



- COVERING THE POLICE ▾
- TROUBLE
- HOUSING
- JOB
- EATS
- GUIDE ▾
- ABOUT ▾
- SUPPORT US ▾
- ADVERTISE

## The high health toll of SF's relentless rent increases

By Rachel Mueller | Nov 24, 2018 | Featured, Front Page, Mobile, Newsletter, Today's Mission, Topics | 13 ●

### What To Do



**GLBT History Museum: We Built a Movement From Books**

December 6 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

**Red Poppy Art House: Luminance Ensemble: A Celebration of Concert & Folk Traditions**

December 6 @ 7:30 pm - 10:00 pm

# MISSION LOCAL



Illustration by Sofia Probert

Everyone knows that the rent is too damn high, but for seniors in the Mission and all across San Francisco, the mental health implications born from the struggle to find stable housing can have dire consequences.

“Every single senior I’ve ever spoken with about evictions reports tremendous anxiety,” said Theresa Flandrich. Flandrich, who has experienced eviction, is an organizer at Senior and Disability Action, a SoMa-based organization that mobilizes and educates seniors and those with disabilities around social justice issues.

Community Series, featuring  
**Mean J...**

December 6 @ 8:00 pm - 11:59 pm

**Verdi Club: Milonga Malevaje**

December 6 @ 8:00 pm - 11:59 pm

**Secession Art and Design: Holiday Art Reception**

December 7 @ 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

[View More...](#)

**BuildingProgress** **SFMTA**

**Potrero Yard Modernization Project**  
Help us design a new bus yard with housing on top that adds to the neighborhood!

Wednesday  
December 5, 2018  
6 PM - 8 PM

Saturday  
December 8, 2018  
11 AM - 1 PM

Sports Basement, 1509 Bryant St.

[Click here to learn more and RSVP](#)

**Business Member**

A Twitter list by [@MLNow](#)

...infections caused by capital improvements, and a 50 percent increase in...  
...caused by the Ellis Act's... the law... of units. (The Ellis Act, passed by the  
California legislature in 1987, permits landlords to evict all tenants if they wish to  
exit the rental market altogether.)

This high-priced, competitive housing market takes a particularly high toll on the  
mental health of the city's most vulnerable populations, says psychologist Tori  
Branch. Branch is the director of Clinical Services at the Access Institute, a  
nonprofit that provides therapy and psychiatric services to those who are  
underinsured and uninsured.



"Somewhere between 15 and 20 percent of the people who complete an intake with  
us mentioned something about feeling anxiety, or stress about money or finances,  
or specifically housing," said Branch.

"Things have gotten far worse than they ever were," said Tommi Avicelli Mecca,  
director of the counseling program at the Housing Rights Committee of San  
Francisco. Mecca, who has lived in San Francisco for 27 years, said he has been

Replying to  
@monkeybrainsnel  
... I don't enjoy taking BART, but  
... owner. See you spending  
money (our fare money) on  
advertising to get more  
ridership, I think about how  
BART is not cheap and  
cheats children. 🙄

8h

Monkeybrains ISP  
@monkeybrainsnel



# MISSION LOCAL

Data on the mental health consequences of housing instability are scarce, but tenant organizations and counseling organizations like Tenos Branch and Mendota work for, said they are seeing the effects firsthand. And, in December 2010, a federal program found that safe housing is one of the basic needs crucial to good health, along with access to food and community design.

Branch sees clients facing a cascade of anxiety-inducing problems once their housing is threatened. The mere threat of eviction can lead to anxiety; the fight to avoid eviction can be stressful; and increased anxiety, stress or depression can affect job performance, which can lead to eviction. This is one cycle Branch has observed.

“It’s sort of like the chicken and the egg,” Branch said. “Once you lose something it’s hard to get it back.”

Flandrich’s own experience offers an all too common example. She fought to keep her own home in the face of an Ellis Act Eviction for nearly four years, until she was finally evicted in 2016.

She said she experienced fear and anxiety while going through the eviction, and now occasionally suffers post-traumatic stress while counseling seniors experiencing their own housing problems.

“There is this underlying anxiety that is always there,” said Flandrich, who now has a new home. “It’s also the horror of what has happened to this city, that people are treated this way, that homes are treated as coffee beans on the market.”



PRACOGSIOUAL  
HEALTH PLACEMENT  
SINCE 1971

603 Valencia Street (at 17th Street)  
(415) 503-9522



SO  
STAMPER OPTOMETRY

2508 Mission St (at 21st St)  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
(415) 824-2374



# MISSION LOCAL

Community members said. Canada had a unique "lifetime lease" on her apartment that was granted in 2009. In 2014, the owner sought to evict Canada to convert the building into a for-profit. After a lengthy fight in court, Canada was granted the right to stay as long as she paid the owner's attorney's fees that racked up while Canada fought the evictions. The fees totaled more than \$100,000. Canada was eventually evicted in February 2017. She died shortly afterward, in March.

"Her doctor wrote a lot of letters describing her stress relating to this," said Iris Merriouns, Canada's great-niece. "Whenever we would go to court, her heart rate would go through the roof. It would take a few days for her to come back down."

But fighting sometimes is the only thing people can do.

"People ask me, 'was it worth it to fight?'" said Flandrich. "It wasn't just about me. It was about, you know, what's going on in the city."



**Subscribe to Mission Local's daily newsletter**

Email Address

SUBSCRIBE