

Burlingame Invests in Their Wastewater System and Becomes Kansas' 2011 Earth Day Project



Burlingame, KS recently embarked on an improvement of the city's wastewater system. On "Earth Day", April 22, 2011, USDA Rural Development recognized the city for investing in its future and partnering with USDA to improve the city's sewer system. Earth Day was created forty-one years ago, when a small group of dedicated citizens decided to take action to make their local communities cleaner and healthier.

The city of Burlingame, once known as Council City, is located southwest of Topeka. U.S. Highway 56 enters town from the south and east and Kansas Highway 31 enters from the west and they all meet in the center of town. You may also take the scenic route from Topeka by driving straight south on Auburn Road. With a population of 934, Burlingame is tucked away in northern Osage County. The city is loaded with unique history. Founded in 1854, Burlingame is the oldest surviving city in the county. At first it was assumed to be the county seat. And quite interestingly when it was decided that a permanent county seat was needed, a "local war" ensued between competing cities. Both Burlingame and Lyndon competed fiercely including attempts to steal the county records and hold them as "hostage". Serving as the first link for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe



Council Member Rosie Parker, City Clerk Patti Gilbert, Mayor Ray Hovestadt, Council Members Vikki Demars, Carolyn Strohm and Carolyn Lee admire the planting of a Shumard Oak tree in recognition of "Earth Day 2011."

Railroad from Topeka in 1869, the depot passengers from the railway connected with the Overland Stage Coach on the Santa Fe Trail. As people drive into Burlingame from the east, they go through an underpass. This is the only place in the United States "Where the rail meets trail." The main street of Burlingame (Santa Fe Avenue) is wide enough to park three cars wide, angled parking on the sides and parking in the middle. The streets were built wide enough for an oxen team to be able to make a u-turn. You can still view the ruts of the trail west of the city leading on to "the great west".

There is a future!

It's important that we all think about what we can do to help protect the environment for future generations. That is exactly what the city of Burlingame has set out to do. In the 1990's while the city was working on the water distribution upgrade, the crew would keep encountering problems with the sewer collection system. For approximately ten years, residents would call in when the area experienced heavy rainstorms and report "manhole covers are floating in the street!" During this time, a subdivision consisting of eight homes was also constructed in Burlingame.



EmCon, Inc. was the contractor on the Burlingame project.

“The sanitary sewer system was old; most of the system was installed in 1913. Tree roots were a major problem, collapsing some of the sewer lines and some (lines) were just gone,” says City Clerk Patti Gilbert.

During that ten-year time period, the city had two very costly insurance claims due to sewage backup. One of the claims consisted of “the city literally replacing an entire trailer home”, Gilbert reported. When opening a sewer line the contractor came down the hill, rather than going up. The result? An entire basement filled with raw sewage.

There are approximately 102 manholes in the system; the manholes in Burlingame are a combination of brick or precast concrete. Fifty-five of the manholes are precast concrete. Two of the manholes have a concrete repaired base with a brick upper half, making them somewhat subject to collapsing. Seven flush manholes are no longer functional.

Beginning in 2003, with the second phase of the water system total rehabilitation project underway, the city started on Phase II of the sewer system total rehabilitation. Working with Charlie Schwindamann, Wastewater Tech for the Kansas Rural Water Association, the city smoke-tested the system and found numerous

problems. A follow-up report by Charlie noted the following: “A total of 123 inflow and infiltration (I&I) problems, including nineteen cleanouts, fourteen manhole leaks, twelve structures had smoke inside, nineteen mainline leaks, forty-eight service lines that were faulty and eleven other problems. There were so many problems it is hard to pinpoint

just one or two as the biggest contributors to the I&I issues.

The project consultant, Brian Kingsley with BG Consultants, Inc., Lawrence, offered these comments: “BG is proud to have assisted the city in this system wide sanitary sewer rehabilitation project. With a multi-phase project approach we were able to help the city achieve maximize grant

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This photo shows a new manhole.



