



Brisbane: Small Town neighboring the Big City

Brisbane is a throwback to the days of small towns and close communities with one major difference: the big city is just around the bend.

BY MEGAN LYNCH

Ron Davis walks into Madhouse Coffee and is instantly bombarded by hellos from his regular customers. They take the time to come up, shake his hand and talk. Ron, wearing blue jeans and a collared shirt, fits right in and seems to embody the town's persona.

Davis, owner of Madhouse Coffee and Realtor, has lived in Brisbane for 23 years. A San Francisco native, Davis left his home in search of a family-oriented town in the early eighties. Once he set foot in Brisbane, Davis never looked back. He and his wife instantly fell in love with the small-town atmosphere and close community—moreover, they were attracted to its proximity to San Francisco. "Brisbane is like a city neighborhood outside of the City," said Davis. "There is a real sense of community that is not burdened by heavy politics."

As Ken McCall makes his way to the garden behind Madhouse, Davis calls him over and asks about his favorite part of Brisbane. McCall's answer reflects similar passion for his hometown, "The people here know each other and help take care of each other. When one person needs help, the rest of the town chips in."

Residents enjoy the best of two worlds: the comfort of a small town and the cultural, social and economic opportunities of a big city.

Brisbane is a hidden secret nestled at the base of San Bruno Mountain. Enveloped on three sides by the Mountain and the San Francisco Bay on the fourth, the City is surrounded by open space. It is closer to downtown San Francisco than many San Francisco neighborhoods and is easily accessible via the 101 and 280 highways. Brisbane is also minutes from SFO airport.

Its location at the base of San Bruno Mountain helps keep Brisbane secluded not only from the hustle and bustle of nearby cities but also from the fog. The Mountain

forms a barrier that keeps out the fog that plagues the Northern Peninsula. "Fog is against the law (except for three days out of the year)," jokes Realtor Linda Dettmer. "Just kidding, but I do like to tell my clients that we have a fog ordinance prohibiting the fog from changing our gorgeous sunny weather for 362 days a year. Our weather is what makes the



PHOTOS BY ANSON CHAN, THE EXAMINER

hot summer evenings perfect for our Concerts in the Park series."

Dettmer is a member of SAMCAR (the San Mateo County Association of Realtors). SAMCAR is a professional trade organization that organizes Realtors on the Peninsula. The Association provides members with opportunities for community involvement and access to a network of professional resources and business contacts. Realtors must abide by a strict code of ethics and participate in additional training above and beyond state real estate license requirements.

Brisbane's small-town feel makes it a great place to raise a family. The neighborhoods are safe and everyone knows one another so

it's common to see children playing outside. Families also feel part of a bigger community thanks to the many traditions, one of which is the year-round display of huge wooden stars lit by Christmas lights. "We are proud of our home and our traditions. Our stars come on at Christmastime during our annual festival of lights. Frank Walch was responsible for

no lack of activities in Brisbane. "We have a teen center, a senior center, a swimming pool, walking trails, a dog park, a skate board park, a marina, a library, youth sports, scouting, dance classes, our own Santa, Eagles and Lions, the MOB (mother's of Brisbane), painted fireplugs, world class entertainment at the Mission Blue Center and Bingo on Wednesday nights at the Community Center," said Dettmer.

The City government works with its citizens and responds to their needs. As a result, residents regularly participate in their government. "We are active people," said resident Wayne Stenabaugh, owner of Pacific Bay Realty Services. "We participate in the government and help to plan the city."

Another element of Brisbane's success is its business community. The City is home to international and national-scale businesses like Hitachi, Bebe and Walmart.com. These businesses contribute to the town's growing economy and help sustain it.

Brisbane is a small town that feels like it exists in another time. Dettmer summed it up perfectly, "I love Brisbane. It is a place you would not expect to exist in this day and age. Its people, and their passion for the lifestyle we enjoy make this so. Some say it's the small town atmosphere; others just call it quality of life."

Information in this series of community profiles is provided by the San Mateo County Association of REALTORS® (SAMCAR). Megan Lynch is a freelance journalist based in San Francisco. Please send questions, suggestions or feedback by e-mail to samcar@samcar.org or call 650.696.8200.

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The Top Five Reasons to Live in Brisbane

BY MEGAN LYNCH

★ SMALL-TOWN FEEL

Looking for a small town to call home? Brisbane is the place to be. Residents belong to a close-knit community with caring neighbors and an involved government. People wave when they see each other on the street and stop to chat at the local coffee house. The City truly cares about its citizens and when it comes to elections, forget partisan politics—Brisbane always comes first.

★ OPEN SPACE

Brisbane is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. The City is surrounded on three sides by San Bruno Mountain—a beautiful open space, which presents plenty of opportunities for hiking, biking and enjoying the outdoors.

The San Francisco Bay borders Brisbane to the East, offering residents the opportunity to explore the water via boat or by walking along the waterfront trail.

★ LESS FOG

Fog is a major consideration for many Peninsula homebuyers—it can turn a dream home into a gloomy nightmare. Brisbane is shielded from foggy weather by San Bruno Mountain and enjoys considerably better weather than many cities on the Northern half of the Peninsula. This translates into sunnier weather and warmer temperatures year-round.

★ SECLUSION

Brisbane is a well-kept secret that is almost invisible to the outsider. The key to its seclusion: it's location. The City is tucked away at the base of San Bruno Mountain. This ideal location makes Brisbane feel miles away from anything else. Additionally, Brisbane is surrounded by open space on all sides—so although neighboring cities are just minutes away, they feel miles away.

★ PROXIMITY TO SAN FRANCISCO

Brisbane is closer to downtown San Francisco than many San Francisco neighborhoods. This unbeatable location is a major highlight of living in Brisbane. And with easy access to both the 101 and 280, getting there is a breeze. Its proximity to San Francisco gives Brisbane residents the opportunity to take advantage of the culture and diversity of a big city while living in a small town.

