

Excelsior District Improvement Association

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
P.O. Box 12005
San Francisco CA 94112-0006



Founded 1942 Incorporated 1962

DATE: July 28, 2008

RE: San Francisco Planning Department Exemption from Environmental Review
Case Number 2007.1350E

Dear Mayor Newsom, Supervisors, and others,

We wish to voice our strong opposition to the Planning Department's decision to grant an exemption from environmental review to AT&T's new utility boxes. This matter will be before the Board of Supervisors at its meeting on July 29, 2008 (file number 080906).


The Excelsior District Improvement Association met on July 22nd, 2008 and discussed this matter. All members firmly believed that this would be very problematic on our sidewalks. We are seeking to underground as many services as possible, and we certainly don't want giant boxes. We appreciate that we would benefit from the services, but the same services can be undergrounded and we strongly oppose any more aboveground installations in our area. From experience we know that these big utility boxes are merely attractive and convenient signboards for taggers. We already have several similar boxes which are being painted out by volunteers several times per week. We don't want any more work to do!

- We expect that the large boxes will act as graffiti magnets, are eyesores, attract vandalism, tend to collect trash around and on top of them and detract from our neighborhood's attempt to create a more attractive and pleasant environment.
- 850 new utility boxes throughout the City will dramatically affect the look and feel of San Francisco. They will completely block visibility for pedestrians and for cars trying to back out of our driveways.
- The new boxes that AT&T has already installed have already attracted graffiti, despite AT&T's claims of graffiti resistant surfaces. Many of AT&T's existing boxes are covered with graffiti that does not get removed.
- Many neighborhoods, like the Inner Sunset, have spent years under grounding their wires. This was done in the spirit of community improvement and with good faith that utilities would be under grounded and out of sight. Residents paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to get this work done and dealt with years of torn up streets. But it was worth it to make their neighborhood more beautiful, more pedestrian friendly and safer. Now, after the residents have spent money and time to do this, AT&T wants to reverse these efforts. AT&T should be required to make their plans conform with our efforts, time and money spent to improve our neighborhoods.
- These cabinets run completely contrary to efforts by city residents to beautify their neighborhoods and make it safer, by under grounding our electrical wires, planting trees, installing speed bumps, bulb-outs, and instituting other traffic calming measures. For example, the city recently targeted the Inner Sunset as one of four neighborhoods in San Francisco that could benefit from urban planner's Jan Gehl efforts to make urban areas more pedestrian friendly. Yet this is one of the neighborhoods greatly impacted by AT&T's proposed boxes. Large street obstacles are unsightly and directly contradictory to the City's efforts to improve our City's physical environment.

- These boxes are incompatible with the aesthetics of our classic San Francisco neighborhood. Many of the homes in our neighborhood date to the early part of the 20th century. The Inner Sunset, for example, is a gateway to Golden Gate Park, the De Young museum, and the Academy of Sciences. These proposed boxes would run counter to the look and feel of our neighborhood.

- There is an alternative: the technology is available for communication boxes to be installed underground along with our other utilities. AT&T is opting for the lower cost option but there are very real costs of this option to the City and to the residents. Residents and the City end up paying for the graffiti, trash and vandalism attracted by the above ground boxes.

Sincerely,


Jacqueline Cash, President EDIA

cc: Mayor Gavin Newsom, City Hall, Room 200, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102
Gerardo Sandoval, D11 Supervisor, City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room #244, SF, CA 94102-4689
Sophie Maxwell, D10 Supervisor, City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room #244, SF, CA 94102-4689
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