Affordable Housing/ Vivienda Asequible, Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) & Print Collective, Clarion Alley Mural Project, San Francisco, 2016

LTF
LATINO TASK FORCE

2022

Street Needs Assessment + El Proyecto Dignidad

Calle 24 Latino Cultural District
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
The Gubbio Project — Sacred Sleep · Community · Sanctuary
Coalition on Homelessness San Francisco
Dolores Street Community Services
San Francisco Night Ministry
United to Save — The Mission
City and County of San Francisco — Office of Supervisor Hillary Ronen
Saint Mary & Saint Martha Lutheran Church — Santa María y Santa Marta Iglesia Luterana
SFDEM — San Francisco Department of Emergency Management

LATINO TASK FORCE

Latino Task Force Mission District Street Needs Assessment Report

+

El Proyecto Dignidad: Plan For Transitioning The Unhoused Into Housing In The Mission District

June 16, 2022

Table of contents

Introduction

Being keenly aware of the growing grim realities facing the unhoused within our community, The Latino Task Force employed its Street Needs Assessment Committee to obtain the data and synthesize it into this historic community-based assessment. This campaign was executed in partnership with city government, unhoused neighbors, community volunteers from non-profit organizations, faith groups, and caring individuals. Many of these participating individuals, it must be noted, are themselves at risk of losing their homes, or have already been forced out of San Francisco as a result of the gentrification and displacement-fueling public policies that have driven so many working-class and low-income Black, Indigenous, and Brown community members from the city.

Following on the heels of the success of similar effective district-wide partnerships such as the precedent-setting test and vaccine sites launches, the nurturing food and service hub initiatives, and the unique collaboration of more than 45 community-based organizations who joined forces in the Mission to help quell the COVID-19 pandemic, garner support for immigrant families, and advocate for the needs of people of color in general during the viral crisis, this hands-on homelessness assessment you are reading brought together the work of more than 80 volunteers.

These dedicated community volunteers delivered care packages, COVID tests, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to 209 unhoused neighbors in the Mission District, and engaged with 110 of them to learn about their experiences, life goals, and personal struggles. It is the hope of this committee that in having done this, we can now fully document the human rights abuses against these unhoused residents that so many of us have witnessed, detail the impacts of these abuses, and in the final section of this report present an effective plan that will help the city pivot to a holistic solution focused on securing supportive and stable housing for these houseless neighbors who refuse to be pushed out of the city they love, even if it means having to living on the streets for now.

We believe that this report from the Street Needs Assessment Committee and the ensuing Proyecto Dignidad (Dignity Project) plan to transition the homeless into housing will surprise, enrage, and sadden many readers. And hopefully it will also compel some readers into action – demanding that the city of San Francisco do better for its most vulnerable residents.

The first step needed in the direction of corrective action is for the city to adopt the plan for effective action laid out in this report, and in doing so bring immediate relief to these unhoused victims of destructive and racist housing and associated real estate practices. In the tradition of the Latino Task Force common practice of working together in a community-led, community-driven, and community-implemented partnerships with government and institutions, we believe these steps towards critical, holistic relief can and will be done if we work hand in hand to make them happen.

“Si Se Puede!”

Housing is a human right. And it is unconstitutional to punish an individual for being homeless and lacking this most basic human right. We believe firmly that a city’s success in housing its residents, particularly its most vulnerable, must be the measure that defines the health of that city.

Photo: Robert Gumpert

Executive Summary of Findings

The true health of a city is made evident by the living conditions of its most vulnerable residents. The following report takes an in-depth and personal look at the lives of our unhoused neighbors in the MIssion District. It tells their stories and provides direct guidance towards critical solutions. It introduces an effective action plan, and urges the city to adopt this plan in order to assist those unhoused in finally overcoming the relentless trauma of living on the streets.

The true health of a city is made evident by the living condition of its most vulnerable residents.

Collective Trauma

The trauma of the unhoused is compounded daily through institutional abuses and the violence of city government "sweeps" – the practice of ordering untrained city workers to move people from their current location and/or confiscate and dispose of the few personal belongings and medications of these homeless residents. This displacement is often done at times of day that are the most disruptive to the mental health of the unhoused residents, frequently the early morning hours when these exhausted residents have survived the many dangers of the night and finally drifted off to some much-needed sleep. These sweeps often include the destruction of their tents and makeshift shelters.

The indignity of these sweeps is exacerbated by the failure of the city workers performing these operations to offer any substantial supportive services or stable housing opportunities to the unhoused they are performing these aggressive actions against. The operations these city workers are performing is in direct violation of San Francisco city policy requiring that these items be "bagged and tagged" for future recovery. This nearly daily re-traumatizing of our unhoused neighbors is happening on the streets of the city we all love and call our home, San Francisco.

Community-Led, Community-Driven, Community-Implemented

The March 2022 study that underlies this report is based on a methodology prepared by experienced professionals from the Dolores Street Community Services, The Coalition on Homelessness, the San Francisco Aids Foundation, Santa Maria y Santa Marta Shelter, The Gubbio Project, San Francisco Night Ministry, Calle 24 Latino Cultural District, United to Save the Mission, and the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management. This methodology was put into action by survey teams after dialogue with a number of additional city agencies from Mission District Supervisor Hillary Ronen's office to the SF Healthy Streets Operations Center, as well as the 15 committees of the Latino Task Force. It brought many parts of our community together to engage and learn from the testimony of neighbors who make up the most vulnerable part of our community.

The community-led process of creating this report with our unhoused neighbors has only revealed to us even further that, unhoused or housed, we really are all deeply connected. When a part of our community is being subject to systemic violence while already at one of the most difficult points in their lives, it is traumatic for all of us.

This core reality – that we really are all deeply connected – became clearer than ever as a result of these very human interactions between our housed neighbor volunteers – many of whom have been forced to live outside the city – interviewing our displaced neighbors who are now living on the streets. The resulting report reveals that these people who have been pushed out onto the sidewalks are, in fact, deeply rooted in this city that they and their families have long called home. They were born and raised here, worked or still work here, went or still go to school here, belong to communities of faith, have relatives and friends here, and see their community as a system of support.

Our Barrio

The multi-ethnic cultural reality of the Mission District leads migrant community members to stay in their neighborhood where they can more easily identify with one another and are more likely to be able to obtain services and information in their own language. They look for ESL classes, tend to medical and spiritual needs, shop for food and supplies, and look for work in this neighborhood where they find a language and cultural identification. The Mission District becomes their home and their universe.

It is, therefore, natural that when these existing Mission residents are evicted, lose their jobs, or experience a sudden trauma that leads to homelessness, that they stay close. This might mean living in their car, on somebody's couch, or out on the street in this same neighborhood. This choice to make a nearby sidewalk his new home was the case for Luis Góngora Pat, a Mayan neighbor living on a Shotwell Street sidewalk, needlessly murdered by the police in 2015 just two blocks from his former home where he had recently been evicted.

En Honor de Luis D. Góngora Pat, Twin Walls, Clarion Alley Mural Project, San Francisco, 2018

The lack of adequate accessible information in their original language and failing to seek out services due to a perceived stigma around obtaining these services are two key cultural examples of how language and immigration-related issues can lead many of our unhoused Mission residents to continue their struggle on our streets, still outside of the system. These disincentives are additionally coupled with the fear of becoming a public charge – taken into care by the city against their will but "for their own good."

Our Unhoused Neighbors

This street survey did not reveal, however, powerless and passive victims of these events that led to their homelessness. Instead, it found creative and resourceful human beings continually re-exploring ways to maintain their dignity and searching for ways to heal and thrive. Despite receiving recent blows pushing them out onto the street, often resulting from the gentrification and

displacement pressures supported by the city's housing and real estate policies, we found an unhoused population that was pointedly asking for support to lift themselves up from the sidewalks. The testimonies of these brave residents affirm and instruct us that low-barrier access to direct resources; increased investment in city initiatives for increasing housing affordability in the Mission and the city at large; equitable access to services; and adopting new, more humane standards for city interactions that better meet their needs are, in fact, the keys to success.

Additionally, a brief glance at the collected survey data shows us quite plainly that the commonly held idea that unhoused neighbors do not want to be housed is delusional. Survey responses reveal an extremely high number of the unhoused not yet on a waiting list for coordinated entry to shelter or housing – more than 83%. And yet nearly 100% of those surveyed affirmed their continued search for access to supportive housing and services. Testimonies repeatedly pointed to the city's failure to provide a "no wrong door" system of access – a scenario where no matter what organization an unhoused person might approach seeking services of any kind, it could become the beginning of their journey into housing. The need for this kind of wide-open accessibility was clearly identified as a dire problem requiring an immediate solution..

Shelters, however, are perceived by many as unsafe congregate settings that lack proper oversight and culturally responsive support systems. The failure to provide safe and culturally-appropriate shelters creates a perception of danger for many that can result in our unhoused neighbors choosing to stay on the street, especially when considered in the context of some very real threats that are often experienced in these settings such as physical and psychological abuse.

Effective Solutions to End and Heal Institutional Racialized Violence

Given the institutional racialized violence and the limited access to services experienced by unhoused neighbors, and per requests from the city and the office of the district supervisor who initiated the process of the assessment committee, **the Street Needs Assessment Committee report ends with a list of recommendations and an effective plan for dealing with this trauma.**

In alignment with the practices and goals of the Latino Task Force, these critical study results point the way to a low-barrier approach to solving this crisis in the form of professionals partnering with the community to respond directly to the needs of people who have formed these encampments to protect themselves. The plan, El Proyecto Dignidad (The Dignity Project), will serve as a living document to guide the city and community partners in the execution of a well-prepared, effective approach to housing the unhoused - giving notice of the operation, providing proper care of personal items taken into custody, providing clinical assessment and services, offering temporary shelter options, and then completing the final move into stable housing. This four-week, step-by-step set of guidelines has been shown to have 100% success in a similar San Francisco pilot,[1] and can easily be implemented once again with the expectation of successful results.

We also recognize in the survey responses a clear call for formal "trauma-informed" training for the city workers who are hired to respond to our unhoused neighbors, many gathered in encampments they organized out of a dire need for personal safety. Without this informed training in place, we see that further city-induced violence only creates a rising spiral of stress and pain. This, in turn, undoubtedly leads some on the streets to seek out coping mechanisms such as self-medicating. As one day laborer told us, "Drugs don't take people to the street, the harshness of living on the streets leads some people to drugs to cope with the violence."

It will be critical that these unhoused neighbors are accompanied at every step on this journey into housing with the services they will need to succeed in their new placements, whether it be short or long term. **We are confident we can all rise to the occasion together as a city, offering our fellow citizens in great need what we already freely offer so many tourists and corporations: a warm embrace, relevant information, access to resources.**

The LTF's recent COVID-19 experiences and the task force's proven results obtained through operating testing sites, food hubs, and providing small business support programs, have taught us firsthand that compassion is practical, intelligent, and produces optimal results. We practice partnership with government and industry in an effective manner that is community-led, community-driven, and community-implemented. It is based on mutual respect, "helping the city get better at being better" at these critical operations, moving us all away from violence and towards a shared wholeness.

Too often, unthoughtful planning has pitted "realism" or "practicality" against compassion, as if one is constructive tough love and the other is merely naive good intentions. It is our practical experience that both of these interpretations are fantasy. **The healing for our unhoused neighbors is our healing as a larger community.**

The Latino Task Force

The San Francisco Latino Task Force-COVID-19 Response (LTF) was formed in March 2020 during the first week of shelter-in-place.The mission was to immediately address the needs of the Latinx population who predictably would be the hardest hit with the highest test positive rates, the loss of income, at-home distance learning, and potential housing evictions. The LTF responded by activating multiple resources and working committees to address the urgent emerging crisis.

The LTF, is a city-wide collective of over 40 community-based organizations (CBOs) with 15 active committees working closely with a number of city officials and departments. As an action-oriented initiative, each partner must be committed to do the work in a respectful and participatory manner, offering and acting on solutions, and keeping a clear focus on their service to the community.

LTF
LATINO TASK FORCE

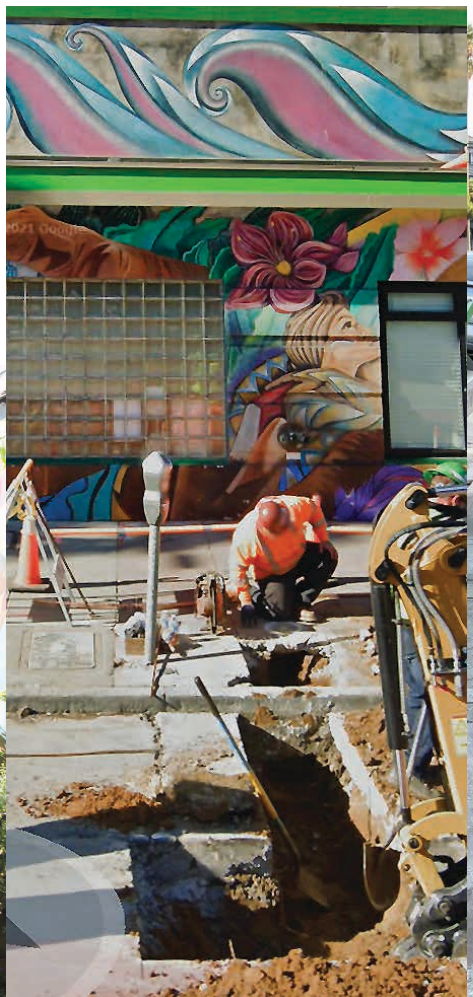
What Is The Street Needs Assessment Committee?

