

# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE DECEMBER 20, 2019

## CAFFÉ SAPORE

*Application No.:* LBR-2016-17-071  
*Business Name:* Caffé Sapore  
*Business Address:* 790 Lombard Street  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Elias Bikahi, CEO  
*Nomination Date:* February 6, 2017  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Caffé Sapore's opened its doors for business on March 23, 1997 and immediately become a neighborhood gathering space. Owner and founder Elias Bikahi is a chef who has successfully operated many restaurants throughout San Francisco. Immigrating to the United States from Lebanon in 1984 at age 18, Bikahi did not expect to find himself working in the restaurant business, but after completing a B.S. in Applied Sciences and Business at the University of San Francisco in 1989, he decided to follow an entrepreneur's path.

The business is located on the north side of Lombard Street between Jansen and Taylor streets in the North Beach neighborhood. Bikahi decided to open the coffee shop and eatery to fill the needs of the North Beach community as well as to allow him to be home in the evenings with his family. It is a European style café with Mediterranean influences. Caffé Sapore has created a number of low- to moderate-income jobs that have been used to maintain employment for entry-level workers. This includes one employee that has been working for the café for over 18 years.

In late 2019, a letter arrived in the mail from the property owner invoking a clause that allowed 90-day notice for lease termination. This came in spite of the fact that Caffé Sapore has stayed current on rental payments, taxes and other obligations. Staff and supporters have attempted to reach out to the property owners in hopes of negotiating terms that would allow the café to stay open. They have not received a response to numerous phone calls, texts, emails, letters and requests for in-person meetings. The date the business must vacate the premises is December 31, 2019. The North Beach Special Use District, in which Caffé Sapore is located, has a unique zoning regulation specific to Legacy Businesses: "Conditional Use authorization is required in the North Beach SUD for a non-residential use proposing to occupy a space where the immediately prior use was a Commercial Use that was also a Legacy Business."

Several news articles have been published and news segments have been aired highlighting the importance that Caffé Sapore has within the community. This includes KPIX, CBS, NBC Bay Area and the San Francisco Chronicle. The stories featured the hundreds of community members who have rallied in support of keeping Caffé Sapore open for business in North Beach.





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

No, the applicant has not operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years.

790 Lombard Street from 1997 to Present (22 years).

PER CRITERION 1: Has the business operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, face a significant risk of displacement?

Yes, Caffé Sapore has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and, if not included on the Registry, would face a significant risk of displacement.

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

Yes, Caffé Sapore has contributed to the history and identity of North Beach, Russian Hill 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 European style café culture and Mediterranean cuisine.
The property has a Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of "A" (Known Historic Resource) due to its finding of individual eligibility in historic resource surveys.
Caffé Sapore was one of the first café's in San Francisco to feature fair trade, sustainable coffee beans and was featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal in 1999 for this role.





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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, Caffé Sapore is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Caffé Sapore 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:

- Mediterranean influenced cuisine.
- Excellent coffee, tea, beer, and wine.
- Catering services.
- Murals by Susan Brennan and Sam Flores.
- Original hardwood floors.

### **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.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Caffé Sapore currently located at 790 Lombard Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Program Manager  
Legacy Business Program



# Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE DECEMBER 20, 2019

CAFFÉ SAPORE

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

*Application No.:* LBR-2016-17-071  
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*Nomination Date:* February 6, 2017  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

## ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR CAFFÉ SAPORE, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 790 LOM.

**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 December 20, 2019, 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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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Caffé Sapore 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 Caffé Sapore:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Mediterranean influenced cuisine.
Excellent coffee, tea, beer, and wine.
Catering services.
Murals by Susan Brennan and Sam Flores.
Original hardwood floors.

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

- Restaurant.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on December 20, 2019.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

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

- Ayes -
Nays -
Abstained -
Absent -





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OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

**Legacy  
Business  
Registry**

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2016-17-071  
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*Nomination Date:* February 6, 2017  
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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

790 Lombard Street from 1997 to Present (22 years).

**PER CRITERION 1:** Has the business operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, face a significant risk of displacement?  
\_\_\_\_\_  Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**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:** The property owner invoked a clause in the lease that allowed 90-day notice for lease termination. This came despite the fact that Caffé Sapore has stayed current on rental payments, taxes and other obligations. The date the business must vacate the premises is December 31, 2019.

**DELIVERY DATE TO HPC:** December 4, 2019

Richard Kurylo  
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

**AARON PESKIN**  
佩斯金 市參事

February 6, 2017

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

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

It is my honor and privilege to nominate Café Sappore for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Café Sappore has catered fresh, delicious Mediterranean food to its local Russian Hill customers and clientele since 1996. Its owner, Elias Bikahi, holds more than 30 years of restaurant and catering experience in San Francisco, exercising a passion for his craft that is nearly unparalleled in the City's current restaurant climate. The Café supports the community in a multitude of ways, including by exhibiting artwork by local artists and regularly hosting special community events.

While it has not quite reached the 30 year mark, Café Sappore is facing an imminent risk of displacement and is therefore ripe for inclusion on the Registry. It is my hope that inclusion on the Registry will provide the incentive necessary for Café Sappore to enter into a new long-term lease with its current landlord. I hope for the continued success and growth of this family-owned, community-serving business.

Sincerely,

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

Aaron Peskin

# Section One:

## Business / Applicant Information.

Please 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.

<b>NAME OF BUSINESS:</b>	
Caffe Sapore (Bikahi Inc)	
<b>BUSINESS OWNER(S)</b> (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business):	
Elias Bikahi	
<b>CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
790 Lombard Street San Francisco, CA 94133	(415) 474-1222
	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
	██████████
<b>MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS:</b>	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE:</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address	
	<b>MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE:</b>
<b>WEBSITE ADDRESS:</b>	
www.caffesapore.com	
<b>FACEBOOK PAGE:</b>	
www.facebook.com/caffesaporesf	
<b>TWITTER NAME:</b>	
@caffesaporesf	
<b>APPLICANT'S NAME:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:</b>
Elias Bikahi	██████████
<b>APPLICANT'S TITLE:</b>	<b>APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
CEO	██████████
<b>SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:</b>	
0486930	
<b>SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable):</b>	
3638695	

# 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
790 Lombard Street	94133	03/23/1997
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	1997 - Current	

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

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

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

OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable)	ZIP CODE	DATES OF OPERATION
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		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. 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.

Elias Bikahi

11/14/19

Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:

## CAFFÉ SAPORE

### 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.**

Caffé Sapore makes this request to be added to the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry due to its 20+ years of history as an iconic North Beach café and its current risk of displacement.

Caffé Sapore's lease at its current North Beach location (790 Lombard Street) commenced on February 1, 1996, and the café opened its doors for business on March 23, 1997. Immediately, the spacious café became a neighborhood gathering space. For 23 years, Caffé Sapore has continuously operated at this location, providing food and beverage to the community, as well as a welcoming space where neighbors gather to build community. In short, Caffé Sapore became the neighborhood's living room.

Owner and founder Elias Bikahi is a chef who has successfully operated many restaurants throughout San Francisco. Immigrating to the United States from Lebanon in 1984 as an 18 year old, Bikahi did not expect to find himself working in the restaurant business. Back in Beirut, he intended to become an architect. After completing a B.S. in Applied Sciences and Business at the University of San Francisco in 1989, he decided to follow an entrepreneur's path. Following his departure from USF, he worked around the clock as the manager for Le Carousel, a café at Pier 39, until he was able to buy a percentage of the business. During his time there, it became the only business on the pier that attracted locals as well as tourists. In 1996, he left to open his own shop in North Beach, Caffé Sapore.

He decided to open the coffee shop and eatery to fill the needs of the North Beach community as well as to allow him to be home in the evenings with his family (wife Emma Dunbar and later three children – Lucy, Zuzu and Georges). It is worth noting that during this time Caffé Sapore has created a number of low- to moderate-income jobs that have been used to maintain employment for entry-level workers. This includes one employee that has been working for the café for over 18 years.

For 23 years, Caffé Sapore has continued to offer the neighborhood good food at a fair price. Then a letter came in the mail from the property owner invoking a clause that allowed 90-day notice for lease termination. This came in spite of the fact that Caffé Sapore has stayed current on rental payments, taxes and other obligations. Moreover, during the business' time at this location, the owner has invested large sums of money into new flooring and other tenant improvements that have vastly improved the value of the property. Staff and supporters have attempted to reach out to the property owners in hopes of negotiating terms that would allow

the café to stay open. They have not received a response to numerous phone calls, texts, emails, letters and requests for in-person meetings. The date the business must vacate the premises is December 31, 2019. Several news articles have been published and news segments have been aired highlighting the importance that Caffé Sapore has within the community. This includes KPIX, CBS, NBC Bay Area and the San Francisco Chronicle. The stories featured the hundreds of community members who have rallied in support of keeping Caffé Sapore open for business in North Beach.

It is worth noting that currently 21% of commercial spaces are vacant in North Beach and 26 of these are on Columbus Street within five blocks of the café's current location. North Beach does not need another vacant storefront. This business has proven capable of operating successfully and should be allowed to continue to do so.

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

Caffé Sapore has not had any lapses in operations. As such, this section is not applicable to the application.

