

Cultural Preservation Through Community-led
Development in Seattle:
Community Engagement for Little Saigon's
Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center

Elena Arakaki

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Urban Planning

University of Washington
2024

Committee:
Dylan Stevenson
Stephanie Farquhar

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
Department of Urban Design and Planning

©Copyright 2024
Elena Arakaki

University of Washington

Abstract

Cultural Preservation Through Community-led Development in Seattle:
Community Engagement for Little Saigon’s Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center

Elena Arakaki

Co-Chairs of the Supervisory Committee:

Dylan Stevenson

Department of Urban Design and Planning

Stephanie Farquhar

Department of Health Systems and Population Health

In September 2023, Friends of Little Saigon (FLS) purchased land in Seattle for a new mixed-use development called the Landmark Project, which will accommodate 71 units of affordable housing above a Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center (VCEC). Mixed-use cultural centers are important “third places” to strengthen a sense of place attachment, social cohesion, and community participation — all of which are social determinants of health. This capstone project engaged community members to inform programming, physical space designs, and aesthetics of the VCEC through four methods: (1) an online survey, (2) interviews with small business owners, (3) an interactive feedback board, and (4) a World Café-style community meeting. Across all methods, community members expressed interest in food-related events, pop-up markets, art gatherings, cultural celebrations, classes, and intergenerational activities. In terms of ambience, community members were clear about their desire for a balance between traditional and modern elements to appeal to the Vietnamese diaspora. These findings will guide the development of the VCEC to ensure that programming and physical design align with community needs.



CULTURAL PRESERVATION THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT IN SEATTLE

Community Engagement for Little Saigon's Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center

Elena Arakaki

Master of Public Health and Master of Urban Planning

University of Washington

2024

SITE

Friends of Little Saigon

SITE SUPERVISOR

Quynh Pham

Executive Director, Friends of Little Saigon

PUBLIC HEALTH FACULTY ADVISOR

Dr. Stephanie Farquhar

Director, Community-Oriented Public
Health Practice (COPHP)

URBAN PLANNING FACULTY ADVISOR

Dr. Dylan Stevenson

Assistant Professor, Department of Urban
Design & Planning

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who supported me through this capstone project. First, I want to acknowledge my site supervisor, Quynh Pham, who guided and trusted me through this process. I would also like to thank Valerie Tran, who has mentored me for the past 2.5 years and connected me to Quynh and Friends of Little Saigon. Through both of them, I have learned about the operations of community-based nonprofit work, which was one of my personal goals. Additionally, I am grateful to the staff at FLS for helping me with outreach, translation, materials development, marketing, World Café support, and more. I have felt like part of the team at FLS, and the staff played a big role in creating a welcoming environment.

I also want to express my immense thanks to my two academic advisors, Stephanie Farquhar (Public Health) and Dylan Stevenson (Urban Planning). Each one gave me invaluable feedback and advice over the past year, and I couldn't have asked for a better team. I feel lucky to have their interdisciplinary perspectives for this project that crosses between urban planning and public health.

None of this would have been possible without the people who participated in my engagement work: the case study contacts and informational interview participants, Little Saigon business owners, and community members who shared their time and thoughts with me. I am also grateful to the friends and neighbors who lent me tablecloths and room dividers to improve the ambience at the community meeting.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, who provided a grant that funded this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	2
LIST OF FIGURES.....	4
LIST OF TABLES	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION.....	7
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE.....	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
METHODS.....	22
FINDINGS	31
DISCUSSION.....	47
LIMITATIONS.....	49
RECOMMENDATIONS	50
CONCLUSION	51
REFERENCES	52
APPENDICES.....	59

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Sense of Belonging in Third Level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Figure 2. Social Cohesion as a Mediator Between Place Attachment and Health

Figure 3. Intersecting Aspects of Community Life

Figure 4. Stakeholder Mapping

Figure 5. Map of Survey Flyer Locations

Figure 6. Map of Survey Participant ZIP Codes

Figure 7. Word Cloud: What Do You Want to Feel When You’re at the VCEC?

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Case Study and Informational Interview Contacts

Table 2. Survey Respondent Demographics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

In September 2023, Friends of Little Saigon (FLS) purchased land for a new mixed-use development called the Landmark Project, which will accommodate 71 units of affordable housing above a Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center (VCEC). Little Saigon has experienced rapid gentrification, exacerbated by the pandemic, and the VCEC will be a neighborhood anchor to combat displacement by supporting small businesses and celebrating Vietnamese culture. Mixed-use cultural centers are important “third places” to strengthen a sense of place attachment, social cohesion, and community participation — all of which are social determinants of health.

Purpose of this Capstone

This capstone project aims to engage community members in two guiding questions, which will inform programming, architectural designs, and aesthetics:

1. What types of **activities, events, and other programming** would bring community members to the VCEC?
2. What do community members want the VCEC to **feel like**?

Methods

Four methods were used to answer the guiding questions: (1) an online survey, (2) interviews with small business owners, (3) an interactive feedback board, and (4) a World Café-style community meeting. These methods attempted to reach Little Saigon residents, the regional Vietnamese community (including youth, elders, and families), and small business owners.

Findings

Across all methods, community members expressed interest in food-related events, pop-up markets, art gatherings, cultural celebrations, classes, and intergenerational activities. Many programming ideas that emerged during engagement are activities that FLS already hosts at the Little Saigon Creative. This finding demonstrates that FLS is on the right track with programming and the VCEC provides an opportunity to scale it up. In terms of ambience, community members were clear about their desire for a balance between traditional and modern elements to appeal to the Vietnamese diaspora. Respondents frequently used the words “welcomed,” “safe,” “at home,” “connected,” “community,” and “proud” when asked how they wanted to feel at the VCEC. These words represent feelings that the architects should center in the design process.

Recommendations

Some recommendations that emerged from this project include:

Short-term (rest of 2024)

- Conduct more engagement with youth, families, and elders to capture perspectives that were missed in this round of engagement.
- Conduct outreach to pockets of Vietnamese community members outside of Seattle.
- Include storytelling circles or other conversation-based engagement methods to get more personalized and nuanced feedback.

Medium-term (2025-2027)

- Use the feedback to design a welcoming, safe, and community-oriented environment that appeals to the Vietnamese diaspora and engages the senses.
- Collaborate with artists and partners who have held events/workshops at the Little Saigon Creative to explore opportunities to scale up their programming at the VCEC.
- Design for accessibility (anti-slip floors, level surfaces, clear multilingual signage, etc.).

Long-term (2027-ongoing)

- Host a food-focused grand opening with street vendors, live music, and local art to get people excited about the opportunities at the VCEC.
- Invite elders to lead programming, not just participate in it (cooking, art forms, “living history” lessons, etc.).
- Consider ways to share space with other Southeast Asian communities through food, art, social gatherings, cultural celebrations, and allyship.

"I am interested in having a third space in Little Saigon I can find great food but also learn about the cultural and historical context that outlines this neighborhood.

I also believe that events are a fantastic gathering place and brings a sense of belonging and invigoration."

– Small Business Owner

INTRODUCTION

Plans for the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center (VCEC) have been many years in the making. In 2012, Friends of Little Saigon (FLS) and community partners developed the Little Saigon 2020 Action Plan, which identified the need for a cultural center based on community visioning sessions (Nguyen, 2012). Over the past decade, FLS has worked tirelessly to learn about community ideas for a social, cultural, and economic anchor for Little Saigon. After a long search for the right site, FLS purchased land for the new mixed-use development in September 2023, which will accommodate 71 units of affordable housing with a cultural center on the ground floor (Chew, 2023). The Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) will manage the affordable housing, while FLS will oversee the VCEC.

The future cultural center will have wide-reaching impacts on the community, including health and social benefits that community members have been missing in their lives. Social isolation has increased across the country in the last 20 years and has been exacerbated by the pandemic (Kannan & Veazie, 2023). With busy work schedules, long commutes, competing demands, and the increasing ability to connect online, social networks and support systems have deteriorated. Gentrification has been a driver of social isolation in some places, contributing to community fragmentation. This is the case in Little Saigon, where a lack of affordable housing options for intergenerational families has pushed many Vietnamese people out to start new lives elsewhere. Because the Vietnamese community is now dispersed, many live far away from culturally relevant services and social hubs.

Living in a neighborhood with a history of disinvestment due to institutional racism, Chinatown-International District (CID) residents and workers experience more health burdens than those in other Seattle neighborhoods. Discriminatory policies like redlining and racially restrictive covenants have had long-lasting effects on neighborhood health, as have infrastructural disruptions like I-5 razing through the CID (Krombach et al., 2024). Community members have experienced chronic stress, social isolation, and sedentary lifestyles because of neighborhood disinvestment, contributing to a 7-year shorter life expectancy than people in the most affluent areas of the city (Tran, 2016). With high access to opportunity and high risk of displacement in the CID, development must be accompanied by investment and support, especially for low-income residents and businesses who are at greater risk of being pushed out.

Gentrification and cultural displacement have documented health impacts, such as increased stress, depression, obesity, cardiovascular disease, mortality, and food insecurity (G. S. Smith & Thorpe, 2020). Residents who get displaced might end up paying more for housing in a new

community that feels unfamiliar and disconnected from their social networks. Additionally, they may spend more time commuting, leaving less time to spend with family.

These harmful effects of gentrification can be partially explained by the importance of community cohesion. As social beings, humans rely on community networks for support, and being forcibly uprooted from one's community removes all established social support. Social cohesion (defined as strong community relationships and trust) and social capital (defined as access to knowledge, resources, and connections through social networks) are determinants of health that have positive associations with cardiovascular health, physical activity, mental health, and life expectancy (McNeill et al., 2006; Pérez et al., 2020; R. J. Smith et al., 2022). People with strong social relationships are more likely to live longer than those who experience more social isolation (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Social relationships are a protective factor for health but one that isn't widely discussed by healthcare or public health professionals.

The Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center will build on the benefits of community cohesion and provide a space where community members can gather, eat, and celebrate together. Through community-informed design and programming, the center will bring life back into Little Saigon and create a neighborhood hub where people will want to spend time. Additionally, the affordable housing units above will provide housing security for over 70 families and allow Vietnamese community members to stay connected to the neighborhood.

The Landmark Project serves as a model to follow for understanding and investing in community needs. Community engagement is a key component of this project and has been shown to enhance sense of ownership of a place and help resist displacement (Mullenbach et al., 2019). Supporting community ideas and visions for the VCEC will improve its long-term success, encourage social cohesion, and increase opportunity while preventing displacement.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Friends of Little Saigon

Executive Director: Quynh Pham

Friends of Little Saigon (FLS) is a community-based nonprofit that began in 2011 with a mission to preserve and enhance Little Saigon’s cultural, economic, and historic vitality. FLS envisions Little Saigon as the hub for the Vietnamese American community where all families and businesses thrive. FLS maintains strong relationships with community groups, government agencies, and economic development entities. As it grows its staff and board capacity, FLS will continue to invest in these relationships to increase awareness, educate, and bring resources into Little Saigon.

FLS is funded through a combination of government grants and private donations with an annual operating budget of \$1.2 million. There are currently 6 full-time staff members and 2 part-time staff members with backgrounds in public policy and administration, urban planning, public health, environmental studies, marketing, communications, art and arts administration, community outreach and engagement, bilingual engagement, and fundraising. The governing board, made up of 9 community members representing small businesses, community perspectives, and community/economic development expertise, guides the organization’s direction.

In 2016, FLS became one of five “demonstration project” grantees for the City of Seattle’s first round of Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) funding. This funding helped them hire consultants and launch the process of finding a site. FLS has continued to receive EDI funding for the Landmark Project over the following years.

In 2020, FLS opened the Little Saigon Creative, a community gathering space dedicated to Vietnamese culture including an art gallery, local artist vending space, meeting space, community library, and a café. The Little Saigon Creative is proof that local community-centered spaces can bring people together as neighborhood anchors. The vision for the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center was based on the success of the Creative space.

The Landmark Committee is one of FLS’s board committees with a purpose of ensuring that the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center meets the vision, goals, and anticipated needs of the Little Saigon community. The Landmark Committee is made up of board members, community members, and local business owners. They are highly involved in this project and helped guide community engagement strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review frames the VCEC’s impact through the lenses of place attachment, social cohesion, health, and community participation. The first section discusses the concept of place attachment and the role of social cohesion in reinforcing positive health outcomes, tying in examples from other Vietnamese communities. The second section identifies community centers as places to build cultural identity and social connections, considering design and programming factors that may contribute to stronger social cohesion. Finally, the third section investigates the relationships between community participation, sense of neighborhood responsibility, place attachment, and social cohesion. These interconnected relationships make the case for involving community members in decision making for the VCEC — not only for the sake of the center, but also to build a stronger sense of community in Little Saigon.

Sources for this literature review were compiled from the following research databases: UW Libraries, Web of Science, PubMed, Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar. Search terms included “place attachment,” “sense of place,” “social cohesion/capital,” “social isolation,” “loneliness,” “resilience,” “Little Saigon,” “Vietnamese American,” “community/cultural center,” and “community engagement/participation.”

Place Attachment

Place matters. Places can bring people together and foster socially connected communities, but they also have the potential to create hostile or unwelcoming environments. This section will focus on the power of place attachment, highlighting social cohesion as a primary determinant of how people assign meaning to places. Through developing social bonds in meaningful places, communities can combat isolation and experience the associated health benefits of feeling socially connected. For Vietnamese communities, Little Saigon neighborhoods across the country help maintain a sense of place and cultural identity within American society.

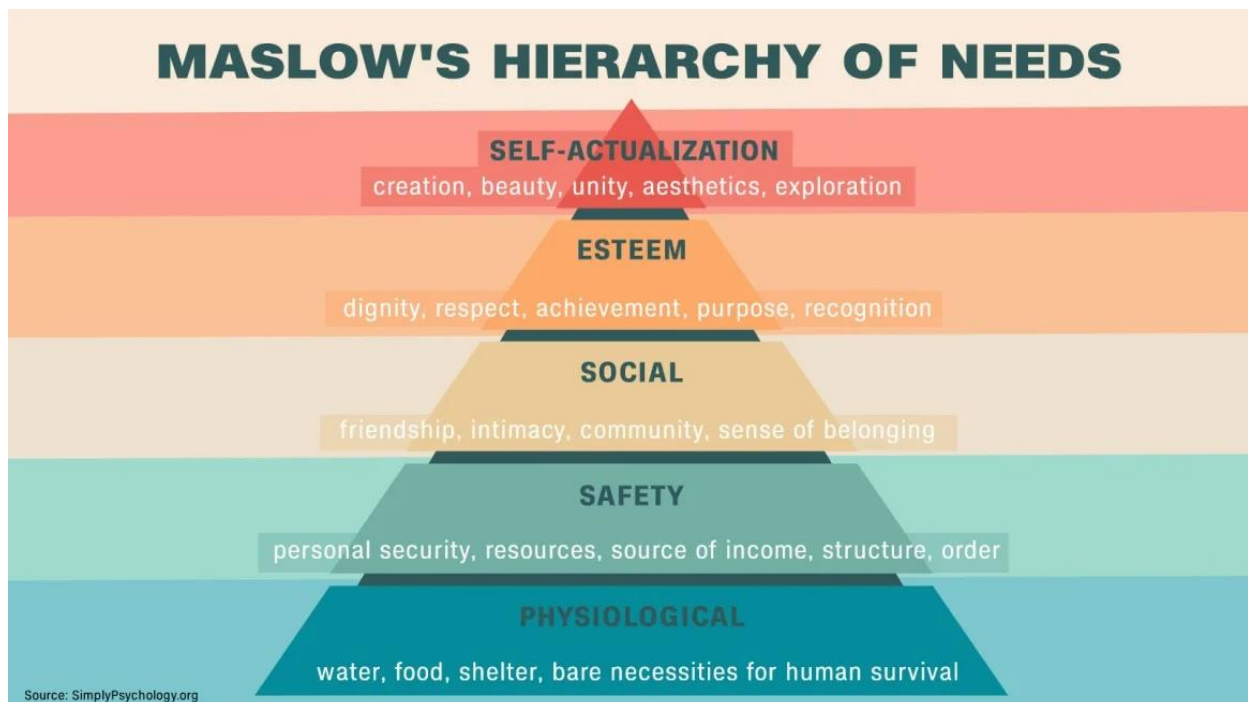
What is Place Attachment?

