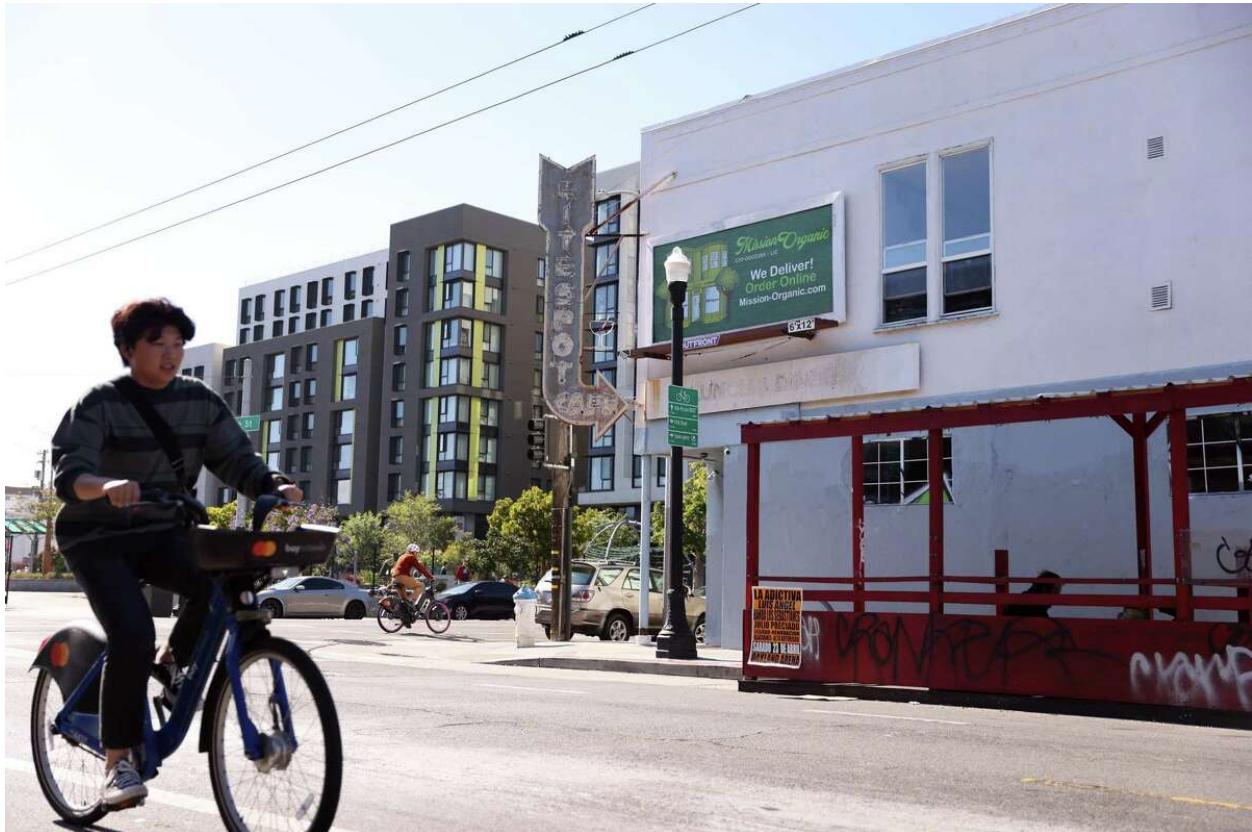


S.F.'s Mission District has had 649 affordable homes open in two years. Is it having an impact?

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/sf/article/mission-affordable-housing-17316008.php>

