



Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application Number: LBR-2016-17-038
Business Name: Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc
Business Address: 735 Columbus Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Walter Haas, CEO
Nomination Date: October 24, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin

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

735 Columbus Ave. from 1935 to Present (90 years)

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

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

FEATURES OR TRADITIONS: Coffee shop

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION: August 18, 2025

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

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



Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

佩斯金 市參事

October 24, 2016

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi
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 Graffeo Coffee Roasting Co. for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Graffeo Coffee is a family-run business that has occupied its quaint façade in North Beach for 81 years. Graffeo Coffee prides itself on being one of the oldest artisan coffee roasters in North America, and experts will concur that they have thoroughly perfected their roasting process, producing different blends in dark, light and decaf roasts. Graffeo's #1 Zagat quality coffee score has attracted locals to their piping hot hand-roasted coffee for generations.

I hope for the continued success of Graffeo Coffee Roaster as it is an integral part of the business community of North Beach and District 3.

Sincerely,

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

Aaron Peskin



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc

Business owner name(s): Walter Haas

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

Current business address: 735 Columbus Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133

Telephone: (415) 986 – 2420

Email: coffee@graffeo.com

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: www.graffeo.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/p/Graffeo-61569339424014/ **Twitter:** @graffeocoffee

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 1 1 6 0 9 3 8

Do any of these describe your business? (select all that apply)

Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.

☐ Immigrant-Owned Business

☐ Owned by Person with a Disability

☐ LGBTQ+-Owned Business

☐ Veteran-Owned Business

☐ Minority-Owned Business*

☐ Woman-Owned Business

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

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: Walter Haas

Contact person title: CEO

Contact telephone: () –

Contact email:

Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: 735 Columbus Ave. Zip Code: 94133

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

Dates at this location: From: 1935 To: Present

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other Address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Other address (if applicable): Zip Code:

Dates at this location: From: To:

Applicant Disclosures

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

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☐ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☐ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☐ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☐ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☐ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☐ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☐ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name:

Signature:



Date:

Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc

Written Historical Narrative

Introduction

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

Graffeo Coffee is the oldest independent coffee roastery in San Francisco, roasting premium coffee beans since 1935 using time-honored fluid bed roasting techniques. It sells whole-bean coffee and related coffee-making products, providing both retail and wholesale services from its longstanding home in North Beach.

Graffeo Coffee uses a singular blend of premium beans from Colombia, Costa Rica Tarrazu, and Papua New Guinea for their dark and light roasts. Their decaf is 100% Colombian Swiss Water Process.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

Graffeo Coffee serves coffee aficionados, neighborhood residents, local restaurants, and discerning visitors from the Bay Area and beyond. Its customers range from longtime San Francisco locals to international tourists exploring the city's culinary scene. Renowned establishments such as House of Prime Rib, Zuni Café, Lazy Bear, Original Joe's, Harris' Restaurant, Pier 23 Cafe Restaurant & Bar, Café Jacqueline, and Mario's Bohemian Cigar Store Café have all chosen Graffeo Coffee.

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

Simply the world's finest coffee.

Criterion 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years

a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc ("Graffeo Coffee") was founded in 1935 by Giovanni Graffeo, a Sicilian immigrant, as a neighborhood grocery store that also roasted coffee beans.¹ Initially, he slept on a cot in the back room. From its small storefront at 735 Columbus Avenue,

¹ "S.F.'s oldest coffee roaster is a 'well-kept secret.' A new owner wants to change that," by Mario Cortez, San Francisco Chronicle, January 29, 2025, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/food/restaurants/article/graffeo-coffee-north-beach-sf-20050020.php>.

the business quickly became a fixture of the local North Beach community, celebrated for its meticulous roasting process.

Giovanni Graffeo died in 1944, leaving the business to a string of interim owners and inactivity. Giovanni Repetto bought Graffeo in 1954, bringing his experience of roasting coffee in Liguria, Italy, to the neighborhood. His son, Luciano Repetto, was only 10 years old at the time, absorbing the intricacies of the coffee business as he grew up. After his father retired in 1977, Luciano took over the family business, leaving behind a successful career as a wine salesman.²

Graffeo Coffee stopped selling pasta (the other main item retailed) in 1978 around the time Luciano took over from his father. It was then that he installed the Sivetz Fluid Bed Roaster machine with the inventor of the device, Michael Sivetz. From there, Luciano continued to adapt the roaster to Graffeo's very exacting specifications. Luciano has since built over eight roasters, each one becoming more of his own invention.

