

VENETIAN ISLANDS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Underground Utilities Project

We want to improve your life, but we need your help and support.

Overhead utility wires are ugly and unreliable. We want to put these wires where in their proper place: **underground**. We need your signature on the attached petition to make this happen.

When utility wires are underground, neighborhoods look better. Look around at the tangle of wires infesting the air above our streets and sidewalks. Take a look at the blue skies above Rivo Alto island's underground utilities. We want Dilido and San Marino islands to have skies as clear as Rivo Alto island.

Underground utilities are more reliable. Foreign objects interfering with our utility lines are the number one cause of power outages on our islands. By placing out utility wires underground, we will have fewer outages, and more reliable power.

Underground utilities raise property values. Buyers are attracted by the aesthetics and reliability. Neighborhoods with underground utilities are more desirable, and have higher property values than similar neighborhoods with above ground utilities.

We want the residents of Dilido and San Marino islands to have these benefits.

Our plan is to create a Special Taxation District to fund this project. Miami-Dade County finances the project, and recovers the money by adding an extra entry on our property tax bill for a few years.

We are asking all Dilido and San Marino property owners to sign our petition. This is a necessary step in the creation of the district.

Attached is a list of questions and answer about this project. Please read them, and if you have any additional questions, please let us know.

Please sign and return the enclosed form at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
Your Venetian Islands Homeowners Association

P.S. Check out our new web site at www.venetianhomeowners.com.

Q. Who will pay for this?

Ultimately, we will, but not right away, and not all at once. The Miami-Dade County will finance the project, and recover the costs by increasing our property taxes an estimated \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year for the next 10 years (this is done with a mechanism called a “Special Taxation District”).”

Q. What is a “Special Taxation District”?

It’s a method for the County to tax the homes in a certain area in order to fund a particular project that benefits that area. In our case the additional taxes will be for a period of ten years, and then they will go away.

Q. What are the advantages of a “Special Taxation District”?

There are a lot of advantages to a “Special Taxation District”. These include:

1. The county handles all the financing. As individuals, we do not have to worry about it.
2. We pay the county by having our property taxes increased for 10 years. For many of us, property taxes are deductible, giving us an advantage come tax time. You should check with your tax advisor to find out how you will benefit from this finance method.

Q. Does the Special Assessment cover all expenses?

No. The project only covers the common utility elements (electrical, telephone, and cable TV) shared by the community, not improvements to private property. It does *not* include the cables that run to your house. If your current utility service is above ground, and you would like it underground, you would need to pay for this yourself (this cost will not be financed by the Special Assessment Area)

The cost to underground your home’s service will depend on many factors. How your lot is arranged, the location of your meter, your landscaping, your driveway shape, any fountains and other obstructions will all affect the cost. Obviously this general document cannot give you an accurate cost estimate for your particular situation. We have heard of situations (current electric meter is near the street, separated only by grass) where the cost to underground has been as low as \$500. We expect that most houses will cost more, perhaps several thousands of dollars.

If your existing electrical service does not meet current standards the city may require you to update your service before you can switch to underground service. Again, you would need to pay the costs of any needed upgrades to your home’s electrical service.

Obviously the cost of any upgrades would depend on how much work needs to be done. We have heard of situations where upgrades cost several thousand dollars.

The VIHA cannot make any assurances that your costs will be similar to these. Your costs might be less, or significantly more. We strongly recommend that you get a cost estimate from a qualified electrical contractor to determine your specific cost for undergrounding, if your home will require upgrades, and (if needed) the cost for those upgrades.

Q. Will I be forced to pay more taxes?

Sort of. All the homes in the district will benefit from undergrounding the common utility wires. Each homeowner will be assessed their share. You will have the option of paying your share up front, or paying over time via the Special Taxation District. The county charges interest if you pay over time, so your total cost will be less if you pay everything up front.

Q. Will I be forced to underground my current overhead service?

No. Those that do not want to move their home's current service underground may choose to leave it overhead. The common utility wires will be moved underground, however the utility pole servicing your house will remain, along with your existing overhead service. We expect that most people will want their service undergrounded

Because the common utility wires will be undergrounded, Your home *will* still be in the special assessment area, and your taxes *will* go up while the special assessment is in effect.

FPL usually offers a discount if everyone opts for underground service, so we encourage everyone to choose to underground their utility lines.

Q. What about Rivo Alto Island?

Rivo Alto island already has underground utilities, and is not included in this project.

Q. Do I need to give you any money today?

No. You are not required to give us any money today.

Q. What about the main line that runs along the causeway?

FPL's main line that runs along the causeway is not included in this project. It will remain above ground. There are a few homes along Venetian Way which receive power directly from this main line. These homes are excluded from this project.

Q. Will everything be hidden?

The wires for electricity, telephone and cable will be buried under the ground. However some equipment that is currently mounted on the poles must be placed above ground.

For telephone and cable there will be 'pedestals,' small access cabinets placed around the islands to allow the lines to be serviced.

FPL uses transformers to distribute electricity to our homes. Box shaped transformers will be placed on the ground every 2 to 5 homes. Our current plan (awaiting approval by FPL) is to place the transformers on the swale (grass) in front of some homes. The locations of the transformers are dictated by FPL's technical requirements. Over the years technology has improved. Current transformers are smaller than the old ones used on Rivo Alto Island.

Q. What else can I do to help?

If you are not already a member of the Venetian Islands Homeowners Association (or you have not yet paid your annual dues), we encourage you to join. Membership gives you a stronger voice in matters such as these. Membership information can be found on our website www.venetianhomeowners.com

Annual dues are only \$75/year. We also accept additional donations to fund the association. We can always use volunteers. If you have time you can give us, please let us know.

