

Tobacco Use Reduction Force (TURF)
A project of the Youth Leadership Institute

“Where We Live, Tobacco Is Everywhere”
A Case Study

The over-concentration of retail outlets selling tobacco in low-income communities and communities of color in San Francisco is a major public health concern.¹ Youth living in neighborhoods with higher tobacco retail density are not only disproportionately exposed to tobacco products that are more available and accessible than youth from more affluent neighborhoods, but also experience increasing environmental cues to smoke and are more likely to view tobacco use as a cultural norm.



The prestigious Institute of Medicine, a national advisory body on health policy, has called for regulations to reduce the number and density of tobacco outlets as an important prevention approach.² Data indicates that the concentration of tobacco outlets within neighborhoods where the tobacco industry uses deliberate marketing strategies targeting low income and racially/ethnically diverse communities (through price discounts, culturally customized ad content, promotional giveaways, and product placement) is directly related to the likelihood of smoking.³ Research has found that higher sales of tobacco to minors in both African American

1" Rodriguez D., et al. (2012). Predictors of tobacco outlet density nationwide: A geographic analysis. *Tobacco Control*. Published online, April 4, 2012.
<http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2012/04/03/tobaccocontrol-2011-050120.short?rss=1>

2" Institute of Medicine. (2007). Ending the tobacco problem: A blueprint for the nation. Washington DC: National Academies Press. Available at:
<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2007/Ending-the-Tobacco-Problem-A-Blueprint-for-the-Nation.aspx>

3" Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, Counter Tobacco, and the American Heart Association (2012) Deadly alliance: How big tobacco and convenience stores partner to market tobacco products and fight life-saving policies. Retrieved on December 20, 2012,
http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what_we_do/industry_watch/store_report/

and white low income urban areas were directly related to tobacco retail outlet density. In other words, the chances of being a current smoker are higher for youth living in neighborhoods with more tobacco outlets than for those in areas with less outlet concentration.⁴ One study documented the real targeting of youth in low-income urban areas,⁵ while another found that retailers were more likely to sell cigarettes to African American adolescents than to white adolescents.⁶ In addition, smoking rates among students are higher for schools with tobacco outlets within 1000 feet of the school. The magnitude of this problem is highlighted for San Francisco where 60% of tobacco outlets are within 1000 feet of schools.

Community Action Model

In implementing its action, TURF utilized the Community Action Model (CAM), a process that builds on the strengths or capacity of a community to create change from within and mobilizes community members and agencies to change environmental factors promoting economic and environmental inequalities. CAM steps include:

Train participants to develop skills, increase knowledge and build capacity.

Do a community diagnosis to find the root causes of a community concern or issue and discovering resources to overcome it.

Choose an action to address the issue of concern. The action should be achievable, have the potential for sustainability, and compel change for the wellbeing of all.

Develop/implement an action plan which may include an outreach plan, media advocacy, developing and advocating for a model policy, presentations, and evaluation.

Enforce/maintain the action after it is successfully completed to maintain it over the long term with enforcement by appropriate bodies.

The **Tobacco Use Reduction Force (TURF)**, a project of the **Youth Leadership Institute (YLI)**, has worked over the last five years to limit tobacco retail density in San Francisco. YLI is a youth-serving organization that creates communities where young people and their adult allies work together to create positive social change. YLI designs and implements community-based programs that provide youth with leadership skills in the areas of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention, philanthropy, and civic engagement, and also creates curricula and training programs that advance social change efforts and promote best practices in the field of youth development.

TURF is a diverse group of youth advocates who champion tobacco control policies. In 2008, under contract to the San Francisco Tobacco Free Project (TFP), TURF first convened a group of young advocates to work on tobacco control in the City. The advocates conducted research and chose to work on a community education campaign to limit tobacco retail density in low income communities of San Francisco. Although political support for the policy was split by a parallel

4" Novak SP, et al. (2006). Retail tobacco outlet density and youth cigarette smoking: A propensity-modeling approach. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96, 670-676.

5" Voorhees CC, et al. (1997). Cigarette sales to African American and White minors in low-income areas of Baltimore. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87, 652-654.

