



Little Italy Standard for Outdoor Dining Structure



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

A MESSAGE FROM LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, STEVEN J. GALASSO

There is too much to say about what transpired over the last year. Nothing could have prepared us for the international, Covid-19 Pandemic that crippled so many parts of our community, city, state, and nation. What we have all experienced was nothing short of a lesson about the way we live, the way we react to crisis, and the way we cope with cataclysmic events. This annual report reflects an 18-month summary beginning in January 2020 and concluding in June 2021.

Our main avenue, India Street, became a ghost town overnight in early March 2020. The pandemic created a massive hole in our business communities' ability to function. The ability to use adjacent parking spaces to expand our businesses at a time when no one was allowed to enter the premises greatly

alleviated the loss of income. We moved aggressively in June of 2020 to ensure that businesses could use these parking spaces as a life saver. We are now requesting a one-year extension of current conditions for outdoor dining to serve in structures adjacent to our cafes, bars, restaurants and retail shops, starting from the reopening on June 15th

Mixed messages on what is allowable now, and won't be allowable in July, demonstrate the confusion arising from the post COVID actions and we fear curtailment of the structures in parking spaces reflects a challenge to the positive impact that these public spaces have given the businesses in Little Italy. A move to decapitate the roofs of these structures will have a negative, economic impact on the survival of our business community and the resulting

ability to to run a business, let alone maintain a household.

I remain optimistic. As a business owner in this community for over 30 years, I have seen how we as a neighborhood, led by the Little Italy Association, weathered this historic storm with innovative measures and avoided suffering a vacancy issue like many of our communities will face for years to come. We have many faced challenges in the past, but nothing as widespread as the pandemic. We remain hopeful that we will reemerge from this crisis stronger than ever. I am sincerely grateful to everyone who kept the soul of this community alive and moving forward. The pandemic may not be over, but we are one step closer on the road to recovery.

REPORT FROM LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR, MARCO LI MANDRI

These past 18 months have tested us both as an Association and as a community alike. President Steve Galasso implied above that Little Italy has been hit with many crises over the past 60 years, including:

- The decimation of the historic immigrant community following the construction of Interstate 5 in the early 1960s.
- The rapid demise of the 70-year-old tuna fishing industry due to government laws restricting the catching of dolphins and porpoises in the tuna industry nets in the late 1970s, resulting in the transfer of tuna seiners and canneries to the western Pacific and away from San Diego.
- The elimination of the name of "Little Italy" by the former redevelopment agency and the renaming of this community as "Harborview" in the early 1990s, until the community resurrected the name and culture through the Little Italy Association formation in the late 1990s.
- The social and psychological impact of the 9/11 attacks in 2001 had on the local economy, leading to greater restrictions on travel, complications with border crossing, impact on local hotel and airport traffic, and the halting of economic growth in the year following.
- The financial collapse and impact on new development, stopping nearly all development in Little Italy and Downtown from 2009 – 2012, including the elimination of many local banks and subsequent bankruptcies that arose from the lack of regulation of the financial and real estate industry by the Federal government.
- The pandemic of 2020, which led to two complete shutdowns of all social interaction and business activity throughout 2020.
- The unprecedented ever-growing population of homeless and mentally ill individuals living on the street.

From the outset, our goal has been to

preserve what has been created here over the past 25 years. The Association has done exemplary work to keep businesses alive and residents safe in this historic, but fast-growing community. Here are some of the lessons that have been learned over this past year:

Content and Form

The success of any neighborhood, particularly a historic one such as Little Italy, is based on how well the building content and form are managed. In the late 1990's, Little Italy was overwhelmingly one-story, first-generation structures next to ample parking lots to accommodate the office workers in downtown San Diego. 100-year-old sidewalks and streetlights, cars speeding through our main streets heading to the freeway onramps, and only one trash can provided in 48 blocks were some of the features of our community. The state of the neighborhood was somewhat dismal during that era until the Association began to fight for improvements in the mid-1990s.

