

New Program Brings Meals to Struggling Treasure Island Residents

By Joe Rosato Jr. Published August 9, 2021

It's hard to imagine a neighborhood in San Francisco, with its ubiquitous restaurants, where it's a chore to find food. But on Treasure Island, scoring food requires a bit of forethought and planning.

Car trips off the island have to be timed around busy commute hours, or there's always the unattractive option of hauling groceries home on the bus.

"We don't have access to anything but a great view," said longtime island resident LaShawndra Price-Breston.

Sweeping views on the island are indeed plentiful. Food, not so much. The current options include a mini-mart, a pair of restaurants and a food pantry operated by nonprofit One Treasure Island, which residents relied on heavily during the pandemic.

Not long ago, the island didn't even have those possibilities. Though as the ultimate tease, residents could readily look across the bay to San Francisco's constellation of dining options.

"We didn't have all the conveniences like every other community," Price-Breston said.

But recently, a new dining option popped up for islanders. Nonprofit One Treasure Island scored a \$500,000 grant from the Crankstart Foundation to create the Nourish TI Project – a program that's handing out free meals to people on the island five days a week over the next 10 months. It's doing it through the island's own network of restaurants and resources.

The program is distributing healthy meals through food trucks, take-home meal kits and to-go meals from restaurants Mersea and Aracely Cafe, which hand out 200 meals each Wednesday and Thursday.

"It means a break," said former island resident Chantel Ginocchio, who serves on the board of One Treasure Island. "They're going to have a chance to help out with another bill instead of buying groceries."

The island's inhabitants have even struggled getting food delivery services, with UberEats and other delivery companies refusing to travel to the island. One Treasure Island said a recent survey found that 10% of the island's population suffers food insecurity issues, while half of the roughly 2,300 residents live below the poverty line.

"The island is known for the best views in the world facing San Francisco," Ginocchio said. "But what's behind it, people are facing poverty and hunger."

The dining program isn't just helping out residents. The program is paying local businesses to make and distribute the food, which is welcome work for restaurants like Mersea which struggled during the height of the pandemic.

"We are able to keep our staff busy, gives us business," said Mersea co-owner MeeSun Boice. "Gives us a little revenue while helping the community."

On a recent Tuesday, Mersea served up a dinner of chili, steak, jasmine rice and focaccia. Residents signed up in advance to reserve the meals, and young people from the island, hired by the program, helped hand them out.

Price-Breston, who works in San Francisco, said the meals bring relief because her children can pick up dinner and have it on the table by the time she gets home. As a bonus, her son and daughter are among those hired to distribute the meals.

"It's good food, it's made with love," Price-Breston said. "Even my son told me that. He was like, 'Mom, eat this. They made it with love.'"

Land-secured bonds mark progress for San Francisco island development

By [Keeley Webster](#) August 05, 2021, 11:54 a.m. EDT 5 Min Read

The City and County of San Francisco has issued its second bond deal that will help a master-planned community that could eventually house 20,000 people take shape in the middle of San Francisco Bay.

The first new residents on Treasure and Yerba Buena islands could be moving in early next year.

The second set of bonds were issued July 21 for the first phase of housing on Yerba Buena Island, the midpoint of the two San Francisco Bay Bridge spans that connect the city with Oakland.



A view of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and Yerba Buena Island, where the first units of a major development project are being built.

Lead Manager Stifel and co-manager RBC Capital Markets priced \$41.3 million in unrated tax-exempt special tax bonds for San Francisco — the second set of bonds issued off the bond authorization for Community Facilities District No. 2016-1 created in January 2017.

The land-secured bonds, authorized under terms set in the state's Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982, are paid back with a special property tax levy. They are a means to fund public infrastructure for a new development without weighing on a city's general revenue base.

The 15- to 20-year project first conceived in 2011, which calls for 8,000 new housing units, was delayed for three years as a development team lead by Wilson Meany and Lennar Corp. battled a lawsuit brought by a former county supervisor that was eventually resolved.

