

# City's major census outreach is in Tenderloin

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100,000 and has lost \$300 million over 10 years. The 2000 census put the city's population at 776,733; the 2008 census' updated projection put it at 809,000. A year before, the June 2007 Extra reported that the state Finance Department had estimated the city's population at 809,844. The department does its own calculations using more complicated data than the feds. In January 2009, the state said San Francisco's population was 845,559.

San Francisco receives \$3,862 per person from federal assistance programs using census data, the mayor's office said, quoting a Brookings Institution study. This year, when the feds undertook the largest civic outreach and awareness campaign in U.S. history, the city awarded \$809,000 in grants to nonprofits to beef up the count campaign in hard-to-reach neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, a cadre of census organizers working throughout the city — but concentrating in poor communities — hooked up months ago with TNDC, Community Housing Partnership, Southeast Asian Community Center and Ayadi to promote the census in the Tenderloin. They promote compliance and recruit census takers to go door-to-door for follow-up interviews with heads of households who received census forms in mid-March but didn't complete and return them by April 1.

The Tenderloin, with the largest concentration of census muscle, landed five of the city's 18 grants from the Office of Civic engagement and Immigrant Affairs. Bayview, next, has four.

## NAGGING PROBLEM IN SROS

But before March ended, outreach workers in Chinatown had already discovered a nagging problem crimping compliance in SROs that have bulk mail drops instead of individual mailbox delivery. Residents in a shabby SRO without a name at 688 Commercial St. found their forms in mid-March scattered on a second-floor counter, some missing, and others with the wrong addresses, all meant to be handed out by a desk clerk. Up to five people occupy each of the 71 units.

City Attorney Dennis Herrera, after a battle local

activists had fought since 2005, sued the U.S. Postal Service in May, insisting its carriers treat SROs like apartment buildings, which is to say, unit-by-unit mail delivery, not a bulk drop at the desk. Some SROs now do have lock boxes — a result of a 2006 ordinance sponsored by Supervisor Daly — but many do not.

At a press conference March 26, census worker Jade Wu said the short, 10-question census form is a contrast to 2000's 40 questions — the long form that 1 in 6 families received. The mail-back rate then was 67%. The extensive data the census will provide over the next decade does not come from answers given on the 2010 form. Education, occupation, household vehicles and more come from American Community Surveys that are sent monthly to 300,000 households. Only the population and ethnicity info from the 10-question form are actual counts.

"Our charge more than a year ago was to go out and build relationships with local organizations," David Lloyd, a census spokesman, said on opening day, Feb. 10, outside the TL census resource center at 476 Eddy St. The space in a TNDC-owned building, donated to the U.S. Department of Commerce for four months, is one of a score of testing centers in the city for census job applicants. It also serves as one of 10 questionnaire-information centers in the Tenderloin, all found on [www.sfgov.org/OCEIA](http://www.sfgov.org/OCEIA). They are open 15 hours a week, and offer advice in 30 languages until April 19, about the time the testing centers close.

Outsiders are often distrusted in the TL. And although Lloyd is a 30-year city resident and a Hastings Law School graduate, he's no neighbor.

"I've been asked if I'm with the FBI," Lloyd said. "But people in the Tenderloin will trust TNDC."

The Eddy Street center may be the hottest job site in the city. It has been administering the 30-minute test in a small room to about 20 job applicants per session. There are three sessions Monday through Friday, two on Saturday, plus less frequent sessions at two other sites. The aim is to test 1,200 TL residents. Preferred are high-scoring bi-linguists. The pay is \$22 an hour.

"We'll need follow-ups to those (households) that didn't respond," Lloyd said. "We expect a 70% (compliance) rate nationwide. For every 1% that

don't respond it will cost \$75 million for follow-up procedures. That's mostly personnel costs."

By April 1, San Francisco's was 46%, which Lloyd said was good.

Armed with single-sheet census questionnaires on March 29, 350 counters launched a three-day homeless count in the Tenderloin by visiting shelters at night. The next day they focused on soup kitchen lines. March 31, from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., 800 spread out here and over the city to count street people.

Expected to be a boon to the count is Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi's SRO legislation. Traditionally, desk clerks have made it difficult for guests to visit SRO residents. Mirkarimi's legislation, passed March 9, ensures census workers access to SROs from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. to conduct surveys and distribute handbills, without "harassment or other inappropriate interference" by hotel employees.

At a standing-room-only census rally Feb. 25 in CHP's San Cristina SRO on Market Street, Mirkarimi aide Jeremy Pollock reminded the mostly SRO residents attending that the 100,000 residents the mayor says are undercounted "are low-income people" and the city needs a complete count for maximum government money.

Among the speakers was Angelica Chan, a Latina mother of a 6-year-old daughter in the Tenderloin Community School and an 11-month-old son, who she wheeled into the stuffy room in a baby carriage. She too, stressed the importance of the count for poor, struggling people. Her remarks were translated from Spanish by Bobbi Lopez of La Voz Latina, who later spoke to The Extra.

The major causes for noncompliance in the Latino community are lack of information, cynicism and language problems, Lopez says. For many Latinos, English is a third language they are trying to learn behind Mayan, first, then Spanish, Lopez says.

"When I tell them the census will help them get services, they laugh," Lopez says. "They just don't believe the government will do that, they've had such a lack of response when they go to City Hall. I tell them we need statistical data because it's more effective than anecdotal evidence."

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Source: Javelin Strategy & Research. "2010 Identity Fraud Survey Report." February 2010.

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