

Scenic Watch



Florida Goes Underground

"Underground utilities lines are like business assets: You must reinvest in them to stay competitive and add value."

"Leave it better than you found it.

Plan on it: At least every 10 to 15 years in Florida, you're going to have to replace the roof on your home to maintain the home's value...

If you want to remain competitive in business, you must reinvest — in people, equipment and development of new products and services...

[PASSED] Ballot question: Shall Town of Longboat Key be authorized to issue revenue bonds/notes, in one or more series, not exceeding \$25,250,000.00, bearing interest not exceeding maximum legal rates, maturing not beyond 30 years from issuance, to finance undergrounding electrical, communications, fiber optics and other utilities and installation of street lighting relating to Gulf of Mexico Drive, payable solely from special assessments imposed against real property throughout the Town and other non-ad valorem revenues if necessary?

Florida Power & Light Co. says the following municipalities and counties are in preliminary stages, advanced stages or have completed projects:

Completed

Daytona Beach
Jupiter Inlet Colony
Jupiter Island
Lake Worth
Sewall's Point

In process

Bonita Springs
Charlotte County
Collier County
Fort Lauderdale
Fort Myers
Gulf Stream
Holly Hill
Hollywood
Jupiter

Covering
November
2015



Fun Festivals and Events

Central and West

Thru Jan 1
Space Coast Light Fest, Melbourne
Thru Dec 31
Now Snowing Nightly, Celebration
Thru Jan 3
Light Up UCF!, Orlando
Dec 3
Christmas in the Park, Winter Park
Dec 3-5
Festival of Trees, Newberry
Dec 4
Gainesville Art Walk, Gainesville
Dec 4
Camellia Christmas, Tallahassee

Miami Beach
Palm Beach
Pompano Beach

...You can read all kinds of studies online about how the cost of installing and maintaining underground utility lines is much higher than the costs for standard overhead lines. We came across one study from the Virginia State Corporations Commission that said the benefits of underground lines would offset only 38% of the costs.

Face it: You would be hard pressed to prove with data the investment pays for itself.

Likewise, study after study points out the negatives most often associated with underground utility lines. Check out the list below.

But then, drive the length of Gulf of Mexico Drive [Longboat Key]. Pay particular attention to the power lines and poles. And then imagine all those poles replaced with more massive, taller concrete poles — for the next 30 years.

Then imagine no power poles ... and better digital services in your homes.

The decision for voters is not just economic. It's also about the Longboat lifestyle, that ethereal thing that attracts so many here to begin with. Imagine how much cleaner and lush the Key will look. One study said an effect of underground utility lines would be a 2.5% increase in property values — just because of the aesthetic improvement.

Underground positives

Maintenance and Operating costs

Lower storm restoration cost

Lower tree-trimming cost

Improved Reliability

Increased reliability during severe weather (Wind-related storm damage will be greatly reduced for an underground system, and areas not subjected to flooding and storm surges experience minimal damage and interruption of electric service.)

Less damage during severe weather

Far fewer momentary interruptions

Improved utility relations regarding tree trimming

Study data show about one-fifth as many outages on underground circuits as on overhead circuits.

Underground lines have a higher failure rate initially due to dig-ins and installation problems. After three or four years, failures become virtually nonexistent.

Improved Public Safety

Fewer motor vehicle accidents

Reduced live-wire contact injuries

Fewer fires

Improved Property Values

Improved aesthetics (removal of unsightly poles and wires, enhanced tree canopies)

Fewer structures impacting sidewalks

Maryland State Highway Administration reported in 2003 that assessment values will increase by 2.5%. Research indicated that properties in with underground utilities are more desirable

But there is more to it than that. The case for the underground utility lines became stronger after we spoke to Lisa Rosintoski, customer communications manager at Fort Collins (Colo.) Utilities.