6" Klonoff EA, et al. (1997). An experimental analysis of sociocultural variables in sales of cigarette to minors. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87(5), 823-826.

piece of legislation introduced by the Mayor, the campaign did raise awareness among San Francisco policy makers about the disproportionate exposure to tobacco in low-income communities, and set the stage for a new group of TURF advocates convened in 2011. The 8 current TURF advocates include 6 young women and 2 young men, ranging in age from 16 to 21, represent a diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds: African American, Filipino, Latino, and Caucasian; four are bilingual in Tagalog (2) and Spanish (2).

Armed with the wealth of data collected by the previous cohort, knowing that no one else was working on the permit issue, and inspired to be trailblazers in creating positive change, the current group of TURF youth decided to build on the work of their predecessors to enact a policy limiting the density of tobacco retailers and cap the number of tobacco stores allowed to operate in San Francisco. In the first phase of the project, the advocates received training and capacity building to upgrade their research and analytic skills and learn how tobacco is a social and global justice issue. In the very early stages of their action research, they learned about the importance of viewing the issue of tobacco outlet density within the context of each area. For example, the advocates went on community walking tours and met with organizers in different neighborhoods. They discovered that while tobacco seemed to be more of an issue in the more high income Sunset District than in the low-income Bayview District (where other issues such as high rates of poverty, violence, and poor health were higher priorities), retail tobacco density was much higher in the Bayview. The advocates also updated the information that had been collected by the previous TURF youth to reflect new census and redistricting data, and worked with City officials to examine how tobacco permits are distributed in the city by supervisorial district. Their key findings include:

- The six supervisorial districts in San Francisco with the highest per capita proportions of tobacco retailers also have the lowest median household incomes.
- District 6 (Tenderloin and South of Market) has the highest density of permits and sales.



Districts with higher proportions of low-income residents and communities of color (particularly African Americans and Latinos), are more likely to have a higher number of tobacco retail outlets than are more affluent neighborhoods. The Mission District, which has a large population

with low median household income and people of color, has nearly twice as many stores selling tobacco in contrast to the more affluent and ethnically homogenous Marina District.

- 60% of tobacco retailers are within 1000 feet of schools.
- In 2011, despite increased enforcement and San Francisco's existing tobacco permit ordinance, 51% of 9th graders in S.F. public schools reported it was "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain cigarettes.

Public opinion surveys conducted by TURF in 2009 and 2012 have found strong public support to limit the density and number of cigarette retailers in San Francisco. The 2009 survey of residents in four different San Francisco neighborhoods revealed that 83% supported limits on stores selling cigarettes in low income communities with large populations of children and youth.

The 2012 survey found:

- 88% of respondents agreed that too many stores selling cigarettes were bad for their community's health
- 87% supported a policy to reduce the number of tobacco products available
- 78% believe that one store selling tobacco products on every block was too many
- Over 80% of respondents favoring city legislation to gradually reduce the number of stores selling cigarettes and tobacco products.

TURF advocates also interviewed a number of governmental agencies, policy makers, researchers, planners, and educators to collect information about strategies used in other jurisdictions to limit tobacco permits. Interviews included county health department officials in San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Marin Counties that had already passed policies to regulate tobacco retailers. They learned that existing county tobacco retail policies focus on reducing illegal sales to minors, and do not address the many community health impacts and disparities resulting from over-concentration of tobacco retail in particular areas or neighborhoods. They also learned that counties have not passed policies designed to reduce the number of permits over time. Revocation of permits for repeated sales to minors is the way that counties could conceivably reduce permit numbers.

The advocates examined the efficacy of San Francisco's current suspensions process and found:

- While San Francisco's retail permit suspension enforcement may be effective in deterring sales to minors, retailers on average are granted shorter suspension terms than the minimum amount stated in the ordinance.
- The appeals process is not intended or designed to permanently revoke permits and it seems unlikely that the appeals board would apply the stiffest penalty of permanently suspending a license.

Finally, the advocates researched opinions of retailers from interviews and the literature. They found that retailers:

- Claim profits from tobacco range from 8%-10% up to 30% of total sales;
- Complain that new regulations (e.g., litter fee, plastic bag ban, etc.) often hurt small businesses by raising prices and drive customers to shop outside of San Francisco;
- Argue that they promote "freedom of choice" – not smoking, and public health advocates should focus on reducing demand rather than imposing additional burdensome regulations on retailers.

After extensively researching and documenting the connection between public health and tobacco sales, the TURF advocates concluded that enforcement and tobacco permit requirement policies have important but limited impact, in that they do not address the effects of overconcentration of retail outlets. They drafted a proposed model policy to address current law in San Francisco that does not cap the number of tobacco retail permits it issues or set conditions on permit location, leading to a disparity in the concentration of tobacco outlets in low income communities.

