



AGENDA

GARDEN GROVE PLANNING COMMISSION

SEPTEMBER 3, 2026 – 7:00 pm

COMMUNITY MEETING CENTER
11300 STANFORD AVENUE

Meeting Assistance: Any person requiring auxiliary aids and services, due to a disability, to address the Planning Commission, should contact the Community Development Department at (714) 741-5312 or email planning@ggcity.org 72 hours prior to the meeting to arrange for special accommodations. (Government Code §5494.3.2).

Agenda Item Descriptions: Agenda item descriptions are intended to give a brief and general description of the item. The Planning Commission may take legislative action deemed appropriate with respect to the item and is not limited to the recommended action indicated in staff reports or the agenda.

Documents/Writings: Any revised or additional documents/writings related to an item on the agenda distributed to all or a majority of the Planning Commission within 72 hours of a meeting, are made available for public inspection at the same time (1) in the Planning Services Division Office at 11222 Acacia Parkway, Garden Grove, CA 92840, during normal business hours; and (2) at the Community Meeting Center at the time of the meeting.

Public Comments: Members of the public who attend the meeting in-person and would like to address the Planning Commission are requested to complete a yellow speaker card indicating their name and address, and identifying the subject matter they wish to address. This card should be given to the Recording Secretary before the meeting begins. General comments are made during "Oral Communications" and are limited to three (3) minutes and to matters the Planning Commission has jurisdiction over. Persons wishing to address the Planning Commission regarding a Public Hearing matter will be called to the podium at the time the matter is being considered. Members of the public who wish to comment on matters before the Commission, in lieu of doing so in person, may submit comments by emailing public-comment@ggcity.org no later than 3:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. The comments will be provided to the Commission as part of the meeting record.

PLEASE SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES DURING THE MEETING.

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

ROLL CALL: COMMISSIONERS ASHLAND, BEARD, CUEVA, FLANDERS, LARICCHIA, LINDSAY, RAMIREZ

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS - PUBLIC

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 20, 2026

C. PUBLIC HEARING(S) (Authorization for the Chair to execute Resolution shall be included in the motion.)

C.1 ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION NO. IFC-004-2026

APPLICANT: CITY OF GARDEN GROVE
LOCATION: NA

REQUEST: A request for Planning Commission to consider and recommend that the City Council adopt non-binding design guidelines for the “Little Saigon” area in collaboration with the Cities of Fountain Valley and Santa Ana.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval of Item for Consideration No. IFC-004-2026 to City Council.

D. MATTERS FROM COMMISSIONERS

E. MATTERS FROM STAFF

E.1. Project Update

F. ADJOURNMENT

GARDEN GROVE PLANNING COMMISSION
Community Meeting Center
11300 Stanford Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92840

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 20, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Ashland
Commissioner Beard
Commissioner Cueva
Commissioner Flanders
Commissioner Laricchia
Commissioner Lindsay
Commissioner Ramirez

Absent: Flanders, Lindsay

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Commissioner Ramirez.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – PUBLIC – None

July 16, 2026 MINUTES:

Action: Received and filed.

Motion: Ramirez Second: Laricchia

Ayes: (5) Ashland, Beard, Cueva, Laricchia, Ramirez

Noes: (0)

Absent: (2) Flanders, Lindsay

Abstain: (0)

PUBLIC HEARING – CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. CUP-300-2026 FOR PROPERTY LOCATED ON THE SOUTHSIDE OF GARDEN GROVE BOULEVARD, BETWEEN CANNERY STREET AND CASA LINDA LANE, AT 9240 GARDEN GROVE BOULEVARD, UNIT NOS. G16 & G17

Applicant: Nouh Sedra of NS LIQUOR LLC
Date: August 20, 2026

Request: A request for Conditional Use Permit approval to allow a new liquor store to operate with a new original Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) "Type 21" (Off-Sale General) License. In addition, a recommendation that the Planning Commission revoke the previous Conditional Use Permit No.

CUP-075-2016. In conjunction with the request, the Planning Commission will also consider a determination that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The applicant's representative, Nouh Sedra, addressed the Commission and answered questions. The applicant representative was asked if they had read and agreed with the Conditions of Approval, and they responded that they had.

Action: Resolution No. 6145-26 was approved.

Motion: Ramirez Second: Beard

Ayes: (5) Ashland, Beard, Cueva, Laricchia, Ramirez

Noes: (0)

Absent: (2) Flanders, Lindsay

PUBLIC HEARING – CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. CUP-103-65 (REV. 2026) FOR PROPERTY LOCATED ON THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF KATELLA AVENUE AND DINO CIRCLE, AT 10802 KATELLA AVENUE

Applicant: PDS West, Inc.

Date: August 20, 2026

Request: A request for modifications to the approved plans under Conditional Use Permit No. CUP-103-65 to allow building and site improvements for an existing carwash. In conjunction with the request, the Planning Commission will consider a determination that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The applicant's representative, Shawn Amin, addressed the Commission and answered questions. The applicant representative was asked if they had read and agreed with the Conditions of Approval, and they responded that they had.

Action: Resolution No. 6144-26 was approved.

Motion: Laricchia Second: Cueva

Ayes: (5) Ashland, Beard, Cueva, Laricchia, Ramirez

Noes: (0)

Absent: (2) Flanders, Lindsay

PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDMENT NO. A-047-2026

Applicant: CITY OF GARDEN GROVE

Date: August 20, 2026

Request: A City-initiated zoning text amendment to various provisions of Title 9 (Land Use) of the Garden Grove Municipal Code to conform to changes in State law and City policies, and to make clarifications and typographical corrections. In conjunction with the request, the Planning Commission will also consider a recommendation that the City Council determine that the proposed Amendment is categorically and statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Action: Resolution Nos. 6146-26, 6147-26, 6148-26, and 6149-26 were approved.

Motion: Ramirez Second: Ashland

Ayes: (5) Ashland, Beard, Cueva, Laricchia, Ramirez

Noes: (0)

Absent: (2) Flanders, Lindsay

MATTERS FROM COMMISSIONERS: Commissioner Beard requested information for the City Council and Planning Commission Joint Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, August 25th. Staff provided a brief description and confirmed an agenda would be distributed for the meeting. Commissioner Laricchia requested information regarding the status of the residential structures at the Cottage Industries project that are currently painted black. Staff confirmed the structures will remain as residential units that would be rented on a long-term basis and that ADUs will be constructed on some of the properties.

MATTERS FROM STAFF: Staff stated that following the Special Joint Meeting on August 25th with the City Council and the Planning Commission, there will be a Planning Commission meeting on September 3rd to consider the Little Saigon design guidelines.

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:15 p.m.

Carol Sebbo
Recording Secretary

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT PLANNING STAFF REPORT

AGENDA ITEM NO.: C.1	SITE LOCATION: NA
HEARING DATE: September 3, 2026	GENERAL PLAN: NA
CASE NO.: Item for Consideration No. IFC-004-2026 ("Little Saigon" Design Guidelines)	ZONE: NA
APPLICANT: City of Garden Grove	CEQA DETERMINATION: Exempt
PROPERTY OWNER: NA	APN(s): NA

REQUEST:

That the Planning Commission consider and recommend that the City Council adopt non-binding design guidelines for the "Little Saigon" area in collaboration with the Cities of Fountain Valley and Santa Ana.

BACKGROUND:

Little Saigon is one of Orange County's most significant cultural and economic assets, and a dynamic district shaped over half a century by Vietnamese-American entrepreneurship, culture, community, and investment. Since its early inception, the growth of Little Saigon has been driven by the community of Vietnamese-American businesses, institutions, and residents who have now expanded throughout the region across municipal boundaries.

Recognizing the opportunity to build upon these assets, the Cities of Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and Fountain Valley formed a collaborative partnership to advance Little Saigon as a premier statewide destination for cultural tourism, while simultaneously supporting economic development, business growth, and job creation. Through funding provided by the California Jobs First Regional Investment Initiative Catalyst (RIIC) Program, the three cities launched a coordinated series of initiatives intended to strengthen Little Saigon's economic vitality, enhance the visitor experience, and preserve and celebrate the cultural identity that makes the district unique. The Little Saigon Design Guidelines are one component of this broader economic development strategy.

Gensler was awarded the Architectural and Urban Design Guidelines Request for Proposals (RFP) as approved by City Council on January 13, 2026. On February 5, 2026, the Parties began biweekly meetings with the project consultant to further refine the Little Saigon Project's vision. A kickoff meeting was held on January 30, 2026 with the intent to complete the scope of work by September 30, 2026.

In coordination with Gensler, more than 100 participants were surveyed through in-person community meetings held on April 25, 2026 and June 20, 2026, and

virtually via Zoom on March 24, 25, and 30, 2026. Additional online surveys were available for those who were unable to attend a meeting. Feedback received during these outreach efforts identified perceived strengths and weaknesses of the area. Respondents highlighted the community's strong historical roots in the area, the variety and quality of food, and the culture, while identifying concerns with mobility, access, and fragmented identity. The survey also included a variety of design choices, allowing community members to express their preferences and help establish a consensus for desired design elements for the area.

On August 25, 2026, a joint study session with the City Council and Planning Commission was held to solicit feedback on the draft Design Guidelines. Overall, the guidelines were received favorably, with the discussion focusing on implementation strategies, including opportunities to incentivize or to assist property owners and build upon the document over time. Additional feedback emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity and thoughtful execution, including the potential development of a mission statement that could help guide future implementation and be preserved in perpetuity.

DISCUSSION:

Developed by Gensler in collaboration with the three cities and informed by extensive community engagement, the Guidelines establish a shared design framework for articulating and enhancing Little Saigon's public realm, commercial centers, buildings, and visual identity.

The proposed design guidelines were developed through a three (3)-part process. The first step involved researching the area, including conducting an architectural tour on February 13, 2026, and studying the history and development of the region. The second step focused on public outreach and included several community meetings held virtually via Zoom, two (2) in-person outreach events, and an online survey. The third and final step involved drafting the design guidelines based on the feedback and input received from the community throughout the outreach process.

The resulting design guidelines provide recommendations based on community feedback and best practices. Overall, the guidelines aim to create a stronger sense of place for Little Saigon to encourage tourism while enhancing the sense of community for Vietnamese residents. Overall, the intent is to strengthen Little Saigon's historical identity while supporting continued growth. A brief summary of the key recommendations is as follows:

1. Increased focus on pedestrian-oriented design at a private and public level.

One focus on potential improvements to the district's streetscape includes enhanced medians, street furniture, shade canopies, pylons, and street lighting designed to reflect and reinforce the district's distinct identity. These improvements are intended to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages walking, exploration, and gathering. Recommendations emphasize the incorporation of Vietnamese-inspired paving patterns and other culturally reflective design elements to establish a sense of place. This

recommendation encourages investment in, and enhancement of, existing infrastructure, and improvements to sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities to create a more inviting and connected streetscape.

2. Enhanced landscaping and public spaces.

Another recommendation made by the design guidelines is for expanded landscaping, both in the public and private realm. It encourages landscaping with added medians, curb extensions, traffic islands, pedestrian corridors in the right-of-way, and additional plantings in the public realm, with added shade trees, groundcover, and swales. The guidelines also make recommendations on the types of shrubs, trees, and groundcover.

3. Culturally inspired architecture and streetscapes.

This recommendation focuses on incorporating culturally inspired elements into site design to reinforce the district's identity and sense of place. These elements may range from the architectural form of buildings, to the materials, colors, and finishes used. The recommendations also identify site features that can contribute to a culturally distinct environment, such as paving patterns, lanterns, canopies, awnings, and other site amenities.

4. Coordinated signage and wayfinding.

This recommendation provides guidance for creating a coordinated wayfinding and signage system throughout Little Saigon. The recommendations establish a clear hierarchy of information, promote bilingual communication, and encourage a consistent visual identity that improves navigation. This includes creating public signage, such as gateways, street banners, and branded pedestrian spaces, with additional recommendations for tenant signage.

Design guidelines are a set of recommendations and strategies that inform the creation of built spaces within a defined area. They are written as flexible, at times subjective statements that provide readers a framework for how buildings, larger project sites, and other developed spaces could be designed. Design guidelines are not prescriptive or written as specific directions that must be followed without room for interpretation, these stricter types of regulations are usually referred to as design standards. Design guidelines, as presented in this document, are not intended to override existing zoning or land use regulations, which are typically regulated by individual cities or jurisdictions through other mechanisms such as the zoning code, general plan, or area plans.

The intent of these guidelines is to provide a framework to enhance the cultural identity and character of Little Saigon by providing recommendations that encourage cohesive design from both public and private development. It does not establish a new set of mandatory development standards; rather the guidelines are intended to serve as a resource to inspire new development, redevelopment, and improvements.

Additionally, the guidelines are intended to demonstrate the City's continued investment in this important economic and cultural area of Garden Grove. Establishing guidelines for the district may also support future efforts to pursue grant funding and other investment opportunities that can enhance the area's economic vitality and cultural identity.

The exact proposed design guidelines are shown in [Exhibit "A"](#) (Proposed Little Saigon Design Guidelines) of [Attachment 1](#) (Resolution No. 6151-26 for Item for Consideration No. IFC-004-2026).

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

The adoption of the Little Saigon Design Guidelines does not constitute an "approval" of a project requiring environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"). (CEQA Guidelines, § 15352.) CEQA Guidelines section 15352 defines "approval" as the decision by a public agency that commits the agency to a definite course of action with respect to a project. Adoption of the Design Guidelines does not commit the City to a definite course of action or authorize any particular development, redevelopment, public improvement, or other physical change to the environment. The Design Guidelines are advisory in nature and are intended to provide guidance and inspiration for future development, redevelopment, property improvements, and potential public-realm improvements within Little Saigon. The Design Guidelines do not establish new mandatory development standards, modify permitted land uses or development intensities, approve or entitle any private development project, or require implementation of any particular design feature or improvement.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission take the following action:

1. Adopt Resolution No. 6151-26 recommending that the Garden Grove City Council approve Item for Consideration No. IFC-004-2026 and adopt non-binding design guidelines for the "Little Saigon" area.



Maria Parra
Planning Services Manager



By: Christian Farmer
Urban Planner

RESOLUTION NO. 6151-26

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GARDEN GROVE RECOMMENDING THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVE ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION NO. IFC-004-2026, AND ADOPT NON-BINDING DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE “LITTLE SAIGON” AREA.

WHEREAS, Little Saigon is one of Orange County’s most significant cultural and economic assets—a dynamic district shaped over half a century by Vietnamese-American entrepreneurship, culture, community, and investment; and

WHEREAS, the Cities of Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and Fountain Valley (collectively, the “Cities”) have formed a collaborative partnership to advance Little Saigon as a premier statewide destination for cultural tourism, while simultaneously supporting economic development, business growth, and job creation; and

WHEREAS, through funding provided by the California Jobs First Regional Investment Initiative Catalyst (RIIC) Program, the Cities launched a coordinated series of initiatives intended to strengthen Little Saigon’s economic vitality, enhance the visitor experience, and preserve and celebrate the cultural identity that makes the district unique; and

WHEREAS, one such initiative is the development of non-binding architectural and urban design guidelines for the Little Saigon area located within the three Cities, intended to preserve cultural identity, enhance visual quality, support economic vitality, and create a cohesive sense of place that reflects and celebrates the area’s unique Vietnamese-American heritage; and

WHEREAS, proposed Design Guidelines for the Little Saigon area have been developed by Gensler in collaboration with the three Cities and informed by extensive community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the City solicited and received feedback from the public on the proposed Design Guidelines through in-person events held on April 25, 2026 and June 20, 2026, through several community meetings held virtually via Zoom on March 24, 25, and 30, 2026, through an online survey, through a joint Planning Commission and City Council Study Session held on August 25, 2026, and at the September 3, 2026 Planning Commission meeting; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed Little Saigon Design Guidelines establish a shared design framework for articulating and enhancing Little Saigon’s public realm, commercial centers, buildings, and visual identity and provide flexible tools that reinforce cultural identity, strengthen connections between destinations, encourage private and public investment, and create a more welcoming and memorable experience for residents and visitors alike; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Little Saigon Design Guidelines ([Attachment A](#)) establish a shared design framework for articulating and enhancing Little Saigon's public realm, commercial centers, buildings, and visual identity and provide flexible tools that reinforce cultural identity, strengthen connections between destinations, encourage private and public investment, and create a more welcoming and memorable experience for residents and visitors alike; and

WHEREAS, adoption of the Little Saigon Design Guidelines does not commit the City to a definite course of action or authorize any particular development, redevelopment, public improvement, or other physical change to the environment and therefore does not constitute an "approval" of a project within the meaning of CEQA Guidelines section 15352 or require environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); the Guidelines are advisory in nature and are intended to provide guidance and inspiration for future development, redevelopment, property improvements, and potential public-realm improvements, and do not establish new mandatory development standards, modify permitted land uses or development intensities, approve or entitle any private development project, or require implementation of any particular design feature or improvement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, FOUND, AND DETERMINED that the Planning Commission of the City of Garden Grove, in regular session assembled on September 3, 2026, does hereby recommend that the City Council approve Item for Consideration No. IFC-004-2026, and adopt non-binding design guidelines for the "Little Saigon" area.



ATTACHMENT "A"

DESIGN GUIDELINES | AUG 2026



Acknowledgments



City of Garden Grove
City Manager's Office
Economic Development
Planning Division
Traffic Division

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	01
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1	
INTRODUCTION	06
Introduction	07
Defining Little Saigon	08
Community Snapshot	09
Design as a Conduit	10

2	
PROJECT FRAMEWORK	11
Engaging Little Saigon	12
A Community Led Process	13
Little Saigon Today	14
Community Preference	15

3	
USER GUIDE	19
Understanding Design Guidelines	20
Navigating This Document	21
Glossary	22-24

4	
STREETSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM	25
Introduction	26
Understanding The Elements	27
Improvements	28-29
4.1 Create Welcoming Streets that Encourage Walking, Gathering, and Exploration	30
4.2 Reinforcing District Identity Through Cultural Inspired Streetscape Elements	31
4.3 Expand Urban Greenery	32-36
4.4 Support Safe and Comfortable Movement Throughout the District	37
4.5 Design Public Spaces to Support Social Interaction and Community Use	38-41
4.6 Celebrate Vietnamese Culture Through Public Art and Placemaking	42-43
4.7 Promote Shared Mobility and a Park-Once District Strategy	44
Visualization	45

Table of Contents

5	
SITE DESIGN	46
Introduction	47
Understanding The Elements	48
Improvements	49-50
5.1 Improve Access and Connectivity Within Retail Centers	51
5.2 Activate Site to Support Community Life and Cultural Activities	52
5.3 Strengthen District Identity Through Culturally Inspired Site Elements	53
Visualization	54

6	
ARCHITECTURE	55
Introduction	56
Understanding The Elements	57
Storefront Architectural Elements	58-59
Architecture Improvements: Storefront Design Alternatives	60-61
6.1 Encourage New Development that Supports Walkability and District Character	62
6.2 Design Active and Engaging Storefronts	63-68
6.3 Design Roof Forms that Enhance Building Character	69-70
Visualization	71

7	
SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING	72
Introduction	73
Understanding The Elements	74
Improvements	75
ADA Standards and Viewing Distance	76
Storefront Signage Alternatives	77
Public Realm Signage Alternatives	78
7.1 Gateways	79-81
7.2 Monuments	82
7.3 Pylons	83
7.4 Tenant Signage	84
7.5 Branded Pedestrian Spaces	85
7.6 Street Banners	86
7.7 Storytelling Pathways	87
Visualization	88

Executive Summary

Little Saigon is one of Orange County’s most significant cultural and economic assets—a dynamic district shaped over half a century by Vietnamese-American entrepreneurship, culture, community, and investment. Since its early inception, the growth of Little Saigon has been driven by the community of Vietnamese-American businesses, institutions, and residents who have now expanded throughout the region across municipal boundaries.

Recognizing the opportunity to build upon these assets, the Cities of Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and Fountain Valley formed a collaborative partnership to advance Little Saigon as a premier statewide destination for cultural tourism, while simultaneously supporting economic development, business growth, and job creation. Through funding provided by the California Jobs First Regional Investment Initiative Catalyst (RIIC) Program, the three cities launched a coordinated series of initiatives intended to strengthen Little Saigon’s economic vitality, enhance the visitor experience, and preserve and celebrate the cultural identity that makes the district unique.

The Little Saigon Design Guidelines are one component of this broader economic development strategy. Developed by Gensler in collaboration with the three cities and informed by extensive community engagement, the Guidelines establish a shared design framework for articulating and enhancing Little Saigon’s public realm, commercial centers, buildings, and visual identity. The goal is not to create uniformity or prescribe a single architectural style, but to provide flexible tools that reinforce cultural identity, strengthen connections between destinations, encourage private and public investment, and create a more welcoming and memorable experience for residents and visitors alike.

Little Saigon is not a static geographic area: it is a living cultural district that has expanded and evolved over time, and is not confined by existing jurisdictional boundaries. Although Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and Fountain Valley provided the partnership and leadership that made this effort possible, these guidelines are intended to serve Little Saigon beyond the influence of the three participating cities. As Little Saigon’s cultural and economic presence continues to grow, other cities and communities with established Vietnamese-American commercial and cultural areas are invited to adopt or adapt these guidelines.

Ultimately, the Little Saigon Design Guidelines provide a common resource for strengthening Little Saigon while respecting the diversity and individuality of the communities that comprise it. Together with complementary efforts focused on tourism, district organization, marketing, infrastructure, and business development, they support a larger vision: to celebrate and preserve Little Saigon’s cultural identity while leveraging its unique assets to attract visitors and investment, support local businesses and entrepreneurship, create economic opportunity and quality jobs, and ensure that Little Saigon continues to thrive for generations to come.

