

EXERCISE 9: DESIGN ANALYSIS, HOSPITALITY ENVIRONMENTS

A Bit of Saigon, Jacksonville, Florida

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INDS726-OL1

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Purpose and Function



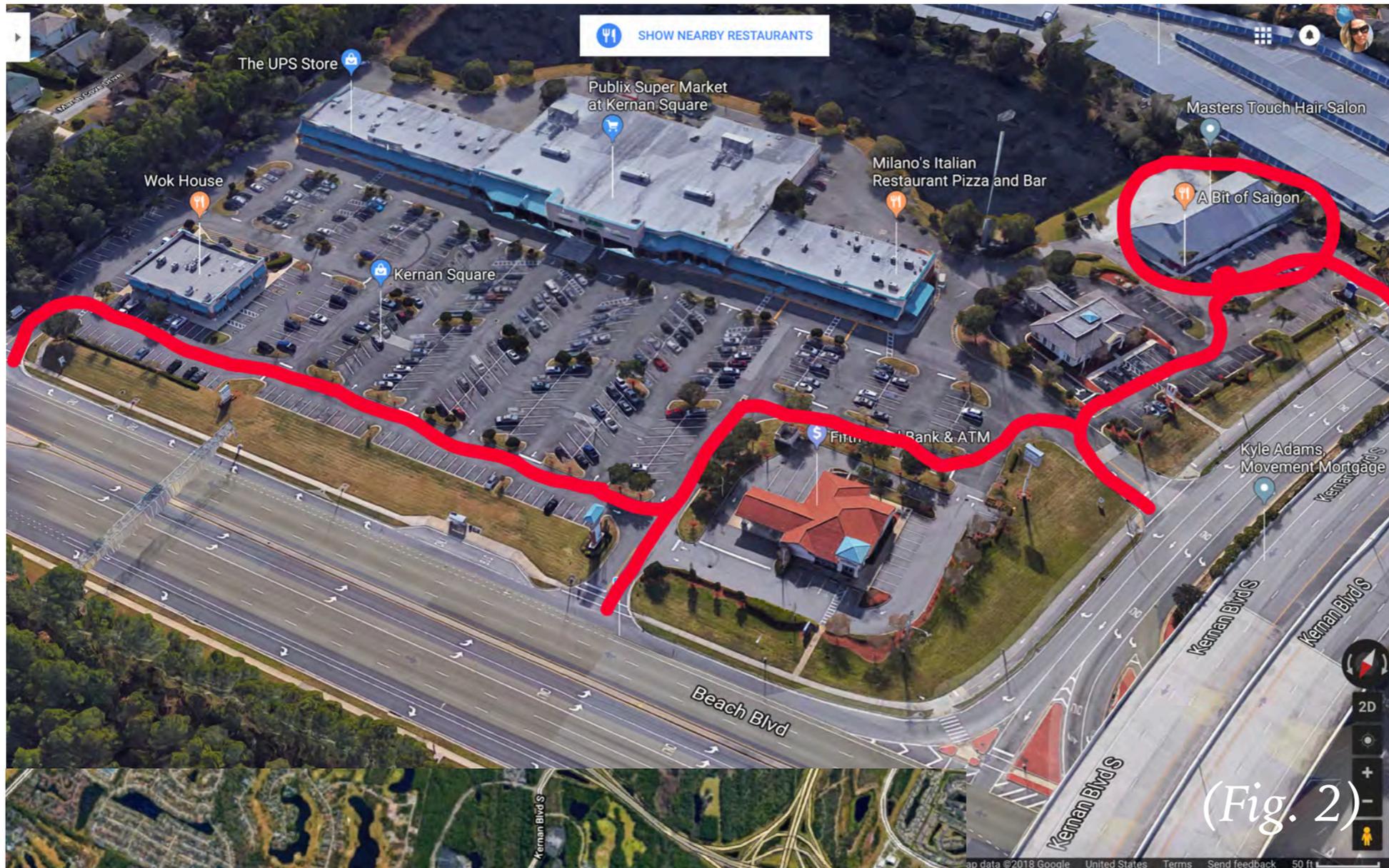
A Bit of Saigon is a family-run, Vietnamese restaurant in Jacksonville, Florida located at 3503 Kernan Boulevard South.

