

Places we call home

Showcasing | So. San Francisco

So. San Francisco: Close-knit community

A diverse community with great opportunities for working near home

BY MEGAN LYNCH

The Bay Area is notorious for its extreme housing prices and high cost of living. Although some people tough out these conditions, others have moved their families away from their jobs in search of a home they can afford. The cost of this move: some professionals commute up to two or three hours to work each morning from places as far away as Stockton and Fairfield.

One city in the Bay Area prides itself of providing its residents with more opportunities to live/work near home: South San Francisco. Although it is still an expensive place to live, housing prices in this City beat those in other Peninsula cities.

Opportunities for working near home abound thanks to a growing biotech and tech market. "We have a strong workforce with good opportunities to live and work. This means less commuting for our residents," said South San Francisco Realtor John Penna.

For those that do have to commute to work, the City tries to make it an easier journey. "People should be stress-free when they get to work. We do whatever we can to make the commute more comfortable," said South San Francisco Vice-Mayor Rich Garbarino. This comes in the form of bettering public transportation and planning for a future ferry system that will ease the commute for many.

South San Francisco is located at the northern tip of San Mateo County, in the valley formed by the San Bruno Mountains to the north and Coast Mountains to the west. An unbeatable location—thanks to its close proximity to San Francisco, which is merely minutes away.

Easily distinguished from afar by the words "City of Industry", which are etched

onto the San Bruno Mountains, South San Francisco has evolved from a city rooted in manufacturing to a center of technology with a strong community.

"South San Francisco is the birthplace of biotech," said Garbarino. "Genentech was founded here and has attracted other biotech companies to the area. We have switched from an industrial to a technological city."

The City has also maintained a low turnover rate for residents, many of whom stay in South San Francisco for years. This creates strong neighborhoods with lasting ties. "We are a well-established community. When people move here, they stay here," said Penna. "This makes South San Francisco a good place to raise a family. Parents can work near home and get involved in their community."

South San Francisco's close-knit community boasts a dedicated and efficient City government. The elected City Council has a reputation for being both accessible and approachable, "We can always be reached," said Vice Mayor Garbarino. "We are easy to talk to and to get to know. Citizens can always come up and talk to us."

"It is a well-run city, providing efficient services," said Penna. "Our paramedic team, for example, rates above other cities in the County and in California." City amenities include recreational activities and programs including soccer, baseball, and bike/running paths for outdoor enthusiasts.

The City's schools rate somewhere in the middle, but offer students a unique learning opportunity thanks to the diversity of students. Students represent a myriad of cultures and races, allowing them to learn about other cultures from their friends. "Our demo-



PHOTO BY ANSON CHAN, THE EXAMINER

graphics are changing—we have more cultural diversity, which is a positive shift," said Garbarino. "We have a real diverse ethnic makeup."

Are there any drawbacks to living in South San Francisco? Maybe its reputation as the "City of Industry," some say—reflected by the hillside tagline reminiscent of its industrial past.

Critics have suggested removing the "City of Industry" lettering from the hillside. But as a registered historic landmark, the sign is here to stay. Homebuyers, though, are advised to disregard the old label when looking for a place to put down their roots, said Realtor Penna. "The name on the hill doesn't describe us anymore."

Penna is a member of the San Mateo County Association of Realtors (SAMCAR)—the professional trade organization that represents the Realtors in San Mateo County. SAMCAR members must abide by a strict Code of Ethics of the National Association of Realtors (NAR), America's largest trade association.

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 South San Francisco

BY MEGAN LYNCH

1. GOOD WORK/LIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Once the City of Industry, now the City of Biotech and High-tech companies, South San Francisco has always been a great place in which to live and work. Residents of this city have less of a commute each morning thanks to the myriad of employment opportunities in their hometown. This translates into more family time and closer-knit communities for South San Franciscans.

2. WELL-RUN CITY AND AMENITIES

South San Francisco prides itself on its well-managed City government and amenities. One example is its paramedic service, the only in San Mateo County run by the City itself. The benefits of this system? Patients have to wait less time for an ambulance to arrive and receive care from the same paramedics from start to finish. They also pay 10% less in fees.

3. AVAILABLE CITY COUNCIL

Unlike many larger cities, South San Francisco makes sure its City Council is always available to its citizens. Vice-Mayor Rich Gar-



PHOTO BY ANSON CHAN, THE EXAMINER

barino boasts that he is always available to listen to people's concerns, "We are available to all citizens, anytime and anyplace." As a whole, the Council responds to its constituents quickly and makes sure to return phone calls and emails in a timely manner.

4. PROXIMITY TO SAN FRANCISCO

For those who enjoy the quieter life of a suburban neighborhood, but crave the culture and activities available in the City, South San Francisco is the perfect place to live. Residents

enjoy a close community, in a suburban setting while living within minutes of the nightlife and culture of San Francisco. Easy access to public transportation makes getting to the City easy and quick.

5. DIVERSITY

As one of the most diverse communities on the Peninsula, South San Franciscans have a unique opportunity to experience life in a multi-cultural setting. According to the City, more than 50% of South San Francisco's population is of a minority race. This melting pot allows residents to learn about other cultures from their friends and neighbors.

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](mailto:samcar@samcar.org).

The Examiner.

Maryann Bologna 415.359.2652
Anson Chan 415.359.2822