ULI San Fransisco

REVITALIZING NEWPARK MALL

Newark, California

Technical Assistance Panel | February 25–26, 2026

About

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The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and land use professionals dedicated to advancing ULI's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership of professionals from private enterprise and the public sector represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, ULI has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, including over 2,100 members in ULI San Francisco (sf.uli.org).

ULI TAPs

The ULI San Francisco Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program is an extension of the national ULI Advisory Services Program (ASP). ULI's advisory services panels provide strategic advice to clients (public agencies, nonprofit organizations, or nonprofit developers) on complex land use and real estate development issues. The program links clients to the knowledge and experience of ULI and its membership.

Since 1947, ULI has harnessed the technical expertise of its members to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Since 1982, ULI San Francisco has adapted this model for use at the local level, delivering 52 TAPs.

TAPs include extensive preliminary briefings followed by an intensive two-day, in-person working session in the client's community. A detailed briefing package and guided discussion are provided by the client to each TAP panelist in advance of each working session. In these sessions, ULI's expert panelists tour the study area, interview stakeholders, and address a set of questions proposed by the client about a specific development issue or policy barrier within a defined geographic area. The product of these sessions is a final presentation and report, which presents highlights of the panel's responses to the client's questions, as well as a diverse set of ideas and suggestions.

Learn more at: sf.uli.org/get-involved/technical-assistance-panels/

Cover photo: A restaurant is one of the few active businesses along the southern side of the NewPark Mall. (ULI)

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About

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RESTAURANT & BAR
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Executive Summary

GOOGLE EARTH / ULI PANEL

The Greater NewPark Mall area, is circled in red on the map above and is bordered by Interstate 880, Mowry Avenue, hotels, restaurants, and Shirley Sisk Grove Park.

The City of Newark, California, is facing a dilemma: the future of the once-successful NewPark Mall is in question as most of its in-line retail stores are empty and both the former Sears and Macy's buildings remain vacant. The retail landscape has changed dramatically since the mall first opened decades ago, and the retail-focused, enclosed mall model that defined NewPark Mall's original purpose no longer aligns with how people prefer to shop today.

The Greater NewPark Mall covers approximately 125 acres, including the large surface parking lots that surround the building. While its interior retail bays are mostly vacant, bright spots remain, including a new Costco store, a busy AMC movie theater, a 24-hour Fitness, and a cluster of restaurants near the western entrance.

Not content to sit back and watch this community asset languish, the City of Newark (the City) turned to the Urban Land Institute San Francisco District Council (ULI) for guidance. The City articulated its goal to transform the mall into a "premier, vibrant urban place through thoughtful land use design, which includes residential areas, dining and retail opportunities, community venues, a world-class movie theater, inviting pedestrian-oriented streets and public spaces, enhanced sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and transit facilities."

Using its two-day technical assistance panel (TAP) process, ULI convened a group of real estate and land use professionals to study the site, interview key stakeholders, and make recommendations to the City for actionable steps it can take to help shape a new future for the mall.

Economic and Market Challenges

Cities across the United States are facing similar challenges with regional shopping mall properties. Structural disruptions in the retail industry have permanently altered the landscape for enclosed regional malls. The COVID-19 pandemic, the growth of e-commerce, the downsizing of national department store anchors, and the general overbuilding of retail space have left many malls struggling to find a viable path forward.

A number of retailers have found new success by shaping their sales around experience. Wellness centers, medical spas, restaurants, entertainment, and food and beverage now represent the growth segment of the retail market.

The commercial opportunity at the NewPark Mall will require a different economic model that accounts for this shift in retailing and that takes advantage of the strong community-orientation of Newark's increasingly diverse population.

Residential market conditions. Recognizing the shifts in the market, Brookfield Properties, the entity that owns much of the mall property, began a market pivot in 2015, and the City adopted a specific plan for the property in 2018 that featured new uses at the site and higher-density residential development. The assumptions embedded in that plan, however, reflect a retail and residential rental market environment that no longer exists, and dense residential development that features structured parking will not be financially feasible without either significant rent growth or direct public subsidy.

Development cost barriers. In addition to the macroeconomic headwinds, several Newark-specific municipal requirements are increasing the cost and complexity of development at the site. These include impact fees, off-site improvements, affordable housing requirements, and design standards that impose constraints on building form and configuration. While these requirements exist for legitimate policy reasons, they are instead functioning as barriers to development.

Mall ownership. Brookfield Properties acquired the mall and the AMC theater in 2018; a Brookfield subsidiary owns the Sears building; and the Macy's building and the new Costco center have different owners. The breadth of this ownership structure and the mix of engaged and active owners with those less so combine to add further complexity to the potential paths forward for the entire site.

Site Opportunities

In cities facing similar challenges with struggling retail, existing assets are being transformed through new or creative uses. There is also a willingness to depart from traditional retail formulas, and placemaking is playing a critical role in how these assets are repositioned. Placemaking works best when it is a sustained practice.

NewPark Mall's competitive position. The mall has a unique opportunity to celebrate Newark's ethnic diversity and differentiate the site from its competition. It can provide places for family entertainment, spaces for young adults and families to gather, and opportunities for connection to the community and to one another.

Near-term opportunities. With its placemaking and community-building potential and with some early municipal investment, the site can be reshaped into a destination that serves residents and invites in the surrounding communities. Two early opportunities include improvements to the adjacent park and facilitating connectivity across the property's 125 acres. Shirley Sisk Grove is an underutilized asset that is already home to a number of events and programming, and improved pedestrian pathways, lighting, and increased programming could draw more people to the area.

Site planning adjustments. While the specific plan may have once provided a useful framework for the development in 2020, today's market conditions require a new approach. Modifications will be needed to provide greater flexibility, and additional policy updates to be included in the City's general plan or new master plan may include:

- Adjusting housing expectations to allow lower densities along the outside of NewPark Mall Road (the "outer ring").
- Permitting other development opportunities such as manufacturers of cutting-edge technologies, office space, or additional hotels in the outer ring.
- Expanding the realm of potential tenants to include additional local and hyper-local retailers, business service providers, and educational resource providers.
- Building on existing entertainment successes to include a small-scale music venue or performance space that could also host local events and community gatherings. Experiential retail can also bring people together regularly, expanding the community's opportunities to stay in Newark for entertainment.
- Incorporating regular community programming to continue to activate the area and attract residents and visitors.

A New Vision and Placemaking

The panel's vision for NewPark Mall is a new Tri-City destination that elevates and celebrates the city's ethnic diversity, featuring early activations that can help attract additional new tenants.

The area within NewPark Mall Road is appropriate for retail, entertainment, placemaking, and community-focused uses. Higher-density housing remains a longer-term consideration, but will require waiting for market conditions to improve. The outer ring could accommodate lower-density residential development as well as technology companies, office, and hotels.

Near-term opportunities. The panel's vision builds on existing assets and forms stronger connections between the assets, the surrounding hotels, and the neighborhoods beyond. Specifically, enhanced pedestrian and pathway connections between the movie theater, the restaurants, and Shirley Sisk Grove Park should be an early focus.

