



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: September 23, 2024

## SABELLA AND LA TORRE

*Application No.:* LBR-2021-22-030  
*Business Name:* Sabella and La Torre  
*Business Address:* 2809 Taylor St.  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Donald Elwell-McFarland, Owner  
*Nomination Date:* June 10, 2022  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Sabella and La Torre is one of the few original Fisherman's Wharf restaurants still in existence today. The business is an Italian seafood restaurant that has operated out of 2809 Taylor Street since 1927 when Luciano Sabella opened a fish stand. The fish stand evolved into a sit-down restaurant in 1946 at the same location and has been continuously operated by the Sabella family since its opening. The stand originally sold crab, and the restaurant continues to specialize in garlic crab. The name changed from "A. Sabella" to "Sabella and La Torre" in 1946 when the stall became a restaurant, to signify the last names of the Sabellas and La Torres who owned and operated the restaurant. Sabella and La Torre is currently run by the fourth generation of Sabella and La Torre families.

As one of the oldest seafood restaurants in Fisherman's Wharf, Sabella and La Torre carries a proud tradition of fresh seafood served at the wharf. It is often one of the first restaurants that tourists see when visiting San Francisco, located at one of the most popular tourist destinations. Since being partially converted into an outdoor mall and gathering space for tourists, many of the authentic Italian restaurants in the area have been forced to close or relocate. Sabella and La Torre has endured the changing character of Fisherman's Wharf and remains as an important fixture in San Francisco history. It is one of the few fixtures of Fisherman's Wharf that ties the current wharf to its original purpose as a seafood marketplace.

The restaurant features a photograph of Joe Dimaggio in front of their original crab stand in the wharf as a child. It has been featured in several local newspapers including SFGATE, The Fric, and CBS News.

### 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, Sabella and La Torre has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

2809 Taylor St. from 1927 to Present (97 years)

### CRITERION 2

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

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





Yes, Sabella and La Torre has contributed to the history and identity of the Fisherman's Wharf 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 business is associated with Italian cuisine.
- The Taylor Street property is listed in the National Register as a contributor to the National Register Port of San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District. The property is also featured in the Here Today book published in 1968.
- The business has been featured in several local newspapers including SFGATE, The Frisc, and CBS News.

### **CRITERION 3**

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

Yes, Sabella and La Torre is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Sabella and La Torre 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:

- Restaurant serving seafood.
- Interior woodwork by Carlo Cefalu.
- Open façade at exterior, providing service to pedestrians on the pier with outdoor seating.

### **CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS**

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

- Restaurant featuring seafood.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Sabella and La Torre currently located at 2809 Taylor St. 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. \_\_\_\_\_

September 23, 2024

## SABELLA AND LA TORRE

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### Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Sabella and La Torre, currently located at 2809 Taylor 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 September 23, 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 Sabella and La Torre 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 Sabella and La Torre.

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Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Restaurant serving seafood.
- Interior woodwork by Carlo Cefalu.
- Open façade at exterior, providing service to pedestrians on the pier with outdoor seating.

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

- Restaurant featuring seafood.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on September 23, 2024.

---

Katy Tang  
Director

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

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

**Legacy Business Program**

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# Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2021-22-030  
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*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Donald Elwell-McFarland, Owner  
*Nomination Date:* June 10, 2022  
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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

2809 Taylor St. from 1927 to Present (97 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:** August 19, 2024

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

## Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

**AARON PESKIN**

June 10, 2022

Director Katy Tang  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Katy.Tang@sfgov.org

Director Tang:

I am writing to nominate Sabella and La Torre at 2809 Taylor Street for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Established in 1927, Sabella and La Torre is one of the few original Fisherman's Wharf restaurants still in existence today and has been family-owned since its inception. Luciano Sabella and his son Antone originally sold crabs and other seafood items, as the years passed, the business expanded into a full-service restaurant bringing an authentic culinary experience to locals and tourists alike.

Sabella and La Torre would Benefit from inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry, and it is my honor to nominate it for inclusion.

