

Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE FEBRUARY 13, 2017

FLAX ART & DESIGN

Application No.: LBR-2016-17-049
Business Name: FLAX art & design
Business Address: Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D
District: District 2
Applicant: Howard Flax, President
Nomination Date: December 15, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Jane Kim
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

FLAX art & design is a third generation family-owned art supply store that has served San Francisco since 1938. After having lost virtually all their savings during the Great Depression, Herman and Sylvia Flax left New Jersey for San Francisco to start a new life and opened Flax's Artists Materials on Kearny Street in downtown San Francisco. Now run by Herman and Sylvia's grandchildren, FLAX art & design (as it has been called since 1991) continues to offer one of the city's largest selections of arts and crafts supplies and materials. FLAX art & design accomplishes its mission to "inspire creativity" by emphasizing the customer experience with helpful and knowledgeable customer service and a visually interesting presentation of merchandise, leading some to refer to the business as "a candy store for the creative." The business relocated several times – first to another location on Kearny Street, then to Sutter Street, and eventually to its flagship location at 1699 Market Street where it operated for 38 years. After owners of the Market Street property announced plans to construct 162 condos on the site, FLAX art & design spent a year searching for a new home for its flagship store within the city's boundaries, but ultimately moved to Oakland. FLAX art & design still maintains a presence within the city, however, through its new Fort Mason Center store. The 5,000 square foot space in Fort Mason Center, located along the city's northern waterfront, continues the business' 79-year history of serving San Francisco students, artists, DIYers, hobbyists, and other creatives. Flax Art & Design also offers a plethora of programs that has helped the business integrate into the larger community. Such programs include: free art classes, hands-on demonstrations, its annual KidsFest, a Live Artist program, publications of artist interviews, and donations to local schools and nonprofits.

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





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

437 Kearny Street from 1938 to 1951 (13 years)
255 Kearny Street from 1951 to 1966 (15 years)
250 Sutter Street from 1966 to 1981 (15 years)
1699 Market Street from 1978 to 2016 (38 years)
Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D from 2015 to Present (2017) (2 years)

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

Yes, the applicant has contributed to the arts and creative communities' history and identity.

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:

- FLAX art & design is associated with the arts and crafts. It sells art and crafts materials and supplies, offers free educational arts programs and events, and promotes local artists through outreach events.
- Flax Art & Design has contributed to the San Francisco arts community's history and identity by serving as the longest-running local seller of art materials and supplies; providing a memorable experience for artists, students, creatives, and others in need of arts and crafts materials; offering free arts and crafts workshops, classes, festivals, and other events; and by supporting and promoting local artists.
- The business is located in a historic property known as the Old Brook House/Quarters #2, built in 1863 as part of Fort Mason. The building was previously evaluated by the Planning Department for potential historical significance and is considered to be a "Category A Property." It is both individually eligible for listing on the National Register and as a contributor to two National Register and California Register Historic Districts: Black Point Historic District and the Fort Mason Historic Districts.
- Flax Art & Design has also been the recipient of a number of awards, including being named "Best Places to Shop in SF" in the category of Hobby-Art Supplies in 2016 by San Francisco Magazine; "Best Arts and Crafts" by Bay Area A-List; "Top 100 Shops in the Bay Area" in 2014 published in SF Chronicle's Style section; "Totally Awesome Artistic Art Supplies" by Red Tricycle in 2012.
- San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee issued a proclamation declaring August 24, 2013 as Flax Art & Design Day in San Francisco.
- The business has been cited in the following publications:
 - San Francisco Magazine, 6/2016, "The Best Place to Shop in SF in 2016."
 - Bedford Gallery at the Lescher Center for the Arts BG Blog, 6/2016, "Inspiring Creativity: An Interview with Howard Flax."
 - San Francisco Magazine, 1/2016, "Flax Art & Design, Like the Artists it Serves, is Decamping to Oakland," by Joe Eskenazi.
 - SF Gate, 1/2016, "Longtime Market Street art supply store Flax moving to Oakland," by J.K. Dineen.
 - San Francisco Chronicle, 8/2016, "Flax art merchant sees forced move as brush with opportunity," by J.K. Dineen.
 - NBC Bay Area news segment, 7/2014, "Longtime San Francisco Art Store Faces Tough Search for New Home," by Joe Rosato Jr.





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

Yes, Flax Art & Design is committed to maintaining the traditions and physical features that define its tradition of selling arts and crafts materials and supplies, and its tradition of supporting and promoting San Francisco's arts and creative communities.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that FLAX art & 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:

- Tradition of providing a wide array of arts and crafts materials and supplies to the community of students, artists, hobbyists, and others.
- Carefully thought-out presentation of merchandise.
- Quality customer service provided by helpful and knowledgeable staff.
- Community outreach events such as: free art classes and hands-on demonstrations, KidsFest, Live Artist program, and artist interviews.
- Company logo designed by Louis Danziger, featuring a signature "F" (the Flax "F" is in the permanent design collection of the Museum of Modern Art).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include FLAX art & design currently located at Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Manager
Legacy Business Program





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Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE FEBRUARY 13, 2017

FLAX ART & DESIGN

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. _____

Application No.: LBR-2016-17-049
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Business Address: Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D
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Nomination Date: December 15, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Jane Kim
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
 legacybusiness@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR FLAX ART & DESIGN, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT FORT MASON CENTER, 2 MARINA BOULEVARD, BUILDING D.

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 in 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 February 13, 2017, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore





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BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes FLAX art & 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 FLAX art & design:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Tradition of providing a wide array of arts and crafts materials and supplies to the community of students, artists, hobbyists, and others.
• Carefully thought-out presentation of merchandise.
• Quality customer service provided by helpful and knowledgeable staff.
• Community outreach events such as: free art classes and hands-on demonstrations, KidsFest, Live Artist program, and artist interviews.
• Company logo designed by Louis Danziger, featuring a signature "F" (the Flax "F" is in the permanent design collection of the Museum of Modern Art).

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on February 13, 2017.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

- Ayes -
Nays -
Abstained -
Absent -





**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? X Yes No

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Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D from 2015 to Present (2017) (2 years)

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

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: December 19, 2016

Richard Kurylo
Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors
District 6



City and County of San Francisco

JANE KIM

金貞妍

December 15, 2016

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

Re: Flax Art & Design

Dear Regina:

I would like to formally nominate Flax Art & Design as a candidate for the registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco.

Original owners, Herman and Sylvia Flax moved their family west from New Jersey, in 1938, after losing virtually everything in the Great Depression. With \$100, they opened a small art supply store on Kearny Street, in downtown San Francisco. Now a third generation family-owned business, headed by Howard Flax, his sister Leslie Flax Abel and his brother Craig Flax, Flax Art & Supply has a long history of supporting artists and the Bay Area arts community.

In 1955, Herman passed away and his sons, Philip and Jerry, took over the San Francisco business. The SF-based Flax brothers grew close to their customers, becoming well-known for their generous support of struggling artists and the Bay Area arts scene. Their retail store soon drew nationwide attention for its incredible breadth of products, a helpful and knowledgeable staff of artists, designers, and musicians, and its ability to inspire creativity through inventive presentation of merchandise. The store is visited regularly by residents and tourists alike and as the company grew, they settled into their new home at the Goldberg Bowen Building on Sutter Street.

As the advent of desktop publishing forever changed the dynamics of the art supply industry in the 1980s, the company ventured into mail order to broaden its market. With the desire to showcase their broadening selection of materials, the store moved to 1699 Market Street for more than 38 years.