They are restricted to the size and type of signage allowed, but have fallen short on their exterior signage, probably due to budgetary constraints.

The restaurant is tucked into the back auxiliary area of a Publix shopping centre. It is hard to reach on the first attempt. (GPS doesn't always work.)

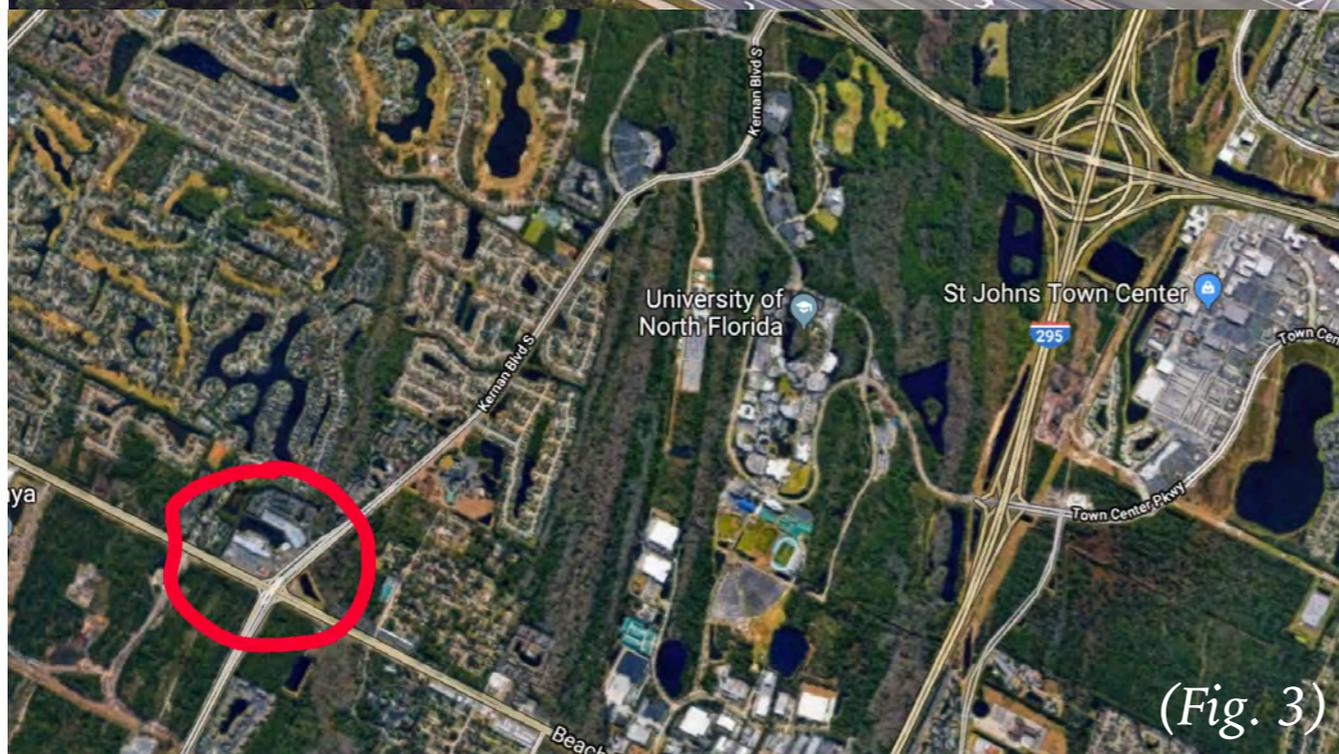
(Fig. 1)

Location and Climate



(Fig. 2)

There are 4 ways to access the parking lot, but in the land of weird (Florida), there isn't a lot of directional signage. You're just expected to know where you're going, in town. If you miss your turn, you're expected to cut across 4 lanes of traffic, illegally U-turn, scream "FLORIDA!!!" as you attempt to turn around and go back. (Parts of this may be sarcasm. I'll leave that to the reader to discern.)