Sincerely,

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

Aaron Peskin



# Legacy Business Registry Application



## Business Information

**Business name:** Sabella and La Torre

**Business owner name(s):** Gina LaRocca and Donald Elwell-McFarland

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

**Current business address:** 2809 Taylor St., San Francisco, CA 94133

**Telephone:** ( 415 ) 673 - 2824      **Email:** info@sabellalatorre.com

**Mailing address (if different than above):**

**Website:** www.sabellalatorre.com

**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/SabellaLaTorre      **Twitter:** @SabellaLaTorre

**7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN):** 0 1 4 8 3 4 4

**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:** Donald Elwell-McFarland

**Contact person title:** Owner

**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:** 2809 Taylor St. **Zip Code:** 94133

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

**Dates at this location: From:** 1927 **To:** Present

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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:**

---

**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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## Legacy Business Registry | Application

## 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: Donald Elwell-McFarland

Signature: *don elwell- mcfarland*

Date: 1-15-2024

# SABELLA AND LA TORRE

## Written Historical Narrative

### INTRODUCTION

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

Step into Sabella and La Torre and immerse yourself in the vibrant atmosphere of San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf. With a century of culinary tradition, the Sabella and La Torre family invites you to experience the rich flavors of seafood and Italian cuisine, paired perfectly with handcrafted cocktails from their full bar. Whether you're a seasoned local or a first-time visitor, they promise to enchant you with their delicious offerings, friendly service, and charming ambiance.

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

Sabella and La Torre serves a wide range of clients. They are located in the heart of Fisherman's Wharf, so they get a lot of tourists as well as locals.

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

World famous garlic crab.

### 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.

Sabella and La Torre – a family-owned, fourth-generation business – was established as “Stall #3 A. Sabella” by Luciano Sabella and his son Antone Sabella at 2809 Taylor Street in 1927.

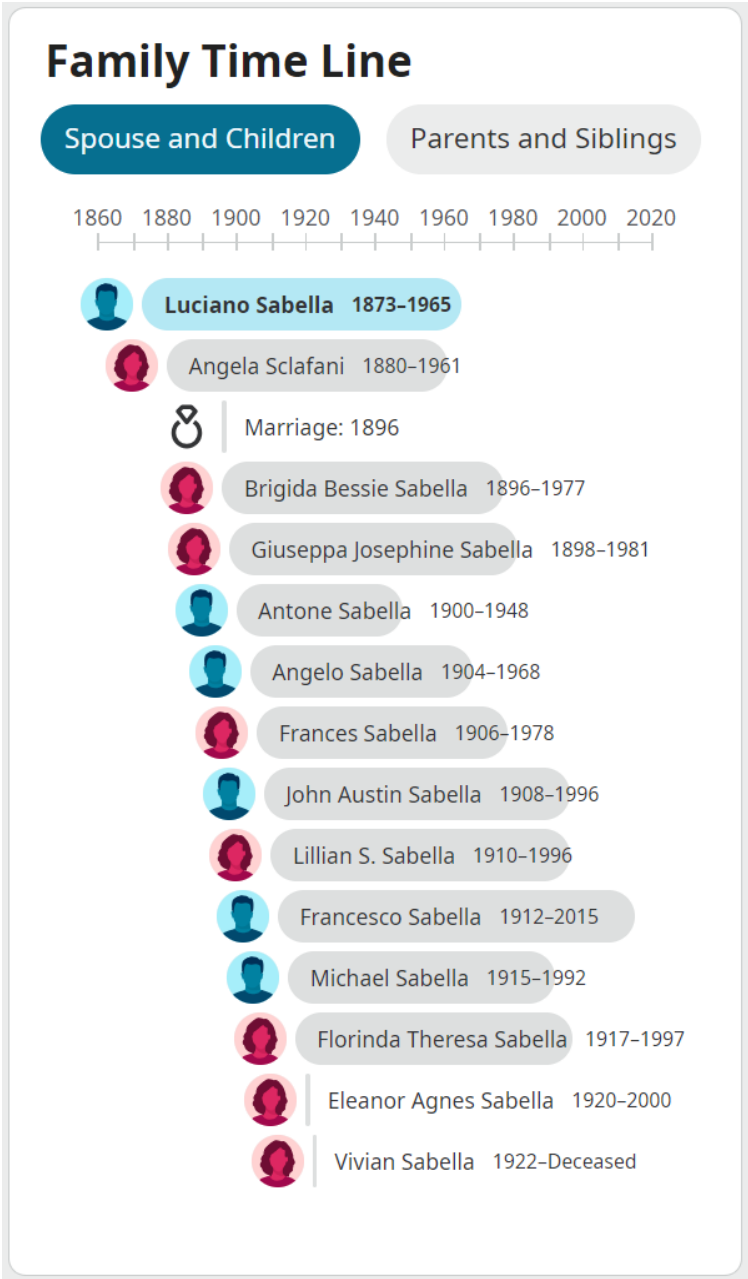
The family business all started when Luciano Sabella arrived from the fishing town of Sciacca, Sicily, to San Francisco in 1887. Luciano wasted no time applying his expertise to the bustling seafood scene of San Francisco.

