



*The Thompson Family* enjoying Caffe Italia's outdoor seating.



# ANNUAL REPORT FY22

## BRINGING LITTLE ITALY BACK TO LIFE - STEVE GALASSO PRESIDENT

As someone who's owned and operated a business on India Street for nearly 30 years, I have truly seen it all. March 2020 through the end of 2021 represent 20 months that we are still recovering from. Reflecting on that time, with the businesses closed and the streets empty, is sad and heartbreaking to say the least. However, this is not the first time our community has undergone change.

Prior to the removal of 3,000 homes for the construction of Interstate 5 in the early 1960s, Little Italy's Tuna fishing industry was in its heyday. Fast-forward to the mid 1990s, when the Little Italy Association Business Improvement District was approved, the main drivers of Downtown's redevelopment were the 10 year-old Horton Plaza, the

emerging Gaslamp district, and the new Petco Park.

Little Italy now houses over 150 restaurants, boutiques, and commercial establishments; all of which suffered tremendous hardship during the Pandemic. Social distancing made it near-impossible for most restaurants to keep their doors open, so our staff worked diligently with Mayor Faulconer, Councilman Ward, and now Mayor Gloria, to proactively use outdoor parking spaces for outdoor dining, many installations of which have remained intact to this day. The Association was so successful in their efforts that Ranch and Coast Magazine designated Little Italy as the best example of a district responding to the Pandemic and its lock down, in the

entire County.

The Association is committed to ensuring that our neighborhood, its residents, business and property owners, and all who patronize our community have a safe, attractive, and memorable experience in Little Italy. Please continue to spend your dollars and support the local economy. The payback for such actions will have long-term, positive impacts for everyone who lives, works, and visits this great community.

Steven J. Galasso  
President  
Little Italy Association

## LITTLE ITALY'S FARMERS' RETURNING TO WHAT WE REMEMBERED AND MORE - CATT WHITE, MARKET MAESTRA



The Little Italy Mercato now offers an opportunity to residents and visitors to shop twice as fresh, with farmers markets on both Wednesday and Saturday mornings. The Saturday Mercato remains the largest certified farmers' market in San Diego County, celebrating its 14th continuous year of operation in July.

The Saturday farmers market emerged from the most restrictive COVID-19 protocols in late June of last year. Restricted to just 20 percent of its footprint and participants for 15 months during the height of the pandemic, the market was rebuilt gradually over the last half of 2021. It is now once again operating at its full size. Stretching six city blocks, from west of Kettner Boulevard to Front Street, it features almost 200 tents on West Date Street every week, occupied by certified California farmers and ranchers, local food makers and a curated group of rotating artisans and crafters.

The mid-week Wednesday morning market relaunched in August of 2021, having remained closed during the most restrictive protocols while the Saturday market fulfilled Little Italy's essential grocery needs. The Wednesday Mercato provides a smaller, more relaxed shopping experience and has been welcomed back by neighbors, tourists and chefs. That event just celebrated its first anniversary and is expected to grow from two to three blocks in the coming year, with the Piazza della Famiglia remaining its center.

The two weekly year-round farmers markets continue to supply California-grown vegetables and fruits,

honey, olive oil, pastured eggs and meat, locally caught seafood, yogurt, sauces, freshly baked breads and pastries and more to the Little Italy neighborhood and surrounding downtown and uptown San Diego communities. The family friendly events provide visitors with an impressive showcase of regional creators and producers.

Farmers markets allow farmers to keep the retail price of the food they grow and that keeps farmers farming, no small feat in the face of rising land costs and climate challenges. They provide an incubator for small businesses that employ San Diegans and keep the money they earn in the local community. Due to the efforts of the Little Italy markets' operation team, the weekly events act as a significant source of year-round revenue that help pay for keeping all parts of the neighborhood safe and beautiful.

The Little Italy Mercato continues to make our neighbors' lives healthy and delicious in the heart of a growing community, every week, year-round, rain or shine.

## LITTLE ITALY WELCOMES ATTENDEES BACK FOR AN IN-PERSON TASTE - CURT BROOKER



On June 21 and 22, one of the district's most popular events filled the streets with food, music and fun as 1500 attendees strolled and tasted specialties from Little Italy's restaurants. This event seems to sell out earlier each year, and many attendees participated both evenings! Featuring 16 outstanding tastes each evening, attendees were able to discover new favorite spots along the way. This event raises funds to support the neighborhood enhancement programs of the Little Italy Association. Special thanks to CityMark, ALSCO and Urban Strategies Group.