(Fig. 3)

This area is highly populated and has a relatively diverse population: politically, ethnically, racially, and socio-economically (for Jacksonville standards). The residents often seek small, family owned restaurants as well as larger chain places that can be found in the nearby mall (St. John's Town Center). These spaces quickly become a "third place" (Oldenburg, 2001) and there are several of these "third places" in this same shopping center.

Patrons



(Fig. 4)

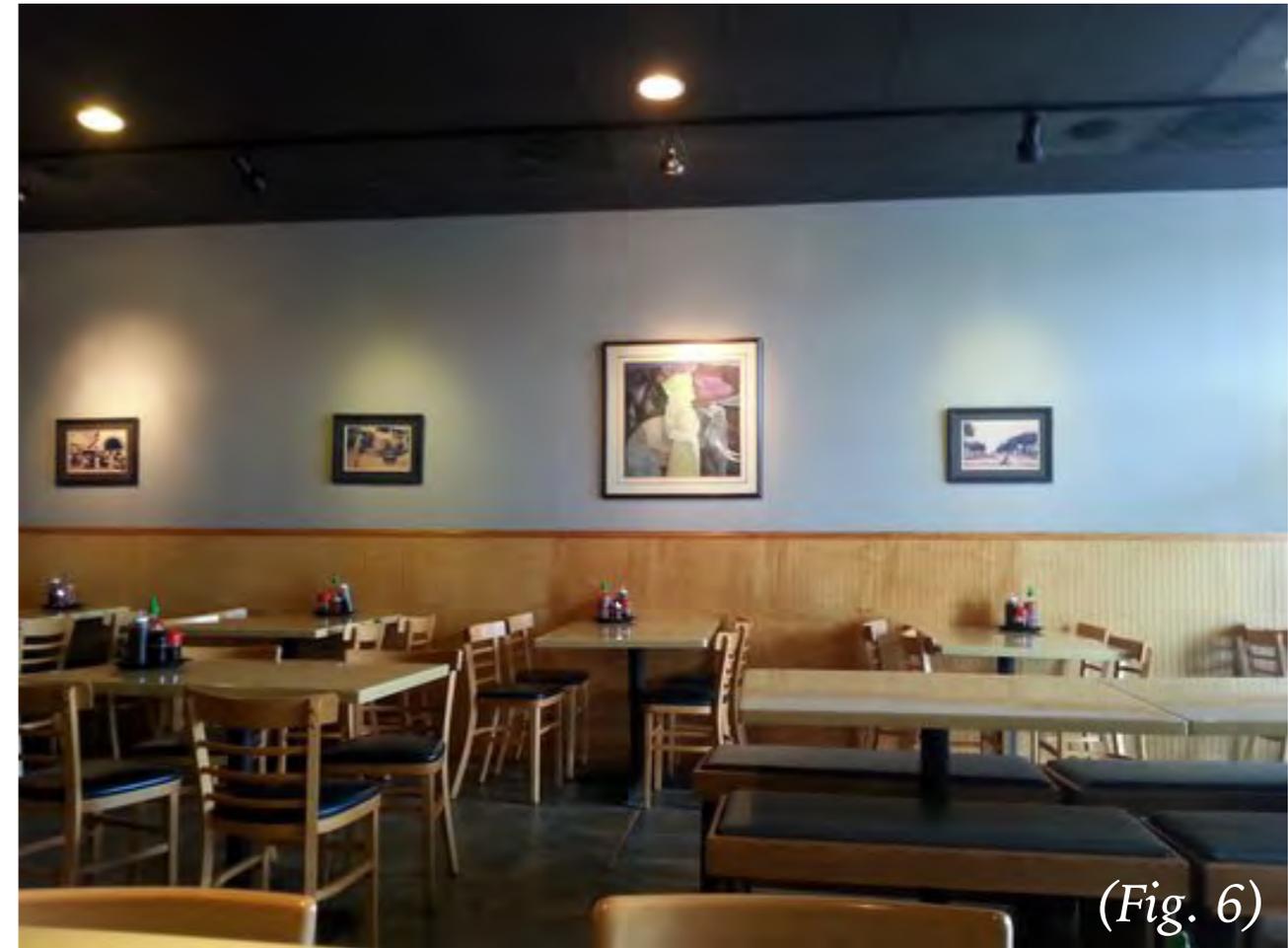
There is seating for 54-60 people within the space. It isn't poorly planned, but the glossy finish on the tables is a little lacking for tactile response, although I'm sure it helps with the cleaning.

