

# SF Neighborhoods

## Body



## *Deciding Where to Live*

### **Choosing a Neighborhood in San Francisco**

San Francisco is a city of unique neighborhoods. The boundaries of some of the areas are fuzzy, but a reasonable representation is given below.

Neighborhoods popular among residents include: Inner Sunset, Outer Sunset, Cole Valley, Noe Valley, and Inner Richmond. The city of San Francisco is small enough that you could live anywhere and have reasonably easy access to all of the necessary hospitals. A good account of various areas is available at the San Francisco Neighborhood Guide. As a general rule, the "fog line" passes between the Inner Sunset and Cole Valley. If you live in the Inner Sunset or anywhere to the west, you will spend much of your summer in a cloud of fog. If you live in Cole Valley or anywhere to the east, you stand a better chance of seeing the sun (and you pay for this extra light).

### **Neighborhood Guide**

Like most great cities, SF is organized into fairly discrete neighborhoods that each have their own character and ambiance. As you all begin to meet and get to know people here, the question of where you live will be the most asked.

While it is very nice to have one hospital that you can walk to, (especially Moffitt where there is no alternative parking) a car or public transit will get you where you need to go. So pick your neighborhood based on the places that you find and the scene you are looking for. See our section on finding an apartment for some tips.

**INNER SUNSET:** Located between Golden Gate Park to the north and Vicente Street to the south, from Stanyan Boulevard to the east and 19th Avenue to the west, the Inner Sunset is just three miles from the Pacific Ocean and smack in the middle of the fog zone. This is a popular locale for UCSF folk, so expect to see your med students, and occasionally attendings wandering around Irving too. This area is a little more hip than the outer area, and has a small-town like feel. Between Irving and 9th avenue you can find great Asian food, pubs, book stores, produce markets, and just enough young people out at night to make you feel like you are in a city. The major drawback for some is the fog. Some days the sun doesn't come out at all and it makes things damper and cooler. Some of us don't mind because it's very convenient.

#### **Pros:**

1. Walking to Moffitt
2. N-Judah to take you to other neighborhoods, Caltrain, Bart?
3. Good restaurants
4. Good markets with fresh produce
5. Reasonable parking
6. Walking distance to the park.

#### **Cons:**

1. FOG
2. FOG

### 3. FOG

4. It's hard to motivate to go anywhere else, you get stuck at your favorite neighborhood places.
5. You may feel like Moffitt watches you wherever you go.

**OUTER SUNSET:** A lot of people end up here; it's cheap, easy to find a place, and the N-Judah can take you straight to Moffitt or downtown. It has proximity to the beach, but it is quieter than the Inner Sunset. If the beach is the reason you moved out here: surfer/avid beach walker/stalker of strange naked people who like to lay out when it's warm, then the sunset might be for you. Think 42nd to 48th streets.

**Pros:**

1. Quiet and residential
2. Easy parking (don't underestimate that)
3. More for your money
4. Close to the VA
5. Can take the N-Judah to Moffitt

**Cons:**

1. Isolated from most of the other neighborhoods
2. Foggy from mid-June to September
3. No access to fun neighborhood bars
4. Long walk to grocery store, morning coffee?

**COLE VALLEY:** The slightly sunnier sliver of real estate is definitely a coveted living spot, but places can be hard to find. Bordered on the west by Stanyan Street and the Sutro Forest, on the south by Tank Hill and on the east by Clayton Street, this area definitely has a community feeling to it. Residents are largely families and young professionals, but it's very down to earth. There are dozens of restaurants and cafes, (less bars) to keep you occupied.

**Pros:**

1. The big hill to the west blocks some of the fog and clouds, leaving a lot of sunshine for Cole Valley.
2. Comfortable and cozy, there's always a new brunch spot
3. Parking is reasonably good.
4. The main strip on Cole street has several great restaurants, including one of the best brunch spots (Zazie is Yelp's #1 for brunch in SF), great sushi place (Grandeho's Kamekyo), InoVino a great wine bar in the city, not to mention the Boulange - a great bakery/cafe.
5. You are also a quick walk down to the Haight, and not far from the entrance of Golden Gate Park.
6. The N-Judah has several Cole Valley stops, so it's easy to get to other parts of the city.