Ursula Luna-Reynosa

City of Garden Grove
Assistant City Manager &
Economic Development and Housing Director



1

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

Celebrating Little Saigon’s cultural heritage

The oldest Vietnamese community in the United States is known as Little Saigon. It is a vibrant cultural and commercial hub that continues to evolve and grow. Following the Fall of Saigon in 1975, South Vietnamese refugees resettled in the United States, establishing vibrant communities across the nation, with one of the largest and most influential taking root in Orange County. Centered on Bolsa Avenue, Little Saigon is known for its bustling markets, authentic cuisine, cultural festivals, and Vietnamese-language media. Over the decades, it has become not only a vital economic engine for the region but also a symbol of identity, resilience, and unity. for generations of Vietnamese Americans in Orange County.

Little Saigon presents a significant opportunity to be leveraged as a premiere statewide destination for cultural tourism, drawing visitors seeking authentic and immersive experiences. With its rich history, dynamic culturally-inspired dining establishments, markets, and institutions, Little Saigon offers a compelling narrative that resonates far beyond Orange County. By promoting heritage tours,

culinary experiences, traditional festivals such as Tet Festival, and Vietnamese arts and crafts, Little Saigon can attract tourists from across California and beyond. Strategic investment in infrastructure, signage, marketing and partnerships with travel and cultural organizations can further position Little Saigon as a vibrant, year-round cultural destination that celebrates diversity and boosts the regional economy.

Communicate Culture Through The Lens of Design

This project seeks to establish a set of design guidelines for Little Saigon that balances cultural authenticity with modern development standards. These design guidelines will provide guidance to local governments, developers, businesses, and property owners when developing new projects, improvements, or renovations. By establishing a unifying vision for matters of site design, architecture, signage, and other design components, the Little Saigon Area can continue to grow as a regional and statewide cultural destination that uniquely balances design, investment, tourism, and community pride.

Image Below: Vietnam War Memorial, Westminster, CA

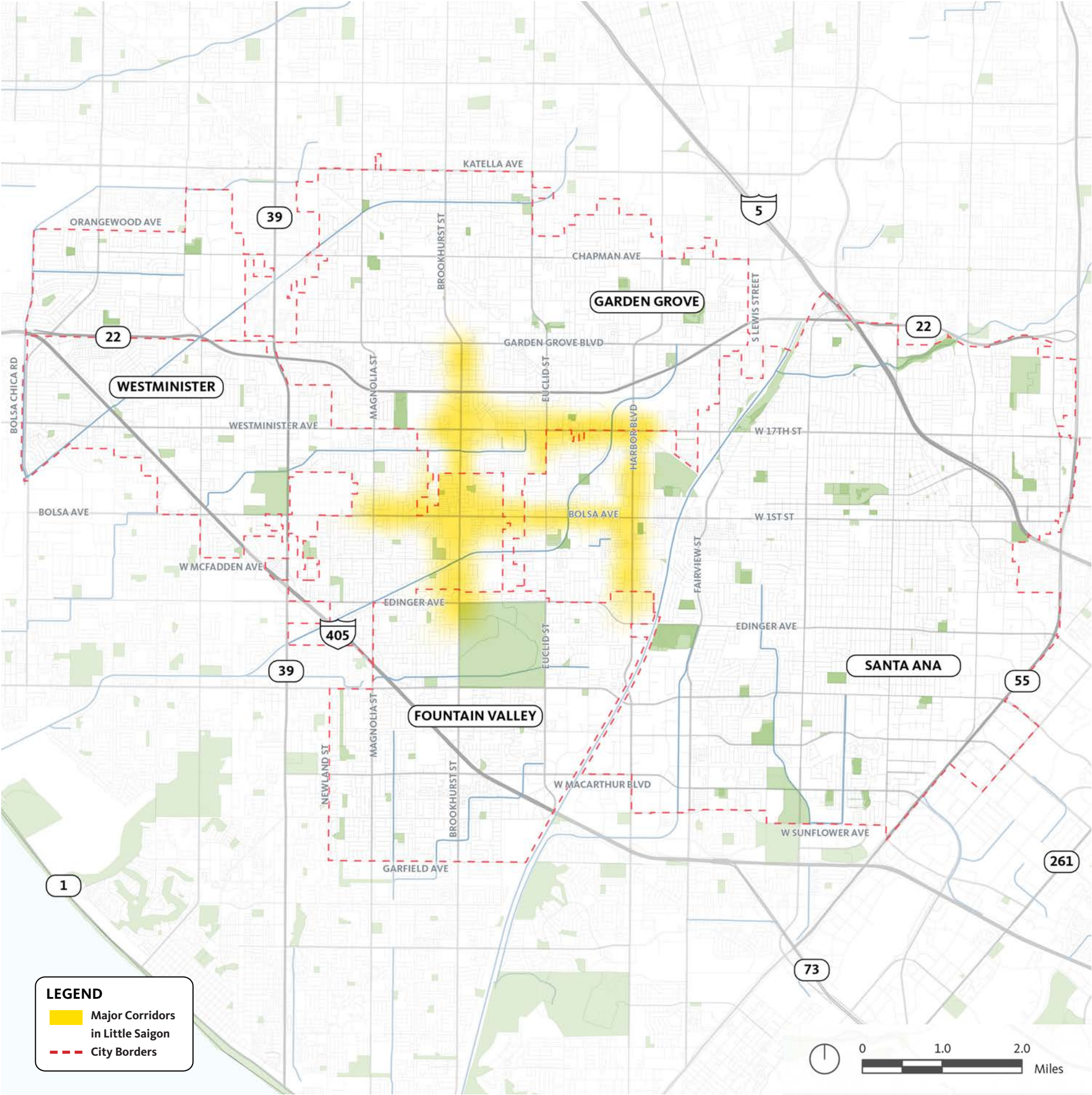


Defining Little Saigon

The Vietnamese community in Orange County has been a defining cultural presence for over 50 years, and is now home to the largest and oldest Vietnamese population in the entire country. While the most significant waves of immigration were experienced throughout the 1970s and early 1990s, the area known locally as Little Saigon is now home to a thriving and diverse mixture of native Vietnamese, Vietnamese-Americans, and the broader multi-cultural and multi-ethnic profile of the wider Orange County region.

Little Saigon occupies a unique pattern of urban development which sets it apart from other recognizable ethnic neighborhoods: rather than being bound within a specific network of streets or clearly established jurisdictional borders, Little Saigon is more dispersed throughout the county and is more accurately characterized as a series of neighborhoods where a substantial population of Vietnamese residents, stores, and cultural institutions, can be found. Importantly, Little Saigon is not an exclusive or mono-ethnic enclave where only Vietnamese people, language, or culture is expressed, as many other populations call these neighborhoods home.

While these design guidelines were prepared specifically at the request of the Cities of Garden Grove, Fountain Valley, and Santa Ana, any city that contains a portion of Little Saigon now or in the future is welcome to adopt these guidelines.



Community Snapshot

Little Saigon is a collection of sites, sounds, colors, textures, and moods. It is a diverse canvas of cultural expression, manifesting throughout the community as a collection of design motifs, materials, sculptures, and other celebrations of Vietnamese heritage and history.



Garden Grove Plaza, Garden Grove



Lien Hue 2, Garden Grove



Banh Mi Che Cali, Garden Grove



Mall of Fortune, Garden Grove



Euclid Retail Center, Garden Grove



Duc Huong, Garden Grove



Chua Hue Quang Temple, Santa Ana



Chua Bat Nha Temple, Santa Ana



Chua Hue Quang Temple, Santa Ana



Chua Bat Nha Temple, Santa Ana



Chua Hue Quang Temple, Santa Ana



Today Plaza, Westminster



Vietnam War Memorial, Westminster



Bolsa Mini Mall, Westminster

Design as a Conduit

The community of Little Saigon has grown organically across the decades. While each city that comprises a portion of Little Saigon has experienced unique patterns of growth, development, and investment that form a unique urban context, the influence of the local Vietnamese community has gradually ingrained itself throughout the residential and commercial neighborhoods in a familiar pattern of design and cultural expressions.

Each resident, homeowner, store owner, and tenant has identified unique and interesting conduits for which to express their pride in Vietnamese culture, heritage, and identity. Through every choice of window display, floral arrangement, advertising font or language, the community of Little Saigon introduces a part of their traditions into the surrounding built environment for all to see and experience.

Navigating through Little Saigon today, one witnesses the vibrant colors, building materials, and architectural expressions of Vietnamese culture in a variety of settings: monuments and statues rooted in public plazas and parks, each evoking critical historic moments both celebratory and somber; Vietnamese flags and banners providing contrasting colors and patterns to the Stars and Stripes, hung from windows, building awnings, and over pedestrian walkways along commercial strips; buildings and temples projecting a unique curved roof line, adorned with distinctive tiles and wood paneling; plaza directories cataloging Vietnamese business and commercial establishments alongside familiar American brands and stores.

No two design expressions are alike, yet collectively imbue the urban fabric with a familiar and recognizable character that invites all to participate in experiencing Little Saigon's hospitality and joy.



Garden Grove Plaza, Garden Grove



Hue Quang Buddhist Temple, Santa Ana



Fountain Valley Town Center, Fountain Valley

A large, stylized white number '2' is centered on a solid orange background. The number has a thick, rounded, and slightly irregular appearance, with a small gap at the top left and a sharp point at the bottom right.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PROCESS



Engaging Little Saigon

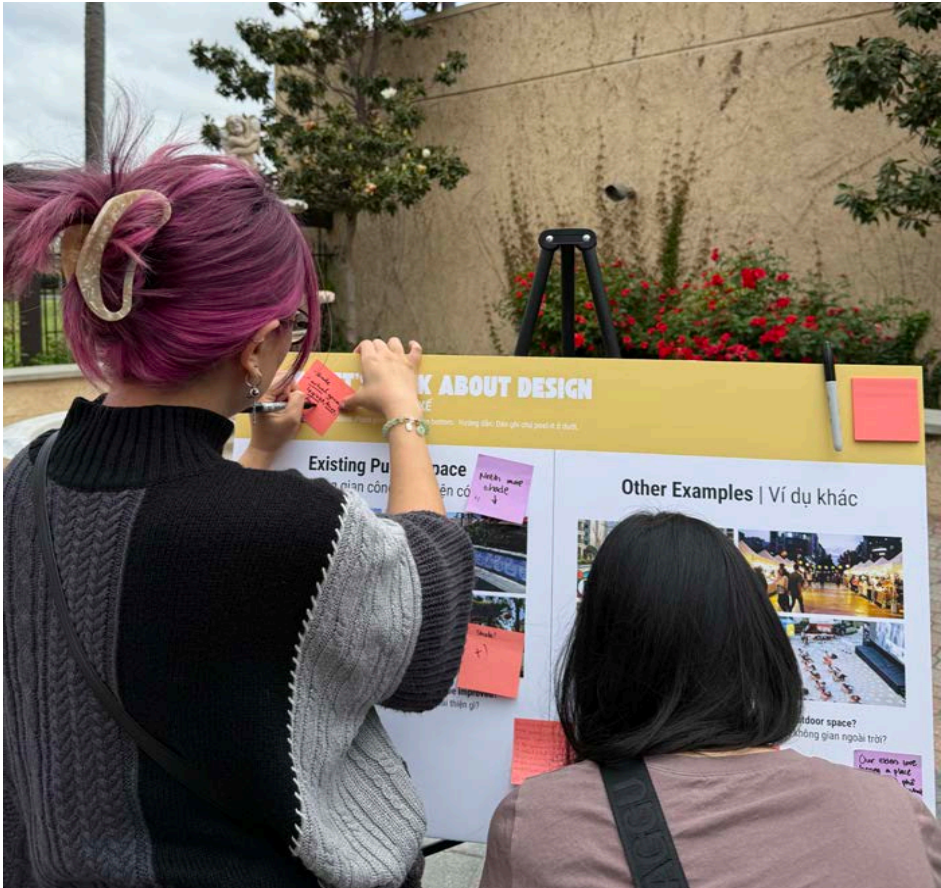
The Cities of Garden Grove, Fountain Valley, and Santa Ana retained Gensler to craft an inclusive community engagement campaign that explored how stakeholders experience the spatial and physical dimensions of Little Saigon, and where gaps and opportunities might exist. The sessions brought together residents, business owners, property owners, cultural leaders, and civic organizations from all three jurisdictions.

Engagement activities also probed questions of aesthetics and identity, inviting the community to define what feels authentic and visually representative of who they are. Rather than imposing a predetermined design vision, the process surfaced the community’s own language around place, memory, and cultural expression.

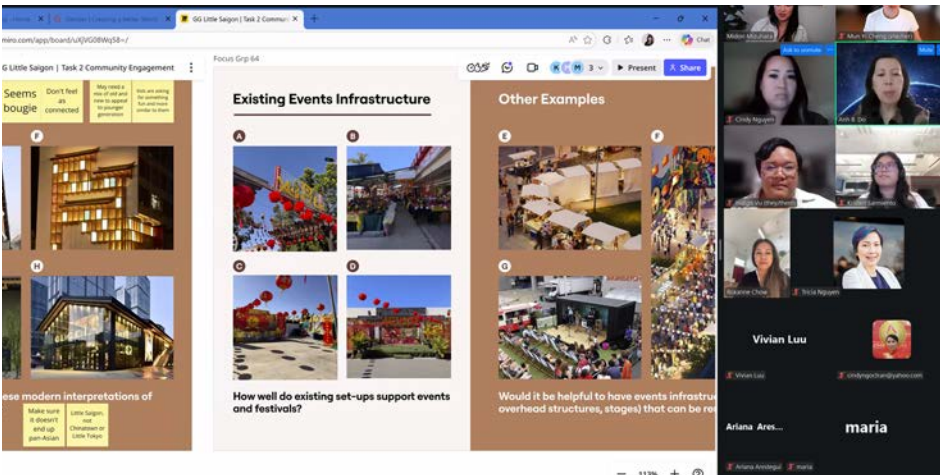
This early, sustained community co-creation is foundational to the success of the Little Saigon Design Guidelines. Standards shaped with the community, not for it, earn far more genuine buy-in from the residents, business owners, and property owners who bring them to life. That buy-in determines whether guidelines stay on a shelf or become a living framework that are applied across the district.



Garden Grove Community Center, Garden Grove



Garden Grove Community Center, Garden Grove



HỘI THẢO CỘNG ĐỒNG VỀ THIẾT KẾ CHO LITTLE SAIGON



Hãy tham gia cùng chúng tôi và góp ý xây dựng Định hướng Thiết kế cho Little Saigon

Thứ Bảy, 25 Tháng Tư | 11 AM - 1 PM
Garden Grove Courtyard Center | 12732 Main St, Garden Grove, CA 92840

Với bề dày lịch sử và sự năng động của Văn hóa Việt-Mỹ, Little Saigon là một trung tâm văn hóa và thương mại đầy sức sống, được mở rộng từ Santa Ana đến Garden Grove, Fountain Valley và các khu vực lân cận. Kính mời quý vị tham gia buổi hội thảo về định hướng thiết kế này. Chúng tôi rất mong được lắng nghe ý tưởng của quý vị về cách tiếp tục cải thiện diện mạo của Little Saigon cho thế hệ mai sau.

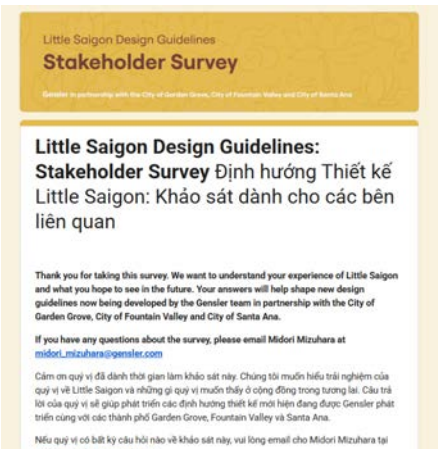


A Community Led Process

Over the seven-month project timeline, more than 100 community members and stakeholders were engaged through six touch points. These engagements were offered in a variety of formats and languages to create an accessible atmosphere and lower barriers to entry for those new to civic engagement processes. Garden Grove, Fountain Valley, and Santa Ana each marketed engagement opportunities in English and Vietnamese through social media, press releases, and public access television. Each engagement was strategically designed to gather input for the next phase of work, forming an iterative process that directly shaped the design guidelines deliverable. The first phase of engagement and listening sessions shaped the draft Design Guidelines, and the second phase informed the final Design Guidelines.



Garden Grove Community Center
Garden Grove



Fountain Valley Rec Center
Fountain Valley



FEBRUARY 2026
Project Kick-Off

**SPRING: DISCOVERY
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
PHASE 1**

**Virtual Marketing
Campaign & Messaging**

Virtual Stakeholder Focus Groups
March 24th, 25th, 30th, 2026

In-Person Community Workshop
April 25th, 2026

Online Survey
Open from April 3rd to May 8th, 2026

LATE SPRING
Consultants drafted preliminary design guidelines.

**SUMMER: REFINEMENT
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
PHASE 2**

**Virtual Marketing
Campaign & Messaging**

In-Person Community Workshop
June 20th, 2026

LATE SUMMER-FALL
Consultants refined final design guidelines.

SEPTEMBER 2026
Project Finalization

Little Saigon Today

In the first phase of engagement activities, community members surfaced the current strengths and weaknesses of Little Saigon. These insights gave the team a starting point and context for analyzing potential opportunities and solutions. The following pages highlight the opportunities and lessons learned that were carried forward into the design guidelines.

Strengths

Deep community roots

Multi-generational households, strong family ties, and a growing 2nd and 3rd generation Vietnamese-American presence anchor Little Saigon’s community.

A living fusion culture

Vietnamese, American, and other cultural influences have woven together over decades into a cultural fusion unique to Little Saigon. Today, it is expressed in food, fashion, language, and civic life.

Enduring cultural and community institutions

From bilingual schools to community organizations and nationally recognized advocacy groups, Little Saigon has established institutes that support and uplift residents.

Food as a cultural cornerstone

Food is Little Saigon’s most visible and widely celebrated asset. Nearly unanimously celebrated by participants, it remains the most well-known and accessible aspect of Little Saigon to visitors.

Weaknesses

Fragmented district identity

Little Saigon lacks a shared vision across its multiple jurisdictional boundaries. Plazas, monuments, religious facilities, and attractions remain disconnected, with no coordinated strategy for branding, wayfinding, or tourism.

Limited mobility and accessibility

Little Saigon is predominantly car-dependent, with poor pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and underused public transit. Non-drivers, particularly seniors and youth, face significant barriers to getting around.

Insufficient public space and amenities

Publicly accessible gathering spaces are scarce and underutilized, shade and cleanliness are recurring concerns, and access to green space is limited.

Lack of youth appeal

Youth without ties to religious facilities or community clubs report a weak connection to Little Saigon as a place. Nightlife and venues for contemporary Vietnamese-American culture are largely absent, pushing younger residents to seek those experiences elsewhere.



Right Image: Hue Quang Buddhist Temple, Santa Ana

Honoring Little Saigon's Roots

Preserve and Build on Little Saigon's Existing Nostalgic and Layered Character

Since Little Saigon's origins in the mid-to-late 1970s and the establishment of the area's first businesses, multiple waves of immigration have shaped the district. Each decade has added its own layer to the visual timeline of the district. The result is a fascinating and diverse look and feel, one that celebrates the beauty of different people and decades coming together in one place over time. Little Saigon's signage, architectural details, and visual diversity are widely valued by the community as expressions of cultural memory and identity.

Legacy plaza signs, distinctive architectural features, and varied colors reflect the entrepreneurial grit and lived experience of the Vietnamese immigrants who built the district.

At the same time, the community supports building on these features to improve legibility and district cohesion. Clearer wayfinding, more visible district markers, and greater consistency in signage can help visitors recognize when they are in Little Saigon, while reinforcing pride and stewardship among community members.

Future updates should strengthen Vietnamese-specific identity through culturally meaningful colors, language, and forms, while remaining community-informed, accessible, and respectful of the district's layered history.



Iconic plaza sign with layered, bilingual typography reflecting Little Saigon's cultural identity.

Mall of Fortune, Garden Grove



Temporary decorations for festivals such as Lunar New Year.

Chua Hue Quang Temple, Santa Ana



Temple architecture invoking Vietnamese traditional roots is nostalgic for many community members.

Hue Quang Buddhist Temple, Santa Ana



Bus shelter with Vietnamese-inspired roof integrating cultural identity into everyday public infrastructure.

Bolsa Ave, Westminster

Cultural Expression in Many Forms

Celebrate the Unique Spectrum of Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American Design Aesthetics

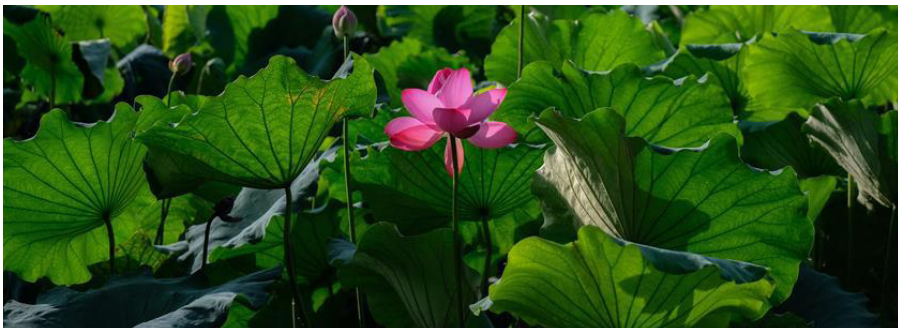
Vietnamese-American identity is often expressed through everyday materials, colors, objects, and visual styles. Community feedback highlights strong connections to wood and bamboo, metalwork, and Vietnamese craft traditions. These are elements that carry cultural memory while remaining practical and adaptable.

Retro color palettes, expressive hand-lettered fonts, and signage styles associated with Vietnamese storefronts and street-food culture are widely recognized as nostalgic, but are also experiencing renewed relevance in contemporary design. When implemented with a contemporary hand, these elements can feel both familiar and fresh, honoring the past while appealing to younger generations.

