



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: June 24, 2024

## MPA DESIGN

*Application No.:* LBR-2023-24-015  
*Business Name:* MPA Design  
*Business Address:* 414 Mason St., Suite 700  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Susan Painter, President  
*Nomination Date:* October 26, 2023  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Established in 1969 by forward-thinking landscape architect Michael Painter, MPA Design is an acclaimed landscape architecture and urban design firm with a portfolio consisting of over 3,000 completed projects.

MPA Design is one of the oldest continuously operating design firms on the West Coast and provides a holistic design approach to its projects that is site-specific. Over the past five decades, MPA Design has contributed to the growth and vibrancy of the San Francisco Bay Area through producing sustainable design projects, including the Doyle Drive Redesign Plan, the St. Regis Hotel, the U.C. Davis Medical Center Cancer Treatment Facility, the John F. Kennedy Gravesite, Twin Peaks Overlook Project, and the Great Highway and Ocean Beach Reconstruction Plan. MPA Design counts among its clientele many corporate, academic, and non-profit institutions including Stanford University, U.C. Berkeley, Hewlett Packard, and The Presidio Trust, among others.

Founder Michael Painter passed away in June 2018, and the business is now directed by Susan Painter, Michael's wife.

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

562 Mission St. from 1969 to 1994 (25 years)  
414 Mason Street, Suite 700 from 1994 to Present (30 years)

### CRITERION 2

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

Yes, MPA Design has contributed to the history and identity of the Union Square 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:

#### Legacy Business Program

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





- MPA Design was founded by Michael Painter, a significant, nationally recognized landscape architect who contributed to the landscape architecture and sustainable design fields. Painter earned a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1956, followed by a master's degree in urban design from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He completed over 850 projects throughout his career. Significant local projects included the Presidio Parkway, the AT&T Administrative Center, the Genentech Campus, the HP Corporate Headquarters, and the Great Highway/Ocean Beach Re-Construction.
- The business rents its office at 414 Mason Street, in the Native Sons Building, which is an Article 11 Individual Resource and is located within the Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Conservation District. Additionally, the building appears eligible for the National Register as an individual property through survey evaluation. The building at 414 Mason Street is discussed in *Architecture, Planning, And Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies* Historic Context Statement.
- Michael Painter and MPA Design have been mentioned in numerous publications including *Landscape Architecture Magazine* and *The Washington Post*.
- The firm has received over 100 awards since 1969, including earning the Community Service Award from the American Institute of Architecture for the San Francisco Presidio Parkway project; numerous American Landscape Architecture Association Merit and Honor Awards; and an Award of Excellence from the Urban Land Institute.
- With regard to racial and social equity, MPA Design is one of the oldest, continuously operating, women-owned small business landscape architectural firms in the United States. This business contributes to the cultural fabric of San Francisco through high quality landscape design for local parks and educational institutions. MPA Design has also participated in several community groups within the design field, including SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association) and the local chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architecture.

### CRITERION 3

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

Yes, MPA Design is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business.

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that MPA Design 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:

- Innovative, client-centric, sustainable landscape architectural design.

### 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.

- Architectural services.

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include MPA Design currently located at 414 Mason St., Suite 700 in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

### **Legacy Business Program**

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# Small Business Commission

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

June 24, 2024

## MPA DESIGN

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legacybusiness@sfgov.org

**Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for MPA Design, currently located at 414 Mason St., Suite 700.**

**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 June 24, 2024, 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 MPA Design 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 MPA Design.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Innovative, client-centric, sustainable landscape architectural design.

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

- Architectural services.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on June 24, 2024.

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Katy Tang  
Director

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

**Legacy Business Program**

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# Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

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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

562 Mission St. from 1969 to 1994 (25 years)  
414 Mason Street, Suite 700 from 1994 to Present (30 years)

**CRITERION 2:** Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?  
 Yes  No

**CRITERION 3:** Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?  
 Yes  No

**NOTES:** NA

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** May 8, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

## Legacy Business Program

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City and County of  
San Francisco



Board of Supervisors,  
President

AARON PESKIN  
佩斯金市參事

October 26, 2023

Director Katy Tang *via email* <Katy.Tang@sfgov.org>  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
SF City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 110

Dear Director Tang,

I write to nominate MPA Design, located at 414 Mason Street in San Francisco's Union Square neighborhood, for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Established in 1969 by forward-thinking landscape architect Michael Painter, MPA Design is an acclaimed landscape architecture and urban design firm, with a portfolio consisting of over 3,000 completed projects. MPA Design is one of the oldest continuously operating design firms on the West Coast and provides a holistic design approach to its projects that is site-specific.

