

SF families rally for affordable housing, child care

KIM CURTIS Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO - Feeling as if they're lacking a warm reception from city government, a group of family and child advocates rolled out a red carpet for themselves Wednesday on the steps of City Hall where they rallied in support of affordable housing and child care.

With suitcases at their feet symbolizing the urgency of their need, about two dozen advocates - mostly minorities and women - announced their \$10 million budget agenda aimed at keeping low- and moderate-wage earners in San Francisco.

The plan, proposed by the nonprofit Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, includes \$2 million for rental assistance and eviction prevention, \$2.5 million for job training, \$3 million for affordable day care and \$2.5 million for violence prevention services.

An April 8 rally is planned to formally ask the support of Mayor Gavin Newsom and the city's Board of Supervisors, according to executive director NTanya Lee.

"San Francisco can be a city of hope for all families and all children," Lee said. "This is the first step for city officials to keep families here in the city. Low- and moderate-income families of color are being pushed out."

Matt Franklin, director of the mayor's office of housing, said affordable places for families to live already is a priority for Newsom.

"The need does outstrip the resources," he said, adding the city spends about \$100 million a year on affordable housing and about 30 percent of that is family housing.

San Francisco has the smallest share of children in any major U.S. city. Just 14.5 percent of the city's population is 18 and under, far fewer than New York at 24 percent, according to census estimates.

And a recent survey by the city controller found 40 percent of parents said they were considering pulling up stakes within the next year.

One of the main reasons is the lack of affordable housing. A two-bedroom, 1,000-square-foot starter home is considered a bargain at \$760,000. Rents for one-bedroom apartment hover near \$1,300 a month.

Currently, a family would have to earn about \$240,000 to afford a median-priced home. The average teacher and police officer earn about \$50,000 a year, according to a report by Coleman Advocates.

Rosario Ramirez, 30, has lived in San Francisco for 14 years. She and her husband work full-time, earn a combined \$40,000 and have little hope of buying a home. Instead, they live with their 7-year-old daughter in a tiny, studio apartment in an industrial area of the city. Because their apartment is subject to rent control and because they've lived there 12 years, they pay \$560 a month.

Her daughter sleeps on a pullout sofa, Ramirez said.

"This is the place where my daughter was born," she said, close to tears. "She has a right to live here."