

April 22, 2024

The Honorable City Council  
Office of the City Clerk  
Room 395, City Hall  
Mail Stop 160

Attention: Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky  
Chairperson, Energy and Environment Committee

Honorable Members:

Subject: Council File No. 23-1023 – Project Powerhouse/Multifamily Housing  
Projects/Enhanced Services/American Institute of Architects –  
Los Angeles/Housing Element Goals

Enclosed is a response to the subject referenced motions that requests the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power report to the Energy and Environment Committee.

If you have any questions or if further information is required, please call me at (213) 367-1338, or have your staff contact Mr. Paul Habib, Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (213) 367-3846.

Sincerely,



Martin L. Adams  
General Manager and Chief Engineer

PH:tf

Enclosure

c/enc: Councilmember Tim McOsker, Energy and Environment Committee  
Councilmember Nithya Raman, Energy and Environment Committee  
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield, Energy and Environment Committee  
Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez, Energy and Environment Committee  
Mr. Paul Habib

**Council File No. 23-1023 Project PowerHouse / Multifamily Housing Projects / Enhanced Services / American Institute of Architects - Los Angeles / Housing Element Goals**

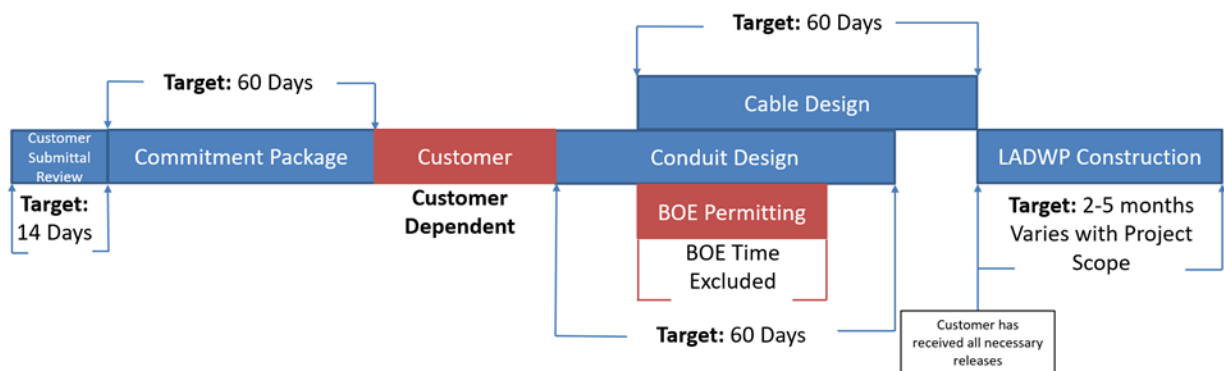
This is in a response to the subject-referenced motion (Krekorian-Park and Raman) that requests the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) report back to City Council with a plan to expand Project PowerHouse beyond 100 percent affordable housing projects; and improve the engineering design and construction process and timelines to build enough housing of all kinds to meet the demand.

Project PowerHouse, established by the Board of Water and Power Commissioners, eliminates the “first in” costs of new and/or upgraded utility infrastructure (i.e. line extensions), encourages early collaboration with a developer’s architects and commits to shorter timeframes for engineering designs and approvals. LADWP has implemented a number of policies and procedures that would improve the process relative to the design and construction of new business projects that need new and/or upgraded infrastructure.

LADWP has strategically and significantly increased staff allowing for specific process improvements and project coordination throughout the Power System. Specifically, the Service Planning group has the bandwidth to meet with developers as soon as they possess a basic site plan and load schedule for their project. Recently, this pre-submittal meeting concept has proven beneficial to the developers and their architects as they design their projects. In addition, LADWP anticipates launching an electronic application process during the second quarter of 2024, which will allow developers to submit applications for power services and track their projects in real time.

In addition to pre-submittal meetings and electronic application submission, LADWP is aligning its resources to target our Project PowerHouse timelines for components of the design process across the board. Below is a high-level overview of the timeline targets for service planning:

## Service Planning Timelines & Targets



LADWP has reviewed the letter from the American Institute of Architects - Los Angeles (AIA) to the Board of Water and Power Commissioners (Board) regarding Needed Best-Practices to Optimize Safety, Environmental Performance, Constructability, Efficiency and Access to Affordable Housing. In the letter to the Board there were six categories of recommendations. Summarily, LADWP's standards are based on safety, accessibility/operations, maintenance and ability to make emergency repairs. Following is a summary of LADWP's responses to AIA's suggested recommendations:

## 1. REFORM ON-SITE STAGING AREA STANDARDS FOR TRANSFORMERS

AIA determined that staging and placement of transformers in the public right of way results in the removal of trees and is unsightly. AIA also notes the decrease in the allowable number of units by approximately 10-20% due to staging in the public right of way. Summarily, AIA's preference would be that all utility infrastructure be located in the rear of projects, not the front.

