



shuttered and locked store  
Burlingame Ave.

**"An Artisan Market for Burlingame Avenue?" by Willi Paul & Planetshifter.com**

*The Avenue lost its charm when big biz moved in 10 to 15 years ago ... it's now a wash of Boba juice joints, java huts and mediocre restaurants? Why are rents so high that we are losing so many owners. The best shops, restaurants, etc. are the independents. 15 to 20K per month- independent businesses can't handle that- even the chains are rethinking that. Becoming like 2011 again but without the recession.... it's pretty but it's getting less interesting fast.*

## **Introduction**

Does Burlingame Ave accurately reflect the values of the residents and our visitors or is this place more like a chaotic mix-up of landlord whims and long-dripping corporate capriciousness?

There are opportunities and empty buildings here (Two specific sites are discussed: the 1234 Burlingame Ave. property recently vacated by J Crew and the old post office property and a plethora of exciting sustainable examples to ponder. But does the City government have a vision for the Ave? Conversely, do the citizens have a voice in its design? Who is in charge?

Can a retail district morph into community spaces? The following citizen-conversation is edited from a recent Nextdoor thread about the possible loss of charm on the Ave. This is our piece:

## **Legal Issues**

I went to the Olive oil and vinegar store on the Avenue which I love. The owners, husband and wife were both there today. He showed me that the space next to Sixtos (in that area), has been vacant for years. It's a very small space and the landlord is firm on her price. He asked me why someone would receive nothing for years just to hold out for steep rent which they don't seem to be getting anyway. His space is \$11,000 a month. Does that sound terribly high to you as it does to me. I won't be surprised if they leave at some point too. It would be a darn shame if they did since it's one of the few places you can purchase a nice hostess gift or just enjoy their wonderful products for yourself. It is so nice to have a specialty store owned and operated where you are so warmly received and treated so well. With rents at these staggering prices people such as them that live in the South Bay and travel to work in Burlingame will be forced to seek other locations to operate their business. The landlords from what I have been told have the attitude if you don't like it, then you can leave. Looks like many are starting to already.

I hope landlords are reading the reviews also the consignment shop encore will be leaving at the end of the month They have been in that spot for 20 years landlord should be ashamed of themselves.

On the landlord comment (I'm not one though), I'm guessing churning through tenants may allow bumping up the rent price (more) as opposed to annual rent increases in a lease contract, and it might be easier to evict retailers than it is a residential tenant in doing that churning. New contracts can be ahem "corrected" for current market "prices" while existing contracts can only increase so much at a time.

It is quite simple to evict residential tenants. State law requires a 60-day notice in most cases; 30 days in others. No reason required. 4,548 units were evicted from 2014 through 2016 in San Mateo County. This does not include the numbers of residents who left because they were priced out. Also, many residents are no longer offered leases, but month to month tenancies only, unlike businesses. Churning human beings and businesses is extremely profitable.

## **Design Preferences and Templates**

Oxbow Market/ Ferry Building concept would be fantastic in our old post office space!

Yes, the Oxbow market/Ferry Bldg. concept might work very well in Burlingame! It would be a big draw for

the town's economy. We need to stand out. Other towns are catching up to rival the attractiveness of Burlingame Avenue or more simply, "The Avenue."

Ponce City Market in Atlanta, GA. Amazing shopping and food with an urban/industrial/vintage vibe. Visit [poncecitymarket.com](http://poncecitymarket.com)

Cool! Ponce City Market breathes new life into the historic Sears, Roebuck & Co. building in Atlanta. The classic structure, which is the area's largest adaptive reuse project, has been reinvented as a vibrant community hub housing the Central Food Hall, various shops, flats and offices, all while pointing back to the roots of its inception. The market infuses vigor and excitement into this historically significant structure, located in one of Atlanta's most cherished neighborhoods.

