



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: December 11, 2023

ELIXIR

Application No.: LBR-2016-17-032
Business Name: Elixir
Business Address: 3200 16th St.
District: District 8
Applicant: H. Joseph Ehrmann, Proprietor
Nomination Date: October 4, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Scott Wiener
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

The Elixir space is the second oldest continually operated saloon location in San Francisco. There has been nothing but a saloon on the northwest corner of 16th and Guerrero streets since 1858, and a saloon at this location may go back as much as another 10 years. Ever since then, people have been traveling to the Mission to enjoy the bar as much as the locals have walked around the corner to enjoy it. The bar was a classic 19th-century saloon run mostly by Irishmen from the predominantly Irish community surrounding it.

In 1906, the Great Earthquake and Fire burned it to the ground. The business owner at that time, Patrick J. McGinnis, rebuilt a grander building, which was designed by famed Petaluma-based architect Brainerd Jones. McGinnis rebuilt right away and reopened in 1907. After rebuilding, McGinnis kept the community-driven barroom active as a “soft-drink parlor” during Prohibition.

Over the years, the bar's name has changed numerous times, and there have been over a dozen owners. The bar has been doing business as Elixir since 1990, first as “Jack’s Elixir Bar” and then just “Elixir” since 2003.

In 2003, current owner H. Joseph Ehrmann recognized the Victorian bones of the building and bought the property and the bar. He restored the bar to its Victorian glory, including restoring all of the wood by hand, refinishing all of the furniture, installing Victorian lighting, and digging deep into the location’s unknown history.

Elixir is open seven days a week, providing the local community with beverages, community, and hospitality in a beautiful Victorian atmosphere of mahogany and redwood. The bar offers classic whiskey cocktails, traditional cocktails, beer and wine, Trivia Happy Hour, Industry Night, ticketed cocktail classes and tasting events for individuals and small groups, private group events, a Whiskey Geeks membership group, and a Cocktail Club.

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

3200 16th St. from 1990 to Present (33 years)

Legacy Business Program

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City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
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www.legacybusiness.org





CRITERION 2

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

Yes, Elixir has contributed to the history and identity of the Mission neighborhood 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 site is within both the California Register and National Register-eligible 16th and Valencia Streets Post-Fire Historic District. The district is associated with significant events and architecture, specifically, with the period of major rebuilding and recovery that occurred in the Inner Mission North and in San Francisco after the earthquake and fires of April 1906. Further, the district exhibits architectural value that is particularly expressive of San Francisco's "Edwardian" era. The historic district includes excellent examples of Classical Revival, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, as well as local variants that combined stylistic elements.

Contributors to the historic district are buildings that were constructed between 1906 and 1926, during an extended period of physical rebuilding that followed the earthquake and fires of April 1906, which completely destroyed earlier development in the area. Contributors are mostly two-story and three-story, multiple-unit, wood-frame structures that exhibit Classical/Roman Revival, Mission Revival, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival architectural styles. The subject building is a contributor to the district. Brainerd Jones was the architect of the building.

- There have been several features and articles on Elixir, including mentions in over 30 books. Highlights include:
 - "Top Cocktail Bar in San Francisco" in the San Francisco Chronicle in 2023.
 - "High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco" by J.K. Dineen.
 - "Elixir Bar: A Deep Fount of Mission History" in Mission Local.

CRITERION 3

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

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

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Elixir 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:

- Bar committed to maintaining the hospitality, community, and superior beverages.
- Projecting Sign Cabinet.
- Hand-carved 19th-century mahogany backbar and bar with historic plaque.
- Assorted San Francisco artifacts.
- Historic interior decoration such as furniture and posters.

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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.

- Bar.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Elixir currently located at 3200 16th St. 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. _____

December 11, 2023

ELIXIR

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Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Elixir, currently located at 3200 16th St.

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on December 11, 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 Elixir in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Bar committed to maintaining the hospitality, community, and superior beverages.
- Projecting Sign Cabinet.
- Hand-carved 19th-century mahogany backbar and bar with historic plaque.
- Assorted San Francisco artifacts.
- Historic interior decoration such as furniture and posters.

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

- Bar.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on December 11, 2023.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2016-17-032
Business Name: Elixir
Business Address: 3200 16th St.
District: District 8
Applicant: H. Joseph Ehrmann, Proprietor
Nomination Date: October 4, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Scott Wiener

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

3200 16th St. from 1990 to Present (33 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: Elixir was established as “Jack’s Elixir Bar” in 1990, becoming just “Elixir” in 2003. There has been nothing but a saloon at 3200 16th St. since at least 1858, but the present business Elixir only goes back as far as 1990 with regard to the Legacy Business Registry.

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: October 18, 2023

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors
District 8



City and County of San Francisco

SCOTT WIENER
威善高

October 4, 2016

Re: Nomination of Elixir for the Legacy Business Registry

Dear Director Regina Dick Endrizzi:

I'm writing to nominate Elixir for the Legacy Business Registry. Elixir is the second oldest continually operating saloon location in San Francisco (The Saloon, in North Beach, is the oldest). The current saloon was built in 1907 after the first one burned down in the Great Earthquake of 1906. Most buildings between Guerro Street and Dolores Street were either burned or dynamited in order to stop the fire that devastated the city. The saloon was restored to its Victorian glory in 2003 after almost a hundred years of wear and tear as an Original San Francisco Saloon and a true piece of what was once the wildest of Wild West towns.

More recently, Elixir has been listed as one of the "Best Bars in America" by Esquire, GQ and Food and Wine magazines. Elixir's focus on American whiskey and authentic saloon culture, combined with its pioneering cocktail work helped to make San Francisco an early leader in the "Modern Cocktail Renaissance", which also aided the City's already thriving restaurant scene become more sustainable and profitable in the face of exceedingly high operating expenses.

Elixir is a treasured gathering spot in the neighborhood, and would benefit greatly from being a part of San Francisco's Legacy Business Registry. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Wiener".

