After three widely-anticipated years, the new Piazza della Famiglia opened on March 9th, 2018. Encapsulating the entire city block of Date street between India and Columbia streets, the 10,000 square foot open air public space features a wide, cobblestone-paved plaza accompanied by multiple areas for seating, a grand showcase fountain near Columbia Street, as well as a permanent evergreen tree on the corner of Date and India streets which will be used for the annual Christmas tree lighting in December. 50 public parking spaces have also been made available under the Piazza entrance to cater to the several new cafes and restaurants opening in the upcoming months, in addition to the 125 luxury residential units bordering the new space.

Coupled with the massive public space, another highlight of the Piazza is its daily activation via multiple mediums of entertainment, including exercise (yoga, tai chi), live and recorded music, as well as non-musical acts (story time, professional learning events, Washington Elementary educational outings). Chalk art canvases (concrete pads in the Piazza) are also available on a more frequent basis, as well as the Little Italy Mercato’s long-awaited relocation back to India street after the Piazza’s completion.

A full-time event manager has been hired to oversee the sales, marketing, and activation of the Piazza and will be working with Olive PR to promote the Piazza as a “must see” destination in San Diego for locals and tourists alike. The event manager will also utilize multiple online and print media platforms to market the Piazza as an event venue to local wedding planners, event specialists, and Destination Management Companies (DMCs) for a variety of both public and private events.

The Piazza della Famiglia was constructed by the HG Fenton Company in collaboration with the Little Italy Association, who will be responsible for managing and maintaining the venue. The Piazza formalizes the “town center” of Little Italy which was initially launched with the Little Italy landmark sign in 2000, and further links Little Italy’s India Street with Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Amici Park, and Washington Elementary School. Little Italy has become a national model of how 21st century historic neighborhoods can evolve and thrive over time, and with the formation of the new Piazza, Little Italy can now be marketed as an international public space. Come and visit the new heart of Little Italy.
ANOTHER MILESTONE REACHED IN LITTLE ITALY - MARCO LI MANDRI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

For almost 1/3 of my life, I have had a wonderful time overseeing the growth and development of Little Italy in San Diego. Of course, its greatest assets are the people who built this neighborhood, their history, Our Lady of the Rosary Church and the community’s openness to new ideas and concepts.

With the opening of the 10,000 square foot Piazza della Famiglia in early March, we have seen another great milestone occur in Little Italy. Since its inception in 1996, the Little Italy Association has undergone a variety of milestones which have altered this community for the better. In chronology, I will summarize what we have achieved in this past generation:

1994: The first Annual Little Italy Festa held on Columbus Day weekend, around 1 ½ blocks long with a handful of vendors;

1996: Little Italy Business Improvement District was formed by a vote of the district’s business owners. This led to the creation of the Little Italy Association in 1997;

1997: New restaurants begin coming into Little Italy. We started with a handful of restaurants, stores, and coffee shops - Little Italy becomes a place of rapid and innovative growth;

2000: The Little Italy property owners vote to assess themselves to fund the maintenance of new capital improvements that were slated for Little Italy. The Little Italy Community Benefit District becomes the second source of revenue to the Little Italy Association and allows it to begin maintaining the public rights of way. Little Italy becomes the only self-managed neighborhood in Downtown San Diego;

2000: In October 2000, the Little Italy landmark sign is dedicated, with over 10,000 in attendance for its first lighting on the evening of the Festa;

2000: Our Lady of the Rosary celebrates its 75th year. Opened in 1925, it became the spiritual center of the neighborhood and the regional parish for Italian Americans;

2001: Amici Park opens, jointly funded by the Centre City Development Corporation and the San Diego Unified School District;

2001 – 2004: The new Piazza Baseline has its ground-breaking ceremony at India and Fir Street and takes around 2 – 3 years to complete. It is dedicated to the young Italian, Portuguese, and Mexican men who never returned to Little Italy after WWII and the Korean War. This is the first self-funded piazza in Little Italy and become an extremely popular public space in the Community and among the Marine Corp – dedicated to Gunnery Sergeant John Baseline;

