

1. Introduction

Overview

Little Saigon is a dynamic cultural enclave and home to the country's most concentrated population of Vietnamese residents and business owners. Over the past 30 years, the Little Saigon district in Westminster has evolved into a vibrant social epicenter for the Vietnamese community and a distinctive tourist destination drawing visitors from across the country. Properties located along Bolsa Avenue in the general vicinity of Moran Street and the Asian Garden Mall are widely regarded as the "heart" of Little Saigon.

The importance of this area for the City and the Vietnamese community cannot be understated - it is a focal point of social activity, personal services and commerce locally, regionally, and nationally.

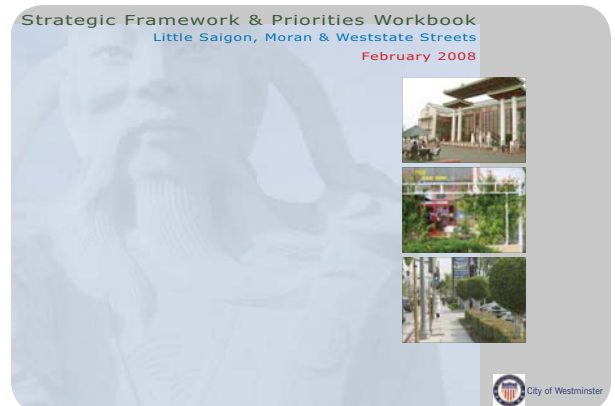
Since the area was experiencing a period of redevelopment, as demonstrated by the recent construction of Saigon Villas, a new 144-unit multigenerational residential project located on the southeast corner of Moran Street and Bishop Avenue, property owners along Moran Street saw an opportunity to rezone some of the existing industrial uses to commercial, office or residential uses to complement the new residential development.



Little Saigon Strategic Framework and Priorities Workbook

In 2008, at the request of several property owners along Moran Street, the City initiated a study to examine the feasibility of rezoning multiple properties on Moran Street from industrial to commercial or mixed-use, which could include residential. The *Little Saigon Strategic Framework and Priorities Workbook* was prepared later that year as a result of the interest expressed by the property owners.

The Workbook included an analysis of approximately 30 acres of land that included both Moran and Weststate Streets. The drawings in the Workbook were used to gain a sense of the land use, circulation and parking issues present in the area and to illustrate what future development could look like if new zoning codes were put in place that allowed for commercial or mixed-use development. The Workbook contained illustrations of street sections (sidewalks, landscaping and roadways) for Moran and Weststate Streets as well as the drive aisle adjacent to the Asian Garden Mall. Three dimensional illustrations were also included in the Workbook so that the community could gain a better understanding of what the area would look like with a different mix of uses and to assess the amount of parking that would be needed for each combination. The ideas presented in the Workbook served as the foundation for the development concept that is included in this Specific Plan document.



Community Outreach

As part of the initial planning efforts the City conducted an extensive outreach program with property owners in both the Moran and Weststate Street areas as well as the community at large. The intent of the outreach was to gain a better understanding of the community's vision for this area of Little Saigon and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas between the City and stakeholders

Working group meetings or “charrettes” were first held with property owners along Moran and Weststate Streets, followed by a Town Hall meeting open to property owners within 500 feet of the study area. Hearing no major opposition to the initial concepts presented in the Workbook, staff invited property owners to attend one-on-one meetings with the City to provide any final input before proceeding with the Specific Plan effort. The City met with over 20 individuals during the final phase of outreach and received valuable input that significantly refined the project area. As a result of the feedback received during the final property owner meetings, it was determined that Weststate Street would not be included in the Specific Plan project area; property owners would pursue redevelopment separately, at a future undetermined date.

Discussions with the public and property owners served as the critical first step in defining (and refining) a development concept that is the focus of the Specific Plan document. The Specific Plan addresses streetscapes, parking, and land use densities and intensities that were all developed as a result of the feedback received during the initial outreach process.

The comments received through public outreach have shaped the future vision for the project area and will be incorporated into future planning efforts along Moran Street. Following is a summary of Specific Plan objectives that were developed as a result of the feedback provided by the community.



Specific Plan Objectives

The Specific Plan envisions that development within the Moran Street project area will contribute to the following objectives:

Create a cultural activity center and tourist destination

Under this specific plan, development that occurs along Moran Street and at the Asian Garden Mall will provide the quality in design and sense of place that are vital characteristics of destination places and community gathering spaces.

