

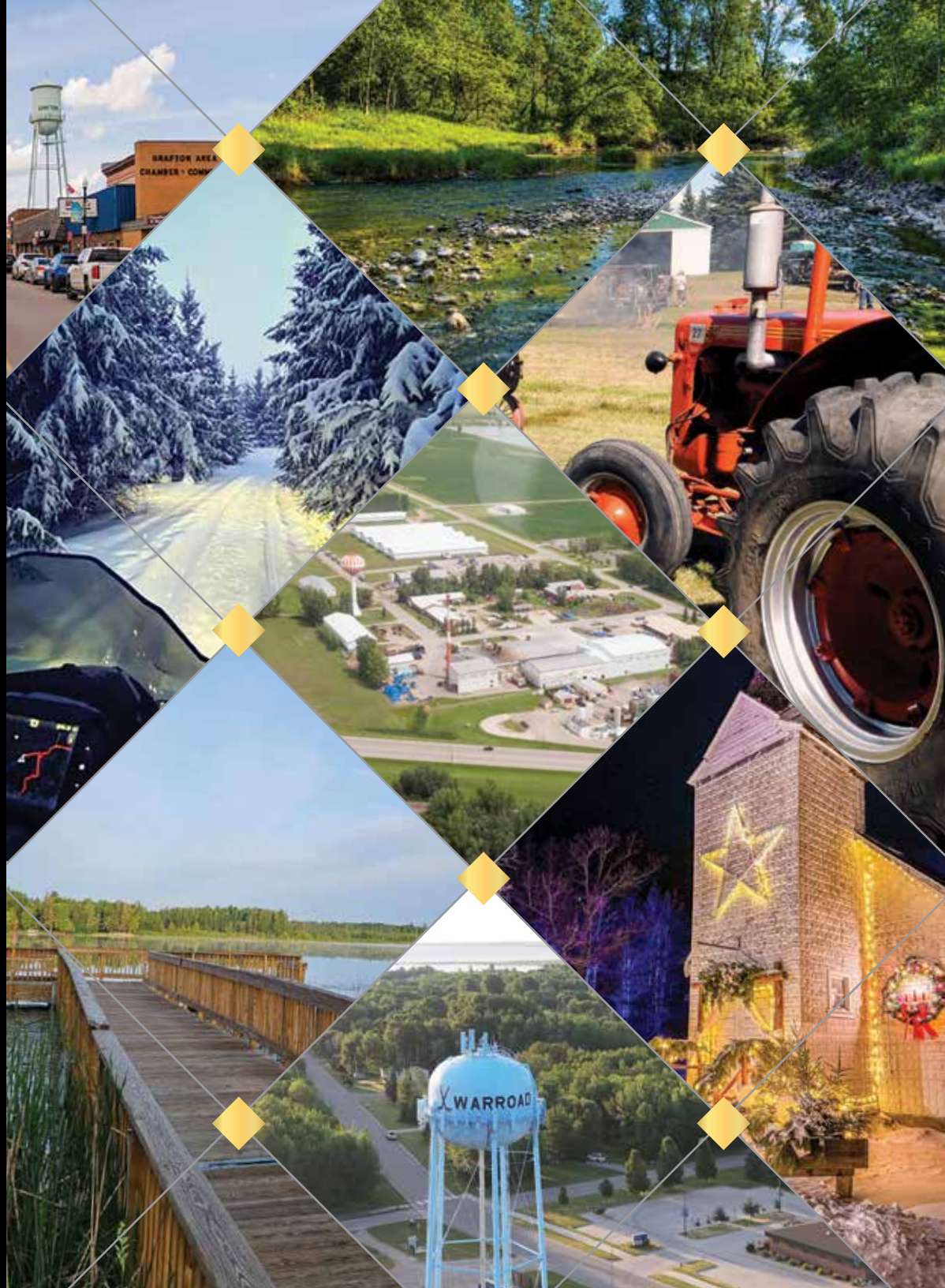
50A

YEARS

1976-2026

Northern Municipal
POWER AGENCY

Energizing Generations



50A
YEARS

1976-2026

**Northern Municipal
POWER AGENCY**

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Northern Municipal Power Agency: Powering People and Communities for 50 Years

Founded on December 1, 1976, Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) is the wholesale energy supplier for 12 municipally owned electric utilities in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. Its member communities are Bagley, Baudette, Fosston, Halstad, Hawley, Roseau, Stephen, Thief River Falls, Warren, and Warroad in Minnesota, and Grafton and Park River in North Dakota. Each community is represented on the NMPA Board of Directors, ensuring that member utilities have a direct voice in the agency's governance.