2002: The first large market rate housing project, Village Walk, is built in Little Italy, at India and Beech. The first Piazza in Little Italy is also created at the intersection of India and Beech;

2004: The Little Italy Neighborhood Development project is opened, which combined row homes, affordable housing, and the rehabbing of the old Harbor Inn & Suites. Close to 10 architects and developers collaborated to rebuild an entire City block at the south end of Little Italy;

2004: The property owners re-vote to increase the Community Benefit District to respond to the tremendous growth of new condos and businesses that are under construction. As a result, the property owners vote to double the budget of the Community Benefit District’s annual revenues to $500,000 per year, which manages the public rights of way services;

2000 – 2004: Phase 1 and Phase 2 of India Street Improvements funded. 100 year old sidewalks replaced. New street lights, trees, and diagonal parking installed up and down India Street. The neighborhood become far more walkable;

2006: San Diego’s Little Italy is the only Little Italy nationwide to partner with NBC TV to celebrate the opening of the Torino Winter Olympics. Over 20,000 people fill the streets of Little Italy to watch the opening ceremonies on 3 jumbotron TVs. In July of that year, over 10,000 Little Italy residents and San Diegans fill India Street to witness Italy beat France in overtime in the World Cup;

2000 – 2008: Over 3,000 new market rate condominiums and apartments open in Little Italy. The residential population nearly quadruples;

2008: The Little Italy Mercato: Farmers Market is launched by Catt White, to grow into the largest, most popular Farmers Market in San Diego County. The Mercato yields over $¼ million dollars in gross revenues to the Association annually;

New “da Vinci Days”
2010: With the help of then Councilman Kevin Faulconer (now Mayor), the Association negotiates to receive its fair share of almost half a million dollars per year in parking meter revenues, as per the local parking meter ordinance. Little Italy commences its community valet program which now parks over 1,000 cars per month in private parking lots that were formerly inaccessible to the public at night;

2008 - 2012: Residential development stops due to the Great Recession, but restaurants, particularly Italian immigrant-owned restaurants, continue to open in Little Italy;

2015: Ground is broken on the new Fenton project at the heart of Little Italy. Date Street is vacated from India to Columbia Street yielding the new Piazza della Famiglia, a 10,000 square foot central Piazza. Construction continues on the two new apartment buildings on either side of the Piazza. The Association negotiates with the City to vacate the street and manage the Piazza once completed;

2015: The Association negotiates a 66 year lease with the San Diego Unified School District to manage the grounds of Washington Elementary. The lease includes the playground (which is split to segregate neighborhood dogs and the children), the bocce ball courts, and all the grounds surrounding the school. A historic home is moved from the Fenton project to Amici Park and retrofitted to 21st century standards to create new restrooms for Association activities at Amici Park (funded by the Fenton company);

2016: Interns working at the Association discover that since Little Italy’s renewal process began, sales tax revenues have doubled, thereby contributing to the City’s general fund. Furthermore, we find that almost 6,000 employees work in Little Italy;

2017: The Amici Dog Park is opened to accommodate the hundreds of new dogs that now reside in Little Italy. Over $100,000 is raised to create a 13,000 square foot dog park to keep the dogs and kids separated so both can enjoy the park. Almost $80,000 is contributed by Gina Champion Cain, a local restaurateur, to fund the park;

2014 - 2018: Almost 2,000 new residential units are opened or under construction in Little Italy;

2017: The Association reorganizes its Ornamental and Landscaping team to demonstrate how flowers, beautification, and public spaces can become new congregating centers for relaxing and communicating in public;

2017: The Piazza Pescatore (tribute to the fishing families), is opened after a $25,000 grant from Bumble Bee Seafoods and many generous contributions from the Italian and Portuguese fishing families of San Diego. The Piazza is located at Kettner and Fir Street;

2017: The Live Well Live Safe Program is launched in Little Italy, managed by the Association to help bring order to the sidewalks of Little Italy. The Association begins this program to respond to the growing frequency of issues related to homelessness and the mentally ill wandering the streets of Downtown.