Traditional commercial strip center developments with minimal architectural interest and limited pedestrian amenities are common along Bolsa Avenue in Little Saigon. As the community has evolved over time, so too has the desire to attract high quality development into the area. The Specific Plan will not dictate the style of architecture to be implemented, but will identify features that should be integrated into new projects to create a prominent sense of arrival and make the area attractive to visitors. Plazas, outdoor dining opportunities and a walkable pedestrian experience will all play a prominent role in future development in the Moran Street Area.

Quality developments that incorporate distinctive architecture or landmark features are desired in the Specific Plan area. The intent is to create a destination that is architecturally distinctive from other communities creating an experience for residents and visitors that is unparalleled in the City or the region.



Encourage a diverse mix of uses

Attracting a diverse mix of uses to the Moran Street area will allow new development to be more sustainable over time. It is envisioned that a variety of local and regional retailers and services could be attracted to the project area and would cater to the needs of local residents as well as visitors from outside the community.

In addition, residential uses integrated with retail or office uses can foster pedestrian activity and fewer vehicular trips than stand alone uses. The total number of trips generated by the project area can be reduced if pedestrians are able to walk to different uses versus driving from one point to another in the same area.

The regulatory guidance built-in to the Specific Plan provides the flexibility to respond to changing market demands over time. As the market changes and demand for different uses changes over time, the specific plan will allow for flexibility to accommodate the new uses without the need for a potentially time-consuming or costly revision to existing zoning regulations. Allowing for a wider variety of uses and streamlining the regulatory process gives property owners the flexibility to develop their properties to the highest maximum potential.



Minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles

Pedestrians are important to the vitality and sustainability of the Little Saigon area. Surrounded by single family, mobile home and apartment uses, the Moran Street project area has a significant opportunity to link surrounding residents to the amenities and businesses that are envisioned there. Since the Moran Street area is also envisioned as a destination location, a large number of visitors will arrive to the area by car. Because of the high level of both automobile and pedestrian trips that will be generated by the mix of uses encouraged by the Specific Plan, special provisions must be made to minimize the conflicts that are encountered by both.



Provide an adequate supply of parking spaces that are easily accessible

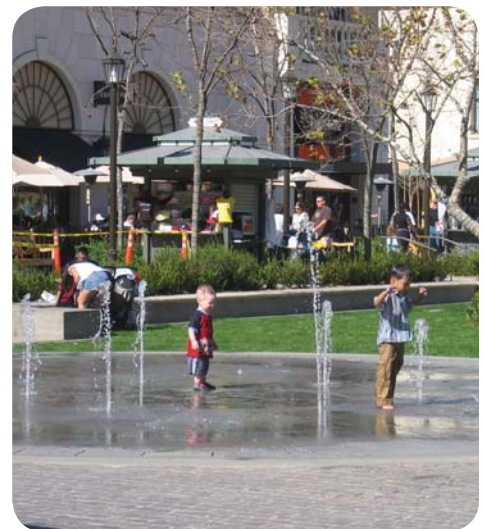
Parking is one of the major factors that will influence how, where and at what intensity any future development or redevelopment may occur. Based upon observations in the field, the City's Police Department estimates that the population of Little Saigon almost triples on weekends. This dramatic increase in visitors causes a parking shortage on both Moran and Weststate Streets, which are burdened with the overflow parking demand. The Specific Plan will allow for a broader mix of uses and more intense development will create further demand for parking in an area where parking availability is extremely limited. To respond to the immediate need for additional parking spaces, future development in the Moran Street Specific Plan envisions the construction of a new parking structure behind the Asian Garden Mall to serve non-residential uses in the area. Parking can be combined with additional uses, such as ground floor retail, to foster the walkable environment desired by the community. A "park once" concept is encouraged for the area, a strategy that allows visitors to park one time with easy access to multiple businesses or venues within the district.



Incorporate gathering spaces, plazas and public amenities as prominent features of new development

Integration of new plaza spaces, cultural or entertainment uses are strongly encouraged with new development in the project area. Amenities such as these promote a walkable pedestrian environment that is an instrumental component of the vitality and sustainability of the Moran Street area. New development should create links to public spaces, allowing pedestrians to experience the environment without the use of an automobile. Gathering spaces can also include seating areas, fountains or public art that would further distinguish this area as the ceremonial heart of the community. Decorative bollards and other design features should protect pedestrians from cars, prevent conflicts and reduce driver confusion.

A new, landmark plaza is envisioned to replace the existing surface parking lot in front of the Asian Garden Mall, generating a highly visible focal point for social interaction. It is also anticipated that the drive aisle adjacent to the Asian Garden Mall will be redesigned with wider sidewalks on both sides of the street and will allow for temporary closures of the roadway for farmers markets, kiosks, or temporary community events.



