



A Changing Landscape: Food Security and Services in San Francisco's Tenderloin

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Executive Summary

The Tenderloin Hunger Task Force (THTF) is a coalition of agencies working together to maximize food security, defined as 'access by all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life, in the Tenderloin and nearby disadvantaged neighborhoods in San Francisco. Member agencies include the Glide Foundation, Meals on Wheels SF, Project Open Hand, Salvation Army, the San Francisco and Marin Food Bank, St Anthony Foundation and the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC).

Purpose

This report was commissioned in 2011 through a grant provided by the San Francisco Foundation's Community Action Fund which has allowed the Task Force to take the first steps to further its mission in depth and scope. In order for the THTF to collectively improve the food security of the neighborhood, the Task Force identified the need for an assessment of to examine the state of food security for Tenderloin residents. The purpose of the report is to assess current food and nutrition needs, gaps in service delivery, demographic and social shifts, and other environmental conditions that have critical implications for food insecurity. Based on the report findings, the THTF has outlined four recommendations to increase food security and effect change at the program, local, state, and national levels.

Neighborhood

The Tenderloin is the most densely populated neighborhood in San Francisco and is linguistically and ethnically diverse. The neighborhood is home to the largest population of homeless and marginally housed individuals in the City. More than one-third of households survive on less than \$15,000 per year and more than 10% are unemployed.

Tenderloin residents suffer from detrimental health conditions that are often associated with food insecurity and poor nutrition including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancer. Over one-third of residents in the neighborhood live with disabilities, and this number is expected to grow given the aging population in San Francisco.

Barriers

Barriers to food security and nutrition are multi-faceted and exist at the individual, community, and social levels. The dynamic between barriers and their implications often reinforce the conditions that make it difficult for residents to achieve food security and nutrition short of a multi-pronged intervention. The most prevalent barriers to food security in the Tenderloin include;

- The low cost of housing and continuum of health and human services in the Tenderloin has allowed many low-income individuals and family to reside in a city with very high costs of living. Even then, more than one quarter of Downtown/Civic Center residents expend 50% or more of their monthly income on rent. Despite being housed, many live in facilities that lack cooking facilities. Most homeless individuals and families living in shelter or marginally housed situations often depend on meals from service providers.
- The Tenderloin has few affordable and nutritious food options. The neighborhood does not have a full grocery store, which means residents will purchase food staples at convenience stores or depend on community food programs such as food pantries and free dining rooms.
- At the individual level, residents lack nutrition education and have little knowledge on how to prepare foods. Language and cultural barriers also create barriers for residents who are unable to access information and knowledge on how to navigate systems and available services.

- Issues with mental health and substance abuse can diminish capacity to successfully navigate social service systems to obtain necessary food and nutrition resources and other support.

Gaps

This report shows that nonprofit programs are unable to sufficiently meet the current food and nutrition needs of vulnerable San Francisco and Tenderloin. A recent study conducted by Stanford and the San Francisco Food Bank estimates that nearly 63 million “missing” meals, meals with no identifiable source of support, in San Francisco in 2010. Yet each year, the demand for meals continues to rise, as does the cost of food; meal demand rose 27% from 2007 to 2010 and food costs rise between 4 and 6 percent annually, and at the same time agencies report greater challenges to obtaining grant funding and/or individual donations to support the increase in demand. In addition, proposed cuts in federal and state spending (i.e. SNAP, WIC and FEMA) have and will have a significant impact food security. Lastly, as San Francisco’s adult population ages, the City will experience a steep rise in seniors needing support to meet their basic needs.

Recommendations

Based on the report’s findings, the Task Force identified its top priorities for working together:

- **Address the needs of the Tenderloin’s growing population of older adults and people with disabilities.** As homeless and low-income residents continue to age and experience disproportionate health issues compounded with disability, food security and nutrition become more critical for independence. The Task Force will expand and tailor services to meet the needs of this growing resident population at the community level, and advocate for additional public benefits programs at the governmental level.
- **Improve the low knowledge of food preparation and nutrition.** Understanding that there are gaps in knowledge, skills, and resources, the Task Force recommends the continuation of nutrition and food preparation programs/projects that met the diverse needs of our neighborhood.
- **Improve access to cooking facilities among homeless and SRO residents.** The Task Force will advocate for improving access to cooking facilities among homeless and Single Room Occupancy hotel residents as well as partnering with agencies to implement strategies to improve access as a means of improving food security.
- **Strengthen interagency coordination and innovation.** Lastly, the Task Force will continue to facilitate conversations focused on improving coordination among agencies, standardize key information collected across agencies, develop a common policy agenda, continue to operate successful collaborative initiatives, increase awareness the importance of food resources through education of elected officials and the community, and to advocate for more promising public benefits programs through state and national policies.

Conclusion

This report outlines the obstacles and barriers that Tenderloin residents face to meeting their food needs and to make healthy food choices. We urge policy makers, foundation partners, community leaders, and individuals to join us to create equitable, impactful, and sustainable food system that will meet the present and future needs of San Francisco’s most vulnerable and marginalized residents.