2017: In December, the first closure of India Street occurs for the lighting of the two holiday trees in Little Italy. Over 20,000 people are present for the Christmas Village and lighting ceremony;

2018: The Piazza della Famiglia is opening in early March, capping off a three-year construction project which now creates a town center within Little Italy;

All of this is due to the leadership of the Little Italy Association officers and Board of Directors, New City America staff, the close working ties we have to Our Lady of the Rosary Church and Washington Elementary school, the alliance we have with the Little Italy Resident Association, the very close working relationship we have with the Mayor’s office, City Council office and County Supervisor’s office and especially to the property owners, residents, businesses and visitors to this wonderful community. I always tell people we are only 50% of where will we end up, so there is still a lot of work ahead of us. Let’s see what the next year brings us.
OLIVE CREATIVE STRATEGIES’ MEDIA RECAP FOR 2017

2017 was a successful year for San Diego’s Little Italy; not only garnering regional coverage, but receiving hundreds of national and international media hits about the community. Little Italy is frequently praised in the local media and has been quickly catching the attention of other regional cities, nationally-known travel writers, in addition to growth and developmental reporters alike. Little Italy has been recognized as a top travel destination in Restaurant Inc. Magazine, Food Network Magazine, The New York Times, The Desert Sun, San Jose Mercury News, Fodor’s Travel, British Airways Highlife, Los Angeles Times, Alaska Beyond Magazine, and many more!

Little Italy is no stranger to the local news either, being featured on CBS 8, FOX 5, The CW, KUSI, ABC 10, KPBS, and NBC 7 multiple times throughout the year. The community’s events and happenings have also been featured in The San Diego Union Tribune, San Diego Magazine, Pacific San Diego, San Diego Union Tribune’s Night + Day, Thrillist and other regional publications throughout the year. In March 2017, news of a collaboration between the Little Italy Association and San Diego State University’s football team spread to the Associated Press and over 100 outlets including ABC News, ESPN, Yahoo Sports and more. The feature highlighted the team’s spring break trip to San Diego’s Little Italy to learn about the neighborhood and its culture, with the team being treated to lunch at four of the local establishments!

Little Italy isn’t just a local hot spot and top travel destination; the community has also been recognized as a model neighborhood in the national community space for its innovation and progressive nature. Media outlets such as Entrepreneur Magazine, San Diego Magazine’s HATCH, the San Diego Business Journal and more have acknowledged Little Italy for its positive growth and fast-moving development.

In 2018, the Little Italy neighborhood will continue to make waves in the media, especially with its new Piazza della Famiglia opening in March of 2018 and the brand new Solo Italiano event in October—there’s no sign of it slowing down anytime soon!

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Little Italy Association engages the online community on social media through strategic campaigns and thoughtful content that allows followers to experience the culture and values of San Diego’s Little Italy. Connecting with residents, businesses, travelers, restaurants, media and influencers, Little Italy has continued to grow a strong, connected network that serves as a trusted resource for all things happening in the community.

Social Media Statistics

In the last year, these networks have grown by 27% on Facebook, 86% on Instagram, and 20% on Twitter. Because of the continued influx of media coverage and strong social media presence, San Diego’s Little Italy is touted and now revered as a top destination.
LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION INITIATES AN EMERGENCY TEXT ALERT PROGRAM

In the fall of 2017, the Little Italy Association began an Emergency Text Alert program to include residents, property owners, and business managers in a text message alert system when an emergency situation occurs, such as a water main break; therefore, allowing them to receive up-to-the-minute information.

To give you an idea of why the program came to be realized, last summer, at 6:30AM on a Sunday morning, a massive water main break occurred at the intersection of Juniper and Kettner, pumping thousands of gallons of fresh water into the streets. The result was tens of thousands of dollars in lost sales and wages, thousands of dollars in property damage, and a temporary shut-off of all water in Little Italy north of Cedar street.

Following this occurrence, we understood that we had no way to contact business owners, property managers, and residents of the impact to the community. Much like the Amber alert system, we sent LIA staff to gather hundreds of cell phone numbers in preparation should a neighborhood-wide crisis arise again.

