

# LITTLE SAIGON, ORANGE COUNTY: A DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

*Presented by Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting*



**CSUF**

**COLLEGE OF  
Business  
and Economics**

# LITTLE SAIGON, ORANGE COUNTY: A DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

*Prepared by*

**Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting  
College of Business and Economics  
California State University, Fullerton**

**Anil Puri, Ph.D.**  
*Project Director*

**Aaron Popp, Ph.D.**  
*Project Co-Director*

**Adrian Fleissig, Ph.D.**  
*Project Co-Director*

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## FOREWORD

As a fellow business and community leader, I am honored to share with you the first-ever economic report on Little Saigon—a historic moment for our community. Little Saigon has long been a symbol of resilience and entrepreneurial spirit, serving as a thriving center for Vietnamese Americans and a key part of our region's economy. The Little Saigon Orange County: A Demographic and Economic Profile marks an important milestone in our efforts to understand and guide the future of our community.

I want to thank the teams at Cal State Fullerton—especially the University Advancement, College of Business and Economics, Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting and the Small Business Development Center—for their support in producing this invaluable report.

This study offers crucial insights into where we stand today, highlighting key trends and opportunities that will shape our growth. Whether you're a seasoned business owner or an aspiring entrepreneur, the data and analysis in this report will help you make informed decisions for the future and guide strategic actions to drive success and development within the community.

Little Saigon's success has always been rooted in its people and our shared commitment to collaboration. I encourage all of us to use this analysis as a tool to drive collective growth and ensure that Little Saigon remains a beacon of cultural and economic vitality for years to come.

Together, we can continue building a prosperous future for our community.

Go Titans,

**Tâm T. Nguyễn, MD, MBA**

CSUF MBA Class of 2005

Chair, CSUF Philanthropic Foundation Board of Governors 2022-2024

Proud Little Saigon Business Owner, Advance Beauty College 1987-2024

## *FOREWORD*

At the College of Business and Economics, we are guided by dual missions: an “academic” mission to provide thought leadership through research, and a “community” mission to drive positive impact in our region. The inaugural Little Saigon Demographic and Economic Profile is a first-of-its-kind study highlighting the incredible progress made by Vietnamese Americans in Orange County over the past fifty years. It also serves as a benchmark allowing us to effectively plan for the continued growth of this community in the future.

The report provides a comprehensive look at the expanding geographical boundaries of Little Saigon, now encompassing Fountain Valley, Garden Grove, Santa Ana and Westminster. It also captures key shifts in the demographic and economic landscape of Little Saigon, illustrating the strides made by the Vietnamese American community. While this progress is impressive, there remains important work ahead to help this community achieve full economic parity within Orange County. This publication offers essential insights for policymakers, business leaders and other stakeholders to inform future actions and decisions.

I want to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Tam Nguyen for his leadership and for commissioning this project, as well as to Cal State Fullerton and the OCIE SBDC for their support. I am also incredibly proud of the team at the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting for their outstanding work on this report, which will serve as a cornerstone for the continued development of Little Saigon and our region.

**Dr. Sridhar Sundaram**

Dean, College of Business and Economics

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**Data appendices are available upon request.**

Please contact Anil Puri via email  
([apuri@fullerton.edu](mailto:apuri@fullerton.edu)) for  
more information.

# LITTLE SAIGON, ORANGE COUNTY: A DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, 1.5 million to 2.5 million Vietnamese residents emigrated abroad. The first wave of immigrants arrived in the United States in 1975, and the second wave was prolonged between 1978 and the early 1990s. Vietnamese communities became established throughout the U.S. The largest are in Orange County, San Diego and San Jose, California; Arlington, Garland and Houston, Texas; Boston, Massachusetts; Falls Church, Virginia; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Seattle, Washington. These communities established their own restaurants, grocery stores, and small businesses in geographically concentrated areas and their own economic, social, and cultural identities.

### **Growth of Little Saigon, Orange County**

The largest and oldest Vietnamese community in the U.S. is in Orange County, California. Bolsa Avenue in the city of Westminster became a hub in the beginning and remains a center of activity, with many shops, restaurants, and businesses surrounding the Asian Garden Mall and Little Saigon Plaza. The city of Westminster passed Resolution No. 2661 in April 1988, to recognize the Little Saigon area as a commercial area of the Vietnamese community and designated a 1.5-mile stretch of Bolsa Avenue as the Little Saigon Tourist Commercial District. Then California Governor George Deukmejian went to the Asian Garden Mall on June 17, 1988, to officially recognize the Little Saigon District as a commercial and tourism center in Orange County. Community activist and Westminster City Councilman Tony Lam played a prominent role in promoting the Little Saigon freeway signs. Governor Deukmejian introduced the directional signs to the Little Saigon area from Interstate 405 and State Route 22 in 1988. The 405 freeway from Bolsa Chica to Magnolia Avenue was designated the “Little Saigon Freeway.”

Little Saigon continued to expand into neighboring cities. In addition to multiple restaurants, delis, supermarkets, strip malls, and banks (First Vietnamese American Bank and Saigon National Bank most noteworthy), media and entertainment industries began to grow in the area, including Vietnamese newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and Vietnamese language TV stations.

The Asian Garden Mall and Village Center is an iconic landmark in Little Saigon. This two-story building houses Asian Garden Mall (Phước Lộc Thọ), which opened in 1987 on Bolsa Avenue. Developer Frank Jao built it for \$15 million. The Asian Garden Mall has many shops, restaurants, and entertainment businesses. During summer weekend nights, it hosts the Asian Garden Night Market.

News media and television stations led the growth of cultural and entertainment outlets. Ethnic newspapers included *The Little Saigon News*, *Vien Dong Daily News*, *Việt Báo Daily News*, and the newspapers of *Nguoi Viet*. Little Saigon Radio and Radio Bolsa are two popular Vietnamese radio stations. There were also broadcasts of Little Saigon TV, SBTN TV, VietFace TV, VNATV, and Saigon TV.

The Vietnamese Lunar New Year, known as **Tết Festival (Tết Nguyên Đán)**, stands as the pinnacle of Vietnamese cultural celebration each year. It celebrates the new spring season, marking a time for families to come together in joyous reunions. Amidst colorful festivities, Tết offers a respite from the trials of the past year, fostering hope and anticipation for the year ahead. It is a cherished occasion where bonds are strengthened, and optimism reigns supreme.

The annual Tết celebrations are held across Orange County, including at the Asian Garden Mall, Mile Square Regional Park in Fountain Valley, Garden Grove, and Santa Ana. The Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce has been celebrating it since 1996. The OC Fair and Event Center had its 10th annual Tết festival in 2024, celebrating the Year of the Dragon. Thousands of people attend the celebration, which is broadcast live on local Vietnamese-language TV and radio stations. By 2024, the festival attracted over 15,000 attendees, with additional viewership estimated to be 250,000 globally across multiple streaming and TV channels. Orange County's Little Saigon remains the largest and most influential community for Vietnamese Americans in the United States.

**Orange County's  
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## II. LITTLE SAIGON, ORANGE COUNTY DEFINED

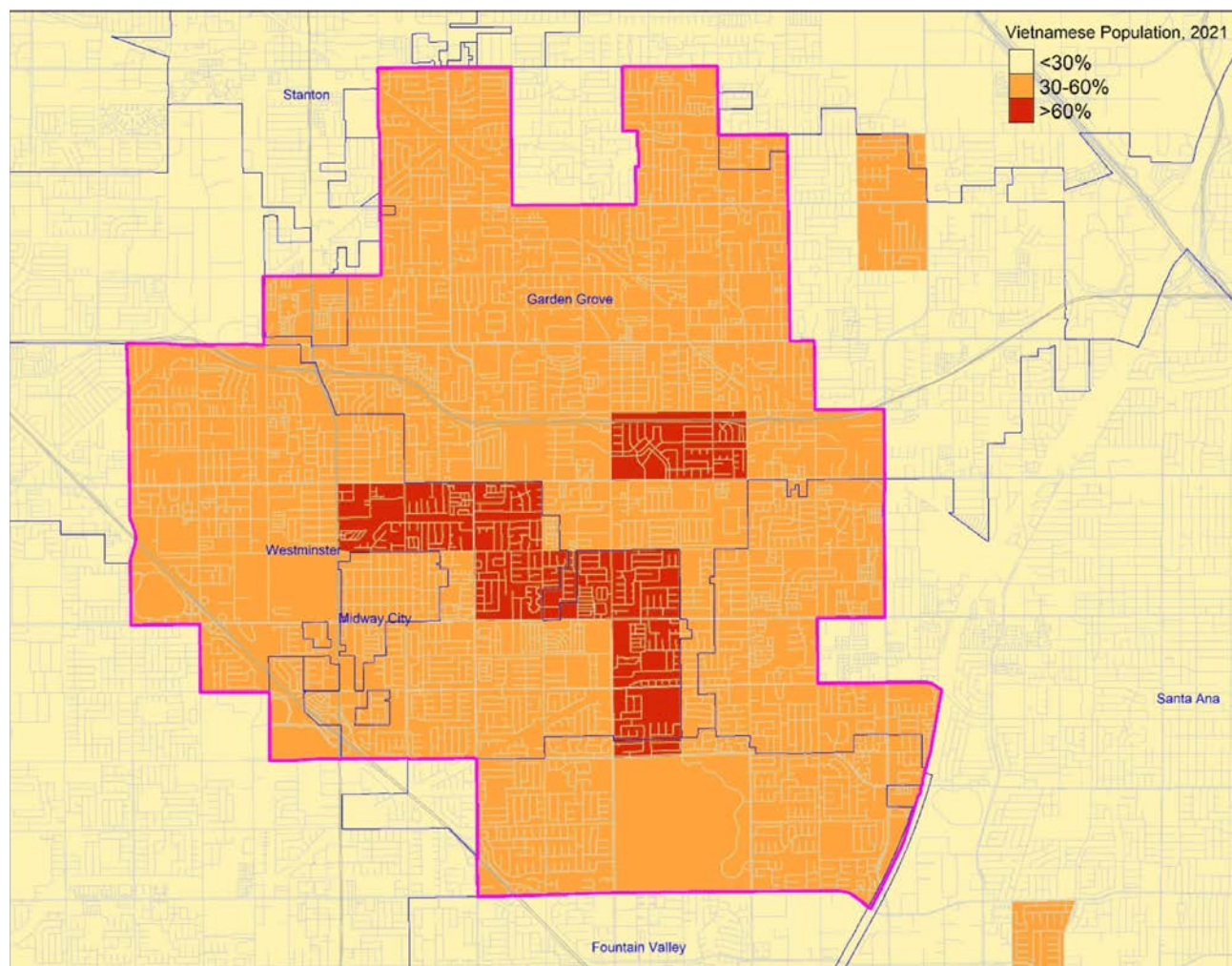
Using a population-based approach used in the academic literature to distinguish ethnic enclaves, we define Little Saigon as a collection of neighborhoods with a substantial population of Vietnamese residents. Specifically, we used American Community Survey data (and decennial census data historically) to find an adjacent collection of census tracts, including the historical Little Saigon boundary, where the population of people who are Vietnamese alone or Vietnamese in combination with other races is 30% or more of the population<sup>1</sup>. These criteria yield the borders for Little Saigon using 2021 American Community Survey estimates in Figure 1. Table 2 lists the 41 census tracts of Little Saigon and their Vietnamese population for census tracts in Little Saigon according to 2021 American Community Survey data.

