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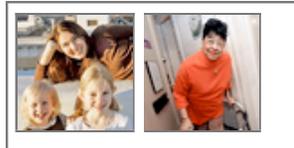
San Francisco Chronicle

Waiting lists common for Hallinan buildings

Heather Boerner

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Interested in getting into one of the Hallinan buildings? Get in line. Because tenants stay for years, there's often a waiting list.



The most popular building, 801 Sutter St., has a waiting list several people long, said building manager Terri Price. "I can't tell you how long the wait is, because you never know when someone will move out," she said. "But I have people coming from Thailand and Taiwan who only want to live in this building.

"If you're interested in a Hallinan building, I recommend any one of them. There isn't one I wouldn't live in."

Price, now semi-retired, has lived in her animal print-strewn studio apartment for 25 years, and has been managing the building for 20. She worked first for Vivian



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Hallinan and has a framed weekly newspaper cover in her apartment that features Vivian Hallinan and one of her grandchildren.

One recent day, a tenant came by to collect petty cash to buy the building a Christmas tree and decorate the staircase with holiday lights. The building, which has a large spiral staircase below a century-old cut-glass skylight, required \$1 million in renovations over the past 25 years, Matthew Hallinan said.

"It does feel like a community," said Gary Butcher, an artist who has lived and worked in a studio at 801 Sutter St. for a decade. "You can be very social here, but you can also be very private. It's really pleasant and that's why I stay."

Most tenants can't say enough nice things about Hallinan, and many are protective of him, checking carefully with others in the building before they talk to strangers about him.

"I hope I'm out of here before the last Hallinan passes away," said Michael Daily, who has lived in his studio in a Hallinan building on Geary Street since 1979. "I don't think anyone deals with tenants the way they do."

That doesn't mean, however, that Hallinan's tenants don't still feel the twinge of stress at San Francisco's high rents.

Tina Warren, who named her own price for her two-bedroom duplex apartment, says the \$2,000 she pays for the place is hundreds less than she was seeing anywhere in the area four years ago, when she was apartment hunting for herself and her family. Still, when she writes the rent check, she cringes.

Daily, who jokes that moving apartments "seems to be the main source of exercise in San Francisco," says he and his wife considered moving to a larger apartment a few years ago, but changed their minds when the reality of the city's rents sunk in.

"Had we moved, we could have afforded the rent, but that would have been all we could have afforded," he said. "We like to travel. Living here gives us that."

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Butcher, the artist, said he doesn't blame Hallinan. Instead, he blames the area's rental and home ownership market.

"I think rent in the city is obscene in general," he said. "It's good (here), but compared to what? I pay close to \$1,000 in rent. That's people's mortgages in Iowa. But you have to keep it in context and look at where you are. I wouldn't have all this life if I were in Iowa."

Page K - 4

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