

# Planning for Big Change: Enrollment Growth and SFUSD School Portfolio Planning

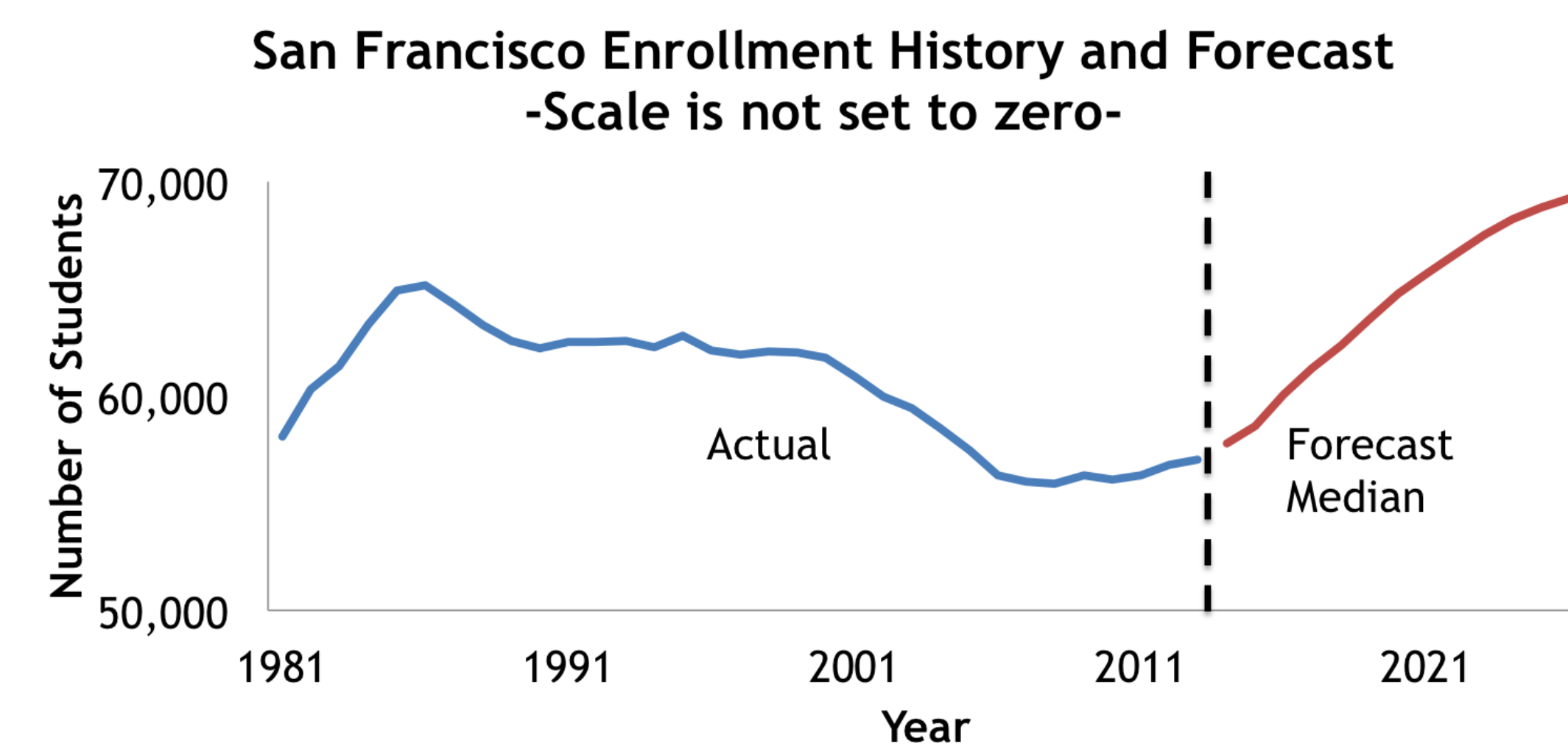
Justine Wolitzer, PLUS Fellow

2015



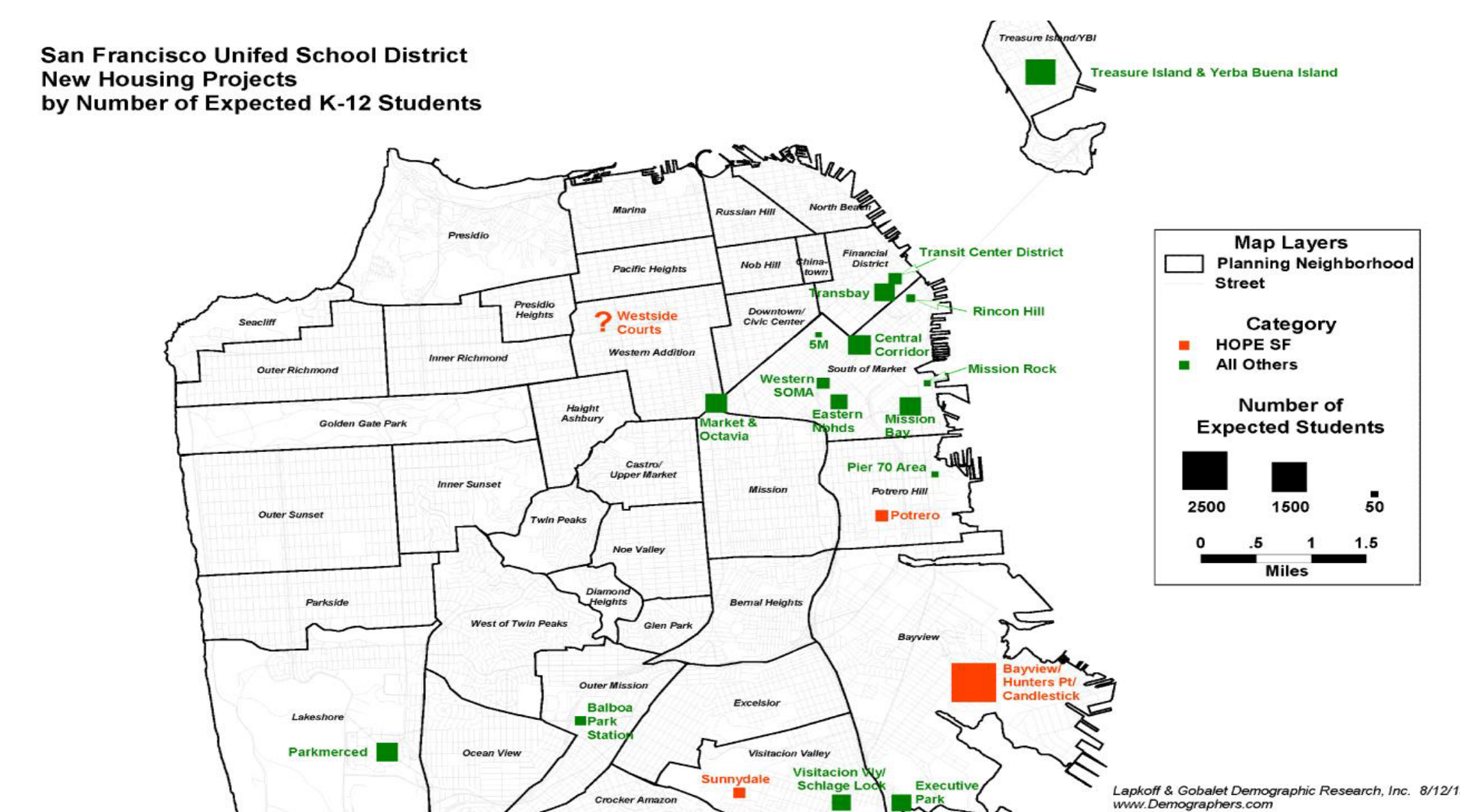
## ISSUE

The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) needs a paradigm shift when thinking about its long-range facilities planning because the city demographics and enrollment are changing dramatically.