As of February 2018, there are over 250 subscribers with no use of the program being needed yet. If you would like to sign up for this text alert program, please email alert@littleitalyasd.com with your name, business name, and cell phone number.

LITTLE ITALY MERCATO TURNS 10 - CATT WHITE, MARKET MAESTRA

The Little Italy Mercato launched in June of 2008 and will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2018. In its last full year on West Cedar Street before returning to its original West Date Street location, the event continues to win accolades as the largest California Certified Farmers’ Market in San Diego County. Extending five full city blocks from Kettner Boulevard to Front Street, the market provides freshly harvested vegetables and fruits, pasture raised eggs and meat, locally caught seafood, pickles, seasonings, bread, jams, and more. With an emphasis on California farmers and San Diego makers, the Mercato serves as a fully functioning weekly grocery store as well as a community gathering place.

Generating nearly one million visits each year to Little Italy, the market attracts residents of downtown San Diego and nearby neighborhoods, in addition to tourists from throughout the US and across the globe; its recognition bolstered by national and international press including food and travel magazines and television features.

While direct revenues from the Mercato contribute more than a quarter of a million dollars to the Little Italy Association’s annual budget for maintenance and ongoing improvements to San Diego’s most vibrant neighborhood, the economic benefit of local farmers’ markets is even more far-reaching. The USDA, National Farmers’ Union, and the Farmers’ Market Coalition all track statistics on how local communities benefit from farmers’ market commerce. Studies have highlighted that three times as much money stays in the local economy when entrepreneurs sell directly to consumers than when wholesale distributors and retail chains, often based in another state entirely, take their cut.

The Little Italy Mercato remains both a well-loved local institution and an impressive economic asset.
Ferragosto’s “Wild Western” gala was another smashing success. Cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, a Western-style BBQ, casino, rodeo, live entertainment and a boot-scoot’n live band were all features of 2017’s celebration. Attendees were encouraged to kick up your heels while raising money for youth scholarships, and the historical preservation of San Diego’s own Little Italy. Thanks to the generous giving of so many, the event netted over $120,000 to benefit three neighborhood charities: Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Washington Elementary School Foundation, and the Little Italy Association. To date, Ferragosto has raised over $600,000 for philanthropic causes.

The Nuova Gen Committee thanks all those who took part in and supported the 2017 event and are looking forward to Ferragosto’s Finale on August 14th, 2019, when we will sunset the event. Together, we are working for a better future, and honoring Fr. Grancini’s memory by carrying on his legacy.

Since the inception of the Little Italy Association of San Diego in 1996, we have prided ourselves on creating a neighborhood that’s pedestrian-friendly and community-oriented—a place where people from all over want to gather, linger, and enjoy all of the experiences Little Italy has to offer.

In 2013, the Little Italy Association began a collaboration with Alliance Residential to create a unique and intimate Piazza, known as Piazza Pescatore, at their new development—Broadstone Little Italy. The Piazza Pescatore honors the rich history of San Diego’s Little Italy by memorializing the tuna industry, which brought national recognition to our neighborhood in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Little Italy Association’s Board of Directors voted to adorn this new public space in bronze and classic mosaic tile work, paying homage to the community’s rich history and further immortalizing our commitment to honoring the past and those that came before. After a lengthy design review process, local sculptor Gregory Reade and mosaic artist Kim Emerson were selected as the featured artists tasked to enhance the space. The project as a whole could not be done without the generous support from Bumble Bee Seafoods, Julius & Tom Zolezzi, Anthony Navarra, Antonina Castagnola, Carol Ann Pollar, Dominic Brunetto, Louis Stagnaro, Luisa Stagnaro, Maria Cicere, Mary Castagnola, Nancy Nichols, Andrew Stagnaro, Bernadette Tarantino, Jim Brigante, Louis Palestini and Richard Brigante.

