



Places we call home

Showcasing | **Burlingame**

Where History Meets Community

With a rich history, booming downtown and caring neighbors, Burlingame is the place to be.

BY MEGAN LYNCH

Out-of-towners who drive through Burlingame on El Camino Real may be surprised by the community spirit reflected on this short stretch: Seven churches and other community buildings line the street. Visitors who stop to take a closer look will find a community rich in history and culture.

"There are many cities in San Mateo County that blend together, but Burlingame is kind of unique with its own character and history," says Realtor John Gieseke, President-elect of the San Mateo County Association of Realtors (SAMCAR). "It is a community which is involved in its schools and maintaining its historic neighborhoods, and thrives on its business community."

Burlingame sits on the Bay 15 minutes south of San Francisco, nestled between San Mateo and Millbrae. The earliest documented European contact with the area was made by the Juan Bautista de Anza expedition in 1776. From that year, the Spanish missionaries developed the San Mateo / Burlingame area as the farm to support their mission in San Francisco.

The town site is named after the Honorable Anson Burlingame, the United States Minister to China who was appointed by President Abraham Lincoln. Visiting the area, he chose a 1,100 acres villa site to retire to following his mission to China.

Today, with a population of approximately 28,000, Burlingame has maintained its small town charm in a cosmopolitan area. Among the myriad of cookie-cutter towns in the area, it stands out as a family-oriented neighborhood with an active City Council.

"The number one attraction in Burlingame is our family and religious communities," says Burlingame Mayor Joe Galligan. He points out to the large number of churches -- from all faiths ranging from Greek Orthodox to Christianity -- and community activities the city has to offer its residents. Over the holidays, for example, everyone comes out to City Hall to meet Santa and be with friends and family. "There are great seasonal attractions," agrees Burlingame Realtor Sue Walsh, who is also a board director of SAMCAR, the local trade asso-



ciation of the real estate industry on the Peninsula. "People come out to the park during the summer, watch high school football in the fall and during the winter, everyone comes out to Burlingame Avenue to welcome the holiday season."

One benefit of having a close-knit community is the active participation of its citizens and a hands-on city council. "I like to think of Burlingame as a large company with 28,000 shareholders who pick five board directors to run the City," said Mayor Galligan. "We truly are a service-oriented business. 75% of our budget goes to people--from our librarians to street cleaners."

Most recently, the city has worked to rezone its bay front area to make room for more hotels and businesses. Although Burlingame already has a booming business market, new companies on the bay front will equal more economic growth. "Burlingame has a vibrant downtown, a successful hotel row on our bay front and a strong commercial district," said Mayor Galligan.

Local business is booming, especially in the downtown Burlingame district. Featuring a number of boutiques and restaurants, the area has become a favorite shopping and hangout spot for locals and visitors of all ages. Families are also drawn to the City's rich history and architecture.

The Burlingame

Train Station, for example, was built by members of the exclusive Burlingame Country Club and opened for service on October 10, 1894. It was the first permanent building of the "Mission-Revival" style, inspired by California's Spanish missions.

Another attraction is Burlingame's accessibility. "Burlingame has a prime location on the Peninsula," said Walsh. "It is close and easily accessible from San Francisco, the East Bay via the San Mateo Bridge, San Francisco Airport, San Jose and the coast." Additionally, it is near the Highway 101 and prides itself on its accessibility thanks to the BART and Caltrain railway system.

Unlike some areas on the Bay, Burlingame is also lucky to have very nice temperate weather year round. It does not get as hot or as foggy as in other cities. One drawback of living in such a warm, centrally located community, though, are the expensive home prices.

During the first half of 2005, the median home price was \$1,225,000, according to the San Mateo County Association of Realtors. Despite the sky-high home prices, rentals are surprisingly moderate--which means there is also more socioeconomic diversity than in other neighboring towns.

"Home prices are good economic indicators of the socioeconomic makeup of the population. In Burlingame we have some of the highest home prices," said Gieseke. "But at the same time we have a large percentage of rental housing, which means greater diversity."

Burlingame is more than just a cookie-cutter town. Its history, downtown area and diversity set it apart from other communities, as visitors quickly discover. Not surprisingly, many of them stay and become residents -- feeling right at home in a city that has something to offer for everyone.

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.

The Top Five Reasons to Live in Burlingame

BY MEGAN LYNCH

1. STRONG FAMILY-ORIENTED COMMUNITY.

Burlingame is renowned for its strong community. Its community spirit shows on a myriad of levels, from holiday celebrations to school fundraising events. Washington Park and other community areas are meticulously well kept and frequented by residents. Its citizens are also very involved in local government affairs--sometimes city council meetings run until way after midnight.

2. TOP-NOTCH SCHOOLS.

Burlingame has a top rated school district from K through 12th grade. Students consistently score in the top percentile on achievement tests. Academics aside, Burlingame schools are also known for their strong and well-supported music and physical education programs. Thanks to its caring community, schools are well-endowed.

3. LOCATION ON THE PENINSULA.

Nestled between San Mateo and Millbrae right off the 101, Burlingame has a primo-location on the Peninsula. Residents can enjoy the buzzing city life in San Francisco, which is just 15 minutes away, or the up-and-coming scene in San Jose. Thanks to its proximity to the coast and its accessibility via Caltrain and BART, recreational opportunities abound. The city's location also means great mild weather year-round.

4. HISTORY.

Once part of a Spanish land grant given by Governor Pio Rico to his secretary, Cayetano Arena; then the location of a San Francisco banker's vision of a "sacrosanct colony"; and later, the site of the first country club in California, Burlingame has a unique history. The City prides itself on its heritage and works hard to maintain the character.

5. DOWNTOWN BURLINGAME.

Spending a weekend in Burlingame is easy thanks to the allure and charm of its downtown district, which is home to an attractive shopping district and an array of restaurants. Downtown Burlingame is a social draw--kids and parents alike spend time there to meet friends, eat ice cream and check out shops.

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 at samcar@samcar.org.



PHOTOS BY ANSON CHAN, THE EXAMINER

The Examiner.

Maryann Bologna 415.359.2652

Anson Chan 415.359.2822