Over the decades, Graffeo Coffee expanded its reach through wholesale accounts while preserving its original roasting operations in North Beach. At one point, Graffeo operated two roasting facilities in the Los Angeles area and one in Singapore. It still operates a smaller roasting facility in San Rafael that processes supermarket accounts. Although it has occasionally explored opportunities beyond San Francisco, the flagship storefront in North Beach – occupying two connected storefronts at 735 and 733 Columbus Avenue – remains the heart and headquarters of the business.

In 2024, Walter A. Haas III, a sixth-generation San Franciscan, purchased the majority stake to preserve the roastery's heritage and share its exceptional coffee with more fine establishments. Luciano, continues to operate the company as a co-owner.

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

1935 to 1944:	Giovanni Graffeo
1944 to 1956:	Interim Ownership (exact details unknown)
1956 to 1978:	Giovanni Repetto (1st Generation Repetto Family)
1978 to 2024:	Luciano Repetto (2nd Generation Repetto Family)
2024 to Present:	Luciano Repetto; Walter A. Haas III

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

As far as is known, Graffeo Coffee has never ceased operations in San Francisco. Despite occasional economic challenges, the roastery has remained open and continuously active in the city.

² "S.F.'s oldest coffee roaster is a 'well-kept secret.' A new owner wants to change that," by Mario Cortez, San Francisco Chronicle, January 29, 2025, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/food/restaurants/article/graffeo-coffee-north-beach-sf-20050020.php>.

Criterion 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community

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

Graffeo Coffee is deeply woven into North Beach's identity, reinforcing the neighborhood's reputation as the home of Italian-American coffee culture in San Francisco. It stands as the oldest surviving artisan coffee roaster in the city, preserving a tradition that predates modern specialty coffee movements.

At Graffeo Coffee, the roasting process is as unique as the flavor in every cup. Using a custom-built Sivetz fluid bed roaster perfected over decades, they ensure each bean is roasted evenly for a clean, rich taste that sets them apart. The roaster has been modified by Luciano Repetto over the years to achieve the exact temperature parameters and roasting times that makes the roast consistently delicious. Traditional drum roasters put beans in contact with searing metal, which can scorch the beans on the outside and under-roast the inside. This yields bitter coffee with an unwanted aftertaste. Graffeo Coffee's fluid bed roasting method uses heated air to roast beans evenly inside and out. This gentler method brings out the most desirable flavors in the bean. For many coffee lovers who think bitter taste is just part of the deal with dark roast coffee, their first sip of Graffeo's coffee is a revelation. It's strong, no doubt, but delivers a smooth, rich flavor whether brewed as espresso or pour-over.

*"For almost one hundred years, it's been our obsession. Science meeting soul. Low temperature convective heat roasting bean to bean. Not by time. Not color. By temperature. Rich and never bitter."*³ – Luciano Repetto, Graffeo Coffee

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

Over the years, Graffeo Coffee has attracted notable neighborhood icons, local writers, and cultural figures drawn to North Beach's vibrant artistic and culinary life. During a visit to San Francisco, Ruth Reichl of The New York Times singled out Graffeo Coffee as her favorite, praising its exceptional flavor. Its current clientele includes other legacy establishments, such as Mario's Bohemian Café.

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

Graffeo Coffee frequently donates coffee to local fundraisers, neighborhood school events, and charitable organizations. The roastery also supports cultural festivals that celebrate North Beach's heritage. Current donation recipients include The Salesians of Don Bosco and Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, which receive cash or complimentary coffee to assist their missions.

³ <https://graffeo.com/pages/our-roast>

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

Graffeo Coffee has appeared in local newspapers, travel guides, and culinary magazines as a destination for anyone seeking an authentic San Francisco coffee experience.

