

# Orange County Business Journal

## Little Saigon's First Vietnamese American Bank Acquired by L.A.-Based Bank

By [Chris Casacchia](#)

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Westminster's First Vietnamese American Bank has been closed by regulators and sold to a Los Angeles bank holding company.

Grandpoint Capital Inc. said its Grandpoint Bank acquired the banking operations of First Vietnamese in a purchase and assumption agreement with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., which was appointed receiver when the California Department of Financial Institutions closed the bank that served Little Saigon.

Under the agreement Grandpoint assumes all of the assets of First Vietnamese, valued at approximately \$48 million, and its \$47 million in deposits.

First Vietnamese operated a single branch in Westminster, where it opened with fanfare in 2005 as the first bank to specifically target Vietnamese-Americans and their businesses in Little Saigon, which spans Westminster, Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach, Garden Grove and Santa Ana.

The area is home to an estimated 200,000 Vietnamese.

First Vietnamese hadn't posted a profit since it opened and was under regulatory scrutiny for much of its existence.

Last month, the FDIC made public a prior order on First Vietnamese to shore up its finances or find a buyout partner.

In May, it was issued a cease and desist order from the FDIC to improve compliance and fair lending practices.

Before the Grandpoint announcement, First Vietnamese had a deal in the works to sell the bank to Charles and Michael Lhuillier, brothers who run one of the largest pawn shop and jewelry operations in the Philippines.

State regulators signed off on that deal in July, but the FDIC didn't grant final approval.

This acquisition marks the second deal for Grandpoint in Orange County.

Grandpoint in June acquired Santa Ana Business Bank after Don Griffith, chairman and CEO of Grandpoint Capital Inc. and Grandpoint Bank, led a \$75 million investment.

The Santa Ana bank now goes by Grandpoint.

Griffith, who raised \$350 million in late 2008 to buy Southern California banks, told the Business Journal last week said he didn't see too many opportunities through the FDIC, especially after a rash of failures in the past two years.

Santa Ana Business Bank started in 2007 by targeting the city's dominant Hispanic population.

In July, Grandpoint announced a definitive agreement to acquire Encino-based First Commerce Bank. First Commerce branches in Encino and Brentwood will become part of Grandpoint when the transaction closes, expected by the end of the year.

A third branch is planned in the South Bay area of Los Angeles County.

Grandpoint Bank serves small and mid-sized businesses, professionals and entrepreneurs, and wealthy clients.