

## **Don't Be Fooled By the Mailer Sent to Kensington Residents Requesting Your Input on the Undergrounding Issue**

Anonymous critics of undergrounding have sent mailers to Kensington residents with the heading "Undergrounding Is Coming to Kensington." This mailer includes a response form requesting input from the community. The response form may look official, but it is the work of people who have been trying to delay our undergrounding project or to stop it altogether. The mailer is misleading, contains erroneous information, and is biased toward delaying the project. The people who put out this mailer have chosen to work outside the process established by the Kensington-Talmadge Planning Group. They do not reveal who they are or how they financed this mailing.



*Which do you prefer?*

### **We Don't Need Any More Delays**

The flier suggests that we may need to delay the undergrounding project to negotiate with the utility companies. In fact, the Kensington-Talmadge Planning Group (KTPG) has already asked the City of San Diego to delay the City Council vote to establish the Kensington Undergrounding District for one year, from fall 2010 to the fall of 2011. The purpose of this delay is to provide time for the community to work with the City and utility companies to resolve concerns that some residents have raised about utility boxes. We have a year to work out these issues; we don't need to delay the project further.

If we request further delays, City staff has told us that Kensington could lose its place in the City's undergrounding priorities. If that happens, our project could be delayed for many years. (Some communities are not scheduled to have their utilities put underground until 2060.)

### **Residents Have Say in Where Utility Boxes Are Placed**

The flier suggests that utility companies will run roughshod over the community, "installing boxes wherever they decide is best." In fact, residents will have an opportunity to see the plans prior to construction and work with utility planners. We talked to residents of communities where undergrounding projects have been completed and in many cases the utility companies modified their plans based on residents' concerns.

### **Is the Mission Hills Project a Special Case?**

The flier states that undergrounding in Mission Hills "may not have followed the usual policy, as some of the system components were placed underground. . ." suggesting that Kensington could get the same standards applied here. We talked to the SDG&E underground planner who told us that the design for Mission Hills used "normal design standards," the same standards that will be used in Kensington. So if you like what is being done in Mission Hills, you should like what is planned for Kensington.

## **The Benefits of Undergrounding**

The flier fails to mention the many benefits of putting utility lines underground. Benefits include:

- eliminating the potential fire hazard of high-voltage wires in canyons
- the aesthetic value of removing utility wires and poles
- replacing our outdated infrastructure with new and upgraded electrical, cable, telephone, Internet and streetlight facilities.

## **Will the Utility Companies Put the Boxes Underground?**

The KTPG asked SDG&E if they will put equipment such as transformers in underground vaults. SDG&E responded: “SDG&E does not place equipment such as transformers in underground vaults.” In addition, SDG&E informed the KTPG that the cost of subsurface transformers is “3-4 times greater” than above ground transformers, below ground transformers pose a significant safety risk for SDG&E employees, result in more outages, and pose an environmental hazard. According to SDG&E, “While it was once thought that subsurface equipment would be the next phase in this beautification process, the toll on safety, functionality, and the environment is such an expense that SDG&E and the majority of domestic utilities are not willing to add the cost impacts to their rate base.” (This information is from [a document provided by SDG&E to the KTPG and available on the KTPG website.](#))

## **Comments on the Flier’s Response Form**

The flier contains a response form with 4 options. Option A suggests that negotiating with the utility companies may take two additional years. This ignores the fact that the Council vote to start the project has already been delayed a year for the purpose of getting a better undergrounding solution. Why would we need additional time? This option also implies that Kensington can get the utility companies to put their facilities underground. SDG&E has already told us that they do not put transformers underground. Further negotiating on this issue will only delay our project, perhaps for many years if the City decides to put other communities ahead of us.

Option B implies that the community will have no say in the placement of the boxes. This is simply not true—residents will have an opportunity to review the plans and to work with the utility company planners regarding problems. This process has worked well in other communities.

## **What Should You Do?**

As a Kensington resident you have a stake in the Undergrounding project. If you want your opinions to be heard, go to the Kensington-Talmadge Planning Group meetings (they generally meet on the second Wednesday of the month at the Kensington Community Church) and to the KTPG Transportation and Safety Subcommittee meetings (the next meeting is Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> at the Kensington Community Church).

For more information:

- [kensingtonunderground.com](http://kensingtonunderground.com)
- [ktpg.org](http://ktpg.org)

Kensington Underground is not affiliated with the Kensington-Talmadge Planning Group or any other organization.  
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