In its 78 years, Flax has partnered with dozens of art organizations, schools, local artists, and the like to offer a platform, as well as support, for a number of worthy causes. Flax helps raise awareness for local non-profits with a rotating art show, highlighting both amateur and professional work. It offers a location for regular, free workshops, as well as promotion of individual artists to showcase their work and engage with the public during its live art program.

Their current store is located in the historic Fort Mason Center for the Arts where they are immersed in the artistic culture and can continue to offer their vast selection of fine art and craft supplies, unique

papers, and gorgeous gifts. Coined as a "candy store for the creative," Flax has become an icon of inspiration and a Bay Area institution.

Their business would be greatly missed by many if they were to go away. I am proud to nominate Flax Art & Supply as a candidate for the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of three stylized, cursive characters that appear to be 'J', 'K', and 'I'.

Jane Kim

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information. Provide the following information:

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

NAME OF BUSINESS:		
FLAX art & design		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
Howard Flax Philip Flax		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:		TELEPHONE:
Fort Mason Center 2 Marina Blvd, Building D San Francisco, CA 94123		(415) 530-3510
		EMAIL:
		hf@flaxart.com
WEBSITE:	FACEBOOK PAGE:	YELP PAGE
http://flaxart.com	https://www.facebook.com/Flaxartdesign	https://www.yelp.com/biz/flax-art-and-design-san-francisco-4

APPLICANT'S NAME	
Howard Flax	<input type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
APPLICANT'S TITLE	
President	
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:	
Fort Mason Center 2 Marina Blvd, Building D San Francisco, CA 94123	
TELEPHONE:	
(415) 819-9928	
EMAIL:	
hf@flaxart.com	
SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):

OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff	
NAME OF NOMINATOR:	DATE OF NOMINATION:
Barbara Lopez (Jane Kim's office)	12/05/2016

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

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

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:	ZIP CODE:	START DATE OF BUSINESS
437 Kearny Street	94108	11/16/1938
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	1938-1951	

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
255 Kearny Street	94108	Start: 1951
		End: 1966

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
250 Sutter Street	94108	Start: 1966
		End: 1981

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
1699 Market Street	94103	Start: 1978
		End: 2016

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Blvd, Building D	94123	Start: 2015
		End: Present

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

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

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

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

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in 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 the Business Assistance Grant.

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.

Howard Flax 12/02/2016

Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:



FLAX ART & DESIGN

Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

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

In the Great Depression, Herman and Sylvia Flax lost virtually everything. In 1938 they moved the family west from New Jersey and with \$100 opened a small art supply store in downtown San Francisco at 437 Kearny Street. Initially the family lived in the store's backroom, but soon they rented an apartment and converted the free space into a custom framing department. Flax's Artists Materials was born and soon rose to success, buoyed by the artists' movement that grew during WWII.

In 1955, Herman passed away at an early age, and upon returning from military service, Herman and Sylvia's youngest son Philip took over the San Francisco business alongside his brother Jerry. The Flax brothers grew close to their customers, becoming well-known for their generous support of struggling artists and the Bay Area arts scene. Their retail store soon drew nationwide attention for its incredible breadth of products, its helpful and knowledgeable staff, and its ability to inspire creativity through inventive presentation of merchandise.

As the company grew, so did their location. In 1966, they settled into a 3-story building in downtown San Francisco at 250 Sutter Street in the Goldberg Bowen Building. A year later Jerry Flax left the company to lead the Electrostatic Printing Corporation, leaving full ownership to Philip. Then in 1981 the Flax store moved to a larger space again, to 1699 Market Street.

As the advent of desktop publishing forever changed the dynamics of the art supply industry in the 1980s, Flax ventured into mail order to broaden its market. During this time, Philip's three children joined the company - Craig, Howard and Leslie - beginning a period that continues with the four family members working together to grow the company. With the desire to recognize their broadening selection of materials, in 1991 the company changed its name from Flax's Artists Materials to FLAX art & design.

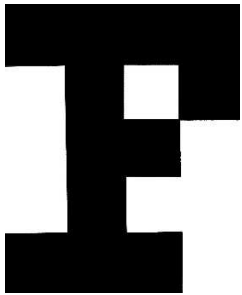
The current [San Francisco store](#) is located in the historical Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. Flax is located in one of the four warehouse buildings completed in 1915. Before opening in November 2015, false walls, old flooring and decades of clutter were removed to expose the original surfaces, windows and doors. Our store space remodel was the first in FMC to retain the building's character and embrace its status as a historical landmark. Look above our glass storefront and you'll see the hinged canopy-style warehouse door in its full open position. It and the other warehouse doors remain fully operational. The store continues to offer a vast selection of fine art and craft supplies, unique papers, and gifts.



On our [Press page](#) is an article about the need to vacate the Market Street store and the new Fort Mason Center store - <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Flax-art-merchant-sees-forced-move-as-brush-with-6476815.php?t=c0c0b3735b00af33be&cmpid=fb-premium>

Timeline

1938 - Flax store opens at 437 Kearny St. (now the driveway of St. Mary's Square garage).



1949 - Harvey Flax (from the LA store) commissions Louis Danziger to create the Flax logo. The Flax 'F' is in the permanent design collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

1951 - SF store moves to 255 Kearny at Bush (after being bought out of the lease at 437 Kearny by the developers who built the St. Mary's Square garage).

1955 - On February 11, Herman Flax passes away. His sons, Jerry and Philip, lead the business.

1956 - Flax Framing opens, a small custom frame shop on the same block as 255 Kearny.

1958 - Flax trivia: Kim Novak visits Flax in the shooting of Hitchcock's Vertigo. The back door of the frame shop provides the lead-in for the scene in the Podesta Baldocchi flower shop.

1959 - Philip Flax opens "Philips," a fine art store at 121 O'Farrell. At this time the other Flax store catered mostly to commercial art needs.

1966 - Jefferson Airplane shoots a photo in front of the Flax sign.

1966 - On October 24th the Flax store and Flax Framing move to 250 Sutter Street. Philips closes, as the Sutter Street store has the space to accommodate both commercial and fine artists.

1978 - Another Flax location opens at 1699 Market, which was initially used for offices, a warehouse and as a discount retail outlet.

1981 - Sutter Street store closes and the Market Street location gets a complete remodel, becoming the primary retail store.



1991 - The warehouse and distribution center (headquarters) move to Brisbane, CA, a major renovation of the Market Street store triples the retail space, and the company changes its name from Flax's Artists Materials to FLAX art & design.

2007 - Flax discontinues mail-order and e-commerce sales channels and brings all operations back to the Market Street store.

2015 - On November 7th Flax opens a new store at the Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture.

2016 - After 38 years on Market Street, the flagship store moved to Downtown Oakland, opening on March 21.

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

None

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

Yes.

1938 - Herman and Sylvia

1945 – Herman, Sylvia, Philip, Jerry, Lita

1967 – Sylvia, Philip, Lita

1990 – Philip, Howard, Craig, Leslie

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

Not applicable.

CRITERION 2

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

After 78 years, Flax gained iconic status in San Francisco, evidenced by this [ABC article](#). That came about not only from longevity, but also from integrating ourselves into the art community by creating a welcoming environment for creative people of all ages and backgrounds.

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

In 2013, to celebrate the store's 75 years in business, the business threw a historic party to share the significance of a third generation business while reminiscing with long time customers and staff. Flax enjoyed visits and proclamations by SF Supervisor Scott Weiner and State Senator Mark Leno, and Mayor Ed Lee officially proclaimed August 24, 2013 as Flax Art & Design Day.

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

We have a Wikipedia listing here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flax_Art_Supply_Stores. There are 40 references listed.