The Street Needs Assessment Committee is comprised of organizations working on housing and homelessness issues in San Francisco, a number of whom focusing their work in the Mission District. The committee is also made up of representatives from the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management and the office of Mission District Supervisor Hillary Ronen.

Created in May 2020, the Street Needs Committee performed its first assessment of Mission District residents living on the street, May 27-28, 2020, to document the specific needs of this population. From the outset of the work the committee's work has been to create a living document that provides guidance to move the city towards healing–"helping the city get better at being better." The resulting document provided a set of recommendations and plans guided by the same community-led, community-driven, community-implemented practices that drive all of the LTF committees and provide the ongoing framework for its partnerships with the city.

This first assessment has supported, and will continue to support, the Latino Task Force and participating organizations in advocating for direct and life-changing outcomes for our neighbors living on the street. This resulted in permanent water stations, additional Pit Stop toilets and handwashing stations, and provided the backbone for our ongoing advocacy for further Shelter in Place hotels and permanent housing placements.

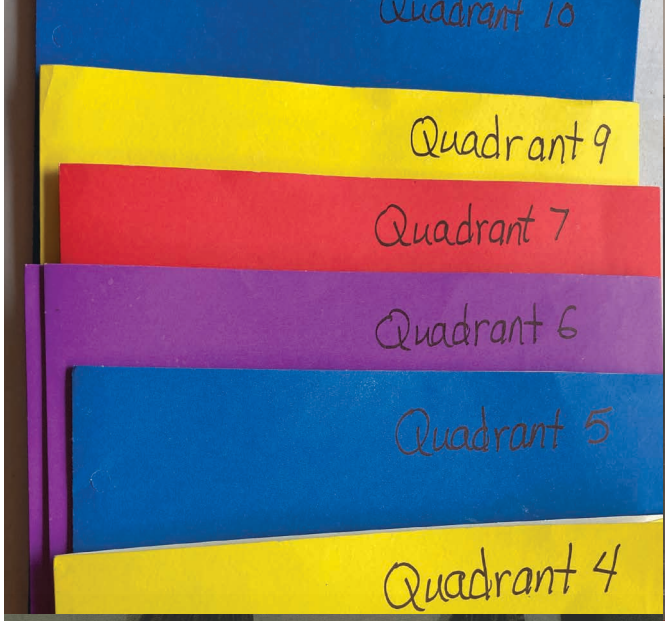
Not only did the outcomes of the first Street Needs assessment affect the day-to-day living situations and long-term outcomes of individuals living on the street in the Mission, it resulted in very direct and life changing outcomes for the entire community. The committee continued meeting during the year to advocate for additional support for our unhoused neighbors, such as calling for a bag and tag policy for property confiscated from tents, information for our unhoused neighbors to be posted in pertinent languages, clear calendar and cleaning procedures established, and trauma-informed training for city workers dealing with unhoused neighbors.

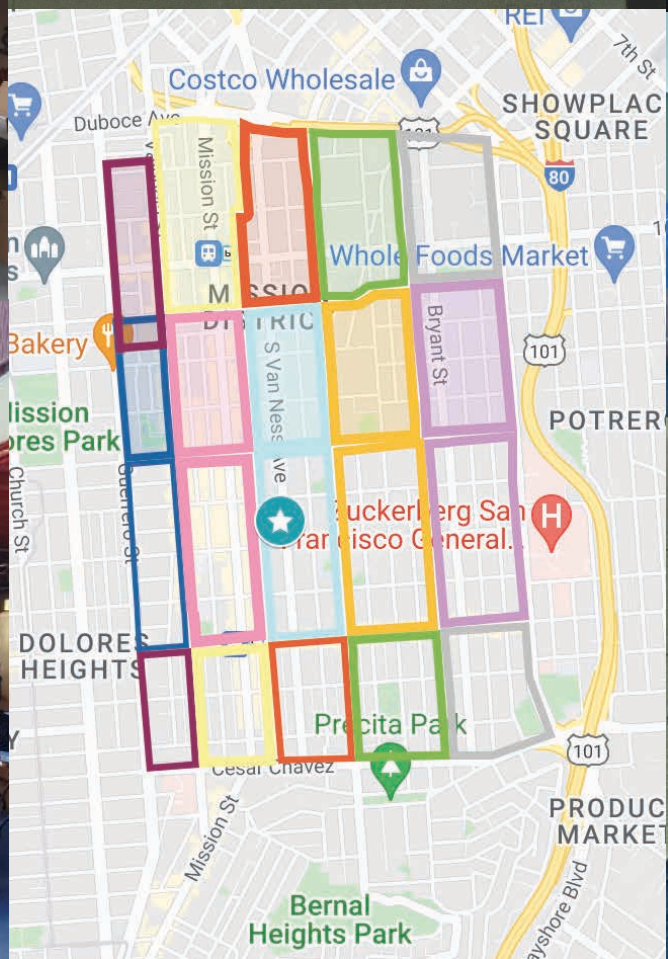


Goals Of The 2022 Second Street Needs Assessment

In line with the Latino Task Force mission of addressing the needs of the Latinx population through community-led solutions, the 2022 survey focused on gathering additional data that was not part of other outreach efforts and is not being collected or reflected in other studies, with a specific focus on the unhoused neighbors in the Mission. It is vital that as a next step advocacy and policy now be derived directly and accurately from the complete picture painted in these survey results of those without homes–who they are, how they have been connected to San Francisco during their lives, what support could have altered their path towards living on the streets, what their experience has been trying to survive in our community, and what is most needed for them to successfully live their lives with house keys firmly in hand.

The intention of this effort is to provide a practical and effective plan to allow our unhoused neighbors the opportunity to be sheltered with the dignity each person deserves.





Methodology

On two cold days in early March, 2022, more than 80 volunteers set out on a late Thursday morning and the following Friday afternoon to engage with these remarkable survivors who currently live the majority of their lives on our Mission District sidewalks.

Teams of four, including a designated leader, divided up into 20 quadrants drawn up on a Mission District map where they engaged unhoused neighbors in this survey. The Mission territory covered was between Division Street to the north and Cesar Chavez Street to the south, and between Guerrero Street to the west and Potrero Avenue to the east

Most of these volunteers work day jobs with non-profit organizations that provide services to and advocacy for our unhoused neighbors. Volunteers also came from faith communities in the area. The remaining participants were those living near these unhoused residents who hoped their participation would bring awareness and offer solutions for the dire challenges and abuses they have witnessed these people endure in their daily lives.

To prepare for the survey, the volunteers attended one of two hour-long virtual orientations, offered simultaneously in Spanish and English. These sessions were recorded as well, allowing those who could not attend live an opportunity to become orientated and participate. Topics covered included the purpose of the survey, how the survey walk through would be organized, helpful strategies for approaching our unhoused neighbors, what to do if you encounter someone on the street who is non-responsive, what to commonly expect in these interactions, and a discussion of the survey questions themselves. This discussion of survey questions focused particularly on how to ask questions in order to encourage full participation and elicit answers that would most accurately tell the person's story.

On the days of the assessment, the volunteers received a quick-result COVID test administered by seasoned LTF Community Wellness Team Workers, sat down for a meal together, received some last-minute instructions, and gathered into their assigned teams before heading out.

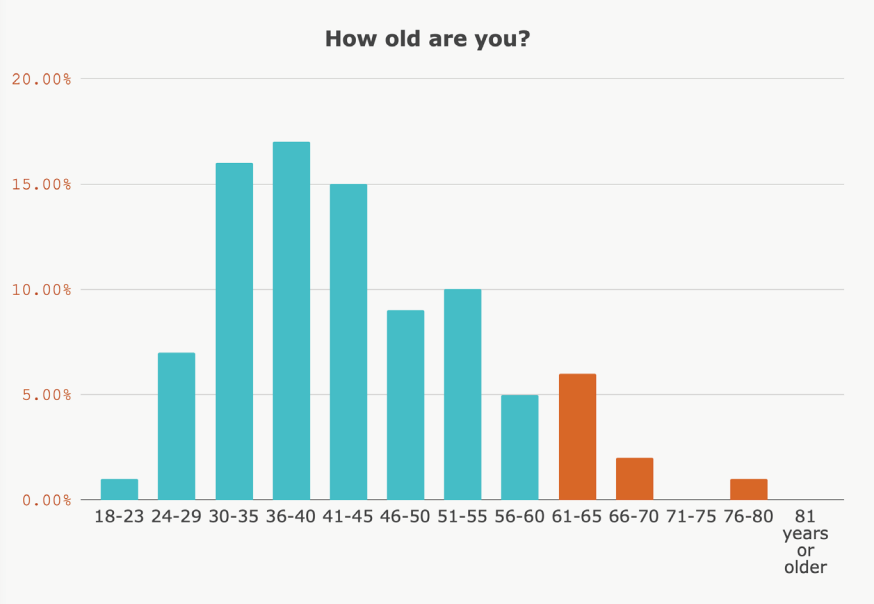
Volunteers carried hygiene kits that were purchased and assembled by the assessment committee organizers to give to any unhoused person they encountered, regardless of whether or not that person had the time or interest in participating in the survey. The volunteers also carried Narcan in the event overdoses were encountered, as well as a list of community resources available to people without traditional homes that might assist those they interviewed. Over the course of the two days a total of 209 unhoused people were encountered, with 110 participating in the survey.

Demographics

Age

Based on historical data from annual Point In Time surveys, it was anticipated that the majority of unhoused individuals would fall within the ages of 30-45 years of age. Given that unhoused individuals over 60 years of age were prioritized for Shelter In Place Hotels during the pandemic, it was alarming to see that there were still many elders living on these sidewalks and disheartening to learn that for some it was because they had just recently lost their housing during the pandemic.

Of this group of elders living on the street, 21% lost their homes via no fault eviction (Ellis Act, Owner Move-In) and 50% said that rental assistance would have prevented their homelessness.

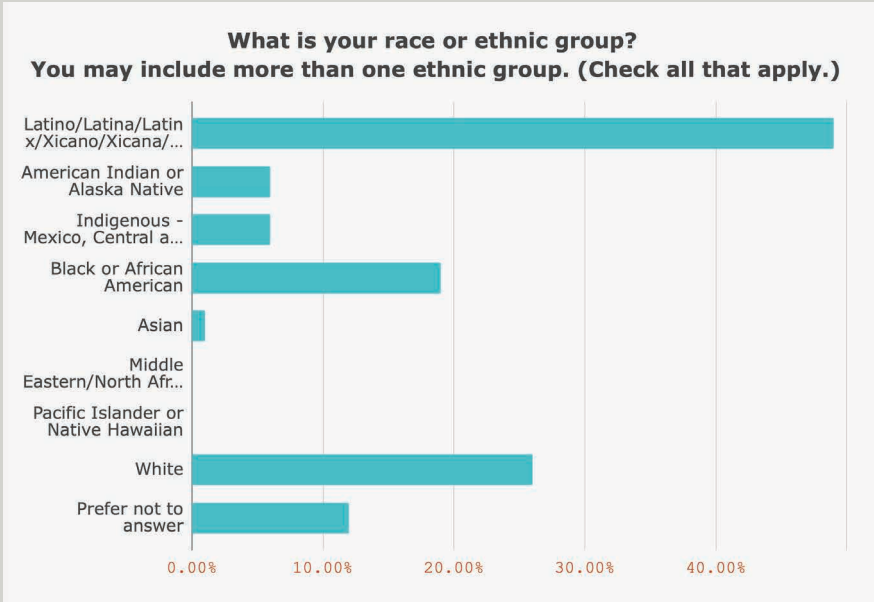


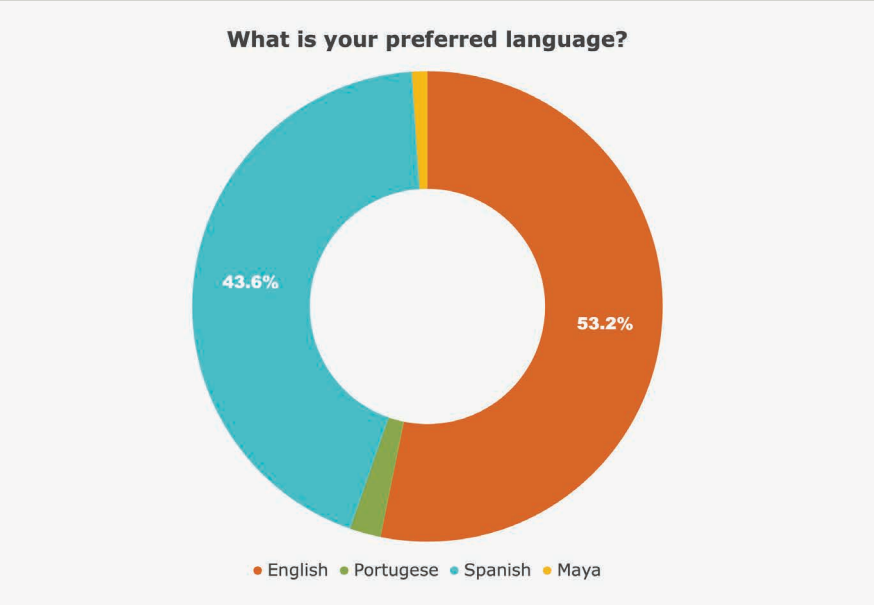
Race And Ethnicity

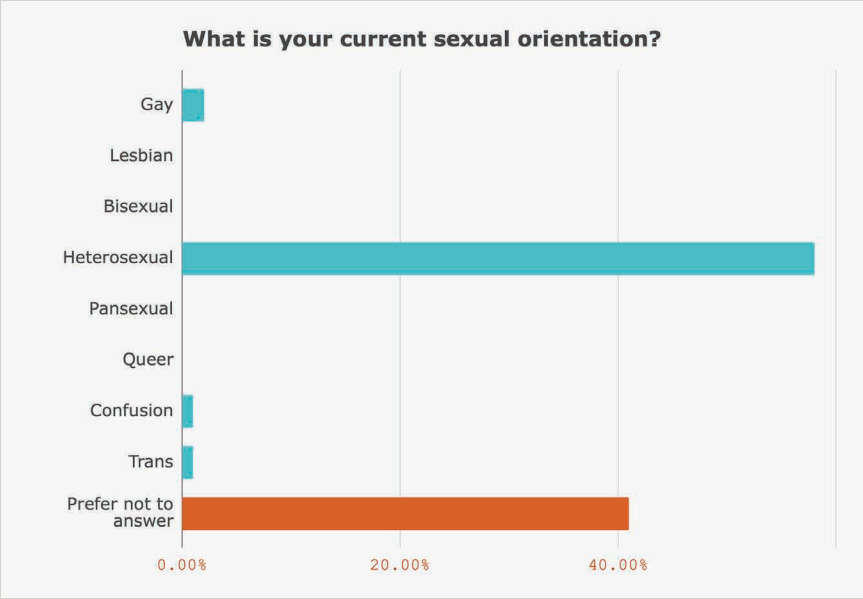
Of the individuals surveyed, 68% were people of color and 59% were Indigenous orand Latinx. Based on past experiences of the members of the Street Needs Assessment committee, these numbers were in line with expectations for a community of color where individuals feel safe and supported by familiar language, culture and immigrant support networks that have long been established, resulting in them staying at the heart of their community, even if now living on the street.