Introduction

Established in 2007, the Tenderloin Hunger Task Force is a coalition of agencies working together to maximize food security in the Tenderloin and nearby disadvantaged neighborhoods in San Francisco.* The purpose of the Task Force is to work collectively on issues and services affecting food security by:

Communicating the priorities, policies, and funding decisions of this coalition to government agencies and other institutions.

Stimulating inter-agency communication and cooperation.

Cooperating on issues, funding, and programs affecting food security.

Educating elected officials, administrators, community leaders, representatives of the media, and the community at large about food security and hunger issues.

Maximizing effectiveness of existing programs and creating new services, when appropriate.

Member agencies include Glide Foundation, Meals on Wheels, Project Open Hand, St. Anthony's, San Francisco Food Bank, the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, and the Salvation Army. The San Francisco Departments of Human Services (CalFresh) and Public Health (Food Systems) also participate in Task Force meetings.

A changing landscape

The Tenderloin Hunger Task Force is facing a turning point. As a result of the economic downturn and its extended effects on the city, member agencies are facing increased demand for food at the same time that funding for food programs is at risk. Just recently, the San Francisco Food Bank, which supplies food for the majority of free meals in San Francisco, was denied federal funding for its food program for a second year due to new regulations which favor communities with lower employment rates, while failing to take into account issues of income inequality and concentrated poverty. Unlike last year, federal stimulus funds are not available to help make up for this funding shortfall. Meanwhile, Tenderloin nonprofits are struggling with their own funding challenges, further exacerbating the issue.

While there are some indications that the economy is gaining strength and unemployment is declining, these positive trends have had little impact on food needs in the Tenderloin. As detailed later in this report, individuals and families living in this neighborhood disproportionately struggle with poverty, homelessness, substance use, mental health, disabilities, and other health issues compared to their fellow San Franciscans. Many experience severe vulnerabilities, making it unlikely that they will become self-supporting through labor force participation. In fact, despite improvements in San Francisco's economy and a new focus on community revitalization in the Mid-Market area, recent trends suggest that food needs in the Tenderloin persist and are potentially rising.

* This report focuses primarily on the Tenderloin, but includes data on surrounding neighborhoods that are also home to poor residents including South of Market. The resulting recommendations are relevant to this broader geographic area.

The Task Force recognizes the importance of understanding the changing landscape of resident needs and working together to maximize the impact of public and private investment in this neighborhood. With this in mind, the Task Force commissioned Harder+Company Community Research, a consulting firm that specializes in social sector research and strategy, to conduct an assessment of the state of food security and nutrition among Tenderloin residents. The purpose of this assessment is three-fold: (1) to summarize food security needs and issues in the Tenderloin, (2) to identify options to improve access to healthy food, and (3) to inform Task Force planning and collaboration.

Importance of food security

Before delving into the approach and methods used for this report, it is first important to define food security and its significance. The San Francisco Food Security Task Force defines food security as *access by all people at all times to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life*.¹ Food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain. Food insecurity has a wide range of manifestations, including worrying that food will run out, buying cheaper and nutritionally inadequate food, rationing meals, or skipping meals completely.

Food security is important because it has serious implications for health. Many people understand that healthy eating and an active lifestyle are essential to health, but what happens when people are unable to consume nutritious food on a routine basis? According to a review of the literature conducted by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, food insecurity and malnutrition are associated with poorer health and correlated with increased risk of depression, poor mental health, and chronic disease.² Food insecurity among children has also been linked to poor academic outcomes. Among seniors, malnutrition and isolation contributes to slower healing rates, increased risk for medical and surgical complications, and increased length of hospital stays and readmissions.³ In the Tenderloin, where residents are disproportionately affected by a variety of health issues, access to nutritious food is absolutely vital to residents' day-to-day health and wellbeing, and residents rely profoundly on the continuum of food services provided by local agencies.

Approach and methods

Given the importance of food security, this assessment addresses the following questions:

What is the state of food security and nutrition of Tenderloin residents?

What are the demographic trends of the population and the neighborhood, and how might these impact food resources for vulnerable residents?

How do the housing assets of these neighborhoods contribute to or inhibit food security?

What activities can be implemented by members of the THTF to improve coordination, increase efficiencies, and expand impact?

Are additional resources, programs, and assets required to effectively meet the current and future food and nutrition needs of the neighborhood's most vulnerable residents?

To address these questions, Harder+Company collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data included analysis of secondary data from the US Census, the American Community Survey, and the California Health Interview Survey, as well as a review of local reports and program data maintained by local public and nonprofit agencies. Qualitative data included interviews with executive directors of Task Force member agencies and focus groups with member agency staff.

There are a few things to note about the information included in this report. *First*, there is a paucity of publicly available local data on food security. The USDA provides national estimates of food security, but this data is not available at the zip code or census tract level. *Second*, data on neighborhood demographic and socioeconomic trends from the US Census and American Community Survey (ACS) is also limited. Data from the 2010 US Census is still being released and some estimates that would have been useful for this report are not yet publicly available. ACS estimates are often used when Census data is unavailable. However, ACS data is constrained by small sample sizes at the neighborhood level, making it difficult to detect trends over time. A *third* limitation pertains to public administrative data sources. For many of these sources, data were not publicly available at the tract or zip code level. In these instances, we relied on data for the Tenderloin's planning neighborhood (Downtown/Civic Center) or supervisorial district (6), or citywide data where none of these were available. *Lastly*, it should be noted that information from interviews and focus groups with providers is self-reported, and therefore may not accurately represent community perspectives.