Luciano wed Angela Sclafani in 1896, and they had 12 children between 1906 and 1922, all born in their house on Francisco street. Antone Sabella was the third oldest child. When he was born on March 10, 1900, his father was 26 and his mother was 19.<sup>1 2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LVZB-SNY/antone-sabella-1900-1948>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LV53-84M/luciano-sabella-1873-1965>



In 1927, Luciano opened a fish stand at 2809 Taylor Street with his son Antone. This was during the time when several Sicilian men, who started out as fishermen, opened restaurants at the wharf. Stall #3 A. Sabella initially sold crabs and other fresh catches to eager customers, laying the foundation for a lasting culinary legacy.

Around 1940, Antone bought land on Jefferson and Taylor streets, kitty-corner from the fish stand business, where he eventually opened up a restaurant that he named “A. Sabella” or “A. Sabella’s.” That restaurant has a separate history from Sabella and La Torre, and it closed in 2007.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cook’s Night Out: Antone Sabella, SFGATE, November 28, 2004, <https://www.sfgate.com/restaurants/article/COOK-S-NIGHT-OUT-ANTONE-SABELLA-2669264.php>



There were substantive changes to the business immediately following World War II between 1945 and 1946. Luciano and Antone sold the fish stand to Antone's brothers Frank Sabella Sr. and Michael Sabella, and Antone's nephews Anthony La Torre and Louis La Torre. Lou had just returned from World War II. Frank had been involved in the family's restaurant since a very young age. By the age of 8, he was already cooking crabs and selling them. Frank already had 20 years of restaurant experience when he became a co-owner in 1946.

The new owners changed the name of the business to Sabella and La Torre and expanded it into a sit-down restaurant.

The strongest time for this family business was the partnership between Frank Sabella Sr. and Lou La Torre. They both provided the stepping stones for the future generations to succeed. They both were symbols of hard work and dedication. They both came to work almost every day. Frank lived to the age of 102 and Lou to the age of 98.

In 1955, the ownership of the business changed with Frank Sabella Sr., Frank Sabella Jr., and Tom La Torre co-owning the restaurant. Tom, the son of Lou La Torre, had a great reputation for his business acumen, and he was even better as a leader. He maintained a successful business by working hard quietly and leading the business on a day-to-day basis.

In 1985, Frank Sabella Sr. retired from the business.

In 2013, Frank Sabella Jr. retired, and his daughter Gina LaRocca joined the business as a co-owner.

In 2023, Tom La Torre retired from the business. Donald McFarland came on board as a co-owner with Gina. Don is related to the family through marriage. Don married Frank Sabella Sr.'s granddaughter Kristina. Kristina is also Gina's first cousin.

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

1927 to 1946:	Luciano Sabella; Antone Sabella
1946 to 1955:	Frank Sabella Sr.; Michael Sabella, Anthony La Torre; Louis La Torre
1955 to 1985:	Frank Sabella Sr.; Frank Sabella Jr.; Tom La Torre
1985 to 2013:	Frank Sabella Jr.; Tom La Torre
2013 to 2023:	Tom La Torre; Gina LaRocca
2023 to Present:	Gina LaRocca; Donald McFarland

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

Sabella and La Torre closed for six weeks in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.

