

# Yellow Pages Ordinance Proposed by Supervisor David Chiu

## – Frequently Asked Questions –

### YELLOW PAGES BY THE NUMBERS

**How many Yellow Pages phone books are dropped in doorways and apartment building lobbies in San Francisco?**

- According to industry, San Francisco receives almost 1.6 million Yellow Pages phone books each year – even though there are only about 800,000 residents in the City. Like junk mail and spam, many of the phone books are unwanted and never get used.
- These 1.6 million phone books, if stacked, equals the height of over 287 TransAmerica Pyramids – nearly eight and a half times the height of Mt. Everest. That amount of phone books are delivered – and then eventually thrown out – every single year.
- At an average of 4.33 pounds per book, the Yellow Pages create nearly 7 million pounds of waste every year in San Francisco.



### HIDDEN COSTS OF YELLOW PAGES

**What are the hidden costs from the dumping of Yellow Pages at San Francisco residences and businesses?**

- According to San Francisco Recology, it costs \$300/ton to collect and dispose of (or recycle) Yellow Pages in San Francisco. This cost is born entirely by commercial and residential ratepayers.
- According to San Francisco Recology, Yellow Pages cannot be processed in the same way as other paper collected. They require manual handling in the pre-sort phase of processing. The books that get by the pre-sort station contribute to premature wear on disk screens, where they stall and just spin in place. The disks have to be replaced almost every year at great cost.
- Based on these disposal and recycling rates, the hidden costs of phone books in our waste stream may be over \$1 million per year.

### PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

**What are the effects on the environment from the distribution of the Yellow Pages?**

- The amount of natural resources required to produce, distribute and dispose of all these Yellow Pages paper phone books is staggering - as is the carbon footprint of production, distribution and disposal - for a product that is delivered unasked for year after year.
- The paper industry is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest source of carbon dioxide emissions among U.S. manufacturers.
- Even if old phone books are recycled, the carbon footprint for their distribution and disposal is significant. According to U.S. EPA, not producing a phone book reduces carbon emissions almost two and a half times as much as recycling a phone book.
- If half as many Yellow Pages were produced for San Francisco residents, nearly 6,180 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions would be saved every year.

## ALTERNATIVES TO THE YELLOW PAGES

### What should I use to find a phone number if I don't want to use the print Yellow Pages?

- The Internet. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, over 86% of Bay Area residents use the internet. Internet users can use online Yellow Pages, local consumer review sites like Yelp.com, and search engines like Google.
- The phone. From any phone you can access free phone directories such as 800-BING-411 or 800-FREE-411. These services provide searchable listings and connect the dialer for no charge.
- The White Pages. If you know the name of the business, you can look up their phone number in the business listings in the White Pages. The White Pages are not affected by the San Francisco ordinance.
- If you don't use the Yellow Pages, you are in good company. When looking up a phone number, **people are 15 times more likely to use the internet than the phone book.** According to Experian Simmons 2010 *National Consumer Survey*, only 38.3% of adults opened a Yellow Pages directory within the last year.

## THE SAN FRANCISCO ORDINANCE

### If the new ordinance is passed, how will I be able to get a phonebook if I want one?

- The ordinance allows for phone book distributors to distribute Yellow Pages to all San Francisco residents and businesses who want them. **Anyone who wants a Yellow Pages directory can get one.**
- Yellow pages may be distributed at community centers, grocery stores, or directly at residences when a resident is at home and personally accepts the Yellow Pages.
- The ordinance simply prohibits Yellow Pages from being left in doorways of residents or businesses that don't want them - where they often become garbage.
- Before leaving Yellow Pages in a doorway for a resident, a distributor must confirm that delivery is desired. Confirmation can be done by phone, by mail, or by leaving a notice of attempted delivery (in the same way that UPS attempts to deliver a package and leaves a delivery notice before leaving a package unattended).
- The ordinance includes an outreach program. Distributors will be invited to work with the City to devise outreach programs to ensure that people who want the Yellow Pages will receive them.
- The ordinance does not change the law indefinitely – it only creates a three-year long pilot program that will allow the City to measure the effect of the program on Yellow Pages distribution and small business.

### Will the ordinance affect niche and non-English language commercial directories?

- The major niche and non-English language commercial phone directories – like Momento (Spanish Yellow Pages) and the *Chinese Yellow Pages* and *Chinese Consumer Pages* – have reported that they do not drop directories at doorways. Instead, these phone books are distributed through supermarkets, community centers and events c. They report that this method reduces waste, is good for the environment and is very effective with businesses. As a result, these niche directories will not be affected by the ordinance.

### Why is the ordinance necessary? Doesn't the industry's self-regulation program solve the problem?

- We have already tried self-regulation by the phone book industry, and the continued waste, blight, and safety hazards are not acceptable. Where industries stand to gain from increased distribution and sales, self-regulation has generally proven ineffective.

*For more information, contact Catherine Rauschuber, legislative assistant to Supervisor David Chiu, at [catherine.rauschuber@sfgov.org](mailto:catherine.rauschuber@sfgov.org) or (415) 554-7450.*