This photo vividly demonstrates the effects of excessive inflow and infiltration during a heavy rain event.

The funding assistance from USDA has made it possible for the citizens of Burlingame to assure their children that they are leaving this rural area in a healthier shape for tomorrow.

dollars available to the city while minimizing sewer system rate increases. The city experiences excessive inflow and infiltration, which causes undue stress on the pump station and treatment facility.”

Phase I of the project includes TV inspection, interceptor sewer replacement, pump station replacement and upgrades to the treatment. Phase I is currently under construction. EmCon, Inc., Berryton, KS is the contractor.


Mayor Ray Hovestadt offered these remarks: “Partnering with USDA Rural Development has helped make all this happen.” Additionally, he noted that, “Dan Fischer, USDA Rural Development Specialist from the Manhattan office has been with us every step of the way. Without USDA our projects would not have been possible. The funding assistance from USDA has made it possible for the citizens of Burlingame to assure their

children that they are leaving this rural area in a healthier shape for tomorrow.”

USDA Rural Development Manhattan Area Director Philip Neary comments, “Every day we face serious challenges to our nation’s resources, and USDA Rural Development can assist communities in confronting these challenges. USDA Rural Development recently announced fifty-three projects that will improve water and wastewater infrastructure and energy efficiency in rural communities.”

Funding for Phase 1 consists of an \$890,000 loan through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds by USDA Rural Development, as well as a \$500,000 Community Block Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce.

“Phase II includes rehabilitation of the sanitary sewer collection system with manhole rehabilitation and replacement, full and partial sewer line replacements and lining of sanitary sewer mains,” says consultant Kingsley. Phase II will be federally funded with a \$1.65 million loan and \$550,000 grant. A \$500,000 Community Block grant is available for the project. The total cost to the state and federal government is providing the city of Burlingame to upgrade its sewer system is \$4.09 million.



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Representatives of the city of Burlingame, their consultants, and USDA Rural Development staff pose for this photo on “Earth Day,” April 22, 2011. State Representative Willie Prescott (second from left) also attended.

What about rates?

A town with this much investment likely has rate increases. What’s the impact on rates at Burlingame? Clerk Gilbert sums them up in one word: “Cheap!” Until January, 2010, the rates that had been in effect since 1996 included a base rate of \$10.17 with use of 2,000 gallons of water and \$3 per 1,000 gallons on additional use.” Burlingame has always had a base sewer rate; rates are based on water usage. To be able to obtain state and federal funding, Burlingame increased the sewer rates two times. City Clerk Gilbert reports, “In 1993, South Park, a fifty-unit residential housing development was added to the city. Due to billing oversight, seven of the homes were never billed for sewer utilities until 2010.” Gilbert feels most of Burlingame citizens have been positive about the needed improvements and rate increases. She added “It’s challenging to hang on to a small town when cities start to lose their utilities. She credits the “city team” for the future of Burlingame. One more rate increase will need to be implemented before the sewer project is complete. “That increase will be painful,” Gilbert says. “It comes at a time when the cost of living is high, but the city still needs to make the increase to be able to pay for the much needed improvements and set aside monies in reserves for future improvements.”

Kim Bomberger, Kansas Forestry Department, was on hand to help the Burlingame officials plant a “Shumard

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.”

Oak” tree at the city park in honor of Earth Day 2011. Bomberger demonstrated the techniques for properly planting a tree, how to care for the tree after planting, etc. She also answered questions from the group that gathered for the

celebration. Burlingame’s Mayor Ray Hovestadt wrapped up the celebration by quoting a Greek proverb: “A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.”

Rita Clary has worked for KRWA since June 2009. She assists with KanCap and other training and provides assistance with funding applications for cities and RWDs. She previously worked for eleven years in municipal government at the city of Troy, KS where she was a certified EMT, served as Ambulance Director and supervised the volunteer staff.





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