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

Caffé Sapore is a family-owned business. The CEO/founder/owner is Elias Bikahi. Bikahi lives in North Beach with his wife and three children within five blocks of Caffé Sapore's location. Bikahi's wife, Emma Dunbar, is a San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) employee and is currently the Principal at Presidio Middle School. Their three children, Lucy (age 16), Zuzu (age 14) and Georges (age 11), grew up attending Yick Wo, the local SFUSD elementary school. This school is within two blocks of Caffé Sapore's location and allowed the children to come to the café in the morning and work on homework or help ready the café for the day.

During summer vacation from school, Bikahi's oldest child, Lucy, has begun helping out as a part-time employee. The family plans to continue this tradition with each of the three children as they reach employment age. Eventually, Bikahi hopes to train one or more of the children to run the business themselves.

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

The ownership history of Caffé Sapore is as follows:

1996 to 2014:	Elias Bikahi owned as a sole proprietorship
2014 to Current:	Converted to S-corps and Elias Bikahi remains the CEO and sole shareholder

**e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. 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.**

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 23+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application. Although this is less than the required 30+ years, Caffé Sapore is eligible for listing on the Registry because the business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years, it has played an integral role in North Beach and significantly contributed to the history and identity of the neighborhood and it would face a significant risk of displacement if not included in the Registry due to their impending lease termination.

**f. Note any 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.**

According to the website <https://sfplanninggis.org/PIM/> the building that houses Caffé Sapore at 786 Lombard Street is classified by the Planning Department as Category A, Historic Resource Present. The building was constructed in 1916 in the Classic Revival style and was determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register or the California Register.

## **CRITERION 2**

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

Caffé Sapore is a North Beach staple. Its contributions to the history and identity of the neighborhood are visible both in terms of community residents who patronize the business and in the million+ visitors who come to North Beach and visit the “crookedest street” each year, located just two blocks west, many who stop in the café.

Caffé Sapore is a European style café with Mediterranean influences. North Beach is known as Little Italy and Caffé Sapore has a strong Italian influence, but also incorporates other Mediterranean cultures. The murals on the walls feature strong Italian influences that reinforce this identity, including a rendition of Michelangelo’s “The Creation of Adam.”

The café is a welcoming space for community members to gather and commune, and for visitors to take respite after walking the nearby hills. The vast majority of those who come to dine are people who live in nearby apartments and houses. Many come every morning – retirees, freelancers and parents on their way to drop off their children at school. North Beach has always been a welcoming community full of artists, bohemians and families. Visitors come to the neighborhood to experience this feeling of community. Caffé Sapore reinforces this feeling for both neighborhood residents and visitors.

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

Caffé Sapore hosts and caters of number of events within the community. The business has hosted a series of pop-up dinners that have provided up-and-coming chefs with the opportunity to connect with patrons eager to explore new foods. These events feature food, culture and music from different ethnic groups. The goal has been to build community through in-person interactions at a time when San Franciscans and the larger society have become increasingly isolated and over reliant upon technology-based interactions.

Caffé Sapore was part of a team that put on a Lombard Street Easter Street Fair in front of the business location. The street was blocked off, and families enjoyed games, crafts, rides and music. Sapore's sidewalk tables were incorporated into this event, and refreshments were provided.

In conjunction with the San Francisco Public Library and the now-closed bookstore A Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books, Caffé Sapore has hosted author book readings. This was organized by Paul Signorelli and featured works like "Hidden Garden Steps" and readings from works in progress featuring such authors as Tillie Olsen, Anne Lamott, Carl Djerassi and Herb Goldberg.

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

Caffé Sapore was one of the first café's in San Francisco to feature fair trade, sustainable coffee beans and was featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal in 1999 for this role. See notable publications, below. Caffé Sapore continues this tradition.

Notable publications:

"Coffee Farmers Bypass Middlemen Using Global 'Fair Trade' Strategy"

*Wall Street Journal*, November 23, 1999

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB943314008771929890>

"San Francisco Residents To Rally Against Evictions Of Aging Local Actor, Popular Café"

*KPIX CBS SF Bay Area*, November 13, 2019

<https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2019/11/13/san-francisco-residents-rally-against-evictions-of-aging-local-celebrity-popular-cafe/?fbclid=IwAR1Jxr57PFQsjVswTQGb2oXRP7bH4C4rHHgwXbOaWdnG7xiEYugwWUk4tg8>

"North Beach residents protest eviction of longstanding cafe, actor"

*SFGate*, November 14, 2019

<https://www.sfgate.com/living/article/North-Beach-residents-protest-eviction-actor-cafe-14835429.php?fbclid=IwAR2rhyDuHEF5jMIBZl848E9Wg7S0tgJq3j7th2YrWBl6QE-oFiCoc4xrdQl>

“As North Beach’s Caffè Sapore plans closure, supporters rally to save it”

*San Francisco Chronicle*, November 14, 2019

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/As-North-Beach-s-Caffe-Sapore-plans-closure-14835887.php?fbclid=IwAR07zdRp47oINg-Ft65zXTGSwMYwxWGwm0WN1uKNyqax0NiMgpta3eZb9kk>

“Popular SF Cafe Being Evicted After 23 Years in North Beach”

NBC Bay Area, November 14, 2019

<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/california/Popular-SF-Cafe-Being-Evicted-After-23-Years-in-North-Beach-564957502.html>

“Cafe In San Francisco's North Beach Tries To Fight Off Eviction”

*KPIX CBS SF Bay Area*, November 14, 2019

<https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/video/4212937-cafe-in-san-franciscos-north-beach-tries-to-fight-off-eviction/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evEbnuMsHIs&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3LU7kARhmgR3LMwTOyhTwSgXfaWvqgu6YcbPi6bF90U1NiHBo2LumCyQk>

“SaveSapore”

*Change.org*, November 2019

[https://www.change.org/p/sunny-angulo-sfgov-org-savesapore?source\\_location=petitions\\_browse](https://www.change.org/p/sunny-angulo-sfgov-org-savesapore?source_location=petitions_browse)

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

Caffé Sapore is frequented by many well-known individuals.

Several politicians have campaigned at Caffé Sapore including David Chu, Aaron Peskin and Gavin Newsom. Arnold Schwarzenegger came to the café and had a meal here while he was campaigning to be governor of California and was looking to connect with North Beach residents.

Other famous patrons include Steven Tyler, Maria Shriver, Forrest Whittiker, Ron Howard, Bruce Springsteen and soccer great Alexi Lalas. Ed Moose, a well-known North Beach restaurateur who owned Moose’s, was a frequent and avid customer of Caffé Sapore.

A film company used Caffé Sapore to film an episode of television show *Nash Bridges*. Stars Don Johnson and Cheech Marin spent the day in the café acting out a scene that appeared in the show.

Rose Alioto attended the daycare that used to be on the premises around 65 years ago and continued to be a devoted customer of Caffé Sapore.

Damon Soule and Sam Flores painted murals on the walls of Caffé Sapore, and the murals are still there. Sam Flores was an employee at Caffé Sapore before becoming a well-known professional painter.

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

Caffé Sapore is committed to North Beach and demonstrates this through community giving and membership in neighborhood groups.

Caffé Sapore has provided catering for many area nonprofits and educational institutions, including the San Francisco Unified School District, Saints Peter and Paul School, North Beach Citizens, TEL HI (Telegraph Hill) Neighborhood Center, etc. Often these are provided at a pro-bono or greatly reduced price as a way to give back to the community that has supported the café for so many years.

Caffé Sapore supports a number of entry-level employees – on average six at any given time.

Currently, three of the business' employees have three or more children (and one is the parent of five children!) who rely upon the income that Caffé Sapore provides. Over the years, the business has had hundreds of employees including immigrants, parents, college students, semi-retired folks and more. Several have gone on to pursue careers in the restaurant business with skills gained at Caffé Sapore.

Elias Bikahi, the owner, was a long time member and board member of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce, and Caffé Sapore is a member of North Beach Neighbors.

Caffé Sapore features local artists on its walls. This includes art students, retirees and both semi-professional and professional artists. Damon Soule and Sam Flores both have painted murals on the walls of Caffé Sapore. Flores was a former employee and his mural is still featured on the wall.

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

The majority (approximately 70 - 75%) of those who come to Caffé Sapore are residents near the business' North Beach/Russian Hill location. The remaining patrons are visitors to the neighborhood. There are many tourists from other countries who are eager to explore North Beach and experience a San Francisco/European-style cafe.

The customer base is diverse – families on their way to school, retirees who come to read the newspaper and converse with neighbors while they drink their coffee each morning, politicians, freelancers working laptops or meeting clients, homeless individuals seeking refuge from inclement weather, art students on their way to their classes at the Art Institute and more.

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

The commercial space at 790 Lombard Street used to house a glass shop for 65 years. Before that, it housed a daycare center. Rose Alioto, a customer of Caffé Sapore, came into the café when she was in her 80s and shared with the employees the experiences she had as a child in the daycare center at this location.

There are murals on the wall that were painted by noted artists Sam Flores and Susan Brennan.

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

Closing Caffé Sapore would be a loss to the community. Each year, more and more North Beach business close their doors. Most sit vacant, and the few that do reopen often house overpriced establishments that cater to tech dollars and/or tourists. There are few places that neighbors feel comfortable gathering and even fewer that are affordable to all.

If the café were to close, six employees would lose their jobs, including one employee that has been with the business for 18 years. North Beach would also lose some of its Mediterranean flair.

Hundreds of people have signed a petition for the business to remain in place. Almost all supporters are nearby residents. As of December 1, 2019, over 1,500 people have signed the petition to keep Caffé Sapore in North Beach.

