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COMMUNITY BUILDING & DEVELOPMENT IN
SEATTLE'S LITTLE SAIGON: A CASE STUDY IN
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A Capstone project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Policy Studies Interdisciplinary Arts &
Sciences | Vy Nguyen

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I would like to thank InterIm and Seattle Chinatown/International District Preservation Development Authority (SCIDpda) for the opportunity to tie my academic and community interests together. It was an incredibly rewarding and enriching experience to utilize my education to help others understand an issue in my communities – as a life-long Seattle-area resident who grew up within the Vietnamese-American community discussed in this research.

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Executive Summary/Research Abstract:

In 2011, to address community economic development issues, a Neighborhood Block Grant from the City of Seattle's Office of Economic Development was awarded to two partner community planning/development organizations in Seattle's International District: Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation Development Authority (SCIDpda) and InterIm Community Development Association (InterIm). Working as a graduate student research partner beginning in July 2011, this research explores ways to understand and recommend meaningful and fully participatory efforts for local economic development in Seattle's Little Saigon.

Little Saigon is a historically immigrant/refugee community of Vietnamese business owners. Despite being seen as a cultural hub by many in the Seattle region, the neighborhood continually faces challenges in building a cohesive, resilient community with a clear voice, agenda, and agency in the policies and/or developments that impact both Little Saigon as a business district or as a community hub for Seattle-area Vietnamese. In light of the multiple large-scale urban infrastructure projects that will literally change the landscape of Little Saigon, attention has been turned at how to engage the neighborhood and community with current developments such as the First Hill Streetcar, Yesler Terrace Re-Development Plan, as well as other urban planning changes.

As a case study, this research utilized a diverse methodology of secondary data analysis and primary data collection through interviews and a participant-observation method. Key concepts for exploration in this research included: community economic development, social capital, urban planning, community building, and community resilience as paths to building capacity for participatory economic development as a means of capacity.

Recognizing the lack of conversation on capacity in previous studies into economic development and urban planning of Little Saigon, initial findings of this research include significant gaps and challenges for the community in building and exercising capacity. Some of the issues uncovered: a lack of neighborhood and cultural identity (Little Saigon the physical neighborhood vs. Little Saigon, as a cultural 'home' for Seattle-metro area Vietnamese-Americans), a lack of meaningful leadership, challenge of civic literacy across culture, and multiple government agendas from the multiple infrastructural projects in and around the neighborhood. The findings were the basis of recommended next steps for community development and consideration as the landscape of Little Saigon and its stakeholders face significant changes in the next few years.

Section 1: Statement of the Problem

Research Question: *What is the role of capacity and social capital in community-based development of an ethnic neighborhood?*

Introduction to Little Saigon

In 2011, partner organizations Seattle’s Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) and InterIm Community Development Association, secured a neighborhood block grant from the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development (OED). As non-profits operating in Seattle’s International District that work on neighborhood development and preservation issues, part of the grant detailed a community needs assessment to better understand the challenges of community capacity in the Little Saigon business district. By understanding the challenges of the business district, SCIDpda and InterIm (“community partners”) intend to make recommendations to community and city government partners appropriate for adoption by Little Saigon stakeholders as a means towards meaningful, participatory economic development.

The Little Saigon Business District (“LSBD”) is part of Seattle’s Chinatown/International District (C/ID); the business district itself lies in the eastern part of C/ID. Bordered by the I-5 overpass (west),

Washington Street (north), Dearborn Street (south), and Rainier (east); LSBD’s intersection of 12th Avenue and Jackson Street is the heart of LSBD, with businesses and organizations populating the blocks around the intersection. Historically, this

Figure 1: Little Saigon highlighted in red.



Map Source: City of Seattle Department of Planning & Development, *Livable South Downtown*

area has been home to multiple ethnic groups within the city but shortly after their arrival in the late 1970's, Vietnamese refugees turned entrepreneurs began establishing grocery stores, shops, and restaurants in this area. Since the first Vietnamese-owned business was established in 1981,¹ LSBDD developed to an identified 175 businesses and 25 non-profits within the area.²

Currently, there is little to no housing within the 'borders' of the neighborhood. Yesler Terrace, Seattle Housing Authority's oldest public housing development sits just north of LSBDD; there is also multi-family housing in surrounding neighborhoods of First Hill, Mount Baker, Pioneer Square, the Central District, Capitol Hill, and beyond. The role of housing is important to note, as it is often an indicator to neighborhood and community vitality, capacity, and health, which will be discussed later in this section. The majority of physical ties in Little Saigon come from the businesses that serve as a Vietnamese cultural hub for residents of the Seattle metropolitan area. Seattle has the seventh largest Vietnamese ancestry population in the United States;³ according to the 2010 Census there are 66,575 self-identified Vietnamese in Washington State, 83% (55,114) of that population living in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue-Everett metro area.⁴ As a business district, restaurants, grocery stores, and shops are at their busiest on the weekends when people come from local cities and counties to socialize, shop, worship, eat, and enjoy all else LSBDD has to offer.

This is an important trend to distinguish, as the absence of residents⁵ presents a challenge in capacity and resources to address potential development changes. The LSBDD and its surrounding areas are sites that are currently being examined for re-development and infrastructure projects by multiple parties. These projects would dramatically change and re-shape the landscape of LSBDD, but most definitely increase the land value and attractiveness of the area for businesses and residents. The

¹ (Only In Seattle, 2012)

² (Trang Tu Consulting; Strategic Economics, 2007)

³ (U.S. Census, 2011)

⁴ (Office of Financial Management, 2010)

⁵ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2009)

current project proposals or infrastructure work underway as of early 2012, with review of these plans to come in Section Three of this manuscript include:

- Yesler Terrace Re-Development
- Livable South Downtown
- First Hill Streetcar

Little Saigon has been host to a variety of studies and research over the last decade. These studies of Little Saigon have been funded or initiated by a variety of partnerships, community groups, local government offices and university students, in which all of them have studied how best to maximize economic, cultural, spatial, and development potential of the neighborhood or how to mitigate nearby proposed development externalities from the large-scale infrastructure projects listed above. As a business district and a cultural hub for Seattle-area Vietnamese-Americans, Little Saigon has been an area of particular interest by the City of Seattle. Seattle is interested in preserving this area as part of the City's cultural diversity. Yet the City is also interested in development potential of Little Saigon; looking to the future in planning for greater urban density as well as maximizing Little Saigon's potential as a geographic area ripe for transit-oriented development.

Little Saigon: Urban Laboratory

Issues that were emerged as immediate as starting points for consideration were based in urban planning. Two of the identifiable changes include zoning changes in the neighborhood; second were the potential development externalities of the Seattle Housing Authority's re-development plan for the Yesler Terrace⁶ public housing project to become a mixed-income housing community. As a neighborhood with underutilized zoning and land usages or slow in reaching its development potential, LSBD has been a laboratory for urban planning, landscape design studies, and as well as for local

⁶ (Seattle Housing Authority, 2011)

economic development initiatives. As a result, there is a wealth of existing data from the numerous researchers and studies that have taken place in Little Saigon.

Upzoning, which increases density potential by allowing for higher building structures to be built within a particular land-use zone, was approved unanimously⁷ by Seattle City Councilmembers as part of the Livable South Downtown⁸ initiative that looks to increase density of neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown corridor by working on historic preservation, livability, open spaces as well as small businesses in the area. Little Saigon was part of the area impacted by this ordinance.⁹

Due to its proximity to downtown, the housing re-development proposal for Yesler Terrace helps move the City's goal towards greater (mixed-income) density. The Yesler Terrace re-development plan aligns with Seattle's Comprehensive Plan¹⁰ for smart growth management, especially as population forecasts from the Washington State Office of Financial Management anticipates an addition of 1.2 million individuals¹¹ to the state's population, where many will likely settle in the Seattle metropolitan area. Details of the plan will be discussed later, but the increased traffic during and after construction as well as the increased density will likely become a significant development externality to Little Saigon.

Little Saigon: 'Home' for Vietnamese-Americans in Seattle

The Vietnamese-American community in the Seattle area is still a young, maturing community that began as refugees and immigrants. After the fall of Saigon in April 1975, there were three waves of immigration that brought refugees to the United States that varied in education levels and vocational skills. As the Vietnamese-American community continues to establish roots in a new country, immigrants still arrive in Seattle and beyond to become part of the social fabric in the U.S. As a result, the Vietnamese-American community in the Seattle area is an incredibly diverse within its ethnic

⁷ (City of Seattle City Council, 2011)

⁸ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2009)

⁹ (City of Seattle City Council, 2011)

¹⁰ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2005)

¹¹ (Office of Financial Management, 2010)

population. Education, language capacities (which includes more than just English or Vietnamese), employment, length of time in the U.S., and cultural identities all vary a great deal within the community.¹²

With 83% of the local Vietnamese-American population in Washington State living in the Seattle metro area, the population has grown considerably from its humble beginnings as a refugee community. Spanning the metro area, it is not difficult to find signs of integration into the social fabric with pho (Vietnamese beef noodle soup) or banh mi (Vietnamese baguette sandwich) shops in areas where Vietnamese families have settled and/or Vietnamese entrepreneurs found opportunity. Despite Vietnamese-owned businesses being found in many neighborhoods in the Seattle-area, the Little Saigon Business District, remains for a strong draw as a cultural hub for many where people often go to stay connected to their Vietnamese heritage.

As my data and findings will detail, there are still considerable challenges for the population to act as a community. While discussed in further detail in Section Four, it is important to understand moving forward that, at present my data indicates that there are significant organizational and capacity challenges for the Vietnamese-American community to act in a way that would work as a cohesive community to respond to the development externalities posed by the infrastructure projects that will disrupt the ability to do business in Little Saigon, and potentially displace the businesses themselves. Absent residents who live in the neighborhood, the local Vietnamese population in the Seattle metro area served by LSBDD is among the most potentially impacted stakeholder group by the transformative infrastructure changes to the area.