Physical space forms the housing, offices, streets, parks, and shops that we interact with every day. When we create positive emotional bonds with our physical surroundings, “space” turns into “place.” *Topophilia*, a term popularized by human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, defines this relationship as “the affective bond between people and place or setting” (Wolf et al., 2014). Another way to describe the person-to-place bond is place attachment, which can create feelings of belonging, contentment, and shared stewardship.

Place attachment is influenced by a number of factors including physical characteristics and accessibility (Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; Mazumdar et al., 2000), social interactions and activities that occur in the space (Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2022; Zahnow, 2023), shared culture (Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; Mazumdar et al., 2000), memories created (Bayat et al., 2022; Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2022), and the amount of time a person has been connected to the space (Giang & Lam, 2020; Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; Wolf et al., 2014). In cultivating place attachment, physical elements such as signage, public art, and architecture gain meaning through connections to personal feelings and community history (Aguilar-San Juan, 2005). Because place attachment is so subjective, a specific place will elicit varied responses from different individuals. Additionally, an individual's relationship to a singular place will evolve over time based on their associations and experiences in that space.

When we experience a strong attachment to a place, we are more likely to feel a sense of belonging (Aguilar-San Juan, 2005; Hagerty et al., 1992; Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; Zahnow, 2023). Occupying the third level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Willingham, 2023), belonging contributes to human fulfillment by connecting individuals to larger spatial and social systems (see Figure 1). This sense of belonging can make us feel like an integral part of our environment and encourage us to take shared responsibility for our communities.

Figure 1. Sense of Belonging in Third Level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



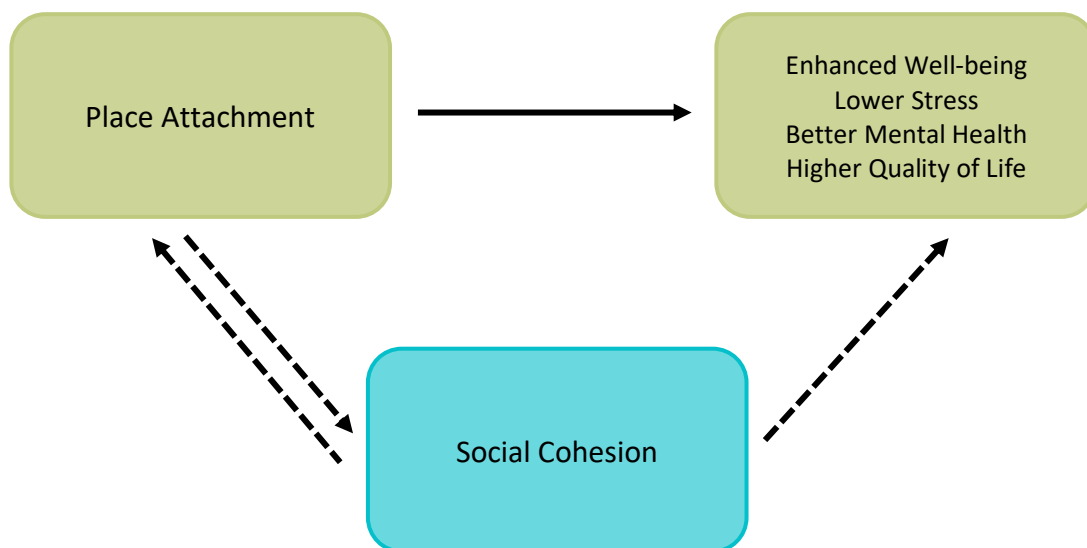
Place Attachment as Health Promotion

Place attachment not only contributes to personal feelings of belonging and contentment, but also benefits physical and mental well-being. People with strong emotional bonds to their environment have reduced stress (Yu et al., 2022), improved mental health (Hagerty et al., 1992; Krombach et al., 2024; Woo et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2022), and better overall quality of life (Friesinger et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2023). This relationship can be explained by perceived safety, abundance of green space, community services, walkability, and cleanliness — but most of all, social cohesion (Zahnow, 2023). Social cohesion can be understood as community trust and partnership, and finding these three things to be true (R. J. Smith et al., 2022):

- People in this community know each other very well
- People in this community are willing to help each other
- People in this community can be trusted

Social ties strengthen when they take place in a meaningful location (Bayat et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2023; Zahnow, 2023) and social cohesion influences place attachment (Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2022; Zahnow, 2023), creating a mutually reinforcing relationship between place and social relationships. Social cohesion is well-documented as a determinant of health and can mediate the relationship between place attachment and health outcomes (Yu et al., 2022). Figure 2 illustrates the recognized association between place attachment and health benefits, highlighting social cohesion as a mediator along the causal pathway. As noted earlier, social cohesion also influences place attachment, hence the bidirectional arrows.

Figure 2. Social Cohesion as a Mediator Between Place Attachment and Health



The Influence of Social Cohesion on Health

The connections we nurture with other humans have strong implications for our long-term health and well-being. People with social relationships are 50% more likely to survive than those who lack quality social connections (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). In fact, the influence of social relationships on health is comparable to that of smoking and drinking alcohol, and even greater than well-recognized health risk factors like obesity and physical activity (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Social ties have wide-reaching effects on health outcomes such as mental health (Baum et al., 2009; Friesinger et al., 2022; Kannan & Veazie, 2023; Pérez et al., 2020; R. J. Smith et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2022), cardiovascular disease (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Kannan & Veazie, 2023), mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Kannan & Veazie, 2023; McNeill et al., 2006), and physical activity (Pérez et al., 2020). Increased stress, another correlation to a lack of social support, impacts health outcomes such as poor sleep, mental health struggles, weakened immune systems, cardiovascular problems, and unhealthy habits (Yu et al., 2022).

Why are social relationships so influential to our health? As social beings, we rely on others for support and to set examples for our own behavior. Friends and family can help us adopt healthier lifestyles, provide support in hard times, and share access to healthy resources (McNeill et al., 2006; Peterson, 2017). Additionally, when communities have strong social cohesion, neighbors can collectively organize to advocate for healthier neighborhoods (Airriess et al., 2008; Bayat et al., 2022). The people we surround ourselves with have immense influence on our perceptions, habits, and access to resources — which, in turn, influence health outcomes.

Unfortunately, social isolation has increased over the past two decades, driven largely by the escalating role of technology across society (Kannan & Veazie, 2023). While the U.S. had been on a lonelier trajectory for years, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated trends of isolation. Stay-at-home orders and risks of infection affected almost everyone's well-being, but Asian American populations experienced disproportionate mental health impacts due to the pandemic. Between 2019 and 2020, Asians were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with depression (2.04 times) and anxiety (1.97 times) than any other race (Lee & Howard, 2023) and had poorer self-rated health (Bresnahan et al., 2023). The rise of anti-Asian racism was a likely contributor, with a 77% increase in race-based violence against Asian Americans between 2019 and 2020, and 1 in 3 Asian Americans experienced slurs or racist jokes in that timeframe (Lee & Howard, 2023). Racial prejudice during the pandemic created cracks in society that stigmatized Asians, detrimentally affecting their social status and associated mental health outcomes.

The world will experience more pandemics, natural disasters, and emergencies that will cause social isolation and affect mental health. Strong place attachment and social cohesion have

proven effective at withstanding the negative effects of disasters, an example being the New Orleans Vietnamese community's post-Katrina recovery. Bonded by shared refugee experiences, religious faith, and a deep attachment to place, the Vietnamese community in New Orleans successfully evacuated, relocated, and recovered after Hurricane Katrina (Airriess et al., 2008). Additionally, they collectively advocated to close a landfill for post-Katrina waste that was located just a mile from their community, which posed environmental health concerns for residents. This process would not have been possible without the foundation of place-based community identity and social cohesion that they had established previously, and these bonds were strengthened by the community's collective action and activism. To build resilience, both in individuals' daily lives and in times of emergency, policy and programs must invest in social relationships and kinship.

Social cohesion is a protective factor for health, but one that isn't widely discussed by healthcare or public health professionals. The increasing severity of society-level isolation has created a need for policies and projects to prioritize social cohesion for the sake of healthy and connected communities. In light of the disproportionate mental health impacts on Asian Americans since the pandemic, the need for social cohesion and place attachment in Asian communities is especially pressing.

Importance of Place for Vietnamese Culture

Large-scale Vietnamese immigration to the United States began in 1975 at the end of the Vietnam War, bringing 125,000 people that year and hundreds of thousands more in the coming decades (Batalova, 2023). New immigrants who lost physical connections to their homeland found solace in Little Saigon neighborhoods throughout the U.S. as ways to “stay Vietnamese” in the face of assimilation and cultural displacement (Aguilar-San Juan, 2005; Giang & Lam, 2020; Mazumdar et al., 2000; Nicholds, 2020). Now, nearly 50 years later, Little Saigons remain anchor places for first-generation Vietnamese residents who are now elders — a home away from home. In a study of Westminster, CA, one interviewee describes recalling memories of Vietnam when they visit Westminster's Little Saigon (Mazumdar et al., 2000):

“I remember seeing the old women, grandmothers, walking down the streets of Vietnam in their black, loose, satin pants with their embroidered shirts, their hair in buns and darkened teeth from chewing tobacco. *And being able to see the image again in Little Saigon gives me a sense of something that I used to be familiar with* [emphasis added].”

In addition to evoking familiar emotions, Little Saigons also help Vietnamese immigrants remember a place that feels like it's slipping away. Another Vietnamese refugee described the following (Mazumdar et al., 2000):

“Little Saigon serves as a reminder for me of what Vietnam is like. I guess by going there, I retain a part of my heritage and culture. I need a Little Saigon to remind me of my home country since I left it when I was only eight years old. Even though I consider myself bicultural, *I know that I will slowly forget my Asian heritage if I do not visit places like Little Saigon* [emphasis added].”

Most Vietnamese residents in King County are second or third generation, so creating a sense of place in Little Saigon can help Americanized generations connect with their heritage. Younger Vietnamese Americans can learn from elders about traditions and language while feeling a sense of cultural belonging that they might not experience elsewhere (Giang & Lam, 2020; Mazumdar et al., 2000; Nicholds, 2020). Being part of the “visible majority” can also reinforce feelings of belonging to a significant community (McLaughlin & Jesilow, 1998).

It is that sense of belonging that brings Vietnamese people to Little Saigon neighborhoods, even if they live far away. In Westminster, CA, people drive from miles away to get their hair cut, buy clothes, shop for specialty goods, eat, and attend cultural events. They don’t mind the extra time it takes because it’s worth it to feel that sense of belonging and cultural connection (McLaughlin & Jesilow, 1998). Familiar sights, sounds, and smells can recall conscious or instinctive memories of community history and cultivate an emotional connection to the neighborhood. A woman who left Vietnam as a teenager described her experience in Westminster’s Little Saigon (McLaughlin & Jesilow, 1998):

“I can let down my guard there and be myself...Everything is different. You can smell the food and hear Vietnamese music. *I can connect with that place. I’m more myself there* [emphasis added].”

These quotes express the links between identity and culture through the experience of place. In Seattle, the Vietnamese community has a generations-long presence in Little Saigon, but disinvestment and displacement have dispersed and fragmented the community. By building the cultural center, Vietnamese residents from across the region will have opportunities to reconnect with each other and with Little Saigon. The new center will serve as a physical and cultural anchor that contributes to community well-being through place attachment and social cohesion.

Mixed Use Cultural Centers as Public Health Assets

Everyday social spaces are essential for place attachment. As “third places,” they represent neither home nor work, and function as places to gather, enjoy each other’s company, and create memories (Collins, 2019; Krombach et al., 2024; Peterson, 2017). Purely public spaces such as streets, parks, and plazas have long been studied as community-building places that

allow for diverse populations to intermingle, but semi-public spaces with an established function like community centers, cafés, and public libraries may facilitate community interactions more successfully (Krombach et al., 2024; Peterson, 2017). This section will focus on community centers as places to build social cohesion and cultural identity, and identify design and programming characteristics that foster connection.

Building Social Cohesion and Cultural Identity

Social cohesion forms most readily through interactions with familiar people in a meaningful place (Bayat et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2023; Zahnow, 2023). Community centers serve as facilitators for social cohesion where community members can have planned and unplanned encounters with neighbors. While some people have developed deep friendships at community centers, fleeting encounters with familiar faces can be enough to contribute to a sense of community (Krombach et al., 2024). For example, residents of a neighborhood in the Netherlands were more likely to engage with each other at the local community center than out in public because they shared a common reason for visiting the center (Peterson, 2017). After having positive interactions at the community center, residents saw familiar faces at the grocery store and on the street, which helped reduce the sense of urban anonymity and social isolation. Although Dutch residents often kept their social lives at the community center separate from their regular friends, the center still fulfilled a certain need for community support, sharing of common interests, casual socialization, and a network to lean on in times of need (Peterson, 2017). For residents of this neighborhood, feelings of social connectedness often originated at the community center, which residents described as “homey” places where they could “be themselves” (Peterson, 2017).

Community centers can also strengthen cultural identity, especially among people who share ethnic backgrounds. By recognizing the bonds that can be created by shared traditions, customs, and language, communities can design places centered around common identities. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an intergovernmental organization of 10 countries, has operationalized this principle by establishing a cultural center in Bangkok, Thailand. In designing a center that emphasizes a sense of community among Asian nations, ASEAN aimed to advance long-term goals like economic and social development (Lamey, 2021). A core strategy for the design was focusing on street food culture — a fundamental aspect of many Southeast Asian cultures. The Street Food Exhibit educates visitors about the history of street food, connecting diverse national food culture across the greater Southeast Asian region.

This ability to hold and link various identities can be described as “nested identities” and allows individuals to see themselves as part of the broader cultural fabric (Lamey, 2021). The design of the VCEC should lean on the concept of “nested identities” to honor Vietnamese history within

the context of modern Vietnamese American society. Visitors to the center should be able to see themselves as part of the interwoven tapestry that connects Little Saigon, Vietnamese residents across the Puget Sound region, and the national Vietnamese American community.

Design and Programming that Encourage Community Center Use

Research has shown significant relationships between the design of physical environments and how humans experience place, which impacts subjective well-being (Farahani et al., 2022; Rezvanipour et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). When designed with social cohesion in mind, physical space can invite people in, encourage social interaction, and facilitate a variety of uses.

One of the most important qualities of physical space is perceptions of safety (Farahani et al., 2022; Rezvanipour et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). In a study of neighborhood centers in China, feeling safe was often the deciding factor for visiting the center, and was also associated with increased social activity and psychological well-being (Zhang et al., 2023). The reverse is also true — social interaction increases senses of safety and security (Baum et al., 2009; Farahani et al., 2022; Krombach et al., 2024). Perceived safety heavily depends on the number of neighbors people know by name and the amount of time spent in public spaces, which are both stronger determinants of safety than police presence (McKnight, 2013). Therefore, safety could be promoted by programming a space for more social interaction, which would create better long-term safety than reactionary measures like installing cameras or hiring security guards.