Following are notable articles about the business:

- [Why top chefs and restaurants are obsessed with this heritage coffee roaster](#)
The Manual
June 23, 2025
- [Graffeo Coffee expands retail distribution in Portland and Austin](#)
International Communicaffe
May 20, 2025
- [A century on, this neighborhood is still brewing up San Francisco's best café culture](#)
7X7
May 5, 2025
- [Graffeo Coffee, San Francisco's Oldest Roastery, Announces New Ownership](#)
BevNET
February 9, 2025
- [6th-generation San Franciscan from wealthy family takes over city's oldest coffee roastery](#)
SFGATE
February 6, 2025
- [S.F.'s oldest coffee roaster is a 'well-kept secret.' A new owner wants to change that](#)
San Francisco Chronicle
January 29, 2025
- [Long-Running San Francisco Coffee Brand Graffeo Gets a New Wealthy Co-Owner](#)
Eater San Francisco
January 28, 2025
- [A San Francisco coffee roaster's mission to deliver the perfect cup](#)
CBS News
September 30, 2024
- [A Taste of San Francisco; Culinary Lights: North Beach Shines Again](#)
New York Times
October 7, 1998

Following are notable videos about the business:

- [Espresso, Ferrari, and Flair! Graffeo's Unique Mobile Café](#)
Good Day Sacramento
August 4, 2025
- [Graffeo Roasting Company](#)
Italian Commerce Association
April 2, 2025
- [A San Francisco coffee roaster's mission to deliver the perfect cup](#)
CBS Evening News
September 30, 2024

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

Graffeo Coffee has been honored by several local business associations for its longstanding contributions to the neighborhood and has repeatedly featured in regional “best of” coffee lists.

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

If Graffeo Coffee were to close, North Beach would lose a cornerstone of its Italian-American coffee culture. Employees with decades of experience would be displaced, and the city’s culinary landscape would lose a direct link to San Francisco’s storied past. Moreover, many beloved Bay Area restaurants would be deprived of the excellent coffee product that sets them apart.

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

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

The original storefront on Columbus Avenue features a classic sign that has remained largely unchanged, emphasizing the roastery’s timeless appeal. Inside, multiple vintage roasters and traditional display pay tribute to its enduring craft.

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

Coffee roasting and retail services.

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

Walter A. Haas III has no intention of selling Graffeo Coffee and plans to keep operations in the Haas family, with the Repetto family retaining partial ownership. This approach ensures Graffeo Coffee remains a family-run endeavor, preserving its roasting methods, customer loyalty, and foundational values for generations to come, while making strategic investments to remain competitive in a changing market.

d. What challenges is the business facing today?

The roastery faces rising operational expenses—fueled by a historically high C-Price for specialty coffee beans—along with stiff competition from chain coffee shops and shifting consumer habits. Nevertheless, Graffeo Coffee continues to rely on its sterling reputation, devoted customer base, and unwavering dedication to quality to maintain its standing in the local market.

Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:

a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.

Coffee roasting.

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

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building at 725-735 Columbus Avenue is “A - Historic Resource Present.” The building was determined eligible for listing in the National Register and California Register in a 1984 survey.