## MISSION FED ARTWALK: TWO DAYS OF ART, MUSIC & DANCE - CURT BROOKER



On April 30th & May 1st, Mission Fed ArtWalk returned to Little Italy, with a return to its original Springtime dates. The festival celebrated its 38th year as San Diego's Original Fine Art Festival. More than 250 artists filled 15 blocks of

the district, showcasing paintings, sculptures, photography and so much more. The Artes de Mexico installation at ArtWalk features the artwork of more than 30 amazing artists from South of the Border.

San Diego's largest and longest-running fine arts festival, the event brings more than \$1Million into the local economy each year and helps sustain our creative economy.

In 2022, the Cajun/Zydeco Festival, Gator by the Bay, sponsored the Piazza della Famiglia stage, with a lively lineup of New Orleans-style musicians, even including a Mardi Gras parade down India Street each day.

All ArtWalk events support ArtReach, the not-for-profit art education program that takes art workshops into schools throughout the County, that have no other resources for art. ArtReach held an auction at the event featuring repurposed vinyl record albums that were transformed into works of art.

Special thanks to Mission Fed Credit Union for sponsoring the festival for 14 years.

## SUMMER LOOKS SO MUCH BRIGHTER IN THE PIAZZA - CURT BROOKER

On alternating Sundays, ArtWalk Summer Series filled the Piazza della Famiglia and W. Date Streets with 25-30 fine artists per weekend. These art markets are popular with artists as they get to meet and interact with attendees in a more intimate setting than ArtWalk's larger festivals. There were four Summer Series events this year, with the final edition on July 24. This successful event will return for the third year in 2023.

**MISSION FED ARTWALK  
APRIL 29 & 30, 2023**

The largest fine arts  
festival on the West Coast

Two-days of art, music &  
dance.



## SERVING OUR NEIGHBORS WITHOUT HOMES – PAUL ARMSTRONG, SDRM VP OF PROGRAMS



In October 2021, we contracted with the San Diego Rescue Mission (SDRM) to begin an intentional outreach program for our unhoused neighbors. They utilize a relational model which is considered a best practice. Through building a relationship they were able to get one of our longest unhoused members into housing. The gentleman had been on the streets for over 20 years. Now he and his dog have a home and he is connected to the right supportive services. This story of connecting relationally is being played out over and over as they seek to impact one life at a time.

Here is a picture of the impact that has been made. SDRM has been able to get 64 people off the street, relocate another 49 to less disruptive locations and provide basic services such as food and clothing to 1,353 homeless neighbors. They have provided case management services 381 times to help people navigate the system and take a step forward. Another 44 people were able to get vital documents and another 36 people were connected to health-care and emergency medical services. Our intentions when partnering with SDRM was to manage the tension of showing compassion to those without

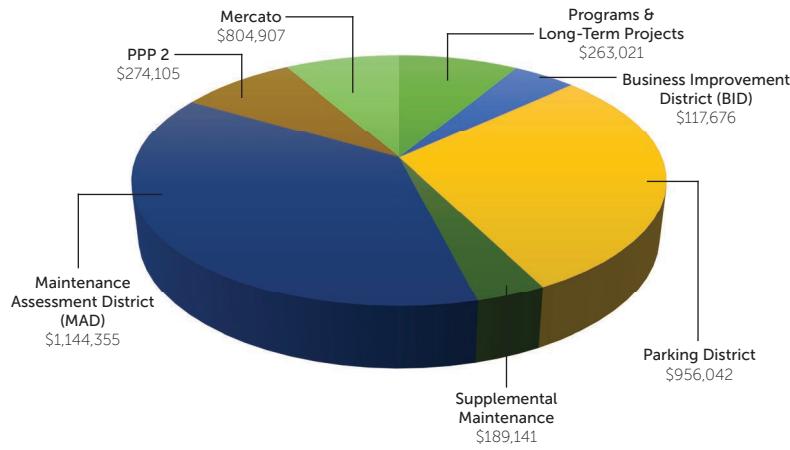
homes and maintaining a vibrant environment for our community. We have been pleased with the level of engagement even as we continue to see homelessness increase in our region. There is an enforcement component, and we will continue to work with the City, County and State to address issues beyond the scope of what SDRM can provide.

When SDRM first joined us, they stressed the importance of trust. Trust takes time and consistency. They will continue to be present seven days a week doing outreach. As they continue to gain trust and demonstrate effectiveness, we will see our neighbors without homes find safe places to live and regain hope.