The developers and investors, Kenwood Investments and Stockbridge Capital Group, had purchased lots on the man-made Treasure Island and adjoining Yerba Island from the Navy, with plans for a master-planned development involving homes, retail, office buildings and open space with 22-miles of trails.

Today, construction of 266 units of condominiums and townhomes on Yerba Island, part of the development's first phase, is well-underway. A 124-unit condominium building will be completed by year-end and some units have already sold. The two sets of bonds support this project.

"When we issued the first set of bonds in 2020, we didn't anticipate we would be returning with the second set so quickly," said Luke Brewer, the debt specialist in the San Francisco Controller's Office of Public Finance. "The reason we did was that the development had been able to move forward quickly, and also to take advantage of the super-low interest rates."

The Series 2021 special tax bonds achieved a true interest cost of 3.18%, nearly 50 basis points lower than the 3.66% expected when San Francisco's debt team presented the bond sale to the board in early May, Brewer said. The deal was oversubscribed by 12 times, he said.

"I think a lot of that is market movement since May," Brewer said. "The high-yield, non-rated market is less impacted by Treasuries and the volatility in the market. They are more focused on nominal yields and they are more credit focused."

The finance team fielded fewer questions related to the Bay Area's housing market than it had when Stifel and co-manager Backstrom McCarley Berry & Co. priced the inaugural \$17 million on Oct. 15, Brewer said.

The team included more disclosure on the complex project. It also posted a [drone video](#) and a slide presentation as part of the preliminary offering documents.

"It was easier to market, not just because it was the second financing, but because we are coming through the pandemic," said Eileen Gallagher, a Stifel managing director. "There was less uncertainty about the San Francisco housing market."

The developers have also started sales of the condominiums and are continuing to make progress on the project, Gallagher said.

Headed into the market, Gallagher said she wasn't sure where they would end up on spreads, because of the market volatility in late July, but she was "confident they would get significant interest given what has been experienced with comparable transactions over the last few months."

The deal brought repeat investors, said Brewer, noting that five out of the seven institutional investors had bought into the October deal.

The bonds are for the 15.5-acre Yerba Buena Island Improvement Area No. 1 in the CFD's Improvement Area No. 1, which has authorization for up to \$250 million in special tax bonds to support. The project includes construction of 266 condominium units and a hotel.

The Yerba Buena project is the first segment of 3,000 units of phase one housing planned in a 461-acre master-planned development that at build-out, near the end of the decade, will have 8,000 housing units.

The project also calls for 140,000 square feet of new commercial and retail space, 311,000 square feet of commercial-flex through the adaptive re-use of existing buildings, up to 500 hotel rooms,

100,000 square feet of office space and 290 acres of open space including walking-biking paths, playing fields, a marina and a ferry terminal.

The finance team also fielded questions about the entirety of the project. Investors wanted to know when a grocery store and a school would be built and when the ferry will start service. The ferry terminal was completed this summer and is expected to start service by the end of the year. Residents are currently connected to San Francisco and Oakland by the Bay Bridge.

“There were a lot of questions about the amenities,” Gallagher said.

“They also asked about the developer’s financing,” Brewer said “It’s a large infrastructure budget that will involve hundreds of millions to finish everything.”

Brewer said his office spent at least an hour talking to the developers each week for the past two years.

Treasure Island was created by filling part of the bay in the late 1930s as a location to host the 1939 World’s Fair, later serving as a naval base from 1942 until 1997. It’s physically connected to the naturally created Yerba Buena Island.

After the base was decommissioned, planning to redevelop the island began. The City of San Francisco has used the former military homes as rental housing.

The development team secured approval for the project in 2011 but was stymied from moving forward until 2014 until the state Supreme Court rejected an appeal from a lawsuit brought by former Supervisor Aaron Peskin claiming environmental reviews for the project were inadequate.

The Navy has been completing environmental cleanup of Treasure Island, which had high levels of radioactive contamination in some areas.

The island currently has about 250 units that house about 700 previously homeless people, and about 650 market-rate apartments. The master plan calls for 435 units for formerly homeless people out of the 2,000 units that will be set aside for low-income residents.

