

PORTOLA READING CENTER COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION

Portola Reading Center is located at 3424 San Bruno Avenue, Between Silver Avenue and Silliman Street, a residential and commercial area that lies west of Highway 101, bordered by McLauren Park, Daly City and Highway 280. A city fire station and a realty office separates the two-story building that house the library. The library is on the street level with two rental apartments above it. The first known location of the Portola library was at San Bruno Avenue and Bacon Street which is now a pizza parlor. In 1941, the library moved to the current location that use to be a grocery store owned by a five-generation Muscat family. This area is the Supervisorial District 8. Portola district was populated during the 1880's by largely Eastern European immigrants, particularly Jewish and Irish. Wealthy residents along with the Italians moved south out of the Mission District and migrated into the Portola area which was developed after the 1906 earthquake and fire. Blue collar families inhabited the Portola area with a high registration of Democrats. Portola is in a valley situated between two hills which filled quickly with homes during the 1920's and 1930's. In 1952, the Bayshore Freeway was constructed. An increasing number of Latino and Filipino families quickly moved into the area and opened small businesses. Working, middle-class residents with median incomes live near the southern border of the neighborhood. Homes are made of stucco and wood frames. Lawns are well kept, an indication of social stability. The community is located close to the Cow Palace and Geneva Towers, the largest public housing project in the City. A silent neighborhood which rarely makes the news. Homes are about 50 years old and are usually single-family, row on row, built over one-and-two-car garages. Some apartments along with duplexes and fourplexes. Appearances range from dilapidated and in need of repair to nearly mint condition. Many in-law units, portions of homes that have been remodeled as rental units, bring additional income to homeowners. Most of the homes were built before World War II. People had money to build at that period, especially after the Hunters' Point Shipyard opened nearby which provided more jobs.

The 12-block stretch extending from Silver Avenue to Paul Avenue provided neighborhood residents with a variety of shopping outlets, 8 Asians restaurants, 3 banks, 4 realty offices, 4 "mom and pop" grocery stores, 4 bars, 3 churches, a major supermarket, fire station, private schools, churches, daycare facilities, mental health services, dental and professional offices, Boys and Girls Club, Karate School, shoe shops, a children's apparel shop, and more than 70 small businesses make this neighborhood unique.

The Pastry Express, a San Francisco landmark, is famous for its delicious breakfast and lunch. Local and city-wide residents flock in at 6:00 a.m. to enjoy a fresh cup of coffee, read the newspaper and converse for hours. It is of the most popular family-oriented eateries in this area.

A few blocks from the branch is the Silver Terrace Playground, a local park frequented by children and adults in the neighborhood. It is also widely used by residents from all parts of the City for recreational activities and sport events.

The City and County Health Center and Social Service facility is located only one block from the library. This resource provides preventive health care for all ages. The Center is staffed by doctors, nurses, dentists, health educators, environmental health inspectors and many other individuals who are there to meet the needs of the neighborhood. It serves approximately 122,000 residents from 7 neighborhoods southeast of San Francisco to the Daly City border. Neighborhoods served are Bernal Heights, Portola Excelsior, Visitacion Valley, Crocker Amazon, Silver Terrace and Bayview.

There are two newspapers in the neighborhood: Neighborhood Association Newsletter, and The Grapevine. These newspapers serve Portola, Bayview and Visitacion Valley districts. They primarily focus on the concerns and needs of the residents in these areas.

1990 Census Tract shows that the population served by Portola Branch is 13,669; 19% of the residents are hispanic, 23% white and 23% black.

Portola's neighborhood is immersed with schools, 5 public schools and 5 private schools. The school which utilizes the branch most frequently is E.R.Taylor Elementary School. According to school data of 700 students enrolled, 41.6% of the students are educationally disadvantaged, 34.3% have limited English or no English and 5.7% are gifted and talented. The E.R.Taylor Child Center has a morning class and an afternoon class for preschoolers who attend preschool storytime at Portola monthly. Hillcrest Elementary is also located in the neighborhood although it is not as close in proximity as E.R.Taylor. 555 students are enrolled at Hillcrest; 25.4% of the student body have either limited English or no English, 48.6% are educationally disadvantaged, and 2.7% are gifted and talented. The most recently created elementary public school is 21 Century Academy, an alternative academic school, which goes from preschool through 5th grade. The student body consists of 170 students. The private school which uses the library most consistently is St. Elizabeth with 370 students. Most of the classes visit the library during the school year. Many of these students use the library after school. Other private schools in the area are Fellowship Academy with 225 students, Cornerstone Academy with 600 students, San Francisco School with 150 students and S.R.Martin College Prep with 35 students. All of these schools

have a preschool program and goes up to 8th grade except for S.R.Martin College Prep which goes except from 6th grade to 12th grade. Martin Luther King Middle School, the public junior high school near Portola has an enrollment of 710 students; 59.5% are educationally disadvantaged, 10.8% have limited English or no English, and 17.6% are gifted and talented. Woodrow Wilson High School, with an enrollment of 884 students; 77.5% are educationally disadvantaged, is listed as one of Portola's schools, but more students from Philip Burton High School, which is not assigned to the library, use the branch more frequently.

Portola could use a larger book budget to fill gaps in the collection due to a fire that destroyed majority of the collection in the summer, 1989.

A tutorial service at this branch would provide individual reading assistance to children. Programs that address ESL, Adult Literacy and Project Read would be beneficial to community residents. To better serve this diverse community, there is a great need for additional open hours and more support and professional staff. material in languages other than English is in high demand due to the attraction of mostly asians and hispanics to this neighborhood.