

Observer

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Undergrounding project to commence on Fairbanks

Winter Park leaders will host an information meeting on Oct. 10 leading up to Fairbanks Avenue undergrounding project.

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Some major changes are on the horizon for one of Winter Park's main gateways: Fairbanks Avenue.

The city is almost ready to start a new project alongside Duke Energy to underground power lines

along the south side of Fairbanks Avenue from Harper Street to Interstate 4 — an effort to beautify the stretch of road that welcomes people into Winter Park.

Instead of looking up at power

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Undergrounding

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lines and poles along the major thoroughfare, residents and visitors will see wide-open skies free of obstruction by the end of next year.

Workers will be putting large transmission lines underground starting at Harper Street and heading west, center-cutting the southern-most lane on Fairbanks Avenue.

The project to underground Duke Energy's power lines — starting Nov. 1 and running to the end of 2019 — will obstruct traffic in the south lane during select times.

The city is welcoming residents and business owners to a public information meeting about the project from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 10, at the Winter Park Community Center, 721 W. New England Ave.

"What we want to do with the meeting is make sure that we're transparent to our residents and more precisely the residents in the affected area as to what the project's going to entail, how long it's going to take and who's going to be impacted," Director of Electric Utility Dan D'Alessandro said. "We want to give them the (forum) to be able to ask questions that they have.

"If we begin at Harper, we know that we'll be impacting the businesses from Harper to just west

of Orlando Avenue first, and we'll let them know," he said. "We've gotten very detailed about which driveways we're going to be blocking and what time period and which driveways have alternate access and which don't and how we're going to provide alternate access during that time. ... We realize this is going to be impactful to the businesses, and so we want to give them as much notification about the plan and what to look forward to."

The project — made possible by a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation — will tackle 800- to 1,500-foot stretches of road at a time.

"They'll be moving much like a train — they'll do a piece, finish it and move forward," D'Alessandro said. "There's going to be different plans for night and day. Most of the work will be performed at night and then the traffic patterns will change during the day. It will be more specific in the meeting as to where and when that change is."

There are more advantages to the project than just the aesthetics, D'Alessandro said. Undergrounding power lines also better protects them from high winds during storms.

"The frequency of outages because of things like cars hitting power poles, lightning striking overhead power lines, squirrels climbing on the power lines ... all



A stretch of Fairbanks Avenue should have a much different look by the end of 2019. These photos from the city show the before (top) and after (bottom).

of these things are no longer an issue," he said. "The frequency of outages will be reduced."

Winter Park also has been working on a separate ongoing project

to underground all of its power lines by 2026. D'Alessandro said the city is on track to meet that goal and has completed about half the work.