- Create a spine of activity between the mall and park with pop-up uses and add lighting, seating, and landscaping to increase safety and support an inviting environment.

- Strengthen the role of Shirley Sisk Grove Park as a location for community events while creating a more welcoming and safer connection to the mall.
- Activate the Mall area with community markets, cultural festivals, food events, and live music, and ensure the space can flex into a larger venue for signature community events.
- Remain flexible and nimble in these activation efforts, ensuring that the area can continue to adapt as the mall's redevelopment unfolds.

Opportunities on the horizon. Given the unknowns represented by the multiple-owner structure and the challenging capital markets, several development goals remain on the horizon.

- Identify opportunity sites in the outer ring that might accommodate additional market-driven uses that would be complementary to a mixed-use environment, but which may not currently be permitted by the specific plan.
- Consider community-focused uses that can serve Newark residents and business owners but which may fall outside a typical mall tenant list. These uses would likely require a lower rental rate than might be typical for similar market-based mall spaces.
- Let the market decide, allowing property owners and potential tenants to determine the right tenant mix.

Foster Success: Implementation and Tools

The City has an important role to play in fostering success at the site through regulatory reform, public investment, and near-term activation to maintain and promote flexibility as market cycles change.

Adjust the land use framework. The panel recommends setting aside the specific plan and reverting to the City's existing Greater NewPark Master Plan (2015) framework to provide guidance. In that master plan, incorporate certain aspects of the specific plan as follows:

- Retain certain elements of the specific plan, including conceptual plans, visionary policies, caps on allowable development, and allowable uses.
- Allow additional housing outside the ring road with a minimum density of 20 dwelling units per acre.
- Remove limiting prescriptive elements, including the land use plan, the density plan, detailed street and mobility plans, infrastructure plans, and prescriptive design guidelines.
- Consider enabling amendments in the general plan as needed that incorporate these policies. Update the zoning code to affirmatively prohibit certain incompatible uses.

Make key public investments. The panel recommends that the City invest in key infrastructure improvements—such as street improvements and signalization, lighting, sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycling pathway connections, landscaping, and signage—particularly in and around Shirley Sisk Grove, with a focus on supporting placemaking and helping to unlock future private investment.

Pursue near-term opportunities. The City is encouraged to pursue near-term actions that can be implemented without significant capital expenditure or regulatory change. These might include pop-up retail events, basic public realm improvements along pedestrian routes, outreach to potential partners, and Increased programming at Shirley Sisk Grove.

Conclusion

The Greater NewPark Mall is already in the process of finding its new path forward. With help from the City and guidance from the panel, placemaking at the site can become durable, supporting future investments that are aligned around a shared vision and with intentional momentum.

The site has the potential to once again become a hub of community activity. The vision for that hub may look different from a historical regional mall, yet it may be the new vision that serves Newark's residents and surrounding communities more effectively, richly, and authentically. The City has proven it is adaptable—this is yet another opportunity to demonstrate that adaptability, supporting NewPark Mall as it becomes something genuinely new, serving community needs, and laying the foundation for what it will become.

Introduction and Background

Like many traditional indoor shopping malls across the United States, the Greater NewPark Mall has experienced a seismic shift in occupancy and related declining financial success over the past decade or more. The dominance of online shopping and the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed countless retailers into “make or break” business positions. While some retailers have successfully navigated a dual online and brick-and-mortar model, others have shifted to a model that provides a more engaging experience for shoppers, and still others have simply stepped away from the industry altogether. These shifts have left mall owners struggling to fill the anchor and in-line spaces, the bulk of whom rely on the foot traffic created by an energetic mix of smaller tenants to help attract shoppers.

Newark’s Greater NewPark Mall is in an enviable physical location. Situated at the southeastern corner of the intersection of Interstate 880 and Mowry Avenue, the mall was built as a regional draw. In addition to attracting shoppers from Newark, Fremont, and Union City (the “Tri-City area”), the mall could also anticipate visitors from other cities in San Francisco’s East Bay.

Today, the vacant Sears and Macy’s department stores begin to tell a story that the vacant inline storefronts appear to confirm. Yet this particular story–the appearance of a mall in decline–is layered and complex, requiring further exploration.

The City of Newark (the City) understands the historical value the mall has delivered for Newark, both in terms of sales tax revenue and retail services for the community. It is also a significant piece of real estate and one that, when appearing to be in decline, can send negative signals to the broader market. Recognizing the potential perils of a declining mall and the potential that its redevelopment might bring, the City turned to the Urban Land Institute San Francisco District Council (ULI) for assistance in identifying a navigable path forward.

ULI, using its trusted and objective technical assistance panel (TAP) program, convened a team of real estate and land use professionals to study the challenges before the City and help identify opportunities for improvement, growth, and future success.

Problem Statement and TAP Questions

The City’s goal is to transform the NewPark Mall into a premier, vibrant urban place.

Using the TAP process, the City seeks assistance reimagining the Greater NewPark Mall Area through input and recommendations regarding land use, economic development, and community compatibility.

1. What are the key strengths and weaknesses of the current project site and its surrounding area, and how can the project best leverage existing assets?
2. Based on the panelists’ observations and stakeholder interviews, articulate a vision statement for the Greater NewPark Mall area? What are the highest and best uses for the area (and a ROM quantity for each) that optimizes the balance between land use, economic development, and community compatibility (e.g., quality shopping, dining, entertainment, office, distribution, R&D, or housing)?
3. What are the key market trends that will influence the success (or lack thereof) for this project.
4. What, if anything, should be amended in the Specific Plan to incentivize multifamily and mixed-use development (e.g. zoning, design standards, building code requirements, environmental approval and entitlement processes, mobility and site access)?
5. What are key policy and regulatory barriers to implementation that can be addressed by the City?
6. Where will political will need to be exercised (in particular, where will community attitudes need to evolve) in order to achieve the vision stated above?
7. What are the recommended next steps (short, intermediate, long-term) for moving the project forward?

Convening over the course of two immersive days, the panel brought experience and perspectives from a variety of professions to the task, including real estate development, land use law, architecture and urban planning, municipal governance, real estate brokerage, and economic development consulting. The panel toured the mall and surrounding areas and interviewed stakeholders, including elected leaders, City staff, business owners, property owners, real estate brokers, and developers. Following this information-gathering process, the panel spent the rest of the work sessions applying its expertise to the task, deliberating its findings, and drafting a set of recommendations for the City to consider as it works to support the revitalization of NewPark Mall.

