

NEIGHBORHOOD UNDERGROUND CONVERSION PROGRAM

REMOVING UTILITY POLES



The cost of undergrounding overhead utilities lines varies greatly; however, a good estimate is \$ 30,000 – \$ 50,000 per property.

Removing overhead utilities are one of the most noticeable improvements a neighborhood can make. Wires, poles and other equipment can obscure some of the wonderful scenery that is so common here in the City Light service area.

The process for conversion is both complex and expensive, and generally speaking, money is not available from local jurisdictions. Seattle City Light has prepared these guidelines to help neighborhoods understand the undergrounding process.

Steps to converting your utilities from overhead to underground.

Step 1: Identify the area that you would like to have converted. In conjunction with your neighbors, identify the contiguous properties where you would like to have the utilities placed underground. All property owners within the area identified must agree to participate in this project.

Step 2: Contact Seattle City Light for Consultation, Design Work, and Cost Estimate. Seattle City Light's Customer Engineering Representatives (206.615.0600) are happy to provide basic information about the program, and how it pertains to your area. They can prepare a free preliminary cost estimate, based on two hours of engineering time. If you decide to move forward with the project, a non-refundable deposit will be required to provide a detailed time-and-materials estimate.

(Please note: Because of engineering and utility code requirements, the area to be converted may be slightly larger than the initial area that you and your neighbors identified. In that instance, the affected property owners must also agree to participate in the project.)

Prior to the design work commencing, the affected property owners must submit a completed "Private Property Conversion Agreement" (available from your Seattle City Light Customer Engineering Representative). This form lists all properties affected, and must be signed by all property owners. It indicates that all affected parties are aware that they are responsible for all charges, as well as the obligation to convert their individual properties to underground service.

When the design work is completed, the entire estimated cost is due before work can commence.

Be aware that there are additional costs to underground cable TV, telephone, and any other equipment that utilize the overhead system. Once Seattle City Light drawings are established, the companies need to be contacted for their design work and cost estimates.

Step 3: Construction of Underground Utility Improvements This phase will convert all the commonly shared equipment for the neighborhood (poles, wires, etc). Individual residences will be required to provide appropriate trenching and equipment (as determined by Seattle City Light and other utilities) to their property line. Engineering and installation charges for each property are the responsibility of the property owner, and must be paid before conversion can occur.

Step 4: Removal of overhead equipment and final billing. Once wires, poles and other equipment are removed, you can enjoy this new neighborhood amenity! You will receive a final statement from Seattle City Light. Any outstanding charges are payable at time of receipt.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the typical costs?

The cost of undergrounding overhead utilities lines varies greatly; however, a good estimate is \$ 30,000 – \$ 50,000 per property.

In addition to the construction in the right-of-way, the service connection to individual homes must also be reconstructed. The cost for these private connections is the responsibility of property owners.

Will everyone pay the same amount?

Financing is the responsibility of the neighbors affected. All estimated fees must be paid prior to the work commencing, and a final bill will be submitted upon completion of the work.

How is the area of the district determined?

The area of the district is determined by the neighborhood, in conjunction with Seattle City Light, to make sure the district boundaries works with the electrical grid.

Will all the wires and poles be removed?

The undergrounding project will generally remove all wires and poles. There are some exceptions. For instance, poles that support streetlights will not be removed. In addition, poles that support cellular communications will only be removed if an alternate location can be found.

How long should the process take?

The length of the process will vary greatly from project to project depending on size, complexity, and neighborhood support. Generally speaking, it will take approximately twelve months to design the improvements and twelve months to perform the work in the right-of-way.

What should we expect during conversion?

During the construction phase, expect occasional service disruptions, temporary loss of curbside parking, and excavation of roads, sidewalks, and other portions of the

right-of-way. Be advised that the right-of-way may extend into what might be previously having been regarded as private property. City Light, along with other utilities (phone, cable, etc) are not responsible for restoring any landscaping or other non city-owned property.

Why can't Seattle City Light pay for utility undergrounding?

City Ordinance states that all electrical service, outside the Downtown, First Hill, and University District Network areas, be provided from overhead service. Underground service outside of network areas is to be installed at property owner's expense and City Light's discretion. All electrical equipment installed in the right-of-way becomes the property of Seattle City Light.

Why are some neighborhoods already served from underground lines?

Some areas were designed by contractors to be served underground, and the cost was figured into the price of the home at time of construction. Other neighborhoods were converted as part of Local Improvement Districts, or LID's. Still others were the recipients of federal funding that is no longer available.

What equipment will still be visible above ground? Will I get a chance to review proposed equipment locations before they are finalized?

Transformers will be located in sub-surface vaults covered by typical manhole covers. In addition, many underground facilities will require air vents, which will be visible from the street.

Telephone systems may require above ground terminals.

Final engineering maps will be provided once the appropriate fees have been paid. Corrections or additions will be subject to additional charges.