

## Executive Summary

Brookhurst Street in Anaheim is home to one of the most visible Arab American communities in Southern California. Affectionately known as “Little Arabia,” this area of West Anaheim is a cultural hub that is regularly patronized by visitors hailing from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)<sup>1</sup> region. The service providers and patrons come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, ranging from Arab to Afghan to Circassian to Vietnamese to Mexican, with each group functioning in harmony within the boundaries of West Anaheim.

Despite its extreme visibility, there isn’t too much data and information that captures the people’s voices and experiences within the district. This project, known as the Little Arabia Community History and Needs Survey, aims to provide information about one of California's most unique and beloved cultural districts. **This study explored how the district grew, what types of benefits it brought to Anaheim, and what are the community’s needs as they envision the future of the district. Ultimately, the project aimed to allow the people to tell their story of Little Arabia.**

We conducted our study between December 2021 to April 2022. We gathered data from **35 participants. Oral interviews were conducted with 17 participants, while 18 participants filled out online survey forms.** We split the survey into four parts: Demographic, Profile, Community Needs, and Civic Engagement. There was a total of 27 questions. We conducted textual data analysis on over **20,000 words** to find common themes, phrases, terms, and sentiments delivered in English and Arabic.

The data clarifies that **Little Arabia is a cultural and business hub that attracts a diverse market from the MENA region.** In Little Arabia, patrons can acquire their cultural needs, attain a sense of belonging, and find new opportunities. When asked what Little Arabia means to them, most participants responded by saying “**Home.**”

Little Arabia’s residents and service providers are diverse in their backgrounds and profession.

- 66.7% of participants were born outside of the United States.
- 33.3% were born within the United States.
- 41.6% of participants hail from the *Belad al-Sham* region, consisting of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan.
- 27.8% of participants were between the ages of 25-35.
- 47.2% were between the ages of 43-65.
- 86% of participants are bilingual. Some are multilingual.
- The top three spoken languages are English, Arabic, and Spanish.

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, MENA is used to include the Southwest Asia and North African (SWANA) regions

## Little Arabia Community Needs Survey, May 2022, Arab American Civic Council

- 34% of participants owned their businesses. The rest of the participants ranged in professions stretching from a cook to a lawyer to an engineer, among many others.

Results show that participants desire the following themes to improve the district<sup>2</sup>:

- Promotion and Awareness
- Renovation and Beautification of the District
- Education and Community Development through Activities and Events
- Unifying the Community
- Systemic Changes in Policy, Media, and Public Perceptions
- Encouragement of a Women-led Market

The top four needs of the community are:

- 1) Education (70%)
- 2) Safety (57%)
- 3) Housing (57%)
- 4) Jobs (49%)

- Many cited that education is vital for the empowerment of the community. Participants indicated that they want to see an improvement in public schooling. They also requested educational material from the City, particularly information to increase their participation and productivity within Anaheim.

To increase civic engagement, participants desire more information on issues surrounding the community and desire more preparational materials, informational sessions, and workshops.

- 80% requested information on the issues concerning Anaheim and Little Arabia.
- 50% stated they need information on time, location, and specific issues to discuss.
- 63.3% requested information on the Designation of Little Arabia.

The data reveals that participants have a neutral and negative view of the City Council.

- 42% state that they **are unsure** if the City Council cares about their concerns.
- 38% state that they **do not believe** the City Council cares about their concerns.
- 20% state that they **believe** the City Council cares about their concerns.

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<sup>2</sup> See the section titled "Discussion, Analysis, and Ideas for Future Projects" for more details on the themes.