What the Panel Learned

In its briefing to the panel, the City shared its goals for the site and provided insights into its previous planning efforts for the property. The following themes emerged:

- City leaders have articulated a vision for the mall that goes beyond retail stabilization and instead centers around a vision for a vibrant urban place that serves as a true community destination for the Tri-City area.
- Newark has demonstrated an ability to adapt. The City has maintained fiscal stability, provided consistent and committed leadership, and employs dedicated staff who understand how policies can and should support the type of growth and development the City and the community would like to see.
- The City's demographics are changing. Newark is becoming more ethnically diverse, and this demographic shift is reshaping demand for retail, services, and community gathering spaces.
- The mall is seen as having the potential to serve as a community amenity that complements, rather than competes with, Old Town's locally-oriented commercial district and the big-box retail function of the Four Corners shopping area.
- The City adopted a specific plan for the mall property in 2018 and amended it in 2021. However, declining market

The panel met with City leaders and toured the exterior and interior of the mall as well as surrounding neighborhoods and commercial districts.

conditions have rendered that plan infeasible. The City is seeking guidance on whether the plan still reflects current realities and what barriers may be limiting progress

In addition to the insights from the City, the panel interviewed a variety of business and community stakeholders who provided the following information and perspectives.

- The conversion of NewPark Mall into an outdoor mall is likely cost-prohibitive.
- Demographics, density, and spendable income drive retail success.
- The days of the 60,000-square-foot anchor stores are over. Tenants are seeking smaller spaces and more nimble lease terms.
- Typical premier rents in a big mall can be challenging for today's smaller retailers.
- The immediate area surrounding the mall is home to retailers that could benefit from reconfiguration. (The general rule of thumb in retail is to avoid competitors within three miles of a potential site.)
- The mall's specific plan is too prescriptive and limits potential new ideas that could help breathe new and additional life into the interior spaces and surrounding parcels.
- The City sees great potential in the site and has high expectations for it, yet achieving these expectations may be difficult.
- The City is becoming more inclusive in its outreach and operations, and the diverse residents and business owners are becoming more active in civic matters.

A digital billboard s found near a primary entrance to the mall.

- Newark is a family-focused community. With family budgets increasingly constrained, Newark's residents often "vacation in place," turning to local entertainment options on the weekends.
- Community members are hungry for cultural events and diverse experiences.
- Residents would appreciate opportunities to attend additional recurring events, and parents of Newark teenagers would welcome low-barrier (e.g., low-cost) and safe events for teens.

The Role of Placemaking

The challenge before the panel included a focus on creating identity, vibrancy, and a destination that feels like the heart of Newark. The City's goal is to transform a site that was built as a traditional retail-focused, enclosed center into a place where people want to spend their free time. This is fundamentally a placemaking question, and placemaking cannot be separated from the structure. It cannot be separated from market demand, and it cannot be separated from the legal framework that governs the site.

Successful placemaking is more than façade improvements and event programming—placemaking is also built upon the right mix of uses and stronger connections, walkability, and integration with the surrounding city. Placemaking requires the right density to support daily activity and the right economic foundation to sustain it. Placemaking succeeds when the underlying framework supports it.

The challenge for NewPark Mall is establishing the conditions where placemaking is economically and structurally viable and sustainable.

The site has long-term potential, but potential alone cannot generate momentum. Momentum requires clarity, sequencing, and a strategy that reduces uncertainty. This is where the panel began forming its recommendations.

Economic and Market Challenges

The City's planning for NewPark Mall has taken place against the backdrop of long-term economic trends that affect both local and national market conditions. These trends are also impacting the development industry's ability to respond in a manner that meets the risk and return expectations of its equity investors, including the capital markets. These conditions have been made highly visible at the mall, but it is not an isolated instance. Cities across the U.S. are facing similar challenges.

Macroeconomic and Retail Conditions

Real estate demand is generally tied to employment growth, which in turn drives demand for housing and generates the wages that determine household disposable income. The retail industry has undergone structural disruption over the past decade, permanently altering the landscape for enclosed regional malls. The disruption began before COVID and was driven by the growth of e-commerce, the downsizing of national department store anchors, and the overbuilding of retail space in the 1990s and 2000s. The "master developer" model, which requires significant upfront capital in order to capture long-term value, has become increasingly difficult to achieve amid the declining number of developers operating in this sector.

In Newark specifically, the closures of Sears and Macy's are not anomalies. They reflect national decisions by retailers managing their real estate footprints in response to structural changes in consumer behavior. These closures are not a referendum on Newark, but they do leave the mall with anchor vacancies that are unlikely to be backfilled with traditional tenants.

For retailers today, success is often shaped around experience. Tenants that require a physical presence to deliver their product—restaurants, entertainment uses, food and beverage, wellness, and medical spas—now represent the growth segment of the retail market.

The trade area for NewPark Mall has faced increasing competition. With Pacific Commons in Fremont and Union Landing in Union City NewPark Mall no longer competes well on the basis of traditional retail selection or national brand anchors.

The retail opportunity at NewPark Mall will require a different economic model than what the specific plan presently contemplates in a prescriptive fashion. The local, community-oriented, and entrepreneurial tenants that best serve the Tri-City demographic—ethnic grocers, local restaurants, small business operators, and service providers—cannot support the rent levels associated with structured parking and dense urban retail formats. These new tenants will need convenient surface parking, which is plentiful at a site like NewPark Mall. Requiring structured parking, financed through rents, is not economically viable and would exclude the very tenants who could make great use of the space and meet the community's market demands.

Residential Market Conditions

Recognizing the shifts in the market and the changes in retail shopping, the mall's owner began its market pivot for the property in 2015, during a period of significant regional employment growth. When the City's specific plan was adopted in 2018, the assumptions embedded in it—particularly those regarding high-density residential development—reflected a market environment that no longer exists today.

While post-pandemic employment levels have recovered to some extent, regional job growth remains flat. Employment stagnation is accompanied by sharply higher interest rates and a significant pullback in capital markets' appetite for ground-up development risk. Years of inflation have pushed up the cost of materials and labor, as well as insurance, utilities, and other operating costs. Investor yield requirements have increased, raising the return threshold that projects must meet to attract equity capital. Capital markets are, in general, frozen for new ground-up multi-family rental development—with activity concentrated in distressed assets and select high-rent markets like San Francisco and the Peninsula, where rent growth has been sufficient to justify development economics. Housing projects that were already in the pipeline—with locked-in construction costs and financing commitments—have moved forward. New projects outside of the high-rent markets, however, are effectively impossible to finance. The result is high housing demand but little new development. For Newark, new for-rent residential development with structured parking will not be financially feasible without either significant rent growth or direct public subsidy.

Development Cost Barriers

In addition to the macroeconomic headwinds, several Newark-specific requirements are increasing the cost and complexity of development at the site. These include:

- Development impact fees
- Off-site improvement requirements
- Affordable housing requirements
- Design standards that impose constraints on building form and configuration
- Other community benefit obligations

These requirements exist for legitimate policy reasons, yet in the current environment, they serve as barriers to the very development the City wishes to see at the site.

With a targeted relaxation of specific requirements—particularly for the types of uses the City most wants to attract—it is possible to meaningfully improve feasibility without compromising the City's broader policy objectives. It is also possible to still deliver community benefits at the site. By repositioning the mall with placemaking and community-serving businesses, the NewPark Mall redevelopment could provide community benefit in its own right rather than requiring developers to deliver this benefit through other project-level obligations. If the City wants to create a special environment at this site, it will need to be prepared to invest in the infrastructure that enables it.

