

30. The Gateway Cities Face the Future

IN 1961 DALY CITY marked its fiftieth anniversary. "A century of progress in half the time" became the official slogan of the celebration.

Newspaper articles recorded the city's phenomenal growth from a rural area in 1911 to a city that was expected to fill 4,900 acres with homes, schools and shopping centers. The reporters recorded Daly City's population growth from 2,900 people in 1911 to a community that was experiencing as much as 30 percent growth in a two year period. Meanwhile, the United States Army Corps of Engineers expected the population density of Daly City and its neighbors in Township One of San Mateo County to reach 7,452 persons per square mile by the year 2020.

City officials joined reporters in heralding the 1961 celebration as the beginning of an era of progress for Daly City. Thus, Edward Frank, City Manager in 1961, wrote, "The future of Daly City looks bright and promising with an emphasis on the expansion of boundaries and population, accompanied by modernizing governmental services to keep pace with the growth and economic development."²

Mr. Frank noted that Daly City was primarily a residential community, providing homes for workers throughout San Mateo County and San Francisco. Perhaps this accounts for the large number of children he found living in Daly City. "There are," he wrote, "8,408 children—kindergarten through the eighth grade—in public schools and there are 948 in Catholic schools." He further reported that there were 3,600 students in Daly City high schools. Moreover, he predicted that the number of children would increase by "leaps and bounds within the next few decades."³

Even as Mr. Frank was speaking of the large number of children in Daly City's population, stories regarding the high birth rate were appearing in the national press. One such article was penned by Thomas Dove and was published with pictures and comments.

Reporting that the birth rate in Daly City was 707 babies per 1000 women—about double the national average—Mr. Dove seemed at a loss to find a reason for such a high number of births. "Is it the food?" he asked. "Is it the water? Is it the hobbies or exercise?" He wondered if the birth rate could be

attributed to the teachings of the ministers of the twenty-one churches in the community. Then again, he suggested it might be due to the fact that the townspeople were "robust and large." For want of a better explanation, Mr. Dove finally accepted a reason given to him by a local minister. "It's due to a simple reason. Daly City is a happy community."⁴

Since Mr. Dove wrote his article, the fertility ratio, which is the number of pre-school children (under 5 years of age) per 1,000 women of child-bearing age (between 15 and 44 years of age), had declined to 380 in 1970.⁵ In the same year, persons under 15 years constituted 28.7 percent of the population with those fifteen to nineteen making up another 8 percent. That these children were the progeny of young parents is witnessed in the fact that the median age for adults in 1970 was twenty-six years.⁵

To some observers, however, Daly City, with its rows and rows of houses standing roof to roof and wall to wall, served as an excellent example of what Robert Tebbel called "the West Coast housing mess."⁷ Borrowing other phrases from Mr. Tebbel, reporters spoke of Daly City's housing developments as "sloppy, sleazy, slovenly and slipshod." They referred to it as a "slurb" and spoke of houses with squeaking floors, out of plumb walls and troublesome doors. National magazines seemed to fall over themselves in a fight to publish pictures of Daly City's rows of homes. Singers picked up the lines of a ditty by Malvina Reynolds that is said to have been written as the author traveled along Daly City's Skyline Boulevard:

Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky tacky,
Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes all the same.
There's a green one and a pink one,
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.⁸

But many residents of Daly City did not agree. Their satisfaction with the homes in their community is evidenced in the slogans they suggested for the fiftieth anniversary:

"Happy hearts, homes and headway."

"Daly City is the place to be if you like a progressive community."

"Daly City, the brightest nugget in the Golden State."

"Be wise. Localize. Support the city you idolize."

"Be alert. Be progressive. Be strong. Move to Daly City."

One citizen, Charles Phelps, summed up the sentiments of many with a



If you want
children and
can't have them,
don't give up. Try
a trip to

Daly City, California

The Town Where Pregnancy Is Catching

By THOMAS DOVE

THERE'S AN OFT-TOLD story in Daly City, town of 50,000 population, just south of San Francisco. It goes that a married woman visited her physician and said, "I'd like to have a pregnancy test." The doctor then asked, "Where do you live?" Said the woman, "Daly City." To which the doctor shook his head and said, "No need to take 'a test. You're pregnant, alright."

