
THE IMPACT OF SMALL SITES ON DISPLACEMENT IN SAN FRANCISCO

An Impact Evaluation Framework for the San
Francisco Housing Accelerator Fund

By Laurel Engbretson

For the San Francisco Housing
Accelerator Fund

Mills College Public Policy Program

May 1, 2018



SAN FRANCISCO
housing accelerator fund

Disclaimer

This study has been prepared for the San Francisco Housing Accelerator Fund, San Francisco, CA. The student author conducted this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Policy at Mills College and in compliance with the requirements of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Mills College Public Policy Program, the sponsoring Client organization, or any other organization or agency.

Executive Summary

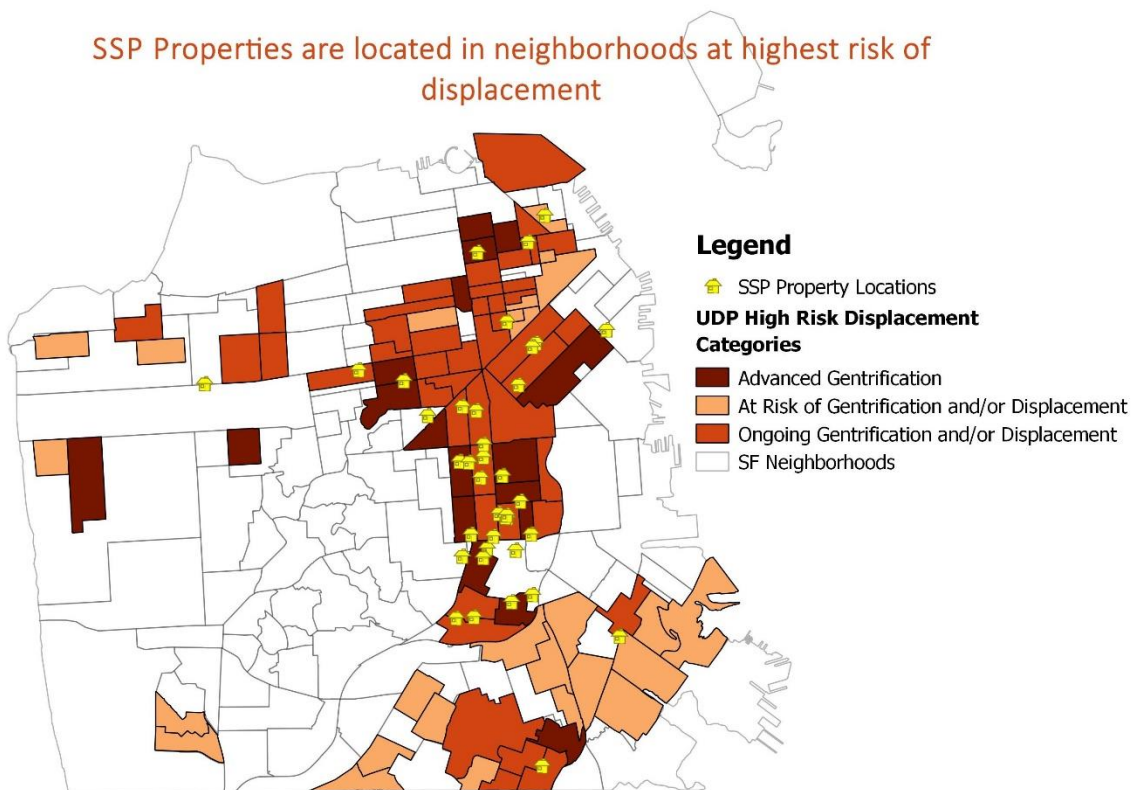
The purpose of this report is to provide the San Francisco Housing Accelerator Fund (SFHAF) with a framework to evaluate the impact of its investments in the Small Sites Program (SSP) on displacement in San Francisco. The SFHAF was launched in 2017 to increase the capacity of SSP, an anti-displacement program that protects tenants at risk of eviction by acquiring market rate apartment buildings and preserving them as permanently affordable housing.

SSP and SFHAF were launched in response to the housing crisis in San Francisco. Climbing housing costs have created a squeeze on the capacity of low-income households to afford market rent while also creating a compelling incentive for landlords to cash out by finding a way to evict tenants paying below market rent. Since 2010, formal evictions have increased 64% and at least 8,743-9859 low-income San Francisco residents have been formally evicted from their homes.