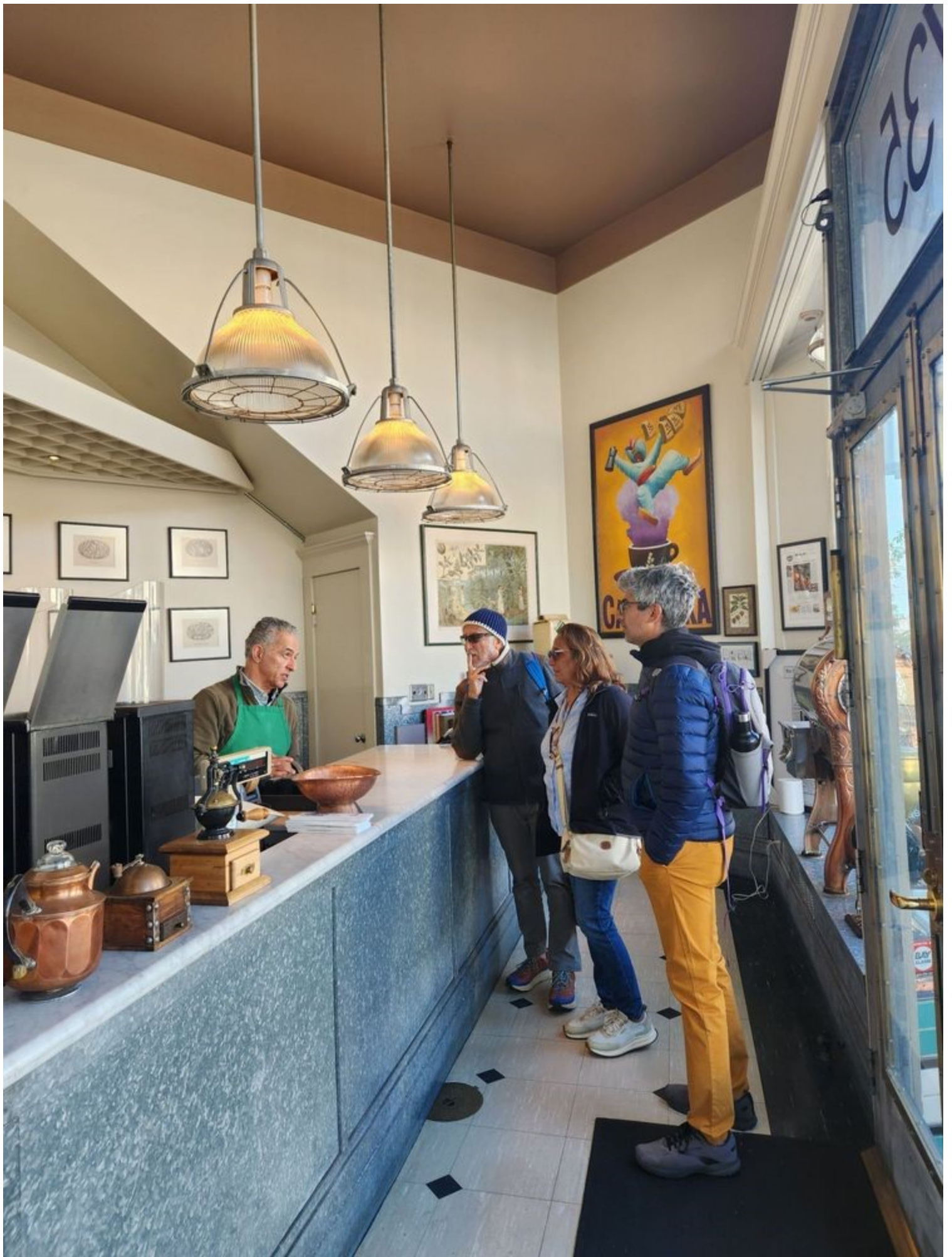




Simply the World's Finest Coffee

Since 1935

Simply the World's Finest Coffee







ENABLE



ALARM
RESET



EMERGENCY
GAS
OFF



AIR
PRESSURE



INLET AIR
LIMIT



AFTERBURNER
LIMIT



RESET



RESET



BEAN
LIFT



PRESSURE
BLOWER



COOLING
AIR



PURGE



MAIN BURNER
ON PAUSE



WATER
SPRAY



AFTERBURNER
OFF TEST



BEAN
GATE



SUPPLY
AIR



SPARE



EXHAUST
AIR



AFTERBURNER
MONITOR



3 PHASE
MONITOR



PROMETHEUS
INDUSTRIAL CONTROLS
VOLTAGE 240
PHASE 3
CURRENT 84A
MODEL BNRI
SERIAL ZS97
SAN FRANCISCO 94133

ROAST
CHAMBER

OMRON
E5EX
TEMPERATURE CONTROLLER

PV 93
SV 456

OUT SHFT AT ALM1 ALM2

ROAST TIME

00.14.34

OPERATIONAL
TIME

000078

RESET



Graffeo

RIES



308
quattrovalvole

San Francisco Chronicle



S.F.'S OLDEST COFFEE ROASTER IS A 'WELL-KEPT SECRET.' A NEW OWNER WANTS TO CHANGE THAT

Shortly after taking over from his father, Repetto was interested in removing the bitter, burnt flavors from Graffeo's coffee that resulted from prolonged contact with the hot metal drums then used for roasting. He worked with Mike Sivetz, a chemical engineer from Oregon, who worked with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, to develop an early model of the fluid bed roasting machine. Over the years, Repetto has made several modifications, with some requiring special build-outs of the roasting floor; fortunately, Repetto owns the building.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GRAFFEO?