Physical accessibility is also a priority for community center visitors. Ensuring that the site is accessible for pedestrians, cyclists, and people riding transit increases residents' likelihood of visiting (Farahani et al., 2022; Naji et al., 2020; Rezvanipour et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Once inside, the space should be designed for all ages and abilities, including features like anti-slip floor textures, level surfaces, and clear signage for directions and exits (Zhang et al., 2023). High-quality seating creates comfortable environments, especially for seniors, children, and people with disabilities. Community center visitors may feel a greater sense of comfort and belonging if they know they can relax undisturbed without having to pay for a service, and seating areas can also facilitate social interaction (Zhang et al., 2023).

The design of space shapes the types of activities that can occur there. For example, flexible layouts with movable furniture are adaptable to many uses and can be easily shifted to accommodate different events. Multifunctionality often matters more than the size of a space because “spaces do not merely exist as physical settings but are most importantly a social product” (Peterson, 2017). Spaces with seating areas, food vendors, shopping, performance space, and room for workshops would attract a wider audience than a single-purpose space, and people could intermingle across the space. At a café in the Netherlands, an older woman

said she likes to “just leaf through some magazines or newspapers [and] hear other people chatting in the back [because] you can look over and see what they are doing” (Peterson, 2017). With background music and ambient chatter, cafés are an excellent example of “third places” where people can feel like part of the social scene. Integrating a café or food vendors into the VCEC would create a “café culture” that activates the space and stimulates social activity (Farahani et al., 2022). Additionally, designing space that allows indoor activities to spill out onto the street creates a lively environment for social interaction (Krombach et al., 2024).

Programming the cultural center matters just as much as the physical layout. To appeal to the whole community, programming should offer a wide range of activities at varying times of day. In an effort to enhance social cohesion in Korean neighborhoods that had experienced underinvestment, the city government built community centers to facilitate social capital through organized activities (Woo et al., 2023). Local residents came to community centers for knitting and cooking classes, singing groups, film screenings, neighborhood meetings, childcare, and cultural festivals. Within each of these activities, participants were able to connect around shared interests and meet new people. Through these varied interactions, neighbors experienced and contributed to a “collective life” within the community center that facilitated a sense of belonging and connection to others (Peterson, 2017).

Community Center Use and Health

People who regularly visit community centers have been found to have more social capital, lower stress, a greater sense of belonging, and better overall well-being (Woo et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Much of these health benefits can be attributed to social cohesion, as discussed previously. However, community centers can also serve as health resource hubs by directly providing health information and tools to residents.

A community center in Chicago that serves primarily Latinx community members provides free health-centered programming to residents throughout the region (Milanés, 2022). They host bi-weekly nutrition classes, exercise classes, health education workshops, HIV and STI testing, and domestic violence programming. Participants recounted sharing tips on managing cholesterol levels through home remedies, empathizing around negative experiences with the medical system, and supporting each other through their health journeys. The community center aims to meet people where they are by providing essential health services and resources in a familiar place with familiar people. This center constitutes yet another example of a place where residents can fulfill multiple needs while building community.

Importance of Community Participation

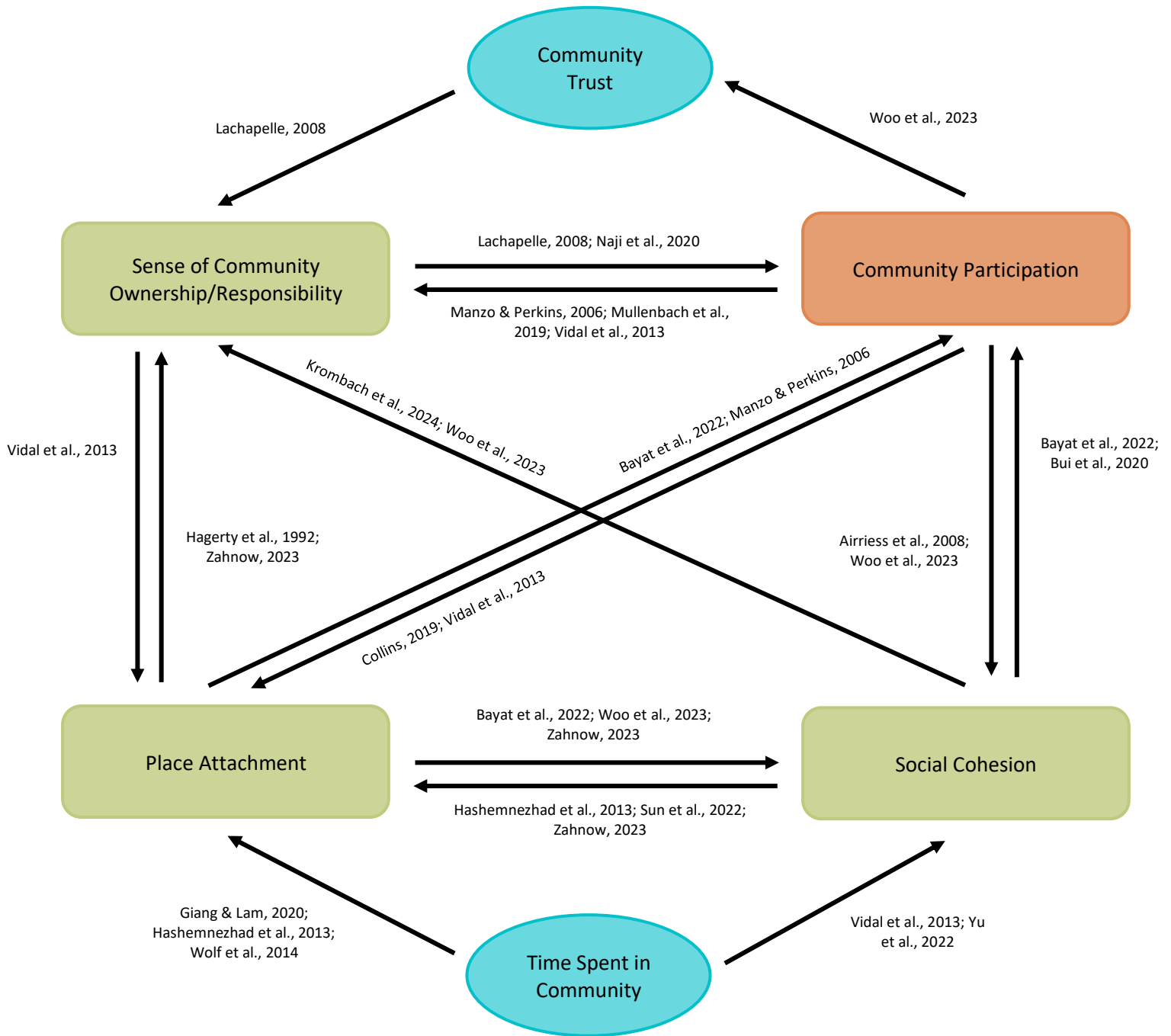
Neighborhoods and communities are shaped by the people who live, work, and play there. Local residents have a voice in what happens in their communities, and their level of engagement in neighborhood activities often depends on how connected they feel to their community and the people within it (Bayat et al., 2022; Bui et al., 2020; Lachapelle, 2008; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Naji et al., 2020). It is important to understand the relationships between place attachment, social cohesion, sense of community responsibility, and civic participation to shape communities where residents want to work together towards shared goals. This section will consider factors that influence community participation, impacts of community participation, and implications for the VCEC.

Contributing Factors to Community Participation

When people care about a place and their neighbors, they are more likely to actively work to protect or improve the community (Bayat et al., 2022; Bui et al., 2020; Lachapelle, 2008; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Naji et al., 2020). This relationship also goes the other way — residents who are more involved in neighborhood affairs have a stronger sense of community and attachment to place (Collins, 2019; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Mullenbach et al., 2019; Vidal et al., 2013). Figure 3 shows this mutually reinforcing network of community participation, social cohesion, place attachment, and sense of community responsibility that are influenced by community trust and time spent in the community, among other variables. This diagram is not meant to be exhaustive of all points of connection, but instead emphasize the reciprocal nature of these aspects of community.

Participating in community projects and events can help residents feel more connected to their neighborhoods. In the process of designing a park in a low-income Black community in Philadelphia, a local nonprofit worked with residents on park visioning to meet their needs and desires (Mullenbach et al., 2019). Compared with residents who were not consulted, residents that helped design the project were more likely to view the park as a community asset and felt a greater sense of ownership over it. In another example, a national urban regeneration program in Chile called “Quiero Mi Barrio” (I Love My Neighborhood) aimed to improve physical spaces and strengthen relationships between community members. The study found that people who had participated in the program had significantly stronger feelings of place attachment than non-participants, which was mediated through the sense of community that had come from civic engagement (Vidal et al., 2013). Social and political engagement are some of the strongest indicators of place attachment, reinforcing the importance of creating opportunities for community members to get involved in local decision making (Collins, 2019).

Figure 3. Intersecting Aspects of Community Life



Conversely, investing in place attachment and social cohesion can increase levels of collective action and community organizing (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). In a study of older Asian immigrants in Texas, social capital and the number of years they had lived there were positively correlated

with their frequency of volunteering, going to City Council meetings, voting, and other ways of engaging with the community (Bui et al., 2020). Similarly, a survey of an Iranian neighborhood found a significant relationship between place attachment and social participation, mediated by social cohesion (Bayat et al., 2022). These findings suggest that residents who have strong connections to their environment and the people around them will be more civically engaged and invested in their communities.

Community Engagement for a Cultural Center

The main objective of this capstone project is to learn what members of the Vietnamese community in the greater King County region want to experience in the new cultural center in terms of programming and spatial design. Engaging with community members will contribute not only to the final plan for the center, but will also enhance place attachment, social cohesion, and a sense of ownership over the space. In turn, these connections to people and places are likely to encourage residents to get more involved in community activities and advocacy, forming a mutually reinforcing cycle of engagement, caring, and attachment.

The VCEC has the potential to catalyze a renewed sense of community, cultural belonging, and civic engagement in Seattle’s Little Saigon. Visiting community centers has been shown to increase levels of community participation in local activities and volunteer opportunities outside of the center, even after controlling for self-selection bias (Woo et al., 2023). Additionally, the amount of time someone spends in a community increases their place attachment and social cohesion, and the VCEC will offer a welcoming place to spend time and grow those connections (Vidal et al., 2013; Wolf et al., 2014). The center will serve as a much-needed neighborhood anchor that will connect residents to Little Saigon, Vietnamese culture, and each other. Conducting culturally relevant community engagement is key for earning resident buy-in and maximizing the center’s social potential.

Conclusion

The Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center will be a place for community members to meet, relax, participate in activities, support local businesses, and experience shared culture. The site will serve as a physical and cultural anchor for the regional Vietnamese community with the potential for health-promoting benefits through social cohesion. By involving community members in the design and planning process, Friends of Little Saigon can create an accessible and welcoming space where community building can occur. The VCEC has the potential to facilitate strong place attachment, social cohesion, and better quality of life — contributing to a healthier and more resilient Vietnamese community.

METHODS

In 2016, FLS conducted an initial round of community engagement around the concept of the Landmark Project (Dinh et al., 2016). They interviewed and held focus groups with Vietnamese young adults, parents, elders, and business owners. Programming was the focus of the 2016 engagement effort; suggestions like intergenerational activities, professional development workshops, mental health group sessions, small business support, language and citizenship classes, and cultural programming came up in interviews and focus groups (Dinh et al., 2016). This first round of engagement helped FLS imagine the potential for the Landmark Project and narrowed the site selection criteria to accommodate desired programming, transportation access, and prominent visibility in Little Saigon (SCIDpda, 2014).

This capstone project builds on previous engagement efforts and explores tangible ideas for the VCEC, now that people can envision a physical space at 10th Ave S and S Jackson St. The following two questions were developed to guide the scope of the engagement and help define the methods:

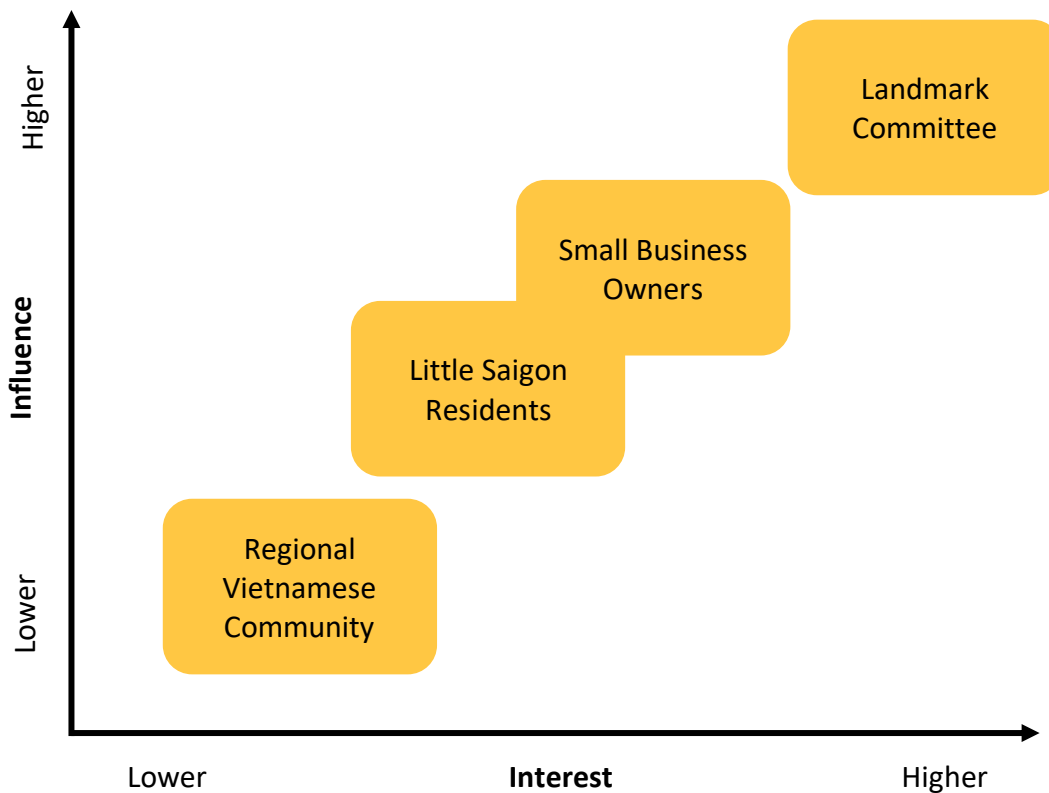
1. What types of **activities, events, and other programming** would bring community members to the VCEC?
 - What programming can support small business owners?
2. What do community members want the VCEC to **feel like**?
 - How can the VCEC reflect Vietnamese culture in Seattle?

The first question sought to confirm findings from previous engagement and raise new ideas with the physical site plan in mind. Because economic development and anti-displacement are central to the Landmark Project, a special emphasis was placed on collecting feedback from small business owners. The second question was reworked many times and landed on a sensory theme. Learning how community members want to experience the space can help the architects design the interior aesthetic, lighting, public art, furniture styles, and floor and wall patterns that reflect Vietnamese culture in Seattle. Asking about feelings and senses can evoke more values-based responses than asking about specific chair types, for example.

This engagement aimed to reach Little Saigon residents, the regional Vietnamese community (including youth, elders, and families), and small business owners. These audiences were identified because of the project's vision as a regional Vietnamese hub with economic support for local businesses. Another key player is the FLS Landmark Committee, who carry deep community ties and commitment to the project. Figure 4 shows a stakeholder mapping graphic representing these four groups in the context of their interest and influence in the project. For example, the Landmark Committee holds a lot of influence because of their advisory position

and are heavily invested in the project’s success. The broader Vietnamese community throughout King County may be less interested than Little Saigon residents because of their distance from the site, but this engagement will hopefully move them farther to the right when they see the potential for a community hub.

