

How do we provide power to the system without local generation?

From the Board of Light and Power's origin in 1896 until the Sims power plant was retired in early 2020, most of the BLP's power was produced within our local distribution system. For the most part, the system was electrically an "island" operating somewhat independent of the larger regional transmission system, what many refer to as the power grid.



Following the construction of Sim's Units 1 and 2 in the early 1960s, high voltage electric lines were installed within the Grand Haven community to interconnect the power plant and our local distribution network with the regional transmission system. This allowed the Sims plant to operate "synchronously" or in parallel with, the regional system, allowing for power to be exchanged with other interconnected utilities. In other words, when the Sims power plant was overproducing (above the power needs of the locally connected "retail" customers), this power could be sold at "wholesale" to others and when Sims was producing less, or offline entirely, our local system could be supplied with power from other more remote generation sources. The reliability of the local distribution system was not then based only on the ability of local generating units to produce energy; the Sims units were always then supplemented by other generators regionally. The reliability of the system improved as a result and these interconnections allowing Sims to be run more efficiently as a base load resource. Sims Unit 3 became operational in 1983, and Units 1 and 2 were retired shortly thereafter. With Sims Unit 3 now retired these interconnections now meet the full needs of the system.

The high voltage transmission power lines that run through Grand Haven (originally built in the early 1960s) and the interconnections to the power grid to the north and south of our community are now even more critical to the reliability and operability of our system's electrical infrastructure, allowing the GHBLP to import all of the power the system needs from the wholesale power markets. These lines, and associated grid interconnections have recently been reconstructed and are now capable of supplying adequate and reliable power from the regional power grid to our system year-round.