



MICHAEL BROWNRIGG, MAYOR
ANDREA PAPPAJOHN, VICE MAYOR
DONNA COLSON
DESIREE THAYER
PETER STEVENSON

The City of Burlingame

CITY HALL -- 501 PRIMROSE ROAD
BURLINGAME, CALIFORNIA 94010-3997

TEL: (650) 558-7204
www.burlingame.org

March 17, 2026

National Trust for Historic Preservation
600 14th Street NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Members of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Evaluation Committee:

I am writing to express our City Council's enthusiastic support for the nomination of the historic United States Post Office (USPO) landmark renovation project at 220 Park Road in Burlingame for the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Award.

220 Park Road and the neighboring parking lot is a public/private collaboration between our City -- which aspired to innovate and improve our public open space while also protecting an important piece of our heritage, a historic USPO in the center of our city -- and two far-sighted private sector developers. Preservation of the USPO had been a City priority since the US Postal Service put it on the disposition list, but we simply did not have the resources to acquire it nor to rehabilitate it. Had we not structured this project as a public/private collaboration, the historic Post Office might not exist today.

Our private sector collaborators were Dostart Development Company and Sares Regis Group. In addition to restoring and repurposing the 1940s USPO, the hybrid project includes a six-story downtown mixed-use building and abuts a former at-grade, City-owned parking lot that the City and developers re-imagined as a new Town Square, which will open in spring of 2026. Imagine a single project that both preserves a historic WW II Post Office AND creates a Town Square in the center of a 100-year old, fully built-out city. Truly, this is a marriage of old and new, with a focus on community benefit and preservation.

Our City had long appreciated the beauty and historicity of the Post Office. Brian Turner named the Burlingame USPO an important historic resource in the National Trust for Historic Preservation San Francisco office's work on the digital USPO field guide in 2018 as the federal government began selling core assets in urban areas. Our local historical society submitted it for consideration to the 11 Most Endangered List after the first owner left the site vacant and ring-fenced, and the building began to deteriorate, causing urban blight in the center of our downtown shopping district. In 2019, we featured this site on an historic tour of a field study for the San Francisco Past Forward conference. The building has an original clay tile roof, eagle bronze cast hardware, artistic reliefs, and gorgeous local marble interiors along with all the historic post boxes and windows.

However, as noted, we did not have the resources to save the Post Office, so we realized we had to bring in the private sector. We searched for and found developers who would honor the old Post Office, but there was a hitch: the City had only a few years earlier pressed the community to expand downtown development heights to engender redevelopment. Despite misgivings from some older

residents, we allowed buildings to go from two stories to five stories. To preserve the Post Office, we could not allow development above it, yet without that space, the project as whole would not “pencil.” So, with typical Burlingame goal-oriented pragmatism, we issued a variance for height, allowing the developers to go to six stories and 70’ in the neighboring space, preserving the Post Office envelope and allowing the project to go forward. This was not an easy political “give,” but it was necessary.

Yet, this project is much more than a preservation win; it is part of our strategic re-envisioning of Burlingame.

Burlingame is a small city of 32,000 people located in an urban corridor near the San Francisco airport. We benefit from proximity to transit, a highly educated workforce, excellent schools, and a bustling set of retail areas, chief of which is Burlingame Avenue, adjacent to the old Post Office. We are perceived as affluent, and we do indeed have many affluent residents, but 55% of our residents are renters living in multifamily housing, making us one of the densest cities in the Bay Area.

Notwithstanding this density, Burlingame City policy has been to build more housing, as much as 20% more by the end of 2030, to ensure we remain open and welcoming to young families and aging residents alike. Many suburbs that look a lot like ours have fought building height and housing tooth and nail, but not Burlingame. And today, we are on track to hit our housing goals early, including many new affordable workforce and senior housing units. If every city in California expanded its housing stock by 20%, there would not be a housing shortage.

But as we like to say, if City leaders are going to press residents to accept more housing, then we must also provide more amenities. That includes creating great public open space, and that’s what 220 Park has created in spades. The project saved a beautiful historic resource while creating a unique and coveted spacious open space in our Town Square, with benches, trees, and a fountain to meet the needs of a growing population. We also have access to 220’s parking spaces on weekends and evenings, when downtown parking is in the shortest supply. This is truly an example of historic preservation catalyzing change and growth and evolution in a city, rather than simply embedding a building in amber as is often perceived to be the case with preservation.

Since the preservation of the USPO, our downtown has experienced a noticeable revitalization. The building itself serves as a striking architectural anchor, blending classic design with modern community needs. By keeping its original façade and unique character, we have not only preserved an important piece of Burlingame’s history, but we have also created a welcoming space for residents and visitors alike.

Furthermore, the preservation has inspired community pride. We anticipate residents will gather on the steps of the USPO and the adjacent Town Square space for events, photographs, and even informal social interactions, reinforcing a sense of belonging. The location will serve as a backdrop for our local farmers’ market, community festivals, and holiday celebrations, strengthening the connection between our downtown and those who call Burlingame home. By safeguarding the USPO at 220 Park Road, we have not only honored our past but also energized our present and future.

Thank you for considering this perspective on the importance of the USPO to our vibrant downtown.

Sincerely,

Michael Brownrigg
Mayor, City of Burlingame