

Identifying St. Helena Lifestyles by Neighborhoods and Real Estate Values

No can say definitively “this is THE St. Helena lifestyle”. However, I’m taking a stab at describing several general lifestyle options from a real estate perspective. I’ve been showing buyers St. Helena properties for 10 years, and do a large volume of relocation work with St. Helena Hospital’s physician recruiting program. In an effort to provide some kind of price and lifestyle guidance for them I created the following neighborhood descriptions. They are intended to be a nothing more than a generalized sampling.

There are basically 5 major categories of neighborhood styles, i.e., lifestyles, in the St. Helena area:

- 1) Family neighborhood lifestyle
- 2) Mixed country lifestyle
- 3) Estate country lifestyle
- 4) Entry level lifestyle
- 5) Condo/townhome lifestyle

Family Neighborhood Lifestyles:

The family neighborhood lifestyle neighborhoods/streets include Sylvaner, Signorelli, Meadowcreek and, what is considered the westside downtown quadrangle, bordered by Madrona to the north, Hudson on the west, Spring on the south and Oak Ave to the east.

Of all the family style neighborhoods in St. Helena the **west side downtown** is still considered by most to be the most desirable because of the walking distance to town, the charming architecture, mature tree-lined streets and walking distance to schools. Prices of west side homes range from the mid \$600,000 range to well over \$2 million on average. Some of the best streets, real estate performance wise, are Allyn Ave, upper Madrona, Scott Street and north Hudson. West side downtown is a lifestyle of walking your dog and knowing your neighbor.

The second desirable neighborhood lifestyle on the list is the newer **Meadowcreek** development. The residences there are all custom, but more homogenous than the mixed architecture found on the west side. They are considered executive homes and offer more square footage typically than basic west side homes. Meadowcreek recent sales average around \$1.2 million. The east side location is considered less desirable overall than the west side but that perception is softening. Proximity to two affordable housing communities, which are quite nice, may affect the perception of value of Meadowcreek homes, but in reality the mix of values and styles is a key element in the small town atmosphere of St. Helena.

Signorelli is considered the new family neighborhood of St. Helena (taking that position over from the matured Sylvaner community on the west side). While not exclusive to young families there is a good representation of couples with small children who have migrated to these newer homes (built around 2001). Currently the average price of a Signorelli home is around \$1 million.

Sylvaner is an older development of custom homes on St. Helena's west side. It is considered walking distance to downtown, if you a _ mile or so is what you consider walking distance. Biking to town, no problem. Prices typically range from \$900,000 to \$1,800,000 for the larger hillside homes on the west hillside of the development. Many of the homes still have a 1980's architectural look to them, but many have been customized and remodeled in a more contemporary style. Sylvaner is mostly an owner occupied neighborhood with a maturing population. The landscape of many of the houses owned by older occupants dates the overall look of the community. Real Estate values tend to maintain stability.

Mixed Country Lifestyle:

A mixed country lifestyle is found in many pockets, mostly on the outskirts of St. Helena. A mixed country lifestyle is described as an area where the homes are a mixed, eclectic style ranging from a country cottage to a vineyard estate right next door to one another. "Country" refers to living near or contiguous to agriculture and the lifestyle that goes along with that: wind machines, wild animals, tractors, vineyard workers and picturesque seasonal changes. Here is a sampling of a few neighborhoods that offer a mixed country lifestyle:

Dean York Lane/Palmer Drive/Boyson/Fir Hill is located off Spring Mountain Road just before the road ascends the mountain. It is an enclave of estate homes and older homes on large lots. Most properties have charm and character. The area is not a through-way to anywhere so it is considered private and quiet. There is a mix of very nice estate homes with values up to \$5 million. Some ranch homes remain that haven't been remodeled in years, occupied by generational, local family names. It is a shady area with old growth mature trees and a few seasonal creeks meander around the properties. Prior to the recent slow down in the economy it was difficult to acquire a home in this neighborhood for under \$1 million. The average is closer to \$1.5 million.

Inglewood/Stanton/Lidia/Tokay is located off Hwy 29 near Dean & DeLuca on the south end of town. It is in an unincorporated area of the county with a St. Helena address. The neighborhood is a mix of small clapboard cottages, ranch style homes and several substantial estates peppered about. It is known for being very quiet the farther west you travel down Inglewood. Again, there is no through-way so the only traffic is homeowners and minimal traffic from a few wineries located at the end of the Inglewood cul de sac. Most houses sit on _ acre lots or larger and most homes have vineyard views. Values in this neighborhood range from \$800,000 to \$20,000,000! This is a country neighborhood where older homes are being remodeled into high end custom homes.