In the common space, there are two toilet areas, and the cashier area. There is no host stand to speak of, but seating is expected to be "at will". This isn't communicated in the design, just as customers walk in, they're told to "sit where ever you like."

The crowding and density of the space uses both the sociofugal and sociopetal concepts of furniture placement, as the patrons seated in the centre row of the restaurant have a vantage point, allowing them to see their immediate dining companions as well as some of the other patrons of the restaurant. (Kopec, 2018)

The market area is lower-to-upper-middle class and the pricing of the menu is mid-range, allowing it to simultaneously be a nice night-out, or a quick, inexpensive bite. The posted hours can be confusing, open MT_RFSS from 11a-9p and closed Wednesdays. I spoke with the owner about this, and he said that there wasn't enough business on Wednesdays and he needed a day off so he opted for that day. It makes sense to me, but the way the hours are displayed can detract patrons, if they don't make themselves aware of the hours before arriving. (Could it read: Thursday - Tuesday, 11 a- 9p? I'm not sure what the best option is.)

Style and Theme/Defensible Space

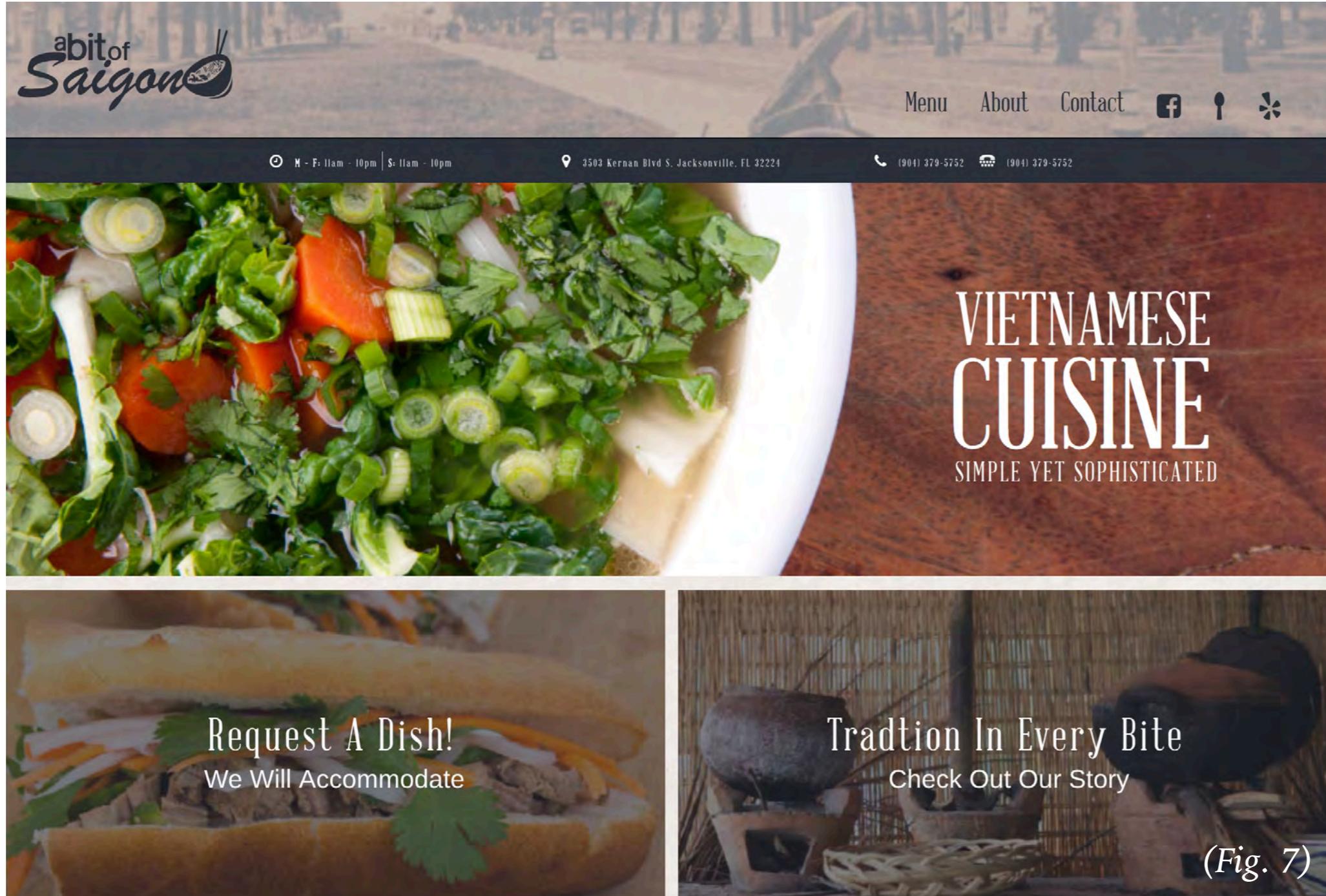


The style and theme is a contemporary blend of present-day America and old Vietnam. The splashy graphic image of cropped bamboo is directly across from sepia photographs of Saigon, prior to the Vietnam war. They seem to be standing off against one another. I think that more photos on that wall would work better, graphically. Photo walls give people a sense of history and community and lend