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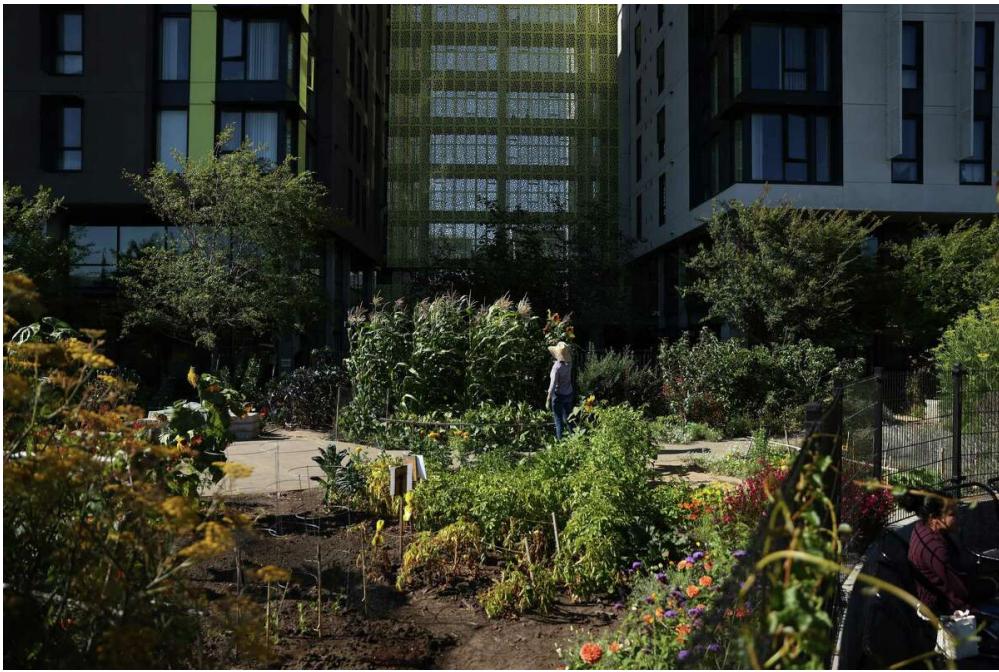
To an outsider, the snazzy new buildings rising across San Francisco's Mission District might seem like the latest wave of condos and rentals catering to the young professionals who have long gravitated to the neighborhood.

But they are not. While a few smaller, 20- or 30-unit market-rate buildings have opened over the last two years, all of the larger, new Mission District complexes are subsidized affordable housing, the result of a decades-long push to stop and reverse the displacement of working families in the enclave — which lost about 8,000 Latino families between 2010 and 2020.

Over the last two years, the Mission has seen six new affordable projects totaling 649 units and about \$400 million worth of development. This includes a senior building at 1296 Shotwell; and family complexes at 490 South Van Ness Ave., 2828 16th St., 1950 Mission St., 2060 Folsom St. and a smaller 45-unit building at 3031 24th St.

Now, affordable housing builders Mission Economic Development Agency and the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp. are finishing up the neighborhood's latest project: 130 units at 681 Florida St.

While leases have yet to be signed for the Florida Street building, the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development received 7,681 applications from would-be tenants, about 60 for every available apartment. Of the applicants, 1,156 qualify for the city's neighborhood preference program, which means they live in Supervisor District 9 — it covers the Mission, the Portola and Bernal Heights — or within a half mile of the development.



The community garden at 2060 Folsom in San Francisco's Mission District has 127 apartments for families and transitional-age youth.

Scott Strazzante/The Chronicle

The overwhelming demand — and long-shot odds of landing a unit — shows that the Mission is still in jeopardy of losing the working-class, largely Latino community that defines much of the neighborhood's vitality, commerce and culture, according to Supervisor Hillary Ronen, who serves the district containing the Mission.

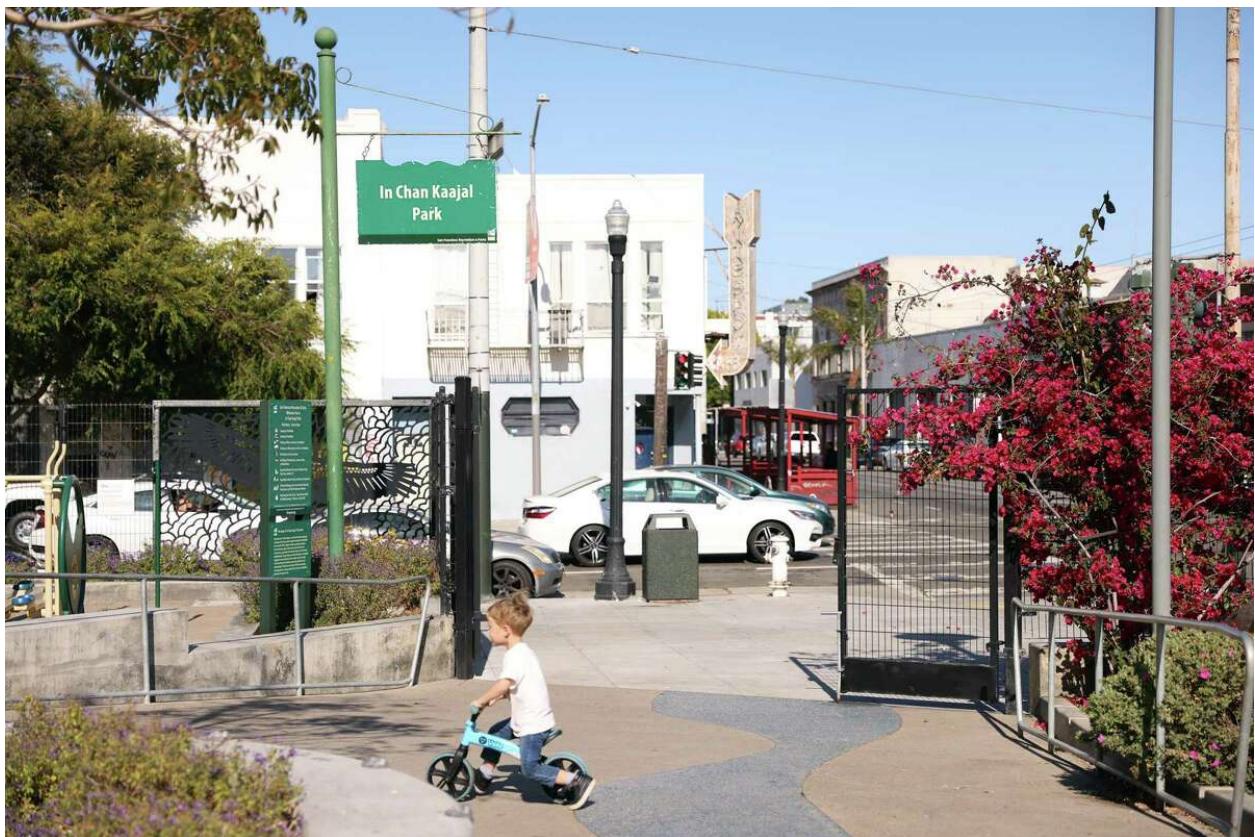
"You can't undo three decades of gentrification in five to 10 years — it takes time," said Ronen. "We can't stop to declare victory. We could still lose the character of the neighborhood in a heartbeat."

