

Identifying genius loci elements in urban space of the history central area of Ho Chi Minh City

Nhận diện yếu tố nơi chốn trong không gian đô thị khu vực trung tâm lịch sử TP.HCM

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ABSTRACT

Vietnam, a rich history and culture, is a country of diverse beauty from North to South, famous not only for its majestic natural landscape but also for its indigenous genius loci values. Each region, from the mountains and forests in the North to the plains in the South, contains its own unique characteristics, traditional values and culture. Typically, when talking about the Northern mountains, people will feel the soul of the countryside through the villages of ethnic groups such as H'Mong, Dao, and Nung, where each costume and each festival tells a story. Meanwhile, in the South, you will be conquered by the peaceful beauty of the Southern river region, where each canal and each floating market is a separate song about life close to nature. However, with today's rapid integration, many traditional cultural values and unique regional identities are gradually being challenged, even lost. Newly formed cities have placed too much emphasis on economic development and forgotten about preserving their cultural foundation, causing them to become uniform and lacking identity. Globalization and urban development should not be the reason for each city and each region to lose its unique values, which are the values of genius loci in space. For example, Ho Chi Minh City, although standing firmly as the leading economic center of the country, the search for a unique and different identity for itself is still unclear. Only by understanding and honoring the historical cultural values in the community foundation can Ho Chi Minh City affirm its position on the world map, becoming a city worthy of pride and dignity living.

Keywords: Genius loci, the element genius loci; urban space; history central area; central of Ho Chi Minh City.

TÓM TẮT

Việt Nam, với bề dày lịch sử và văn hóa là quốc gia có vẻ đẹp muôn màu từ Bắc chí Nam, không chỉ nổi tiếng về phong cảnh thiên nhiên hùng vĩ mà còn về những giá trị nơi chốn đậm chất bản địa. Mỗi vùng miền, từ núi rừng phía Bắc cho tới đồng bằng phía Nam đều ẩn chứa những đặc trưng, những giá trị truyền thống và văn hóa riêng biệt. Điển hình, khi nhắc đến vùng núi phía Bắc, người ta sẽ cảm nhận được hồn quê qua những ngôi làng của các dân tộc như H'Mông, Dao, Nùng, nơi mỗi bộ trang phục, mỗi lễ hội đều kể lên một câu chuyện riêng biệt. Trong khi đó, ở phía Nam, bạn sẽ bị chinh phục bởi vẻ đẹp thanh bình của vùng sông nước Nam Bộ, nơi mà mỗi kênh rạch, mỗi buổi chợ nổi lại là một điệu nhạc riêng về cuộc sống gần gũi với thiên nhiên. Tuy nhiên, trước bước đi nhanh chóng của hội nhập ngày nay, nhiều giá trị văn hóa truyền thống, những bản sắc đặc trưng vùng miền đang dần bị thách thức, thậm chí mất mát. Những đô thị mới hình thành đã quá chú trọng vào sự phát triển kinh tế mà quên mất việc gìn giữ nền tảng văn hóa, khiến chúng trở nên đồng điệu và thiếu bản sắc. Hội nhập toàn cầu hóa và sự phát triển đô thị không nên là lý do để mỗi thành phố, mỗi vùng miền mất đi những giá trị riêng biệt của mình, đó là các giá trị nơi chốn trong không gian. Ví dụ như TP.HCM, dù đang đứng vững với vị thế là trung tâm kinh tế hàng đầu của cả nước, nhưng việc tìm kiếm một bản dạng đặc trưng và khác biệt cho mình vẫn chưa được rõ nét. Chỉ khi hiểu và tôn vinh những giá trị văn hóa lịch sử trong nền móng cộng đồng, TP.HCM mới có thể khẳng định vị trí của mình trên bản đồ thế giới, trở thành một đô thị xứng danh với sự tự hào và đáng sống.

Từ khóa: Genius loci; the element genius loci; urban space; history central area; central of Ho Chi Minh City.