Today, we have over six distinct public spaces, 2,000 condos built, over 3,000 residential units/apartments built, new sidewalks in our main streets, an urban forest that includes over 1300 trees (considered the best urban forestry project in the County), over 75 restaurants/cafes and bars, dozens of retailers, trash and recycling receptacles on every corner, in addition to stop signs on every corner to slow traffic and increase pedestrian friendliness.

New content has altered the form and look of this community. In the next three years, two buildings exceeding 350 feet high will be constructed, welcoming hundreds of new residents to our thriving community. Little Italy's population has grown from a little over 1,000 residents in the late 1990s to well over 7,000 today. While we don't regulate design of the buildings built within the community, we do advise and insist on the proper integration of buildings to the surrounding public infrastructure to ensure a cohesive, walkable community in our excellent microclimate.

Finally, we understand the need to control land use. Over the past 7 years, restaurants or bars seeking to open in Little Italy were mandated to stop serving outdoors by 10:00pm. each night and by 12:00am every night. This ensures that residents who live above or near these establishments are able to live and sleep in conjunction with the business' operating hours, creating balance between content of the buildings and the form of the neighborhood.

Strategies for Survival

During the pandemic, our 18 maintenance workers and 7 ornamental landscape employees kept the community sanitized, cleaned and maintained. We sought to sustain somewhat of a normal life as a neighborhood, punctured by the forced government shutdowns which fell out of our control. Unfortunately, our entire 30-person valet program suffered the most. Valet will be coming back in July as summer demand for parking increases. In our assessment, we haven't lost one restaurant, café or bar during the pandemic. We were probably the most aggressive in San Diego County in working with the City to implement the use of adjacent parking lots and parking spaces to allow our restaurants and cafes to survive with outdoor dining. This effort that was rolled out overnight in June 2020, saved many businesses from anticipated closures. Though we lost parking, we gained the support of the impacted businesses, which not only provide thousands of jobs, but are, for all intents and purposes, family owned and operated entities. Following guidelines, we understood that the ability of the virus to survive in an open-air environment was one of the best ways to halt the spread of the pandemic in our part of the world.

As we begin to fully re-open a year later, we now face challenges regarding new restrictions on these structures and whether the State will allow them to maintain as such for at least one year after the statewide opening, or until June 15, 2022.

In light of the crisis, Governor Newsom's order for the relaxation of strict building codes on these structures' longevity will be critical to restaurants generating new revenue through both indoor and outdoor dining. This is an example of prioritizing time over tasks. We need these results now.

Dynamic Public Spaces

Since the creation of our first public space, the Piazza Villaggio at Village Walk (Beech and India Streets) in 2002, the Association has designed, funded, and managed five new piazzas or public spaces. Those include the Piazza Villaggio, Piazza Basilone, Piazza Pescatore, Piazza Giannini, Piazza della Famiglia and soon, the Piazza Costanza, Piazza Tomaso, and Piazza Grancini. The Little Italy Association Dog Park, which is funded and managed by the Association, has also become a great gathering spot for dog owners in the neighborhood.

These new public spaces are woven into the fabric of this neighborhood and allow us to give employees, visitors, and community members a place to meet outside without the pressure to purchase anything. These well-designed public spaces, whether large or small, give this community a sense of identity, as it is through the Little Italy Association Board to manage and control these vital outdoor areas. We have learned that the Corona virus needs a concentration of virus cells to enter the lungs and wreak havoc on the body. The virus cannot do that effectively in an outdoor environment. We are the leaders of outdoor public spaces in San Diego County.

Cancelled Programs

Over the past 20 years, weekly or monthly events have done much to create the brand of Little Italy as a dynamic and ever-evolving community. Prior to COVID, we had a full schedule of events that defined the neighborhood; anchored by the weekly Farmer's Market or Mercato, led by Catt White and San Diego Public Markets. The Little Italy Mercato attracted over 1,00,000 people per year to our neighborhood

each Saturday, growing to become one of the largest, most successful markets in the state. Unfortunately, the Mercato was crippled by the complete shut-down of all outdoor activities; but, as of the mid-June 2021, the Mercato is operating at full capacity with the crowds back to pre-COVID levels.