Scott Wiener
Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: The Hache Group, LLC; D.B.A. Elixir

Business owner name(s): H. Joseph Ehrmann

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

Current business address: 3200 16th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

Telephone: (415) 552 - 1633 **Email:**

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: www.elixirsf.com

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/elixirsaloon **Twitter:** @elixirsf

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 3 7 1 2 5 9

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.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Owned by Person with a Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-Owned Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman-Owned Business |

**Minority is defined as one or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: H. Joseph Ehrmann

Contact person title: Proprietor

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: **Zip Code:**

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

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:**

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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: H. Joseph Ehrmann

Signature:



Date: 7/12/23

ELIXIR

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

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

Elixir is the second oldest continually operated bar (saloon) in San Francisco. There has been nothing but a saloon on the northwest corner of 16th and Guerrero streets since 1858. Over the years, the name of the bar has changed numerous times, and there have been over a dozen owners. The bar has been doing business under the name “Elixir” since 1990, first as “Jack’s Elixir Bar” then just “Elixir” since 2003.

Elixir is open seven days a week, providing the local community with beverages, community, and hospitality in a beautiful Victorian atmosphere of mahogany and redwood. The bar offers classic whiskey cocktails, traditional cocktails, beer and wine, Trivia Happy Hour, Industry Night, ticketed cocktail classes and tasting events for individuals and small groups, private group events, a Whiskey Geeks membership group, and a Cocktail Club.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

Elixir has served the Mission District as a local gathering place and has also attracted tourists visiting from around the world. The crowd ranges from the young and single to old couples who have frequented the bar through several ownerships: gay, straight, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual, like San Francisco itself.

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

Communal gathering place for neighbors and whiskey geeks.

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.

Elixir, located at 3200 16th Street in the Mission district, was established by William Carlson as “Jack’s Elixir Bar” in 1990, becoming just “Elixir” in 2003. There has been nothing but a saloon on the northwest corner of 16th and Guerrero streets since at least 1858, with numerous different businesses at the site and 13 known owners.

PRE-HISTORY OF ELIXIR: 1858 TO 1990

Mission San Francisco de Asís, commonly known as Mission Dolores (as it was founded near the Dolores creek), was founded on October 9, 1776.¹

Nearing the end of the first hundred years of Mission Dolores, there were several buildings connected to the north side of the Mission, including a saloon called the Mansion House. People would travel out to the sunny Mission on weekends to attend church services and relax in its saloons. They would make that journey from Yerba Buena (downtown) via the Fulton Plank Road (built in 1852) and then up the Mission Plank Road (built in 1851), which ended right in front of where Elixir is today. There is documented evidence of saloon service on this corner since at least 1858, and it is possible that a saloon at this location goes back as much as another 10 years. Ever since then, people have been traveling to the Mission to enjoy the bar as much as the locals have walked around the corner to enjoy it. The bar was a classic 19th century saloon run mostly by Irishmen from the predominantly Irish community surrounding it.

In 1906, the Great Earthquake and Fire burned it to the ground. The business owner at that time, Patrick J. McGinnis, rebuilt a grander building, which was designed by famed Petaluma-based architect Brainerd Jones. McGinnis rebuilt right away and reopened in 1907. After rebuilding, McGinnis kept the community-driven barroom active as a “soft-drink parlor” during Prohibition.

Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, the bar changed with the times and needs of the community, including welcoming women after Prohibition by closing the “ladies entrance,” converting the stock room to a women’s bathroom (now an all-gender bathroom) and not bothering to sink the plumbing into the walls, and removing the Victorian-era cigar counter and boot black stand.

The bar was a happening cocktail club called The Hunt-In Club in the 1940s, of which the first known photograph of the building exists thanks to SFMTA archives.

From 1965 to 1985, the bar was a merchant marine bar called Swede’s owned by Florence Norrman and B.K. (known as “Swede”). There were a lot of Swedes in the neighborhood back then, and Swede himself was a former merchant marine.

In 1985, Florence and Swede sold the bar to a gay Latino man who made it a gay bar called La Bandita for a short spell, until he died of AIDS and was disowned by his own family. The court took ownership.

HISTORY OF ELIXIR: 1990 TO PRESENT

In 1990, the court sold the bar to William (“Bill”) Carlson, who reopened the bar as Jack’s Elixir Bar. Bill Carlson rode the new wave of craft beer turning it into a popular beer bar with as many

¹ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission_San_Francisco_de_As%C3%ADs

as 62 taps at one point. It was part of his chain of bars around the city, all called “Jack’s *something or other*”; this one “Jack’s Elixir Bar.” By 2003, however, the bar was completely run down.

H. Joseph Ehrmann recognized the Victorian bones of the building and bought the property and the bar. He renamed the bar “Elixir” and restored it to its Victorian glory, including restoring all of the wood by hand, refinishing all of the furniture, installing Victorian lighting, and digging deep into the location’s unknown history.

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

The ownership history of Elixir and the other bars that predated Elixir is as follows:

PRIOR TO ELIXIR:

1858 to 1873	.....	Frances Daneal
1873 to 1877	.....	Hugh Mooney
1877 to 1879	.....	Harrison & Anderson
1879 to 1893	.....	A. Luthy
1893 to 1933	.....	Patrick J. McGinnis
1933 to 1938	.....	Thomas N. Sheehan
1938 to 1965	“The Hunt-In Club”	Mathew Hunt and Grace Hunt
1965 to 1985	“Swede’s”	B.K. (“Swede”) and Florence Norrman
1985 to 1987	“La Bandita”	Ruben Salazar
1987 to 1990	“La Bandita”	Betty Louise Killeen

ELIXIR:

1990 to 1998	“Jack’s Elixir Bar”	William Carlson
1998 to 2003	“Jack’s Elixir Bar”	Birute Cassidy and Anthony Cassidy
2003 to Present	“Elixir”	The Haché Group, LLC

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

As with all bars in San Francisco, Elixir closed for some time during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 as a result of mandated business closures. Elixir is currently back to serving the community 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

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.

Today's Elixir is a story of the entire history of the bar, acting like a museum and recreating what the original saloon must have felt like while meeting the needs of the modern era. It is a window into the past, and a beacon of modern San Francisco's convivial culture and culinary leadership. Step inside and look at everything on the walls, as they all have a purpose and a story. Talk to the team, as they all have a passion for their customers, their service, and the place they call home. Have a drink with a local and see what they think Elixir means to them, and their lives in San Francisco.