¹² (Takami, 1997)

Gaps in the Neighborhood

Building upon previous research that has studied the neighborhood through an economic and urban design lens, my community needs assessment found gaps in previous research, especially around issues on community development and capacity to respond appropriately to proposals --from city government, local non-profits or private sector development -- in Little Saigon.

In identifying those gaps in previous efforts and examining literature in community-based economic development; the question of capacity, social capital, and community development has become emerging themes in this current study of Little Saigon. As my community partners were charged with the task of finding ways to build meaningful participation in economic development in Little Saigon for the OED grant, the natural question was to first establish “do stakeholders have the capacity *for* participatory economic development?” As a community of immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs, there are considerable cultural and language barriers in participatory economic development. Additionally, absent other groups typically involved in neighborhood development -- local residents -- this is another challenge to community development in Little Saigon. With the considerable challenges for LSBD in organizing to respond to (or enact) environmental changes and the lack of sustainable community development efforts; this research asks the question of the role of capacity and social capital in community (economic) development of an ethnic neighborhood, particularly as a neighborhood with an immigrant and refugee population.

Seeking to build on the wealth of existing information, my methodology had multiple approaches. For context, I analyzed reports and plans on proposed developments within LSBD and with the Vietnamese-American community. To understand community and neighborhood challenges in greater detail, I collected primary data through interviews and surveys which were intended to supplement the existing data from the numerous studies within the last five years.

In exploring the topics of social capital, community capacity, community economic development, and community-based planning; this case study identifies gaps in community development within the Little Saigon neighborhood, and how the Vietnamese-American community plays a role in it, despite not being housing-based residents in the business district itself. This capstone, in working with community partners Interim and SCIDpda, seeks to provide culturally appropriate research-based information and recommend feasible courses of action for the community, Little Saigon neighborhood, and local government agencies to consider for fostering meaningful, participatory and collaborative community (economic) development with Little Saigon stakeholders.

Section 2: Literature Review

In selecting my literature for review, I have identified a set of concepts that are vital for the discussion on their roles in community development. Starting with the question of capacity within the OED grant, I explore the concepts of: community capacity, social capital, urban planning, and community economic development, and community resiliency as a means of community-based development.

Community Building: Ways to Achieve Capacity & Development

Using the OED grant as a starting point; to better understand how to build community capacity, I wanted to understand how community capacity is defined and framed in development literature. Looking at the big picture issue, community-based development has an intended outcome to improve the quality of life, empower and provide opportunities for those typically marginalized within society.¹³ Diving into local economic development literature, common themes that emerge often discuss economic development as an issue of community capacity, accomplished via community building or community development.

Often used as interchangeable terms, successful community building and community development has an outcome of increased community capacity. Successful community developers recognize that in order for a community to successfully reach sustainable economic or physical development, capacity must be addressed as part of a functional civic infrastructure for decisions or actions with buy-in to move forward.¹⁴ Adding to that dialogue, successful community development and building will produce community and human infrastructure that is resilient and robust enough for self-determination through participating in the larger economic, political and civic picture.¹⁵

Community development and building efforts often include community capacity building, which in turn impacts the success or failures of community development and building efforts. With this cyclical

¹³ (Anglin, 2011, Community Economic Development Capacity)

¹⁴ (Traynor, 2008)

¹⁵ (Anglin, 2011, Public Sector Innovation and Community Economic Development)

nature, scholars and practitioners in the field nearly always discuss the two as going hand-in-hand. By successfully empowering individuals and communities to affect their environment via utilization of skills, talents, assets and relationships, building community capacity is the foundational step in sustainable community development efforts, be they social, economic or cultural. Moreover, social relationships matter in community development.¹⁶

Using the above definition of community capacity building becomes a discussion in social capital. Successful community building and development efforts increase social capital. Social capital can become an important factor in sustainability of community building and development. Increased social capital can also translate into increased community capacity. Social capital will be revisited later in this literature review.

Another approach to community capacity building leads us to the work of leading scholars, such as John McKnight and John P. Kretzmann. Kretzmann and McKnight have a significant body of work that detail community capacity, building it first through individuals then as a collective effort. Through their work with The Asset-Based Community Development Institute: School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University, McKnight and Kretzmann (along with many others) discuss how capacity often become issues within low-income communities and how to effectively address capacity by empowering communities to affect sustainable change, from the inside out.¹⁷ This has possibly been the challenge of previous economic development initiatives in Little Saigon, where it has been development *to*, not development *with*.

Asset-based community capacity and development examine ways to best change the current development model from client-based with local organizations and government to partnership-based.¹⁸ Working with SCIDpda and InterIm has led me to continue investigation on capacity from an asset-based

¹⁶ (DeFilippis, 2008)

¹⁷ (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993)

¹⁸ (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993)

point-of-view, as Little Saigon already has some existing assets to draw non-residents and investment (financial, human, infrastructural, etc.) into the neighborhood on a consistent basis.

Social Capital: Why Relationships Matter

Moving forward from the issue of community capacity, social capital is another concept for review. Social capital is often an outcome of community building and development efforts, even when those efforts are not successful. Typically understood as the value of and in social networks that idealize a generalized reciprocity, social capital has the potential to promote positive (and negative) social change,¹⁹ depending on the dynamics within any given network as no two are identical due to the diverse human actors and resources within any network.

In community building and developing efforts, capacity building is often a goal because it empowers actors and agents to affect change. The transformation from client to citizen often includes an increase in social capital, when relationships within a network have the potential to become action.²⁰ This set of relationships and the access to resources is an asset to mobilizing action²¹ that can also define one's social capital. In the case of Little Saigon, by working to increase social capital, this translates to the ability and willingness to participate in community economic development initiatives.

Within the framework of social capital, two types of social capital are also become relevant to this case study. Putnam details two types of social capital: bonding social capital – which can help strengthen *internal* networks or group identity -- and bridging social capital, which strengthens a group/network to *other external* networks.²² Bonding and bridging social capital will be revisited in Section Four.

¹⁹ (Putnam, 2000)

²⁰ (Coleman, 2000)

²¹ (Hyman, 2008)

²² (Putnam, 2000)

Social capital plays a dual role in many aspects of community and economic development while also having the ability to bolster it. Even in failed community organizing efforts, social capital is an end result as ties to others in a community or geographic area are forged.

Urban Planning: Community-based Plans

Urban planning is important to understand the current planning practices, strategies and initiatives in Little Saigon along with why the City of Seattle has taken a keen interest in the neighborhood. The following topics that will be briefly covered in this portion of the literature review include: comprehensive planning, smart growth, urban design, community planning, participatory planning, housing, transit oriented development and economic development planning.

Comprehensive planning and smart growth²³ are two strategies utilized by the City of Seattle to manage the population growth, physical urban growth while preserving environmental quality within Seattle. Comprehensive plans, as mandated by the Washington State Growth Management Act,²⁴ are often extensive and detailed documents that become one part law and one part community vision for the direction that a city's growth will be planned for. Comprehensive plans address growth two ways: first by planning for land-use in spatial neighborhoods with defined boundaries. Second, comprehensive plans address elements that impact the quality of life for city residents via issues such as transportation/transit, housing, economic development, human development, cultural development and the environment. Smart growth is the underlying philosophy to manage and plan for growth in a way that is, ideally, dense so that it does not unnecessarily strain physical or natural resources in the environment.

²³ (Levy, Growth Management, Smart Growth, and Sustainable Development, 2009)

²⁴ (Washington State Legislature, 1990)

In planning practice, urban design²⁵ is an area of planning that connects people to the public places, be it for work, home, leisure or commute/travel. Urban design connects planning principles such as public health through promoting alternative transportation methods to cars or environmental stewardship through green buildings via actual design of (but not limited to) buildings, parks, and public space. Successful urban design often requires community and participatory planning. Community planning engages the community so that planning is *with*, rather than planning *to* the community. Community planning plans are often most successful when they employ democratic planning methods, such as participatory planning with stakeholders and constituents so plans become collaborative and maintain the agency of its constituents. The most successful plans include community input; absent buy-in from stakeholders and constituents, even the most well thought out and well-intentioned initiatives run the significant risk of failure and/or sustainability.

In the context of Seattle and Little Saigon's urban development, all of these topics are particularly relevant as they are an indicator of where the City intends to move their planning efforts and the steps along the way to move developments forward. Beginning with the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, the City has detailed a plan to manage growth within the city limits towards greater density and, ideally, as transit-oriented development.

By promoting transit-oriented development through greater density, the City is also promoting better quality of health and the environment by replacing car-dependent transportation methods in favor of public transit, biking or walking which decrease greenhouse gas emissions by shifting transportation methods and distances traveled by a greater portion of the population.²⁶ In addition to walkable neighborhoods promoting individual and community well-being, they can also promote economic well-being via opportunities for support services and businesses. With Little Saigon's proximity to multiple populous and robust neighborhoods in all directions as well as being next to main

²⁵ (Barnett & Hack, 2000)

²⁶ (Levy, Transportation Planning, 2009)

arterial routes such as Rainier Avenue, I-5 and I-90; the neighborhood becomes incredibly attractive for development in line with Seattle's Comprehensive Plan.²⁷ The First Hill Streetcar line broke ground in Spring 2012, which will connect the International District Light Rail station to the under construction Capitol Hill Light Rail station.²⁸ The current path runs directly up Jackson Street, a major arterial of C/ID and Little Saigon, loops via 14th Avenue to Yesler Way, then reconnecting at Broadway to the light rail station.²⁹ The station will connect residential neighborhoods, business districts, as well as other commercial areas on the line with each other.

