



CenterPoint Electric

URD Joint Trench Projects – Developer Guide

	URD Joint Trench – Developer Guide		Revision Number: 2025.1
	Document No.:	CNP-ES-DIST-0017	Effective Date: 9/22/2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document is intended to assist Land Developers in navigating the Joint Trench process for single-family residential projects. It outlines key expectations, easement requirements, and coordination steps necessary for successful collaboration between Developers, approved Joint Trench partners and CenterPoint Energy. The goal is to ensure compliance with easement standards and streamline utility installation throughout development.

1.2 Scope

This document provides an overview of the key steps, milestones, and approvals involved in the development process—from the initial submission of a project by the Land Developer to the URD Service Consultant, through to the pre-construction and post-construction walks. While it does not cover every possible scenario, it is designed to serve as a practical guide to help stakeholders navigate the process and achieve successful project completion.

1.3 Definitions

- **CRSF:** Competitive Retailer Selection Form
- **FEA:** Facilities Extension Agreement
- **JT:** Joint Trench
- **Landbase:** A combination of layers of data depicting natural and manmade features, providing a primary base map for GIS applications, which can include basic right-of-way and property line information.
- **LONO:** Letter of No-Objection
- **L&FS:** Land & Field Services
- **MCDF:** Master Contact Data Form
- **MUG:** Major Underground
- **OVH:** Overhead
- **REP:** Retail Electric Provider
- **UE:** Underground Easement
- **URD:** Underground Residential Distribution
- **SOL:** Service Outlet Location

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2. Service Level Agreement

Table 1 below includes the project phases leading up to construction, their milestones, timeline, and potential challenges during each stage.

Note:

Timeframes may vary due to factors such as weather conditions, workload, design changes, incomplete or inaccurate documentation, non-standard request, delays in submissions or approvals, and coordination with third-party stakeholders and agencies. Depending on the milestone and associated tasks, some may be performed concurrently, while others require completion of preceding milestones before proceeding.

