Changes at Main and Main in Little Italy

Our Little Italy has come a long way since we started our work in 1996. At that time, there were a handful of family-owned-and-operated businesses including Filippis, Mona Lisa, Caffe Italia, the Waterfront, the Princess Pub, Assentis Pasta, HG Daniels (now Blick), Pete’s Meats, Mimmos, ALSCO, Beardsley Automotive (now Caliber), Auto Radio Specialist, and a few other places. The community was the parking lot for Downtown as most of our 48 square blocks were parking lots serving the office buildings to the south. The housing stock was single-family residential with a few apartment buildings. There was no Amici Park, but there was Washington Elementary School and of course, Our Lady of the Rosary Church.

In 1999, there was no Little Italy sign and India Street was a three-lane thoroughfare with no stop signs, no diagonal parking and virtually no trees.

Fast forward 15 years and we see this neighborhood as one of the most dynamic urban communities on the west coast, filled with nearly 10 blocks of retail and restaurants along India St.; a growing arts, design and professional community on Kettner and in Little Italy North; over 2,000 condos and apartments built since 2002; and great public spaces that have become the envy of communities throughout the County.

This growth was a result of:
• The convergence of time and place, the neighborhood was ready for change;
• The creation of a Business Improvement District, later evolving into a 48-square-block Community Benefit District (which is most of the Association’s operations);
• An active and engaged public-benefit corporation Board of Directors;
• Cutting edge district management and staff that seek to learn as much as possible from other successful districts throughout the country;

A “game changing” development, is now in the works in Little Italy, one that will have more impact than almost anything else we have seen in the last 15 years. This new development will occur at the corner of our “Main and Main Streets,” or India and Date. The long dormant Reader office building, formerly the vibrant De Falco’s grocery store, has recently been sold to the Fenton Company – a family-owned development company with over 100 years of history in the City of San Diego.

We currently have a “black hole” with The Reader offices in the heart of the community with 100 linear feet on the east side of India, just north of Date. This building has not been accessible to the public for years. The new Fenton building

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

Little Italy Association of San Diego

MISSION STATEMENT
The Little Italy Association pledges to advocate on behalf of its members and residents in the areas of public safety, beautification, and economic development while preserving the unique cultural resources that exist in the Little Italy community.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT
Steven Galasso

VICE PRESIDENT
Daniel Moceri

TREASURER
Louis Palestini

SECRETARY
Luke Vinci

PROPERTY OWNER SEATS
Vito Altieri
Tommy Bataglia
Domenic Brunetto
Marianna Brunetto
Charlie Coradino
Dino Cresci
Jim DeSpenza
Rich Gustafson
Jack Pecoraro
Frank Stiriti
Rev. Joseph Tabigue
Tom Zolezzi

BUSINESS OWNER SEATS
Pat Brunetto
Sandi Cottrell
Larry Kuntz
Perry Meyer
Catt White

COMMUNITY-AT-LARGE REP.
John Contasti
James Pieri, Jr.
DID YOU KNOW?!

San Diego’s Little Italy has
249 Trash Receptacles
119 Recycling Receptacles
1,027 Trees
126 Corner Concrete Pots
33 Seasonal Wine Barrels
68 Hanging Plants
73 Doggie Pot Dispensers
that Little Italy CBD Staff maintains on a daily basis.

CCDC – The End of Redevelopment

As many of you know, the Centre City Development Corporation, our Downtown Redevelopment Agency, was abolished, along with 407 other Redevelopment Agencies by legislative action signed by the Governor and upheld by the California Supreme Court in early 2012.

We would like to thank the volunteer Board members of the Centre City Advisory Board and the Centre City Development Corporation for the countless hours they spent overseeing the development of Downtown San Diego into one of the premier Downtowns on the West Coast. Thirty-thousand people residing in Downtown would never have happened without CCDC and its leadership.

For the record, the discussion about redevelopment supporting “big developers” and smaller property owners being gobbled up – was just a scare tactic. That never happened in Little Italy. No one was ever eminent domain from their property.

Since 1992, what Little Italy did get through CCDC and redevelopment, was new sidewalks, new street lights, new trees, new trash cans, hanging plant racks and baskets, concrete planters on the corners, Amici Park, quality affordable housing – all positive things. Redevelopment worked as envisioned in Downtown San Diego; it eliminated blight and financed 100-year-old infrastructure replacement to accommodate new vertical development.