Over the past five decades, MPA Design has contributed to the growth and success of the local San Francisco Bay Area (as well as regions throughout the United States) by helming sustainable and environmentally conscious design projects, including the Doyle Drive Redesign Plan, the Marin Country Day School, the St. Regis Hotel, the UC Davis Medical Center Cancer Treatment Facility, the John F. Kennedy Gravesite, Twin Peaks Overlook Project, and the Great Highway and Ocean Beach Reconstruction Plan. MPA Design has also launched and nurtured the careers of many young designers who have gone on to develop their own award-winning practices.

MPA Design counts among its clientele many corporate, academic and non-profit anchor institutions that have proven critical to core U.S. industries and both Bay Area and global economic growth, including Stanford University, U.C. Berkeley, Genentech (Roche), Hewlett-Packard, and The Presidio Trust, among many others.

MPA Design would benefit greatly from being added to the Legacy Business Registry, particularly as the design community seeks to honor the legacy of Michael Painter, who passed away in the summer of 2018. 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: MPA Design

Business owner name(s): Mrs. Susan C. Painter

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

Current business address: 414 Mason Street, Suite 700, San Francisco, California 94102

Telephone: ( 415) 434 - 4664

Email:

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: <https://mpadesign.com>

Facebook:

Twitter:

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 0 6 2 6 7 0

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 checked="" 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: Mrs. Susan Painter

Contact person title: President

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:**

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**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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**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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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: Susan C. Painter

Signature:



Date:

Sept. 29, 2023

# MPA DESIGN

## Written Historical Narrative

### INTRODUCTION

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

Founded in 1969 by Michael Painter, San Francisco based MPA Design is a highly acclaimed landscape architectural and urban design services firm with a portfolio consisting of over 3,000 completed projects. MPA Design is one of the oldest continuously operating design firms on the West Coast. The success of the firm is recognized through its large base of repeat clients, over 100 design awards, and notable work featured in numerous books and publications. Projects have spanned a broad spectrum of geographies, topographies, and climactic zones. Examples of the firm's work can be found throughout many regions of the continental United States, Hawaii, Tahiti, and several European countries.

#### b. Describe whom the business serves.

MPA Design has three primary focused areas of client service – commercial, mixed-use/multi-family housing, and non-profit/government.

Select clients have included Stanford University, U.C. Berkeley, Genentech (Roche), Hewlett-Packard, Bayer, The Presidio Trust, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of the Interior and many others.

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

Client-centric, innovative, and sustainable design.

### **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.

Michael Painter founded Michael Painter & Associates as a California Corporation in San Francisco on 17 July 1969. The firm's original office and headquarters was located at 562 Mission Street in the South of Market neighborhood.

On 28 September 1984, the firm's name was changed to MPA Design.

Subsequently, on 1 December 1994, the business relocated its headquarters to 414 Mason Street in the Union Square neighborhood, where it remains today.

After relocating, Michael continued working with his local strategic partners, the San Francisco city government, and several federal agencies to adopt one of his most impactful projects. He proposed redesigning the roadway which runs through the Presidio of San Francisco and connects San Francisco to the Golden Gate Bridge. Today nearly 40 million motorists each year enjoy traversing this significantly improved thoroughfare. The resultant, Presidio Parkway, has become one of the firm's marquee projects in recent years.

Unfortunately, Michael Painter passed away in June 2018. At that time, Susan Painter, MPA's Corporate Secretary and Michael's wife, assumed the role of President and became 100 percent shareholder of MPA Design. The business continues to further penetrate its installed base from its Mason Street headquarters while, simultaneously, renewing its growth by both (a) adding new clients and (b) diversifying into markets.

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

1969 to 2018: Michael Painter  
2018 to current: Susan Painter

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

MPA Design has remained in continuous operation in San Francisco since its founding in 1969. While navigating challenges across numerous business cycles, the business has never ceased operations for any length of time.

**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 1969, MPA Design has significantly contributed to the growth and success of the local San Francisco Bay Area and many other regions throughout the United States – helping to foster sustainable and environmentally conscious design. MPA Design has also launched and nurtured the careers of many young designers who have gone on to develop their own award-winning practices. Finally, its designs have contributed to the growth of many anchor corporate and non-profit institutions that have proven critical to the development of critical U.S. industries as well as global economic growth.

MPA Design is currently one of the oldest, continuously operating, Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) landscape architectural firms on the West Coast of the United States.

