

# RECLAIMING OUR TURF



## Setting limits on tobacco retail permits in San Francisco

To protect the public's health, the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) youth advocates from the Tobacco Use Reduction Force (TURF) propose to amend the health code to minimize the harmful effects of over-exposure to establishments with permits to sell tobacco. This proposal provides a solution that dramatically reduces the serious disparities in exposure vulnerable communities face. Simultaneously, it attempts to level the playing field for businesses across all supervisorial districts in San Francisco.

## What We Need to Change

### Tobacco continues to harm our communities in uneven ways

Tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death for San Franciscans (Mokdad A. H., et al., 2004). Despite extensive prevention education and policy efforts, 11.6% of San Francisco adults continue to smoke (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2009). Low-income individuals and communities of color generally have disproportionately higher smoking rates, and higher prevalence of tobacco related illness and death (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1998; California Department of Public Health, n. d.b). In addition to its health impact, tobacco-related death and disease have considerable economic costs. The cost of tobacco-related disease and death in San Francisco is close to \$500 million a year. (1)

### Levels of exposure to stores that sell tobacco is strongly linked to higher smoking rates and other tobacco-related harms

San Francisco has over 1,000 retailers that sell cigarettes and related tobacco products (San Francisco Department of Public Health and the Tobacco Free Project, 2012). In many San Francisco neighborhoods, stores selling tobacco are virtually everywhere. The over-concentration of outlets presents a serious public health threat. The data indicates the likelihood of smoking is directly related to the concentration of tobacco outlets in one's neighborhoods. Research conducted in Chicago neighborhoods revealed that the odds of being a current smoker are higher for adolescents living in neighborhoods with more tobacco outlets than for those in areas with fewer tobacco outlets (Novak, et al. 2006). Among other studies with similar results, a California study showed student-smoking rates were higher for schools that had tobacco outlets within a thousand feet of the school (Leatherdale, et al., 2007; Henriksen, et al., 2008). Considering 60% of tobacco outlets citywide are within a thousand feet of schools (San Francisco Department of Public Health, 2011), this is a major public health concern for our city. The presence of tobacco retail outlets conveys tacit approval of the purchase and use of tobacco. The ubiquity of tobacco retail outlets in many San Francisco neighborhoods sends a clear message that use of these products is the norm.



Overexposed:  
What Many San Francisco Youth Experience Everyday

1. In 1999, the economic costs of smoking in California were estimated to be \$475 per resident or \$3,331 per smoker, for a total of nearly \$15.8 billion in smoking-related costs (1999 dollars). Max W, Rice DP, Zhang X, Sung H-Y, Miller L. The Cost of Smoking in California, 1999. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Health Services, 2002. Those same costs in 2008 would be \$690 per resident or \$4,924 per smoker



## Teens still find it easy to buy tobacco

*"I live downtown and Chinatown is a five minute walk from my home. There are stores that sell cigarettes on every block and it's very easy to buy them. I want to live in a neighborhood where I am not surrounded by a product that can kill me."*

- Janakaye Cruz, TURF Policy Advocate

Teens have ready and easy access to tobacco in San Francisco. In a 2010-2012 survey, a startling 51% of 9th graders or freshmen in the San Francisco Unified School District thought it was "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain cigarettes (SFUSD, 2011). Furthermore, an early study addressing sales of tobacco to minors in both African American and White low-income urban areas in Baltimore demonstrated racial profiling and targeting based on race, ethnicity and socio-economic status (Voorhees, et al., 1997). In fact, another study found that retailers were more likely to sell cigarettes to African American youth than White youth (Klonoff, E.A., Landrine, H., Alcaraz, R., 1997). While the overall rate of sales to minors has decreased due to increased enforcement and the City's tobacco permit ordinance, these strategies don't address the real effects of the concentration of retail outlets themselves, and are thus limited in their impact.

## Vulnerable communities in San Francisco are disproportionately exposed to tobacco products

San Francisco residents are not impacted equally by exposure to tobacco retail outlets. The findings of a recent study are alarming—tobacco outlets are more concentrated in areas where people already at higher risk for negative health outcomes reside (Rodriguez, et al., 2012). In general, districts with higher proportions of low-income residents and communities of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, tend to have more tobacco retail outlets. (2) This is not surprising—the tobacco industry makes a deliberate effort to target these communities through marketing strategies such as price discounts, promotional giveaways, product placement, and culturally tailored ad content at retail locations (Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, research also shows that the targeting of tobacco sales and the concentration of tobacco retailers in disadvantaged neighborhoods is having the intended effect—more smoking. Research conducted in four northern California cities revealed that lower neighborhood socio-economic status and higher convenience store