## **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.**

Sabella and La Torre stands as one of the original Fisherman's Wharf restaurants still thriving today. Established as a fish stand in 1927, the business initially sold crabs and other fresh fish to local customers. Following World War II, the humble crab stand turned into a full-service restaurant, catering to the evolving tastes of locals and tourists alike.

As the years went by, Sabella and La Torre grew in both reputation and scale, becoming a beloved fixture of the Fisherman's Wharf dining scene.

Today, Sabella and La Torre is proudly operated by the fourth generation of the Sabella and La Torre families. With a deep-rooted commitment to quality and tradition, they carry forward the legacy of their ancestors, indulging locals and guests from all corners of the globe to experience the best of San Francisco's seafood and Italian cuisine. From the time-honored recipes passed down through generations to the warm hospitality that has become synonymous with the establishment, Sabella and La Torre continues to honor its storied past while embracing the excitement of the future.

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

The restaurant has a picture of Joe DiMaggio in front their crab stand when he was young.

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

Sabella and La Torre has a longstanding commitment to hiring of hiring young San Francisco kids for their first summer job.

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

- ***San Francisco tourism continues to inch toward pre-pandemic levels***  
CBS News  
July 22, 2024  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/san-francisco-tourism-continues-to-inch-toward-pre-pandemic-levels/>
- ***The Delay in Crab Season Puts a Pinch on SF Business and Holiday Traditions***  
The Frisc  
November 24, 2021  
<https://thefrisc.com/crab-season-delay-puts-a-pinch-on-sf-business-and-holiday-traditions-6910730d7421/>

- ***Sabella & La Torre still a family affair***

SFGATE

October 1, 2013

<https://www.sfgate.com/restaurants/article/Sabella-amp-La-Torre-still-a-family-affair-4850005.php>

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

Sabella and La Torre have not received any awards, recognition, or political commendations.

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

If the business were to close, tourists and locals would lose an iconic seafood restaurant that has been an integral part of Fisherman's Wharf since 1927.

**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?**

Inside the restaurant, there is a hanging picture of Luciano Sabella smoking a cigar and cooking crabs out front. The picture includes a young Lou La Torre freshly home from World War II.

The woodwork inside the restaurant was done by Carlo Cefalu, a master carpenter and boat maker. He became the family's close friend and handyman for over 20 years. Carlo went on to become president of the Fisherman's Wharf Historic Fishing Boat Association per a [2006 article in SFGATE](#).

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

Sabella and La Torre is committed to providing exceptional service, delicious cuisine, and a warm, inviting atmosphere for their guests. They will always give their customers the best and freshest seafood in town.

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

The plan to keep the business going indefinitely is to keep the business in the family and pass it on to the next generation. Some of the fifth generation has expressed interest and has begun working in the business.

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

As with many small businesses in the area, following are some of the challenges that Sabella and La Torre is facing:

- Finding good employees.
- Increased wages coupled with decreased revenue.
- Insurance companies leaving California, and increased rates by the remaining insurance companies.

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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.**

Restaurant featuring seafood.

**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 parcel that includes Sabella and La Torre is "A - Historic Resource Present," but it is unclear whether the building itself is historic.





LEGAL HOURS OF SALE  
FOR  
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES  
4 P.M. - 2 A.M.

Selling, furnishing or giving away alcoholic beverages to persons under 21 years of age or to obviously intoxicated persons is prohibited by law.

**MINORS ATTENTION!**

Persons under 21 years of age who purchase alcoholic beverages in this state are guilty of violating the law.

GEORGE A. BULLY

TO SAFEGUARD NO.  
WE SERVE ALL CO.  
WITH AUTOMATIC CO.