**CRITERION 3**

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

Caffé Sapore is nestled in a cozy neighborhood in the North Beach district of San Francisco. Serving fresh focaccia sandwiches, bagel sandwiches, quiche, pizzas and much more all with a Mediterranean influence. The business also offers excellent coffee, tea, beer and wine. Caffé Sapore is a neighborhood staple where many people gather to work, laugh, enjoy art and dine outdoors in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Caffé Sapore has continuously provided catering for weddings, showers, memorials, holidays, family events and gatherings of all kinds. Most of the catering has a Mediterranean flair. The kitchen at the 790 Lombard location is used for cooking the majority of the catering food as well as for storage of all catering needs, prepping and plating. Approximately 25% of the business is catering.

**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)**

Caffé Sapore is committed to maintaining its historical tradition as a Mediterranean café with an affordable, unique, fresh menu with a variety of beverage and food items (bagels, sandwiches, salads, desserts, vegan soups and vegan pies). Staying in North Beach is integral to the business' survival. The neighborhood is Italian, and other neighborhoods would not fit as well culturally with Caffé Sapore's focus.

In order to retain Caffé Sapore's historic character, the establishment must remain in its long-time home.

**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.).**

Elias Bikahi has demonstrated that he is willing to go above and beyond to maintain the historical integrity of the 790 Lombard Street location that Caffé Sapore occupies. This location has original Douglas fir floors that are an important part of the heritage of the building. Bikahi has paid for 100% of the costs of redoing the floors to maintain and preserve their beauty. This includes when he first opened the restaurant 23 years ago and most recently in 2016.

In addition, approximately 10 years ago, the plumbing pipe that runs from the building to the mainline under the street needed to be repaired. Bikahi paid half the total bill to show good faith as a tenant and to maintain the integrity of the building, even though the pipe was the responsibility of the landlord. The pipe in question is used by the entire building, including multiple residential units above the café.

**d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; 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.





780 LOMBARD

*Gianni Sapore*

*Sapore*

790 LOMBARD

*Gianni Sapore*

















# BUSINESS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

RENEW BY DATE  
05-31-2020

EXPIRATION DATE  
06-30-2020

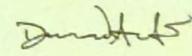
FY 2019-20

BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER 0486930	LOCATION ID 0486930-01-001
TRADE NAME (DBA) <b>CAFFE SAPORE</b>	BUSINESS LOCATION <b>790 LOMBARD ST</b>
BUSINESS BIKAHI INC	THIRD PARTY TAX COLLECTOR <input type="checkbox"/> PARKING TAX <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX

BIKAHI INC  
790 LOMBARD ST  
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94133

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
OFFICE OF THE TREASURER & TAX COLLECTOR

  
José Cisneros  
Treasurer

  
David Augustine  
Tax Collector

POST CLEARLY VISIBLE AT THIS BUSINESS LOCATION

Read reverse side. To update addresses or to close a business, go to [www.sftreasurer.org/accountupdate](http://www.sftreasurer.org/accountupdate).

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB943314008771929890>

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## Coffee Farmers Bypass Middlemen Using Global 'Fair Trade' Strategy

By

*Jim Carlton* Staff Reporter of *The Wall Street Journal*

Nov. 23, 1999

SAN FRANCISCO -- Nicaraguan coffee farmer Santiago Rivera sat at a patio table outside Caffe Saphore here not long ago, listening to a Latin band and shaking hands with customers.

A glamorous Juan Valdez, he's not. Unlike the fictitious coffee farmer who appears on television commercials for Colombian coffee, the 54-year-old Mr. Rivera is lean and wiry with callused hands and a battered straw hat. He has ventured far beyond his mountain home to publicize what is called the "fair trade" coffee movement. Since signing up to grow beans for fair trade, "my roof doesn't leak anymore," he says with a grin.

Haven't heard of fair-trade coffee? You soon may. Started in Europe 10 years ago and just making its way to the U.S., the aim of the fair-trade coffee movement is to lift the standard of living for poor farmers in developing countries by forming a system where the farmers can sell their beans directly to roasters and retailers, bypassing the customary practice of selling to middlemen in their own countries.

This arrangement allows farmers, who farm mainly in the mountainous regions of Latin America and other tropical regions where the high-flavor high-priced beans sold to gourmet stores are grown, to earn as much as \$1.26 a per pound for their beans, compared with the 40 cents per pound they were getting from middlemen. Farmers who use environmentally friendly practices, such as promising not to clearcut trees or use pesticides, are paid a premium.

The fair-trade coffee movement is the latest example of how social activists are using free-market economics to implement social change. The idea to import the movement into America came from TransFair USA, a group that launched the campaign five months ago, targeting the politically liberal San Francisco Bay area. Since then, the organizers say they have signed up eight gourmet roasters and about 120 stores, including big chains like [Safeway](#) Inc. Fair-trade coffee carries a logo identifying it as such.

## **Plans for Expansion**

While the movement has led to incidents of violence in some places in Latin America, mostly involving middlemen who are being bypassed, organizers say they have plans to extend sales of fair-trade coffee to Seattle this month -- to correspond to the meeting of the World Trade Organization -- and plans to target half a dozen U.S. metro areas a year, possibly Boston and Washington, D.C., in 2000. By the year 2005, TransFair hopes to have 5% of the \$18 billion U.S. coffee market, the world's largest, and an even larger percentage of the faster-growing specialty coffee market.

"People who hear of our program are very excited to hear about an alternative to getting their products from sweatshop conditions," says Deborah James, fair-trade director for Global Exchange, a humanitarian group based in San Francisco that is working with TransFair to publicize the fair-trade coffee movement in the U.S.

Oakland's Royal Coffee shop, for instance, reports sales of fair-trade coffee have jumped to about 60 pounds a week, or 5% of total sales, in a month. "People here like what this stands for, plus the coffee is great," says Michael Murphy, the shop manager.

At Equator Estate Coffees & Teas, a roaster in upscale San Rafael, officials say the coffee accounts for about 15% of their total, and would be higher if supplies were greater. The company says it weaves the fair-trade coffee into all of its blends. "Once the demand builds, there will be more supply," says Brooke McDonnell, a partner in the company. "I really think it's like a rolling thunder."

Fair trade made big inroads in Europe, where fair-trade coffee sells in 35,000 stores and has sales of \$250 million a year, according to organizers. In some countries, like Switzerland and Holland, fair-trade coffee accounts for as much as 5% of total coffee sales. Based on those successes, organizers in Europe are expanding their fair-trade efforts to include other commodity items, including tea, sugar, bananas and chocolate.

But fair-trade activists concede that selling Americans on the idea of buying coffee with a social theme will be more difficult than it was in Europe. Americans, they note, tend to be less aware of social problems in the developing world than Europeans. But when unfair business practices are made public, Global Exchange officials say, their surveys show eight out of 10 American consumers would opt for a product that is made under fair practices. "Once you give people the option, they will generally make the right decision," Ms. James says.

## **Support From a Mayor**

In Oakland, Mayor Jerry Brown is even pushing his constituents to give more thought to how they buy coffee. "I would hope that the people sipping their cappuccinos would take a moment to reflect on the sweat and labor of those who provided it."

Indeed, coffee farming is grueling. Workers often extract beans by hand from mountaintop groves, and then carry the harvest miles down in 100-pound packs.

The movement has yet to get the support of major U.S. coffee houses such as [Philip Morris](#) Co s.' Maxwell House unit and [Procter & Gamble](#) Co. 's Folgers unit, which buy their beans in volume. And most coffee sold to big companies comes from lowland coffee farms that consist of vast plantations run by corporations.

"Participating in those kinds of initiatives can be tricky," says Pat Riso, a Maxwell House spokeswoman. Quantities supplied by fair-trade farmers are still limited, while shipping schedules are subject to disruptions such as strikes, organizers say.

Another hindrance is violence against farmers by middlemen. A number of farmers have been injured or murdered, including Mariano Perez, who in 1994 was shot to death in the Mexican state of Chiapas, where he was helping organize a local fair-trade-coffee group.

Farmers generally are organized in cooperatives of as many as 2,500 members, which set prices and arrange for export directly to brokerage firms or other distributors. Middlemen -- known as "coyotes" in Nicaragua -- previously handled this role. So far, 500,000 of the developing world's four million coffee farmers have signed on with TransFair.

TransFair is trying to nudge Seattle's two big coffee giants, [Starbucks Coffee](#) Co. and Seattle Coffee Co., into agreeing to buy some of the fair-trade coffee. Officials at Starbucks say they plan to meet with TransFair to see how to proceed. "We are very supportive of fair-trade coffee," says Starbucks spokesman Alan Gulick.

So, apparently, are some customers. Zachary Smith, a computer architect who turned out to meet Mr. Rivera at Caffè Saphore, says he began buying the fair-trade coffee after learning the proceeds would go to help improve the lives of growers, such as Mr. Rivera. "I really believe that the way to make the world a better place is to give people that are growing things enough money to live on."

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<https://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/As-North-Beach-s-Caffe-Sapore-plans-closure-14835887.php>

# San Francisco Chronicle

Biz & Tech // Business

## As North Beach's Caffe Sapore plans closure, supporters rally to save it

Shwanika Narayan and Anna Bauman

Nov. 14, 2019

Loyal customers of Caffe Sapore in North Beach held a rally Thursday for their beloved corner cafe, which says it is facing eviction after 23 years in the neighborhood.