**Cons:**

1. Apartment rent is on the higher side (median \$1900-2600/month for a 1BR) but good deals can be found.

**HAIGHT-ASHBURY:** While it's lost some of its hippie feel over the years, fragments of that flower-power, incense-burning, acid-dropping, tie-dye-wearing, peace-and-love-vibing era can still be seen on the streets mingling in with the new scene of expensive trendy boutiques and new dance clubs and bars. Nevertheless, it's a fun vibrant area, great for people watching and an active night life.

**Pros:**

1. Longish almost walking distance to Moffitt
2. Close to Golden Gate Park

3. Many close, cheap, good restaurants
4. Some good bars
5. Walking distance to the N train
6. Lots of buses/cabs on Haight Street
7. Smack dab in the center of the city

**Cons:**

1. Dirtier than other neighborhoods
2. Quite a few vagrants/pan handlers/teenagers selling pot
3. Parking is about the worst in the city, so you have to rent a space
4. Can be loud at times because people come to party

**THE MISSION:** Traditionally the Latino quarter of SF, the Mission is home to artists and families, and offers a lively nightlife scene. The wide streets are always bustling with the profusion of taquerias, produce markets, Salvadoran bakeries, *salon de bellezas* (beauty salons), auto-repair shops and check-cashing centers, and the large warehouse type selling everything from wedding dresses to soccer balls. It's loud, it's vibrant, but especially has come to house some of the best restaurants and bars. The weather is fantastic, and on sunny weekends people from all parts of the city flock to Dolores Park to bask in the sunshine on the side of the hill. The more west of Mission you get (Dolores and Valencia) the quieter and more gentrified it gets, and continues to be the city's hipster paradise and increasingly the neighborhood of choice for young tech professionals seeking great coffee and easy access to BART and the freeway to Silicon Valley.

**Pros:**

1. Food- A giant burrito dinner with all the fixin's and agua fresca (fresh fruit drink) for 4 bucks... on every corner! Good to excellent Senegalese, Thai, Californian, Italian, South American, Mexican, food with reasonable prices surround you.
2. Sun- This is the sunniest, warmest part of San Francisco.
3. Fun- Amazing grassroots arts events take place alongside some of the best design houses around. Your neighbors will range from funky artist hipsters in lofts to old school Mexican families in Victorians. There are dance, yoga, pilates studios... muralistas... warehouses full of sculpture-making, performance art, and independent theater productions. Mission and Valencia are full of bars and clubs. Tons of salsa clubs.
4. Bulk shopping: most of the city's large stores are down around 9th St: Trader Joe's, Costco, Rainbow Grocers, Safeway, Bed Bath & Beyond, Ross Dress for Less, Nordstrom Rack, Office Depot, Best Buy are all a short drive away.
5. Easy getaway: you're a hop away from the Bay Bridge to go to East Bay and 101 South to get to South Bay.

**Cons:**

1. Cost- Places are expensive here. Median price for 1 bedroom apartments was nearing \$2900/month as of 2014. If you hope to buy, plan to bid 20% over the asking price...with the usual single family homes over \$800K.
2. Noise- if near bars, clubs, tons of young people with disposable time, and SFGH. Lots of boozing, loud music, and ambulance sirens can get annoying when you're trying to take a nap post-call or sleep well for Saturday call.
3. Not as clean: The streets here are wider/noisier/dirtier. It definitely has a city feel. Not a place to live if you want a quiet neighborhood to come home and relax in.
4. You can pretty much forget about finding parking, you better have a garage (or a mini!).

**THE MARINA:** If you're looking for the hip, trendy, young hub of the beautiful, fit and fashion conscious then you've found your scene. The singles scene is great with fabulous

restaurants and numerous bars and clubs. Union is arguably the best street in the city to window-shop the hours away on a sunny Saturday afternoon. Marina green is just a couple blocks down with a great view of the water and gorgeous boats. If you're looking for diversity or an edgy or progressive feel, the Marina probably isn't your neighborhood -- unless you count Fort Mason, which hosts a bounty of cultural museums and nonprofits. Overall, this is the land of SUVs, chic fashion and killer spa treatments, and the neighborhood most edgy San Franciscans love to hate.