The company's headquarters is located just off Union Square and has become a business staple in a neighborhood that has recently experienced a sharp drop in business occupancy levels post-pandemic. Nevertheless, MPA Design has remained a great business neighbor. During these challenging times, the firm has served its local community through not only donating its design services to efficiently deliver impactful projects to local clients, but also through supporting other San Francisco businesses in its procurement and strategic partnering strategy.

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

The firm's founder, Michael Painter, was a significant, nationally-recognized landscape architect. Following are a few references to Michael and his impact on the San Francisco Bay Area and the national landscape architectural ecosystem:

- Michael Painter, Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael\\_Painter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Painter))
- Michael Painter, The Cultural Landscape Foundation (<https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/michael-painter>)
- SF County Transportation Authority, Resolution 19-13, Michael Painter ([https://www.sfcta.org/sites/default/files/content/Executive/Meetings/board/2018/09-Sept-25/r19\\_13\\_michael\\_painter.pdf](https://www.sfcta.org/sites/default/files/content/Executive/Meetings/board/2018/09-Sept-25/r19_13_michael_painter.pdf))

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

Throughout its history, MPA Design has positioned the business as offering its services to support the needs of the public at large. Although the firm primarily serves business-to-business (B2B), business-to-nonprofit (B2NP), and business-to-government (B2G) clients, most projects ultimately benefit the associated individuals and their communities. For example, MPA Design has worked on a number of projects for local parks, and San Francisco Bay Area universities and colleges. These projects have significantly improved the health, safety and general environment for individuals in those work/play/learn communities.

Over the years, MPA Design has participated in several community, city, and regional commissions that strive to leverage the synergies and improve effectiveness within the design and construction ecosystem for the public good. For example, historically the firm has been an active participant and leader within SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association). Also, MPA's principals have held leadership positions within the local chapter of the ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architecture). On numerous occasions, MPA Design has been quite actively involved in communicating with and advising local and regional governments as their associated agencies revise their plans to optimally adapt to dynamic local issues such as population growth, regional transportation, and climate change.

Finally, MPA Design has fostered the careers of numerous emerging landscape architects. The firm's principals have traditionally worked closely with regional schools to educate and advise students considering a career in the design industry, and subsequently mentoring new entrants as they commence their careers. While at MPA Design, young designers have received exposure to a diverse range of challenging projects while receiving the necessary support as they progressed through the licensing process. After discovering the appeal of entrepreneurial pursuits, several of these young, licensed architects have, subsequently, spun off to launch their own successful ventures here in the Bay Area and around the country.

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

Since it was founded in 1969, MPA Design has been mentioned in numerous books, articles, and publications. The following is a small representative sample of those references:

- **Great Highway Redesign: North of Lincoln Way – A Conceptual Plan**  
<https://archive.org/details/greathighwayrede1979mich/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>
- **“Corrective Surgery for the GREAT HIGHWAY” by Suzanne Calio**  
Landscape Architecture Magazine, Vol. 68, No. 5 (September 1978), pp. 424-429 (10 pages)  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44666543>
- **1982 Landscape Awards - The Washington Post**  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1982/08/20/1982-landscape-awards/b13d2c91-16c2-4efa-8a4d-af5f327ae30c/>
- **The First Public Children's Playground in the United States**  
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=40374>
- **BART/Trails; a study of the commuter and recreational trail potential to the Bay Area Rapid Transit System**  
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000020960>
- **Michael Painter & Associates, C 542677, rcb: 24735, c: 542677. Marta (Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority) - Public Information - Division Director's Subject Files, 087-10-026. Georgia Archives**  
[https://georgiaarchives.as.atlas-sys.com/repositories/2/archival\\_objects/152723](https://georgiaarchives.as.atlas-sys.com/repositories/2/archival_objects/152723)
- **BART/Trails: A Study of the Commuter and Recreational Trail Potential to the Bay Area Rapid Transit System**  
[https://books.google.com/books/about/BART\\_Trails.html?id=os2xbhOsNMIC](https://books.google.com/books/about/BART_Trails.html?id=os2xbhOsNMIC)

