



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

Hearing Date: December 12, 2022

## LIFE

*Application No.:* LBR-2022-23-006  
*Business Name:* Life  
*Business Address:* 604A Haight St.  
*District:* District 5  
*Applicant:* Rika Futamura, Owner  
*Nomination Letter Date:* July 29, 2022  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Dean Preston  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Life is a gift shop in the Lower Haight neighborhood established by Sarah Laight in 1992 specializing in fragrance and essential oils, custom fragrance blending, clean beauty, scented candles, incense, magic books, and organic clothing, as well as pioneering in ecofriendly bulk body products and offering astrology readings. Life is a place for the community where customers, neighbors, artists, and friends can gather since its inception.

Life also serves as a community hub by offering a gathering space for California's emergent house music scene in the 1990s, as well as a catalyzing space for the San Francisco Henna Body Art Community.

The business is highly influenced by South Asian practices and fragrances. After extensively traveling in Bali, Indonesia, Sarah designed and helped open Life in 2004 Amed, a boutique hotel on the east coast of Bali. Sarah moved to Bali in 2009 and divided her time between San Francisco and Bali. Sarah began designing jewelry and brought back an assortment of beautiful Balinese fabrics, accessories, incense, and homeware to Life. Sarah always felt that 20 years of owning the shop would be an incredible achievement, and it was time to pass on the ownership. In the fall of 2011, Sarah decided to sell the shop to her long-time employee, Rika Futamura, who was a manager of the shop at that time. Under Rika's stewardship, Life serves as a place for local artists and musicians to gather, meet community members and sell their products.

Life's customers are as colorful as the neighborhood – older customers who have shopped there since the store first opened in the 1990s; families whose children have now grown; and the new and younger generation in the tech and service industries, including hairstylists, service industry professionals, and other business owners who work in the neighborhood. Life has many customers who come from other Bay Area counties, Southern California, and even from abroad.

### CRITERION 1

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

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

604A Haight St. from 1992 to Present (30 Years)

#### Legacy Business Program

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





## CRITERION 2

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

Yes, Life has contributed to the history and identity of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and San Francisco.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is associated with offering a unique custom fragrance blending service experience and the craft of Henna Body Art.
- Life has always maintained a beautiful storefront with changing window displays. The store has hosted two different artists to paint murals on their side door, and there is a hand-carved wooden sign that reads "Life Est. 1992" above the door with the beautiful architecture and colorful culture of the Lower Haight neighborhood.
- In 1998, Sarah had learned and started to offer Henna Body Art in the Life Henna Lounge she created in the back of the shop. The popularity of Henna Body Art in that era helped propel Life to success and recognition in the Henna Body Art community. Word of mouth quickly spread of Life's Henna offerings, and many customers traveled to the shop to seek this service. Sarah continued to do Henna for the next 10 years with a crew of talented Henna artists in the shop and at many events such as private parties and music festivals. In 2000, Sarah invited small businesses in the Lower Haight to join her in creating the Late Night in Lower Haight, a holiday shopping event in December to promote small businesses in the Lower Haight, which has evolved to become the Lower Haight Art Walk in the present day. The Lower Haight Art Walk has been happening a few times a year for over 10 years, bringing together the whole neighborhood and community and promoting small businesses, local art and music, and the colorful and artistic culture of the Lower Haight.
- The establishment has been featured in a website article named "Owner of Life Boutique Leaving After 20 Years" back in January 2012. Hoodline is a hyperlocal news site that prides itself in delivering original news and stories in local neighborhoods.

## CRITERION 3

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

Yes, Life is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Life 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:

- Oil and fragrance oils.
- Murals.
- Hand-carved wooden sign.
- Excellent customer service.
- Support of local artists and makers.
- Unique offerings of Henna Body Art and handmade mixtapes.

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## **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.

- Gift shop.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Life currently located at 604A Haight St. in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

### **Legacy Business Program**

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# Small Business Commission

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

December 12, 2022

## LIFE

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**Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Life, currently located at 604A Haight St.**

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

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

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

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

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

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on December 12, 2022, 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 Life in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

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**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Life.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Oil and fragrance oils.
- Murals.
- Hand-carved wooden sign.
- Excellent customer service.
- Support of local artists and makers.
- Unique offerings of Henna Body Art and handmade mixtapes.