Other events including the annual Mission Federal Artwalk each April, led by Sandi Cottrell and Little Italy Events, was cancelled in 2020 but will be coming back full force this October. This will bring over 100,000 people to Little Italy again.

Our standard event schedule includes First Responders Appreciation month, the Marine Band Summer concert in late July, the State of the Neighborhood Mixer in September, Trick-or-Treat on India Street for Halloween, and the annual Christmas tree lighting the first week of December. These will all be coming back this year as the world re-opens. We also have ongoing lineup of events in the Piazza della Famiglia and up at Amici Park with our partner Convivio.

Homeless and Mental Illness

When the pandemic hit, almost 15,000 prisoners were released from California Prisons with no requirement for checking in with probation and parole officers. Courts were closed, Police were restricted from ticketing illegal encampments, and every major business district in the state was inundated with tents and people sleeping on the sidewalks in the community. This issue of homelessness was not created by the pandemic, but clearly amplified by its aftermath. The Association has done what it can to ensure that sidewalks remain clear, and people behave in a socially acceptable manner, but there is only so much we can do.

The mental illness problem is the direct result of decades of neglect from all levels of government. Everyone living in a downtown environment nationwide has seen this issue explode over the past 18-months. While we work closely with the County Board of

Supervisors and PD on this issue, there is no easy fix due to laws that prevent people from being institutionalized if they are a threat to themselves and others.

Little Italy 2025

We look forward with great optimism. The entire impact on the world and in particular our cities has been very Darwinian. The stronger communities will survive, and one with less leadership will take much longer to bounce back.

By 2025, we believe that Little Italy will have a new, updated Amici Park, much more public art depicting the history of this community, a vibrant and growing Washington Elementary school, a growing congregation at Our Lady of the Rosary, at least two new Piazzas, less issues with homelessness and the mentally ill, more affordable housing (particularly for seniors), thousands of new residents, rail connections to both UCSD, the Golden Triangle as well as rail connection to the airport, greater cleaning and landscaping of the community, and a resiliency that demonstrates our commitment to the future.

I can confidently say that none of us wish to relive the events of last year. To those of you who lost loved ones, our deepest condolences go out to you and your families. With the lifting of social distancing requirements, it is now time to embrace the future and work together to make this community into a beacon of entrepreneurialism, job creation, and overall success. We are proud to continue helping Downtown San Diego become one of the most thriving cities in the nation.

LITTLE ITALY'S FARMERS' MARKETS IS BACK - CATT WHITE, MARKET MAESTRA

Like most businesses in San Diego and beyond, the Little Italy Farmers' Markets faced unique circumstances over the last year. Providing fresh food to residents and visitors, while still navigating an ever-changing public health landscape, the markets remain an integral part of the community and an important funding source for the Little Italy Association.

The Mercato team met the challenges of Covid protocols that completely closed markets early in 2020 and drastically limited their operation and capacity until June of 2021. The Saturday market was initially reduced by city and county pandemic rules to just 20 percent of its established six blocks of farmers and vendors. The Wednesday Mercato remained closed throughout the year.

With the much larger staff and excess equipment required to maintain safety protocols, and restrictions on the number of farmers and vendors who fund operations through space rent, the market's ability to contribute to the Little Italy Association's expense budget was limited. Still, it remained solvent and self-supporting and did yield net income to support the association's other budget challenges during a difficult year.

Working closely with local officials to

maintain safe operations, the Little Italy Mercato gradually returned to three, four and then five well-spaced blocks. In June of 2021, the restrictions on the number of farmers and foodmakers, and the number of shoppers, were lifted for outdoor farmers markets. Now the process of rebuilding can begin in earnest.

