Neighborhood-preference program for affordable housing proves effective

**Dominic Fracassa, San Francisco Chronicle, March 7, 2019**

“A San Francisco program to protect people in close-knit neighborhoods from being uprooted by gentrification and soaring housing costs appears to be working.

“The Neighborhood Resident Housing Preference plan requires 40 percent of units in new affordable housing developments funded by the city and private sources to be reserved for people living in the same supervisorial district or within a half-mile of them.

“The Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development’s progress report on the program shows it is within 1 percent of its target.

“The program ‘not only acknowledges that displacement happens, it acknowledges San Francisco’s diverse and unique neighborhoods,’ said Kate Hartley, director of the mayor’s housing office.

“Federal and state housing officials have long looked down on neighborhood preference legislation, viewing it as a vestige of racist housing policies, so the city was never able to use federal or state money for affordable projects that included neighborhood preference provisions.

“But this year, the state Department of Housing and Community Development shifted its policy. Now, San Francisco officials can use state funding on projects that reserve units for nearby residents — but only 25 percent of the units can be set aside.

“Karoleen Feng of the Mission Economic Development Agency said, ‘This is one of those programs everybody likes. It is a great anti-displacement tool: in addition to building the housing, it’s creating ways for people to come back’ to the neighborhood.”

Read the full article here.