Sulphur Springs/Arrowhead is located off Hwy 29 near Inn. It has a sprinkling of older homes and homes that have been remodeled. Vineyard views are best on the western end of the block and so are the real estate values. The east end of Sulphur Springs sees more traffic because it is a local shortcut to get into town when tourist traffic clogs the south end of Hwy 29. Arrowhead is somewhat homogenous with a ranch-style appearance, even though homes have been updated on the block. Values range from \$700,000 to several million.

Crystal Springs Road/Sanitarium is located just below St. Helena Hospital and winds around to the Silverado Trail. It is another smattering of mixed residences but most are on 1 acre lots or much larger. Crystal Springs Road has a north fork that is more valuable than the south fork. The upper part of Crystal Springs, closest to the hospital, gets a fair share of shade because it's in a valley. The north fork is a west-facing hillside community with expansive vineyard views. Values range from \$1,000,000 to several million. The west side of Sanitarium Road features beautiful hidden estates with great vineyard views. Traffic noise and speed on Sanitarium is a concern and could affect re-sale value if a purchase is not strategic.

Estate Country Living

St. Helena is NOT known for having homogenous estate neighborhoods. The closest that come to this kind of lifestyle are found on West Zinfandel, Bournemouth, Whitehall Lane, Meadowood Lane and Madrone Knoll.

Madrone Knoll is an enclave of shady, hillside homes built off the Silverado Trail just south of Meadowood. The architectural style tends to be a blend of Tahoesque and contemporary. It is a quiet adult-oriented community. Some homes have views of Meadowood's golf course and have golf cart access to the course and country club. Some houses built on the west-facing slope have amazing vineyard floor views. Values remain strong but closely tied so you should use caution on over-improving. Madrone Knoll offers a quiet, shady, executive lifestyle. Recent sales have been in the \$1 million range and up.

Whitehall Lane is a winding country road on the southern edge of St. Helena. Some of its geography is in the Rutherford Bench appellation. Lower Whitehall is less desirable than the residences and estates located in the western hills. One of the reasons the lower properties are considered less valuable by some buyers is the aroma that comes from nearby pumice processing plant. The air smells pungent and vinegary during crush and a few other times throughout the year. The road leading up to the mountainside estates is often narrow and difficult for two cars to maneuver. Views from the upper Whitehall Lane area are some of the most spectacular in the upper valley.

West Zinfandel/Cabernet/Gamay has maintained one of the best real estate value stabilities for high-end estate living in St. Helena. Properties are typically several acres in size. Most are valley floor level and have been customized over the years. Landscaping is a significant part of the value of this neighborhood and surrounding vineyards and

vineyard views. The average value ranges from \$1,500,000 (a very recent sale on a fixer) to several million for the best of the best.

Bournemouth is an enclave of private custom estate residences located north of Deer Park Road off the Silverado Trail. There are no more than approximately 20 residences in the complex. Most owners are high-profile community members and wine business executives. A few second home buyers have residences there as well. It is not gated but considered exclusive. It is not a vineyard area, though some properties have western vineyard views. The environment is shady and upscale with many architectural styles represented. The average lot size is 5 acres. Values range around \$2,000,000 and up.

Entry Level Lifestyle

There are three primary neighborhoods in St. Helena that have historically followed a pattern of having entry level real estate values. They are Crinella, El Bonita and Stice Lane.

The **Crinella** neighborhood includes Park Street, Voelker Court and Christine Court. It is located just north of downtown St. Helena, an easy walk. Real estate values in this area tend to be limited by the overall neighborhood ceiling so over-improvement is a caution. A lack of mature trees and foliage was bad foresight when the area was developed and therefore is a liability to the home values in this area, but as the years go by that has become less of an issue. Upkeep on the homes range from meticulous to run down, with owner occupied homes as easy to identify as those occupied by renters.. Values are in the \$500,000 and up range.

El Bonita is located south of downtown St. Helena and south of St. Helena high school. It is another mixed area of homes that are meticulously maintained to those with less than desirable brown lawns. The entry level values range from \$400,000 to high \$700,000. An issue of concern for this neighborhood is a proposed development of a cluster of large homes on the vacant orchard parcel which may cause traffic and resource problems. Buyer would bode well to do their homework with the city planning department to make an educated decision.

Stice Lane/Zygmunt/Mountain View/Vineland is sometimes referred to as the other side of the tracks because the neighborhood is literally on the eastern border of the Wine Train tracks. Again, historically, this area has followed a trend of lower-end St. Helena values. It is a mixed neighborhood of styles, offering quite a variety of décor, paint colors and remodeled architecture. It's a nice affordable family neighborhood that has good, friendly energy. Values range from \$400,000 to \$700,000. A select number of homes in this neighborhood have vineyard views.