Organization of this report

This report begins with a summary of the state of food security in the Tenderloin by providing a profile of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of this neighborhood and highlighting barriers to food security among residents, including the connection between housing and food. The subsequent section examines the array of public and nonprofit food resources available to Tenderloin residents and their adequacy with respect to meeting neighborhood needs. The report concludes with a discussion of potential opportunities to work together across agencies as well as recommendations from the Tenderloin Hunger Task Force regarding how to strengthen coordination, increase efficiencies, and expand the impact of member agencies on behalf of neighborhood residents.

State of Food Security in the Tenderloin

What are the characteristics of Tenderloin residents, and what is the state of food security in this neighborhood? This section of the report provides an overview of resident demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and outlines barriers residents face in accessing nutritious food.

Who lives in the Tenderloin?

As a variety of data sources reveal, the Tenderloin neighborhood is a dense and economically disadvantaged neighborhood that is home to a culturally diverse population.

The Tenderloin is a densely populated area of San Francisco that is home to more men than women. According to the most recent US Census, 39,231 people live in the Tenderloin, representing approximately five percent of San Francisco's population.⁴ Although a small proportion of the city's population is in the Tenderloin neighborhood, it has a high population density of approximately 20,979 per square mile. In addition, more men (60 percent) than women (40 percent) live in the Tenderloin. This estimate however does not necessarily capture the transgender population which may require specialized services and outreach.

The Tenderloin has a similar age structure as the rest of the city of San Francisco. As shown in Exhibit 1, the majority of Tenderloin residents are adults between the ages of 25 and 64. According to the most recent US Census data, the Tenderloin's population of children and teens declined slightly over the past ten years, while its population of older adults increased slightly.⁵ San Francisco's older adult population is expected to grow by almost 20 percent over the next ten years, and it is likely that the proportion of older adults living in the Tenderloin will follow this same pattern.⁶

Exhibit 1: Population breakdown by age of Tenderloin residents

Age	Zip 94102, 2000*		Zip 94102, 2010**		San Francisco, 2010**	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Children (0-14)	2587	8.9	2,182	7.0	89,964	11.2
Teens and Youth (Age 15-24)	3480	12.0	3,723	11.9	95,224	11.8
Adults Ages 25 to 64	19,250	66.4	20,948	67.2	510,205	63.4
Older adults (65+)	3,674	12.7	4,323	13.9	109,842	13.6
Total Population	28,991		31,176		805,235	

*Source: US Census 2000

**Source: US Census 2010

The Tenderloin neighborhood is racially and ethnically diverse, with a growing number of Latino residents. The Tenderloin neighborhood is racially and ethnically diverse as shown in Exhibit 2. The Tenderloin has a higher proportion of African-American residents than the city of San Francisco overall (14 percent versus 6 percent). Asians composed a quarter of the population of the Tenderloin community. According to the most recent US Census data, the Tenderloin's population of

African-American residents declined over the past ten years, while its population of Hispanic/Latino residents increased.⁷

Exhibit 2: Race and ethnicity of Tenderloin residents compared to San Francisco

Race and Ethnicity [†]	Zip 94102, 2000*		Zip 94102, 2010**		San Francisco, 2010**	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Population	28,991		31,176		805,235	
White	13,332	46.0	14,147	45.4	390,387	48.5
Asian	7,285	25.1	7,922	25.4	267,915	33.3
Hispanic or Latino (of any race) ⁸	3,900	13.5	5,893	18.9	121,774	15.1
Black or African American	4,781	16.5	4,343	13.9	48,870	6.1
Two or more races	1,660	5.7	1,469	4.7	37,659	4.7
Some other race	1,493	5.1	2,866	9.2	53,021	6.6
American Indian and Alaska Native	317	1.1	306	1.0	4,024	0.5
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	123	0.4	123	0.4	3,359	0.4

*Source: US Census 2000

**Source: US Census 2010

Overall, Tenderloin residents are economically disadvantaged and struggle with issues of poverty and employment. Eighty-nine percent of Tenderloin residents are employed, compared to 93 percent of city residents overall. Because the employment rate excludes people who are not actively looking for work, the number of people who are not working is likely much larger. The proportion of people in the Downtown/Civic Center area living below 200 percent of the Census poverty threshold is 55 percent, the second highest rate compared to other San Francisco neighborhoods.⁹ More than one-third of Tenderloin households have incomes under \$15,000 per year, which is indicative of many residents' severe vulnerability.¹⁰ Data from Tenderloin nonprofits suggests that those who access hot meal programs are among the most vulnerable. According to recent surveys, 91 percent of St. Anthony's Dining Room guests had a monthly income of less than \$1,000 and 71 percent of Glide Dining Room guests had a monthly income of \$900 or less.¹¹ The San Francisco Human Services Agency noted that between 1990 and 2000, the number of low-income people living in the Tenderloin increased substantially, making it home to a greater number of low-income persons than the Bayview.¹² Poverty data from the 2010 Census has not yet been released, so it is not yet possible to determine whether this trend has persisted. However, a recent report released by the US Census Bureau highlights the depth of the poverty challenge in California. According to a new poverty measure that takes into account government programs designed to assist low-income people as well as a state's cost of living, the proportion of Californians living in poverty is 23.5 percent, one of the highest state rates in the nation.¹³

