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Oculus building starts to boot up

City preps for commuters to Burlingame Point campus

By Corey Browning Daily Journal staff
Aug 30, 2021



Facebook’s Oculus campus in Burlingame is mostly empty, with an estimated 10% capacity for now as most employees are not planned to occupy the space for in-person work until early next year.

The 767,000-square-foot site is designed to offer work space for 3,200 people but the tech giant is focusing on “data, not dates” in its plans to bring workers back to the office, according to a spokesperson for the company.

“Given the recent health data showing rising COVID cases based on the delta variant, our teams in the U.S. will not be required to go back to the office until January 2022,” spokesperson Chloe Meyere said in an email.

While the area surrounding the campus may not see an influx of tech workers this year, some community members are concerned that when the campus does come online, it could clog streets for local residents.



“It’s certainly a major change out there to have a building that large,” said Burlingame Councilmember Emily Beach, also the chair of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority Board of Directors. “We’re going to do everything we can to make sure that it’s a positive for the community and that we protect everyone’s safety and quality of life in the process.”

A key component to keeping traffic at bay will be a new shuttle, established by the county Transportation Authority in partnership with Facebook and [Commuter.org](https://www.commute.org), which will transport employees to and from the campus and BART and Caltrain stations.

The shuttle will also be free and open to the public — a win for the community, allowing easy access to the Bayfront’s trails and playing fields, Beach said.

Beach said that there will also be encouragement from Oculus for employees to use means of transportation other than single-occupancy vehicles, adding that roughly half of employees drive to work at the company’s other facilities, and that the Oculus location is perhaps better positioned to use public transit than those facilities.

“There’s really good reason for hope, they have a really good track record,” said Beach.



Some concerned residents have proposed traffic calming measures, including limiting left turns from some streets — something Beach said traffic engineers will take time to study and make changes where appropriate.

“We are definitely concerned about the opening of the Facebook Oculus building, once again,” said Cynthia Newton, North Shoreview Neighborhood Association president, who added the area was suffering from cut-through traffic even prior to the pandemic. North Shoreview, in San Mateo, is just south of the current Oculus location at 300 Airport Blvd. that was home of the Burlingame Drive-In for decades.

Beach said that, additionally, Broadway Caltrain station is planned to reopen for weekday Caltrain service in 2024 once the Caltrain fleet is fully electrified, which will provide even better access to the campus.

Oculus is a virtual reality headset company founded in 2012 but purchased by Facebook in 2018. It became a division of the social media company in 2018, which coincided with Facebook announcing plans to use the Burlingame site in the same year. Plans for Burlingame Point, now the Oculus campus, were originally approved by the city in 2012

“It’s been a long journey to get it going,” said Beach. “We need to watch it very carefully to make adjustments as needed, but I am optimistic.”

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