See: [kitchentowncentral.com](http://kitchentowncentral.com) & [publicmarketemeryville.com](http://publicmarketemeryville.com)

University in Palo Alto has The Stanford Theatre. Fully restored to its original grandeur and plays all the old classics. My wife and I have spent many a great evening down there.

It's boring. Mall stores. Restaurant chains. I go to San Carlos or half moon bay.

I agree that the "Ave" as my daughter calls it is going from merely bougie to bland. It should be a Hayes Valley, not a Stanford Mall. I really hope that Burlingame has a plan to develop Broadway around local, independent businesses like Preston's [although it is looking rather dingy lately] and Weimax. Communities like Portland have shown how to encourage thriving premium and local retailers. I'm not sure Burlingame has the resources/guts to provide this guidance, however. I agree that San Carlos [or even Mill Valley] is a good template to follow.

If I am not mistaken, San Anselmo, a charming little town, strictly prohibits commercial chain businesses. I don't think they have a Starbucks downtown. The main street features many stores and restaurants - most of which are locally owned/individual businesses.

I like Carmel's model: fine the landlords for each month their building is unoccupied. Has predictable effect of keeping shops in place longer, vacancies near zero.

As goes San Francisco; so goes Burlingame America's 'Retail Apocalypse' Is Really Just Beginning  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2017-retail-debt/>

I agree: Chicago and NY converted their shopping districts into a breathing community of business, resident, art, music, etc. Maybe a blues or jazz place. Here is an older Bank of America report on reinventing business districts: [https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/TP\\_BusinessDistricts.ashx\\_.pd](https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/TP_BusinessDistricts.ashx_.pd)

It's true. We need a coffee house or jazz club. Murals. Civic spaces and plazas. Street performers with no amplification.

**Vision:** An Artisan Market & Incubator for the Old J Crew Site (1234 Burlingame Av)

I conversed with the owner's relator of the now vacant property at the Old J Crew Site (1234 Burlingame Av):

Hi Ms. Taylor - A group here is advocating for an artisan market (Ferry Building scheme) with an incubator component. We are not seeking another big box retailer but an edu-entertainment vibe. The slow demise of Broadway Av is a sharp counter-point. We want regenerative; new urbanism! Cordially, Willi

Hi Willi - Really Love the idea. An Oxbow market/Ferry Bldg would do well. This would require strong operational experience from a master lessor with extensive food background and high net worth/and or high net

worth financial backers to fund and perform the build out, and to source and install the artisan operators. Is that team in place? Landlord is not experienced in running a food hall. It's a unique skill set.

## **Values**

It's interesting that no one has raised the congestion in the sidewalks yet. Between the dogs, baby carts, Lime bikes, skateboards and tourists, it can be dangerous out there...

The "charm" for me is being able to get pretty much everything I need without getting in my car. Sometimes that is from a local shop (like the above-mentioned olive oil store - one of our favs), sometimes it's a local chain like 5 Little Monkeys, and sometimes it's a corporate chain like Gap or Sephora. To me the point is that I'm buying from and interacting with my local community and reducing my carbon footprint. Plus, the exercise and fresh air of walking to Burlingame Ave a couple times a week is quite nice.

I want to love Burlingame Ave. more. It's nicer to go there than Hillsdale Mall, for sure. I'm not sure why they did the marble sidewalks---I always fear I'll slip in rainy weather. It would benefit from a true cafe with outdoor tables. Peet's and Starbucks used to have a scene. Crepevine adds to the charm. It certainly would be nice to make the old post office into a market hall, but I'm not sure there's enough parking there. Also, the feds or whoever owns it likely would like a high-\$\$\$ use of that site. I used to go to Broadway for the natural foods store and the low-priced Green-owned market there.

## **What now?**

Nextdoor is infamous for selling stuff and bitch sessions but no community action. See my recent critique entitled: "[Blank: A Critique of Nextdoor.com.](#)"

What if the landlords, economic planners and the public met in at 1234 Burlingame for a community charrette? Test the street vibes; share values?

**I'll bring the whiteboard.**