Figure 4. Stakeholder Mapping



To guide the methods development, outreach was conducted with organizations working on similar projects focused on community cohesion, cultural vitality, and anti-displacement. The goal of these introductory meetings was to learn about their projects from ideation to completion, gather inspiration for community engagement strategies, and build relationships with other community-based organizations. Informational interviews were also held with people who had experience leading creative community engagement for place-based projects.

Case study contacts were primarily identified through the list of projects funded by the City of Seattle Equitable Development Initiative. Community engagement practitioners were found through personal connections, literature review research, and snowball sampling. The 15 conversations listed in Table 1 helped shape the methods for this project through community knowledge sharing.

Table 1. Informational Interview Contacts	
Contact(s)	Organization
Agnes Navarro*	Filipino Community of Seattle
Connie Au-Yeung^	UW SPH, previously CID BIA
Emily Chen^	Headwater People
James Lovell*	Chief Seattle Club
Kizz Prusia^	UW Resilience Lab
Molly Garfinkel*	City Lore
Olisa Enrico*	Cultural Space Agency
Rochelle Hoi-Yiu Kwan*	Think!Chinatown
Sarah Kavage^	Self-employed artist
Sarah Nguyen^	Friends of Little Saigon, UW student
Slayman Appadolo*	Cham Refugees Community
Stephanie Ung, Yaslynn Makein, and Thyda Ros*	Khmer Community of Seattle King County
Stev Weidlich^	King County, previously AECOM
Tsega Desta*	Ethiopian Community in Seattle
Yordanos Teferi*	Multicultural Community Coalition
* Case study contact for similar community project ^ Informational interview to inform methods	

Four methods were chosen to answer the guiding questions and reach the intended audiences: (1) an online survey, (2) interviews with small business owners, (3) an interactive feedback board, and (4) a World Café-style community meeting. These methods, described below, aimed to reach people through varied approaches to get a broad representation of perspectives.

Online Survey

An online survey aimed to reach a wide audience to get general perspectives on the VCEC. The Google Forms survey contained 4 closed-ended and 4 open-ended questions that asked what would bring respondents to the VCEC and how they would want to experience the space using their senses (see Appendix A). Basic demographic information was also collected to track gaps in outreach that might be filled by other methods.

The survey was translated into Vietnamese and Traditional Chinese through a company called Interpret This. To encourage participation, a chance to win a \$100 gift card to Lam’s Seafood Market (locations in Little Saigon and Tukwila) was offered upon completion. There was also an option to leave an email address if the participant would like to stay updated on Landmark Project news.

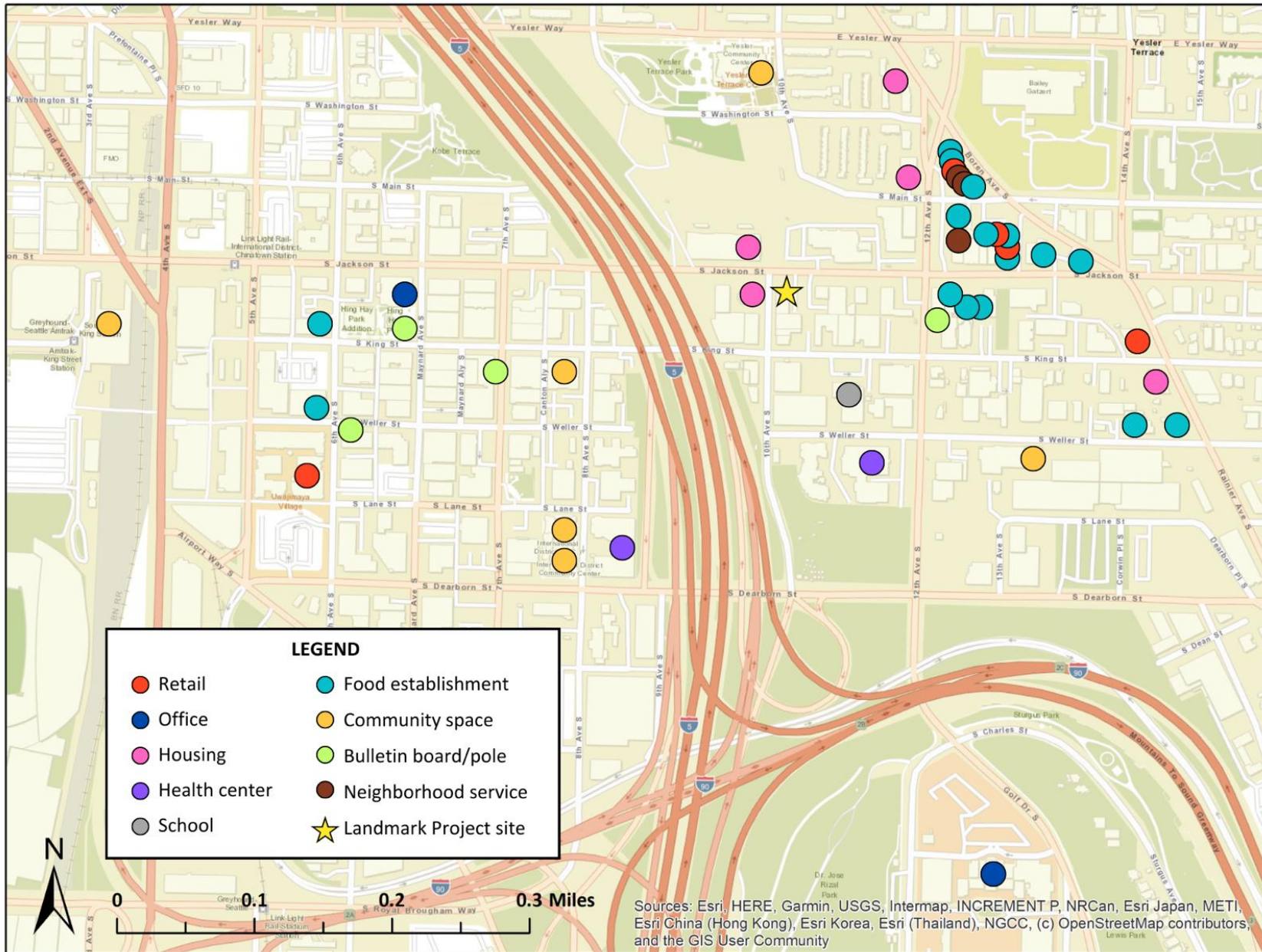
The survey was amplified to the public through the FLS newsletter, flyers with QR codes in community spaces (see Figure 5 for flyer locations, Appendix B for flyer), social media, partner organizations’ channels, and personal contacts. Paper copies were not printed because most people who visit the Little Saigon Creative, where the surveys would be available, are younger and tech savvy. However, this decision limited the audience to those who could comfortably take a survey on Google Forms. The English survey ran from February 7 through April 5 and the Vietnamese and Chinese surveys ran from February 16 through April 5.



*English and Traditional Chinese flyers with QR codes to the survey.
Credit: Elena Arakaki*

Results of multiple-choice questions were analyzed with pie and bar charts. Responses to open-ended questions were entered into the visual workspace tool called Miro so they could be sorted into themes, and notable quotes were pulled out.

Figure 5. Map of Survey Flyer Locations



Interviews with Small Business Owners

FLS has strong relationships with most of the businesses around Little Saigon, and staff know that business owners are very busy. It was unlikely that business owners would have time to come to a community meeting or fill out a survey, so one-on-one interviews were a way to meet them where they are. Taking the lead from FLS outreach and engagement staff, potential interviewees were contacted via email and text to gauge interest and availability. Interviews were conducted in March with business owners at their storefronts during non-peak hours. A staff member who knew the business owners and spoke Vietnamese came along to establish the connection and interpret if needed. This method was successful because of FLS's trusted relationships with long-time community members.

Four brick-and-mortar businesses and two mobile vendor artists at the Little Saigon Creative were interviewed. The businesses included a restaurant, an insurance company, a jewelry store, a pharmacy, and local artists. Five interviews took place in person and one over Zoom, with an average length of 20 minutes. Interviewees were asked for consent to record the conversation for transcription and all agreed.

An interview guide was developed to provide some structure and consistency across conversations (see Appendix C). The guide consisted of four main questions about their thoughts on the VCEC from their perspectives as a business owner and community member. At the beginning of the interview, interviewees were handed a paper copy of the questions and a one pager on the Landmark Project (English and Vietnamese copies were available, see Appendix D). At the end, interviewees were each given a \$30 VISA gift card as a small token of appreciation for their time and thoughts.

Interviews were recorded into a transcription software called Otter.ai then manually cleaned for accuracy. Transcripts were coded inductively, meaning that themes were identified as transcripts were analyzed. Each one was reviewed twice to ensure that all relevant excerpts were captured in the codes and salient quotes were highlighted.

Interactive Feedback Board

An interactive feedback board was created to catch people's eye at tabling events and draw them in to learn more. The 48"x36" board was made on Canva and featured six short answer questions from the survey (see Appendix E). Colorful sticky notes accompanied the board and invited community members to add their thoughts. The board was taken to two tabling events: the Tết Celebration at the Little Saigon Creative on February 4 and the CID BIA's Lunar New Year Celebration on February 24.

Between February 4 and April 5, the feedback board was displayed at the Little Saigon Creative. It was in plain sight of people who were spending time there or grabbing a coffee from Hello Em, the Vietnamese café in the Little Saigon Creative. This method reached people who were already coming to Little Saigon, engaging a likely audience for the VCEC. Writing on sticky notes proved to be an approachable way to share thoughts and the board had to be cleared numerous times to make room for new ideas.



Tabling at the CID BIA Lunar New Year Celebration.

Credit: Anh Nguyen



A community member adds an idea to the feedback board.
Credit: Felix Tran

World Café Community Meeting

The final and most significant method was a community meeting hosted at the Nisei Veterans Committee Memorial Hall on April 6, 2024. FLS had been wanting to host a public meeting as part of this engagement effort to reach elders, the regional Vietnamese community, and local partners who might not have shared feedback through other methods.

Goals for the meeting were co-created with staff from SCIDpda, who would be presenting on the housing portion of the Landmark Project. The agenda was planned around a World Café format, which is a method “designed to create a safe, welcoming environment in which to intentionally connect multiple ideas and perspectives on a topic by engaging participants in several rounds of small-group conversation” (Parkhurst et al., 2016). The World Café method was chosen because it embodied the community-based nature of the Landmark Project, provided a forum for in-depth feedback, and was scalable for varying numbers of attendees.

The plan for the meeting included an introduction and project update from FLS and SCIDpda (with Vietnamese translation). Then the World Café portion would begin with small group conversations about programming for the VCEC, followed by a whole group share out with a note taker capturing the ideas. For the second round of conversation, participants would sit at new tables to mix up the groups. The same share out process would happen after the second round, and then a concluding “idea harvest” would allow for overall reflections to be shared. The notes would be shared with a graphic scribe, who would create a visual summary of the World Café after the meeting. The full agenda can be found in Appendix F.



Community members watch an introductory presentation at the community meeting.

Credit: Elena Arakaki

The invitation to the meeting was sent to the FLS newsletter, partner organizations, personal contacts, survey respondents who wanted to stay informed, Vietnamese Student Associations at high schools and colleges around King County, and shared on social media (see Appendix G). Ads were placed in two Vietnamese language newspapers that each ran for three weeks leading up to the event.

Ten facilitators and ten note takers were recruited to host small group discussions. These volunteers were made up of FLS staff, FLS board members, members of the Landmark Committee, SCIDpda staff, and hired Vietnamese interpreters. A short training was held with volunteers before the meeting about their roles, including facilitation strategies and how to answer tricky questions that may come up (see Appendix H for the facilitation guide).

Ambience is central to the success of a World Café. The gym at the Nisei Veterans Committee Memorial Hall was set up with 10 folding tables with 7 chairs at each (5 participants, 1 facilitator, 1 note taker). The room was arranged to accommodate 50 participants with the flexibility to add or remove tables, depending on how many people showed up.



*A table of Vietnamese speakers engage in a World Café discussion.
Credit: Annie Tran*

To make the gym feel more welcoming and cozy, colorful tablecloths and decorative room dividers helped brighten up and enclose the space. Soft music played as people entered, adding to the casual and friendly atmosphere.

One corner of the room had large architectural renderings on easels, and another had kids' games and activities, in case participants brought their children. Lunch and snacks were provided for all attendees.



*Participants learn about the Landmark Project.
Credit: Annie Tran*

FINDINGS

Participant Profiles

Online Survey

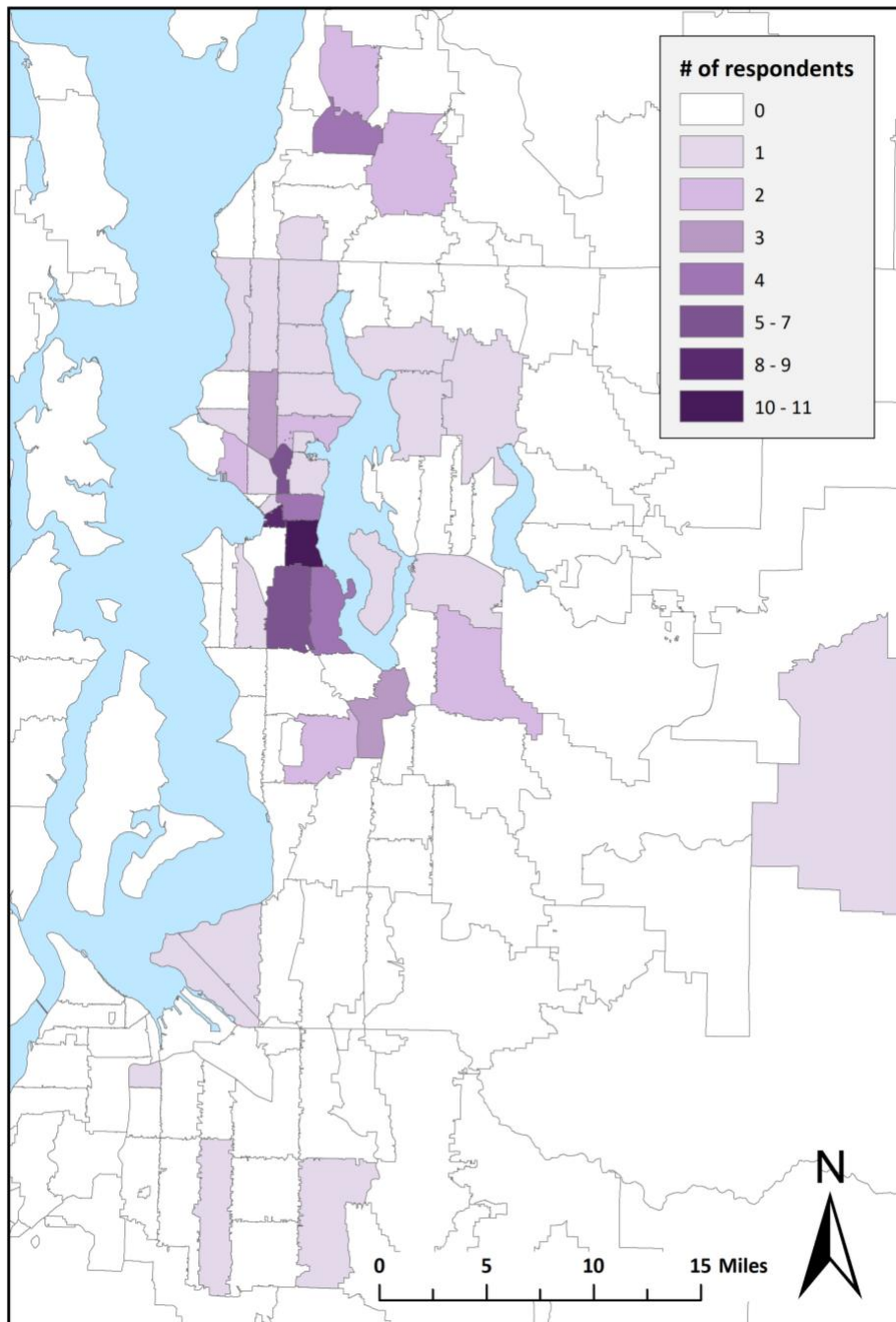
In total, 95 people took the survey and 97% took it in English. Participants tended to be younger to middle-aged adults (87% were between the ages of 18-49), which left out youth and elder perspectives. The vast majority (87%) identified as Asian or Asian American. Household incomes skewed high, with over half of respondents reporting more than \$100K annually. Almost 60% of respondents live in 1- or 2-person households, suggesting an underrepresentation of respondents with children. Table 2 describes the demographics of survey respondents.