themselves to symbolic representation. They could be a collection of images of Saigon, family images, selected fabric patterns, and maps of the area which can all be used to help connect the patrons and space through place attachment. (Kopec, 2018) The spot lighting helps establish vignettes within the space lending itself to Affiliate Conflict Theory's idea of simultaneously wanting to be closer to and farther from others, thus using the lighting as a spacing mechanism, establishing areas of perceived privacy within the existing, open space or Public territory. (Argyle and Dean, 1965)(Kopec, 2018)

The wall colour is a nice, warm grey, however it probably should be more neutral so as not to clash with the several colours of wood stain, the mottled tile floor, the touches of brick, and the various pieces of art throughout the space. Paint is an inexpensive way to change the ambiance of a space. The pot of sticks in the front of the space looks cluttered and sad, as though it was an afterthought and doesn't lend itself to Biophilia in any way. In my opinion, some living plants or a water feature would be better options.(Kopec, 2018)

There is no real way to establish a Defensible Space within this restaurant, with the exception of the toilet areas, the cashier space, and the kitchen. The only thing that gives the impression of a blockade is the wooden, slatted divider at the front and the one near the toilet area. (Figs. 4 and 5)

Services and Amenities/Crowding



Their website includes their menu and part of their story. (Although the link is broken) The design is really graphically stimulating, although the bar near the top is virtually illegible.