Mall Ownership

The ownership structure at NewPark Mall adds a layer of complexity to the revitalization of the area. The mall has changed ownership multiple times, paralleling the broader disruptions in the industry. Brookfield—one of the country's largest real estate developers—acquired the mall and the AMC theater in 2018, and the Sears building is owned by a Brookfield subsidiary. The Macy building is held by a separate and unrelated entity, while another department store chain sold its building and parcel to make way for the new Costco on the site. Each of these entities is uniquely focused on its own property, yet all are inextricably linked and tied to the property's broader success. Any strategy the City pursues to support the mall site's revitalization will need to account for this ownership complexity.

A 24-Hour Fitness facility has filled a section of the mall that is visible and directly accessible from the surrounding parking lots.

Site Opportunities

Other cities facing similar challenges with struggling retail have generated instructive lessons for the market. In San Francisco, the response to retail vacancies—both pre- and post-pandemic—involved both private-sector creativity and public-sector leadership.

In the private sector, there has been a shift away from formulaic retail, with mall owners allowing non-traditional uses such as grocery stores, medical facilities, educational services, and recreational and entertainment uses. This intermixing of necessity and discretionary shopping has worked in Stonestown, where a Whole Foods Market in a former Macy's store sits below a new movie theater and above a new Sports Basement. Serramonte converted a former JCPenney into a Korean grocery store and a subsequent shopping destination. Restaurants have also found strong success in malls, providing yet another bright spot in the retail landscape.

On the public sector side, the City of San Francisco aggressively supported the reinvigoration of retail by radically streamlining zoning. By reducing permitting times, tenants have been able to open sooner. Cities are also permitting outdoor parklets, which allow private businesses to convert parking spaces into outdoor dining areas that can help activate streetscapes and enliven retail districts. The parklets come in all shapes and sizes, and the variety creates a lively street scene. In other areas, merchants have been allowed to set up sidewalk displays, expanding their retail floor space while also contributing to the area's allure. San Francisco has promoted the use of a small food incubator, La Cocina, to support residents interested in starting a food cart business, many of whom go on to open restaurants in formerly empty retail spaces. In other public spaces and community plazas, the City has hired people to facilitate community activation by offering lawn games, such as cornhole and badminton, for playing in the public space. While these activations require management, each has the potential to bring the community together, enliven spaces that would otherwise be vacant, and support nearby retail uses. All of these activations help create and strengthen a sense of place.

> "Placemaking is finding ways to foster social and emotional connections to place."
>
> —ULI PANELIST

In each of the above examples, existing assets are transformed through new or creative uses. There is also a willingness to depart from traditional retail formulas, with then understanding that placemaking works best when it is sustained over time.

NewPark Mall's Competitive Position

Current demand in the NewPark Mall trade area, as identified through market analysis and validated during the stakeholder interviews, is concentrated in three primary categories: ethnic grocers, recreation and entertainment, and food-oriented uses. NewPark Mall has a unique opportunity to celebrate the Newark community's ethnic diversity and differentiate the mall property from other shopping centers and retail competition. The panel recommends that the mall embrace and highlight this diversity, re-positioning the retail in order to compliment rather than compete with the other retail centers in the market. The mall can also provide a welcome place for family entertainment, spaces for young adults and families to spend time, and opportunities to connection with the community and with one another.

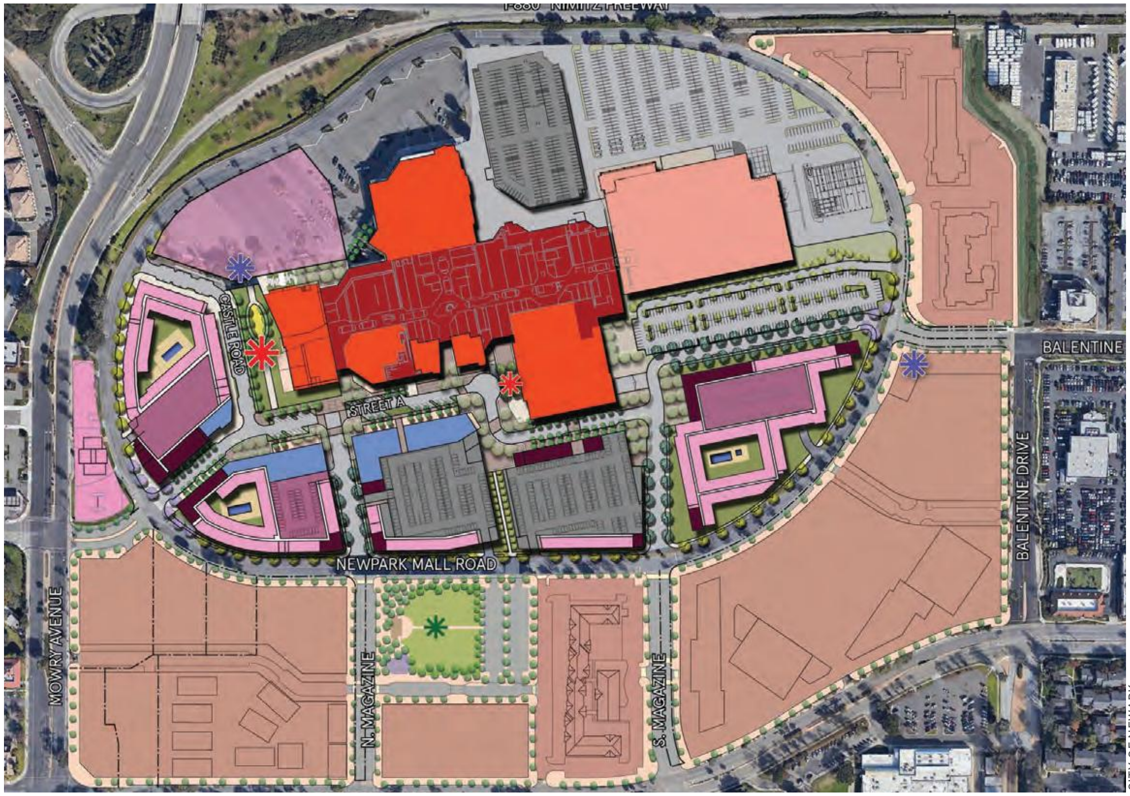
Differentiation at the mall and new activity can already be found in pockets across the mall property. Costco's new location takes advantage of the high visibility and access provided by proximity to Interstate 880. Another new big-box property owner is negotiating with potential new tenants for creative use of its anchor sites. Like Costco, the AMC theater is a success story and is proof that the right uses, properly positioned, can generate traffic at this location.

These successes demonstrate that NewPark Mall has the potential to again become a strong, focused center for commerce and activity in Newark. With additional focused effort and municipal support, NewPark Mall can become a destination built around community, family entertainment, and the ethnic diversity that differentiates the Tri-City area.

Near-Term Opportunities

The City has an exciting opportunity to help reposition NewPark Mall. With thoughtful placemaking and intentional community-building, the site can be reshaped into a destination that serves Newark's neighborhoods and welcomes visitors from the surrounding communities and nearby hotels. While this proximity will require some municipal infrastructure investments, such investment will signal to the private sector that the City is serious about the site and is willing to lead and invest in its success.

