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Tech Boom

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High quality of life, lower rents, and a brilliant workforce are luring start-ups to the east bay. Meet the fearless pioneers who are staking their claim.

East Bay Draw

The Commute

A reverse commute, and a rise in commute programs, including all-electric city carshare.



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Revamping the Business Parks

While trailblazing companies see the East Bay as an appealing place to be, the area's traditional job hubs, business parks, can still be a tough sell. The isolated, car-oriented islands of office space that first lured corporations to the burbs are less appealing to today's young workforce, who want urban-style amenities, including proximity to public transit and restaurants. So the parks are adapting.

Walnut Creek is working with the 1970s-era Shadelands Business Park to develop 25 acres zoned for retail shops and restaurants. The idea, says Walnut Creek Economic Development Manager Ron Gerber, is to create a commercial center within Shadelands—which currently has a 25 percent vacancy rate—to make it more attractive to new companies, particularly those doing groundbreaking research and development.

Pleasanton's 32-year-old Hacienda Business Park is home to roughly 550 companies with more than 17,000 employees. The park's owners are continually working to create what General Manager James Paxson calls "more of a suburban center." That includes adding 1,250 housing units.

The owners are also working with the city of Pleasanton to develop commute programs, the latest of which is a City CarShare program using all-electric vehicles.

"That type of dynamism that we're building into the project is something that's very desirable to the type of more contemporary workforce our businesses are trying to attract," says Paxson.

Similar things are happening at Bishop Ranch in San Ramon. Initiatives there include biweekly farmers markets and food truck gatherings, movie nights, and a free bike share program. Management also has big plans to redevelop the 2-million-square-foot property recently purchased from AT&T into a Google-style campus complete with on-site amenities. ([See profile here.](#))

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