

# CITYSCAPE

A PUBLICATION OF THE IOWA LEAGUE OF CITIES

City of Manning



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## MANNING NATURAL GAS IMPROVEMENTS

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# Manning Natural Gas Improvements Key to Community Development

Successful community and economic development is contingent upon a variety of factors and finding the right combination is a never-ending challenge for local officials. Local utility services are sometimes taken for granted, but necessary for any project.

Manning, a community of 1,500 in western Iowa, recently completed a natural gas expansion project that will enable the city and surrounding communities to better serve existing customers while boosting the capacity to take on new businesses and residents.

The additional service became a critical issue as the previous infrastructure had reached its capacity, limiting development options. The \$5.4 million project includes 24 miles of new pipeline, providing new and existing customers a reliable and cost-effective fuel source.

The project was spearheaded by Manning Municipal Utilities (MMU), which provides electric, gas, telephone,

cable TV and internet services to Manning. The gas service also extends to the surrounding communities of Templeton and Aspinwall along with rural properties. Jeremy Carroll, general manager for MMU, said that while local officials knew they were at their capacity for

natural gas services, there was hesitation over making such a big investment. “No’ is always the easy path, and I heard ‘no’ for about eight months. But, my board and our team were just not willing to let it go.”

MMU and city officials were motivated to make

improvements and expand service after being previously approached by a potential commercial developer and realizing the system could not take on a high-volume user. Carroll understood the need to collaborate with others to make the project viable and identified potential partners in the area that could use better natural gas service. This included the Farmers

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*Jeremy Carroll, general manager for MMU*

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Cooperative in Arcadia and Landus Cooperative in Templeton, both of which expressed interest in connecting to the improved service.

Carroll also worked with the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB), which has regulatory authority over investor-owned utilities. The IUB was helpful in MMU obtaining a permit to construct a new pipeline across Carroll County from a connection off the Carroll branch line of Northern Natural Gas. With the permit in hand, the project had the regulatory approval needed to move forward.

The partnerships continued as Carroll also worked closely with colleagues at Carroll County. MMU officials were reluctant to use eminent domain to install the new pipeline and planned to use existing public right-of-way, primarily county roads. Dave Paulson, Carroll County Engineer, was instrumental in helping to provide access to the county road right-of-ways that were necessary to the project.

Given the unique nature of the project and the significant cost, MMU's bond counsel and financial

advisor were also key to its success. They helped devise a plan to utilize a variety of funding sources, including \$1 million of MMU reserves and \$2.5 million from Farmers Cooperative to finance the 8 miles of the pipeline to its facility.

Carroll and the MMU board were also mindful of longtime customers and did not want to increase their rates. The project began July 7 last year, and by the end of September, they were already providing services to Farmers Cooperative. "We came in on-time and under budget, and we did it with no rate increases," Carroll said.

The result of the expansion is already being felt by the improved service to existing customers and adding new customers that could not be serviced before. Meanwhile, Carroll said the increased capacity makes operations better and safer for MMU employees. And to top it all off, the investment enabled MMU to begin a fiber project that will bring improved broadband service to area residents.

Not often can a singular project have so many benefits. The work completed in Manning and the surrounding area provides an example of what collaboration, innovation and investment can do for a community.

This type of stewardship can support the community now and well into the future. ●

*Mickey Shields is the director of membership services and may be reached at (515) 244-7282 or [mickeyshields@iowaleague.org](mailto:mickeyshields@iowaleague.org).*

*Top: Manning's natural gas pipeline expansion covers 24 miles, providing better service to area customers.*

*Right: Manning officials celebrated the natural gas line expansion with Iowa Economic Development Authority Director Debi Durham.*

