

Chapter V. Economic Development Element

Introduction

Burlingame has a diverse local economy, with strengths in hotel, tourism, retail, and airport-related industries. Burlingame’s proximity to San Francisco International Airport has been key to attracting hotels, logistics, air transportation, and business services companies. Burlingame also has a variety of retail centers that serve unique market niches, including regional-serving retail in Downtown Burlingame, local independent retailers and restaurants in the Broadway district and Burlingame Plaza, and automobile dealerships along California Drive and adjacent to Highway 101 near the Broadway interchange. While the city historically has not been a primary regional office location, the potential for attracting office-based technology and business services firms is strong as businesses look to take advantage of Burlingame’s convenient transit and freeway access that connects the city to north to San Francisco and along the Peninsula.

This Economic Development Element establishes goals and policies focused on protecting and growing Burlingame’s economic assets, and leveraging new business retention and attraction opportunities created by Burlingame’s competitive advantages within the evolving and dynamic San Francisco Bay Area economy.

Economic Base

A healthy and diverse business mix allows Burlingame to weather economic cycles and provides a range of job opportunities for residents. The revenues generated by businesses—such as hotel taxes (transient occupancy taxes), sales and use taxes, and business license fees—allow the City to provide high-quality services for residents, employees, and

visitors. These amenities and services further reinforce Burlingame’s reputation as a highly desirable location for businesses, creating a virtuous cycle that benefits the entire community.

Opportunities to expand the business mix in Burlingame are provided through flexible land use policies in all business districts, with the implementing zoning regulations able to accommodate evolving business practices. Whereas the Rollins Road and North Bayshore districts historically have been centers for industrial and airport support activities, this General Plan applies the Innovation/Industrial designation to these areas to accommodate creative industry businesses as well. The Bayfront Commercial designation allows for greater development intensities for office and hospitality uses to encourage recycling of underutilized properties. And in Downtown, commercial properties along Howard Avenue can support either retail or office uses over time, based on market shifts.

These goal and policies focus on maintaining a diversified economic base by accommodating a variety of business types, supporting major revenue-generating activities that support municipal services, and maintaining Burlingame’s competitive advantages.

Goal ED-1: Maintain a diversified economic base that provides a wide range of business and employment opportunities capable of ensuring a healthy and prosperous economy for generations to come.

ED-1.1: Diverse Building Types and Sizes

Encourage development of new office, research, and technology spaces to diversify the types of businesses in Burlingame, specifically focusing on the Rollins Road, Bayfront, and Downtown areas. [DR, MP, SO]

ED-1.2: Flexible Building Use

Provide opportunities for flexible building uses, such as live/work uses or conversion between types of space, as appropriate in the Rollins Road, Bayfront, and Downtown areas consistent with land use policy. [DR, MP]

ED-1.3: Automobile Dealerships

Support the continued presence of automobile dealerships in Burlingame at appropriate locations where they benefit most from clustering and regional exposure, and where impacts on surrounding uses can be minimized. Recognize and respond to the evolving nature of automobile sales in a manner that continues to benefit dealerships and the contribution of such businesses to the local economy. [DR, MP, SO, PA]

ED-1.5: Hotel Base

Protect and grow hotel businesses by supporting such uses and ancillary activities on properties located along the Bayfront and, as appropriate, as boutique operations in Downtown. [DR, FB, SO, PA]

ED-1.6: Community Benefits of Development

Ensure that major commercial development projects contribute toward desired community benefits of urban design, land use, sustainability, resiliency, affordable housing, and community health while also expanding the economic base of the city. [DR, FB, SO, PA]

ED-1.7: Coordination with Local Schools

Work with the Burlingame School District, San Mateo Union High School District, and local private schools to support commercial businesses in Burlingame through purchasing practices and promotions that encourage shopping and eating locally. [AC, PI]

ED-1.8: Sharing Economy

Track trends in the “sharing economy” (for example, private home rental and car sharing) to assess their impact on businesses in Burlingame, and implement appropriate responses to ensure that identified trends/practices do not adversely impact local businesses and residential neighborhoods and do contribute revenues as appropriate. [SR, SO, PI]

Business Retention and Attraction

Burlingame is located within a competitive and dynamic environment for businesses, entrepreneurs, and worker talent. The City’s ability to attract and retain businesses is influenced by Burlingame’s land use and economic development policies, infrastructure and place-making investments, and ongoing operations.