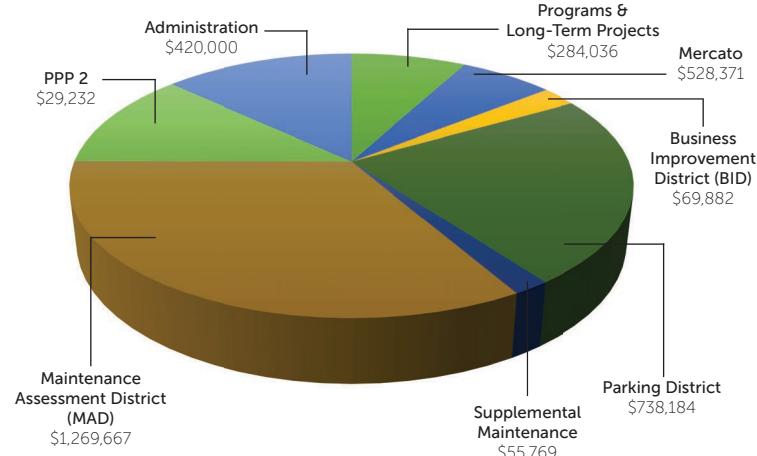


## LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION FY22 FINANCIALS

### Income / \$3,749,247



### Expense / \$3,395,151



## OLIVE CREATIVE STRATEGIES' MEDIA RECAP FOR FY22

### MEDIA RELATIONS

Little Italy continues to shine brighter and brighter with every coming month and the 2021-2022 season is no exception. With the return of Taste of Little Italy's original format in 2021, came the start of a fun-filled summer including the Marine Band Summer Concert, the debut of the ArtWalk Little Italy Summer Series, San Diego Padres Italian Heritage Nights, Little Italy Summer Film Festival, and the Wednesday Mercato, garnering over 400 media hits in June.

2021's Little Italy Tree Lighting and Christmas Village being one of the neighborhood's most attended tree lightings in recent years. Through the event attendance, media coverage and social numbers it is clear people have been eager to enjoy events and Little Italy is the top neighborhood they look to first.

This year's media relations strategy focused on highlighting the neighborhood's events and continuing to position the Little Italy Association as a leader in outdoor dining, especially

when it came to navigating the newest updates and the Spaces as Places program.

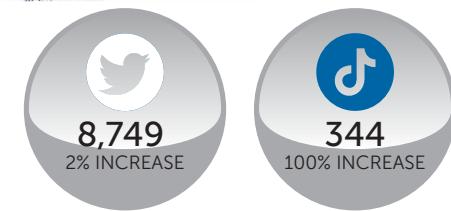
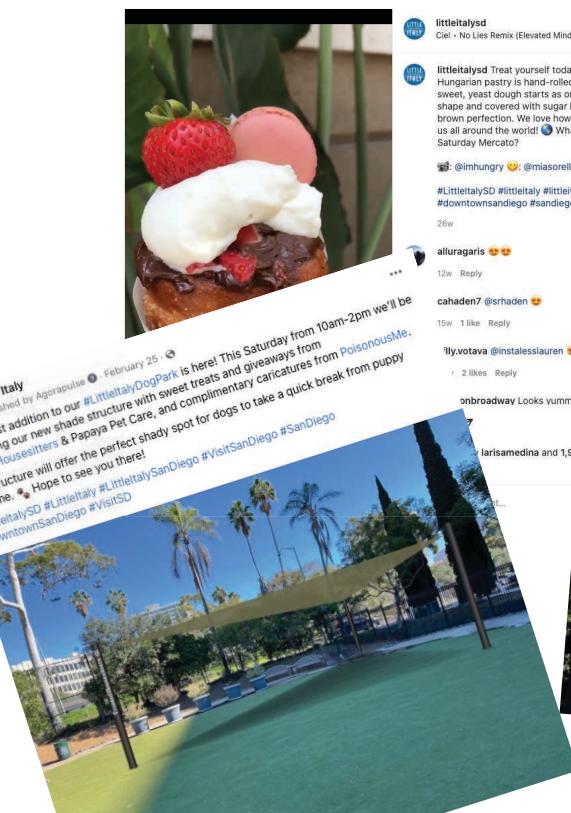
With national print magazines reducing within the last year, our focus has been geared more towards travel and lifestyle digital platforms on a national level, while still incorporating national print media when appropriate. On the local level, the focus continues to be across the board on print, TV, radio, and online. This past year we also prioritized Hispanic media more than ever before as we continue to position the neighborhood as a travel destination for locals and visitors from Baja California. Media highlights from the past year include coverage in San Diego Red, San Diego Magazine, Telemundo 20, Uncover LA, SF Gate, San Diego Union-Tribune, Yahoo!, MSN, and Modern Luxury San Diego.

community and more on showcasing what Little Italy is all about. We utilized social media to demonstrate the Experience, the Fun, and the History of Little Italy through creative content, authentic engagement, and strategic ad campaigns.