Elixir is known primarily as a historic neighborhood saloon, but it is also a pioneering cocktail bar of the modern cocktail revival and is listed as one of "America's Top Whisky Bars" by Whisky Advocate: <https://whiskyadvocate.com/Americas-Top-Whisky-Bars>.

Elixir offers ticketed cocktail classes and tasting events for individuals and small groups, as well as private group events. Classes are conducted both online and in-person. For in-person events, they will supply everything; for virtual classes, they will give you a list of everything needed and can help you source it.

At Elixir, we are all geeks ... Whiskey Geeks! Whiskey Geeks is the name of their newsletter, written for friends that want to stay in touch and get insider access to new releases, event tickets, and other benefits "for geeks only." Members receive an irregularly sent email newsletter with information about upcoming events and specials, plus private access to their Whiskey Geeks Facebook group where information, links, stories, and more not found in the newsletter are shared among members.

Elixir has been delivering the Elixir Quiz every Tuesday since 2004, and it is one of the best quiz nights in the city. The place packs up before it starts at 8:00 p.m. Groups and individuals are welcome, and you'll find many people returning week after week. This is one of our best programs for promoting the regular meeting of friends outside of home and work. It's competitive nature also makes it a great time to meet new people and make friends. The quiz is six rounds of 10 questions, each covering a broad range of topics, often pertinent to an upcoming holiday or big event. It's all over by 10:00-10:30 p.m., their Trivia Happy Hour kicks in with \$1 off beer and wine and well drinks.

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

Famed architect Brainerd Jones designed the grandiose Victorian building that houses Elixir in 1907. It had all of the new saloon details drawn right into the original architect's drawings. These can be seen framed on the wall in the bar, including images of some of Jones' signature design elements in the windows and trim. The building also included a store and five private residences. Jones was an architect in San Francisco until 1900 when he moved to Petaluma and where he is credited with designing over 75% of the historic buildings of that town, including a Carnegie Library and the Sebastopol train station.

Current Elixir owner H. Joseph Ehrmann is credited with being one of the pioneering bartenders of the modern cocktail revival, having brought attention to the bar with his original recipes as early as 2006. He and a handful of other Bay Area bartenders created what came to be known as the "West Coast Style" of cocktail design, employing culinary techniques, farmer's market

ingredients, and new flavor combinations, and helping to inspire new generations of bartenders and bar owners to take their beverages and careers more seriously and improve the guest experience with superior and focused hospitality. He created and ran a festival called San Francisco Cocktail Week from 2007-2014, bringing cocktail fans from around the country to town for a week of events held all over the city in places like Anchor Brewing Company, The Old Mint, and the Ferry Building. The movement ignited a wave of new bar programs in the city, bringing world-wide attention to San Francisco in the late 2000s and a wave of new restaurants to the Mission District that earned it the moniker “the gourmet ghetto.”

Since 2008, Elixir has been mentioned on the “Best Bars In America” lists for media outlets like GQ Magazine, Esquire Magazine, Esquire TV’s “Best Bars in America” television show, Food and Wine Magazine, and more, and it is currently ranked one of the “Best Whisky Bars In America” by Whisky Advocate magazine and “Best Bourbon Bars in America” by The Bourbon Review. H. Joseph Ehrmann and his drinks appear in over 30 books, and he regularly tours the country to teach bartenders, speak at conferences, and consult with spirits industry leaders.

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

Since 2004, Elixir Charity Guest Bartending has been a Wednesday night program that welcomes customers to “guest bartend” with a group of their friends and colleagues in order to raise funds for a particular charity. Their tips and raffle monies are all donated to the chosen charity, and the program has raised tens of thousands of dollars for several hundred charities since it began.

In the wake of the terrible fires that ripped through Northern California, the Golden Hydrant Cocktail Program was instituted in 2017 by putting one cocktail on draft (now there are two) that donates \$2 of every cocktail to a fire charity. This program continues today.

Elixir hosts several annual parties for various charities, including the local Boys and Girls Club (a block away) and a Toys for Tots Holiday Program.

Business owner H. Joseph Ehrmann co-founded a bartender’s charity fund in 2009 called The Bartender Relief Fund for helping bartenders who face catastrophic events where there is no assistance from insurance (because so many bartenders didn’t have insurance). The BRF evolved into The Bartender Emergency Assistance Program, a fund of the same purpose that is now a part of the United States Bartenders Guild National Charity Foundation (USBG NCF). Today it distributes grants to bartenders all over the country on a regular basis, and he continues to raise funds for that charity.

Mr. Ehrmann also produces an annual exclusive whisky tasting to raise money for the other fund in the USBG NCF, The Helen David Relief Fund, which provides grants to bartenders fighting breast cancer. He also regularly rides his bike to raise money for that fund via Team Negroni charity rides all over the country.

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

Elixir has received tons of press since 2000, including mentions in over 30 books. Below is a short selection of media references.

- *“Top Cocktail Bars in San Francisco: The city’s 18 best destinations for a well made drink”*
San Francisco Chronicle
August 16, 2023
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/projects/best-cocktail-bars-sf/>
- *“The Espresso Martini Is Back. Gen X Asks: Why?”*
Wall Street Journal
July 12, 2023
https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-80s-espresso-martini-is-back-gen-x-asks-why-a7bd4cba?st=ipsmhjlqmsgvrkk&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink&fbclid=IwAR31SpS-6E35IR0v153ReaYi96As63FmF3amn7jEq3pWc-BGxokWVeTWlgQ
- *“High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco”*
J.K. Dineen (in collaboration with SF Heritage), pp. 87-91
2015
- *“Can SF’s historic bars outlast COVID?”*
San Francisco Chronicle
2022
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/culture/article/Can-SF-s-historic-bars-outlast-COVID-15446671.php>
- *“Cocktail Pioneer”*
Market Watch Magazine
July 4, 2019
<https://www.marketwatchmag.com/cocktail-pioneer/>
- *“Going 10 Rounds With Top Bartender H. Joseph Ehrmann”*
Daily Beast
November 9, 2018
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/going-10-rounds-with-top-bartender-h-joseph-ehrmann>
- *“Elixir’s H. Joseph Ehrmann Wins Top Cocktail Award”*
Haute Living
April 30, 2018
<https://hauteliving.com/2018/04/h-joseph-ehrmann-2018-cocktail-year-award/655421/>