NMPA was created to help its member communities secure a reliable, economical, and long-term supply of electricity while preserving the local ownership and control that define public power.

A major milestone came in 1981, when two regional utilities decided they would be stronger together. NMPA had been seeking a long-term power supply option, and Minnkota Power Cooperative was looking for access to capital to complete the Coyote Station, which was under construction at the time. As a result of the partnership, NMPA acquired Minnkota's 30 percent ownership interest in the 427,000-kilowatt Coyote Station near Beulah, North Dakota. The agency also acquired a load-ratio share, approximately 15 percent, of Minnkota's transmission system. These investments established the foundation of the long-term NMPA-Minnkota partnership.

Under a Power Supply Coordination Agreement (PSCA), NMPA retains Minnkota to serve as its operating agent and markets the capacity and energy from Coyote Station that is not required by

NMPA members. This relationship allows NMPA to combine its ownership of generation and transmission resources with Minnkota's operating capabilities and regional infrastructure.

The PSCA allows NMPA to operate with a lean organizational structure from its headquarters in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. The model allows NMPA to stay small and efficient, avoiding duplication of responsibilities and positions.

NMPA's business model is based on shared resources and economies of scale. The agency supplies wholesale power to its member utilities, while each participating city owns and operates its local distribution system and maintains responsibility for serving its customers.

Over the past 50 years, NMPA has provided its member communities with access to reliable generation, transmission resources, and regional expertise while enabling them to retain local utility ownership and decision-making.

Today, NMPA continues to operate on the same core principles that led to its formation in 1976: local control, shared resources, long-term planning, and reliable public power.





1976-2026

**Northern Municipal
POWER AGENCY**

50 Years of Public Power Partnership

Twelve communities. One enduring commitment to reliable, affordable, locally controlled power.

In 1976, leaders from 12 municipal utilities in northwestern Minnesota and northeastern North Dakota chose to do something bold: work together to secure their communities' long-term energy future.

Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) was founded by its member communities. As NMPA Chief Financial Officer and Secretary-Treasurer Dalene Monsebroten explained, "The agency would not exist if it weren't for all of those cities coming together. We weren't created and then went looking for members. The members created the agency."

At the time, the cities faced a common challenge. Many generated some of their own electricity, purchased power from neighboring cooperatives, or received allocations from the Western Area Power Administration, but those resources were not sufficient to meet their growing needs. They wanted a reliable and economical long-term supply and more control over the decisions that would shape their futures.

The path was neither simple nor quick. Joint action agencies were new to Minnesota, and the tools for bringing people together were far different than they are today. Monsebroten points to the time, effort, and persistence required of city leaders. NMPA CEO Jasper

Schneider sees the same defining qualities in their work: "It took vision, courage, and foresight to bring 12 cities together and recognize that they were stronger together than they were individually." Their work made NMPA Minnesota's first joint action agency and laid the foundation for five decades of service.

That foundation became even stronger in 1981, when NMPA acquired a 30 percent share of the Coyote Station near Beulah, North Dakota, and a load-ratio share of the Minnkota Power Cooperative transmission system. The communities made a consequential, long-term investment in the generation and transmission resources needed to serve their citizens. They also entered a power-supply partnership with Minnkota that remains central to NMPA's operations.

For NMPA Board President Lucas Spaeth, the significance of those decisions is clear. "In 1976, you had 12 cities that decided they wanted to be part of something bigger," he said. Their shared investment in Coyote Station, transmission, and other power resources gave the communities strength they could not have achieved independently.



Stronger Together

The member communities vary widely in size, resources, and local needs. Yet each has representation on the NMPA Board of Directors, and each shares the same fundamental objective: reliable electricity at an affordable cost.