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

- Gift shop.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on December 12, 2022.

---

Katy Tang  
Director

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

Ayes –  
Nays –  
Abstained –  
Absent –

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# Legacy Business Registry

# Application Review Sheet

*Application No.:* LBR-2022-23-006  
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**CRITERION 1:** Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?  
    X     Yes                 No

604A Haight St. from 1992 to Present (30 Years)

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

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

NOTES: n/a

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: October 19, 2022

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds  
Legacy Business Program

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Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 5



City and County of San Francisco

**DEAN PRESTON**

July 29, 2022

Office of Small Business  
Attn: Legacy Business Registration Application  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: *Letter of Nomination for Life to the Legacy Business Registry*

Dear Mr. Kurylo:

I am writing to nominate Life, a long-time cultural and Lower Haight community institution, to the Legacy Business Registry.

Since opening in 1992, Life has served the Lower Haight as a gift shop and community hub. As a shop, Life specializes in crafting world-class fragrance blends and essential oils, selling eco-friendly bulk body products and beauty supplies, candles, incense, magic books and offering astrology readings. As a community hub, Life has been both a gathering space for California's emergent house music scene in the 1990's, as well as a catalyzing space for the San Francisco Henna Body Art Community. It is a true embodiment of the spirit of the Lower Haight neighborhood.

Sarah Laight, the original founder and owner, gave Life its name because she knew that this business would become her life's work, while also highlighting her belief in the living qualities inherent in all things. The care and intentionality that she, as well as current owner, Rika Futamura, have put into this shop over the years is evident from the items that they carry to the community that they have crafted.

Beyond the shop itself, Life has shown itself to be dedicated to the larger Lower Haight and San Francisco community. Life's founder, Sarah Laight, organized Late Night in Lower Haight in 2000, a holiday shopping event that would go on to become the much beloved Lower Haight Art Walk. The current owner, Rika took over ownership of Life in 2011 after having been a long-time shopper turned employee, and has continued Life's deep commitment to the neighborhood.

Under Rika's stewardship, Life serves as a place for local artists and musicians to gather, meet community members and sell their products. Rika continues the legacy of ensuring that Life is a part of the Lower Haight community. People come to Life for the oils and sundries and linger for the ambiance and conversation.

Having survived difficult years in the pandemic, Life remains a favorite stomping ground amongst both locals and visitors to the city. It is welcoming, with a truly positive and even magical energy that retains the age-old charm of the Lower Haight after all of these years. I hope that Rika and Life continue to serve the Lower Haight neighborhood, San Francisco and beyond, for many more years to come.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these comments. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Preston", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Dean Preston  
District 5 Supervisor





# Legacy Business Registry Application



## Business Information

**Business name:** Life

**Business owner name(s):** Rika Futamura

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

**Current business address:** 604A Haight St., San Francisco, CA 94117

**Telephone:** ( 415 ) 252 - 9312      **Email:** lifesanfrancisco@gmail.com

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

**Website:** www.lifesanfrancisco.com

**Facebook:** https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100      **Twitter:** @lifeboutique

**7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN):** 0 4 6 6 0 4 5

**Do any of these describe your business?** (select all that apply)  
*Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Immigrant-Owned Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Owned by Person with a Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+-Owned Business               | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-Owned Business            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minority-Owned Business* | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Woman-Owned Business   |

*\*Minority is defined as on 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:** Rika Futamura

**Contact person title:** Owner

**Contact telephone:** ( 415 ) 252 - 9312      **Contact email:** lifesanfrancisco@gmail.com

## Business Location(s)

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

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

**Original San Francisco address:**  **Zip Code:**

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

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

---

**Other address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

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

---

**Other address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

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

---

**Other address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

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

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**Other Address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

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

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**Other address (if applicable):**  **Zip Code:**

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

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## 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.

Rika Futamura

06/15/22

Rika Futamura

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Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:

# LIFE

## Written Historical Narrative

### INTRODUCTION

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

Life is a gift shop in the Lower Haight neighborhood specializing in fragrance and essential oils, custom fragrance blending, clean beauty, scented candles, incense, magic books, and organic clothing, as well as pioneering in eco-friendly bulk body products and offering astrology readings. Life is a place for the community where customers, neighbors, artists, and friends can gather.