- *“Elixir, one of SF’s oldest saloons, has changed with the city”*
San Francisco Chronicle
March 17, 2017
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/nativeson/article/Elixir-one-of-SF-s-oldest-saloon-s-has-11011022.php>
- *“Elixir Bar: A Deep Fount of Mission History”*
Mission Local
March 17, 2017
<https://missionlocal.org/2017/03/elixir-bar-a-deep-fount-of-mission-history/>
- *“H. Joseph Ehrmann and His Elixir of Success”*
Bar & Restaurant News
March 29, 2011
<https://www.barandrestaurant.com/food-beverage/h-joseph-ehrmann-and-his-elixir-success>

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

Elixir has won numerous industry and media awards for “Best Bar,” “Best Cocktail Bar,” “Best Whiskey Bar,” and “Best Cocktails.”

Following are key recognition and political commendations:

- “Certificate of Honor, “15-Year Anniversary” – 2018; City and County of San Francisco; Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
- “Certificate of Honor” – April 7, 2006; City and County of San Francisco; Mayor Gavin Newsom
- “100 years of dedicated service to San Francisco” – April 7, 2006; Water Bond; City and County of San Francisco.

In 2017, Elixir received a historic plaque from E Clampus Vitas, a fraternal organization dedicated to commemorating significant historic locations. The plaque is mounted outside to the left of the front door.

In 2005, Elixir was one of the first 50 businesses in San Francisco to become a Certified Green Business. It was the first bar in the country to achieve any official green certification. The business is still certified today.

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

If the business were to shut down, the city and neighborhood would lose not only one of the most historic properties and businesses in one of the most the most historic neighborhoods, but it would also lose a business whose entire focus is chronicling its long history and creating a new one at the same time. It would lose an internationally-recognized leader in the beverage

and hospitality industries. The Mission would lose a cornerstone of its community since 1858. In addition, 10 to 12 people would be out of work.

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

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

The building, as mentioned, is historic, though improperly not officially recognized as such, just by the nature of the architect that designed it, including some of his signature design elements. The original leaded glass windows on the façade are in great need of extremely expensive restoration. The sign box formerly held neon (that was dismantled years ago, but could be restored with modern technology). The late 19th century backbar and bar itself are hand carved mahogany and predate the building itself, as evidenced by a plaque that shows it came from the San Francisco Store and Office Fixture Company. The address of that store is noted as being a pre-1906 address from across the street and down the block (that store relocated after the earthquake and fire). Most of the bar stools are over 50 years old. There's a historic French poster on the wall from the early 20th century. There are display boxes throughout that show off historic saloon and San Francisco artifacts, including a whiskey bottle made for P.J. McGinnis from somewhere around 1910 to 1920. The walls are covered with other images and artifacts from San Francisco, the Mission District, and various saloons.

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

Elixir is committed to maintaining the hospitality, community, and superior beverages for which the bar is known.

c. What challenges is the business facing today?

As of October 1, 2023, because of a long running string of SFMTA construction plans and changes, about which Elixir and SFMTA were in constant debate, Elixir is now behind on necessary physical changes to their parklets in order to be compliant with new regulations for a Shared Spaces permit. (SFMTA was to tear down and pay for a rebuild of the 16th Street parklet as part of plans around street work and repaving needs, all of which changed last minute and is now complete.)

Elixir's revenue is still down 30-40% compared to 2019 because of the COVID shutdown and continued economic decline in San Francisco in general. The bar's team and business are operating very well, but the business is just not there.

The business does not have enough revenue to maintain the hours of business they prefer in order to serve the neighborhood regularly (7 days a week, 365 days a year), and so they are

facing reduced shifts and offering shorter hours, which also damages staff morale and hinders hiring.

Elixir has two vendors that are not releasing them from excessive fees based on unreasonable contracts, and the business cannot afford a lawyer to fight them.

The IRS has put liens on the property for personal back taxes and penalties and will not negotiate despite several efforts at an Offer in Compromise.

The Mission District is not being cleaned and maintained as it should up and down 16th Street, with the City allowing commercial property owners to go un-fined for allowing graffiti to remain on their facades.

Street and commercial crime in the neighborhood is up and becoming more violent, and it has the entire staff on edge, especially near closing hours from 1:00 to 3:00 a.m. This also makes it difficult to hire and maintain staff.

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.

Bar.

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

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building that houses Elixir is "A - Historic Resource Present." The building appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, and it is a contributor to the eligible 16th and Valencia Streets Post-Fire Historic District.



The Hunt-In Club, 1940's





Swede's 1965-1985



Jack's Elixir Bar 1990-2003



1983



2003



Swede's

ONE OLDER GENTLEMAN at the bar, a victim of bourbon and circumstances, was talking about dreams; about how they seem to be just a little harder to cling to these days, how somewhere along the line getting rich had lost out to just getting by. He allowed as to it didn't make him sad exactly. But live in the Mission District all your life, live a long life and a lot of change happens anyway.

Swede's has been in the Mission all his life, but not much is different now about it. Everybody at the bar agreed. Not that it ever was much to look at. Layers of cigarette smoke have clouded the front window to the point it's no longer transparent. And the bar has been decorated in that haphazard fashion where arcane items find their way onto the walls, but for some reason or another don't find their way off again. If the old backbar came around the Horn, nobody knows, or even cares. The chief relic is the carcass of a pinball machine.

The regulars, which accounts for pretty much everyone at Swede's, all know each other's business, never hesitating to offer each other advice, wanted or not. They are often retired, good-hearted men, short on money and long on dignity. They come to drink and be together, to play cribbage or rummy and pass the time away among familiar and trusted faces. What counts is that they watch out for each other.

Now, like many little bars, Swede's is threatened by rent increases and hard times, to the point where Florence and Swede may just decide to retire. For the people who frequent those bars, who depend on them for companionship, it will be a hard loss; yet another step in the letting go of dreams.