Table 2. Survey Respondent Demographics	
	n (%)
Survey Language	95
English	92 (97%)
Traditional Chinese	2 (2%)
Vietnamese	1 (1%)
Age	94
17 and under	2 (2%)
18-25	19 (20%)
26-34	36 (38%)
35-49	27 (29%)
50-64	4 (4%)
65+	5 (5%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (1%)

What is your race/ethnicity?*	93
Asian or Asian American	81 (87%)
White	13 (14%)
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	2 (2%)
Hispanic or Latine	2 (2%)
What is your annual household income?	91
Less than \$15,000	3 (3%)
\$15,000-\$39,000	4 (4%)
\$40,000-\$69,000	11 (12%)
\$70,000-\$99,000	19 (21%)
\$100,000-\$149,000	22 (24%)
\$150,000-\$230,000	18 (20%)
Greater than \$230,000	7 (8%)
Prefer not to answer	7 (8%)
How many people live in your household, including yourself?	92
1	22 (24%)
2	32 (35%)
3	12 (13%)
4+	26 (28%)
* Respondents could select more than one race, so total percentage will exceed 100.	

Most survey respondents live in Seattle, particularly clustered around Little Saigon. There was also decent representation from Beacon Hill, Columbia City, Rainier Valley, Downtown, the Central District, and Capitol Hill. Several respondents came from other parts of King County like the Eastside, Renton, SeaTac, and one from North Bend. There were also a handful of people from Snohomish and Pierce Counties. One person from Bellingham took the survey, which was unable to be represented in this map due to scale. Figure 6 shows the geographic distribution of survey respondents.

Figure 6. Survey Respondent ZIP Codes (n=88)



World Café

The World Café meeting had 47 attendees, 10 facilitators, 10 note takers, 2 photographers, and 1 floater for a total of 70 people in the room. After everyone was seated, there ended up being nine conversation groups, including one Vietnamese-speaking table with hired interpreters. On the sign-in sheet, 96% of attendees indicated interest in staying updated on the Landmark Project.

Engagement Findings

The following results stem primarily from the World Café, which was the most in-depth and community-driven method. Findings from the survey, interviews, and feedback board provide support and context to the main themes that emerged from the World Café.

The findings from the four engagement methods are organized below by the project’s two guiding questions.

1. What Types of Activities, Events, and Other Programming Would Bring Community Members to the VCEC?

Cultural Celebrations

Community members love the events that FLS hosts and are excited to participate in more celebrations and large gatherings in the new VCEC space. Eighty-two percent of survey respondents said they would come to the VCEC for events, which was the most frequently selected programming option. Small groups at the World Café advocated for at least two big events per year and suggestions included family-oriented events for Lunar New Year or a neighborhood block party anchored at the VCEC. With the Little Saigon Park opening this year, another community member recommended physically connecting the VCEC to the park through a parade, multi-location festival, or historical tour. Additionally, FLS could collaborate with the Wing Luke Museum to incorporate the Heritage Trail tour as part of an event that showcases Little Saigon’s history and culture.

In addition to cultural events, community members proposed a public altar at the VCEC to honor ancestors. The altar could be a permanent fixture or a focal point for events where visitors could feel connected to their past, present, and future family members. A sticky note on the feedback board suggested a map of Vietnam with ancestral connections, which could be a feature of the altar.

Food-centered Space and Programming

Across all methods, food came up as a strong community connector. Sixty-one percent of survey and feedback board respondents named food as their favorite thing about Little Saigon and 66% of survey respondents said they would come to the VCEC for food. Specifically, community members expressed interest in cooking classes and food demonstrations, street food festivals and markets, and space to support up-and-coming food businesses through pop-ups or test kitchens.

“Pop ups and food-related events would pretty much be a guarantee of getting me out there!”

– Survey Respondent

Many community members requested culinary representation from different parts of Vietnam and Southeast Asia because, as an interviewee put it, “each region varies dramatically.” Elders could share their family recipes and techniques with younger generations, including how to shop for Vietnamese ingredients. Events centered around food present opportunities for cultural and social connections.

Additionally, the VCEC will include a commercial kitchen available for community use. When asked about using the kitchen in the survey, 64% of respondents said that they would like to attend a cooking class there. A handful of respondents would use the kitchen for personal use or to prepare food to sell.

Showcasing Vietnamese Arts and Culture

Arts of all types were highlighted as ways to showcase Vietnamese culture in the VCEC. Forty-two percent of survey and feedback board respondents named arts, culture, or community as their favorite thing about Little Saigon, mentioning feelings of connection to people and the neighborhood. In the survey, 45% of respondents said they would come to the VCEC for the opportunity to connect with Vietnamese culture and 43% would come for art or history exhibits. An interviewee praised their fellow artists, “I think there’s just so many opportunities to showcase the talent within our own community, within the Vietnamese community.”

“[I] would love to see all kinds of arts being displayed, less art museum style and more community safe space for people of all artistic abilities to see themselves represented.”

– Survey Respondent

All engagement methods revealed a desire for highlighting community art through various mediums. Community members would like a rotating art gallery, expanding on what already

exists in the Little Saigon Creative to allow for more exhibits and event space. Others mentioned wanting to showcase non-western art styles and create opportunities for Vietnamese artists to meet one another and connect through art, including cocktail hours to introduce new artists and exhibits.

Many community members expressed gratitude for the marketplace at the Little Saigon Creative and wanted more opportunities to buy from local artists. Fifty-eight percent of survey respondents would visit the VCEC to shop at pop-up vendors, and an expanded marketplace would allow for more small businesses to share their work with the community. One respondent wanted local artists represented so they could buy unique goods, “not something you can get at Southcenter [Mall].”

"I think the [FLS] team's doing really well. I would love to see them expand, too, their vendors."

– Small Business Owner

Performing arts came up as a priority such as fashion shows (celebrating áo dài and other Vietnamese clothing), dance performances, plays, and other live shows. Community members also mentioned music-centered events like concerts, Vietnamese music nights, open mic nights, and karaoke.

Another important way to showcase Vietnamese culture is through storytelling. World Café participants discussed the power of sharing stories through art. Art can transcend generations and connect refugee experiences to those of young Vietnamese Americans growing up in Seattle. One interviewee was particularly interested in hearing stories from elders who don't often get their voices centered:

"If we could find works from people who are more hidden. A lot of our elders, especially the older women, they kind of hide behind, like, you know, doing chores at home, steady routines. Maybe we want some of their stories heard one day."

This participant also mentioned that some Vietnamese elders have published books about their experiences surrounding the war but haven't had a platform to promote their work. Events like author talks, speaker panels, poetry circles, and “living history” lessons could help share intergenerational knowledge and community stories.

"Well, personally, I love hearing from our community leaders, from different artists to authors. So I think that's what would draw me in...So having a space where folks can come and learn about different authors, artists, book clubs."

– Small Business Owner

Classes and Workshops

The VCEC has great potential to be a center for learning and skill sharing. Fifty-five percent of survey respondents said they would come to the VCEC for classes or workshops.

Overwhelmingly, community members expressed the most interest in Vietnamese language classes. FLS already hosts language classes — but either not everyone knows about them, or current offerings don't meet demand. Some older community members are concerned that younger generations don't speak Vietnamese as well, and younger community members have mentioned wanting monthly clubs to practice their Vietnamese (like Olé Café in Wallingford,

where they encourage only speaking Spanish).

A survey respondent suggested language classes in the commercial kitchen where people could learn new recipes while practicing Vietnamese together. On the flip side, English classes could help Vietnamese elders and new arrivals better connect with younger generations and the wider King County community.

"Learning history and having niche language workshops would be awesome. Always looking for opportunities to practice and expand vocabulary beyond just speaking it at home."

– Survey Respondent

Community members would also like to attend skill building classes at the VCEC. These include wellness activities like arts and crafts workshops, exercise classes, self-defense, guided meditation, and mental health education. Classes can also teach skills and knowledge to enhance self-sufficiency such as citizenship classes, legal counsel, media literacy, combatting disinformation, translation services, and paperwork support.

In addition to gaining skills and knowledge, classes can be a great way to meet new people and build community. One interviewee said, "I always encourage folks who are looking to make new friends to go to those sorts of classes or even host those classes. It brings people together." As spaces for learning and socializing, classes have great potential to bring visitors to the VCEC.

"Regular activities for community building would be lovely, especially around mental health advocacy for our community."

– Survey Respondent

Opportunities for All Ages

Creating opportunities for all ages was a main theme that emerged from all engagement methods. Below are some suggestions for programming geared towards specific age groups.

Elder-focused Programming

Many community members envision the VCEC as a special place for elders, who don't currently have a central gathering place in Little Saigon. Fun activity sessions were recommended for elders, such as knitting, crafts, games, and sports. The table of Vietnamese elders at the World Café discussed senior meal programs and community building around food. Another conversation group suggested a Vietnamese version of the Creative Aging program at the Frye Art Museum, which hosts activities for lifelong learning tailored towards people with dementia, Alzheimer's, and their caregivers. The Creative Aging program hosts interactive events, live music, movies, lectures, and hands-on crafts to engage participants. Other ideas included healing sessions for elders to address the impacts of colonization, their thoughts and feelings on the war, and mental health. The VCEC could also host recurring health clinics in partnership with existing clinics and provide health education resources to seniors.

Elder-specific programming should be made as accessible as possible. Considerations to increase accessibility include hosting COVID-conscious events (providing masks and collaborating with the Seattle Clean Air Collective, a group that supplies free air purifiers for shows and events) and providing transportation for elders to get to the VCEC.

Teen-focused Programming

Teens are another subgroup that could benefit from a free public space to gather. World Café participants mentioned a need for "third places" where young people can establish their identity and sense of belonging. Teen programming could include tutoring and mentorship between high school and college students, as well as a think tank incubator space to share resources and connections for young entrepreneurs.

Older generations count on youth to carry forward cultural legacies. One small business owner reflected, "I think about the future very much. I think about the younger generation. Because that's where we grow. I depend on the younger people. We all do, you know?" She suggested the possibility of building employment pathways to connect youth to small businesses in the community. Youth could learn skills and become better integrated into the community, and businesses in turn would appreciate the help. The VCEC could host a mentorship program to match youth with small businesses for school credit, volunteer time, or paid part-time work.

Youth voices were underrepresented in all methods, so youth-specific engagement should be conducted in the future to better inform programming ideas.

Child-focused Programming

To cater to all ages, the VCEC will have activities that children can enjoy. Programming for children might include Vietnamese story time and a children’s library. Community members also suggested special events for children, like singing and games. A safe place to play would keep kids entertained while their parents attend a class or run their business at the VCEC.

Intergenerational Gatherings

Age-specific programming was highly valued among all engagement participants, but not nearly as much as intergenerational activities. Community members expressed a strong desire to bring generations together at the VCEC for bonding and celebrating shared culture. Ideas included monthly meetups for elders and youth to talk about what it means to be Vietnamese (also described as Vietnamese

"I think there's just so much wisdom within our elderly community that I would, if I had the time, I would love just to sit down with them and learn from them from different artistry to cooking."

– Small Business Owner

American/Vietnamese immigrant mixers), bilingual events, and multi-generational nights.

Historical exhibits and content could also bridge generational divides and reteach Vietnamese history from Vietnamese perspectives. One interviewee emphasized the importance of centering elders’ stories in the VCEC to make the space feel relevant to them, which may be a shortcoming of the Little Saigon Creative:

"I feel like if we had a history project, that would be very meaningful to make it truly feel like a cultural setup. Because otherwise we see a repeat of this place [the Little Saigon Creative], where we'll see a lot of trendy Viet stuff...a lot of trendy young, like you know, creative...but it will slowly start to isolate the older members, I feel. Like young people definitely bring their families, but their families don't necessarily feel that extra step to feeling like they belong."

This quote exemplifies the risk of creating a space that caters to younger generations while excluding elders. By consciously planning intergenerational and age-specific programming, the VCEC can be a welcoming space that draws everyone in.

Spaces to Be in Community

In addition to engaging activities, community members also want unprogrammed space to simply spend time with each other. Thirty-nine percent of survey respondents said they would visit the VCEC to socialize with friends and family, and a World Café group would like to see “spaces to hang without a purpose, not consumer driven.” Specifically, people mentioned

wanting quiet space and secured outdoor sitting space. This flexible space could be available for informal meetup groups and conversations.

Additionally, all four methods surfaced a desire for mutual aid groups and coordinated community support for unhoused neighbors. Safety came up as one of the biggest concerns around the Landmark Project, but community members also saw potential for an unofficial organizing spot for mutual aid groups and advocacy efforts. Stakeholders from local business owners to Hello Em visitors to community members across the region voiced the urgency around helping the unhoused community, whom the city hasn't supported. Thirty-nine percent of survey respondents expressed interest in participating in civic engagement and community organizing at the VCEC. One survey respondent commented,

“We need more engagement of what is going on in Little Saigon and ways to connect communities to the unhoused members who are surviving outdoors. We need to bridge empathy and compassion and not focus on capitalist pursuits of community thriving and sustainability. Communities thrive when we all collectively understand that those who don't have a lot can still feel safe and welcome is how we really bring safe and thriving neighborhoods together.”

This issue of safety and community support came up so often that it should not be ignored. Community members feel strongly about making Little Saigon a safer place and there is significant interest in creating a venue for mutual aid organizing at the VCEC.

Private Reservable Space

There was strong interest in tech-capable private space that community members could reserve or rent out for activities like board meetings, parties, game tournaments, or quiet study space. A survey respondent mentioned that Seattle Public Libraries have free meeting rooms for community use with sliding scale rental costs for longer durations, which could be a model for rooms at the VCEC. Community members suggested making rooms free for community planning and engagement, and charge for commercial use. The rooms and reservation system should be ADA and language accessible so anyone can easily find space.

Small Business Support

Six interviews were conducted with small business owners in Little Saigon and artists who have vended at the Little Saigon Creative. This section outlines how the VCEC could support their unique needs as business owners.

Entrepreneurship Classes and Technical Assistance

Several business owners shared the difficulties of starting a new business, from the sheer startup costs to gaining industry knowledge to developing technical skills. One business owner

suggested that the VCEC could provide space for entrepreneurship classes so small business owners could learn how to start off on the right foot:

"We [business owners] are small and our voice not that big. If we have some issue, some problem, we would like to have a place to come to."

She voiced the desire to offer competitive pay and benefits to her employees, but doesn't have the knowledge or tools to meet the standard she aspires to provide:

"I think my dream is...I really want to take good care of my employees. [So] I can provide my employees the benefit that the other business, like American restaurants, they can provide to the employees. So I really want to do that. But right now, for example, I cannot provide them like the health insurance, you know, to compensate or something. I really want to say, talk about it, but I don't have enough knowledge to know what I really want to give to my employees."

Other technical assistance that business owners requested included QuickBooks, tax support, IT support, and translation services to help older business owners better connect with their clientele. New entrepreneurs would appreciate discounted classes to get their businesses off the ground.