The area in the boundaries contains an estimated 46.1% of the population in Orange County describing themselves as Vietnamese alone in the 2021 American Community Survey five-year estimates (99,585 of 215,546)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>The 2000 Census was the first to allow respondents to choose two or more races, so data from the 1980 Census and 1990 Census use the share of the population that is Vietnamese alone.

<sup>2</sup>DP05-line 50 (Detailed tables referred to in the report are available upon request).

**FIGURE 1: 2021 Borders of Little Saigon**



The criteria we use do not require the ethnic Vietnamese percentage to be a majority of the area’s population, which is consistent with the literature on ethnic enclaves. For example, Logan et al. (2011)<sup>3</sup> discuss that past studies have had a variety of criteria that effectively ranged from 10% to 35% of a tract’s population, and our 30% criterion is in the upper part of the range for similar criteria of ethnic enclaves.

We do not suggest that the borders of Little Saigon used in this report define a neighborhood that excludes other large ethnic groups. Instead, the borders of Little Saigon delimit a connected area where a significant share of the population is Vietnamese. The definition of Little Saigon we use does not assume that the area is an ethnic enclave solely influenced by Vietnamese culture and language. For example, Koreatown in Garden Grove is inside the 2021 boundary we define, and there are large Hispanic neighborhoods on the west side of Santa Ana. Instead, the borders of Little Saigon have a substantial share of the population having Vietnamese heritage.

**The borders of Little Saigon delimit a connected area where a significant share of the population is Vietnamese.**

<sup>3</sup>Logan, John R., Seth Spielman, Hongwei Xu, and Philip N. Klein. "Identifying and bounding ethnic neighborhoods." *Urban Geography* 32, no. 3 (2011): 334-359.

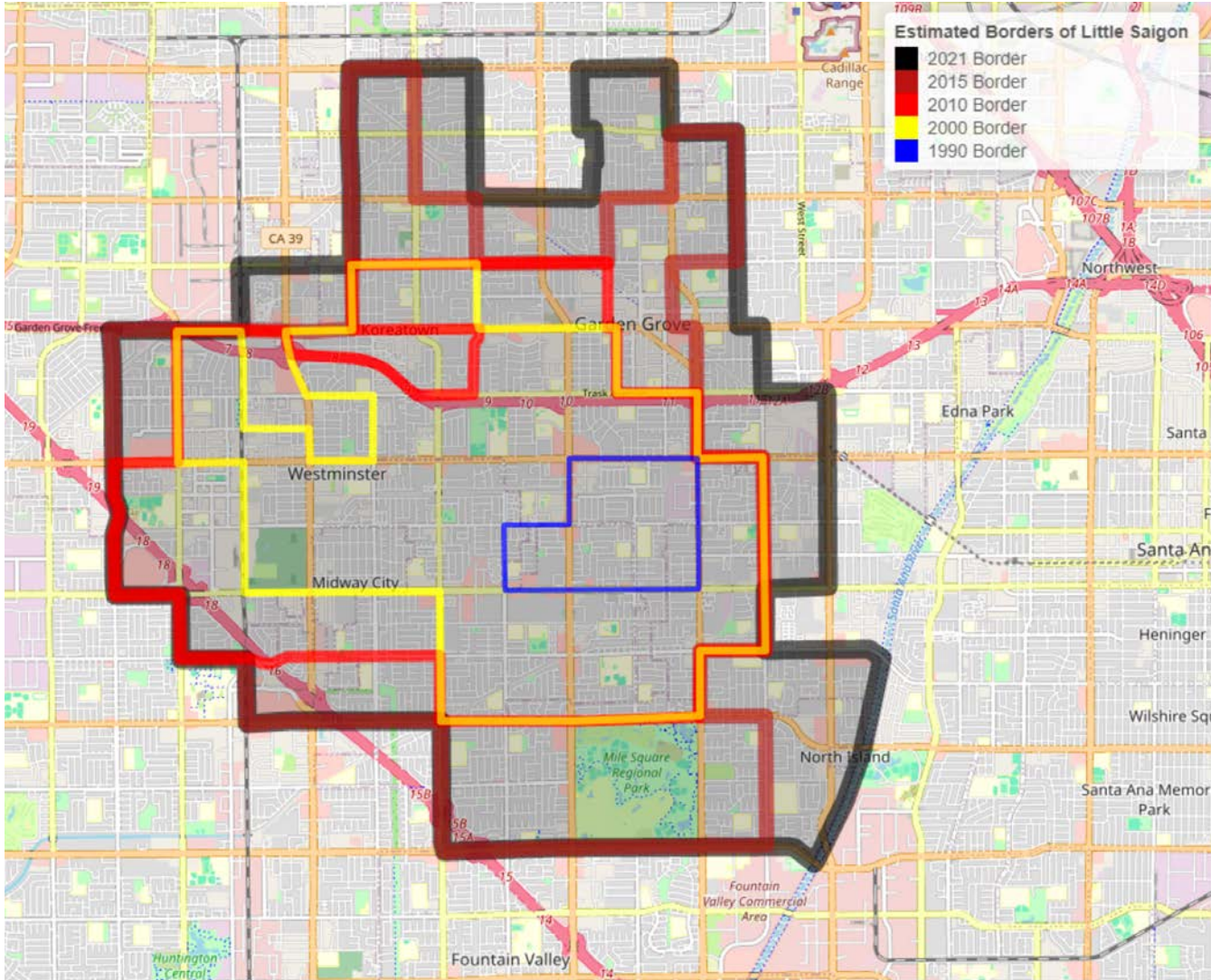


**TABLE 2: CENSUS TRACTS OF LITTLE SAIGON, 2021**

Census Tract	Total Population	Vietnamese Population	% Vietnamese
889.04	4,890	3,852	78.8
889.05	4,939	3,558	72.0
998.03	5,893	3,864	65.6
889.02	5,543	3,490	63.0
992.04	5,167	3,144	60.8
992.23	5,538	3,116	56.3
890.01	6,083	3,329	54.7
889.01	6,729	3,592	53.4
889.03	8,643	4,542	52.6
992.47	2,836	1,485	52.4
887.02	6,001	3,130	52.2
992.22	5,465	2,846	52.1
992.03	5,386	2,776	51.5
888.02	5,403	2,759	51.1
997.01	6,550	3,306	50.5
992.24	3,190	1,584	49.7
997.02	8,304	4,040	48.7
998.02	4,611	2,178	47.2
881.07	6,175	2,894	46.9
887.01	6,134	2,696	44.0
999.04	5,737	2,418	42.1
999.03	5,610	2,324	41.4
880.01	4,673	1,911	40.9
880.02	4,270	1,713	40.1
881.05	4,685	1,876	40.0
992.26	3,777	1,429	37.8
886.01	7,481	2,824	37.7
888.01	7,657	2,784	36.4
883.01	5,797	2,078	35.8
881.06	5,244	1,874	35.7
882.03	5,207	1,835	35.2
886.02	4,471	1,538	34.4
996.01	7,510	2,573	34.3
992.27	5,910	2,018	34.1
890.04	6,517	2,192	33.6
890.03	4,446	1,489	33.5
997.03	5,674	1,881	33.2
992.25	4,049	1,307	32.3
992.02	7,242	2,324	32.1
998.01	6,260	1,930	30.8
883.02	6,287	1,919	30.5

To see how Little Saigon has expanded in Orange County, the decennial census from 1980, 1990, and 2000, and American Community Survey data from 2005 and 2021 are used. Figure 3 below shows the boundaries of Little Saigon based on 2021 American Community Survey data.

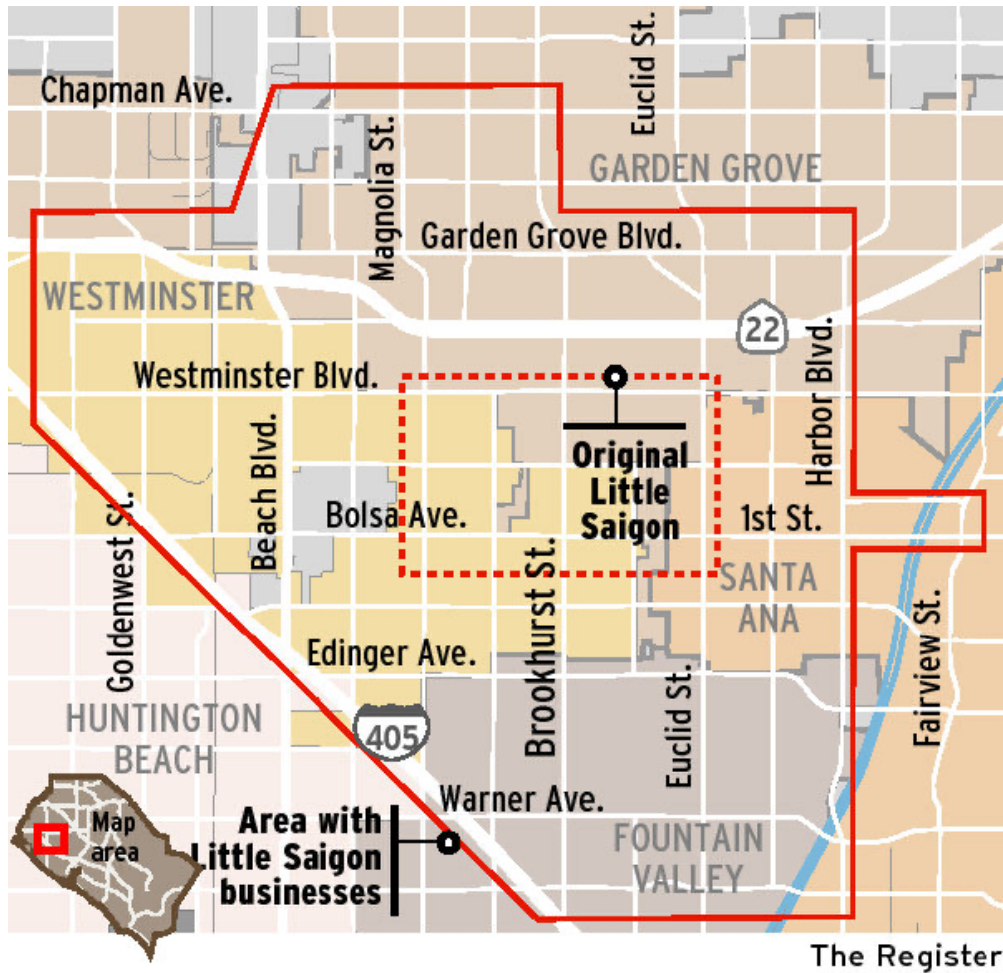
**FIGURE 3: POPULATION-BASED BORDERS OF LITTLE SAIGON OVER TIME**



### Comparison with Other Definitions of Little Saigon

Our delineation of Little Saigon over time broadly agrees with formal and informal historical definitions of it.

**FIGURE 4: APPROXIMATE BORDERS OF LITTLE SAIGON IN 2013 ACCORDING TO THE OC REGISTER**



The Little Saigon business district designated by former Governor Deukmejian in 1988 was bounded by Euclid Street to the east, Magnolia Street to the west, Westminister Boulevard to the north, and Bolsa Avenue to the south. Today, the Vietnamese community has expanded beyond those boundaries. Figure 4 is from an *Orange County Register* article in 2013<sup>4</sup>, and it shows the original Little Saigon boundaries and their assessment of the boundaries of Little Saigon businesses at that time.