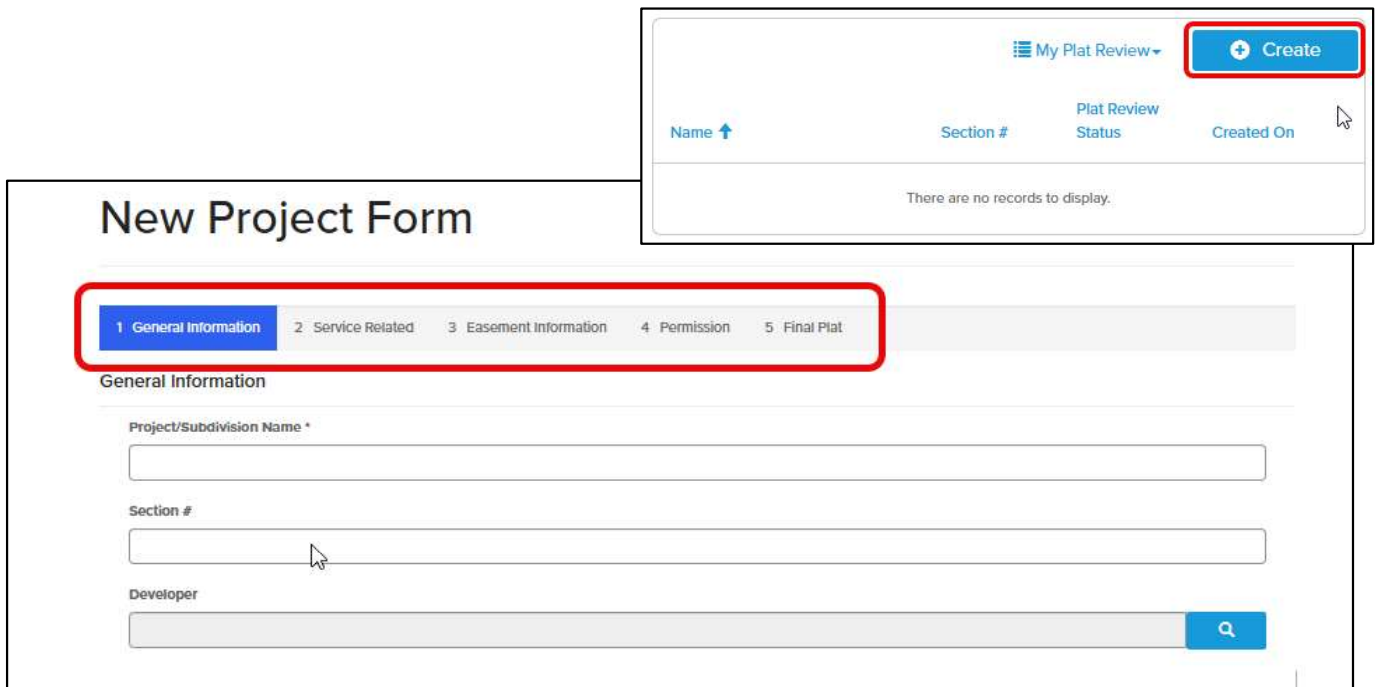
Table 1 SLA Timeline Breakdown

Phase	Milestone	Standard Timeline	Potential Challenges
Project Initiation	Plat Review	5-7 Business Days From the time of submission to the time of response from Land & Field Services (L&FS) group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incomplete/inaccurate plat data • Conflicting utility requirements • Non-standard subdivision layouts • Delayed approvals • Environmental/site constraints • 3rd party conflicts (i.e. transmission, railroad, pipelines, flood control districts)
Design Phase	Electric Layout	25 Business Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed developer acknowledgment • Wet utility conflicts • Non-standard subdivision features or Developer requests • Incomplete load/civil plans • Layout changes after design begins • Negotiating non-standard OVH or URD routes • Changing from IES to non-IES streetlight design (or vice versa)
	Gas Layout	20 Business Days	
	Cable Layout	10 Business Days	
	Telephone Layout	10 Business Days	
Document Phase	Contracts	1 Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in plat/easement recording • Incomplete or unsigned agreements • Missing/incorrect contribution payments • Inconsistent civil plans or missing street light details • Coordination gaps
	Easements	4-10 Weeks	
	Staking	2-4 Weeks	
	Work Order Approvals	2 Weeks	
Construction Phase	Pre-Construction Walk	From day of passed walk – Contractor completes construction within 42 days. 7 additional days per additional loop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site not ready • Missing permits or delayed approvals • Weather delays or material shortages • Uncoordinated utility schedules • Unexpected field conditions • Damage to existing infrastructure • Grade changes or easement grade not acceptable • Non-JT utility facilities in easement • Construction debris or material in easement • Conflicts or changes that developer failed to make CNP/ Contractor aware of

3. Project Initiation

3.1 Plat Review

- The first step for the developer is to submit a **Project Request** through the **Joint Trench Portal** by completing the **New Project Form**. The submission should include, but is not limited to, the following items:
 - Final Plat
 - Overall land master plan
 - Electronic plat drawing in .DWG format (essential for high-density developments)
 - Home size and their average square footage
 - Gas and electric requirements
 - Street lighting preferences (decorative or standard; IES or Non-IES)
 - Building pad fit (essential for high-density developments)



The screenshot displays two parts of the web application. On the right, a table titled 'My Plat Review' is shown with columns for 'Name', 'Section #', 'Plat Review Status', and 'Created On'. A 'Create' button is visible in the top right corner of this table. Below the table, it states 'There are no records to display.' On the left, the 'New Project Form' is shown with a progress bar at the top containing five steps: '1 General Information', '2 Service Related', '3 Easement Information', '4 Permission', and '5 Final Plat'. The 'General Information' step is highlighted with a red box. Below the progress bar, there are three input fields: 'Project/Subdivision Name *', 'Section #', and 'Developer'. A search icon is located at the end of the 'Developer' field.

- Once received, the Final Plat is routed to the Land & Field Services (L&FS) team for review. Their response will be provided through the Joint Trench (JT) Portal.
- The **estimated review timeline is 5 to 7 business days** from the time of submission to when the developer receives a response.

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- If the Final Plat is rejected, the Developer must make the required corrections and resubmit. **For any additional questions regarding status updates or rejection comments, please contact the Plat Review team at plat.review.tx@centerpointenergy.com.**
- If the need for a Transmission LONO requirement is identified during plat review and no other issues are present, the JT project may proceed with a temporary approval, allowing the electric design to move forward while Transmission Services completes its LONO review.

Note:

*During the design phase, if the Overhead/Underground Residential Distribution (OVH/URD) design is approved by the developer and found to be adjacent to or crossing a transmission corridor, a transmission request will be submitted for review by the URD Service Consultant. **The project cannot proceed without Transmission Service’s approval.***

- If the Final Plat is approved, the URD Consultant, the developer, and participating JT partners will be notified via email and a Project ID (JT_####) will be generated.