Small Business Networking

Business owners also requested opportunities to meet each other and share best practices. One person suggested,

"It would just be fun just to have a round table of the community businesses, too, where they can teach all the learnings that they've learned throughout the years within running their own business. Because I feel like whether you run an art business or you run a restaurant, there's always cross learning between the two."

More experienced business owners shared a willingness to mentor newer business owners and pass down knowledge that they have gained over time. Interviewees related to the self-reliant mentality that many business owners adopt to become successful, but wished for more collaboration. Regular community meetings every 2-3 months could create a forum for local businesses to share knowledge and build relationships with each other.

"I think the community looks out for each other, and there are lots of people like myself who would like to volunteer their time and effort to help teach new business owners how to get started, because it's a scary thing."

– Small Business Owner

Increased Visibility

Business owners see the potential for the VCEC to increase visibility for their brand. Local restaurateurs that do pop-ups at the VCEC could attract more customers to their permanent storefronts and potentially get longer-term investors or contractors. One business owner excitedly spoke about the exposure she could get and imagined finding someone to agree to a multi-year contract to buy her food. This would allow her more stability and the possibility of expanding her business — all because of increased visibility at the VCEC.

Larger Space to Host Workshops

Both of the mobile vendors who were interviewed mentioned a need for larger space to host art workshops. They have both hosted events at the Little Saigon Creative and would like to expand so more people can attend while maintaining manageable noise levels. One vendor described her desired setup:

"So I feel like everything that we're already doing within the [Little Saigon Creative] space that we currently have, but to expand it to a larger crowd, because it can be challenging at times to host an event, but also have folks speak over just because it's such a small space. So I feel like having dedicated rooms to different activities would be helpful, independent from the café."

These comments demonstrate that the Little Saigon Creative is on the right track with programming and that more space will help meet demand.

2. What Do Community Members Want the VCEC to Feel Like?

Welcoming, Safe, Comforting

To get community members to envision themselves in the VCEC, multiple methods asked questions to engage the senses. When thinking about how they want to feel when they enter the VCEC, 49% of survey and feedback board respondents described wanting to feel welcome, safe, and comforted. An interviewee said,

"I love the idea of coming to a place and feeling like I'm at home. Like in a sense where the colors...the look and feel, and vibes, the smell...the five senses are kind of touching on things I'm familiar with."

Nostalgic, Cultural Connection to Vietnam

Other survey and feedback board respondents touched on feelings of nostalgia and direct connections to Vietnam. One respondent described yearning “for time to slow down” at the VCEC, which could mean recalling historic Vietnam or being fully immersed in the community scene. There was a lot of interest in representing Vietnamese immigrants’ stories and culture, which could help younger generations connect to their families’ histories.

Curious, Intellectually Stimulated

Along with feeling emotionally connected, community members also want to feel intellectually stimulated at the VCEC. Many respondents used words like “inspired,” “curious,” and “educated” to express how they want to experience the center, particularly in relation to the sharing of generational knowledge. A survey respondent hopes for each individual visitor to feel intellectually and emotionally engaged when they enter:

“Information, displays, or exhibits that give each person walking through the door something that draws each person in, orients them, and/or shows them how they might fit in, relate to, or connect to the center.”

Programming that draws on education and historical knowledge can fulfill the desires for lifelong learning and connecting to the broader Southeast Asian diaspora.

How Can the VCEC Reflect Vietnamese Culture in Seattle?

Mix of Nostalgic and Modern Elements

Community members consistently mentioned that the ambience of the VCEC should strike an intentional balance between nostalgic and modern feelings. It’s important to incorporate traditional Vietnamese elements that tie back to culture and history, and also recognize that Little Saigon in Seattle is unique in its own ways.

When asked what they would like the space to feel like, community members described outdoor markets and street food culture in Vietnam. They frequently mentioned elements of casual food culture that the VCEC could emulate, like low stools and places to socialize.

“Walking down the street in Vietnam, there's outdoor seating, places to pause and hang out.”

– World Café Participant

Another common theme was that the VCEC should keep an eye to the future, not only the past. Some World Café groups noted, “The Vietnamese community has evolved, we do not want to look like how Vietnam looked prior to 1970” and that the space should “develop culture, not just reminisce.” There is a delicate balance to strike that simultaneously allows elders to relate

to the space while inviting in younger generations who are exploring what it means to be Vietnamese American in Seattle.

Celebrating Diverse Experiences and Identities

Community members expressed a desire to represent diverse sides of Vietnamese and Southeast Asian identities that are often left out. For example, World Café conversations reflected that Vietnamese culture usually centers around Saigon and often misses central and northern Vietnam. One conversation observed, “Viet spaces sometimes feel very homogenous when we're actually very diverse,” speaking to the desire to celebrate this diversity in the VCEC.

Many people used the word “diaspora” when describing the communities they envision at the VCEC. They named local restaurants like Phở Bắc and Anchovies & Salt as good examples of spaces that incorporate regional and temporal diversity in their decor and ambience. Other World Café groups suggested showing a historical timeline for different waves of immigration and highlighting migration patterns outside of just southern Vietnam. Recognizing the ethnic diversity of Vietnamese Americans would help the VCEC feel more “welcoming to the diaspora,” as one community member wrote.

Inviting Other Southeast Asian Communities to Share Space

The VCEC could also be a place to share space with other Southeast Asian communities. World Café participants brainstormed ways to engage the broader community such as inviting Cham, Cambodian, Laotian, Indonesian, and Filipino communities to host pop-ups at the VCEC. There was interest in partnering with other communities to share food, art, and support for each other’s efforts. As one participant reflected, “What kind of diversity is possible to represent?” The VCEC presents an opportunity to build stronger relationships among Southeast Asian communities across the Puget Sound region.

Sights – Vietnamese Imagery

To honor the past without feeling antiquated, World Café participants suggested leaning on boat and water imagery, cultural icons like conical hats, and the Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag. Participants wanted design inspiration from Vietnamese folklore such as the Children of the Dragon and the Fairy origin story, legends of Kim Quy the turtle, and the Vietnamese Cinderella tale called Tấm Cám. Community members also mentioned using images of historical figures like the Trưng sisters and Trần Hưng Đạo as symbols of resistance. Ideas for interior decorations included plants, motorbikes, wood, glass, lots of vibrant colors, and patterns from Vietnamese culture.

Sounds – Community Activity and Music

The VCEC will be a lively place full of activity, which visitors would like to hear reflected in the ambience. The two main things that people want to hear are sounds of socializing and music. Many respondents described that they want to hear people of all ages talking, laughing, and speaking different languages in “a hum of activity.” Heartwarmingly, a sticky note on the feedback board read that they would like to hear “people of the neighborhood celebrating.”

“[I want to hear] aunties gossiping, uncles' chuckles, organizing and strategizing for thriving communities.”

– Survey Respondent

In terms of music, the majority of survey and feedback board respondents would like to hear a diversity of musical styles and eras. They mentioned traditional Vietnamese instruments like đàn bầu, đàn tranh, and cultural drums, and styles such as Viet pop, Viet rap, folk, bolero, lo-fi, and ambient music. Participants also suggested live music events (both traditional and non-traditional styles), DJ sets, and karaoke nights.

Recognizing that the VCEC will be a multifunctional space, participants noted that it will be important to have “different volume zones for different activities, so that all the spaces sounds don't compete.” Designing the space with sound separation in mind will allow for a variety of uses to take place in the center at the same time.

Smells – Food, Cleanliness, and Familiarity

The last sense that participants were asked about was smell. Most survey and feedback board respondents (63%) identified cooking and food smells as a desired first impression when they enter the VCEC. They listed scents such as lemongrass, pho and aromatic broths, fish sauce, and pandan. Another 13% of respondents named coffee as a preferred smell.

After food and drink aromas, the next largest group of respondents opted for a clean, scent-free space. One survey respondent highlighted accessibility considerations: “I think a scent free space is more accessible for people who struggle with sensory issues,” and others simply wanted a more neutral-smelling environment.

“I want it to smell like I just walked in an Asian household.”

– Survey Respondent

Some community members spoke to the appeal of familiarity and comfort, wanting a “smell that is specific to Vietnamese culture, smell that reminds you of home.” Others suggested Asian floral scents like lotuses, orchids, plumerias, and jasmine.

DISCUSSION

The engagement efforts described here confirm community excitement and investment in the new Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center. Main takeaways from the engagement completed in 2016 are very similar to those gathered using the online survey, interviews, feedback board, and World Café community meeting. Community feedback has provided encouragement that Friends of Little Saigon is on the right track with planning for the programming, design, and feel of the VCEC.

In alignment with the literature that highlighted space activation as a key determinant of cultural center visitation, much of the engagement focused on programming. Community members frequently requested programming that brings people together such as food-related events, pop-up markets, art gatherings, cultural celebrations, and classes. Intergenerational activities were mentioned frequently, which have been linked to reduced loneliness across all age groups and increased social capital (Krombach et al., 2024). While respondents did not explicitly recognize the health benefits of these activities, the literature supports the notion that social ties contribute to community well-being and positive health outcomes. Community members have expressed strong interest in engaging in social activities at the VCEC, which will contribute to a healthier neighborhood.

Many programming ideas that came up during engagement coincide with activities that FLS already hosts in the Little Saigon Creative. Community members requested food and drink options, art displays, social meetups, mobile vendors, language classes, and small business support. FLS and Hello Em provide these opportunities on a limited scale, which was acknowledged and appreciated by many community members. These activities came up often among all methods of engagement, which speaks to their value to the community. The VCEC creates an opportunity to scale up FLS's programming and continue to host activities that bring Vietnamese community members together. Additionally, FLS can expand their support for small businesses by creating physical space for networking and entrepreneurship classes.

This round of engagement also elicited some programming ideas that FLS doesn't currently focus on. Survey and feedback board respondents, interviewees, and World Café participants all highlighted the need for elder-focused programming. While the Little Saigon Creative is a key gathering space, one interviewee observed that it tends to cater towards younger audiences, which may isolate older community members. It's true that the LSC usually has modern Viet-pop music playing and young professionals can be found getting coffee, having meetings, and socializing at Hello Em. Creating specific programming that centers the interests of elders at the VCEC can help create a sense of belonging and relatability for older community members.

Another common suggestion was to provide mutual aid and support for people experiencing homelessness in Little Saigon. All engagement methods raised concerns about the state of homelessness in the neighborhood and suggested ways that the VCEC can support the unhoused community. While the VCEC will not become a shelter, it can be a space for mutual aid gatherings and community organizing. Safety concerns around issues of homelessness came up frequently as reasons why people hesitate to visit Little Saigon. The literature suggests that safety and social activity have a mutually reinforcing relationship (Baum et al., 2009; Farahani et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Providing organized support for the unhoused community and hosting social programming could bring more people to the area and increase the perception of neighborhood safety.

In terms of ambience, community members were clear about their desire for a balance between traditional and modern elements. The literature described the concept of “nested identities,” which relates to this ability to hold multiple identities that are interconnected and interdependent (Lamey, 2021). The decor and atmosphere should reflect the nested identities that many community members relate to, including connecting to Vietnam, living in the United States, and valuing the complicated feelings that come with belonging to a diaspora.

Community members responded well to questions about sensory engagement in the VCEC. They discussed sights, sounds, and smells that are distinctly Vietnamese while celebrating diversity within the Vietnamese American experience. Stories from Little Saigon in Westminister, CA describe experiences that evoke feelings of nostalgia and belonging. People come to the neighborhood from all over to feel that sense of belonging, and the VCEC can create parallel feelings for Seattle’s Little Saigon. The neighborhood has experienced such significant displacement and disinvestment, and the VCEC provides a unique opportunity to create a welcoming environment that honors diasporic identities to bring people back together.

A big part of this project was providing community members with an opportunity to get involved in the Landmark Project before it becomes a reality. The literature revealed that community participation increases a sense of ownership (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Mullenbach et al., 2019; Vidal et al., 2013), trust (Woo et al., 2023), place attachment (Collins, 2019; Vidal et al., 2013), and social cohesion (Airriess et al., 2008; Woo et al., 2023). The VCEC will be a neighborhood asset and should be guided by community members, so they have a stronger stake in the project’s success. The implications of participating in the VCEC’s development are broader than the center itself — community members who provide input are more likely to stay engaged in other community issues in the future.

LIMITATIONS

Researcher positionality created one limitation, as the primary research is not part of the Vietnamese community and does not speak Vietnamese. She relied on FLS coworkers to translate (both verbally and in writing) and lacked established trust with community members without their help, which could have affected community perceptions of this project.

This project had several limitations related to data collection and timeline constraints. Looking at the survey respondent demographics, the vast majority of respondents were younger working professionals who speak English. This method failed to reach youth, elders, families with children, and people with lower incomes. Although a significant part of the budget was used to translate the survey into Vietnamese and Traditional Chinese, 97% of respondents took it in English. It is probable that promotion methods did not reach diverse audiences and the fact that the survey was only available online excluded people who lack access to technology. Figure 6 showed that most respondents live in Seattle, which missed community members from other parts of King County.

Due to time and budget constraints, only six small business owners were interviewed during this round of engagement. This small sample size provides valuable insights into some business owner needs, but is not generalizable to all Little Saigon businesses.

Selection bias played a role in who had access to the interactive feedback board. The board was a convenient method to passively collect comments, but only reached people who came to Hello Em or to the CID BIA Lunar New Year event. People who do not currently visit Little Saigon but might be drawn in by the VCEC were not given an opportunity to give feedback through this method. Additionally, the feedback board format limited the number and depth of questions asked.

Finally, the World Café had limitations around accessibility and budget. While the meeting was hosted in Little Saigon, which is close to the VCEC site, it may have been harder for people who live far away to engage. A goal for the VCEC is to be a regional hub for the Vietnamese community, but the location catered to local crowds. Ideally, there would have been funding for accessibility needs like childcare, transportation, stipends, and more interpreters. With the limited budget and short timeline, the team was not able to prepare for all accessibility needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emerged from the engagement findings and conversations with FLS leadership. This list is not exhaustive, and more recommendations will emerge from future engagement.

Short-term (rest of 2024 | engagement)

- Conduct more engagement with youth, families, and elders to capture perspectives that were missed in this round of engagement.
- Conduct outreach to pockets of Vietnamese community members outside of Seattle such as Renton, Tukwila, White Center, and other areas around south King County.
- Include storytelling circles or other conversation-based engagement methods to get more personal and nuanced feedback.
- Ask more small business owners in Little Saigon about their business-specific needs that the VCEC could provide.

Medium-term (2025-2027 | design and construction)

- Use the feedback to design a welcoming, safe, and community-oriented environment that appeals to the Vietnamese diaspora and engages the senses.
- Collaborate with artists and partners who have held events/workshops at the Little Saigon Creative to explore opportunities to scale up their programming at the VCEC.
- Design for accessibility (anti-slip floors, level surfaces, clear multilingual signage, etc.).
- Plan for noise level separation so multiple activities can happen simultaneously (quiet activities on the mezzanine level, louder activities on the main floor).
- Advertise the upcoming space to local groups who might be interested in using the VCEC to build a base of support before it opens (VietQ group, teen groups, mutual aid groups, artist collectives, musical groups, Vietnamese authors, street food vendors).
- Consider partnerships with local health clinics to provide resources at the VCEC.
- Consider partnerships with transit agencies to increase access to the VCEC, especially for youth, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Long-term (2027-ongoing | VCEC is open)

- Host a food-focused grand opening with street vendors, live music, and local art to get people excited about the opportunities at the VCEC.
- Invite elders to lead programming, not just participate in it (cooking, art forms, “living history” lessons, etc.).
- Consider ways to share space with other Southeast Asian communities through food, art, social gatherings, cultural celebrations, and allyship.
- Advertise community events and opportunities widely.
 - Have an info board inside the VCEC where community members can share resources.
- Be okay with trying out different programming options to see what works (it doesn’t have to be perfect right off the bat).