Report of active shooter on Treasure Island was a false alarm, police say; no one hurt

Wednesday, August 11, 2021

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (KGO) -- San Francisco police responded to a report of an active shooter on Treasure Island Wednesday morning, but say no shots were fired and no one was hurt.

They say the alarm was set off by mistake.

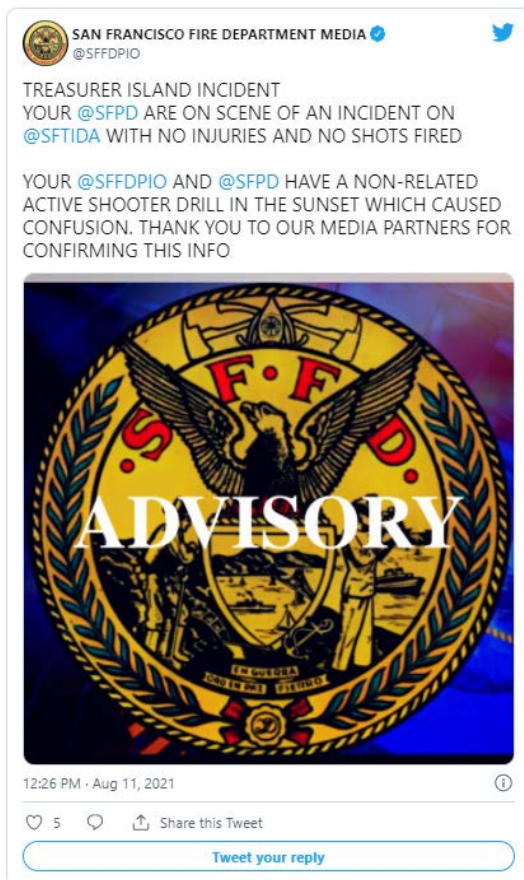
According to police, officers arrived on scene just after 11:20 a.m. to the 300 block of Avenue H at the Harvey Milk Memorial Administration building.

"At this time we have not confirmed an active shooter incident or located any victims," a police spokesman told ABC7.

SFPD says someone in the building triggered the alarm to report an active shooter.

But after officers searched room by room, they determined there was no threat in the building or anywhere on Treasure Island.

Police were conducting an unrelated active shooter drill in the city's Sunset District, which caused confusion, officials said.



These 3 communities have some of the lowest vaccination rates in the Bay Area. Why?

[Julie Johnson](#), [Nanette Asimov](#), [Sarah Ravani](#)

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Jin Sheng Wu of Treasure Island checks on grandson Justin Luo, almost 1. Wu has not yet gotten a COVID-19 vaccination.

Glenn Webb took a break from his job picking up trash in the parking lot of a retail strip in Antioch and walked over to a group of public health volunteers offering COVID-19 vaccines out of a minivan.

The QuikStop parking lot in Antioch's Sycamore neighborhood was bustling on this weekday in July. Shoppers dipped in and out of the market, smoke shop and beauty store. Three women sold drinks out of coolers. Men huddled around parked cars.

Webb, 58, wasn't sure he'd get vaccinated, but volunteer nurses had finally persuaded him to sit down in a folding chair and roll up his sleeve. "It's convenient," he shrugged.

And that was the point. Antioch neighborhoods have some of the lowest vaccination rates in the Bay Area, communities that have also withstood disproportionately high rates of job loss, eviction and coronavirus infections.

As the delta variant fuels a new wave of infections, The Chronicle visited three ZIP codes with the lowest vaccination rates in the Bay Area to learn why fewer residents there are getting shots and what public health agencies and others are doing about it.

The communities were west Antioch in northeast Contra Costa County, San Francisco's tiny Treasure Island and a southeastern section of East Oakland that includes flatlands and hills. Their rates for full vaccination are well below their respective counties and, according to state data, under California's rate of 65% of those 12 and over.

Each place is unique, as are the reasons behind individual choices to delay getting a vaccine. Many unvaccinated residents shared a distrust in the government and medical establishment and a desire not to be rushed or forced into getting the vaccine. Some repeated misinformation about the vaccine that they saw on social media, read on the internet or heard from a friend or family member.