#### b. Describe who the business serves.

Though Haight Street has historically brought many tourists from around the country and the world, the community that Life serves the most is the Lower Haight community. Life has always been a favorite and much-loved shop in the Lower Haight, and their customer base reflects this fact.

Life's customers are as colorful as the neighborhood – older customers who have shopped there since the store first opened in the 1990s; families whose children have now grown; and the new and younger generation in the tech and service industries, including hairstylists, service industry professionals, and other business owners who work in the neighborhood. Life has many customers who come from other Bay Area counties, Southern California, and even from abroad. Past San Francisco residents who have moved away often visit the store whenever they are in town.

Life is always expanding their customer base through word of mouth, and they are now well known for the oil blending service they provide that cannot be found anywhere else in the Bay Area.

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

Custom made fragrances.

### 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.

In early 1992, Sarah Laight saw a vacant storefront at 604A Haight Street and envisioned opening a retail store there. Originally from England, she had been living in San Francisco for a few years and was just about to take a trip to Thailand. During her travels, she began envisioning how she would create a beautiful shop in the space, the store concept, and even designing the window gates that still exist today. Upon returning from Thailand, the storefront was still vacant, so she knocked on

the door of the flats upstairs where she met the landlord of the building, Kelly Dearman. Sarah showed Kelly her drawings and shared her ideas for the store, and Kelly agreed to lease the storefront to Sarah starting on August 1, 1992.

Sarah decided to name the shop Life, because she felt that this business, where she would dedicate so much of her time and energy, would become the center of her life, and also because she believed life is in everything we touch and breathe. Life opened on September 11, 1992. Kelly has continued to be the landlord for the last 30 years.

During the early 1990s, the Lower Haight was a colorful neighborhood with a community of artists, DJs, musicians, and other thriving small businesses. The Life shop quickly became a hub and sanctuary to the community, where customers, friends, and neighbors would gather, shop, talk about music, learn about oils, and build friendships. During the 1990s, Life became known in the underground House Music scene for selling handmade mix tapes from DJs. People from all around California came to seek these out. Music and incense were always flowing from the door, as it is very much today.

In 2004, after extensively traveling in Bali, Indonesia, Sarah designed and helped open Life in Amed, a boutique hotel on the east coast of Bali. Sarah moved to Bali in 2009 and divided her time between San Francisco and Bali. Sarah began designing jewelry, and brought back an assortment of beautiful Balinese fabrics, accessories, incense, and homeware to Life. Sarah always felt that 20 years of owning the shop would be an incredible achievement, and it was time to pass on the ownership. In the fall of 2011, Sarah decided to sell the shop to her long-time employee, Rika Futamura, who was a manager of the shop at that time.

Rika started working at Life for Sarah in the summer of 2004. Rika moved to San Francisco in August 2001 from Hayama, Japan, a small beach town south of Tokyo. She started living in the Lower Haight in January 2002 and had frequented the Life shop as a customer and became good friends with the ladies that worked there. One of these ladies ended up being her roommate, and when her roommate decided to leave her job at Life, Rika took on her position as a sales associate. She worked part-time for the first few years, while also working full-time as a sushi chef.

In the spring of 2010, Rika started managing Life full-time. During her years of working for Sarah, Rika learned from Sarah the art and practice of custom fragrance blending and about aromatherapy as well as the daily operations of running a small business. Rika started joining Sarah for buying trips in the Bay Area as well as Los Angeles, to learn about wholesale buying for retail and getting to know the companies, designers, and sales groups that supply the shop with merchandise.

Preparations and talks for the business transfer began in the fall of 2011. To prepare herself for the skills she would need to run a small business, Rika started a three-month business course at the Women's Initiative for Self-Employment and graduated the class in December 2011. Ownership transferred on February 7, 2012, and Rika became the new owner of Life.

Since Rika had worked at Life for 8 years prior to buying the shop from Sarah, she was a familiar face in the neighborhood, community and with customers at Life. She was someone who

understood and loved the culture and community of the Lower Haight, and had shown a great interest and enjoyed managing the shop.