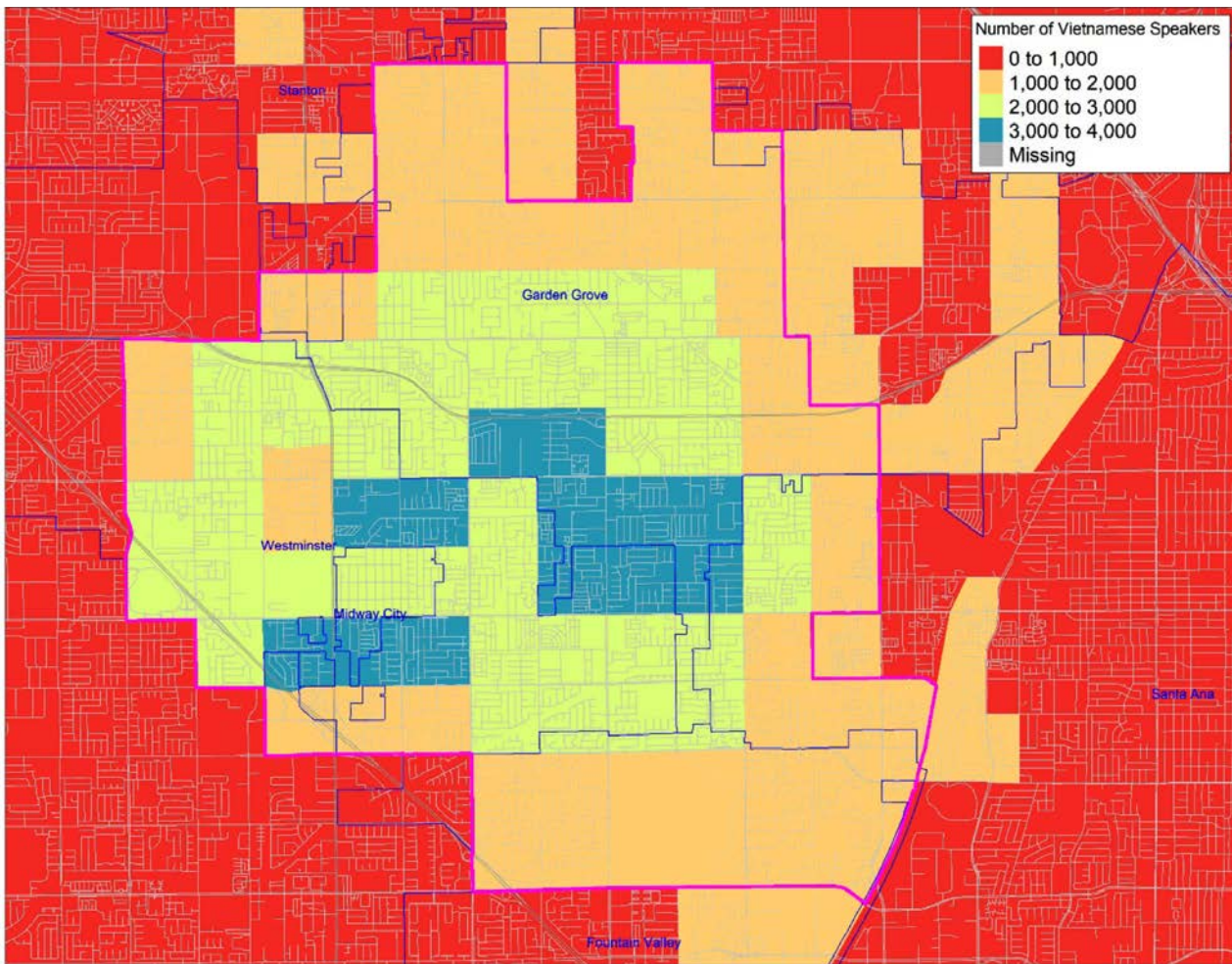
<sup>4</sup>“Little Saigon turns 25” by Doug Morino and Kendra Ablaza, *The Orange County Register*, June 17, 2013.

Our 1990 population-based estimates of Little Saigon encompass most of the eastern end of the original Little Saigon boundaries, and the western end of the original boundaries included many Vietnamese businesses and the Asian Garden Mall.

Compared to our map based on the 2015 population, the *Orange County Register's* assessment matches well, except that the *Register's* review of Little Saigon business boundaries reaches less far north in Garden Grove than ours. This difference makes sense since many neighborhoods in the northern part of Garden Grove are primarily residential, not commercial, and the *Register's* assessment was based on areas with Vietnamese businesses.

We believe that any language-based definition of Little Saigon would be similar to our results since all census tracts in our definition of Little Saigon contain a substantial share of residents who speak Vietnamese at home as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

**FIGURE 5: NUMBER OF PEOPLE SPEAKING VIETNAMESE AT HOME (2022 ACS)**



## Estimation of Economic and Demographic Statistics for Little Saigon

In sections below, we examine the economic and demographic characteristics of Little Saigon residents and compare them to Orange County residents. Little Saigon is not an officially designated city or other jurisdiction, so the United States Census Bureau and other government agencies do not have any official estimates of statistics about it. However, the Census Bureau conducts the American Community Survey (ACS), which estimates national, state, county, and local economic and demographic information annually. The Census constructs the following data profile reports to distribute commonly requested information about different jurisdictions:

- DP-02: Selected Social Characteristics
- DP-03: Selected Economic Characteristics
- DP-04: Selected Housing Characteristics
- DP-05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

We collected these reports for Orange County, and we constructed estimates of these statistics for Little Saigon building up from the census tract level<sup>5</sup>.

The estimates in the data profiles have three different types of statistics: counts, means, and medians. We estimate counts for Little Saigon, such as the total Vietnamese population of Little Saigon, by summing the estimates of the counts across all 41 Little Saigon census tracts in Table 2 from the American Community Survey. We estimate means, such as the mean commuting time, using the weighted mean of the estimates across the Little Saigon census tracts. We estimate medians, such as median household income, using the weighted median of the estimates across Little Saigon census tracts. We do not have access to the confidential raw responses of the ACS, so the estimates we produce for Little Saigon are not official estimates from the US Census Bureau. Instead, they are our best estimates based on publicly available data. Another common statistic in the report is the percentage, such as the percentage of the population that is Vietnamese. We estimate these percentages using the appropriate counts of those variables<sup>6</sup>.

We use the latest available data from the ACS as of the writing of this report, which are the 2022 ACS estimates while using mostly the latest 2021 Little Saigon boundaries. We use the 5-year estimates, which combine five years of survey data for better accuracy at the local level.

**Little Saigon is not an officially designated city or other jurisdiction, so the United States Census Bureau and other government agencies do not have any official estimates of statistics about it. However, the Census Bureau conducts the American Community Survey (ACS), which estimates national, state, county, and local economic and demographic information annually.**

<sup>5</sup>The detailed tables are available upon request.

<sup>6</sup>For example,  $(\text{total Vietnamese population}/\text{total population}) \times 100$ .

### III. DEMOGRAPHICS

Little Saigon’s population has grown over time at a rate faster than that of Orange County as a whole. Table 6 below shows the growth of Little Saigon and the Vietnamese population between 1980 and 2022:

**TABLE 6: LITTLE SAIGON AND ORANGE COUNTY POPULATION, 1980-2022<sup>7</sup>**

Year	Vietnamese Pop. in Little Saigon	Total Pop. in Little Saigon	Vietnamese Pop. in Orange County	Total Pop. of Orange County	% of Vietnamese in Little Saigon	Vietnamese % of Orange County
1980	-	-	19,333	1,932,709	-	1.0
1990	4,151	12,451	71,822	2,410,556	5.8	3.0
2000	44,685	109,562	135,548	2,846,289	33.0	4.8
2010	57,771	127,213	170,256	2,965,525	33.9	5.7
2015	82,489	185,934	195,351	3,116,069	42.2	6.3
2022	99,585	229,314	215,546	3,175,227	46.2	6.8

The table shows that the Vietnamese population has grown substantially. As of 2022, the population of Little Saigon stood at 229,314, while that of Orange County was 3,175,227, making Little Saigon’s population 7.2% of Orange County<sup>8</sup>. However, much of the population growth is due to immigration from Vietnam over this period, as explained later in this section.

The age profile of Little Saigon is older than that of Orange County since the median age of people in Little Saigon at 41 years is older than for Orange County (39 years)<sup>9</sup> as of 2022. For example, 19.9% of Little Saigon’s population is below 18 years of age compared to 21.4% for Orange County<sup>10</sup>. The share of 20-44 age group is 31.8% for Little Saigon and 33.9% for Orange County<sup>11</sup>. In other words, Little Saigon’s population share of those below age 45 is lower than that for Orange County, 54.6% versus 58%<sup>12</sup>.

Little Saigon has a larger share of the population in middle and older ages from 45 years and older. The group 45-64 is 14% of Little Saigon’s population compared to 12.9% in Orange County<sup>13</sup>. 16.5% of Little Saigon’s population is 65 and older compared to 15.4% for Orange County<sup>14</sup>.

Age-Sex population pyramids provide a more detailed profile for age as well as sex, as shown below in Figure 7<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>7</sup>Sources: 1980 Census, 1990 Census, and 2000 Census summary files; 2010-2022 ACS DP-05 rows 30 and 47.

<sup>8</sup>Table DP-05, line 1.

<sup>9</sup>Table DP-05, line 7.

<sup>10</sup>Table DP-05, line 18.

<sup>11</sup>Computed from Table DP-05, lines 1 and 8-10.

<sup>12</sup>Computed from Table DP-05, lines 1 and 4-10.

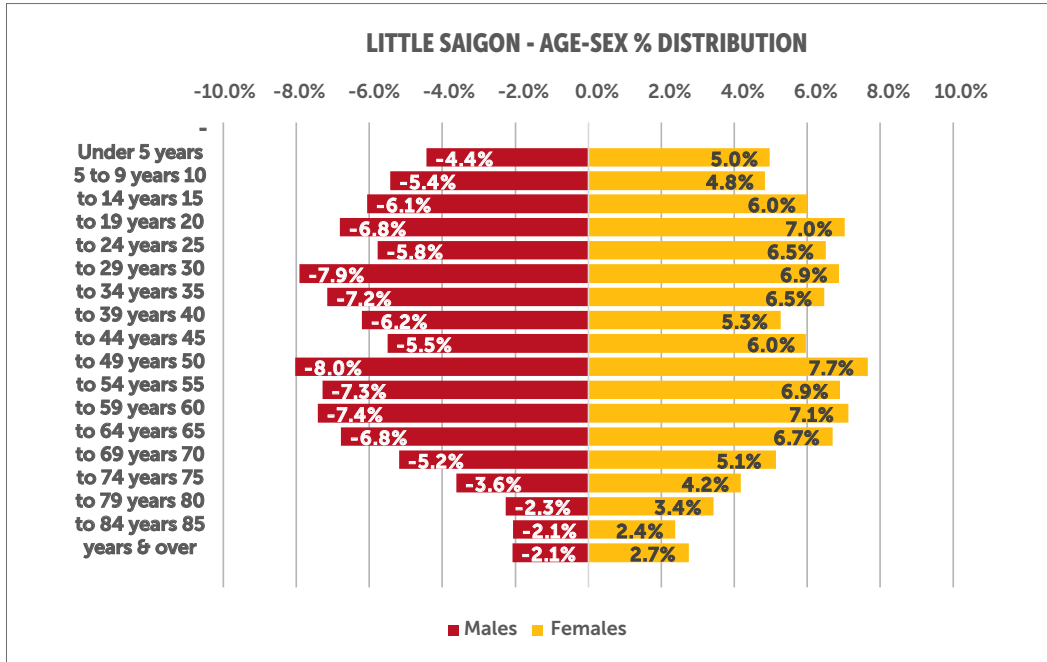
<sup>13</sup>Computed from Table DP-05, lines 1, 11, and 12.

