

Layali Little Arabia

The 3rd year anniversary of the official designation of Little Arabia District in Anahim



Event Time:

August 23, 2025
Saturday
2pm to 8pm

Organized by:



Event Address:

Modjeska Park
1331 S Nutwood St,
Anaheim, CA 92804

www.AACivicCouncil.org/layali



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Word from our ED.



For decades, Arab Americans and Arab immigrants have migrated to Southern California for many reasons, whether economic opportunities, educational pursuits, escaping genocide or civil war, seeking refuge, and more. Over the years, West Anaheim has grown into a thriving economic and cultural hub for Arab Americans.

Since the late 1990s, Arab American community leaders have worked to have Brookhurst St. recognized as Little Arabia much like other cultural districts across California, such as Little Saigon, Koreatown, and Little Armenia. These decades of advocacy culminated in 2022 with the [#DesignateLittleArabia](#) campaign, led by the Arab American Civic Council.

On August 23, 2022, the Anaheim City Council voted to formally designate Little Arabia.

This designation is a testament to the resilience of the Arab American community, it was achieved despite immense challenges. It's a powerful reminder of the importance of civic engagement: when we come together, we can transform our conditions for the better.

At a time when our community is under attack both here and abroad, from the genocide in Gaza to ICE raids targeting our neighborhoods, it is vital to create spaces where we can unite and honor our achievements. Layali Little Arabia marks the third anniversary of this historic designation. It is an opportunity to showcase our cultural pride, support Arab American businesses, and commemorate a victory that will benefit generations to come.

We extend our gratitude to everyone who made this historic day possible.

Rashad Al-Dabbagh
Executive Director
Arab American Civic Council



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What to expect

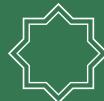
Layali Little Arabia



Food & flavors of Little Arabia District. Savor iconic dishes from Little Arabia's beloved businesses



Activities for all ages! A photobooth and a designated kids activities section.



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Rundown From 2pm to 8pm

Layali Little Arabia



٢

2:00 PM

DJ Set by
ThanksJoey

٣

3:00 PM

Intro by MC
Mikel Al
Baghdadi

3:15 PM

History of Little
Arabia District
Panel

٤

4:00 PM

DJ Set by
ThanksJoey

4:30PM

interlude
فاصلة

٥

5:00 PM

Opportunity Drawing
and shoutouts

٥:٣٠ PM
**Performance
by Mawtini
Choir**

٦

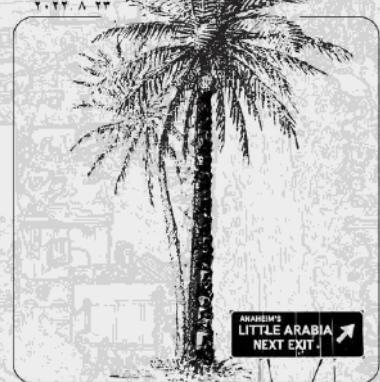
6:00 PM
DJ Set by
ThanksJoey
& Intermission

٧

7:00 PM
**Live ensemble
by Al Akhbar**

٨

8:00 PM
**Closing
remarks**



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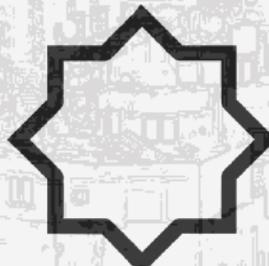


NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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SAWA for Palestine
CAIR-LA
Global Hope 365
American Arab Business Council of CA
Orange County Public Works
Arab American Caucus
American Red Cross