About 75 to 100 people showed up, and owner Elias Bikahi shook hands and greeted old friends who walked into the spot at 790 Lombard St. Regular customers sipped coffee and chatted in twos and threes at the popular cafe, which offers freshly prepared focaccia and bagel sandwiches, breakfast quiches and an array of soups and salads, all with a Mediterranean influence.

Bikahi said he received a 90-day notice from his landlord last month, informing him he needed to vacate the space by Dec. 31st. No reason was given, he said.

The landlord of the property, Siu Chuen, could not be reached for comment.

“I am scared and my employees are scared,” Bikahi said. “It’s hard to think about a place being destroyed like this, and it’s not easy to pack up and leave and start somewhere else on a whim. Not in San Francisco.”

State Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, attended the rally and said successful small businesses are being pushed out by landlords.

“When our small businesses are pushed out, that undermines and badly damages the fabric of our neighborhoods,” he said.

The cafe’s woes are emblematic of North Beach, where the percentage of empty storefronts grew from 13% in 2017 to 21% in 2018, the highest increase in any of San Francisco’s retail areas, according to city data.

A Chronicle investigation into the shuttered sites this summer showed many reasons beyond the rise of online shopping that North Beach, the city's old Italian town, came to rank fourth in retail vacancies among San Francisco's 24 recognized neighborhoods.

In North Beach, as throughout the city, the cost of doing business for mom-and-pop operations is high, including rent and labor. The city's permit process takes time and adds complications.

Cafes like Bikahi's are also grappling with industry shifts such as the rise of app-based food delivery services that cut into their business.

The city has recently passed legislation to address the issue, and other proposals are in the works.

A law pushed by Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer requires landlords to register empty storefronts with the city or face a hefty annual fine; it took effect in April.



State Sen. Scott Wiener, above, speaks at a rally to save Caffe Sapore in North Beach, where customers showed support for the restaurant and signed a petition, below. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle

Supervisor Aaron Peskin is spearheading a move to charge landlords a vacancy tax if their properties sit empty for six months. Peskin, whose district includes North Beach, says the goal is to dissuade “bad actors” from intentionally keeping storefronts empty.

Peskin, who said he’s known Bikahi since the 1980s, spoke to the crowd Thursday about the importance of saving small local businesses and fighting as a community to save what many neighbors consider their “living room.”

“This is a neighborhood, like many in San Francisco, under a tremendous amount of pressure,” he said.

Bikahi said he’s tried to reach the landlord on numerous occasions but his efforts have been unsuccessful.

“I don’t even know what she plans to do with the location,” he said.



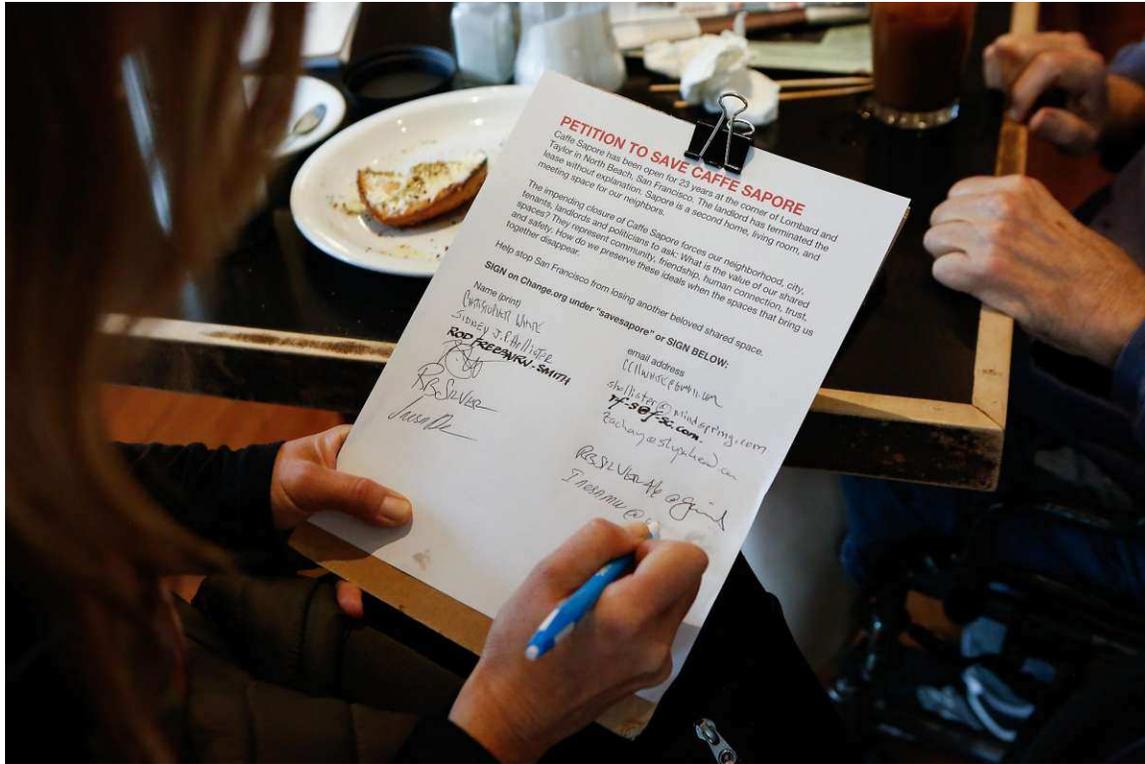
Owner of Caffé Sapore Elias Bikahi speaks at Thursday’s rally. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle



Elias Bikahi, the owner of Caffè Sapore, is greeted with hugs from patrons protesting the cafe's closure. Photo: Photos by Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle



Longtime customer Fanny Renoir holds a sign in support of Caffè Sapore in North Beach. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle



A woman signs a petition in support of saving Caffe Sapore on Thursday. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle



Supervisor Aaron Peskin and state Sen. Scott Wiener speak at a demonstration in support of saving Caffe Sapore in San Francisco. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle



Owner of Caffe Sapore Elias Bikahi is greeted with hugs and support from neighbors and customers at Thursday's rally. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle



A crowd of neighbors and customers listen as elected officials speak in support of Caffe Sapore. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle



Owner of Caffe Sapore Elias Bikahi is shown at a demonstration in support of keeping his cafe open. Photo: Amy Osborne / Special to The Chronicle

Bikahi, an immigrant from Lebanon, came to the U.S. in 1984 and opened the cafe in 1996, when “there was no one on the northern side of North Beach,” he said. One of the few businesses on a mostly residential block, he quickly found a loyal clientele.

Andrea Michaels, a regular customer at Caffe Sapore since it opened, embraced Bikahi after the rally. She lives a 20-minute walk away in Nob Hill. She said she loves the light that pours in through windows on both sides, the bagels with lox, and the student artwork that dots the walls. She’s watched Bikahi’s children grow up.

“It’s everything a North Beach cafe should be,” she said.

*Shwanika Narayan and Anna Bauman are San Francisco Chronicle staff writers. Email: shwanika.narayan@sfchronicle.com, anna.bauman@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @shwanika, @abauman2*



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To whom it may concern,

I would like to support Caffé Sapore and his Owner Elias Bikahi.

My name is Wolfgang Taft. I'm a small business owner in San Francisco for almost 30 years.

Cafe Sapore has always been a great gathering place for me and my employees. We have had many business meetings and private parties at the Café.

The atmosphere Elias has created and his customer service is over the top.

Seeing the Café being closed would be a big loss not only for North Beach and China Town, it would be a big loss for San Francisco.

Thanks

Wolfgang Taft

274 Shotwell Street

San Francisco, Ca 94110

t: 415.495.2774

or 866.495.2774 (US only)

f: 415.495.2803

e: [dubbelju@dubbelju.com](mailto:dubbelju@dubbelju.com)

[www.dubbelju.com](http://www.dubbelju.com)

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my outrage and sadness at the possibility of Caffè Sapore being evicted from its location on the corner of Lombard and Taylor.

Caffè Sapore is a community gathering place for all ages from the kids at Yick Woo, the home workers, neighbors meeting for coffee, the list goes on.

Elias has provided a rare and welcoming place that is needed in our community. It would be a big loss if he were to be evicted. Our son has gone there his entire life, I do work there on a regular basis as does my husband. Always there is a neighbor there to say hello to.

This caffè is an important coming together place for North Beach, Russian Hill and Telegraph Hill, not to mention a welcome stop for the many tourists who come in on their way up or down Lombard Street.

If the landlord cares at all about our local community, she needs to recognize the value of Caffè Sapore and withdraw the eviction order.

Thank you,  
Anita Walter

Caffe Sapore is important because it has connected me to the local community that's been here for decades. I've only lived in North Beach for about 5 years. Despite moving to SF because of the tech scene, I very much want to integrate into the local community. Sapore continues to provide the venue for all types of people to meet in North Beach.

Community is important to me, and Sapore has introduced me to so many local neighbors that have turned into friends. They've shared many stories about North Beach, and it feels as if it's been the melting pot to pass down oral stories about how San Francisco used to be and where it's going. Without Sapore, I feel like I will lose that connection to my neighbors and the locals.

Dan Strengier

To Whom It May Concern:

I have lived directly across the street from Caffe Sapore longer than it has existed. The owner, Elias Bikahi, has become a personal friend. Below are some of the many ways Caffe Sapore is important to me. I am certain my reasons resonate with others who live nearby.