Recognizing the site's strengths and the movement already underway across various mall parcels, the panel identified two early opportunities for municipal investments that can be activated without favorable capital markets, complex entitlements, or large-scale private investment.



The map from the City's current Land Use Plan for the study area provided the panel with insights into how the uses might align across New Park Mall Road.

- **Improve Shirley Sisk Grove Park (the Park).** The Park is situated across NewPark Mall Road and is an underutilized municipal asset. The park is home to a number of events and programming, yet it remains generally unconnected to the mall property. Improved pedestrian pathways and lighting would create a more welcoming environment and improve visitors' feelings of safety and access to open spaces and gathering areas. Partnering to more actively program the park could also assist in drawing the community to both the Park and the Mall on a regular basis.
- **Facilitate connectivity.** Food and beverage is a bright spot in the retail landscape nationally, and NewPark Mall already has a foundation of successful restaurants in place. Providing well-lit and visible sidewalks, crosswalks, and signage to these restaurants from the surrounding neighborhoods and hotel properties will support the viability of the restaurants and make the walking or biking experience around and across the mall property more inviting and safer. With the sea of parking across the site, cars are clearly welcome, but pedestrians, bicyclists, or families wheeling through do not generally feel safe.

Site Planning Opportunities

The City asked the panel to consider the existing Specific Plan, as amended in 2021, and to evaluate its effectiveness in guiding development at the mall. While the specific plan might have provided an excellent framework for the development considerations percolating in 2020, particularly dense multi-family projects, conditions have changed, and the site requires a revised framework to facilitate future redevelopment.

The good news is that the City has experience developing a master plan, which resulted in the 2015 Greater NewPark Master Plan that stands the test of time and can continue to guide progress at the mall property. The framework and guiding principles are sound, and with a revised retail vision, one that more accurately represents Newark and Tri-City demographics, the site can stand out from the crowd, begin to fill identified gaps, and leverage the site's current strengths.

Moderate housing expectations. From the perspective of site planning, the panel believes that some higher-density housing, the type that typically requires structured parking, remains appropriate within the inner ring of the site, interior to NewPark Mall Road. The market for this type of private and unsubsidized development, however, remains far on the horizon. In the near term, there could be market opportunities for lower-density development, such as townhome developments, just outside NewPark Mall Road.

Explore other development opportunities. Beyond housing, the parcels lining the outside of NewPark Mall Road could also accommodate advanced manufacturing businesses, medical or other flexible office space, or additional hotels. Each of these uses could co-exist with the retail and service businesses proposed by the panel and those typically found in mixed-use environments.

Expand the realm of potential tenants. In addition to traditional mall retailers, the site could be an excellent location for one or more ethnically-based grocery stores. It could also become a destination for a unique mix of local, hyper-local, and national retailers. The site, particularly the second floor of the mall, could become a hub for wellness centers, medical spas, and services for small businesses and entrepreneurs, including legal services, tax and accounting assistance, and marketing and communications services. The small business services, particularly if it catered to Newark's diverse business

The wide open inline retail spaces could also be used as maker spaces for the city's up-and-coming craftspeople and business owners.

Stakeholders expressed an interest in more family-focused entertainment opportunities in Newark. The mall holds good potential to provide space for amenities that are welcoming to all ages.

With a bit of public investment, flat open areas, even parking lots, can be transformed into places for games and gathering, where all ages are invited to enjoy the amenities.

community, could be another great differentiator for the mall while providing valuable support to the city's small business community.

Build on the existing entertainment draw. In addition to the existing AMC movie theater, the site would be an excellent location for an even more significant entertainment and amenity draw. This might include a small-scale music venue, music hall, or comedy club that could also serve as a venue for local events, plays, children's events, and dancing. The space could also include a banquet hall or other flex space for gatherings beyond those offered at the Newark Pavilion. The addition of bocce courts, miniature golf, and/or bowling could provide welcome opportunities for families and friends to get together and play, whether on a random occasion or in a weekly league. Through these efforts, the mall can build on its current successes and begin to serve the area's unmet entertainment needs.

Incorporate regular programming. To continue to activate the area and attract Newark residents and visitors from the surrounding area, the site would benefit from regular and diverse programming, as suggested by the mall owners and the City. Whether hosted by the City, in partnership with the developer, or hosted by community organizations, the mall property needs to show increased activity. Indoor and outdoor, programmable, and playful community area and open space can bring people in to visit with friends, sit and relax, play all day, or enjoy refreshments. From smaller, frequent events and everyday visits to larger weekly or monthly gatherings, fairs, or festivals, this space should be programmed for the community on a very regular basis. Should the City wish to host or staff some of these early activations directly, it may need to consider how the capacities of existing departments, such as the Recreation & Community Services Department, might be able to staff and support the contemplated programming.

A small stage and play area can provide welcome structure to the space and serve as a platform for meeting and gathering. The importance of this outdoor space, as a catalyst and feeder for the evolving property revitalization, cannot be understated. This gathering space should be co-located with the smaller, more community- and food-driven retailers. It should also be positioned in a manner that allows it to flex into a larger venue for bigger community events.

The site opportunities recommended by the panel are consistent with the City's stated vision and provide an opportunity for much-needed placemaking at the mall. Further development at the site, led by the City and the private sector, featuring housing and other commercial opportunities, will continue to add vibrancy to this mixed-use development.

A New Vision and Placemaking

The panel's vision for NewPark Mall centered around the opportunity to create a new Tri-City destination that elevates and celebrates the ethnic diversity and authentic community identity of Newark. As a place where the community gathers for food, dance, music, and cultural events, the site could be richly activated by events well before it is further activated by additional tenants.

Broadly, the panel considered opportunities for the site within Newpark Mall Road (the "inner ring") and for parcels outside Newpark Mall Road (the "outer ring").

- The inner ring is generally viewed by the panel as appropriate for retail, entertainment, placemaking, and community-focused uses. While high-density housing with structured parking may be appropriate over the longer term should market conditions improve, in the near term, the inner ring and Shirley Sisk Grove Park should be the primary focus of activation investments.
- The outer ring will likely accommodate a different set of additional uses. Lower-density residential, including townhomes, may be feasible in the outer ring, as structured parking would not be an added cost. Other uses, such as advanced manufacturing, medical and other office, and hotels, would also be appropriate in the outer ring as they generate daytime and evening activity that can further support the inner ring's programming.

GOOGLE EARTH / ULI PANEL

The panel re-envisioned the mall property into areas for events, gathering, and early connectivity. It also noted areas where additional development opportunities might be explored.

Near-term Opportunities

The panel's vision builds on the foundation of existing assets at the site and the opportunity to strengthen connections into the neighborhood beyond. Specifically, the panel identified the opportunity to better connect the movie theater, the restaurants, surrounding hotels, and the Park. This connection point would bring visitors into the heart of the site while creating a new spine of activity that could become the new location for gathering space, additional food vendors, and community pop-up activations.

