



STAFF REPORT

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Date: March 19, 2026

From: Margaret Glomstad, Parks and Recreation Director

Subject: Approval of Two Didactic Panels, One for the Bayfront and One for the Greyhound Depot

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Commission approve the two didactic panels, one for the Bayfront and one for the Greyhound Depot.

BACKGROUND

Over the past few years, the Burlingame Historical Society has created 6 didactic panels to continue educating residents and visitors about Burlingame's history, outside the confines of the Station museum. The topics have been Washington Park and Polo Grounds history, Baseball history in Washington Park, Ansel M. Easton's battery-operated trolley up Hillside Drive, the Old City Hall Cupola in Parking Lot J, and 990 Burlingame Avenue (aka Burlingame Lions Hall) (Exhibit A).

The panels have become very popular additions to the streetscape, helping people learn some quick history 'on the go'.

DISCUSSION

The proposed panels tell the stories of the locations with backgrounds that are not widely known.

The first is about the Bayfront area of Burlingame, which has been home to many early developments, including recreational ones, and has its own story related to the creation of Anza Park. The Bayfront is also an area most likely to change over the next few decades (Exhibit B).

The second is Howard Park, established in 1912, which is home to the former Greyhound Depot and has an interesting history that few are aware of (Exhibit C).

All the panels will be installed on City-owned land. General locations are shown in Exhibit D.

FISCAL IMPACT

In April, the Historical Society will apply for the City's annual Community Grant funding to help cover the production costs for the panels and stands; design has been handled in-house.

The Historical Society has requested the assistance of the Parks staff to install the panels. The estimated cost for staff time and materials is \$500 per panel.

EXHIBITS

- A. Installed Didactic Panels
- B. Draft Didactic Panel for the Bayfront
- C. Draft Didactic Panel for the Greyhound Depot
- D. Sample Locations

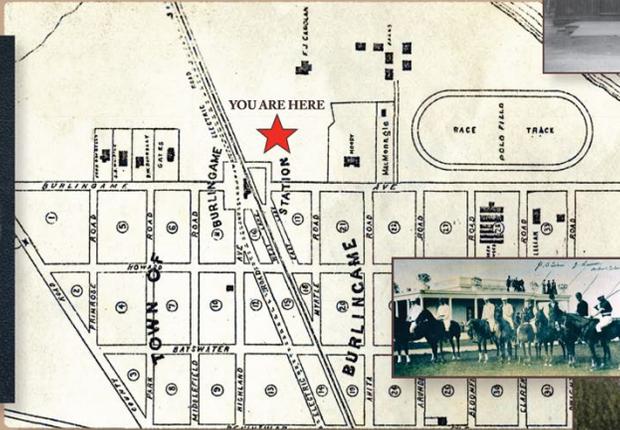
Exhibit A

From Ponies to Pupils...

In the 1870s wealthy businessman William Corbitt acquired 400 acres north of Burlingame Avenue, stretching from El Camino Real to the Bay, to establish a horse-breeding farm known as the San Mateo Stock Farm (shown at right).



Photo by E. DeMiddler



Some of Burlingame's first permanent residents were tradespeople who worked for Corbitt, including carpenter John Donnelly, who built homes for himself and adult children in the current downtown area. (See adjacent map.)



By 1901, Francis Carolan (above) (husband of Harriett Pullman, heiress to the Pullman Estate) purchased a portion of Corbitt's acreage east of the railroad tracks that included Corbitt's racetrack and land on which Burlingame High School is located.

Carolan christened the acreage Crossways Farm, where he indulged his interest in horses and polo.

SM Stock Farm: San Mateo County Historical Association (1973.11.1).
 Polo on Carolan (Crossways) Field: San Mateo County Historical Association: (1.) (484ZB.5), (r.) (484ZA.004).

Panel funded by Bill Walsh, Fred & JoAnn Hawley
 Burlingame High School Class of 1962

Francis Carolan portrait (J. Segel Romero Collection) and c. 1903 map: Burlingame Historical Society.



From Cigars to Crafts - The Evolution of Washington Park

For over twenty years, Burlingame's Recreational classes operated from a 17-room mansion (in vicinity of today's Rose Garden); it was the former home of horse breeder William Corbitt's daughter, Nellie, and her husband, merchant Frederick S. Moody.