Data Source: Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc., 2013. SFUSD is in the process of refreshing these enrollment projections to incorporate the latest information from the City about housing development.

During the last three decades, San Francisco's public school enrollment has been fairly stable, with a gradual declining trend overall. However, **forecasts show that enrollment will increase nearly 20% by 2025.** A little over half of this expected increase is due to the city's ambitious housing growth plans.

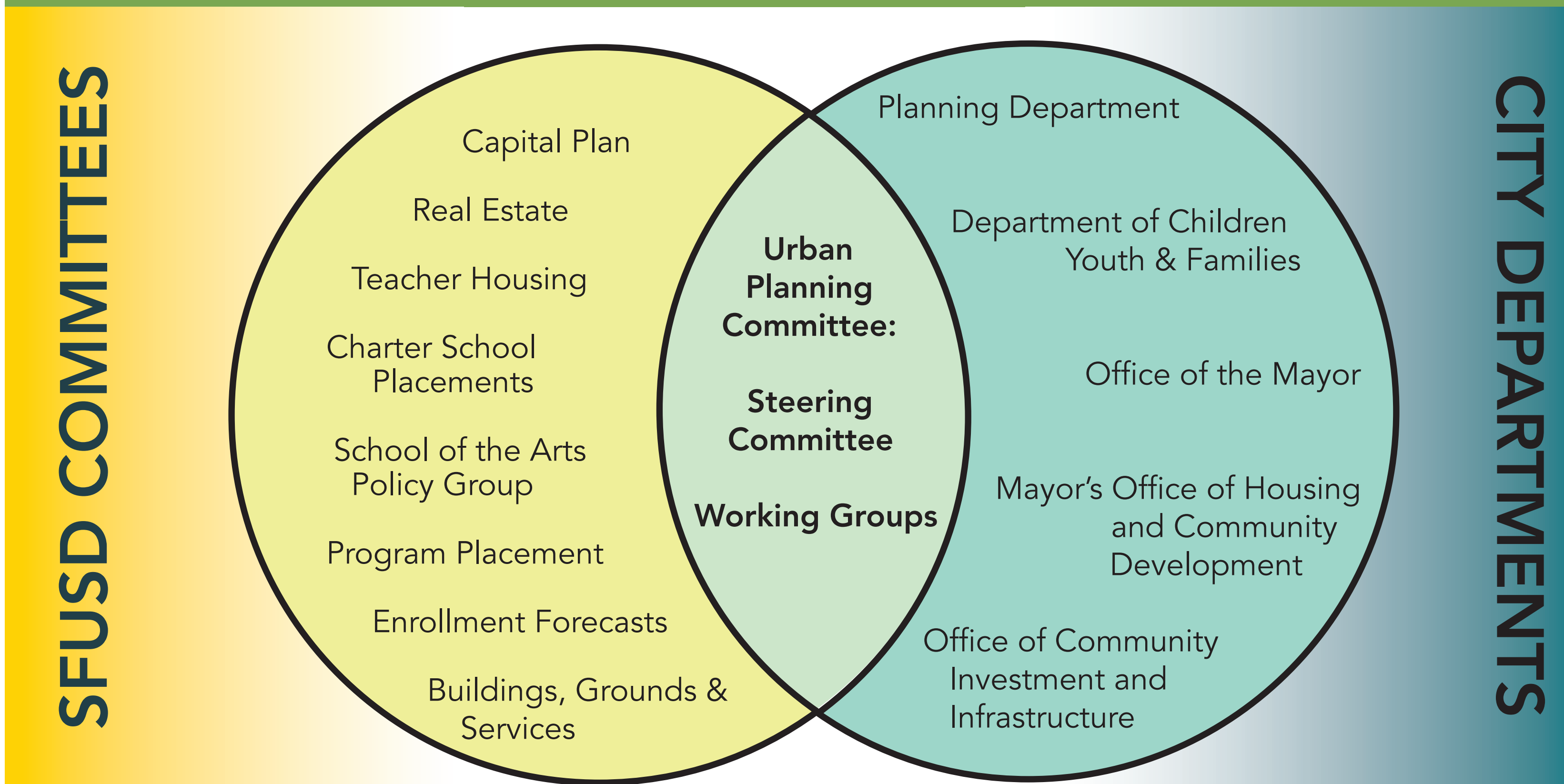


## METHODS

Interviews were conducted with key staff at:

