



PHOTO INSITE, VANCOUVER B.C.

Vancouver's clean, well-lit Insite injection facility services 12,000 registered users and last year had 221 overdose interventions with no fatalities.

'Treat addicts like alcoholics'

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Eileen Shields, DPH spokeswoman, said. "And (Health Director) Barbara Garcia has said it's not an issue to take up at this time because there are too many budget issues. It's not being talked about. A number of people want this to happen, but we're not one of them."

Police Capt. Jimenez is one. Now a night supervisor in the Field Operations Bureau after his 32-month stint at Tenderloin station, he retires in October after 41 years on the force.

He said in 2009, when he drove then-Police Chief Gascon around the neighborhood, the chief was appalled at the rampant dealing and immediately wanted to do something about it. He did crack down in the TL for a while. It was a "typical" reaction, Jimenez said, as he sat in his car at Leavenworth and Golden Gate Avenue one July evening before work. But there's more to slowing the drug problem than making arrests, he said.

"There's still drugs — as long as there's a demand, we'll have them," Jimenez said. "That problem won't go away. And you can't arrest them all — there's no room for them, anyway, the system is so taxed. And the system can no longer address the petty stuff."

When he first heard about safe injections in community meetings, he thought

it was a "terrific" idea, he said, but not for the Tenderloin, already swamped with drug services. Later, he said, he couldn't imagine any other neighborhood going for it. "So maybe this is the only place — it makes sense."

He said many citizens want a tough cop, one who won't look the other way.

"A lot of people don't understand that we can't solve this problem through law enforcement — it's medical."

Jimenez also believes drugs should be legal, available in pharmacies to card-carrying addicts and sold for a fraction of the street cost. The quality, too, would be pure, not harmful like "dirty" heroin.

"And if people can't afford it, it should be free. We give away methadone. And we don't want bad stuff that can eat away a shoulder, either. We should treat addicts like alcoholics — it's a medical problem."

Thomas said the alliance will continue meeting with supervisors and community groups to inch the topic forward.

"The supervisors asked good questions and so we have some research to do on costs and results," she said. "More people need to be educated about it, and we need a couple of public servants in support. We're in the process of finding them. The next election may help."

Hyde says a safe injection site is "three or four years from getting passed." ■



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	Maximum / Minimum Income Limit
Knox:	1 person - \$33,360 per year (maximum income) \$760 per month (minimum income)
	2 person - \$38,160 per year (maximum income) \$760 per month (minimum income)
Bayanihan:	1 person - \$29,190 per year (maximum income) \$760 per month (minimum income)
	2 person - \$33,390 per year (maximum income) \$760 per month (minimum income)

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Would a safe-injection site encourage drug use?

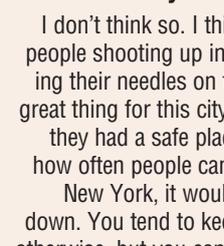
Asked at various Tenderloin locations

John Atchan, Tenderloin



It would encourage needle use, and we don't need any more needles. Using needles is against my good judgment. I have a phobia against them. When I was 14, I used to have to tie my niece up when she'd come out of her nod because she would point her needles at me. Once you get started on heroin, at the very least you're going to end up needing methadone for another 20 years. It's a down-down dirty drug.

Larry Browder, Tenderloin



I don't think so. I think it would cut down on people shooting up in front of kids and throwing their needles on the streets. It would be a great thing for this city — especially this area. If they had a safe place where they monitored how often people can come in, like they do in

New York, it would actually slow drug use down. You tend to keep doing more and more otherwise, but you can only get so high. You're not going to get any higher. You're just going to end up ODing. That's what happened to me.

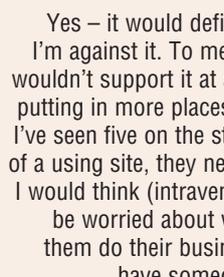
I'm finally getting off the whole intravenous thing. I'm on methadone now.

Pedro Angel Rivera, Tenderloin



It would give people who already have a problem a means to do it safely. I advocate it, and needle exchange, too. I've remained HIV negative all these years because I have access to clean needles. A safe-injection site would discourage you being stuck on the street doing it. It would keep it away from young eyes and young minds. It would keep people from trying to emulate needle use, which is not healthy.

Brenda Washington, Tenderloin



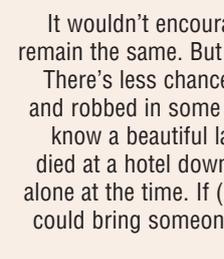
Yes — it would definitely encourage it, and I'm against it. To me, it glorifies drug use. I wouldn't support it at all. But I would support putting in more places to dispose of needles. I've seen five on the street just today. Instead of a using site, they need more disposal sites. I would think (intravenous drug users) would be worried about who would be watching them do their business. I'd be ashamed to have someone see me if I did that.

James Word, Tenderloin



It would facilitate drug use, but I don't think it would promote it. It would just be a service where people could go for a better way of doing what they're going to do anyway. It's a no-brainer, really, in my humble but correct opinion.

Roman Carrasco, Tenderloin



It wouldn't encourage drug use — it would remain the same. But I think it's a great idea. There's less chance of you getting beat up and robbed in some hotel or on the street. I know a beautiful lady who overdosed and died at a hotel down the street. She was all alone at the time. If (safe-injection site staff) could bring someone back from ODing, I'm right behind that.

Penny Cunha, Tenderloin



It would encourage people to use drugs and needles. It wouldn't help the problem. It would just be a glorified shooting gallery. They could hook up there, hustle there, then go out and rob more and shoot up more. I hate needles.