However, within this greater number, the assessment teams only encountered 5% of individuals that identified as American Indian, which was a surprising under-representation from what was expected. It has been documented in the most recent US Census and Point in Time count data that American Indians are 17 times more likely to be found among the unhoused population than in the general population,[2] and the 2019 citywide PIT count found 400 single-race American Indians living on the streets.[3]

From 1934 to 1968, the Federal Housing Administration carried out a policy of "redlining" which prevented American Indians from renting or buying housing in most of San Francisco. Under redlining, American Indians were forced into the North Mission neighborhood, a high-risk zone which became known as "The Red Ghetto."[4] Based on both the historical survey and census data, our expectation was that survey teams would interview a significantly larger number of American Indians than the six they interviewed.



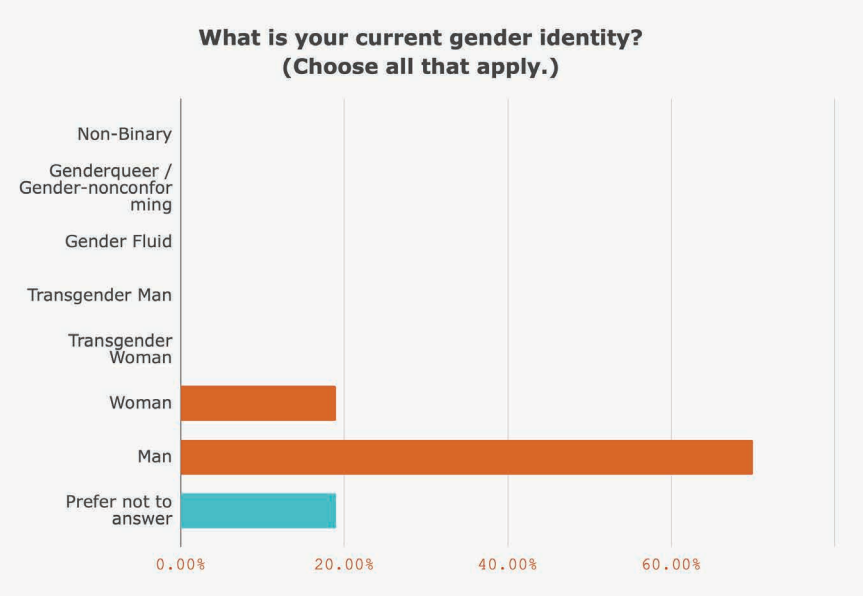




Sexual Orientation

Given the long history of discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ+ community, and the fact that many have come to San Francisco to escape persecution for their sexual orientation, it was not surprising that a substantial number of individuals surveyed did not feel comfortable sharing their sexual orientation. Of the 40% that preferred not to answer, 63% were persons of color, which may in part reflect cultural stigma sometimes associated with certain sexual orientations.

Anti-trans discrimination, legal and language barriers, and coslty and competitive rental markets can make safe housing nearly impossible for Translatinas to obtain.[6]



Gender Identity

Findings from this assessment showed only one respondant identified as a member of the transgender community in response to the Sexual Orientation question, and none identified as Translatinas.

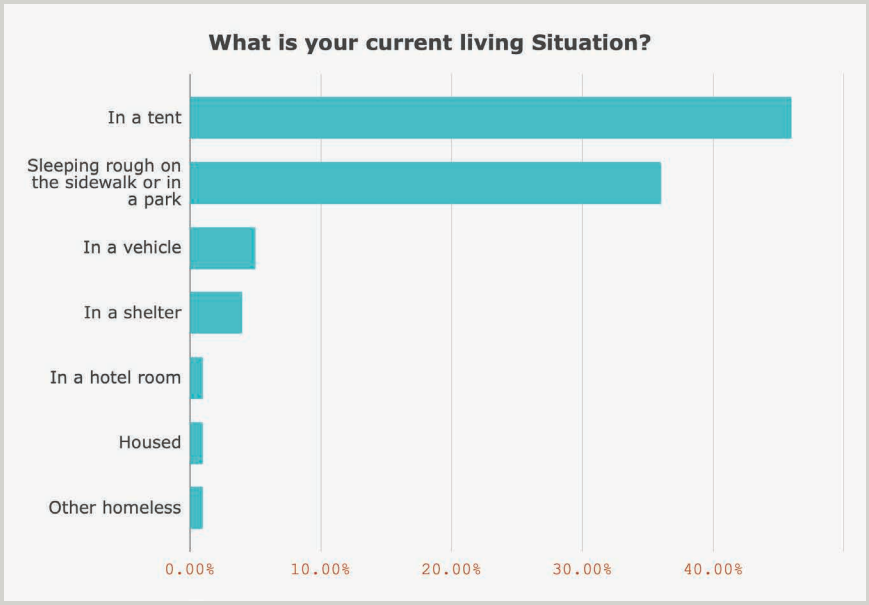
Given that the Mission District has long been the home to the Translatina community (transgender women of Latin American descent), the LTF Street Needs Assessment committee was also surprised by this finding. As the committee wanted to make sure that the needs of this population were represented in this report, despite the very surprising lack of on-the-ground representation, the committee reached out to the Mission-based El/La Para Translatinas, who recently completed a study in partnership with the St. James Infirmary and UC Berkeley entitled *Preventing Homelessness Among Translatinas in a Sanctuary City.* This lack of encounters during surveying could have been coincidental and subsequent surveys may shed more light on this in the future.

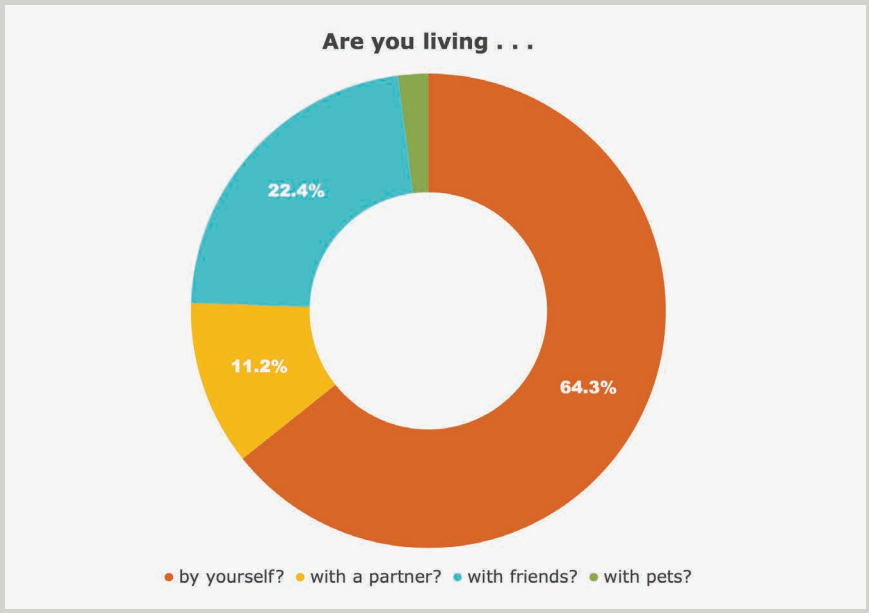
The estimated rate of homelessness among transgender people in San Francisco far exceeds that of the general population, with half of transgender people having experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.[5] Anti-trans dicrimination, legal and language barriers, as well as ongoing exposure to violence lead many to avoid publicly identifying themselves for fear of risking further trauma and exacerbating the barriers that keep them unhoused.

Household Status

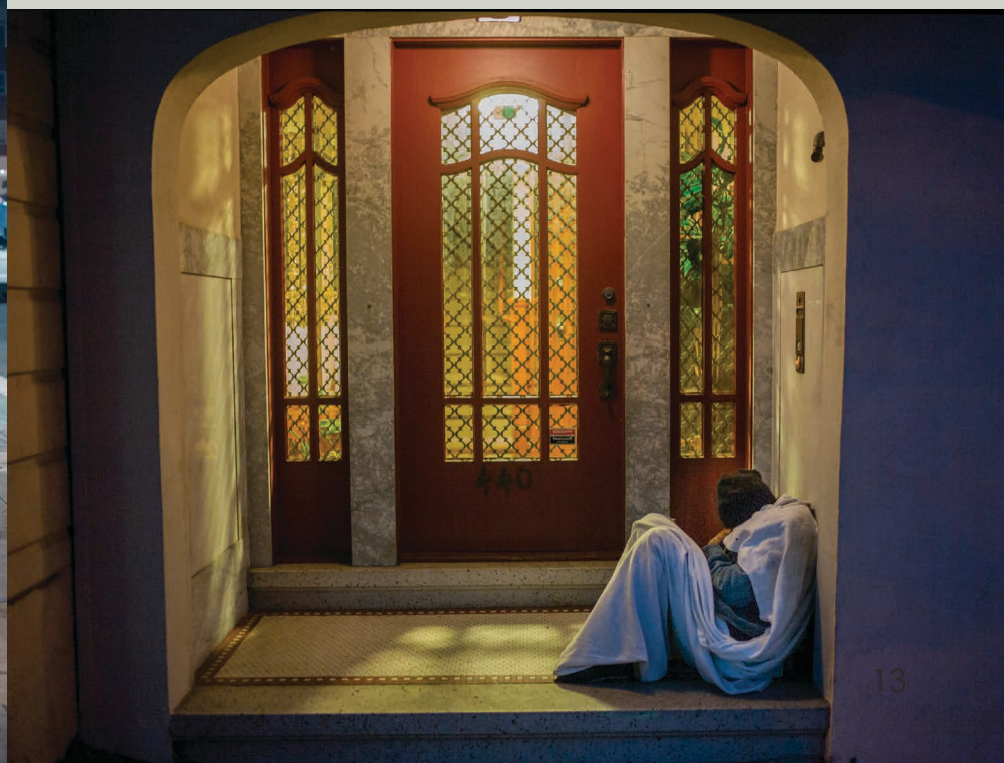
Of the individuals surveyed, 38.3% were sleeping rough (without any shelter) on the sidewalk or in a park, largely due to the fact that living in a tent makes them more vulnerable to sweeps. Perceived as an irritating visual representation of homelessness to neighbors and city officials, city operations have become hyper-focused on the counting of tents and targeting of them for removal, resulting in harmful health impacts[7] when individuals have their tents confiscated and destroyed, leaving them fully unsheltered. Once their tent is taken, most do not have the ability to replace it and also fear that in replacing the tent they will make themselves a target again for further sweeps.

The large majority of unhoused individuals surveyed were living entirely alone, more than 63%, without the support of friends or a partner. Only 2% had a pet for company. Similar to the issue of tents, living in groups of people and with pets, while an effective mutual support system, also leads to increased visibility and often further targeting for harassment and sweeps.





All Photographs of Neighbors Sleeping Rough, Robert Gumpert[8]



Findings: Learning More About Our Unhoused Neighbors

Who Are They?