<sup>14</sup>Table DP-05, line 13.

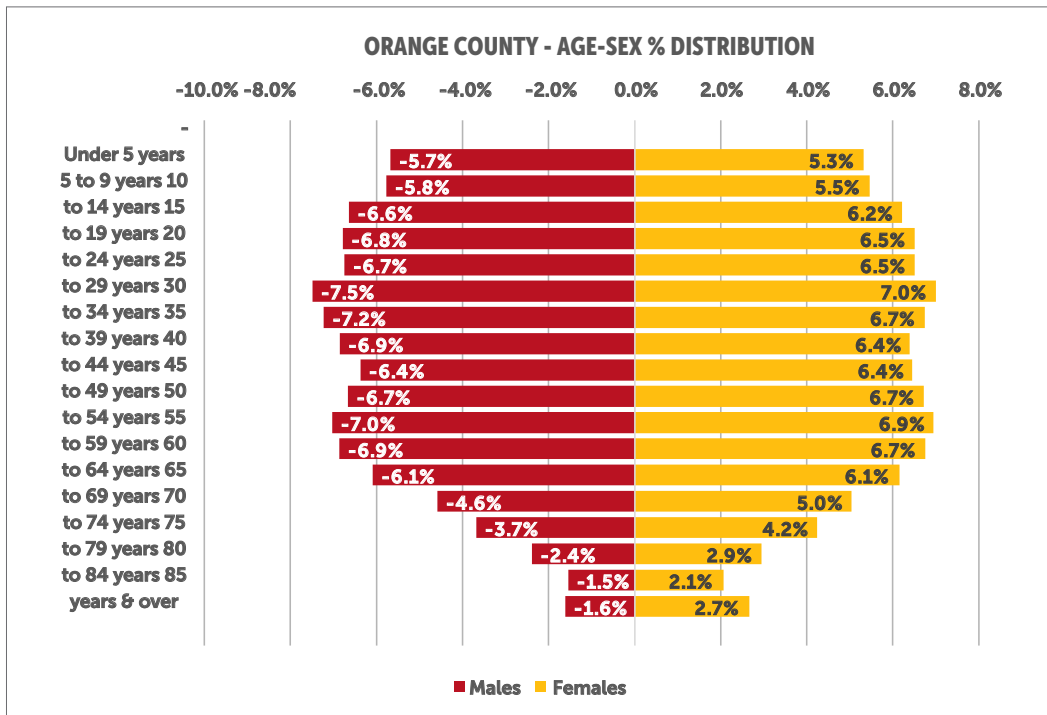
<sup>15</sup>Computed using 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates for each age profile.

Both regions have healthy, well-distributed profiles where no single cohort dominates the pyramid.

**FIGURE 7: LITTLE SAIGON'S AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION PYRAMID, 2022**



**FIGURE 8: ORANGE COUNTY'S AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION PYRAMID, 2022**



In terms of racial makeup, 92.3% of Little Saigon residents reported being of a single race, while the proportion was 88% for Orange County<sup>16</sup>. Of these, 23.3% were White alone, 1.15% Black alone, and 52.8% Asian alone for Little Saigon, while the proportions for Orange County were 50.2% White alone, 1.7% Black alone, and 21.7% Asian alone<sup>17</sup>. In Little Saigon, 43.4% of the population reported being Vietnamese, while the proportion was 6.8% for Orange County<sup>18</sup>.

Finally, of the total population, 28.5% in Little Saigon reported being of Hispanic origin, while the proportion was 33.9% for Orange County<sup>19</sup>. There is a substantial proportion of people of Hispanic origin in the Little Saigon area, though as a percentage, it is smaller than that for the county.

### Place of Birth and Citizenship

Little Saigon makes up 7.2% of the Orange County population, of which 50.6% are native-born compared to 70.5% for Orange County. In other words, 49.4% of the Little Saigon population is foreign-born compared to 29.5% for Orange County<sup>20</sup>. Of those foreign-born, 70.4% of the Little Saigon population is naturalized compared to 57.9% of the overall county population<sup>21</sup>. Of the foreign-born, 29.6% of the Little Saigon population is non-citizen compared to 42.1% for Orange County (these could be people with immigrant or other kind of visas)<sup>22</sup>. Of the foreign-born residents, 74.5% in Little Saigon come from Asia and 22.6% from Latin America, compared to 51.2% and 38.9%, respectively, for Orange County<sup>23</sup>.

English as the only language spoken at home occurs in 28.7% of Little Saigon households compared to 54.4% for Orange County<sup>24</sup>. Where English is not the only language spoken, 39.8% speak it “less than well” in Little Saigon compared to 18% in Orange County<sup>25</sup>. Spanish is spoken at 22.4% of the Little Saigon homes compared to 24.3% for the county<sup>26</sup>. The share of Asian and Pacific Islander language speakers is 46.8% in Little Saigon and 15.3% for the county<sup>27</sup>.

**49.4% of the Little Saigon population is foreign-born compared to 29.5% for Orange County.**

**The share of Asian and Pacific Islander language speakers is 46.8% in Little Saigon and 15.3% for the county.**

<sup>16</sup>Computed using Table DP-05, line 55.

<sup>17</sup>Table DP-05, lines 34, 35, and 41.

<sup>18</sup>Table DP-05, line 47.

<sup>19</sup>Table DP-05, line 70.

<sup>20</sup>Table DP-02, line 89.

<sup>21</sup>Table DP-02, line 96.

<sup>22</sup>Table DP-02, line 97.

<sup>23</sup>Table DP-02, lines 107 and 110.

<sup>24</sup>Table DP-02, line 113.

<sup>25</sup>Table DP-02, line 115.

<sup>26</sup>Table DP-02, line 117.

<sup>27</sup>Table DP-02, line 121.



## IV. ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE IN LITTLE SAIGON

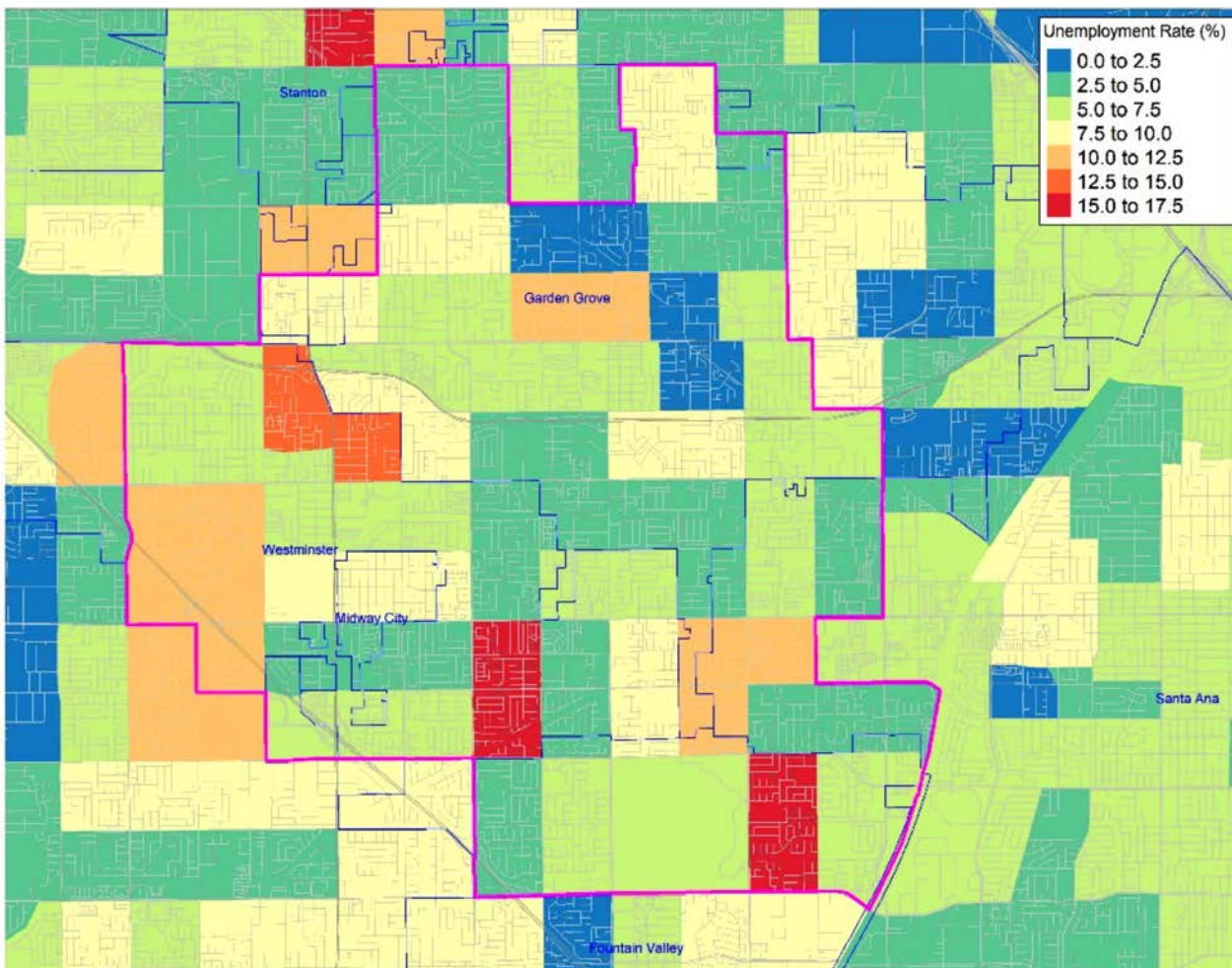
This section describes the general economic characteristics of residents of Little Saigon compared to Orange County in 2022. A discussion of Little Saigon from businesses' perspective is in Section VIII below.

### Employment and Unemployment

Little Saigon has a weaker labor market than Orange County as shown by key labor market indicators. The unemployment rate calculates the percentage of the labor force (employed and unemployed) who do not have a job but are actively looking for one. Little Saigon had a higher unemployment rate and a lower employment-population ratio than Orange County in 2022. The unemployment rate of Little Saigon was 6.7%, which was higher than the Orange County unemployment rate of 5.4%<sup>28</sup>. Figure 9 below shows the unemployment rate in Little Saigon by census tract in 2022 with Little Saigon's borders in purple:

**Little Saigon has a weaker labor market than Orange County as shown by key labor market indicators.**

**FIGURE 9: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY CENSUS TRACT**



<sup>28</sup>Table DP-03, line 9.

The unemployment rates differ within Little Saigon. The highest unemployment rates within Little Saigon were in the southern parts east of Mile Square Regional Park and the neighborhood around and south of the Asian Garden Mall, where unemployment rates are above 15%. The lowest unemployment rates are in the northern part of Garden Grove and along Westminster Ave. in the eastern part of Little Saigon where unemployment rates are below 5%.

The employment-population ratio is the percentage of the population 16 years or older that is employed, and a lower employment-population ratio means that fewer adults are working. The employment-population ratio in 2022 was 56.9% in Little Saigon versus 62% in Orange County<sup>29</sup>.