Sup. District	Number of Stores that Sell Tobacco*	Tobacco Retailer Density (%)*	Median Household Income**	Total Population**	Number of tobacco retailers per 10,000 pop.
6 (SOMA Tenderloin)	270	27%	\$38,610	94,790	28.5
3 (Chinatown/North Beach)	147	14.69%	\$48,516	68,890	21.3
9 (Mission/Castro)	97	9.69%	\$69,198	65,670	14.8
5 (Western Add./Haight)	95	9.49%	\$66,885	70,650	13.4
10 (Bayview)	81	8.09%	\$54,948	78,660	10.3
11 (Outer Mission)	73	7.29%	\$69,992	79,540	9.2
1 (Richmond)	59	5.89%	\$71,204	68,290	8.6
2 (Marina)	51	5.09%	\$102,457	68,080	7.5
4 (Outer Sunset)	46	4.60%	\$76,387	71,580	6.4
8 (Twin Peaks)	45	4.50%	\$93,576	69,240	6.5
7 (Inner Sunset)	37	4.27%	\$92,768	69,850	5.3
Total	1,001			805,330	

Table 1: Key Demographics and Tobacco Retail Outlet Density by Supervisorial District, 2012

\* Data from TFP Analysis of SF Tax Collector Data, 2011

\*\* Data from "At a Glance: San Francisco Socio-Economic Profile, 2005-2009 American Community Survey", San Francisco Planning Department



concentration, measured by density and distance, were both significantly associated with higher levels of individual smoking (Chuang, et al., 2005). Novak (2006) found similar results: higher sales of tobacco to minors in both African American and White low income urban areas were shown to be directly related to tobacco retail outlet density.

TURF's own analysis shows the relationship between tobacco outlets and community characteristics in San Francisco. Using data from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, TURF found that:

- The six supervisorial districts with the highest proportions of tobacco retailers by population also have the lowest median household incomes in the city (San Francisco Planning Department, 2011).
- African American and Latino residents are more likely to live in districts with the highest density of tobacco retailers (San Francisco Planning Department, 2011).

Table 1 illustrates the relationship between tobacco permit outlet density and income across San Francisco districts. The six districts with lowest median household income, have visibly higher numbers and/or more distinct concentrations of permitted outlets than districts on the west and north sides of the city.

Though some ethnically diverse and more moderate-income neighborhoods have been spared, many neighborhoods are clearly overwhelmed with the number of outlets. For example, District 9, the Mission District, which has a large population of people of color and low median household income, has almost twice as many stores selling tobacco as compared to District 2, the Marina District, with smaller percentages of people of color and higher per capita income. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of tobacco retail outlets across the city. Clearly, outlets are concentrated in eastern neighborhoods.

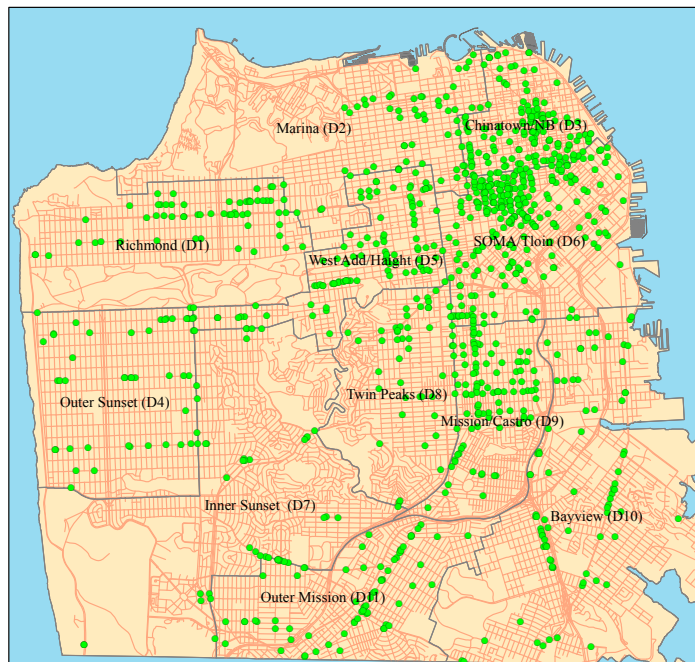


Figure 1. Tobacco Outlets in San Francisco by Supervisorial Districts, 2011 (San Francisco Department of Public Health, 2011)

Residents of these targeted communities don't need scientists or research experts to tell them they are being targeted. TURF members surveyed San Francisco residents in 2012, finding that 88% of respondents agreed that too many stores selling cigarettes is bad for their community's health. Communities are tired of being targets, and want to see change.

*"Our research using the tobacco industry's own internal documents demonstrates how residents of poor and minority neighborhoods have been targeted for decades. This illustrates clear health disparities. Limiting the number of tobacco permits is one way to begin to address this historical pattern of injustice, which has furthered addiction, disease and early death in our communities."*

*-Ruth Malone, PhD, Professor and Vice Chair of the Department of Social And Behavioral Sciences at the University Of California: San Francisco (UCSF)*

# RETAIL LICENSE LIMITS: THE TURF SOLUTION

## All of San Francisco's Communities are affected

As stated above, in San Francisco, the number of outlets with permits to sell tobacco among districts is not uniform. However, all supervisorial districts in San Francisco are affected by the concentration of retailers with permits to sell tobacco outlets and the resulting harm their presence causes.

