



3/10/25

Step one of our five-step discovery process begins with community-driven surveys to ground us in the reality of the community. This is our way of learning about the community's challenges, its approaches to solving problems and its ways of adapting.

Community organizers Siu Han Cheung and Tammy Huynh, the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC), and a group of eleven Chinese elders collectively known as the Radiant Lights of the Setting Suns are conducting a survey of tenants in residential occupancy dwellings. The Radiant Lights plan to carry out 800 surveys and, to date, they have received more than 650 completed surveys. Nearly all the questions have been answered. (See photo above, right of the Radiant Lights at one of our training sessions.)

Our review of the survey data illuminates the structure of the family and community as a sanctuary—an unseen treasure of the Chinese community in the Tenderloin:

1. **87% of the respondents feel that the residents in their neighborhood generally protect and safeguard them and others.**

2. **86% of the respondents report having a social space to gather and keep fit with friends and neighbors.**

3. **69% of the respondents have created a "spiritual refuge" for their families within the neighborhood.**

4. **Over 91% of the respondents are receiving support and experiencing healing and personal growth through the assistance of extended-family members, spiritual leaders, and friends.**

However, the data also highlights challenges in family and community structures: 51% of the tenants live alone, 28% with a spouse, and 15% with one or more children. The intergenerational family structure is breaking down, with a significant number of elderly individuals living alone and no longer providing care for their children and grandchildren. This shift results in a widening of the generational gap and a disconnect from a primary source of Chinese history and culture for younger generations. And although 87% of the respondents describe their families and/or community members as working harmoniously together, about half of this group indicated a need for assistance in problem-solving beyond the extended family. Without access to expertise

and technology resources, the solutions they choose may hinder their ability to adapt and thrive effectively. The survey also brings to light an erosion in the ethos of the community: 3% of neighbors experience a helping hand—a gift gesture—every day that they did not ask for or expect and only 22% experience an unanticipated gift once a week.

Our next step is to convene meetings of survey respondents to share and discuss these challenges and to develop community-driven solutions to them. We will be exploring how the activities that form their sanctuary can be further strengthened.

We are committed to preserving the inherent assets of the community. In the contemporary era, the challenges of community building in the United States and globally compel us to fortify the structures that significantly impact the lives of residents, particularly immigrant families at the grassroots level. Our approach commences with the social and cultural fabric of the community —naming and asserting an ethos that governs the organization of family and community life, integrates with political and legal systems, and contributes to the economy. * By bringing these resources to light, the community will be guided by its own narrative of how it is sustaining change. This is the rationale behind the establishment of the Dao Project: to empower the very core of the community through a process of discovering its unseen treasures.

We will keep you informed about the final analysis of the surveys and the community-driven solutions that emerge to address the challenges set forth in the study.

*See *What We Owe Each Other*, Minouche Shafik, Princeton University Press, 2021.