The lower employment-population ratio in Little Saigon reflects lower participation by Little Saigon residents in the workforce. Several factors could contribute to this lower participation. First, Little Saigon residents are older and more likely to be closer to retirement age than the typical Orange County residents. As noted above, 16.5% of Little Saigon residents in 2022 were 65 years and older versus 15.4% of Orange County residents<sup>30</sup>. The median age of Little Saigon residents was 41 years versus 39 years for Orange County residents<sup>31</sup>. Second, Little Saigon residents of typical working age are more likely to be disabled. In Little Saigon, about 7.5% of residents 18 to 64 years old were disabled versus 6.2% in Orange County<sup>32</sup>. Third, Little Saigon families with young children are more likely to have a parent staying at home than Orange County families. Of workers with children under 6 years old, 61.1% of them were in households with all parents in the labor force versus 65.6% in Orange County<sup>33</sup>. Long-term differences in female labor force participation cannot explain lower overall labor force participation. While the employment-population ratio for women is lower in Little Saigon compared to Orange County (52.1% vs. 55.8%), the gap between Little Saigon's and Orange County's employment-population ratio for men is far larger (61.6% vs. 68.3%)<sup>34</sup>. Childcare, disability, and an aging workforce are all also reasons why the national employment-population ratio has been falling<sup>35</sup>.

**The lower employment-population ratio in Little Saigon reflects lower participation by Little Saigon residents in the workforce.**

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<sup>29</sup>Calculated as  $\text{employment}/(\text{population 16 and over}) \times 100$  using Table DP-03, rows 1 and 4.

<sup>30</sup>Table DP-05, line 23.

<sup>31</sup>Table DP-05, line 17.

<sup>32</sup>Table DP-02, line 76.

<sup>33</sup>Table DP-03, row 15.

<sup>34</sup>Table DP-03, rows 1, 4, 10, and 13 with male value = total value – female value.

<sup>35</sup>As discussed in Abraham, Katharine G., and Melissa S. Kearney. 2020. "Explaining the Decline in the US Employment-to-Population Ratio: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 58 (3): 585–643.

## Occupations and Industries

This subsection describes the occupations, industries, and classes of the 108,266 workers who lived in Little Saigon in 2022<sup>36</sup>. Occupation estimates describe the kind of work that people do on the job. Industry describes the kind of business conducted by their employer. The class of worker defines the type of ownership of the workers' employers.

Workers who live in Little Saigon are more likely to be employed in service- and production-related occupations and less likely to be employed in white-collar occupations. 45.6% of workers in Orange County are employed in management, business, science, and arts-related occupations, only about 31.4% of workers in Little Saigon are employed in these occupations<sup>37</sup>. On the other hand, 22.5% of Little Saigon workers are in service occupations versus 16.4% in Orange County, and 17.4% of Little Saigon workers are in production, transportation, and material moving occupations versus 10.1% in Orange County<sup>38</sup>. This difference may be caused by the fact that fewer Little Saigon workers have a college degree which is more likely to be required for white-collar jobs. Also, many of the initial wave of Vietnamese refugees to the United States were well-educated professionals, but language barriers and other reasons forced many former white-collar workers into retail, sales, and blue-collar work<sup>39</sup>. As later sections in our report show, manufacturing employment within Little Saigon's boundaries has fallen substantially since 2002, forcing many of Little Saigon's manufacturing workers to commute out of Little Saigon for work.

The industry employment in Little Saigon is consistent with the occupation data. Professional, financial, high-tech, and administrative industries have fewer Little Saigon workers, 34.2%, while the ratio is 43.9% for Orange County. However, there is a higher proportion of Little Saigon workers in services, 39.1% (excluding public administration), compared to 35.7% for Orange County<sup>40</sup>. 16.8% of Little Saigon workers were employed in manufacturing versus 11.7% for Orange County in 2022<sup>41</sup>.

Little Saigon workers are slightly less likely to be employed by the government than Orange County workers. 81.8% of Little Saigon workers were private wage and salary workers compared to 80.8% in Orange County, and 10.7% worked for the government in Little Saigon compared to 11.5% in Orange County<sup>42</sup>. Self-employment rates were similar in Little Saigon and Orange County; just over 7% of workers were self-employed in Little Saigon and Orange County<sup>43</sup>.

**Workers who live in Little Saigon are more likely to be employed in service- and production-related occupations and less likely to be employed in white-collar occupations.**

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<sup>36</sup>Table DP-03, row 4.

<sup>37</sup>Table DP-03, row 27.

<sup>38</sup>Table DP-03, rows 28 and 31.

<sup>39</sup>Detailed survey data is collected in Nguyen, Liem T., and Alan B. Henkin. "Vietnamese refugees in the United States: Adaptation and transitional status." *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 9.4 (1982): 101.

<sup>40</sup>Computed using Table DP-03, lines 32, 42, 43, and 44.

<sup>41</sup>Table DP-03, line 35.

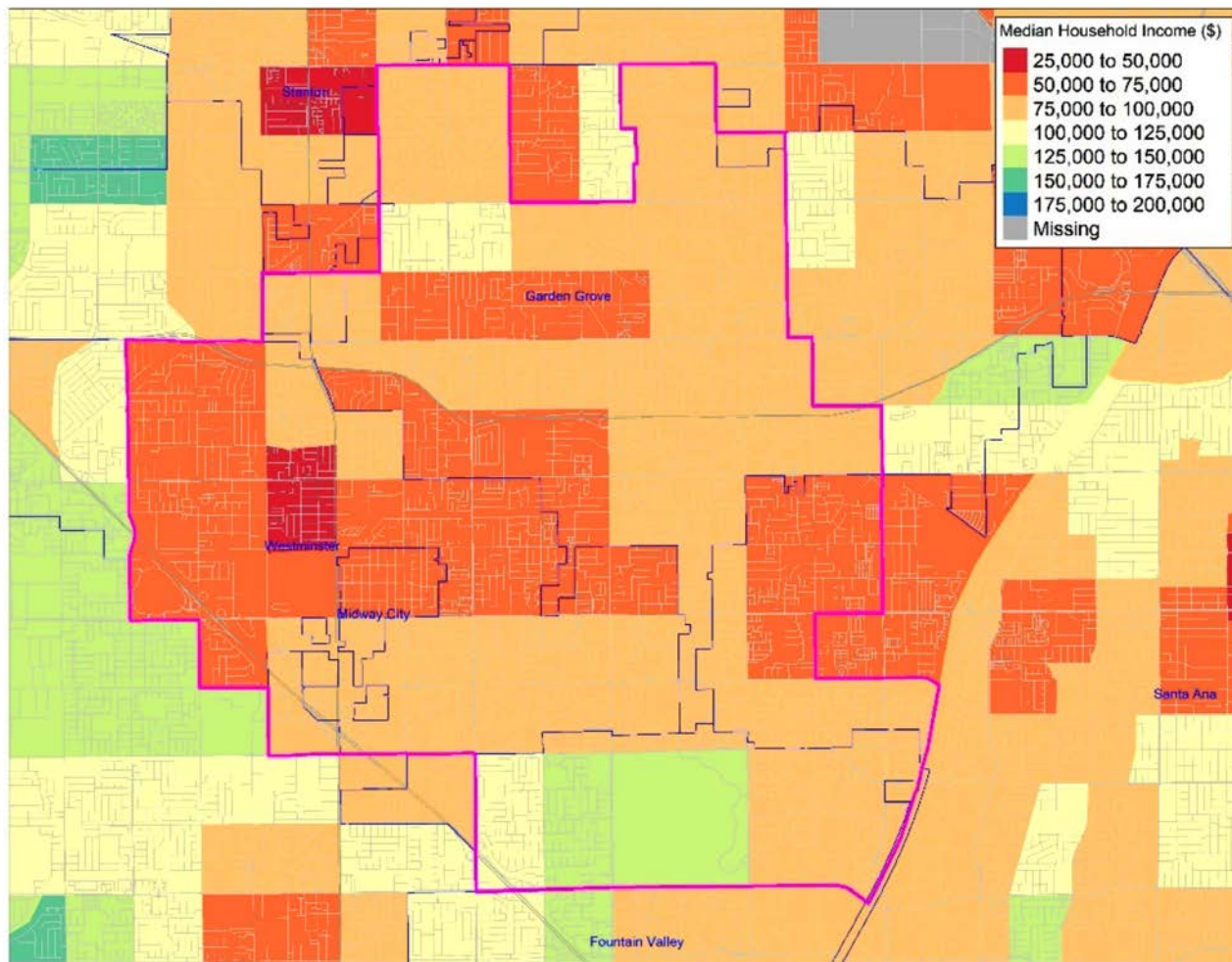
<sup>42</sup>Table DP-03, lines 47 and 48.

<sup>43</sup>Table DP-03, line 49.

### Income Profile

Little Saigon’s median household income lags Orange County’s but has been recovering since the Great Recession. Median household income was \$79,911 in Little Saigon census tracts in 2022 compared to \$109,361 in Orange County. In other words, median household income was 27.8% lower in Little Saigon compared to Orange County<sup>44</sup>. Little Saigon households are about half as likely to be earning over \$200,000 compared to Orange County overall, with 11.4% of Little Saigon households earning more than \$200,000 compared to 22.3% in Orange County. Median household incomes are the highest in the more recent expansions of Little Saigon in Fountain Valley to the south and Garden Grove to the north and the lowest in Westminster to the west:

**FIGURE 10: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CENSUS TRACT (2022 ACS)**



<sup>44</sup>Table DP-03, row 62.

Family status of households cannot explain much of the difference in household income between Little Saigon and Orange County. The median household income of nonfamily households (i.e., roommates) in Little Saigon was 65.5% of nonfamily households in Orange County (\$45,625 vs. \$69,626)<sup>45</sup>. Family households’ incomes in Little Saigon also lag household incomes in Orange County. Little Saigon’s median family household (excludes people living together as roommates) income was \$85,156, which was 68.6% of Orange County’s median at \$124,132<sup>46</sup>.

Since household incomes are lower in Little Saigon, poverty rates here are higher compared to Orange County: 6.8% of Orange County families are in poverty, while the proportion is 11.1% for Little Saigon<sup>47</sup>. Poverty rates by household and population groups are also consistently higher in Little Saigon for almost all demographic groups.

Historical income data in Table 11 suggests that Little Saigon suffered more in the aftermath of the Great Recession. It has been recovering slowly and is catching up to the rest of Orange County, especially in areas where Little Saigon has recently expanded. Table 11 below shows the median household income data for 2010, 2015, and 2022 for Little Saigon. As Little Saigon has expanded over that period, we include median household income estimates based on our 2010, 2015, and 2021 definitions of Little Saigon to allow a comparison of the regions over time.

**Little Saigon suffered more in the aftermath of the Great Recession. It has been recovering slowly and is catching up to the rest of Orange County, especially in areas where Little Saigon has recently expanded.**

**TABLE 11: NOMINAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN LITTLE SAIGON AND ORANGE COUNTY, 2010-2022<sup>48</sup>**

Year	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME				ANNUALIZED GROWTH RATES (%)			
	LS area in 2010	LS area in 2015	LS area in 2021	OC	LS area in 2010	LS area in 2015	LS area in 2021	OC
2010	\$55,347	\$55,536	\$58,357	\$74,344	-	-	-	-
2015	\$48,651	\$51,462	\$51,462	\$76,509	-2.5	-1.5	-2.5	0.6
2022	\$70,583	\$75,982	\$79,911	\$109,361	5.5	5.7	6.5	5.2

Median household incomes in Little Saigon were \$55,347 in 2010, \$51,462 in 2015, and much higher at \$79,911 in 2022 using contemporary definitions of Little Saigon. Median household income fell between 2010 and 2015 while it rose in Orange County by this measure, and median household income grew at over a 5% rate in Little Saigon and Orange County between 2015 and 2022. This growth caused Little Saigon’s median household income as a percentage of Orange County’s income to fall from 74.4% in 2010 to 67.2% in 2015. Little Saigon’s median household income recovered to 73.1% of Orange County’s level by 2022. The industries and occupations of Little Saigon workers could explain the slow recovery from the Great Recession since the recovery was strongest in the typically higher paying white-collar and high-tech industries.