As you can see, they state that they can accommodate many different dietary needs/restrictions (allergy alerts, vegetarians, dairy-free, gluten-free, etc...) and they make these accommodations with little to no charge. The owner is very open about his recipes, as to make sure that everyone has a good experience with his food. There is free wifi, which is really great for students who may need to work while enjoying a massive bowl of Pho.

The flexibility of the seating allows for ADA accessibility, and can be arranged as needed, for larger groups. They often have a "full house", and that is problematic, due to their lack of overflow/bar area. The only option, really, is for them to buy the space next door and take that over. I've worked on a Sketchup design for a more cohesive colour and texture palette. (Example: changing the wall colour, changing and adding more art, and changes to the tables and chairs.) (Birren, 1997)

Wayfinding and Exterior Design



(Fig. 8)

Let's just dig in here: Their channel lettering is awful. It doesn't lend itself to the aesthetic, the theming, or the palette, and neither does their "OPEN" neon. That being said, it is legible from the road. There is a tiny "restrooms" sign over the hallway opening to the toilet area, and that is the only sign inside the space. Wayfinding inside, customers should find the three rows of tables /chairs and the spot lighting makes it easy to determine the separate areas as well as give people their own vignettes of perceived privacy.

There could be more directional information regarding the seating arrangements, like: "Please seat yourself" or "Wait to be greeted and seated." A simple sign would suffice. As it happens now, the owner calls out to every entering customer(s), "Sit anywhere you'd like!" and although it is done in a happy manner, it is disruptive to the customers already seated, eating, and trying to have conversation.



(Fig. 9)



(Fig. 10)

Customers are immediately funnelled down one of the two aisles past the centre row of tables, confronting their right-directional bias.

Music and Scent



(Fig. 11)

There is a lightly playing selection of classical piano pieces, but I'm not sure how that fits with the theme, or the restaurant itself. I feel that classical Vietnamese music would be more than applicable to the theme. It may be the owner's preference, though.

The scent isn't off putting at all. It's basically a really vibrant chicken soup, lime, and basil smell. It's quite lovely and fits with the fact that this is a Pho shop. Every once in a while, someone orders something else on the menu, but those scents all blend well together.

Successes

- Well Lit
- Ample Seating
- Proximity Control
- Texture Rich
- Scent is Welcoming

Failures

- Seating is Uncomfortable
- Needs more Set Dressing
- Lack of Wall Decor
- Paint Colour clashes
- Music is a Confusing Choice.