Chris West, NMPA board vice president and mayor of Grafton, described the agency's defining quality in one word: resilience. "What stands out to me about NMPA's 50th anniversary is resilience," he said. "There have been challenges and different opportunities, but cohesively, we stick together." Through changing board membership, industry challenges, and new opportunities, the communities remained cohesive because they continued to pursue the same goal.

Former General Manager Darryl Tveitbakk put it another way: "There's always been a recognition that we're all in this canoe paddling together."

That commitment is visible beyond the boardroom. Utility employees and community leaders exchange knowledge, call on one another for help, and learn from communities with different systems and resources. Spaeth, who represents Halstad, points to the value that these relationships provide for smaller cities. A colleague in a larger community may have different budget and operating needs, but the line departments can still share expertise and solve problems together.

NMPA's partnership with Minnkota adds another dimension. Municipal utilities and rural electric cooperatives were not always viewed as natural allies. Yet the two organizations recognized that their service territories, generating resources,

and transmission needs created opportunities for cooperation. Minnkota serves as NMPA's operating agent, allowing the agency to remain lean while drawing on broader operational capabilities and expertise.

Schneider calls the agency "small but mighty." Its strength, he said, comes from a network of partnerships—with Minnkota, Coyote Station's co-owners, engineering and financial firms, legal and rate advisors, and state and national public power organizations. By combining local accountability with shared expertise and economies of scale, NMPA provides a level of service that would be difficult for communities to replicate individually.

Reliability Built Through Cooperation

The value of those relationships becomes most apparent when something goes wrong.

Tveitbakk recalls severe storms that damaged a major transmission line carrying energy east from Coyote Station. When one structure fell, others could follow like dominoes. Rebuilding portions of the line with stronger structures required significant investment, technical expertise, and a clear focus on reliability.





Another major test came when a turbine failure took Coyote Station offline for more than a year. With the original manufacturer no longer in business, replacement components had to be recreated. NMPA, Minnkota, Otter Tail Power, and specialized engineers and technicians worked toward the same goal: Return the plant to service. Meanwhile, the broader power-supply partnership provided the backup needed to continue serving NMPA communities.

West said the experience reinforced why redundancy and trust matter. Even if a power plant is unavailable, homes and businesses expect the lights to come on. The coordination that customers rarely see is what makes dependable service possible.

Powering Community Vitality

The full impact of public power is not measured at the meter, but at the community level.

NMPA's members own their local electric utilities and answer to the people they serve. Tveitbakk captured the distinction directly: "Public power means power that is owned, operated, and controlled by the people it serves. It's locally controlled, and that's extremely important." These utilities are not operated to maximize returns for outside shareholders. Local employees provide the service, and utility margins remain in the community, helping support public services, strengthen municipal budgets, and keep the local tax burden down.

In Grafton, West noted, the municipal utility provides both reliable service and revenue that helps offset other city costs. Monsebroten sees similar benefits across the membership: local jobs, competitive rates, civic pride, and resources that can be reinvested to meet community needs.

Reliable, competitively priced electricity also supports economic development. Tveitbakk points to the manufacturers and major employers operating in NMPA communities. Businesses can locate in many places; dependable power and reasonable operating costs help rural communities compete, retain industry, and create opportunity.

For Schneider, public power represents “communities at their best”—places willing to bet on themselves, control essential infrastructure, and reinvest in their own future. Electricity powers schools, hospitals, businesses, and homes, but its impact reaches farther than that: It helps make community life possible.