Housing is another way that planning can help meet some of the goals discussed above. The current housing re-development plan underway next to Little Saigon is Yesler Terrace. Yesler Terrace, in its current state as public housing features 561 units for over 1,200 residents.³⁰ In efforts to plan for greater density, Seattle Housing Authority has launched a re-development plan for a mixed-income housing community that will feature 5m000 units. In addition to the number of housing units multiplying by nearly tenfold, the Yesler Terrace re-development plan also adds considerable office, retail, community services and commercial space along with the First Hill Streetcar to the thirty-acre lot.

The re-development plan intends to provide living and working spaces for city residents that strengthens economic well-being while promoting sustainable design and alternative methods of transportation. The Yesler Terrace re-development will require that surrounding neighborhoods have the proper infrastructure and capital – both human and physical -- to support such a significant infusion of human activity.

²⁷ (Levy, Transportation Planning, 2009)

²⁸ (Seattle Streetcar, 2012)

²⁹ (Seattle Streetcar, 2012)

³⁰ (Seattle Housing Authority, 2011)

Community Economic Development & Community Resiliency

Coming back to the question of capacity, community economic development is a cornerstone of this study. Community economic development (CED), rooted in a history of anti-poverty measures, is defined as a process that mobilizes assets and builds capacities of stakeholders to improve a shared (and/or individual) future.³¹ Community institutions such as non-profits and service agencies play a role in improving that ability to build capacity and mobilize resources that assist populations that are typically poor, underserved, or face substantial challenges in achieving agency in their communities, neighborhoods or environments.³²

Successful CED efforts build capacity of those it seeks to positively impact. Successful CED is often partnership-based, collaboration dependent, and comes from a place-based strategy.³³ Sustainability of CED efforts is always a concern, which is why public policy is vital to CED efforts. Public policy must link different communities in a region to broaden thinking on issues that affect a neighborhood of concern for sustainable development efforts to be successful.³⁴ Linking them to outside, regional resources or identities help them de-fuse the historical challenges through a shared identity and responsibility.

Community resiliency is what ties many of these concepts together. While much academic discussion on community resiliency comes from environmental and disaster management thought, community resiliency is often thought to mean “the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise.”³⁵ Community resiliency is dependent on capacity from community building and development, it is also dependent on social capital as relationships are essential

³¹ (Anglin, What is Community Economic Development?, 2011)

³² (Anglin, Community Economic Development Capacity, 2011)

³³ (Anglin, What is Community Economic Development?, 2011)

³⁴ (Anglin, Searching for Sustainable Community Economic Development, 2010)

³⁵ (Magis, 2010)

to resiliency of a community. Community resilience surveys are often used by practitioners in their work through a series of questions and assessments to determine a community's ability to respond to changes. A community's resiliency can determine whether changes in the environment ultimately pose a threat or opportunity.

In summary, this literature review of community building, social capital, urban planning, community economic development, and community resiliency are all connected by the concept of capacity to responding to environmental changes. Inter-dependence, social relationships, collaboration and outreach are present in each of the discussed concepts successful in practice in the real-world. All of these things help build trust and establish community, which is a cornerstone of community development efforts, especially if they are to energize and engage stakeholders and ultimately become successful. As a community economic development case study, concepts from this literature review help frame the role of capacity and social capital in the context of LSBD.

Section 3: Methodology

As a case study, my research question – the role of social capital and capacity in community-based development – took multiple approaches in its exploration and framing. There were many lenses to approach this research – economic, socially, and culturally – so it required drawing on diverse sources to understand the complexity and richness of the overlapping questions of community, identity, and capacity. I approached this research with a multi-faceted methodology: first I began with analysis of secondary data to begin understanding the status quo conditions, participant-observation to build relationships with stakeholders and building the knowledge to fully understand the rich level of detail required for this case study, and finally gathering primary data to gain deeper insights to community and neighborhood health and its challenges. The discussion of my methodology and data findings will mirror this three step process, in which I reviewed secondary data first, built upon my participant-observations of the neighborhood, and finally engaged in primary data gathering to gain deeper insight to Little Saigon and its stakeholders.

All research begins with looking at what has already been done prior to a new project; Little Saigon has been an urban laboratory for a number of economic development and impact studies as well as development and urban design. In addition to the economic and planning studies, a recent Seattle-area Vietnamese-American community assessment by the Vietnamese Friendship Association was also particularly relevant in examining current community and stakeholder capacity. After review of these reports, there were still questions I found necessary to be asked of the community in order to better build this case study.

For my primary data collection set, I wrote a set of ten questions for interviewing and surveying within the Little Saigon stakeholder community (Appendix A). These questions were designed to examine willingness for participation in local economic/community development efforts; look for relationships and networks within the community; identification of community assets and

neighborhood/cultural identity perceptions. Moreover, what my questions intended to measure beyond a practical or contextual view was to assess concepts and ideas from the data collected from my interviewees. Questions – utilizing “Grounded Theory” -- were written open-endedly enough to allow for the creation of categories or “key concepts” within the data in their terms.^{36 37} This would lend itself for later coding and analysis, as well as give myself the opportunity to conceptualize data – where possible – from the data I collected.

Through utilizing existing professional and personal networks, my sample size was formed through the snowball method of identifying members of the Vietnamese-American community as well as stakeholders in the LSBDD neighborhood to interview. Interviewees solicited for interviews were individuals who have worked as community organizers or served in the community in some capacity, many of them were experienced in working with the Little Saigon neighborhood (and beyond) or with the Vietnamese-American community. Since my primary data collection worked with human subjects, I was required to submit an application to the University of Washington Institutional Review Board for approval.³⁸ Once approved, the primary data collection period for my research spanned April-May of 2012. My sample size included eleven interviews, all conducted in English. My interview questions were translated into Vietnamese, and while I had access to a translator, I did not successfully secure an interview with a community or neighborhood stakeholder who would require translation services. This naturally skews the data I collected as English-only narratives, some of the perspectives I may have been able to collect in Vietnamese was not gained as a result. My interviews have been transcribed into 51 pages of notes.

Another crucial part of my methodology in building this case study was participant-observation. Participant-observation is a method that often works best in qualitative studies where researchers go

³⁶ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

³⁷ Strauss & Corbin (1998) state “Grounded theory can be presented either as a well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties.” (pg. 31)

³⁸ IRB Approval received February 22, 2012

beyond direct observation. It gives researchers the opportunity to step out of their academic shoes and participate, which allows them a richer and deeper understanding for their study.³⁹ Participant-observation is frequently used in urban neighborhoods or where the research takes place across cultural or subcultural groups.⁴⁰ Working with InterIm gave me the opportunity to approach my research additionally as participant-observer; coming to the office one to four times a month beginning in July 2011, I opened the door to better understand the richness and history of the neighborhood. Being a neighborhood presence connected me to community and neighborhood groups and members, I was alerted to continual developments in Little Saigon as well as cultural and community events or meetings. I kept field notes from meetings and events, as well as a journal to de-brief my thoughts and observations through the months.

As part of my participant-observation methodology, I participated on an advisory board that oversaw the Community Action Research Education (CARE) Phase II project with the Vietnamese Friendship Association. The CARE project is a multi-year, multi-phase project that seeks to bring the Vietnamese-American community in southeast Seattle together to build community and to create a common vision for the future.⁴¹ Phase I was a year-long project, with a team of undergraduate students conducting a community assessment and participatory research, looking at the health of the Vietnamese community in Seattle. CARE Phase II was also a year-long project; a team of undergraduates from local institutions formed the Youth Action Team (YAT) that took findings from CARE Phase I to build a community strategy to address the gaps and needs identified from Phase I. My role here was attending monthly meetings with other board members. We would discuss current steps of the Phase II project and advise on potential next steps with the CARE program director. I saw this as an important piece in

³⁹ (Yin, 1994)

⁴⁰ (Yin, 1994)

⁴¹ (Vietnamese Friendship Association, 2010)

establishing myself as a researcher interested in community health issues for the local Vietnamese-American population. It also helped me secure interviews during my data collection.

Once data was compiled, micro-analysis was my method to analyze the data and uncover concepts as well as emerging themes from the data.⁴² Micro-analysis is a technique that requires close readings of textual data for concepts and key themes to emerge out of the data sets. Through coding my data, key concepts I identified: lack of leadership, leadership, unity, community identity, neighborhood identity, capacity, organizational capacity, generational divide, civic engagement and literacy, institutional support, culture, cultural preservation, history, and institutional support.

⁴² (Yin, 1994)

Section 4: Results and Discussion

This case study, with its multiple layers of stakeholders in a variety of capacities, draws on many different kinds of data and reports. As secondary data findings was crucial to contextualizing and framing this research, secondary data findings will be discussed first. It then follows to discuss primary data findings as that data set was collected in addressing the “gaps” in previous community conditions reports and studies (the secondary data set). This section concludes with a discussion from the view of the researcher of the data on Little Saigon’s community health report. For the purpose of distinction, the term “neighborhood” will refer specifically to a place-bound definition of community; whereas “community” will encompass a broader the definition of a socially-defined community with ties and relationships to others sharing the same identity, and population will be used as it would be in the U.S. Census, a self-identifier of demographics, but not necessarily meaning community or neighborhood.

Secondary Data Findings:

In shaping my research, there were a considerable number of previous studies and current documents (Appendix C) that helped shape this case study. Exploring the issue of community development – as a place-bound issue via LSBDD and a social issue through the cultural symbolism of Little Saigon for the Vietnamese community led me to the following findings in my review of existing reports, studies, and literature.