Recommendations

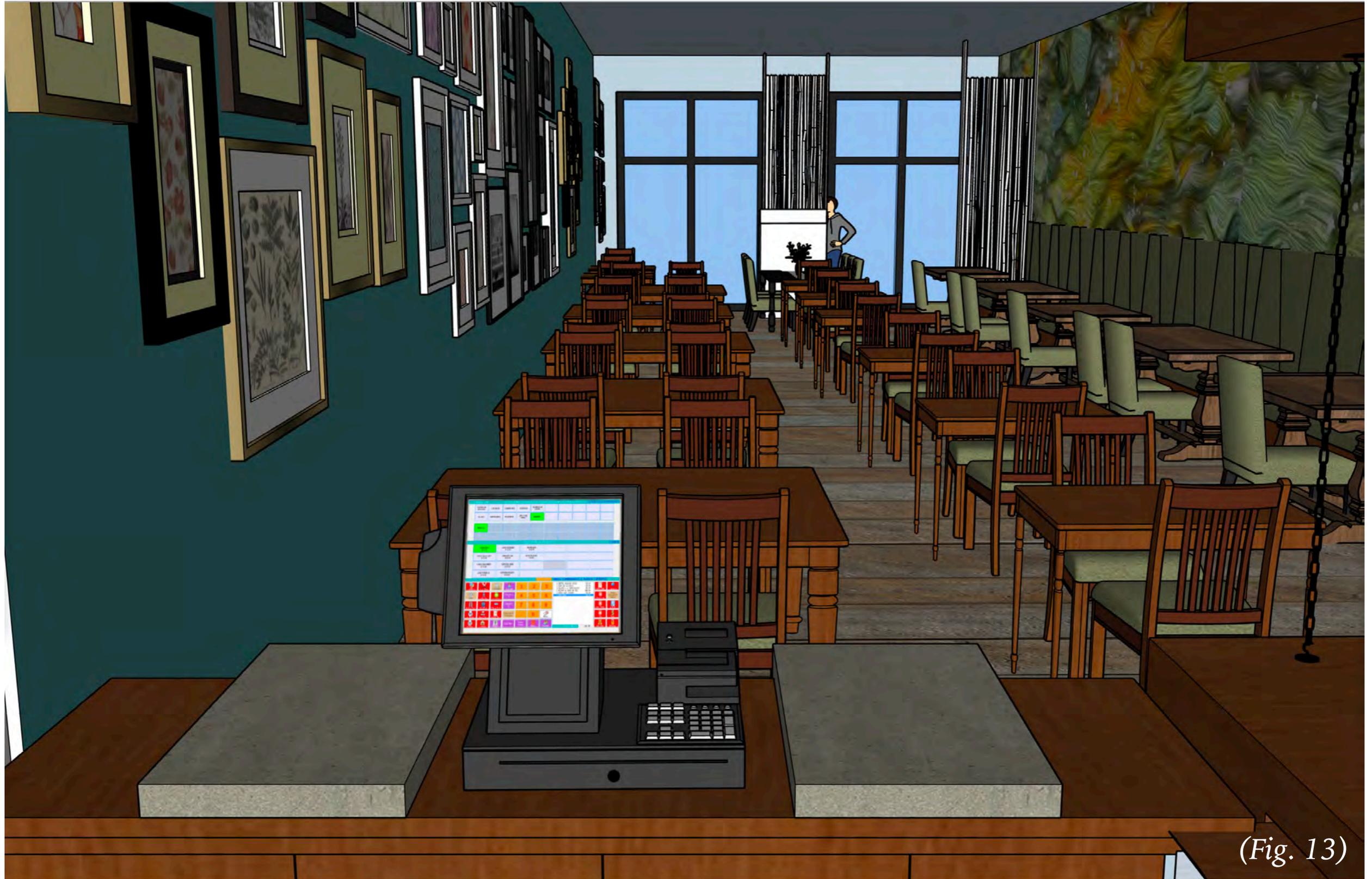


(Fig. 12)

I've recently learned Sketchup, so I decided to create a floor plan for this restaurant. It leaves the overall layout in tact, changing the paint colour, flooring, the seats, and the tables, and adding more wall images by way of a picture wall.

I've also added a bench near the entryway so that a host can meet customers as they enter, or wait for takeout.

Recommendations, Continued



(Fig. 13)

Recommendations, Continued



(Fig. 14)

Recommendations, Continued



(Fig. 15)

REFERENCES

Birren, F. (1997) *The power of colour*. Seacaucus, NJ. Carol Publishing Group

Kopek, D. (2018) *Environmental Psychology for Interior Design, 3rd Edition*.
New York: Fairchild Books, Bloomsbury

Oldenburg, R. (2001) *Celebrating the third place*. New York: Marlowe and
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IMAGE CITATIONS, BY FIGURE NUMBER

1. Image of the exterior of the restaurant. Google Earth, 2017.
2. Image of the shopping center, Google Earth, 2018. Accessed 6 November, 2018
3. Image from area, Google Earth, 2018. Accessed 7 November, 2018
4. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
5. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
6. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
7. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
8. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
9. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
10. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
11. Image courtesy of A Bit of Saigon, 2018
12. Sketchup model created by Author, 8 November, 2018
13. Sketchup model created by Author, 8 November, 2018
14. Sketchup model created by Author, 8 November, 2018
15. Sketchup model created by Author, 8 November, 2018