[†]The percentages represent the proportion of the total population that identifies with the corresponding race/ethnicity category. For the US Census people were able to mark more than one race category. Additionally Hispanic origin is an ethnicity that is calculated separate from race categories. Therefore, the percents do not add up to 100%.

Residents of the Tenderloin disproportionately suffer from serious health issues. The Community Health Status Assessment report recently commissioned by the San Francisco Department of Public Health analyzed a variety of health data for San Francisco.¹⁴ According to this analysis, Tenderloin residents are disproportionately affected by a number of health issues including low birth weight, heart disease, drug overdose, suicide, and premature death due to HIV/AIDS. The Tenderloin neighborhood area also has the highest age-adjusted rate of preventable emergency room (ER) visits. In addition to preventable ER visits, rates of ER visits for other health conditions such as alcohol abuse, adult asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, are higher in the Tenderloin compared to all of San Francisco. Finally, the Tenderloin is home to a high concentration of people living with disabilities—*more than one-third of the population*. This population will likely increase given projected growth in the number of older adults.¹⁵ These data raise concerns for Tenderloin residents given the integral connection between nutrition and health.

Violence is prevalent in the Tenderloin. During 2005-07, the Tenderloin was home to the highest number of annual physical (5,948) and sexual assaults (161) of any San Francisco neighborhood. The neighborhood was ranked third in terms of the number of homicides (19) after the Bayview and Mission.¹⁶

Barriers to food security

The demographic and socioeconomic data described in the previous section suggest a number of implications for the food security of residents. However, pinpointing the exact number of residents who lack food security is challenging. As mentioned previously, food insecurity measures are only available through the United States Department of Agriculture, and estimates are not available at county or neighborhood level. Furthermore, some have criticized USDA food insecurity rates as incomplete because they focus on measures of insecurity and anxiety rather than actual meals needed.¹⁷ Efforts are underway to improve national and regional reporting. Until better information is available, policymakers must rely on qualitative information from service providers, administrative data, and special studies to assess whether food security is adequate among Tenderloin residents.

One thing is clear, however. Tenderloin residents face a number of barriers that affect access to healthy meals. These include residential housing stock that lacks cooking facilities, a dearth of groceries and other retail outlets that sell affordable and nutritious food, and limited knowledge among residents regarding how to prepare healthy meals. It also includes challenges associated with homelessness and the cost of housing, diverse cultural and linguistic needs, and tailoring nutrition programs to the needs of particular populations. These are further described below, along with relevant secondary data.

Lack of cooking facilities. Many Tenderloin residents lack access to basic cooking facilities that allow for them to routinely prepare their own meals. This is true not only for the substantial numbers of homeless people who live in the Tenderloin, but also those housed in single-room occupancy (SRO) residential hotels which account for 51 percent of the City's SRO rooms. While residential hotels are an important resource in that they provide access to low-cost housing, many are old, in poor condition, and lack in-unit kitchens. According to the American Community Survey, a full 20 percent of the Tenderloin's occupied housing units lack complete kitchen.

facilities.¹⁸ Use of microwaves and hot plates is often restricted due to concerns about faulty wiring. Not being able to cook in one's own kitchen means that many residents must rely on congregate meals and pre-prepared foods for daily eating. Agency-level data bears this out—72 percent of St. Anthony's Dining Room guests and 55 percent of Glide Dining Room guests report not having access to cooking facilities.¹⁹

Dearth of affordable and nutritious food options. Residents also face challenges when it comes to purchasing healthy food. Overall, there is a lack of affordable and nutritious food options located in this densely populated neighborhood. Only one of San Francisco's 78 supermarkets is located in the Downtown/Civic Center area. Far more common are convenience stores which offer a limited and more expensive line of goods such as milk, bread, soda, snacks, alcohol and tobacco. The Tenderloin has the highest density of convenience stores per square mile of any neighborhood in San Francisco.²⁰ The Tenderloin is also home to a high number of food retail establishments classified as 'unhealthy' by the San Francisco Department of Public Health that accept food stamps (CalFresh).²¹ In keeping with this classification, a 2007 survey of food retailers conducted by ChangeLab (formerly Public Health Law and Policy) found that the majority of these stores do not offer fresh produce.²² Data from a recent survey of Tenderloin residents conducted by the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development confirm that there is a strong desire for a full-service grocery store among people who live in this neighborhood.²³

Low knowledge of food preparation and nutrition. According to providers, another barrier to food security is residents' level of knowledge regarding how to prepare food. One program manager observed that as a result of the instability that results from deep poverty, "A lot of people do not know how to prepare food. They have forgotten how to prepare vegetables. When we give them pasta or produce they [are unable to] prepare it." According to providers, not knowing how to prepare one's own meals contributes to reliance on congregate meal programs in favor of cooking at home. Aside from food preparation, providers also indicated that many residents lack knowledge regarding what constitutes a healthy diet and how to improve their own eating habits.