The 7-acre property included orchards, a carriage house, tennis court and guest cottage.

By 1904 the estate (including the adjoining parcel of Nellie's sister Minnie Corbitt MacMonagle) was purchased by prominent SF cigar merchant Moses A. Gunst (shown at left).

In 1940, Gunst's widow Ophelia sold the estate to the City. Peninsula Children's Theatre held productions in the carriage house during the 1940s, today home to the Burlingame Historical Society. By the mid-1960s most remaining structures had been demolished. The original Gaston Rognier-designed pillars still mark the estate's original entrance on Burlingame Avenue.



Moses Gunst: Courtesy of the Jewish Museum of the American West. All other images: Burlingame Historical Society Collection.

Panel funded by Bill Walsh, Fred & JoAnn Hawley
Burlingame High School Class of 1962



Baseball and Washington Park Field



Community baseball has been played in Burlingame since the first sandlot team formed on an empty parcel at Anita Road and Peninsula Avenue, in April 1911. A year later, it was played on a leased field on Cypress Avenue and El Camino Real. By July 1920, the Burlingame Athletic Club played its first game on the new Carolan Field adjacent to North Lane on the eastside of the railroad tracks.



Bicycle Baseball was a popular fundraiser of the Burlingame Fire Department from the 1940s-1960s, with home games played at Washington Park Field. Ricci's Sports Shop on Burlingame Avenue created a variety of trick bikes on which players had to stay perched but often didn't know the "trick," resulting in hilarious outcomes.



Burlingame's early community baseball in 1912. Photos above and at right: Burlingame Historical Society.

In May 1922 the Burlingame Bs were playing at the new ball field (known as Washington Park Field by 1932). Burlingame architect Ernest L. Norberg designed the first wooden stands that over time evolved into the covered grandstand we know today. In the early 1970s and again in the 1990s, the structure was completely refurbished. As many stands are replaced with metal construction, Burlingame's wooden grandstand is one of just a handful still in existence in California.



Panel funded by City of Burlingame Community Grant to the Burlingame Historical Society 2024-5



Ansel Mills Easton's Burlingame Railway Company



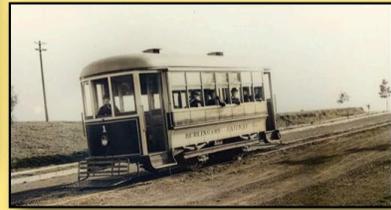
Ansel Mills Easton
Burlingame Historical Society

Looking at Hillside Drive today, it's hard to imagine Ansel M. Easton's battery-powered trolley laboring up the steep grade at 5 mph to promote property sales of his parents' 1,500-acre estate that he'd begun to subdivide in 1905.