1. Recently after hospitalization for severe side effects from advanced cancer medication, Elias, the owner, said if there was anything I needed I should simply ask. I am 76 and live alone. I did not have the strength to cook for myself so I asked for some simple chicken broth. Elias made me chicken broth from scratch, brought it to my apartment and spoon fed me. That is the kind of person Elias is!
2. Whenever there is an election, I meet with friends in Caffe Sapore to go over the ballot together before voting.
3. In the past when I have needed help lifting or moving something into my home, I go to the cafe and ask one of the staff to help. They always do.
4. When I celebrated my 50th milestone birthday (many years ago), I had my party at Caffe Sapore with Elias' fantastic catering. My apartment was too small for such an event.
5. Recently when there was a mentally unstable homeless person in our block, who was pushing garbage totes over and threatening tourists and residents, I went to Caffe Sapore for safety and asked them to call 911, which they did.
6. Self-employed and sometimes working at home, I have had business meetings in the cafe.
7. When I was looking for a dog walker, I met that person at Caffe Sapore.
8. I am a serious art collector and have bought several paintings that have graced the walls of the cafe. Generally the displays are of the nearby San Francisco Art Institute's students. Sapore provides fledgling artists with a venue seen and supported by many.
9. I have attended Sapore's wonderful, special events such as a party honoring Colombian cuisine and through those parties have met new people who are now part of my life.
10. Frequently, because my apartment is relatively small, I rely on Caffe Sapore as my extended living room. It also guarantees me privacy when needed.
11. Occasionally I have sold things through Craigslist or Facebook's Marketplace. Caffe Sapore is my safe place to meet and transact the sale.

12. Because of its proximity to the crooked block of Lombard Street, I have seen tourists from around the world congregate at Sapore sometimes for coffee and sustenance and conversations with the locals. Unfortunately and not infrequently, the tourists have sometimes sought safety from the plague of thieves who prey on tourists visiting the Crooked Street.

13. Sapore has offered high schoolers their first job opportunities. My god-daughter is one such person who needed a summer job while in school.

14. Finally, as a former North Beach community activist for 40 years, I must add the importance of businesses like Caffè Sapore can never be overstated. Sapore is a center, a hub, the identity of a neighborhood. It and its staff are much loved. It goes without saying that this neighborhood will not support a copycat business should the property owner decide she will reap greater profits by imitating Sapore's business model. I have seen it happen before. Without any formal organization, North Beachers will silently boycott any such a business causing its ultimate failure.

It should be obvious that Sapore must remain in place.

Marsha Garland

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of Caffè Sappore as a Legacy Business. As a nearly four decade long North Beach resident and co-founder of the North Beach Tenants Committee I have watched the closing of so many neighborhood gathering places and special individuals like Elias, the owner of Sappore, disappear from our community. It is not a matter of brick & mortar, rather what role owners like Elias play in welcoming everyone inside their doors and what role they play in supporting our community. Local hiring/employment, attention paid to students at nearby schools, discounts for not only students but also seniors in the neighborhood. We treasure Elias and this cornerstone in our community.

This cafe is also a place where I meet with tenants, many of whom are seniors being displaced through Ellis Act evictions, construction evictions, etc., as it is a safe, well-loved place of familiarity for so many neighbors. It is the one quiet, warm, welcoming place in this part of North Beach and one easily accessible for so many seniors. We treasure Elias and this cornerstone in our community.

Thank you for your consideration in granting legacy business standing of Caffè Sappore.

Sincerely,

Theresa Flandrich  
North Beach Tenants Committee Co-Chair

To whom it may concern,

Please approve the application of Elias Bikahi to designate Caffè Sapore, located at Taylor and Lombard, as a legacy business in North Beach.

For decades, Caffè Sapore has been dedicated to maintaining the unique aesthetic, cultural, artistic and culinary offerings of a quaint, historic and inviting urban breakfast and lunch establishment that people associate with North Beach and our city.

Caffè Sapore significantly contributes to the historic identity of San Francisco because of its unique characteristics and location in historic North Beach where it is widely known as the heart of the neighborhood and the “civic trailhead” for tourist pilgrimages to the historic crooked street.

As a North Beach landmark, Caffè Sapore has become a gathering place for thousands of tourists worldwide. They pause for coffee, freshly baked goods and bathroom reststop before ascending the Crooked Street (an historic landmark) to the crest of Russian Hill, which boasts the most iconic view of our beautiful city.

Caffè Sapore’s exterior and interior are historic hallmarks of a nostalgic North Beach culture that draws millions of people to the City of Love every year. Graphic art on the walls are representative of the vibrant San Francisco beat that has inspires people to live and work.

The Caffè Sapore is living history: while enjoying art displayed for sale by local artists at Caffè Sapore, families, elders, students and working millennials eat, converse, write, read and interact with their neighbors in this unique North Beach eatery.

As a neighbor and patron of Caffè Sapore and leader of a major California base non-profit organization who proudly showcases Caffè Sapore to family, friends, business colleagues as “Quintessential San Francisco” I urge you to approve Mr. Bikahi’s application to designate Caffè Sapore as a legacy business.

Sincerely,

Paula Golden  
President  
Broadcom Foundation

To whom it may concern,

We encourage you to approve Caffè Sapore as a legacy business in the North Beach neighborhood.

Caffè Sapore is woven into the fabric of our family. Back in 1999 I began dating my husband who lived on the 900 block of Greenwich, just up the street from Caffè Sapore. Our relationship bloomed between cups of coffee at Caffè Sapore. After our wedding we consciously decided to raise our family in a small apartment on Lombard Street in North Beach. When our children were babies, our family would go on walks to Caffè Sapore for our Sunday coffee and pastry. As our children grew, Caffè Sapore became that special place where we would go as a family for lemon poppy seed muffins, bagels, sandwiches and coffee multiple days a week. My son, a breakfast aficionado begs for Caffè Sapore's lemon poppy seed muffins nearly every day of the week. Caffè Sapore serves as a convenient place for our children to meet with academic tutors and an office when my husband and I work from home. It has become an extension of our home, a place where we always feel welcomed and connected to this amazing community that we live in.

Caffè Sapore has been an integral part of our family for 20 years and we cannot imagine a life without it in our community.

Please let us know how else we can help!

Thank you for doing this for Elias and family!

Best  
Christine Colon

## How Caffè Sapore is part of my/our community and history in North Beach

Coming from abroad (Germany) to San Francisco it is important to settle into a neighborhood that helps you to feel comfortable, to connect and to find new friends. For 10 years I lived in North Beach and Caffè Sapore became a very special place for me. I met my future husband there, I formed friendships there that last till today, I brought a lot of guests to the café, I had many meetings at Caffè Sapore. For a few years, I managed Caffè Sapore and experienced and witnessed the vibrant and lovely community enjoying each other's company, celebrating events together, reaching out to each other for support, information and friendship. Above all, the owner, Elias Bikahi and his family became very close friends. All this contributed to a special time in my life in North Beach, San Francisco, which I am always fond of and which continues to impact my life till this day. I cannot imagine the neighborhood that I grew to love so much without this irreplaceable treasure, called Caffè Sapore, which is so important to so many people in the neighborhood. During my time in North Beach I watched as Caffè Sapore became a linchpin and social center of the neighborhood. Beyond that it is very difficult to see a person like Elias Bikahi subjected to such a monumentally unfair treatment by the landlord of the café.

Claudia Brose | [claudiabrose@yahoo.de](mailto:claudiabrose@yahoo.de)

To whom it may concern,

Caffe Sapore is a neighborhood treasure at 790 Lombard Street in North Beach, San Francisco as you well know. We live nearby. Sapore is not only a gathering place for our neighbors and their friends, but also for visitors. Many a meeting of importance or intense conversation about a book, a painting, a sculpture or event planning has taken place there. Elias Bikahi gave us a big nurturing living room. He has contributed so much to the neighborhood over the many years that he has fed us with delicious Middle Eastern/Italian food. Sapore adds enormously to the special charm of North Beach. In addition, Bikahi has provided healthful and tasty catering to important neighborhood events. To lose another of our bits of neighborhood magic would be a tragedy as a number of other places giving North Beach its special character have closed over the past few years. It is our understanding that the landlord has terminated the lease. If no solution to continuing Sapore's existence in its home is found, our community will suffer a great loss.

Thank you for all you are doing to save our beloved Caffe Sapore.

Gyongy Laky  
Thomas Layton

Dear San Francisco,

In 1998 I answered a newspaper personal ad that led me to a first date at Caffè Sapore with my future wife. That meeting has given us a 20+ Year marriage, 2 kids, Telehi Co-op community, Yick Wo Elementary School community, and a very good life a block from Caffè Sapore on Greenwich Street. All of this because of Elias, his great family and the staff at Sapore. Together they've made a special place for everyone in North Beach! Our teenage boys happily wander down to buy our Sunday Toasted bagels with cream cheese. A place for kids, parents, tourists to feel welcome and happy. A place where the same faces behind the counter for 20 years also makes us grateful for continuity and history. We want San Francisco to make Caffè Sapore a heritage destination so that the love and community stays and grows. Please.

