

STAFF REPORT



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DATE: December 9, 2025

TO: Justin Hess, City Manager

FROM: Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director
VIA: Fred Ramirez, Assistant Community Development Director
Scott Plambaeck, Planning Manager
Daniel Villa, Principal Planner
BY: Vanessa Quiroz, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Introduction of an Ordinance Amending the Burbank Municipal Code, Title 10, Chapter 1 (Zoning) to Establish School–Trade/Vocational as a New Use Along With Related Regulations, Allow the Use in M-1 (Limited Industrial) and M-2 (General Industrial) Zones, and Clarify the Permissibility of the Use in Other Non-Residential Zones

RECOMMENDATION

Introduce AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BURBANK AMENDING TITLE 10, CHAPTER 1 (ZONING) OF THE BURBANK MUNICIPAL CODE TO ESTABLISH SCHOOL–TRADE/VOCATIONAL AS A NEW USE ALONG WITH RELATED REGULATIONS, ALLOW THE USE IN M-1 (LIMITED INDUSTRIAL) AND M-2 (GENERAL INDUSTRIAL) ZONES, AND CLARIFY THE PERMISSIBILITY OF THE USE IN OTHER NON-RESIDENTIAL ZONES. (PROJECT NO. 25-0004932, ZONE TEXT AMENDMENT) (Attachment 1).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City proposes the following Ordinance (Ordinance) to amend the Burbank Municipal Code (BMC), Title 10, Chapter 1, Zoning under a Zone Text Amendment (ZTA) to establish trade/vocational schools as a new use differentiated from the BMC's existing "School" use. The amendments include: 1) adding the use to the Zoning Use List table to permit the use in the industrial zones and clarifying the permissibility of the new use in the City's non-residential zones, 2) modifying the definitions, and 3) providing a new parking standard requirement for the use. On October 13, 2025, at their regularly

scheduled meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed and voted 3-0, with two absences, to recommend approval of the ZTA and the associated Ordinance to the City Council.

BACKGROUND

The Community Development Department Planning Division has received prior inquiries about operating a trade/vocational school in the M-1 (Limited Industrial) and M-2 (General Industrial) industrial zones of the City where the “Schools–Public or Private” use classification is currently prohibited. The inquiries identify several benefits of allowing trade/vocational schools in the industrial zones, including proximity to future employers that can facilitate internships, job placement, and networking opportunities.

Furthermore, the City’s 2024-2028 Economic Development Strategic Plan (Attachment 3) analyzed emerging economic trends and created an activation plan, identifying Higher Education¹, which includes trade/vocational schools, as one of four emerging industries to retain and attract in the City. Moreover, the City’s industrial zones were identified as having ideal parcels and characteristics to accommodate trade/vocational type tenants.

Existing Permissibility of Trade/Vocational Schools and Proposed Amendment

Although the BMC includes a definition for “Trade School” in § 10-1-203, this use is not currently listed in the Zoning Use List (§ 10-1-502). At the same time, the BMC’s existing definition of “School” broadly includes vocational and professional schools, indicating that trade schools are arguably included under the “School – Public or Private” use. This definition groups all school types (e.g., K through 12 schools, pre-schools, childcare, universities, colleges and vocational schools) into a single use that is prohibited in the City’s industrial zones. However, trade and vocational schools differ from traditional educational institutions. These programs provide hands-on, skills-based training such as welding, automotive repair, machining, and equipment maintenance that is more compatible with industrial areas.

To address this, staff recommends amending the BMC to clearly identify trade/vocational schools as a distinct use allowing it in industrial zones through a discretionary review process. This would ensure compatibility with surrounding industrial operations while preserving existing allowances in non-residential zones where such uses are currently permitted by-right or through an Administrative Use Permit (AUP). Separating trade/vocational schools as their own use will provide clearer regulatory guidance, align

¹ City of Burbank 2024-2028 Economic Development Strategic Plan, “The Higher Education Sector includes on-ground and online universities, colleges, and other institutions of higher learning such as satellite campuses that provide education, training, and internships. While higher education has significant value as a sector in an economically vibrant and attractive City, its most profound impact is its contribution to fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, research, and development in other sectors, per the World Bank. With the advent of micro-credentials, the focus on continuous or “just-in-time” skill building rather than traditional four-year degrees, the expansion of international education (including how that relates to Foreign Direct Investments (FDI)), and preparing the workforce for the future, this sector has greater value to economic development than its own growth projection.”

with the City's 2024–2028 Economic Development Strategic Plan, and support opportunities for partnerships between schools and nearby employers located in the M-1 and M-2 zones.

