

Surface Mounted Facilities (FAQ)

All answers are given in accordance with Public Works Code Article 27 and Order 206,293.

What is a Surface Mounted Facility?

A Surface Mounted Facility (SMF) is any utility facility (physical element or structure) that is installed, attached, or affixed in the Public Right-of-Ways on a site that is above the surface of the street and that requires the Permittee to excavate in order to install the facility in the Public Right-of-Ways. Surface Mounted Facilities do not include utility poles and attached appurtenances and bus shelters and associated kiosks.

Why are SMF Community Meetings important for you to attend?

The Community Meeting is your **ONLY** opportunity to work directly with the Applicant to assist in the selection of one or more preferred locations for the SMF. While you will have an opportunity at a later date to protest the issuance of a Surface-Mounted Facility Site Permit at one or more of the preferred locations, the Community Meeting is your only opportunity to work with the Applicant in the selection of one or more preferred locations.

Do I really have the opportunity to work with the SMF Applicant in selecting preferred locations for a SMF at a Community Meeting?

Yes. Attend the community meeting and work directly with the Applicant. The community meeting is your **ONLY** opportunity to work directly with the Applicant in the selection of one or more preferred locations for the SMF.

What happens at the Community Meeting?

The Community Meeting gives the opportunity for the local community to work with the Applicant in selecting preferred locations for the proposed SMF, identifying any new locations, and if applicable, discussing the ways the Applicant can mitigate the visual impact of the proposed SMF with a street tree and how the community can work with the Applicant, Public Works and the SF Arts Commission to place a mural on the SMF.

How does the new process improve Community involvement?

The SMF Applicant is required to conduct a Community Meeting in the early stages of the SMF Permit process and work directly with the Community in the selection of preferred locations for the proposed SMF. The Community consists of all persons owning or occupying any property and neighborhood planning associations located within 300 feet along either side of the fronting streets of any of the preferred SMF locations.

How do I learn about a Community Meeting for a SMF in my neighborhood?

The Applicant is required to mail out a Notice of the Community Meeting to all persons owning or occupying any property and neighborhood planning associations located within 300 feet along either side of the fronting streets of any of the preferred SMF locations. The Applicant also physically posts the Notice at each of the preferred and feasible locations of the proposed SMF. The Applicant is required to conduct a Community Meeting after 5:00 P.M. on weekdays or on weekends and at a location within 1,500 feet of at least one potential locations of the proposed SMF.

What are Preferred and Feasible Locations of a SMF?

Preferred Locations are locations for a SMF that an Applicant determines best suits its needs and that are consistent with the requirements of the Public Works Code. Feasible Locations are proposed locations for a SMF that meets both the Applicant's technical requirements and the Public Works Code placement requirements, but aren't the Applicant's preferred locations.

Where can I see a map of all of the Approved and Requested Surface Mounted Facilities in the city since 2011?

A map of the Approved and Requested Surface Mounted Facilities in San Francisco can be found [here](#).

What makes placing SMF's in Public Right-of-Ways possible?

Under section 7901 and 5885a of the California Public Utilities Code, state video service franchises have the right to install facilities in the Public Right-of-Ways to provide telephone

and/or video service. The City can regulate the placement of these facilities, but cannot deny access to the Public Right-of-Way.

Can the SMF be placed underground?

The Applicant is required to verify that they attempted to place the SMF underground, including a statement from a license engineer that no adequate technology is available to make it technologically or economically feasible to place all or part of the SMF underground. In addition, with the multitude of sewer, water, power and other utility lines running under the streets in San Francisco, it is difficult to locate a feasible place to put the SMF's underground where they will not impact an existing utilities.

Why is the SMF proposed so close to an existing one?

The Applicant is required to explore reasonable opportunities to co-locate a SMF with any other SMF installed in the Public Right-of-Ways by other entities including City departments. There are different types of Surface Mounted Facilities in the city; some are utility cabinets and pedestals, and others are SFMTA cabinets for traffic signals, etc.

Why is the SMF proposed in front of my house or along my street instead of a busier commercial street?

For each preferred or feasible location of an SMF, the Applicant must satisfy the criteria contained in Public Works Code §§ 2704(b) and the SMF Placement Criteria (Order 206,293 Exhibit A). To the extent feasible, an Applicant shall locate the SMF on streets where pedestrian travel is minimal.

I am planning to build a sidewalk garden/driveway/something right where the SMF is proposed to go. How do we resolve this?