The reason the doctor spoke so confidently is in the statistics. That city is running 707 babies per thousand women consistently. That is about double the average. Let the most barren of couples move into the Daly City area and the stork takes a healthy bite out of them. Why? What is it about the city that makes it act as if a fertility rite has been accomplished in its environs?

There are a lot of guesses and a lot of rumors but very little substantiation as to why women are more fertile in Daly City than in San Francisco, for instance, five miles away. It certainly is, smiles the wise-guys, a danger-

ous place for a bachelor to take his girl on a week-end.

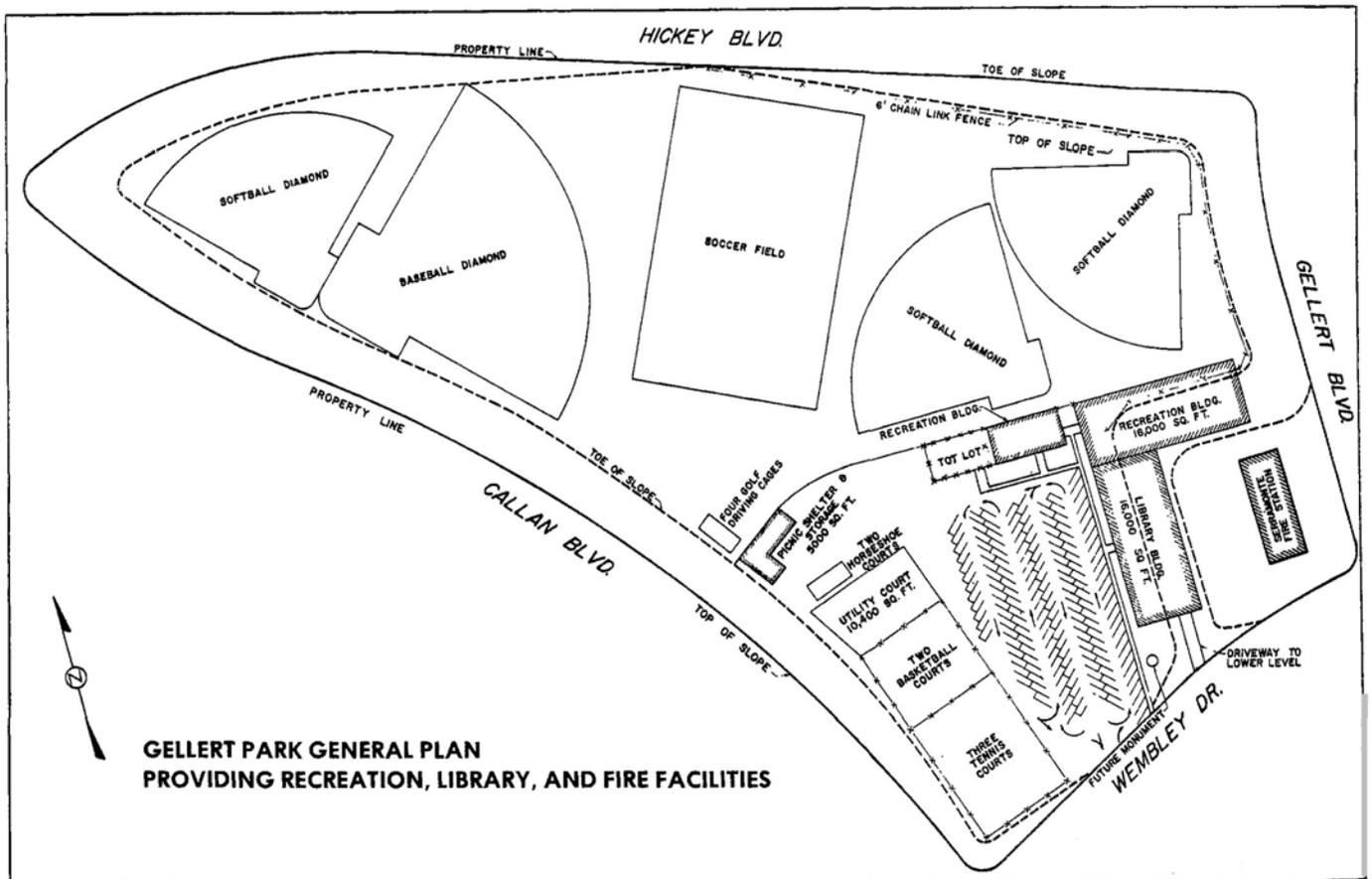
But the news is getting around and married couples unsuccessful in child-bearing are moving in in droves. This is kind of embarrassing to the Peninsula City because the San Mateo County School Board is having grave expansion problems. In the town of 50,000 population there are already 10,000 children in public school, more than 9,000 in High School and 3,000 in Parochial School. This is a fantastic school age average.