After Rika took over ownership, she has continued to honor the shop concept created by her former employer and mentor, Sarah. Rika created a new logo and signage for Life, but kept the same business model and concept. It was important for Rika to honor the history of the shop and not change it too much. The new store logo, the double-sided arrow with a diamond in the middle, represents a timeline of Life's history and its evolution.

Rika celebrated her 10-year anniversary as shop owner on February 7, 2022. She has since painted the interior and exterior, updated to an accessible entryway, expanded the oil selection, brought in two local curators of vintage clothes, shifted the shop gift selection to locally made products and merchandise, and invited local artist to showcase their art work on the shop walls, while continuing to be involved in the Lower Haight community through participation with the Lower Haight Art Walks and other neighborhoods events as well as the Lower Haight Merchants and Neighbors Association.

In 2022, Life continues to be a vital small business in the Lower Haight neighborhood. Surviving the 2020 pandemic year was difficult, but their local and loyal regular customers supported the store tremendously by shopping online, buying gift certificates, and choosing to shop there again and again. Rika has been told by many customers, new and old, that Life is their favorite shop in San Francisco and that it is unlike any other place, with a welcoming, magical, positive vibe, and a beautifully curated selection of unique items for gifts, home, and everyday life. Life hopes to continue to serve the Lower Haight neighborhood, San Francisco, and beyond for many years to come.

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

1992 to 2012:	Sarah Laight
2012 to Present:	Rika Futamura

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

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Life was closed from March 16 to June 16 in compliance with the San Francisco order to close all retail stores. They were able to continue online sales. The local community supports Life day in and day out, year after year, and has helped Life survive the COVID pandemic and other economically challenging times.

**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.**

With only a handful of retail shops in the Lower Haight shopping corridor, Life has, along with the other small businesses that exist there, contributed to the success of the neighborhood and community as a whole.

The Life shop has been more than just a retail store in the Lower Haight. Since the beginning, one of Life's offerings that made them different from other retail shops has been the custom fragrance blending service, which has become even more popular in the present day. There are no other businesses in San Francisco that offer the extensive fragrance and essential oil custom blending that they offer. In the 1990s, Life was one of the first places to offer Henna Body Art to the community, started by the original owner Sarah Laight.

Life has always been known in the neighborhood to have very friendly and helpful staff, excellent customer service, and unique and high-quality merchandise. It's a great place to buy gifts and cards. In recent years, Life has shifted its focus to more local makers, artists, and designers and has provided a space for local artists to showcase their work.

Many customers that come to shop at Life also visit one of the many hair salons and eat at the many great eateries in the neighborhood. As a community of businesses, they have all helped one another become successful.

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

In 1998, Sarah had learned and started to offer Henna Body Art in the Life Henna Lounge she created in the back of the shop. The popularity of Henna Body Art in that era helped propel Life to success and recognition in the Henna Body Art community. Word of mouth quickly spread of Life's Henna offerings, and many customers traveled to the shop to seek this service. Sarah continued to do Henna for the next 10 years with a crew of talented Henna artists in the shop and at many events such as private parties and music festivals.

In 2000, Sarah invited small businesses in the Lower Haight to join her in creating the Late Night in Lower Haight, a holiday shopping event in December to promote small businesses in the Lower Haight, which has evolved to become the Lower Haight Art Walk in the present day. The Lower Haight Art Walk has been happening a few times a year for over 10 years, bringing together the whole neighborhood and community and promoting small businesses, local art and music, and the colorful and artistic culture of the Lower Haight.

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

Life's most important store concept is to give its customers and community a beautiful experience when shopping at the store. Life is committed to serving its community and many customers from all walks of life and all parts of the United States and the world; providing excellent customer service; providing much care and attention to detail; offering their expertise of custom fragrance blending; and making each person feel welcome, comfortable, and appreciated. They have donated to numerous local school fundraisers, auctions, and charitable organizations; have been part of every Art Walk; contributed to the Lower Haight Merchants and Neighbors Association; and know their neighbors by name and have long lasting, positive relationships with many other Lower Haight businesses and the community.

