

Quality of life great in arboreal splendor of Belmont

Peninsula city most blessed with trees 'quiet, friendly community,' boasts kick-the-habit ordinance

By Larry Rosen
Examiner Staff Writer

Got a yen to light up? Don't do it in Belmont. The leafy mid-Peninsula town of 26,000 recently passed the country's strictest anti-smoking ordinance. Sometime in January, 2009, it will become illegal to smoke inside multi-unit buildings — including condominiums and townhouses. It will become illegal to smoke in workplaces, in city parks and on hiking trails later this month.

Fortunately, there are more people hiking than smoking in Belmont. Blessed with one of the best microclimates in the Bay Area, Belmont includes ample park space and protected areas such as Water Dog Lake, within the John S. Brooks open space.

"We have an excellent quality of life," says Christine Wozniak, Belmont planning commissioner and candidate for City Council.

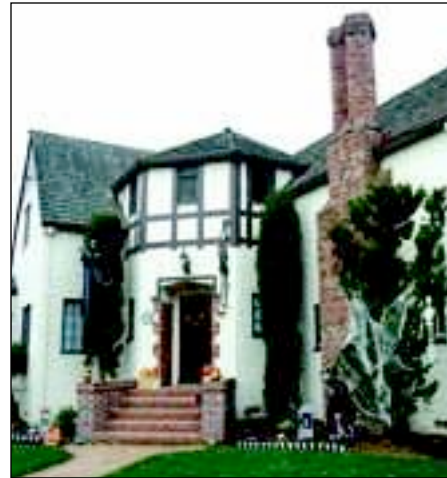
"And people work to maintain this."

It is easy to see the results. "We have high levels of parental involvement in the schools, a very active open-space preservation community, support for the arts, and an active youth sports community," Wozniak says.

Apparently, you don't live in Belmont; you live Belmont.

"It's a quiet, friendly community," says Sri Talasila, owner of the Namaste Market in Ralston Square. Talasila opened his store, which carries a wide variety of Indian foods, two years ago. He chose Belmont for its central location and its proximity to Oracle, whose enormous, futuristic headquarters loom over downtown. "There are a lot of Indians in San Mateo county, and I would say that 50 percent of the ones who come in here work at Oracle," Talasila says.

The real estate market in Belmont, Wozniak says, is stable. "My sources tell me that sales take an average of a month." According to househunt.com, the average price of a home sold in Belmont during 2007 (through September) is \$950,070, up from a 2006 average of \$900,322. The volume of sales is down, however. Fifty-four properties changed hands from July through September 2007, compared



The average price of a home sold in Belmont during 2007 (through September) is \$950,070, up from a 2006 average of \$900,322. — All: Mike Kozmin/Special to The Examiner

to 97 for the same period in 2006.

Most of these homes sit among groves of trees. Of all Peninsula towns, Belmont is most blessed with trees. Trees are everywhere. They surround Notre Dame de Namur University, climb the height of Belmont's hills and give its neighborhoods a grace that defines the town.

As for the smoking ban, Wozniak says it's

something Belmont residents are taking in stride. "In general, the residents I've spoken with support the ordinance," she says. "There is some concern that apartment residents will be singled out by other residents as a way to victimize fellow tenants. But the way the ordinance is written — it includes a long 'conflict resolution process' — I don't see that this will be a problem."

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