

Gentrification via Tenant Evictions in the Mission

for the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition

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AsianNeighborhoodDesign

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The recent boom in housing / “artist” live work in the Harrison Street corridor has brought in hundreds of residents whose income is dramatically higher than existing Mission residents, in particular existing Latino families.

As an area is upscaled, it usually attracts other similar people who want to move in and who can afford to outbid existing residents. The newcomers don’t like uses which they consider obnoxious, e.g. workplaces that handle goods, do repairs, and generate noise.

In the case of the new owners at 728 Alabama, they immediately started a siege on the Mission Language and Vocational Center – which had operated at its site for over 20 years. That Center – located in an industrial district which generally tolerates more noise, regularly had evening wedding receptions, civic and youth events in its large community room. Events with bands and which attracted young people. New residents – not part of that community, not Latino, with a HUGE investment in their upscale “loft” housing began a campaign with the Police Department to shut down operations which were a significant source of income to MLVS. The new condo owners wanted the neighborhood, an industrial neighborhood, to adapt to them. They did not want to adapt to their neighborhood.

As new people want to move into a neighborhood, people with economic resources greater than the existing residents, the balance of power shifts to those with money (power) to take away the jobs and housing of those already part of the neighborhood.

Shifting rental housing stock

In the last 15 years, the San Francisco has witnessed a substantial increase in no-fault evictions, particularly Ellis Act & Owner Move-In (OMI) evictions. Evictions remove units from the rental market and thus, decrease the amount of rental housing stock. Furthermore, they decrease the number of rent-controlled units. Rent control has been the primary means that the City has used to ensure the affordability of its housing stock. But new construction built after 1979 is not subject to rent control. Thus, any new rental housing is not rent controlled and is subject to unregulated, market driven rent-increases.

The Mission District had the highest number of OMI Eviction notices submitted to the San Francisco Residential Rent Stabilization and Arbitration Board (Rent Board) every year since 1994. The Mission had a total of 1163 OMI notices for the period of 1994-2005 out of a total of 8122 in the entire city (or 14%). The Sunset has the next highest number of OMI evictions with 760 evictions in the period of 1994-2005.¹

In terms of Ellis Act evictions, in the entire City of San Francisco there has been a general increase in the number of evictions since 1990, with peaks in the fiscal years 1999-2000 and 2004-2005.²

¹ Rent Board Annual report, p.27-28 of statistics

² Ibid, p.41-42 of statistics

The following table shows the annual number of units removed from the rental market:

| | | | |
|-----------|----|-----------|-----|
| 1990-1991 | 25 | 1998-1999 | 29 |
| 1991-1992 | 10 | 1999-2000 | 879 |
| 1992-1993 | 1 | 2000-2001 | 281 |
| 1993-1994 | 20 | 2001-2002 | 188 |
| 1994-1995 | 85 | 2002-2003 | 233 |
| 1995-1996 | 27 | 2003-2004 | 338 |
| 1996-1997 | 10 | 2004-2005 | 480 |

In the Mission District, during fiscal year **2004-2005**, there were **76** units removed from the rental market through Ellis Act evictions out of 480 total in the city (17%).³

The Mission also has the highest number of wrongful evictions reported to the Rent Board in San Francisco in FY 2004-2005, 52 out of 357 or 15%.⁴ It should be noted that the Rent Board data represents only those evictions reported to the Rent Board and as such it does not capture the thousands of illegal evictions that have occurred in the neighborhood.

The dramatic rise in the number of evictions in the Mission is in large part due to skyrocketing land values brought about by the gentrification of the area. The building of massive amounts of high-end housing in what were once a traditionally low-income, working class areas of the Mission has driven up the value of existing homes in the neighborhood. Landlords driven by the lure of increased profit have been converting their rental properties into condominiums or, in even greater numbers, tenancies-in common (TICs). Even worse, increasing land values have lured real estate speculators who buy rental buildings for the sole purpose of emptying them of tenants so they can be “flipped” as condominiums or TICs.

Though the common perception is that the displacement crisis in the Mission ended with the fall of the dot-com era the Rent Board’s statistics show that, if anything, the displacement of the working-class and poor people of the Mission has actually sped-up year after year.

The maps on the following pages plot no-fault evictions in the Mission covering 4-year periods. The data is from data base maintained by the Rent Board.

It shows few evictions prior to 1994. During 1994-1997 evictions accelerated in the Mission, but the pattern was heavily oriented west of Mission Street, with another “clot” around Bryant Street. As “artist” live/work started booming in the industrial areas of the Mission in the late 1990’s, evictions started exploding around this area. Even though evictions slacked off after 2002, there is an increasing trend toward Ellis Act evictions to remove existing tenants in newly purchased buildings.

