



SAFER

NEWPORT HEIGHTS

UNDERGROUND UTILITIES. SAFER COMMUNITY.

Undergrounding Utility Assessment District 118-2 FAQs

1. If the Petition doesn't get signatures of 60+% of property owners, what happens?

- The project dies at no cost to the any property owners. The City will not perform an assessment. Utilities will remain above ground.

2. If the binding vote of property owners fails to get yes votes from 50+% of voters, what happens?

- The project dies at no cost to any property owner. Utilities will remain above ground.

3. How long after the successful binding vote will it take for construction, pole removal and the undergrounded system to go live?

- There are a lot of variables, but a completion date ranging from 3 to 6 years would be a reasonable estimate. One important variable is that the project can't go live until all properties are connected. After that, the poles and wires will be taken down.
- Once construction starts, total construction time is estimated at approximately 18 months, with each block taking approximately one month.

4. Who will connect my property to the undergrounded system?

- If your property's electrical access point has already been undergrounded, the City will connect your property at no cost to you. This will be the case for most homes built or substantially remodeled after 1979.
- If not, the property owner is responsible to contract for getting the connection done and paying the cost. The property owner can choose any qualified contractor. The City will provide a list of qualified contractors who have done this work in the past, but the City will not make any recommendations.

5. How is the actual assessment cost for my property determined?

- The City hires an independent engineer to determine the total cost of the project for the District, subject to City review.
- The independent engineer then determines (subject to City review) the appropriate amount to assess each individual property, taking into account the following factors, among others:
 - ✓ Reliability benefit
 - ✓ Safety benefit
 - ✓ Aesthetics benefit
 - ✓ Property size
- The cost for each property will then be included in the Project Description sent to each property owner **before the final binding vote.**

6. If the final vote passes and I voted no, do I still have to pay the assessment?

- Yes. This whole procedure is done under provisions of state law that mandate that all property owners must pay their share so long as the majority approve.



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7. If the project is ultimately approved, and I choose to finance my undergrounding assessment through my property tax bill, will a lien be placed on my property?

- Yes, similar to property taxes and other assessments that show up on your property tax bill.
- Your responsibility to pay the assessment is no different than for payment of property taxes or other charges on your property tax bill. The City has *never* foreclosed on a property solely for non-payment of an undergrounding assessment charge.

8. My electrical service and poles are in the alley behind my house. I assume the alley will have to be torn up to complete the undergrounding and provide for connection to my home. Who pays for that?

- Portions of the alley will be affected but the entire alley will not have to be repaved.
- The costs for any alley-paving work are included in the assessment amount.

9. The last time undergrounding was proposed for the Heights, the average estimated assessment was about \$24,000. Why has the cost basically doubled with this proposal?

- The last proposal was in 2015 and was proposed to be done in conjunction with the alley repaving project, which was paid for by the City and in effect covered much of the repaving cost of the combined project, reducing the property owner assessment amount.
- The current undergrounding proposal must now cover 100% of alley paving/repair costs.
- Inflation has caused prices to increase overall in the past ten years, including prices for construction.

10. What if I or my neighbors cannot afford the cost of undergrounding?

- For economically disadvantaged property owners who qualify, up to 100% of the undergrounding cost (including both the assessment amount and connection costs) could be deferred until transfer of the property, using a loan program sponsored by the City.
- The City Council is expected to vote on this program in June or July, before any final vote on undergrounding in Newport Heights. All council members expressed support for undergrounding and helping lower income residents at the April 28 council meeting.
- Property owners with low income and limited assets, who are over the age of 55, will likely qualify. The owner's primary residence and IRA-style retirement accounts will not be included in asset evaluation.
- The City and/or a third party provider will likely determine who qualifies based on an application submitted to the City along with supporting financial detail.
- In the event the undergrounding project is fully approved by a majority of property owners, a 30-day application period would be established.
- We expect to know more about this program by mid-June, and expect a vote by late June or early July.

11. Where can I find more information?

- You can visit safernewportheights.com for additional and updated information.