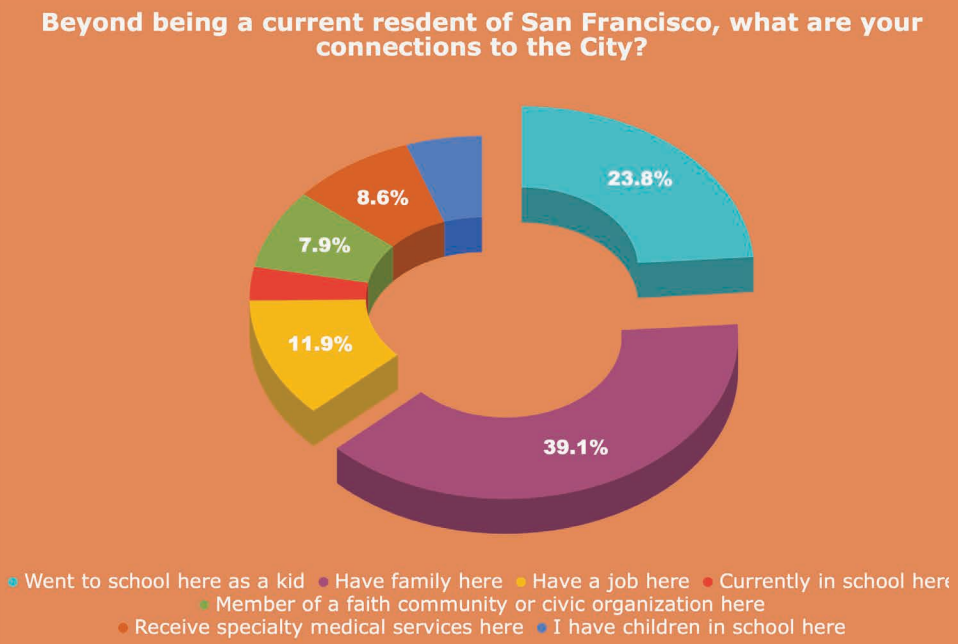
The information gathered in this survey revealed that our unhoused neighbors in the Mission have deep social and cultural connections to San Francisco and the Mission community. The majority grew up in San Francisco, or have family in the city. Many of these individuals have maintained their connection here despite being homeless for more than 14 years.

One of the most striking findings of this survey was the number of individuals who lost their housing during the COVID-19 pandemic – **more than a quarter of those surveyed said that they lost their housing during 2020 and 2021 and were forced to live on the street.** The majority of the individuals in this group moved from housed living to street living in 2020, the first year of the pandemic.

"I need help. I need support. I need housing, 'cause I cannot handle [it] myself. And I... I really need help. I need somewhere to stay. I need housing or somewhere to stay 'cause I live in the streets."

- Anonymous (unhoused participant)

Connections To San Francisco



When we look at connections unhoused residents have to San Francisco, more than 85% percent reported having roots to the city. Twenty percent of these individuals grew up in San Francisco, more than thirty percent have family here, and many work and continue their education here. Contrary to the popular mythology that our unhoused neighbors are not connected to the city, we see that they are deeply connected by family, childhood, communities of faith, and all of the same things that connect housed residents to the place they call home.

While the assessment teams did not encounter any children during the survey, they did encounter unhoused parents whose children attend school in San Francisco.

The data showed that a significant number of unhoused residents have been long term residents of the city with 20.5% stating they attended school in San Francisco. Twenty-six percent of respondents reported they had become unhoused during the first two years of the COVID pandemic, 2020-2021. Not surprisingly, there was a lower but still significant number of long-term unhoused, with 14% stating they last had stable housing 14 or more years ago.

Sanctuary City

Poster: Patrick Piazza, Poster Syndicate

San Francisco has long been a place for those seeking sanctuary in our communities where they have established family, where their culture and language are celebrated, and where they can seek refuge from persecution, particularly in the case of the city's reputation as supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. When these refugees become displaced to the street, they continue to remain and find sanctuary within the San Francisco community that first became their home.

Long before it officially became a Sanctuary City in 1989, San Francisco was welcoming large numbers of immigrants from Latin America who were fleeing civil wars, as well as other Latinx individuals, especially from the LGBTQ+ population, fleeing persecution in their home countries. Decades later, as migrant communities continue to be displaced from these other areas of the world, many continue to make their way to San Francisco. Most recently the city has seen a rise in communities emigrating from the Mayan Peninsula and Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala) who, similar to decades ago, are fleeing political persecution, economic devastation, and organized violence.

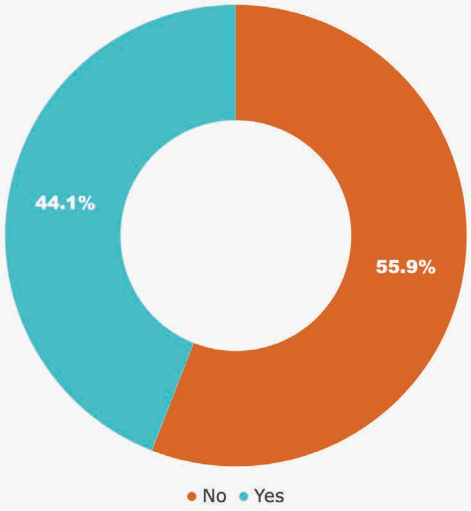
Out of the total number surveyed, 85% of these unhoused neighbors are deeply connected to the city. They have family here, have children in school here, are still active in their communities of faith, are receiving specialized medical care, and feel culturally understood and aligned in a Latinx community of monolingual Spanish, Maya, and Portuguese speakers with whom they share familiar customs.

Our unhoused community is part of the local economy – over 10% of respondents stated they were part of the city's workforce. Although these unhoused residents do not have housing in the Mission neighborhood, their deep roots in this neighborhood provide them a sense of belonging, safety, and community, leading many to make the choice to remain, even if it means passing on access to shelter and housing resources in other neighborhoods like the Tenderloin or South of Market Districts.

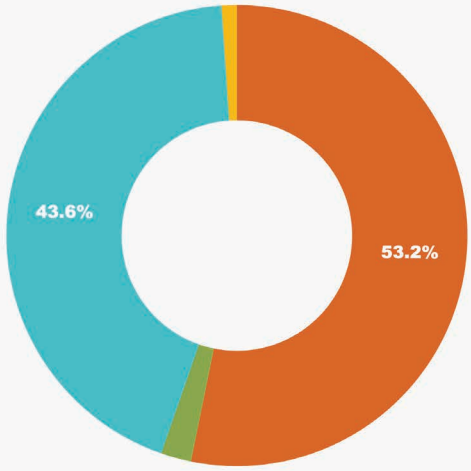
Language And Immigration

Immigrants often feel particularly unsafe when they are living on the streets. And information related to safe places to sleep and currently housing access services are rarely available in Spanish, and never in Mayan. In addition to these and other language access issues, there are additional cultural barriers to access immigrants face that come into play. This often results in immigrants remaining unhoused for a significantly longer time than other unhoused communities. Many also fear the loss of their personal freedom if public charge laws were to be invoked against them, so they do not seek out available services. Therefore, they are often not even assessed through the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing Coordinated Entry.

Did you or your parents immigrate from another country to the United States?



What is your preferred language?



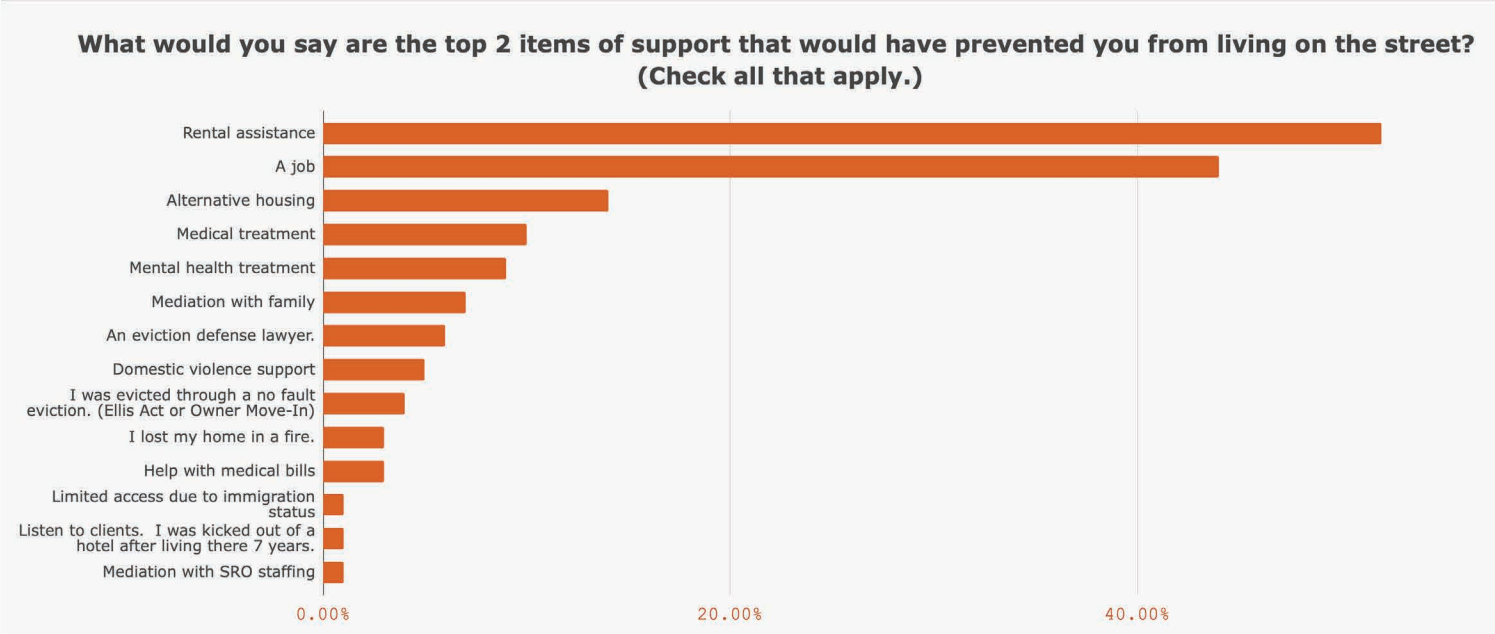
The implementation of a community-driven and community-centered Promotorxs Program to assist immigrants in navigating systems and removing barriers would increase their access to the above services and affordable housing, while at the same time addressing the unhoused resident community's legitimate fears of public charge, deportation, and concerns that they may be jeopardizing their immigration status or future ability to receive US residency by getting services.

Current Living Situation And Preventative Interventions Of Support

The information gathered from the survey indicates that many unhoused neighbors end up living on the streets because they did not have the resources to pay their rent, were unaware of their tenants rights, were unaware that they could have access to free legal representation, and/or had unresolved issues with their families that led to their needing to leave their prior housing situation.

In the case of the unhoused population in the Mission, the lack of abundantly disseminated information on tenant rights and legal assistance services in Spanish and Mayan-speaking languages undermines the ability of many individuals to remain housed. **Many of these residents were in crisis but were unaware that assistance was available to them, and as a result often ended up self-displacing from stable housing when they could have received assistance that may well have helped them stay in place. The lack of culturally appropriate family mediation services in Spanish and Mayan also contributes similarly to this self-displacement problem.**

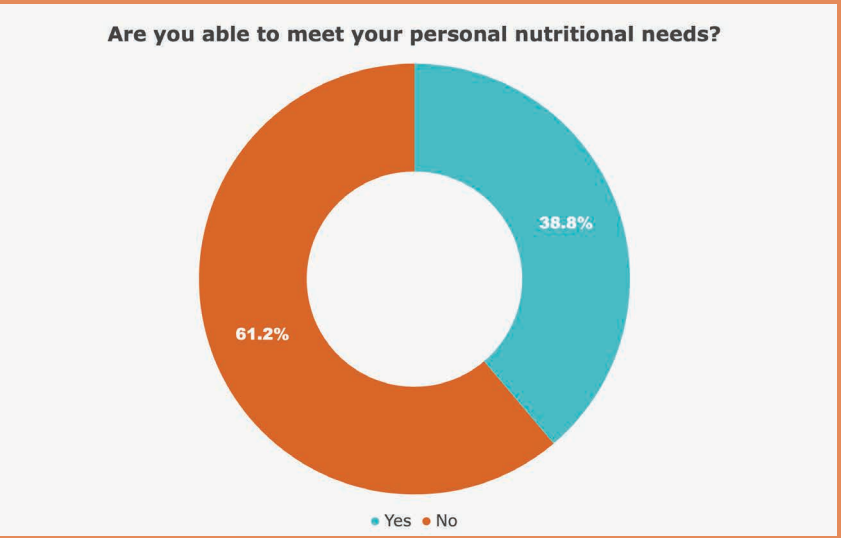
The Latino Task Force Street Needs Assessment Committee strongly recommends that, going forward, outreach and education for housing and family services needs to be tailored to serve Spanish-speaking immigrants and Mayan-speaking communities. The committee is confident that this will contribute to our goal of increasing the enrollment of Mission district residents in these services and increasing housing stability as a result. The implementation of a community-driven and community-centered Promotorxs Program to assist immigrants in navigating systems and removing barriers would increase their access to the above services and affordable housing, while at the same time addressing the unhoused resident community's legitimate fears of public charge, eportation, and concerns that they may be jeopardizing their immigration status or future ability to receive U.S. residency by getting services.



Findings: Access to Services

Hunger And Nutrition

The majority of the unhoused individuals surveyed were not able to meet their personal nutritional needs. The inability for most to store and cook food, combined with the high cost of prepared food, leads many to go hungry or have inconsistent access to food. Due to the ongoing stress of their living environment and lack of regular quality of sleep, many individuals have developed medical conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes that medically require them to eat healthy, nutritionally sound, and appropriate foods, and to eat at regular, consistent intervals throughout the day to maintain their health. This inconsistency of food availability and timing for most, therefore, leads to further health consequences for many of the unhoused.