If you are planning to build or have approved plans to construct improvements in the area of the proposed SMF, please email and ask for the SMF program coordinator to explain your plan as it relates to a proposed SMF location. Public Works will review the information and compare it with the Applicant's proposed sites to make a determination how this would potentially impact the placement of the SMF and the required street trees and landscaping.

Can you put an SMF fronting a historic building? My home or building is officially recognized as historic.

The placement of a SMF that is adjacent to or affects the view of a historic home, building or street furniture is a disfavored location. Public Works will not issue an SMF Permit for a disfavored location unless the Applicant can show that no other option is available. The SF Planning Department reviews every SMF Preferred Location to verify it will not adversely affect a Historic Resource area and, if the Applicant proves that no other location options are available, can include Conditions intended to minimize such effects. If an SMF is proposed fronting a home or building that is listed as a National Historic Landmark or inside an officially designated National, State, or Local Historic District, please let Public Works know by emailing and asking for someone knowledgeable about the SMF program.

Can you plan to place a SMF in front of an officially-commissioned or recognized SF Arts Commission mural or public art in my neighborhood?

No, an SMF must be sixty-feet (60') away from any mural or other piece of public art that has been officially commissioned or recognized by the San Francisco Arts Commission.

Why doesn't the Applicant place the SMF in a City park or open space instead?

The Applicant can apply to place a SMF in front of a City park or open space. However, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department may disapprove the Applicant's request to place a SMF adjacent to a City park or open space if it will unreasonably affect the aesthetic character of the City park or open space as stated in Public Works Code §§ 2704(b).

Will the path-of-travel on my sidewalk be impeded by the SMF?

No. The Applicant must satisfy the criteria contained in Public Works Code §§ 2704(b) and the SMF Placement Criteria (Order 206,293 Exhibit A) that requires maintaining an appropriate path of travel along the sidewalk, paying particular attention to the needs of persons with disabilities. A minimum of four feet (4') of pedestrian clearance must be maintained at all times in accordance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, and the SMF cannot intrude on pedestrian clear zones at corners. A minimum of six feet (6') of pedestrian clearance is required on sidewalks in higher density Mixed-Residential (RC and RM), NC (Neighborhood-Commercial) and C (Commercial) Districts, and in any other Districts that require additional sidewalk space for pedestrian flow.

What is the Surface-Mounted Facility Placement Criteria?

Public Works has laid out specific criteria contained in Public Works Code §§ 2704(b) and SMF Placement Criteria (Exhibit A) to satisfy the placement of SMFs in Public Right-of-Ways. A proposed SMF must:

- Allow for a minimum of four (4) feet of pedestrian clearance on sidewalks in Residential House (RH) and Public Use (P) Districts.
- Allow for a minimum of six (6) feet of pedestrian clearance on sidewalks in higher density Mixed-Residential (RC and RM), Neighborhood Commercial (NC) and Commercial (C) Districts, and in any other Districts that require additional sidewalk space for pedestrian flow. SF Planning [Zoning Map](#)
- Not intrude onto pedestrian “clear zones” at street corners.
- Be set back five (5) feet from the edge of crosswalk area on approach to an intersection and five (5) feet from the edge of crosswalk areas on the exit from an intersection. Placement is preferred on the exit of an intersection.
- Be set back a minimum of twenty-four (24) inches, but not more than thirty-six (36) inches from the face of the curb.
- Be set back a minimum of eight (8) feet from any fire escape or fire exit and five (5) feet from any fire hydrant.
- Be set back five (5) feet from any driveway, curb ramp, or handicapped (blue zone) parking space.
- Be set back a minimum of ten (10) feet from any permitted Parklet.
- Be set back a minimum of forty (40) inches from any other above-ground structure, including but not limited to street light poles, parking meters, trees, etc.
- Be set back a minimum of sixty (60) feet from any SFMTA transit stop, shelter or kiosk.
- Be set back a minimum of five (5) feet from any certified street artist’s designated area.
- Be set back a minimum of sixty (60) feet from any public art work, mural, or installation officially recognized by the San Francisco Arts Commission.
- Not cover any storm drain or other utility facility.
- Not obstruct a view of any traffic sign, way-finding sign, or any other related existing facility.
- Not interfere with the planting of a street tree.
- Be set back a minimum of twenty (20) feet to either side of any sidewalk length used for drop-off and pickup of students at schools.
- Not be placed on Public Rights-of-Ways that are adjacent to or that will affect the view of a Historic Resource or that are within a Historic Resource in which any existing street furniture contributes to the historic nature of the Historic Resource.
- Not be placed on Public Right-of-Ways that are adjacent to a City park or open space, unless the Department finds that such locations could be used to minimize the effect on the Aesthetic Character of the City park or open space.