TURF's Proposed Policy to Amend S.F. Health Code, Article 19	
Current Law	Proposed Policy
No limits on the number of permits	Set a maximum number (or cap) on tobacco retailer permits at 39 per 10,000 residents allowed for each supervisorial district.
No condition on location of permits	New retail permits would be subject to limits on proximity to schools and to other tobacco retail outlets. A permit would not be issued in any district that exceeds 5 tobacco retail permits per 10,000 residents; to any establishment within 500 feet of an existing permit holder; or to any establishment within 1,000 feet of a school.
Does not discourage increase in permits	Through attrition (e.g. retailer sells business, goes out of business, or license revoked after 3 violations of tobacco control laws in 12 months), gradually reduce the number of tobacco retail permits citywide below current levels. Over time, will result in a more even distribution of tobacco retail permits across all supervisorial districts.

Along with drafting and finalizing the resolution to submit to the Health Commission and ultimately the Board of Supervisors, TURF advocates created a campaign action plan, worked on developing various messages, materials, and presentations suitable for a variety of audiences, and practiced making presentations. A large part of TURF's political strategy was to be sure the messages and materials were tested before going public. To that end, they established a TURF Advisory Board made up of labor and community advisors who provided feedback on the materials and presentations. The advocates also reviewed endorsements that had been used in



the last cycle, identified gaps, and expanded the organizations from whom they wanted to seek endorsements beyond youth-focused groups to community and economic development groups.

In the first half of 2012, the advocates obtained good media coverage, with stories about the campaign appearing in El Tecolote in February, POOR Magazine in May, the Examiner.com in June, and a PSA on KPFA radio. TURF also created two educational videos about the campaign. The latest one, a 6 minute PSA video, debuted on November 29 at a community event held by TURF at YLI's San Francisco office. The event – Building Momentum for a Healthy Environment – included youth, allies, and community leaders involved in building a youth movement for health in San Francisco. The advocates shared information about TURF's progress to pass their model legislation, about other youth-led health campaigns, and how to get involved.

By late April 2012, the advocates were ready to seek a sponsor who would carry the legislation. They initially reached out to the member on the Board of Supervisors who had agreed to sponsor TURF's similar proposed policy in the previous cycle and who, when the measure stalled due to competing proposals, had encouraged the group to contact him in the future. However, his office had experienced a lot of staff turnover, and some of the institutional knowledge that previous staff had was not transferred to new staff members. It thus took a while for TURF advocates to reach him by email. Meanwhile, the proposed policy was scheduled to be heard by both the Health Commission and at the Department of Public Health cabinet leadership meeting. Having finalized their materials and presentations, the advocates were well prepared to present to each group. The Health Commission unanimously passed a resolution to support the policy in concept and recommended some other supervisors that the advocates should contact. The week after, a resolution in support of the policy was passed by the Youth Commission.

After lengthy delays, in large part due to political events inherent in an election year, the advocates finally heard from the supervisor's office and a meeting was scheduled for July. The supervisor was running for a delegate position for the DCCC and was also campaigning to retain his seat on the Board of Supervisors, which was taking a considerable amount of time. In addition, his aide was relatively new on the staff, did not have a background in health policy, and did not fully understand the relevance of the proposed policy. At the meeting, TURF advocates learned that the supervisor was worried about the backlash that had resulted from progressive legislation he had sponsored earlier in the year. Dealing with a tenuous political situation, he did not think it prudent to take the lead on the tobacco control legislation. He was, however, willing to co-sponsor the legislation and, given his reelection, said he would be happy to take the lead if needed. He suggested that the advocates meet with the supervisor from District 6 – the district so

Organizational Endorsements

Community-based and Youth Organizations

Asian American Recovery Services
Asian Youth Prevention Services
Bayanihan Community Center
Bayview Hunters Point Food Guardians
BMAGIC/Public Defenders Office
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Chinese Progressive Association
Coleman Advocates
Community Youth Center of San Francisco
Dolores Street Community Services
FilipinoCommunity Center
Girls After School Academy
Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth

Horizons Unlimited
Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center
Mujeres Unidas y Activas
Oasis for Girls
People Organized to Demand Environment and Economic Rights
People Organized to Win Employment Rights
South of Market Community Action Network
Teachers 4 Social Justice
Tenderloin Youth Leadership Program
West Bay Pilipino Center