*If It Swims We Have It!*

*Sabella  
and  
La Torre*

SEA FOODS

Telephone  
ORdway 3-2824

No. 3 FISHERMAN'S WHARF  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

•



Torres's

The Crab Station  
At Fisherman's Wharf

SABELLA LA TORRE



LIGHT



No. 3  
Fisherman's Wharf

Sabella & LaTorre

Since 1927

Establi  
FRESH

Seafood Cocktails

ORIGINAL FISHERMAN'S WHARF RESTAURANT

"If It Swims We Have It"

ENTRANCE

2 HOURS  
FREE PARKING

SAN FRANCISCO





Torre

Since 1927

"If It Swims We Have It"

*Sabella & La Torre*

CLAM CHOWDER	COCKTAILS	BEVERAGES
CLIP 10	GRAB 13	SODAS 4.00
PINT 16	HOT SHRIMP 11	WATER 1.00
QUART 13	LG SHRIMP 11	JUICES, CRUSH 4.00
BREAD BOWL 13	COMBO 12	ICE TEA, LEMONADE 4.00
	CALAMARI 12	MOUNTAIN DEW 4.00
<b>FRIED FOODS</b>		DOM BEER 6
(2) ITEM COMBO 17	SHRIMP SANDWICH 13	IMPORT BEER 8
SHRIMP & CHIPS 15	GRAB SANDWICH 14	WINE, ANCHOR 8
CALAMARI & CHIPS 16	LOBSTER ROLL & FRIES 31	<b>BREADS</b> 5
CLAMS & CHIPS 15	LG SHRIMP PLATE 16	MIN LOAF 5
FISH & CHIPS 15	OYSTER 1/2 SHELL (4) 33	BAGUETTE 6
FRENCH FRIES 7	COMBO SALAD 32	
ONION RINGS 7	1/2 LOBSTER 31	
CRAB CAKES (8) 11		

HOT FOOD ITEMS PLUS TAX VISA, M/C, AMEX, DINERS 15.00 MINIMUM FOR PARKING VALIDATION

FISH GROTTTO

*Sabella & La Torre*  
 Daily Specials  
 Daily Lunch  
 Daily Dinner  
 Take Out  
 Delivery  
 10:00am - 11:00pm



SABELLA & LA TORRE



**Sabella & La Torre**

CLAM CHOWDER		COCKTAILS		BEVERAGES	
CUP	10	CRAB	15	SODAS	4
PINT	16	BAY SHRIMP	11	WATER	4
QUART	24	LG SHRIMP	12	JUICES, CRUS.	5
BREAD BOWL	14	COMBO	17	ICE TEA,	5
<b>FRIED FOODS</b>		CALAMARI	14	LEMONADE	5
(2) ITEM COMBO	19	CRAB	MP	MOUNTAIN DEW	5
SHRIMP & CHIPS	17	SHRIMP SANDWICH	15	DOM BEER	9
CALAMARI & CHIPS	17	CRAB SANDWICH	17	IMPORT BEER	9
FISH & CHIPS	17	LOBSTER ROLL & FRIES	34	WINE	9
FRENCH FRIES	8	PEEL & EAT SHRIMP	16	FULL BAR	
ONION RINGS	8	OYSTER 1/2 SHELL (4)	15	<b>FRESH CRAB</b>	
CRAB CAKES (1)	11	COMBO SALAD	24	GARLIC OR SPICY	
CHICKEN TENDERS	14	1/2 LOBSTER	36	CHEESEBURGER \$17	
		W/BAY SHRIMP	36	SPICY CHICKEN SANDWICH 18	
<small>HOT FOOD ITEMS PLUS TAX VISA, M/C, AMEX, DINERS 15.00 MINIMUM FOR PARKING VALIDATION</small>					



**FISH GROTTO** NO 3

**& LATORRE**

**SABELLA & LA TORRE**  
SINCE 1927

**ENTR**

Food service counter with stainless steel equipment, including a fryer, grill, and beverage dispenser. A menu board is mounted on the counter, and a display case on the right contains various food items and drinks. A sign on the counter reads "TIPS".



SABELLA & LATORRE

SABELLA & LA TORRE  
SINCE 1927



Hot  
New England  
CLAM  
CHOWDER

NICK'S  
STARTS  
LINE  
HERE

SEAFOOD  
COCKTAILS  
SALADS

LATORRE

Budweiser  
SAN FRANCISCO











MULLA & LATORRE

WINE & BEER

Red Wine	\$27.99
White Wine	\$27.99
Steak & Lobster	\$49.99
Garlic Crab	\$49.99
Spaghetti	\$22.99

WINE & BEER

Red Wine	\$27.99
White Wine	\$27.99
Steak & Lobster	\$49.99
Garlic Crab	\$49.99
Spaghetti	\$22.99