Basic Necessities For Survival

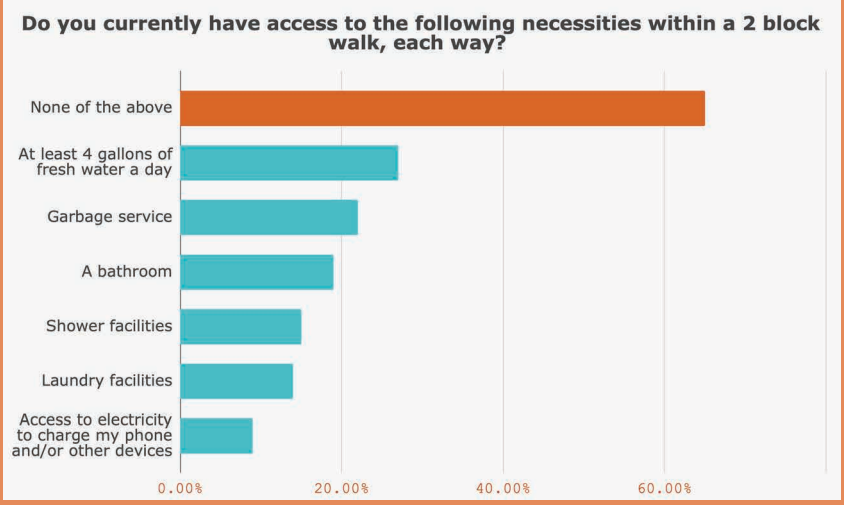
With regard to the access to the most basic necessities – fresh water, garbage service, a bathroom, showers, laundry, and the ability to charge a phone and other devices – 65% percent of respondents said that they don't have access to any of these necessities within a two-block walk from where they sleep.

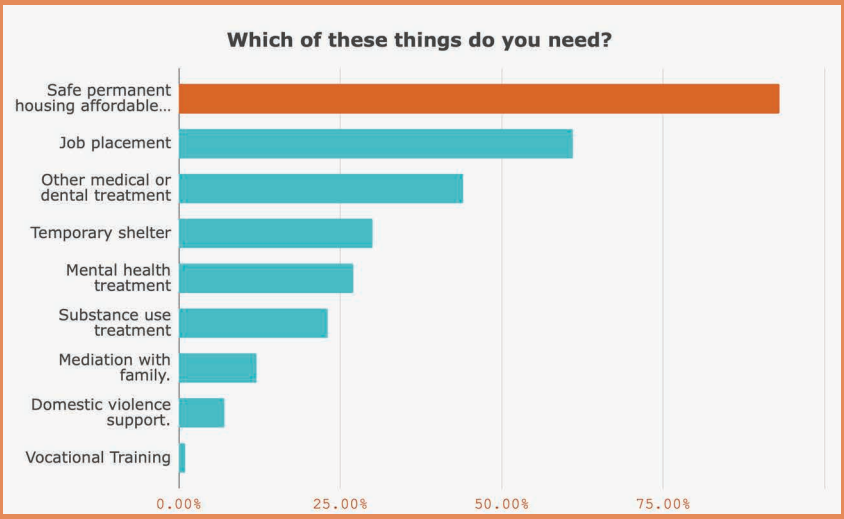
And for the 90% of individuals that don't have access to charging their phones the effect is devastating, leading to countless complications and worse outcomes. Despite 93% of individuals wanting safe, permanent housing, only 10% can charge a phone or device, typically required as the primary way for social workers and housing coordinators to reach them without coming out to the streets to try to find them. In the case of the less abled or those that cannot leave their sleeping site for fear of having their personal items confiscated, it is the primary way to get appointments, maintain benefits, or check status on wait lists.

The ability to have a working phone is also one of the only ways to set up medical appointments or have doctors reach you to review tests and other health records. Because of this barrier, many are unable or discouraged by circumstances from seeking medical care and advice until they end up in the ER. The lack of stable phone access also often means they cannot easily reach out to a mental health professional when needed, before they end up at a point of crisis.

"Soup kitchens you know, for the homeless. Food pantries -spread [them] out more. [The homeless] should have a soup kitchen."

- DLW (unhoused participant)





Housing Referral, Waitlists And Barriers To Permanent Housing

Eighty-three percent of those surveyed said they were not on the Coordinated Entry List for housing referral. At the same time, 93% of the same respondents indicated that what they most needed was permanent, supportive housing. This second set of responses sharply contradicts the common misbelief that the unhoused community does not want to be housed. Temporary fixes like shallow rental subsidies that place individuals and families in housing for two years only to be one more short stop in a revolving door for these people, bouncing them in and out of homelessness.

Immigrants, who are often extremely low-income and who may be undocumented or in a mixed-immigration status family, are very typically unable to increase their incomes to afford these permanent housing units without a rental subsidy. As a result, they are frequently forced into homelessness or to double up with friends or family when faced with a housing instability scenario or the direct possibility they are about to become displaced.

The Coordinated Entry system has a number of barriers that contribute to the Latinx immigrant community not being able to access housing. Spanish-language access to the system has been a longstanding, problematic issue for our community. While some progress has been made, there is a dire need to have Spanish-speaking and culturally-competent staff present at these sites to more adequately serve the Latinx community at this time of great need. The unhoused community should be able to approach this system and begin problem solving their housing needs from access points within their own community.

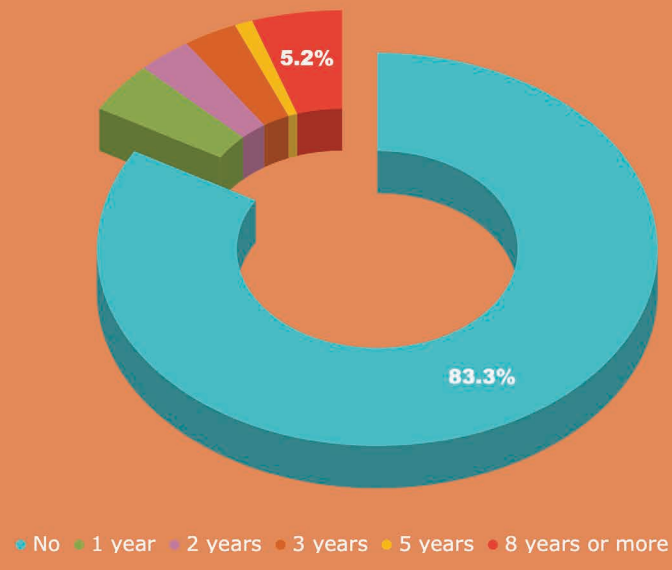
The Mission District has a large network of community-based organizations that collaborate closely in serving Mission residents, including the unhoused. The strength of this tightly-interconnected not-for-profit infrastructure lends itself to establishing the critically needed no-wrong-door model for serving our unhoused community. Regardless of which organization an unhoused resident engages with, the organization's staff should be able to provide them with "problem-solving funds" to handle short-term crisis issues, as well as connect them to housing navigators who will assist them in finding housing and the mental health professionals who will conduct a mental health and trauma assessment.

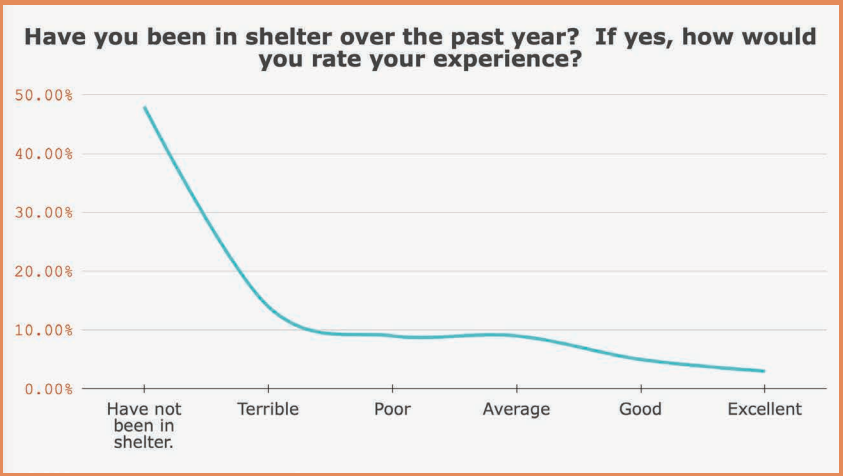
As an example of how this no-wrong-door model could work, many of the members of the day-laborer community who are out looking for work are also unhoused. And while these laborers often have their first engagement with staff at the Dolores Street Community Services Day Labor Program and Women's Collective, this workforce interaction could also provide a vital opportunity for staff there to provide support and services around their unhoused status as well.

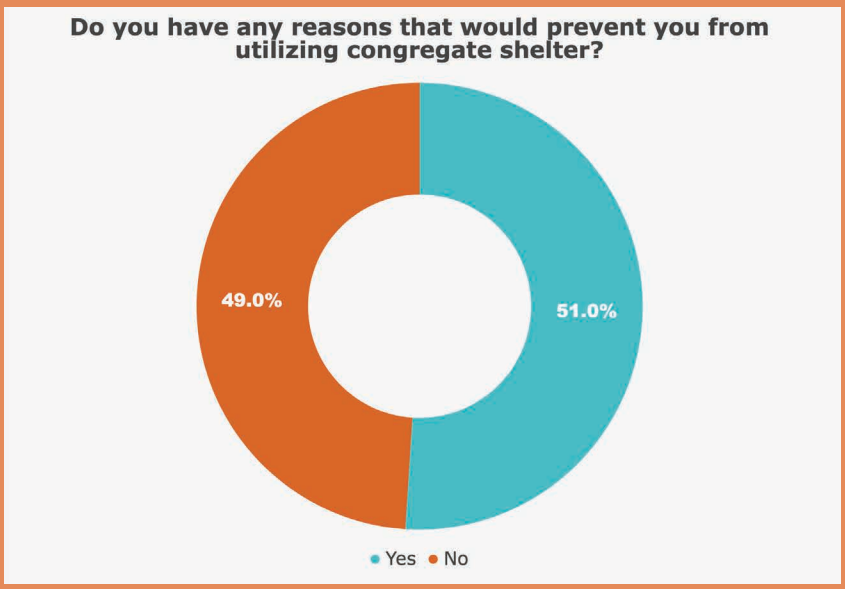
There is too much information that is not the same. People get confused on who they're speaking with, when they're going to the doctor, not all the information is matching up basically.
It is very confusing."

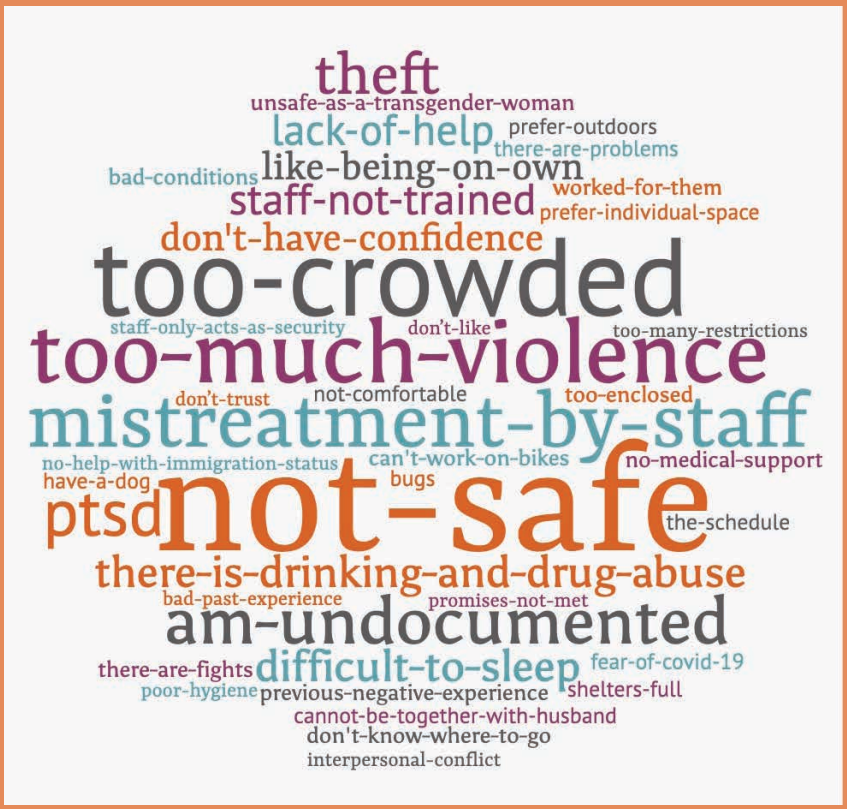
- JAE (unhoused participant)

Are you on any waitlists for housing. i.e. coordinated entry, public housing, section 8? If so, how long have you been waiting?









Congregate Shelter

Unhoused residents also reported feeling very threatened by predatory and violent behavior they have experienced or witnessed within congregate shelters (larger shelters with shared living spaces), as well as having significant anxiety regarding the well-founded fear of the potential for this harm if they sought shelter in these spaces due to their reputation for having these issues. **Many of these congregate shelters do not have Spanish-speaking staff, and nor are staff trained to serve immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities in a culturally responsive manner, adding to overall strain and anxiety for a significant portion of the Mission unhoused population who are considering utilizing congregate shelters.**

Fifty-one percent of those surveyed cited specific reasons that were preventing them from utilizing these congregate shelters. Additional reasons to those detailed above were the individual's post traumatic stress disorder, the crowded conditions in these congregate spaces, difficulty sleeping in this setting, the inability for couples to find a place that allowed them to stay together, and abuses by shelter staff coupled with the general lack of oversight in these spaces. Many such respondents said they would rather risk the challenging realities of the outdoors rather than be subjected to the very real possibilities of robbery, harrassment, and physical or sexual abuse in these indoor settings.

Unhoused individuals surveyed also made it clear that they were acutely aware of the dangers that the Covid-19 virus posed for those sheltering in congregate living arrangements. City data confirms that there were multiple incidents of positive cases in these congregate settings. With the potential for exposure to the virus often a risk for compounding existing health conditions, along with the host of other safety issues outlined above, it wasn't surprising to learn that a significant number of these unhoused residents currently see the risk of moving into a congregate shelter to be greater than the risks of living on the street.