Commissions and Coalitions

San Francisco Health Commission
San Francisco Youth Commission
San Francisco Tobacco Free Coalition
Transitional Age Youth Initiatives of San Francisco/Youth Adult Advisory Board

Health & Policy Organizations

Alcohol Justice
African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council
BREATHE California
California LGBT Tobacco Education Partnership
Center for Policy Analysis on Trade and Health
Freedom From Tobacco
Sunset Russian Tobacco Education Program

Community and Economic Development

Excelsior Action Group
Mission Economic Development Agency
North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District
Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation

Businesses

United Whole Health

heavily impacted by over-concentration of tobacco retail outlets – as a potential sponsor. TURF reached out to her along with two others that the Health Commission had recommended.

The supervisor from District 6 was impressed that TURF had already obtained resolutions from the Health Commission and Youth Commission. TURF believed she would be a particularly good choice as lead sponsor in getting the legislation passed because of her close working relationship with many corner grocery store owners in her district, particularly the Arab American Grocers Association. She had recently led the successful passage of a civil rights ordinance holding San Francisco police officers, working with the FBI's joint terrorism task force, to San Francisco's strong protections for privacy and free speech. The protection afforded by this legislation resonated deeply within San Francisco's Arab American community and TURF believed the political capital gained by the supervisor because of her role in its passage would help to neutralize opposition from many tobacco retail outlet owners.

The supervisor sent TURF's proposed legislation to the City Attorney for review. Once she receives the policy back from the City Attorney, she will meet with TURF to talk about how to move forward and broker a meeting between TURF and the Arab American Grocers Association.

If this supervisor is not able to be the lead on the proposed legislation, TURF will approach the original supervisor who by then had been reelected and has the capacity to be the lead sponsor or co-sponsor.

TURF set up a meeting with a pro-community, pro-youth organizing commissioner on the Small Business Commission to get advice about how TURF can refine its message, how to pitch it to the Small Business Commission, how to deal with voices of dissent on various commissions, and how to neutralize opposition from the business community before the ordinance is heard by the Board of Supervisors. In the previous TURF tobacco permit campaign, major sources of support were sought from predominantly youth organizations. This time, the advocates, guided by the Project Coordinator, worked to get support from other community-based organizations and economic development neighborhood associations, along with boards, committees, commissions, and community organizations that are less focused on youth. This has translated into an impressive list of 39 endorsements from commissions/coalitions, health and policy organizations, community-based and youth organizations and community and economic development organizations, along with over 34 endorsements from individuals.

Working on this action provided the advocates some notable lessons, as TURF stretched the boundaries and developed some new and fruitful strategies. These include:

- **Understanding the reciprocity in organizing work** by lending support to other campaigns and coalitions. The advocates learned how to help push forward other campaigns that can ultimately result in TURF being able to leverage reciprocal support for their own campaign. For example, the advocates supported an organization trying to provide incentives to small businesses to help them shift their business model to carry healthier food, with less reliance on products like tobacco and alcohol. When an advocate spoke at a press conference in support of that policy, she was identified as a TURF member and that gave TURF some positive exposure in another setting and with another audience.
- **Thinking outside the box** by approaching more economically-focused and community-based organizations – groups that youth-focused organizations do not ordinarily think about working with. This new strategy brought the advocates into contact with organizations that are not only working towards positive health change in their communities, but are also more experienced with the political process and can provide guidance to TURF.
- **Studying an issue within a specific context.** From the beginning when they did their community research, TURF advocates were exposed to a holistic way of think through the interconnectedness of issues. Since many on the TURF team come from immigrant families, it was important that they understood how tobacco promotion globally affects immigrant families living in San Francisco. In particular, the advocates traced the connection between neighborhoods most heavily impacted by tobacco retail density to high populations of immigrants that have high smoking rates. Having a context helps to refine how to best market TURF's messages and policies.

- **Untapped public resources.** Through the work of the Project Coordinator, the advocates are learning about resources in the City that may be of help in their campaign. There are many boards and commissions with contacts and networks that could be leveraged to move the campaign forward – people serving on different boards who might be interested but not necessarily knowledgeable about youth organizations or connected to people working on different policy campaigns.

Contact

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Project related tools/products

6-minute PSA video used as an educational tool:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF926CsdXyU>

Fact sheet