Sabella & LaTorre

WHARF RESTAURANT

"If It Swims We Ha

ENTRANCE

FISH GROTTO

SABELLA & LATORRE  
SINCE 1977

CLAM CHOWDER	COCKTAILS	BEVERAGES
CLAM CHOWDER CLAM CHOWDER CLAM CHOWDER	COCKTAILS COCKTAILS COCKTAILS	BEVERAGES BEVERAGES BEVERAGES





# SFGATE

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## Sabella & La Torre still a family affair

By [Janny Hu](#), Assistant Sports Editor

Sep 27, 2013 | Updated Oct 1, 2013



Sabella and La Torre opened in 1927 and was one of the first Fisherman's Wharf restaurants in San Francisco, California, as customers are served take out in front of the restaurant on Wednesday, September 4, 2013. Liz Hafalia/The Chronicle

*This is part of a series exploring the Port of San Francisco restaurants. These waterfront spots embrace and reflect the city's oldest - and newest - culinary traditions, and they have plenty of stories to tell. Previous articles are at [www.sfgate.com/food](http://www.sfgate.com/food) and [www.sfchronicle.com/food](http://www.sfchronicle.com/food).*

The story of Sabella & La Torre begins with the Sabellas in 1927, when [Luciano Sabella](#) and his son, Antone, opened a small seafood stand at Fisherman's Wharf.

After World War II, Antone sold the stand to his brothers, Frank and Michael, and his nephews, Tony and [Louis La Torre](#), and though the business eventually expanded into a sit-down restaurant, not much has changed in the time since.

"We still cater to a lot of locals and longshoremen, we're still doing the fresh crabs and fresh fish, and we still take pride in the business," says general manager [Don McFarland](#).

Frank Sabella is still going strong - he turns 101 in October - and the same goes for his family's bread-and-butter.

Sabella & La Torre, one of Fisherman's Wharf's original occupants, now spans two outdoor crab stands, a full-service restaurant and bar, and even a crab-shipping business.



Sabella and La Torre opened in 1927 and was one of the first Fisherman's Wharf restaurants in San Francisco, California, as a covered display of family photos are seen in front of the restaurant on Wednesday, September 4, 2013. Liz Hafalia/The Chronicle

McFarland, who is married to Frank Sabella's granddaughter Kristina, helps run the show for Frank Jr. and [Tom La Torre](#). Both McFarland and La Torre learned the trade from the ground up, bussing tables and working the crab stands, and to this day, either he or Tom is usually on duty. Call it familial pride: Frank Jr. worked until he was 70, only retiring about a year ago.

A visit to Sabella & La Torre's - look for the blue-and-white awning - is an exercise in decision-making. Eat inside or outside? Clam chowder or seafood cocktail? Crab cakes or crab Louis?

The food is classic Fisherman's Wharf fare, from the seafood specials to Italian pasta plates. Popular items, aside from the usual seafood cocktails, whole crabs and raw oysters, include the marinated calamari, which features boiled squid in a Sicilian-style dressing of olive oil, garlic, onion, and red pepper flakes.

Venture indoors, and you'll find a charming, old-school atmosphere with dark banquettes and booths and granite countertops. The menu is large and the portions even larger. Best of all, meals are served with a side of hospitality. Children are welcomed with paper placemats and crayons, and the staff is cheery.

"Our No. 1 thing is customer service," McFarland says. "We know there are a lot of tourists here, but we don't want that attitude where we feed you one time and that's it. We want you to return because everyone's friendly."

### **Sabella & La Torre**

2809 Taylor St. (near Jefferson Street)

(415) 673-2824. [www.sabellalatorre.com](http://www.sabellalatorre.com).

Open daily from 10 a.m. Validated parking.