Short-form video content has become increasingly popular across social media, so we launched a TikTok channel and started creating and posting Reels video content on Instagram. In the last year, Little Italy's social networks have grown by 3% on Facebook, 33% on Instagram and 2% on Twitter. Little Italy will continue to be a leader and top destination locally and nationally, due to its strong positioning in media coverage and engaging social media presence.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

The Little Italy Association continues to be the leading neighborhood district in San Diego across social media. This year, our content strategy shifted to focus less on driving visitors to the



## LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION

### OFFICERS

Steven Galasso  
*President*  
Daniel Moceri  
*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 DeSpenza  
Rich Gustafson  
Pasquale Iole  
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

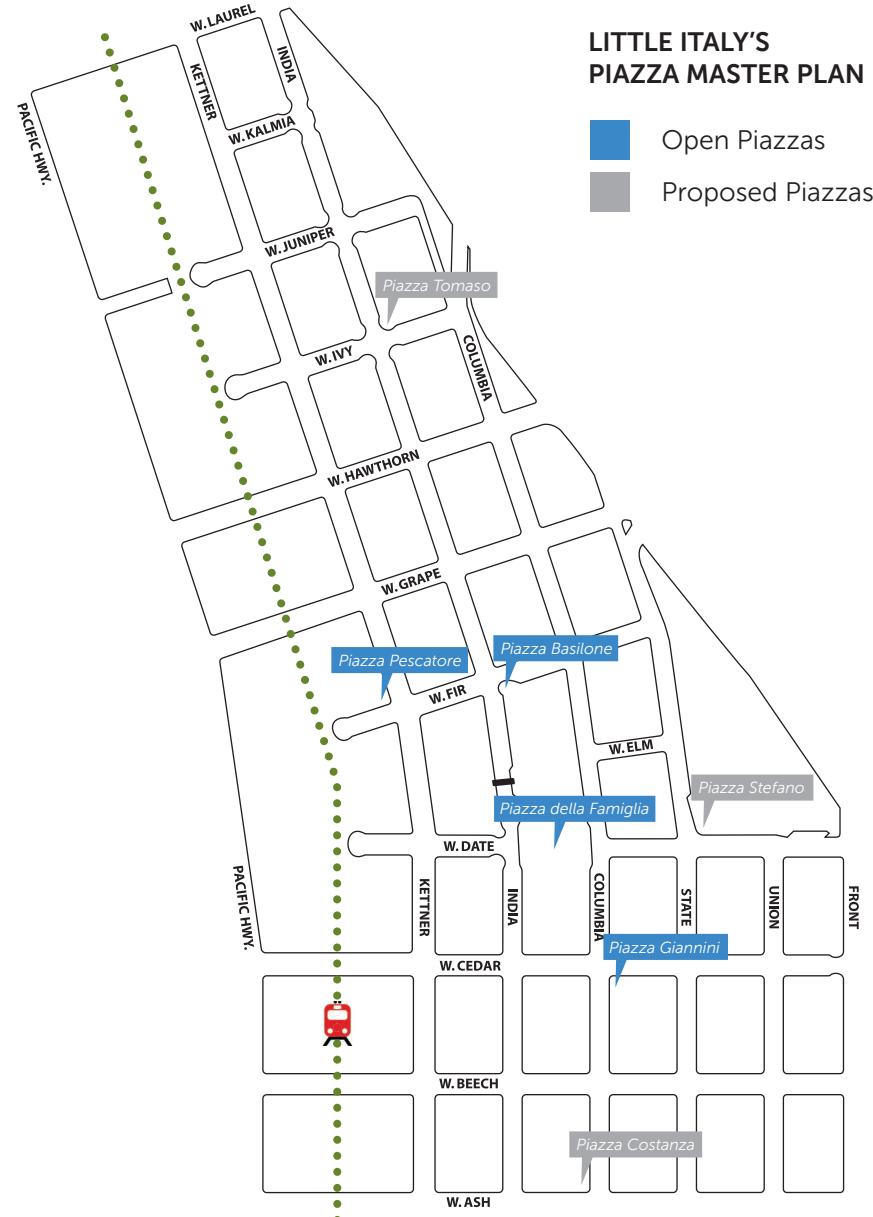
Rosie DeLuca

### OFFICE MANAGER

Dianne Serna De Leon

### STAFF

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



## 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