*Disfavored Locations. Disfavored locations shall not be used for SMF facilities unless the Applicant can show that no other option is available.

Does the SMF pose any health risks to me or my neighbors?

Because SMFs are installed by many different entities and serve many different functions, Public Works cannot provide a single answer to this question. Contact the SMF Owner or Applicant to obtain all specific facility information and understanding about the SMF. If you are unable to identify the SMF Owner or Applicant, contact Public Works by email or phone at (628) 271-2000 and ask for someone knowledgeable about the SMF program.

Does the SMF have any environmental impact?

In 2006 the City of San Francisco Planning Department began a review of the SMF program, to determine if it fell under the jurisdiction of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In both 2008 and 2011, The Planning Department found that the SMF program was categorically exempt from CEQA.

What are the procedures for removing graffiti from the cabinet and who is responsible?

The SMF Owner is required to remove all graffiti, stickers, or other damage to their SMFs within three City business days of being notified of the graffiti or damage. Please call the number identified on the facility to notify the Owner or call 311 (the City of San Francisco's 24-hour helpline). You can also use the new 311 app on your Smartphone to notify the City of the graffiti (<http://sf311.org/index.aspx?page=797>, 2015).

How does an Applicant go about applying for a Permit to install a SMF?

1. The Applicant begins by submitting a list of preferred and feasible locations (ID's by street address) for their proposed SMF to Public Works. Proposed preferred and feasible locations should satisfy the criteria contained in Public Works Code §§ 2704(b) and the SMF Placement Criteria (DPW Order 206,293 Exhibit A).
2. If applicable, the Public Works Bureau of Urban Forestry (BUF) reviews the information for street tree potential at the locations and provides this information back to the Applicant.
3. The Applicant schedules a community meeting and notifies all persons owning or occupying any property and neighborhood planning associations located within 300 feet along either side of the fronting streets of any of the preferred SMF locations. and then conducts the community meeting.
4. At the community meeting, the Applicant shall discuss: (1) all feasible locations for the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility, which may include specific locations or zones, but in no case fewer than two Preferred Locations for the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility shall be identified and discussed; (2) any technological limitations to the location of the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility; and (3) the process for the public to object to the Applicant's Preferred Locations. • As part of the Pre-Application Approval Process, an Applicant may submit a Preferred Location List to the Department within 10 days of the community meeting in which the Applicant shall identify at least two Preferred Locations for the Surface-Mounted Facility and shall specify the Applicant's order of preference for the proposed locations. If there are any technological limitations to the location for the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility in the Public Right-of-Ways, the Applicant shall inform the

Department of such constraints in the Preferred Location List. • As part of the Pre-Application Approval Process, the Department shall complete its review of the Preferred Location List within 14 days of receipt from the Applicant. With the concurrence of the Applicant, the Department may extend this review period beyond 14 days. • The Applicant receives notification of the approval or rejection of the Preferred Location List for the SMF from Public Works along with any Conditions and the corresponding landscaping and street tree requirements.

5. If the Preferred location list is approved, the Applicant creates the Notice of Intent (NOI) and provides Public Works with all of the information contained in the Notice of Intent Checklist (DPW Order 206,293 Exhibit C). If Public Works approves the information contained in the Notice of Intent Checklist and the NOI document, the Applicant posts the NOI and notifies of all persons owning or occupying any property and neighborhood planning associations located within 300 feet of either side of the fronting streets of any of the Preferred SMF locations listed on the NOI.
6. If any Protests are received from the NOI SMF locations within 10 days from the posting date on the NOI notice, Public Works schedules and conducts a Public Hearing.
7. The Department shall send written notice to any Person submitting a protest, to the Applicant, and to any City department that reviewed the Preferred Location List of the date the Department has set for the hearing at least 7 days before the date set for the hearing. The Department shall follow its regular procedures for notifying the general public of the date set for the hearing.
8. Public Works Hearings allow testimony from Public Works staff, Protestors and the Applicant to be heard by a Hearing Officer. Five (5) days after the Public Hearing, the Hearing Officer will issue a report that may recommend that the Public Works director approve one of the Applicant's Preferred locations or deny all Preferred locations if they do not comply with Public Works Code Article 27.
9. The Public Works Director issues a Director's Decision adopting, modifying or rejecting the Hearing Officer's report and recommendation.
10. If the Preferred Location is approved in the Director's Decision, the Applicant can then proceed with submitting the Application for the final approved location of the SMF.
11. Public Works issues the notice of final determination approving or denying the Surface-Mounted Facility Site Permit. This document is posted throughout the block face where the SMF will be located and mailed to the Applicant, any neighborhood association (within 300 feet of the SMF), and any person who either filed a protest, submitted evidence, or attended at the hearing, provided the name and address are known to Public Works. This document also includes information about how to appeal the issuance of the permit to the Board of Appeals.

