

# Utility Boxes in North Park

The need for planning & design standards

North Park Community Plan Update Advisory Committee,  
Mr. 20, 2011

# What are Utility Boxes?

- Above-ground appurtenances supporting utility lines to homes and businesses
- Cabinets, pedestals, risers, boxes
- SDG&E examples
  - transformers, fuse cabinets, circuit breakers, cable terminators

# What do they look like?

AT&T  
rectangular  
riser

Cox breadbox style  
riser



SDG&E  
transformer

# North Park Planning Committee

## Utility Box Subcommittee

- **Formed early 2010**
  - Robert Barry, Cheryl Dye, Lynn Elliot, Liz Studebaker
- **Met with utility reps and city**
  - SDG&E, Cox, AT&T
- **Prepared issue paper**
  - Provided to NPPC, Councilman Gloria, utilities, other CPGs
- **Collaborating with City/CPGs/Utilities**
  - March 28 meeting

# What is the problem?

Utility boxes in North Park are:

- Unsightly
- Graffiti magnets
- In conflict with urban village goals
- Deterrence to shoppers
- Danger to pedestrians
- Negative impact on property values
- Negative impact on historic resources
- Result of
  - No design standards
  - No property owner/CPG/public input

# Why are they installed?

- Additional demand
- Technological changes/upgrades
- Utility Pole Conversion Districts
  - Undergrounding of poles and wires result in need to relocate transformers & other facilities
  - North Park scheduled for 2016; majority of undergrounding 2030-2050

# What is required to install?

- Minimal review if within PROW
  - Only requirement: PROW permit from Engineering Dept.
  - No review for design, placement
  - No public notice/property owner input
- Conversion projects: one public meeting
  - Lack of info re above-ground boxes

# Does any business deserve this?

30<sup>th</sup> St, south of North Park Way



# Business/Church Entryways

30<sup>th</sup> Street, south of El Cajon Blvd



# Do No.Park pedestrians deserve this?

University Blvd. & Louisiana Ave.