3.2 Master-Planned Communities Kickoff

It is recommended that all key stakeholders engage in early-stage discussions when initiating a new master-planned community. These discussions should include representatives from:

- **Electric**
- **CenterPoint Gas** *(if applicable)*
- **Planning Department** *(if applicable)*
- **Land & Field Services** *(if applicable)*

4. Design Phase

This stage of the project involves coordination with the participating Joint Trench partners – with the result being a consolidated layout posted to the Joint Trench Portal.

The order of the Design Phase is the following:

1. Electric Layout
2. Gas Layout (if needed)
3. Cable Layout
4. Telephone Layout

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4.1 Electric Layout Design

It is strongly recommended to engage with the URD Service Consultant at the beginning of the design phase.

Early coordination is essential to identify and avoid potential conflicts—such as wet utility easements, zero lot lines, aerial encroachments, or other impediments—that may prevent Joint Trench (JT) facilities and overhead (OVH) circuits from being installed along the proposed route in a free and unobstructed manner.

- **Within 2 business days** of the Project ID being created, the Service Consultant submits a request to planning engineering to review and provide feedback on a potential proposed OVH circuit route.
- Simultaneously, GIS begins digitizing the final plat into the landbase system, which has an estimated timeline of **5-7 business days**.
- Once the digitized final plat and planning request are completed, the initial electric design phase begins by the URD Service Consultant. The Service Consultant will upload the electric layout to the Joint Trench (JT) portal, which follows an estimated timeline of **25 business days**.
 - If multiple adjacent sections are being submitted simultaneously, it is critical that this information is clearly communicated upfront. The layout will be designed based on the details provided, and any changes after the design phase may require a full redesign by all Joint Trench (JT) partners—potentially resetting the project timeline and result in additional redesign cost.
 - If your community includes any commercial services—such as a lift station, water plant, wastewater treatment facility, recreation center, pump station etc. —it is the developer’s responsibility to notify the URD Service Consultant and provide the required documentation, which includes a one-line diagram and load analysis. If the plat of the commercial site is not recorded and/or requires an overhead (OVH) extension, a metes and bounds description must be submitted to facilitate service. An approved Service Outlet Location (SOL) is required.
 - Any redesign request will likely result in layout delivery delays and may trigger a customer contribution.

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4.1.1 Streetlights

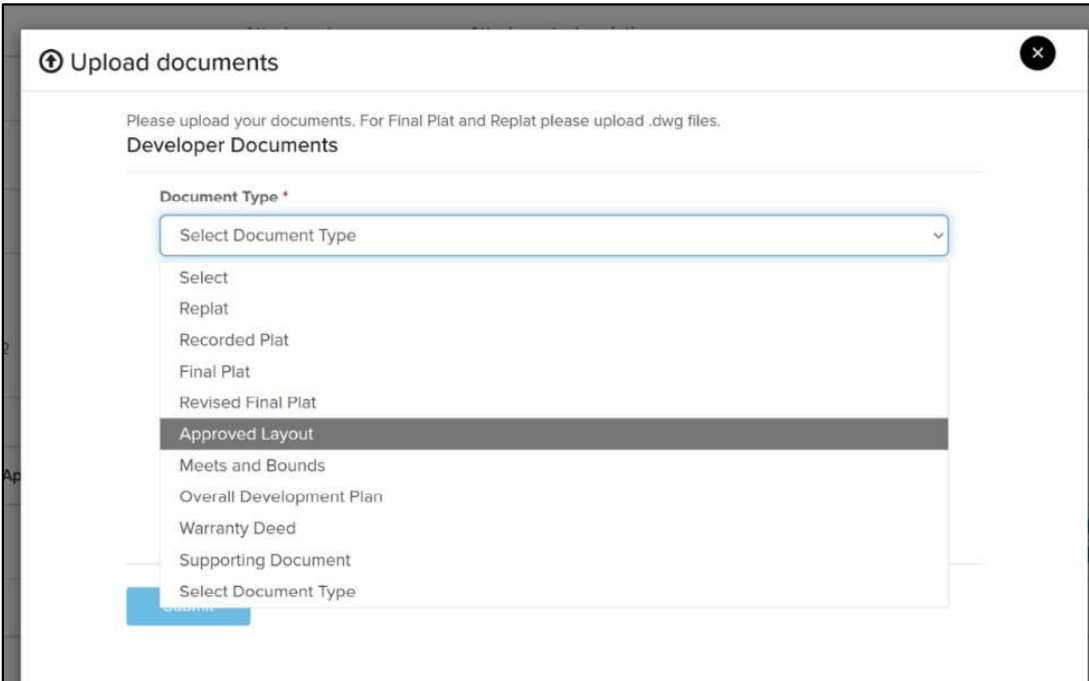
Standard streetlights located within the platted section will be designed by the URD Service Consultant. Decorative streetlights and thoroughfare lighting, however, will be designed by the Streetlight Service Consultant.