Crafts such as woven forms, lanterns, and artisan details are seen as underrepresented, presenting an opportunity to elevate cultural presence in ways that feel current rather than themed. Thoughtfully integrating these materials and visual cues into signage, furnishings, and design details can reinforce Little Saigon as a culturally specific, expressive, and evolving district across generations.



Materials such as wood, bamboo, and metalwork are frequently cited by community members as warm and familiar design choices.



Lanterns, traditional crafts, and natural motifs like the lotus are culturally meaningful ways to bring artisanship, color, and warmth into design elements.



Retro, hand-lettered signage is often described as nostalgic yet contemporary, with personality that feels approachable and distinctive.



The desire to balance traditional Vietnamese and French architectural styles came up often as a way to signal a connection to Vietnam.

Fostering Community Through Design

Enabling Cultural and Social Activities is Just as Important as Physical Design Aesthetics

Community feedback emphasizes the need for more comfortable, publicly accessible third spaces: places where people can gather and feel welcome across ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Many distinctively Vietnamese-American cultural practices, from lingering with friends over slowly brewing coffee in an intimate shaded patio, to celebrating the New Year festivals in a large open plaza, depend on welcoming high-quality outdoor spaces of many scales.

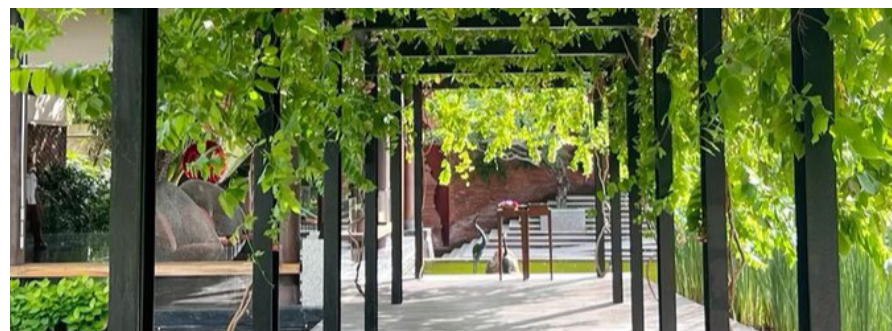
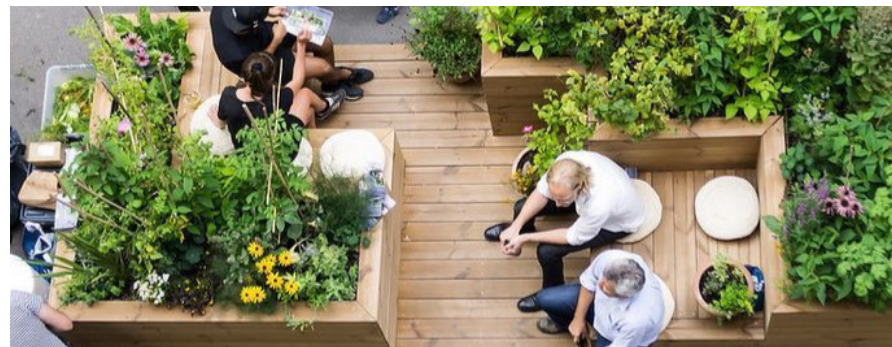
Community members consistently point to the absence of basic amenities: ample shade, seating designed for lingering, meaningful greenery, and clean, well-maintained spaces that feel safe and cared for. These elements are viewed as non-negotiable foundations for any successful public space.

Spaces should accommodate everyday, informal activities such as sitting, talking, playing board games, people-watching, or resting between errands, especially for elders, families, and youth. Accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities is a recurring priority, as is visibility and integration with surrounding businesses and streets.

Third spaces encourage daily use, intergenerational connection, and community pride, strengthening Little Saigon as a place to gather, stay, and belong year-round.



Family-friendly spaces and programming such as play areas that could be designed with Vietnamese-American cultural elements.



During engagement, community members consistently favored public spaces integrated with greenery for comfort and lingering.



Community members supported temporary markets as opportunities for local vendors, cultural expression, and attracting visitors.



Underutilized spaces in parking lots and between buildings present opportunities to introduce additional publicly accessible third space.

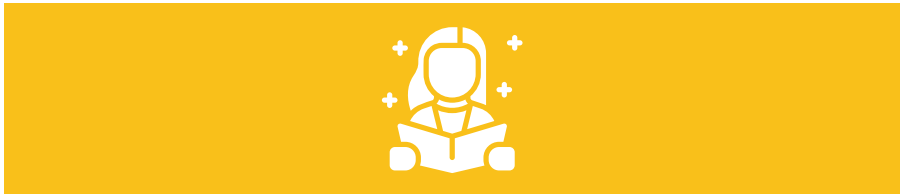
Design Values

Shaped by community voices and refined hand-in-hand with community members throughout the project, these design values are the core of this Design Guidelines document, guiding every design guideline and serving as a north star for the project’s vision.



Design for Hospitality First

- Plan for welcoming moments at all scales, from signage to infrastructure to activities
- Little Saigon should feel approachable to everyone, whether residents and visitors, elders and youths, the able-bodied and people with disabilities
- Prioritize ease of access and mobility



Honor Memory and Storytelling

- The memories, aesthetics, and institutions that have shaped Little Saigon are its foundation - design should layer the new onto the existing
- Celebrate the full range of Vietnamese-American life and identity in Little Saigon



Look to the Future

- Ensure that future generations have a sense of belonging in Little Saigon, with design aesthetics, spaces, and activities that include youth
- Focus on supporting families with spaces, infrastructure and activities they need to thrive in Little Saigon



Embrace Nature and Leverage the Outdoors

- Southern California’s good weather is one of Little Saigon’s greatest assets
- There is a cultural affinity for outdoor public spaces, but greenery and shade are sorely lacking
- Every public space should be designed for life, with shade, greenery, seating, and programmed activities



Stay Flexible and Tactical

- Prioritize solutions that are feasible for small business owners and flexible across property types
- Explore ways to support implementation through grants and shared resources cross-city



Prioritize Coordination and Cooperation

- Continue to use this project as an opportunity to bring diverse constituents together around a common goal
- Activate local businesses, community organizations and artists/musicians to work collaboratively rather than in silos

3

USER GUIDE



Understanding Design Guidelines

What are design guidelines?

Design guidelines are a set of recommendations and strategies that inform the creation of built spaces within a defined area. They are written as flexible, at times subjective statements that provide readers a framework for how buildings, larger project sites, and other developed spaces could be designed. Design guidelines are typically not prescriptive or written as specific directions that must be followed without room for interpretation – these stricter types of regulations are usually referred to as design standards.

Design guidelines as presented in this document are not intended to override existing zoning or land use regulations, which are typically regulated by individual cities or jurisdictions through other mechanisms such as the zoning code, general plan, or area plans.

The design guidelines included in this document serve as an extension of the vision and design principles described in previous sections, and are written for a diverse audience and range of stakeholders who play an active role in developing properties, designing buildings, managing storefronts, or creating spaces for people to visit, shop, work, and dwell.

How do design guidelines work?

Readers should review these guidelines as a set of best practices and recommendations when considering the design of a building, property, or communal area located within the **Little Saigon Area**. While the Cities of **Garden Grove, Fountain Valley, and Santa Ana** commissioned these guidelines, other cities that have a critical mass of Vietnamese American businesses located within commercial corridors are welcome to adopt these guidelines as well.

Design guidelines for this document are organized into the following topics:

- **Streetscape and Public Realm**, which regulates streets, sidewalks, parking areas, and other spaces that mostly cater to the movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians;
- **Site Design**, which provides guidance for open spaces, parking, pedestrian areas, and other community-oriented spaces;
- **Architecture**, which focuses on building form, location, placement, and the design of facades and storefronts; and
- **Signage & Wayfinding**, which focuses on the design of banners, gateways, and other structures intended as outward-facing means of communication or expression.

These design guidelines do not only apply to brand new buildings, but can also inform renovations, tenant improvements, or redevelopment of existing properties.

What other regulations apply?

The topics included in this document do not represent a comprehensive set of design criteria that are intended to apply uniformly to every project within the plan area. This document is also not a substitute for any existing regulatory standards that may be formalized through legislative document such as local zoning codes.

Each city within the Little Saigon Area, or any city that chooses to adopt these guidelines shall continue to maintain its own set of development standards, review processes, and regulatory requirements. Applicable development standards for any project are contingent on the address and location of the site.

This document and its recommendations shall not override any existing zoning, land use regulations, engineering requirements, and other applicable standards legislated by local planning, public works, or building departments through other regulatory mechanisms such as the zoning code, general plan, area plans, or engineering design guidelines.

Individual property owners are encouraged to refer to the local authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for additional information or clarity regarding applicable design regulations and standards, including:

- **City of Garden Grove** - Planning Services
ggcity.org/planning
- **City of Santa Ana** - Planning & Building Agency
santa-ana.org/departments/planning-and-building
- **City of Fountain Valley** - Planning Division
fountainvalley.org/420/Planning-Division

Navigating This Document

The **Section Title**, denoted by a number and sub-letter, will appear at the beginning of each new topic. The Section Title uses an alpha-numeric prefix and ties back to a specific chapter of the document. For example, Guideline 1.2 is the second guideline of Chapter 1. The Section Title includes a short description of the topic.

The **Introduction** provides a narrative summary of the key goals of the guidelines, and why it is meaningful to defining the Little Saigon community.

A **Community Quote** may be included. These statements provide a local perspective on the topic, as communicated during several engagement events which are described in further detail in **Chapter 2**.

Supporting **sources** are identified through footnotes throughout the document. These references highlight city plans, design guidelines, municipal codes, and other documents that informed the recommendations.

Implementation symbols identify the stakeholders most likely to implement each recommendation. Depending on the guideline, implementation may involve a City Agency, Property Owner, Business Owner, or a combination of these stakeholders.

The **Design Guidelines** are presented as bullet points and associating sub-bullets, and provide a written description of the design recommendation. The text may include specific metrics (ex. 10-feet), but shall not be interpreted as a requirement.

Images, diagrams, and captions provide an example of how the guidelines may be met. Where provided, images and diagrams are intended to be illustrative, and are not indicative of a final design.

LITTLE SAIGON DESIGN GUIDELINES

4.2 Reinforce District Identity Through Culturally Inspired Streetscape Elements

Little Saigon's public realm should celebrate the culture, history, and traditions of the Vietnamese American community through a cohesive family of streetscape elements. Thoughtful integration of public art, lighting, furnishings, landscaping, and cultural motifs can reinforce district identity, foster community pride, and create a memorable sense of place for residents and visitors alike.

"Every street should help tell the story of our community."

Sources:

1. APBP Bicycle Parking Guidelines
2. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide
3. Illuminating Engineering Society

City/Public Agency

Developer/Property Owner

Private Business Owner



Culturally inspired transit shelter with decorative screening panels



Decorative bicycle parking integrated into the furnishing zone



Pedestrian lighting inspired by traditional lantern forms

- Locate seating and bicycle parking near building entrances, transit stops, and public gathering spaces.
 - Bicycle parking should be located within 50 feet of the primary building entrance.¹
- Incorporate culturally inspired lighting fixtures and lantern-themed elements with coordinated nighttime lighting treatments along commercial corridors, gateways, plazas, and gathering spaces.
 - Illuminate public art, monuments, and cultural landmarks.
 - Install street lighting approximately 12-16 feet tall at intervals of 60-100 feet apart.²
 - Utilize warm white lighting (2700-3000K).³
 - Select low light pollution fixtures by utilizing fully shielded, downward-directed lighting that minimizes glare and light spill.
- Establish a cohesive family of street furnishings, including benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, transit shelters, and bollards.
 - Utilize durable, low-maintenance materials such as powder-coated steel or cast metal.
 - Trash container areas should follow city standards regarding refuse, recycables, and organics
- Utilize furnishing zones between pedestrian walkways and travel lanes to accommodate street furniture, landscaping, bicycle parking, and other amenities.
 - Avoid placing furnishing within curb ramp landing areas.
- Coordinate streetscape materials, colors, finishes, and design details between cities.
 - Utilize a common palette of 3-5 primary materials and 2-3 accent materials.

* Each topic in this document follows a similar format, although the layout, graphics and imagery, and details of each individual guideline may vary.

Glossary

American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs.

Amenities

A feature that helps to provide comfort, convenience, or enjoyment.

Arcade

An arched covered passageway or avenue (as between shops); A series of arches with their columns or piers.

Architecture

The art or practice of designing and building structures, especially habitable ones; Focuses on building form, location, placement, and the design of facades and storefronts.

Attractions

An attraction is a specific location, exhibit, or event that provides entertainment and draws visitors. They are usually valued for their historical significance, culture, or natural beauty.

Awning

A roof-like cover extending over or in front of a place (as over the deck or in front of a door or window) as a shelter.

Bay

A principal compartment of the walls, roof, or other part of a building or of the whole building.

Bioretention

A nature-based stormwater management practice that filters urban runoff through engineered soil and vegetation.

Bioswale

Vegetated, shallow, landscaped depressions designed to capture, treat, and infiltrate stormwater runoff as it moves downstream.

Breeze Block

A light, concrete building block made with cinder or ash (also known as a cinder block);a decorative masonry block with cutouts designed to let the wind pass through.

Bulb Out

A traffic-calming design where the sidewalk extends into the parking lane, narrowing the roadway and providing additional pedestrian space and visibility.

Canopy Trees

Large trees with broad, spreading crowns that provide extensive shade over streets, sidewalks, plazas, parking lots, and outdoor spaces.

Cladding

The non-structural external “skin” of a building.

Color Temperature

Color temperature is a metric that describes the “warmth” or “coolness” of a light source, measured in degrees Kelvin (K). Lower temperatures (such as 2700K) produce warm, reddish-yellow light, while higher temperatures (such as 5000K+) produce cool, blue-white light.

Community Engagement

The collaborative framework where design professionals, stakeholders, and end-users co-create the built environment. It integrates local feedback into planning, ensuring spaces reflect the cultural, social, and functional needs of residents.

Cornice

The molded and projecting horizontal member that crowns an architectural composition.

Destination

The specific place where someone or something is going, or the intended end point of a journey. It acts as a goal or the final stop on a route.

Facade

The front of a building.

Fenestration

The arrangement, proportioning, and design of windows and doors in a building.

Glossary

Flowering Plants

Herbaceous plants and perennials grown primarily for their colorful blooms and seasonal interest.

Foliage

A cluster of leaves, flowers, and branches.

Frontage

The land between the front of a building and the street.

Furnishings

All the movable accessories—such as rugs, curtains, appliances, and furniture—that make a space livable, comfortable, or functional.

Glazing

The glass panes themselves, or the professional trade and process of fitting glass into window frames and doors.

Groundcovers

Low-growing plants that spread across the ground to cover exposed soil and reduce the need for turf.

Iterative Process

A cyclical method of planning, creating, testing, and refining a project or product.

Median

The physical barrier or strip of land that separates opposing lanes of traffic.

Micro-Mobility

The use of small, lightweight vehicles—such as electric scooters, bikes, electric bikes, electric skateboards, hoverboards, segways, cyclos, and unicycles—for short-distance urban trips.

Ornamentation

The act of decorating, the state of being decorated, or the decorative elements themselves.

Ornamental Grasses

Decorative grasses valued for their seasonal texture and movement.

Parapet

A low wall or railing to protect the edge of a platform, roof, or bridge.

Parklet

An outdoor seating area erected alongside a public sidewalk especially for use by patrons of an adjoining bar or restaurant.

“Park Once” Experience

A compact district where you can park your car in a single spot and explore multiple destinations on foot, rather than driving between locations

Pilaster

An upright architectural member that is rectangular in plan and is structurally a pier but architecturally treated as a column and that usually projects a third of its width or less from the wall.

Placemaking

A people-centered urban design approach that re-imagines public spaces to strengthen the connection between people and their communities.

Public Art

A type of steel that has been protected with a durable, dry polymer resin and pigment finish. This process creates a tough, continuous layer that significantly outlasts traditional liquid paint.

Public Art

Art in any media whose form, function, and meaning are created for the general public.

Public Realm

The places where people gather, linger, and experience the culture of Little Saigon, regardless of whether on public or private property.

Public Right-of-Way

The street, sidewalk and parkway areas that are used by the public as a means of travel.

Pylon

A tall, freestanding outdoor sign supported by one or two poles or columns, designed to be easily seen from a distance by fast-moving traffic.

Setback

The minimum distance a structure must be positioned from property lines, streets, or natural features.

Glossary

Signage

A collection or system of signs used to visually communicate information, identify a brand, provide directions, or issue warnings.

Site Design

Provides guidance for open spaces, parking, pedestrian areas, and other community-oriented spaces.

Soffit

The underside of a part or member of a building (as of an overhang or staircase).

Stakeholders

Any person, group, or organization that can affect, be affected by, or has a vested interest in the success or failure of a project, business, or policy such as city officials, residents, developers, property owners, or private business owners.

Streetscape

The physical components that support movement and define the public environment.

Temporary Activations

Short- or medium-term, low-cost interventions that repurpose underutilized public spaces, vacant lots, or empty buildings to test ideas, engage communities, and stimulate local activity.

Third Space

A social environment outside of your home (the first space) and workplace (the second space).

Urban Heat Island Effect

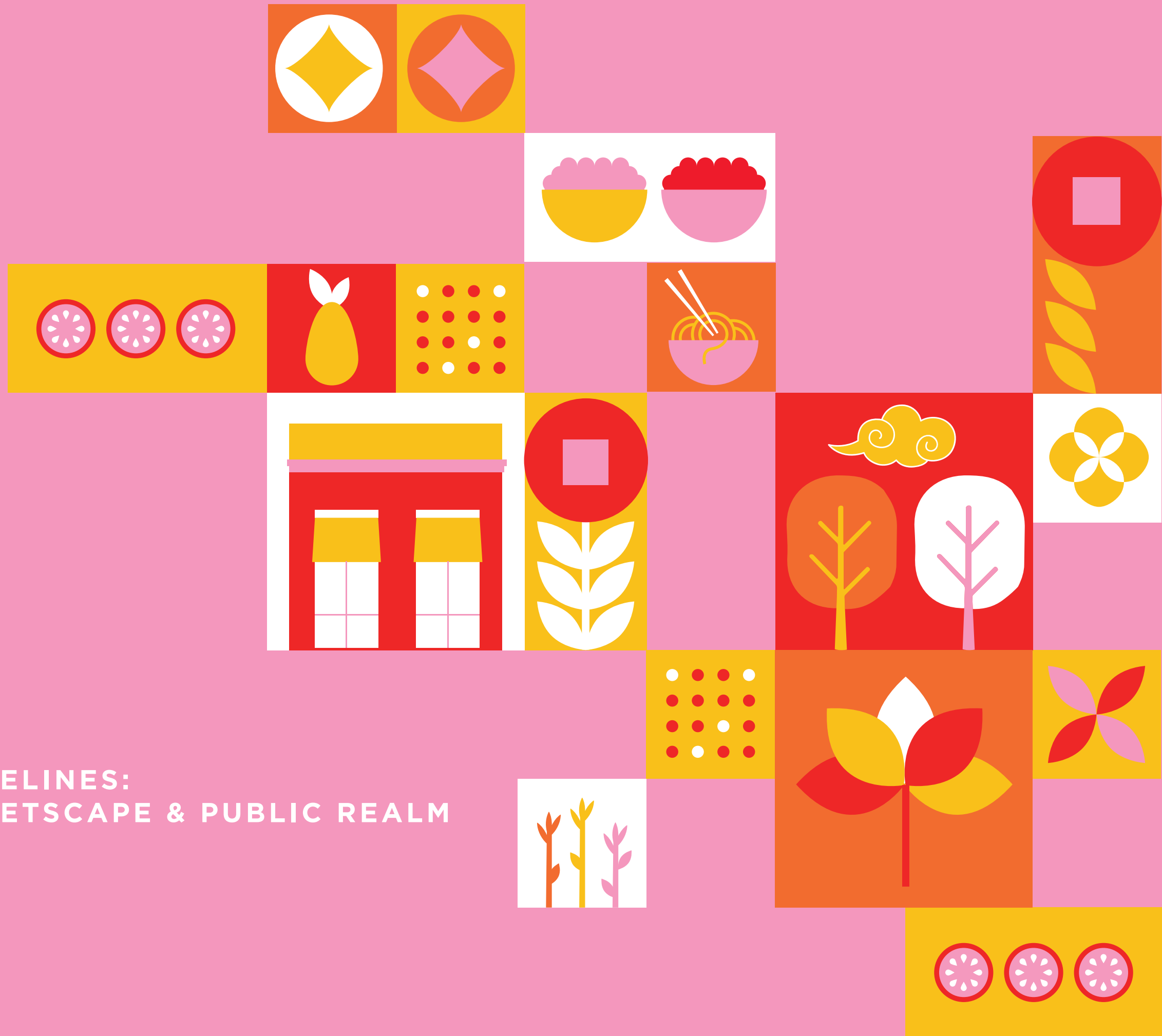
A phenomenon where urban areas experience significantly warmer temperatures—up to 15°F to 20°F hotter—than surrounding rural regions due to human modification of the land surface.

Wayfinding

The process of orienting oneself in a physical environment and navigating to a destination.

4

GUIDELINES: STREETSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM



Streetscape & Public Realm

Introduction

While Little Saigon is recognized for its vibrant culture, thriving businesses, and strong sense of community, much of its physical environment has developed around the automobile. Wide streets, expansive parking lots, and disconnected pedestrian spaces make it difficult to experience the district on foot, even when destinations are located only a short distance apart.

As a result, **visitors often experience Little Saigon as a collection of individual shopping centers rather than a connected district.** Streets, sidewalks, and parking areas primarily serve transportation needs, with fewer opportunities for gathering, cultural expression, and everyday social activity.

The public realm presents an opportunity to strengthen the connections between destinations while creating a more welcoming and memorable visitor experience. Streets, plazas, and sidewalks can become places where people gather, celebrate Vietnamese culture, and discover local businesses, rather than simply spaces for movement between destinations.