**Pros:**

1. Stunningly beautiful (people and buildings)
2. 3 parks within walking distance including the presidio, best running in the city and safe to run alone at night
3. Extremely easy access to Marin- the best local hiking and cycling
4. Next to one of the best windsurfing spots in the world
5. Gets sunnier here before the rest of the city
6. Extensive collection of local bars and restaurants
7. A very young/active (rich) neighborhood
8. A sense of distance from work- you cannot see the hospital from here

**Cons:**

1. Expensive living: food, rent, clothing all runs a little pricier here- though perhaps more affordable if one is willing to spend our new housing supplement on housing.
2. Your classmates will tease you for living in a yuppie neighborhood
3. You must drive to/park at all three hospitals
4. You may feel pressured to spend your salary on clothes and shoes so you can look as cool as your neighbors.

**PACIFIC HEIGHTS:** With multi-million dollar mansions and views of the Bay to match, Pacific Heights is an easy way to escape from the urban chaos below. For the most part, the activity of choice is shopping, with an emphasis on costly women's clothing and luxury bath and kitchen items. Fillmore street offers a variety of fancy boutiques, peppered with cozy sidewalk café's and relaxed, hip bars. It's too high up to get hit by fog, so the weather is generally quite pleasant, and Lafayette Park is a gorgeous place to spend an afternoon watching the small dogs and their sleek owners. You can find deals here among the amazing single family homes, but expect to pay a bit more.

**Pros:**

1. Beautiful up-scale neighborhood
2. Safe
3. Easy parking
4. Sunny
5. Quiet
6. Close to Fillmore Street shops and bars
7. Close to Mt. Zion (there is a shuttle from Mt. Zion to Parnassus)
8. About 12 minute drive to all three hospitals

**Cons:**

1. Yuppie
2. Not a great place in the city for food
3. You have to drive/park at all three hospitals (unless you shuttle it to Parnassus)
4. Less diverse than other parts of the city

**THE CASTRO:** Widely known as the gay capital of the world, this neighborhood abounds with cafes, shops and nightlife. Attracting all types, the streets have a cohesive, community type

feel with plenty of quaint café's, used bookstores, small specialty deli's, shopping, and good food. The price of living rose dramatically here with the dot-com boom, and still remains high.

**Pros:**

1. Lots of yummy restaurants, good shops, some good music venues.
2. Easy access to public transportation, very centrally located
3. You can bike to both UC and SFGH easily
4. SUNNY (on average at least 10 degrees warmer than the Sunset).
5. Dolores park is there to catch some rays on those rare days off.
6. Fun neighborhood regardless of sexual orientation

**Cons:**

1. Parking can be a pain
2. A little more pricey.

**MISSION BAY:** A newish neighborhood that is building up and becoming a housing option for UCSF professionals due to the new complex down there. Great weather is a plus, it's extremely remote. You will be close to the Giants home at AT&T Park. While there are some good brunch places down there (Sally's, Axis) and some good bars (the Ramp, Mission Rock, and a great Red Sox bar -Connecticut Yankee) the area still feels kind of isolated. Plus you'll be living amongst UCSF PhD students and faculty, and you may feel like you can never get away.

**Pros:**

1. Cheap housing in a great sunny area
2. Shuttles to Moffit and SFGH
3. Great access to Baker gym, the new Mission Bay gym that is a clean, new and supersized alternative to Moffitt gym.

**Cons:**

1. Far from nearly everything and everyone, except for SFGH

**ALAMO SQUARE:** The four block radius around Alamo square park that borders lower Haight and Hayes Valley holds as it's claim to fame, the site of the Full House intro clip. A stunning view from the top of the park, this is a quiet, often forgotten part of the city. It's generally sunny, and the neighborhood is home to mostly 20 and 30-ish renters, who can be seen walking their dogs in the park at all hours. It's edges do border the projects, so stick to the area west of Fillmore. Though the neighborhood has a smattering of bars and restaurants, it's main attraction is it's easy distance from Hayes Valley and Lower Haight.