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

No

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

Flax hosts dozens of free [Workshops and Events](#) every year. On many Saturday afternoons we offer free classes or hands-on demos on a variety of different art media. For the past 25 years we've held a popular event called KidsFest, a creative arts festival with hands-on activities and art projects. Kids of all ages are welcome and each year we entertain 200-400 attendees.

Our [Live Artist](#) program encourages visual artists to consider, for a few hours, our store as an extension of their studio. We provide them with a prominently located space in the store to set up and create, with the opportunity to present themselves to our customers. We build a permanent webpage on our blog for the event, which we promote through social media and to our 12,000+ eNewsletter list. Similarly, we publish [Artist Interviews](#) of local artists which we then promote. The intent behind these programs is support our customers, demonstrate our commitment and inspire others.

Flax donates to local schools and non-profits, most often in the form of gift cards for auctions. We donate materials to local groups like SCRAP. Each year we collaborate with like-minded arts organizations with an eye toward mutual success. In 2016 we partnered with Art Millennium, Blue Bear School of Music, Magic Theater, ArtSpan, SF Center for the Book and others to help them promote their mission and/or a specific event.

Our weekly eNewsletter contains a Community section. Our website has a [Resources](#) page. We have a blog writer whose focus is local arts events.

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

We conducted a survey in 2013 that revealed our customer base to consist of 10% students, 10% professional artists, and 80% everyone else. Weekend DIYers and hobbyists, amateur artists and casual fans of the arts make up most of our community.

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

See Criterion 1, f.

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

Just like our customers, we are original. Flax cannot be replaced.

CRITERION 3

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

As a company our mission is to inspire creativity. We do that by offering a broad array of product that is attractively presented and backed by customer service. Many customers refer to Flax as a "candy store for the creative," which is music to our ears and proof that we are fulfilling our ideals.

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

See answer 'a' above

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

While the 3D elements on the façade of our Market St store grew to define that location, they did not define the business. Instead, with each location we've inhabited our intent was to use the space in a manner true to its character. We've been fortunate to have always occupied spaces of architectural interest, and we honor the design.

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

Not applicable.



437 Kearny Street, the first FLAX location, 1938



255 Kearny at Bush, 1950



255 Kearny at Bush, interior of 4,200 sq ft. store, 1955



Jefferson Airplane in front of Flax sign at 255 Kearney, 1967



250 Sutter Street, interior, 1967



1699 Market Street, 2012



FLAX art & design

FLAX art & design

ANTIQUE VINTAGE
FLAREMENT BULBS
\$11-\$45

THE BEST
of the best
FLAX art & design

PUSH



ANTIQUE VINTAGE
FILAMENT BULBS
By Request \$11.95 - \$44.95

2016
BEST
Craftsmanship
Best Places
to Shop in LA
FLAVR
by LA Times

NOW OPEN
STORE HOURS
MONDAY - SATURDAY
10:00 - 6:30
SUNDAY
12:00 - 6:00





Need Assistance?
Just Ask!

FLAX

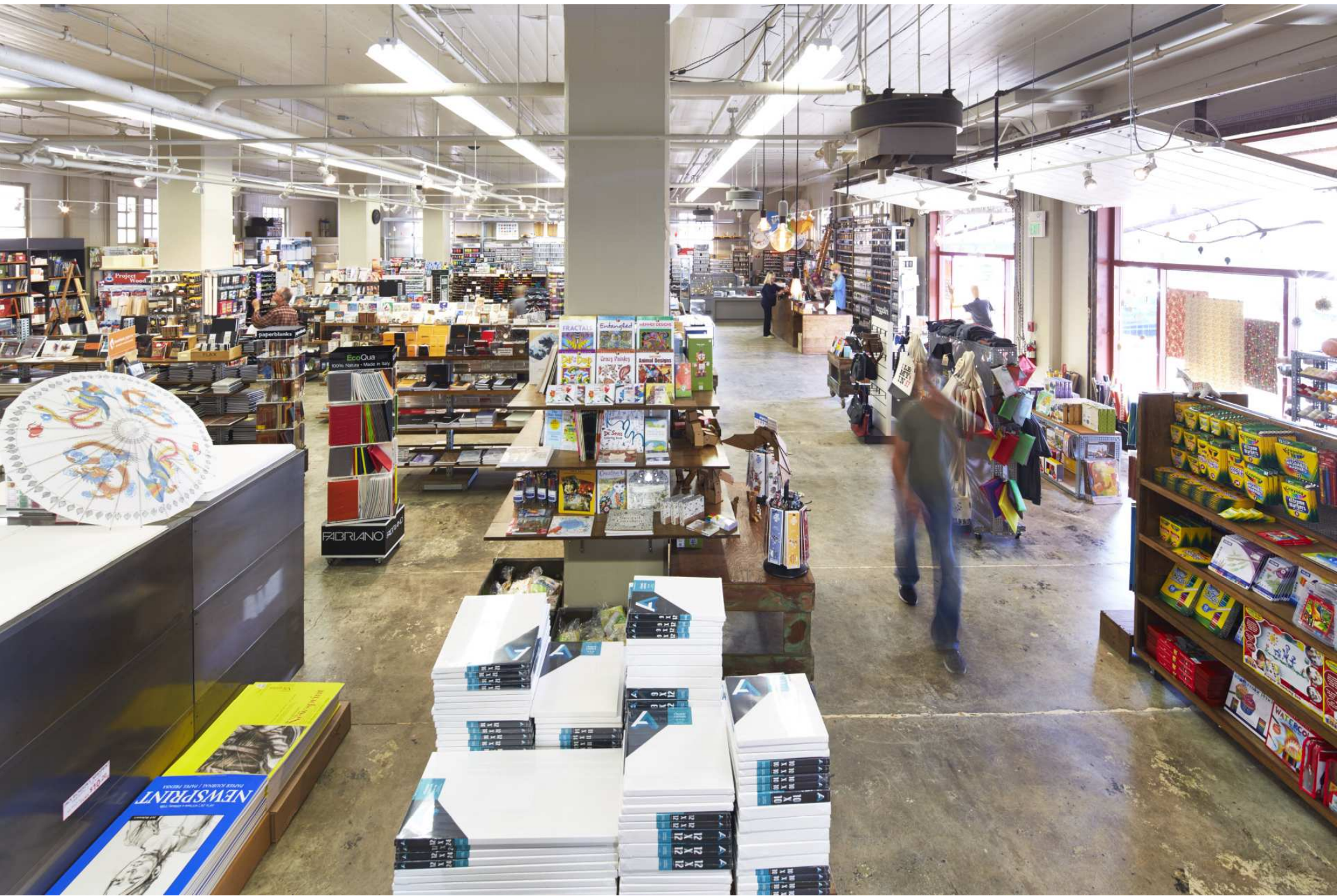
FLAX

MOLESKINE
SMALL SIZE

MTN Waterbase

MTN HIRECORE \$7-\$8







Press

News

[San Francisco Magazine](#), The Best Places to Shop in SF in 2016
(FLAX Fort Mason Center store), JUNE 2016

[Bedford Gallery, at the Leshher Center for the Arts](#), BG Blog, *Inspiring Creativity: An Interview with Howard Flax*, JUNE, 2016

[San Francisco Magazine](#), *Flax Art & Design, Like The Artists It Serves, Is Decamping To Oakland*, By Joe Eskenazi, JANUARY, 2016

[SF Gate](#) *Longtime Market Street art supply store Flax moving to Oakland*, By J.K. Dineen, JANUARY, 2016

[San Francisco Chronicle](#), *Flax art merchant sees forced move as brush with opportunity*, By J.K. Dineen, AUGUST, 2015

[NBC Bay Area](#) news segment, *Longtime San Francisco Art Store Faces Tough Search for New Home*, by Joe Rosato Jr., JULY, 2014

Awards



[San Francisco Magazine](#) - Best Places to Shop 2016

FLAX art & design, Fort Mason Center store named **Best Places to Shop in SF** -
Hobby - Art Supplies



[Bay Area A-List](#) - BEST OF 2015

Flax Art & Design named **Best Arts and Crafts** by Bay Area A-List voters



FLAX is among the **Top 100 Shops in the Bay Area**. The list was compiled by 14 Bay Area tastemakers who chose their go-to stores, and published in the SF Chronicle's Style section.