To measure SFHAF's impact on displacement through its investments in SSP, I created three indicators: Displacement Risk, Vulnerable Populations, and Community Connectivity. Using these indicators, I evaluated the 39 SFHAF-funded units along with all 321 units in the SSP portfolio. From this analysis I found that SFHAF's investments in SSP have had a significant impact on displacement in San Francisco, relative to the size and age of the program, addressing as much as 25-28% of the annual risk of low-income displacement. My key findings for the three indicators and my subsequent recommendations are summarized below.

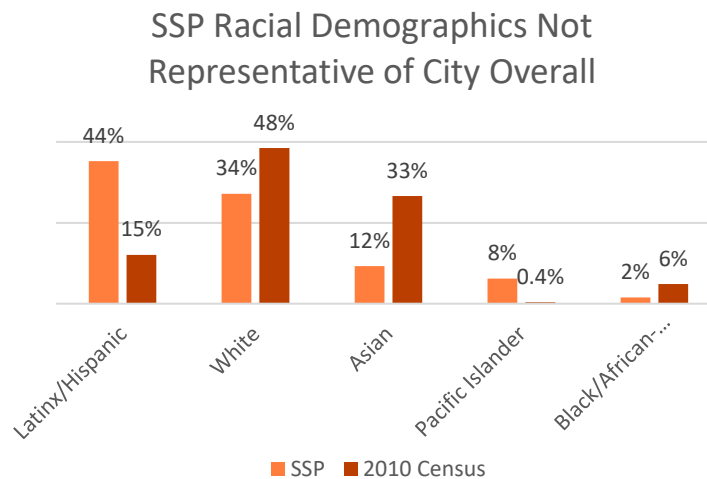
Displacement Risk

Small Sites targets neighborhoods with the highest risk of displacement in San Francisco. Using the Urban Displacement Project's research on displacement risk, 90% of the 321 households in the SSP portfolio and 85% of the SFHAF-funded households are located in neighborhoods at high risk of displacement. However, distribution of the SSP properties is not equal among high-risk neighborhoods in the city. As shown on the following map, the SSP properties are concentrated in the eastern center of San Francisco and there is unmet need in the western and southern parts of the city.



Vulnerable Populations

Most people protected by Small Sites would likely be displaced if they had been evicted. There are categories of people who are more vulnerable to displacement after eviction, including low-income, elderly, disabled, families with children, and nonwhite households. These populations face a variety of institutional and discriminatory barriers that make it harder to secure an affordable home to rent after eviction. Of the SSP households that reported their demographic data, 78% are low-income, over half are families with children, about one third have at least one elderly family member, and about a quarter have at least one disabled family member. Of the data available for the SFHAF-funded households, 56% protect vulnerable populations. SSP has been effective at addressing the high rates of eviction of the Latinx/Hispanic population in the Mission, but the Black/African-American and Asian populations are underrepresented in the program, as demonstrated in the following graph.



Community Connectivity

The preservation of long-term residents increases community connectivity in a neighborhood. Communities anchored by long-term residents lead to neighborhood stability and stronger social and health outcomes for all its members. Of the data available at this time, 78% of SSP households protect long-term residents and the average length of residency is 20 years. Once length of residency data is collected on more SSP households, then more conclusive findings can be reported.

Recommendations

As SFHAF and SSP continue to grow, they can implement the following recommendations to increase their impact in the highest-risk neighborhoods, with the most vulnerable and long-term residents:

- **Target** properties in the highest-risk tracts with unmet need.
- **Weight** properties in the highest-risk tracts and properties with higher percentages of vulnerable populations more favorably during the underwriting process.
- **Increase outreach** to developers and community-based organizations that work with tenants in the Tenderloin, Bayview/Hunters Point, Lakeshore, Outer Sunset and Outer Richmond neighborhoods, and with tenants from vulnerable populations, especially the Black/African-American and Asian communities.
- **Collect** income and demographic data from the 172 units that are missing this data in SFMOHCD's Small Sites Pipeline database, and individual demographic data from the SFHAF-funded properties. Collect length of residency data and survey data on community connectivity for the remainder of units in the SSP portfolio by adding it to the annual Income Certification.
- **Set a goal** to increase the number of Black/African-American and Asian households to match the racial composition of the city, at a minimum.

Because vulnerable populations are concentrated in high-risk neighborhoods, the impact on displacement risk and vulnerable populations are related. Targeting either the highest-risk tracts or the vulnerable communities themselves should increase the impact on displacement for both the Displacement Risk and Vulnerable Populations indicator.