



STATE OF THE CITY

Mayor Roy D. Buol Spring 2019

Sustainable Innovation

The City of Dubuque's mission statement begins with, "Dubuque city government is progressive and financially sound with residents receiving value for their tax dollars and achieving goals through partnerships."

Following the City Council's recent adoption of the operating and capital improvement budgets for the next fiscal year, I wanted this spring State of the City column to share news on some partnerships that are yielding important results for our community.

First, "**Sustainable Innovations**" is the name of a collaborative effort between Greater Dubuque Development Corporation (GDDC) and the City of Dubuque. Its purpose is to create, foster, and prioritize the implementation of best practices and opportunities to improve the sustainability and resiliency of the Dubuque area for continued economic growth. These efforts are yielding real results and I want to focus on two examples.

Biogas Conversion Projects

The excess biogas produced at the City's wastewater treatment facility, the Water & Resource Recovery Center on Julien Dubuque Dr., is now being captured, treated, and converted to renewable natural gas, injected into Black Hills Energy's pipeline, and is used as a low carbon vehicle fuel. It's a technically complicated process made possible through a partnership, facilitated by GDDC, between the City, BioResource Development, Black Hills Energy, and N1 Energy.

This project went live in February last year and is generating annual lease revenue of \$10,000 and 5 percent of biogas sales gross revenues for the City. All capital and operational costs of the project are covered by the private sector.

A similar project is under construction at the Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency's (DMASWA) Landfill, which is jointly managed by the City and Dubuque County. This project is a partnership between the DMASWA, Trillium, and Black Hills Energy and, like the WRRC biogas project, is utilizing technology produced by Unison Solutions of Dubuque.

Biogas produced at the landfill will be captured and converted to approximately 1.5 million gallons of renewable natural gas annually. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, this project is expected to reduce the landfill's operating costs by \$68,000 annually, provide annual lease revenues of \$20,000 and approximately \$300,000 of additional revenue each year (6 percent of all gross revenues from biogas sales).

Like the WRRC project, all capital costs associated with the project are covered by the private sector partners. It is expected to be operational in December 2019.

Broadband Expansion

The City Council's vision for Dubuque includes "a strong diverse economy and expanding connectivity." "Connectivity" includes transportation but also broadband internet access. To help achieve this vision, the City partnered with GDDC in 2015 on a broadband acceleration initiative to improve Dubuque's broadband connectivity and reduce the cost and time needed for new technology and broadband investment in Dubuque. The initiative also seeks to lower costs and improve broadband access for our businesses and residents.

After an initial analysis, it was determined Dubuque was "average to good" for a community its size, but not competitive with the major commercial centers with which Dubuque now competes. Early efforts included infrastructure sharing and capacity collaborations with existing and new broadband providers, while more recent work has included "arterial" networks to improve capacity and reach and consumer-facing systems.

This year we will see a rapid increase in collaborations to bring fiber-to-the-home (FTTH), helping to extend these broadband improvements and choice to our citizens and improve capacity for under-served and at-risk populations.

Since this initiative began in 2015, Dubuque has seen the number of active broadband carriers operating in the city increase from two to 10, a 300 percent increase in miles of conduit available for service collaborations, and a 400 percent increase in the miles of fiber in service. These efforts are clearly moving broadband in Dubuque from a community and business "negative" to a "positive."

Much of this expansion is due, in part, to the City's pioneering use of "Master Licensing Agreements" and "Master Shared Service Agreements," which are allowing the public and private sectors to move faster to keep up with the pace of change and growing demand for connectivity.

Additionally, the broadband expansion initiative's comprehensive approach included a review and revision of all City communication regulations. The goal was to not only update local regulations to recognize changing technologies, but to assure that only those regulations that were still needed were kept and that they would form the basis for a reasonable, flexible, timely, and easy-to-use process for industry partners and consumers.

The revised regulations were adopted by the City Council in August 2017 and are creating increased revenue and cost-sharing opportunities for the City.

Public/private partnerships are the foundation for our community's progress and they will continue to be critical to Dubuque's path toward becoming an equitable, sustainable city. ☰