The relationship between tobacco access and use is clear. Low income and minority communities in our city are overwhelmed with stores that sell tobacco. Policies that reduce this disproportionate impact are vital. TURF believes that reducing the concentration of tobacco outlets with tobacco permits, particularly in more vulnerable communities, can and will reduce smoking rates and decrease tobacco-related harms.

Our position is similar to the Institute of Medicine, the nation's premier advisory body on health policy, which recommends regulations to reduce the number and density of tobacco outlets to reduce tobacco-related disease and death (Institute of Medicine, 2007).

Because of the serious health impacts caused by smoking, it is in the City's best interest to reduce the disproportionate exposure to outlets and to minimize exposure in all districts by limiting, and over time decreasing, the number of tobacco retail permits. The key interest is to improve the public health of all San Francisco communities.

## Proposed legislation

Article 19 of the San Francisco City and County Health Code would be added and amended to limit the amount of tobacco retail permits. The amendment would set a maximum number of tobacco retailer permits allowed for each supervisorial district, over time creating an even distribution of tobacco retail permits across all supervisorial districts. Through attrition, this legislation would gradually reduce the number of tobacco retail permits citywide below current levels. New retail permits would be subject to limits on proximity to schools and other tobacco retail outlets.

## Community Benefits and Precedence

Setting the maximum number of permitted tobacco retailers allowed for each supervisorial district will eliminate the disparity of exposure to tobacco outlets. This creates uniformity and fairness among districts and is an easily enforceable policy. This policy directly promotes public health by addressing the serious disparities in health outcomes for communities of color and low-income residents and offers an important new way to reduce smoking rates. While this policy approach is new to tobacco control, regulations of this kind are not. Through Alcohol Beverage Control, the state of California sets specific limits on alcohol retailers to one license for 2,500 residents. TURF's proposal proposes setting a limit on density, much like this existing alcohol permit regulation does.

## How the legislation works

Retailers who currently possess retail tobacco permits can continue to sell tobacco. In the event of sale or change of ownership of a tobacco retailer, a new tobacco permit will only be issued if the number of tobacco permits in a particular district is below the maximum number. As retail establishments close or change ownership, tobacco permits will be discontinued and not replaced until the number of permits is below the maximum number allowed by this policy. Periodic assessments of population data and tobacco retailer ownership closure, sale and change of ownership data will be necessary as part of the enforcement of this legislation.

## Support for the policy

TURF believes that the public, including smokers, are in support of this legislation. A recent TURF survey shows over 80% of San Francisco residents support legislation to gradually reduce the number of stores selling cigarettes and tobacco products in the city.





The TURF Team and VYDC Youth with Supervisor Eric Mar

### Background and History of the Tobacco Use Reduction Force (TURF)

TURF is a diverse group of young advocates who will champion a tobacco control policy to create a healthier San Francisco. TURF is a program of the Youth Leadership Institute made possible by funding from the SF Department of Public Health's Tobacco Free Project. The Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) is a national non-profit, based in San Francisco, that builds communities where young people and their adult allies come together to create positive, sustainable community change. For over 20 years, YLI has been an innovative leader in the field of youth development, working in many capacities—from advocating for national policy change to organizing on a community level.

TURF first convened young leaders to advocate for tobacco control in San Francisco in 2008. This first group of TURF leaders conducted research, led a community education campaign, and in 2009 championed a policy proposal to limit tobacco density in San Francisco. While critical support for this first policy proposal was ultimately split by similarly introduced legislation, it succeeded in raising awareness among the city's policy makers to the disproportionate exposure to tobacco in low-income communities and set the stage for a new group of TURF advocates. In 2011 YLI convened a new group of TURF leaders. Inspired to create positive change, and informed by prior efforts, this cohort is championing a new policy proposal to limit tobacco density in San Francisco's disadvantaged neighborhoods.

In 2008, and again in 2011, YLI received funding, training and technical assistance from the San Francisco Tobacco Free Project of the San Francisco Department of Public Health to implement the CAM: Community Action Model (Hennessey, et al., 2005). The CAM involves community advocates in researching issues of concern in their communities and implementing policy development campaigns. The intent of the CAM is to work in collaboration with communities and provide a framework for community members to acquire the skills and resources to investigate the health of the place they live and then plan, implement and evaluate actions that change the environment to promote and improve health. Since 1996 a number of projects have been funded resulting in a variety of policy outcomes including: a policy by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks department banning smoking in outdoor playground areas; tobacco free sponsorship policies, smoke free policies at multi-unit housing complexes, policies reducing tobacco ads at stores while increasing healthy foods, and enforcement of policies requiring warning labels on tobacco products.

For more information about this proposal or the TURF team, please contact Avni Desai, Program Coordinator, at 415-836-9160 (ext. 237) or [adesai@yli.org](mailto:adesai@yli.org). For more information about the Youth Leadership Institute, please visit [www.yli.org](http://www.yli.org).

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