For the page featuring FLAX, click on this link to a pdf: [Top 100 shops](#).



Totally Awesome Artistic Art Supplies

Red Tricycle's Awesome Awards honor kid friendly brands, products and services as recognized by the Red Tricycle Community.

Red Tricycle is a mom-focused community that helps parents have more fun with their kids. For these awards Moms nominated their picks, then the top nominees and Red Tricycle's editorial team picked the finalists for each category.

Our goal at FLAX is to inspire creativity, and we work hard to present a wide selection of arts and craft supplies for kids to express their imagination through thoughtful play. We are proud to share this award with you.

Video

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The Best Places to Shop in SF in 2016

San Francisco magazine | June 24, 2016

Lifetime-lasting shoes, affordable (but impeccable) suits, unkillable plants, and the rest of the best swag in the city.

HOBBY

Art Supplies: Flax

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Although its long-standing Market Street location closed earlier this year, Flax's Fort Mason outpost is no less packed. Its diminished size is a virtue—it avoids the overwhelming mazelike quality of its Oakland sister store, but there's something for professionals, teachers, kids, and crafty types, from pipe cleaners and marker sets to color-coded rows of paint by Gamblin, Windsor & Newton, Liquitex, and Golden. Every size sketchbook imaginable is displayed alongside paintbrushes, illustration markers, and colored pencils. The store is well stocked with necessary tools—gaffer tape, canvases, X-Acto knives—and playful surprises like vibrant hand-silk-screened paper from Japan and miniature architectural models of trees, flowers, and people.

Inspiring Creativity: An Interview with Howard Flax

Posted by BG Staff // June 23rd, 2016

We're thrilled to partner with [FLAX art & design](#) for our upcoming workshop **Drawing with a Blade** with artist [Crystal Wagner](#). The legendary art supply store has a fascinating history: Herman Flax opened his first FLAX art & design store in SF in 1938, on the heels of the Great Depression. His brothers had already established their own art supply stores in NY and LA. Herman's grandson, **Howard Flax**, is now FLAX's President, part of a third generation to own and operate the family business. Below, a conversation with Howard on art, working with family, and the company's recent move to Oakland.



Photo: Connor Radnovich, The Chronicle

FLAX art & design has been a treasured presence in the SF art scene for nearly 80 years, and your flagship store just moved to Oakland. The change has sparked lots of dialogue about the flight and plight of artists in the Bay Area, but you've had a store in Oakland before and your extended family also operates supply stores in other art hubs like Chicago and Atlanta. What major changes have you seen among artists and art-led industries, both in and outside the Bay Area?

Among artists and art-oriented industries we have not noticed a significant change over the years. The overriding tenor is typically affordable art supplies in a supportive economy. The latter can be challenging. The biggest change we've seen is "Art is In." With the rise of Pinterest, Etsy, DIY and the Maker Movement for example, creativity in any form is really being celebrated. More people than ever realize they can be an artist!

What new opportunities do you see for FLAX since it's moved to Oakland?

Oakland and the East Bay are so excited that we are [excited]. We very much underestimated the need for an art supply store here. The greatest opportunity I see, and it is well underway, is to integrate Flax into the arts community. The strength and sincerity of the arts community, both individuals and organizations, has been overwhelming. Everyone wants to collaborate and help each other be successful. I love that. We are building lasting relationships to hopefully position Flax in the center of this amazing art scene.

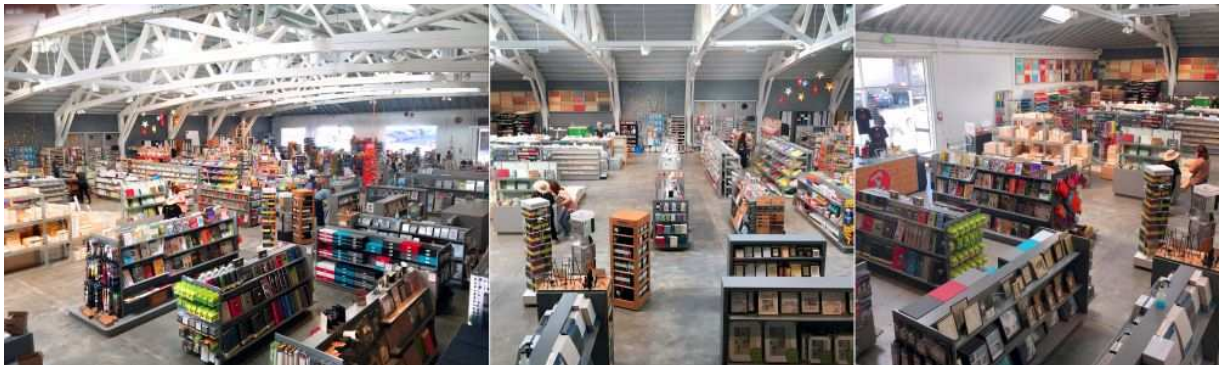


Photo: www.flaxart.com

FLAX has been a family-owned business from the beginning. Was it always assumed you'd take over? Any fond or tough memories growing up and working for an institution like FLAX?

Growing up, my father gave my brother and sister and me a wide berth to decide upon our path. Nevertheless, soon after college we all found ourselves in the family business. This was when we had the dynamic mail-order business and there were many roles to fill. It was a great time to learn and grow. It doesn't often work this way, but yes, it was assumed that I would take over

after my siblings and I settled in and discovered what we wanted in a career. Fond memories – that’s easy, getting to work with my dad all these years. He’s been a great mentor and loving supporter. And I’m lucky to add that he’s still involved. My brother and sister are too! It’s a true family-run business.

Most of your employees are artists and musicians. How has the company adapted to respond to their needs?

Our employees are our greatest asset. The length of tenure runs as long as 40+ years. Really! We haven’t adapted in any way, we’ve just always treated our employees with respect.

Are you an artist yourself? Anyone else in the family?

My parents are artists, and my kids are too. I think that attribute skips a generation.

You’ve done a tremendous mail-order business in the past and were an early adopter for online sales in 1998, making Internet Retailer’s Top 500 list in 2005. Yet a few years later you halted e-commerce efforts to focus on brick and mortar. In an era of online sales, what went into those decisions?

That’s a long story, but fundamentally the mail order business was not profitable anymore, and the infrastructure we’d built to support that and the eCommerce business was too big without all the revenue cylinders firing. So we circled the wagons around the retail stores, which has always been our core strength. Our new eCommerce site is growing and this year we’ll be committing further resources to further its success.

Your stores are huge, with a cornucopia of options for artists and hobbyists of all types, including items for casual customers like home décor and picture frames. What are your biggest challenges in today’s retail market? What areas of the market do you see growing or shrinking?