Burlingame’s economic development policies must be responsive to larger economic trends in the Bay Area region. Increasing demand for high-quality office and research and development space on the Peninsula—driven by the computer technology and biotechnology industries, as well as emerging businesses resulting from a strong presence of venture capital—has generated interest in large-scale development in the Bayfront area and smaller increments of space in the Downtown area. The North Bayfront and Rollins Road areas are anticipated to attract private redevelopment interest and pressures for turnover of long-established industrial operations in favor of higher-intensity uses. At the same time, Burlingame’s retail districts and automobile dealerships must adapt to rapidly changing retail patterns and competition.

The following goal and policies support Burlingame’s desire to retain and attract businesses and remain economically resilient in the longer term through careful planning and investments.

Goal ED-2: Cultivate a business environment that supports long-established enterprises, attracts new and emerging businesses, and provides support for synergistic business relationships and partnerships.

ED-2.1: Land Use Compatibility

Address potential land use compatibility issues and roadway/truck access conflicts between office, industrial, retail, and residential uses in areas of transitioning land uses, such as the Bayfront and North Rollins Road areas. [DR, MP, PA]

ED-2.2: Commercial Uses

Provide appropriate zoning in the north El Camino Real, California Drive, Broadway, Bayfront, and Downtown areas to ensure that established businesses can remain and continue to meet community needs. [DR, MP]

ED-2.3: Transportation Access

Work with businesses citywide to develop local transit and bicycle connections and first mile/last mile strategies from the Caltrain stations to Burlingame's employment and retail destinations. [AC, PA]

ED-2.4: Streetscape Maintenance

Maintain attractive streetscapes citywide as a means of encouraging business investment, particularly in areas of high pedestrian activity, as identified in the Community Character Element. [SO]

ED-2.5: Household-supporting Retail

Promote growth of neighborhood-serving retail uses—such as grocery stores, dry cleaners, and convenience stores—at locations within easy walking distance of residential neighborhoods. [DR]

ED-2.6: Broadway District Streetscape

Implement improvements to the Broadway district streetscape and pedestrian environment to enhance the experience for visitors. Minimizing any potential negative impacts to businesses and residents during construction periods. [MP, SO, PA]

ED-2.7: Broadway Business Mix

Position the Broadway district as a destination for locally-owned and operated businesses and restaurants. [MP, PA]

ED-2.8: Regional Shopping Destination

Support Downtown businesses, and encourage the branding and marketing of specific activities that increase the district's recognition and competitiveness as a regional shopping destination. [DR, FB, SO, PA]

ED-2.9: Shopping Districts

Collaborate with business and property owners in the Burlingame Plaza and Broadway areas to strengthen the economic performance of smaller retail stores and restaurants. [DR, MP, PA]

ED-2.10: Bayfront Office and Research and Development

Position the Bayfront area as a location for larger office-based and research and development businesses as a complement to the hospitality businesses. [SO, MP, PA]

ED-2.11: Economic Development Services

Provide economic development services—such as grants and loans for expansion, expedited development review, and relocation assistance—to support businesses of all sizes. [SO, PA, PI]

ED-2.12: Business Organization Partnerships

Collaborate and coordinate with business associations and districts for marketing, branding, and promotion activities. [SO, PA, PI]

ED-2.13: Small Business Assistance

Collaborate with local organizations to provide technical and permitting assistance to small businesses. [SO, AC, PA, PI]

ED-2.14: Commercial Data Tracking

Monitor occupancies and vacancies and track trends in major industries through collaboration with brokers, property owners, and business owners. Use the data to develop and pursue business attraction and retention strategies. [SR, SO, PA, PI]

ED-2.15: Marketing Available Business Spaces

Promote efforts to market and fill spaces in commercial and industrial buildings, especially smaller creative and technology firms in Downtown and larger firms attracted to the North Rollins Road and Bayfront districts. [SO, PA, PI]

ED-2.16: Permitting Processes

Provide efficient and transparent permitting and approvals processes for businesses permits and land use development/improvement projects. [DR, SO, PA, PI]

ED-2.17: Hospitality Industry

Support the needs of the well-established and new hospitality businesses to attract and serve visitors from around the globe, and to adapt to emerging consumer preferences and industry practices. [DR, PA]

ED-2.18: Entertainment Businesses

Implement strategies to attract desirable entertainment-related businesses to Burlingame that are regional destinations and that complement other local business sectors. [SO, PA]