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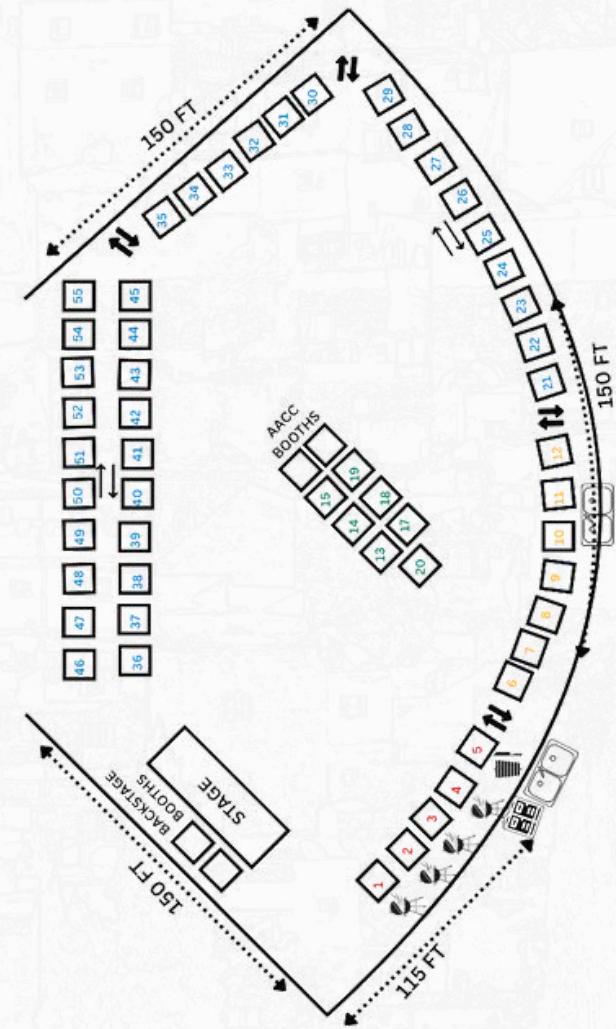


EVENT LAYOUT (8/13/2025)

*DESIGN NOT TO SCALE

LEGEND

- 3-COMPARTMENT SINK W/ WATER TANKS
- RESTROOMS + HANDWASH
- OPEN GRILL/FRYER
- SHAWARMA SPIT/GRILL
- FOOD / OPEN GRILL
- DESSERTS / COFFEE
- KNATPEH CAFE
- LITTLE ARABIA RESTAURANT
- WORLD FAMOUS GRILL
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It is an honor to support Layali: A Celebration of Little Arabia, an evening filled with culture, connection, and deep community pride. Congratulations on three years since the official designation of Little Arabia, a milestone made possible by years of advocacy, leadership, and persistence by community members determined to have this neighborhood's identity recognized.

To those who led that work: thank you. Your dedication helped secure not just a name on a map, but a lasting symbol of presence, belonging, and resilience. Through your contributions in culture, art, business, and civic life, you continue to shape a stronger, more inclusive community for all of us.

Preserving cultural identity is not just about honoring the past, it's about protecting the right of all communities to be seen, heard, and valued. The ability to live with dignity and safety, free from discrimination or erasure, is fundamental. Upholding those rights is not optional, it's a shared responsibility.

As we gather tonight, surrounded by music, food, and loved ones, we celebrate the people who make this place special. And we recommit ourselves to the values that unite us: equity, justice, human rights, and mutual respect.

A heartfelt thank you to the Arab American Civic Council and to all our community partners for building a future where everyone has a place.

With gratitude and solidarity,

Councilwoman Jessie Lopez



History of Little Arabia District

In the 1970s, immigrants from Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, and Iraq – along with sizable Iranian and Pakistani communities – began settling in West Anaheim.



By 1988, the Khoraki family opened Altayebat Market on Brookhurst Street, serving the neighborhood's growing population and meeting its distinct dietary and linguistic needs.

During the 1990s, the community grew rapidly. Many of its members were the children of Palestinians expelled during the 1948 Nakba, and they worked to preserve their distinct cultural identity.

It was during this period that the community began informally adopting the name “Little Gaza”—both as an homage to their ancestral homeland and as an affirmation of their right to self-identify.

‘GAZA’: It’s a Strip, But in Anaheim

Continued from B1
economy and good potential for growth,” Ayoub said. “The Southern California climate is very similar to that of most Arab countries—desert and close to the ocean, and mountains.” They moved to Orange County for the same reason other people do: to stay away from the large cities and get their space without sacrificing job opportunities and good schools.”