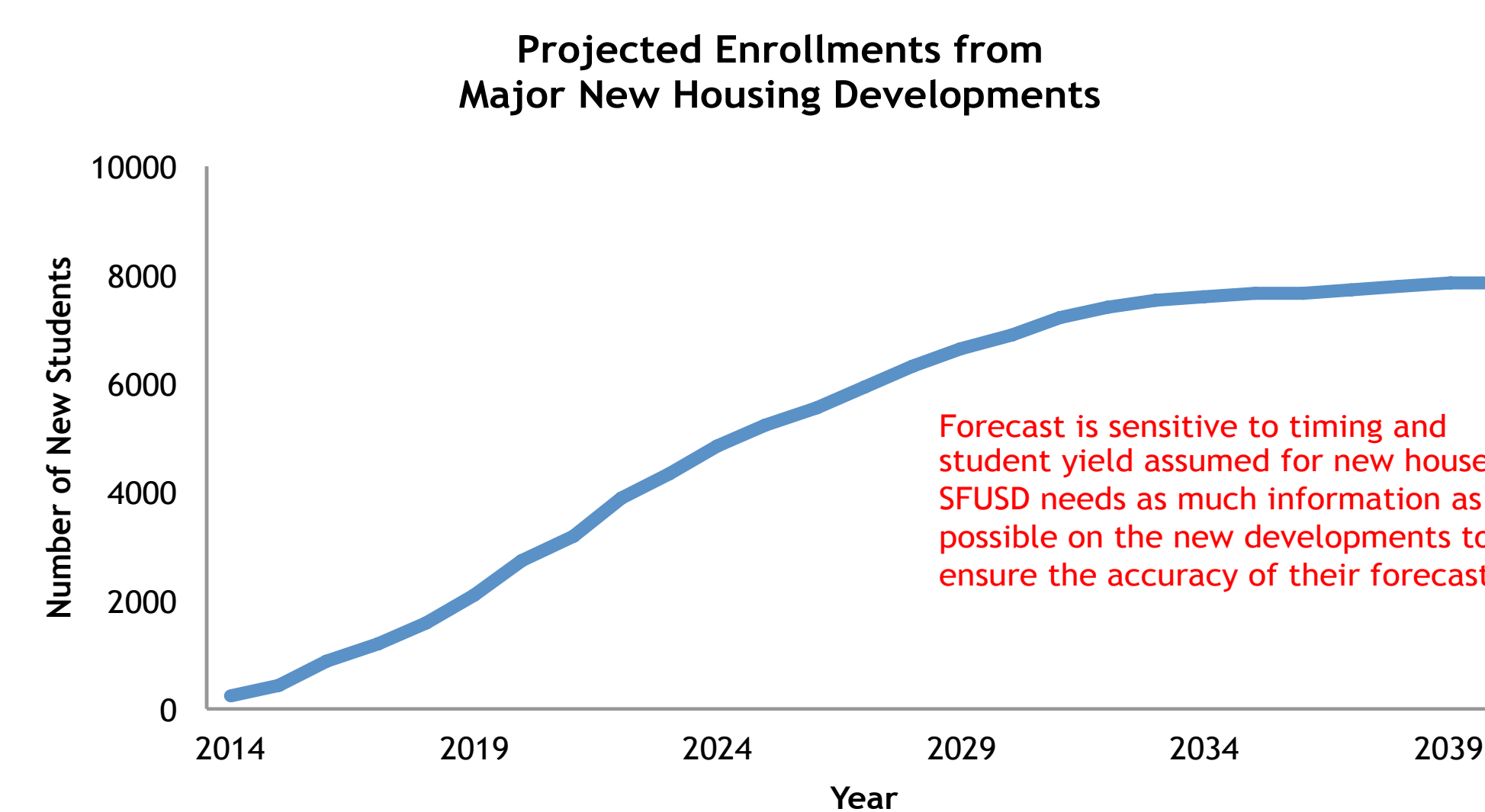
- SFUSD and SFUSD's demographer consultants, Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc.
- City Departments: San Francisco Planning Department, Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, and the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure.
- Other Districts that have faced similar growth: Denver Public Schools (DPS) and Wake County Public School System (WCPSS).