A Legacy Carried Forward

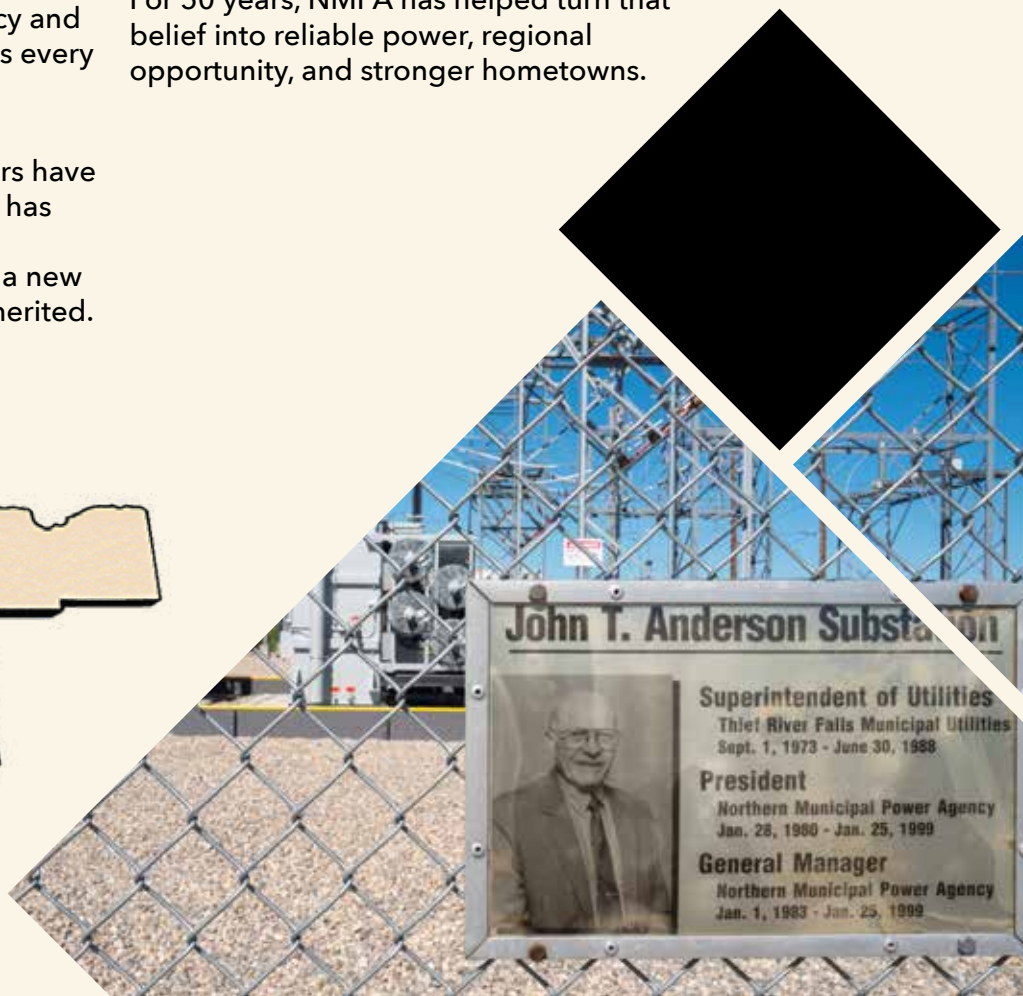
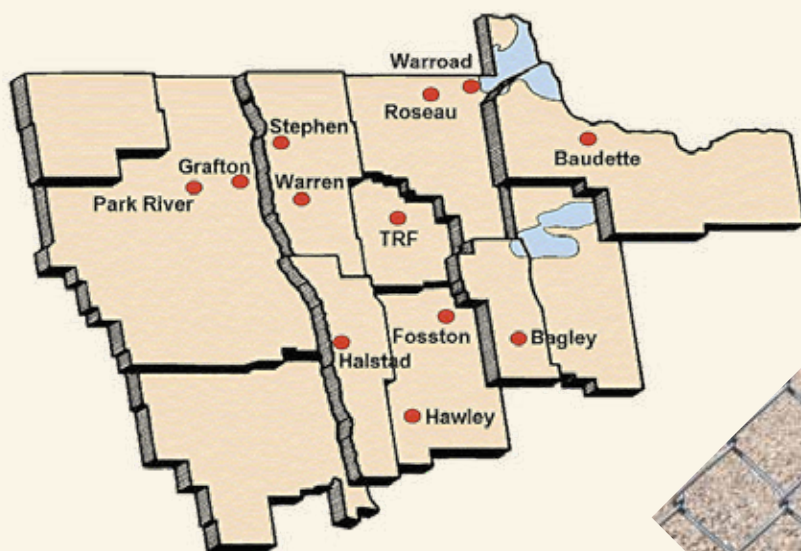
NMPA's 50th anniversary honors the people who first saw the need and acted on it, including John T. Anderson and the many city officials, board members, advisors, and utility professionals who helped form the agency and secure its long-term power supply. It also recognizes every director and employee who has helped sustain the partnership through changing times.

