part of the community and one of the last remaining café pioneers that define North Beach and celebrate its Italian heritage. Owners Hanna and Sandra Suleiman opened the café in 1988 and have tirelessly worked since; their son, Sasha, joined the family business in 2009 and plans to maintain it in the future.

Caffè Greco is both a culinary and a community hub. The owners describe it as a second home to many; people savor their daily cappuccino, talk with longtime staff, have conversations in an assortment of languages, read, and experience the warm, inviting nature of North Beach. The café is frequented by local patrons (sometimes generations of the same family), tourists, artists, politicians, and many others. Throughout its thirty-four years, Caffè Greco has been a gathering spot for neighborhood favorites like artist and poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Beach Blanket Babylon lead Val Diamond, director Francis Ford Coppola and his family, and Saturday Night Live alum Rob Schneider.

Caffe Greco is deeply involved in the North Beach community. They have donated to numerous community events, school fundraisers, and church charities, as well as remained active in the North Beach Chamber of Commerce and the North Beach Festival. In fact, Hanna Suleiman has served as president, vice president, and board member of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce. Caffe Greco is also loyal to its own small community; it prides itself in taking care of its staff, many of whom have worked there for nearly thirty years.

The business's primary location at 423 Columbus Avenue is a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the southwest side of Columbus Avenue between Stockton, Green, and Vallejo Streets in the Russian Hill neighborhood. It is within the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. It is within the North Beach "Invest in Neighborhoods Initiative Area." 423 Columbus Avenue was identified as eligible for listing on the California Register or National Register in the 1984 North Beach Survey.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1988.

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

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

- a. Caffe Greco has operated continuously in San Francisco for 34 years.
- b. Caffe Greco has contributed to the history and identity of the Russian Hill and North Beach neighborhoods and San Francisco.
- c. Caffe Greco 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 Italian coffee, pastries, desserts, and other café fare. Additionally, one of the owners, Hanna Suleiman, is originally from Lebanon and still includes nods to his own culture in the café, such as freshly baked baklava.

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

Yes. Caffe Greco has been a gathering spot for neighborhood favorites like artist and poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Beach Blanket Babylon lead Val Diamond, director Francis Ford Coppola and his family, and Saturday Night Live alum Rob Schneider. Other famous patrons include Nicholas Cage, Marisa Tomei, Robin Williams, Vince Vaughn, Reese Witherspoon, Don Johnson, Cheech Marin, Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley, ballet legend Mikhail Baryshnikov, local politicians, and numerous others.

Additionally, Caffe Greco has been used as a venue for local musicians, neighborhood poetry readings, and various fundraising events. Perhaps most notably, Lawrence Ferlinghetti held an art auction in the space, donating the proceeds from his drawings and paintings to charity. Caffe Greco has also served as a backdrop for many photo shoots, movies, and television shows.

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

Yes, the property was evaluated in the 1984 North Beach Survey and determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register or the California Register. It is listed as a “Category A,” Historic Resource Present.

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 owners and the café. Caffe Greco has been featured in numerous publications such as the *North Beach Now*, *SF Weekly*, *SF Examiner*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Focus* magazine, *7x7 Magazine*, as well more far-reaching publications like *Food Arts* magazine, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Smithsonian Magazine*, various airline magazines, and numerous books and travel guides. Additionally, local television news stations often seek out owner Hanna Suleiman’s opinion on local issues in North Beach.

Owner Hanna Suleiman was also presented the Community Enrichment Award from the North Beach Chamber of Commerce in 1996 and another award from the same body in 1997 for his contributions to the city as an innovator and visionary.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 423 Columbus Avenue (1988 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Finest coffee drinks
- Welcoming atmosphere
- Quality Italian food and pastries
- Classically Italian setting
- Loyal staff culture
- Original, hand-painted outdoor signage
- Original, hand-painted gold leaf window signage
- Original, vintage lithographs
- Solid mahogany cabinetry and display cases imported from Italy
- Old ship masts from “Barbary Coast” ships
- Large menu board created by local artist Noel
- Posters showcasing local artists and creatives

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. 1291

HEARING DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2022

Case No.: **2022-011009LBR**
Business Name: Caffe Greco
Business Address: 423 COLUMBUS AVENUE
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0131/026
Applicant: Hanna Suleiman, Sandra Suleiman, Sasha Suleiman
423 Columbus Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Elena Moore – 628-652-7322
Elena.Moore@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR CAFFE GRECO CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 423 COLUMBUS AVENUE, BLOCK/LOT 0131/026.

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 December 7, 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 Caffè Greco 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 Caffè Greco.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

- 423 Columbus Avenue (1988-present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Finest coffee drinks
- Welcoming atmosphere
- Quality Italian food and pastries
- Classically Italian setting
- Loyal staff culture
- Original, hand-painted outdoor signage
- Original, hand-painted gold leaf window signage
- Original, vintage lithographs
- Solid mahogany cabinetry and display cases imported from Italy
- Old ship masts from “Barbary Coast” ships
- Large menu board created by local artist Noel
- Posters showcasing local artists and creatives

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 2022-011009LBR to the Office of Small Business on December 7, 2022.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Wright, Black, Johns, So, Nageswaran, Matsuda
NOES: None
ABSENT: Foley
ADOPTED: December 7, 2022