Homelessness and affordable housing. According to the 2011 homeless census, there were 6,455 homeless San Franciscans. The largest population of homeless individuals was in District 6, reporting 40 percent of the City's total. In addition, 32 percent of the City's unsheltered homeless individuals were from the Tenderloin area (1,001 out of 3,106). Though this recent report suggests that the Tenderloin's unsheltered homeless population peaked at 1,239 in January 2007 and has declined since that time, providers identified homelessness, often coupled with behavioral health issues, as a significant barrier to food security. The Tenderloin is also seen as a destination for homeless individuals, who may find other neighborhoods to sleep in at night. Even among those who are housed, providers indicated that the high cost of housing means that Tenderloin residents often face painful choices between rent, medications, and food. In fact, more than one-quarter of Downtown/Civic Center households pay gross rent that is 50 percent or more than their income.²⁴

Linguistic and cultural diversity. As described previously, the Tenderloin neighborhood is ethnically diverse. According to 2010 Census data, many residents of the Tenderloin speak

languages other than English and are foreign born. Half of residents speak a language other than English at home. Forty-three percent of Tenderloin residents are foreign-born and of these, 64 percent were born in Asia and 26 percent were born in Latin America.²⁵ Meeting the linguistic and cultural needs of such a diverse population presents many challenges. Beyond language, some residents may be hesitant to access services or enroll in public benefits programs due to concerns about their immigration. In addition, waste may occur when individuals are given groceries or meals comprised of ingredients not found in food ways from their country of birth.

Tailoring food programs to population needs. Aside from cultural and linguistic needs, providers also discussed complexities associated with customizing food programs to the other needs and circumstances of Tenderloin residents. This includes providing groceries that work for residents who have kitchen facilities and those who lack them; meeting the needs of older adults who require food that promotes easy digestion; making services available to working families after typical work hours and in child-friendly settings; and customizing food options for clients with dietary restrictions due to special health conditions. According to providers, maximizing food security in the Tenderloin requires developing an understanding of a variety of client needs and finding ways to be nimble when it comes to meeting them.

Public benefits access and eligibility. Providers also identified barriers associated with public benefits programs—specifically, the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit and San Francisco’s own Care Not Cash program. In California, people who receive SSI are not eligible for California’s version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known nationally as CalFresh. While this policy is meant to help SSI recipients by putting more cash in their hands and reducing program administrative costs,²⁶ providers believe it has a negative impact on their ability to purchase food because most of their income is devoted to housing. One provider explained, ‘If you get SSI, some of the cash is supposed to go to food, but SSI is typically \$700-1000 [per month], and rent is way more than that even if you’re living in an SRO.’ In addition, individuals convicted of drug felonies are also excluded from this program. Aside from eligibility barriers, some providers also expressed the opinion that this program is currently under-enrolled. On a more local level, the City’s Care Not Cash program, which provides homeless people with housing and services instead of monthly lump sums of cash, has helped create more affordable housing and expand access to substance abuse and mental health problems. However, some providers commented that the program leaves people little to live on once they are housed, thereby compromising their level of food security.

Other barriers. Additional barriers mentioned by providers included supporting resident safety while accessing food services (particularly for women); meeting the needs of people with physical disabilities that contribute to limited mobility; addressing stigma and shame associated with seeking services, and attending to the sense of isolation and hopelessness that exists on the part of some residents. In addition, staff of Glide and St. Anthony’s, the two largest congregate meal programs in the Tenderloin, highlighted challenges associated with serving clients who have mental health issues. Individuals struggling with mental illness can be withdrawn, appear sad or confused, or act loud. Special care and staffing may be required to help these individuals access services.

Finally, providers also discussed two broader trends with implications for Tenderloin residents' food security. First, many are concerned about the implications of development in the Mid-Market area for low-income residents. While recent development has resulted in new employment opportunities for some San Francisco residents,²⁷ there is a sense that these benefits are accruing primarily to those who live outside the neighborhood. Several providers expressed concern that development could result in further marginalization of Tenderloin residents by contributing to neighborhood gentrification increasing the cost of housing, and further isolating people living in poverty. A second trend noted by providers was more positive in nature. This had to do with increasing interest on the part of the public in urban agriculture and food justice issues. Several of those interviewed noted that community gardens, urban farmer's markets, and projects like the Tenderloin National Forest have helped to cultivate a positive vision for the neighborhood. Some see this trend as an opportunity to raise awareness of resident food needs and tap into new opportunities to increase food access.

Food Resources in the Tenderloin

What resources are available to Tenderloin residents to support their food and nutritional needs? This section of the report provides an overview of relevant public and nonprofit programs and summarizes provider perspectives on how agencies can collaborate to meet resident needs.