"If you don't know your way in the system or in the [interruption] it..it can be intimidating you know, and traumatizing in itself if it's not a good experience, so… it should be all the same."

- JAE (unhoused participant)

Findings: Human Rights and Displacement

Description Of Federal Law

Federal law recently clarified that the city of San Francisco cannot criminalize the unhoused for loitering and sleeping on public property. In the case of Martin vs. Boise, six currently and formerly homeless Boise, Idaho residents alleged that laws prohibiting them from sleeping outdoors within city limits amounted to cruel and unusual punishment and violated their rights under the Eighth Amendment. [9]

The Obama administration's Department of Justice agreed, and submitted a statement of interest,[10] arguing that making it a crime for people who are homeless to sleep in public places, when there is insufficient shelter space in a city, unconstitutionally punishes them for being homeless. The city of Boise appealed this decision in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, but was denied in September 2018, upholding the ruling that criminalizing the unhoused who had no other options than to sleep outdoors amounted to cruel and unusual punishment.

Judge Marsha S. Berzon, who presided over the case, stated:

> Turning to the merits, the panel held that the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause of the Eighth Amendment precluded the enforcement of a statute prohibiting sleeping outside against homeless individuals with no access to alternative shelter. The panel held that, as long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannotcriminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property, on the false premise they had a choice in the matter.[11]

"I hope you take this to the heart and remember that we have our needs too."

-JDD (unhoused participant)

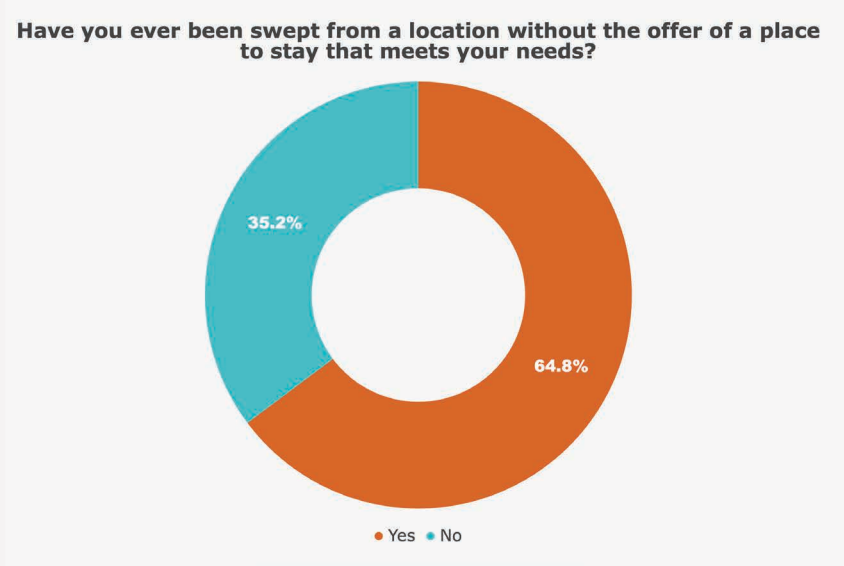
Alignment With Other Data Sources

The results we found through our survey of unhoused neighbors in the Mission District mirrored the findings from other well-known sources. In 2021, The Coalition on Homelessness released a report on the activities of the Healthy Streets Operation Center (HSOC),[12] the team principally responsible for responding to large encampments.

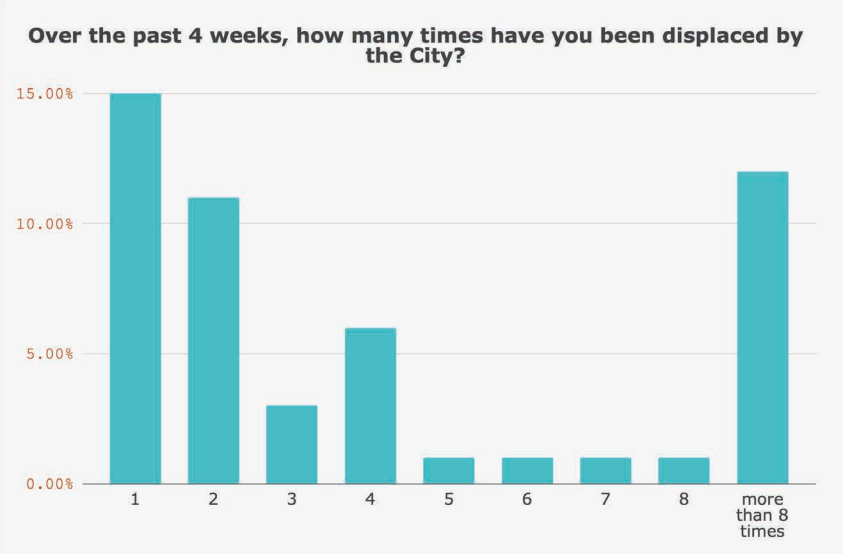
This report analyzed data from the city and drew from the coalition's own experience monitoring HSOC operations. Over a 37-day period from January to February of 2021, the report found there were only two occasions when HSOC had enough shelter beds to offer a bed to everyone who arrived at the site in need of one. On average, HSOC only had access to only 52% of the beds they would have required to provide for the need they faced. When individuals were offered shelter, however, they overwhelmingly accepted that placement.

By cross-referencing the service-connection data provided by HSOC from the 37-day period described above, when accounting for the shelter beds that were available to HSOC during those same days, the report found that people who arrived in need of a bed accepted placements, when available, at quite high rates.

Despite a 29% bed acceptance rate reported by HSOC during those 37 days of the study by the city, this deeper dive into the data found that 75% of all unhoused residents that were offered one of the limited beds available in fact accepted the offer. There often simply weren't enough beds to offer each resident, let alone appropriate beds, resulting in many being displaced without an option, and misleading statistics about their desire for beds.



When the unhoused survey participants were asked whether they had ever been asked to move without an accompanying offer of a place to stay that met their needs, 64.8% stated that they had.



Service Offers Needed Prior To Displacement

In addition to being contrary to the 2018 constitutional law guidance, it is the strong opinion of this committee that both common decency and common sense would dictate that using the police and other city agencies to push the unhoused from their sidewalk locations and other resting places without offering them housing or another meaningful alternative is bad practice. This behavior only layers further trauma and hardship onto human beings who are already deeply suffering. The practice also wastes city dollars to resource this ineffectual strategy, as the displaced individuals, having nowhere else to go and usually already situated in locations where they feel safe and/or culturally welcome, often simply return to the same spot shortly after or move one block away and resettle.

The fruitless practice of "sweeping" the unhoused in this way serves very little purpose other than to create the false illusion of action, further destabilize these individuals, and often exacerbates the chronic challenges that already accompany their homelessness. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has recognized that when unhoused people are displaced without offering housing solutions they are more likely to lose connections with social service providers and outreach workers. This makes it harder to move off the streets and at times causes them to miss out on housing opportunities and other services they had been seeking.

Frequency Of Displacement

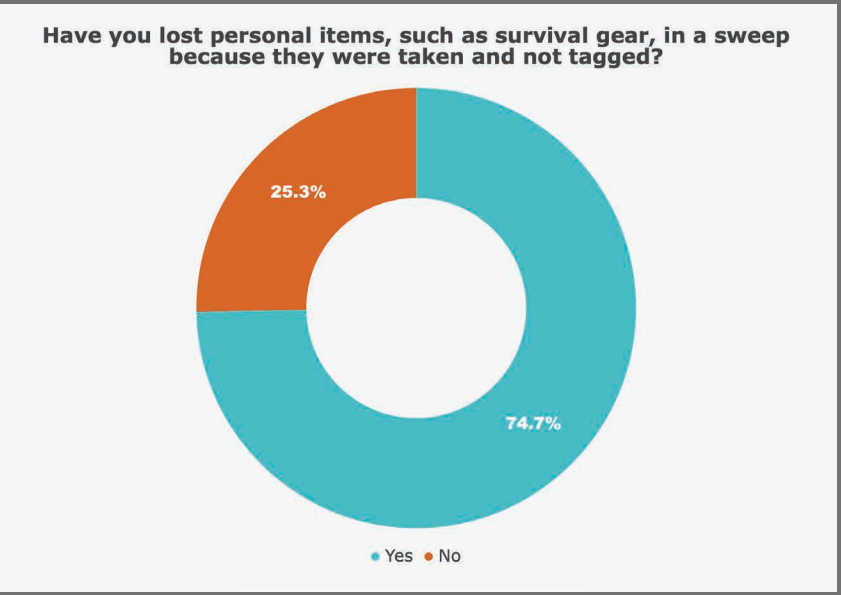
Experiencing homelessness, even without forced displacements, is in and of itself very traumatizing – individuals have no door to lock, experience sleep deprivation, and often the smallest human activities like eating and using the restroom are a hardship. **Disturbingly, nearly 60% of survey respondents said that they had been displaced by the city at least one time in just the past four weeks.** And nearly 20% of all respondents had been forced to move by the city five or more times during this same short period.

Loss Of Personal Items

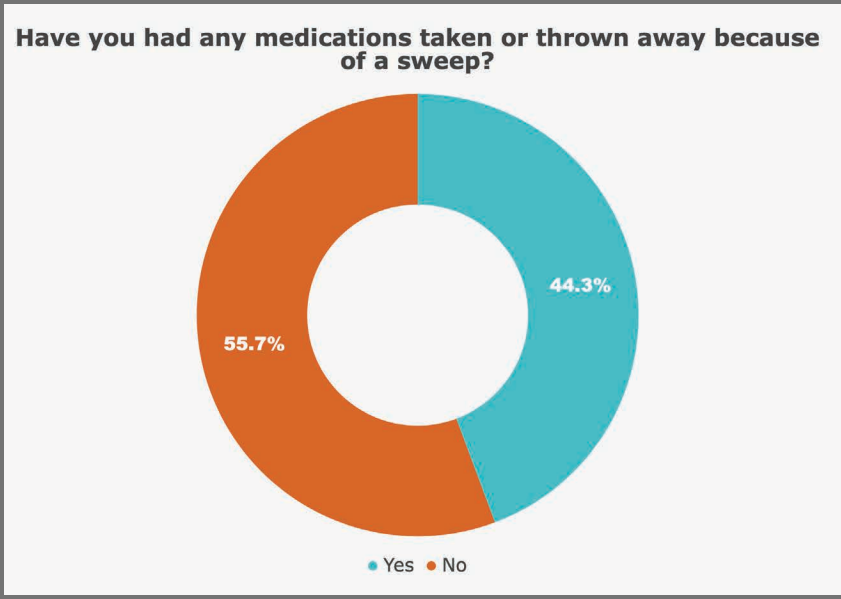
One of the many hardships experienced by our unhoused neighbors is the loss of personal belongings. Unhoused people are usually clinging to what little they have left – they carry around their identification; important documents; and survival gear such as warm clothing, shelter, and tarps. The loss of these critical belongings is often understandably devastating.

For this reason, the city has policies in place to protect the personal property of the unhoused from loss, commonly referred to as the "bag and tag" policy. This policy dictates that if items taken from homeless individuals and camps are clearly not trash or severely soiled, that city workers must bag the items up, label them, and store them so that the unhoused residents may later claim them. This policy, outlined in a 2018 SFPD bulletin,[13] also applies to other departments such as the Department of Public Works.

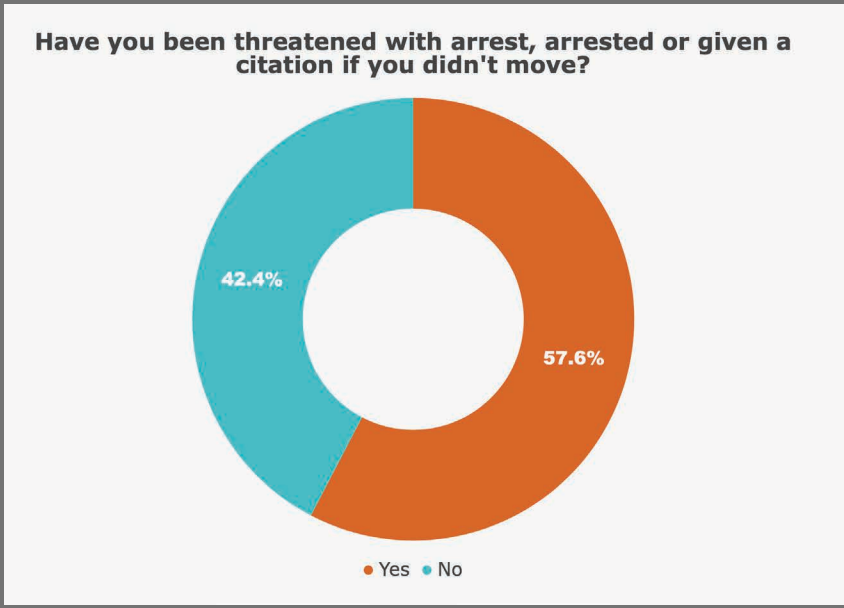
In administering our 2022 survey, the committee attempted to measure whether the city was following their own "bag and tag" policy with regard to the treatment of personal items and survival gear. **With nearly a full three quarters of respondents reporting that they recently had property confiscated by the city without the appropriate practices of retaining and labeling it for a later return, there appears to be a clear practice and pattern by the city of violating its own policy, despite the legal implications of doing so.**



Originally developed via negotiations with the ACLU and Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights, the city's "bag and tag" policy was recently updated as an outgrowth of the UC Hastings lawsuit regarding city actions in the Tenderloin neighborhood. Three community organizations joined the original suit in an attempt to protect unhoused Tenderloin residents from what was seen as abusive practices employed by the city.