**Pros:**

1. The park is great and if you have a dog this is a huge dog area
2. Geographically dead-center in San Francisco and you can ride your bike to work at all 3 locations (and Mt Zion)without difficulty or big hills in the way.
3. It is very close to (i.e. walking distance from) Fillmore Street, Haight Street, and GG Park
4. Good running and biking since the pan handle of Golden Gate Park is 2 blocks away
5. The views are great (the 'Painted Ladies' made famous by postcards and the TV show, Full House, border Alamo Square to the east and you would be surprised by the number of tour buses that show up on a Saturday morning).
6. You can walk down 4 blocks to the N at church and Duboce (or Noe and Duboce) to catch the N-Judah, and get your work-out walking up the hill back home.

**Cons:**

1. Classically considered a 'tweener area - west of Hayes Valley, north of Haight Street, east of the pan handle and south of Pac Heights.
2. Some rough around the edges housing projects as you head down the hill to the north or

east (towards Pac Heights or Hayes Valley)

**HAYES VALLEY:** With a great upscale neighborhood feel, Hayes Valley is a favorite spot for Sunday morning wanderers. It has some of the best coffee shops in the city (Blue Bottle), and some of the most expensive boutiques. Though it's mainly confined to Hayes street, the shops and restaurants have started to spread out to neighboring streets. Though it's still shows some of it's seedy past around the edges, SoHo-style funky art galleries, high-end interior-decorating shops, top-notch restaurants and hip nightspots now predominate.

**Pros:**

1. Great little spots to eat here (Belgian fries, Indian, Italian, German, and upscale notables: Paul K, Citizen Cake, Absinthe)
2. A perfect halfway point between Moffitt and the General.
3. Some good deals to be had if you look west (between Hayes Valley and the Panhandle).

**Cons:**

1. The cheaper area can feel less safe than Hayes Valley proper at night, so be sure to check it out before you sign the lease.

**RICHMOND:** Although consistently underappreciated, this neighborhood is rich with cultural diversity, great noodle houses and bargain shopping. The Inner Richmond has become a bustling multicultural soup with cute stucco houses, grand mansions, easy access to the Presidio, a plethora of inexpensive eateries and a good variety of shops . The Richmond lacks the hype of the Mission, and the fog does roll in a little earlier in the afternoon, but on its main dining and shopping drag, Clement Street, you'll find great Burmese, Thai, Chinese, Vietnamese, Burmese (Burma Superstar) and Korean restaurants, Chinese bakeries that sell *siu mai* (steamed meat dumplings), BBQ pork buns and other dim sum for under a dollar and produce markets that offer bitter melon, several kinds of *choy* (greens) or 10 lemons for a dollar. Also check out Green Apple Books.

**Pros:**

1. Affordable
2. Close-ish to Mt. Zion, and very close to the VA
3. Tons of ethnic restaurants (Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian) and a few top French restaurants as well (Clementine and Chapeau).
4. Good muni bus access
5. Spacious
6. Mellow, the outer Richmond has good beach access.
7. Lots of parks
8. Easy northbay/Sierras access
9. Parking is easy in outer Richmond, but much harder east of 25th street.
10. UCSF shuttle that picks people up on Arguello and Turk.
- 11.

**Cons:**

1. The place is a little more suburban
2. Foggy in the summer, more so as you get closer to the beach.
3. Not much nightlife
4. Not the best neighborhood for a single, out-on-the-town kind of intern
5. Only great if you have a car (only buses, no rail).

**NOE VALLEY:** Boasts a more settled, post-dot-com, organic eating, stroller pushing kind of crowd. It's sunny warm, and there are great restaurants, coffee shops and health food stores on every corner. It's very quiet, and extremely safe feeling. Since the dot.com boom began

waning, housing prices have dipped slightly and there has been some turnover on the main shopping drag, but it remains a prosperous, shopper-friendly neighborhood whose bistros, coffee shops, and bookstores are always lively, and where parking is always at a premium.