Thoughtful investments in pedestrian comfort, cultural placemaking, and public amenities can reinforce Little Saigon's identity while encouraging exploration throughout the district. A more connected public realm can also foster a stronger sense of arrival, making it easier for visitors to recognize Little Saigon as a cohesive cultural destination.

This chapter provides guidance for creating streets, sidewalks, plazas, and public spaces that are safe, comfortable, and culturally expressive. The recommendations include both near-term improvements that can be implemented through routine property enhancements and long-term investments requiring coordination among cities, property owners, and other partners. Together, these strategies are intended to strengthen district identity, enhance the visitor experience, and support the long-term vitality of Little Saigon.



Understanding The Elements

Streetscape and public realm work together to shape how people experience Little Saigon. They form the setting for daily life, supporting movement, commerce, and social interaction while creating the connections between individual destinations. Together, these spaces help transform Little Saigon from a collection of shopping centers into a recognizable and memorable district.

Streetscape elements provide the physical components that make streets safe, comfortable, and accessible for everyone. Sidewalks, trees, lighting, furnishings, landscaping, and other pedestrian-oriented improvements support everyday travel while contributing to the identity and character of the district.

Although many of these elements are located within the public right-of-way, they should also extend into private developments wherever possible. Internal walkways, shopping center plazas, and building frontages all play an important role in creating a seamless pedestrian experience that connects with adjacent public spaces.

The public realm focuses on the places where people gather, linger, and experience the culture of Little Saigon. Plazas, outdoor seating, public art, and community gathering spaces create opportunities for everyday activity, cultural celebrations, and social interaction. Together, these spaces strengthen district identity, foster a greater sense of place, and create memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike.

“Make it easier to walk, bike, or take transit around the district.”



Streetscape & Public Realm Improvements

Recommendations

A Street Lighting

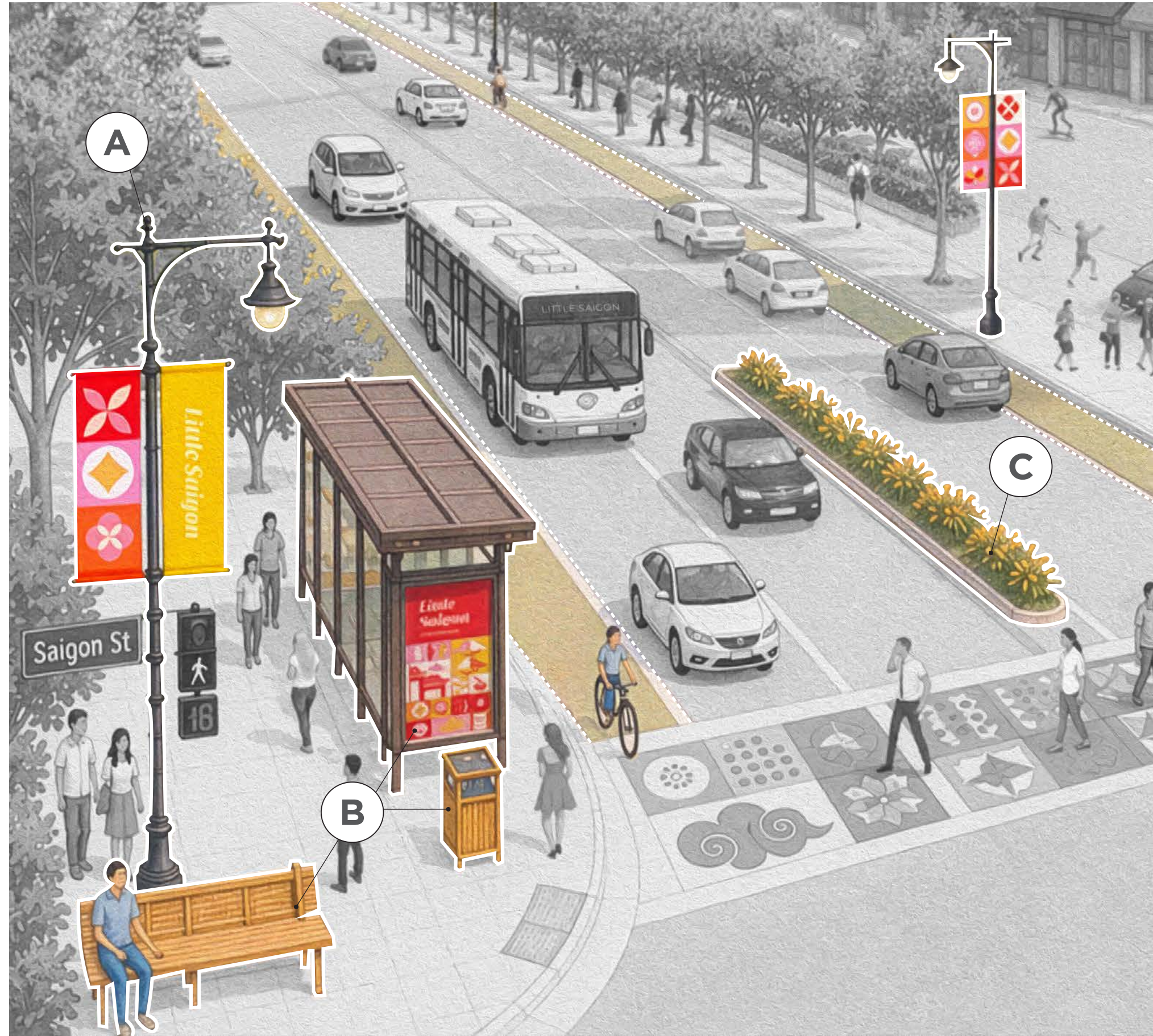
Street lighting establishes a safe and welcoming nighttime environment along major corridors while reflecting Little Saigon's cultural character through decorative fixture design.

B Street Furniture

Street furniture supports everyday pedestrian activity by providing places to rest, gather and wait, while contributing to a cohesive district identity.

C Roadway Medians

Landscaped medians enhance the visual character of roadways while providing opportunities for planting trees and flowers.



Streetscape & Public Realm Improvements

Recommendations

D Bike Lane

Bike lanes clearly identify dedicated bicycle space, improve safety for cyclists, and strengthen the district's active transportation network.

E Pylon

District pylons create prominent arrival markers that welcome visitors into Little Saigon; they can be used as an alternative to gateways or as secondary entry signs at minor street entrances.

F Shade Canopy

Shade canopies provide protection from the sun and create comfortable outdoor seating areas that encourage people to gather and dine.

G Outdoor Seating

Outdoor seating transforms underutilized parking spaces into active gathering areas that support local businesses, encourage social interaction, and create a more vibrant pedestrian environment.



4.1 Create Welcoming Streets that Encourage Walking and Exploration

Streetscape improvements should create comfortable, pedestrian-oriented environments that encourage walking, exploration, and everyday activity throughout the district. As a regional destination, Little Saigon attracts visitors arriving by foot, bicycle, transit, and car; streets should be designed to safely and comfortably accommodate each of these travel modes.

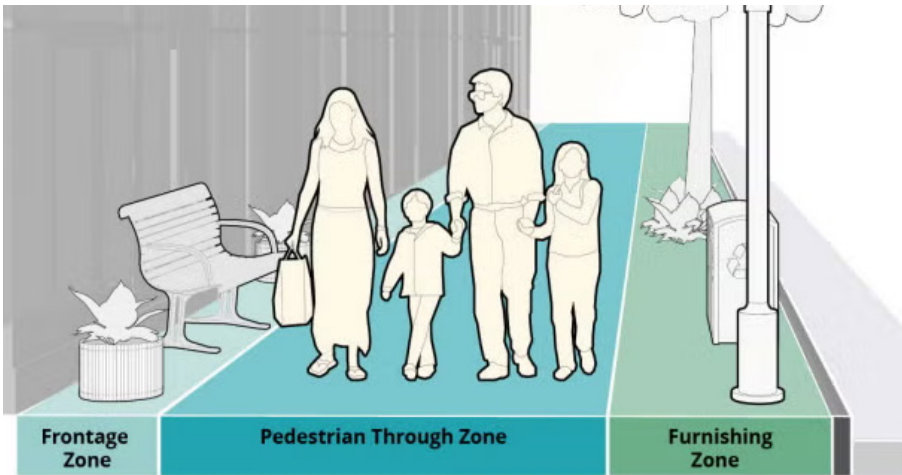
“We want streets that encourage people to slow down, explore local businesses, and connect with one another.”

Sources:

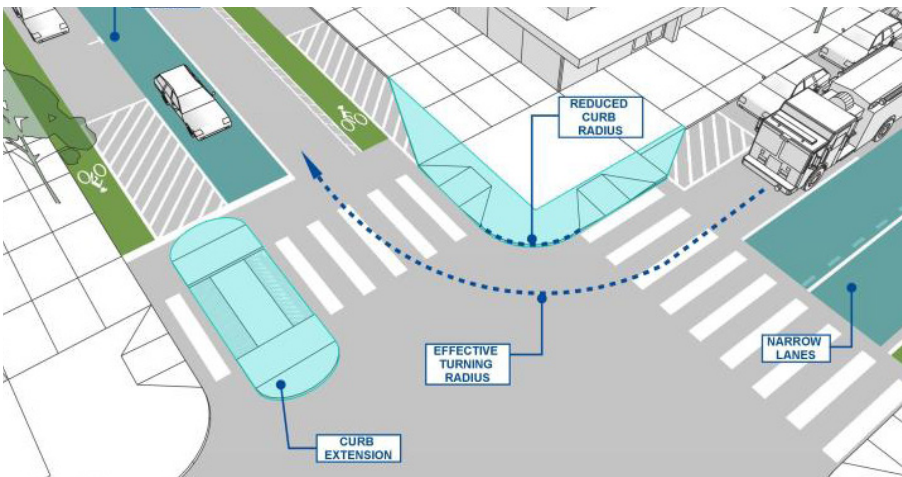
- 1. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide
- 2. City of Los Angeles - Complete Streets Design Guide

-  Incorporate Vietnamese-inspired paving patterns, decorative treatments, and cultural motifs within sidewalks and crossings.
 - Patterns include: Vietnamese textiles, floral symbols, bamboo patterns.
-  Design pedestrian crossings to meet applicable accessibility standards, providing safe and accessible routes with appropriate slopes, clear widths, landings, detectable warnings, and connections to transit stops, parking areas, and building entrances.
-  Provide adequately sized sidewalks organized into three zones, where feasible, while keeping all zones clear of traffic lanes.
 - Consider a frontage zone that is 2-4 feet wide.¹
 - Maintain a clear pedestrian through zone that is 6-8 feet wide.¹
 - Provide a furnishing zone that is 4-8 feet wide.¹

-  Consider pedestrian bulb-outs at high-volume intersections and key mid-block crossings where supported by an engineering study.
 - Provide bulb outs that are 6-8 feet in depth.²
 - Maintain compatibility with roadway operations, applicable design standards, and maintenance requirements.
-  Design intersections and circulation routes to minimize conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.
 - Minimize curb radii to slow turning vehicles, where feasible.
-  Maintain continuous pedestrian routes between shopping centers, plazas, transit stops, and cultural destinations by eliminating gaps in sidewalks and pedestrian connections.



Organization of the sidewalk into frontage, pedestrian through, and furnishing zones.



Reduced curb return radii and curb extension.



High-visibility mid-block crossing.



City/Public Agency



Developer/
Property Owner



Private Business
Owner

4.2 Reinforce District Identity Through Culturally Inspired Streetscape Elements

Little Saigon’s public realm should celebrate the culture, history, and traditions of the Vietnamese American community through a cohesive family of streetscape elements. Thoughtful integration of public art, lighting, furnishings, landscaping, and cultural motifs can reinforce district identity, foster community pride, and create a memorable sense of place for residents and visitors alike.

“Every street should help tell the story of our community.”

Sources:

- 1. APBP Bicycle Parking Guidelines
- 2. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide
- 3. Illuminating Engineering Society

 City/Public Agency

 Developer/Property Owner

 Private Business Owner

-  Locate seating and bicycle parking near building entrances, transit stops, and public gathering spaces.
 - Bicycle parking should be located within 50 feet of the primary building entrance. ¹
-  Incorporate culturally inspired lighting fixtures and lantern-themed elements with coordinated nighttime lighting treatments along commercial corridors, gateways, plazas, and gathering spaces.
 - Illuminate public art, monuments, and cultural landmarks.
 - Install street lighting approximately 12-16 feet tall at intervals of 60-100 feet apart. ²
 - Utilize warm white lighting (2700-3000K). ³
 - Select low light pollution fixtures by utilizing fully shielded, downward-directed lighting that minimizes glare and light spill.

-  Establish a cohesive family of street furnishings, including benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, transit shelters, and bollards.
 - Utilize durable, low-maintenance materials such as powder-coated steel or cast metal.
 - Trash container areas should follow city standards regarding refuse, recycables, and organics
-  Utilize furnishing zones between pedestrian walkways and travel lanes to accommodate street furniture, landscaping, bicycle parking, and other amenities.
 - Avoid placing furnishing within curb ramp landing areas.
-  Coordinate streetscape materials, colors, finishes, and design details between cities.
 - Utilize a common palette of 3-5 primary materials and 2-3 accent materials.



Culturally inspired transit shelter with decorative screening panels.



Decorative bicycle parking integrated into the furnishing zone.



Pedestrian lighting inspired by traditional lantern forms.

4.3A Expand Urban Greenery : Public Right of Way

Landscaping is one of the defining elements of a welcoming and memorable public realm. Street trees, planting areas, and other landscape features shape how people experience Little Saigon, creating more comfortable streets while reinforcing the district's unique identity. A coordinated approach to landscape design can strengthen the connections between streets, gateways, and public spaces, creating a more cohesive district. Integrated planting also improves pedestrian comfort, supports environmental resilience, and contributes to a public realm that reflects the character and aspirations of the Little Saigon community.

Sources:

1. City of Treasure Valley Tree Selection Guide
2. City of Garden Grove Tree Selection Guide
3. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide

 Plant continuous rows of shade trees along sidewalks, parkways, transit stops, and major pedestrian corridors.

- Select species capable of achieving 30–40 feet of mature canopy width where feasible.¹
- Within high pedestrian-traffic, space trees 25–35 feet on center, adjusted by mature canopy spread.²
- Coordinate tree placement with lighting, utilities, signs, and accessibility requirements.

 Select and locate landscaping to account for existing utilities, traffic and pedestrian visibility, access points, fire hydrants, signage, and transit stops.

- Choose plants that fit their surroundings, with enough space for roots to grow and manageable irrigation and maintenance needs.
- Clearly define responsibilities for watering, pruning, removal, and replacement.

 Incorporate landscaping within sidewalks, medians, curb extensions, traffic islands, and other roadway features.

- Provide dedicated sidewalk landscape zone that is generally 4-8 feet.³
- Utilize low-growing shrubs and ornamental grasses to maintain visibility.
- Frame gateways and key intersections with seasonal flowering plants where appropriate.
- Incorporate bioswales and bioretention planters where feasible.
- Coordinate planting with pedestrian lighting, furnishings, and wayfinding.

 Maintain clear sightlines within medians, curb extensions, traffic islands, and parkways to support safe visibility of intersections, approaching vehicles, and traffic control devices.

 Turf should not be used within medians, curb extensions, traffic islands, or other roadway right-of-way features



Continuous street tree canopy along a neighborhood corridor.



Layered planting palette with trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowering perennials along the sidewalk.



Vegetated bioswale capturing and filtering stormwater runoff along sidewalk.



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Property Owner



Private Business
Owner

4.3B Expand Urban Greenery : Private Development

Landscaping helps transform retail centers from collections of buildings and parking lots into welcoming destinations. Shade trees, planting areas, and outdoor gathering spaces create a more comfortable visitor experience while reinforcing the character of Little Saigon. Extending landscape improvements throughout private developments helps create a stronger connection to the surrounding streetscape while contributing to a greener and more cohesive district. Integrated planting also improves pedestrian comfort, supports environmental resilience, and softens the appearance of buildings and parking areas.



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Private Business Owner



Integrate landscaping throughout parking areas to reduce heat island effect, improve stormwater management, and provide shade for pedestrians and parked vehicles.

- Plant shade trees throughout parking lots to provide shade over a significant portion of parking spaces at tree maturity.
- Maintain clear visibility between vehicles and pedestrians when placing landscaping near driveways and internal circulation.
- Incorporate bioswales or permeable landscape areas, where feasible based on site drainage, soil and infiltration conditions, utilities, groundwater, and stormwater requirements.
- Utilize low-water-use shrubs and groundcovers that require minimal maintenance.
- Where provided, turf may be installed in designated recreational areas or community spaces as an alternative to natural planting.



Utilize landscaping to define plazas, courtyards, outdoor dining areas, and community gathering spaces.

- Cluster shade trees around seating areas.
- Integrate flowering accent trees to provide seasonal interest.
- Incorporate ornamental planting around public art, fountains, and gathering areas.
- Utilize fragrant planting near seating and outdoor dining.



Incorporate landscaping along storefronts to soften building edges and improve pedestrian comfort.

- Decorative Planting Strip: 3-5 feet



Where appropriate, incorporate culinary gardens featuring edible herbs, fruits, and vegetables commonly used in Vietnamese cuisine to celebrate the district's culinary heritage.



Shade trees and landscaped islands distributed throughout parking lot.



Layered landscape lines storefront edge and enhances pedestrian walkway.



Clusters of shade trees define gathering areas and frame the edges of the plaza.

4.3C Expand Urban Greenery: Planting Palette

Approved Trees and Plants

-  Select drought-tolerant, climate-appropriate, and water-efficient trees and plant materials that provide shade and support biodiversity.
-  - Utilize layered planting with canopy trees, accent trees, shrubs, ornamental grasses, groundcovers, and flowering plants.

Refer to the applicable municipal approved tree, plant, and shrub lists when selecting landscape materials to ensure consistency with local standards, maintenance requirements, and long-term performance.

- **City of Garden Grove** - Tree Selection Guide
- **City of Garden Grove** - District Approved Plants and Shrubs List
- **City of Santa Ana** - Designated Tree Species Guide
- **City of Santa Ana** - City Landscape Guidelines
- **City of Fountain Valley** - Parkway Tree List

The City of Fountain Valley does not have an approved plant and shrub list. Landscape materials should consist of drought-tolerant, climate-appropriate, and water-efficient species that comply with the City’s landscape requirements.

Canopy Trees

- Large trees with broad, spreading crowns that provide extensive shade over streets, sidewalks, plazas, parking lots, and other outdoor spaces.
- Provides high environmental benefits.
- Typically 30–60+ feet tall at maturity

Accent Trees

- Smaller ornamental trees with decorative flowers, bark, or foliage used to create visual interest, seasonal color, and highlight important locations.
- Complements larger shade trees.
- Typically 15–35 feet tall.

Shrubs

- Woody plants that provide structure, define spaces, and soften transitions between buildings, sidewalks, and open spaces.
- Creates dense branching that is easily shaped.
- Typically 2–10 feet tall.

Ornamental Grasses

- Decorative grasses valued for their seasonal texture and movement.
- Typically 1–6 feet tall.

Groundcovers

- Low-growing plants that spread across the ground to cover exposed soil and reduce the need for turf.
- Provides dense coverage.
- Typically under 12 inches tall.

Flowering Plants

- Herbaceous plants and perennials grown primarily for their colorful blooms and seasonal interest.
- Typically replaced or maintained seasonally
- Pollinator-friendly



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4.3D Expand Urban Greenery: Plant Selection Guide

Plant Selection Principles

- Choose landscapes that celebrate the cultural identity of Little Saigon by combining flowering trees, fragrant plants, tropical foliage, ornamental grasses, and layered groundcovers.
 - Shaded: Trees with wide, spreading canopies.
 - Colorful: Flowering trees and plants with vibrant seasonal blooms and layered textures
 - Fragrant: Plants with pleasant floral or aromatic foliage.
 - Lush: Plants with large, tropical leaves or upright forms.
- Bamboo Planting Guidance
 - To prevent invasive spread, install bamboo within raised or enclosed planters or select clumping bamboo species rather than running varieties.
 - Due to their extensive root systems and mature size, they should be planted only within raised or decorative planters and should not be planted directly in the ground or used as street trees.

The plant palette has been compiled from the approved tree, shrub, and plant lists of the Cities of Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and Fountain Valley. Each species identifies the municipality from which it was selected. This guide represents a selection of recommended plant materials and is not a comprehensive list of all approved species. Refer to the applicable municipal landscape standards and approved plant lists for the complete inventory of permitted plant materials.



Canopy Tree: Coastal Live Oak (GG) (SA)



Canopy Tree: Australian Willow (GG) (SA) (FV)



Ornamental Grass: New Zealand Flax (GG)



Ornamental Grass: Festuca (GG)



Accent Tree: Crape Myrtle (SA) (FV)



Accent Tree: Pink Trumpet (GG)



Groundcover: Mexican Evening Primrose (GG)



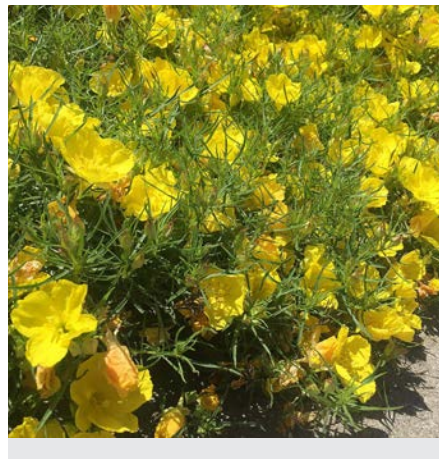
Groundcover: Gardenia Radicans (GG)



Shrubs: Bougainvillea



Shrubs: California Fuchsia (SA)



Flowering Plants: Hartweg Evening Primrose (SA)



Flowering Plants: Cedros Island Verbena (SA)



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4.3E Expand Urban Greenery: Planter Design

- Include planters that draw inspiration from Vietnamese landscapes, symbolism, and traditions.
- Glazed ceramic, porcelain, or terracotta finishes inspired by Vietnamese pottery.
- Natural stone, textured concrete, or exposed aggregate finishes.
- Bamboo-inspired screening, wood slats, or decorative metal panel.
- Decorative tile accents, engraved patterns, or lotus-inspired motifs.
- Vary planter heights, sizes, and shapes to create visual interest.



