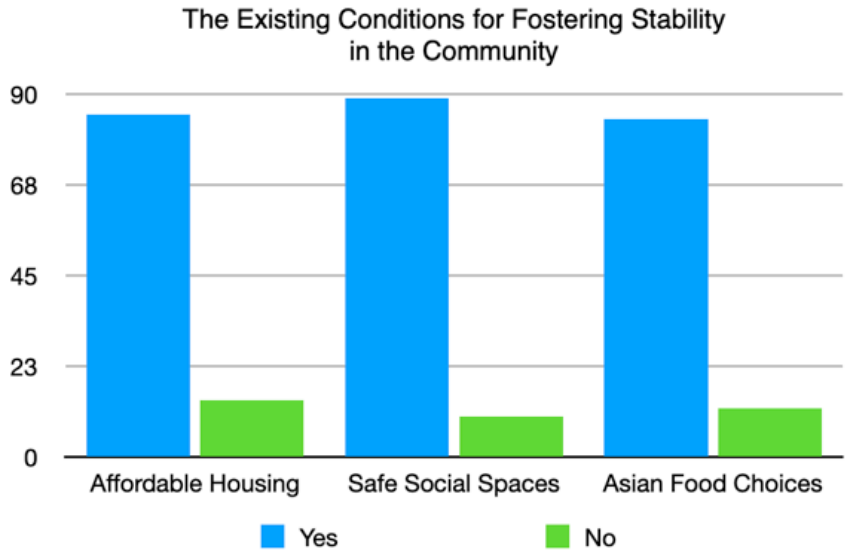
From the Inside Out 4/2/25

Our community engagement efforts have led to an unexpected outcome: bringing together previously disconnected groups of Chinese elders. This has further illuminated the reality that the Tenderloin has a very different look and feel from the inside out. These newly formed cohorts are helping to build a wider network, offering valuable insight into the thoughts and needs of the community. This, in turn, gives us a clearer lens through which to identify and support activities that foster stronger relationships within the community.

Our analysis of just under 770 surveys and focus group discussions with local residents highlights what make this neighborhood a sanctuary for residents, many of whom are of Chinese ancestry. The surveys reveal that 96 percent of the respondents are comfortable living in housing at facilities such as the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation. Eighty-three percent of survey respondents hailed Father Alfred E. Boeddeker Park located in the heart of the neighborhood as one of their primary gathering places. And 84 percent of the respondents buy their groceries in the neighborhood. Affordable housing, safe spaces in residential housing and in the park, and access to local produce are conditions that foster individual protection and family stability. See the graph below summarizing these community findings:



What also captured our attention was the fact that over 71 percent of the respondents, whose median age is 76, live either alone or with their spouse. And just over 90 percent indicated that they have harmonious relationships with family members, friends, neighbors, and spiritual leaders. These support groups are helping them to solve problems, heal, and grow. We know that the quality of relationships is one of the main predictors of longevity and happiness. (See The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness by Robert Waldinger, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development at Massachusetts General Hospital, and Marc Schulz, associate director of the HSAD.) And we are now identifying the respondents' guidelines for building productive and enabling relationships. The following beliefs

and values come from focus group sessions with elders in the Tenderloin, who summarized what guide them in building quality relationships with others:

- Strive for harmony and unity amid diversity.
- Guard and protect each other.
- Respect the elders and love the young.
- Gain deeper understanding of others who are different from you.
- Be active and flexible in seeking out solutions to problems and challenges.
- Create art that heals others.
- Give a helping hand to your neighbors.

In April and May 2025, we will be convening meetings at residence facilities in the Tenderloin to hear their thoughts and recommendations regarding community-driven activities that will strengthen relationships within the family and among community members. Through these meetings, we will identify activities to receive potential funding for fortifying this sanctuary in the Tenderloin. We will report back to you on what they suggest.