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

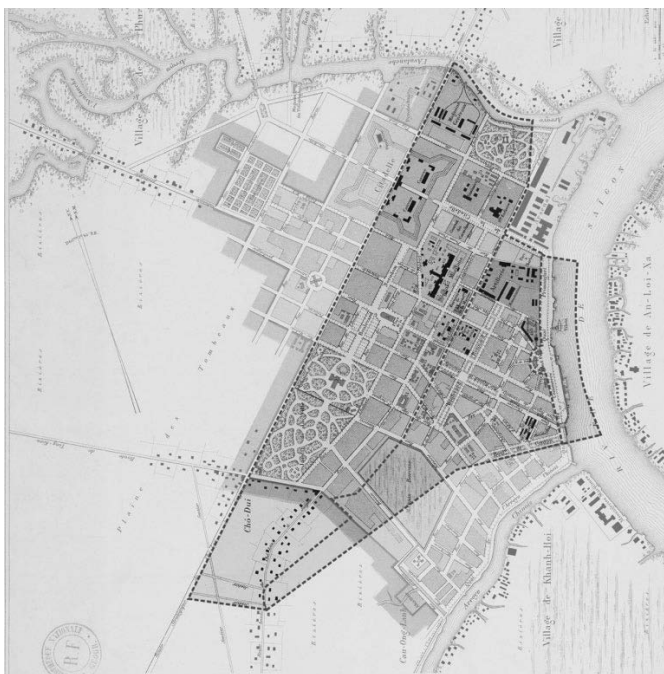
When talking about the history and building style of a city, nothing is more important than its center. In essence, the center is the soul of the city, where the past and present blend together and where the future is formed and developed. Identifying genius loci elements in the organization of urban space in the historic central area with full reference to material and spiritual elements as well as

the connection between their values will allow urban perception, objectively and fully informed not only as an immutable object but as a living organism with a spirit to orient and exploit and breathe life into the city. In this study, the article is looking for and identifying genius loci factors in urban space in Division 1, Division 2 and Division 3 of the historic central area of Ho Chi Minh City. With the function of a commercial, cultural and historical center and the

west bank of the Saigon River, these three subdivisions have done a very good job of preserving, preserving, maintaining and conveying unique features in the network structure system. The road network combined with building spaces of cultural and historical value has clearly formed its identity through the process of formation and development over more than 300 years. The cultural and historical function area is integrated with some commercial spaces, and within the commercial function area there are also some cultural and historical spaces. This has contributed to enriching the spatial identity of the genius loci and adding more urban highlights. The transition from historical to modern urban space morphological changes and the interconnection with checkerboard routes, combined with a number of walking routes, further enhance the unique character of the city. genius loci value of this area.

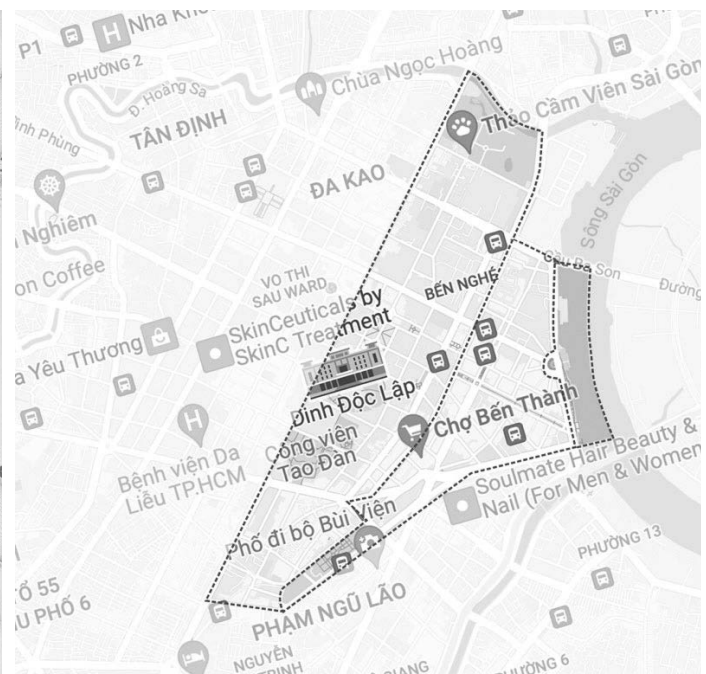
If Division 1 is considered the heart of Ho Chi Minh City. It is not only a gathering place for economic and political activities but also a reflection of the city's cultural and social identity. When you step into Division 1, you will feel the dynamic vitality of a vibrant economic center, where skyscrapers mix with cramped low-rise neighborhoods that have existed since previous centuries. On the contrary, Division 2, with its perfect combination of history and culture, shows us what Ho Chi Minh City was like in the past and the values it still retains. At Division 2, the space is quieter and more historic. We can easily see old houses, French colonial-style cafes, or peaceful pedestrian areas. When coming here, everyone will feel like time has stopped, allowing us to experience and enjoy every peaceful moment. The intersection between Division 1 and Division