Andrew Middleton and Antea von Henneberg (and Ford and West)

15 November, 2019

To whom it may concern:

Regarding Caffè Sapore

Caffè Sapore on the corner of Taylor and Lombard Streets has been a neighborhood institution and treasure for going on over twenty-three years. The owner, Elias Bikahi, is one of my dearest friends. He came to the US from Lebanon to attend USF and ended up staying and working in the hospitality business. He gives a tremendous amount to the neighborhood and is beloved by everyone. I met my wife Claudia at the Caffè when she was helping out there part-time. So Caffè Sapore holds a special place in our hearts, and in the hearts of so many other people in the North Beach and Russian Hill neighborhoods who rely on the Caffè and who love Elias. Caffè Sapore is an important neighborhood resource and in so many ways is quite literally “the living room of the neighborhood”

Elias has always been a good and responsible tenant, and neighbor. But now he is being summarily evicted with the excuse that the landlord needs to “retrofit” the building. Everyone suspects this is a ruse and just one more example-like the Italian-French Bakery and various other neighborhood legacy businesses which gave the neighborhood its special character but were evicted or driven out by outrageous rent increases. Many stores, restaurants and cafes have been left empty for many months, even years, damaging the neighborhood and depriving the city and state of important tax revenue. There is a well-founded suspicion that the landlord has taken advantage of an escape clause recently imposed on Elias as a condition of the renewal of his lease in order to activate an existing agreement to lease the location to a chain like Peet’s or Starbucks if she can evict Caffè Sapore.

North Beach has been devastated in recent years by so many businesses closing and not being replaced. It’s become a partial ghost town with so many empty store fronts now. The neighborhood has been torn apart. It would be a shame if one of the successful remaining businesses, one that is beloved by the community, should be driven out under questionable circumstances and when the business owner has done nothing to cause eviction and has provided an important service to the neighborhood and community for more than twenty years. We don’t need one more story like this in San Francisco, especially in one of the City’s most historic and unique neighborhoods.

Save Caffè Sapore!

John McDermott and Claudia Brose

To whom it may concern,

Sapore has been a place in the sun both literally and figuratively for North Beach residents for a very long time. Elias has created a space that is welcoming to all, a gathering place for those who like a warm friendly place to share food and drink. I was very touched when I attended a memorial at a home on Lombard a year plus ago to see that Elias had not only catered the event, but he also made a very gracious and loving speech about the deceased who was a habitue of Sapore. Elias has been a treasured part of our community for decades plus. It is beyond heartbreaking that he is being evicted and for no reason.

Sapore richly deserves legacy business status. Elias has contributed greatly to the community. Losing Sapore would be losing a very large piece of North Beach's history and culture.

Respectfully yours,  
Marla Knight

To whom it concerns:

Caffe Sapore has been an integral part of the neighborhood for 23 years. I began going 20 years ago when I move into the neighborhood. It has always been a splice and special place. When I meditated mornings at Tel-Hi we went weekly for our coffee and pie Friday's afterwards and we're always greeted with kindness and charm.

It's an instruction and would be greatly and irrevocably missed by all patrons. The neighborhood will be a sadder place without Elias and his family.

Sincerely,  
Liduina van Nes  
San Francisco, CA

November 15, 2019

San Francisco Planning Department  
1650 Mission St #400,  
San Francisco, CA 94103

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of my family to express strong support for the designation of Caffè Sapore, at 790 Lombard Street in North Beach, as a Legacy Business. The business exemplifies the exact values that the program is intended to preserve. Losing Caffè Sapore would have very real, and negative, effect on the North Beach community.

My wife and I are raising three children in the city and live a few blocks away on Lombard. Caffè Sapore and its people have been an important part of our family life throughout, and one of the great things about North Beach that helped us stay in the city with kids. It was our destination of choice for coffee and a pastry over the Chronicle before we had children. Thirteen years ago our oldest child Katherine was born, and we found the people of Caffè Sapore to be incredibly accommodating to new parents. Elias and Emma Bikahi are raising children of their own here, and it showed. They provided a welcoming and safe environment, and even toys for children of all ages. It was routine to see other parents and neighbors there. For all of us parents who were apartment dwellers, Caffè Sapore offered space that we didn't have at home. We can rattle off the names of dozens of friendships formed or grown at Caffè Sapore.

Little has changed since we first wheeled in a stroller back in 2006, except that there's now that many more families and children who have benefitted from having this "neighborhood living room" in our community. We go there regularly, and it's unusual not to see someone we know when we do. On my last visit there a few days ago, meeting a client (great spot for that too) five different people came through that I chatted with. It's unique in the neighborhood, especially given its location a little off the beaten path from so much tourist traffic. Also important is that Lee, who made our drinks, has been there as long as I can remember. This isn't a business that churns through its employees.

Like all neighborhoods North Beach is an evolving place, and its cafés have played a key role in its history. The best of them are neighborhood institutions, part of our social fabric. They're gathering spaces to meet neighbors, bring the kids, see local art, hear some music, read a book, talk politics, play checkers. Caffè Sapore is all of these things, and it's taken Elias decades of hard work to make it that. We've lost too many of these cafe spaces recently: Caffè Roma, Caffè Puccini, even La Boulange (which started small). Beyond losing the place itself, it's turned stretches of the neighborhood into ghost towns, with all the urban problems that leads to. I'm sure we would see an immediate decline in that area if Caffè Sapore were to close, especially given its proximity to the most crime-targeted blocks of Lombard. I doubt any replacement business would come soon, or serve the same role in the neighborhood. Please

help prevent this by giving Caffè Sapore the Legacy Business designation its proprietors and staff have so clearly earned.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Tad Borek, Martha Mahony, Katherine, Eleanor and Christopher  
San Francisco

To whom it may concern,

I'm asking you to please consider the sustainment of the small business, Caffe Sapore. To you, it may just seem like a regular ol' cafe, but to visitors of the city, North Beach residents and coffee-drinking regulars, it's a piece of the essence of San Francisco. It's a part of our community and our lifestyle.

Every time I walk through the doors of Caffe Sapore, I'm treated like family. Regardless if I'm in a hurry and just in need of my to-go coffee or leisurely enjoying a bagel and lox on my day off, Elias and team are always so incredibly gracious and kind. I know the second I walk into the cafe, I'll feel happy and ready for the day—plus, I'll likely love the song they're playing so that's always an added bonus.

As covered in the Chronicle and visually apparent, North Beach, as a neighborhood, has seen a massive decline in small businesses, particularly restaurants.

I can't tell you how many times I've recommended Caffe Sapore to passerby tourists and even locals.

Closing Caffe Sapore will not just dishearten locals, but it will also lead tourists to go to alternative, more readily available restaurants or cafes which are likely closer to Fisherman's Wharf and owned by large corporations.

Please consider supporting this small business. Again, it's more than just a cafe. It's the charm of the city to a tourist and it's the start of my day.

With regards,

Sydney Brown

I live in Russian Hill and my favorite coffee shop is Caffe Sapore. The coffee is great and the food is delicious. The customers are so friendly and I feel safe in there. It would be a travesty to close it down. This is terrible to give the owner a last minute notice. How evil can one be? Whatever goes in there I will protest and never be a customer there. Please save Caffe Sapore.

Tina Canepa

My husband and I are great fans of Sappore. We visit San Francisco at least 5 times a year to visit our family. The staff at the cafe know us when we walk in the door. Not only do they know us they also know what we like to order and often have it in process before we reach the counter. This is a treasure for The Columbus Inn guests. I hope the owner of the building realizes that this cafe is a symbol of all the wonders of San Francisco.

Kathy and Ray Naylor

To whom it may concern:

As a fellow business owner and resident of North Beach it saddens me to hear that Elias of Caffe Sapore is in danger of being evicted. From my short time as a business owner here in my neighborhood of North Beach, I can tell you that owning a business in a high rent neighborhood is a combination of passion for your craft and love for the clientele that you serve. I have yet to meet a small business owner in North Beach who is making an insane amount of profit after paying such high rent + expenses. No, business owning in North Beach is a service to the community. Why else would a business actively choose to open amid a host of vacancies in the neighborhood? We are trying to build a community here. As a resident of North Beach and patron of Caffe Sapore I've enjoyed gathering for meetings with neighbors and friends in the cafe's cozy environment. When both my children were younger, I was so relieved to see that Caffe Sapore had shelves filled with toys and games for kids to play with while we dined. What a thoughtful detail to include things for children to play with; an indication that the owner thinks about what would make families feel comfortable while spending time in his cafe. I pass the cafe every morning now to drop my children off at school. I see my neighbors getting their early morning coffees inside. I see the sanitation engineers from Recology stop to chat and grab a quick bite before going back to their morning routes. I see the early risers sitting outside the cafe on business calls. I see the international tourists stop in before heading up the hill to the windy section of Lombard. I hear the different languages spoken in the cafe in the afternoons as the sun hits the long window side of the cafe. This is a place of gathering. This is a place that helps build community. This is a place that provides a living to honest, hard-working people. Let's honor the integrity, community, and love that this place represents and refuse to evict.

Sincerely,  
Tracy Andreassen  
Resident of North Beach  
Business Owner at RENDEZVOUS North Beach

To whom it may concern:

Caffe Sapore has been an icon of North Beach, a meeting place, a “living room”, a great place for coffee, bagels, pastries and luncheon salads and sandwiches. It is nearly always full of neighbors and tourists.

Because of its close proximity to the “crooked street.” It is a common place for tourists to gather before or after their visits.

It is also close to the North Beach Library, and a convenient place to stop before or after a visit to the library.

