



# STAFF REPORT

DATE: 11/06/2024  
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members  
FROM: Planning and Development Department

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**2024-107**

## REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

### SUBJECT:

WAIVER FROM [CORONA MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 15.60.080](#) ON THE UNDERGROUNDING OF EXISTING OVERHEAD UTILITY WIRES LOCATED ADJACENT TO 225 EAST HARRISON STREET (APPLICANT: CITY OF CORONA)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to waive the requirement of Section 15.60.080 of the Corona Municipal Code (CMC) regarding the undergrounding of existing overhead utility wires located at 225 East Harrison Street, adjacent to City Fire Station No. 2. CMC Section 15.60.080 requires overhead wires that transmit less than 34,000 volts to be relocated underground when a new building or structure is proposed, or an addition is made to an existing building or structure. The City is proposing to reconstruct City Fire Station No. 2. CMC Section 15.60.060 allows the City Council to grant a waiver from this provision if it finds that the application of this requirement would be unreasonable, impractical, and cause undue hardship to the applicant or the public.

### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council waive the requirement from [Corona Municipal Code Section 15.60.080](#) requiring the existing overhead utility wires to be placed underground located adjacent to 225 East Harrison Street.

### BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

The project site is located at 225 East Harrison Street and fronts East Harrison Street. The property contains City Fire Station No. 2, which was built in 1961. An expansion was added to the building in 1996. The operations at City Fire Station No. 2 have outgrown the existing facility. In 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was approved by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to the public health emergency and offset negative economic impacts. The City of Corona received an ARPA allocation of \$29 million to use for this purpose.

The City Council at its Fall Policy Workshop on September 29, 2021, provided direction regarding the ARPA funding allocation and recommended that \$10 million be allocated to the rebuilding of City Fire Station No. 2. ARPA funds have strict deadlines for fund appropriation and expenditures. Additionally, as a federally funded project, Fire Station No. 2 must comply with various labor compliance laws. The project is anticipated to take between 18 to 24 months for construction.

According to CMC Section 15.60.080, the rebuilding of City Fire Station No. 2 will require the existing overhead utility wires adjacent to the property, which are less than 34,000 volts, to be placed underground. The overhead wires extend beyond the boundary of the project site and connect to other power poles located east and west of the project site on E. Harrison Street. The City, as the applicant for this project, is requesting that the City Council grant a waiver from undergrounding the overhead wires adjacent to the project. If the undergrounding were to occur, overhead wires will still exist above ground on E. Harrison Street and the existing appearance of the overhead wires in the neighborhood would remain mostly unchanged. Additionally, the cost of the undergrounding of the overhead wires would be financially infeasible based on the project's scope.

**ANALYSIS:**

Corona Municipal Code Section 15.60.080 recognizes above-ground utility wires exist within the City and are considered nonconforming to the requirement of CMC Section 15.60.030. CMC Section 15.60.030 prohibits above-ground poles, wires, and associated structures, irrespective of the use or proposed use of the structure or building intended to serve. However, CMC Section 15.60.060 allows the City Council to grant a waiver to this requirement if the finding is that undergrounding the utility wires would be unreasonable, impractical, and cause undue hardship to the applicant or the public.

The staff has determined that the finding exists for the City Council to grant the waiver for the undergrounding of the above-ground utility wires for the following reasons:

- a) The overhead poles and wires will continue to remain above ground beyond the boundaries of the project site on East Harrison Street.
- b) Approximately 615 feet of underground electrical conduit would need to be installed to relocate the overhead electrical lines underground from the project frontage to Main Street, at an estimated cost of \$440,125, which was not included as part of the construction cost for the project.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

America Rescue Plan Act funds were used to pay the Utility Underground Request Waiver Request fee of \$2,013.00.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a Project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies to only Projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. There is no possibility that this action on granting a waiver from CMC Section 15.60.080, to place overhead utility lines underground will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

**PREPARED BY:** JESSICA KANG, ASSOCIATE ENGINEER

**REVIEWED BY:** JOANNE COLETTA, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Exhibit 1 – Location Map
2. Exhibit 2 – Waiver Request
3. Exhibit 3 – Overhead Utilities Street View