Create a spine of activity. In addition to serving as an important connective path from the park to the mall, this new spine of activity could be intermittently lined with temporary pop-up uses using minimal investment. This corridor of temporary activities might be defined by more permanent retail structures in the future. With a small amount of retail—roughly 60,000 square feet—this pathway could yield a fun and exciting destination, framing events and activities in the spaces in between, much like an upscale Eastern Market concept. Given that this new spine of activity would be situated on a surface parking lot, lighting, seating, and landscaping will be critical elements, helping to create an experience where visitors feel safe, can sit and linger, and find the experience inviting. Shade will also be important, particularly in the spaces for food vendors, allowing patrons to sit and enjoy their food before moving on to the next experience. The idea is not just to create a Tri-City destination, but to also engage the Newark community as customers and as retailers.

Paint on pavement can create pathways for pedestrians and spaces where they are safely prioritized.

Connect to Shirley Sisk Grove Park. The panel also sees tremendous potential in creating stronger connections to the adjacent Shirley Sisk Grove Park. As a public park, the City can control its built environment and manage improvements. The Park is also already playing host to music and cultural events, which means that the community already views the Park as a place for events and gatherings. Enhancing the Park and physically connecting it to the mall site through pedestrian infrastructure would strengthen the role of the Park while creating a more welcoming and safer environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others moving around the area outside of a vehicle. The City should consider making these catalyst investments now.

Invite the community in and give them something to do, see, eat, and enjoy. The central organizing element of the mall property redevelopment should be a programmable, outdoor community space. This new space could be activated by events even before it can be activated by retail tenants. The outdoor space should be designed to accommodate smaller, frequent gatherings—such as community markets, cultural festivals, food events, and live music—and to flex into a larger venue for signature community events. It should feel like a front porch: welcoming, flexible, and genuinely reflective of the community it serves.

Remain flexible. Above all, the City is encouraged to remain flexible and nimble in its efforts. The panel cannot predict exactly how the NewPark Mall site will evolve. Not enough is known about the future state of the retail market, the anchor tenants, or the residential development pipeline to dictate the final configuration of uses. It is also not yet possible to know whether the mall's revitalization might eventually require demolition or rehabilitation of some of its existing structures. Flexibility is key, and the panel recommends regulating changes to allow that flexibility as outlined below.

Opportunities on the Horizon

Given the broader goals the City has for the site and the unknowns represented by one ore more property owners who are not actively pursuing redevelopment, the panel noted that several development goals will remain outside the City's control for the foreseeable future.

Consider identifying opportunity sites. On the map on the prior page, the panel noted several areas that might provide interesting future opportunities for a reactivated mall property.

- **Outer parcels.** Parcels and spaces outside the ring of NewPark Mall Road may offer opportunities for complementary uses, including residential, office, or light manufacturing.
- **Second floor of the mall.** There are also a number of medical and other office-related, recreational, and educational uses that could work well on the mall's

second floor. These uses could make good use of the mall's central location, the site's easy access, and do not rely on the same foot traffic as traditional retailers. These uses could include business services for small business owners and entrepreneurs, such as legal support, accounting, marketing, and more. These service providers could make great use of space that is affordable enough for non-chain operators and could help incubate the kind of tenancy the community wants and needs. The second floor could also work well for a comedy club or other entertainment use, neither of which requires quite the visibility of other, more traditional retailers who might find more success with a first-floor presence.

- **Sears building.** The former Sears building holds interesting potential. In its current state and with minimal remodeling in the interim, the building might make great sense for a recreational use like a climbing gym, laser tag operator, or indoor playscape. Eventually, when economically feasible, it may make sense to demolish the structure and replace it with a residential use.

Let the market decide. While the panel recommends the City consider and certainly be open to these uses and more at the site, it is critical that the market remains the driver of the eventual uses. That openness will require amendments to the City's regulating framework that are less prescriptive and more adaptive to market demand. In the near term, the City can tee up ideas and encourage pop-ups and pilot projects, but it will be up to the property owners and potential tenants to determine the final mix within this new retail and entertainment destination.

MARCUS WESTBURY

With some creative partitions and furniture staging, these vacant storefronts in Melbourne, Australia, transform into vibrant shops.

Lofty empty box stores could transform into recreational spaces like this climbing gym.

Foster Success: Implementation and Tools

While the redevelopment or revitalization of the NewPark Mall is ultimately a private sector decision and development project, the City has an important role in fostering success at the site.

The foundation for success at the mall property begins with a focus on people—attracting visitors to the site and sparking inviting experiences. Success also hinges on proactive implementation that supports positive near-term successes.

The mall represents a compelling and unique opportunity to build community, but the "old approach" will not work, as it is driven by processes and regulations that no longer align with today's market forces. Instead, elected officials, staff, administration, and the community need a different approach to development that leads with flexibility, out-of-the-box thinking, open-mindedness, openness to risk, and being bold. For Newark's public sector, it will also require leadership.

The private sector will respond to the right conditions, both in the market and at the site, and the City can take deliberate action in three areas—regulatory reform, public investment, and near-term activation—to provide the foundation for viable new development.

Land Use Framework

The existing regulatory framework—including the City's general plan, the NewPark Place Specific Plan, and the municipal code—was developed in a different market environment and reflects assumptions that are no longer viable. The Specific Plan mandates prescriptive buildings, uses, and infrastructure in locations that are not viable; unfortunately, the plan current prohibits the exact flexibility the City and the mall owners need to create the successes sought by all stakeholders. Accordingly, the panel recommends setting aside the Specific Plan and reverting to the City's existing master plan framework to guide but not mandate specific development and activities at the mall property.

Retain certain key elements of the Specific Plan in the new master plan. Specifically, the panel had the following recommendations for retaining certain Specific Plan elements that will continue to support development success at the site in a new master plan:

- **Conceptual plans.** Retain the City's conceptual plans that reflect the City's long-term aspirations for the site.
- **Visionary policies.** Retain the City's visionary policies that help set the vision for future development.
- **Caps on allowable development.** The caps on allowable commercial and residential development should be retained in the master plan and Specific Plan, to preserve the City's ability to manage scale at the site and avoid extensive environmental reviews.
- **Allowable uses.** The uses that are generally allowed within and along the outer edges of NewPark Mall Road can also continue to serve as helpful guardrails, as amended as recommended by the panel. Additional consideration should be given to entertainment and outdoor recreational uses, which may require an update to the zoning code.

Allow additional housing. Specifically, the City is encouraged to allow new housing development outside the ring road with a minimum density of 20 dwelling units per acre. This will provide adequate development flexibility without mandating the structured parking, which generally renders new residential development in the area financially infeasible.

Remove prescriptive elements that limit development feasibility. The panel identified the following Specific Plan elements that are likely hindering private-sector movement at the site and should, as such, be eliminated.

- **Land use plan.** The City's land use plan (Figure 2-4) is too prescriptive for the current market environment.
- **Density plan.** Similarly, the density plan (Figure 2-6) is also too prescriptive for new development.
- **Street and mobility plans.** The site's current street and mobility plans are very detailed and likely are creating barriers for new development or private-sector improvements and investment.
- **Infrastructure plans.** The specific plan leans on the private developer for

infrastructure improvements that may need to be funded and managed by the City in early stages and as a means to catalyze private investment.