Its very longevity----I know it had been here a long time before we moved here in 1995----and the old San Francisco style makes it a legacy restaurant.

I have seen comedy evenings here when they opened the space evenings for special events.

Caffe Sapore is irreplaceable to the North Beach and Chinatown neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Karen Melander-Magoon, D.Min.  
[www.karenmm.com](http://www.karenmm.com)  
San Francisco CA 94133

To whom it may concern:

When my daughter was less than a year old, a fellow mom suggested we go to Sapore for dinner. It was a few blocks from our North Beach apartments and we heard it was “kid friendly,” a rarity in San Francisco even then. They had high chairs! And toys!! And when our babies dropped their pasta on the floor and we started to pick it up, the server rushed over to tell us cleaning up was their job and we should enjoy our wine and our night off from cooking and cleaning.

My daughter is now 24. Sapore has been our family's second home for many years. It's where we would meet friends for breakfast before heading up the hill to go to school at Yick Wo (a school Elias and his family have supported faithfully and where his own children have gone). It's where we'd go for snacks and homework after school. It's where she and I went for dinner when my husband was working and I was too tired to cook.

It was the only cafe my husband, who is mobility impaired, could walk to for lunch. Now he's in a wheelchair and still has lunch there—he especially likes sitting at an outside table, watching the world go by.

Caffe Sapore supports local artists. Local schools. Local musicians. Even local comedians from time to time.

It's a gathering place for families, for older people, for tourists walking down Lombard Street, for long-time North Beach residents like us, for those on a budget (day-old pastries were a favorite of my daughter and her friends), for students from the art college or from the elementary school. It's not hip or trendy or tech-centered (though many have made it their 'office'). It's a neighborhood place, a community place. There is no other place like it in the neighborhood and very few places like it in San Francisco anymore, where the owner knows everyone, the staff is like family, the prices are affordable, and the welcome is always warm for everyone.

If Sapore is evicted it will leave a gaping hole, not just as one more empty storefront in our ravaged neighborhood, but in our hearts. Please grant Sapore legacy status and help us preserve a neighborhood treasure.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cathryn Domrose, North Beach resident since 1996 (for the last 19 years on Lombard Street, across the street from Caffe Sapore)

To whom it may concern:

As a proud member of the North Beach/Russian Hill community, I am writing in support of Elias Bikahi for legacy business application for Caffè Sapore. For over two decades, Caffè Sapore has served as a hub. It is on the few spots left in the neighborhood which generously offers physical space, food, support to our community in many, many forms. Our families, our elders, our artists, our students, our homeless and many others, are welcome to sit, write, meet, read, and organize. The Caffè is at the heart of North Beach/Russian Hill, it is known as a place to convene, work, study, and enjoy.

In addition, Caffè Sapore significantly contributes to the history of the critical junction where North Beach meets Russian Hill. The cafe is literally a gateway to Lombard Street. It is estimated that 1 million people visit Lombard yearly. The majority of tourists are dropped off and picked up by tour buses on this block. Literally, the first impression of San Francisco is Caffè Sapore--which welcomes their diverse backgrounds, cultures, and languages. Many need to use the bathroom, and they find this at Caffè Sapore. The cafe radiates the warmth, creativity, and welcoming spirit--it is demonstration of our collective values in action.

Caffè Sapore contributes to the vibrancy of our neighborhoods in countless ways. On its walls, local artists and students from the SF Art Institute display their work. Community dinners are held there with communal group tables. These dinners showcase new chefs who often cannot afford a restaurant of their own. Their cuisine from their native country is augmented with wine and music, and spontaneous dance, to share the complete experience of their culture and bringing the members of our community closer together. In addition, local fundraisers and community organization meetings happen so regularly. It is hard to even count how many local associations and parent, political action, elderly groups etc. utilize this space a reliable venue, and can stay for as long as they desire without being rushed.

As a nurse and parent, I also value it as a safe place to go in case of emergency. Many of us know that we can always go to Caffè Sapore to seek help. It brings us together and critical to the fabric of who we are. I support Caffè Sapore for its legacy business application.

Best Regards,

Bethany Golden RN

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today to support Caffè Sapore's application for status as a legacy business.

I have lived in North Beach for over a decade and have seen this neighborhood change - most often not for the better. Similar cafes have shut down (Cafe Roma, etc.) despite the fact they were thriving and paying their rent each month. These spaces have since sat empty. There are fewer and fewer places for neighbors to gather and tourists to experience Little Italy.

Like many San Francisco residents, I am a freelancer. I work from home or, more often than not, from coffee shops and cafes. There are several of us who use Caffè Sapore as our office, to work in a calm and homey atmosphere and to meet with clients. I have at least 2 meetings a month at Caffè Sapore and sometimes as many as 10 in a week. This means I have become close with the staff and other customers.

The staff have become like family to me.

I have come into Sapore in tears after hearing some very sad news about a friend's health and received hugs, kind words and healthy food (free of charge) to bring to my friend.

I have watched their children grow and join their dad behind the counter.

When I went through some difficult financial times and was on the fence about staying in North Beach (and paying my astronomical North Beach rent) or moving out of the city, my Sapore network was a bit reason for me to stay. They supported me through the launch of my business and I am now thriving.

Please help them to stay in North Beach. We need more places like Caffè Sapore, not less.

Best,

Melody B. Hernandez  
Nonprofit Grant Consultant  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
[www.melodybhernandezconsulting.com](http://www.melodybhernandezconsulting.com)

November 18, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

We are a family of four writing from our living room in North Beach to support the designation of Caffé Sapore (790 Lombard Street) as a legacy business in San Francisco. Half of us have been patronizing Caffé Sapore for more than two decades and the other half is just learning about the important role a place like Caffé Sapore plays in a community like ours.

It's impossible to visit Caffé Sapore and not appreciate the positive impact it has on our neighborhood. Weekday mornings before 9:30 you'll find parents chatting while their kids read books, play games and munch on bagels before hiking up the hill to Yick Wo Elementary School. After that a steady stream of locals pours in, greeting each other and their servers before settling into work, a book or another conversation. The walls are lined with art by local artists and a sign on the front door invites art students to take advantage of a special discount. And let's not forget the tourists. Nestled at the base of Lombard Street between Fisherman's Wharf and Downtown, Caffé Sapore serves as a lounge of sorts for visitors making their way from one point of interest to the next.

In the past few years we've heard more and more about the challenges of having a small business in San Francisco and the increasing number of empty storefronts in North Beach tell us that these challenges are real. The unique blend of families, professionals, tourists and artists found at Caffé Sapore embody the spirit of North Beach in a way few other businesses can.

It has all of the characteristics of a true legacy business and we hope the city will formally identify it as such.

Sincerely,

Rob Hayden  
Laura Mancuso  
Eleanore Hayden  
Anthony Hayden

**Christina Saveri**  
**San Francisco, CA 94133**

November 18, 2019

To whom it may concern:

It has been brought to my attention that Caffè Sapore located at 790 Lombard Street in San Francisco may be closing due to being evicted after many years of business in our neighborhood. This cafe has been serving our neighborhood for years, and has been a long-standing establishment that provides great community for the neighborhood. Since 2002 my family has walked to this unique cafe from our home and we enjoy it very much. It will be very unfortunate and sad if Caffè Sapore is forced to shut its doors.

I hope there is something that can be done to prevent this tragedy from happening.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Christina Saveri

To whom it may concern,

We are residents of North Beach and regular patrons of Caffe Sapore for a variety of reasons. Not only do they have excellent coffee, food and staff, but they provide an atmosphere and experience that is distinctly North Beach. They are truly a neighborhood cafe, welcoming anyone who enters their doors and taking the time to get to know each of their customers. Inside you will find people from all walks of life enjoying breakfast and coffee in the morning, or perhaps a pizza and beer in the afternoon, while taking in conversation with friends and enjoying the art that lines the walls. It's not loud, but it's not quiet either, and the welcoming murmur is still low enough that other patrons are able to work quietly by themselves and simply enjoy the ambiance. It is one of the few cafes left in North Beach with ample seating for patrons, as most other coffee shops are small and focused on takeaway. All this comes together to create a venue that fosters the North Beach community and culture.

Enjoying the café is not just a privilege for those of us that live in North Beach. Given their location on Lombard and Taylor, they see regular foot traffic from the visitors that are sightseeing throughout Fisherman's Wharf, Lombard, Columbus, Russian Hill, etc. The cafe has become part of the experience of visiting Lombard Street for many tourists, either enjoying a meal/cup of coffee before or after walking on the crooked street. We personally think it's a highlight for many to be able to take a break, relax, and enjoy food, drink and art in an authentic North Beach café. We love that Caffe Sapore is able to provide this to so many so conveniently, and we bring our visiting friends and family here for that reason as well.

If Elias and Caffe Sapore are evicted, we can't imagine what would replace it that would promote this community and provide such delight to both locals and visitors alike. North Beach is an iconic San Francisco neighborhood due to places like Caffe Sapore, we can't continue to lose them at the rate that we are. It is so crucial to keep the doors of this important neighborhood icon open. It's due to places like Caffe Sapore that make the neighborhood a desirable and enjoyable place to live. Kathryn's first apartment in North Beach was right above the cafe, and because of the community Caffe Sapore creates, we can't imagine our experience in the neighborhood without it. We are writing this letter in support of Caffe Sapore's legacy business application, please do the right thing and protect our community.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Snyder & Kathryn Wilson

Dear Sirs and Mesdames—

I am writing in support of Caffé Sapore, at the corner of Lombard and Taylor, in North Beach. I have been going to Elias Bikahi's café for almost 20 years. I have watched his children grow up and met his wife, Emma, and father-in-law, Richard. It is where I go to meet friends and clients (I am a freelance editor) for morning coffee or lunch. It is an integral part of my life and of the life of my neighborhood.