2 creates a unique space where the past and present meet. As for Division 3, with its winding Saigon River, it brings peace and beauty, clearly reflecting the nature of the Southern region. Division 3 represents the harmony between nature and people, where on the West bank are buildings bearing the mark of unique French architecture dating back over 100 years such as the Majestic Hotel, the City Customs Department,... and On the other side is the new urban area Thu Thiem which is continuously developing and forming every day. When combining these three subdivisions, Ho Chi Minh City is not only an ancient and poetic urban area. It is also a vivid picture of the combination between tradition and modernity, between past and present, between humans and nature. Each subdivision, each street corner hides the uniqueness and richness of the downtown area. If the Coffyn plan in 1862 destroyed the citadel planning style of the old feudal regime and replaced it with a modern planning of an urban center along the Saigon River, gradually shaped through the map of Plan in 1878. From here, we can see the transformation and expansion of the city through each period, but the central area is always maintained and consolidated. It is Division 1, Division 2 and part of Division 3 of the 930ha plan. These subdivisions are not only important in terms of location but also because of the cultural and historical value they bring to Ho Chi Minh City. The historic center is not only a physical space but also a place where the past, culture and people intersect. Each area has a unique mark, together creating a vivid, colorful picture of Ho Chi Minh City.



Saigon planning map in 1878.

Source: Internet



Map of Ho Chi Minh City's historic center

Source: Author

2. IDENTIFYING GENIUS LOCI ELEMENT IN THE HISTORY CENTRAL AREA OF HO CHI MINH CITY

Urban space is the space within an urban area, including open areas and built-up areas such as streets, parks, squares, commercial areas and architectural works. Urban spaces are often designed to serve the living, work, entertainment and transportation needs of people in urban areas; is a place where social activities take place openly and people can easily participate and exercise their civil rights. Urban space is of great

importance to the quality of life of people and is also an important factor in the economic and cultural development of an urban area. Urban space can be located inside or outside the building. However, within the limits of the article, the urban space mentioned is the public space outside the building, where everyone can freely access, regardless of social status, gender, ethnicity, religion. It can be a square, park, riverside walkway, outdoor play area,... serving the needs of relaxation, connection, and community interaction.

According to history, Saigon - Gia Dinh left behind natural terrain features and the structure of the central area of Ho Chi Minh City, taking the Saigon River as the standard. Urban formation and development along the edge of the river, rivers and canals here have become part of the urban area, participating in the structure and process of social development. The architecture of the existing central area more or less bears the imprint of the river, creating a unique cultural identity. The riverbank area stretching for dozens of kilometers with winding waterways between the East and West banks of the Saigon River is an ideal space to activate diverse public activities. From here, the Saigon River seems to have become the soul, the blood that nourishes this Southern land through each historical period. Not simply a topographic feature, but also a testament to the harmony between humans and nature. On the banks of the river, Saigon people have created unique cultural features, from business to coffee shops overlooking the river, which is an advantage that attracts tourists. In addition, wharves, piers, and historical architecture such as the Thu Ngu flagpole, waterbus wharf or floating restaurants on the river have turned a riverside area into a cultural highlight, attracting thousands of tourists. million tourists every year. Projects to regenerate riverside spaces such as entertainment areas, food courts, or 3D river paintings, all have the goal of exploiting the maximum cultural and historical value of the Saigon River. At the same time, it creates a tourist highlight and serves the entertainment needs of the community. Thereby, the Saigon River not only makes its mark in the hearts of every person here but is also deeply engraved in the soul of every visitor once they set foot there. That is the power of river culture, a precious heritage that the city is increasingly trying to preserve and promote.

The traffic network in the central area is divided into chessboard squares along the original spatial axis, which is the edge of Quy citadel and Phung citadel. From there, it can be seen that, in the process of developing their planning during the colonial period, the French did not completely eliminate the existing road network structure but used skillful manipulation to develop on the basis of the existing road network. old. The urban identity is still preserved, transformed, developed and expanded to form the future cultural, historical and political center of Ho Chi Minh City. The roads that make up the backbone of Ho Chi Minh City urban areas include Dong Khoi, Le Duan, Le Loi, and Nguyen Hue streets. Nguyen Hue Street today is a destination not to be missed when talking about street space or public space in Ho Chi Minh City. Since being redesigned and officially becoming a walking street in 2015, this area has quickly attracted residents and tourists because of its open, airy space and diverse cultural and entertainment activities form. Every evening, this street transforms into a large art stage with many performances from live music, puppet shows, street performances to typical Saigon culinary stalls. During the Lunar New Year, Nguyen Hue Street becomes a "flower street" with paintings recreating warm, unique rural life scenes, reflecting the spirit and traditional culture of Vietnamese people. Along with that, stalls selling Tet specialties such as banh chung, banh tet, Tet jam,... bring a bustling, vibrant atmosphere to the heart of the city.