- **New sculpture garden at Harvest Inn**  
[https://napavalleyregister.com/star/lifestyles/new-sculpture-garden-at-harvest-inn/article\\_489463eb-c6d9-5812-aaf0-622cd3ae72b6.html](https://napavalleyregister.com/star/lifestyles/new-sculpture-garden-at-harvest-inn/article_489463eb-c6d9-5812-aaf0-622cd3ae72b6.html)
- **University of Nevada, Las Vegas, campus Master Plan Study**  
<https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/assets/planning/history/CampusMasterPlan-PrelimReport-77.pdf>
- **Salisbury Maryland Regional Urban Design Assistance Team: May 1-5, 1980**  
The American Institute of Architects  
[https://www.brikbases.org/sites/default/files/dat\\_1980\\_Salisbury\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.brikbases.org/sites/default/files/dat_1980_Salisbury_compressed.pdf)
- **Vol. 73, No. 5, September/October 1983, Landscape Architecture Magazine**  
Published by: American Society of Landscape Architects  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40195458>
- **2014 Silver SPUR: How Michael Painter Re-Envisions Urban Design**  
<https://www.spur.org/news/2014-11-24/2014-silver-spur-how-michael-painter-re-envisions-urban-design>
- **500 Pine Street Rooftop Park**  
<https://sfrecpark.org/DocumentCenter/View/542/Revised-Concept-Design-05-14-2015-PDF>
- **The Women Who Led the Presidio Parkway and Tunnel Tops**  
<https://www.sfcta.org/blogs/women-who-led-presidio-parkway-and-tunnel-tops>
- **Memory Garden in Colma is first Jewish place in U.S. to mourn pregnancy loss**  
<https://jweekly.com/2022/11/15/memory-garden-in-colma-is-first-jewish-place-in-u-s-to-mourn-pregnancy-loss/>

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

Similarly, MPA Design has been received over 100 awards since 1969. The following is a synopsis of several of those honors:

- **Presidio Parkway**  
Community Service Award, AIA  
San Francisco Merit Award, ASLA, Northern California  
Certificate of Recognition, California State Assembly
- **Grave Site of President John F. Kennedy, Arlington, Virginia**  
Honor Award, ASLA, National

- **Great Highway/Ocean Beach Reconstruction, San Francisco**  
Honor Award, ASLA, National
- **Hennepin County Government Center, Minneapolis**  
Merit Award, ASLA, National
- **Twin Peaks: Vista Point Overlook, San Francisco**  
Merit Award, ASLA, Northern California Chapter
- **Pacific Bell Administrative Center, San Ramon**  
Award of Excellence, Urban Land Institute  
Honor Award, ASLA, Northern California Chapter  
Merit Award, ASLA, National
- **General Electric A.P.E.D. Headquarters Building, San Jose**  
Honor Award, ASLA, National
- **Hewlett Packard, Cupertino**  
Merit Award, ASLA, National
- **Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove**  
Honor Award, ASLA, National
- **Blair House Garden, Washington, D.C.**  
Merit Award, ASLA, National
- **Lafayette Park, Washington D.C.**  
Merit Award, American Society of Landscape Architects
- **Mary B. Connolly Children's Playground, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco**  
Honor Award, ASLA, National

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

As a preeminent thought leader in Landscape Architectural Design, MPA Design has become the design partner of choice for a plethora of commercial enterprises, multi-family housing developers, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and construction partners throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Moreover, the firm's longevity has afforded it the opportunity to become a catalyst for growth throughout the Global Silicon Valley (GSV). Its long tenure in this key region for U.S. and global innovation has enabled MPA Design to form relationships with many current Silicon Valley stalwarts throughout the early days of their growth. The company's designs have incrementally improved the prospects for all stakeholders of numerous GSV veterans such as



Genentech, Bayer, BioMarin, Gilead, Hewlett-Packard, AT&T, TotalEnergies (SunPower), UC Davis, UC Berkeley and Stanford University.

We believe that if MPA Design were to shut down or be relocated, it could cause irreparable near-term harm throughout the design ecosystem. Employees would lose their jobs. The firm's long-term strategic consultants would lose project work and associated revenue. The aforementioned clients and partners may scramble to replace MPA Design with substitute design partners, but those substitutes would lack the historically relevant institutional knowledge on which clients have come to rely upon from MPA Design. The Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) Building management would lose an attractive, long-term tenant. In short, the region would lose a core leader in the landscape architectural design ecosystem.

While it may be true that MPA Design could be replaced, we believe that its replacements could take years to offer a comparable level of client service, innovative thought leadership, and sustainable design execution that the business offers today.

### **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?**

MPA Design leases its office space. However, the business is one of the longest-term tenants (since December 1994) of the architecturally significant Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) Building located at 414 Mason Street (<https://hoodline.com/2017/12/3-centuries-of-history-in-8-stories-the-nsgw-building/>).

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

MPA Design is committed to providing innovative, client-centric, sustainable landscape architectural design.