Little Saigon: Place-bound Development

As discussed above, multiple reports agree that Little Saigon is an area that is overdue for significant development within a timeline of the next twenty years.^{43 44} Due to its geographic location, it

⁴³ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2009)

⁴⁴ (Trang Tu Consulting; Strategic Economics, 2007)

is an attractive location for development for housing, transit, economic, and cultural development.⁴⁵ Denser neighborhoods promotes many goals of the City, it helps foster development⁴⁶ – economic, human, and cultural -- while mitigating the effects of sprawl considered detrimental to the natural environment as it increases the necessity of infrastructure service as well as the increased impact of car-dependent lifestyles on the climate.⁴⁷ Through growth management, the City of Seattle hopes to work to increase the quality of life through planning for a variety of capacities of the built environment while maintaining a high standard of the natural environment⁴⁸ are dual, explicit goals of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

Up-zoning changes⁴⁹ will be the way that many of these goals would be met, and is already underway with the successful approval of land-use changes.⁵⁰ Where current zones include commercial, industrial commercial, and neighborhood commercial, reports agree that limited up-zoning and the introduction of downtown mixed residential/commercial zoning would best benefit the Little Saigon neighborhood to expand its constituency base beyond business owners and introduce residents who would now also have a stake in neighborhood developments. In the interest of preserving the distinct neighborhood character of Little Saigon, community groups, researchers, and City of Seattle Offices of Economic Development, Planning & Development have asked for modest increases in allowable heights, to give way to medium density growth. Yet a 2007 study⁵¹ clearly indicates that up-zoning will likely have moderate to high harm to existing businesses, and potentially displace them altogether through increased rent through increased property value if the influx of commercial spaces attract significant activity.

⁴⁵ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2009)

⁴⁶ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2005)

⁴⁷ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2005)

⁴⁸ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2005)

⁴⁹ (City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development, 2009)

⁵⁰ (City of Seattle City Council, 2011)

⁵¹ (Trang Tu Consulting; Strategic Economics, 2007)

Additionally, there are other spatial developments in the neighborhood to consider. In an effort to address the cultural and human development within Little Saigon, City of Seattle Department of Parks has invested resources to establishing a park and green spaces in the neighborhood.⁵² Working with SCIDpda and a Landscape Architecture Studio class from UW Seattle, the Little Saigon Park Study 2010 was the first design exploration study into a culturally-appropriately designed green space for Little Saigon goes to use as a community space.

Working with the neighborhood stakeholders through community visioning events, some issues that arose out of this study addressed a few themes that recur in my data. A primary concern at the forefront of many starts with Little Saigon being is at its busiest on the weekends when people come to patron businesses, socialize, worship, and shop in the neighborhood.⁵³ With the infusion of traffic and people, something like cracked sidewalks become an indicator of the larger problem of a lack of infrastructure and the support necessary to address it. An example of the lack of infrastructure for what the neighborhood needs is evidenced in the heavy business activity on the weekends and a lack of parking for those traveling in from other locales in the metro area to Little Saigon. Some of the park design proposals address this by introducing green sidewalks,⁵⁵ which would also address another area of concern for the neighborhood as deteriorated sidewalks has been a safety concern since (at least) 2005.⁵⁶ From community visioning portions of this study, neighborhood stakeholders indicated they wished they wished to provide this amenity for their customer base.

Little Saigon: Social & Cultural Development

As a cultural hub for Seattle-area Vietnamese-Americans, the social and cultural development is an important element for consideration when contextualizing community economic development in

⁵² (Neighborhood Design Studio - Autumn 2010, 2010)

⁵³ (Neighborhood Design Studio - Autumn 2010, 2010)

⁵⁵ (Neighborhood Design Studio - Autumn 2010, 2010)

⁵⁶ (Community Design Studio 2005, 2005)

Little Saigon. Though CED is considered a place-bound strategy for building capacity of a neighborhood and population, the dynamics of Little Saigon itself dictate it must look beyond its immediate geographically defined stakeholder group to think about the impact of changes to LSBDD as part of a regional identity. For this, my data details the work of two community-based groups that are working with the Vietnamese-American community and Little Saigon neighborhood as part of a community development effort.

The Vietnamese Friendship Association (VFA), based in South Seattle, began as a non-profit that provides social services to refugees arriving in the Seattle area in the late 1970's. As the needs of the Vietnamese population have evolved, so has the scope of services and mission of VFA. The CARE project's Phase I findings showed some strengths in the community, and some challenges. Some positives of the qualitative data showed, on many levels, a sense of bonding social capital expressed in family values with respect to elders, that heritage is celebrated and hard work and a spirit of entrepreneurship as values⁵⁷ within the Vietnamese-American community. Whereas some of the identified community challenges in the same data gathering indicated that lack of community unity, language barriers, inter-generational disconnect, lack of services for more recent immigrants from Vietnam, and a lack of space for the community to gather are issues facing the community.⁵⁸

A particular challenge of note from the study is the lack of community unity and civic identity, this has been the lynchpin that continually challenges the Vietnamese-American population in the Seattle-metro area to becoming a vibrant, community unified by a shared heritage and ethnicity, with clear leaders whom are looked to on issues that would impact the Vietnamese-American population in the area. Focus groups from Phase I indicated that there was a fear of becoming involved in community affairs, or obstacles of knowledge.⁵⁹ Despite an identified need to unify the community and for

⁵⁷ (Vietnamese Friendship Association, 2010)

⁵⁸ (Vietnamese Friendship Association, 2010)

⁵⁹ (Vietnamese Friendship Association, 2010)

meaningful leadership, this has been a gap since arrival in the late 1970's. While individuals in the study report involvement with local temples and churches, the engagement does not extend beyond places of worship towards a collective "Vietnamese in Seattle" identity or a community that is pro-active on issues that impact the Vietnamese population.

A non-profit that is focused on pro-actively addressing issues that impact the Vietnamese population is the recently-formed Friends of Little Saigon (FLS). Established in January 2011, FLS is a neighborhood-based non-profit dedicated to "promote, enhance, and showcase the cultural and economic vitality of Seattle's Little Saigon."⁶⁰ As a community-based volunteer group in the neighborhood, FLS has organized a number of events throughout the course of my study that lent itself to my participant-observation methodology in this study. FLS is currently working with neighborhood and community stakeholders to create a Little Saigon Vision Plan, which includes short-term and long-term goals for the future. The timeliness of the FLS project is in part response to the proposed developments around the neighborhood, but also out of an absence of vision for Little Saigon as a community and cultural hub for the Seattle-area Vietnamese population.

One such example is organizing the Celebrate Little Saigon as a community festival for the Vietnamese holiday of Tet Chung Thu (Mid-Autumn Holiday). FLS also used this as a community visioning opportunity since it would draw a crowd of community and neighborhood stakeholders to the event. Held in a parking lot adjacent to Lam Seafood, a popular grocery store with Vietnamese (and other ethnic) patrons, the community visioning asked participants to place dots on a series of poster board to indicate what was unique and worth preserving for Little Saigon, as well as asked participants how they would like to see programs and space develop for the neighborhood and community in the future.

⁶⁰ (Friends of Little Saigon, 2012)

Table1: What programs/cultural aspects for Little Saigon?

<u>What</u>	<u>Character: unique & to be preserved in Little Saigon</u>	<u>Future: what we would like for the future</u>
Shopping	XXXXXXXXXX	XX
Eating	XXXXXX	XXXX
Exercising		XXX
Socializing	X	XXXXXX
Creative play	XX	X
Dating	X	XX
Enjoying nature	X	XX
Performances	XXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
Family play		XXXXXX
Gatherings/festivals	XXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
Spiritual activities	XX	XXX

Table 2: What physical spaces for Little Saigon?

<u>What</u>	<u>Character: unique & to be preserved in Little Saigon</u>	<u>Future: what we would like for the future</u>
Art	XXX	XXXXXXXXXX
Benches/seating		XX
Lighting	XXX	XXXXX
Paths	X	XXX
Green Open spaces	XXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
Shelters	X	XXXXX
Signage	XXXXX	
Sidewalk displays/vending	XXXXXXX	XXXX
Sidewalk cafes	XXX	XXXXXX
Culturally specific design	XXXXXXX	XXXXX
Colorfulness	XX	X
Landscape	XXX	XXXXXX
Tall buildings		XX
Short buildings	X	XXX

Source: Friends of Little Saigon, September 2011 Community Visioning event data

The tables of results above indicate that respondents in the community visioning of spatial and cultural wants for Little Saigon expressed desires to preserve the shopping and dining experiences of the neighborhood, while providing cultural programs appropriate for Little Saigon stakeholders for the

future. Also important would be family programs Little Saigon, the desire to see green spaces in Little Saigon illustrates this since the current landscape in Little Saigon has businesses sprawled out from one another and absent a park, no spaces that provide recreation or leisure for the neighborhood, community, and other stakeholders coming to Little Saigon. An attractive landscape, with culturally relevant design, and the infusion of sidewalk cafes and shopping (reminiscent of the “old life” in Vietnam) were also highly desired by community visioning participants. All of this translates into potential economic opportunities for future or current entrepreneurs, as well as expressed desires by Little Saigon stakeholders for future planning changes.

Primary Data Findings:

Analysis and synthesizing of the information previously discussed led me to continue investigation on the issue of community and neighborhood capacity through what I called supplemental information to the rich picture painted so far with the various community assessment, community visioning, urban design and planning studios, and economic development reports. Since my research question explores the role of capacity and social capital as a means of community (economic) development, I designed my supplemental questions (Appendix B) to be open enough for interviewees to use their own words, to form their own meanings.

Questions were formatted for an “open conversation” feel, they were intended to give interviewees the opportunity to conceptualize assets, places, and resources that are often required of community economic development as well as identity-making for a stakeholder group of Little Saigon, the Vietnamese population. While there was rich existing data as detailed and discussed above, it seemed that simple questions had yet to be asked. I wanted to learn about perceptions of capacity, assets, challenges for Little Saigon stakeholders – for the actual neighborhood itself and broader in its context as a socio-cultural hub for the Vietnamese population in the Seattle-area. My data collection revealed some interesting narratives and common themes (Appendix D) from Little Saigon stakeholders.

I discuss the data and the findings through discussing recurrent themes from the interviews and through sharing part of the narratives from interviewees in their own words.