With the 130-unit Florida Street building set to open in the fall, the number of permanently affordable units that will have opened in the neighborhood since early 2020 will rise to 779. Three more projects are on tap: about 300 units at 1979 Mission St., 157 units at 1515 South Van Ness, and 63 condos for sale below market rate at 2205 Mission. All of those are expected to break ground in 2023 and 2024.

As is frequently the case in San Francisco, the politics of Mission housing — the give and take between nonprofit and for-profit, subsidized and privately funded — is complex and often divisive. It was fierce community opposition, led largely by Latino-dominated groups like Mission-based community group the Poder Organization, that derailed market rate projects at both 1979 Mission and 1515 South Van Ness, ultimately forcing the developers to seek other options.

However the properties at 1296 Shotwell, 681 Florida and 1979 Mission were deeded to the city by market-rate developers in order to satisfy the city's affordable housing requirement.

Poder Organizational Director Antonio Diaz said the movement to protect land from unfettered private development has not only created housing, but also parks and open space for community organizations like his. Poder has a bike repair training facility at 1950 Mission and will be moving into a space at 2060 Folsom.



In Chan Kaajal Park, just south of 2060 Folsom in San Francisco, has become a popular public space in the Mission District.

Scott Strazzante/The Chronicle

The building at 2060 Folsom overlooks a community garden and the In Chan Kaajal Park — which means “Little Town” in Mayan.

“For Poder, that project is particularly satisfying because in the early 2000s we fought tooth and nail for that area to be rezoned for open space,” Diaz said. “It’s a huge victory for the residents who have been organizing for decades.”

Much of the Mission’s new affordable housing is the result of the [Mission Action Plan 2020](#), which passed in 2017 following a yearlong moratorium on market-rate development.

Planning Director Rich Hillis, who was on the Planning Commission when the Mission 2020 plan was passed, said the objective was to stop “looking at the neighborhood project by project and fighting over each one.”



A biker passes by apartments above a storefront on Folsom Street in San Francisco’s Mission District. The neighborhood has seen a burst of affordable housing in the last two years.

Scott Strazzante/The Chronicle

“The community demanded that the city look at the neighborhood holistically — small business, cultural districts, PDR (production, distribution, repair) and