- ◆ If decorative streetlights are requested, please note that the estimated material lead time is approximately 3 to 5 months.
 - Payment must be submitted to initiate the material order and proceed with the pre-construction walk.
- ◆ For projects within the City of Houston (COH), the following process is needed for streetlights:
 - Developer sends a copy of the signed URD layout and plat with the streetlight request to the City of Houston Public Works.
 - COH Public Works designs the streetlight layout and sends streetlight layout and cost agreement to the developer.
 - Developer pays the COH per the cost agreement.

4.1.2 Developer Approval

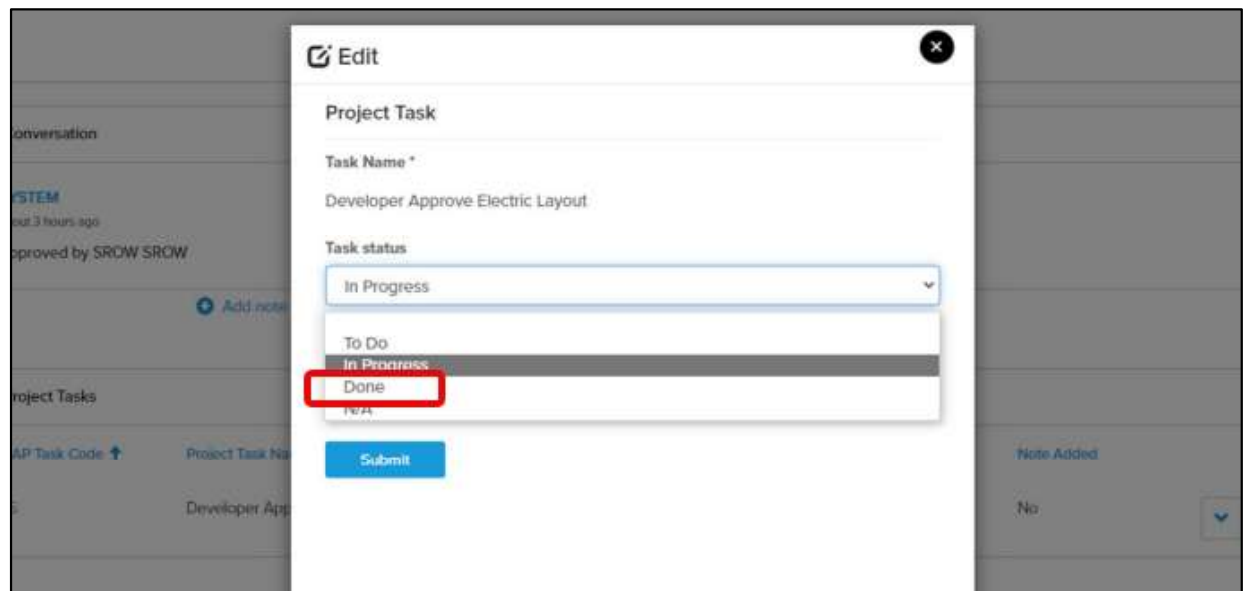
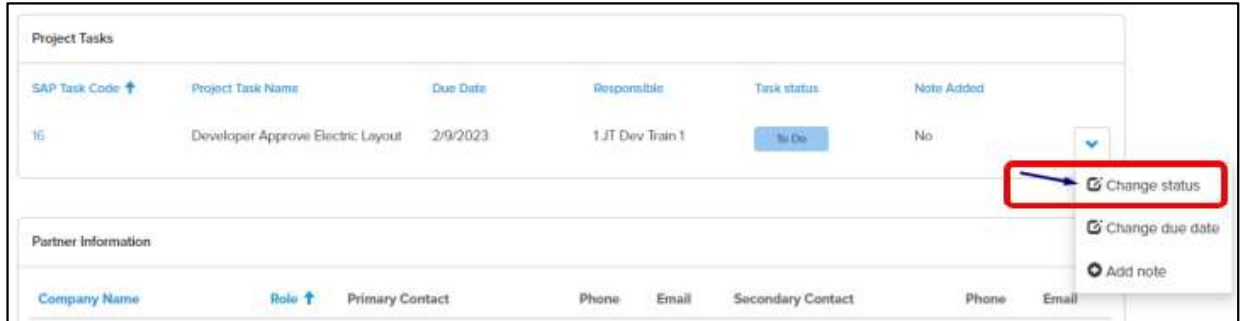
Developers are responsible for thoroughly reviewing the design and identifying any discrepancies or potential conflicts involving third-party utilities.