What public programs are available to Tenderloin residents?

Given neighborhood demographics and barriers, what types of programs are available to support the nutritional needs of Tenderloin residents? Major federal programs include food stamps, school meal programs, senior nutrition programs, and WIC, as described in the following table.

Exhibit 3: Federal nutrition programs*

Program	Benefit	Eligible Population	Tenderloin
CalFresh Food Stamps Program	Federally-funded food stamps program providing monthly electronic benefits that can be used to buy most foods at markets, and food stores. [‡]	Households with a US citizen and gross monthly income of 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Older adults on SSI are ineligible for this program, as are drug felons. Non-citizens may be eligible for the program if they meet certain immigration requirements.	7,350 people in the District 6 [§] receive food stamps representing 16 percent of all food stamps distributed in San Francisco. ²⁸ District 6 is ranked second highest in the number of residents receiving food stamps among other SF neighborhoods.
School Nutrition Program	Federally-funded program providing nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals during the school day.	Children in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions.	<i>Information not available</i>
Women, Infants and Children Program	Federally-funded program providing supplemental foods, breastfeeding and nutrition education, and referral to health care.	Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have recently had a baby; infants and children under age five. Meet income eligibility guidelines, live in SF, and have a documented nutritional or medical risk.	<i>Information not available</i>

*Though not a means-tested program, the federal Administration on Aging provides grants for congregate and home-delivered meals older adults and people with disabilities through the Elderly Nutrition Program.

‡ CalFresh participants who are elderly, disabled, or homeless may also use CalFresh to purchase prepared food from restaurants registered with the CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program.

§ District 6 includes the Tenderloin as well as Union Square, Civic Center, Mid-Market, Cathedral Hill, South of Market, South Beach, Mission Bay, North Mission, Treasure Island, Yerba Buena Island, Alcatraz, and part of Hayes Valley.

In addition to the programs highlighted above, smaller public programs exist to fill gaps for specific populations. These include the federal *Commodity Supplemental Food Program* which provides a monthly box of USDA commodities to eligible low income seniors, women, infants, and children; the federal *Child and Adult Care Food Program* which reimburses child and elder care providers for serving nutritious meals; *The Emergency Food Assistance Program* (TEFAP) which makes commodity foods available to states for distribution to soup kitchens and food banks; and the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families *After-School Snack Program* which provides snacks to low-income children in DCYF-funded after-school programs.²⁹

What nonprofit programs are available to Tenderloin residents?

In light of the array of resources described above, one might ask whether these programs are sufficient to meet the needs of San Francisco residents. In short, the answer is no. A variety of nonprofit programs also exist to meet the needs of Tenderloin residents. The Stanford Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality, in conjunction with the San Francisco Food Bank, estimated that nonprofit programs provided over 34 million meals to San Franciscans in 2009, *nearly three-quarters as many meals* as were provided through government programs.³⁰ While the study did not include neighborhood-level food estimates, it does highlight the essential role of nonprofit programs within the larger system of resources available to people living in poverty, regardless of where they live. This section of the report highlights three major types of food programs: food pantries, congregate dining rooms, and meal delivery.

Food pantries. Food pantry programs distribute groceries to individuals and families in need. Overall, the Food Bank sources 33 pantries in the Tenderloin which in turn serve nearly 3,000 households each year (Exhibit 4). Many of these programs focus on the needs of subpopulations such as supportive housing residents, older adults, people living with disabilities, and children and families. Few are open to the public at large.

Exhibit 4: Tenderloin food pantries sourced by the Food Bank

Program Type	Population	# of sites	# of households	# annual food pounds
Supportive Housing	Supportive housing residents	17	1,081	912,969
Brown Bag	Older adults & people with disabilities	8	885	522,848
Neighborhood Grocery Network	Open	3	535	383,379
Healthy Children	Children and families	4	290	226,454
Immigrant Food Assistance	Immigrants	1	200	262,409
Total		33	2,991	2,308,059

Congregate dining. Congregate dining programs offer hot meals served on site. Two major dining room programs open to the public are located in the Tenderloin—St. Anthony's, which serves an average of 2,800 meals daily, and Glide, which serves an average of 2,290 meals daily. Shelters located in the Tenderloin also offer hot meals to their residents. Among the four Tenderloin-based shelters funded by the San Francisco Human Services agency, there is capacity

to serve approximately 893 additional meals each day. In addition, smaller nonprofits offer congregate dining programs for special populations served by their agencies.

Meal delivery. Finally, home-delivered meal programs provide hot meals to people who are not able to shop and prepare meals without support. Tenderloin residents benefit from two major home-delivered meal programs—Project Open Hand and Meals on Wheels of San Francisco. Project Open Hand provided home-delivered meals to approximately 246 home-bound older adults living in the Tenderloin, while Meals on Wheels served approximately 724.³¹

One key thing to understand about nonprofit nutrition programs, regardless of program type, is that they rely heavily on foundation grants and individual donations. For example, St. Anthony's Dining Room receives no government funding, while 77 percent of Glide's meals programs and 57 percent of Meals on Wheels' annual budget is funded by private contributions. This is because government funding for nonprofit-delivered programs in San Francisco is limited to just two sources—the federal Elderly Nutrition Program and local general fund monies set aside for meal programs. In addition, nonprofit food programs often rely on significant volunteer hours to operate their programs. So, not only do nonprofits play a role in providing food to people in need, they also play an essential role in *developing private funding* and *leveraging volunteer hours* to meet community needs.