Fort Collins is one of the nation's leading cities for progressive energy policies. It adopted a formal undergrounding program in 1989. It completed the project in 2006 at a cost of \$25 million, with 98% of the city's electrical lines now underground.

Fort Collins experiences few of the negatives often cited with underground lines. When much of Colorado flooded in 2013, Fort Collins' electrical grid was hardly affected — thanks to the city's stormwater system.

Underground negatives

Installation and Maintenance Costs

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin reported in 2013 the cost of installation "ranges from four to 14 times more expensive than overhead lines of the same voltage and same distance." Repairing outages can be five to 10 times more costly than overhead lines.

Reliability

Not as easy to locate outages compared to overhead lines

Interruptions take longer to repair. Study data show it takes 2.25 times longer to address outages on underground lines compared to overhead.

Tree roots can cause interference and should not be planted in vicinity of underground lines.

Dec 4

Christmas in the Square, Sanford

Dec 4

Downtown DeLand Merchant

Holiday Open House, DeLand

Dec 4

Light Up Flagler, New Smyrna

Beach

Dec 4-6

Festivals of Speed, Orlando

Dec 4-6

Sarasota Craft Show, Sarasota

Dec 4-31

Festival of Lights, White Springs

Dec 5-6

Dudley Farm Cane Day,

Newberry

Dec 5

Winter Festival, Tallahassee

Dec 5-6

Annual Market Days, Tallahassee

Dec 5

Sanford Historic Trust Tour of

Homes, Sanford

Dec 5

62nd annual Ye Olde Hometown

Christmas Parade, Winter Park

Dec 5

Daytona Beach Christmas Boat

Parade, Daytona Beach

Dec 5

Orlando Pottery Festival,

Orlando

Dec 5

Lighted Boat Parade, Mount Dora

Dec 5

Christmas Parade, Mount Dora

Dec 5

First Saturday Jam, Barberville

Dec 5

New Smyrna Beach Christmas

parade, New Smyrna Beach

Dec 5

Sunset & Symphony Holiday

Concert, Lake Wales

Dec 5

Riverfront Festival of the Season,

Port Orange

Dec 4-6

Norwood's Holiday Food and

Wine Festival, New Smyrna

Beach

Dec 4

Holiday Lights Orlando, Orlando

Dec 5

Jaycee's Christmas Parade,

DeLand

Dec 5-12

Pop Warner Super Bowl, Orlando

Dec 6

Sounds of the Season

An American Holiday, Gainesville

Dec 7, 13-15, 17-23, 26-30

Wild Wonderland at Tampa's

Lowry Park Zoo, Tampa

Dec 11

Santa PAWS, Mount Dora

Dec 11-12, 18-19

Winter Waterland, Weeki

Wachee State Park

Dec 11-12

Candlelight Tours of Fort Foster,

Tampa

Dec 11-12

In flooded areas, storm-damage restoration is delayed until water has receded. Salt-water flooding can shorten the life and increase maintenance of underground system. Underground lines require specialized equipment and crews to locate a fault. Underground lines have a higher failure rate initially due to dig-ins and installation problems. After three or four years, however, failures become virtually nonexistent. As underground cables approach their end of life, failure rates increase significantly, and these failures are difficult to locate and repair.

Electrical reliability measurements surpass most Colorado utilities. The average power disruption in the region has been 35 minutes for the past 10 quarters. In Fort Collins, they have averaged 15 minutes, although for seven quarters they were only 10.

Rosintoski attributes this efficiency in part to the city adopting smart meters, which ping when a disruption occurs, allowing the city to pinpoint the underground outages.

And important to all Fort Collins residents: Power lines block no one's views. There's the aesthetics again..."

-- Staff, Observer

[Read entire article](#)

Naples: "Project burying utility cables in Vanderbilt Beach area"



Photo: Tim Aten, Naples News

"The local project to bury lines for Florida Power & Light, Century Link, Comcast and Summit Broadband utilities will not be completed until the second quarter of 2016.