- ◆ The developer reviews the layout and, if approved, the developer must upload a signed layout to the JT Portal under the Developer tab.
 - Under the **Document Type** drop-down menu, select **Approved Layout**, upload the document, and then click **Submit**.



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Upload documents" with a close button in the top right. Below the title, there is a instruction: "Please upload your documents. For Final Plat and Replat please upload .dwg files." and a section header "Developer Documents". A "Document Type" dropdown menu is open, showing a list of options: "Select", "Replat", "Recorded Plat", "Final Plat", "Revised Final Plat", "Approved Layout" (which is highlighted in grey), "Meets and Bounds", "Overall Development Plan", "Warranty Deed", "Supporting Document", and "Select Document Type".

- Once uploaded, the developer clicks the assigned Project Task for **Developer Approve Electric Layout** and changes the status to **Done**.



- ◆ If the developer does not approve, the developer and the Service Consultant collaborate for a solution and possible redesign.
 - **Please be aware that the timeline will reset and will not resume until a resolution is reached.**
 - Once a solution is achieved, the developer must submit the most updated approved layout to the JT Portal.

4.2 Gas Layout

If applicable, the Service Consultant uploads the .dwg design to the JT Portal for CenterPoint Energy Gas to begin design – which is estimated to take up to **20 business days** (Addresses required).

Once completed OR if Gas is not needed, the process can move to Cable/Telephone Layout.

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4.3 Cable & Telephone Design

Cable and Telephone company designs typically require approximately 10 business days to complete, contingent on addressing being available, a developer-approved layout, and a .dwg design uploaded by the URD Service Consultant to the JT Portal. Both utilities can design their final layout independently; however, the Telecommunications company is responsible for posting the consolidated layout and can only do so once the Cable company has finalized its design.

- Cable Layout – 10 Business Days
- Telephone Layout – 10 Business Days

5. Document Phase

The Document Phase includes the preparation and processing of contracts, easements, staking, and work order approvals. Estimated timelines for each task are listed below:

Task	Timeline	Notes
Contracts	1 week	**Timeline is not dependent on any of the following tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URD Contract • MCDF and Streetlight Agreement Letter • CRSF (if applicable) • 50% Agreement (if applicable) • FEA and Invoice (if applicable) • SOL (if applicable)
Easements	4 to 10 weeks	Refer to Section 5.2 Easements for detailed requirements.
OVH Staking <i>(if applicable)</i>	2 to 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May proceed concurrently with a defined easement request. • Must wait for blanket easement to be recorded.
Work Order Approvals & Assignment	2 weeks	Refer to Section 5.4 Work Order Approvals for more information.

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5.1 Contracts

For URD contracts (Agreement for Underground Electric Service) for Electric:

- URD contracts will be uploaded to the JT portal for developer approval.
- The developer prints 3 hard copies of the URD contract, signs all three, ensures they are notarized, and sends them back to the Service Consultant through the mail, along with any required payment.
- MCDF and Streetlight Agreement Letter will be uploaded to the joint trench portal.
- If no ESI# is provided on the MCDF then the Customer Retailer Selection Form (CRSF) is emailed to the contact listed on the MCDF. This form is required to establish the paying party with the Retail Electric Provider (REP) of their choice.

5.2 Easements

Easements are mandatory for all JT projects. **Easement Information is available on the JT Portal on the [FAQ Easement Page](#).**

- After all participating Joint Trench partners have posted their designs along with the consolidated layout, the Service Consultant can submit a defined easement request to L&FS for the underground design.
- If CenterPoint Energy Gas is not involved in the project, a blanket easement request can be submitted to L&FS by the Service Consultant after the electric layout is approved.
- L&FS will review, draft and upload the defined or blanket easements to the Joint Trench Portal estimated **4 to 10 weeks**.
- The developer prints 3 hard copies of the easements, signs easements, ensures they are notarized, and mails original documents for return.
- The Service Consultant sends signed easements to L&FS for recording with the appropriate AHJ county. Timing to record varies depending on the county – it takes **7 business days on average**.
- A 30-foot all-weather access easement is required when overhead (OVH) poles are adjacent to detention or drainage areas. This requirement may also apply if the poles are not being installed within the public Right-of-Way or on a designated lot.