In an attempt to meet its obligations under Prop 98 to School Districts, the State believed that the funds fueling the renaissance of Downtowns and urban centers, should instead be directed toward Schools, not infrastructure.

So now Downtown anticipates a total of 90,000 residents and millions of square feet of new office building, hotels, and non-profit building developments with no funding to mitigate the impact of this new growth.

The Little Italy Association is seeking new ways to continue to fund our infrastructure needs, particularly public space needs for our residents,
employees, businesses and visitors, and will increasingly rely on accommodations from new developers, donations, and grants.

CCDC, now Civic San Diego, will sorely be missed. The Little Italy Association wants to thank CCDC, and now Civic San Diego staff, for keeping the flame going during the unbelievable changes over the past two years.

Parking Plan - Conversions

Since 2010, the Little Italy Association has managed a portion of the Downtown Parking meter revenues to create operational programs to maximize on-street and off-street parking. We have come up with a community master plan that includes vacating dormant curb cuts, repainting obsolete commercial zones, converting parallel parking to diagonal parking and converting diagonal parking to perpendicular parking.

The parking plan is on the Little Italy website. We know that the conversion of diagonal parking to perpendicular parking on Ivy Street alone yielded an increase of 60% more parking spaces.

This year Civic San Diego granted the Little Italy Association $410,000 to use for its innovative valet program, the Saturday 2-Hour Free Parking program, the shuttle programs, parking-conversion programs and marketing the programs to visitors. It is our goal to create a new parking district in which 45% of the parking meter revenues generated in Little Italy, stay in Little Italy to facilitate new parking programs.

Changing of the Guard

Since 2004, Little Italy and the rest of Downtown has been represented by Kevin Faulconer, our District 2 Councilman. With the election of the strong Mayor form of government and the resulting increase from 8 to 9 City Council seats, Downtown San Diego was taken out of District 2 and put into District 3. Kevin will now represent the Point Loma, the Airport, the Sports Arena areas and beach communities up to La Jolla. Kevin has been a great friend and a strong supporter of our efforts in Little Italy and we want to thank him and his staff for all of the excellent work that they have done over the past 8 years.

Though we are moving from one Councilmember to another, our new representative will be Councilmember Todd Gloria. Councilman Gloria has been in the forefront of many critical issues. He knows Downtown and Little Italy well, and we look forward to working with him and his excellent staff in pursuing new programs and projects in Little Italy.

“ I am excited to represent Little Italy as a part of Council District Three. The mix of history, unique restaurants and businesses, residents, and frequent events makes the neighborhood a hub of energy and life, and I look forward to working with all community members in the years ahead. -- Councilmember Todd Gloria”
Caged While Drinking

Little Italy has always seen itself as a cutting edge neighborhood and a model for the entire City. As “America’s Finest City” we still have to be barricaded to enjoy wine or beer in the public rights-of-way.

Over the past two years, the Little Italy Association and its staff have been working with the ABC, Vice, and CCDC to alter the rules that currently require that alcohol can only be served outdoors behind permanent railings. In October this long sought improvement was presented to the CCAC Center City Advisory Committee and unanimously approved.

For years, San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles and other cities have allowed restaurants to serve alcohol in the public rights-of-way without physical barriers separating the public from the patrons. Little Italy has jumped through nearly all of the hoops to NOT require, but in fact, remove, these barriers in the sidewalks and instead, provide for “bookend” guides to ensure a clear path between outdoor diners and obstacles in the public rights-of-way.

Why would we insist on this? Because hundreds of residents use the sidewalks for jogging and dog-walking early each morning and must go around these permanent railings even though the restaurant or bar is not open. Our interim step was removable or unattached railings, which are now in place at Napizza and Isola Restaurants on India Street.

The next step is to implement our pilot project area allowing new restaurants to serve in the public rights-of-way without the required permanent railings. Watch for this new improvement in 2013.

New Board Members

Every year, the Little Italy Association sends out nomination forms for Board seats to over 2,000 property owners and 400 businesses. The Little Italy Association is a non-profit public-benefit corporation whose Board membership hovers around 22 – 26 throughout the year. The Board meets in a public setting the first Tuesday of each month at Our Lady of the Rosary meeting hall, 1629 State Street.

Requirements for serving on the Board include full payment into the Little Italy Maintenance Assessment District (on the property tax bills), full payment into the Little Italy Business Improvement District, being a resident of Little Italy, as well as serving on a Committee of the Board for at least one year prior to being appointed to the Board. This year we have 26 members, 2/3 of which are property owners (commercial and residential) and 1/3 business owners or Community at large reps.