Entrees: \$13.25-\$46.25

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[Janny Hu](#)

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

**Janny Hu is The San Francisco Chronicle's assistant sports editor, directing coverage of the Warriors/NBA and Major League Baseball. She was The Chronicle's Warriors beat reporter from 2004-09 and also spent four years with the Food & Wine team. She has covered everything from the Olympics, Super Bowl and World Series to the latest Bay Area food trends. Her first book, *The Slanted Door: Modern Vietnamese Food*, a collaboration with James Beard Award-winning chef Charles Phan, was published in 2014.**



# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: September 18, 2024**

*Filing Date:* August 18, 2024  
*Case No.:* 2024-007652LBR  
*Business Name:* Sabella and La Torre  
*Business Address:* 2809 Taylor Street  
*Zoning:* C-2 (COMMUNITY BUSINESS) Zoning District  
 40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Cultural District:* None  
*Block/Lot:* 0005/001  
*Applicant:* Donald McFarland  
 2809 Taylor Street  
*Nominated By:* Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Will McCallum - 628-652-7338  
 Will.Mccallum@sfgov.org

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

## Business Description

Sabella and La Torre is one of the few original Fisherman’s Wharf restaurants still in existence today. Sabella and La Torre is an Italian seafood restaurant that has operated out of 2809 Taylor Street since 1927 when Luciano Sabella opened a fish stand. The fish stand evolved into a sit down restaurant in 1946 at the same location, and has been continuously operated by the Sabella family since opening. The stand originally sold crab and the restaurant continues to specialize in garlic crab. The name changed from “A. Sabella” to “Sabella and La Torre” in 1946 when the stall became a restaurant, to signify the last names of the Sabellas and La Torres who owned and operated the restaurant. Sabella and La Torre is currently run by the fourth generation of Sabella and La Torre families.

As one of the oldest seafood restaurants in Fisherman’s Wharf, Sabella and La Torre carries a proud tradition of fresh seafood served at the wharf. It is often one of the first restaurants that tourists see when visiting San Francisco, located at one of the most popular tourist destinations. Since being partially converted into an outdoor mall and



gathering space for tourists, many of the authentic Italian restaurants in the area have been forced to close or relocate. Sabella and La Torre has endured the changing character of Fisherman's Wharf and remains as an important fixture in San Francisco history. It is one of the few fixtures of Fisherman's Wharf that ties the current wharf to its original purpose as a seafood marketplace. The restaurant features a photograph of Joe Dimaggio in front of their original crab stand in the wharf as a child. It has been featured in several local newspapers including SFGATE, The Fric, and CBS News.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

**1. *When was business founded?***

The business was founded in 1927.

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

Yes. Sabella and La Torre qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Sabella and La Torre has operated continuously in San Francisco for 30 years.
- b. Sabella and La Torre has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Sabella and La Torre is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

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

Yes. The business is associated with the Italian cuisine.

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

Yes. The Taylor Street property is located within the National Register Port of San Francisco Embarcadero Historic District. The property is also featured in the Here Today book published in 1968.

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

Yes, the site is listed in the National Register as a contributor to a district.

**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, it has been featured in several local newspapers including SFGATE, The Frisc, and CBS News.

## 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.

## Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

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

Current Locations:

- 2809 Taylor Street (1927 – Present)

### Recommended by Applicant

- Restaurant serving seafood.

### Additional Recommended by Staff

- Interior woodwork by Carlo Cefalu
- open façade at exterior, providing service to pedestrians on the pier with outdoor seating

## Basis for Recommendation

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

## ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative

- Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
- Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
- Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation





# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###

**HEARING DATE: September 18, 2024**

*Case No.:* 2024-007652LBR  
*Business Name:* Sabella and La Torre  
*Business Address:* 2809 Taylor Street  
*Zoning:* C-2 (COMMUNITY BUSINESS) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0005/001  
*Applicant:* Donald McFarland  
2809 Taylor Street  
*Nominated By:* Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Will McCallum - 628-652-7338  
[Will.Mccallum@sfgov.org](mailto:Will.Mccallum@sfgov.org)

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR SABELLA AND LA TORRE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2809 TAYLOR ST, BLOCK/LOT 0005/001.

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 September 18, 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 SABELLA AND LA TORRE 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 SABELLA AND LA TORRE.

*Location(s):*

Current Location:

- 2809 Taylor Street (1927 – Present)

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:*

- Restaurant serving seafood.
- open façade at exterior, providing service to pedestrians on the pier with outdoor seating

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business on September 18, 2024.

Jonas P. Ionin  
*Commission Secretary*

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: September 18, 2024