

TOP NEIGHBORHOODS

Urban living

What is urban? It's wherever you don't need to drive to get a lot of what you want. Here, we considered residences that are within a reasonable walking distance of, well, anything!

SOLANO: First Street, Benicia

Benicia's First Street, a picture-perfect model of quaintness, begins at City Park and slopes gently downward past restaurants, businesses and eclectic retail shops that reflect the town's artistic sensibilities. It ends at the Carquinez Strait, where a number of high-profile, contemporary townhouse developments take advantage of the view and location.

"It's part of the city's general plan to increase opportunities downtown," says Kathleen Olson, broker and owner of Olson Realty, Inc. "By and large it's worked beautifully. Each one of those communities has its own personality. They infuse more vibrancy in the downtown."

The newest of these is Harbor Walk, a mixed-use building with condominiums built over retail shops such as The Jewelry Box and WineStyles. One of the older complexes is Pointe Benicia, 60 units built in the early 1980s around a free-flowing, insular lagoon. Kathy and Dan Dixon have been residents since 1987. "We are in the midst of all the activity," Kathy says. "Anytime there is a parade, I just walk a block to watch it. We rarely drive to eat to have dinner. The First Street restaurateurs and merchants are like our own neighbors. We like that sense of integration of community. Once we saw Pointe Benicia, that was it. We didn't have to look anywhere else."



SOLANO

\$\$\$; \$400,000-800,000

Sq. Ft.: 1,100-2,000

Amenities: Everything at the Waterfront district

Transportation: Benicia Breeze, public bus transit system; AMTRAK within five miles; accessible within five miles to Interstates 680, 780, 80

Recycling: Allied Waste