“The influx of Middle Easterners began in the 1970s and has produced a thriving community. When they came, they set up shops, opened markets and built a mosque on nearby Brookhurst Street.”

“It’s still growing,” Ayoub said. “I saw snowballing—one store attracts another, and those two stores attract two more.”

As a result, many Arabic visitors also come to this part of Katella and the surrounding area, one of the most diverse streets. “It tell you one thing,” said Sam Bessoso, 24, an American-born Palestinian living in Utah, “that you’re going to have a business trip to visit the Fishawi Cafe. ‘There are no hangouts like that back in Salt Lake City.’”

Arabs in Little Gaza manifestations—the new arrivals brought with them is *shisha*—sometimes called *argileh*, the ornately decorated water pipe used by Arabs, other smokers and friends traditionally socialize.

Smokers inhale through a long, multi-colored tube that is pre-purified by a small mound of glowing charcoal placed over a cup containing the aromatic tobacco, filtered



H. Hamadi of Corona smokes a water pipe at the Fishawi Cafe. Customers pay \$5 to smoke a pipeful of flavored tobacco that can last two hours.

terred smoke is almost nicotine-free. And many Arab families, Ayoub said, keep at least one pipe at home to share with their relatives and friends.

Smokers inhale through a long, multi-colored tube that is pre-purified by a small mound of glowing charcoal placed over a cup containing the aromatic tobacco, filtered

Turkish coffee, play chess or back-gammon, listen to Arabic music and chat with friends in their native tongue.

One of a handful of Orange County establishments providing Arab water pipes, the cafe—which

is on Katella.

In addition, to shutting Little

Gaza, owner Ragab Alimbeay said,

Katella is a good location for the

center of its proximity to the

Dangerfield.

“Arab people like to go to

quiet streets. He stops by regularly for the peace of mind that smoking shisha provides.

“It’s an old-fashioned kind of gathering,” he said. “What it does for you is get you to sit down, relax and think. It’s like



“It’s still growing. It’s snowballing—one store attracts another, and those two stores attract two more.”

HESSAM ALYOUSIF
American-Arabic American official, on Anaheim’s “Little Gaza”

“It’s like a cocktail,” the 30-year-old Jordanian immigrant said. “I like the gathering. I like seeing the guys. I’m my father’s烟 this all day.”

Four young men sitting outside the cafe reflected that they are in the少数族裔 community engaged in an informal family reunion.

It can be difficult to find a seat here on Friday and Saturday nights. “It’s a Middle Eastern atmosphere,” said Bessoso, the visitor