**Pros:**

1. One of the two sunniest (and warmest) neighborhoods in the city (other is the Mission).
2. Nice street of shops and restaurants (24th) that is not as pricey/trendy as Union St or Chestnut St but more upscale than Haight or the Mission.
3. Good family environment but definitely residents are not all families.
4. Very safe.
5. 10 minute drive to SFGH and UCSF, 20 minutes to VA.

**Cons:**

1. Parking near 24th is very scarce but do-able.

**SOMA:** South of Market is a huge district, sprawling from the Embarcadero to Eleventh Street, between Market and Townsend. The neighborhood is a patchwork of warehouses, swanky nightspots, residential hotels, art spaces, loft apartments, furniture showrooms and the tenacious internet companies that survived the first tech market collapse. Although a lot of building has gone on in recent years, it is still not densely developed. You can walk several desolate blocks before suddenly finding a hopping restaurant. Some of the wide, more deserted streets can feel less, safe, but that's just because you don't know that there is actually an underground night club right around the corner. Some of the city's major cultural attractions are here including SF MoMA (new building under construction), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Museum of the African Diaspora, The Contemporary Jewish Museum, the Lamplighters Music Theatre, and Theatre Rhinoceros. It is also the location of the Folsom Street Fair, the annual kink-and-bondage celebration attended by hundreds of thousands that, whether or not it's your cup of tea, makes you marvel at just how NOT like other cities San Francisco is. The northeast portion of SOMA is a forest of cranes as the city builds the 21st Century counterpart to the 20th Century Financial District just across Market Street.

**Pros:**

1. Cheap large lofty-type apartments
2. Close to museums, large warehouse type stores
3. Great new clubs in that area

**Cons:**

1. More than a bit out of the way
2. Not close to any of the hospitals except Mission Bay- quite a drive to the VA.

**BERNAL HEIGHTS:** The neighborhood is a bastion of artists and progressives, popular with the lesbian community and attractive to young families looking for a first home and quiet streets. It is also a mecca for dog owners, thanks to a high concentration of single-family houses with yards and the nearby haven of Bernal Park. The main shopping strip of Cortland Avenue is populated by small markets, cafés, fruit stands and barber shops, and the residential streets are a cluster of diminutive bungalows and community gardens. However, Bernal Heights bears the influence of city sophistication, with trendy boutiques and innovative restaurants scattered among its homely storefronts. Newcomers may also be startled by the mostly unheralded views that unfold at their feet, especially on the northern side of the hill.

**Pros:**

1. Small town feel, but only a 10-15 drive to the center of the city
2. More for your money
3. Parking is easy.

**Cons:**

1. Public transportation is practically non-existent
2. Most people have never been to where you live.
3. Cab fares into the main city are expensive and cabs are hard to get. Plus no one really wants to come party in your neighborhood

### **Parking relatively easy**

Outer Sunset  
Portrero Hill  
Noe Valley (not on 24th)

### **Parking doable**

Alamo Square  
Inner Sunset  
Richmond

### **Parking impossible without a garage spot**

Mission  
Marina  
Castro

### *Finding a Home/Apartment*

PadMapper <sup>[1]</sup> is a helpful listing aggregator that pulls information from Craigslist and other rental websites. You can make a profile and view a map of listings meeting your criteria. It is also helpful to simply check Craigslist directly.

UCSF Campus Life Services has a Housing Office where you can find links for on campus and off campus rentals, as well as more tips for finding housing and transportation. At one of the sites (Places4Students) landlords post specifically looking for UCSF students or residents.

San Francisco housing prices rival New York, and unfortunately demand exceeds supply. Listings turn over quickly, so it would be very difficult to apartment hunt remotely. If you want to have the best chance, come prepared. It can be helpful to have a renter's resume, which would include a small blurb about yourself, employment/income, rental history, and references (rental, employer, and personal). Landlords often also ask for or will check a credit score, so it can be helpful to have a credit report on hand. Finally, bring your check book and be prepared to leave a deposit if you find a place you like. As with anything else, the residents are happy to offer advice.

Contact Us  
UCSF Main Site

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**Source URL:** <https://neuroresidency.ucsf.edu/sf/neighborhoods>

### **Links**

[1] <http://www.padmapper.com/>