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

A story about Life's business ownership transfer was featured in Hoodline in January 2012. <https://hoodline.com/2012/01/owner-of-life-boutique-leaving-after-20-years/>

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

Life has not received any awards, recognition, or political commendations.

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

Haight Street is a culturally and historically significant street, with its history being most associated with the Hippie Era of the 1960s and 1970s. Life has continued to honor the history of this street with the offering of many things made popular in that era, from incense, essential oils, books about magic and nature, to vintage clothing. Life is a shop that is loved by many in the community; it is a place to shop but also a place for the community to gather, a place for artists to showcase their work, a place that many people find comfort and sanctuary, and truly a one-of-a-kind, special place for many people. For these many reasons, it would be a significant loss for the neighborhood as a business corridor and as a community if Life were to ever close.

**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?**

Life has always maintained a beautiful storefront with changing window displays. The store has hosted two different artists to paint murals on their side door, and there is a hand-carved wooden sign that reads "Life Est. 1992" above the door. In August 2021, the store upgraded the entryway to an ADA compliant sloped doorway, repainted the shop exterior and door, and continued to upkeep the shop exterior and interior in line with the beautiful architecture and colorful culture of the Lower Haight neighborhood.

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

The essential feature of Life that sets them apart from other retail stores is their custom fragrance blending service. With over 100 different fragrance and essential oils, they have created thousands of unique blends catered to each customer. They have extensively trained the Life staff as well as continually educating themselves about fragrance blending techniques and trends, aromatherapy and the therapeutic qualities of essential oils, proper and safe handling and usage of oils, and providing a unique experience to customers by assisting them in creating their own fragrances



with their skill, knowledge, and expertise. Life is committed to maintaining the unique custom fragrance blending service that they have become known for, not only because of demand but also because it is what they are passionate about, and makes the store unique in the retail world.

Life is also committed to providing excellent customer service to their community and customers, and focusing on supporting local artists and makers, and being true to their community roots and providing a safe and welcoming place for the community. Life provides a joyful and invigorating experience to its customers.

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

The challenges that Life is facing today is the ongoing recovery from the pandemic years 2020 and 2021. During 2020, sales were half of what it would have been in a normal year, and although 2021 was a better year than the last, much of the debt from the year prior remained. The Economic Injury Disaster Loan and other grants have helped Life keep its doors open, but the taxes and repayment of loans have caused significant financial pressure.

Since the pandemic began, Life has had many supply chain issues affecting the ability to stock the store with merchandise. The cost of goods has gone up significantly, and along with repaying the debt accumulated from the first two years of the pandemic, 2022 has been a challenging year financially.

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**Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:**

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

Gift shop.

**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 building housing Life has a Planning Dept. Historic Resource Status of B – Unknown / Age Eligible per a Planning survey in 1976. The building appears to be a well-maintained Edwardian building that should likely be listed as Category A (Historical Resource). That said, the San Francisco Citywide Cultural Resources Survey (SF Survey) is underway. The SF Survey is a multi-year effort to identify and document places and resources of cultural, historical, and architectural importance to San Francisco's diverse communities. As a part of this effort, Planning staff have been auditing past survey findings to ensure accuracy.









## Owner of Life Boutique Leaving After 20 Years



By Andrew Dudley - Published on January 30, 2012.

San Francisco Lower Haight

Sarah Laight, the owner of Lower Haight specialty shop [Life](#), is selling the store after nearly 20 years in the neighborhood.

Sarah opened the shop in 1992, selling candles, scents, beauty products and gifts inspired by her travels to Southeast Asia.

The Lower Haight was a very different place in the early '90s, Sarah recalls.

*"I started hanging out in Lower Haight 25 years ago. There were a lot of bars -- Nickies, 13%, Toronado, Noc Noc, 508 Haight, Water Bar and eclectic shops along Fillmore Street. My favourite shops were Eye of the Day and Naked Eye."*

But it was serendipity that led her to open a shop of her own.