Despite the risk of loss of life, 44.3% of respondents said they had medication taken or thrown away during a sweep.



Confiscation Of Medications

One very dangerous outcome of this illegal property confiscation by the city is the loss of valuable and at times life-saving medications. As noted previously in this report, unhoused community members tend to be in poor health, suffer disproportionately from chronic illnesses, and often depend on their medications to survive.

This loss of personal medical property becomes even more important when viewed through the lens of life-saving overdose treatments. As a portion of the unhoused community use drugs, and with the recent dangerous proliferation of synthetic drugs such as Fetanyl, overdose interventions for drug users are extremely important in saving lives. For that reason, outreach organizations have distributed Narcan which reverses potentially fatal overdoses. However, the life-saving impacts of this wide distribution is obviously lost if the recipients are having their medications illegally confiscated by the city. Despite these high stakes, 44.3% respondents said they have had medications taken or thrown away during a sweep.

Criminalization Of Homelessness

In San Francisco, unhoused people receive between 10,000 and 20,000 citations per year for so-called “status crimes,” or activities principally related to their unhoused status. In the past, if these citations went unpaid, the tickets would turn into bench warrants and unhoused people would have to pay them off with jail time. While this practice was more recently stopped, other significant related problems remain. Forty percent of the county jail population is still made up of unhoused residents. This is a significantly disproportionate representation when compared to the overall city population.

Reports from community-based organization representatives at our committee have indicated in the past that arrests and threats of arrest are a common tool used by law enforcement to displace unhoused community members from their outdoor locations. As a result of hearing these anecdotal stories about this criminalization of their poverty, **we asked our unhoused neighbors if they had been threatened with arrest, arrested, or given a citation if they didn’t move when asked to do so by the police – a shocking 57.6% reported that they had.**

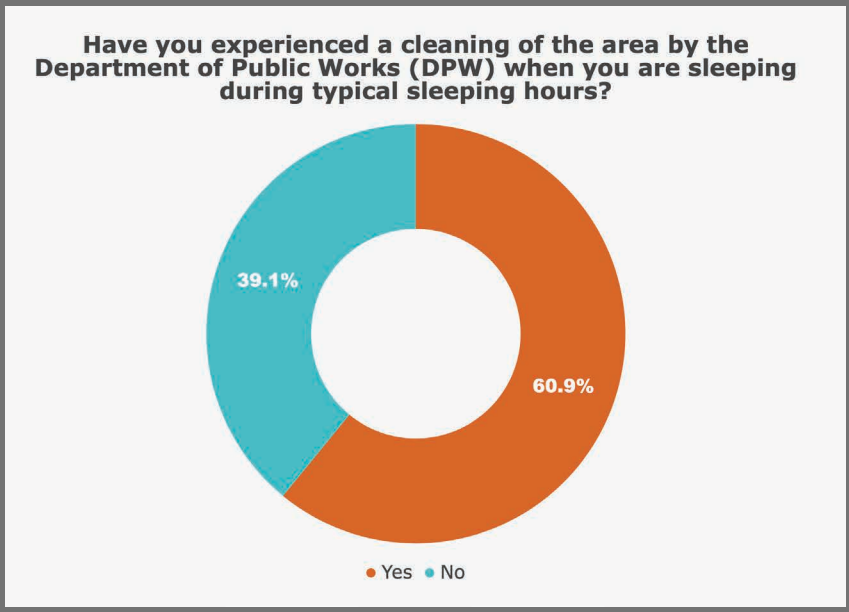
One of the most brutal and health-deteriorating aspects of homelessness is the ongoing loss of sleep. The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness can be up to 36 years shorter than that of the general population.

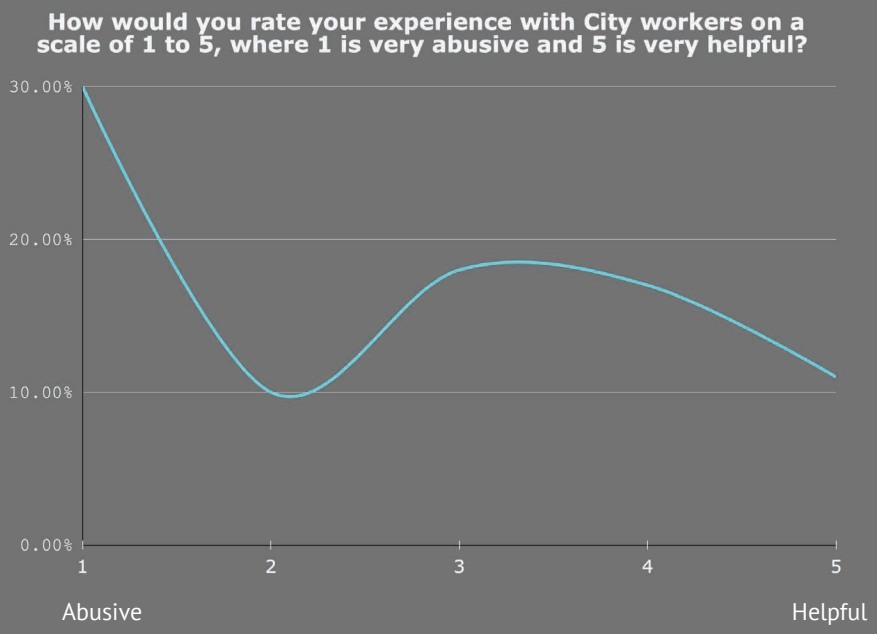
Timing Of Sidewalk Cleaning And Its Health Impacts

One of the most brutal and health-deteriorating aspects of homelessness is the ongoing loss of sleep. The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness can be up to 36 years shorter than that of the general population.[14] **A recent study by UCSF found that homeless people are a full 25 years older than their calendar age in all areas of health and that they regularly experience geriatric symptoms at anomalously early ages.**[15] To make matters worse, homelessness is an independent risk factor for a number of illnesses, and homeless people themselves are susceptible to increased health problems due to high stress, sleep deprivation, unsanitary surroundings, lack of access to hygiene facilities, and a myriad of other symptoms inherent to living without stable housing.

Many of these independent risk factors can be traced back to sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation impairs cognitive processes and puts one at risk for heart disease, heart attack, heart failure, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, strokes and diabetes.

Homeless people disproportionately suffer from sleep deprivation due to legal prohibitions on their right to rest where they are. We know from reports by area community-based organizations that the unhoused are frequently awakened by police and security in the middle of the night by the Department of Public Works for cleaning operations. Based on these reports, we sought to measure just how frequently this middle of the night practice is carried out, and asked participants if they had experienced being pushed out for cleaning during what would typically be overnight sleeping hours. Committee members were deeply concerned to learn that indeed this was a very common practice, with almost 61% responding that they had experienced this sleep-depriving harassment.





City Workers Interactions With The Unhoused

During our ongoing Latino Task Force Street Needs Assessment meetings, there have been many occasions where task force members themselves have brought stories to our meetings regarding the abusive practices of city workers they had recently learned of or witnessed, including the illegal confiscation of property, verbal abuse of the unhoused, and even episodes of physical abuse.

We asked survey participants to rate their experience with city workers and were alarmed to see that 46.5% rated city workers as abusive or very abusive. While we did not ask which city department, we know from experience that the Department of Public Works is at the front line of encampment removals and unhoused people consistently report their problematic behavior to organizations such as the Coalition on Homelessness and Dolores Street Community Services. We outline in our recommendations sections how to rectify this abusive behavior, and with the expected reorganization of the Department of Public Works on the horizon, we are hopeful that these patterns of abuse will come to an end.

El Proyecto Dignidad
The Dignity Project

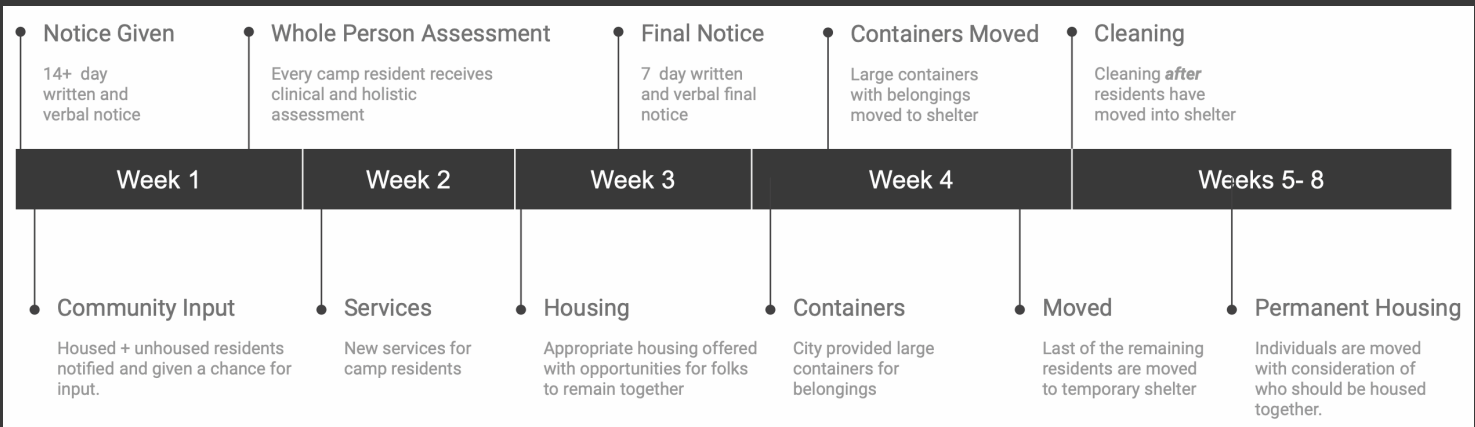
Background

In 2012, California Highway Patrol called for the displacement of a large San Francisco encampment on King Street. Spearheaded in a very intentional and sensitive manner by Bevan Dufty, the Mayor's former homeless director, **the initiative led to a 100% successful permanent relocation of this settlement.** Prior to the commencement of relocation, Dufty had reached out for counsel from community members within the camp as well as homeless advocates at the Coalition on Homelessness, and secured a church where the residents could relocate temporarily en masse.

The city rented a large storage container where these unhoused neighbors could store their belongings fully intact. And most importantly, city agencies created an exit plan for these new inhabitants of the church to transfer to more permanent housing. After a period of living in the church, each resident was then relocated to permanent housing, with careful consideration given to keeping the mutual human support systems developed through living together in the camp intact. One hundred percent of camp residents were successfully connected with permanent housing.[16]

Current sweep operations constitute institutional, racialized abuse against a primarily BIPOC community. As demonstrated in the King Street model, there is a path to deconstructing encampments that is both effective and humane. **El Proyecto Dignidad** is above and beyond the city's current Healthy Streets Operations program, where only 30% of individuals are connected with shelter, and none to permanent housing. Instead, El Proyecto Dignidad presents a community-centered approach where the city is truly engaged with community organizations and unhoused people and aims to meet the needs of every unhoused resident who enters the program.

The successful King Street operation of moving this large encampment, in this manner, provided the impetus for El Proyecto Dignidad. It formed the basis for the understanding that this could be done successfully on a larger scale if all parties worked together.

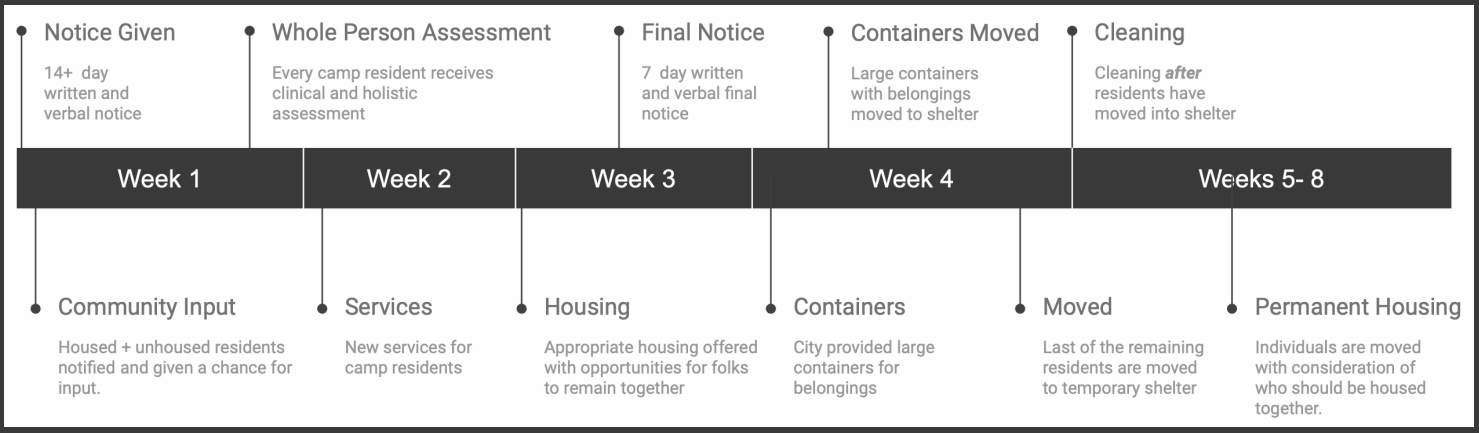


El Proyecto Dignidad - Preparing to Begin the Four-Week Program

The City of San Francisco will provide a public schedule of locations where notifications and sweep operations are being planned. A notification will also be sent to the lead community-based organization coordinating the human rights monitors, including information regarding the staff member who will be leading the sweep, and the teams involved in the city action. The community-based organization will communicate the name of the human-rights monitor to the city staffer leading the sweep operation.