B



# Walkability & Safety

## Bank of America Customer Access



# Do our historic treasures deserve this?

North Park Birch Theatre side entrance



# ADA compliant?

across from North Park Theatre



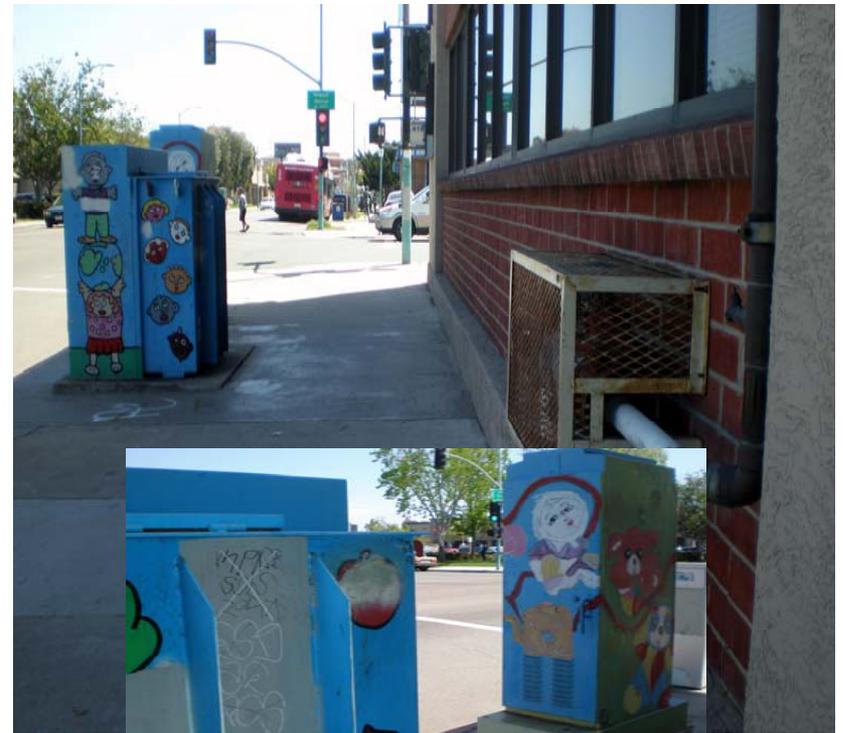
# Trails of Utility Box Eyesores

Walking south on 30<sup>th</sup> St from El Cajon Blvd



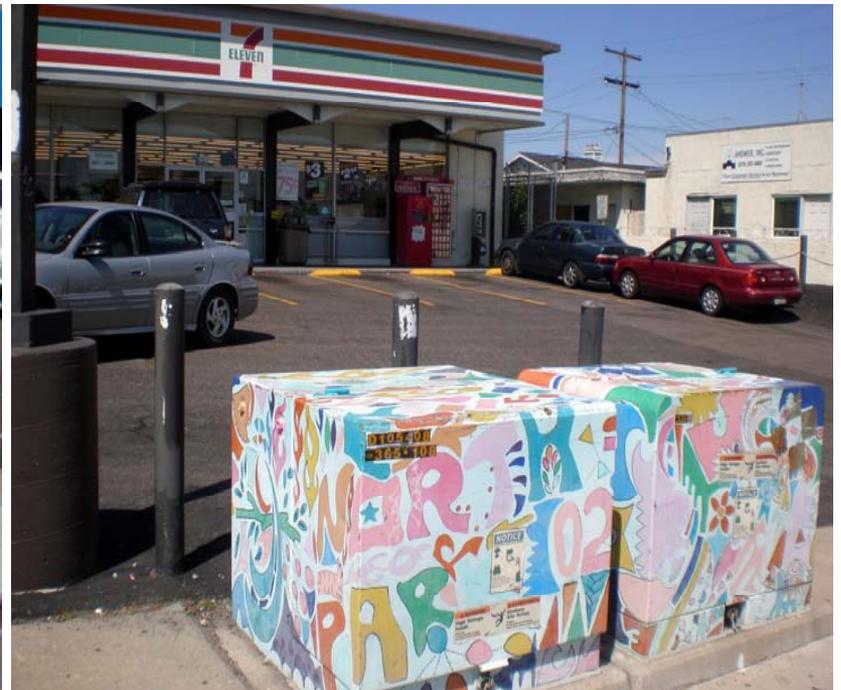
# Same Trail

*Continuing walk south from 30<sup>th</sup>/El Cajon Blvd*



# Neighborhood Retail Parking Lots

University Blvd.



# Does any homeowner deserve this?

Talmadge after conversion process

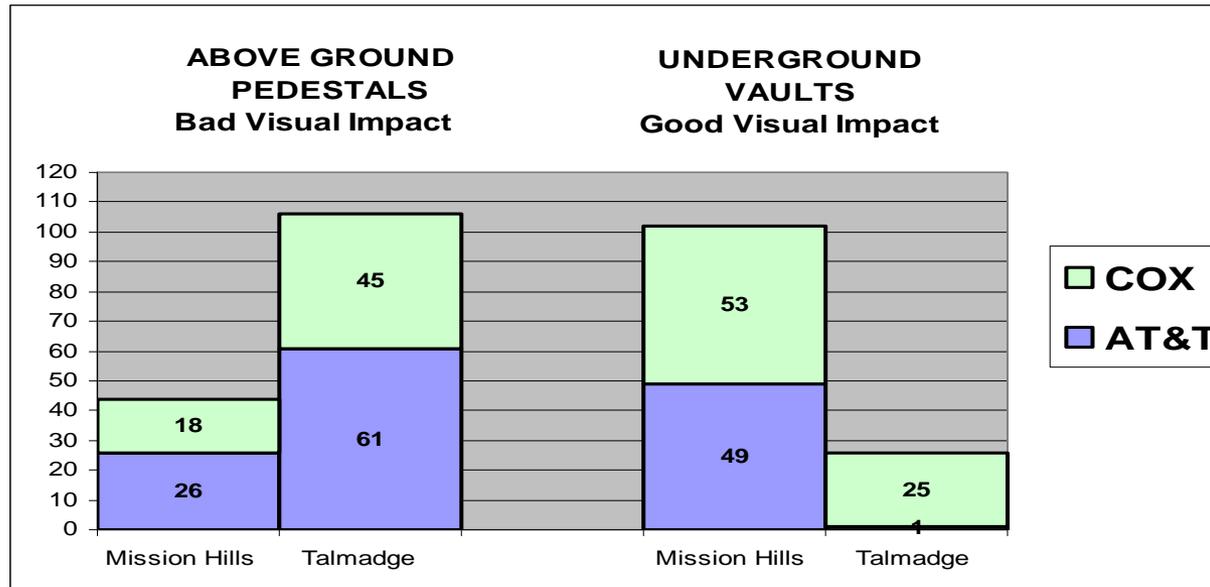


# Or this?



# Neighborhood Inequities

## Talmadge vs Mission Hills: Recent Conversion Projects



### Talmadge compared to Mission Hills

- Talmadge: 2.5X more Cox pedestals; only 1/2 as many Cox vaults
- Talmadge: 2X more AT&T pedestals; no AT&T vaults (MH: 49 vaults)

### •Pedestals Per Home Ratios

- Cox Pedestals: Talmadge 1:2-5 homes; MH 1:11 homes (Cox est. 1 per 2-8)
- AT&T Pedestals: Talmadge 1:3 homes; MH 1:7 homes

# How it should look



# How it should look

Mission Hills neighborhood



# Initial Goals

- Reduce ratio of above-ground Cox & AT&T units to homes
- Eliminate transformer blight from front of homes/businesses
- Methods
  - Identify options for placing in underground vaults
  - Annually review progress on new technology (PG&E, DWP, SCE) that addresses environmental and maintenance concerns
  - Adopt design standards, including placement and screening
  - Obtain expanded easements to maintain adequate pedestrian walkways
- Run SDG&E lateral conduit underground to electrical service panels
  - (85% MH vs 37% Talmadge)

# Next Steps

- Address in North Park Community Plan Update
  - Undergrounding, design & placement standards
  - Property owner, NPPC and public input
- Present to Community Planning Committee (CPC) on Ap 27 at 7pm, 9192 Topaz Way
  - Create Task Force with City, PG & Utility reps
  - Request item go to LU&H and to Council with recommended policies/regulations
  - Request Council to ensure meaningful involvement of PGs in design process