"We never talked about ending in October," said project manager Harry Sells of Collier County's Public Transit & Neighborhood Enhancement Department...

The project to bury utility lines in that area has been in the works for more than a decade. The idea was conceived in 2002, but it wasn't until the Vanderbilt Beach municipal services taxing unit, or MSTU, was formed in 2004 that funds started to be collected and significant planning began for the beautification effort, Sells said.

"It definitely changes the look of the neighborhood," he said.

In addition to the aesthetic improvement, underground utilities assure less service outages caused by high winds. To make the project happen, county government had to work with FPL, which resisted the idea until about 2008, Sells said...

"I think it turned out extremely well," he said. "The landscape has matured and everything has been restored. It's a dramatic change because of the lack of wires and poles."

-- Tim Aten, Naples News

[Read entire article here](#)

Longboat Key: "Longboat Key votes 'Yes' to underground GMD power lines"

Southern Pines Blues and BBO Festival, Perry
Dec 11-12
Holiday Magic, Tallahassee
Dec 12
Annual Holiday Parade and Lawn Mower Parade
Dec 13
Holiday Traditions
A Musical Celebration, Gainesville
Dec 12
Home for the Holidays Nighttime Parade, Ormond Beach
Dec 12
Christmas in the Park with Snow, Mount Dora
Dec 12
Parade of Lights, Sanford
Dec 12-13
Wine & Chocolate Festival, Clermont
Dec 12
Holiday Tour of Homes, Ormond Beach
Dec 18-20
Sarasota Snow Fest, Sarasota
Dec 19-24, 26
Christmas Celebration of Lights, Homosassa
Dec 19-20
Holiday of the Arts, St Petersburg
Dec 19
Cruisin' Downtown DeLand Classic Car Show, DeLand
Dec 19
Snow Fest, Maitland
Dec 19-21
Santa of the Rainbow, Dunnellon
Dec 20
Pickin' in the Park, Ocala
Dec 25
Fourth Fridays Art Walk, Sanford
Dec 26
Art Walk on Flagler, New Smyrna Beach
Dec 30
Orlando Citrus Parade, Orlando
Dec 31
New Year's Eve Celebration, New Smyrna Beach

South

Nov 15-Dec 31
Festival of Lights at Fishermen's Village, Punta Gorda
Thru Jan 3
Holiday Nights at Edison and Ford Winter Estates, Fort Myers
Dec 1-6
Red Dot Fair, Miami
Dec 3-31
Visit the Famous 100ft Christmas Tree, Boynton Beach
Dec 3-6
Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami Beach
Dec 4
Florida Keys Holiday Festival, Islamorada
Dec 4-31



Photo: YourObserver.com

"...Longboat Key voted decidedly in favor to bury power lines on Gulf Of Mexico Drive.

In fact, 62% — a total of 1,399 of the 2,234 voters who cast ballots — said 'Yes' to the referendum question that authorizes the Town to move forward and bond up to \$25.25 million to pay for the project and repay the bonds through special assessments on each parcel of property.

About 37% of the town's 5,986 registered voters participated in the vote altogether.

Sarasota County voters were far more supportive of the proposal with 1,007 — more than 67% — voting in support and 488 against. In Manatee County it was far closer: 392 — about 53% — voted for the undergrounding plan and 347 voted against the measure.

The approval will allow the Town to take major steps in its plan to beautify and aesthetically improve the Gulf of Mexico Drive corridor. Part of the project is for the town to install fiber optic line the entire length of Longboat Key and that will allow a variety of technological improvements and options...

'I think its very exciting and I am very pleased with the results and the significant vote in favor,' said Mayor Jack Duncan following the outcome. Duncan continued, 'It is a Red Letter day for the town. Now that GMD is approved, we have to now really dig into the neighborhoods; it is just as important in my mind. We have to come up with an equitable way to get the neighborhoods done. This will enhance values and aesthetics.'