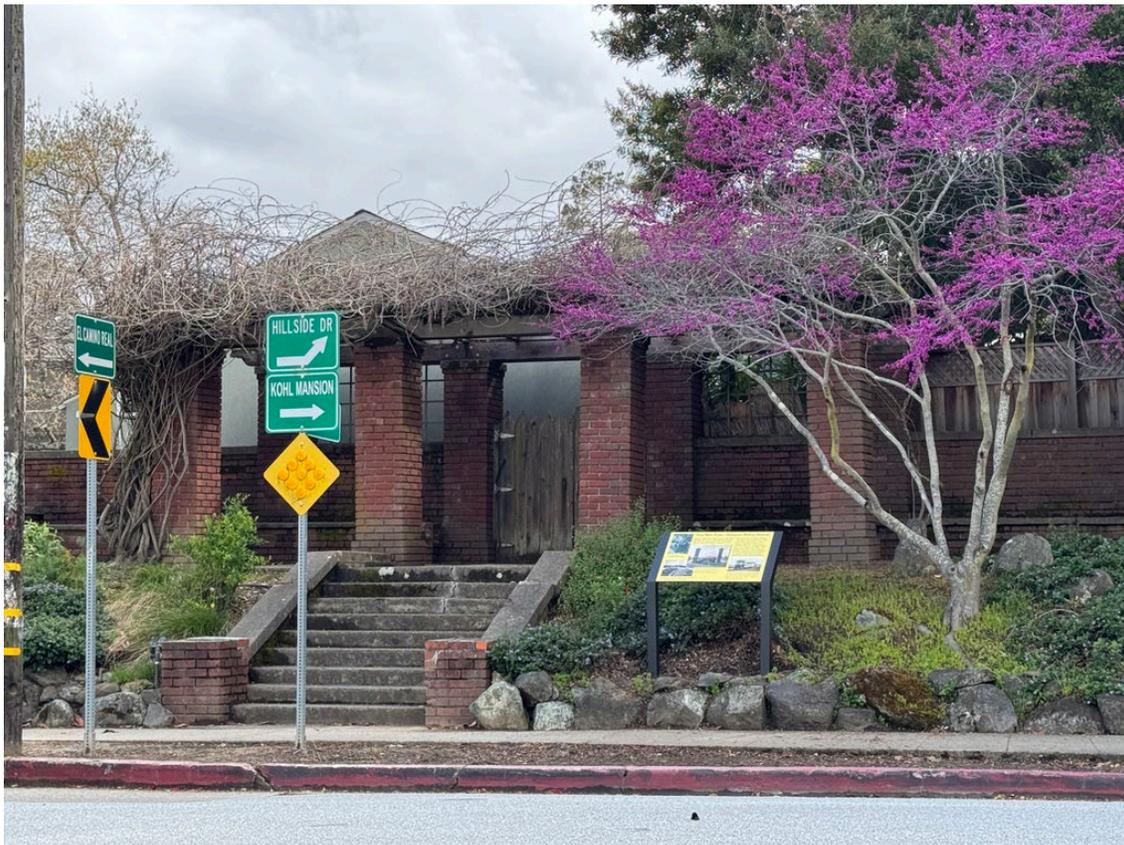
Easton's trolley terminated at the brick work-shelter and park located at Hillside Circle and Alvarado Avenue (left).
Photos left and above by Gabriel Moulin

Before cars became commonplace, Easton's trolley offered a way for commuters to connect with Southern Pacific Railroad or United Railway's 40-line electric streetcar near Broadway. During its five years in operation (1913-1918) home sales were sluggish and the underpowered trolley was more likely to carry Sunday picnickers than serious homebuyers. Running at a financial loss, Easton replaced the service with Studebaker buses in 1918. With the popularity of automobiles in the 1920s, Easton's homesite sales increased substantially.



The first of its kind on the West Coast, recharging the trolley's 119 storage batteries took 7 hours overnight, with a 3.5-hour boost during the day. 8,850 feet of grooved rail ran from California Drive to Carmelita, to Cabrillo, to Hillside Drive, with terminus at Hillside Circle.
Photo above: Burlingame Historical Society

Panel funded by City of Burlingame Community Grant to the Burlingame Historical Society 2024-5



The Many Lives of 990 Burlingame Avenue



Built around 1907, and originally located at Primrose Road and Bellevue Avenue, the structure at 990 Burlingame Avenue has served the Burlingame community in many different capacities. Initially serving as a church, the property was purchased by the City for \$3,000 in 1912 for use as a Public Library. By 1930, voters approved funds for a new, larger library on the site. The American Legion - Burlingame Post No. 163 successfully lobbied the City Council to purchase the older structure for \$1. The cost of moving the building to Washington Park was covered by the SM County Board of Supervisors. By the late 1970s, the City repossessed the structure, leasing it to the Lions Club for \$1 a year, in exchange for extensive renovations.



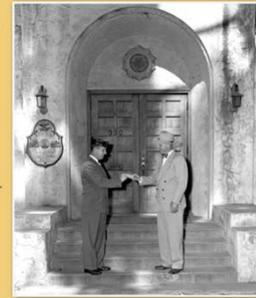
The Burlingame Lions Club has sponsored community events for decades, many centered around the Lions Club Community Hall and Washington Park.



WHEREAS, a certain conveyance of real property, known as the First Congregational property within the City of Burlingame, is about to be conveyed to the City of Burlingame, and WHEREAS, said property is conveyed for the purpose of a public library within the City of Burlingame.

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, That in consideration of ONE (\$1.00) DOLLAR in hand paid to us, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, the City of Burlingame does hereby transfer to the Board of Library Trustees of the City of Burlingame the following described property: Lot 111 - Block No. 3, Burlingame Land and Tract Company.

