

Overhead to Underground Utility Conversions for the City of Alameda

Underground Utility Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this Underground Utility Policy (Policy) is to provide a deliberate, efficient and transparent process to identify, select, implement and complete overhead to underground utility facility conversions within the City of Alameda. This Policy renews the City's initiative to beautify the city through the removal, conversion and undergrounding of overhead utility facilities which was originally established by ordinance on September 18, 1984.

Policy

1. Because the cost of utility underground conversions is covered through the collection of incremental revenues from all Alameda Municipal Power (AMP) ratepayers, any such projects should provide a maximum benefit to the greatest number of people. To this end, and to avoid a "patchwork" of isolated underground districts throughout the island, this Policy will, in general application, favor island entryways and heavily traveled roads which flow into, out of, between, and around major civic business areas.
2. Areas of the city to be converted will be designated as Underground Utility Districts (UUD) through a City Resolution in accordance with Chapter 19-4 "Underground Districts" of the City of Alameda Municipal Code. A resolution designating an Underground Utility District requires that all property owners within that designated district comply with the necessary actions required to convert from overhead to underground utility service.
3. The extent of AMP's financial participation in converting a district will depend on the designation the UUD receives from the City Council. These designations are:
 - a. Areas of General Public Interest and Benefit - The Underground Utility District Fund (UUDF) will fund all necessary conversion costs up to a pre-established limit. Any expense greater than the allotted limit will be borne by the customer. As a goal, the limit will be set at a level resulting in the majority of customers having no out-of-pocket costs for the conversion.
 - b. Areas of General Public Interest, But Primarily of Local Benefit - Conversion costs will be entirely borne by the applicant or group of applicants.
 - c. Areas of Insufficient General or Local Public Benefit - All other underground conversions that lack sufficient general or local public benefit will be performed as specified in AMP's Rules and Regulations – "Replacement of Existing Overhead Facilities in Non-Underground Districts" and will not fall under the UUD Policy.
4. To maximize public benefit, the two-tiered, prioritized criteria below will be considered when establishing or selecting areas for undergrounding overhead utility lines. However, under City Council direction, any area where overhead utility lines are located in streets, roads, or rights-of-way may be included in an Underground Utility District for engineering, operating, or economic reasons.

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- a. Tier 1
 - i. Road Classification - Aerial facilities located along and adjacent to six (6) classifications of roadway as defined by Public Work's street classification system as having the greatest trip length, traffic volume and most through traffic. These classifications in descending order include: regional artery, island artery, transitional artery, island collector, transitional collector, and local.
 - ii. Heavy Concentration of Aerial Facilities - AMP distribution poles supporting multiple connections to each pole, street crossings and visual impact.
 - iii. Areas of Civic, Historical, Recreational or Scenic Interest: Aerial facilities that encumber the frontage or immediate surrounding proximity of civic, historical, scenic or recreational areas and whose presence degrades the natural beauty or environmental relevance of these areas.
 - iv. Deteriorated Facilities - AMP distribution poles or aerial facilities that are nearing or exceeded their useful life as determined by AMP's asset management and inspection program and are scheduled for replacement.
 - b. Tier 2
 - i. Foliage - AMP distribution poles and facilities that are encumbered by trees. Elements of consideration are tree density, height, projected growth, age, and resiliency to line trimming.
 - ii. Coordination with other City Projects - Proposed underground district that encompasses or coordinates with planned and/or outstanding Public Works or other City department projects that would benefit from undergrounding.
 - iii. Interconnectivity to Existing Underground - Proposed underground district would originate from and/or terminate into, existing underground facility(ies).
5. The UUD Policy will be reviewed in whole or in part every five years or at the direction of the City Council to assess current UUDF balance, social, economic, and other relevant issues and will be revised as necessary.

UUD Designations

- 1. UUD in Areas of General Public Interest and Benefit - A UUD in which the City of Alameda City Council has determined that such undergrounding is in the general public interest and benefit for one or more of the following reasons:
 - a. Such undergrounding will avoid or eliminate an unusually heavy concentration of overhead electrical facilities.
 - b. The street or road right-of-way is extensively used by the general public and carries a heavy volume of pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
 - c. The street or road right-of-way adjoins or passes through a civic area or public recreation area or an area of unusual scenic interest to the general public.
- 2. UUD in Areas of General Public Interest, But Primarily of Local Benefit - A UUD in which the City Council has determined that such undergrounding is in the general public interest, but primarily of local benefit.