Before the process of notifications and sweep even begins, city and community teams will meet to clarify, or make any fine tuning of the planned operations. During this meeting, all five stakeholders will be present: the Mission District supervisor's representative, the community-based organization with their human-rights monitors, the city department representative leading the sweep, a representative from the SF Human Rights Commission, and at least one member or representative from the unhoused neighbors.

After each week of these operations, a debriefing will be conducted among this same set of representatives to evaluate and monitor the respect of human rights of unhoused neighbors.



El Proyecto Dignidad - Operations

Week One

Component 1 - Notice Given:

The initial engagement with unhoused neighbors is implemented by two teams: the team responsible to give the notice and the social/health service and housing team. In addition, a human rights monitor team (human rights monitor, unhoused neighbor representative, and the Mission District elected official representative) are present to verify that the human rights of those being notified are being respected. The notice is given to unhoused neighbors at 9 a.m. and no later than 3 p.m. The notice is also provided in the language(s) of the unhoused neighbors, and the documents must include an outline of the residents' rights and responsibilities, legal assistance services available to them, and the contact information for the San Francisco Human Rights Commission.

Over the following three to four weeks, culturally-competent housing and social/health services team members will offer interviews in the primary language of each unhoused neighbor to identify their most pressing needs, with the goal of developing individualized stabilization plans, and clarifying the immediate, short term and long term goals of the city operation. They will work with these residents to create tailored and practical moving plans, identifying and securing the necessary support and resources to make this happen.

Component 2 - Community Input:

This participatory process is facilitated by a community-based organization representative, assuring that all parties are taking an active role in implementing a human-rights based approach to move the unhoused neighbors to housing or temporary shelter that leads to housing. The CBO representative is empowered with the honorary authority to mediate among the parties participating in the process.

Component 3 - Clinical and Whole Person Assessment:

The clinical assessments include psychosocial, physical, and behavioral assessments, in addition to offering vaccines and referrals to dental or vision services. These assessments are conducted by the social service/housing team, behavioral health professionals, and a health professional. A unique record of each assessment is created, and informed consent, and release of information forms are signed by the unhoused neighbor, to enable follow ups with the necessary registrations and referrals to needed services.

Week Two

Component 4 - Connection to Services:

The unhoused residents are registered for medical, behavioral services, social and financial support, and any other services that may be needed, including harm reduction or legal services. The initial psychosocial assessment is used to support the registration and service referrals. The housing and social service team is responsible for providing the continuum of care and implementing the stabilization care plan.

Week Three

Component 5 - Housing:

The unhoused residents are now referred into the appropriate housing, or if such housing is not immediately available, referrals are made into appropriate shelters that will lead to housing in a very timely fashion. Individual shelter stays shall be as short as possible, with placements into appropriate housing occurring within a maximum time frame of six months.

Component 6 - Final Notice:

Unhoused residents are provided a final notice of operations, in their primary languages, and the documents include a detailed outline of their rights and responsibilities, legal assistance services available, and the contact information of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. During this stage of the engagement, the housing and health/social services team members offer these residents practical and emotional support and identify and secure any additional available resources that may ease the impact of the final notice and commencement of operations.

Week Four

Component 7 - Containers Delivered:

Moving the belongings of these unhoused residents to the storage containers will focus on a human-centered approach, taking into account the functioning levels of each resident. Practical support must be provided by the housing and health/social service team to assist in de-escalating the stress of unhoused neighbors during the process of moving and perhaps disposing of some belongings. To facilitate disposal, the city will provide large garbage containers for any unwanted belongings.

The process of moving belongings to containers should start in the morning and end before 5 p.m. in order to keep the process as focused and low stress as possible for the unhoused residents. This stage of the process needs to have services to support unhoused neighbors in case of any physical or emotional decompensation or deregulation. Food and drinking water will be provided to the unhoused neighbors during this process.

Component 8 - Containers Moved:

As the day for moving the containers approaches, the date and time of the container move will be clearly communicated, both verbally and in writing no less than one week ahead of the move to the unhoused neighbors at the site.

Component 9 - All Individuals are Moved into Housing or Shelter that Leads to Housing:

At this stage in the process the city and community partners need to provide significant services to support each of these neighbors as they make their move in case any physical or emotional decompensation or deregulation is triggered by the move. Food and drinking water will be provided to these unhoused neighbors during this process.

Component 10 - Cleaning:

After residents have departed, DPW will be responsible for cleaning the vacated area. DPW must maintain strict adherence to bag and tag policies for any items that may have been inadvertently left behind.

The final step in closing out the initial four-week process will be a collaborative meeting between all of the teams that have been involved in the process in order to evaluate the successes and areas where improvement is needed to inform future week one-through-four operations.

Weeks Five through Eight

Component 11 - Placement:

Those residents still placed in temporary shelters will continue to be moved into permanent housing. Permanent housing options should align with the needs of the residents, allowing pets, partners, and property, and minimizing unnecessary rules, so these residents can live with a sense of dignity and autonomy.

Additional Recommendations

Shelter and Housing: Rare, Brief, and One-Time Homelessness

1. Implement a "no wrong door for housing" policy. Currently, there are a very limited number of access points for the unhoused to enter the housing system. This has resulted in decreased access, a lack of culturally and linguistically appropropriate intake centers, and ultimately presents a scenario where very few unhoused people in the Mission have been able to sign up for and transition into housing. A no-wrong-door policy means that an individual or household seeking housing could visit any trusted community-based organization, health clinic, or even the emergency room and become engaged in a housing assessment which would then put them on the coordinated entry waitlist.

2. Ensure direct placement into shelter and housing from community organizations. Currently the city has a centralized intake system that is called Coordinated Entry. This access system is unable to make the very human and nuanced decisions often required by the unique situations surrounding those in extreme need. This LTF committee urges the city to set aside a portion of the city's housing units in order that community-based organizations can make real-time, direct placements of their most needy clients.

3. Eliminate barriers to services in existing homeless programs. Ensuring that shelter options become free of barriers requires allowing pets, partners, and property to enter the shelter program together, and minimizing unnecessary rules so these residents can live within the system with a sense of dignity and autonomy.

4. Invest in permanent solutions to homelessness, including significantly increasing the housing supply, providing pathways to living-wage jobs, and committing to ongoing treatment and medical care rather than short-term "band-aid" solutions. These basic solutions will require additional local, state and federal investments.

A Human Rights-, People-, and Community-Centered Participatory Model

5. Encampments and individuals sleeping on the street are in dire need of stability. When these groups and individuals are being relocated, it is important to ensure at least two-weeks notice is given, thorough assessments of the residents' needs are completed, appropriate placements are secured based on those assessments, property transport and storage is arranged, operations are designed and executed based on client input, and both traditional and non traditional family units are accommodated. Cleaning will need to be arranged for after the residents leave. **The entire operation needs to be carried out without the presence of police.**

6. Fund and deploy two independent empowered human rights monitors. These human rights monitors should be present at all camp displacement operations through HSOC, SFPD, or DPW and shall ensure that proper noticing, bag and tag practices, and connection to appropriate services are all happening in accordance with the city and community planning. Monitors shall record violations, including the time and date, as well as the individual and department names of those involved in the violations. These monitors should be allowed to use video and photo documentation with informed consent of the unhoused individuals impacted.

Recorded complaints shall immediately be copied to individual department leads and submitted to the Human Rights Commission, the Local Homeless Coordinating Board, and any additional commissions associated with the departments involved in the complaint. Commissions and departments that receive such reports from the human rights monitors must respond within ten days and report exactly what corrective steps are being taken to remedy the infractions. The Human Rights Commission will post all complaints and grievances publicly on a monthly basis. In addition, the Board of Supervisors should hold twice-yearly hearings to review prior complaints and provide oversight.

7. Suspend the policy and practice of focusing on the elimination of tents. Instead have street teams identify, assess, and place these people in need into housing. For the past five years, city departments have been focused on tracking and eliminating the presence of tents; counting tents, centering their resources on people living in tents, and expending a disproportionate amount of resources responding to complaints about tents. This has led to more resources going towards unhoused individuals in gentrified areas, exacerbated racial disparities in resource expenditures, and left out those individuals sleeping rough who are in the greatest need of assistance. It has also meant that the clearing of tents has taken priority over ensuring those living in tents have access

to care, leaving many in need without any shelter at all. Shifting to a more trauma-informed, human and community-centered approach is important for meeting the needs of the unhoused and ensuring these folks can eventually make it through the housing process and exit homelessness.

Photo: Robert Gumpert

8. Schedule, advertise, and execute regular cleanings and trash pick-up during daytime hours in areas where unhoused people tend to sleep or park. The findings in this survey made clear that many unhoused are enduring frequent and ongoing traumatizing cleaning operations carried out in the middle of the night. Given that a lack of sleep among unhoused community members is one of the highest contributing factors to chronic health conditions and premature death, it is much more humane and effective to schedule this cleaning during daytime hours. In addition, regular cleaning intervals are more efficient, and allow our unhoused community members to be prepared to move ahead of time, including separating out any trash they may want help disposing of, and gathering their important belongings ensuring they are safe and clear of the cleaning. The disabilities and/or age of many of these residents prevent them from being able to move swiftly, and these unexpected cleanings in the dead of night forces them to experience undue physical and emotional stress and often leads to the loss of what little valuable property they have.

9. Halt practices that criminalize individuals for their economic and housing status. For too long, San Francisco has relied on police as the primary response to homelessness. According to a recent report by the Budget & Legislative Analyst,[17] between June 2020 and February 2022, San Francisco police responded to between 9,000 and 10,000 calls related to the homeless each month.

9. Fully implement CART – Compassionate Alternative Response to Homelessness – by dispatching well-trained, well-paid peer-based street teams to respond to and manage "C" level 911 calls connected to homelessness.

10. After CART is fully implemented, ensure the Homeless Outreach Team begins to center its work on case management and connecting individuals to care, moving away from its current practice of spending much of its time and resources responding to complaints.

11. Immediately stop the enforcement of anti-homeless laws, including enforcement against individuals residing in areas that have already been swept. These "re-encampment prevention" activities do not address the needs of the unhoused people targeted, nor assist them in getting off the streets. Instead of relying on these failed enforcement measures, the city must pivot to connecting these individuals with care and long-term solutions

12. Ensure full transparency in the reporting of all street responses. These reports should begin to include the number of people who were connected with care through any given operation, as well as maintain data on the overall progress of placement, similar to the work of the Street Crisis Response Team and Street Overdose Response Team.

The policy and practice of focusing on the elimiation of tents has led to more resources going towards unhoused individuals in gentrified areas, exacerbated racial disparities in resource expenditures, and left out those individuals sleeping rough who are in the greatest need of assistance.

Endnotes

1 Friedenbach, Jennifer, *A Tale of Two Homeless Sweeps*, San Francisco Examiner, March 3, 2016, updated May 26, 2022.

2 The United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2009-2020), https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html.

3 San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Houisng, *San Francisco Homeless Count & Survey*, 2019.

4 Blansett, Kent, *A Journey to Freedom: Richard Oakes, Alcatraz, and the Red Power Movement,* Yale University Press, 2018.

5 Yarbrough, D., Santamaria, N., Hanssmann, C, Bosch, S, Fleming, M, *Preventing Homelessness Among Translatinas in a Sanctuary City,* April 22, 2022.

6 Yarbrough D, Santamaria N, Hanssmann C, Bosch S, Fleming M, *Preventing Homelessness Among Translatinas in a Sanctuary City,* April 22, 2022.

7 Qi D, Abri K, Mukherjee MR, Rosenwohl-Mack A, Khoeur L, Barnard L, Knight KR, *Health Impact of Street Sweeps from the Perspective of Healthcare Providers*, J Gen Intern Med, 2022 Mar 16. doi: 10.1007/s11606-022-07471-y, Epub ahead of print. PMID: 35296981.

8 Robert Gumpert Photography, https://robertgumpert.com.

9 United States Constitution, *Eighth Amendment,* Legal Information Institute, https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/eighth_amendment.

10 United States Department of Justice, *Statement of Interest of the United States Bell vs. Boise, Case 1:09-cv-00540-REB,* August 6, 2015.

11 United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, Berzon, Marsha S, Circuit Judge, *Martin vs. Boise Case: 15-35845,* September 4, 2018, Portland, Oregon.

12 The Coalition on Homelessness, *Behind the Healthy Street Operation Curtain*, https://www.cohsf.org/behind-the-healthy-street-operation-curtain/, November 2021.

13 Scott W, Chief of Police, *Protocol for Processing Homeless Property consistent with DPW's "Bag & Tag" Policy*, San Francisco Police Department, May 2, 2018.

14 Kochanek KD, Murphy SL, Xu J, Arias E, *Deaths: Final Data for 2017,* Natl Vital Stat Rep, 2019 Jun;68(9):1-77. PMID: 32501199.

15 Brown, Cassandra L et al. C*ognitive activity mediates the association between social activity and cognitive performance: A longitudinal study,* Psychology and aging vol. 31,8 (2016): 831-846. doi:10.1037.

16 Friedenbach, Jennifer, *A Tale of Two Homeless Sweeps*, San Francisco Examiner, March 3, 2016, updated May 26, 2022.

17 Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office, *Police Department Role in Street Teams,* City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors, April 19, 2022.