Therefore, staff recommends amending Chapter 1, Title 10 (Zoning Regulations) of the BMC through a ZTA, to clearly establish and conditionally permit trade/vocational schools in the City's M-1 and M-2 industrial zones with related regulations, while updating definitions and continuing to allow the use in existing non-residential zones.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Zone Text Amendment (ZTA)

To establish and permit trade/vocational schools as a use, staff proposes the following amendments to Title 10, Chapter 1 (Zoning) of the BMC (Attachment 4):

- 1) Amend BMC § 10-1-203 (Definitions) to remove “TRADE SCHOOL,” change the existing definition of “SCHOOL” to remove reference to vocational and professional schools and establish a new definition for “SCHOOL–TRADE/VOCATIONAL.”**

The BMC currently includes a definition for “Trade School”, but the use is not separately identified in the Zoning Use List (§ 10-1-502). At the same time, the existing definition of “School” includes vocational and professional schools, creating confusion on how trade and vocational schools are classified and regulated. The proposed Ordinance removes the existing “Trade School” definition, revises the existing “School” definition, and creates a new definition for “School–Trade/ Vocational” to clearly distinguish these uses and provide regulatory clarity. The amendments are proposed to read as follows:

- ***(Revision to existing definition at BMC § 10-1-203)*** School: Means an establishment or facility used as an institution of learning ~~for minors~~, whether public or private. This can include institutions that, ~~which~~ offer instruction in those courses of study required by the State Education Code, ~~or~~ which ~~is~~ ~~are~~ maintained pursuant to ~~the~~ standards set by the State Board of Education. This definition includes a child day care facility, kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, ~~colleges, universities and~~ ~~or~~ any special institution of learning under the jurisdiction of the State ~~Board Department~~ of Education ~~and a Vocational or a professional institution~~. This definition also includes child day care facilities utilized at a school location which are licensed by the State Department of Social Services and the City of Burbank. This definition does not include School- Trade/Vocational.

- **(Deletion of existing definition under BMC § 10-1-203)** ~~Trade School: Means an institution offering instruction in a trade or vocation that is not of an academic or professional nature.~~
- **(New category and definition added to BMC § 10-1-203)** **School-Trade/Vocational:** Means an establishment or facility used as an institution of learning that provides specialized training and education in various trades and technical fields that may provide a degree in conjunction with certification. These schools focus on practical, hands-on skills that prepare students for specific careers, such as plumbing, electrical, automotive repair, culinary arts, healthcare, and more.

2) Amend the Zoning Use List in BMC § 10-1-502 (Uses in All Zones (except Residential Zones)) under sub-heading Recreation, Education, and Assembly to add “School–Trade/ Vocational” as a new use subject to a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) in M-1 (Limited Industrial) and M-2 (General Industrial) zones and maintain existing allowances in other non-residential zones by-right or subject to an AUP, based on the zone or its proximity to residential zones.

- The ZTA creates a new use called “Schools–Trade/Vocational” for schools that provide specialized skill training separate from existing “Schools-Public or Private” that includes childcare, pre-schools, K-12 schools, universities, and colleges and it clarifies the permissibility of the new use in all non-residential zones.

3) Amend BMC § 10-1-1408 (Spaces Required) to establish a parking standard for the “SCHOOL–TRADE/VOCATIONAL.”

This ensures that the BMC includes a clear and objective parking standard for the new “School–Trade/Vocational” use, which reads as follows:

- 1 space per student. Reductions to this parking rate may be granted, subject to the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process as specified in BMC § 10-1-1934 et. seq. or the applicable discretionary review application required for the use. The applicant shall provide a parking study prepared by a qualified professional to justify the reduced parking rate. Updates to the previously approved parking reductions may be granted under a CUP/AUP Minor Modification, subject to the consideration of a parking study prepared by a qualified professional to justify the reduced parking rate.