Finally, it is worth noting that many Tenderloin nonprofits providing food to those in need go beyond the traditional role of food pantries as an emergency food provider. They often use food programs as a way to engage residents in other services designed to stabilize them and connect them with government, state, and local assistance programs. By helping clients apply for and obtain other supports, Tenderloin nonprofits are able to address the underlying causes of hunger in San Francisco.

Are public and nonprofit resources sufficient to meet resident needs?

A key policy question is whether currently available programs, both public and nonprofit, are sufficient to meet Tenderloin residents' needs. Answering this question with quantitative precision poses several challenges. In terms of demand, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of residents who lack food security due to limitations in publicly available data discussed previously. On the supply side, understanding the adequacy of food resources is also complex given differences in how nonprofit programs track clients and services.

Citywide, there is a gap. Some have attempted to develop estimates of food insecurity that get at this issue on a *citywide* level. For example, a recent Stanford and San Francisco Food Bank study which looked at food security in San Francisco and Marin used the number of households living in poverty (185% FPL) as a proxy for identifying families in need of food support and then compared this to an approximation of the number of meals supported through government and nonprofit programs or purchased by residents directly. Based on this approach, the researchers estimated that there nearly 63 million “missing” meals, needed meals with no identifiable source of support, in San Francisco in 2010.³² The Food Bank estimates overall that one in four San Francisco adults has difficulties feeding themselves and their family on a daily basis.³³ The California Health Interview Survey also contains

some information on food security. According to 2009 survey data, 44 percent of San Francisco adults whose income was less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level were not able to afford enough food.

Food distribution in the Tenderloin is on the rise, yet some donors are cutting back. While these estimates are useful, they are not specific to the Tenderloin itself. One approach to understanding whether the supply of resources is adequate in relation to demand in this smaller geographic area would be to use demand for food programs as a proxy indicator. In other words, if nonprofit food programs are increasing services, then this must be because existing resources are not sufficient to meet resident needs. When asked directly about this, nonprofit representatives participating in this assessment reported that they are indeed experiencing increases in service demand. Program managers and executive staff of nonprofits reported increases between 5 and 10 percent. On a citywide basis, this trend was reflected in the Stanford/Food Bank study. According to the researchers' analysis, the number of meals provided by San Francisco nonprofits grew from 27.1 million in 2007 to 34.3 million—an increase of 27 percent. At the same time, agencies are reporting greater challenges when it comes to obtaining grant funding and individual donations.

Nutrition funding is at risk. It is also important to consider the broader funding landscape that supports Tenderloin residents struggling with food insecurity issues. According to the California Budget Project, Congress is considering deep cuts to the federal food stamps program, known as CalFresh in California, as part of the reauthorization of the Farm Bill.³⁴ Prior versions of the House bill have included proposals with potential to reduce the amount of benefits program participants and/or restrict some people's eligibility to participate in this program.³⁵ Concurrently, the WIC program remains vulnerable to sequestration, the process of automatic, across-the-board funding cuts that could occur in 2013 if Congress fails to meet its targets for reducing debt.³⁶ Changes in the availability of public and private funding have substantial impacts on the ability of nonprofits to provide services. For example, the recent cut to the San Francisco Food Bank's federal funding will likely have implications for the many nonprofits that rely on the Food Bank for supplies. Another example comes from Glide. In 2011, this organization cut its Daily Free Meals Program by nearly 200,000 meals to support the sustainability of its overall program operations.³⁷ The Daily Free Meals program currently accounts for 10 percent of the pounds of food distributed by Tenderloin organizations and is one of a handful of programs open to anyone in need of services.

How can nonprofits work together to make an impact?

The Tenderloin Hunger Task Force commissioned this report with the overall goal of improving how nonprofits providing food services could work together to meet the needs of neighborhood residents. Providers interviewed for this report were asked to contribute their ideas regarding how this might be accomplished. Suggestions included the following:

Improve *service coordination* from the perspective of clients by facilitating conversations between (a) providers of similar services (i.e., congregate meals, meal delivery) and (b) providers serving similar populations in close proximity to one another.

Increase *awareness* among policymakers and the broader public of food security issues and other challenges faced by people in poverty (i.e., perhaps through an education campaign or by working with the Food Security Task Force).

Develop a common, cross-agency *policy agenda* and prioritizing 2-3 issues for joint advocacy.

Expand *joint purchasing* efforts with agencies not yet participating in this endeavor.

Develop cross-agency *volunteer* recruitment, deployment, and/or referral efforts.

Centralize and improve *service referrals* across agencies by deciding on criteria for case manager assignment and making an up-to-date inventory of services available, potentially by working with existing citywide information and referral providers.

Standardize *information collected* and reported across agencies.

Educate *line staff* about food resources and needs, and ways that agencies are collaborating.