In the 1930s, Legion Post member Ernest L. Norberg offered his design services gratis, notably creating the mission-style stucco facade that transformed the building design after the move to Washington Park. Photo c. 1949: Norton Pearl Photography



Panel funded by City of Burlingame Community Grant to the Burlingame Historical Society 2025-2026



Old City Hall and its Cupola

In 1914, prominent architect Charles Peter Weeks designed a City Hall structure worthy of Burlingame's pride and ambitions. Located on the 200-block of Park Road, the handsome red brick building, crowned with a white cupola, housed the fire department, jail and police station, as well as an assembly hall, and various City offices. Today, only the cupola remains intact.



In 1949, Governor Earl Warren campaigned for reelection at the center of town—the small square in front of the Old City Hall. The neon Police Department sign is now part of the Burlingame Historical Society archives. Photo: Norton Pearl Photography Collection

Old City Hall with cupola is seen (at right), shortly after construction, and ivy-laden, as viewed from the US Post Office steps in the 1960s (below).

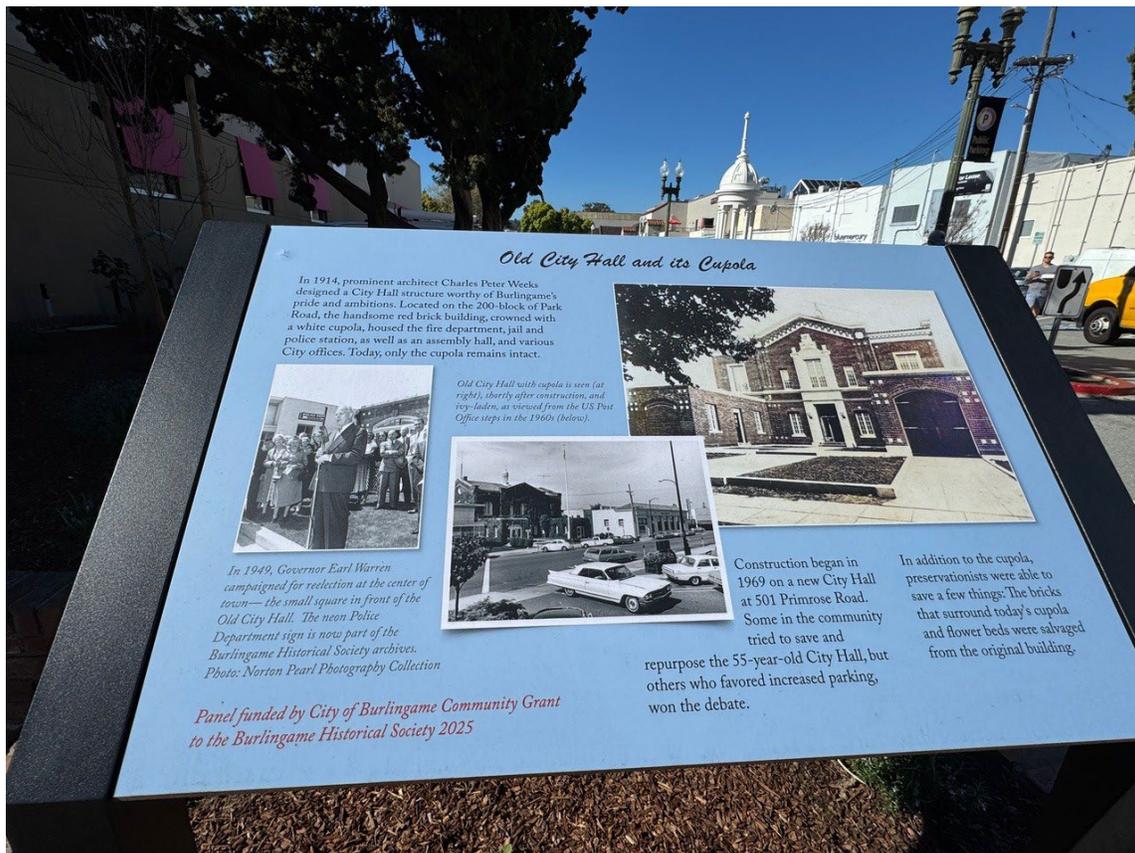


Construction began in 1969 on a new City Hall at 501 Primrose Road. Some in the community tried to save and

repurpose the 55-year-old City Hall, but others who favored increased parking, won the debate.