History & Culture

The role of history in Little Saigon spans multiple ethnic groups and generations, multiple decades, and nationalities. More than one interviewee discussed the role of personal and shared histories as a serious point of consideration for the Little Saigon neighborhood, for anyone who was intending to do any sort of work – social, economic, or otherwise – in the area.

The area now known as Little Saigon has always been an “ethnic enclave,” previously been considered Japantown, and to some “Indian Country” as Native American and Japanese-American communities have called this neighborhood home long before the arrival of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970’s and continue to have health services and a community/cultural center within the geographic bounds of Little Saigon. Though Vietnamese entrepreneurs were a primary driving force in recent decades to the development from mostly vacant lots to its current state as a modest-to-vibrant business district, the lack of awareness of history seemed to suggest an insensitivity by the newest-comers or “a fact of life” by non-Vietnamese ethnicities who still call the neighborhood home.⁶¹

Yet, my data suggests there is an understanding of the shared social fabric that the Vietnamese-American population is becoming a part of. One interviewee, Mr. K., expressed that:

“it is important to the Vietnamese people, important to everyone to preserve the history and experience of the Vietnamese people like how we are preserving the history and experience of the Nisei Vets...it’s part of the American experience whether your story started in Japan, Korea, or China.”⁶²

Ms. V, speaks of why she became involved with FLS, that:

“In Houston, there was a Little Saigon like there was here. It was on land that no one wanted but when the land suddenly became valuable, the Vietnamese community

⁶¹ Ms. T., Interview: April 25, 2012

⁶² Mr. K., Interview: April 25, 2012

became displaced there. Earlier years the Vietnamese community had lobbied for street names to have Vietnamese names, but now there aren't even any Vietnamese owned businesses on those streets. It's a story I've heard and I think that's why I've become involved, I'm hoping for a different ending here in Seattle."⁶³

Yet history doesn't always mean a shared culture or interest. Another interviewee, Ms. P., recognizes the role that history directly plays in how there's a "history of Asian cultures and groups not trusting each other."⁶⁴ Another interviewee, Ms. N., about how history has impacted the community in a number of ways, from the Vietnamese Vietnam Vets club that often challenges even the most well-intentioned community development efforts because ideas did not originate with them, which often translates to impeding progress when someone female or of the younger generation seeks to move forward with an idea or action to benefit the Vietnamese community and help shape its collective identity. This stems from traditional Vietnamese culture, where fathers and males of older generations are looked to as cultural and community leaders and decision-makers.⁶⁵

Culture as place was also a common topic of discussion. On one level, interviewees discussed what the idea of a cultural home – a place to gather, shop, worship, receive community and/or social services, form or strengthen social ties, etc. -- within their respective ethnic communities. Indian Country, Japantown, Chinatown, Little Saigon – each of these names has been used for the 12th & Jackson area, as each of these ethnic groups have seen it as "home," a way to stay connected to their heritage even if they live in places outside of the neighborhood.

Another way that culture emerged as a theme from my interviews was more Vietnamese specific. Interviewees discussed the role of traditional Vietnamese culture and its

⁶³ Ms. V., Interview: April 20, 2012

⁶⁴ Ms. P., Interview: April 19, 2012

⁶⁵ Ms. N., Interview: April 23, 2012

challenges of finding a space within the mainstream U.S. culture to remain Vietnamese. While embracing their (new) homes in America, it is also important that the Vietnamese population gets involved to preserve the Vietnamese experience and not have it get lost the generation born and raised here integrate into the broader social fabric. As Ms. P. puts it, “a lot of the community members said they didn’t want to re-create Vietnam but look to the future and that they are also Americans now. So there’s a lot of tension in the community between acknowledging history and the future.”⁶⁶

Capacity& Civic Engagement

The role of capacity has been an important line of inquiry in this research. Nearly all interviewees touched upon the issue of capacity when discussing development, for Little Saigon as a neighborhood and community, as well as for the Vietnamese-Americans towards a collective identity as a community in the Seattle-metro area. Unlike the discussion on history and culture, the conversation on capacity from my interviews all described a lack of capacity within the Little Saigon neighborhood and Vietnamese-American population to address concerns and challenges as a community. This lack of capacity was also discussed as a lack of civic engagement. With Ms. P describing neighborhood challenges to development as “getting them involved in the community, for a lot of business owners it’s just work and home, nothing else.”

Mr. N., a business owner in the neighborhood acknowledges that:

“And there’s something in our background, we grew up during the war – our parents ingrained in us to be aware, to not take everything as is, there’s always this lingering question about intent of others. And that hurts our ability to connect and work with each other. This is something we need to work on.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ms. P., Interview: April 18, 2012

⁶⁷ Mr. N., Interview: April 15, 2012

Despite Mr. N.'s commitment to be an involved LSBD stakeholder and community member, the issue of capacity stems from an experience before one as refugees and/or immigrants establishing new roots in a new country.

Civic engagement, tied to capacity, is another emerging theme from the interviews. Addressing the role of resources, motivation, and knowledge from diverse sources is part of the complex task of building capacity. Community development for Little Saigon, as a neighborhood presents a unique set of challenges because of the role of history and culture. Mr. H., working as a community organizer and developer with a non-profit says:

“I think a lack of civic and community engagement by the community at-large on many levels is a challenge. It doesn't have to be intensive or active, but something small like voicing opinions or attending community meetings. At large, just lacking social and cultural institutions and bonds between community members, there's a lot of in-group fighting and divisions in the community... I think understanding the history of community building in Little Saigon and different groups or factions that exist will help anyone. Sooner or later, you'll run into these issues of different key players (whether they've been active in the past or present) is important with any community work in Little Saigon.”⁶⁸

The role of history and culture are present here, Mr. H. touches upon the role of social capital via challenges of productive social bonds to move forward in community development.

Identity & Challenges

The role of identity has been a lingering question in this research, while discussion on the notion of identity will be discussed later, data gathered from interviewees indicate that this is a latent question in the minds of many as Little Saigon and the Vietnamese-American community have intertwined yet separate identities.

The lack of unity, first discussed in VFA findings, re-surfaces in my data. As detailed above, the lack of unity presents itself as a challenge in moving forward with community visioning for the Vietnamese population, it is also present in business owners coming together in

⁶⁸ Mr. H., Interview: April 4, 2012

Little Saigon to be engaged in their neighborhood where they do business. The lack of unity within the Vietnamese-American population and Little Saigon neighborhood becomes a significant challenge to community development work. On the lack of unity and buy-in from the community-at-large, Ms. D. says:

“Talking to other people, it’s hard to get a group of people to agree and decide, but it seems there especially needs to be trust-building – have folks involved and bought in enough, so they don’t feel so upset about the things that they want to derail an effort. It’s just seems like sometimes, a few people who might be motivated by ego or power, to derail honest, well-meaning efforts.”⁶⁹

Another narrative on the lack of unity or urgency as Mr. T. describes it:

“...there are many facets but it basically culminates to ownership. A sense of ownership, both the sense and issue of ownership: ownership of place, ownership of real estate, ownership of a sense of shared responsibility to the community here, to the experience here in America, to the new generation that is growing up in America. Predominately up until this time, many families tend to view that –besides their own residency home – their cultural home is still in Vietnam. There’s not a sense of urgency in the parts of many families and individuals that something else has to be done to change that dynamic of ownership.”⁷⁰

Without that collective identity – Little Saigon as a neighborhood or community in itself and the Vietnamese-American community within that space – and enough buy-in from stakeholders is a consistently discussed challenge in my data.

Another challenge in my data was the lack of resources and institutional or culturally appropriate support for community development efforts. In my interviews, the lack of institutional or culturally relevant support was usually discussed as assistance or resources from local government agencies or departments, federal and state level government, non-profits, faith-based or service organizations and other community-bases of support. Mr. T., again, describes:

“there’s no institutional support, it needs a certain threshold for the support and resource to exist so it comes back to the issue of access and proportionality. And I say

⁶⁹ Ms. D., Interview: April 12, 2012

⁷⁰ Mr. T., Interview: April 19, 2012

that whole institutional allocation of resources, not just from mainstream society – that responsibility is also lacking internally within the Vietnamese community itself. Whether it's faith-based or community-based have failed to address in its existence since the beginning of this experience.”⁷¹

Or it can be something a bit simpler than institutional support, as Ms. P put it:

“We need a lot of resources. For the community: we need a lot of – because right now, customers are not coming in because of safety issue -- more officers. I’m walking around with community officers to introduce them to business owners. It’s not safe once it’s dark. We don’t have any garbage cans. It stops at the end of First Hill, and it stops on the east side of the overpass. That makes our streets dirtier, too.”⁷²

The challenges of working with Little Saigon and the Vietnamese-American population are multi-faceted and complex. Interviewees shared considerations in challenges of establishing a collective identity for a population scattered across a metro area as well as within a business district with dis-engaged owners. Other challenges detailed disconnected resources and efforts within community development or an absence of support for very basic things to keep streets clean.

Discussion:

Building this case study to explore the role of capacity and social capital in Little Saigon, and by extension the Vietnamese-American community in the Seattle area, has been a process that gathered rich details and explored issues that seemed to be just under the surface. For the last year, as a researcher, I have gained insights, narratives, technical information in terms of spatial development, socio-cultural development, and economic development. Looking at all the data I have collected, there were definite trends in gaps of the current development, in the whole sense of the word, of Little Saigon as a neighborhood that has more cultural meaning beyond its established identity as a mostly Vietnamese-owned business district.

The first identifiable gap in the “big picture” of Little Saigon is the challenge of a place-bound community identity. Little Saigon is a business district of business owners, mostly self-identified as

⁷¹ Mr. T., Interview: April 19, 2012

⁷² Ms. P., Interview: April 18, 2012

Vietnamese. When discussing the development of Little Saigon as a community, does the identity lie with the business owners who are physically in the neighborhood, exclusively? Or does it extend beyond business ownership to include the markets it serves? Is community identity here, a place-bound concept that requires a physical, day-in, day-out presence to have a stake in neighborhood developments?