**c. What challenges is the business facing today?**

1. Access to capital at reasonable terms.
2. Post COVID-19-pandemic business development of new clients.
3. Recruitment of promising young talent.

Just as MPA Design began to recover from the softness in its business related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the firm was unfavorably impacted by the quite disruptive and unusual weather patterns that our region experienced during late autumn of 2022 and into the winter of 2023. During this timeframe, select new MPA Design clients leveraged their size and prowess to improve their cash cycles by engaging in “slow-pay” and/or “no-pay” tactics. Needless to say, this became a catalyst for some cashflow issues and associated employee angst. However, MPA Design’s management remains optimistic and continues to address these challenges with its redoubled multi-dimensional growth strategy.

In the most recent weeks of third quarter 2023, several of MPA Design’s established clients have commenced accelerating their pace on executing numerous projects that had been previously approved but delayed throughout the pandemic and into early 2023. The firm has also been approached to propose on innovative projects from new clients outside its installed base. MPA Design has also recently received new client referrals from its already solid yet growing strategic partner relationships. However, management feels that the business is currently constrained to appropriately execute on these new opportunities consistent with MPA Design's standards due to its less-than-optimal access to capital on reasonable terms and the need to grow the firm's talent.

As a part of MPA Design’s growth strategy, the firm seeks to complement its currently resurging B2B business with accelerating growth in its B2G and B2NP markets to return to MPA Design’s historical levels. Management feels that this restoration of balance within the firm’s three target markets while continuing to acquire new clients within the B2B market will allow MPA Design to maintain sustainable growth for the next five decades. Today, management continues to implement its multi-pronged business development strategy while maintaining relationships with select talented emerging Architects that MPA Design believes may be optimally positioned to carry the firm into the next century and beyond.

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### **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.**

Landscape architectural design.

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

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 414-430 Mason Street is “A - Historic Resource Present.” The Native Sons Building was evaluated in 1976 and rated 4 out of 5 for architecture with 5 as the highest rating. It was also evaluated in 1978 and rated “A,” highest importance. The building appears to be eligible for the National Register as an individual property through survey evaluation.



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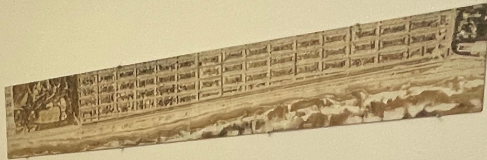
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Gathering Nov. 12 to dedicate the new Memorial Garden in Colma. (Photo/Patrick Walls Photography)

NEWS > BAY AREA

# Memory Garden in Colma is first Jewish place in U.S. to mourn pregnancy loss

BY **MAYA MIRSKY** | NOVEMBER 15, 2022

*[Sign up for Weekday J](#) and get the latest on what's happening in the Jewish Bay Area.*

It could have been raining, but instead the sun chose to shine on the 100 or so people gathered on Nov. 13 at Eternal Home Cemetery in Colma. They were there for the



dedication of a new Jewish space for those who have experienced the grief of a miscarriage, stillbirth or death of a newborn. **The Memory Garden** is the first specifically Jewish memorial place for prenatal and neonatal loss in the country, its founders said. In creating the garden, they wanted to provide an external, physical location for the internal expression of grief and mourning.

“For the Jewish community, that’s very important to us, to have a physical place to go,” said Debbie Findling, senior philanthropic adviser to the Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund, who founded the garden project along with Abby Porth, director of the Lisa Stone Pritzker Family Foundation.

The dedication was **the culmination of a long journey** that began with a conversation between Findling and Porth more than a decade ago. Both women had experienced pregnancy loss and wanted to turn to Judaism and Jewish ritual for support in their grief, but felt a lack.

“There wasn’t really a way to kind of move through the experience from a Jewish perspective,” Findling said.

Much of Jewish practice involves marking time and repeating ritual, as it does with the many **traditions around mourning**. But Judaism doesn’t prescribe specific rites for miscarriage or stillbirth. **According to Maimonides**: “We do not [perform ritual mourning rites] for stillborn infants.”



*The Memory Garden (Photo/Patrick Walls Photography)*

So finding Jewish solutions was hard for Findling. “For example, I didn’t know what to do on the anniversary, the *yahrzeit*, of my stillbirth,” she said.

Porth and Findling began a conversation that expanded to include the [Bay Area Jewish Healing Center](#) and [Sinai Memorial Chapel Jewish funeral home](#), which agreed to provide land at the cemetery it owns for the Memory Garden.

