

April 12, 2004

**Statement of the Historic Districts Council  
Before the Art Commission**

**Re: Item 21798, Installation of a Prototype "Wrap" on Existing Double Telephone Kiosks,  
Manhattan below 96th Street.**

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts and neighborhoods meriting preservation. The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that the preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources – our neighborhoods, buildings, parks, and public spaces – are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council wishes to voice our opposition to the proposed advertising “wrap” for existing double telephone kiosks.

Our objection to the proposal is two-fold:

- First, the expanded advertising spaces will have a detrimental impact on the aesthetics of New York City's streetscapes.
- Second, this proposal runs counter to proposed regulations promulgated by other city agencies.

HDC has long been deeply concerned about the proliferation of public pay telephones and their effect on New York City's historic neighborhoods. In the past five to ten years, New York City's sidewalks have been bombarded with a proliferation of public pay telephones. Today's public pay telephones are a jarring presence in our historic streetscapes. They have become billboards plastered throughout our neighborhoods, physically blocking our sidewalks and visually cluttering our beautiful city.

The Titan telephone wrap is a clear indication that telephone companies are more interested in advertising revenue than providing a public service. Indeed, Titan's proposed telephone structures look more like big boxy advertising signs than telephones that are supposedly on our sidewalks to provide a public service. Public pay telephones should first and foremost look like telephones and should not merely be structures for advertising.

Recently under the Bloomberg administration, several city agencies have attempted to address the problem of the proliferation of public pay telephones and their associated advertising. In January 2004, the Landmarks Preservation Commission proposed a rule to regulate public pay telephones within historic districts and to forbid outright telephones in front of individual landmarks. The Landmarks Preservation Commission's rule, when adopted, will also prohibit advertising on the street-side panel of the telephone kiosks within historic districts. More significantly, in February 2004, the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) proposed a rule forbidding advertising on all new telephones below 110th Street in Manhattan. The Historic Districts Council fully supports DoITT's rule because it will help ensure that Manhattan's neighborhoods are not further denigrated by inappropriate advertising on public pay telephones.

Unfortunately, DoITT's proposed rule does not correct the problems created by the existing over-abundance of telephones and their advertising panels. Titan's proposed advertising wrap before us today will make the existing telephone problem even worse by increasing the amount of advertising space on the existing telephone enclosures. The Art Commission cannot allow increased advertising space on existing telephones while other city agencies are working towards curtailing such advertising.

The Historic Districts Council urges the Art Commission to deny Titan's advertising wrap. In doing so, the Art Commission would be supporting the concerned citizens and neighborhood groups and even the

Bloomberg administration in their fight to prevent public pay telephones and their associated advertising from dominating our streetscapes.

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