Why is this small (Continued on page 68)

'We're the third white house from the corner— you can't miss it'



"DALY CITY'S LITTLE BOXES"



terse remark, "We're sitting pretty in Daly City."⁹

Even the **San Francisco Examiner**, although it had published pictures of Daly City's rows of homes, wrote, "The gambling rooms and bookies joints from Daly City have been replaced by quiet streets, schools and comfortable, middle-class tract homes."¹⁰

Meanwhile, the population continued to grow, despite complaints of urban sprawl. In 1970 it was listed as 66,922¹¹ and estimated at 70,094 in 1972. The Daly City Planning Department estimated that the population would be 75,800 by mid 1975 with 83,100 within its planning area.¹²

As Daly City approached the 1970's, it remained a community of homes and shopping centers. Some buildings dated back to Daly City's infancy while some were so new they had not been occupied. While some parts of the city were being studied for redevelopment, others were being made ready for their initial development.

Daly City houses, surrounded by palm trees and various bushes, presented a picture of contrasts, witnessing the styles of architecture and planning that the city had known and showing that Daly City residents came from all walks of life.

Indeed, it may be said that in 1973 Daly City was an integrated community. In 1967 there were 442 people living in homes with a gross yearly income of \$20,000 or more while 556 lived in homes where the income was under \$2,000. The greatest number of families enjoyed an income in the \$6,000 to \$15,000 range.

The 1970 census listed 86.7 percent of Daly City's population as white. This figure included 12,544 people of Spanish language or Spanish surname for a total of 18.7 percent of the population. Other minorities comprised 13.2 percent of the population as follows: 6.6 percent Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean and Hawaiian; 5.4 percent Negro; and 1.2 percent other races. These figures show that 31.9 percent of Daly City's population was composed of either Spanish-Americans or non-whites.

To serve the growing population modern facilities have been built. Among the largest of these, Mary's Help Hospital, sits on a hill where it may be seen and admired as a beautiful and functional building. Erected in 1966, the ten-story hospital features complete medical and surgical care, maternity, pediatric, orthopedic care, diagnostic facilities and twenty-four hour emergency service.

Daly City's War Memorial Building has received national recognition for its architecture. Today it is the center facility of the city's sports and recreation activities.

Foremost among other recreation facilities are Lake Merced Golf and Country Club, the Olympic Country Club, and Cypress Hills Golf Course. Each maintains well kept grounds that add to the beauty of the city. Meanwhile, water sports are enjoyed at Thornton Beach State Park and at nearby Lake Merced.

Daly City's unique Civic Center and its modern post office, together with

the offices of the California State Department of Motor Vehicles, make Daly City's Sullivan Avenue a convenient government complex.

Over 1,500 business and professional firms are located in Daly City. The major industry is centered in the Bayshore section of the city, while the retail centers are spread throughout the city in the shopping centers along Mission Street and in the Serramonte, Westlake, St. Francis Heights, Broadmoor and Skyline developments.

As this history is being prepared, the city is developing Gellert Park. This twenty-five acre facility is being built upon land that was a gift from Fred and Carl Gellert, builders of Serramonte, and dedicated to Charles and Wilhelmina Gellert. It will feature tennis courts, baseball diamonds, a bocci-ball court, basketball and playground facilities. Ultimately, Daly City will construct a recreation center in Gellert Park to allow special recreation programming.

Plans have been formulated for a new main library on the northeastern edge of Gellert Park. It will house the most modern books and equipment, including an audio visual department and a library for the blind, which is a gift of the Daly City Host Lions Club and the Friends of the Library.

Other projects under construction in Daly City include a swimming pool and an enlarged community center in Westlake Park.

With their eyes on the future, many residents of Daly City share the sentiments expressed by Peter J. Markovich, Manager of the Greater Daly City Chamber of Commerce. "We know there are many things yet to be done, but we have accomplished much in the recent past. We share the optimism of many concerning the future of Daly City. We will move ahead and Daly City will prosper and take its rightful place among the leading cities of California."¹⁴