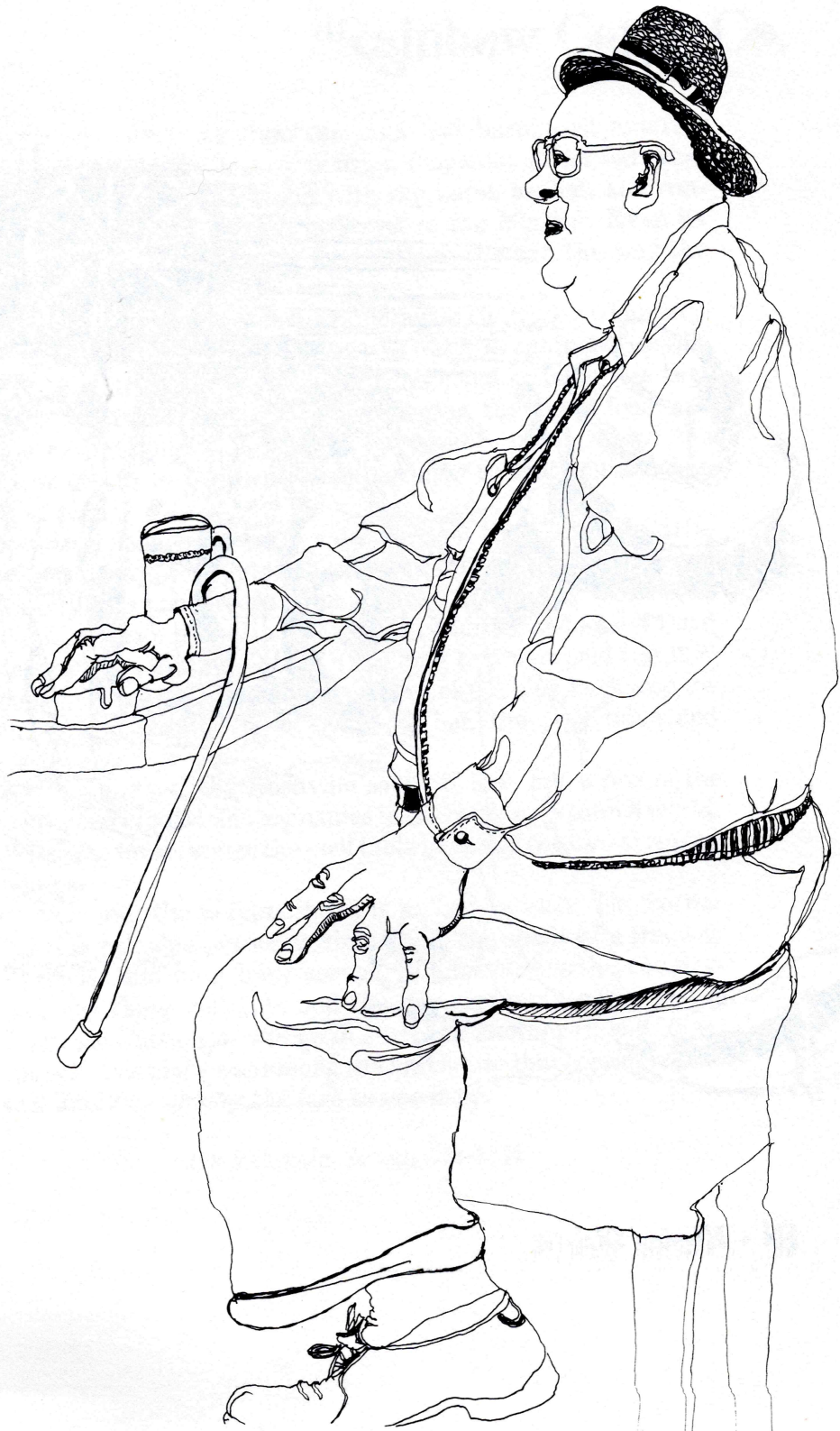
3200 16th Street, 626-6804

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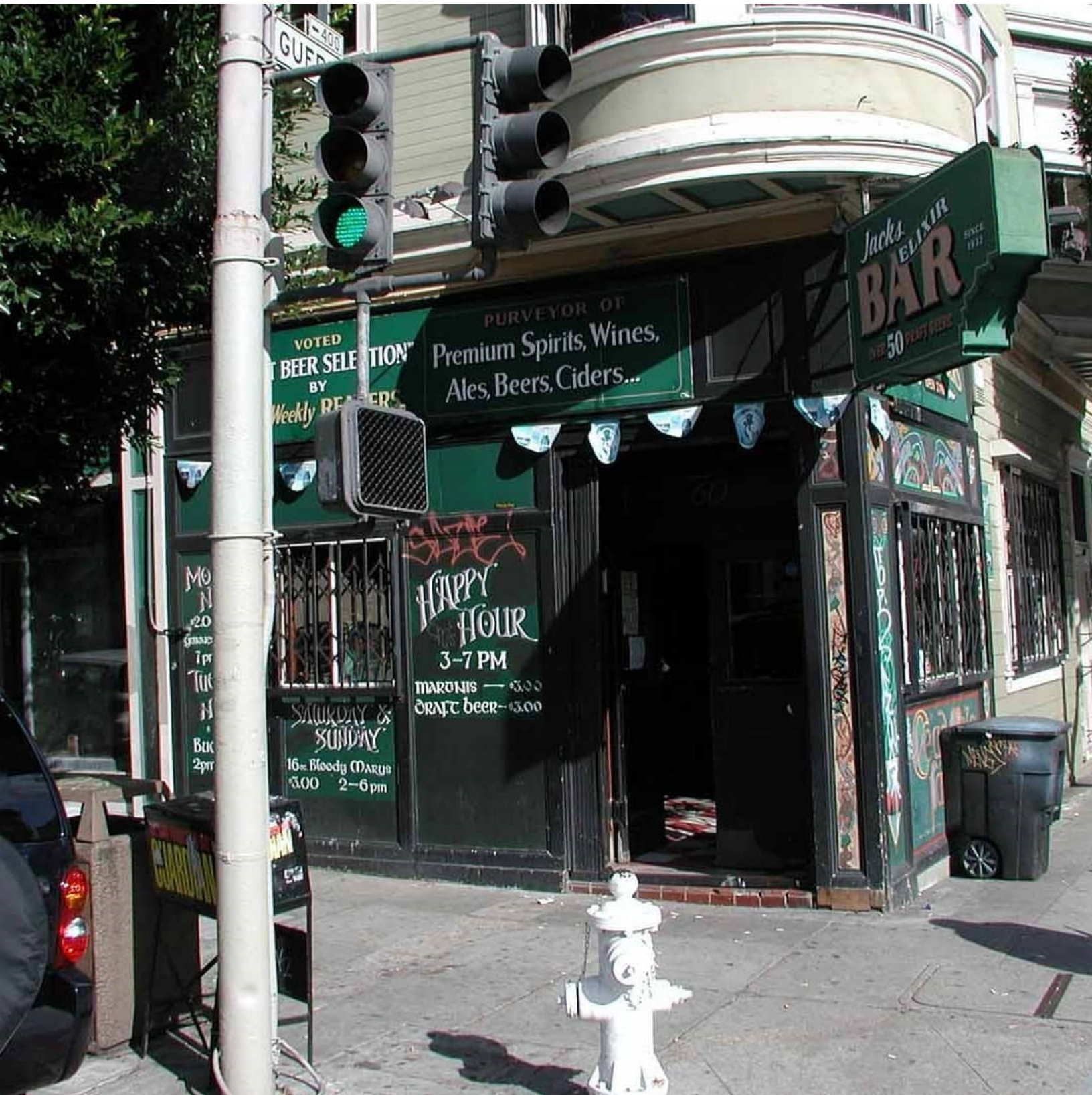
-- CUERRERO ST. ELEVATION --