When talking about Saigon streets, it is impossible not to mention alleys. These are small alleys located discreetly between high-rise buildings or existing residential areas. It is the place that holds the secrets of ancient Saigon. Walking in these alleys, we can suddenly enter a small cafe, decorated in the classic style of the 1970s. There are paintings, paper lanterns and gentle music from old songs. will take you back to a bygone era, a time of golden Saigon. Alleys, also known as small streets, are the soul of many

large cities in Vietnam, especially Saigon. In addition to the main streets filled with exciting activities, many people also love Saigon's alleys because they are bustling, busy, dynamic, but also have a very old, nostalgic atmosphere like alley 8A Thai Van Lung. , alley 74 Hai Ba Trung,... Alley activities in Saigon streets are the thread that binds the relationship between residents, it replaces the traditional village life of the past. The alleys seem simple and discreet, but they contain countless interesting and poetic things. These activities help create a colorful picture of urban life in Ho Chi Minh City today. Where each street and each small alley tells its own story. If the main roads are the fast heartbeat of the city, the alleys are subtle highlights, deeply reflecting other aspects of Saigon life. People here, whether vibrant on the main streets or seeking peace in hidden alleys, all have a special love for their city. Alleys are a familiar, rustic culture. Small restaurants in alley spaces not only serve delicious popular dishes but also preserve the images and values of old Saigon. Although today, high-rise buildings and commercial areas are springing up more and more, Saigon still retains its unique characteristics. And that is the perfect combination between bustling living space and peace in a small alley. Saigon is not just a city, it is also a symbol, a cultural heart full of Vietnamese culture, where every street corner, every street is associated with memories, emotions and cultural values. unique.

Through many historical changes, Saigon - Ho Chi Minh City still maintains its unique architectural beauty and blend of tradition and modernity. French colonial-style architectural works such as Notre Dame Cathedral, City Post Office, Opera House, City People's Committee or Ben Thanh Market are not only architectural symbols but also contain countless stories and memories, and people's love for the city. Each square and each construction site has a distinct cultural and historical value. Such as Paris Commune, Quach Thi Trang, Lam Son or Me Linh Square are not only traffic intersections but also the center of many historical transformation events. It helps link the city's great histories and is a testament to the continuous development of Ho Chi Minh City. Parks in Saigon are not only "green lungs" in the heart of the bustling city but also a place where cultural thinking, art and community sentiment are nurtured. During Tet holidays, parks become ideal meeting places for cultural and entertainment activities, converging the national spirit, expressing solidarity and love. Images of Saigon people participating in cultural activities together in parks or participating in special festivals on Tet holidays such as Tao Dan spring flower festival, September 23 park cherry blossom festival ,... all create a colorful and rich picture of urban life, reflecting the unique cultural identity of Vietnamese people in the context of integration and development. It can be said that Saigon - Ho Chi Minh City is a delicate combination of classic and modern architecture, between peaceful and bustling space. Every street corner, every building is associated with historical and cultural values, creating the unique beauty of a colorful and attractive Saigon.

The historic central area of Ho Chi Minh City is always vibrant with attractive and interesting activities lasting all day and night. That's why Ho Chi Minh City is known as "the city that never sleeps", without ever running out of fire, heat, or excitement. All activities taking place are always very diverse and rich, suitable for many audiences. Travel therefore becomes attractive to everyone. This is the convergence of urban daily life and colorful cultural events. Activities such as book street, Tet flower market, festival space, music performances and art exhibitions along with shops, sidewalk cafes, street vendors, walking streets, chatting and working So the air is full of life. It is the humanistic aspect of this scene that creates

the soul of the street and becomes part of the intangible cultural and spiritual resources of the downtown area. Each year, Ho Chi Minh City organizes a series of cultural events, which not only attract locals and tourists but are also an opportunity to express and continue to spread local cultural identity. Ho Chi Minh City is proud of its rich cuisine, a blend of tradition and modernity, of Eastern and Western flavors, bringing a distinct culinary style of Saigon people. This unique flavor makes anyone who loves food remember it forever. It is no coincidence that many people refer to Ho Chi Minh City as a "street food paradise". On every street, there are street vendors or stalls selling famous dishes such as banh mi, pho, vermicelli noodles, spring rolls, etc. that have made their name.