The Board members elected to serve as officers for Fiscal Year 2012-13 include:

1. Steve Galasso, President (Caffe Italia)
2. Danny Moceri, Vice President (Filippi’s Pizza)
3. Lou Palestini, Treasurer (Community-at-Large)
4. Luke Vinci, Secretary, Resident

The Board Committees and their functions and minutes can be found on the Little Italy Association website.
ON THE HORIZON

The Downtown economy is coming back in Little Italy with new apartments, retail, and commercial developments planned for in 2012 and 2013. The developments include:

BROADSTONE LITTLE ITALY: 201 studios, 1 and 2 bedroom apartments for a total of 195,308 square feet residential, 9,404 square feet retail with 321 parking spaces, located on Kettner Boulevard between W. Fir and W. Grape Streets.

ARIEL SUITES

VILLA CUSMA

STRAUßS PROJECT

FAT CITY PROJECT: 364 Room Hotel located on 62,809 square feet

PALANTINE: 102 Residential Units at State & Elm – in preliminary review.

GRANT FUNDS FROM COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO & SUPERVISOR RON ROBERTS

At the end of the 2011-12 Fiscal Year, Supervisor Ron Roberts and the County of San Diego awarded the Little Italy Association a Community Reinvestment Grant, in the amount of $32,500, to reinvest back into San Diego’s Little Italy.

The money that was granted to the Association will go to the installation of new pea gravel tree grates, the creation & installation of granite plaques that tell the history of Little Italy & the tuna industry, the purchase of a green vehicle, the purchase of 11 additional Little Italy umbrellas for the public right-of-way, the restoration of public art, and purchase of additional 30-gallon watering tanks to maintain the corner pots & hanging baskets.

These funds help to maintain and beautify the public right-of-way and make our neighborhood that much more friendly and desirable for pedestrians, families and pets.

LIGHT INDIA STREET IN LEDS

In the Spring of 2012, Sempra Energy approached the Little Italy Association to create an energy effecient program for Little Italy. This comprehensive program not only benefited the residents/property owners and business owners, it also made Little Italy that much more green.

With an $8,000 grant, the Association was able to convert the lightbulbs strung between the light poles to LEDs; LEDs that use less than one quarter of the energy of the original bulbs. The dedication of the new lights was at Little Italy’s Carnevale event.

A special thanks to Frank Urtasun, Vice President of Community Affairs for Sempra Energy, for facilitating this generous contribution to light up India Street.

NEW ADDITIONS TO LITTLE ITALY’S BANNER PROGRAM

Little Italy’s banner program is one of the most extensive and diverse collections of banners in the City of San Diego. The Little Italy Association has created several cycles of banner programs that rotate about every 3 months.

The banner cycles include Famous Italian-Americans, Italian-American Academy Award Winners, Italian-American Baseball Players, Vintage Italian Product Posters, Art & Science, and more.

This year the Board endorsed the new designs and several new additions to the Italian-American Academy Award Winners and Famous Italian-Americans.
Little Italy Legends Program

In 2009, Jack Pecoraro, a Little Italy Board Member, approached the Little Italy Association about honoring the families of Little Italy and the Italian-Americans that contributed to the success of the neighborhood.

In early 2010, the first plaque was dedicated to Frankie Laine, a huge supporter of San Diego’s Little Italy and a famous Italian-American.

In 2011-12, the Little Italy Association honored Madeleine & Vincent DePhilippis (Residents & Filippi’s Pizza Grotto), Renata & Stefano Brunetto (Mona Lisa Italian Foods), and Rosa & Tony Bernardini (Residents & Civic Center Liquor House).

If you are interested in honoring the history and contribution your family has made in our neighborhood by sponsoring a plaque, please contact Chris Gomez at 619.233.3898.

SANDAG / MTS Trying to put BRT Bus Lot at Little Italy’s Boundary

Since last summer when SANDAG sent a notice to property owners just south of Ash Street, the Little Italy Association has taken a leading role to stop the taking of at least 30,000 square feet for a bus parking lot to service the new Bus Rapid Transit program. SANDAG is proposing a Downtown Short-Term Bus Parking Facility to be located on Ash/India/Kettner/A Streets. The facility will accommodate up to 18 buses at one time, and up to 35 at peak times. Buses using the facility will generally spend 5 to 15 minutes on the lot and idle for no more than one minute while on site. The facility would operate from 4:00am to 1:00am.