Duncan said the discussion on how to structure the referendum to bury the neighborhood utilities and side streets will start as soon as next week...

The referendum question read: Shall Town of Longboat Key be authorized to issue revenue bonds/notes, in one or more series, not exceeding \$25,250,000.00, bearing interest not exceeding maximum legal rates, maturing not beyond 30 years from issuance, to finance undergrounding electrical, communications, fiber optics and other utilities and installation of street lighting relating to Gulf of Mexico Drive, payable solely from special assessments imposed against real property throughout the Town and other non-ad valorem revenues if necessary?"

-- Steve Reid, Longboat Key News

[Read entire article here](#)

Palm Beach: Keeping Voters Informed Via Undergrounding Information Online

Annual Christmas Light Canal
Tours, Punta Gorda
Dec 4-5
Luminary Festival, Sanibel and
Captiva
Dec 5
Snowfest, Naples
Dec 5
Fort Myers Beach Boat Parade,
Fort Myers Beach
Dec 5
Christmas Boat Parade, Venice
Dec 5-6
Winter Fine Arts Festival,
Englewood
Dec 5
Key West Holiday Parade, Key
WeSt Dec 5-6
Buckler's Craft Fair, West Palm
Beach
Dec 5-20
Key West 'Bight' Before
Christmas, Key West
Dec 6
Suntrust Sunday Jazz Brunch,
Fort Lauderdale
Dec 7
Christmas Tree Lighting at
Whitehall, Palm Beach
Dec 11
Historic Lighted Inn Tours, Key
West Dec 11
Boynton and Delray Beach
Holiday Boat Parade, Boynton
Beach
Dec 11-12
Florida's Creative Coast
Weekend, Pine Island
Dec 12
Winterfest Boat Parade, Fort
Lauderdale
Dec 12-13, 19-20
Christmas Rail-Boat Trips, Fort
Myers
Dec 13
Peace River Lighted Boat
Parade, Punta Gorda
Dec 13
Barnacle Under Moonlight,
Coconut Grove
Dec 15
Holiday Boat Parade, Key Largo
Dec 16-17, 19-21
Holiday Pops Concerts, Fort
Myers
Dec 16-20
The Christmas Spectacular, Cape
Coral
Dec 17
Downtown Gallery Walk, Punta
Gorda
Dec 18-23
Flagler Museum Holiday Evening
Tours, Palm Beach
Dec 20
Winter Wonders, Islamorada
Dec 26-27
Coconut Point New Year's
Weekend Art Festival, Bonita
Springs/Estero
Dec 27
The Florida Keys Craft Beer &
Bubbly Fest, Marathon
Dec 31



Photo:Town of Palm Beach

"The Town of Palm Beach has been focused and engaged in assessing the concept of 'Undergrounding' towards the goal of protecting it's above ground utilities comprising electric, phone and cable service over the last decade.

In 2006, the Town commissioned a study titled 'Conversion of Aerial to Underground Utilities Analysis' by R.W. Beck, Inc.. The purpose of this study was to 'perform a high level review of the current cost estimates the Town is utilizing in its analysis (Project)'. At the time, the estimated cost for the undergrounding effort was "roughly \$60.3 million".

The current estimate for this undertaking is estimated at \$90 million by the Town.

This study did not trigger a Town-wide conversion process. In the following few years up to present times, the decision was made to perform undergrounding projects on an 'as requested' basis by each neighborhood.

While the pace of this effort has varied from year to year, it has yielded a handful of completed projects and a few more are currently in the planning and design phase.

Worth Avenue's reconstruction also received the benefit of this approach. These smaller isolated projects have typically started with the efforts of a single motivated resident (The Champion). The Champion would then attempt to garner the support of his/her surrounding neighbors and through coordination with Town staff, a logical project boundary would be determined.