If street food helps visitors quickly grasp the typical flavors of Saigon, then sidewalk coffee helps them immerse themselves in the culture and lifestyle of the people. No need to go into modern or luxurious cafes, just sit down on a plastic chair on the sidewalk to feel the typical atmosphere of Saigon: openness, friendliness and harmony. into the lively space of the city. But perhaps, the most special thing about Saigon lies not only in cultural, culinary or

entertainment activities, but in the people of Saigon. The friendliness, openness and willingness to share have created a beautiful and impressive image in the hearts of visitors. With every step on Saigon soil, visitors feel the love and pride of the people here for their city. They are the people who create the colorful picture of urban life, the soul of the streets, alleys and every dish. For young people, Saigon is a place full of hope and opportunities for the future. Exploring Saigon - Ho Chi Minh City is an unlimited journey. Because every street corner, every street, every space contains stories, histories and secrets that have not yet been revealed. For the people of Saigon, the city is not only a place to live but also a place containing memories, love and pride. Skyscrapers are rising in the heart of the city, but Saigon people still retain their traditional beauty, affection and enthusiasm. Although it changes over time, the spirit and cultural identity of every corner of Saigon still forever exists in the hearts of the people here. From those factors, we get an overall picture of lively spaces and places in the historic central area of Ho Chi Minh City through the following summary table:

SPACE	TANGIBLE	INTANGIBLE
Square: - Quach Thi Trang - Paris commune - Me Linh - Lam Son	- Central location. - Attached to valuable architectural works. - Harmonious and airy urban space - Suitable for human proportions - Simple and familiar shape - Easy access - Many amenities nearby	- Famous landmarks - Diversity of activities - Has historical significance - Diverse landscape environment - Spiritual culture
Park: - Tao Dan - 30/4 - 23/9 - Bach Dang Wharf - Saigon Zoo	- Precious natural green area - Clean air - Natural space - Characteristic riverside water - Attached to value architecture - Diverse functions - "Array", "line" form - Easy access - Many amenities nearby	- Famous landmarks - Attractive activities - Has historical significance - Lively river space - Unique landscape environment
Street: - Nguyen Hue - Le Loi - Dong Khoi - Hai Ba Trung - Ham Nghi - Nguyen Van Binh	- There is a strip of street green trees as a highlight - Attached to valuable architectural works - Vivid street space - Associated with typical Southern rivers - Suitable walking distance - Diverse functions - Easy access - Many amenities nearby	- Famous landmarks - Diverse and attractive activities - Has historical significance - Brings Southern cultural nuances - Feng shui geography - Multi-purpose sidewalk - Reading culture
Structures: - Independence Palace: - Saigon Notre-Dame Cathedral: - People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City - Ben Thanh market: - Ho Chi Minh Opera house: - Home	- Typical French architectural style - Dating back more than 100 years - Highly aesthetic - Associated with squares, parks, green areas. - The ending location of the main space axes creates an urban highlight. - Harmony between old and new elements with the surrounding space - Symmetrical layout	- Famous landmarks - Has many historical significance - Unique - Spiritual culture



The element of genius loci is the structures
Source: Author



The element of genius loci is the artificial open space
Source: Author



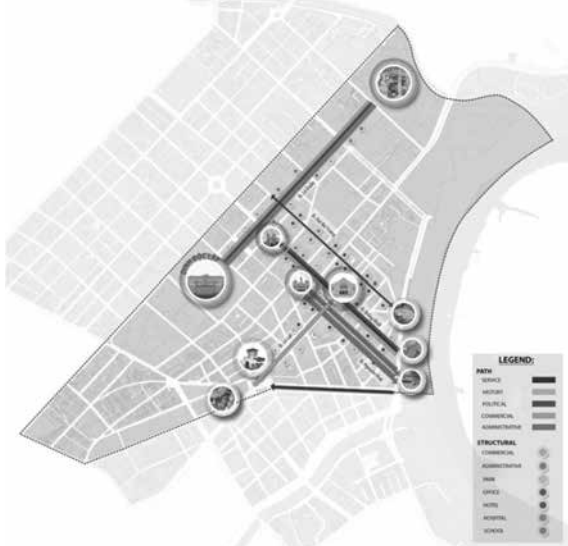
The element of genius loci is the natural open space.
Source: Author