Arab Town

تأسست 14 July 2000

دینۃ الرسُل

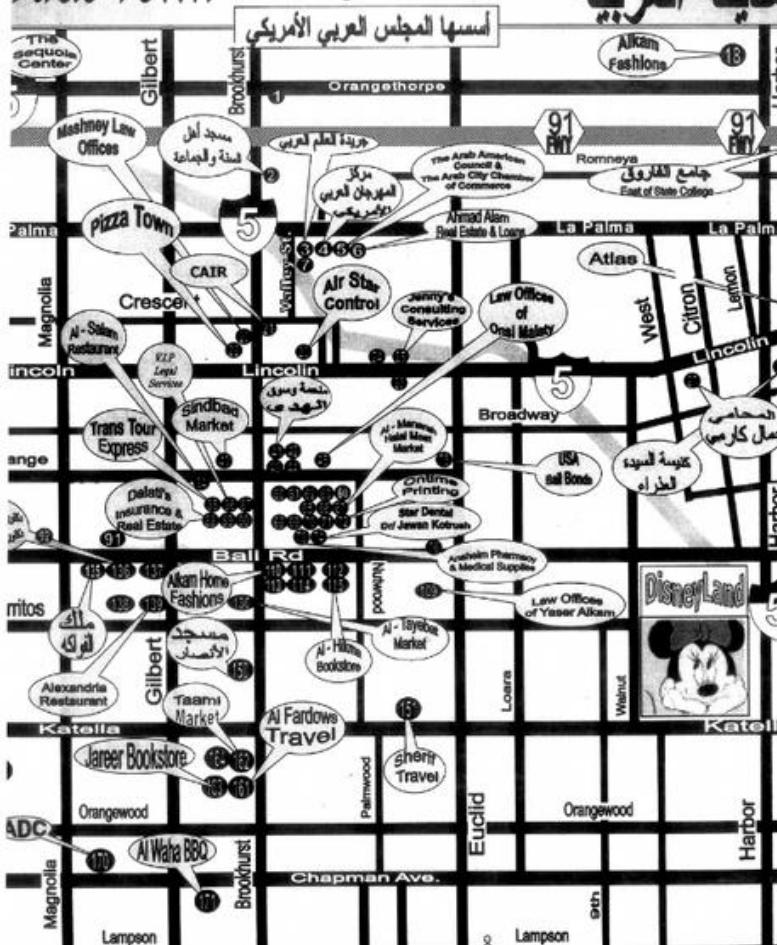


Figure 1. Map of Arab Town (source: *The Arab World* 27 June 2003, B8).

Around this time, the Brookhurst corridor, once referred to as “Arab Town,” began to be known as “Little Arabia,” a name that gained wider use by the mid-2000s.

In the 2000s, Ahmad Alam – owner of the Little Arabia Plaza – launched The Arab World magazine, which featured a community map.



In 2004, Fifty local leaders gathered at Access California Services to brainstorm ideas to elevate the Arab Community in Anaheim. Former City Councilman, Richard Chavez emphasizes the city's poor effort in reaching out to ethnic groups. Official Designation was suggested during brainstorming sessions.

Los Angeles Times



In 2014, community leaders hosted a "Summit," which brought together residents, civic leaders, and then mayor Tom Tait. The event highlighted the potential of Little Arabia as a recognized ethnic district—drawing comparisons to established cultural hubs like Little Saigon and Little Tokyo.

CALIFORNIA

Muslims and Arabs Seek New Profile

By Stanley Allison

June 6, 2004 12 AM PT

The leaders -- brainstorming in small groups, scribbling their ideas in colored inks on display boards and then comparing notes -- proposed several projects Saturday to elevate Arabs' and Muslims' presence in Anaheim.

A community center, they said, would benefit both youth and women, and be a place for recreation and voter registration.

They also suggested creating an official designation for Little Arabia and establishing an office of immigration affairs.

In 2010, seeking an official city designation, Rashad Al-Dabbagh and Omar Masry launched an advocacy and social media campaign to designate Little Arabia to draw public attention to the district.



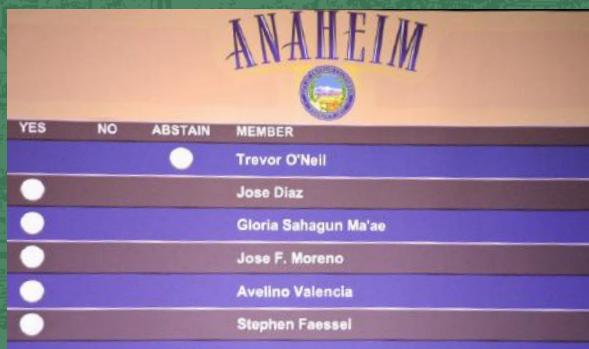
In 2020, the Arab American Civic Council launched the #designatelittlearabia campaign, in an effort to put it on the Anaheim City Council's agenda.

Advocacy for Little Arabia

After more than 18 years of back-and-forth between the community and the Anaheim City Council, Dr. José Moreno placed the Little Arabia district designation on the council agenda in 2022, paving the way for its official recognition.



After more than three decades of community building and activism, Little Arabia was officially designated on August 22, 2022.



Today's Little Arabia District

In January 2024, the Anaheim City Council voted to approve the installation of a Little Arabia freeway sign. On September 19, 2024, the sign was unveiled to the public and installed a couple of weeks later.



Little Arabia has become a space where the community can both celebrate and grieve—a place to be human.