“It has been a long time in the making,” said Sam Salkin, executive director of Sinai Memorial.

Salkin said it had taken so much time to create the garden because of fundraising and the legal steps involved in setting up the space, which included undergrounding important PG&E infrastructure and dealing with a BART right-of-way.

The process also required a lot of listening to the community, and dialogues with those who had experienced grief related to prenatal loss or infertility issues. The result is a design by MPA Design, an S.F.-based landscape architecture firm that also worked on

the John F. Kennedy memorial at Arlington National Cemetery, San Francisco's Doyle Drive Redesign Plan and the St. Regis Hotel in San Francisco.

It features an open space with native California plants, with redwood trees and a large, flat circular pool, "round like a womb," Findling said.

"The outer edge of the circle are the months of the year, both in English and in Hebrew," she said, and in the water are stones that can be moved and repositioned by visitors, a nod to the placing of stones on grave markers and to the marking of sacred days on the Jewish calendar.



*(From left) Abby Porth, Debbie Findling and Cantor Marsha Attie at the dedication of the Memory Garden. (Photo/Patrick Walls Photography)*

But it's meant to be open to interpretation, Findling added. She hopes families, rabbis and those who are grieving will find a canvas on which to make their own rituals.

"It's for them to create the meaning," she said. "We have created the space."

Salkin said that although the garden is adjacent to the cemetery, it offers "intimacy and seclusion" — which will be even more true once the new seedlings have grown a

bit.

The Memory Garden’s opening Sunday was attended by clergy from across Jewish denominations. Cantor Marsha Attie of Congregation Emanu-El (Reform) in San Francisco and Rabbi Yitzchok Feldman of Emek Beracha (Orthodox) in Palo Alto both participated in the dedication, along with Findling, Porth, Salkin and Jennifer Kaufman, an artist and Sinai Memorial staff member.

While it was created in a Jewish space, the garden is open to all. It’s open to the public from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday through Friday and closed on Jewish holidays. Reservations are required for private gatherings by contacting Eternal Home or Sinai Memorial.

Findling said that for her, the garden has proven to be a place where she can create meaning and connection with Judaism in relation to the loss she experienced many years ago but still carries with her.

“It’s where I go now on the anniversary of my stillbirth,” Findling said. “I go to the Memory Garden.”

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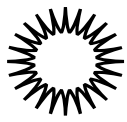
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**Maya Mirsky**

Maya Mirsky is a J. Staff Writer based in Oakland.

**Tags:** stillbirth, Colma, pregnancy loss, death, mourning, Sinai Memorial Chapel, miscarriage, Memory

**SPUR**

IDEAS + ACTION FOR A BETTER CITY

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# 2014 Silver SPUR: How Michael Painter Re-Envisions Urban Design