Having opened one and moved another store in just the past seven months, our biggest challenge is letting our customers know of these changes. We know that once we get them in the store, the experience will bring them back. The market is always evolving, as we must. Demand for photo albums continues to shrink to no one’s surprise in the digital age, while Urban Art has been the fastest growing category for a few years. Spray paint has become a legitimate art medium, particularly with the new water-based formulas designed for indoor use.

Your company motto is “Paint Draw Craft,” an appeal to the individual artist rather than the commercial art supply market, along with new programs like the in-store workshops and Live Artist program. How did this shift in focus come about, and what are your future plans in these areas?

Experience. We have to provide our customers with an inspiring *experience*. Our future plans involve building relationships, holding more events and becoming an integrated component of the East Bay’s arts community. Our goal is to *Inspire Creativity*.

Now for some gossip – any fun stories to share of famous people shopping at the store? Did your dad get Kim Novak’s autograph when filming *Vertigo*?

78 years is a long time to be in business. I know a lot of famous names have come through the doors. My favorites would be:

Ansel Adams – he bought a lot of Strathmore paper from us, and it arrived warped. We made good on it and my father received in return three prints – beautiful photographs I grew up with.

Jefferson Airplane – that photo came to our attention from a friend who received an email from Spotify. How does such a cool iconic image stay out of sight for almost 50 years?



Photo: Jefferson Airplane in front of Flax sign at 255 Kearney, 1967 / www.flaxart.com

This workshop is an exciting opportunity to meet Crystal + learn her techniques for making stunning stencils that can be used in a variety of applications, including printmaking, sculpture, and painting! Many thanks to Howard for the interview.

Drawing with a Blade

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Flax Art & Design, Like the Artists It Serves, Is Decamping to Oakland

Joe Eskenazi | Photo: Joe Eskenazi | January 4, 2016

Planned condo tower dooms 78-year-old San Francisco business's headquarters—but Oakland reels it in with \$99K (or more) to sweeten the deal.



Flax's future Oakland home at 15th and MLK, a stone's throw from City Hall.

On a rainy December morning, the cavernous future home of the Flax Art & Design store in downtown Oakland is bathed in soft light and feels like the grand old art salon of the Parisian Académie. A workman spreads mortar on the former garage's concrete floors with a two-by-four, while two guys in hazmat suits perched atop a scissor-lift blast paint high into the rafters. The arching, cantilevered ceilings are around 30 feet tall, pierced by a dozen skylights. Yes, this will be a fine place to hawk vast quantities of art supplies. And yet...

"Everyone wanted us to stay in San Francisco," says company chief executive officer Howard Flax, 54, shortly before giving *San Francisco* the first media tour of the new locale. "Including us!" interrupts Craig Flax, his 53-year-old brother. True, Howard nods, but in Oakland, he's happy to say, "we got everything we wanted." Craig interjects again: "Except that we're not in San Francisco."

True again. [Flax's San Francisco outpost \(http://flaxart.com/\)](http://flaxart.com/) was established in 1938 by Howard and Craig's grandfather, Herman, who had a feeling that the art-supply business was a viable way to profit during the Great Depression. His bet paid off. At its peak in the mid 2000s, the canvas and easel empire moved 10 million catalogs annually. But what worked during the Great Depression isn't clicking as well during this Great Boom. The store deftly pivoted to noncommercial clientele after losing 90 percent of its 1980s-era business to desktop publishing home computers. That took finesse. But you can't finesse your way out of the landlords wanting to [drop a condo on top of you \(http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-development-boom-swallows-up-historic-family-5792378.php\)](http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-development-boom-swallows-up-historic-family-5792378.php). Thirty-seven years after Howard's father, Philip, sealed a handshake deal with the owners of the former Hermann Safe Company site to lease their 27,000-square-foot facility, the current landowners of the hulking Valencia and Market site have decided that they'd be better off with a residential tower on the spot, likely with a swank restaurant on the ground floor. So third-generation CEO Howard Flax is taking the company across the bay, perhaps as soon as February, retracing the migration of so many of their priced-out paintbrush-wielding customers over the last decades.

The store's moving sale will commence later this month, but the Flaxes aren't given to moping about their displacement. When life serves them lemons, they are inclined to see them as *Still Life with Ingredients for Lemonade*. Perhaps a move to Oakland will all be for the best, they say. After all, a sprawling art-supply emporium needs a lot of space, and many of the sites in San Francisco that Howard Flax would have desired were never a possibility because they're zoned for businesses engaged in production, distribution, and repair (PDR) services—selling art supplies doesn't cut it. Meanwhile, properly zoned spots in SoMa, Dogpatch, and the Bayview fell through.

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(san-francisco/video/fallfest-2015)

And so, after nearly two years of fruitless searching for a San Francisco home, Flax closed on the Oakland site in a matter of weeks, sealing the deal in September. Shaking his head, Howard marvels, "It was so easy!"—something that nobody ever says about land deals in San Francisco. But Oakland made the decision a no-brainer for the Flaxes. Keira Williams, a retail specialist in [Oakland's Department of Economic & Workforce Development](http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/oi/CityAdministration/d/EconomicDevelopment/index.htm) (<http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/oi/CityAdministration/d/EconomicDevelopment/index.htm>), supplied Flax management with a list of potential properties—including, she says, the one they eventually settled upon—as well as demographic information (namely, the frequently bandied-about—but never actually verified—claim that Oakland boasts the most artists per capita in the nation).

Many of those artists, one can assume, were at one time based in San Francisco. So are many of the Oakland businesses that now cater to them—some of which relocated in response to parodic San Francisco prices and/or Oakland municipal enticements: Flax, for example, was promised \$99,000 in Oakland public funding for site improvement and may snare up to \$30,000 more for facade improvements. Every time he talked with Oakland city officials, Howard Flax notes, "the amount of money to lure Flax to Oakland grew."

Not every Flax employee will be making the journey east, however. The Oakland store's 14,500 square feet, along with the 5,000-odd square foot San Francisco outpost Flax opened at Fort Mason in November add up to only 70 percent of the floor space that the Flaxes enjoyed at their Market Street site. Howard believes he will have to jettison 10 to 15 workers—along with Manny, [the giant artist mannequin](http://uptownalmanac.com/sites/default/files/styles/full-post-width/public/images-on-cdn/flax-art-and-design-dysonstarr.jpg?tok=eBFm3bYM) (<http://uptownalmanac.com/sites/default/files/styles/full-post-width/public/images-on-cdn/flax-art-and-design-dysonstarr.jpg?tok=eBFm3bYM>), and his kayak-size pen and paintbrush, which dominate the facade of the San Francisco store. They're just too damn big.

"Maybe," posits Craig Flax, "[the guy who has the Doggie Diner heads](https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/211888480/doggie-diner-makeover)" (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/211888480/doggie-diner-makeover>) would want them."

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Have feedback? Email us at letterssf@sanfransmag.com (<mailto:letterssf@sanfransmag.com>)

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SFGATE

Longtime Market Street art supply store Flax moving to Oakland

By **J.K. Dineen**

Updated 7:43 pm, Tuesday, January 5, 2016

Before deciding to move to downtown Oakland, the longtime San Francisco art supply store Flax scoured the city for a new location.

It toured warehouses and former auto repair shops in the Mission District and on the central waterfront. It looked at the vacant Fresh & Easy grocery store in the Bayview and a former O'Reilly Auto Parts on Mission at Cesar Chavez.

But nothing quite worked. Some places were too small; others offered little or no parking. Still others were isolated and lacked access to public transit. Several of the best options were zoned "PDR" — production, distribution and repair — and would have required a six-month process to gain planning approvals.

With its store at Market and Valencia streets closing this month, Flax didn't have the luxury of time.