Shade trees and landscaped islands distributed throughout parking lot.



Enclosed bamboo planters with integrated seating feature.



Layered landscape lines storefront edge and enhances pedestrian walkway.



Clusters of shade trees define gathering areas and frame the edges of the plaza.



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4.4 Support Safe and Comfortable Movement Throughout the District

Design streets to safely accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists while improving connectivity throughout the district. Mobility improvements should create a more accessible and efficient transportation network that supports daily travel and improves access to businesses, destinations, and public spaces.

“Provide better public transit and more alternatives to driving.”

Sources:

- 1. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide
- 2. City of Columbus - On-Street Bicycle Facilities
- 3. Federal Highway Administration - Pedestrian Refuge Island

- Implement designated bike lanes while using high visibility green striping in conflict areas and consistent pavement markings.
 - Bicycle lane width should extend 5-7 feet. ¹
 - Install bicycle symbols every 250 - 500 feet. ²
- Clearly identify conflict zones where bicycle lanes intersect with transit stops, driveways, loading zones, and pedestrian crossings through enhanced striping and signage.
- Incorporate landscaped roadway medians with low-height planting, street trees, and other landscape features.
 - Coordinate median planting palette with municipal approved tree, plant, and shrub lists.

- Establish a connected network of micro-mobility facilities along major corridors, commercial streets, and routes connecting key community destinations.
 - Bicycle and scooter amenities should minimize gaps in the network and provide seamless connections across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Design roadway medians to calm traffic and reduce crossing distances with integrated pedestrian refuge islands, where supported by an engineering study.
 - Provide pedestrian refuge islands with a minimum width of 4-8 feet. ³
 - Align refuge islands with marked crosswalks.
 - Measure street widths from gutter to gutter in accordance with city standards.
 - Coordinate catch basin and parkway drain design with the curb type and obtain approval from the City Engineer.



Dedicated bicycle facility along corridor.



High-visibility green bicycle lane with pavement markings within conflict zone.



Pedestrian refuge island within a landscaped roadway median.

4.5A Design Public Spaces to Support Community Use: Flexible Seating Areas

Seating is an essential element of a comfortable and welcoming public realm. Providing accessible and flexible seating throughout commercial corridors, plazas, and gathering spaces creates opportunities for rest, social interaction, and everyday activity while encouraging visitors to spend more time exploring Little Saigon.

“More seating areas for people to relax and enjoy the outdoors. Building third spaces is critical.”

-  Provide a variety of seating opportunities, including
-  movable benches, chairs, group seating, and individual seating areas, along commercial corridors, plazas, and community gathering spaces.
 - Provide ADA-accessible seating locations integrated throughout public spaces.
 - Include a mix of seating with and without back and armrests.
 - Provide designated storage areas and establish maintenance procedures for movable furniture to ensure public spaces remain well maintained.
 - Orient seating toward active uses and plazas.



Circular seating with back rest and side tables.



Movable bistro table and chairs.



Movable stools and smaller seating.



Flexible seating arrangements accommodating a variety of users and activities.



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4.5B Design Public Spaces to Support Community Use: Shade Structures

Shade structures help create comfortable, welcoming, and active public spaces throughout Little Saigon. By improving pedestrian comfort and extending the use of outdoor spaces, they encourage people to gather, linger, and enjoy plazas, seating areas, and other community destinations.

“Shade is very desirable, we don’t have enough of it in Little Saigon.”

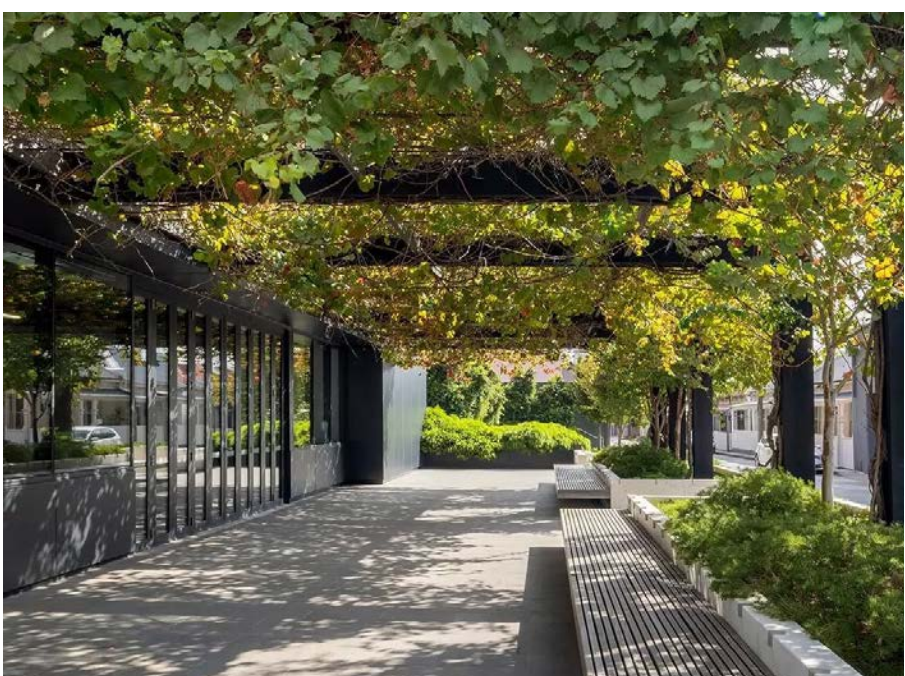
- Provide shade structures, such as canopies, trellises, pergolas, planted structures, and permanent roof elements, throughout public spaces.
 - Prioritize locations near seating, gathering spaces, transit stops, and children’s play areas.
 - Utilize durable, low-maintenance materials suitable for outdoor environments.
 - Maintain a minimum vertical clearance of 8 feet above pedestrian walkways.
 - Direct draining stormwater away from pedestrian areas.
 - Consider the structure, wind, drainage, fire safety, visibility, and security of each installation, while maintaining clear access around utilities, roadways, bicycle facilities, and accessible routes.



Tensile shade canopy providing sun protection over plaza area.



Solid canopy structure shading seating and dining area.



Planted trellis providing natural shade over pedestrian walkway.



Louvered canopy providing filtered shade while maintaining natural light and ventilation in public spaces.

4.5C Design Public Spaces to Support Community Use: Parklet

Public spaces strengthen the social and cultural life of Little Saigon by creating places where people can gather, connect, and celebrate the community. Integrating seating areas, parklets, and other public amenities throughout the district creates welcoming destinations that encourage everyday activity and foster a stronger sense of place.

-  Locate parklets along active commercial frontages and design them as adaptable public spaces that can accommodate seating, outdoor dining, community events, small performances, temporary public art, and children's play area.

- Integrate movable furnishings where feasible.
- Ensure ADA-compliant access from the sidewalk.
- Integrate landscaping, planters, and shade trees to define gathering spaces.

-  Establish a coordinated parklet program that provides design standards, permitting procedures, and operational guidelines to encourage parklets within streets or parking lots.

- Encourage flexible uses and community programming.
- Provide guidance for furniture, landscaping, lighting, accessibility, and signage.
- Define maintenance responsibilities between the city, property owners, and participating businesses.
- Consider location, traffic and parking, accessibility, drainage, visibility, operations, and temporary removal for street or utility work.



Parklet transformed into outdoor dining and seating for restaurant.



Parklet supporting small-scale performances that activates the public realm.



Parklet provides a flexible space for temporary public art installations.



Parklet accommodates temporary play area for children.



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4.5D Design Public Spaces to Support Community Use: Gathering Spaces

Plazas and courtyards create welcoming destinations that support the social and cultural life of Little Saigon. Designed for flexibility, they provide space for everyday activity while accommodating markets, performances, festivals, and celebrations that reflect the district's Vietnamese heritage.

-  Design plazas, parklets, and gathering spaces to accommodate temporary events, markets, performances, festivals, and cultural celebrations that support community life and district activation.
 - Provide open, unobstructed areas for temporary vendors and stages.
 - Allow access to electrical power, lighting, and other utilities where appropriate to support temporary events.
-  Pilot Opportunity: Existing underutilized parking areas can be transformed into temporary plazas to test new public space improvements before permanent construction.
 - Evaluate underutilized parking through a parking study and obtain city approval before re-purposing the space.

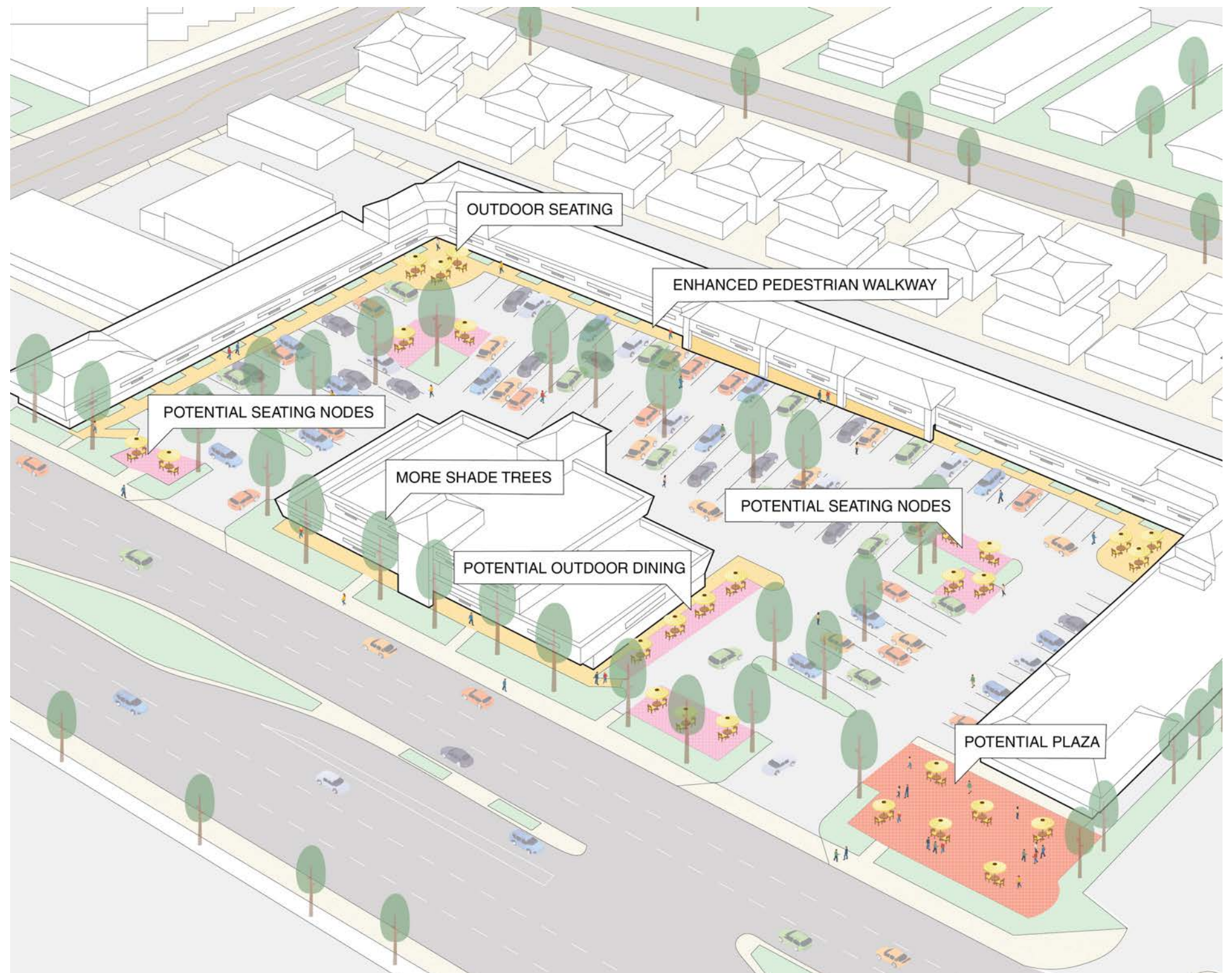


Diagram illustrates potential plaza and outdoor dining spaces created by re-purposing underutilized parking within a retail center.



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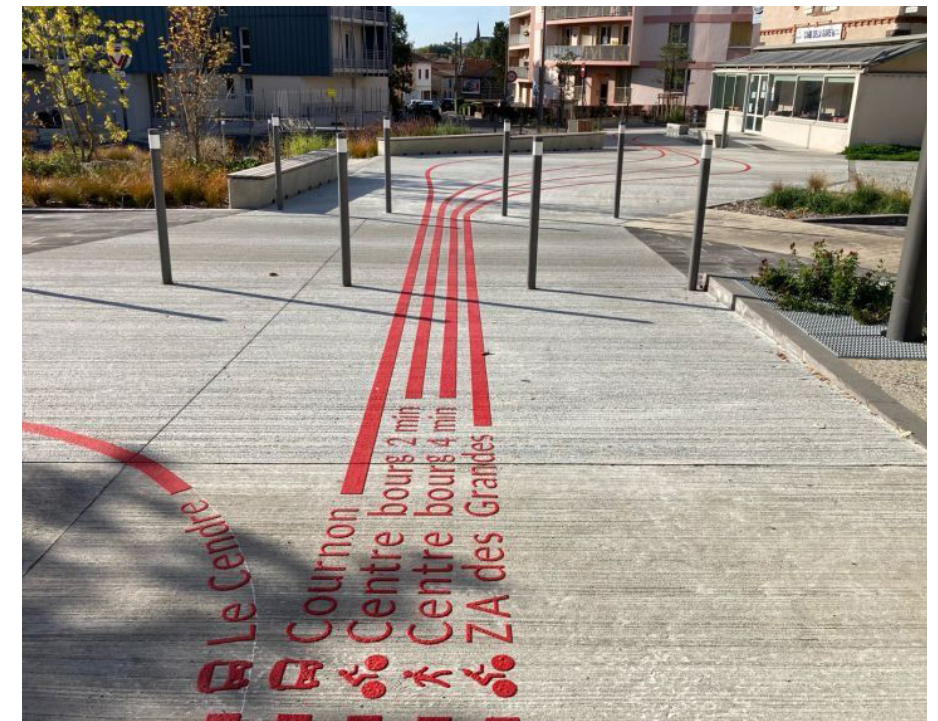
4.6A Celebrating Vietnamese Culture: Public Art and Placemaking

Little Saigon's identity extends beyond its storefronts to the stories, traditions, and cultural experiences that define the community. Public art creates opportunities to celebrate this heritage throughout streets, plazas, and gathering spaces while enriching the public realm. Over time, these installations can create a connected cultural narrative that honors the district's history and reinforces its identity for future generations.

- 🏛️ Establish a public art program that prioritizes opportunities for Vietnamese-American artists, schools, cultural organizations, and community stakeholders to contribute to public art and placemaking initiatives throughout the district.
 - Consider opportunities for artist-designed infrastructure, such as seating, transit shelters, utility boxes, and bicycle racks.
- 🏛️ Incorporate cultural interpretation and storytelling elements that highlight Vietnamese history, refugee experiences, community milestones, traditions, and contributions through murals, interactive artwork, exhibits, paving features, and other placemaking interventions.
 - Integrate storytelling through interpretive signage, interactive artwork, paving inlays, digital media, and exhibits to encourage exploration and learning.
 - Create opportunities for community activation within network of storytelling elements, especially during designated holidays.
 - Stories shared through bilingual interpretation where appropriate.
- 🏛️ Locate public art installations at gateways, intersections, plazas, parks, transit stops, and other high-visibility community destinations.
 - Installations should be placed in both public and private developments.
 - Coordinate public art with lighting and landscaping.
- 🏛️ Establish a network of cultural landmarks, public spaces, gateways, and activity nodes that serve as recognizable destinations throughout the district
 -



Mural celebrating the district with Vietnamese motifs.



Storytelling trail embedded within plaza paving.



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4.6B Celebrating Vietnamese Culture: Public Art Selection Guide



Sculptures & Monuments
Permanent three-dimensional artwork that serves as landmarks or memorials.



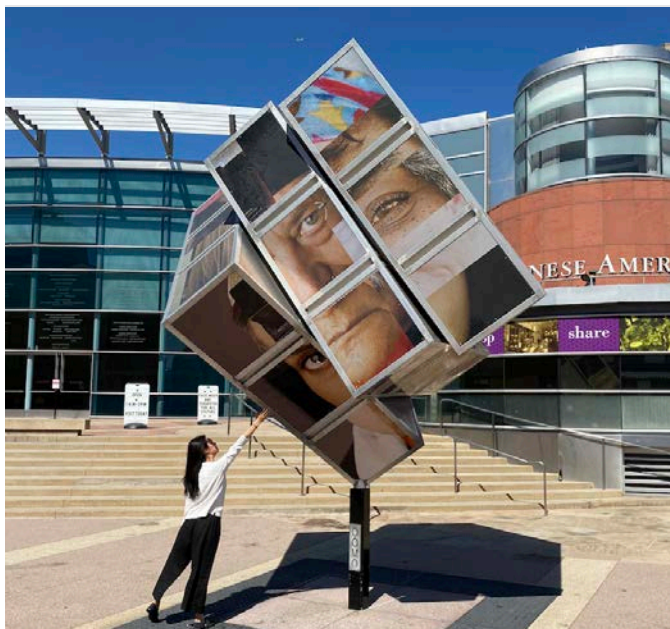
Exhibits
Interpretive displays, photographs, artifacts, or educational panels.



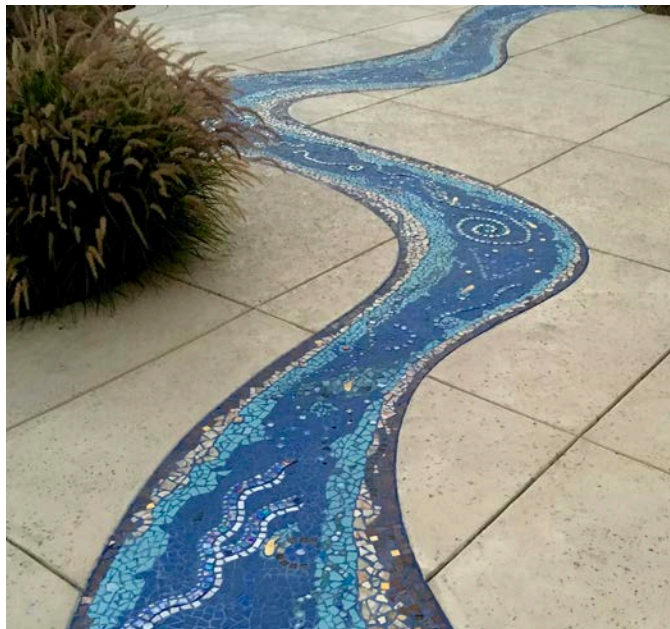
Murals & Wall Art
Large-scale artwork integrated into buildings and walls.



Designed Infrastructure
Painted functional elements, such as utility boxes or bus shelters.



Interactive Art
Artwork that encourages visitors to actively engage through touch and movement.



Pavement Art
Art integrated into the ground through patterns, mosaics, engravings, colored concrete, or paving inlays



Lighting Art
Artistic lighting installations and projection mapping that transforms after dark.



Digital Art
Artwork that uses digital technology to display or communicate creative and cultural content.

4.7 Promote Shared Mobility and A Park Once District Strategy

The experience of Little Saigon extends beyond individual shopping centers to the connections between them. Shared mobility, coordinated parking, and intuitive wayfinding can create a more seamless visitor experience, making it easier to explore local businesses, public spaces, and cultural destinations throughout the district.

“Reduce the need to drive from plaza to plaza - I’d love to park once and be able to walk to everything.”

-  City/Public Agency
-  Developer/Property Owner
-  Private Business Owner

 Provide a wayfinding system, including signage and maps, that directs visitors from parking areas to businesses, public spaces, cultural destinations, and key district attractions.

 Locate bike share stations at key destinations, transit stops, public spaces, and commercial centers.

- Bicycle share stations should be integrated into mobility hubs or furnishing zones and connected to the district bicycle network.
- Maintain clear pedestrian circulation around bike share station.

 Coordinate shared parking facilities within convenient walking distance of commercial corridors, public spaces, and community destinations

- Maintain ADA-compliant pedestrian routes between parking and mobility services.

 Develop a district shuttle or micro-mobility service that connects major destinations, commercial corridors, transit hubs, and parking areas.

- Integrate wayfinding that identifies shuttle routes, mobility hubs, and walking distances.
- Partner with regional transit agencies to connect local shuttle service with existing bus routes.
- Coordinate with micro-mobility providers and adjacent jurisdictions to establish a consistent district-wide system of bicycle share, scooter share, parking areas, and operating policies that supports seamless travel across municipal boundaries.

 Design accessible mobility hubs that combine bike share, shuttle stops, transit connections, seating, and wayfinding.

- Provide secure bicycle parking within 50 feet of mobility hubs.
- Locate within a 5-10 minute walk of major destinations.



Bike share station integrated with the district mobility network.



Cyclo-style rides offer a unique micromobility experience inspired by traditions in Vietnam.



Public parking structure serving multiple district destinations.



A large, stylized white number '5' is centered on a solid red background. The number has a thick, bold appearance with a slight shadow or gradient effect, giving it a three-dimensional look. The top bar of the '5' is slightly slanted to the right. The overall design is clean and modern.

GUIDELINES: SITE DESIGN



Site Design

Introduction

Each retail center within Little Saigon contributes to the identity and experience of the district. While individual properties have their own character, the connections between them shape how residents and visitors experience Little Saigon as a whole. Strengthening these connections can encourage people to explore more businesses, spend more time in the district, and experience its unique culture and community.

