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Ken Fulk 
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From a hotel pioneer to an urban planner reimagining San Francisco and the cofounders of the world's only café serving indigenous Ohlone cuisine, we shine a light on 15 trailblazers who exemplify the Bay Area's spirit

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TYLER FLORENCE
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Photo and rendering courtesy of EQUINOX HOSPITALITY



A rendering of the pool at Equinox Hospitality's Tribute Portfolio by Marriott project in Marin County, crafted by EDG Design

Sam Suleman

Principal + Executive Vice President
Equinox Hospitality

Though Sam Suleman has lived in various cities across the U.S., San Francisco has always been home. The city is an anchor for his family, which runs locally based Equinox Hospitality, the hotel investment, development, and management company founded by his father, Abdul Suleman, in 1994, and where Suleman and his brother, Adam, serve as principals and executive vice presidents.

Originally from India, Suleman's father ended up in San Francisco when he was recruited by engineering firm Bechtel while doing graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley in engineering. The firm put him up in the Hyatt Regency San Francisco. Abdul fell in love with the property, particularly the iconic atrium lobby, and left the Bechtel program, dropped out of Berkeley, and got a job at the hotel's front desk. He worked his way up from there, meeting Suleman's mother along the way (the pair was married at the hotel).

After Suleman was born, the family followed Abdul's Hyatt career across the country—from Chicago to Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Michigan, and Dallas—before they found their way back to the Hyatt Regency San Francisco. Abdul was now senior vice president, and the family lived in an apartment in the hotel (this was the third Hyatt they resided in). "I was the kid with the backpack eating pineapple and toast in the Regency Club Lounge before taking the Muni train to high school," he says.

Turning down a promotion to move to Hyatt's Chicago corporate headquarters, Suleman's dad decided, after 22 years with the brand, it was the right time to launch his own company. Equinox Hospitality's first hotel purchase was in Kauai, Hawaii.

Suleman, for his part, didn't initially join the family business. He was first drawn to medicine, receiving a National Institutes of Health grant as a senior clinical researcher in pediatric cardiac surgery and working

at the University of California, San Francisco and Stanford University. While at Stanford, after taking a leave from medical school, he started simultaneously working with the Equinox team. His interest in design and technology made the construction and renovation world exciting. "I'm passion driven, and I was passionate about hospitality. I knew that from a young age," he says.

Today, Equinox Hospitality owns and operates eight hotels, and the company was also consultant, adviser, and asset manager for Jabal Omar Development Company (JODC)'s Makkah, Saudi Arabia development of 36 high-rise buildings comprising 26 hotel brands. A more personal project is the conversion of a Four Points by Sheraton into a Tribute Portfolio by Marriott in Marin County, the handiwork of local firm EDG Design. "We're excited [to create] one of the only true boutique lifestyle hotels in the midpoint between San Francisco and Napa Wine country," Suleman says.

As for what makes San Francisco ready for its comeback? "There's a real sense of people wanting to rebuild that connection," Suleman explains. "There's a physical beauty here, but also a spirit that makes San Francisco special." **hd**

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