Findings for Approval of a Zone Text Amendment

Pursuant to the BMC and California Government Code § 65860, adding a use to the list of permitted uses requires the City Council to first make required findings under BMC §

10-1-1991 (Requirements for Adding a Use) and meet the objectives and policies specified in the *Burbank2035* General Plan (Attachment 1). The proposed ZTA meets the findings in the BMC and is compatible with the *Burbank2035* General Plan, the Burbank 2024-2028 Economic Development Strategic Plan, and the Council's 2025-2026 Economic Development Goals.

Planning Commission Recommendation

The Planning Commission considered the proposed ZTA and associated Ordinance during their noticed meeting on October 13, 2025, following a presentation by staff. No public comments were received prior to or at the public hearing. During deliberation for the item, the Commissioners discussed: the proposed permissibility of the use and whether allowance through an AUP could be more appropriate as they are currently required for schools in certain zones or when located within 150 feet of residential zones; whether the proposed parking standard is appropriate; and whether trade/vocational schools are considered sensitive uses (Attachment 5). After consideration and discussion, the Planning Commission voted 3-0, with two absences, to adopt the Resolution recommending that Council approve the proposed ZTA and associated Ordinance with an amendment for a typographical revision to the title (Attachment 5).

Subsequent Updates and Clarifications to the ZTA and Associated Ordinance

Following Planning Commission's deliberation, the ZTA and associated Ordinance were updated to: 1) Clarify that trade/vocational schools will be allowed in several other non-residential zones so that existing permissibility is carried over for the new use, and 2) Remove an existing "Trade School" definition, which is no longer necessary since the new definition "School-Trade/Vocational" will encompass it. These revisions have been included in the exhibits of the proposed Ordinance (Attachment 1) and the Redlined Ordinance, which depicts the changes that were made since the Planning Commission's approval (Attachment 2).

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Staff provided public notice of the City Council's public hearing to consider the Ordinance in a newspaper of general circulation in the City on November 15, 2025, in accordance with BMC § 10-1-1994. Additional notifications were distributed via the City Calendar and the Planning Division website. Planning Division staff also reached out to the three existing licensed trade/vocational schools to discuss these proposed amendments, and all schools expressed support.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed Ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15061(b)(3), the common-sense exemption. CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the

activity in question could cause a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. No unusual circumstances exist that would preclude the use of this exemption. The proposed amendments are an administrative activity of the City, with no potential significant environmental effect on existing development. Furthermore, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines § 15378, this proposed Ordinance is not considered a “project” subject to the requirements of CEQA because the ZTA, on its own, has no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and instead involves administrative updates to the BMC. The proposed Ordinance does not effectuate any approval of the use on a particular site and future requests would be evaluated individually for compliance with applicable zoning regulations and CEQA.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed Ordinance will have no direct impact to the City’s General Fund as the processing of the amendment is within the 2025-26 Planning Division Budget.

CONCLUSION

The proposed Ordinance will establish “School-Trade/Vocational” as a new use that is distinct from the BMC’s existing “School-Public or Private” use, which is currently prohibited in industrial zones. In addition, it clarifies the permissibility of the use within non-residential zones, updates related definitions and introduces a parking standard tailored to trade and vocational schools. The proposed Ordinance is consistent with the required BMC findings for a new use that will support surrounding uses and can create synergy between schools and existing skill-based industries seeking trained workers for in-demand positions. The proposed Ordinance also advances the goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the *Burbank2035* General Plan, the Burbank 2024-2028 Economic Development Strategic Plan, and City Council’s Economic Development Goals and Strategies by diversifying the City’s economic base and strengthening opportunities to retain and attract new businesses in emerging industries that bolster the community’s long-term economic success.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Proposed Ordinance

Attachment 2 - Redlined Ordinance

Attachment 3 - Burbank 2024-2028 Economic Development Strategic Plan

Attachment 4 - Summary of Proposed Amendments

Attachment 5 - Staff Report, Resolution, and Meeting Minutes for the October 13, 2025,
Planning Commission Meeting

Correspondences