"We exhausted every possibility we could in San Francisco, but it didn't work out," said Howard Flax, the store's third-generation owner.

So the store is shifting its main operation to Oakland, where it will take 14,500 square feet at 1501 Martin Luther King Way, a former automotive repair shop and indoor soccer facility on the outskirts of downtown. The store will open in February.

Flax, with its signature retro, tilted-letter sign, has anchored the corner of Market and Valencia for 37 years. But it's being forced from that location because the building will

be razed to make way for 162 condominiums, part of a housing boom that is transforming Market Street from Powell Street all the way to the Castro. The move is sure to bolster the argument that Oakland's arts scene is benefiting from San Francisco's astronomical rents and a development boom that is swallowing up land and warehouses across the city.

Supplements loss

"I'm heartbroken that they are leaving the city," said Supervisor Scott Wiener, whose district borders Flax's current location. "Flax is one of the most unique and interesting businesses around. I'm not an artist, but I just loved walking through there and feeling the energy."

The store isn't leaving the city completely, however. In November, Flax opened a 5,000-square-foot store at the Fort Mason Center. Flax said that store — which caters mostly to the art students, actors, musicians and workers who staff the many cultural nonprofits at that waterfront arts campus — has been busy.

But for the main store, Flax said he was drawn to the 1922 Oakland building's architectural features — soaring ceilings and an exposed truss system — and its location in an up-and-coming neighborhood.

"There is drama in the interior space that spoke to us and played into the decision," he said. "The Martin Luther King building had more of a wow factor than our current building on Market Street."

The Oakland building is a block or two from the cafes and restaurants popping up in the neighborhood, but there are plans to develop housing across the street.

"In some respects, it's not unlike when we moved to Market Street 37 years ago," he said. "It's a little pioneering."

The city of Oakland also offered Flax a \$99,000 grant for interior improvements, and the property owner received \$30,000 for facade improvements, according to Brian Kendall, who works on downtown development for the city of Oakland. Flax is also eligible for grant money to help pay for signage.

Downtown ‘anchor’

“What is great about this is that it’s a couple of blocks off the main drag. It will be a great anchor for that area, which doesn’t have a lot of retail,” Kendall said.

Of the San Francisco sites, only the Fresh & Easy store in the Bayview would have been eligible for public grant money because of its location. “They were very interested in having us as tenants, but we felt it was a bit too far out of our market,” Flax said.

Todd Rufo, who heads San Francisco’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development, said he was happy that Flax was able to plant a flag at Fort Mason and that his office spent more than a year working to find Flax a new headquarters in the city.

“Unfortunately, we just weren’t able to find the site that fit their unique needs for a space that mirrored the facility on Market Street,” he said.

Much-needed retail

For Oakland, which does not have nearly as strong a retail base as San Francisco, the arrival of Flax could be a watershed event. While 300 restaurants, bars and cafes have opened in greater downtown Oakland since 2004, very little of the new business has been retail, Kendall added.

“Flax is a perfect use for downtown,” he said. “And art supplies is a niche that has not been met at all.”

Flax will help attract shoppers back to downtown Oakland, said Keira Williams, a retail specialist for the city.

“For many years, Oakland has not been the retail powerhouse it should be for a city its size,” she said. “Flax is a destination that will add a lot of strength. ... It’s a name with great brand recognition. It will bring people to Oakland, and hopefully they will stay awhile and discover the other things that are here.”



Image 1 of 7

An athletic artist's manikin dribbles a basketball at the Flax art supply store at Valencia and Market streets in San Francisco, Calif. on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016. Flax is being forced out of its longtime San Francisco location to make room for a 162-unit residential development.

Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle



Image 2 of 7

Anne Hayes (left) and her daughter Cassi browse through drawers of art paper at the Flax art supply store at Valencia and Market streets in San Francisco, Calif. on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016.

Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle



Image 3 of 7

Construction workers prepare a former automotive repair shop to become the Flax store's new home in Oakland.

Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle

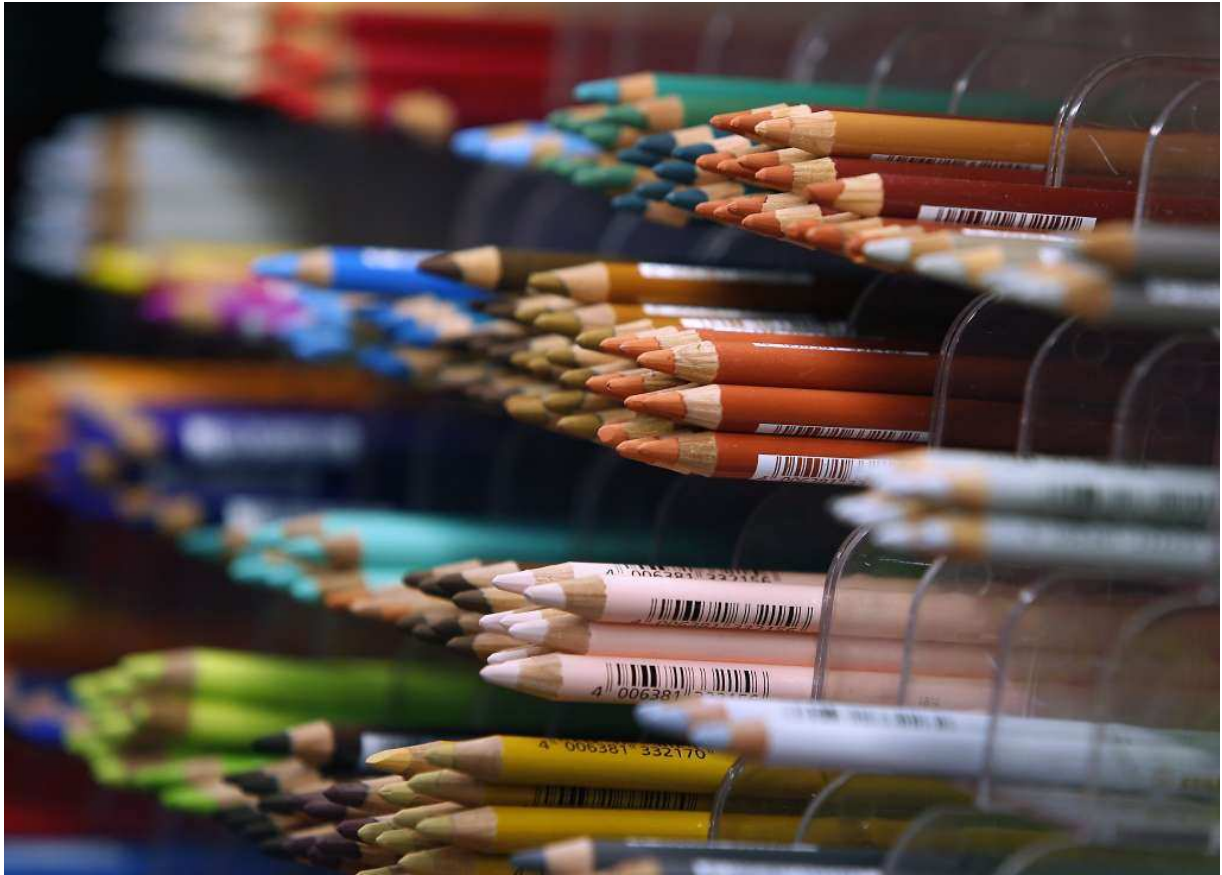


Image 4 of 7

Pencils are organized by color at the Flax art supply store at Valencia and Market streets in San Francisco, Calif. on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016.

Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle



Image 5 of 7

Cassi Hayes (left) shops for textured paper with her mother Anne at the Flax art supply store at Valencia and Market streets in San Francisco, Calif. on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016.

Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle



Image 6 of 7

Construction workers are preparing a former auto repair shop for the new home of the Flax art supply store in Oakland, Calif. on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016.

Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle



Image 7 of 7

The Flax art supply store at Valencia and Market streets is seen in San Francisco, Calif. on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016.

Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle

J.K. Dineen is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: jdineen@sfchronicle.com

Twitter: [@sfjdkdineen](https://twitter.com/sfjdkdineen)

San Francisco Chronicle

Flax art merchant sees forced move as brush with opportunity

By J.K. Dineen

August 31, 2015 Updated: August 31, 2015 6:31pm



Photo: Connor Radnovich, The Chronicle

Howard Flax stands at the site of his new arts and crafts store in Fort Mason in San Francisco, California, on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015.

Nobody in San Francisco was pleased when news broke last year that a condo development would replace the idiosyncratic Flax art supply store that for decades has anchored the corner of Valencia and Market streets.

Flax, with its signature retro tilted-letter sign, was exactly the kind of family-owned business that made San Francisco special, people said. Was nothing sacred? Were there any local institutions that would survive the march of luxurious housing developers through the city's central neighborhoods?

But interestingly, there was one person who didn't join the chorus of complaint. That was Howard Flax, the store's third-generation owner.

"It's a cliché, but indeed with change comes opportunity," Flax said. "I sincerely believe that to be true."

A year later, Flax is busier than ever. He's gearing up for the final holiday season at the Market Street store — it closes in mid-February to make way for the 162 housing units — while working on opening not one but three new stores.

Several stores planned

Flax is gearing up for a mid-October opening of a 5,000-square-foot store in Building D of Fort Mason, a venture that will cater to the art students, actors, musicians and workers who staff the many cultural nonprofits that fill the campus. Meanwhile, Flax is in negotiations for other spaces — one in the city that would be similar in size to the 20,000-square-foot Market Street store and possibly a second somewhere else in the Bay Area.

"I have a number of different opportunities in the pipeline, none of which would have come to light unless we had been forced to move," said Flax,

whose college-student daughter, Jackie, recently became the fourth generation of family employed at the store.

On a recent afternoon, Flax was out at Fort Mason touring his new space and talking to the arts groups that he expects will be his customers. Flax will occupy space that was previously part of the Mexican Museum and at one point housed the Whole Earth Catalog bookstore. The space has five roll-up doors left over from its days as an Army barrack, two of which will be replaced with glass storefronts. On nice days, the doors will be opened and the arts merchandise will spill out onto the walkway in front of the building.



Photo: Connor Radnovich, The Chronicle

Howard Flax assembles an easel outside the space where his new arts and crafts store will be located in Fort Mason in San Francisco, California, on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015.

“Urban art, spray paint will be along this wall,” he said, walking through the space. “That’s a growing category. And then color will line that wall. Canvas

and easels and board and paper over there. In the middle will be pads, drawing, sculpting, modeling, and here gifts, picture frames, stationery, crafting, rubber stamps and stickers.”

Fort Mason, 13 acres between Aquatic Park and the Marina, is more of a destination than a place people happen to walk or bike or drive by. It is home to the City College of San Francisco arts campus, as well as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Artists Gallery, the Long Now Foundation museum, Readers Bookstore, Cowell Theater, BATS Improv, Blue Bear School of Music, the Magic Theatre and other groups. The San Francisco Art Institute is to open a facility there in 2017.

“Super-stoked,” said Blue Bear administrator Richelle Cullen when asked about Flax moving in. “Most of us are artists and musicians, and we like to buy art supplies. We are going to spend all our money downstairs.”

Inspirational location

At the Magic Theater, Flax ran into Director Ellen Richard, who said, “It will be nice to have a supplier downstairs when we need things for props or costumes, or paints for scenery.”

“In terms of props and scenery, let me know what you need,” Flax told her. “If it’s not something we carry now, we can get it.”

One nice thing about Fort Mason is that it’s a lot prettier than gritty central Market Street. There are boats and seabirds, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the ever-changing bay. So Flax plans to rent out easels and painting supplies to visitors or plein-air enthusiasts who want to capture the scenery without lugging around a bunch of equipment.

“Someone strolls down to the end of Pier 2 with an easel, and they can while away three hours, no problem,” said Flax.

In cases where people or stores have to move, the developer is usually cast as the villain. But Flax emphasizes that the people at Presidio Development Partners, which will build the condos on the current Flax site on Market Street, have been his biggest advocates, working their real estate connections to help him find all three new locations.

“Making sure Howard has a new home has been at the top of our list of most important goals on that site,” said Mark Conroe, who heads up the development group. “As San Francisco residents, we like Flax as much as the next guys. They are an important S.F. institution.”

J.K. Dineen is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: jdineen@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @sfjkdineen



Longtime San Francisco Art Store Faces Tough Search for New Home

By Joe Rosato Jr.

You hear it all the time these days: artists getting displaced as landlords jack-up the rent or sell out to developers, taking advantage of San Francisco's soaring economy.

Howard Flax hears the stories all the time, from his customers.

"San Francisco is changing," he said, from the bustling floor of Flax Art and Design Store, the art supply store his grandfather Herman Flax founded in 1938.

His grandfather had a soft spot for the struggling artists.

"There was always a fair amount of bartering and credit," Flax said, before dashing off to help a wayward customer.

But now, Flax finds his family-run art store in the same tight spot as some of his customers. When the store's lease is up at the end of 2015, it'll have to make way for another gleaming tower of condos.

Flax, who along with his brother and sister are the third generation to run the business, is now getting a taste of the grim reality other home shoppers in the city are discovering. After a recent trip to scout locations in the city, Flax was a bit shellshocked.

"We have a tremendous space here," Flax said eyeing the cavernous building which boasts a light-filled room devoted to fine paper. "Finding 20,000 of retail space in San Francisco is going to be difficult."

Inside the paper room, which holds among others, handmade sheets of paper from India, clerk Calvin Clark sympathized with the dilemma facing his employer.

"I teach art and all my students moved to the East Bay or away," Clark said. "Which means now I don't have any students."

Author and poet Neeli Cherkovski hovered over a counter, eyeing the fine quill pens he uses to etch his poetry in a notebook tucked under his arm.

“This is all part of the gentrification of the city,” Cherkovski said. “Everything is getting shuffled and a lot of people are getting shuffled out.”

The store's location at the corner of Market and Valencia is the third for the company, which moved to Sutter Street after opening on Kearney.

Flax held no sour grapes for his landlord, who he says gave plenty of notice of the store's pending ouster. He noted the store will remain where it is for another 16 months, supplying paper, paints and photo books to the public.

He also displayed a quiet confidence, rare among the newly displaced these days.

“We're going to be here another 75 years,” Flax said. “If I have anything to do with it.”