- PLANS FOR FRAME BUILDING -
 - FLATS & STORES -
 - FOR P. J. M. GINNIS - ESQ -
 - N.W. COR. 16th and Cuerrero Sts - S.F. -

- Scale 1/4 inch = 1 foot -

- Plan No. 35-G -
 - Drainerd Jones - Architect -
 - 614 Washington St. - Petaluma -





400
GREEN

PURVEYOR OF
Premium Spirits, Wines,
Ales, Beers, Ciders...

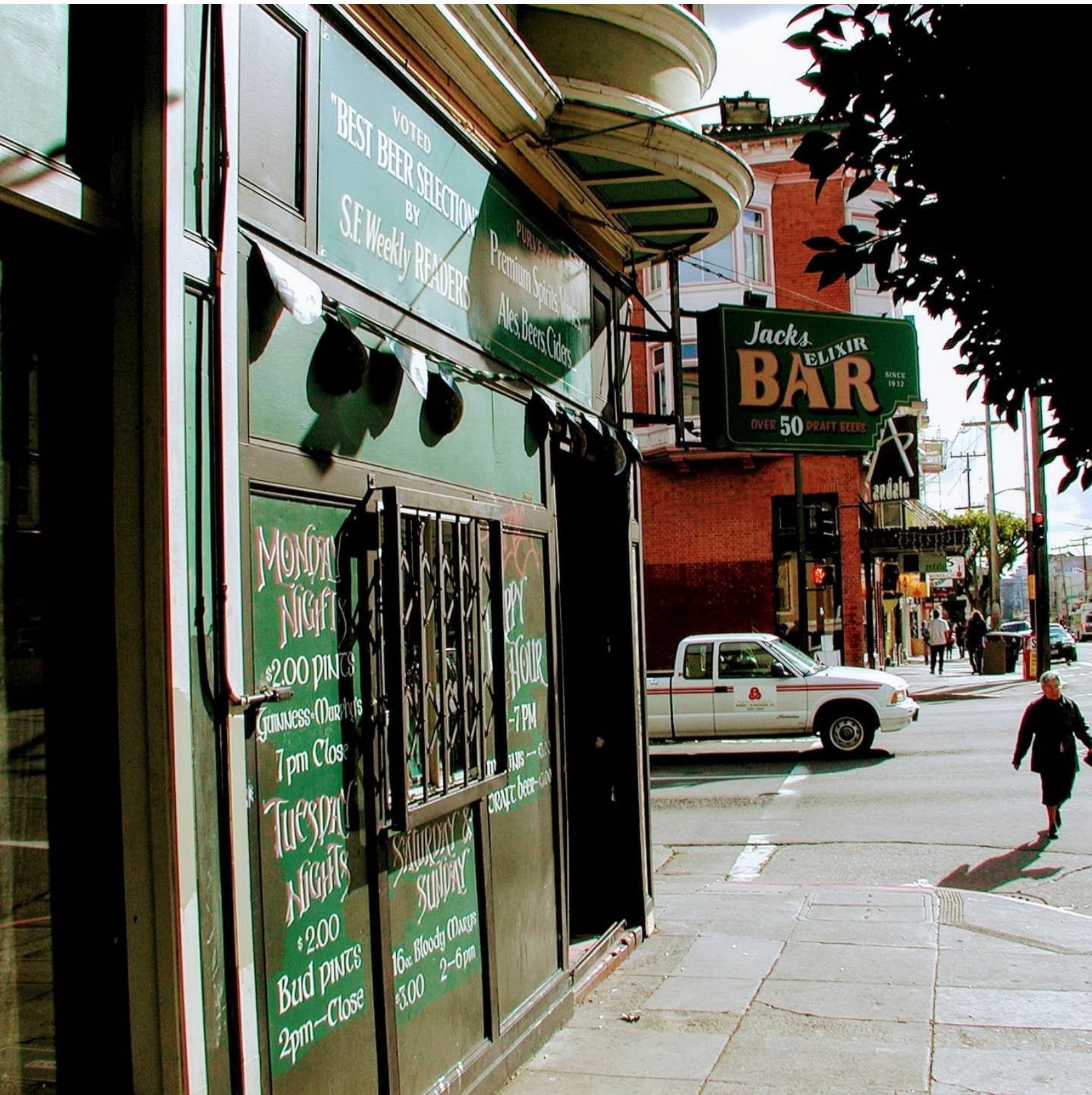
Jack's
ELIXIR
BAR
SINCE 1912
50 DRAFT BEERS