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3. Areas of Insufficient General or Local Public Benefit - All other underground conversions in which the City Council has determined lack sufficient general or local public benefit.

Procedures

1. AMP will serve as the lead city department for implementing the Underground Utility District (UUD) Policy and will develop and maintain a Master Plan which provides additional detail and procedures for implementing the Policy but does not modify or change the approved Policy. The General Manager of AMP may from time to time revise or make changes to the Master Plan as necessary for the efficient implementation of the Policy so long as those changes are consistent with the Policy.
2. The UUD Policy will be reviewed in whole or in part, under the direction of an AMP project manager and including members of other city departments and members of the public, every five years or at the direction of the City Council, to assess current UUDF balance, social, economic and other relevant issues and be modified if necessary.
3. UUD Identification and Selection.
 - a. **District Nomination Board (DNB)** - A DNB is responsible for the initial nomination of proposed districts. The DNB will be led by the AMP project manager and shall be comprised of at least one member of Public Works and up to three* members of the public who are appointed to the DNB via the process defined below. The DNB will exist for the sole purpose of discerning and recommending a set of UUDs for TAC consideration. Upon the TAC's acceptance of the DNB's recommendation, the DNB function will conclude until a new DNB is formed for future UUD recommendations.

Public members of the DNB must meet the following requirements:

1. Have not served as a public member on the immediately previous DNB**
2. Be a customer served by AMP
3. Have completed an application process by the appointed deadline
4. Approved and appointed by the City Council or designate
5. Able to attend and willing to participate in DNB meetings

* *If less than three members of the public are appointed, the DNB may still convene*

** *If there is not sufficient new interest, this requirement can be waived*

- b. **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** - The TAC is responsible for recommending a prioritized list of between 1-4 UUDs for City Council consideration. The TAC will be led by an AMP project manager and shall be comprised of at least one additional member of Public Works and each of the participating utilities. TAC members will have the following responsibilities:

1. From the DNB's list of nominated UUDs, determine between 1-4 UUDs for City Council consideration
 2. Determine exact district boundaries and all addresses within each proposed district
 3. Manage District Selection Survey (DSS), respond to issues and/or concerns, and publish results
 4. Present and recommend between 1-4 UUDs for City Council consideration and approval
 5. Manage issues, challenges, and opportunities during conversion process

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- c. **TOWN HALL & SURVEY** - A town hall meeting and survey will be used by the TAC to inform, educate and gather feedback from customers in the 1-4 UUD(s) considered by the TAC for City Council approval. Information about UUD specifics will be presented at the town hall meeting and feedback collected. Following the town hall, a District Selection Survey (DSS) will be mailed to all customers in the proposed UUD(s) and, based on survey feedback; the TAC will recommend a prioritized UUD list to the City Council for approval.
- 4. UUD in Areas of General Public Interest and Benefit - AMP will, in coordination with other attached, overhead utilities, replace its overhead electric distribution and communication facilities with underground distribution and communication facilities along public streets and roads, and on public lands and private property across which rights-of-way satisfactory to AMP have been obtained or may be obtained without cost or condemnation by the City provided that:
 - a. The undergrounding extends, on both sides of the street, for one block or 600 feet, whichever is less.
 - b. The City Council has:
 - i. Determined that such undergrounding is in the general public interest.
 - ii. Passed a Resolution creating an underground district in accordance with the applicable sections of Chapter 19-4 Underground Districts, of the City of Alameda Municipal Code, which provides, among other things:
 - 1. That all existing overhead electric distribution facilities in such district be removed
 - 2. That each property owner served from such overhead electric distribution facilities shall provide, within a period of time established by the City Council and in accordance with the cost sharing terms between the customer and AMP at the time of City Council district approval and in accordance with AMP's applicable Rules and Regulations, all electrical service facility construction and changes to the owner's premises necessary to receive service from the electric underground distribution after they are completed and in operation.
 - 3. AMP is authorized to discontinue overhead services after the period of time established by the City Council for reconnection to the electric underground distribution facilities has expired.

AMP will convert all electrical distribution and service facilities from overhead to underground, install trench and substructures, make all landscaping and road surface repairs and convert the customer's electrical service to accept underground service, at UUDF expense within the limits defined below:

- a. The installation is the most direct route from the point of service to the meter location unless otherwise agreed to in writing by AMP. Excess installation not agreed to by AMP will be at customer's expense.
- b. The conversion of electric service panel to accept underground service at the existing main breaker size is limited to the cost of panel conversion established by the Master Contractor at the beginning of district conversion. Excess panel conversion costs will be borne by the customer.