Published at 3:29 PM PDT on Jul 23, 2014 | Updated at 7:23 PM PDT on Jul 23, 2014

Source: [Longtime San Francisco Art Store Faces Tough Search for New Home | NBC Bay Area](http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/Longtime-San-Francisco-Art-Store-Looking-for-New-Home-268352842.html#ixzz4TKPEM0vR)
<http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/Longtime-San-Francisco-Art-Store-Looking-for-New-Home-268352842.html#ixzz4TKPEM0vR>

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Proclamation

City and County of San Francisco

WHEREAS, the City and County of San Francisco traditionally recognizes the achievements of notable, local businesses, and the dedicated work of Flax Art & Design represents our City at its best; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1938 as a family-owned business by Herman Flax, Flax Art & Design has a proven history of supporting artists and the Bay Area arts community by providing an incredible breadth of products, priding itself on its helpful and knowledgeable staff, and inspiring creativity through its innovative presentation of merchandise; and

WHEREAS, Flax Art & Design is now under the family's third generation of leadership, brother and sister Howard Flax and Leslie Flax Abel, who are continuing the tradition of excellence and exceptional service; and

WHEREAS, centrally located on Market Street, Flax Art & Design holds 20,000 square feet of art supplies and continues to supply residents and tourists from around the world to established professionals and serious art students to weekend enthusiasts and dedicated hobbyists; and

WHEREAS, Flax Art & Design is San Francisco's oldest locally-run supplier of quality materials for creative people, and has become an icon of creative inspiration for the last 75 years; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Edwin M. Lee, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, in recognition and celebration of this San Francisco institution's special 75th anniversary, do hereby proclaim August 24, 2013 as...

FLAX ART & DESIGN DAY

in San Francisco!



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City and County of San Francisco to be affixed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin M. Lee".

Edwin M. Lee
Mayor



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Legacy Business Registry Case Report

HEARING DATE: JANUARY 18, 2017

Filing Date: December 19, 2016
Case No.: 2017-000093LBR
Business Name: Flax Art & Design
Business Address: Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D
Zoning: P (Public)
40-X and OS Height and Bulk Districts
Block/Lot: 0409/002
Applicant: Howard Flax, Owner
Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D
San Francisco, CA 94123
Nominated By: Supervisor Jane Kim, District 6
Staff Contact: Desiree Smith - (415) 575-9093
desiree.smith@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Tim Frye - (415) 575-6822
tim.frye@sfgov.org

1650 Mission St.
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Information:
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BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Flax Art & Design is a third generation family-owned art supply store that has served San Francisco since 1938. After having lost virtually all their savings during the Great Depression, Herman and Sylvia Flax left New Jersey for San Francisco to start a new life and opened Flax's Artists Materials on Kearny Street in downtown San Francisco. Now run by Herman and Sylvia's grandchildren, Flax Art & Design (as it has been called since 1991) continues to offer one of the city's largest selections of arts and crafts supplies and materials. Flax Art & Design accomplishes its mission to "inspire creativity" by emphasizing the customer experience with helpful and knowledgeable customer service and a visually interesting presentation of merchandise, leading some to refer to the business as "a candy store for the creative." The business relocated several times – first to another location on Kearny Street, then to Sutter Street, and eventually to its flagship location at 1699 Market Street where it operated for 38 years. After owners of the Market Street property announced plans to construct 162 condos on the site, Flax Art & Design spent a year searching for a new home for its flagship store within the city's boundaries, but ultimately moved to Oakland. Flax Art & Design still maintains a presence within the city, however, through its new Fort Mason Center store. The 5,000 square foot space in Fort Mason Center, located along the city's northern waterfront, continues the business' 79-year history of serving San Francisco students, artists, DIYers, hobbyists, and other creatives. Flax Art & Design also offers a plethora of programs that has helped the business integrate into the larger community. Such programs include: free art classes, hands-on demonstrations, its annual KidsFest, a Live Artist program, publications of artist interviews, and donations to local schools and nonprofits.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

1938

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

Yes, Flax Art & Design qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. Flax Art & Design has operated for 79 years.
- ii. Flax Art & Design has contributed to the San Francisco arts community's history and identity by serving as the longest-running local seller of art materials and supplies; providing a memorable experience for artists, students, creatives, and others in need of arts and crafts materials; offering free arts and crafts workshops, classes, festivals, and other events; and by supporting and promoting local artists.
- iii. Flax Art & Design is committed to maintaining the traditions and physical features that define its tradition of selling arts and crafts materials and supplies, and its tradition of supporting and promoting San Francisco's creative communities.

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

Yes. The business is associated with the arts and crafts. It sells art and crafts materials and supplies, offers free educational arts programs and events, and promotes local artists through outreach events.

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

Yes. The business is located in a historic property known as the Old Brook House/Quarters #2, built in 1863 as part of Fort Mason. The building was previously evaluated by the Planning Department for potential historical significance and is considered to be a "Category A Property." It is both individually eligible for listing on the National Register and as a contributor to two National Register and California Register Historic Districts: Black Point Historic District and the Fort Mason Historic Districts.

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

Yes. The business is located within two National Register and California Register Historic Districts: the Black Point Historic District and the Fort Mason Historic District.

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

No.

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

Yes, the business has been cited in numerous publications, including but not limited to: San Francisco Magazine, 6/2016, "The Best Place to Shop in SF in 2016"; Bedford Gallery at the

Lescher Center for the Arts BG Blog, 6/2016, "Inspiring Creativity: An Interview with Howard Flax"; San Francisco Magazine, 1/2016, "Flax Art & Design, Like the Artists it Serves, is Decamping to Oakland," by Joe Eskenazi; SF Gat, 1/2016, "Longtime Market Street art supply store Flax moving to Oakland," by J.K. Dineen; San Francisco Chronicle, 8/2016, "Flax art merchant sees forced move as brush with opportunity," by J.K. Dineen; NBC Bay Area news segment, 7/2014, "Longtime San Francisco Art Store Faces Tough Search for New Home," by Joe Rosato Jr.

Flax Art & Design has also been the recipient of a number of awards, including being named "Best Places to Shop in SF" in the category of Hobby-Art Supplies in 2016 by San Francisco Magazine; "Best Arts and Crafts" by Bay Area A-List; "Top 100 Shops in the Bay Area" in 2014 published in SF Chronicle's Style section; "Totally Awesome Artistic Art Supplies" by Red Tricycle in 2012.

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee issued a proclamation declaring August 24, 2013 as Flax Art & Design Day in San Francisco.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

- Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D

Recommended by Applicant

- Tradition of providing a wide array of arts and crafts materials and supplies to the community of students, artists, hobbyists, and others
- Carefully thought-out presentation of merchandise
- Quality customer service provided by helpful and knowledgeable staff
- Community outreach events such as: free art classes and hands-on demonstrations, KidsFest, Live Artist program, and artist interviews

Additional Recommended by Staff

- Company logo designed by Louis Danziger, featuring a signature "F" (the Flax "F" is in the permanent design collection of the Museum of Modern Art).



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 842 HEARING DATE JANUARY 18, 2017

1650 Mission St.
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Reception:
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Reviewed By: Tim Frye - (415) 575-6822
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ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR FLAX ART & DESIGN, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2 MARINA BOULEVARD BUILDING D (BLOCK/LOT 0643/001).

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 history and identity of San Francisco's artistic and creative communities; and

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

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on January 18, 2017, 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 Flax Art & 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 Flax Art & Design.

Location (if applicable)

- 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D

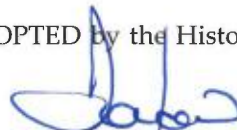
Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- Tradition of providing a wide array of arts and crafts materials and supplies to the community of students, artists, hobbyists, and others
- Carefully thought-out presentation of merchandise
- Quality customer service provided by helpful and knowledgeable staff
- Community outreach events such as: free art classes and hands-on demonstrations, KidsFest, Live Artist program, and artist interviews
- Company logo designed by Louis Danziger, featuring a signature "F"

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 2017-000093LBR to the Office of Small Business.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Historic Preservation Commission on January 18, 2017.



Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES: Hyland, Johnck, Pearlman, Matsuda, Wolfram, Hasz

NOES: None

ABSENT: Johns

ADOPTED: January 18, 2017