Looking ahead, the district's future shines through public art, cultural events, and community tours.



It stands as a beacon of California's ethnic diversity, offering Arab Americans a place where their identity is recognized, affirmed, and openly expressed.

About the performers



The Palestine Foundation, in collaboration with SAWA, a Southern California Arab American mothers group, established the **Mawtini Choir**. This children's choir project focuses on teaching traditional and folk songs, including the associated Arabic language translation, pronunciation, and history, to children between the ages of 5 & 17. The choir aims to foster a sustainable fellowship of young artists who are proficient in various art forms like singing, traditional dance, playing musical instruments, and poetry. They provide instruction in vocal skills, Arabic pronunciation and vocabulary through songs and poetry, as well as playing traditional musical instruments, music theory, and folk dances.



"Thanks Joey" (شكراً) is a Los Angeles-based music producer, audio engineer, and DJ known for specializing in various genres including Hip-Hop, R&B, Reggaeton, Afropop, and Pop. He has released several albums and singles, including "Qahwah Con Leche", "Brown Kid", and "MAKTABA : Home Away From Home".





The name **الأخبار** (**Al-Akhbar**), meaning "The News" in Arabic, was chosen to transform the traditional notion of news as a bearer of sorrow into a messenger of celebration and togetherness. With their unique fusion of traditional Arabic maqam and jazz, Al-Akhbar is reshaping the SWANA music scene, pushing boundaries, and offering a fresh perspective on cultural expression.

Mikel Albagdadi is a comedian hailing from Louisiana, now making waves in Los Angeles. Known for his unique brand of humor, he skillfully weaves tales of his upbringing as an Arab American in the South into uproarious comedy. With credits including a role in the movie *The Hunt* and a recent appearance in the Netflix Original *Carry On* alongside Jason Bateman, Mikel Albagdadi is carving out a niche for himself in the entertainment industry, he has showcased his wit through his writing, contributing to publications such as *The Red Shtick*, *Neutral Ground*, and *Buzzfeed*.





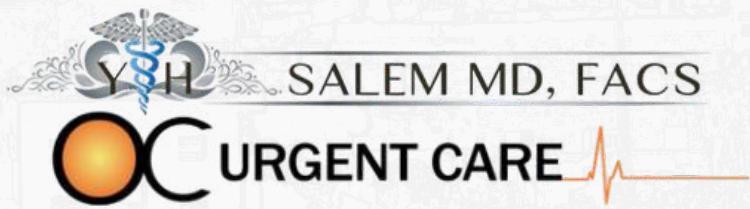
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About the organizer

Established in 2011, the Arab American Civic Council advances community power and grassroots democracy by moving people, organizations, and policy towards justice and equity. We envision an empowered Arab American community thriving in an America that is just and equitable for all.

Our team come from different backgrounds but share the same vision to uplift our communities.

Rashad Al-Dabbagh - Executive Director

Hani Haidar - Admin & Development Coordinator

Amin Nash - Policy & Research Coordinator

Johanna Mustafa - Operations Manager

Ayah Shiadah - Organizing Manager

Aya Baazizi - NNAAC Fellow

Muntadhar Aljadeed - NNAAC Fellow



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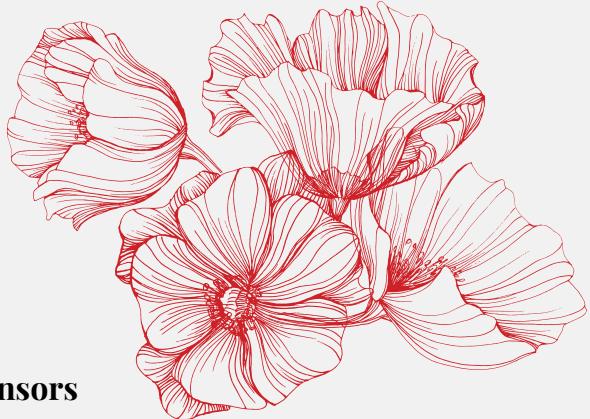


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**Arab American
Civic Council**