Dedication of the Piazza Pescatore - Nov. 2017

**LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION FY17 FINANCIALS**

**Income / $3,305,270**
- Mercato $674,911
- Community Benefit District (CBD) $900,000
- Programs & Long-Term Projects $600,183
- Business Improvement District (BID) $121,650
- Parking District $942,862
- Supplemental Maintenance $67664

**Expense / $3,154,640**
- Administration $452,696
- Mercato $377,755
- Miscellaneous $151,509
- Community Benefit District (CBD) $900,087
- Programs & Long-Term Projects $240,921
- Business Improvement District (BID) $65,075
- Parking District $856,854
- Supplemental Maintenance $49,835
AMICI DOG PARK BECOMES NEIGHBORHOOD INSTITUTION

San Diego’s Little Italy is a premier neighborhood for all things food, shopping, and culture, not to mention a welcoming community for our four-legged friends. Our resident pooches now get to experience some upgrades in the form of a new and improved Little Italy Dog Park at Amici Park.

As a result of the Association’s successful fundraising campaign, the new park opened May 1st, 2017 to cater to the roughly 2,000 dogs that call Little Italy home, creating a safe and enclosed area designated for off-leash exercising and socializing, separate from Washington Elementary children’s playground.

The park is equipped with secure fencing, a water fountain, shaded seating, two beautiful Mimosa trees, improved landscaping, and 6,100 square feet of K9 grass by Forever Lawn.

Community members who supported the fundraising campaign were honored at the Little Italy Dog Park using “paw pavers” and medallions, which were and continue to be installed within the park. Paw Pavers are engraved bricks that will be installed along the new path and include the names of donors and their beloved furry friend, sharing the bond with their pet and the neighborhood as well. Medallions are engraved charms that will be displayed at the entrance of the dog corral.

One of the most generous donors, America National Investments, Inc., funded a portion of the turf in addition to Little Italy-branded tables and chairs, in memorial to Gordie Howe, the late dog of its CEO and Board chair, Gina Champion-Cain. Other contributors to this project include County Supervisor Ron Roberts, Batta Fulkerson, Amici Pet Hospital, Frank Subaru and Kaylan Thornhill (In Memory of Warren & Carol Thornhill, Warren & Estelle Thornhill and Clarence & Eleanor Bishop).

LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE LIVE WELL LIVE SAFE PROGRAM TO KEEP ORDER

Live Well, Live Safe (LWLS) is a new program developed by Little Italy Association Board Member Tommy Di Zinno and Chief Executive Administrator, Marco Li Mandri, of the Little Italy Association was created in November 2017 to handle and mitigate issues with poor and unruly behavior by individuals in the neighborhood. Downtown San Diego, as well as other major growing metropolitan areas in the US, are greatly impacted by historic numbers of homeless individuals, lack of affordable housing and mentally ill people who need treatment but rather use urban Neighborhoods as their refuge. In California, there are limited tools that the police departments have to change this situation. So the Association came up with a non-profit, district management approach to come up with long term solutions to these individuals who frequent Little Italy or consider this community to be their home. A brief explanation of the program is as follows:

Program Overview
- Launched November 2017, implemented primarily on Friday and Saturday evenings
- LWLS crew members are supervised by Tom Di Zinno (National City PD) and Lynda Oberlies (retired Sergeant with the SDPD)
- All Live Well, Live Safe personnel are employees of the Little Italy Association, much like our maintenance, landscaping, pressure washing and valet staff
- The Program is housed within the LIA office and will soon be available via cell phone
- We currently have a two-person crew working south of Hawthorn, and a two-person crew working north of Hawthorn. Both crews are walking patrols.
- The primary hot spots currently include India Street, Kettner Street, Piazza Basilone, the new Piazza della Famiglia and Amici Park
- The crews may soon patrol the district on bicycles for faster response time

Program Hours/Goals for 2018
- Daily, every morning from 7AM – 10AM, North & South end
- Daily, every evening from 6PM – 10PM, North & South end
- 96 hours of coverage per week (average two-person crew, seven hours per day, morning and evening shifts, north and south)

Total Cost
- Cost is estimated to be $175,000 per year for the first year (April 2018 – March 2019)
- Additional hours and coverage are dependent upon successful fundraising efforts