*"I knew of the space before I went travelling around Asia in 1992, and when I came home it was still vacant. I had a twist of fate. I was waiting for an apartment to come up, and had no where to stay. I had parked my car on the corner by O'Looney's while staying with friends for one night. All my belongings and a big bag of silver jewelry were in the trunk. In the morning, my Falcon had been crowbarred, and everything was taken. Luckily I was insured. But my mum offered me money, and I said I'd rather use the money to open this shop with oils and candles, products that you could refill and recycle. I drew up a design and knocked on the apartment above 604a Haight Street, and met Kelly Dearman, my landlady, a true treasure. That's how it began. I rented the flat above and the shop."*

As Sarah recalls, the Lower Haight was an eclectic place at the time, filled with music. *"[It was] a cross between music lovers and shakers, artists, the rock star contingent and zombies on crack. On a normal sunny day I would arrive at my store with a broken*

*down cadillac in front, with homeless and not so homeless characters smoking away and being serenaded by a sax player. On Sundays, the gospel choirs sang at the church where the lofts are now, over a loudspeaker. Also, where Edo is, there was plenty of singing and tambourines banging away with services all the time."*

But the neighborhood had its challenges as well.

*"I would say with sadness, a young boy would come to visit me in the early years, and I have seen many youngsters grow up.*



*Raymon Bass was shot down on the 400 block when he was 17 years old. I had just seen him -- he was a lovely child, full of promise and doing well at school. The shooting was mindless, a retaliation for something someone had done in his family. I think he should be remembered. He was a child of the Lower Haight."*

Sarah has been considering selling the shop for a while, but wanted to reach the two-decade mark before making her exit. Now, as Life enters its 20th year, she's ready to move on. She recently sold the business to one of her employees, Rika, but says that the shop should largely stay the same after her departure. For Sarah, though, things will change quickly.



*"I have been traveling to Bali for years and will be spending more time there, where I designed a [Life Hotel](#). I may be collaborating in the design of a Life cafe, freediving and yoga centre. My goal is to make a museum for the soon to be lost art and 900 year old tradition of salt-making in Eastern Bali. I look forward to coming home to San Francisco and spending more time with my family and friends."*



In this, her final week as a Lower Haight business owner, Sarah will be thanking her customers (and Haighteration readers) with a sale -- a 20% discount

now through Sunday when you mention Haighteration. That increases to 25% if you pay with cash. Finally, she'll be having a send-off party at the shop this Friday, from 6pm to 9pm, if you'd like to swing by and wish her well.



In her own words:

*"It's been nearly 20 years for me and all the good times and faces of my customers visits flash by. I am lucky to have done exactly what I wanted all these years."*

Best of luck, Sarah!





# LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEARING DATE: November 16, 2022**

*Filing Date:* October 19, 2022  
*Case No.:* **2022-010323LBR**  
*Business Name:* Life  
*Business Address:* 604 Haight St  
*Zoning:* NCD (LOWER HAIGHT STREET NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0847/007  
*Applicant:* Rika Futamura  
604A Haight Street  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Dean Preston  
*Located In:* District 5  
*Staff Contact:* Rogelio Baeza – 6286-52-7369  
Rogelio.Baeza@sfgov.org

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

## Business Description

Life is a gift shop in the Lower Haight neighborhood specializing in fragrance and essential oils, custom fragrance blending, clean beauty, scented candles, incense, magic books, and organic clothing, as well as pioneering in eco-friendly bulk body products and offering astrology readings. Life is a place for the community where customers, neighbors, artists, and friends can gather since its inception by Sarah Laight in 1992.

Life also serves as a community hub by offering a gathering space for California's emergent house music scene in the 1990's, as well as a catalyzing space for the San Francisco Henna Body Art Community.

The business is highly influenced by South Asian practices and fragrances. After extensively traveling in Bali, Indonesia, Sarah designed and helped open Life in 2004 Amed, a boutique hotel on the east coast of Bali. Sarah moved to Bali in 2009 and divided her time between San Francisco and Bali. Sarah began designing jewelry, and brought back an assortment of beautiful Balinese fabrics, accessories, incense, and homeware to Life. Sarah always felt that 20 years of owning the shop would be an incredible achievement, and it was time to pass on the

ownership. In the fall of 2011, Sarah decided to sell the shop to her long-time employee, Rika Futamura, who was a manager of the shop at that time in 2012. Under Rika's stewardship, Life serves as a place for local artists and musicians to gather, meet community members and sell their products.