Still San Diego County's largest farmers' market in its 13th year of operation, the Mercato is gradually filling the spaces left empty for many months, with carefully curated local farmers and makers. The Wednesday Mercato, a smaller version of the Saturday market focused on providing a streamlined shopping experience to local residents and chefs, relaunched in August 2021 and was welcomed back enthusiastically. The full six block Saturday market footprint, from west of Kettner Boulevard to Front

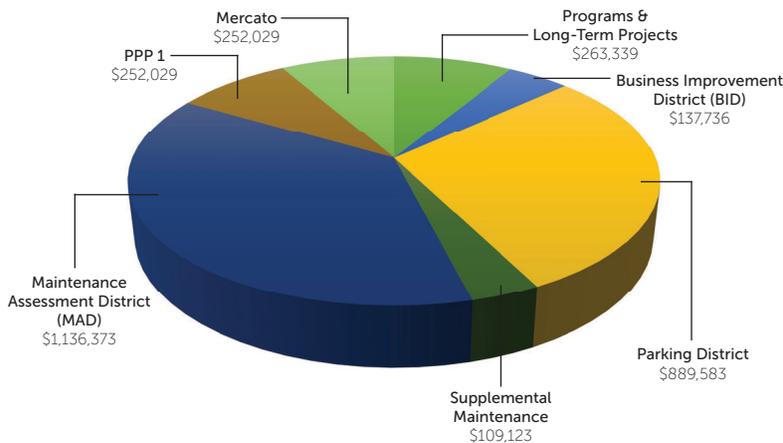
Street, will be back at capacity by autumn of 2021.

Throughout the contraction and expansion, the Saturday market continued to provide Little Italy and downtown residents with just-picked California-grown vegetables and fruits, pastured eggs and meat, locally caught seafood, yogurt, sauces, freshly baked breads and more. Like farmers markets throughout the country, it provided access to locally produced, nutrient dense food in a safe, outdoor shopping environment, even as other supply chains faltered. It enabled California farmers to keep growing, supported a multitude of small businesses and their employees, and brought our community together (if six feet apart) every week. It remains, on the Piazza della Famiglia and surrounding blocks, the heart of Little Italy.

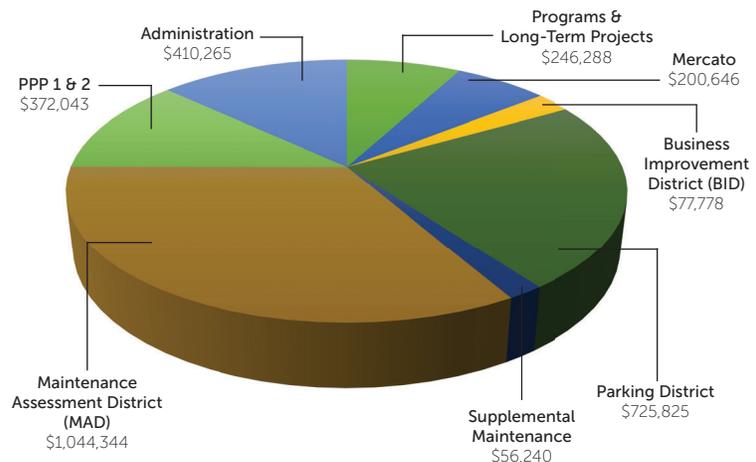


LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION FY21 FINANCIALS

Income / \$3,200,568



Expense / \$3,133,429



OLIVE CREATIVE STRATEGIES' MEDIA RECAP FOR 2021

The rest of 2020 was just as hard as the beginning, if not harder. San Diego slowly started to re-open, just to be shut down again right before the holidays, the busiest times for our local businesses. Throughout the process, Little Italy continued to be a leader and stand up for their local businesses, generation local and national attention. Although some annual events like the State of the Neighborhood and Trick-or-Treat on India St. had to be cancelled, the annual tree lighting still found a way to pivot to the Little Italy Holiday Special, which was broadcast across social media channels, both of which garnered amazing regional coverage. The beginning of 2021 definitely held a brighter future, with restrictions being lifted. ABC 10 ran a beautiful piece on the resilience of Little Italy, which was syndicated across 30 markets. The return of Taste of Little Italy became the start of a fun-filled summer including the Marine Band Summer Concert, ArtWalk Little Italy Summer Series, SD Padres Italian Heritage Nights, Little Italy Summer Film Festival, and the Wednesday Mercato as well as some fun

dog-centric activations at the Little Italy Dog Park. Little Italy also welcomed the filming of a new documentary, backed by the Russo Brothers, set to premier at the National Italian American Foundation Gala later this year.

