

Dear Friends of the Canalwalk:

Thank you for sharing your questions and concerns with design of the Canalwalk Phase II project, specifically as they relate to the utility lines along Race Street being relocated aboveground instead of being placed underground. I want to take this opportunity to clarify how and why the design of the Canalwalk reached this point, and how we could work together so that we may all take pride in the end result of this project.

As you know, while the City manages the design of the Canalwalk Phase II, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) manages its construction budget and has significant oversight over the elements that can be covered from it. It is important to note that the architectural features of a project such as this one are part of a design proposal that is continuously undergoing evaluation through various offices at MassDOT. While City planners made their best efforts to get approval for a proposal with buried utilities as part of the Canalwalk's Phase II budget, review by MassDOT determined this could not be included in it.

The cost of burying and reconnecting the utilities on Race Street between Dwight and Appleton would surpass \$1 Million. This is not a cost the HG&E is failing to cover as part of a prior commitment to the project. On the contrary, the HG&E's initial combined commitment for both Phase I and II of the Canalwalk was \$200,000, which they will significantly surpass at the completion of this project. This

is also not a cost that the City has committed to incur for the project, and while the ideal scenario would be to eliminate the hanging wires from the streetscape, it would not be responsible at this time for the City to divert that amount of resources from competing needs.

Going forward, the task before us is integrating the City's surrounding landscape, including the overhead utilities throughout Race Street, with the new Canalwalk. I would like to invite a conversation between the Friends of the Canalwalk and the Office of Planning and Economic Development to begin a dialogue about creative ways to achieving this goal. A few steps my administration has begun working on are:

1. Eliminating about half of the poles along the Canalwalk, those that are located just east of the canal fence. The utilities would be hung on new poles on the bank of the canal so as to not physically interfere with the Canalwalk.
2. Locating poles behind tree locations wherever possible and as far away from canal overlooks to reduce visual interference.
3. Discussing with the HG&E about ways in which the poles themselves can be used for creative place-making by using them as a canvas for artistic design.

I welcome the Friends of the Canalwalk's input on this project and look forward to discussing it in person. Tessa Murphy-Romboletti will be in contact soon to coordinate a meeting.

Sincerely,

Alex B. Morse