- **Prescriptive design guidelines.** Overly specific design guidelines that specify expensive materials limit the pool of potential developers while, at the same time, inhibiting potential innovative, market-driven uses already permitted by the general plan.

Consider enabling amendments. Finally, the panel noted two items that the City is encouraged to consider amending going forward.

- **Incorporate the panel's recommended policies.** In addition to converting the Specific Plan to a guiding master plan, the City is encouraged to amend the general plan where needed to incorporate many of the policies described in this report, providing a durable policy foundation for future development and success.
- **Update the zoning code.** The City's zoning permits many of the uses recommended by the panel. However, the City should annually review and perhaps eliminate a few of the more industrial uses at the mall site that may not be compatible with the current and future uses envisioned for the mall. The panel also recommends amending its zoning code to allow for entertainment and outdoor recreational uses.

Public Investment

If the City wants to create a special environment at NewPark Mall, it will need to proactively invest in key placemaking elements to make that environment possible. Presently, under the specific plan, these public realm improvements—including community benefits and affordable housing—are the developer's responsibility. These improvements, combined with the challenges of the current economic and capital markets environment, are pushing proje cts beyond what the market can support.

The panel recommends that the City consider the following public investments as catalytic tools:

- Infrastructure improvements, including utilities, streetscaping, lighting, and sidewalks.
- Park enhancements and a pedestrian connection to the mall, as discussed in this report.
- Commuter parking opportunities that serve both the mall property and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Signage and wayfinding improvements that establish a sense of arrival and identity.

These investments should be viewed not as subsidies but as the City's contribution to a development partnership—the kind of public-sector commitment that reduces private-sector risk and helps to unlock the private-sector investments the City wishes to catalyze.

Near-Term Opportunities

The most important near-term action the City can take is to demonstrate its interest in the future success of the entire mall property. The private sector watches for signals that a jurisdiction is serious about change, and the following near-term actions can be implemented without significant capital expenditure or regulatory updates:

- Pop-up retail events and community activations at the site, organized around food, music, and cultural programming that reflects Newark's diverse residential demographics.
- Basic public realm improvements along pedestrian routes to and through the site—including lighting, crosswalks, sidewalks, and seating—to increase safety at the site, improve walkability, and encourage more pedestrian access.
- Outreach to public sector or institutional partners—such as a community college, library branch, or health clinic—that might serve as additional anchor tenants or programming partners.
- Increased programming at Shirley Sisk Grove Park, in coordination with mall tenants, to generate regular event-driven traffic at the mall.

Key Findings and Next Steps

The challenges presented by the NewPark Mall are not insurmountable. Indeed, positive movement is already underway, and the mall is gaining new ground. While the new tenants locating at the mall may not fit the traditional mall retail tenant model, it is clear that the "traditional" model is no longer viable in today's changing retail landscape.

While it is too soon to determine the future or permanent use of the in-line shopping areas, the building itself has value, and preserving its optionality is more important right now than committing to a specific configuration. In the meantime, new tenants filtering into the mall have the potential to create a new destination for Newark.

While placemaking is critical for the future success of the businesses across the site, event programming and facade improvements alone will not transform the property. The underlying regulatory framework must be flexible enough to support a range of durable investments and align with current and foreseeable market realities.

In the near term, the City will need to lead and not wait for the private sector to act. Private-sector investments will be encouraged by visible municipal actions, including a more flexible land-use framework and planned infrastructure improvements to be implemented over time with a proposed phasing plan. With the City's guidance, assistance, and early investment, additional momentum can be gained, and residents and visitors from surrounding communities may once again be regularly drawn to the site.

Recommended Next Steps

The panel recommends the City take the following next steps:

- Evaluate lessons from comparable mall redevelopments—including Bayfair Mall in San Leandro and Stonestown Mall in San Francisco—for applicable strategies and cautionary lessons.
- Invest in public realm improvements—pedestrian infrastructure, Shirley Sisk Grove enhancements, and signage—to enhance safety and signal municipal commitment to the site's future.
- Provide financial and/or other support to increase programming at the mall property and the Park to ensure events and activities are taking place regularly in the area.
- Begin the process of converting the specific plan to a more flexible master plan framework, eliminating the prescriptive, limiting elements, while retaining desirable visionary policies.
- Pursue incremental placemaking that includes Shirley Sisk Grove Park, and engage stakeholders in a co-programming and connectivity strategy.
- Identify and initiate outreach to public sector or institutional partners who may be interested in moving to or locating satellite branches in the mall.
- Complete amendments to the regulatory documents governing the site to allow for greater flexibility.
- Broadcast successes locally, regionally, and within the development community to attract additional investment interest and reinforce NewPark Mall's identity as a community destination.
- Maintain fidelity to the community vision, as it is also the mall's differentiation strategy. This celebration of ethnic diversity, serving local businesses, and prioritizing community experience over national brand tenancy can become NewPark Mall's competitive advantages and should not be compromised in pursuit of short-term deal velocity.

This site carries history as a regional retail center. It has been a gathering place, and it represents a significant part of Newark's identity. Yet as markets and retail formats evolve, cities must also adapt.

The panel's recommendations are designed to create the conditions where placemaking is durable, not temporary—where investment is aligned, not speculative—and where momentum is intentional, not accidental.

Ultimately, this is a moment of direction. The City can focus on the past, attempting to preserve what once was, or it can foster development and investment that is forward looking. The site has potential. The community has vision. The leadership has demonstrated its ability to adapt to change. The panel believes Newark is positioned to build what is next, and with the right framework and approach, NewPark Mall can become something genuinely new: a place that reflects Newark today, serving what the community needs now, and creating the foundation for what is yet to come.

About the Panel

Rick Dishnica

TAP Co-Chair
President
Dishnica Company, LLC

The Dishnica Company was formed in 1999 to pursue Mr. Dishnica's individual investment goals, to develop infill housing, both for-sale and for-rent in the Bay Area, and to provide real estate consulting services.

Rick was an Executive Vice President and the Chief Operating Officer of American Apartment Communities, a privately held REIT, from 1994 through March 31, 1999 with responsibility for all apartment operations, development, and rehabilitation. Since 1982, he was also an Executive Vice President of The Klingbeil Company, predecessor to American Apartment Communities, with operating responsibilities for the Western United States. During the period 1989-1993, he also served as the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer of K/W Realty Group, a Klingbeil-affiliated company in the for-sale housing business.

Prior to joining The Klingbeil Company in 1981, he had worked in the real estate and banking industry. Before his business career, he served as an officer in the U.S. Navy. Mr. Dishnica received his MBA from the University of Southern California in 1974 and his BS degree from Ohio State University in 1968. Rick is currently on the Global Board and on its Governance Committee and a Global Trustee of The Urban Land Institute. He has served as a member of the ULI Governance and Nominating Committee, was Vice Chair for Councils, was a member of the ULI Operating Committee, and was on the Advisory Board of the ULI Rose Center for Public Leadership. He has served as chair on various Advisory Services Panels and Task Forces as well as being a mentor to Young Leaders. He is currently a member of the ULI Multi-Family Residential Council (Blue) and was its Past Chair. He is currently a Board member and past Chair of the ULI San Francisco District Council and on its Governance Committee.