Clearly, places like Sapore are essential to any community in a large city. They knit their part of the city together so it feels like a town not just a section of an impersonal metropolis. If the legacy idea has any merit, it is to protect businesses like Sapore, which make living in San Francisco livable. In a time when more and more large cities look the same with their forests of high rises, unique businesses are needed more than ever. They are irreplaceable.

Sincerely,  
Sidney J.P. Hollister

To whom it may concern:

I am a Native San Franciscan who is appalled that Caffè Sapore is being evicted for absolutely no reason except for the greed of the landlord. Another business being erased from the neighborhood. Look at what is happening all throughout North Beach...empty store fronts, business being displaced... the neighborhood is changing because of greed. Please keep Caffè Sapore as a historical business for the sake of all of us Natives that are feeling like our neighborhood is sinking into blight.

Liam Hennessy

December 03, 2019

Dear Mr. Kurylo and Supervisor Perskin

Thank you for your attention to the eminent eviction and closing of Caffè Sapore at 790 Lombard Street at the corner of Taylor in North Beach.

As you know, this cafe has been an important contributor to the community for over twenty years. I have been coming here since it opened after the glass shop closed. It is immensely important to the people who patronize this cafe that to try to describe the significance to you would sound like an exaggeration. I am sitting at a table at Caffè Sapore now since the modem went out a while ago in my nearby apartment on Chestnut Street. I know I can come here and work on my computer in peace and privacy. I am nearly 71 years old and have lived in my apartment nearby for 45 years. I live alone and do not cook very much. I rely on the delicious and fresh and wholesome home cooked meals I get frequently at Caffè Sapore.

I am aghast to see the closing of this beloved and important cornerstone of our neighborhood. For me and many others, this cafe is our kitchen, our office, a place where we can meet family, friends, and business people in a safe and cozy and charming setting. For me it is also a place where I can come with my dogs who sit outside waiting patiently while I have a coffee after a walk or after our dog agility training. They are fawned over and photographed by tourists who pass them as they go to and fro to the crooked block of Lombard. It is a pleasure seeing my dogs give joy to so many other people, people whose language I cannot speak but with whom my dogs can communicate. It is where I stop off at 7:00AM to grab a coffee and a doughnut on Friday morning. It is where I have met and connected with people from all over the world. It is where I have come to know many of my neighbors, people who I would probably never otherwise have met.

I think it is a travesty that a hard working and ethical man who has put his heart and soul into building such a great business can have it snatched away. I am a Realtor (DRE 00869011) and understand the dynamics of an owner who wants to use her property in a different way. However, it seems so inappropriate that this very special and beautiful man, Elias Bikahi, should be treated like a commodity who has outlived his usefulness. I find it personally and professionally abhorrent that this has happened to him. To say that this is exactly the kind of event which is destroying the essence of this city would be an understatement.

San Francisco needs more people like Elias Bikahi and more places that serve as a reliable meeting place/cafe/restaurant like Caffè Sapore. This is an independent and unique business. It run by a person who has hired many people who otherwise might have a hard time finding employment. He treats everyone he meets with love and respect. This attitude shines through in the way his employees interact with the customers, always patient and professional and kind.

I urge you to continue to move forward in every possible way to avert the eviction of Elias Bikahi, a family man who lives in the neighborhood and is such an important member of our community. I urge you to please continue to do whatever you can to keep Caffè Sapore open and thriving.

I urge you to give Caffè Sapore a designation as a Legacy Business as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,  
**Gloria Ruth Rogan**  
San Francisco, CA 94109



**North Beach  
Neighbors**  
P.O. Box 330115  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
northbeachneighbors.org

November 19, 2019

Legacy Business Program  
Office of Small Business  
City and County of San Francisco  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 140  
San Francisco, CA 94102

**RE: Support for Caffé Sapore's legacy business application**

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of North Beach Neighbors, it is my pleasure to submit this letter of support in favor of Caffé Sapore's application for status as a legacy business.

Over the last 23 years, Caffé Sapore has been a staple of the North Beach community and has become woven into the fabric of our neighborhood. This cafe is frequented by area families, residents, and visitors and is emblematic of North Beach's unique character.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Daniel J. Sauter'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Danny Sauter  
President

*Filing Date:* November 25, 2019  
*Case No.:* 2019-022726LBR  
*Business Name:* Caffé Sapore  
*Business Address:* 790 Lombard Street  
*Zoning:* North Beach NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0065/015  
*Applicant:* Elias Bikahi, CEO  
790 Lombard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
[shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org](mailto:shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org)

## **BUSINESS DESCRIPTION**

Caffé Sapore's opened its doors for business on March 23, 1997 and immediately become a neighborhood gathering space. Owner and founder Elias Bikahi is a chef who has successfully operated many restaurants throughout San Francisco. Immigrating to the United States from Lebanon in 1984 at age 18, Bikahi did not expect to find himself working in the restaurant business, but after completing a B.S. in Applied Sciences and Business at the University of San Francisco in 1989, he decided to follow an entrepreneur's path.

Bikahi decided to open the coffee shop and eatery to fill the needs of the North Beach community as well as to allow him to be home in the evenings with his family. It is a European style café with Mediterranean influences. During this time Caffé Sapore has created a number of low- to moderate-income jobs that have been used to maintain employment for entry-level workers. This includes one employee that has been working for the café for over 18 years.

Several news articles have been published and news segments have been aired highlighting the importance that Caffé Sapore has within the community. This includes KPIX, CBS, NBC Bay Area and the San Francisco Chronicle. The stories featured the hundreds of community members who have rallied in support of keeping Caffé Sapore open for business in North Beach.

The business is located on the north side of Lombard Street between Jansen and Taylor streets in the North Beach neighborhood. It is within the North Beach NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

### *Review Criteria*

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1997.

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

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

- i. Caffé Sapore has operated continuously in San Francisco for 22 years, has significantly contributed to the history and identity of the neighborhood and would face a significant risk of displacement if not included in the Registry due to their impending lease termination on December 31, 2019.
- ii. Caffé Sapore has contributed to the history and identity of Russian Hill and San Francisco.
- iii. Caffé Sapore 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 European style café culture and Mediterranean cuisine.

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

Yes. The property was identified in a 1993 historic resource survey as individually eligible for listing on a local registry, presumably for its architectural significance. The building was constructed in 1916 in the Classical Revival style as the Entella Hotel.

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

No. The property has a Planning Department Historic Resource status codes of "A" (Known Historic Resource) due to its finding of individual eligibility in historic resource surveys.

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. Caffé Sapore was one of the first café's in San Francisco to feature fair trade, sustainable coffee beans and was featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal in 1999 for this role. See notable publications, below. Caffé Sapore continues this tradition. Notable publications:

- "Coffee Farmers Bypass Middlemen Using Global 'Fair Trade' Strategy" Wall Street Journal, November 23, 1999
- "San Francisco Residents To Rally Against Evictions Of Aging Local Actor, Popular Café" KPIX CBS SF Bay Area, November 13, 2019
- "North Beach residents protest eviction of longstanding cafe, actor" SFGate, November 14, 2019
- "As North Beach's Caffe Sapore plans closure, supporters rally to save it" San Francisco Chronicle, November 14, 2019
- "Popular SF Cafe Being Evicted After 23 Years in North Beach" NBC Bay Area, November 14, 2019

- “Cafe In San Francisco's North Beach Tries To Fight Off Eviction” KPIX CBS SF Bay Area, November 14, 2019
- “SaveSapore” Change.org, November 2019

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business*

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

- 790 Lombard Street

**Recommended by Applicant**

- Mediterranean influenced cuisine
- Excellent coffee, tea, beer, and wine
- Catering services
- Murals by Susan Brennan and Sam Flores
- Original hardwood floors

**Additional Recommended by Staff**

- None



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution No. ###

HEARING DATE: DECEMBER 18, 2019

*Filing Date:* November 25, 2019  
*Case No.:* 2019-022726LBR  
*Business Name:* Caffé Sapore  
*Business Address:* 790 Lombard Street  
*Zoning:* North Beach NCD (Neighborhood Commercial District) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0065/015  
*Applicant:* Elias Bikahi, CEO  
790 Lombard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Located In:* District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625  
[shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org](mailto:shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org)

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR CAFFÉ SAPORE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 790 LOMBARD STREET, BLOCK/LOT 0065/015.**

**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 20 or more years, has significantly contributed to the history and identity of the neighborhood, and would face a significant risk of displacement if not included in the Registry; and

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

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

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on December 18, 2019, 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 Caffé Sapore qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 20 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 Caffé Sapore.

***Location(s):***

- *790 Lombard Street*

***Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:***

- *Mediterranean influenced cuisine*
- *Excellent coffee, tea, beer, and wine*
- *Catering services*
- *Murals by Susan Brennan and Sam Flores*
- *Original hardwood floors*

**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 2019-022726LBR to the Office of Small Business December 18, 2019.

Jonas P. Ionin  
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED: