

# **Underground Process**

## **Public Hearing Process**

Prior to the commencement of any design work, the City Council must create an Underground Utility District. In accordance with the San Diego Municipal Code, the City Council holds public hearings in order to create an Underground Utility District. All residents and property owners within an Underground Utility District are mailed a Public Hearing Notice and a map of the proposed area to be converted to underground. The Public Hearing Notice informs property owners that they own property within an area the City Council is intending to underground. The notice explains what the possible impacts are to owning property within an Underground Utility District. Any member of the public may attend or speak at the Public Hearing. After the Public Hearing, all property owners within the Underground Utility District are sent a copy of the Council Resolution and a map of the newly created Underground Utility District.

## **Design Process**

Once the City Council has created an Underground Utility District, the design process begins. This typically takes 12-24 months to complete. During this time, residents may see engineers placing marks on the street, surveyors performing field surveys, or other professionals who are involved in the design process such as those who gather property information or who videotape existing field conditions. Construction of underground utility systems and the subsequent removal of overhead utility systems typically takes between 18 and 36 months for most large projects.

## **Notification Process**

A public forum takes place once a month and people in affected communities are invited to attend to hear detailed information about the undergrounding work that will soon be taking place in their community, on their street and at their house or business. It also provides attendees the opportunity to ask process and procedure-related questions about the work that will be done.

All property owners receive notices prior to the start of construction. Property owners will receive an additional notice prior to any work occurring on private property.

Approximately 6 months prior to the start of construction, property owners will receive a request to enter into a written agreement allowing SDG&E onto their private property in order to perform the trenching and other related work that will prepare their property to receive underground utility service. This agreement is referred to as a [Permit To Enter](#) (PDF: 48K).

Approximately 3 weeks prior to the start of construction, a [door hanger](#) (PDF: 342K) from SDG&E will be placed on the doors of all residents. The door hanger will contain a name and phone number in order to contact the electrical contractor directly. A second door hanger is placed approximately 2 weeks prior to any work on individual private properties. This door hanger provides a contact name and phone number for the trenching contractor who will be working on the property.

## **Construction Process**

Construction of underground utility systems and the subsequent removal of overhead utility systems typically takes between 18 and 24 months for most large projects. This process consists of four phases: Trenching, cabling, cut-overs and pole removal.

### **Phase I: Trenching**

In this phase, crews create a trench and install round plastic conduit below the surface of the roadway. The crews will also trench up to each of the homes and businesses at this time. This is the most community impacted phase of construction and typically can be expected to last 9 to 12 months. On average, most trenching crews can perform 100 feet of trenching or more per day, so trenching operations can be expected to be in front of any particular home or business for just a few days. During this phase, a separate electrical contractor will be working on the electrical panels of the individual homes and businesses in order to prepare them to receive the new underground service.

### **Phase II: Cabling**

In this phase, technicians place new utility lines within the new conduits. The new lines are then energized and brought into service. Residents will most likely hardly notice the few crews who perform this work as this work has very little community impact. This phase can be expected to last between 6 to 9 months.

During this phase, residents will probably notice the new transformer and cable boxes and pedestals being placed above ground near the curbs. These boxes are necessary for the underground system and cannot be placed underground for system reliability reasons.

### **Phase III: Cut-Overs**

Once a new underground system is in place and energized, and all properties have been prepared to receive underground service, all properties are switched over from the overhead lines to the new underground systems. This phase will typically take one to two months.

### **Phase IV: Pole Removal**

When 100% of properties have been switched over to the new underground system, the overhead systems are de-energized and removed. This phase can last two to three months.

## **Post Construction: Street Lights and Trees**

Once the overhead utility lines are placed, there is still some work left to finish the projects. The street lights that once were attached to the wooden poles must be replaced, the roadway must be resurfaced and, if applicable, street trees are installed where necessary.

### **Street Lights**

New concrete street light poles are installed in accordance with the City's current street light standards. In many cases residents will notice that the lighting locations have moved from their old locations and that additional lighting has been added. Since new lights cannot be placed until old poles are removed, there may be a short period without any street lighting. When property owners are notified of public hearings, they are provided with a map of the project including proposed lighting locations.

### **Trees**

All reasonable steps are taken to protect trees while work is in progress. Where safety is a concern, a tree may need to be removed. All tree removals are performed according to City policies and permitting process.

The City will provide and plant a new tree for any property owner who is willing to water and care for the tree until it has become established. More information about this opportunity is provided to property owners through the mail prior to construction.