

The Great Tidepool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



CENTER STAGE

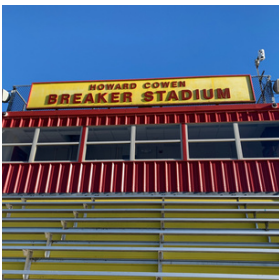
What's the geographic center of Pacific Grove? The question came to me in a flash one day. Not like a lightning bolt, more like a drag-your-feet-on-the-carpet-and-touch-a-doorknob kind of charge, but it came to me nonetheless. I decided to search for the physical heart of our little sanctuary by the sea.



So how to go about this? One way is to simply pull out a map of PG and place your finger in the spot that seems central. I did that and realized, geez, my house is pretty darn centrally located. But this is eminently unscientific, particularly because of PG's odd shape - the way it juts into Pebble Beach and Monterey at its southernmost region. So I consulted my good friend Doug instead. A longtime PG resident, he owns a PhD in computer science and is as much a math whiz as I am not. He also has the coolest job title ever (Chairman of Undersea Warfare at the Naval Postgraduate School). Doug explained that there are various ways of approaching my quest - like figuring the Mahalanobis distance (a stochastic measure of the distance relative to the centroid) or using calculus to locate the centroid of an area via moment integrals.



So I said, "Thanks, Doug. My left-brain hurts." And I decided to let a website do the work instead. Geomidpoint.com allowed me to place points on a map (latitude and longitude coordinates). Then it simply calculated two pieces of information: 1) the midpoint (average coordinates) and 2) the center of minimum distance (also known as the median center, it is the exact coordinate that will minimize distance from all points on the map). They're not exactly the same thing.



I started by placing four points representing the northernmost, southernmost, easternmost and westernmost boundaries of PG - roughly, the John Denver Memorial along the coast, a house at 1323 Buena Vista Avenue, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and Asilomar Beach. In this case, the city's midpoint is about 150 feet east of George Washington Park. Center of minimum distance: A room at the Pacific Gardens Inn.

But I wanted to be much more precise. So I located a bunch of Coordinates around the border and started placing them on the



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map - 15, 25, 35. And more points translated into a closer connection between the midpoint and minimum distance. By the time I placed 50 points around the edges of PG, the answer made my jaw drop: The midpoint, about a block from the center of minimum distance, was essentially the front yard of a house at the corner of Spruce Avenue and Locust Street.

My house!

Of course, while the narcissist in me revels in the discovery, the realist in me understands that if I placed 100 points, the midpoint would move, depending on the added coordinates. In fact, early on, after I placed 25 points, the midpoint was... I swear... my pal Doug's front yard. So the "middle of it all" is a malleable concept.

And that's as it should be. The center of any place is as much a psychological concept as a physical one. We all have our own notion of what feels central to Pacific Grove, whether it's Jewell Park, Lovers Point, Point Pinos, Breaker Stadium, the corner of Lighthouse and Forest avenues... or your own front yard.

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