Pending no permit appeals or the Board of Appeals upholding the issuance of the Permit, the Applicant can proceed with constructing the SMF at the approved location.

What is a Notice of Intent?

"Notice of Intent" means a notice that the Applicant intends to submit an Application for a Surface-Mounted Facility Site Permit. The Notice of Intent shall be in the form approved by the Department by order or regulation, but at a minimum shall contain the information required in Public Works Code Article 27, Section 2713(c)(1)-(9):

- The fronting address for each of the Preferred Locations and photo-simulations of the Surface-Mounted Facility at each of the Preferred Locations. Such photo-simulations shall accurately depict the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility and any proposed street tree.
- The Applicant's order of preference for the Preferred Locations.
- A brief description of the nature of the use of the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility and the consequences of not installing the facility.
- Any assessment made of the Applicant's Preferred Locations by the Planning Department and/or Recreation and Park Department.
- Any Conditions on the installation of the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility at each of the Preferred Locations imposed by any City department that reviewed the Applicant's Preferred Location List (including a statement indicating whether the Applicant has accepted the Conditions).
- Any additional proposed locations for the Surface-Mounted Facility identified by any City department that reviewed the Applicant's Preferred Location List (including a statement indicating whether the Applicant has accepted the proposed locations).
- The procedure for protesting any or all of the Preferred Locations contained in the Notice of Intent.
- The Applicant's contact information for obtaining information related to the Notice of Intent and/or the technical requirements for the proposed Surface-Mounted Facility.
- A statement that more information about the proposed Notice of Intent can be obtained from the Applicant and more information about submitting a protest can be obtained from the Department.

The Applicant shall send a copy of the Notice of Intent to all Persons owning or occupying any property located within 300 feet along either side of the fronting streets of any of the Preferred Locations for the Surface-Mounted Facility. The Applicant shall post a copy of the Notice of Intent in conspicuous places along the Public Right-of-Ways within 300 feet of either side of the fronting streets of any of Applicant's Preferred Locations for the Surface-Mounted Facility. The Applicant shall send a copy of the Notice of Intent to any neighborhood planning association identified by the Planning Department for any neighborhood within 300 feet of any of the Applicant's Preferred Locations for the Surface-Mounted Facility.

How do I protest or comment on a SMF Notice of Intent (NOI) I received or saw posted?

Protests or comments for a Surface-Mounted facility must be submitted online or by mail within 10 days of the date the Notice of Intent was mailed and posted.

Online Public Protest Form (Please reference the application number in your comment (Example: 15SMF-0001)).

Mail: San Francisco Public Works
 49 South Van Ness Ave, 3rd Floor
 San Francisco, CA 94103
 Attn: Surface-Mounted Facility Protest
 Application No. __ (Example: 15SMF-0001)

Can I send my protests/comments about a SMF Notice of Intent to the SMF address SMF@sfdpw.org?

No. Public Works only accepts protest via the Online Public Protest Form or by mail. Please DO NOT send NOI protests/comments to SMF@sfdpw.org

What is SMF@sfdpw.org used for?

The email address is intended for addressing specific questions or comments that you may have regarding the overall SMF program only.

Ok I submitted my Protest. What happens now?

If a protest is timely submitted, the Department will hold a public hearing. The Department shall set a date for the hearing no more than 20 days after the Department's receipt of the protest.

Who receives a Public Works Hearing notice?

The Department shall send written notice to any Person submitting a protest, to the Applicant, and to any City department that reviewed the Preferred Location List of the date the Department has set for the hearing at least 7 days before the date set for the hearing. The Department shall follow its regular procedures for notifying the general public of the date set for the hearing.