November 24, 2014

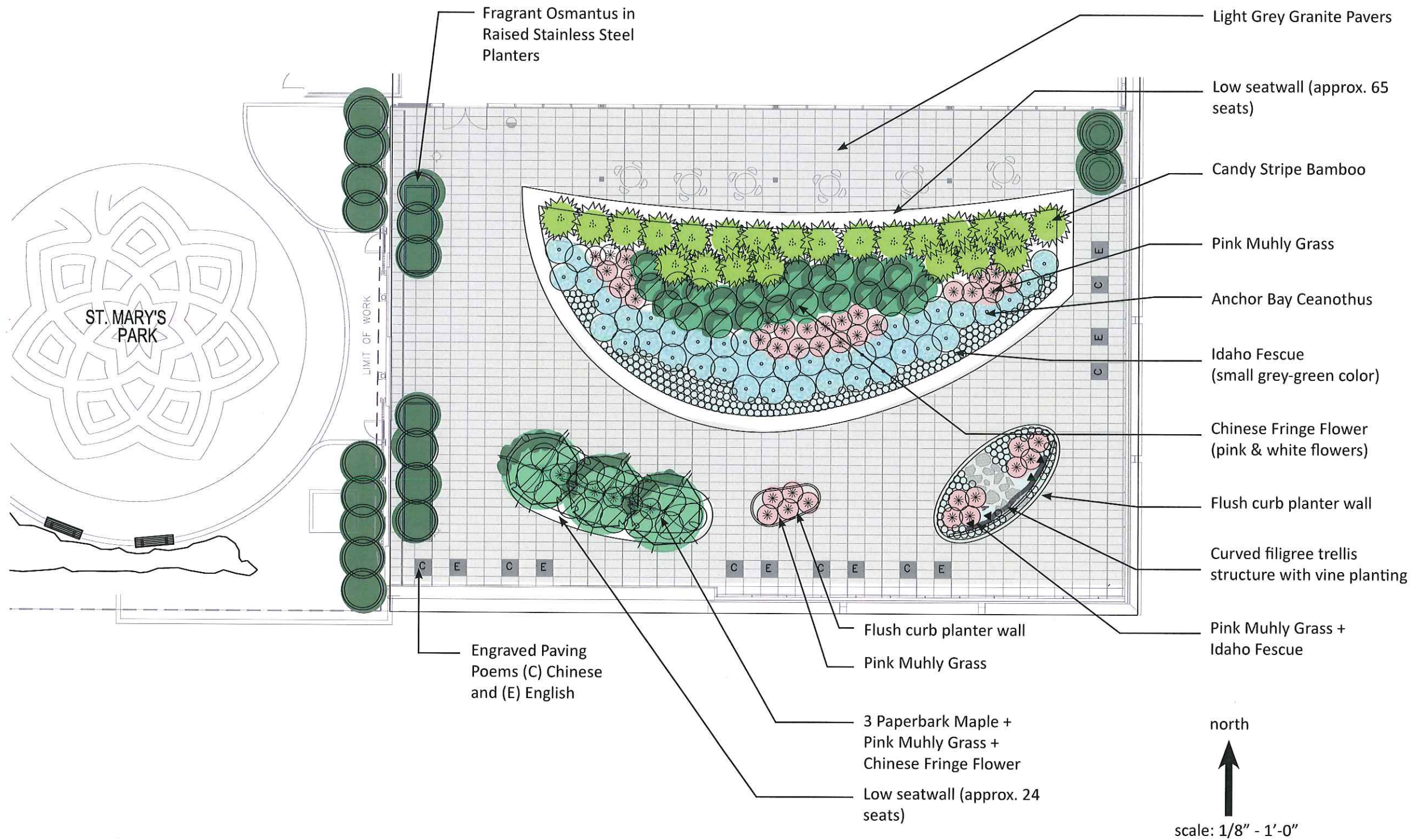


*The 2014 Silver SPUR Awards, held on November 18, recognized five individuals whose achievements have made San Francisco and the Bay Area a better place to live and work.*

**Michael Painter** is owner/president of MPA Design and has offered design development strategies and solutions for award-winning projects since 1969. As Doyle Drive becomes the Presidio Parkway, we are witnessing Michael's compelling vision to replace the U.S. Army's utilitarian drive with a road worthy and respectful of a national park. Over MPA Design's 45-year history, his urban designs have won accolades from the American Society of Landscape Architects, the American Institute of Architects, UC Berkeley's Department of Landscape Architecture and the Lambda Alpha Honorary Land Economics Society. Michael earned his Bachelor of Arts in landscape architecture from UC Berkeley and his master's in urban design from Harvard University. He serves on the SF Architectural Heritage Board and SPUR's Advisory Council.

# **500 Pine Street Rooftop Park**

San Francisco



500 PINE, San Francisco Ca

Community Presentation - Landscape Plan





Candy Stripe Bamboo

Pink Muhly Grass

Anchor Bay Ceanothus

Idaho Fescue  
(small grey-green color)



Paperbark Maple

Chinese Fringe Flower  
(white & pink flowers)

Fragrant Osmanthus





Engraved Paving Imagery



Grey Colored Granite at Poems

White Colored Granite Field



Granite Paver Images

chinese text 2" tall

中秋月  
 暮雲收盡溢清寒  
 銀漢無聲轉玉盤  
 此生此夜不長好  
 明年明月何處看

Engraved Poems Sample

english text 1" tall

The sunset clouds are gathered  
 far away, it's clear and cold,  
 The Milky Way is silent, I turn  
 to the jade plate.

The goodness of this life and  
 of this night will not last for  
 long,

Next year where will I watch  
 the bright moon?