Others were simply unsure how or whether to make the vaccine a priority in their busy lives. A grocery store employee said she worked double shifts six days a week and hadn't found the time to get a shot until a mobile vaccine van parked outside her workplace.

The Chronicle also witnessed public health employees and volunteers working creatively to get more shots in arms. The effort in Antioch, where a local city council member was on hand to help coax vaccine resisters, showed how far officials are willing to go.

The team had worked in that parking lot off and on throughout the summer, but before setting up there, public health workers sought permission from a man who held court there from his car. He wasn't officially connected to the shopping center but appeared to have authority over what took place in the parking lot — legal or otherwise.

"We don't want them to chase us out for not being part of the community," said Ernesto De La Torre, who manages Contra Costa County's vaccine ambassador program. "It's a small tight-knit community. ... We're just there to get people vaccinated and leave."

Keith Gonzales thinks about the word "fear." The 45-year-old Treasure Island resident doesn't like using it to describe how he feels about the coronavirus vaccine, but it's close.

"I'm real leery," Gonzales says, smoking a cigarette outside his low-slung apartment on the San Francisco island, where just 45% of eligible residents are fully vaccinated, according to [state vaccination data](#). "It trips me out that they came up with the vaccine real quick."

To the scientists who created the vaccines, he asks: "Did you have it on standby? Did you know this was coming?"

If he wants a job — and he does — he'll need the vaccine. He knows that. But the conspiracy videos he watches stoke his concerns. Like the one with the woman who claims to be a vaccinated nurse, then removes her mask to reveal a disfigured face.

"She said she never had anything wrong before she got the vaccine," Gonzales says.

City health officials set up 11 vaccination sites on the island on March 27. By June 6, they were gone.

In San Francisco, 79% of those 12 and up are fully vaccinated. But it's not enough. In San Francisco, new cases average 235 a week — up from 27 in early July.

The city's Department of Public Health says it's "laser-focused on ramping up vaccine opportunities in hard-hit neighborhoods."

Treasure Islanders, however, must leave the island for a vaccine.

As of Aug. 3, just 1,258 of them were fully vaccinated. That's 44%, says the state, which uses census data to conclude there are 2,859 eligible residents. But the island's five housing providers say there are closer to 2,000 eligible residents, or about 63% vaccinated, said Robert Beck, director of the city's Treasure Island Development Authority.

Either way, it's not hard to find the unvaccinated. There are 740 or 1,439 of them, depending on whom you ask.

"I don't want to be a guinea pig," said Kurt Shuptrine, 55, who rents storage on the island but lacks a home. Jin Sheng Wu, 62, walking his grandson in a stroller on Gateview Avenue recently, said he had no time to get vaccinated. His son-in-law, Ben Luo, said the family also worried about subjecting Wu to the vaccine's potential flu-like symptoms.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/These-three-communities-have-some-of-the-lowest-16402949.php>

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls the COVID-19 vaccines safe and effective and suggests people get them right away. COVID-19 has killed 4.4 million people around the world, including 628,000 people in the U.S.

Gonzales admitted that he doesn't believe his conspiracy videos and said he trusts his doctor, who wants him vaccinated.

So why not get vaccinated, like, now?

"I don't know," he said. "I don't feel like it."

Mary Johnson leaves her East Oakland home in the mornings only to run errands. That's because the nearby corner store is still empty before the after-work rush of customers.

For 56-year-old Johnson, the fewer people the better. She is not vaccinated against the coronavirus and isn't planning to get the shot anytime soon, even though studies show that vaccines are safe and effective against death and hospitalization from COVID-19.

"It's really rushed," Johnson said of the vaccine's release. "I don't need any side effects. I got enough going on with the body."

Johnson lives in the 94605 ZIP code in Oakland — an area that has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the county with 62% fully inoculated compared with nearly 73% in all of Alameda County.

