



# INFORMATION REGARDING UNDERGROUND UTILITY REQUIREMENTS

## Overview

Utility undergrounding greatly improves the aesthetics of the City of Santa Monica. The City supports the installation of underground utilities and the relocation of overhead utilities underground. The City's underground utility requirements are codified at Santa Monica Municipal Code (SMMC) 7.04.820 and explained in greater detail below.

## Projects That Require Installation of Underground Utilities

Certain types of development projects will require the installation of all utilities underground (e.g., electrical, telephone, cable, etc.) and/or the relocation of all existing overhead utilities underground. These qualifying development projects are described below:

### ***New Construction***

New buildings or structures must be served by utilities underground, including wiring from an existing building to a new building.

### ***Remodels/Tenant Improvements***

If a structure undergoes improvements, such as remodeling a kitchen or adding additional square footage, and the valuation of those improvements exceeds 50% of the replacement cost of the existing structure being improved, any overhead utilities must be relocated underground.

The valuation is calculated using standard values authorized in SMMC 8.08.020. These standard values are adopted from the International Code Council's Building Valuation Data (BVD). The BVD establishes square foot construction costs for additions or new construction. These values are based on gross square footage. Since the BVD is only intended for new construction or additions, the City has assigned a standard valuation of \$75/SF for remodels and tenant improvements.

The City calculates the valuation of replacement cost the same as it calculates the cost of new construction, since if a structure was demolished, a new structure would need to be constructed to replace it. The City will calculate whether a project meets the City's underground utility requirements during Building Permit plan check.

## Plan Check Requirements for Projects That Require Installation of Underground Utilities

If your project requires installation of underground utilities, you must add the following elements to the site plan for the project:

1. Use a dashed line to show the proposed route utility undergrounding to the utility pole proposed to serve as the power cable, etc. point of connection. This is only a proposed route, and it may be subject to change based on requirements set by the utility companies.
2. Add the following note conspicuously on the site plan:

*"All site utilities shall be installed underground per the approved plans supplied or reviewed by the relevant utility companies. A separate Public Works Utility Excavation Permit must be obtained from the Public Works Counter, City Hall Room 113 for any excavation in the public right-of-way.*

*Note: Proposed route of undergrounding subject to change based on plans provided by the utility companies."*

## **Waiver of Underground Utility Requirement**

Pursuant to SMMC 7.04.820(d), the City Engineer may grant a waiver of some or all of the City's undergrounding requirements if one of the following conditions exist:

1. Topographical, soil, or any other conditions make underground installations unreasonable or impractical;
2. If a building or structure is served from the rear by utilities not located in the public right-of-way.

The City strongly supports underground utilities because of the aesthetic benefits it provides to our communities. However, applicants that desire a waiver of the City's underground utility requirements and believe their project qualifies for a waiver may submit an Underground Utility Waiver Application either during Building Permit Plan Check or as a revision to an approved Building Permit.

### ***Option 1: Request Waiver During Building Permit Plan Check***

1. During Building Permit Plan Check, upload a completed Underground Utility Waiver Application and any supporting documentation to the Supporting Docs folder in ProjectDox/ePlans.
2. Your plan checker will review the waiver request and send the determination to the applicant at the email address provided on the application.

### ***Option 2: Request Waiver as a Revision to an Approved Building Permit***

1. Submit an Underground Utility Waiver Application and submit it to [pwpermits@smgov.net](mailto:pwpermits@smgov.net).
2. Your plan checker will review the waiver request and send the determination to the applicant at the email address provided on the application.
3. If your request is approved, fill out a Permit Revision Application with the Building and Safety Division to reflect that your project will not be served by underground utilities. Delete references to underground utilities on the plans.