...months into Haas' and Repetto's partnership, getting that coffee to more people is the main objective. The owners say their roaster can produce several times more coffee than its current output. The idea is to earn shelf space at more specialty markets and greatly increase online retail and wholesale orders.

"My job is to make (Graffeo) a less well-kept secret, but you won't be able to get it just anywhere," Haas said.



San Francisco Chronicle



Lazy Bear

GRAFFEO IS SERVED AT SAN FRANCISCO FAVORITES...

including Zuni Cafe, House of Prime Rib and Lazy Bear, but the brand still maintains a relatively low profile. Haas hopes to change that, but his adjustments have been modest so far. The first thing Haas did on his first day on the job was install a coffee maker in the break room: Graffeo's storefront famously doesn't serve coffee drinks, and is instead focused on selling retail coffee by the pound and shipping orders.

GRAFFEO'S HISTORY DATES TO 1935

when Giovanni Graffeo, a Sicilian immigrant, opened a neighborhood grocery store that also roasted coffee beans. The original owner died in 1944, leaving the business to a string of interim owners and inactivity. Giovanni Repetto bought Graffeo in 1954, bringing his experience of roasting coffee in Italy to the neighborhood. Luciano Repetto was only 10 years old at the time, absorbing the intricacies of the coffee business as he grew up. After his father retired in 1977, the son took over the family business, leaving behind a successful career as a wine salesman. At one point, Graffeo operated two roasting facilities in the Los Angeles area and one in Singapore.



House of Prime Rib



Zuni Cafe



SFGATE

"I DON'T NEED
GOOD COFFEE.
I NEED GREAT
COFFEE"

Joe Betz, owner of House of Prime Rib

"We are the oldest, yet we're the most technically advanced without any doubt," Repetto told SFGATE over the loud whir of the massive roaster. "Our roasting method is very exact, very scientific. We roast using temperature measurements, computers, thermocouples. We don't roast by looking at the color or by time. We do it scientifically and accurately within one degree of temperature, which gives us tremendous consistency." **That's what hooked Joe Betz owner of House of Prime Rib, which has been serving Graffeo for 25 years.** "I don't need good coffee. I need great coffee," Betz said. "It's consistent. The quality is just there. I know Luciano, and I know he takes care of the merchandise."



Graffeo



While coffee trends come and go, for the last 60 years Graffeo has remained laser focused on the science and art of roasting beans that yield what we believe is simply the world's finest coffee. We keep it simple. One blend. Two roasts. No shortcuts. Because when it comes to something as vital as coffee, you don't mess with perfection.



Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

September 22, 2025

GRAFFEO COFFEE ROASTING COMPANY INC

Application Number: LBR-2016-17-038
Business Name: Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc
Business Address: 735 Columbus Ave.
District: District 3
Applicant: Walter Haas, CEO
Nomination Date: October 24, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc, currently located at 735 Columbus Ave.

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on September 22, 2025, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Legacy Business Program

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





BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company Inc.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Unique coffee roasting.
- Custom-built Sivetz fluid bed roaster.

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

- Coffee shop.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on September 22, 2025.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

Legacy Business Program

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





LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: September 17, 2025

Filing Date: August 19, 2025
Case No.: 2025-007616LBR
Business Name: Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company
Business Address: 735 Columbus Ave
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Not Applicable
Block/Lot: 0090/037
Applicant: Walter Haas
735 Columbus Avenue
Nominated By: Supervisor Danny Sauter
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Rogelio Baeza – 628-652-7369
Rogelio.Baeza@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company was founded in 1935 by Sicilian immigrant Giovanni Graffeo as a small grocery store that roasted coffee in San Francisco's North Beach. After Giovanni's death in 1944, the business saw a period of dormancy until Giovanni Repetto revived it in 1954, bringing Italian coffee-roasting expertise. His son, Luciano Repetto, took over in 1977, focusing solely on coffee and introducing innovations like the Sivetz Fluid Bed Roaster, which he further customized over time.