The element of genius loci is daytime activity Source: Author



The element of genius loci is night activity Source: Author



The element Genius loci in urban space of the history central area of HCM City



Source: Author

3. DISCUSS ABOUT IDENTIFYING GENIUS LOCI ELEMENTS

Identifying genius loci elements in urban space, especially in the historic center of Ho Chi Minh City, is not only about analyzing the physical surface but also about delving deeply into history, culture and soul of the city. Ho Chi Minh City, as the economic - cultural - political center of Vietnam, has undergone many historical and cultural changes. Roads, neighborhoods, old buildings or new architectural works all carry the marks of time, witnessing many ups and downs of history. Why is it important to identify place elements in urban space? First, from a historical and cultural perspective, each area and each street tells its own story. Classic buildings in the French architectural style in Dong Khoi, or small street corners in Ben Thanh Market, all bear the imprint of the cultures that have contributed to the formation of today's Ho Chi Minh City. These elements not only create a unique cultural identity for the city but are also a source of inspiration for artists, writers, and history lovers. Next, from an economic perspective, the center of Ho Chi Minh City is where many commercial and service activities are concentrated. Clearly identifying place factors in urban areas, from the location of public spaces to population density and traffic conditions, will help investors, businesses and local authorities make informed decisions suitable for economic development.

On the other hand, environmental and traffic issues are always a big challenge for a crowded city like Ho Chi Minh City. Blind, uncontrolled development can lead to pollution, congestion and lack of green space. Understanding urban space, specifically the important genius loci elements in space, helps plan and build a modern transportation system, as well as protect and develop green spaces for residents. For Ho Chi Minh City to move towards sustainable development, it not only requires consideration between economic and environmental factors, but also needs the consensus of the community. Genius loci factors are not only related to physics but also to human spirit and emotions. Attachment to living space, pride in cultural identity and desire to contribute to the overall development of the city all originate from understanding and properly appreciating the elements of urban space and genius loci.

Looking back, Ho Chi Minh City with its special position and cultural and historical richness has been facing many challenges in the urbanization process. Accurate identification of genius loci elements, especially in the central area space, not only helps solve these challenges but also orients for a future of strong, sustainable development and integration with the trend. global world.

4. CONCLUDE

In the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, the historic center is more than just a physical space. It is a place that preserves cultural heritage, community spirit and precious historical value. To understand the continuity and development of these urban spaces, recognizing and respecting the elements of genius loci is indispensable. Through that, we can look back at their origin, value and change over time. Located in a central location and carrying a historical mission, Ho Chi Minh City has proven that the combination of past and present, between traditional cultural heritage and modernity, can exist harmoniously in a bustling and vibrant urban space. For Ho Chi Minh City to continue to step steadily into the future, identifying and respecting genius loci elements in urban space is extremely important. Each street corner, each street, each building in the historic center represents a separate story, a page in a colorful history book. Besides conservation, space creation and development is the key for the city to continue to develop flexibly,

diversely and richly. Through identifying genius loci elements, Ho Chi Minh City will be able to combine traditional values with innovative ideas, helping to create a unique and livable urban space.

Ho Chi Minh City is not only for its residents but also a destination for many tourists. To continue to improve the quality of life and preserve cultural beauty, cooperation and consensus between people, authorities and planners is a prerequisite. The characteristic of Ho Chi Minh City is not only the choice between remaining the same or changing, but also the search for a balance between tradition and modernity. Every time we walk through the old streets or by the Saigon River, we can feel the soul of the street, from the typical timbres such as the clattering of noodle vendors tapping late at night to the bustling rhythm of the street. modern life. But, for Ho Chi Minh City to be able to withstand the challenges of the future, an overall strategy, a detailed plan and a long-term vision are necessary. Development is not just about building more high-rise buildings or expanding roads, but also needs to consider the harmony between green space, cultural heritage and community needs. We cannot deny that change is inevitable. However, the most important thing is how to change while still maintaining its own identity and cultural values. It is an art, a process that requires patience, love and responsibility towards the homeland. Finally, to become a comprehensively developed urban area, Ho Chi Minh City needs contributions from everyone, from managers to residents, from urban designers to implementers. Each citizen, with small actions, can also contribute to creating a more beautiful, prosperous Ho Chi Minh City that is close to each person's heart.

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