

# Welcome to our SFCUU Newsletter.

## We have News to Share.

[SFCUU.org](http://SFCUU.org)

**We** at the San Francisco Coalition to Underground Utilities (SFCUU) want to encourage you to join our efforts to underground the ever-increasing overhead wires and wooden poles that foul almost half of our streets. SFCUU is a neighborhood organization, formed in 2013, to finish a job. Half of the streets in the City have been undergrounded, and yet many areas still suffer from this blight of poles and wires. We think it's time to tell the City to get the work done.

Undergrounding utilities will rid San Francisco streets of wires and poles that mar our views and landscapes. This project can provide significant safety, aesthetic, and property value benefits to the city. Undergrounding utilities can improve disaster preparedness and reduce outages due to fallen wires.

It can improve views and contribute to the finances of a city whose beauty is a significant source of public and private income.

New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Vienna, and many more have extensive undergrounding. Visitors from other cities often comment that San



Francisco, a famous city on a beautiful natural site, is marred by the wires and equipment strung from and on the poles all along our streets to foul our iconic views.

The most important task ahead of us now is getting the SF Supervisors to approve a budget allocation of about \$1.5 million (\$500,000 for three years) from our *City's \$10 Billion* budget to draft an Undergrounding Master Plan, laying out what will be needed to finance and implement city-wide undergrounding.\*



## Look up! It's Awful!

Look up! It's Awful!! This what we see on the almost 50% of streets that have never been under grounded. We see poles like these from the windows of our homes and businesses and whenever we walk or drive down our streets. Let's get rid of them.

In future issues we hope to add your pictures in your area. When sending photographs, include location and Supervisor district if you know it.

it. [info@sfcuu.org](mailto:info@sfcuu.org)

## We have endorsements from these supervisors and civic organizations:

- District 1: Planning Association of the Richmond
- District 2: Cow Hollow Association  
Russian Hill Neighbors
- District 3: Russian Hill Neighbors  
Middle Polk Neighborhood Association  
North Beach Neighbors
- District 5: Cole Valley Improvement Association
- District 7: OMI-NIA  
Miraloma Park Improvement Association
- District 8: EVNA (Eureka Valley Neighborhood Association)  
Diamond Heights Community Association  
Friends of Noe Valley  
Liberty Hill  
Mission Dolores Neighborhood Association  
Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals Association  
Upper Noe Neighborhood Association
- District 9: Precita Valley Neighbors
- District 10: India Basin Neighborhood Association  
Potrero Boosters Association  
McKinnon Neighbors Book Club
- District 11: Excelsior District Improvement Association

### Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods

San Francisco Beautiful

#### State Senator:

Scott Wiener

#### Supervisors:

- D. 1: Sandra Fewer
- D. 2: Mark Farrell
- D. 3: Aaron Peskin
- D. 4: Katy Tang
- D. 8: Jeff Sheehy
- D. 9: Hillary Ronin
- D 10: Malia Cohen

## Developments so far ...

We have produced a comprehensive Supervisors' Handbook on Undergrounding, detailing what has been done and what needs to be done.

We have also produced a booklet of photographs, "Look up! It's Awful!" showing some of our pet hates. Both of these documents are available on our website <http://sfcuu.org>



## How to Pay for Undergrounding? One of Many Options

Whenever members of the San Francisco Coalition to Underground Utilities start discussing getting rid of these hideous wires and poles, the first questions they encounter are: "How much will it cost?" and "Where will you get the funds?"

We have researched these questions a great deal, but we must admit that at this point we're not yet sure of the answers. Why not? First, because undergrounding is such a huge job – covering 470 miles of city streets. Second, because the answers will come only when the city funds a comprehensive plan to facilitate the undergrounding..

Meanwhile, we are researching sources of funds. This report details some of the possible sources – city taxes collected on telecommunications.

The city collects \$130 million plus each year in such taxes on facilities and the use of the overhead wires for electricity and telecommunications. These funds could be used to underground the utilities.

According to the City Comptroller, the following are the taxes, the facilities or uses taxed, and the amounts collected, yearly, shown here for 2016, as of October, 2017, the most recent full year figures:

<b>Tax</b>	<b>Facility or use taxed</b>	<b>Annual amounts</b>
Telephone Users Tax	7.5% on the cost of services billed by the carriers	\$48.1M
Utility Users Tax	on commercial users only	electricity portion varies, but averages \$39.4 to \$41.7M
Access Line Tax	including prepaid mobile	\$43.6M

This totals \$131.1 million to \$133.4 million

The SFCUU believes, based on the most recent figures on the cost of undergrounding, that:

- overhead pole equipment and utility wire undergrounding can be done in San Francisco for about \$6 million per mile
- it would be practicable to do 11 miles a year.

In sum, by using about half of the taxes collected on what would then be undergrounded, we could launch a very significant program to complete undergrounding for the some 45% of San Francisco that has been passed over for decades.

Clearly, these figures prove that ample, appropriate funds exist right now to draft the comprehensive master plan needed for undergrounding, detailing what has to be done, by what means, on what timetable, and, ultimately, at what cost.

**David Bancroft, Member, SFCUU Board of Directors**

## **Please Join Us!**

We welcome input from one and all. We are eagerly seeking participants from all neighborhoods and supervisorial districts of San Francisco. Even if your location is already undergrounded, free of this urban blight, we must work together to end the problem on a city-wide basis.

- Start by looking up. Be appalled! Urge your friends and neighbors to look up.
- Send pictures of horrible examples.
- Enlist the endorsement and support of your supervisor and your neighborhood organizations.
- Forward this newsletter to your friends and neighbors so we may increase our reach across the city.
- Attend a monthly meeting, meet the SFCUU folks, and join us (details on our webpage.)

**San Francisco Coalition to Underground Utilities Officers:**

- **Anne Brubaker, Chairman (Russian Hill)**
- **Steven Edwards, Treasurer (Mission District)**
- **Melissa Zwigoff, Secretary (Bernal Heights)**
- **David Bancroft, Board Member (Cow Hollow)**
- **Marc Snyder, Board Member (Noe Valley)**

**Website: <http://sfcuu.org>**

**Email: [info@sfcuu.org](mailto:info@sfcuu.org)**

**To submit pictures: [jfglennon@comcast.net](mailto:jfglennon@comcast.net)**