From that point, if two thirds of the residents within that boundary voted to go forward, the Town would proceed with the planning/design and construction process. The cost of the design and construction would then be assessed to all the residents of that particular street based on a model designed by Willdan Financial Services in October 2009 titled 'Town of Palm Beach Utility Undergrounding Assessment Methodology'. That model determined a group of weighted factors that could be applied to each property within the Town...

Within the context of previous and ongoing conversations between the residents, Council members, staff and consultant(s) regarding a more 'regionalized rather than local' approach to undergrounding the Town, the hardening proposal by FPL became an added impetus to view the large scale undergrounding as an alternative whose time had perhaps come.

After in depth deliberations, the Council members and residents in attendance unanimously decided to again pursue the feasibility of undergrounding the entire Town. The Town has commissioned Keshavarz & Associates, Inc. to produce a 'Town-wide Utility Undergrounding Sequencing and Phasing Report', which would focus on how long it will take and how each

Downtown Countdown, Fort Myers

North

Nov 21-Jan 31
 Nights of Lights Festival and Celebration, St Augustine
 Dec 3, 10, 17
 Americana Under the Stars, Santa Rosa Beach
 Dec 3-5
 Festival of Trees, Newberry
 Dec 4
 First Friday Art Walk, St Augustine
 Dec 4
 Gainesville Art Walk, Gainesville
 Dec 4
 Camellia Christmas, Tallahassee
 Dec 4-31
 Festival of Lights, White Springs
 Dec 5-6
 Dudley Farm Cane Day, Newberry
 Dec 5
 Food truck rally, Gainesville
 Dec 5
 Winter Festival, Tallahassee
 Dec 5, 12, 19
 Santa's Storybook Tea Party, Amelia Island
 Dec 5-6
 Annual Market Days, Tallahassee
 Dec 6
 Sounds of the Season
 An American Holiday, Gainesville
 Dec 6
 Annual Garden Club Christmas Tour of Homes, St Augustine
 Dec 11
 Holiday Pops! Concert, Niceville
 Dec 11-12
 Southern Pines Blues and BBQ Festival, Perry
 Dec 12
 Annual Holiday Parade and Lawn Mower Parade
 Dec 12
 5K Reindeer Race, Panama City Beach
 Dec 12
 Amelia Island Holiday Cookie Tour, Amelia Island
 Dec 12
 Artrageous Artwalk, Fernandina Beach
 Dec 13
 Holiday Traditions
 A Musical Celebration,

yearly phase can progress into the next.

-- Town of Palm Beach

[Visit the Town of Palm Beach undergrounding website here](#)

Aesthetics - American Society of Civil Engineers Policy Statement 117:

"Policy

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) supports aesthetic quality in engineering design. As aesthetics are integral to good engineering design and sustainability, the cost of aesthetic quality should also be integral to design and construction budgeting. Aesthetic quality should be an element of the planning, design, construction, operations, maintenance, renovation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and security enhancement of the built environment.

Issue

An engineering design can enhance or detract from the environment by virtue of the quality of its visual characteristics.

Rationale

Aesthetic harmony should exist between civil engineering designs and the environment within which these designs are constructed. The environment is both natural and built, and its aesthetic qualities should be preserved and enhanced by design. Basic design qualities can seldom be economically added once a project is constructed. Visual quality and aesthetics must be considered throughout the life-cycle of the project. Aesthetic quality can be achieved in ways that maintain or enhance functional quality."

-- ASCE

[Visit ASCE website here](#)

Gainesville
Dec 13
Holiday on the Harbor, Destin
Dec 20
Pickin' in the Park, Ocala
Dec 11-12
Holiday Magic, Tallahassee
Dec 19
The Ichetucknee Time Machine,
Fort White
Nov 29-Dec 27
Niceville Christmas Display
"Animation in Motion," Niceville
Dec 31
New Year's Eve Beach Ball Drop,
Panama City Beach

[For many more events and details please visit the Orlando Times Travel Calendar here](#)