Danielle Surdin O'Leary

TAP Co-Chair
Vice President of Municipal Engagement & Economic Development
Prologis

Danielle Surdin-O'Leary leads strategic engagement across the West Region with local governments and economic development organizations, advancing Prologis's business objectives while building durable partnerships that support community and economic growth. Her work centers on aligning municipal priorities with real estate investment strategies to deliver sustainable development and long-term value.

Danielle joined Prologis in 2022 after a 20-year career in the public sector. She has held executive-level economic development leadership roles with the Bay Area cities of Saratoga, Los Gatos, Santa Rosa, and San Rafael, and previously served as Deputy Marin County Executive, where she directed countywide economic development, land-use planning, and public-private partnership initiatives. Known for her ability to translate public policy into practical outcomes, Danielle brings deep expertise in municipal engagement, strategic communications, and stakeholder alignment. She has a proven record of working with city, county, and state leaders to move complex initiatives forward—balancing community priorities with private-sector investment to achieve results.

Cecily Barclay

Partner

Perkins Coie

Cecily Barclay is a land use and real estate attorney who focuses her practice on complex land use entitlement and development projects across Northern California. For decades, Cecily has assisted clients in securing federal, state and local agency approvals for development, resulting in the entitlement and construction of master planned communities, life science and biotech campuses, redeveloped regional retail and commercial centers, redeveloped military bases, hotels, resorts, entertainment centers and thousands of residences. In addition to processing the necessary general plan, specific plan, rezoning, map and use permit approvals, Cecily has significant experience counseling clients on initiative and referenda projects.

Cecily is a lead author of Curtin's California Land Use & Planning Law (40th Ed. 2026), a book which summarizes the major provisions of California's land use and planning laws. She also co-authors Development by Agreement (2nd Ed. 2024), an ABA publication providing a national analysis of laws and practices concerning various forms of development agreements. Cecily regularly teaches and writes on topics addressing land use and local government law.

Cecily graduated from U.C. Berkeley and Harvard Law School, and has received numerous awards and recognitions for her legal work, including a Chambers USA ranking as one of "America's Leading Lawyers" for real estate for the past 15 years.

Dena Belzer

President

Strategic Economics

Dena Belzer is the founder and President of Strategic Economics. Ms. Belzer has over 30 years of experience working on urban economic issues ranging in scale from regional growth strategies to individual development projects. Ms. Belzer's specializations include economic development, affordable housing strategies, and infrastructure funding and financing. Her work often includes blending multiple data sources to prepare multidimensional economic analyses. Ms. Belzer was a founding member of the Center for Transit Oriented Development and has worked as a practice area technical assistance expert for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Ms. Belzer held the Cornish Chair in Regional Economics at the University of California, Berkeley 2019-2021.

Alan Chamorro

Executive VP

Lowe

Alan oversees investment, development and Public Private Partnership activities in Northern California and the Denver Metro area. He is also a member of Lowe's Executive Committee and is a shareholder of the Company. Over his career, Alan has completed over $1B of transactions. He has entitled, acquired, developed, and renovated residential, office, retail, multifamily, and mixed-use assets, and has negotiated several million square feet of leases. Alan specializes in complex entitlements and complicated projects and joint ventures.

Prior to Lowe, Alan was a Senior Vice President and General Manager for Grosvenor, a privately held global investment and development firm, and was in charge of its San Francisco office and the Northern California development team. Alan is on the Executive Committee (Emeritus) for the SF Chapter of Urban Land Institute (ULI), and is a member of NAIOP, and ICSC. Alan and his family enjoy annual outings to the Lair of the Golden Bear,a camp for Cal Berkeley alumni.

Christine Firstenberg

President
MERR

Ms. Firstenberg brings extensive experience in California entitlement processes, land-use analysis, development consulting, and retail real estate brokerage. Her background spans representation of small, regional, and national tenants; participation in entitlement efforts for multiple ground-up shopping center developments; and leadership in private-sector and industry organizations. She has significant expertise in master planning, merchandising strategies, and retailer expansion planning and execution.

She currently serves as President of Metrovation Retail (MERR), a commercial real estate brokerage company and as Principal of Retail Real Estate Resources (RRER), a development consulting firm.

Ms. Firstenberg co-founded Metrovation Brokerage in 2002 (re-branding the company in 2018) with industry leader Merritt Sher and Mark Seiler, focusing on developing strategic expansion plans for major anchor tenants. Prior to founding Metrovation, she spent nine years with San Francisco–based Terranomics Retail Services, consistently concentrating on retail real estate. In 2018, she launched Retail Real Estate Resources (consulting) to help public agencies navigate the complexities of retail operations, retail development, and tenant needs.

Ms. Firstenberg has been deeply involved in Bay Area real estate leadership. She served as Vice President and Board Member of the Contra Costa Council for 18 years, has been a speaker at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business, and has been a committee member of the Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel for 10 years. In the retail industry, she has held leadership roles with the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) for 24 years, serving as Government Affairs Chair, Program Committee Chair, panel speaker, committee member, and founder and Chair of the Alliance/P3/Community Advancement program in Northern California

Leslie Parks

Director of Economic Development
Good City Company

Leslie Parks has 30+ years' experience as a practitioner and consultant in the fields of economic development, redevelopment, and workforce development. She has developed and administered a diverse range of programs that include business retention and expansion initiatives, downtown and retail revitalization, community benefits, sales/use tax revenue assessment, workforce training and job placement, affordable housing, and public/private partnerships.

As a consultant, Leslie assisted with economic development strategies and marketing plans for the cities of Honolulu, Anchorage, Santa Rosa San Francisco, and the counties of Solano County, Merced County, and San Mateo County. Leslie also served as Director of Downtown and Industrial Development for the San Jose Redevelopment Agency, Director of Economic Development for the City of San Jose, and Director of Community Services for the City of San Carlos. She has served as the director of two Workforce Investment Boards. Leslie's recent experience includes implementation of economic development programs for the cities of Foster City, Redwood City, and Campbell where she focused on retail attraction and downtown business support. She joined Good City Company as Economic Development Director supporting several cities on the Peninsula and in Silicon Valley. Specific programs and projects include development of small business and retail action plans, economic development strategies, marketing plans, retail strategies, and economic development program and staffing audits.

Yann Taylor

Principal Architect
Field Paoli

An expert in retail and mixed-use developments from concept design to drawings and construction, Yann focuses on how the public realm influences our behavior: how can the buildings and places we design create lively and energetic environments that promote social equity and allow for positive social interactions between friends as well as strangers? Born and raised in England to a culturally French family helped him learn to step outside of the status quo. His interests include exploring how food can transform our urban environments, and how the insights of neuroscience and behavioral economics are leading to a deeper awareness of user experience and consumer behavior, one which is changing the way we design the public realm.