Due to their innovation on events, the success of the neighborhood and continuing to fight for the benefit of the community and local businesses regard the outdoor dining structures, local and national coverage was secured in outlets like Yahoo, the San Diego Union-Tribune, LA Times, Thrillist, and more.

With Little Italy's continued resilience in 2020 and 2021, not a single business in Little Italy closed their doors, in fact, more businesses opened! In the remainder of 2021, the Little Italy neighborhood will continue to make waves in the media by leading the way for other communities in San Diego and across the country. Little Italy will continue to put the needs of its businesses first through creative thinking and adapting events and will come out on the other side even

stronger than before.

SOCIAL MEDIA

With strategic campaigns, creative content and a focus on connection, the Little Italy Association utilizes social media as an important tool to showcase the history, lifestyle and values of the neighborhood. During a year filled with uncertainty, Little Italy was able to communicate with the community, share important updates and strengthen connections with residents, businesses, and media. Little Italy stepped up as a leader during these times and created opportunities for businesses by spearheading the Al Fresco movement and keeping long standing community events going with safety of the community at the forefront.

In the last year, these networks have grown by 11.11% on Facebook, 23.26% on Instagram and 3.72% on Twitter. Little Italy will continue to be a leader and top destination locally and nationally, due to strong positioning in media coverage and engaging social media presence.

Little Italy Takes Tree Lighting Online, Offers Greetings From Santa Too
POSTED BY EDITOR ON DECEMBER 4, 2020 IN ARTS

More than 20 restaurants, dessert shops and breweries are participating in a revamped Taste of Little Italy event this week, through Thursday.
THE DISH News from San Diego's restaurant industry

TASTE OF LITTLE ITALY ADAPTS TO PANDEMIC WITH TAKEOUT MEALS
 TV's Sam, Spill the Beans coffee. Mr. Moto Pizza new at Seaport Village
BY PAM KRAGEN

STEADY AS SHE GOES, SAN DIEGO

Little Italy is in Little Italy.
March 23

DID YOU KNOW? Sometimes called Little Italy's Mayor, Nick Pecoraro has lived in the two-story yellow house on India Street for 53 years. He's raised three children with his late wife, Joann in this home and has seen Little Italy grow from a small fishing community to a destination location. You'll often find him sitting on his porch enjoying the energy of his little neighborhood. Ciao, Nick!
#LittleItalySD #ItalianAmericanHeritage @radri_

89,395
11% INCREASE

66,477
23% INCREASE

8,549
4% INCREASE

LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION

OFFICERS

Steven Galasso
President

Daniel Mocerì
Vice President

Louis Palestini
Vice President of Cultural Affairs

Luke Vinci
Secretary

Bryan Thompson
Treasurer

BUSINESS OWNERS

Joey Busalacchi
Sandi Cottrell
Jocelyn Marcus
Perry Meyer

PROPERTY OWNERS

Vito Altieri
Ryan Blum
Domenic Brunetto
Charlie Coradino
Dino Cresci
Jim DeSpensa
Rich Gustafson
Pasquale Ioele
Jeri Keiller
Davis Newton
Principal Juan Nunez
Jack Pecoraro
Lee Scrivner
Diana Strauss Casey
Fr. Joseph Tabigue