Proposed First Year Annual Allocation
- $50,000 underwritten by the LIA
NEW PIAZZAS ANTICIPATED TO OPEN OR TO BE INITIATED IN 2018 / 2019

Piazza Giannini, dedicated to Amadeo Giannini, the founder of the Bank of Italy and later the Bank of America. Located at the corner of India and Cedar. Key funders are the Bank of America, the Little Italy Association and the Doug Hamm family. Expected to be opened by May of 2018;

Piazza Costanza will be a place dedicated to the great local leader Midge Costanza. This Piazza will be built with the new Lennar project at Columbia and Ash and will be located on the west side of Columbia just north of Ash Street. Similar to the Piazza under the Little Italy sign, this Piazza will be nearly 100 feet long and provide a bust and pedestal and the story of Midge Costanza and her work nationwide.

Piazza Tomaso, dedicated to the Little Italy Association founder and community leader Tom Fat. This unique Piazza is planned to be built at the intersection of India and Ivy and should be initiated by late 2018;

Piazza Stefano will be a Piazza planned for Amici Park dedicated to the great community leader Father Steven Grancini, a Barnabite Priest who led Our Lady of the Rosary Church for almost 25 years. This Piazza is planned for the amphitheater at Amici Park and should be initiated sometime in late 2018;

Also, New City America staff is coming up with a plan to rebuild Amici Park and create a much better venue for events and the community in the current footprint of the park. We hope to have the plans for the new park completed by the end of 2018.

GENEROUS DONORS TO THE LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION, A 501(C)(3) CORPORATION

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2017 BRINGS LITTLE ITALY NEW BUSINESSES WITH MORE SLATED IN 2018

Little Italy continues to attract new businesses, both retail and restaurant as it grows into one of the most dynamic city neighborhoods in Southern California. We welcome the newcomers to Little Italy over the past 2 years, and anticipate the new ones opening by the end of 2018.

- Alchemie
- Bar One
- Barbusa
- Born & Raised
- Cloak & Petal
- Dixie Pops
- Frost Me Coffee
- Harumama
- Herb & Wood / Herb & Eatery
- King & Queen Cantina
- Livv Natural Health
- Little Italy Food Hall
- Lofty Coffee
- Roma Market
- Rovino
- Salt & Straw Ice Cream
- Shake Shack
- Shane Bowden Gallery
LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION
OFFICERS
Steven Galasso
President
Daniel Moceri
Vice President
Luke Vinci
Secretary
Louis Palestini
Treasurer

BUSINESS OWNERS
Jenn Borba Von Stauffenberg
Olive PR Solutions
Sandi Cottrell
ArtWalk San Diego
Perry Meyer
Meyer Fine Art

PROPERTY OWNERS
Vito Altieri
Domenic Brunetto
Charlie Coradino
Dino Cresci
Principal David Crum
Jim DeSpenza
Anne MacMillan Eichman
Rich Gustafson
Pasquale Ioele
Christopher Morgan
Jack Pecoraro
Fr. Joseph Tabigue
Carroll Whaler

COMMUNITY-AT-LARGE
Marianna Brunetto
Joe Cordileone
Tom Di Zinno
Frank Stiriti
Catt White
Tom Zolezzi

CHIEF EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR
Marco Li Mandri

DISTRICT MANAGER
Christopher Gomez

FINANCIAL MANAGER
Rosie DeLuca

STAFF
Laura Li Mandri
Shirley Zawadzki
Monica Montes
Allicia Martinez
Paula Kwast
John Li Mandri
Joey Li Mandri

OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR
Jasen Nichols

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

476 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
18 Maintenance
5 Landscaping
2 Pressure Washing
23 Valet & Parking
7 Live Well, Live Safe
1,018 Trees
210 Trashcans
100 Recycling Receptacles
LITTLE ITALY ASSOCIATION OF SAN DIEGO
2210 Columbia Street
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: 619.233.3898
Fax: 619.233.4866
mail@littleitalysd.com
www.littleitalysd.com
#littleitalysd

This Annual Report was written and produced by New City America, Inc., Olive Creative Strategies, Catt White and Luke Vinci on behalf of the Little Italy Association of San Diego.