

Burlingame Green Light Paves The Way For New Town Square

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The city of Burlingame (<https://www.bisnow.com/tags/burlingame>) has embarked on creating a new town square for its downtown to serve as a gathering and entertainment space for the public. A facet of the endeavor is the city's coordination with a joint venture by Dostart Development Co. and Sares Regis Group to develop a 1.3-acre parcel for an office and retail building on the vacant, historic Burlingame Post Office property at 220 Park Road.

With city approval in hand, a Q3 groundbreaking has been set for what will be the tallest building in downtown Burlingame.



The 185K SF office and retail building is expected to complete in 2023, according to a press release. The project won approval from City Council in February and includes a \$2M donation from the developer toward the future town square. Another \$3.5M will go toward funding affordable housing in the community.

“Burlingame has an incredibly attractive downtown with great architecture, streetscape, restaurants, retailers, and activity,” SRGNC Chief Operating Officer of Development David N.P. Hopkins said in an email. “Historically, the energy of downtown has been organized primarily around Burlingame Avenue. Through the introduction of a landmark piece of architecture, the restoration of portions of the historic Post Office, street level activation with restaurant and retail space, and the construction of the new city Town Square immediately adjacent, 220 Park expands the activity of Burlingame Avenue and helps fulfill the City’s goal of knitting together the primary corridors of Burlingame and Howard Avenues.”

A key driver of the site’s redevelopment was how to restore the historic Post Office building and make it a gathering place for the community, Hopkins said. The lobby will be preserved and converted into the ground-floor retail that is envisioned to activate Lorton Avenue and give the building an “iconic”

feel. Another portion of the ground-floor retail is designed to front the new town square. The upper office floors will feature private terraces providing outdoor space. The six-story building will reach over 98 feet, which is 43 feet taller than the maximum allowable height under the zoning code, and so a variance was required.

“Because of the desire to respect the historic elements and setbacks of the Post Office, we pushed additional new development away from this portion of the site,” Hopkins said. “The elegant design outcome is that the Post Office retains its historic scale and serves as an active edge to the new Town Square.”

Downtown Burlingame has an active shopping district that is near transit and includes an outdoor farmers market that has stayed busy during the pandemic. The new office building will stimulate economic development in the area, “at a time when retail uses depend on both day and evening traffic,” according to the press release. The project will also supply two levels of underground parking that will be available for public use during evenings and weekends.

“The proposal for the development of this important downtown property promises a building that will contribute much to the fabric of downtown Burlingame while acknowledging the importance this legacy property has to the community,” Burlington Mayor Ann O'Brien Keighran said in the release. “We trust that Sares Regis and Dostart Development have the vision and expertise to deliver a project that will improve our downtown, contributing to the construction of a new Town Square that will serve as a gathering place for our community for decades to come.”

The office component will be available for lease by either a single or multiple tenants with marketing done by Cushman & Wakefield's Mike Moran, Ben Paul and Marc Pope. Burlingame has an office vacancy rate of 11.6%, on par with the subregion's 11.9%, according to San Francisco Peninsula Q4 2020 office market data from CBRE. The city's net absorption was 708K SF, also close to the Peninsula as a whole, which had 861K SF, driven largely by Class-A product in both cases. Burlingame's asking rents came in at \$4.64 per SF compared to \$6.74 for the overall Peninsula market.

Leases for the 15K SF retail portion will be marketed by Steve Cutter and Chris Homs of Lockhouse Retail Group, according to the release.

Directly adjacent to the project site is a surface parking lot called Lot E, which is planned for the new town square. A community engagement process is underway for the plans, including a December meeting in which Council Member Donna Colson described it as the most important public space in Burlingame's downtown. It is geared to be seamlessly integrated with the new office and retail building.

“I think we're all seeing with the pandemic the critical nature of usable outdoor open space for community gatherings,” Colson said at the meeting.

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