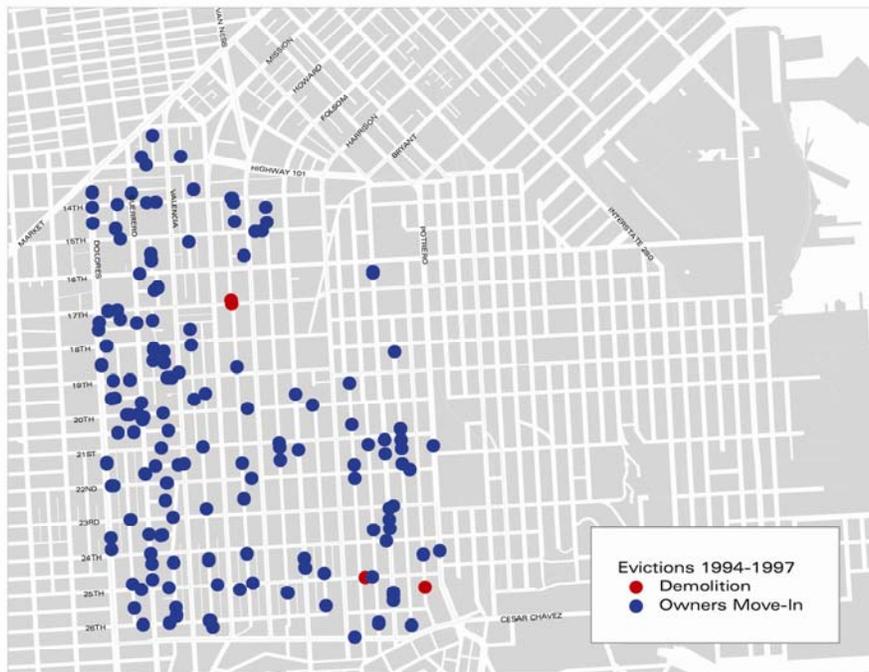
³ Ibid. p. 40 of statistics

⁴ Ibid. p. 30

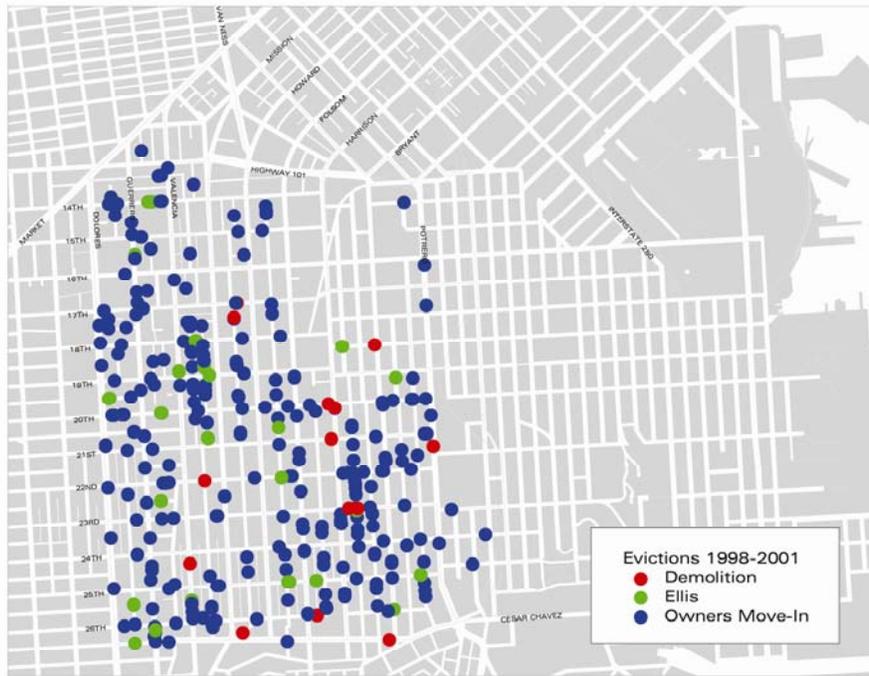
Mission District Residential Evictions 1990-2005



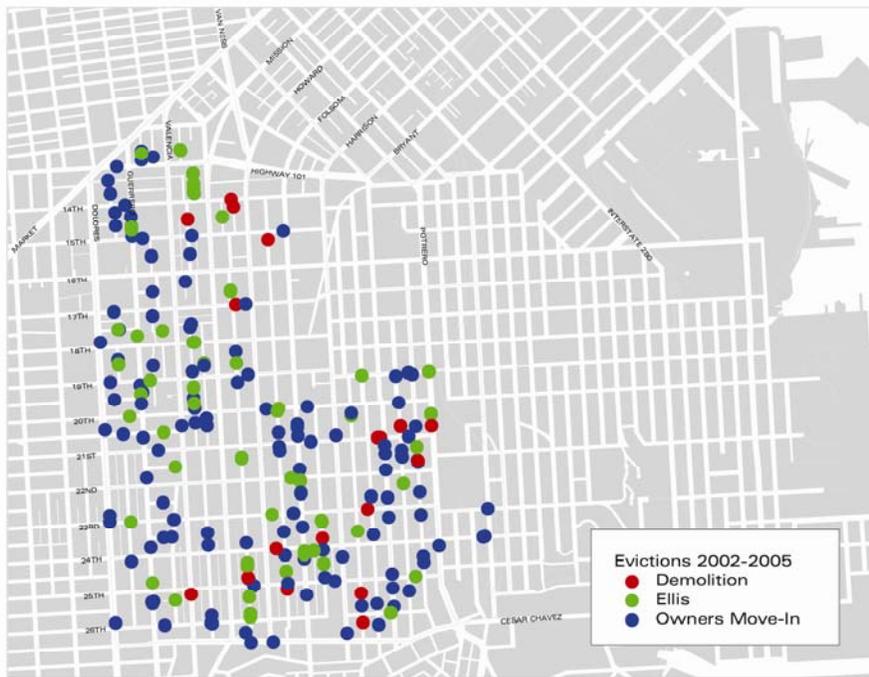
1990-1993



1994-1997



1998-2001



2002-2005

Source: SF Rent Board, SF Rent Stabilization and Arbitration Board's database.