CONCLUSION

This capstone project has identified community priorities for the look, feel, and programming for the VCEC. However, the benefits of this engagement reach farther than generating ideas for art exhibits or language classes. Research has shown that people who participate in neighborhood affairs have a stronger sense of community and place attachment (Collins, 2019; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Mullenbach et al., 2019; Vidal et al., 2013). Community members who completed the survey, participated in interviews, contributed to the feedback board, and attended the World Café have already increased their likelihood of feeling connected to Little Saigon and their neighbors. Based on the feedback, they also want to continue engaging with FLS programming and project updates, which bodes well for the future of the VCEC.

Seattle’s Little Saigon has faced numerous challenges over the past couple decades, including the 2008 recession, COVID-19 pandemic, rapid gentrification, and cultural displacement. Despite these challenges, Little Saigon has continued to rebuild on an upward trajectory as a cultural hub for the Vietnamese community.

The Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center will continue this momentum and create a physical space to strengthen community members’ sense of belonging, place attachment, social cohesion, and cultural connection. Through engaging programming and intentional design, the VCEC will anchor the neighborhood as a welcoming and safe gathering space.

REFERENCES

- Aguilar-San Juan, K. (2005). Staying Vietnamese: Community and Place in Orange County and Boston. *City & Community*, 4(1), 37–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1535-6841.2005.00102.x>
- Airriess, C. A., Li, W., Leong, K. J., Chen, A. C.-C., & Keith, V. M. (2008). Church-based social capital, networks and geographical scale: Katrina evacuation, relocation, and recovery in a New Orleans Vietnamese American community. *Geoforum*, 39(3), 1333–1346. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.11.003>
- Batalova, J. (2023, October 10). *Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States*. Migrationpolicy.Org. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states>
- Baum, F. E., Ziersch, A. M., Zhang, G., & Osborne, K. (2009). Do perceived neighbourhood cohesion and safety contribute to neighbourhood differences in health? *Health & Place*, 15(4), 925–934. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2009.02.013>
- Bayat, F., Hesari, E., Ghahremani, S., Besharati Kivi, S., Hamidi, R., & Hamidi, N. (2022). Analyzing the Causal Model between Place Attachment and Social Participation in Residences through the Mediation of Social Cohesion. *International Journal of Community Well-Being*, 5(4), 711–732. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42413-022-00179-1>
- Bresnahan, M., Zhu, Y., Hooper, A., Hipple, S., & Savoie, L. (2023). The negative health effects of anti-Asian stigma in the U.S. during COVID-19. *Stigma and Health (Washington, D.C.)*, 8(1), 115–123. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sah0000375>

- Bui, C., Kim, K., Song, Q., & Jang, Y. (2020). Together, We Can Make This Place Our Home: Civic Engagement Among Asian Immigrants. *Innovation in Aging*, 4(Suppl 1), 99.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igaa057.327>
- Chew, R. (2023, October 5). Friends of Little Sài Gòn greenlighted to develop Vietnamese cultural, economic center. *International Examiner*. <https://iexaminer.org/friends-of-little-sai-gon-greenlighted-to-develop-vietnamese-cultural-economic-center/>
- Collins, B. (2019). The view from the salad bowl: Community place attachment in multiethnic Los Angeles. *Cities*, 94, 256–274. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2019.06.002>
- Dinh, T. Q., Huynh, L., Nguyen, J., & Giang, J. H. (2016). *Little Saigon Landmark Project Community Engagement and Feedback Report* (p. 14). Friends of Little Saigon.
- Farahani, L. M., Izadpanahi, P., & Tucker, R. (2022). The death and life of Australian suburbs: Relationships between social activity and the physical qualities of Australian suburban neighbourhood centres. *City, Culture and Society*, 28, 100426.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2021.100426>
- Friesinger, J. G., Haugland, S. H., & Vederhus, J.-K. (2022). The significance of the social and material environment to place attachment and quality of life: Findings from a large population-based health survey. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 20(1), 135.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-022-02045-2>
- Giang, J., & Lam, B. (2020). Exploring a Sense of Place Among Vietnamese American Elders. *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*, 23(2), 44–54.

- Hagerty, B. M. K., Lynch-Sauer, J., Patusky, K. L., Bouwsema, M., & Collier, P. (1992). Sense of belonging: A vital mental health concept. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 6*(3), 172–177.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9417\(92\)90028-H](https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9417(92)90028-H)
- Hashemnezhad, H., Heidari, A. A., & Hoseini, P. M. (2013). “Sense of Place” and “Place Attachment.” *International Journal of Architecture and Urban Development, 3*(1), 5–12.
- Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010). Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review. *PLOS Medicine, 7*(7), e1000316.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>
- Kannan, V. D., & Veazie, P. J. (2023). US trends in social isolation, social engagement, and companionship – nationally and by age, sex, race/ethnicity, family income, and work hours, 2003–2020. *SSM - Population Health, 21*, 101331.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2022.101331>
- Krombach, A., Peavey, E., Wilkerson, R., & Barth, A. (2024). *Systems Of Cross-sector Integration and Action across the Lifespan (SOCIAL) Framework Report* (p. 29). Foundation for Social Connection.
- Lachapelle, P. (2008). A Sense of Ownership in Community Development: Understanding the Potential for Participation in Community Planning Efforts. *Community Development, 39*(2), 52–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330809489730>
- Lamey, J. C. (2021). From the Past, for the Future: Defining Southeast Asian Identity at Thailand’s ASEAN Cultural Center. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia, 36*(2), 201–224.

- Lee, J., & Howard, J. T. (2023). Increased Self-Reported Mental Health Problems Among Asian-Americans During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Database. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 10(5), 2344–2353. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-022-01414-3>
- Manzo, L. C., & Perkins, D. D. (2006). Finding Common Ground: The Importance of Place Attachment to Community Participation and Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 20(4), 335–350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412205286160>
- Mazumdar, S., Mazumdar, S., Docuyan, F., & McLaughlin, C. M. (2000). Creating a Sense of Place: The Vietnamese-Americans and Little Saigon. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20(4), 319–333. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.2000.0170>
- McKnight, J. (2013). Neighborhood Necessities: Seven Functions that Only Effectively Organized Neighborhoods Can Provide. *National Civic Review*, 102(3), 22–24. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ncr.21134>
- McLaughlin, C. M., & Jesilow, P. (1998). Conveying a Sense of Community along Bolsa Avenue: Little Saigon as a Model of Ethnic Commercial Belts. *International Migration*, 36(1), 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00033>
- McNeill, L. H., Kreuter, M. W., & Subramanian, S. V. (2006). Social Environment and Physical activity: A review of concepts and evidence. *Social Science & Medicine*, 63(4), 1011–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.03.012>
- Milanés, L. L. (2022). Latinxs in Chicago: Managing Health Inequities with Community Centers. *Human Organization*, 81(4), 327–337.

- Mullenbach, L. E., Baker, B. L., Benfield, J., Hickerson, B., & Mowen, A. J. (2019). Assessing the relationship between community engagement and perceived ownership of an urban park in Philadelphia. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 50(3), 201–219.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2019.1581719>
- Naji, A. A., Almainani, A., & Rahaman, K. R. (2020). Analysis of the current development of community centers in Jeddah city. *Open House International*, 45(3), 249–268.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/OHI-05-2020-0044>
- Nguyen, Q. H. (2012). *Little Saigon 2020 Action Plan* (p. 7). IDEA Space.
- Nicholds, K. (2020, February 13). *Little Saigon – A Cultural Heritage Site*. Preserve Orange County. <https://www.preserveorangecounty.org/tracts/2020/2/13/little-saigon-conservation-of-a-cultural-community>
- Parkhurst, M., Preskill, H., & Gopal, S. (2016, June 16). Guide to the World Café Method. FSG.
<https://www.fsg.org/resource/guide-world-café-method/>
- Pérez, E., Braën, C., Boyer, G., Mercille, G., Rehany, É., Deslauriers, V., Bilodeau, A., & Potvin, L. (2020). Neighbourhood community life and health: A systematic review of reviews. *Health & Place*, 61, 102238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2019.102238>
- Peterson, M. (2017). Living with difference in hyper-diverse areas: How important are encounters in semi-public spaces? *Social & Cultural Geography*, 18(8), 1067–1085.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2016.1210667>
- Rezvanipour, S., Hassan, N., Ghaffarianhoseini, A., & Danaee, M. (2021). Why does the perception of street matter? A dimensional analysis of multisensory social and physical

- attributes shaping the perception of streets. *Architectural Science Review*, 64(4), 359–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00038628.2020.1867818>
- SCIDpda. (2014). *Little Saigon Landmark Project Feasibility Study*.
- Smith, G. S., & Thorpe, R. J. (2020). Gentrification: A Priority for Environmental Justice and Health Equity Research. *Ethnicity & Disease*, 30(3), 509–512. <https://doi.org/10.18865/ed.30.3.509>
- Smith, R. J., Baik, S., Lehning, A. J., Mattocks, N., Cheon, J. H., & Kim, K. (2022). Residential Segregation, Social Cohesion, and Aging in Place: Health and Mental Health Inequities. *The Gerontologist*, 62(9), 1289–1298. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnac076>
- Sun, Y., Ng, M. K., Chao, T.-Y. S., He, S., & Mok, S. H. (2022). The impact of place attachment on well-being for older people in high-density urban environment: A qualitative study. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 0(0), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959420.2022.2111168>
- Tran, V. (2016). *Seattle Chinatown-International District 2020 Healthy Community Action Plan* (p. 28). Interlm CDA.
- Vidal, T., Berroeta, H., de Masso, A., Valera, S., & Peró, M. (2013). Place attachment, place identity, sense of community, and local civic participation in an urban renewal context. *Studies in Psychology*, 34(3), 275–286. <https://doi.org/10.1174/021093913808295172>
- Willingham, A. (2023, August 15). *What is Maslow's hierarchy of needs? A psychology theory, explained*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/world/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-explained-wellness-cec/index.html>

- Wolf, K. L., Krueger, S., & Flora, K. (2014). *Place Attachment and Meaning—A Literature Review*.
Green Cities: Good Health. https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Place.html
- Woo, A., Joh, K., & Yu, C.-Y. (2023). Making space and building social capital: Unpacking the relationships between community center use and social capital in urban regenerated neighborhoods in Seoul, Korea. *Habitat International*, 132, 15.
- Yu, C.-Y., Joh, K., & Woo, A. (2022). Effects of Multifaceted Determinants on Individual Stress: The Mediating Role of Social Capital. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(9), 5571. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19095571>
- Zahnow, R. (2023). Place type or place function: What matters for place attachment? *American Journal of Community Psychology*, n/a(n/a). <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12722>
- Zhang, Z., Fang, K., Zhang, S., Zhang, W., Wang, X., & Furuya, N. (2023). Physical environmental factors that affect users' willingness to visit neighbourhood centres in China. *Building Research & Information*, 51(5), 568–587.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Survey (English)

Help Shape the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center!

Friends of Little Saigon is developing a brand new Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center (VCEC) on the corner of 10th Ave S and S Jackson St! Your input will help decide what activities will take place at the VCEC, which is planned to open by late 2027.

This survey is easy to complete and will only take 8 minutes. Any and all feedback is appreciated and will be valuable in shaping the VCEC.

At the end of the survey, you will have an opportunity to enter into a raffle to win a \$100 gift card to Lam’s Seafood Market to show our appreciation. The winner will be announced at the end of April.

Little Saigon

1. Why do you spend time in Little Saigon? Check all that apply.
 - (a) I live there
 - (b) I work there
 - (c) I have friends or family there
 - (d) I come for food or shopping
 - (e) Other: (write in)
 - (f) I don’t visit Little Saigon

2. What is your favorite thing about Little Saigon?
 - (a) Food
 - (b) Shopping
 - (c) Community and culture
 - (d) Location
 - (e) Other: (write in)

Activities, Events, and Programming

These questions will ask about what you would like to do at the VCEC.

3. What events, programs, or exhibits would make you want to visit the VCEC? Select up to 5 options.
 - (a) Food
 - (b) Shopping at pop-up vendors
 - (c) Quiet space to study or read
 - (d) Space to socialize with friends and family
 - (e) Meetup groups (small business owners, parents, elders, etc.)
 - (f) Art or history exhibits

- (g) Events (festivals, lectures, movie nights, etc.)
- (h) Classes or workshops (wellness classes, language learning, crafts, etc.)
- (i) Opportunities for civic engagement and community organizing
- (j) Opportunities to connect with Vietnamese culture
- (k) Other: (write in)
- (l) I am not interested in visiting the VCEC

Feel free to share any comments about your choices: (comment box)

4. The VCEC will have a classroom/workshop space, private meeting rooms, an art gallery, and flexible event space. How would you want to use these spaces?
 - (a) Classroom/workshop space (short answer)
 - (b) Private meeting rooms (short answer)
 - (c) Art gallery (short answer)
 - (d) Flexible event space (short answer)
5. There will be a commercial kitchen for community use. How likely are you to use the kitchen for these activities? (grid: I would do this, I might do this, I would not do this)
 - (a) Attend a cooking class
 - (b) Rent the kitchen for personal use
 - (c) Use the kitchen to prepare food to sell
6. Name 3 foods that you would like to buy at the VCEC: (3 blanks)

Your Experience at the VCEC

7. When you enter the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center...
 - (a) What do you want to **see**? (blank)
 - (b) What do you want to **smell**? (blank)
 - (c) What do you want to **hear**? (blank)
8. What do you want to **feel** when you're at the VCEC? Please write 3 words or phrases that come to mind. (3 blanks)

Demographics

Your responses will not be linked to your name or shared outside of this project.

9. What is your age?
 - (a) 17 and under
 - (b) 18-25
 - (c) 26-34
 - (d) 35-49
 - (e) 50-64
 - (f) 65+
 - (g) Prefer not to answer

10. What is your race/ethnicity? Please select all that apply.

- (a) American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous
- (b) Asian or Asian American
- (c) Black or African American
- (d) Hispanic or Latine
- (e) Middle Eastern or North African
- (f) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- (g) White
- (h) Prefer to self describe

If you prefer to self describe your race, please write it here: (blank)

11. How many people live in your household, including yourself?

- (a) 1
- (b) 2
- (c) 3
- (d) 4+

12. What is your annual household income?

- (a) Less than \$15,000
- (b) \$15,000-\$39,000
- (c) \$40,000-\$69,000
- (d) \$70,000-\$99,000
- (e) \$100,000-\$149,000
- (f) \$150,000-\$230,000
- (g) Greater than \$230,000
- (h) Prefer not to answer

13. What is your ZIP code? (blank)

14. Are you interested in staying connected to the VCEC and learning about opportunities for future engagement? If so, please leave your email address here.
(blank)

Giveaway entry

If you would like to be entered to win a \$100 gift card to Lam's Seafood Market, please leave your name and email here. We will contact the winner by the end of April!

- (a) Name
- (b) Email

Thank you for your participation and input on the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center! We look forward to working with community members to create a place we can all enjoy. If you have any questions about the project, please email info@flsseattle.org.

Appendix B – Survey Flyer (English)



THE LANDMARK PROJECT

LITTLE SAIGON IS GETTING A CULTURAL CENTER!

After years of community visioning, the Landmark Project is finally happening! In late 2023, Friends of Little Saigon purchased a site on 10th Ave S and S Jackson St for a Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center.

The center will host community activities, support small businesses, and create opportunities to connect with Vietnamese culture.



YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Friends of Little Saigon is looking for community input to help shape the future of the center.

Take our survey and
share your ideas!