MON
TUE
WED
THUR
FRI
SAT
SUN

HAPPY
HOUR
3-7 PM
MARTINIS — \$3.00
DRAFT BEER — \$3.00

SATURDAY &
SUNDAY
16oz. Bloody MARIAN
\$3.00 2-6pm





VOTED
"BEST BEER SELECTION"
BY
S.F. Weekly READERS

PURVEYORS OF
Premium Spirits, Wines,
Ales, Beers, Ciders

Jack's
ELIXIR
BAR SINCE 1932
OVER 50 DRAFT BEERS

MONDAY
NIGHTS
\$2.00 PINTS
Guinness & Mar...
7pm Close

TUESDAY
NIGHTS
\$2.00
Bud PINTS
2pm - Close

SATURDAY &
SUNDAY
16oz Bloody Marys
\$3.00 2-6pm

WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SATURDAY
SUNDAY
7 PM
PLUS
CRAZY BEER



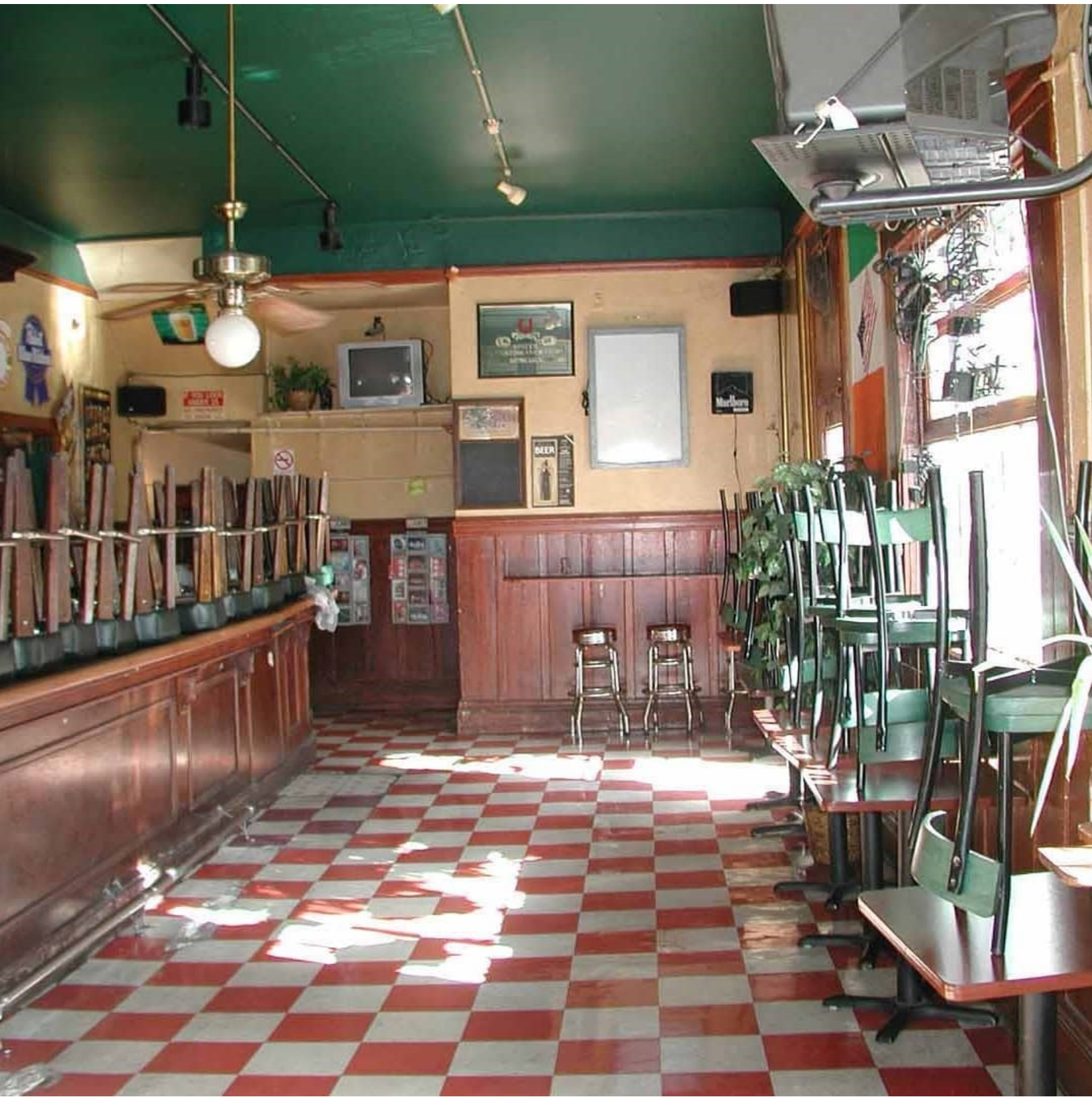
SALOON

ELIXIR
EST. 1858

San Pedro



SAN FRANCISCO









ELIXIR QUIZ
Every Tuesday 5pm

ELIXIR

ELIXIR REPUBLIC
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

ELIXIR

ELIXIR

LO...
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SAVE THE BLACKEN THE WORLD

ELIXIR

This is the second oldest known continually operating Saloon location in San Francisco and a centerpiece of the Mission Dolores neighborhood. On this site Francis Daneal's "bar-room" was listed in the 1858 edition of the San Francisco Registry. Right at this corner in 1851 is also where the Mission Plank Road began, making it quite possible that a saloon was here earlier than 1858. Research has shown that this location has changed ownership and names throughout the years but has always remained a drinking establishment. Owners of note from the past include Francis Daneal (1858-1875), Hugh Mooney (1875-1893), Patrick McGinnis (1893-1933), Thomas Sheahan (1934-1938), Florence and Swede (1966-1984), and William Carlson/Birute Cassidy (1990-2003). McGinnis rebuilt the place after it burnt down during the 1906 Earthquake by building it inside a more grandiose building designed by Brainerd Jones which is the basis of what we see today. The location also survived the "Noble Experiment" of prohibition under the auspices of a "soft drink parlor". In 2003 H. Joseph Ehrmann bought the place and closed its doors in order to restore the saloon to its original Victorian glory whose design lay buried under nearly 100 years of use. After it reopened under the name Elixir, it became a pioneer in the revival of the cocktail culture, and eventually earning recognition as a San Francisco Legacy Bar in 2011.

