

As the City of Los Angeles works to address a severe housing shortage and struggles in the small business community, the timely and efficient approval of new development is critical. As part of the building entitlement, permitting, and inspection process, utility-related processes—particularly those managed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)—can create delays and uncertainty that hinder housing production and exhaust small business resources.

Stakeholders have shared challenges related to LADWP's plan check, permitting, and inspection processes, including lengthy and unpredictable timelines, communication challenges, and site design requirements that significantly reduce developable area.

Specifically, applicants have cited the following challenges:

- No matter the size of a project, LADWP assigns an Electric Service Representative (ESR) who serves as the coordinating liaison between developers and internal LADWP teams. This structure virtually precludes direct communication between applicants and LADWP teams regarding specific issues and can inhibit timely problem solving;
- LADWP processes are often the longest City timelines in the development process, sometimes spanning multiple years;
- LADWP sometimes makes mid-process changes regarding the infrastructure expectations of developers, which leads to wasted time and resources;
- Permanent power is not scheduled for installation and energization until buildings are completely finished, which sometimes adds six to nine months to the building timeline and has ripple effects to other building system testing and inspection timelines for features such as elevators and fire pumps;
- When there is insufficient power capacity in a given area, applicants are saddled with paying for and building the infrastructure that benefits the entire area, a disproportionate burden; and
- Rules relating to overhead power lines, transformer staging areas that require large alleyways, and transformer right-of-way, which are not typical in other large cities, decrease developable area and result in poor urban design.

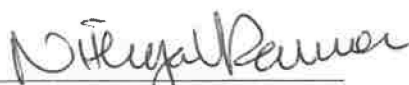
LADWP recently launched efforts intended to improve its development related processes and policies. Two programs of note include Project Powerhouse and the Fair Share program. Project Powerhouse streamlines access to electrical services for 100% affordable and permanent supportive housing developments in line with Mayor Karen Bass Executive Directive No. 1. The Fair Share program shares the cost of underground distribution line extensions in the public right-of-way among all customers who benefit, rather than saddling individual developers with disproportionate costs.

While these programs are excellent initiatives, it is necessary to take additional steps to support housing production. As LADWP plays a key role in enabling housing construction, a review of its development-related procedures is necessary to identify improvements that would support the City's housing goals while maintaining reliability, safety, and sustainability.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council direct the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), with assistance from relevant departments, to report back within 60 days on:

1. Existing approval, permitting, plan check, and inspection processes administered by LADWP for new developments;
2. Average and range of processing timelines, staffing levels, and coordination protocols for housing and small business utility work;
3. LADWP's use of technology in development processes, including digital submittals and application tracking, and ways to use these tools for greater transparency and accountability for developers and other City partners;
4. Identification of other jurisdictions whose process efficiency and urban design standards – particularly as it relates to transformer staging, location, and overhead power lines – are considered exemplary in the power industry, and ways to incorporate these standards into LADWP's work;
5. Opportunities to streamline LADWP's development-related processes to reduce delays and improve efficiency, including potentially expanding Project Powerhouse to all housing developments;
6. Strategies to improve interdepartmental coordination, timeline transparency, and communication with applicants; and
7. A mapping analysis of LADWP power capacity throughout the city overlaid with the areas of the city planned for the greatest density increases, and recommendations to fund infrastructure improvements in areas where there are power deficiencies relative to future potential growth.

PRESENTED BY:



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