Yet there is the other challenge of a conceptualized socio-cultural community identity. Little Saigon (alias Japantown or Indian Country) is often looked to as part of a social and cultural identity of the ethnic populations that see it as “home,” despite living elsewhere. People come to shop, come to worship, come for cultural gatherings. If Little Saigon is seen as part of a socio-cultural identity, my data suggests that engagement in the neighborhood is an awareness issue that must extend to *all* stakeholders, regardless of where they reside if this is an area that should be preserved as a cultural homebase for populations in the Seattle-metro area in light of the infrastructure projects in and around Little Saigon that will change its very landscape.

That brings up the next gap, the challenge of multiple agendas within Little Saigon itself. The number of current projects underway from the Yesler Terrace Re-Development (Seattle Housing Authority), up-zoning of Little Saigon (Department of Planning and Neighborhoods), First Hill Streetcar (Seattle Department of Transportation), Little Saigon Park (Department of Parks), and economic development interest by community groups as well as the OED would make it challenging for any neighborhood to balance the agendas, interests of development while retaining its distinct character and voice. The “alphabet soup” of agencies (SHA, DPD, SDOT, DOP, and OED) with separate agendas, and an established lack of capacity, leadership, and vision of Little Saigon stakeholders make this gap in community development incredibly challenging as it seems there is an extraordinary amount of change to be aware of and respond to, especially when considering the current Vietnamese-American and Little Saigon community and neighborhood health, and level of capacity already discussed in this research.

In light of all the changes going on in Little Saigon that impact its stakeholders, broadly, is another gap of civic literacy and capacity across culture. As some the data highlighted, knowledge of history and culture are important steps to working with the Little Saigon neighborhood as well as the Vietnamese-American community for any sort of development. However, the translation of civic literacy between cultures loses meaning and in some cases, intention. As with the experiences of Ms. N., despite being dedicated to social justice causes, she was met with resistance when she attempted to do work within the community. Not only was her gender an issue, but also the fact that she did not have status as an “elder” within the Vietnamese community. Yet in mainstream American culture, it is common to see young people, of both genders, rise to leadership roles and mobilize communities for positive social change.

In the case of inspired community development, regardless of age or gender, within the Vietnamese-American community there are challenges for it to be well-received with traditional Vietnamese culture. With the established challenges of leadership, a lack of unity, and capacity – this becomes a matter of how will and how the community and neighborhood can evolve its civic identity to respond in a timely fashion. Vietnamese-Americans who wish to preserve the neighborhood as a historical and cultural home-base as well as Little Saigon businesses who wish to continue doing business status quo have ahead of them a challenge of bringing together the community in a way that can bridge the generations and (colliding) individual histories and interests in a meaningful way to build capacity, start the path of meaningful leadership while creating a vision of the future of making Little Saigon as a permanent cultural home. This is a considerable challenge for any community or group, but as a continued challenge for the Little Saigon neighborhood and Vietnamese-American population – feelings of frustration and failure will only continue to dog the overlapping communities, despite the efforts of dedicated and motivated individuals to neighborhood and community development efforts. It

is here that an opportunity for bonding social capital, to create a cohesive vision or idea of what the Seattle-area Vietnamese-American community identity will look like and what their issues will be exists.

Addressing this gap in education, civic engagement, and leadership is a recommendation for the future. It cannot be stressed enough that any and every bit of these efforts in working with the Vietnamese-American population and Little Saigon neighborhood must be done so in the most culturally-appropriate way that understands the history of the Vietnamese people in Seattle. Working to find a way to link the Vietnamese-American population to other potential community allies, is an example of how bridging social capital can be built. This is universally true for anyone or group interested in working with immigrant and/or refugee communities. Working with immigrant and refugee communities are often community development efforts, and collaboration, partnerships, and building capacity, as the literature indicates, is vital for success. This research showed that, while there was not a lack of individuals making efforts, efforts were certainly disconnected and contributed to the lack of unity discussed by my interviewees.

Moving forward to address the gaps detailed in this discussion are a few additional points for future consideration and recommendations. In some ways, this research with its community partners was a study was designed to weave together previous research, most notably the 2007 Dearborn Study (Appendix C) which included culturally appropriate policy recommendations to address Little Saigon's economic and neighborhood development efforts with current community and neighborhood health conditions. Based on my own research, I would recommend two of the strategies specific to Little Saigon from that study.

Strategy one: Inter-agency Initiative, this recommendation is something as simple and straightforward as bringing the various City departments working in the Little Saigon neighborhood to come together and coordinate their policies and work.⁷³ This would directly address the multiple agenda

⁷³ (Trang Tu Consulting; Strategic Economics, 2007)

issue currently manifesting in the neighborhood, as well as give the City government an opportunity to both work with the community and perhaps even give the newly formed (February 2012) Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs a pilot project as it begins its work with refugee and immigrant populations in Seattle.

Strategy two: Targeted Outreach & Vision Building, a tandem effort with strategy one – this strategy is already underway within various community groups as they seek to build establish a broader identity for Little Saigon neighborhood of the Vietnamese-American community in Seattle.⁷⁴ If OED has resources to contribute to outreach and visioning for the neighborhood, there are efforts already underway therefore opportunities for partnerships with community groups. In doing so, it would fulfill strategy two of increasing cultural competency, bridging generations, building capacity, and mobilizing assets and resources while strengthening social, cultural, and economic ties – outcomes of increased social capital.

Finally, I close the discussion of my data with a simple question. Would development efforts in Little Saigon, and for the Vietnamese-American community, be better supported by working with others in the community? Sometimes, it can be just as simple as “being a good neighbor” when other ethnic groups in Little Saigon express a shared identity, a common experience as they, too, integrated into the social fabric of the American experience in Seattle. Other ethnic groups have expressed empathy towards the transitional immigrant experience in the Vietnamese community as reflective of their own histories, but without talking and listening to your neighbors, how would you ever know?

⁷⁴ (Trang Tu Consulting; Strategic Economics, 2007)

Section 5: Conclusion

Community changes. As certain as populations will shift, neighborhoods go through booms and busts. Here is a story of a neighborhood that started in a mostly empty area and is now approaching a series of developments that will make it bustling with all sorts of activities that makes a city thrive. Yet, as a neighborhood considered a cultural home for the still maturing Vietnamese community, there are considerable challenges to balance the neighborhood's (most recently) Vietnamese character as Little Saigon and the significant infrastructural revitalization and development efforts of the area.

In exploring the roles of social capital and capacity within an ethnic neighborhood and community, this research found strengths in Little Saigon's commitment to cultural preservation, maintaining community ties, continued community development efforts despite challenges of civic engagement and literacy, meaningful leadership, balancing multiple agendas, and establishing a broader community and neighborhood identity. In its discussion of capacity and social capital, this research uncovered an underlying idea for the future of the Little Saigon neighborhood, its stakeholders, and the community it serves.

Though the Little Saigon neighborhood and the Vietnamese-American community are both faced with the arduous task of establishing *what* that vision for the future is, the dedication of individuals to community and capacity building efforts is clear as social ties and relationships are being forged to connect resources, places, and people to create meaning and identity for each respective community – both spatially and socially. Successful operationalization of the above steps can lead to positive outcomes in building community resiliency to respond to environmental changes which are on the horizon for Little Saigon.

If current and future Little Saigon revitalization strategies and initiatives are successful in strengthening the neighborhood's economic and cultural character, then Little Saigon will become more resilient despite development externalities sure to come from current urban planning projects

underway. The in-progress work to introduce green spaces in the community is part of a years-long conversation within Little Saigon that comes out of a community desire for spaces for recreation, leisure and more. This is a success for a neighborhood that has experienced considerable challenges as it seeks to develop itself, establish capacity and leadership while serving as a cultural home-base for over fifty-five thousand self-identified Vietnamese persons living in the Seattle-area.

The infrastructure projects progress present a unique opportunity to Little Saigon stakeholders. While a potential challenge, it is also an opportunity to organize, to establish and strengthen social ties within the Vietnamese-American community, as well as with other ethnic and non-ethnic groups that would build social capital and capacity. This also presents the opportunity to increase education and awareness of non-Vietnamese issues that still impact the Vietnamese-American experience in some way in the Seattle-area. Here, again, is more opportunity for meaningful leadership to take form as well as for the community to increase its civic engagement.