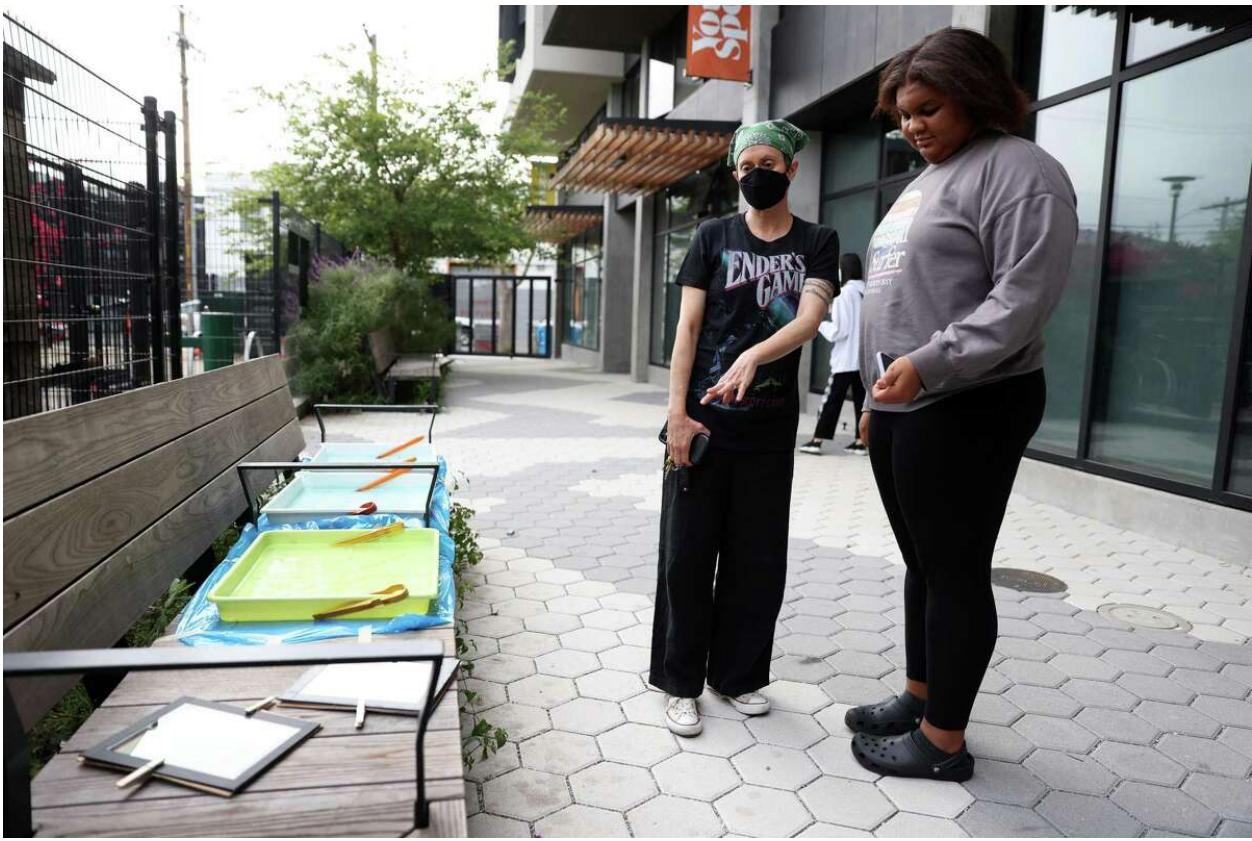
artists space,” he said. “It was about keeping small business on Mission Street so there are places for working families to shop, and about preserving rent-controlled housing that was not vulnerable to evictions. We have checked off a lot that is in 2020 but that doesn’t mean we are done. The work continues.”

The neighborhood preference program is also making a difference. The building at 2828 16th St. is home to 39 households that received a neighborhood preference, while 2060 Folsom has 23 such families, 1296 Shotwell has 24 local preference and 490 South Van Ness has 24, according to the Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development.

While over 1,200 residents have landed new homes, Mission District nonprofits are still building out their spaces in several of the buildings. The new development on Florida Street will be home to a 10,000-square-foot headquarters for Mission-based cultural group Carnaval San Francisco; Galería de la Raza, a Latinx art and cultural organization, will be opening in 2828 16th St. along with HOMEY (Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth.)

Two of the nonprofits — YouthSpeaks and First Exposure — have already moved into 2060 Folsom.

The First Exposures organization provides one-on-one mentoring to high school students interested in photography, providing darkroom equipment, materials and instruction. The new 4,700-square-foot space has classrooms, darkrooms with 12 enlarger bays, including three that are accessible for disabled.



Student Yonni Mason listens as teacher Jenn Wilson explains the cyanotype process during a photography class at First Exposure in San Francisco's Mission District.

Scott Strazzante/The Chronicle

"It's the newest darkroom on the West Coast," said Executive Director Erik Auerbach.

The organization used to be on Third Street near the ballpark — a location that was inconvenient for most of the kids who took classes. Now they can step outside to photograph street scenes and take inspiration from the Mission's famous murals.

"It's the perfect neighborhood for us to be in and the perfect building," said Auerbach. "It feels like there is a real movement to bring arts and culture back into the Mission. It's never going to be what it was 20 or 30 years ago, but it's a start."

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