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Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center

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# New Bernal Journal

## BERNAL COMMUNITY

### BERNAL HEIGHTS LIVING LIBRARY & THINK PARK NATURE WALK:

Life Frames, Inc., the nonprofit sponsor of A Living Library, has worked with the local community, students and families

from the Junipero Serra  
Child Development  
Center, Junipero Serra  
Elementary, and diverse

city agencies to create a unique Bernal Heights Living Library & Think Park Nature Walk. This idea to link a variety of resources in the neighborhood and several streets with native plants, interpretive artworks, community education programs, and Green-Powered Digital Gateways came out of the Bernal Heights Living Library Community Planning Process, begun in 2002 at the Junipero Serra CDC, initially funded by the Mayor's Office of Community Development. The San Francisco Foundation funded the second phase of design development this year.

We have also instituted the Islais Creek Branch Living Library Garden, Ecology, Arts, and Nutrition programs at these schools and also San Miguel Child Development Center and James Denman Middle School in the Excelsior. The OMI/Excelsior Living Library & Think Park is also being developed. Another Living Library & Think Park is under way in New York City on Roosevelt Island; the goal is to interconnect these Living Libraries and new branches as they emerge in diverse communities throughout the world.

In Bernal Heights, we now want to

ensure that all sectors of the community will participate in this very exciting opportunity. We are envisioning multiple ways of linking local resources, such as College Hill



**Students investigate worms in the Living Library Garden at Junipero Serra.**

Reservoir, Holly Park, St. Mary's Park, and streets, to create the Living Library & Think Park Nature Walk that frames and connects Bernal Heights as part of the Islais Creek Watershed while also celebrating the uniqueness and rich diversity of this area - past, present, and future.

We invite you to a special meeting on Wednesday, January 11 at 6 p.m. at the Junipero Serra CDC (155 Appleton Ave., off Holly Park Circle) to view the plans that have been developed thus far. We want your participation and creative ideas. It is exciting, fun, and relevant work, and we are learning about our neighborhood and its many assets and resources. Please join us!

### Islais Creek Watershed

College Hill Reservoir, Holly Park, St. Mary's Park, and several streets all lead to Islais Creek, south of Bernal Heights where 280 snakes by St Mary's Park. On the northern edge of Bernal, Cesar Chavez sits above Precita Creek, which meets the Islais and Serpentine creeks at the freeway interchange where Chavez meets Potrero - home of the former Crossroads Community (the farm), the original inspiration for La Raza Park.

The Islais Creek also appears in Glen Park, where it is daylighted, and in the Excelsior under Cayuga Avenue, its southwestern fork, where it floods many basements. These two forks merge, move out to the bay, and then come back inland under Cesar Chavez. As such, the Islais Creek Watershed is actually quite large and impacts many communities in addition to Bernal Heights: Mission, Noe Valley, Glen Park, Excelsior, and Bayview-Hunters Point.

As our Bernal plan evolved, we mapped our existing Living Library sites as they relate to the Islais Creek Watershed and began to see a much larger and relevant opportunity emerge - to create Living Library Culture: Ecology-Technology Riparian Transit Corridors to celebrate the uniqueness of each community in the watershed, as well as mitigate flooding, calm traffic, add greenery and narrative artworks, provide community education, and attract new businesses along commercial streets among other benefits. The BART stations at Balboa, Glen Park, and 24th Street are also all part of the watershed and should be included.

Each community in this Watershed is diverse and unique, yet interconnected in relevant ways. We see exciting opportunities to incorporate local resources and engage all sectors of the neighborhood, in this evolving process for community building, education, revitalization, environmental transformation, traffic calming, and economic development. A Living Library's systemic approach to transformation and resource integration assures that each community's assets are understood, celebrated, and made visible.

For more information, visit [www.alivinglibrary.org](http://www.alivinglibrary.org) or call Michelle at 819-8270. Bonnie Ora Sherk is the founder and director of Life Frames, Inc. & A Living Library.