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: JUNE 5, 2024**

*Filing Date:* May 08, 2024  
*Case No.:* 2024-004140LBR  
*Business Name:* MPA Design  
*Business Address:* 414 Mason Street, Suite 700  
*Zoning:* C-3-G – Downtown General Zoning District  
 80-130-F Height and Bulk District  
*Cultural District:* Not Applicable  
*Block/Lot:* 0307/008  
*Applicant:* Susan Painter  
 414 Mason Street, Suite 700  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Honora Montano - 628.652.7402  
[honora.montano@sfgov.org](mailto:honora.montano@sfgov.org)

**Recommendation:** Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

## Business Description

Established in 1969 by forward-thinking landscape architect Michael Painter, MPA Design is an acclaimed landscape architecture and urban design firm, with a portfolio consisting of over 3,000 completed projects. MPA Design is one of the oldest continuously operating design firms on the West Coast and provides a holistic design approach to its projects that is site-specific. Over the past five decades, MPA Design has contributed to the growth and vibrancy of the San Francisco Bay Area through producing sustainable design projects, including the Doyle Drive Redesign Plan, the St. Regis Hotel, the UC Davis Medical Center Cancer Treatment Facility, the John F. Kennedy Gravesite, Twin Peaks Overlook Project, and the Great Highway and Ocean Beach Reconstruction Plan. MPA Design counts among its clientele many corporate, academic, and non-profit institutions including Stanford University, U.C. Berkeley, Hewlett Packard, and The Presidio Trust, among others. Founder Michael Painter passed away in June 2018, and the business is now directed by Susan Painter, Michael’s wife.

The business's primary location at 414 Mason Street is a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the east side of Mason Street between Post and Geary streets in the Union Square neighborhood. It is within the C-3-G - Downtown- General Zoning District and the 80-130-F Height and Bulk District. 414 Mason Street is known as the Native Sons Building, which is an Article 11 Significant Building – Category II and is located within the Article 11 Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Conservation District. Additionally, the building appears eligible for the National Register as an individual property through survey evaluation.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

**1. When was business founded?**

The business was founded in 1969.

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

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

- a. MPA Design has operated continuously in San Francisco for 55 years.
- b. MPA Design has contributed to the history and identity of the Union Square neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. MPA Design is committed to maintaining the 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?**

MPA Design was founded by Michael Painter, a significant, nationally recognized landscape architect who contributed to the landscape architecture and sustainable design fields. Painter earned a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1956, followed by a master's degree in urban design from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He completed over 850 projects throughout his career. Significant local projects included the Presidio Parkway, the AT&T Administrative Center, the Genentech Campus, the HP Corporate Headquarters, and the Great Highway/Ocean Beach Re-Construction.

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

The business rents its office at 414 Mason Street, in the Native Sons Building, which is an Article 11 Individual Resource and is located within the Kearny-Market-Mason-Sutter Conservation District. Additionally, the building appears eligible for the National Register as an individual property through survey evaluation.

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

No; however, the building at 414 Mason Street is discussed in *Architecture, Planning, And Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies* Historic Context Statement.

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

Yes. Michael Painter and MPA Design have been mentioned in numerous publications including *Landscape Architecture Magazine* and *The Washinton Post*. Additionally, the firm has received over 100 awards since 1969, including earning the Community Service Award from the American Institute of Architecture for the San Francisco Presidio Parkway project; numerous American Landscape Architecture Association Merit and Honor Awards; and an Award of Excellence from the Urban Land Institute.

## Racial and Social Equity Analysis

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, 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.

MPA Design is one of the oldest, continuously operating, women-owned small business landscape architectural firms in the Unites States. This business contributes to the cultural fabric of San Francisco through high quality landscape design for local parks and educational institutions. MPA Design has also participated in several community groups within the design field, including SPUR (San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association) and the local chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architecture.

## Traditions that Define the Business

### Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 414 Mason Street, Suite 700 (1994 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 562 Mission Street (1969 – 1994)

### Recommended by Applicant

- Innovative, client-centric, sustainable landscape architectural design

## 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. 1398

**HEARING DATE: JUNE 5, 2024**

*Case No.:* 2024-004140LBR  
*Business Name:* MPA Design  
*Business Address:* 414 Mason Street, Suite 700  
*Zoning:* C-3-G – Downtown General Zoning District  
80-130-F Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0307/008  
*Applicant:* Susan Painter  
414 Mason Street, Suite 700  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Honora Montano - 628.652.7402628-652-7402  
[honora.montano@sfgov.org](mailto:honora.montano@sfgov.org)

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR MPA DESIGN, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 414 MASON STREET, BLOCK/LOT 0307/008.

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 June 5, 2024, 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 MPA Design 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 MPA Design:

*Location(s):*

Current Locations:

- 414 Mason Street, Suite 700 (1994 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 562 Mission Street (1969 – 1994)

*Traditions that Define the Business:*

- Innovative, client-centric, sustainable landscape architectural design

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 case file 2024-004140LBR to the Office of Small Business on June 5, 2024.



Richard Sucre  
*Acting Commission Secretary*

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

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: June 5, 2024