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- Once easements are recorded, L&FS notifies the Service Consultant.

Note:

- *The use of a blanket easement is subject to company discretion. For projects involving CenterPoint Energy Gas, a blanket easement may be requested after both the Electric and Gas Layout have been uploaded to the JT Portal.*
- *If all easements are captured on a recorded plat, Land & Field Services will need to verify – turnaround for review and confirmation is **10 business days**.*

5.3 Overhead Staking

Once easements are recorded and the Service Consultant is notified, a staking request can be submitted, if applicable.

- If Staking is not needed, Service Consultant processes the work orders for approvals (see 5.4 Work Order Approvals).
- If Staking is needed, the developer must ensure site conditions are adequate, including stakes & pins, monumentation, grading, and proposed overhead routes are clear.
 - Once the job site meets the above requirements, the Service Consultant will submit a staking request to L&FS.
 - Staking is estimated to take approximately **2 to 4 weeks** to complete by L&FS, depending on weather conditions and workload.

5.4 Work Order Approvals & Assignment

When all applicable documents—such as the recorded plat, executed contracts/layouts, permits, easements, and any associated invoices or payments—have been received, the URD Service Consultant may proceed with packaging the work orders for approval and assignment.

The approval process is estimated to take **approximately two weeks**.

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6. Construction Phase

6.1 Pre-Construction Walk

- The Service Consultant requests the pre-construction walk date dependent upon all required documentation and field conditions being met.
- The contractor schedules the date, and the Service Consultant conducts the pre-construction walk.
- If the pre-construction walk is passed, contractor calls in a survey to stake the Joint Trench facilities.
 - From day of passed walk – contractor estimates to energize a single loop within 42 business days excluding holidays, and weather events.
 - 7 additional days per additional loop.
- If the pre-construction walk fails, required fixes must be remedied and verified before another pre-construction walk request can be submitted by the Service Consultant.

6.1.1 Joint Trench Facilities

- ◆ Joint Trench (JT) facilities must be installed at a 4.5-foot offset from the property line in both perimeter and split easement configurations.

Note:

If JT facilities are not suitable for machine trenching, this may further complicate installation. Non-compliance will result in delays, additional costs, and the possibility of redesign.

6.1.2 Non-Joint Trench Partners

Non-JT partners are utility providers not participating in the Joint Trench installation. This includes third-party gas companies and other dry utility providers.

- ◆ Installation of non-JT partner facilities should occur only after JT facilities have been placed to ensure proper coordination and minimize conflicts.
- ◆ **Perimeter Easement Installation for Non-JT Partners:** Non-JT partner facilities to maintain a minimum offset of 12 feet from the property line on a perimeter easement.
- ◆ **Split Easement Configurations for Non-JT Partners:** Non-JT partner facilities to be installed on the opposite of the dividing property line from the proposed joint trench (JT) design.

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6.1.3 Pre-Construction Walk Checklist

- ◆ Property pins in & lots identified properly with stakes
- ◆ Developer responsible to bring a full-size (24" x 36") set of the water and sewer plans to the meeting.
- ◆ Subdivision section needs to have paving access
- ◆ If applicable, OVH route staked and scheduled
- ◆ Easements cleared and at final grade
- ◆ Street signs installed
- ◆ All utility and consolidated layout received
- ◆ Agreement on removing and re-installing silt fences by developer
- ◆ Proposed facilities meet the 10:1 slope requirement
- ◆ Other obstacles (pipelines, irrigations systems, construction material, etc.) identified and marked on facility layout
- ◆ All easements are construction-ready and free of obstructions (e.g., tree bores, home slabs, fences/walls, stored materials, or unsuitable trenching conditions).

6.2 Post-Construction Walk

Developer participation in a post-construction walk is optional.

- If the developer wishes to proceed, they must notify the assigned Service Consultant. The contractor will schedule the walk once the section has been energized.
- If the developer chooses not to participate, that decision must also be communicated to the Service Consultant.

6.2.1 Post-Construction Walk Checklist

- ◆ URD trench back fill completed
- ◆ URD transformers level
- ◆ URD pedestals level
- ◆ Streetlights have been installed per the approved layout, as detailed in the Street Light Placement section.
- ◆ Silt fences are up