In addition to the cupola, preservationists were able to save a few things: The bricks that surround today's cupola and flower beds were salvaged from the original building.

Panel funded by City of Burlingame Community Grant to the Burlingame Historical Society 2025



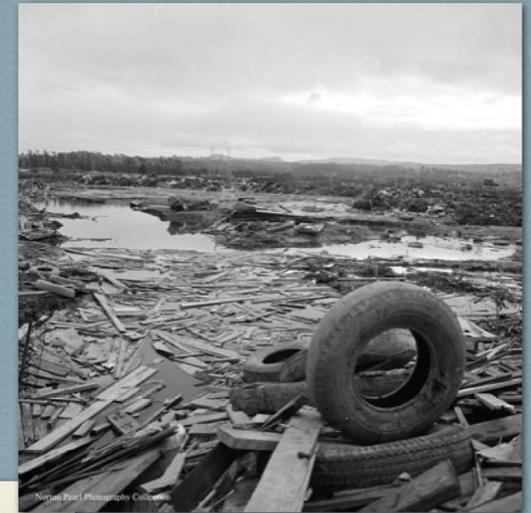
Bogs, Bay Fill, and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission



There have been many uses for Burlingame's bayfront throughout its history. Early in the 20th century, private ownership included amusement parks, movie theaters, as well as privately owned piers. In the 1950s and '60s as developers filled the Bay's shallow, boggy shoreline, citizen-activists launched a multi-year campaign to save the Bay. These efforts led to California Legislature's passage of the McAteer-Petris Act in 1965 that established the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the nation's first coastal protection agency.



For thirty years (1957-1987), Burlingame Landfill (shown at right) operated a shoreline dumpsite east of Broadway. The landfill was capped in 2002. In late 2024, Top Golf opened an entertainment venue on the City-owned site.



In the 1960s, before the creation of BCDC, Anza-Pacific Corp. received permission from Burlingame to create a 146-acre peninsula east of Highway 101 by filling in the Bay. Concrete rubble from the original 1929 San Mateo-Hayward bridge was used to create a wave break perimeter. Litigation ensued over where Anza exceeded its permission, and, in 1972, as part of a settlement reached, the State of California retained 46 acres to be used for the benefit of the public. The Anza Lagoon and nearby Bay Trail remain very popular local destinations.

(R.L. Copeland aerial above)



Panel funded by City of Burlingame Community Grant to the Burlingame Historical Society 2026



In 1904, Sarah Winchester purchased roughly 100 acres of bayside property in Burlingame, including a fully outfitted houseboat, known as the "Winchester Ark". Her vision to create an exclusive personal port along the bay front to welcome visitors coming to California, via Panama, went ultimately unrealized. Winchester died in 1922; the ark burned down in 1929.

Howard Park and the Greyhound Bus Depot

The small, pie-shaped parcel at the junction of Howard and Highland Avenues at California Drive was named “Howard Park” by the City in 1912— one of the oldest, and perhaps smallest parks in Burlingame. That same year, owner George Howard, architect of the Burlingame Train Station, donated his plans for a large, ornate water fountain in the park, as “Burlingame has no drinking place for man or beast...” In 1914 it was reported that fundraising was underway, though it is unclear if the fountain was ever realized.



A 40-line streetcar at the Greyhound Depot in 1948. The streetcar ceased operations in January 1949, having lost substantial business to both transit bus and train services.

During the 1920s, several independent bus companies, including Burlingame-based Peninsula Rapid Transit Co., were acquired by San Francisco-based Pacific Greyhound Lines. In 1939, a Spanish-Eclectic style bus depot was erected on the property. It served passengers of the bus line, as well as those waiting for the 40-line electric streetcar operating through Burlingame since 1903.

In 1990, Greyhound Lines surrendered its lease with the City due to bankruptcy.



A restored 1954 Greyhound bus is shown (at right) in 1992 following the surrender of Greyhound Lines' lease.



Burlingame funded The Depot's renovation in 1993 to accommodate small classes and City functions, and later, consumer retail. In 2005 Burlingame leased the space to a longtime business—Sam's Italian Sandwich Company. The owners retired in 2020 after 47 years in business.



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