Life's customers are as colorful as the neighborhood – older customers who have shopped there since the store first opened in the 1990s; families whose children have now grown; and the new and younger generation in the tech and service industries, including hairstylists, service industry professionals, and other business owners who work in the neighborhood. Life has many customers who come from other Bay Area counties, Southern California, and even from abroad.

The business's primary location at 604 Haight St is a Category B (No resource Present / Not Age Eligible) structure on the north side of Haight St between Pierce and Steiner Streets in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. It is within the Lower Haight NCD (Neighborhood Commercial) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. 604 Haight was included in the 1976 Survey where the building was given a rating of 2.

## Staff Analysis

### Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1992.

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

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

- a. Life has operated continuously in San Francisco for 30 years.
- b. Life has contributed to the history and identity of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Life 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, or tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with offering a unique custom fragrance blending service experience and the craft of Henna Body Art.

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

Yes. Life has always maintained a beautiful storefront with changing window displays. The store has hosted two different artists to paint murals on their side door, and there is a hand-carved wooden sign that reads "Life Est. 1992" above the door with the beautiful architecture and colorful culture of the Lower Haight neighborhood.

In 1998, Sarah had learned and started to offer Henna Body Art in the Life Henna Lounge she created in the back of the shop. The popularity of Henna Body Art in that era helped propel Life to success and recognition in the Henna Body Art community. Word of mouth quickly spread of Life's Henna offerings, and many

customers traveled to the shop to seek this service. Sarah continued to do Henna for the next 10 years with a crew of talented Henna artists in the shop and at many events such as private parties and music festivals.

In 2000, Sarah invited small businesses in the Lower Haight to join her in creating the Late Night in Lower Haight, a holiday shopping event in December to promote small businesses in the Lower Haight, which has evolved to become the Lower Haight Art Walk in the present day. The Lower Haight Art Walk has been happening a few times a year for over 10 years, bringing together the whole neighborhood and community and promoting small businesses, local art and music, and the colorful and artistic culture of the Lower Haight.

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

No. The property was evaluated as part of the 1976 Survey and was given an evaluation of 2 out of 5.

**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. The establishment has been featured in a website article named "[Owner of Life Boutique Leaving After 20 Years](#)" back in January 2012. Hoodline is a hyperlocal news site that prides itself in delivering original news and stories in local neighborhoods.

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

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 604 Haight St (1992 – Present)

Recommended by Applicant

- Oil and Fragrance Oils
- Murals
- Hand-carved wooden sign
- Excellent customer service
- Support of local artists and makers
- Unique offerings of Henna Body Art and handmade mixtapes

## **Basis for Recommendation**

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

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet

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



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 1289

**HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 2022**

**CORRECTED DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 2022**

*Case No.:* 2022-010323LBR  
*Business Name:* Life  
*Business Address:* 604 HAIGHT STREET<sup>1</sup> (~~Primary Address~~)  
*Zoning:* NCD (LOWER HAIGHT STREET NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT) Zoning District  
40-X Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0847/007  
*Applicant:* Rika Futamura  
604A Haight Street  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Dean Preston  
*Located In:* District 5  
*Staff Contact:* Mary Jane Green – 628-652-7399  
MaryJane.Green@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR LIFE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 604 HAIGHT ST; BLOCK/LOT 0847/007.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Although Life is associated with 604A Haight Street, the 604 Haight Street address is recorded here as there is no official record of a 604A Haight Street.

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on November 16, 2022, 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 604 HAIGHT STREET 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 604 HAIGHT ST.

*Location(s):*

Current Locations:

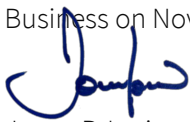
- 604 Haight Street (1992 – Present)

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:*

- Oil and Fragrance Oils
- Murals
- Hand-carved wooden sign
- Excellent customer service
- Support of local artists and makers
- Unique offerings of Henna Body Art and handmade mixtapes

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 **2022-010323LBR** to the Office of Small Business on November 16, 2022 and corrected on November 30, 2022.



Jonas P. Ionin  
*Commission Secretary*

AYES: Wright, Black, Johns, So, Nageswaran

NOES: None

ABSENT: Foley, Matsuda

ADOPTED: November 16, 2022

CORRECTED: November 30, 2022