(Senior Living- Affordable)- If you are 55 or older you may purchase a mobile home in the **Vineyard Valley** senior park. It is an upscale park with very proud owners who put a significant amount of money in their units and landscaping. Flooding of the complex has been an ongoing problem because the development is adjacent to the Napa River near the

junction of Pope and Silverado Trail. Values of individual units are in the high \$200,000 range.

Condominium/Townhome LifeStyle

The supply/demand factor plays a significant role in the real estate values of condos and town homes in St. Helena. There are only four primary developments in this category: St. Helena Park (Phase I and II), Peppertree, Granger and Mariposa.

St. Helena Park is in very high demand because of its in-town location and its reputation of excellent upkeep and impressive equity values. A 10 year trend of values shows an annual increase in sold prices ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 consistently. Currently however prices have dropped from the \$800,000s to \$400,000 to \$600,000 range. The park is located on the west side, within walking distance to Sunshine Market and downtown St. Helena. The landscaping, green belts and creek make the atmosphere resort-like.

Granger Way is an area of town homes on the north end of St. Helena near the Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School. It is well manicured and maintained. Depending on the location of the unit, school noise can be an issue. Granger Way condos currently sell for between \$650,000 and \$800,000.

Peppertree is located off Pope Street on the east side of St. Helena near the Upper Valley campus. The development is small, about 20 total units, and they are about twenty years old, but are maintained very well. Most have been remodeled and many residents are retired or nearing retirement. The units themselves don't have a lot of exterior architectural charm but owners have fixed up the interiors as compact showplaces. Values are currently ranging around \$500,000.

Mariposa is located off Pope Street and is one of the oldest town house communities. Some have been remodeled but their values are limited by a ceiling that affects all units. The architecture is bland and the beige exterior color restriction isn't very attractive. Landscaping leaves something to be desired as well. Owners with artistic talent have fixed some of these units to be quite nice. Outdoor living is limited to small patio areas in most units. Recent sales values have been in the \$400,000 to \$500,000 range.

If you are considering a move to St. Helena there are many other areas not mentioned here that should be considered including Spring Mountain Road; the community of Deer Park located in the lower eastern hillside just above St. Helena; Angwin/Howell Mountain; Diamond Mountain; the picturesque rural lanes of Galleron, Mee and East Zinfandel on St. Helena's south end, are just a few.

Descriptions and values mentioned are based on the opinions, research and observations of Katie Somple, and therefore should not be used by buyers or sellers to determine

asking or offering prices. Price ranges quoted may vary significantly. Consult your real estate agent for comprehensive, updated advice.

LIFESTYLE
PROPERTIES

What Makes St. Helena So Special?

St. Helena is a town and a culture webbed by the premium wine business. The farming, making, marketing, distribution and consumption of wine is related to most St. Helena families and enterprises in some way or another.

Winemaking is considered an entrepreneurial art, and therefore the residents who make up the St. Helena community are drawn to the arts including culinary, literary, music and architecture to name a few. St. Helena tends to attract folks who have achieved a monetary and personal success that is above average. Raising children is an important focus here. You will find multi-generation families with very deep roots in the valley. Generations return here to provide a similar childhood to their children. The schools, public and private are of the highest standard and recognition. Generous property tax basis and private monies allow the schools to have way above average resources. Good schools mean good property values. But it isn't just the schools that make St. Helena property values soar. It is the dichotomy of a sophisticated country life that creates the demand for St. Helena real estate. The best of both simple and cultured worlds.

The best way to describe the St. Helena lifestyle would be a *world class* living experience. Real estate values compete among the top cult communities in the country. Educational resources are among the highest in the state. Culinary talents and restaurants are renown. Health Care is envied. The quality of wine is unsurpassed. Quality attracts quality, and St. Helena has the lion share of all these Napa Valley world class assets.

There are St. Helena assets that are commonly known such as the larger wineries of Beringer, Sutter Home, Louis Martini and . The world class restaurants the tourists clog the highways on weekends to visit: Tra Vigne, Market, CIA, Terra, Go Fish and others.

The real jewels of the St. Helena community are known only by the locals, and they are discovered by venturing out, volunteering and getting involved. Annual events such as the Soroptomist Crab feed, The Firehouse Crabfeed, The Rotary's Winter Ball, Naked Vine wine auction, St. Helena Hospitals Gala, and the cherished White Barn that offers art cultures of all mediums, the funky Native Sons Hall that hosts the fanciest to the most modest town events.

There's the Cameo theatre that is decorated with purple velvet loveseats and haunted-house light sconces, the Model Bakery, Steve's Hardware