A Community meeting took place on August 22, 2011 at Anthology. More than 200 residents present were livid about this proposal. SANDAG did no preliminary Community Outreach on this project. The meeting was followed by circulation of a petition signed by over 1,000 community members opposing the bus yard placement. The petition was submitted to Councilmember Kevin Faulconer in late January.

In March, the LIA took the following position and sent it to all SANDAG members, the Mayor and City Council reps to SANDAG. Our position is that the BRT program is flawed and if a “three hub system” was implemented, it would eliminate the need for a bus yard completely. Here are excerpts of that letter…

At its March 6th meeting, the Little Italy Association Board of Directors voted unanimously to oppose the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit buses WITHIN the boundaries of the core of Downtown. By no means are we opposed to the rational use of “rubber wheeled trolleys” to bring people to and from Downtown. We are very cognizant that fixed raised trolleys cannot be built everywhere in this day and age, due to costs. We just support a system that we believe will be functional and more dispersed to maximize ridership.

In the era of five dollar per gallon gas, we know that more people will be using the trolley, regional and inter-city fixed rail and the BRT. We just don’t want to endorse the near certain destruction of the fabric of our Downtown in the attempt to bring people to and from our City center. We came to this conclusion about supporting a functional and popular BRT from which would not enter the core of Downtown based upon the following rationale:

1. Enter at Strategic Transit Hubs: We propose that SANDAG build a system to bring people to and from Downtown based upon three key entry points: 1) the Sante Fe Rail Station, 2)
Destruction of Promenade Streets by Public Agencies: We used to have a great promenade street, identified by one of the founders of Landscape Architecture, John Nolen, which was Cedar Street. Cedar Street was the ceremonial street for the City identified to tie in Balboa Park and the Bay. That is why the County/City administration buildings were built at its west end. In the 1960’s CalTrans destroyed that promenade by constructing its 2nd Avenue offramp for Interstate 5.

In the 1970’s, MTDB, destroyed C Street, which never came back to its previous viability, by running the Trolley tracks above ground.

The proposed BRT that would run along Broadway would destroy this street once and for all by preventing outdoor seating, cross traffic and the calming affect needed to tie in the north and south sides of Broadway.

2. Downtown Circulator: For years now, leaders in Downtown have spoken about a “Downtown circulator” made up of a series of small, natural gas powered buses that would operate along the grid in Downtown. This would be very similar to the DASH system that works so well in Downtown Los Angeles, which is tied to Union Station. The “Circ” should operate, funded by Downtown Parking meter revenues, advertisements, grants, etc. and the Circ buses, like the BRTs, should be purchased by SANDAG.

3. Gridlocking Broadway: Broadway is already gridlocked with a high number of buses which make traveling by car, bike or walking extremely difficult. Adding 35 more buses every hour, 21 hours per day will do nothing but exacerbate this problem;

4. Destruction of Promenade Streets by Public Agencies: We used to have a great promenade street, identified by one of the founders of Landscape Architecture, John Nolen, which was Cedar Street. Cedar Street was the ceremonial street for the City identified to tie in Balboa Park and the Bay. That is why the County/City administration buildings were built at its west end. In the 1960’s CalTrans destroyed that promenade by constructing its 2nd Avenue offramp for Interstate 5.

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5. Horton Plaza and public spaces: It was with great fanfare that Westfield announced two years ago that they would be leveling the Sam Goody building to expand Horton Plaza to become the grand plaza at the City Center. Their plans for creating this great public space is clearly threatened by the addition of 35 double buses per hour running east and west on Broadway. The traffic between the iconic US Grant and the Horton Plaza should be minimized, not increased.

The most significant street in Downtown is Broadway and we should model ourselves off of North Michigan Avenue in Chicago and Park Avenue in New York City. The use of the 20 foot plus wide sidewalks on Broadway from Horton Plaza westward to Harbor Drive and should be the showcase for Downtown filled with outdoor dining, great public spaces and a high level of pedestrian activity. The implementation of the BRT along Broadway will crush this vision permanently.

Little Italy’s Thriving Farmers’ Market

The Little Italy Mercato celebrated its fourth anniversary in June of 2012, and is already well established as the largest farmers’ market of the almost 60 that now operate in San Diego County. This year, to relieve congestion on Date Street from Kettner to Front Street, at the height of summer visitor season, the Mercato expanded its hours to 8 am to 2 pm. Early-bird shoppers and chefs appreciate the extended hours so they are now permanent. In 2013, additional booth spaces will be added west of Kettner, and Amici Park will be activated more fully during the weekly market.