Coordinate *urban agriculture and food justice* efforts across agencies, rather than competing for individual funding.

Develop *nutrition education programs* that take into account cultural preferences and facilities for use across programs.

Strengthening the System

The Tenderloin Hunger Task Force commissioned this report at a turning point. Despite a changing landscape marked by improving economic conditions, Tenderloin residents still struggle to meet their daily food needs, and agencies are having a hard time obtaining private funding to support their work.

Recognizing the need to strengthen coordination, increase efficiencies, and expand the impact of member agencies on behalf of neighborhood residents, members of the Task Force met over the course of several sessions to review the findings presented in this report. Below are the Task Force's top priorities for working together to strengthen the system of food supports for Tenderloin residents.

1. Address the needs of the Tenderloin's growing population of older adults and people with disabilities. The number of older adults in the Tenderloin is expected to grow 20 percent. More than one-third of people living in this neighborhood have a disability, and this proportion is likely to grow further as the neighborhood ages. This combined population faces multiple barriers to meeting their food needs including coping with mobility issues, isolation, and fixed incomes. Individuals who are on SSI are particularly vulnerable given that this group is not eligible for CalFresh food stamps. To ensure access to food for this group, the Task Force recommends the following program and policy steps.

New Programs/Resources	Local Policy	State & National Policy
Expand home-delivery groceries. Customize food menus. Provide special seating for older adults and people with disabilities.	Develop local program to supplement SSI.	Advocate for expansion of public benefits and support including expansion of CalFresh without reducing current benefit payment.

2. Improve residents' knowledge of food preparation and nutrition. Many of the residence in the Tenderloin do not have readily available access to fresh and nutritional food, and when available many do not have the knowledge of how to prepare in SRO facilities.

New Programs/Resources	Local Policy	State & National Policy
Provide Nutrition Education. Provide Guidance to Families Provide nutrition/food budget/cooking (microwave, crockpot) classes at senior centers and housing sites.	Develop school based programs	

3. Improve access to cooking facilities among homeless and SRO residents. Providers who were interviewed for this report identified lack of cooking facilities as a major barrier to food access that results in reliance on congregate meal programs and pre-prepared foods for daily eating. The Task Force identified multiple ways to address this community need.

New Programs/Resources	Local Policy	State & National Policy
Expand access to publicly available microwaves in group housing.	Advocate for policies that expand to cooking facilities	n/a access
Develop and share nutrition and food preparation education targeted to those without cooking facilities.	Partner with Mayor's Office of Disability to obtain funding.	
Expand resident participation in CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program.		
Train staff about the lack of cooking facilities.		
Partner with people already working on housing improvement issues.		

4. Strengthen interagency coordination and innovation. Task Force members identified a number of ways to improve collaboration and services across organizations, including joint purchasing, education, and policy advocacy. The following steps rose to the top as opportunities to work together on cross-agency issues.

New Programs/Resources	Local Policy	State & National Policy
Facilitate conversations among agencies providing similar services regarding how they can coordinate efforts.	Increase policymaker awareness of food needs and the importance of food resources.	Increase policymaker awareness of food needs and the importance of food resources.
Expand joint purchasing efforts.	Develop a common, cross-agency local policy agenda.	Develop a common, cross-agency state and national policy agenda.
Develop cross-agency activities designed to improve residents' knowledge of nutrition, food budgeting, and cooking (i.e., education in schools, senior centers and housing sites).	Have a public affairs person on the task force, to address role Jim used to play.	Advocate for food stamp enrollment that is concurrent with Medicaid enrollment.
Standardize information collected		Leverage health care resources from health reform for food.

The recommendations in this report will take time to accomplish. Discipline will be required on the part of member agencies to focus on the big picture and on common goals. Flexibility and a willingness to partner will also be necessary to achieving success. The Task Force believes that, taken together, implementation of these recommendations would represent a major step toward addressing changing community needs and enabling a strong system that responds to available resources.

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Jean Cooper, *Glide*

Monique Rivera, *Tenderloin Hunger Task Force*

Paula Jones, *San Francisco Department of Public Health*

Endnotes

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⁵ These estimates are based on 2010 US Census data for zip code 94102, which includes the Tenderloin as well as Hayes Valley and North of Market, because tract-level data are not yet publicly available.

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⁸ The 2000 Census reports that people of Hispanic origin may be of any race and were asked to answer the question on race by marking one or more race categories shown and their percentage is calculated independently from the other race categories. Hispanics were asked to indicate their origin in the question on Hispanic origin, not in the question on race, because in the federal statistical system ethnic origin is considered to be a separate concept from race.

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- ²⁶ According to the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), the purpose of this policy is to reduce costs associated with SNAP program administration. See for example this CWDA fact sheet from May 20, 2011: <http://www.cwda.org/downloads/publications/foodstamps/Food-Stamp-Fact-Sheet-with-Addendum-May-20-2011.pdf>.
- ²⁷ See, for example, recent coverage in the New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/05/us/san-francisco-tech-boom-brings-jobs-and-worries.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>) and Wall Street Journal (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444506004577615253293219254.html>).
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