<sup>45</sup>Table DP-03, row 90.

<sup>46</sup>Table DP-03, line 86.

<sup>47</sup>Table DP-03, line 119.

<sup>48</sup>Based on different versions of Table DP-03 we calculated for different definitions of Little Saigon and different years.

The income data in Table 11 shows that the older core of Little Saigon (LS area in 2010) has had slower income growth compared to the newer areas of Little Saigon. While median household income using the larger 2021 Little Saigon boundary was 5.4% higher in 2010 compared to median household income in the 2010 boundary, it was 13.2% higher by 2022. The data suggests that Little Saigon is expanding into areas that have been growing faster in recent times.

## Wealth

While we cannot observe the wealth of Little Saigon residents using American Community Survey data, we can use Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data for rough estimates of income from interest, dividends, and other assets that provide income, and we can infer some aspects of wealth in Little Saigon compared to Orange County. The IRS's Statistics of Income data provided tallies of the number of returns and amount on each return of income, deductions, and other tax information by zip code, from which we estimated how much of each zip code was in the Little Saigon area to attribute the tax data to Little Saigon.

Our efforts suggest that just as Little Saigon's income lags Orange County's, its wealth also lags Orange County as of 2021. Little Saigon residents have less than half the share of their income from sources other than wages and benefits compared to Orange County residents. While 11.8% of income in Little Saigon is from sources other than wages and benefits, Orange County residents earn 26.6% of their income from these sources<sup>49</sup>. Fewer Little Saigon residents report interest and dividend income<sup>50</sup>, and Little Saigon residents are also less likely to report cryptocurrency holdings than Orange County residents (4.7% of returns in Little Saigon and 5.7% in Orange County)<sup>51</sup>. Fewer Little Saigon residents also report capital gains income (18.3%) compared to Orange County (27.8%)<sup>52</sup>.

## Commuting

Little Saigon workers have a longer commute and are more likely to travel to work by car than the typical Orange County and American workers. On average, American workers spent 26.7 minutes per workday on their commute in 2022<sup>53</sup>. Orange County workers had a longer average commute of 27.3 minutes, and Little Saigon residents had an even longer average commute of 28.3 minutes<sup>54</sup>.

**Little Saigon residents have less than half the share of their income from sources other than wages and benefits compared to Orange County residents.**

**Little Saigon workers have a longer commute and are more likely to travel to work by car than the typical Orange County and American workers.**

<sup>49</sup> Calculated using Table YYY, lines 19 and 21.

<sup>50</sup> Table YYY, lines 22, 24, and 26.

<sup>51</sup> Table YYY, line 9.

<sup>52</sup> Table YYY, line 32.

<sup>53</sup> <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP03>

<sup>54</sup> Table DP-03, row 25.

### *Commuting Destinations*

Commuting destinations in 2021 can be described using data from LODES (The Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics of the Center for Economic Studies at the Census Bureau). LODES data shows Little Saigon residents are more likely to commute to somewhere within Orange County than the typical Orange County resident. Of the 96,948 workers commuting from Little Saigon, 13,525 (14%) commute to another location within Little Saigon, and 55,250 (57%) commute to somewhere in the rest of Orange County. Of other Orange County residents, 24,220 (1.9%) commute to Little Saigon, and 795,985 (63.6%) commute to the rest of Orange County. About 92% of Little Saigon's workers commute somewhere within Orange or Los Angeles counties, but despite Little Saigon's access to Los Angeles County via I-405 and SR-22, Little Saigon residents are less likely to commute to Los Angeles County than the typical Orange County resident (21.1% vs. 24%). About 2.5% of Little Saigon's commuters travel to each of Riverside, San Bernardino, or San Diego counties.

### *Method of Commute and Working from Home*

Little Saigon residents are more likely to commute by car, less likely to walk, and less likely to work from home than the typical Orange County resident. In 2022, 88% of Little Saigon workers commuted by car compared to 80.4% of Orange County residents<sup>55</sup>. While more Little Saigon workers drove to work, they were more likely to carpool (13.1%) than Orange County workers (9%)<sup>56</sup>.

Fewer Little Saigon workers work from home than Orange County workers, which explains much of the difference in commuting methods. In 2022, 8% of Little Saigon workers telecommuted from home compared to 14.6% of Orange County workers<sup>57</sup>. Little Saigon workers are less likely to work from home, partly because they are less likely to work in occupations that encourage work from home, like business and management, and more likely to work in occupations where telecommuting is less common, such as manufacturing<sup>58</sup>.

**Little Saigon residents are more likely to commute by car, less likely to walk, and less likely to work from home than the typical Orange County resident. Fewer Little Saigon workers work from home than Orange County workers, which explains much of the difference in commuting methods.**

## **V. SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

This section describes some of the social characteristics of the Little Saigon population, those related to household living arrangements, school enrollment, and educational attainment.

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<sup>55</sup>Table DP-03, rows 19 and 20.

<sup>56</sup>Table DP-03, row 20.

<sup>57</sup>Table DP-03, row 24.

<sup>58</sup>Table DP-03, rows 27, 31, 35, and 41. More information on occupations more likely to be work from home here: <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2022/article/telework.htm>.

## Household Living Arrangements

Little Saigon has fewer unmarried women living on their own and cohabiting couples (living together in a relationship but unmarried) compared to Orange County. While the overall proportion of married couple households is similar in Little Saigon and Orange County (52.1% versus 53.7%), Little Saigon has fewer cohabiting couple households than Orange County (4.6% versus 6.1%)<sup>59</sup>. There is a larger proportion of male households with no spouse/partner (19.3%) in Little Saigon compared to Orange County (15.7%), but not for female households with no spouse/partner<sup>60</sup>. While there are fewer households of women living alone in Little Saigon, 8.9%, than male, 9.1%, the share of living-alone female households in Little Saigon is substantially lower than in Orange County (8.9% versus 12.4%)<sup>61</sup>. There are also more households with one or more people over 65 in Little Saigon (37.3%) than in Orange County (31.3%)<sup>62</sup>.

A somewhat larger share of Little Saigon residents over 15 have never married (40.3% males and 33.7% female) compared to those in Orange County as a whole (38.1% males and 32.2% females)<sup>63</sup>. However, compared to Orange County, a larger proportion of Little Saigon males are divorced (7.1% versus 6.9%) than females (9.8% versus 11.1%)<sup>64</sup>.

The birth rate also is slightly higher in Little Saigon in Orange County. Per 1,000 women 15 to 50 years old, 51.3 gave birth in Little Saigon compared to 45 in Orange County in 2022<sup>65</sup>. Of the women aged 15-50 who had a birth during the last year in Little Saigon, 23.5% were widowed, divorced, or never married compared to 20.8% in Orange County<sup>66</sup>.

Little Saigon's grandparents are more likely to live with their grandchildren under 18 years since Little Saigon accounts for 11.1% of Orange County households living with their grandchildren compared to the share of the region's households in Orange County (6.3%)<sup>67</sup>. However, fewer grandparents in Little Saigon are solely responsible for their grandchildren compared to Orange County (13.4% vs. 18%)<sup>68</sup>. Also, a much higher proportion of grandparents responsible for their grandchildren under 18 are married (81.4%) in Little Saigon compared to Orange County (72.1%)<sup>69</sup>.

**Little Saigon has fewer unmarried women living on their own and cohabiting couples (living together in a relationship but unmarried) compared to Orange County.**

**Little Saigon's grandparents are more likely to live with their grandchildren under 18 years.**

<sup>59</sup>Table DP-02, lines 26 and 32.

<sup>60</sup>Table DP-02, lines 30 and 36.

<sup>61</sup>Table DP-02, line 40.

<sup>62</sup>Table DP-02, line 38.

<sup>63</sup>Table DP-02, lines 26 and 32.

<sup>64</sup>Table DP-02, lines 30 and 36.

<sup>65</sup>Table DP-02, line 40.

<sup>66</sup>Table DP-02, line 38.

<sup>67</sup>Table DP-02, lines 1 and 44.

<sup>68</sup>Table DP-02, line 45.

<sup>69</sup>Table DP-02, line 52.



### School Enrollment and Educational Attainment

Table 12 below shows the percentage of the population enrolled in school by the type of school. Fewer of those in school in Little Saigon attend preschool and kindergarten than in Orange County, though their shares are roughly equivalent to the rest of the county for higher grades. However, a much higher percentage attend college, 35.8% for Little Saigon compared to 33.9% for the county. It is possible that the parents in the Little Saigon area like to keep and teach younger children at home, though the cohort of students five years and younger is relatively smaller in Little Saigon compared to Orange County as suggested by the population pyramid in the Demographics section.

**TABLE 12: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN LITTLE SAIGON AND ORANGE COUNTY, 2022<sup>70</sup>**

School Enrollment - Population 3 years and over enrolled in school	Little Saigon	Orange County
Nursery school, preschool	3.7%	5.9%
Kindergarten	3.5%	4.4%
Elementary school (grades 1-8)	35.0%	35.7%
High school (grades 9-12)	21.9%	20.1%
College or graduate school	35.8%	33.9%

Differences in school attendance show up in the level of educational attainment, as shown in Table 13 below.

**TABLE 13: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN LITTLE SAIGON AND ORANGE COUNTY, 2022<sup>71</sup>**

Educational Attainment - Population 25 years and over	Little Saigon	Orange County
Less than 9th grade	13.7%	7.3%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	11.2%	5.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	24.6%	17.3%
Some college, no degree	17.8%	19.2%
Associate's degree	8.0%	7.6%
Bachelor's degree	18.4%	26.9%
Graduate or professional degree	6.4%	15.8%

A much higher percentage of Little Saigon residents over age 25 have less than 9th grade education (13.7% versus 7.3% for Orange County) or no high school diploma (11.2% for Little Saigon versus 5.9% for Orange County). However, compared to the county, the region also has a larger proportion of its residents over age 25 with only high school graduation or equivalency (24.6% versus 17.3%). But the Little Saigon area has fewer residents with college degrees at all levels. The effects of such educational attainment patterns are reflected in the residents' jobs, as discussed in the Economic Characteristics section of this report.

<sup>70</sup>Table DP-02, lines 53-58.

<sup>71</sup>Table DP-02, lines 59-68.

Finally, computer and internet use are quite high in Little Saigon and countywide. 95.7% of Little Saigon households and 97.2% of the county households have a computer at home, and 90.6% of Little Saigon and 93.6% of the county households have subscriptions to broadband internet<sup>72</sup>.

## VI. HOUSING

A housing unit is “an apartment, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied or intended for occupancy as separate living quarters.”<sup>73</sup> In total, there were 69,617 housing units in Little Saigon in 2022, which was 6.2% of the housing stock in Orange County<sup>74</sup>. The vast majority of these, 96.4%, were occupied (94.3% for Orange County), and rental vacancy rates were lower in Little Saigon (2.3% versus 4.2% for Orange County)<sup>75</sup>. Single-family detached homes make up 52.1% of Little Saigon’s housing units compared to 49.8% in Orange County<sup>76</sup>. Also, Little Saigon has relatively more mobile homes compared to Orange County (6.5% of housing units in Little Saigon vs. 2.6% in Orange County)<sup>77</sup>.