As a researcher, I found my experience to be nebulous yet rewarding. The complexity of how and where to determine “community” as a focal point of my research consumed a great deal of attention and thought. Coming from a practitioner background in community development, most gaps in community development are usually easy to identify but there were most certainly aspects of this research that could only be understood by “taking the longer view” and through immersion into the community to understand nuances. This is especially important when working in a community and neighborhood (of color) with language and cultural barriers. Blending academic methodology and community involvement was an effective way to navigate this research. The multi-faceted approach to this research was an asset to this research project in understanding and appreciating the full complexities of the neighborhood and community. Had there been more time to collect more data

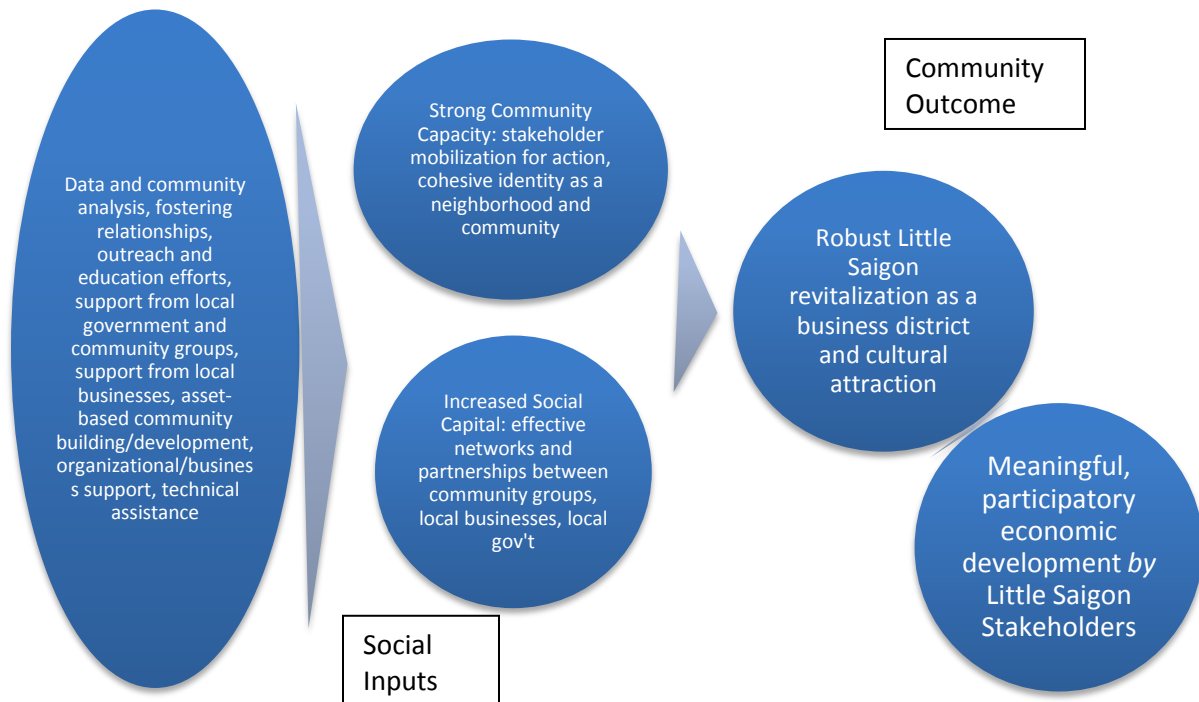
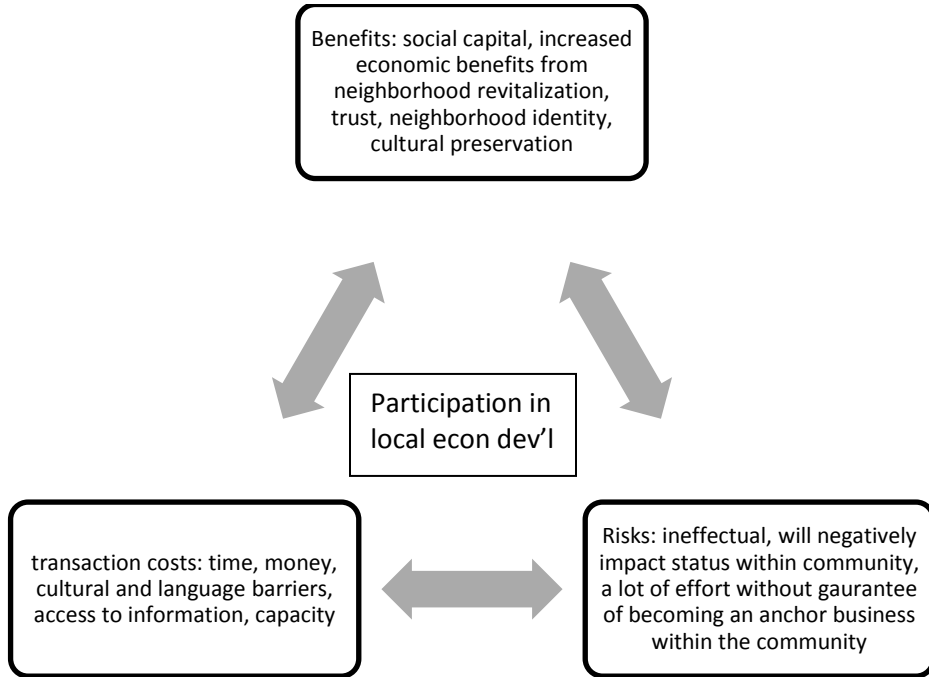
through interviews, gaining the perspectives of others in the community would have added to the richness of this research.

For future academic study, it would be useful to examine immigration and spatial assimilation theories as much of the literature there studies how immigration patterns and assimilation into space ultimately plays a role in how immigrant communities develop in their new locales. This would help future community developers or researchers understand *hows* and *whys* of identity formation to better frame community-based planning in Little Saigon or other ethnic communities. For practitioners interested in the leadership challenges within Little Saigon and the Vietnamese community, leadership theory looking at the concept of technical or adaptive problems for leadership would be appropriate to the context of Little Saigon and the broader Vietnamese-American community. Understanding how to approach social problems as a technical or adaptive problem, gives those with concerns on leadership in the respective communities a few strategies to begin work to address internal issues discussed in Section Four. Scholar Ronald Heifetz and his theories on leadership would offer great insight to leadership challenges within Little Saigon or the Vietnamese-American community. The lens of looking at community challenges and problems as a technical issue or an adaptive one would give practitioners a grounded framework to diagnose and move forward in addressing issues.

Finally, in considering the implications of this study, it raises questions that have no easy answer. In considering community (economic) development -- particularly in a centralized neighborhood of immigrant and refugee businesses that also serves as a cultural home-base for its broader community -- when faced with extraordinary environmental challenges with the potential of displacement after 30 years of being "home," who has the responsibility in shaping response efforts and outcomes? Where would resources come from? What happens when that community itself has capacity, trust, and identity issues stemming from its own history and culture? While City of Seattle

departments have shown an interest in the (continued development) of Little Saigon, are they the right actors? Considering the span of the Vietnamese-American population in the Seattle-area, do other regional or community actors need to get involved and who are they? In asking the question of capacity and social capital in community development, it seems that other questions and implications follow for community development to be successful and sustainable.

Appendix A: Relationship and Outcome Models



Appendix B: Interview Questions

Supplemental Little Saigon Community Needs Assessment Survey

1. What would you call this neighborhood?
 - a. The City calls this area Little Saigon, do you agree with this name? Why or why not?
2. Can you tell me about your tie to Little Saigon and/or the Vietnamese-American community.
 - a. Are you working for an organization, business, community group? Formal or informal?
3. Would you categorize your tie to Little Saigon and/or the Vietnamese-American community as research-based, community-based or economic/business-based?
 - a. For whom is your work targeted for? Example: community empowerment, City of Seattle department, economic livelihood
4. What cultural and/or community benefits does Little Saigon provide for you?
 - a. For the community?
 - b. What are the community assets (buildings, centers, businesses, organizations) in Little Saigon?
5. What missing elements and challenges do you see in the Vietnamese-American community/Little Saigon from your work?
6. What support and resources do you think is required to facilitate community and/or neighborhood development?
7. Are you familiar with previous community planning for Little Saigon? (If no, explain previous community visioning/planning in LS – If yes: ask them
 - a. if they were a participant and/or
 - b. if they have seen any gains in the neighborhood as a result
8. What things do you know now that you wish you knew before starting out in your work in Little Saigon? What advice would you give to people interested in working in Little Saigon, as a business owner or community organizer?
9. How willing are you to be a part of a neighborhood or community effort for revitalization, building and strengthening?
 - a. Can you put that into a number of hours or dollars you'd be willing to contribute?
 - b. How much do you think other members in the community would be willing to do?
10. Is it important for the Little Saigon/Vietnamese-American community to work together to preserve and strengthen the Little Saigon neighborhood as a permanent cultural center for Vietnamese in the Seattle area?
 - a. How do you think this will be best done?

Appendix C: List and Summary of Reports used as Secondary Data

Report:	Author(s):	When the study was conducted or report published:	Intent of study Issue Areas Description:	Key Findings:	Next Steps/Status:
Community Action and Research & Empowerment (CARE) Phase I	Vietnamese Friendship Association (VFA): Youth Action Team (YAT)	Study: November 2009- October 2010 Report: February 2011	Vietnamese-American Community Health Assessment; explored areas of community weaknesses & strengths, detailed specific challenge areas for the community at-large	-Vietnamese-Americans care about their future in Seattle, but to date, a cohesive approach to solicit community input has yet to happen. -Community unity and cultural preservation is important despite significant leadership challenges. -The Vietnamese community would like to see a cultural center established. -A significant generational gap also exists within the community.	Use findings to implement CARE Phases II & III -CARE Phase II will build off findings of PHASE I to create a community action plan, utilizing participatory methods with stakeholders. (Currently in progress)
Little Saigon Visioning	Friends of Little Saigon (FLS)	Study: September 2011	Community visioning event, held in conjunction with the celebration of a Vietnamese holiday. Using a "dot" method, participants weighed in for current and future uses of space for Little Saigon.	For programmatic wants: family programs, shopping, cultural programs, socializing, community events Urban design: art, sidewalk cafes, greenspaces, improved landscape	N/A

Livable South Downtown	City of Seattle Dept. of Planning & Development (DPD)	Published: December 2009	Land-use study to best develop recommendations for increasing density in the area designated as “south downtown.” The study wishes to identify areas best for increased housing and economic activity while preserving current neighborhood characteristics in: Pioneer Square, Chinatown, Little Saigon, Japantown, and the areas around including the Rainier and Dearborn corridors, stadiums.	The study recommended a significant shift of land use in the studied neighborhoods to be re-zoned towards mixed-use broadly. Each new zone re-designation seeks to balance community, sustainability, and economic/housing development through mixed-use zoning. Other aspects for consideration as part of the vision: green spaces, building heights, transit/transportation access, cultural and neighborhood preservation.	The Livable South Downtown ordinance was passed in April 2011 by City Council; the ordinance became effective in June 2011.
Yesler Terrace Re-Development Plan	Seattle Housing Authority (SHA)	Published: May 2011	Master Plan for housing re-development at the Seattle’s oldest public housing site. New plan will shift to a mixed-income, mixed-use community. This plan details SHA’s vision for the 30 acre lot re-development.	Vision plan includes: 5,000 units of mixed-income housing, addition of First Hill Streetcar line, significant commercial, office, retail, community services space, green spaces, and community p-patches.	May 2011: adopted by Board of Commissioners August 2011: U.S. Housing and Urban Development awards SHA \$10.27m Choice Neighborhoods grant for the re-development of Yesler Terrace and its surrounding neighborhoods Fall 2013: SHA anticipated construction start