With more than 150 booths featuring quality local farm products, artisan food producers and unique gift items, the event draws thousands of shoppers every Saturday morning year-round, rain or shine. In addition to loyal local residents, national and international press has drawn shoppers from all over the world, and the market is regularly cited as one of San Diego’s top tourist attractions. Visitors often stay to lunch or shop at Little Italy businesses, making the Little Italy Mercato an asset to the whole neighborhood.
Mission Federal ArtWalk Fills the Streets of Little Italy

This annual public celebration of both visual and performing art has been filling the streets of Little Italy since the early 2000’s. The festival attracts fine artists from around the USA and Mexico for a two-day event attended by more than 100,000 people.

Partnering with Blick Art Materials, Mission Federal ArtWalk teamed up to offer attendees of all ages, an interactive art experience involving printmaking with artist Valentine Viannay. This feature was a recent addition to the festival, and one that attendees loved as they got to try something new, and connect with their inner artist.

Another new highlight, for 2012, was the new dance installation, “Dance on the Edge”, an event within an event, featuring a full weekend of dance performances ranging from hip hop to flamenco to ballet. A full line up of musicians rounded out the festival’s palette of treats for all the senses. KidsWalk was another popular component, which offered interactive art projects for families. ArtReach, the non-profit art education program founded by the ArtReach team, takes visual art lessons into county-wide elementary schools. Through various initiatives at the 2012 festival, ArtReach raised more than $7000 to support the efforts of the program.

ArtWalk is not only a cultural treasure for the community, it also brings big business into Little Italy. More than $1 Million of art sales take place during the festival, and many retailers and restaurants achieve record sales as well.

Mark your calendar for Mission Federal ArtWalk 2013, when the event returns, April 27 and 28.

Little Italy has an App for That!

Over the past year, the Little Italy Association staff has been working closely with FutureWorks to create a comprehensive mobile app for San Diego’s Little Italy. The Little Italy app was launched in June of 2012 and showcases Little Italy businesses, special events, points of interest and best of all - parking!

Over the next several months, the Little Italy staff will be adding additional buttons, one of which is a historic tour. The History button will take app owners on a tour of Little Italy’s history, based on the information that was collected from the Preserve Little Italy initiative. This tour will have photos and written history that app owners can use to get a better understanding of what San Diego’s Little Italy used to be and what it is today.

A few of the amazing features of the Little Italy app are: you can receive notifications from the Little Italy Association about special events or important information, you can find businesses or points of interest near you (based on your phones GPS), you can create a profile to share content on social media, and you can get directions to locations, phone number & website links and more.

The App can be downloaded, for free, by searching San Diego’s Little Italy from the iPhone and Android markets.
The Little Italy Board of Directors’ Takes Action

New Little Italy Office
The Little Italy Association moved to 2,500 square feet of office space at 2210 Columbia Street. The maintenance assessment district employees have their own floor and office space as well as storage space for all of the equipment.

TOT Award
The Little Italy Association has been awarded $23,600 in Transient Occupancy Tax funds from the City of San Diego Arts and Culture Commission for FY 2012 which will be used to offset expenses related to the Festa in October. The Little Italy Festa was ranked a “4”, the highest rating available for an event.

Amici Park/School Board Update - Finalizing 3-Way Agreement
Marco presented a diagram of Amici Park showing the grassy area as well as the hardscape areas, and explained how we propose to get control of both areas for use as a dog park, a kid’s area, and a restroom with a snack shack. The School District is on board with the plan; we are still trying to figure out how to get control of the hardscape area so we can legally serve alcohol during special events.

EVENTS IN FY12

07/25/11
State of the Neighborhood Dinner Reception

08/06/11
Marine Band San Diego Summer Concert

08/13/11
Ferragosto2011: Venetian Masquerade

09/24/11
Art D’Strada in Little Italy North

10/09/11
Little Italy FESTA!

10/22/11
The Bulls of St. Agata Charge Little Italy

10/31/11
Trick-or-Treat on India Street

12/3/11
Little Italy Tree Lighting & Christmas Village

02/18/12
Little Italy Carnevale

04/15/12
GranFondo

04/28-29/12
Mission Federal ArtWalk

06/20/12
Taste of Little Italy

Little Italy Association FY12 Income / $1,885,720

Little Italy Association FY12 Expense / $1,790,707

Little Italy Tree Lighting & Christmas Village
This Annual Report was composed and created by the staff of New City America, Inc.