



**DENVER**  
THE MILE HIGH CITY

# **Undergrounding of Telecommunications Lines**

Infrastructure & Culture Committee

March 11, 2015

FOR CITY SERVICES VISIT | CALL  
**DenverGov.org** | **311**

- BR 15-0137 would require telecommunications companies that maintain aerial lines or cables on city property to relocate facilities underground in two circumstances:
  - In coordination with undergrounding projects where Xcel has been ordered to relocate lines under Article 8 of the city franchise; or
  - When the City is otherwise improving a right-of-way or other city-owned property and requires removal of overhead lines to make the improvements
- Work would need to be done within 180 days
- Work would be done at no cost to the City

- Undergrounding of overhead telecommunications lines serves multiple purposes:
  - Enhances public safety by removing obstructions and risks for contact with overhead lines
  - Enhances the safety and security of the line themselves, thus protecting the reliability of service
  - Enhances the appearance and aesthetics of neighborhoods, preserving views and allowing the tree canopy to flourish
  - Coordinating undergrounding projects allows relocation in the most efficient and cost effective manner with the least disruption to the community

- Since 1984, the City has, as part of its franchise agreement, required cable television lines to be relocated underground when other utilities are being relocated
- Since 1986, the City has, as part of its franchise agreement, required undergrounding of electric distribution facilities in certain circumstances. This includes establishing a fund for undergrounding as part of the franchise agreement (more on that later).
- Historically, telecommunications companies without a franchise agreement with the city have not been willing to voluntarily underground their lines when other utilities are being relocated

- Article 8 of the current Xcel Franchise agreement
  - All new electrical distribution lines must be placed underground
  - 1% Underground Fund established (1% of the preceding year's Electric Gross Revenue) for purpose of undergrounding existing overhead distribution facilities as requested by Manager of Public Works. Fund pays only for Xcel work (no cash value).
    - Generates approximately \$4 million/year
    - 41 projects completed or in progress through this fund
    - Projects typically advanced in conjunction with other public projects (drainage improvements, streetscape improvements, roadway widening, etc.)
  - Requires coordination with other companies that have above ground lines to attempt to have all facilities undergrounded as part of the same project

Chopped off pole (phone line remaining)



Comparison – all utilities vs. phone line only





# DENVER THE CITY OF Cheesman Park – utilities not relocated



- We have legal authority to address undergrounding of these lines
  - As a home rule city, Denver has broad authority to regulate use of streets, alleys, parks, etc.
  - Colorado Constitution and state statutes recognize authority of cities and counties to regulate placement of public utility structures on public property
- Neighborhoods have often expressed desire to see additional facilities undergrounded for the benefit of the community
- This ordinance will provide a long-needed tool to address concerns around undergrounding all overhead lines within a given project