COMMUNITY-AT-LARGE

Joe Cordileone
Melanie Dellas
Frank Stiriti
Catt White
Tom Zolezzi

CHIEF EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

Marco Li Mandri

DISTRICT MANAGER

Christopher Gomez

FINANCIAL MANAGER

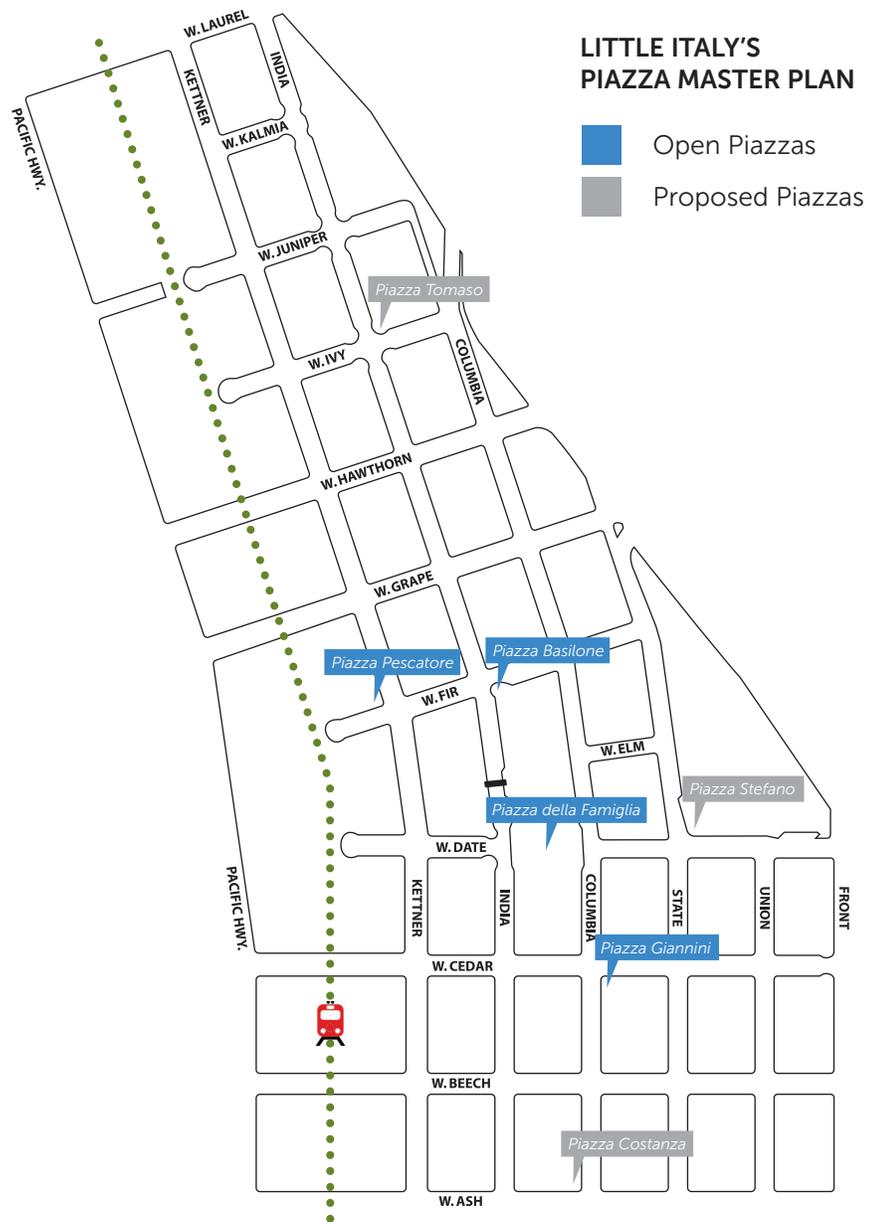
Rosie DeLuca

OFFICE MANAGER

Dianne Serna De Leon

STAFF

Dominic Li Mandri
Laura Li Mandri
Shirley Zawadzki
Monica Montes
Joey Li Mandri



LITTLE ITALY'S PIAZZA MASTER PLAN

- Open Piazzas
- Proposed Piazzas

DID YOU KNOW?

Little Italy has...

48 Square Blocks
67 Acres
7 1/2 Miles of Frontage
2,123 Parcels
1,858 Property Owners
1,753 Condos
1,113 Apartment Units
Approx. 5,000 Residents

702 Business Licenses
944,969 SqFt of Commercial Office Space
1,092 Hotel Rooms
166 Motel Rooms
27 B&B Rooms
Approx. 6,300 Employees

LIA EMPLOYEES
14 Maintenance
6 Landscaping
2 Pressure Washing
7 Valet & Parking
11 Mercato
2 Admin Support
1,018 Trees
210 Trashcans
100 Recycling Receptacles