Dedicated March 18th 6022 (2017) by
Capitulus Redivivus
Mother Lodge Yerba Buena #1 of the
Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus
Credo Quia Absurdum





The City & County of
San Francisco recognizes

Elixir Saloon

as a San Francisco Green Business

April 2022



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 15, 2023

Filing Date: October 18, 2023
Case No.: 2023-009850LBR
Business Name: Elixir
Business Address: 3200 16th Street
Zoning: RTO (Residential Transit Oriented District) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: American Indian Cultural District
Block/Lot: 3556/230
Applicant: H. Joseph Ehrmann
3200 16th Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Nominated By: (Former) Supervisor Scott Wiener
Located In: District 8
Staff Contact: Elizabeth Mau - 628-652-7583
Elizabeth.Mau@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Elixir is the second oldest continually operated saloon location in San Francisco. There has been nothing but a saloon on the northwest corner of 16th and Guerrero Streets since 1858, and a saloon at this location may go back as much as another 10 years. Ever since then, people have been traveling to the Mission to enjoy the bar as much as the locals have walked around the corner to enjoy it. The bar was a classic 19th-century saloon run mostly by Irishmen from the predominantly Irish community surrounding it.

In 1906, the Great Earthquake and Fire burned it to the ground. The business owner at that time, Patrick J. McGinnis, rebuilt a grander building, which was designed by famed Petaluma-based architect Brainerd Jones. McGinnis rebuilt right away and reopened in 1907. After rebuilding, McGinnis kept the community-driven barroom active as a “soft-drink parlor” during Prohibition.

Over the years, the bar's name has changed numerous times, and there have been over a dozen owners. The bar has been doing business since 1990, first as "Jack's Elixir Bar" and then just "Elixir" since 2003.

In 2003, current owner H. Joseph Ehrmann recognized the Victorian bones of the building and bought the property and the bar. He restored the bar to its Victorian glory, including restoring all of the wood by hand, refinishing all of the furniture, installing Victorian lighting, and digging deep into the location's unknown history.

Elixir is open seven days a week, providing the local community with beverages, community, and hospitality in a beautiful Victorian atmosphere of mahogany and redwood. The bar offers classic whiskey cocktails, traditional cocktails, beer and wine, Trivia Happy Hour, Industry Night, ticketed cocktail classes and tasting events for individuals and small groups, private group events, a Whiskey Geeks membership group, and a Cocktail Club.

The business' primary location at 3200 16th Street, is in a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the north side between Guerrero and Dolores Streets in the Mission neighborhood. It is within an RTO (Residential Transit Oriented) Zoning District, the American Indian Cultural District, and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. 3200 16th Street is within both the California Register and National Register-eligible 16th and Valencia Streets Post-Fire Historic District.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1990.

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

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

- a. Elixir has operated continuously in San Francisco for 33 years.
- b. Elixir has contributed to the history and identity of the Mission neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Elixir is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

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

No.

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

Yes, the site is within both the California Register and National Register-eligible 16th and Valencia Streets Post-Fire Historic District. The district is associated with significant events and architecture. Specifically, with the period of major rebuilding and recovery that occurred in the Inner Mission North and in San Francisco after the earthquake and fires of April 1906. Further, the district exhibits architectural value that is particularly

expressive of San Francisco’s “Edwardian” era. The historic district includes excellent examples of Classical Revival, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, as well as local variants that combined stylistic elements.

Contributors to the historic district are buildings that were constructed between 1906 and 1926, during an extended period of physical rebuilding that followed the earthquake and fires of April 1906, which completely destroyed earlier development in the area. Contributors are mostly two-story and three-story, multiple-unit, wood-frame structures that exhibit Classical/Roman Revival, Mission Revival, Craftsman, and Colonial Revival architectural styles. The subject building is a contributor to the district.

Information in the Legacy Business Application revealed that Brainerd Jones was the architect of the building.

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

No; however, the property was identified as eligible for listing on the California and National Registers.

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

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

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

Yes. There have been several features and articles on Elixir, including mentions in over 30 books. Highlights include “Top Cocktail Bar in San Francisco” in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2023, *High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco* by J.K. Dineen, and “Elixir Bar: A Deep Fount of Mission History” in *Mission Local*.

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

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

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco’s cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the city. These businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 3200 16th Street (1990 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Bar committed to maintaining the hospitality, community, and superior beverages.

Additional Recommended by Staff

- Projecting Sign Cabinet
- Hand-carved 19th-century mahogany backbar and bar with historic plaque
- Assorted San Francisco artifacts
- Historic interior decoration such as furniture and posters

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. 1361

HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 15, 2023

Case No.: 2023-009850LBR
Business Name: Elixir
Business Address: 3200 16th Street
Zoning: RTO (Residential Transit Oriented District) Zoning District
 40-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: American Indian Cultural District
Block/Lot: 3556/230
Applicant: H. Joseph Ehrmann
 3200 16th Street
 San Francisco, CA 94103
Nominated By: (Former) Supervisor Scott Wiener
Located In: District 8
Staff Contact: Elizabeth Mau - 628-652-7583
 Elizabeth.Mau@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR ELIXIR CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 3200 16TH STREET, BLOCK/LOT 3556/230.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on November 15, 2023, 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 Elixir 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 Elixir.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

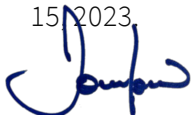
- 3200 16th Street (1990 – Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Bar
- Projecting Sign Cabinet
- Hand-carved 19th-century mahogany backbar and bar with historic plaque
- Assorted San Francisco artifacts
- Historic interior decoration such as furniture and posters
- Leaded glass windows

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business November 15, 2023.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Campbell, Vergara, Wright, Foley, Nageswaran, Matsuda

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: November 15, 2023