The 9-square-mile ZIP code is home to nearly 43,400 people. The neighborhoods are predominately Black and Latino. And about 14% of the population lives below the poverty line, according to the census reporter. Oakland overall has fully vaccinated 70.3% of its more than 425,000 residents 12 and over, and administered at least one dose to 84.6%.

Recently, Alameda County partnered with community organizations to go door to door in neighborhoods to hand out masks, offer information on rental and food assistance programs, and urge people to get the vaccine, said Andrew Nelsen of the Alameda County Public Health Department's health and equity planning unit.

"The way to reach people is to be the people you're trying to reach," Nelsen said. "Being talked at by an expert is very different than (talking) with a peer or a friend."

Nelsen said there are a number of reasons people haven't gotten vaccinated. Some don't know where to go, some can't go because they work long hours, and some people didn't know it was free.

On a recent afternoon, Michele Custodio, 49, stopped outside a tent at Osita Health Clinic in East Oakland to schedule her second dose of the vaccine, something she has delayed.

Custodio said she's read online that vaccines have microchips and can change DNA. These claims are false, but she and many other vaccine-hesitant people have found them compelling.

Also at Osita is 36-year-old Charlie Lloyd, who just received his first shot of Pfizer. Earlier in the day, he'd attended the funeral of a 40-year-old friend who'd died of COVID-19 a few weeks earlier. Lloyd said his friend's death inspired him to get the shot.

"I couldn't be happier right now," Lloyd said after his shot. "I feel good about this."

Outside an Antioch grocery store, cashier Cristina Diaz was waved down by county public health worker as soon as she stepped out the door, finally done with her shift on a Thursday in July.

"Have you been vaccinated?" the county staffer, Diana Aleman, said in Spanish.

Diaz, 30, nodded. But she immediately dialed her older sister and told her her to come to the store, Cielo Market on A Street — and try to persuade their reluctant father, too.

“They were just not doing it,” Diaz said.

This neighborhood of apartments and condos is tucked along Highway 4 in Antioch, a commuter city of about 110,000. Residents in this part of the city are young and impoverished: The median age is just over 26, and the per capita income is \$16,000 — compared with \$29,500 for all of Antioch and \$48,000 for Contra Costa County.

They are also disproportionately unprotected by vaccines for COVID-19. About 18,000 people 12 and up are unvaccinated, representing about 33% of residents living in Antioch ZIP code 94509 — compared with nearly 24% of residents in all of Contra Costa County, according to state data. The data is more stark in the Sycamore neighborhood, where about 50% of those eligible for vaccines are at least partially vaccinated, compared with 69% of Antioch as a whole, the county said, and 76.4% for the county overall.

Generational mistrust of the government, misinformation and the crushing demands of work and poverty have conspired to leave these communities less protected by vaccinations, De La Torre said. Combating that, he realized, would take persistence and a light touch.

“Every person we get vaccinated is another person to bring that message back to their communities and share — ‘I got vaccinated, and I’m OK,’” he said.

After several hours at the market, the group piled into the van and drove less than a mile away to the QuikStop parking lot.

Nay Nay Daniels, 22, who was selling egg rolls and hibiscus drinks in the parking lot, pulled out her phone and showed a TikTok video purporting to depict first lady Jill Biden calling the vaccines an experiment. Daniels said she believed God would protect her and the government would not.

City Council Member Tamisha Torres-Walker joined the county volunteers to help provide a known and trusted voice to the mission in her district, a predominantly black and Latino area of Antioch. She acknowledged “it’s a big concern that not enough of our people are getting vaccinated.”

Torres-Walker, who is Black, said she understands vaccine hesitation given experiences of mistreatment and undertreatment of African Americans among some seeking care in medical settings. Torres-Walker, too, is hesitant to get vaccinated.

“Unfortunately it’s related to pre-existing historical trauma — people don’t trust the government,” Torres-Walker said.

De La Torre recalled a middle-aged man who drove past them several times before doubling back and calling out, “I’m scared.” They called back, saying he would be OK. He eventually agreed once he knew he could hold his dog on his lap while receiving a shot.

“We know we’re not going to change their mind right away,” De La Torre said. “If we maintain a presence, if we build trust, that could change.”

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