Learn more about the project at
bit.ly/LS-landmark



Appendix C – Interview Guide

Interview Protocol

1. Introduce myself, my role at FLS
2. Introduce project, share one pager
3. Explain goals of the engagement:
 - a. What types of **activities, events, and other programming** would bring community members to the cultural center?
 - b. What do community members want the space to **feel like?**
4. Explain that the interview will take around 30 minutes and they will get compensated with a \$30 VISA gift card for their time. Ask if it would be okay to audio record the conversation (will be deleted after this project).

Questions

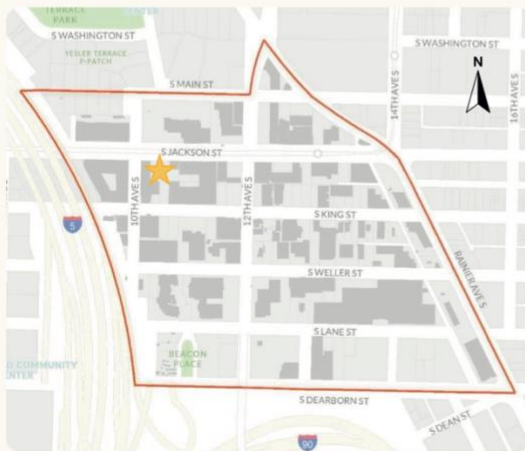
1. As a community member, what activities and events would make you want to visit the cultural center?
2. What do you want to feel or experience while you're there?
3. As a business owner, what support services could the center provide?
 - a. What we've heard from past engagement (prompting if necessary):
 - i. Business consulting and technical assistance (marketing, bookkeeping, applying for licenses, business loans, taxes, etc.)
 - ii. English classes to make it easier to interact with customers
 - iii. Workshops for small business development
 - iv. Networking opportunities for small business owners
4. As a business owner, do you have any concerns about the VCEC?
5. (If applicable) Would you be interested in mobile vending at the cultural center? If so, what would you need to make it successful (power outlets, supplies, etc.)?

THE LANDMARK PROJECT

What is the Little Saigon Landmark Project?

The Landmark Project originated from the Little Saigon 2020 Action Plan, initiated by Friends of Little Saigon (FLS) in 2012. The vision for the project is to secure a community-owned space for affordable housing, commercial spaces, and a cultural center to serve the needs of the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian communities facing displacement pressures in King County.

Feasibility studies were completed in 2014, identifying possible locations and proposing a financially sustainable model for the Landmark Project. In 2016, FLS conducted a round of community engagement to ensure that the diverse and evolving needs of the Vietnamese community remained the focus of the Landmark Project. Since 2016, FLS has continued regular engagement with the community to assess their needs and seek funding to acquire a site.



From Vision to Reality

In September 2023, FLS purchased a site at the intersection of 10th Ave S and S Jackson St, covering approximately 16,500 square feet. The Landmark Project will consist of 71 units of affordable housing with a Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center on the ground floor. FLS will own and manage the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center, featuring food vendors, spaces for pop-ups, outdoor seating, office spaces, and flexible space for cultural activities. FLS is partnering with the Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda) to build affordable housing for families.

Currently, Dong Hing Market and Asia Pacific Wholesale occupy this site. FLS is working with these businesses to continue operations until demolition and support their relocation. FLS is also continuing to seek additional funding for housing, constructing the interior of the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center, and programming costs. The project plans to break ground in late 2025.

Frequently Asked Questions



Who will own and operate the Landmark Project?

FLS will own and operate the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center, while SCIDpda will own and operate the affordable housing component.

What amenities and programming will the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center have?

- Permanent and temporary spaces for food, beverage, and retail vendors
- History and art exhibits
- Cultural and social programs for all ages
- Event space
- Office space
- Community meeting space
- Commercial kitchen for community use

Who is currently funding this project?

- Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development's Equity Development Initiative
- Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant
- King County Performance, Strategy, and Budget Department
- We are actively seeking additional funding from various sources to complete the project

What is the expected timeline?

- 2024: Community engagement
- Late 2025: Groundbreaking and construction commencement
- Late 2027: Completion of construction and leasing

Who is the architect?

FLS and SCIDpda have hired Mithun to design the residential portion of the project, including the core and shell of the ground floor cultural and economic space. SKL is the lead architect for the interior design of the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center.

How can I get involved in/support the Landmark Project?

- Fill out our survey: bit.ly/LS-landmark
- Provide input in upcoming community meetings about the project
- Follow FLS's monthly newsletter for project updates and other news in Little Saigon

Appendix E – Interactive Feedback Board

Help Shape Little Saigon's Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center!


Hãy giúp hình thành Trung Tâm Văn Hóa và Kinh Tế Việt của Little Saigon!

What is your favorite thing about Little Saigon?
Bạn thích điều gì nhất về Little Saigon?

What events, programs, or exhibits would make you want to visit the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center?
Những sự kiện, chương trình, hay triển lãm gì sẽ làm bạn muốn đến thăm Trung Tâm Văn Hóa và Kinh Tế Việt?

When you enter the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center...
Khi bạn bước vào Trung Tâm Văn Hóa và Kinh Tế Việt...

Landmark Project Site
10th Ave S and S Jackson St



What do you want to see?
Bạn muốn thấy điều gì?

What do you want to smell?
Bạn muốn nghe mùi gì?

What do you want to hear?
Bạn muốn nghe âm thanh gì?

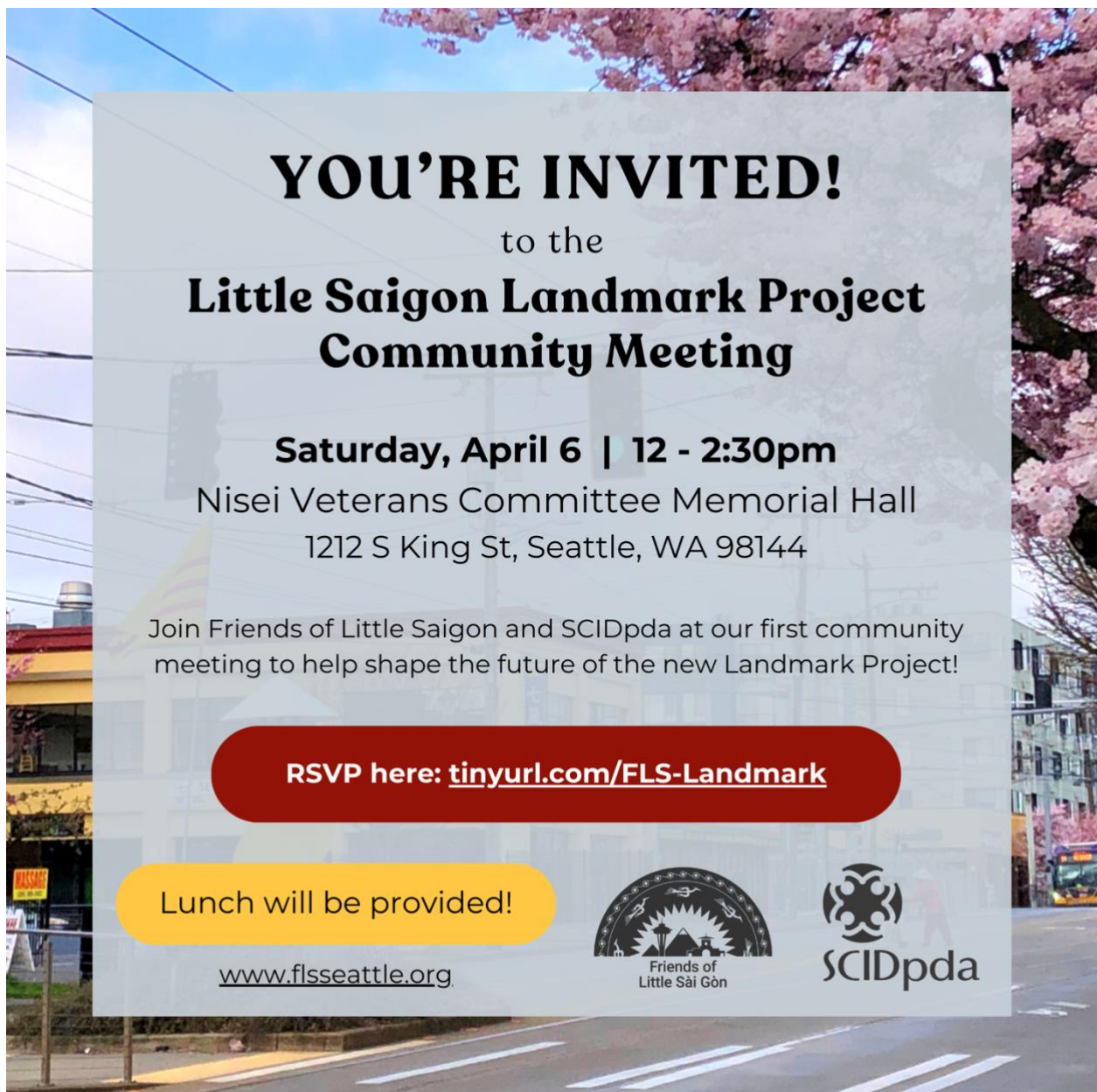
What do you want to feel?
Bạn muốn cảm nhận những cảm xúc gì?

Appendix F – Community Meeting Agenda

Time	Activity (Facilitator)
12-12:30pm	Welcome and Project Introduction (Quynh) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce interpreter • Invite participants to help themselves to food before the presentation • Describe project history • Show renderings/designs • SCIDpda will give overview of housing (Josh/Jared) *simultaneous interpretation reminder to speakers.
12:30-12:40	Project Q&A (Quynh and SCIDpda) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are invited to ask clarifying questions about the project before conversations
12:40-12:45	World Café Introduction (Elena) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landmark Committee, FLS staff, and SCIDpda staff will be table facilitators • Big poster-sized sticky notes and pens on tables • 4-5 people per table (excluding facilitator/note taker) • Vietnamese and English speakers will have separate tables
12:45-1:05	Round 1 Conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What programming would make you want to visit the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center?
1:05-1:15	Round 1 Share Out (Elena) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table facilitators/note takers share on 1-2 main takeaways • Someone takes notes on big easel at the front • After each round, participants move to another random table to mix up discussion groups
1:15-1:25	Break Draw 2 raffle tickets
1:25-1:45	Round 2 Conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the VCEC reflect Vietnamese culture in Seattle?
1:45-1:55	Round 2 Share Out (Elena) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table facilitators/note takers share on 1-2 main takeaways • Someone takes notes on big easel at the front
1:55-2:20	Harvest/Idea Sharing (Elena) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moment of reflection on conversations and group notes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite participants to share reflections on 2 rounds of conversation and takeaways • Goal to build on ideas, share reflections across table groups
2:20-2:30	<p>Closing and Next Steps (Quynh)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank everyone for coming • Next steps for engagement and project timeline • Draw 2 raffle tickets

Appendix G – Community Meeting Invitation (English)



YOU'RE INVITED!
to the
**Little Saigon Landmark Project
Community Meeting**



Saturday, April 6 | 12 - 2:30pm
Nisei Veterans Committee Memorial Hall
1212 S King St, Seattle, WA 98144

Join Friends of Little Saigon and SCIDpda at our first community meeting to help shape the future of the new Landmark Project!

RSVP here: tinyurl.com/FLS-Landmark

Lunch will be provided!

www.flsseattle.org

Appendix H – World Café Facilitation Guide

Landmark Meeting - Facilitation Guide

Thank you for agreeing to facilitate a table at the community meeting! We are using a meeting style called the World Café to gather community input through small group conversations. This would not be possible without table facilitators like you. Below is a description of the World Café method:

The World Café method is designed to create a safe, welcoming environment in which to intentionally connect multiple ideas and perspectives on a topic by engaging participants in several rounds of small-group conversation.¹

It's important to understand that hosting a World Café is not the same thing as facilitating break-out groups. A properly facilitated World Café is about more than just enabling a discussion among a subset of people in a larger group. Some core features of a World Café are:

- **A feeling of welcoming.** *“Attention is paid to creating a hospitable space... Café facilitators are true hosts – creating a spirit of welcome that is missing from most of our processes.”*
- **Diversity.** *“How can we create an accurate picture of the whole if we don't honor the fact that we each see something different because of who we are and where we sit in the system?”*
- **Movement.** *“In the World Café process, people generally move... As we move, we leave behind our roles, our preconceptions, our certainty... and become bigger.”*

Goals of this Community Meeting

- Identify specific ideas for events, food, mobile vending, art, and other activities to plan for programming that meet community needs
- Understand how community members want to experience the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center, including sights, smells, sounds, emotions, and symbols that the architects can reflect in the design

Main Roles of Table Facilitator

- Create a welcoming environment for idea sharing within your small group
- Encourage all participants to contribute to the discussion in ways that feel comfortable
 - Acknowledge that different ways of participating are all valid (speaking, drawing, writing, etc.)
 - We'll collect the big papers on the tables at the end as additional notes, so hopefully participants will write on them!
- Redirect discussion back to the main question if it starts to go off the rails
- Decide with note taker who will share out main points at the end of each round

Agenda

- 12-12:30: Project introduction
- 12:30-12:40: Q&A
- 12:40-12:45: World Café introduction
- **12:45-1:05: Round 1 Discussion - facilitator involvement**
- **1:05-1:15: Share out - facilitator involvement**
- 1:15-1:25: Break, participants find new tables
- **1:25-1:45: Round 2 Discussion (new group) - facilitator involvement**
- **1:45-1:55: Share out - facilitator involvement**
- 1:55-2:20: Harvest (whole group idea sharing)
- 2:20-2:30: Closing

Example Icebreaker (to start each round of discussion)

- Everyone goes around and introduces themselves
- Icebreaker ideas (choose 1 or make up your own):
 - Why did you come to this meeting?
 - What's the best food you ate this week?
 - If you were an Olympic athlete, what sport would you want to compete in?

Ask During Round 1 Only: How did you hear about this event?

Main Questions (2 rounds, 20 min each):

- 1. What programming would make you want to visit the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center?**
 - a. What events, workshops, food, mobile vendors, art, and other activities would you like to see there?
- 2. How can the VCEC reflect Vietnamese culture in Seattle?**
 - a. What sights, smells, and sounds do you want to experience?
 - b. Are there any stories, folklore, or icons that speak to you?

Facilitation Tips

1. Start with the bolded question and ask the sub-questions as follow ups/prompts
 - a. For Question 1, make sure to prompt about the different types of programming during the discussion so all can be touched on (events, workshops, etc.)
2. If the conversation starts to veer into unrelated topics, acknowledge the importance of what they're saying, ask the note taker to write it down, and remind participants of the goals and scope of this meeting
 - a. Goals and scope: understanding community desires for the Vietnamese Cultural and Economic Center

Questions that might come up and how to answer them:

- Refer to *Landmark One-Pager FAQ* for key project answers such as timeline, funders, owners, and how to get involved.

- Q: What is the name of the cultural center? Is the name the Little Saigon Landmark?
 - A: FLS will work with the Landmark Advisory Group to develop a name. The Little Saigon Landmark is the **project** name which includes both the housing and the cultural center. The Vietnamese Culture and Economic Center is the **project name or description** for the cultural center component of the project.
- Q: How much fundraising do you have left?
 - A: For the Vietnamese Culture and Economic Center, we're seeking ~\$3 million. We anticipate hosting a community fundraising in the coming year.
- Q: There is already a Vietnamese Cultural Center, why are you building another one?
 - A: The Vietnamese Cultural Center in West Seattle is a great community asset, but it serves different purposes. It is important to have multiple community spaces and assets to serve the diverse needs of our community. We hope this project will inspire future projects and collaboration within the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Community.
- Q: Will there be parking?
 - A: FLS will be working out an arrangement with nearby parking lots to provide accessible parking.

¹ <https://www.fsg.org/resource/guide-world-caf%c3%a9-method/>