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Telecommunication utilities will convert their overhead facilities to underground at their own expense when and to the extent that the electric utility companies convert their facilities upon request of the governing body within the limits below:

- a. Not to exceed 100 feet of service lateral
5. UUD in areas of General Public Interest but Primarily of Local Benefit - AMP will, in coordination with other attached, overhead utilities, replace its overhead electric distribution and related facilities with underground distribution and related facilities along public streets and roads, and on public lands and private property across which rights-of-way satisfactory to AMP have been obtained or may be obtained without cost or condemnation by the City when requested by a group of applicants or an authorized representative of a group of applicants, provide that:
- a. The undergrounding extends, on both sides of the street, for one block or 600 feet, whichever is less.
 - b. The City of Alameda City Council has:
 - i. Determined that such undergrounding is in the general public interest, but primarily of local benefit.
 - ii. Passed a Resolution creating an underground district in accordance with the applicable sections of Chapter 19-4 Underground Districts, of the City of Alameda Municipal Code, which provides, among other things:
 1. That all existing overhead distribution facilities in such district be removed
 2. That each property owner served from such overhead electric distribution facilities shall provide, within a period of time established by the City Council and at the property owner's expense and in accordance with AMP's applicable Rules and Regulations, all electrical service facility construction and changes to the owner's premises necessary to receive service from the electric underground distribution after they are completed and in operation.
 3. AMP is authorized to discontinue overhead services after the period of time established by the City Council for reconnection to the electric underground distribution facilities has expired.
 - c. The group of applicants or an authorized representative of a group of applicants has:
 - i. Provided AMP documents which show all property owners served from the overhead facilities to be removed have agreed in writing to have the necessary substructure and wiring changes made on their premises so that electrical service may be furnished from the underground distribution system in accordance with AMP's rules and regulations and that AMP may discontinue its overhead service upon completion of the underground facilities; and
 - ii. Furnished and installed, at applicants' expense, the pads and vaults for transformers and associated equipment, conduits, ducts, boxes, pole bases and performed other work related to structures and substructures including breaking of pavement, trenching, backfilling, and repaving required in connection with the installation of the underground system, all in accordance with AMP's specifications, or, in lieu thereof, paid AMP to do so; and
 - iii. Transferred ownership of the above described distribution facilities, in good condition, to AMP; and

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- iv. Paid a nonrefundable sum equal to the excess, if any, between the estimated costs of completing the underground electrical system and building a new, equivalent overhead electrical system.

Where the street lighting system in areas to be undergrounded is mounted on overhead poles to be removed, the street lighting facilities shall be replaced in accordance with the standards and requirements of AMP, and the cost shall be borne by the applicant or group of applicants.

The cost of undergrounding or providing for any other joint pole owner or tenant's facility shall be borne by the applicant or group of applicants as determined by the applicable tariffs and rules of the servicing utility.

Where overhead fiber optics systems exist, 100 percent of the cost to place them underground will be borne by the applicant or group of applicants. Where fiber optics systems do not exist, the applicant or group of applicants are required to install, at no cost to AMP, spare conduit(s) and substructures for future fiber use as required by AMP.

- 6. UUD CONSTRUCTION - A single master contractor (MC) will be responsible for coordinating and installing all designed substructures for each district. This includes substructures across customer's property with the following exceptions:
 - a. Customers may opt to provide their own trench and substructures per the following conditions:
 - i. Substructures are installed and adequately backfilled prior to AMP's scheduled underground service installation date
 - ii. The trench route follows the most direct route from the point of service in the secondary box to the meter location unless otherwise designed and/or approved in writing by AMP.
 - iii. Trench and substructure costs will be reimbursed at a rate equivalent to the established per foot rate charged by the MC.

The MC will also be responsible for alteration or conversion of electrical service panels to accept underground electrical service with the following exception:

- a. Customers may opt to alter or convert their electrical service panel themselves per the following conditions:
 - i. Service panels are altered or converted per AMP's standards, inspected and passed by the appropriate city department and ready to receive underground service prior to AMP's scheduled underground service installation date.
- b. Panel conversion costs will be reimbursed up to a maximum amount equivalent to the estimated panel conversion and/or alteration costs of the MC.
 - i. Panel main switch upgrades (i.e. upgrade main breaker from 200 amp to 400 amp) do not qualify for reimbursement and must meet AMP specifications per AMP's rules and regulations.