Many commercial properties were originally developed to prioritize automobile access. Large parking lots, inward-facing storefronts, and limited pedestrian connections between neighboring retail centers make it difficult to move through the district on foot, even when destinations are located only a short distance apart. As a result, Little Saigon is often experienced as a collection of separate shopping centers rather than a cohesive destination.

This chapter provides guidance for improving retail centers through enhanced pedestrian connections, welcoming public spaces, and site design improvements. The recommendations are organized into phased implementation tiers that support both incremental enhancements and long-term redevelopment. As individual properties evolve over time, these improvements can strengthen district identity and create a more connected, walkable, and memorable Little Saigon.



Understanding The Elements

Site design shapes how people experience individual properties within Little Saigon. It influences how visitors arrive, move between businesses, access storefronts, and use outdoor spaces. Together, these elements help strengthen the relationship between private development and the public realm, creating a more connected district.

Well-designed sites support both functionality and placemaking. The arrangement of buildings, pedestrian routes, parking areas, and outdoor spaces influences comfort, visibility, and ease of navigation while encouraging people to walk between businesses and spend more time outdoors.

As retail centers evolve over time, **site improvements can strengthen pedestrian connections, activate storefronts, and create welcoming gathering spaces.** Together, these elements contribute to a more walkable, cohesive, and memorable Little Saigon.



Site Design Improvements

Recommendations

A Shade Trees

Shade trees act as landscaped buffers between parking lots and storefronts, creating a more comfortable, pedestrian-oriented environment.

B Planting Areas

Planting areas soften the physical environment, define pedestrian spaces, and contribute to a greener, more welcoming retail experience.

C Visitors Information Kiosk

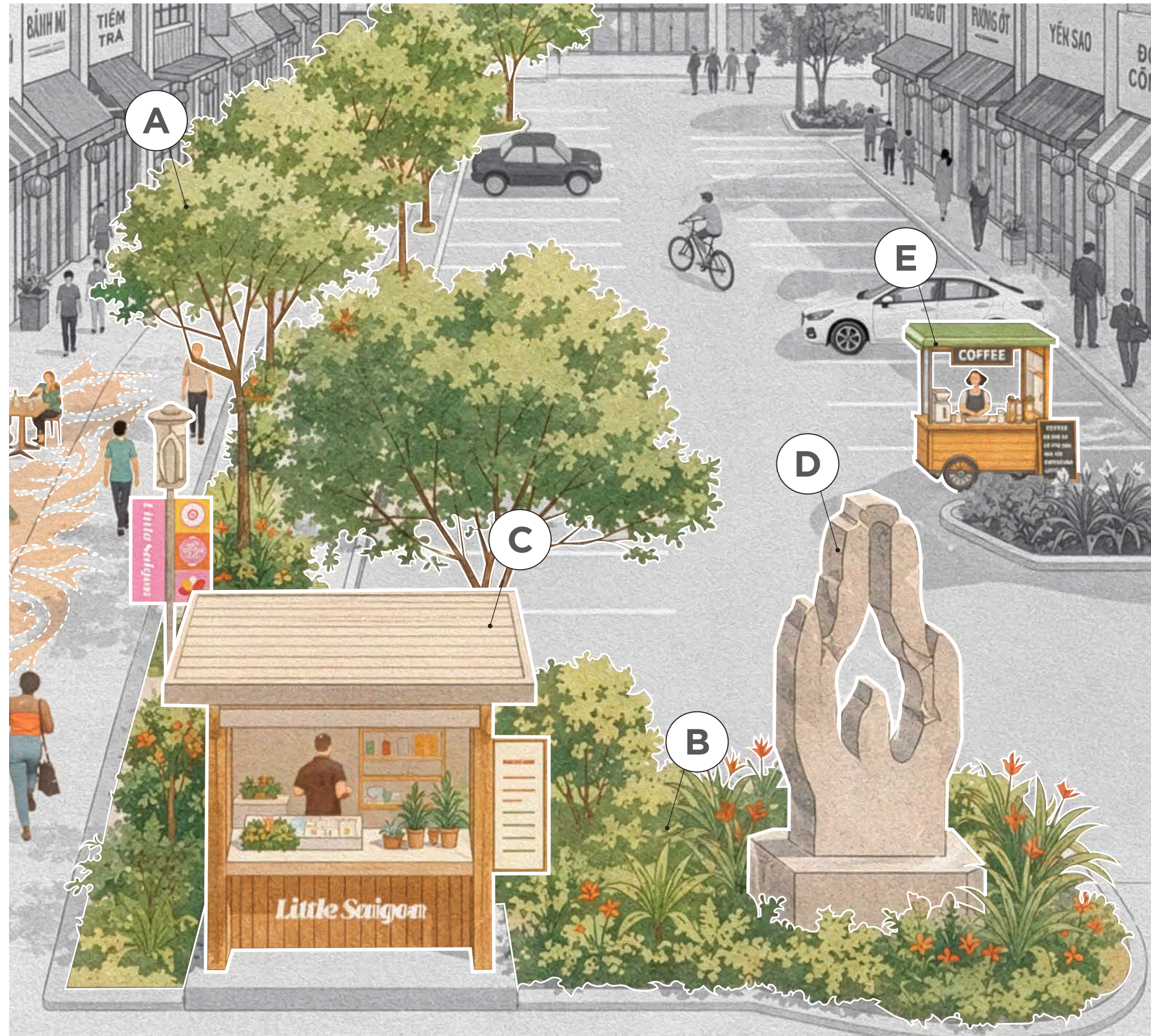
Visitor information kiosks provide maps, directions, and local information that help visitors navigate Little Saigon and discover businesses, cultural destinations, and community attractions.

D Public Art

Public art celebrates the history, culture, and identity of Little Saigon while creating memorable landmarks, encouraging exploration, and enriching the public realm.

E Temporary Activation

Temporary activations transform underutilized parking spaces into flexible places for outdoor retail, food vendors, and seasonal installations.



Site Design Improvements

Recommendations

F Pole Banner

Pole banners create a coordinated branding system that enhances the character of retail centers and contributes to a recognizable Little Saigon identity.

G Decorative Paving

Decorative paving strengthens the visual character of retail frontages while guiding pedestrian movement.

H Pedestrian Lighting

Pedestrian lighting creates a safe and welcoming pedestrian environment while celebrating Vietnamese culture through lantern-inspired forms and decorative architectural details.

I Planters

Planters soften the transition between storefronts and pedestrian walkways, providing opportunities for seasonal planting and enhancing the overall shopping experience.

J Restaurant Outdoor Seating

Restaurant outdoor seating activates storefronts by creating vibrant spaces for dining and social interaction.



5.1 Improve Access and Connectivity Within Retail Centers

Retail centers are most successful when they function as connected destinations rather than isolated businesses. Strategic site access, pedestrian circulation, and parking design support intuitive movement throughout a site, making it easier for visitors to walk between businesses, access community destinations, and enjoy a more connected district experience.

“Connecting the shopping centers would make it easier to explore the district.”

Sources:

1. US Department of Transportation - Bicycle Parking and Storage
2. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide



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Private Business Owner



Install visitor information kiosks, business directories, district maps, and directional signs that help visitors navigate retail centers and locate nearby businesses, public spaces, and cultural destinations.

- Illuminate kiosks where appropriate.
- Where feasible, establish staffed visitor information kiosks or a visitor ambassador program that assists tourists with navigation, transit information, business recommendations, event schedules, and cultural attractions.



- Repurpose underutilized parking spaces or excess paved areas to support amenities and activities.
- Provide flexible overflow areas that allow adjacent businesses to expand retail displays and pop-up sales.
- Unused parking spaces can accommodate bicycle and scooter parking, and bicycle repair stations.
- Locate bicycle parking within 50 feet of building entrances.¹



Design an internal network of sidewalks, pedestrian pathways, and drive aisles that allows visitors to safely and comfortably move between businesses and destinations without re-entering their vehicles.

- Maintain a 6-foot clear pedestrian path.²
- Provide protected pedestrian walkways separated from vehicle lanes by landscaped buffers and raised curbs.



Organize parking lots, driveways, and site entrances to minimize conflicts between pedestrians, and vehicles.

- Consolidate driveways where possible, while following city standards.



Incorporate landscaped islands, shade trees, and planting areas throughout parking lots to reduce heat gain, improve stormwater management and define pedestrian routes.

- Refer to the Streetscape and Public Realm chapter for approved list of trees, plants, and shrubs.



Dedicated pedestrian walkway through a retail center parking lot.



Staffed visitor information kiosk providing district maps and navigation assistance.



Landscaped parking lot with shade trees and permeable parking surfaces.

5.2 Activate Site to Support Community Life and Cultural Activities

The most memorable places in Little Saigon are those that invite people to stay. A shaded courtyard, an active storefront, or a plaza filled with conversation can transform an ordinary shopping trip into an opportunity to gather, celebrate, and experience Vietnamese culture. By creating flexible outdoor spaces that support everyday use alongside festivals, performances, and community events, retail centers can become welcoming places that remain active throughout the year.

“Community events bring people together — we need spaces that make those celebrations possible.”

Sources:

1. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide

-  Encourage storefront activation through outdoor seating, temporary merchandise displays, seasonal installations, and flexible frontage zones.
 - Ensure temporary displays do not obstruct accessible routes or building entrances.
 - Maintain a minimum 6-foot unobstructed pedestrian through zone adjacent to activated storefronts.¹
-  Temporarily transform portions of large parking lots into flexible spaces that support outdoor business activities, community events, and seasonal programming.
-  Orient new buildings, storefronts, gathering spaces, and outdoor amenities toward primary pedestrian routes and areas of activity.
-  Design retail centers with flexible plazas, courtyards, and open spaces that accommodate a variety of activities, including community gatherings, outdoor dining, farmers markets, cultural festivals, performances, seasonal events, and informal everyday use.
 - Integrate landscaping, lighting, seating, and cultural elements within open spaces.
 - Designate any turf areas within children’s play spaces or community courtyards as recreational-use areas.
 - Utilize shade elements over open spaces.
 - Provide children’s play spaces that combine recreational play with opportunities to explore Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American history, culture, and traditions through interactive storytelling, artistic play features, educational sculptures, and musical elements.



Shared courtyard with seating, activating the space between buildings.



Children’s play area integrated into a community gathering space.



Temporary markets activate large parking lots with local vendors.



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5.3 Strengthen District Identity Through Culturally Inspired Site Elements

The identity of Little Saigon is expressed through the details people encounter every day. A lantern-inspired light fixture, a cultural landmark, or a paving pattern inspired by Vietnamese craftsmanship can transform an ordinary shopping center into a place that reflects the community’s heritage. As these elements become part of each retail center, they create a welcoming sense of arrival and a shared identity that reflects the culture, traditions, and stories of Little Saigon.

Sources:
1. US Department of Transportation - Pedestrian Lighting Primer



City/Public Agency



Developer/Property Owner



Private Business Owner



Incorporate landscaping, shade trees, planters, and garden areas along storefronts.
- Refer to Section 1.3 of Streetscape and Public Realm for landscape widths and approved list of trees, plants, and shrubs.



Incorporate culturally inspired landmarks, public art, and central features at plazas, courtyards, entry points, gateways, and prominent corners.
- Frame focal elements with coordinated landscaping, decorative paving, pedestrian-scale lighting, and seating.



Utilize culturally inspired paving patterns along storefront edge inspired by Vietnamese art, textiles, ceramics, and traditional craftsmanship.



Provide consistent pedestrian-scaled lighting throughout plazas, walkways, parking areas, and storefront frontages.
- Incorporate Vietnamese-inspired motifs, lantern forms, patterns, and cultural design elements into lighting fixtures.
- Install pedestrian lighting approximately 12-16 feet tall at intervals of 60-100 feet apart.¹
- For pedestrian lighting, utilize warm white lighting (2700-3000K).¹
- Install parking lot lighting approximately 16-25 feet tall at varied intervals based on roadway width, site conditions, and lighting requirements.¹
- For parking lighting, utilize warm to neutral lighting (3000-3500K).¹



Culturally inspired lighting activating public spaces after dark.



Public landmark serving as a focal point within a community plaza.



Colorful paving enhancing the character of a pedestrian walkway.



6

GUIDELINES: ARCHITECTURE



Architecture

Introduction

Architecture plays an important role in shaping the identity and character of Little Saigon. **Building façades, storefronts, and architectural details contribute to the district's sense of place while creating memorable experiences for residents and visitors.** Together with streets, public spaces, and cultural destinations, the built environment reflects the community's history, culture, and continued evolution.

Over time, Little Saigon has grown through incremental development, resulting in a diverse collection of shopping centers, restaurants, and commercial buildings. While this diversity reflects the district's history and entrepreneurial spirit, inconsistent architectural character and aging commercial centers can reduce visual cohesion and make it more difficult for visitors to recognize Little Saigon as a unified destination.

This chapter provides design guidance for new development and improvements to existing buildings.

The recommendations establish a cohesive architectural framework while celebrating the richness of Vietnamese culture and heritage. By incorporating culturally inspired design elements and architectural details, these guidelines strengthen district identity and create memorable places that reflect the character of Little Saigon.



Understanding The Elements

Building architecture includes the physical characteristics and design features that shape the appearance, identity, and experience of buildings.

From the overall form and placement of buildings to the design of storefronts and architectural details, these elements influence how buildings engage the public realm and contribute to the district's visual character. Architectural design helps create a cohesive environment that supports economic activity, reinforces cultural identity, and enhances the overall visitor experience.

Building form establishes the overall organization and physical presence of development within the district.

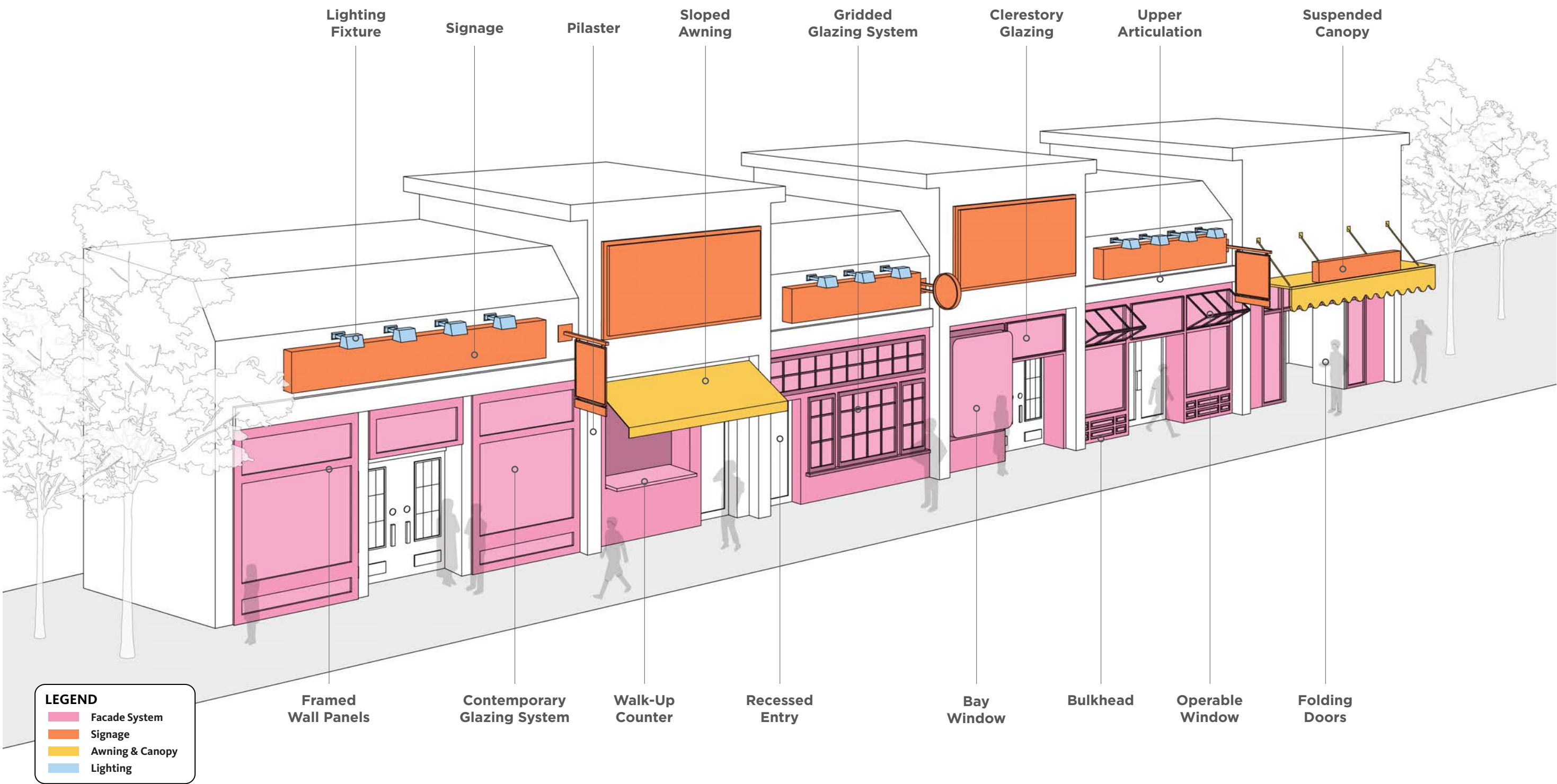
The height, scale, placement, and massing of buildings shape the relationship between private development and the public realm, influencing how streets, sidewalks, and gathering spaces are experienced. Well-designed building form helps frame public spaces and strengthen pedestrian activity.

Architectural character defines the visual identity of individual buildings and contributes to the overall image of Little Saigon. Storefronts, building materials, architectural detailing, lighting, and other design features create distinctive places that reflect the district's culture and heritage. These elements can celebrate Vietnamese identity, strengthen the pedestrian experience, and contribute to a vibrant and memorable destination.

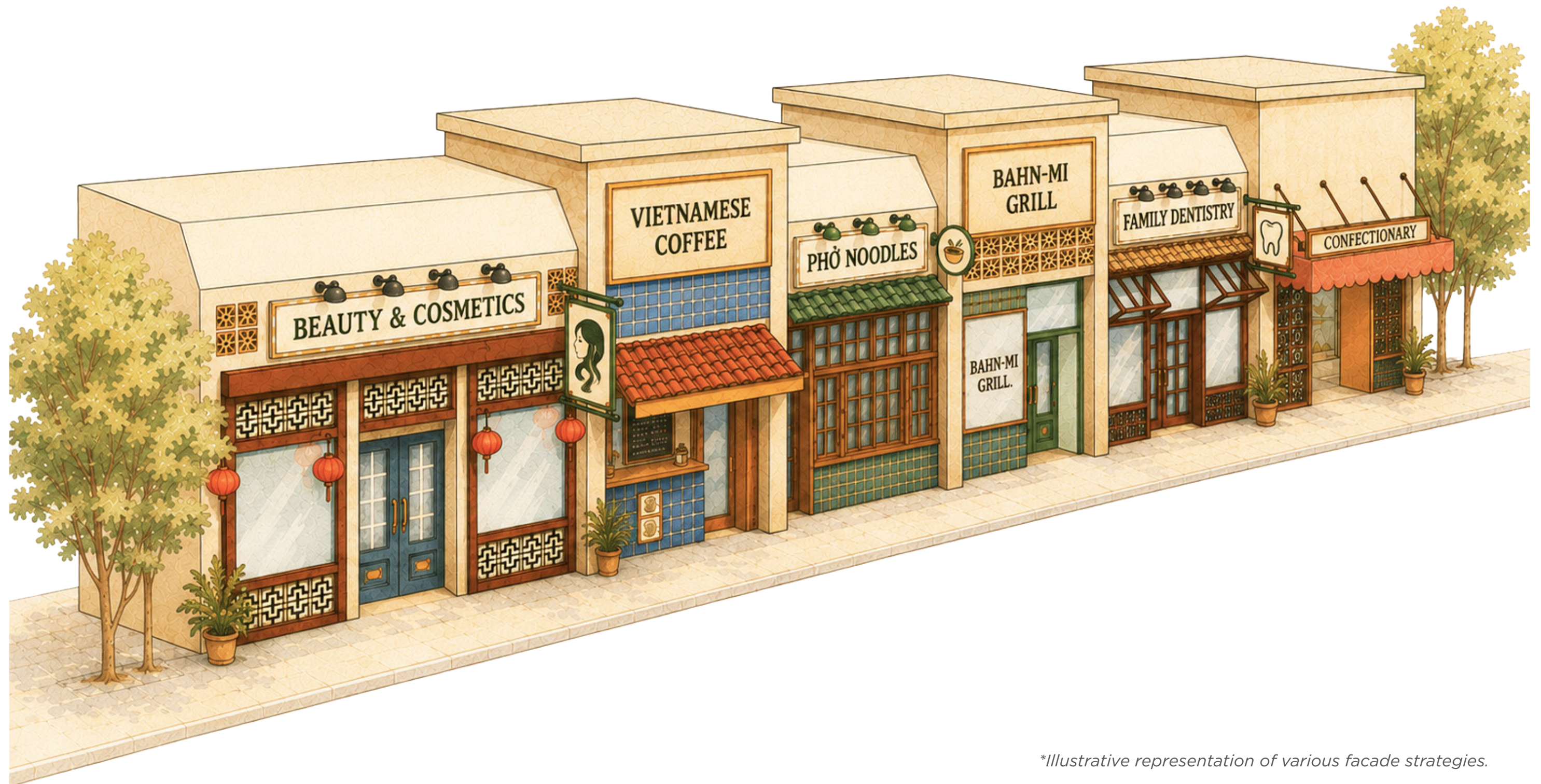
“Love the old school, classic Vietnamese architecture.”