Authority

The Moran Street Specific Plan provides customized regulatory guidance to enable development of land uses and building intensities that would not otherwise be allowed by the City's current development standards.

The Specific Plan is established through the authority granted to the City of Westminster by the California Government Code, Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 8, Sections 65450 through 65457. The Government Code authorizes cities to adopt specific plans either by resolution as policy or by ordinance as regulation. A Planning Commission hearing and City Council hearing are required to adopt the Specific Plan. This Specific Plan is both a policy and a regulatory plan: it establishes policy, including a conceptual land use plan, which guides the development of the site. Sections 3 and 4, Development Concept and Development Standards, respectively, serve as the property's zoning, adopted by ordinance. Development or site plans for this area must be consistent with this Specific Plan.

The California Government Code states that a "Specific Plan shall include a statement of the relationship of the Specific Plan to the General Plan, and further, that it may not be adopted or amended unless found to be consistent with the General Plan." The Specific Plan appendix provides an analysis of the consistency of the Moran Street Specific Plan document with the City of Westminster General Plan goals and policies.

In response to government requirements, this Specific Plan has been prepared to provide an essential link between City of Westminster policies and actual development in the Specific Plan area. Functioning as a regulatory document, The Moran Street Specific Plan provides a means of implementing the City of Westminster's General Plan and detailing specific requirements and guidelines for future development in the Specific Plan area. In this regard, all future development plans, tentative parcel, and/or tract maps or other similar entitlements shall be consistent with regulations set forth in this document and with all applicable City regulations.

Environmental Assessment

This specific plan is prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study was prepared, and it was determined that a program-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was needed to analyze the potential impacts that could result from the adoption of the Moran Street Specific Plan. Subsequent development projects within The Moran Street Specific Plan are anticipated. While the EIR has been prepared as outlined by §15080 through §15097 of the CEQA Guidelines, subsequent projects that are within the scope of this EIR may be subject to additional environmental review if the Director of Community Development determines it is necessary to comply with State requirements.

Specific Plan Organization

This entire document constitutes the Specific Plan for the project and property.

Chapter 1: Introduction, identifies the objectives of the Specific Plan.

Chapter 2: Background, presents the background necessary to understand the basis for the Specific Plan.

Chapter 3: Development Concept, describes the intended pattern of land use and supporting infrastructure.

Chapter 4: Development Standards such as, building height, density, parking and landscaping requirements, details the uses permitted, conditionally permitted, and precluded in the project area.

Chapter 5: Design Standards and Guidelines, details site planning and architectural standards and guidelines for the project's development.

Chapter 6: Administration and Implementation, describes the procedures applicable in administering the plan and steps to implement it.

Appendix A: General Plan Consistency shows how the Specific Plan implements the goals and policies of the City's adopted General Plan.

Additional analyses were conducted in association with The Moran Street Specific Plan and are available under a separate cover. They include the Initial Study and Environmental Impact Report, which incorporate the environmental documentation and traffic impact analyses prepared for the project, and a traffic and parking analysis that contains intersection counts and analysis of trips generated by existing and proposed land uses.

Actions and Expectations

Numerous statements occur in this plan in the form of standards and guidelines that define action expectations to achieve the desired results. The following terms clarify the level of commitment intended in the plan. They reflect the expectation or outcome desired. The application of each term to a particular policy or action is a deliberate application of these definitions.

Shall: We will always follow the policy or apply the standard. This is our absolute commitment to the direction expressed. Our expectation is that the direction will definitely be implemented under all circumstances.

Should: We will follow the policy or apply the standard in almost all cases. Exceptions or degrees of implementation are acceptable for good reason. Our expectation is that the direction will almost always be followed.

Allow: We will permit someone else's initiative and support it unless there is a very good reason not to. Our expectation is that the direction will generally be implemented, even though a party other than the City carries it out.

Consider: We will investigate the proposed action or standard to determine the actual level of commitment that is appropriate under the circumstances. Our expectation is that an open-minded effort will be made to evaluate the possibilities until facts are determined and a decision can be made based on those facts.

Restrict: We will take action within certain bounds to limit the direction defined. Our expectation is that implementation will occur, but at a constrained level or within specified limits.

Prohibit: We will actively prevent a specified condition, use or standard from occurring. Our expectation is that the condition or action described will not happen under any circumstance.

Other terminology may appear in certain policy statements. These terms are to be interpreted according to their similarity to the appropriate term described above.