### Housing Size and Tenure

Housing units in Little Saigon tend to be smaller but have higher occupancy than Orange County, and the typical housing unit is older than in Orange County. The average household size is larger in Little Saigon compared to Orange County for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied homes. The average household size in 2022 of owner-occupied housing units was 3.5 persons in Little Saigon compared to 3.0 persons in Orange County, and renter-occupied housing units averaged 3.3 persons in Little Saigon compared to 2.9 persons in Orange County<sup>78</sup>.

Little Saigon has fewer rooms per housing unit relative to the county with a median of 4.9 rooms in Little Saigon compared to 5.1 in Orange County<sup>79</sup>. 17.7% of the Little Saigon units have 3 or fewer rooms compared to 19.3% for the county<sup>80</sup>. The share of houses with four to six rooms is 64.3% versus 53.9%, and that with more than six rooms is 18% versus 26.8%<sup>81</sup>. With fewer rooms and more occupants per housing unit in Little Saigon, the occupational density is higher in Little Saigon, with 14% of housing units having more than one occupant per room compared to 8.7% for Orange County<sup>82</sup>.

**Housing units in Little Saigon tend to be smaller but have higher occupancy than Orange County, and the typical housing unit is older than in Orange County. The average household size is larger in Little Saigon compared to Orange County for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied homes.**

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<sup>72</sup>Table DP-02, lines 153 and 154.

<sup>73</sup><https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/definitions.pdf>

<sup>74</sup>Table DP-04, line 1.

<sup>75</sup>Table DP-04, lines 2 and 5.

<sup>76</sup>Table DP-04, line 7.

<sup>77</sup>Table DP-04, line 14.

<sup>78</sup>Table DP-04, lines 48 and 49.

<sup>79</sup>Table DP-04, line 37.

<sup>80</sup>Table DP-04, lines 27-30.

<sup>81</sup>Table DP-04, lines 27 and 31-36.

<sup>82</sup>Table DP-04, line 77.

The housing stock in Little Saigon is older relative to Orange County. For example, 72.6% of the units in Little Saigon were built between 1940 and 1979, compared to 55.7% in Orange County<sup>83</sup>. The share of relatively new housing built since 2010 is 3.6% of the total housing for Little Saigon and 7.8% for Orange County<sup>84</sup>.

### Housing Values

Since housing units in Little Saigon are smaller and older compared to Orange County, the median housing price is lower in Little Saigon compared to Orange County. However, Little Saigon residents were relatively more likely to have paid off their mortgage compared to those in Orange County: 59.6% of the owner-occupied households in Little Saigon have a mortgage compared to 68.6% in Orange County<sup>85</sup>. The median price of owner-occupied housing in 2022 was \$698,600 in Little Saigon compared to \$862,900 in Orange County<sup>86</sup>. Of these units, 10.8% were valued below \$200,000 in Little Saigon compared to 4.9% in Orange County<sup>87</sup>. The share of houses priced between \$200,000 and \$500,000 was 13.1% for Little Saigon and 9.4% for Orange County, those between \$500,000 and under one million was 66.2% and 51.7%, and for those \$1 million or more was 10.5% and 34%, respectively<sup>88</sup>.

### Rents and Housing Costs

As housing prices and the size of housing units are lower in Little Saigon than in Orange County, rents are also lower. 59.6% of Little Saigon renters paid less than \$2,000 in monthly rent payments in 2022 compared to 36.5% for Orange County, while 35.4% paid between \$2,000 and \$3,000 (43% for the county), and 10.8% paid more than \$3,000 compared to 20.5% for the county<sup>89</sup>. The median rent in Little Saigon was \$1,900 per month, compared to \$2,248 per month in Orange County<sup>90</sup>. However, despite the lower rents in Little Saigon, rent is still a larger burden on their households than in Orange County. Monthly rent as a percentage of household income measures the financial burden of housing that considers income. 52.6% of Little Saigon renter households pay more than 35% of their income in gross rent compared to 46.1% for the county<sup>91</sup>.

### Vehicle Ownership

Little Saigon households are less likely to own a vehicle compared to Orange County residents, but if they own vehicles, they are more likely to own many. 6.8% of the occupied housing units of Little Saigon and 4.6% of the Orange County do not own a vehicle<sup>92</sup>.

**Since housing units in Little Saigon are smaller and older compared to Orange County, the median housing price is lower in Little Saigon compared to Orange County. However, Little Saigon residents were relatively more likely to have paid off their mortgage compared to those in Orange County.**

**As housing prices and the size of housing units are lower in Little Saigon than in Orange County, rents are also lower.**

<sup>83</sup>Table DP-04, lines 16 and 22-25.

<sup>84</sup>Table DP-04, lines 16-18.

<sup>85</sup>Table DP-04, line 91.

<sup>86</sup>Table DP-04, line 89.

<sup>87</sup>Table DP-04, lines 80-84.

<sup>88</sup>Table DP-04, lines 80 and 85-88.

<sup>89</sup>Table DP-04, lines 126-133.

<sup>90</sup>Table DP-04, line 134.

<sup>91</sup>Table DP-04, line 142.

<sup>92</sup>Table DP-04, line 58.

24.1% of the Little Saigon own one vehicle compared to 27.3% for Orange County, and 34.4% own two vehicles (40.5% for the county)<sup>93</sup>. The share of those owing more than three vehicles is larger in Little Saigon than in Orange County, 34.4% versus 27.6%<sup>94</sup>.

## VII. INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

This section describes Little Saigon from its businesses' perspective.

We have data from two sources. First, the California Employment Development Department (EDD) data on the number of establishments, employment, and total payroll for the second quarter of 2023, which is the most recent data available. Second is the employment data from the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LODES) of the Center for Economic Studies at the Census Bureau to provide historical perspective.

### Employment Development Department Data

Table A.VII.1 and A.VII.2 show the EDD data for Little Saigon and Orange County. The EDD data includes 11,252 establishments in Little Saigon that employ 49,896 workers and have an annualized payroll of \$2.02 billion<sup>95</sup>. The annual average payroll per worker, including full- and part-time workers, was \$40,519, and the average establishment employed 4.4 workers. For Orange County, there were 140,191 establishments employing 1,486,627 workers with an annualized payroll of \$109.36 billion. The annual average payroll per worker in Orange County, including full- and part-time workers, was \$73,564, and the average establishment employed 10.6 workers.

Little Saigon's largest industry by establishments is Health Care and Social Assistance<sup>96</sup>, with 7,163 establishments, almost 10 times more than the next two largest sectors, Accommodation and Food Services, and Retail Trade. The four industries with the fewest establishments are Educational Services; Information; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; and Management of Companies and Enterprises.

The top two industries for total payroll were Health Care and Social Assistance and Retail Trade with around \$103 million in total payroll. However, the average payroll per employee was highest in Management of Companies and Enterprises with \$102,885 and construction with \$75,238. We caution that these numbers are not full-time salaries, and the prevalence of part-time workers would affect the average payroll of these industries. For Orange County, Health Care and Social Assistance is also the largest industry with 45,285 establishments, which is more than twice as large as the second largest sector of Professional and Technical Services with 19,632 establishments.

**Little Saigon's largest industry by establishments is Health Care and Social Assistance<sup>95</sup>, with 7,163 establishments, almost 10 times more than the next two largest sectors, Accommodation and Food Services, and Retail Trade.**

<sup>93</sup>Table DP-04, lines 59 and 60.

<sup>94</sup>Table DP-04, line 61.

<sup>95</sup>We multiply the quarterly payroll amount by four to convert into its annual equivalent.

<sup>96</sup>Health Care and Social Assistance is a sector defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). It includes jobs in inpatient and outpatient hospital, medical clinic, dental, and psychiatric positions, and it includes child and elder care: <https://www.naics.com/six-digit-naics/?code=62>.

Little Saigon's share of Orange County's establishments, employment and total payroll are in Table IV. For Little Saigon, Health Care and Social Assistance provide the largest share of Orange County's establishments with 15.8%. Accommodation and Food Services accounts for 8.5% with Retail Trade totaling 7.4% of the corresponding Orange County industries. The three sectors with the lowest shares of Orange County with under 3% are Management of Companies and Enterprises; Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services.

Little Saigon's businesses differ significantly from those of Orange County in several respects. First, the average employment of Little Saigon establishments is less than half (41.8%) of Orange County businesses and average payroll per establishment in Little Saigon was less than a quarter (23%) of Orange County businesses, which suggests that Little Saigon has more small businesses compared to Orange County. LODES data discussed below suggests that employment by large enterprises has fallen in Little Saigon over the past two decades while it has risen in Orange County. Employers with large industrial establishments typically locate in large industrial parks, but the neighborhoods of Little Saigon are more residential than industrial. Several large industrial areas in Fountain Valley, Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach, western Garden Grove, southern Anaheim, Orange, and Irvine are top commuting destinations of Little Saigon residents but lie outside of Little Saigon's boundaries.

Second, Little Saigon businesses pay significantly less in some sectors per employee compared to Orange County businesses. No industry pays more per employee in Little Saigon than in Orange County. While the average payroll per employee differences may be caused partly by relying on more part-time workers, average payroll per employee is only 29% of Orange County in the Information industry (\$40,375 vs. \$138,554). Average payroll per employee is less than 60% of Orange County in Professional and Technical Services (51.4%; \$57,500 vs. \$111,773); Health Care and Social Assistance (52.9%; \$33,550 vs. \$63,387) Finance and Insurance (57.4%; \$76,504 vs. \$138,277); and Manufacturing (57.7%; \$56,376 vs. \$97,772). The average payroll per employee in Little Saigon is closest to Orange County in the Transportation and Warehousing industry (94.8%; \$54,800 vs. \$61,571). Since Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest industry in Little Saigon, its average payroll differences are of particular concern. This payroll difference is partly caused by the lack of large hospitals with emergency services and relatively highly paid doctors in Little Saigon. None of the 24 hospitals in Orange County with emergency departments are within Little Saigon's boundary<sup>97</sup>. The lower average payroll in the other industries could be explained by differences in education levels. Other areas like Irvine have a higher percentage of the population with at least a college degree, which would attract more high-tech manufacturing and white-collar employers.

**First, the average employment of Little Saigon establishments is less than half (41.8%) of Orange County businesses and average payroll per establishment in Little Saigon was less than a quarter (23%) of Orange County businesses, which suggests that Little Saigon has more small businesses compared to Orange County.**

**None of the 24 hospitals in Orange County with emergency departments are within Little Saigon's boundary.**

<sup>97</sup>As of August 2024 according to the Orange County Health Care Agency: <https://ochealthinfo.com/providers-partners/emergency-medical-services/ems-system-providers/ems-hospitals>. The two closest hospitals are UCI Health-Fountain Valley, which is just south of the southern boundary of Little Saigon, and Garden Grove Hospital and Medical Center, which is east of Little Saigon.

## LODES Industry Data

The LODES data focuses solely on employment by businesses within Little Saigon. We will examine historical trends in major industries in Little Saigon and Orange County between 2002 and 2021. We use the 2021 borders of Little Saigon throughout the analysis so that the growth of Little Saigon's borders does not create spurious trends in industry employment and to enhance comparability across time.

### Little Saigon

While the EDD data shows that Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest industry in Little Saigon, that has not always been the case. Retail Trade was the largest industry in Little Saigon with 22.4% of employment in 2002. Classification changes in industry employment meant that about 5.5% of Little Saigon's jobs were reclassified from Other Services to Health Care and Social Assistance in 2013, so in the current classification, Health Care and Social Assistance and Educational Services were the 2nd and 3rd largest industries with around 13.5% of jobs each. However, employment in Retail Trade has stagnated over the past 20 years, and Educational Services has seen a decline in employment. While the COVID-19 pandemic caused job losses in both of these industries, employment in both sectors had barely changed between 2002 and 2019.