Storefront Architectural Elements



Storefront Architectural Elements: Material Application



**Illustrative representation of various facade strategies.*

Architecture Improvements: Storefront Design Alternatives



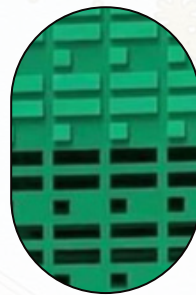
1 - Storefront Facade Materials



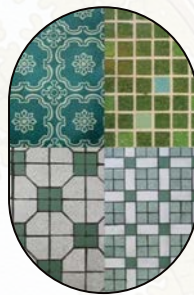
Wood Slats



Iron Metalwork



Concrete/Clay Screen Block



Ceramic Patterned Tile



Smooth Stucco



Natural Stone

2 - Cultural Ornamentation



Nature/Botanical



Lantern Craftsmanship



Bamboo/Rattan Weaving



Traditional

3 - Storefront Fenestration



Foldable Doors



Indoor-Outdoor Pavilion (Serving Windows)



Traditional (Fixed Glazing & Display Window)

Architecture Improvements: Storefront Design Alternatives



4 - Shading Element



Continuous Building Overhang



Canopy



Awning

5 - Signage



Flat Wall Sign



Blade Sign



Neon Sign



Window Sign

6 - Landscaping & Ornamentation



Entry Planters



Planting Strips



Seasonal Display

6.1 Encourage New Development that Supports Walkability and District Character

New buildings should be designed and positioned to support walkability, activate the public realm, and create a comfortable pedestrian experience. Through articulated building scale, setbacks, and placement, development can frame streets and public spaces, strengthen connections between destinations, and contribute to a vibrant and cohesive district character.

Sources:

1. NACTO Urban Street Design Guide



City/Public
Agency



Developer/
Property Owner



Private Business
Owner



Human-scaled storefronts with narrow frontages, frequent entrances, and vertical divisions.

Building Scale

-  Distinguish ground floor from upper stories by breaking down large building volumes through material changes, step-backs, and varied rooflines.
 - Design ground-floor storefronts with floor-to-floor heights generally between 10-15 feet.
 - Repeat architectural bays, columns, pilasters, or vertical elements along larger façades to establish rhythm of openings.
 - Provide canopies, awnings, arcades, or overhangs to visually discern business entrances.
-  Incorporate active ground floors and human-scaled architectural elements along pedestrian frontages.
 - Design storefronts with transparent windows that maximize visibility between indoor spaces and the sidewalk.
 - Wrap storefront design around corner buildings
 - Integrate signage, lighting, canopies, display windows, and architectural detailing into the storefront design to create a fine-grained pedestrian experience.
 - Avoid long blank walls along storefront frontage. Activate walls with murals, vines, public art, or decorative screens.

Building Setback

-  Position buildings closer to public streets where appropriate to strengthen pedestrian activity and storefront visibility.
 - Align building setbacks with adjacent storefronts where feasible to establish a consistent and comfortable pedestrian environment.

-  Utilize setback areas for landscaping, outdoor seating, visitor's kiosk, public art, and wayfinding
 - Maintain a minimum 6-foot clear pedestrian path through setback areas.¹

Building Placement

-  Orient building entrances, storefronts, and active uses toward public streets, sidewalks, plazas, and primary pedestrian routes.
 - Position buildings to frame plazas, courtyards, and outdoor gathering spaces.
 - Design entrances with direct pedestrian access from adjacent sidewalks and gathering spaces.
-  Emphasize corner buildings and prominent intersections through active frontages, architectural articulation, enhanced visibility, and public gathering spaces.
 - Wrap storefront windows, architectural detailing, and active uses around building corners.
-  Locate surface parking behind buildings and away from primary street frontages whenever feasible.
 - Minimize the visual prominence of parking along major commercial corridors.
-  Locate loading docks, utility equipment, and service areas away from primary streets and pedestrian spaces.

6.2A Design Active and Engaging Storefronts: Materiality and Detailing

Architectural character contributes to a cohesive and recognizable district identity by incorporating design elements that reflect Vietnamese culture, heritage, and community values. Materials, colors, textures, and ornamentation help shape how residents and visitors experience Little Saigon, creating memorable places that distinguish the district from surrounding commercial areas.

“Using natural, raw materials feels more culturally authentic.”


City/Public Agency


Developer/Property Owner


Private Business Owner



Vertical wood screening.



Patterned terracotta screen blocks.

- 
Integrate culturally inspired material accents, patterns, and textures into building façade and architectural details.
 - Highlight craftsmanship and artistry through the use of colorful decorative metalwork, wood screens, ceramic tile, textured masonry, or clay screen blocks.
 - Draw inspiration from the district’s Vietnamese temples, cultural institutions, and other significant community landmarks by reinterpreting their materiality, textures, and articulation through contemporary building design.
- 
Select façade materials and decorative elements that work together to create a cohesive building composition. Avoid combining unrelated design themes or architectural expressions within a single building.
 - Integrate material transitions at architectural elements such as columns, storefront bays, cornices, or recessed entries rather than applying materials randomly across the façade.
 - Utilize visually heavier materials such as concrete near the building base. Transition to lighter materials such as wood screens, metal panels, or decorative screens on upper portions of the façade.
- 
Create depth and shadow through façade articulation.
 - Incorporate recessed entries, projecting frames, decorative screens, pilasters, overhangs, or layered façade elements that create shadow and texture throughout the day.
- 
Utilize a color palette that draws from the richness and diversity of Vietnamese design traditions. Color palettes should extend beyond red and yellow to include a broader range of complementary hues and tones.
 - Apply bold accent colors strategically to rather than across entire building façades.
- 
Incorporate nature-inspired ornamentation, including lotus flowers, bamboo, water, koi fish, clouds and other culturally significant landscape motifs, into façade treatments, screens, railings, and decorative elements.
 - Concentrate decorative materials at pedestrian facing ground floors, corners, and building entrances.
- 
Apply ornamentation selectively to highlight important architectural features and pedestrian-facing elements rather than uniformly across entire building façades.

6.2B Design Active and Engaging Storefronts: Building Fenestration

Building fenestration contributes to the visual identity and pedestrian experience of Little Saigon by creating active storefronts, inviting business frontages, and strong connections between indoor and outdoor spaces. Windows, doors, screens, and architectural detailing provide opportunities to showcase Vietnamese-inspired craftsmanship, cultural expression, and storefront character while supporting a vibrant and welcoming street environment.



City/Public
Agency



Developer/
Property Owner



Private Business
Owner

- Design window and door openings with proportions, framing, and detailing that contribute to a human-scaled pedestrian experience.
 - Recess primary entrances to create depth, weather protection, and welcoming transition spaces.
 - Align storefront bays, entrances, and display windows with the rhythm of adjacent storefronts where appropriate.
 - Break down large expanses of glazing through articulated frames, mullions, screens, transoms, or bulkheads.
- Incorporate transparent storefront windows and doors along primary pedestrian frontages to activate the public realm.
 - Avoid blank walls, mirrored glass, heavily tinted glazing, or permanently covered window.
- Consider operable storefront elements by utilizing folding, sliding, or retractable window and door systems for restaurants, cafés, and markets
 - Where appropriate, integrate serving windows or walk-up counters where they enhance sidewalk activity.
- Coordinate fenestration patterns across building façades to create a cohesive architectural composition while allowing flexibility in storefront design.
 - Draw inspiration from traditional Vietnamese commercial architecture and integrate with modern adaptations.



A recessed building entrance framed by transparent glazing and a prominent display window.



Transparent storefront with a combination of fixed display windows, bulkheads and operable doors.



Operable awning windows integrated into a transparent storefront.

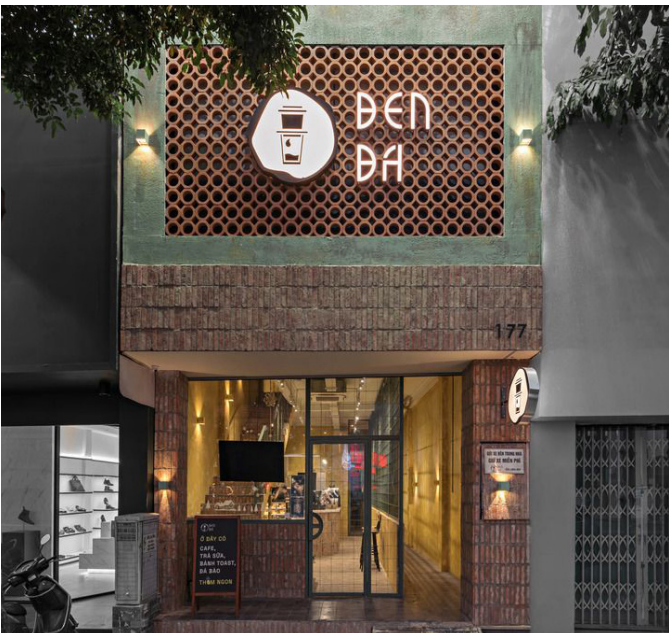
6.2C Design Active and Engaging Storefronts: Facade Inspiration



Warm wood storefront system with transparent glass and exposed concrete that acts as seating.



Facade combines vertical wood cladding, arched openings, and darker colored trims.



Storefront provides contrast between exposed bricks, decorative breeze blocks, and textured plaster finishes



Ceramic tile cladding facade complemented with dark painted metal framing system.



Layered storefront facade with decorative breeze block, recessed display, and illuminated signage.



Storefront featuring metal screen facade, transparent glazing, and vibrant colors.



Storefront composed of warm plaster finishes, operable wood shutters, and decorative lantern lighting.



Facade showcases neutral plaster finishes, wooden window and door systems, and fabric awnings.

6.2D Design Active and Engaging Storefronts: Awnings and Canopies

Awnings, canopies, arcades, overhangs, and recessed entries contribute to the comfort, identity, and walkability of Little Saigon's commercial corridors. Given Southern California's warm climate, incorporating generous shade over pedestrian areas is essential to improving thermal comfort and encouraging year-round walking, shopping, and outdoor dining. These elements create welcoming storefronts that establishes a cohesive architectural character throughout the district.

Sources:

1. City of Los Angeles Engineering – Projections into Public Right of Way

-  Select gently sloped awnings and linear canopies that
-  complements the building's architecture.
 - Avoid oversized, bulky, highly ornamental, or historically imitative canopy designs that overwhelm the storefront.
 - Consider integrating wood soffits, decorative metal screens, bamboo-inspired detailing, or perforated panels to the canopies for added texture and details.

-  Coordinate proportions and materials across building
-  façades to create a cohesive storefront composition.
 - Select canopy materials, colors, and structural supports that complement the building's façade materials and architectural detailing.
 - Integrate storefront lighting, signage, and decorative elements into canopy and overhang designs where appropriate.
 - Permit variations in awning color, graphics, and detailing between tenants while maintaining consistent canopy height, projection, and overall architectural rhythm.

-  Incorporate awnings, canopies, building overhangs,
-  arcades, or recessed entries along storefronts to provide shade, weather protection, and improve pedestrian comfort.
 - Locate shading elements directly above storefront entrances or window openings.
 - Locate awning support poles outside the minimum required pedestrian clear width to maintain safe and accessible pedestrian circulation.
 - The vertical clearance from the public right of way to the lowest part of any awning shall not be less than 7 feet.¹
 - Extend shading elements to cover primary outdoor seating and display areas.
 - Where feasible, align adjacent awnings or canopies to create a continuous shaded walking experience along retail frontages.



Retractable fabric awnings



Tiled roof overhang



Lightweight polycarbonate canopy



City/Public
Agency



Developer/
Property Owner



Private Business
Owner

6.2E Design Active and Engaging Storefronts: Awnings and Canopies Inspirations



Fabric Bull-nose Awning



Striped Retractable Awning



Scalloped, Fabric Dome awning



Striped, Fabric Concave Awning



Wooden Trellis Awning



Natural Fiber Sloped Awning



Cantilevered Metal Canopy



Wrought Iron and Polycarbonate Canopy

6.2F Design Active and Engaging Storefronts: Storefront Lighting

Storefront lighting contributes to the safety, visibility, and nighttime identity of Little Saigon’s commercial corridors. Layered architectural lighting, illuminated storefronts, and culturally inspired fixtures create welcoming businesses after dark, highlight architectural features and entrances, and reinforce the vibrant atmosphere of Vietnamese streets, cafés, and night markets. Enhanced lighting allows for a better pedestrian experience while supporting an active and engaging public realm into the evening.



City/Public Agency



Developer/Property Owner



Private Business Owner

- Incorporate culturally inspired lighting elements, including lantern-inspired fixtures, pendant lighting, and contemporary interpretations of Vietnamese lighting traditions.
 - Utilize warm white lighting that complements the building’s architecture
 - Consider selecting fixtures that reference woven craftsmanship, geometric patterns, or botanical motifs.
 - Shield fixtures to minimize glare and light spill onto adjacent properties and public realm.

- Draw inspiration from the vibrant nighttime character of Vietnamese streets, night markets, and commercial corridors through layered lighting that creates warmth and visual interest.
 - Combine ambient, accent, and decorative lighting to create visually engaging storefronts.
 - Avoid relying solely on bright overhead lighting or exposed floodlights.
 - Illuminate storefronts after business hours to maintain an active retail frontage.

- Integrate lighting within display windows, canopies, signage, and architectural features to highlight building entrances.
 - Conceal lighting, wiring, and electrical conduits within canopies, soffits, and decorative screens.
 - Avoid excessively bright, flashing, or rapidly changing lighting that detracts from the pedestrian experience.



Decorative Vietnamese lanterns featuring colorful silk shades and floral motifs.



Wall mounted scones with pendant fixtures.



Gooseneck light fixtures highlighting storefront signage.

6.3A Design Roof Forms that Enhance Building Character

Roof forms contribute to the architectural identity, character, and visual prominence of buildings throughout Little Saigon. Thoughtfully designed rooflines, overhangs, parapets, and shade structures create distinctive building silhouettes, reduce the perceived scale of larger buildings, and enhance the pedestrian experience. Drawing inspiration from Vietnamese architectural traditions through contemporary design, roof forms can reinforce district character and provide climate-responsive comfort.

- 👤 Introduce roof forms that are inspired by Vietnamese architectural traditions through contemporary interpretations of layered roof forms, deep overhangs, stepped rooflines, and shaded arcades.
 - Integrate wood soffits, decorative screens, exposed structural elements, or ceiling treatments beneath roof overhangs.
 - Coordinate roof forms with façade materials, storefront design, and architectural detailing to create a cohesive building composition.
 - Design roof overhangs to project 1-2 feet beyond the building façade to provide effective shade and rain protection.
- 👤 Select durable, high-quality roofing materials, soffit finishes, and roof-edge detailing.
- 👤 Incorporate varied rooflines and parapets to create visual interest and reduce the perceived scale of larger buildings.
 - Break long rooflines into smaller segments to express changes in building massing through variation of parapet height, roof form, or architectural projections.
 - Align roofline transitions with storefront bays, building entrances, or changes in tenant spaces.
 - Avoid long, uninterrupted rooflines that create monotonous building façades.
- 👤 Utilize rooflines to establish hierarchy and highlight important building components and public-facing spaces.
 - Emphasize primary entrances, corner storefronts, plazas, and public gathering spaces through taller parapets, accent roof elements, or distinctive roof forms.



Traditional Vietnamese clay tile roof



Vietnamese french colonial ceramic roof



Vietnamese contemporary layered roof



City/Public
Agency



Developer/
Property Owner



Private Business
Owner

6.3B Roofline Variation



Continuous flat roofline with a consistent parapet.



Varied roof heights, tower elements, and articulated roof forms break down the building mass.



PHỞ 40
Vietnamese Noodle House

BÁNH
MÌ
CHÈ
CALI

PARIS
BAGUETTE

PIA KONG

NƯỚC ÁI
DA BÀNG

PHỞ
PHỞ TÀI 15.5
PHỞ CHÍN 15.5
PHỞ GA 15.5
PHỞ BÒ VIÊN 15.5
PHỞ CHÍN NAM 15.5
CÀ PHÊ SỮA ĐÀ 4.5
CÀ PHÊ ĐEN ĐÀ 4.5

GUIDELINES: SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING



Signage & Wayfinding

Introduction

Wayfinding helps people understand and experience

Little Saigon as a connected district rather than a collection of individual destinations. Signs, maps, landmarks, and directional information guide residents and visitors to businesses, public spaces, cultural destinations, and community amenities while reinforcing the district's identity and sense of place.

As Little Saigon has grown over time, new shopping centers, businesses, and cultural destinations have developed across multiple cities. While this growth has strengthened the district's economic and cultural significance, inconsistent signage and limited wayfinding can make it more difficult for visitors to navigate between destinations and recognize Little Saigon as a unified cultural district.

This chapter provides guidance for creating a coordinated wayfinding and signage system throughout Little Saigon.

The recommendations establish a clear hierarchy of information, promote bilingual communication, and encourage a consistent visual identity that improves navigation while celebrating the culture and heritage of the Vietnamese-American community.



Understanding The Elements

Wayfinding is a coordinated system that helps people understand, navigate, and experience a place by responding to how they move through the space. Through a combination of signage, landmarks, maps, and environmental cues, wayfinding organizes information into a clear and intuitive journey, helping visitors confidently explore Little Saigon while reinforcing the district's identity.

Effective wayfinding provides clear routes, highlighting important destinations, and reinforcing key decision points along the journey. Successful systems do not rely on an abundance of signs; instead, they provide the right information at the right location. As wayfinding challenges become more complex, messaging should become simpler, allowing visitors to navigate comfortably without unnecessary information or visual clutter. Consistency in messaging, typography, colors, symbols, and graphic design further strengthens recognition and creates a cohesive experience throughout the district.

Signage should communicate quickly, clearly, and consistently while remaining integrated with the surrounding architecture and streetscape. Typography should be legible from appropriate viewing distances and reflect the district's visual identity. Clear messaging, bilingual communication, and universally recognized symbols improve accessibility for a wide range of users while reducing unnecessary complexity. By presenting only the information needed at each decision point, wayfinding can support intuitive navigation while allowing Little Saigon's architecture, public art, businesses, and cultural character to remain the primary focus.



Signage & Wayfinding Improvements

Recommendations

A Gateway

The gateway sign establishes a clear visual boundary marking the entrance to the district for placemaking and identification. They are typically positioned at primary entry points or key intersections, and is usually suspended over major thoroughfares.

B Street Banners

Banners create a continuous visual identity throughout a district, bridging the gap between major entry signs. They are easily interchangeable and can be periodically updated to reflect changing seasons and special events.

C Branded Pedestrian Spaces

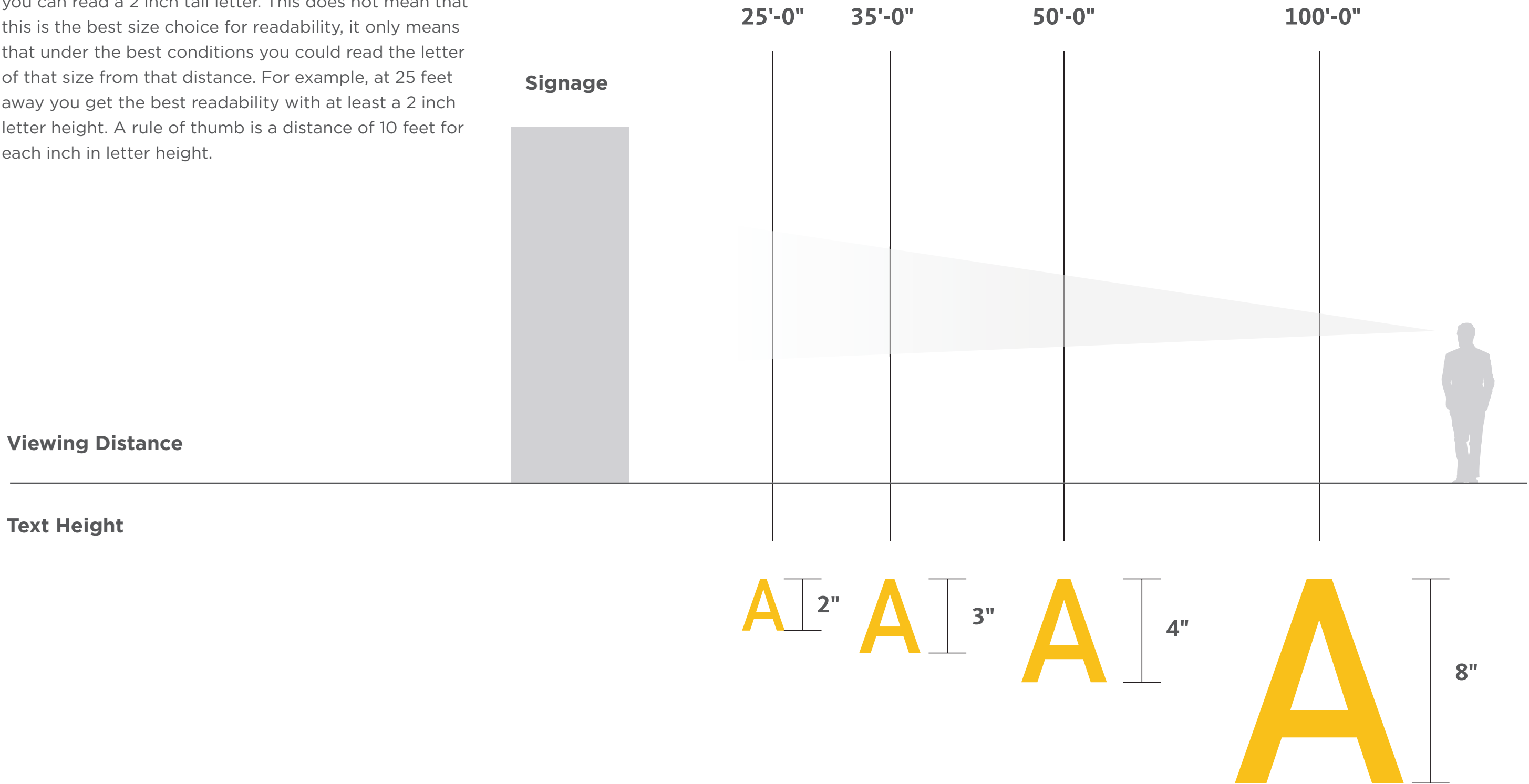
Branded Pedestrian Spaces like decorative crosswalks help transform functional transit areas into immersive brand touch points by reinforcing district identity and enhancing wayfinding.



