

# Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor Bill Agan and members of the Richland Hills City Council  
From: Jason Moore, Assistant to the City Manager  
Date: May 3, 2016  
Subject: Update on the Link and consideration of utility burial

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**Council Action:** Consider proceeding with burying utility lines in front of the Link site

**Background Information:** As you know, the Link project will be the first public project built to the new standards developed in the 2014 comprehensive plan and zoning update. As such, the intent of the Mixed-Use zoning provides for minimal building line setbacks to make buildings more inviting to pedestrian and non-vehicular traffic. The Link will sit about 45 feet from the edge of Baker Blvd. Between the street and building will be a landscape buffer as well as the existing overhead utility lines.

As you see in many new subdivisions, utilities are now typically buried. This provides for aesthetic appeal as well as less interruptions during storm events. However, construction of utility burials is much easier when installing new lines underground versus retrofitting existing overhead to underground. This complexity comes from unknown conflicts with other utilities, coordination among other franchise operators, and service interruptions to existing customers. Because of this, retrofitting the overhead utility lines, which consist of electric and telecommunications lines (Oncor, AT&T, and Charter), has a higher cost than new construction. Based on the type of electric facilities that exist along Baker Blvd, in order to bury the utilities, a couple considerations must be made.

First, if we were to look at burying between Rufe Snow and Matthews Drive, one or two switchgears would be required to handle the loads. The cost for this is outside what we would consider a reasonable budget. Estimates would be closer to the \$300 to \$400 thousand dollar range. Therefore Oncor made a suggestion that to get their cost down we just look at burying utilities directly in front of the face of the building. This would require two new poles and the removal of one.

The cost for this would be about:

- \$60,000 to \$100,000 for Oncor's electric lines;
- \$25,000 to \$35,000 for AT&T's lines; &
- \$15,000 to \$25,000 for Charter's lines

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TOTAL = \$100,000 to \$160,000 range

Staff believes this is a large amount of money that may not prove as beneficial to the aesthetics of the project than something like larger landscape items would provide. For

instance, we could upgrade the size of trees that we installed for a fraction of the cost and likely provide more visual screening of the utility lines from passersby. Some photoshop images of this will be shown during the meeting.

If the Council wishes to move forward with the burial, then staff will begin coordinating with Byrne, Oncor, AT&T, and Charter to move forward with formal design and construction. The lines would not be buried until closer to the end of the calendar year or just after the first part of the year due to backlog of these franchise utilities.

**Board/Citizen Input:** N/A

**Financial Impact:** \$100,000 to \$160,000

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**Attachments:** N/A