




Office of the City Manager

## ACTION CALENDAR

July 14, 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From:  Christine Daniel, City Manager

Submitted by: Andrew Clough, Director, Public Works

Subject: City Council Referral to Develop a Comprehensive Plan for Funding the Undergrounding of Utility Wires on All Major and Collector Streets in Berkeley

### RECOMMENDATION

Postpone implementation of a Utility Undergrounding Work Plan and direct the City Manager to return to Council in Fall 2015 with a report detailing the budget and staffing required to implement a Utility Undergrounding Work Plan and Special Commission. The report would also identify projects in the City's adopted Work Plan that would be delayed in order to implement the Commissions' recommendations.

### FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

An estimated \$12,000 to \$16,000 in staff time is required to determine the budget and staffing required to implement a Utility Undergrounding Work Plan.

### CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Implementation of the Commissions' recommendations requires significant staff time and expense. There are no monetary or staff resources available at this time. The City Manager's recommendation provides staff time to work with the Commissions for further analysis of the financial and personnel resources required for proper implementation. Staff will also work with the Commissions to decide which projects or priorities would need to be eliminated from the City's Work Plan to accommodate these new initiatives.

The majority of staff resources needed to implement a Utility Undergrounding Work Plan would come from the Public Works (PW) Department. PW is already accelerating infrastructure work in many critical program areas, including: sanitary sewers to meet the requirements of the Consent Decree; street paving and green infrastructure for Measure M; and building facilities upgrades and maintenance.

### BACKGROUND

On [December 16, 2014, Council referred](#)<sup>1</sup> to the Public Works, Transportation, and Disaster and Fire Safety Commissions the development of a comprehensive funding

<sup>1</sup> December 2014 Council referral: [www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City\\_Council/2014/12\\_Dec/Documents/2014-12-16\\_Item\\_28\\_Referral\\_to\\_Public\\_Works\\_Commission.aspx](http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2014/12_Dec/Documents/2014-12-16_Item_28_Referral_to_Public_Works_Commission.aspx)

plan to underground utilities along all arterials and collectors in the City of Berkeley. Representatives of each Commission met at Public Works Commission subcommittee meetings to discuss the referral, and each commission discussed the issue at their regular commission meetings in May and June 2015. The subcommittee and regular meetings on this topic were well attended by members of the public interested in utility undergrounding.

In response to the City Council's referral, the Commissions have jointly recommended that staff implement a Utility Undergrounding Work Plan, including development of a comprehensive utility undergrounding funding plan. The Commissions have also recommended that a Special Commission be formed to oversee the preparation of the funding plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Undergrounding of utility wires is safer for emergency access and evacuation, and more aesthetically pleasing.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Staff needs time to evaluate budget and staffing needed to implement the Commissions' recommendations, along with impacts to the City's approved Work Plan.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Sean R. Rose, Manager of Engineering, Public Works, 981-6435

Farid Javandel, Manager of Transportation, 981-7061

Dave Brannigan, Assistant Fire Chief, Fire Department, 510-981-5508