Under Luciano, Graffeo expanded its wholesale business, opened additional facilities in Los Angeles and Singapore, and now also operates a roasting site in San Rafael. Despite this growth, the original Columbus Avenue storefront remains its headquarters. In 2024, Walter A. Haas III acquired a majority stake to preserve and expand the brand, while Luciano continues to run the company as co-owner.

Graffeo Coffee is and continues to be a historic and iconic part of San Francisco's North Beach, known as the city's oldest surviving artisan coffee roaster and a key part of its Italian-American coffee heritage. The result of its unique coffee roasting technique is a smooth, rich, and strong coffee that surprises many who associate dark roasts with bitterness. Graffeo's commitment to quality and tradition makes it a standout in both flavor and legacy.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1935.

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

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

- a. Graffeo Coffee has operated continuously in San Francisco for 90 years.
- b. Graffeo Coffee has contributed to the history and identity of the North Beach neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Graffeo Coffee 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 its unique coffee roasting process to provide high quality coffee beans for its aficionados.

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

Yes. Over the years, Graffeo Coffee has attracted notable neighborhood icons, local writers, and cultural figures drawn to North Beach's vibrant artistic and culinary life. During a visit to San Francisco, Ruth Reichl of The New York Times singled out Graffeo Coffee as her favorite, praising its exceptional flavor. Its current clientele includes other legacy establishments, such as Mario's Bohemian Caf  n.

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

No.

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

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

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

Yes, there have been a number of features and articles on Grafteo Coffee, both within and outside the industry. Grafteo Coffee was featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s article *S.F.'s Oldest Coffee Roaster Is a 'Well-Kept Secret.' A New Owner Wants to Change That* (San Francisco Chronicle, 2025). It has also been praised as one of the oldest coffee roasteries and for perfecting traditional roasting methods in a CBS News segment titled *A San Francisco Coffee Roaster's Mission to Deliver the Perfect Cup* (CBS News, n.d.). As of this year, Grafteo Coffee has been mentioned in the coffee newsletter *International Communicaffe*, which stated the company has "earned the trust of Michelin-starred chefs and the most selective specialty retailers in the Bay Area and Beverly Hills" (International Communicaffe, 2025).

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

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

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

Grafteo Coffee is a cornerstone of North Beach's Italian-American identity and the oldest artisan coffee roaster in San Francisco, preserving a roasting tradition that predates modern specialty coffee. Its distinctiveness lies in a custom-built Sivetz fluid bed roaster, refined over decades by co-owner Luciano Repetto. Unlike traditional drum roasters that can scorch beans, Grafteo's air-based roasting ensures even, gentle heat that brings out the best flavors—resulting in strong yet smooth, never bitter coffee. As Repetto describes it, their process is a blend of science and soul, focused on precise temperature control rather than time or color.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 735 Columbus Street (1935 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Unique Coffee Roasting
- Custom-built Sivetz fluid bed roaster

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None

Basis for Recommendation

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

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DRAFT RESOLUTION NO. ###

HEARING DATE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2025

Case No.: 2025-007616LBR
Business Name: Graffeo Coffee Roasting Company
Business Address: 735 COLUMBUS AVE
Zoning: NCD (NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0090/037
Applicant: Walter Haas
735 Columbus Avenue
Nominated By: Former Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Located In: District 3
Staff Contact: Rogelio Baeza – 628-652-7369
Rogelio.Baeza@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR GRAFFEO COFFEE ROASTING COMPANY CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 735 COLUMBUS AVE, BLOCK 0090, LOT 037.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on September 17, 2025, 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 Grafteo Coffee Roasting Company, Inc. qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Grafteo Coffee Roasting Company, Inc.

Locations

Current Locations:

- 735 Columbus Ave (1935 - Present)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- Coffee Roasting Establishment

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business on September 17, 2025.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: September 17, 2025