## SAN FRANCISCO CONTEXT



- SFUSD currently has several district working groups and structures in place that are addressing school portfolio planning in light of this likely housing growth.
- SFUSD needs updated data from multiple city departments to ensure the accuracy of the enrollment forecast.
- Historically communication between SFUSD and the city has not been strong enough to ensure that potential opportunities are always identified. The new Urban Planning Committee is making progress at increasing this communication.

*Until recently SFUSD was closing schools due to excess capacity. Now SFUSD is having to consider whether it has enough capacity. It can take five years to build a new school. This requires a new type of long-term planning and thinking.*



Data Source: Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc., 2013. SFUSD is in the process of refreshing these enrollment projections to incorporate the latest information from the City about housing development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

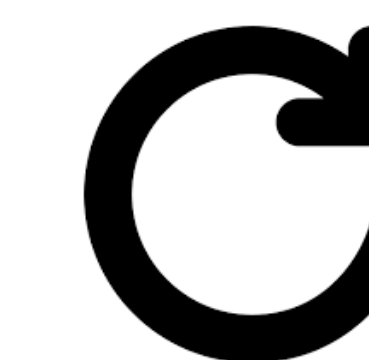
- SFUSD should consider whether it has sufficient expected growth to warrant developing its own internal planning and analysis staff.** If it is too premature to create new staff positions, SFUSD can develop a core strategic working group with existing district staff to focus on these issues. It can also continue to contract out for this expertise when needed.
- SFUSD should explore if there are ways data can be shared electronically and automatically between SFUSD and city departments.** Insufficient data sharing is often a consequence of the staff time and resources required to exchange data.
- SFUSD should continue pursuing ways to increase communication with city departments.** Regular communication and relationship building is the key to identifying shared opportunities and increasing collaboration.

## CASE STUDIES

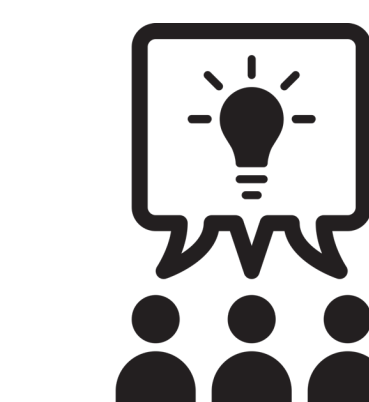
**Background:** Denver Public Schools (DPS) and Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) faced similar trends of rapid housing growth. Interviews revealed that the following practices were helpful for addressing the growth for both districts:



**1. Dedicated Staffing** - Both DPS and WCPSS created district staff positions to address forecasting, planning and analysis needs. WCPSS also contracts with experts at North Carolina State University.



**2. Real-time Data Updates** - The districts have both developed ways to have automatic electronic access to city planning data. This allows them to receive continual updates and reduces the administrative burden.



**3. Regular Meetings with City Planners** - DPS works closely with the city departments and major developers to collect information on residential development projects. WCPSS meets monthly with planners from its 13 different municipalities. It started these meetings 15 years ago as growth started to become an issue. It took several years, but eventually these regular meetings dramatically improved communication and collaboration.

*“Fifteen years ago everyone was at their own tables. Now we are all at one table.”*

- Christina H. Lighthall, Senior Director of WCPSS's Long Range Planning