Gentrification in the Tenderloin

Alejandro Ruizesparza, Hye Jeong Yoon, Jacob Waggoner, Jay Evans
How does the threat of displacement impact Tenderloin residents?
What we’ll be covering today...

● Our Interview Approach
● Common Interview Themes
  ○ Loss of Agency
  ○ Disinvestment
  ○ Gentrification induced Stress
  ○ TL as Home
● Where to go from here? Future Approaches
Our Interview Approach
Work Process

- List of 25 questions
- Focus mainly on collecting stories of Tenderloin residents
- Focus on threat of displacement
- Two trips to the Tenderloin
- Total of 11 interviews conducted
- 10 interviews recorded and included in report

*demographic data was not collected to preserve anonymity*
Common Interview Themes
Common Interview Themes

loss of agency
No choices if you stay..

“I worked with the SRO Collaborative to get rid of the bugs. It helped, but the management didn’t like it. Sometimes I had to call the SRO Collaborative to get into my apartment.”
Little choice but to stay...

“I really need to go see [my parents, because mom is starting to fall over]. But I don’t want to leave here. I don’t want to leave where I’m at because I’m afraid to lose my room. Wouldn’t be able to live anywhere else, I mean I couldn’t afford to rent anywhere else.”
Caught in a system

“The rent is paid, they kick somebody out. The rent is paid, they kick somebody out. The rent is paid, they kick somebody out.”

Photography: Brandon Doran
Dehumanized

“[the management] called the police once and stood by while the police brutalized me. I was beaten by them and called a trespasser. They didn’t like me because I was helping [a friend] advocate for services.”
Common Interview Themes

disinvestment
“[We had] problems with the electrics. The Elevator kept going out, sometimes for days. I had to help [another resident] up the [four floors of] stairs and carry the wheelchair. “

“[Management would] threaten your safety and make your life miserable - no lights in the shower, no locks on the door sometimes, knocking on the door all night.”
“My current landlord, I’ve worked for him, cleaning the building. And he’s not very ethical. I had to clean black mold. Me and another guy in the building had to clean this mold, no masks. And we both got sick. And this mold is still here. Under the sinks. In our rooms. And we get sick sometimes.”

“With the Warfield, conditions were allowed to deteriorate until the point that many rooms were not livable. The people forced to leave were given money. But there are no places left. A lot of them are on the streets now. And that hotel, well the owners can build better units but might probably open them again for higher prices.”
Common Interview Themes

gentrification induced stress
“Little by little, they tell us “you gotta go, we’re organizing construction.” Back then, I could hop from spot to spot. It’s not like that anymore because of the money. [SROs] have a long waiting list, and I’m on the waiting list...”
“With the tech boom, [the neighborhood] is convulsing with change. I eat at this place, a diner, for breakfast, and they shut it down. I think they’re putting in a cocktail bar. That’s not for us. And now I don’t have anywhere to eat. I don’t have a kitchen. We don’t have kitchens. Where can I afford my food now?”
Common Interview Themes

Tenderloin as home
"...there's a camaraderie here. We all struggle but we don't judge. There's not a lot of other places where people won't profile you. I love San Francisco and I can't picture being anywhere else. The TL is the only place I can still be at and be with my city."

THE TL HAS BEEN MY HOME.
If I could make the TL look any way, I'd dress the buildings up. Paint the wood. Put pretty stones on them. It would be so when you walk through the streets, you'd see how funky and pretty the buildings looked, how bright the colors were. You wouldn't see the drugs or the people on the streets. It would be blocks and blocks of magic.

“The TL will be my home. The TL can be a better home.”
Where to go from here? Future Approaches
Profiles for TNDC

- Compile interviewee profiles with excerpts and quotes
- Supplement quantitative reports from city data
- Provide a compelling case for greater or continued investment in TL communities and protections of TL residents by city government
Thank you for listening.