ADA Standards and Viewing Distance

The size of text recommended per American Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards is based on the viewer’s distance from the sign.

This diagram shows that from as far away as 25 feet you can read a 2 inch tall letter. This does not mean that this is the best size choice for readability, it only means that under the best conditions you could read the letter of that size from that distance. For example, at 25 feet away you get the best readability with at least a 2 inch letter height. A rule of thumb is a distance of 10 feet for each inch in letter height.



Storefront Signage Alternatives



LEGEND

- Wall Sign
- Window Sign
- Projecting Sign
- Channel Letter Sign
- Awning Sign

Disclaimer: This study is intended to illustrate potential storefront signage concepts and how signage could be expressed throughout the district. It is not a final design or proposed sign package. Final signage design, placement, and implementation will be determined through future design development and coordination with cities.

Public Realm Signage Alternatives



Disclaimer: This study is intended to illustrate potential public realm signage concepts and how signage could be expressed throughout the district. It is not a final design or proposed sign package. Final signage design, placement, and implementation will be determined through future design development and coordination with the cities.

7.1A Gateway

The experience of Little Saigon begins at its gateways. These prominent entry features announce arrival, create recognizable landmarks, and introduce visitors to the district’s unique cultural identity. As highly visible elements along major corridors, gateways establish a consistent visual identity that welcomes visitors and reinforces Little Saigon as a unified destination.

 City/Public Agency

 Developer/
Property Owner

Location
Positioned at primary entry points and intersection touch points typically suspended over major thoroughfares.

Material & Construction
Materials used should prioritize durability, low maintenance, and structural integrity. All surfaces to be finished with protective UV-resistant coatings and anti-graffiti sealants.

Message
Limited to the district name and / or logo identity. A minimum 70% color contrast between the text and the background is required for ADA-compliant legibility.

Illumination
Internal or external illumination

Size Guidelines
Height and width to follow zoning code.

General Note
Gateways must comply with local municipal codes and permit requirements, including height, size, structural, placement, clearance, and traffic visibility requirements.



Gateway with illuminated channel lettering, integrated LED lighting, and a prominent district emblem.



Arch-style gateway incorporating cultural architectural motifs, decorative ornamentation, and expressive form.



Cantilevered gateway featuring traditional roof forms, decorative lanterns, and cultural detailing.

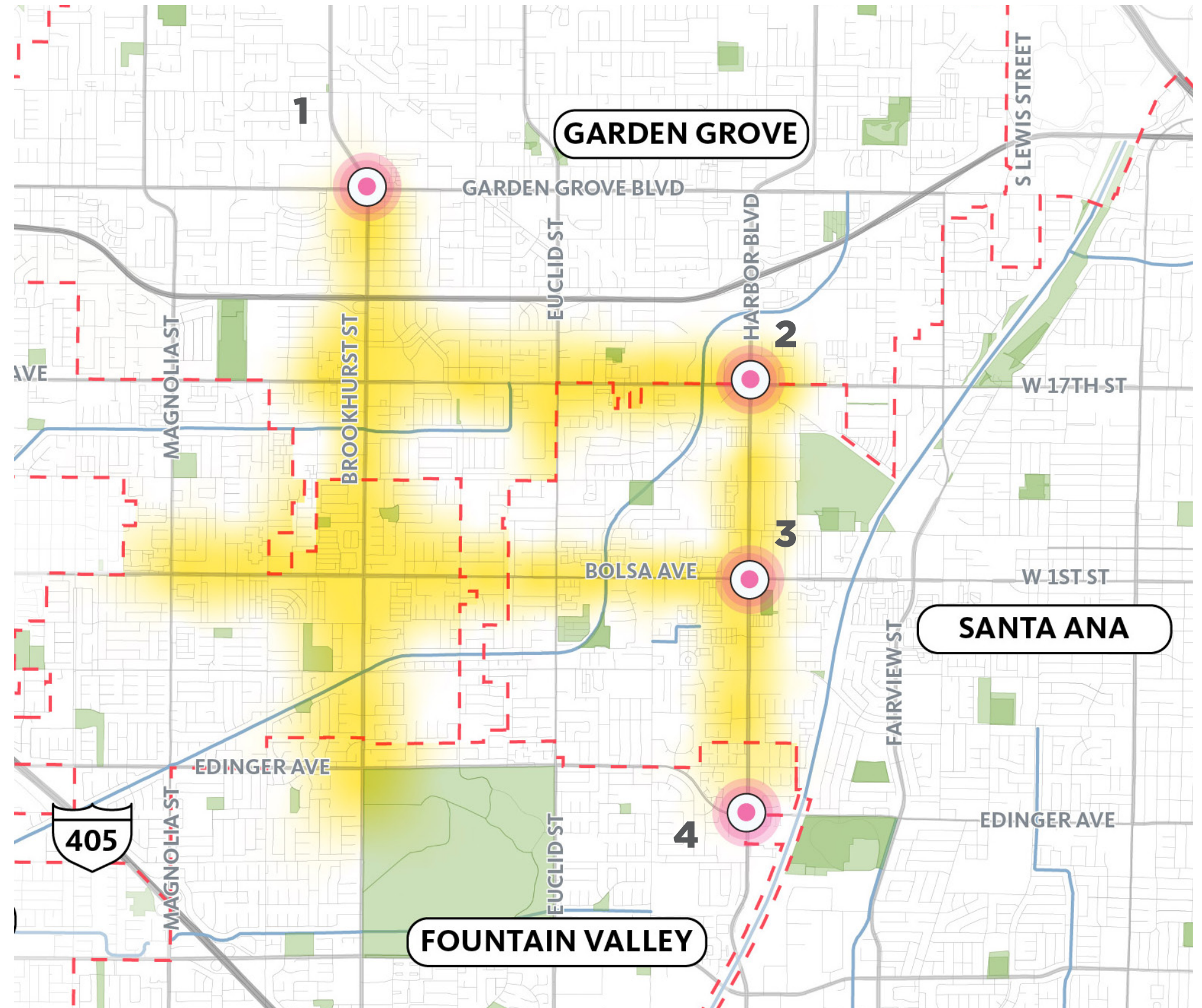
7.1B Gateway: Suggested Locations

Gateway locations have been strategically identified at the primary entrances to Little Saigon to create a clear and memorable sense of arrival from every major direction. Positioned along the district's most prominent corridors and intersections, these gateways announce entry into the Vietnamese-American cultural district while strengthening its identity across Garden Grove, Fountain Valley, and Santa Ana.

- 1 - Intersection of Garden Grove Blvd & Brookhurst St
- 2 - Intersection of W 17th St & Harbor Blvd
- 3 - Intersection of Bolsa Ave & Harbor Blvd
- 4 - Intersection of Edinger Ave & Harbor Blvd

Suggested gateway locations are identified to signal the transition into areas with a greater concentration of businesses within Little Saigon.

Final placement of gateways should be determined through further study and coordination with the participating cities, including consideration of existing conditions, right-of-way constraints, visibility, pedestrian activity, and engineering requirements.



Illustrative map identifying five potential gateway locations at primary district entry points.

7.1C Gateway: Design Alternatives



Version 1. Inspired by traditional Vietnamese architectural forms.



Version 2. Vibrant, illuminated graphics.



Version 3. Hybrid - Vietnamese, modern, & minimalist.



Version 4. Hybrid - Vietnamese, French, & modern.

Preliminary Design Studies: Based on community feedback, multiple preliminary gateway design studies were developed to explore potential design directions for the district. These concepts are illustrative and are not intended to represent four proposed gateways. Further study, design development, and coordination with the participating cities will be needed to determine the final design, location, and implementation of gateway signage.

7.2 Monument

Monument signs serve as an alternative to gateway structures in locations where larger installations are not practical. As part of a coordinated family of district identity elements, they reinforce the character of Little Saigon and create a consistent sense of arrival across a variety of site conditions.



City/Public Agency



Developer/
Property Owner

Location

Positioned at primary entry points or median of main thoroughfares, and intersection touch points.

Material & Construction

Materials used should prioritize durability, low maintenance, and structural integrity. All surfaces to be finished with protective UV-resistant coatings and anti-graffiti sealants.

Message

Limited to the district name and / or logo identity. A minimum 70% color contrast between the text and the background is required for ADA-compliant legibility.

Illumination

Internal or external illumination

Size Guidelines

Height and width to follow zoning code.

General Note

Monument signs must comply with local municipal codes and permit requirements, including height, size, structural, placement, clearance, and traffic visibility requirements.



Arched monument sign featuring large district lettering on a structural steel frame.



Low-profile monument sign constructed of natural stone with inset district lettering.



Mounted monument sign with large scale lettering on vertical louvers.



Large-scale monument sign featuring dimensional lettering and architectural supports.

7.3 Pylons

Pylon signs help identify Little Saigon as a distinct district and let visitors know when they have arrived. They can define entry and exit points along major corridors or provide secondary arrival markers at minor street entrances.

 City/Public Agency

 Developer/
Property Owner

- Location**
Positioned at primary or secondary entry points and intersection touch points.
- Material & Construction**
Materials used should prioritize durability, low maintenance, and structural integrity. All surfaces to be finished with protective UV-resistant coatings and anti-graffiti sealants.
- Message**
Limited to the district name and / or logo identity. A minimum 70% color contrast between the text and the background is required for ADA-compliant legibility.

- Illumination**
Internal or external illumination
- Size Guidelines**
Height and width to follow zoning code.
- General Note**
Pylon signs must comply with local municipal codes and permit requirements, including height, size, structural, placement, clearance, and traffic visibility requirements.



Pylon sign incorporating varied typography, decorative metal screening, and multilingual graphic elements.



Cylindrical pylon made out of metal screens with illuminated letters.



Pylon sign constructed of wood slats with integrated vertical lettering and decorative geometric screening.

7.4 Tenant Signage

Tenant pylon signs serve as highly visible landmarks that help visitors navigate retail centers and discover local businesses. When thoughtfully integrated with the architecture of the shopping center, they create a cohesive identity that supports both business visibility and the distinctive character of Little Saigon.

 Developer/
Property Owner

Location

Position at primary vehicular entrances to retail centers where they are clearly visible from adjacent roadways.

Material & Construction

Design should complement the architecture of the retail center using durable, low-maintenance materials. Incorporate cultural influences through material selection and detailing. Finish all surfaces with UV-resistant coatings and anti-graffiti sealants.

Message

Maintain a consistent panel size, alignment, and spacing while allowing each business to display its own logo and typeface. A minimum 70% color contrast between the text and the background is required for ADA-compliant legibility.

Illumination

Internal or external

Size Guidelines

Height and width to follow zoning code.

General Note

Tenant signs must comply with local municipal codes and permit requirements, including height, size, structural, placement, clearance, and traffic visibility requirements.



7.5 Branded Pedestrian Spaces

Branded pedestrian spaces transform everyday walking routes into opportunities to celebrate the identity of Little Saigon. Integrated ground graphics and cultural patterns reinforce the district's visual character, improve orientation, and create a cohesive experience throughout the public realm.



City/Public Agency



Developer/
Property Owner

Location

Prominent destinations along major corridors and activity centers within the district.

Material & Construction

Epoxy-based Paints

Message

District name and / or logo identity, branded graphics and patterns.

Size Guidelines

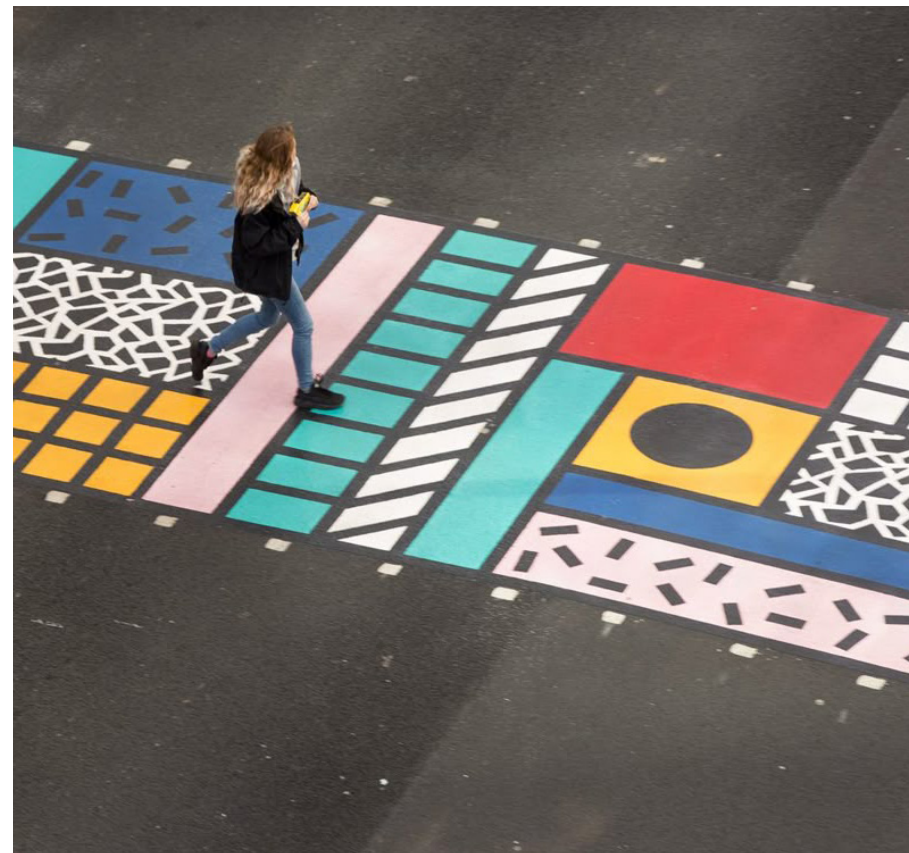
Crosswalk Width: A minimum of 6' is required, though 8' – 10' is the preferred standard for commercial districts and areas with heavy pedestrian traffic.

Branded graphics in public plazas should be proportionate to the size of the plaza, allowing the design to remain legible while accommodating flexible layouts and a variety of public activities.

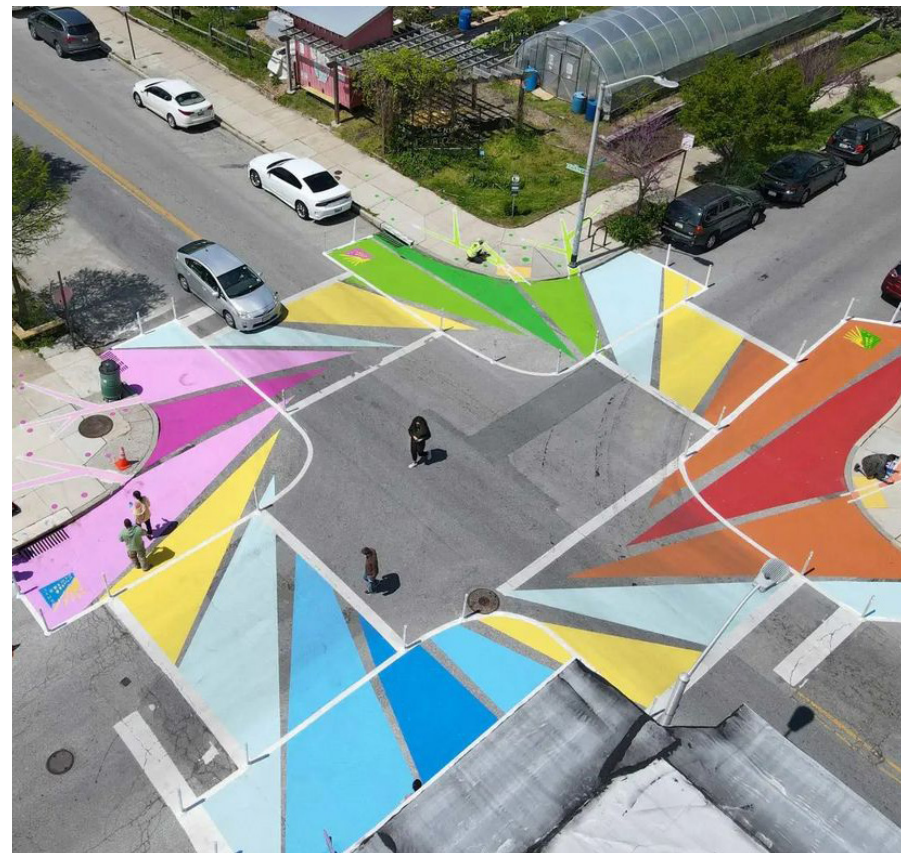
General Note

All signage must adhere to local municipal codes regarding structural regulations, permit requirements, and maximum sizing allowances.

Painted crosswalk locations are subject to further study. Final locations and feasibility will be determined through engineering review, pedestrian traffic analysis, safety considerations, and applicable city standards.



Artistic painted crosswalk incorporating bold colors and graphic patterns.



Painted intersection with high-visibility crosswalks, curb extensions, and decorative pavement graphics.



Decorative plaza paving featuring large-scale geometric artwork.

7.6 Street Banners

Street banners extend the identity of Little Saigon beyond its gateways by creating a continuous visual identity throughout the district. As part of a coordinated family of branding elements, they bridge the gap between major entry signs, strengthen district recognition, and provide a flexible way to reflect seasonal celebrations, cultural traditions, and community events.

 City/Public Agency

 Developer/
Property Owner

Location

Placed in high-foot-traffic areas and along main driving aisles.

Material & Construction

Heavy-duty, UV-resistant Vinyl or Metal

Vinyl banners provide a cost-effective, flexible option for seasonal displays and special events, while metal offers greater durability and lower maintenance.

Message

Limited to the district name and / or logo identity. A minimum 70% color contrast between the text and the background is required for ADA-compliant legibility.

Size Guidelines

Sizing dependent on the height of light pole, clearance regulations, and wind-load engineering. Sizing to follow zoning code.

General Note

All signage must adhere to local municipal codes regarding structural regulations, permit requirements, and maximum sizing allowances.



Vinyl street banners featuring bold colors, graphic patterns, and coordinated branding.



Powder-coated metal banner with cut-out graphics and district branding.

7.7 Storytelling Pathways

Walking through Little Saigon should be an opportunity to experience the stories that shaped the community. Storytelling trails celebrate place by connecting cultural landmarks, public spaces, and everyday destinations through interpretive experiences that engage pedestrians and reinforce the district’s unique identity.



Location
Highly trafficked pedestrian areas along major corridors or shopping areas.

Material & Construction
Epoxy-based paints, high-performance vinyl graphics, colored concrete, decorative pavers, metal inlays, engraved stone, ceramic tile, and large-format LCD digital screens.

Size Recommendations
Consider placing storytelling elements at least every 50-100 feet in highly trafficked pedestrian oriented commercial corridors.

Message
Primary messaging may include historical timelines, community stories, and cultural interpretation. Secondary messaging should be limited to the district name, logo, and branded graphics. Maintain high contrast between graphics and the ground plane for visibility.

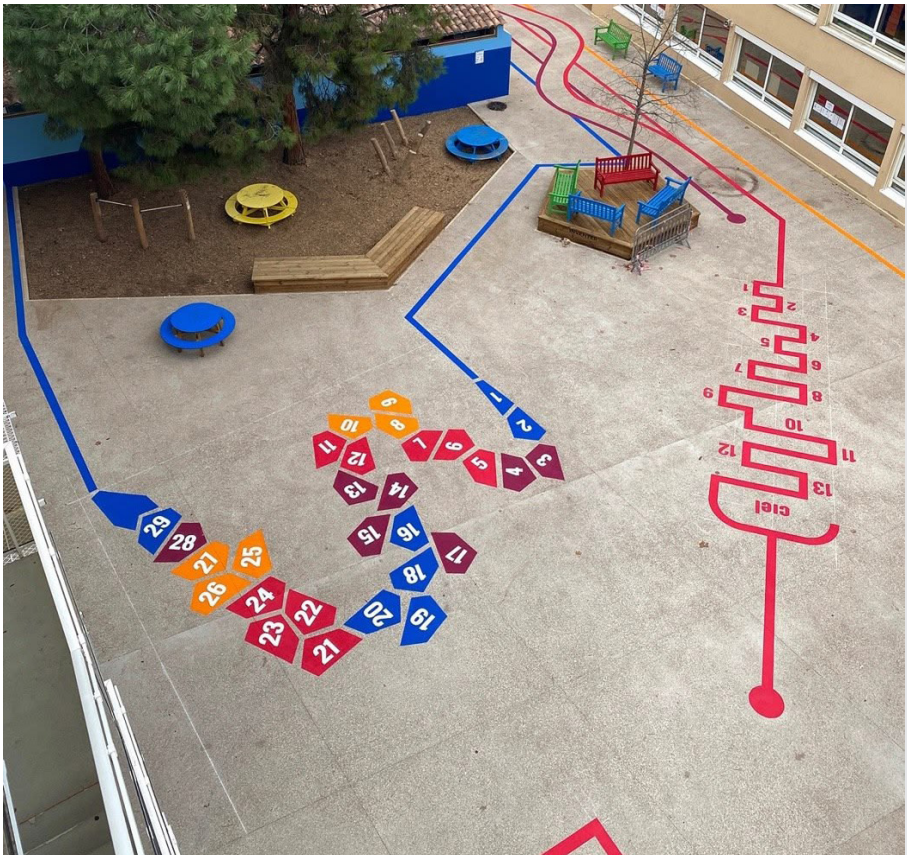
General Note
All signage must adhere to local municipal codes regarding structural regulations, permit requirements, and maximum sizing allowances.



Interpretive walking path with embedded historical dates, archival imagery, and educational storytelling.



Storytelling marker with educational information and pavement graphics.



Interactive storytelling path featuring colorful ground graphics and educational play elements.