First Hill Streetcar	Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)	Approved November 2008	Part of a regional transit plan, it connects dense employment areas and neighborhoods to Sound Transit's light rail service areas, current and future.	The First Hill line connects the International District light rail station to a future light rail station currently under construction. The First Hill line will connect neighborhoods: Chinatown, Little Saigon, Yesler Terrace, First Hill and parts of Capitol Hill.	Construction broke ground in April 2012, the project is expected to conclude in early 2014.
Little Saigon Park Study	Seattle Department of Parks, UW Seattle Landscape Architecture Studio, SCIDpda	Published: Autumn 2010	Pro Parks Levy funded study for a park in Little Saigon, a neighborhood where there is currently no greenspaces. Study engaged with community for visioning and design.	History and culture were important aspects of consideration in design, as were elements of greening spaces, sidewalks, and streets.	As of 2012, Department of Parks is looking for site acquisition to move forward with establishing Little Saigon's first park.
Community Open Space Initiative	Department of Landscape Architecture, UW Seattle	Fall 2005	Examining issues of community building through open space exploration and urban form.	Stakeholders want to improve the business district, but lack the know-how. Lack of infrastructure and institutional support has raised community safety concerns.	N/A

<p>Little Saigon & Chinatown/International District Impacts on Local Business from Proposed Land Use/Zone Changes and Dearborn St. Mixed-Use Shopping Center</p>	<p>Strategic Economics & Trang Tu Consulting for: Seattle Department of Planning & Development (DPD)</p>	<p>Published: May 2007</p>	<p>Multiple intents to this study: understand the economic impact of <i>Livable South Downtown</i> planning study, analysis of how zone changes will impact a community and neighborhood of color, as well as how the proposed Dearborn St. mixed-use development would impact Little Saigon and Chinatown/International District</p>	<p>The consumer-oriented business activity in the area is diverse and extensive. Little Saigon, Chinatown/ID serves as a draw for populations in the region, particularly on the weekends. The commercial mix of businesses is diverse, as are the people who run them, coming from many different nations of origin with varied levels of education, experience, and language capacities. -The report detailed case studies of “commercial gentrification” where previously undesirable areas became areas of interest by developers and how ethnic communities were able to (or not to) respond to their environmental changes.</p>	<p>The Dearborn St. development proposal was cancelled in early 2009 due to economic concerns for the private developer.</p>
<p>Seattle Comprehensive Plan</p>	<p>Seattle Department of Planning & Development</p>	<p>Published: 2005</p>	<p>Extensive living document that guides the planning elements of the built environment. Intended to improve the quality of life and environment for citizens, sustainability is a guiding principle of the Comprehensive Plan.</p>	<p>Many ways to reference the Plan, changes to the living “law” requires legislative approval. This manages human growth in a sustainable way for the City to ensure quality of life and environment, economic development, as well as transit/transportation.</p>	<p>Amending of Comprehensive Plan is generally allowed once a year, following per RCW 36.70a, the Growth Management Act of 1990.</p>

Appendix D: Interviewee Profiles & Narrative Summary

Name Date of Interview	Bio/Info:	Narrative Summary:	Key words/concepts:
Mr. H April 4, 2012	Program director with a non-profit working with the Vietnamese youth & community in Seattle.	Mr. H works in community development and sees significant leadership and capacity challenges in unifying the Vietnamese community. He sees Little Saigon as an economic hub that serves the Vietnamese community, the cultural and social aspects are lacking. Recognizing that resources are finite, Mr. H believes that the community should ultimately determine what they would like Little Saigon to be and dedicate the resources accordingly.	lack of leadership, history, community building, civic engagement and literacy, capacity, unity, community identity
Ms. D April 12, 2012	Organizing Director with a non-profit located in Little Saigon, her organization works on economic-based social justice issues.	Ms. D has worked with members from the Little Saigon neighborhood and community on previous campaigns to ensure the neighborhood voice was heard in light of the Dearborn St. proposal. She identifies organizational capacity and institutional support as significant challenges to responding to environmental changes for the neighborhood. Preserving Little Saigon as part of the diversity in the city is in everyone's interest, even if you are not Vietnamese, and she believes that is true for every neighborhood or community of color.	capacity, community, unity, organizational capacity, organizing, community building
Ms. P April 18, 2012	Little Saigon neighborhood presence and activist; volunteer with local Vietnamese church and language school.	Ms. P has been a part of previous community development efforts and campaigns that impact Little Saigon. She is motivated to preserve Little Saigon as a cultural hub for future generations but sees significant challenges from a lack of resources and engagement from the community and business owners. Leadership is a particular concern, where she believes some individuals have influence, but not the best intentions. This sets the stage for conflict the community cannot move forward from. A lack of a community space to gather is also an issue.	civic engagement, cultural preservation, community identity, lack of leadership

Mr. N April 15, 2012	Successful business owner in Little Saigon, also involved in local community affairs.	Mr. N and his family own several businesses in the Seattle area. His perspective is one in how to continue to add value to the neighborhood while also sharing Vietnamese culture with his “new” home, Seattle. He identifies a lack of space for different generations and the community to connect as a problem. While he is willing to be involved and invest resources into community development projects and efforts, value and benefits would have to be clearly identified. He believes that there is a need for a group or organization to mobilize on the gaps within the community.	organizational capacity, community identity, history, cultural preservation, unity, generational divide, civic engagement
Mr. T April 19, 2012	Community organizer, involved with previous and current projects centered within Little Saigon and the Vietnamese-American community.	Drawing on his extensive history of organizing and development work with the Vietnamese community, Mr. T had insights to share about specific challenges and gaps when it came to community development. Institutional support, civic engagement, scale and accessibility of resources, raised the notion of leadership vs. influence within the community, and community identity during his interview.	institutional support, capacity, civic engagement, unity, community identity, lack of leadership, history
Ms. V April 20, 2012	Fairly new to Seattle, worked with community-based organizations on various grassroots level projects.	Ms. V is a second-generation Vietnamese American coming from Houston, she has worked with community groups on various development projects. As a transplant to Seattle, she shared parallels in the Vietnamese experience she saw in her home community with her “new” community. A Vietnamese community center for Seattle was an expressed desire.	community identity, organizing, history, capacity, generational divide
Ms. N April 23, 2012	Executive Director at a non-profit in Little Saigon that provides social services such as literacy, after-school programs and computer classes for the Vietnamese community.	Ms. N shared insights as Executive Director at an organization considered a community asset in Little Saigon, however she also shared lessons learned from her tenure at her current position. She recognizes community organization, leadership, and historical challenges for the Vietnamese community. There are also significant cultural and generational barriers, as there is the “old way” and “new way” of doing things where efforts and outcomes lie between “American” and “Vietnamese.” Being a woman of the younger generation, she has negative experiences with other influential individuals in the community so now focuses a great deal of her energy to her organization and the work they do there. She also shared experiences of others who encountered similar barriers to well-intentioned community development efforts, because of their lack of “status” with Vietnamese community elders.	history, community identity, institutional support, lack of leadership, generational divide, civic engagement and literacy, culture

Mr. K April 25, 2012	Volunteer Officer at a local non-profit serving the Japanese-American community.	Mr. K identifies with an ethnic population that called the 12 th & Jackson area long before the Vietnamese population arrived in Seattle. He shared the history of the Japanese-American population in the area, including internment camp experiences and how it changed the neighborhood. Returning back to Seattle after a few decades away, Mr. K spoke about how the area now known as Little Saigon is still considered a historical home for the Japanese-American community. He acknowledges the value of the neighborhood as part of the American experience for the Vietnamese community, even if the Vietnamese community and business owners have not reached out to his organization or community as much as he would like to see. As neighbors in Little Saigon, there is commonality in concerns of public safety and cleaner streets. In closing, Mr. K expressed a desire to collaborate and celebrate the Asian-American/American experience of the Asian Pacific Islander community.	history, community identity, leadership, culture, neighborhood identity
Ms. T April 25, 2012	Deputy Director of non-profit that works with the Asian Pacific Islander community, long history of involvement in Chinatown/International District and local Native American affairs.	With an extensive community-based work background, Ms. T also had a longer view of development in the Chinatown/International district area as someone who has worked there for over 30 years. Ms. T spoke of a “disconnect” of the newest comers – the Vietnamese population – to the area she has always seen as “Indian Country” since the Seattle Indian Health Board is close to 12 th & Jackson. The Vietnamese community wants acknowledgement of their history, while they do not recognize the history of others in the area. Ms. T, however, recognizes the importance of having a “historic homebase” and sees the value in preserving Little Saigon as that for the Vietnamese population in the Seattle area. She supports efforts to establish cultural anchors like a community center in the neighborhood.	community identity, history, civic engagement, unity, neighborhood identity,
Ms. Z May 10, 2012	Employed at a local government agency with an infrastructure project in progress around Little Saigon.	Community buy-in and engagement were topics Ms. Z came back to often, her organization supports Little Saigon efforts in community and capacity building to respond to environmental changes.	capacity, organizing, community
Ms. J April 30, 2012	Community organizer and journalist, has ties to local Vietnamese language publications.	Ms. J, as a journalist with newspaper ties beyond her professional work, cites that communication is a challenge in the community. Data should be gathered where the community is, not just counting on the individuals who show up to meetings.	community identity, lack of leadership, civic engagement

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