A blanket policy statement is not feasible however, the pre-submittal collaboration would allow staging options to be vetted early in the project design. The degree of the vetting would be based upon the amount of project specific information the developer can provide. For example, if there is only a basic site plan and load schedule this meeting would be very preliminary and the actual final staging determination would be determined later during the LADWP formal design phase.

Of note, in December 2020, in response to development requests to allow more developable space on site, LADWP revised the Transformer Pad Staging Area Requirements. The new policy allows access to occur in the public right of way if specific requirements are met, and allows the developer to self-certify that they meet these requirements. This process removes the need for a formal variance approval and has significantly reduced the total number of formal variance requests since implementation.

In addition, alley installations can be permitted through a formal variance process. They are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and require on-site inspections to determine if they are feasible. Customers also have the ability to request indoor electrical customer stations to be included in the building footprint creating the opportunity to build vertical over the station, eliminating the decreased number of habitable units identified in staging pad-mounted equipment.

## 2. IMPROVE SERVICE PLANNING DESIGN PROCEDURES

The inability of developers and architects to meet with LADWP service planning engineers prior to project application submittal, presented a challenge. Today, LADWP will meet with developers prior to application submittal if they possess a basic site plan and load schedule. If this minimal information is provided, this

meeting would be very preliminary however, this meeting can be beneficial in the planning phase of the process. In addition, staging is a recurring theme in AIA's suggestions/recommendations and while there are four LADWP staging options available, it is during this meeting that an architect could present and receive information relative to options they may consider.

### 3. ADDRESS OVERHEAD POWER LINES EARLIER

Overhead power lines are a common sight in the City of Los Angeles (City). At times those power lines traverse a customer's property and can impact their ability to build within a certain proximity of those power lines. LADWP has standard diagrams to help developers understand construction limits and clearances when they are in close proximity with overhead power lines. LADWP and LADBS have created a clearance process to make sure safety around overhead power lines is always addressed before construction permits are issued. When a development team believes the overhead power lines are an issue, they should always reach out to LADWP to set up a pre-submittal meeting. This will allow developers them to incorporate any requirements early in the design stage, eliminating the need to re-design.

### 4. REFORM BREAK EVEN DETERMINATION AND VOLTAGE CLASSIFICATION

LADWP 34.5kV and 4.8kV circuit information has been made public (Navigate LA) and while actual circuit records are not available, generally a project load in excess of 300kVA may require the use of the 34.5kV system. This information, coupled with an assigned service planning engineer serving as the concierge in guiding the project through all phases: Submittal – Design – Construction – Energizing will ensure consistency and efficiency throughout the process.

### 5. ENCOURAGE ADAPTIVE REUSE

LADWP supports adaptive reuse projects. As noted in the letter to the Board, in the event LADWP required infrastructure upgrades to an existing building, the economic burden of that upgrade (i.e. line extension) was placed on one property owner. Today, the cost of infrastructure upgrades requiring a "line extension" is no longer placed on one property owner. The costs are now proportioned to reflect each property's actual use of new/upgraded infrastructure.

### 6. IMPROVE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

LADWP has implemented several new policies and procedures to ensure consistent, knowledgeable and timely project development services. In addition to pre-submittal meetings, an assigned service planning engineer serving as the concierge in guiding the project through all phases: Submittal – Design – Construction – Energizing, LADWP also provides quarterly workshops relative to the "Service Planning Design Process". LADWP invites over 550 developers,

contractors, and customers looking to upgrade electrical facilities and we typically seen an average attendance of 150 customers per workshop.

LADWP, being a part of the utility community, meets quarterly with other utilities to review and discuss best practices that may yield codes and/or policy changes to expedite construction, promote economic activity and increase housing stock.

LADWP's Power System continues to strategically increase staff where necessary to ensure a positive experience for the developer community and specifically for those developers increasing the housing stock in the City. In addition to increased staff, LADWP continues to enable newer technologies and the deployment of grid modernization tools, providing increased visibility of distributed energy resources to help achieve the City's climate change goals.

Recently, LADWP was awarded \$3.6 million dollars to build out power infrastructure for 100 percent affordable or supportive housing projects as designated by the Mayor's office. The power infrastructure will not only provide electricity for these sites, but will also provide service for the communities where they are built.