The major industries that have grown the fastest since 2002 are Accommodation and Food Services and Health Care and Social Assistance. Excluding the jobs added because of classification changes in 2013, Health Care and Social Assistance employment grew at a 3.9% average annual rate in Little Saigon, and Accommodation and Food Services employment grew at a 3.1% annual rate. Little Saigon's location near Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, and other tourism destinations may have helped growth in Accommodation and Food Services, and employment growth in Health Care and Social Assistance is consistent with county-level growth in this industry as described below.

The major industry that has declined the most in the last two decades in Little Saigon is Manufacturing. Between 2002 and 2021, Manufacturing employment fell by more than half in Little Saigon, and its share of employment in Little Saigon fell by 2/3 from 9.5% to 3.1% of employment. The data suggests a sectoral shift in Little Saigon away from manufacturing and toward Health Care and Social Assistance and Accommodation and Food Services.

### Orange County

The LODES data from 2002 to 2021 in Orange County suggests that the largest three industries by employment are Health Care and Social Assistance (12.9% of employment); Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (10% of employment); and manufacturing (9.8% of employment). Just prior to the COVID pandemic in 2019, Accommodation and Food Services was also a noteworthy sector with 9.9% of employment.

**The major industries that have grown the fastest since 2002 are Accommodation and Food Services and Health Care and Social Assistance.**

**The major industry that has declined the most in the last two decades in Little Saigon is Manufacturing. Between 2002 and 2021, Manufacturing employment fell by more than half in Little Saigon.**

The fastest-growing industries between 2002 and 2021 were Health Care and Social Assistance (3.1% average annual growth after adjusting for classification changes in 2013); Professional Scientific and Technical Services (1.8% average annual growth) and Construction (1.5% average annual growth). The two major industries with the fastest decline were Arts Entertainment and Recreation (2.5% average annual decline); and manufacturing (1.3% average annual decline). However, Arts Entertainment and Recreation would be one of the fastest-growing industries, excluding the effects of the COVID pandemic since over half of the jobs in this industry were lost between 2019 and 2021 in Orange County. Manufacturing’s job losses since 2019 have been much smaller, so the decline in manufacturing is a more stable long-term trend.

### Comparison between Little Saigon and Orange County

While Little Saigon has seen a sectoral shift away from Manufacturing and into Accommodation and Food Services and Health Care and Social Assistance, Orange County has seen rapid expansion of several service industries and less of a decline in Manufacturing than in Little Saigon. Both Little Saigon and Orange County have seen increases in employment in Health Care and Social Assistance and Accommodation and Food Services. However, the growth in Professional Scientific and Technical Services in Orange County has not been matched in Little Saigon.

## VIII. BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS

This section summarizes data provided by four cities that comprise most of Little Saigon, Garden Grove, Fountain Valley, Westminster, and Santa Ana. The cities provided data on businesses with a business license in each city.

**TABLE 14: TOTAL NUMBER OF BUSINESSES**

BUSINESSES BY CITY	
	Total Business Licenses
Garden Grove	3,260
Fountain Valley	6,302
Westminster	3,265
Santa Ana	25,343

## IX. FUTURE TRENDS FOR LITTLE SAIGON

While Little Saigon has experienced significant economic changes and challenges, we expect that it will continue to grow and have significant opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

The Vietnamese community and Little Saigon in Orange County have consistently grown since the 1970s, and it is expected that it will continue to expand. While about half of the Vietnamese community in Orange County lives in Little Saigon, half lives outside of it, and

**While Little Saigon has experienced significant economic changes and challenges, we expect that it will continue to grow and have significant opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs.**

many are in nearby neighborhoods into which the population could expand further. Figure 5 showed the number of Vietnamese speakers by census tract, and it showed that there were more than 1,000 people who speak Vietnamese at home living in census tracts outside of Little Saigon in Stanton, Fountain Valley, eastern Garden Grove, southern Anaheim, and western Santa Ana. These neighborhoods are close to being considered a part of Little Saigon by our population definition. While Little Saigon is expanding to the north, east, and southeast, its border to the southwest is firmly the I-405 freeway.

Little Saigon’s recent generation of college graduates are more likely to have STEM-related degrees, and this pool of technical talent may encourage more high-tech businesses to move to or be founded in Little Saigon. Table 15 below shows graduates’ first college degree by age. Among all degree holders 25 or older, Little Saigon degree holders are more likely to be in science and engineering and related fields (51.8%) than Orange County degree holders (48.9%). Among younger degree holders aged 25 to 39, Little Saigon graduates are even more likely to have a degree in science and engineering and related fields (53.8%) compared to Orange County degree holders (49.5%).

**Little Saigon’s recent generation of college graduates are more likely to have STEM-related degrees, and this pool of technical talent may encourage more high-tech businesses to move to or be founded in Little Saigon.**

**TABLE 15: FIRST COLLEGE DEGREE OF COLLEGE GRADUATES BY AGE**

Variable	Little Saigon		Orange County		Little Saigon as a % of Orange County
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<b>Total Pop. 25 and older with a Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	40,451	100.0	939,818	100.0	4.3
Science and Engineering	16,617	41.1	382,179	40.7	4.3
Science and Engineering Related Fields	4,322	10.7	77,823	8.3	5.6
Business	9,359	23.1	201,431	21.4	4.6
Education	2,572	6.4	54,790	5.8	4.7
Arts, Humanities and Others	7,581	18.7	223,595	23.8	3.4
<b>Total Pop. 25 to 39 years with a Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	16,422	100.0	312,279	100.0	5.3
Science and Engineering	7,022	42.8	128,416	41.1	5.5
Science and Engineering Related Fields	1,806	11.0	26,015	8.3	6.9
Business	3,631	22.1	66,077	21.2	5.5
Education	481	2.9	8,690	2.8	5.5
Arts, Humanities and Others	3,482	21.2	83,081	26.6	4.2

Little Saigon’s small businesses have seen rapid growth in recent times. Between 2012 and 2021, employment by small businesses has been increasing faster in Little Saigon compared to Orange County, and the job losses seem concentrated in larger firms. According to LODES data, employment by small businesses under 20 employees grew at an average 3.2% per year in Little Saigon compared to 2% in Orange County, while employment by firms with 500 or more employees fell 1.8% per year in Little Saigon compared to growth of 0.4% per year in Orange County.

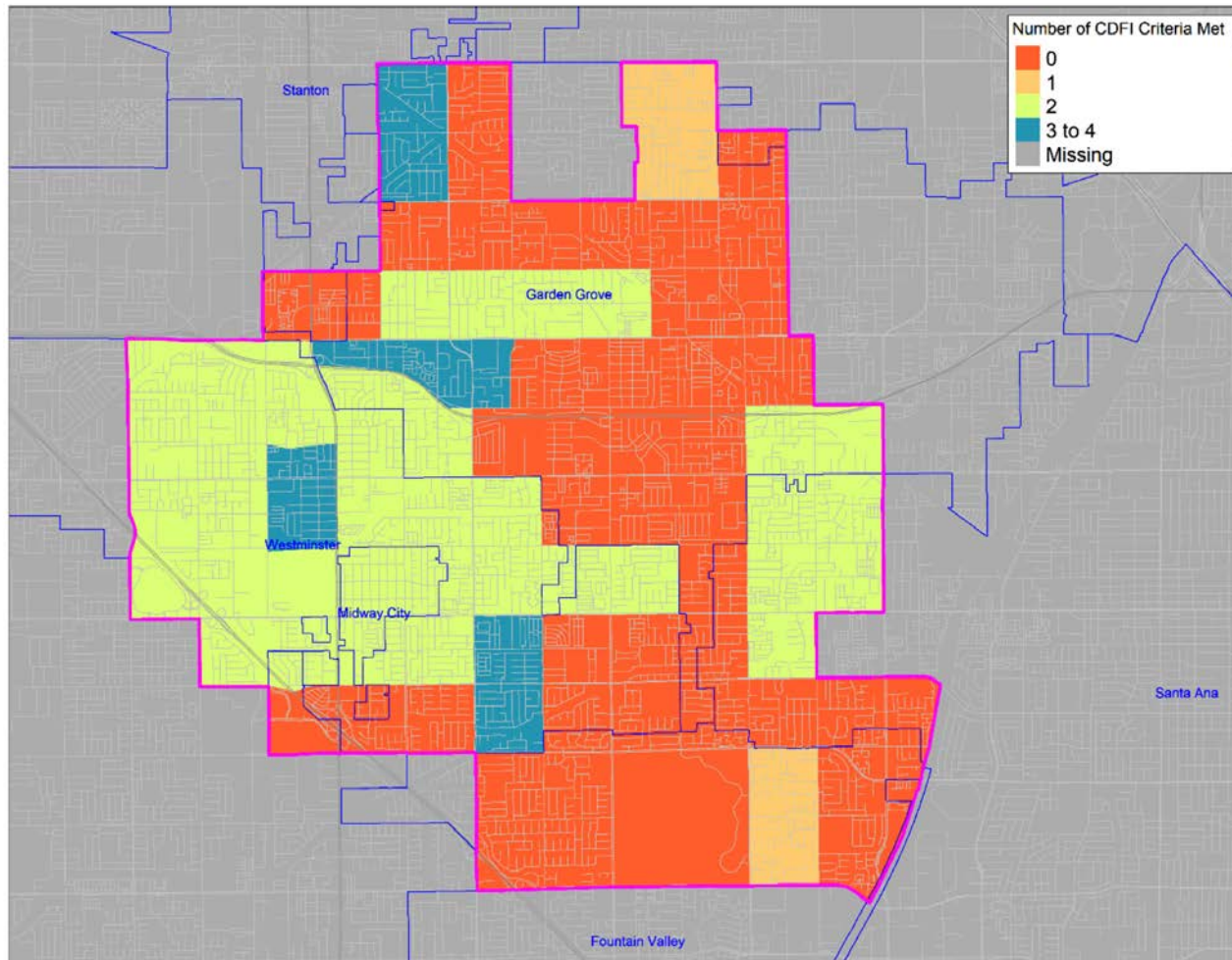
**Little Saigon’s small businesses have seen rapid growth in recent times. Between 2012 and 2021, employment by small businesses has been increasing faster in Little Saigon compared to Orange County, and the job losses seem concentrated in larger firms.**

While Little Saigon lags Orange County by several economic indicators, there are tax incentives, grants, and other programs that could attract more investment into Little Saigon. The Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI), a branch of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, administers several programs that tailor resources to help



develop local communities. For example, the Bank Enterprise Award Program provides awards to banks and thrifts that increase lending or service activity in economically distressed communities. The New Markets Tax Credit promotes investment by offering a 39% tax credit spread over seven years on an investment in distressed communities. Eligibility for CDFI programs depends on several factors, including low income, high poverty rates, and high unemployment rates compared to the area. The graph below shows which of the Little Saigon tracks meet these criteria based on their most recent revisions.

**FIGURE 16: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CDFI PROGRAMS BY CENSUS TRACT IN LITTLE SAIGON**



While not every program uses all these criteria, program criteria and eligibility are updated as economic data is updated, and there may need to be additional criteria that have to be met to qualify for programs.

WOODS CENTER FOR  
**ECONOMIC ANALYSIS  
AND FORECASTING**

California State University, Fullerton  
College of Business and Economics  
800 N. State College Blvd.  
Fullerton, CA 92831

**[business.fullerton.edu](https://business.fullerton.edu/woodscenter)**  
**[/woodscenter](https://business.fullerton.edu/woodscenter)**

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