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Local Matter or Federal Case? The Network of Cell Tower Regulation in California

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Few planning and zoning decisions generate more controversy than the placement of cellular phone antennas. If the proposed side lies near a residential area, neighbors often will organize for purposes of challenging the proposal and, more often than not, they are sophisticated. In the City of San Francisco, one resident successfully challenged the placement of a tower after he switched his mobile devise into "field test" mode, systematically recorded his carrier's signal strength in the vicinity, demonstrated signal strength was good to excellent in most of the area, and thereby convinced the City that his carrier did not need another tower.

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