



Memorandum

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Mayor Reed
Vice Mayor Cortese
Councilmember Nguyen
Councilmember Liccardo
Councilmember Chirco

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Business District

DATE: 11/15/2007

Approved:

Date:

11/15/07

Wahison Ngy *Paul Cat* *Chucky Reed*
Judy Chirco
Jan Luars

Council District: 7
SNI Area: Tully-Senter

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended the San Jose City Council:

1. Accept Staff recommendations by :
 - (a) Adopting a resolution recognizing Story Road, between Senter Road and US 101, as a Vietnamese retail destination area.
 - (b) Directing the City Manager and City Attorney to explore policy and ordinance changes to allow for the placement of decorative street banners and gateway signs in the public right-of-way for the purposes of identifying unique retail areas.
2. Approve the name "Saigon Business District" as the official designation of the Story Road retail area between Senter Road and US 101.

BACKGROUND:

On June 5, 2007, the City Council directed staff to conduct community outreach on the designation of Story Road (between Senter Road and US 101) as a Vietnamese business district.

Our goal was to honor the contributions of Vietnamese entrepreneurs to San José's economy and recognize how Vietnamese business owners have improved this stretch of Story Road. The designated Vietnamese Business District is similar to the idea of a Chinatown, Little Italy, or Japantown. Recognizing an ethnic district will allow local businesses and the City to better market the area to tourists and investors. It will attract visitors locally and globally, fuel the City's economy, enhance the neighborhood's quality of life, generate economic development, and foster the branding of the City of San José as an international city.

The area is already home to nearly 200 Vietnamese-owned businesses, which bring in approximately \$1.2 million in sales tax revenue each year. Officially designating the area as a Vietnamese Business District would recognize the Vietnamese business community's contribution to San José. Vietnamese businesses have contributed significantly both economically and socially to the City of San José.

Much like similar business districts in San José, this retail area project includes the installation of lamp post banners and two gateway signs in the public right of way that would signify to residents and visitors that they are entering the business district. The Redevelopment Agency was directed to solicit community input and the selection of a specific name for the Vietnamese business district was left to a future Council decision, pending the community outreach.

Since June 5, Redevelopment Agency staff has held two community meetings and conducted an advisory survey to solicit community input on the proposed designation.

The results of the community meetings and advisory survey indicated that a clear majority of those who responded to the suggestion of the business district designation wanted to have the name "Saigon" included in its designation, whether separate or together with adjectives such as "New" and "Little". Other names such as "Vietnamese Business District" did not garner much positive response.

ANALYSIS:

The name of the future retail area is a contentious issue among various groups in the Vietnamese American community. The recommendation for the name Saigon Business District provides an opportunity to bridge these differences and create positive compromise.

The name "Saigon" reflects the deep roots of San José's Vietnamese American community, the struggles they faced in fleeing oppression, and the successes they have achieved having started over in America. The name "Saigon" honors both the history and the ongoing strength of the Vietnamese American community and commemorates the achievements of their success in San Jose.

Saigon is still present in the hearts and mind of Vietnamese Americans and clearly represents not only the identity of Vietnamese Americans who fled Vietnam after the end of the war, but it also represents the foundation on which the Vietnamese rebuilt their lives in America and the memories that they carry with them, inspiring the next generation.

As we look to the future, San José's Saigon Business District will capitalize on the success of those who have created the shops and restaurants there today. This project will continue the revitalization of this area in years to come, continuing to provide business opportunities and jobs for the people of San José:

Cc: City Attorney
City Manager
City Clerk
Redevelopment Agency
Mayor and Council