That continuity matters. Only three general managers have led NMPA during its first half-century. Monsebroten has served the agency for more than 30 years, carrying forward knowledge of its beginnings while helping a new generation understand the responsibilities it has inherited.

The enduring lesson is straightforward: The communities are better together. Their partnership has survived because it is rooted in common purpose, local accountability, and a willingness to make decisions for more than one city or one moment in time.

“NMPA matters because the people in our communities matter,” Monsebroten said. “The people in every town we provide power to—and all of their dreams—matter. We’re a very small rural area, but we have some amazing things, and I think their utility is a huge part of the reason.”

For 50 years, NMPA has helped turn that belief into reliable power, regional opportunity, and stronger hometowns.





Bagley Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1907

*Built on Resilience,
Connected
by Community*

In Bagley, Minnesota, life is shaped by the land and strengthened by the people who call it home. Nestled between Bemidji and Grand Forks, Bagley is a small northern Minnesota community where logging, manufacturing, agriculture, and outdoor recreation come together to define both the economy and the lifestyle.

"It's a small community in northern Minnesota," said Lyle Mathison, City Clerk-Treasurer. "We have a lot of logging and manufacturing, and then fishing, hunting, and tourism that comes with that."

That mix creates a steady rhythm. Summers bring anglers and campers, fall draws hunters, and year-round industries and surrounding farmland provide stability. Just as important, Bagley is a place where people know each other and community ties run deep.

A Lake at the Center

At the heart of Bagley is Lake Lomond, a defining feature that offers both recreation and connection.

The lake and adjacent city park include more than 40 RV sites, creating a welcoming hub for visitors and residents alike.

"We have a lake right in the middle of town," Mathison said. "It brings in a lot of families from out of town, and they use the local businesses here when they're staying."

From May through September, the 42-site campground is filled with families, travelers, and outdoor enthusiasts. Weekends are especially busy, bringing new energy into the community and supporting local businesses.

Investing in Infrastructure, Planning for the Future

In recent years, Bagley has completed one of its most significant infrastructure investments: a multiyear water, sewer, and street improvement project.

"It's been going on for about six years," said Bill Masterson, Public Utilities Superintendent. "We've done over 40 blocks of water and sewer upgrades, and all the streets got new pavement."

The project totaled approximately \$16.5 million, supported in part by \$7 million in grant funding—an investment that will strengthen the city's foundation for years to come.

It also sparked a moment of local pride. When the city couldn't fund a logo on its water tower, local businesses stepped in.

"The businesses stepped up," Masterson said. "The community came up with about \$18,000 to pay for that logo. I'm proud of the way they stepped up."

With those core systems in place, Bagley is now focused on modernization. The city has committed \$250,000 annually to begin converting aging overhead power lines to underground systems, starting in residential areas.

"Our overhead is really old," Masterson said. "We're trying to get everything underground where we can manage it."

City leaders are also watching emerging technologies—from renewable energy to electric vehicle infrastructure—while balancing innovation with affordability.

Powering Daily Life

Behind the scenes, Bagley's municipal utility plays a central role in community life, providing electric, water, sewer, natural gas, internet, and cable services. Reliability is a defining strength.

"We have very few interruptions that are substantial," Masterson said. "They're so few and far between that it's hard to even remember them."

That consistency is especially important for major employers like Team Industries, a manufacturing company that supports hundreds of local jobs and relies on steady, dependable power to operate.

Through its partnership with the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA), Bagley benefits from stable rates, shared expertise, and technical support that would be difficult to maintain independently.

***"Our rates have been
really steady."
- Bill Masterson***

Strength in Partnership

In Bagley, public power is about more than keeping the lights on—it's also about local control and shared responsibility. Decisions are made close to home, with the needs of residents and businesses always front and center.

Through its connection to the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA), Bagley is part of something larger: a network of small communities working together to achieve what none could easily do alone.

"Small communities can work together to provide competitive power," Mathison said.

That collaboration brings practical benefits—stable rates, access to technical expertise, and a reliable support system when questions arise.

"It's been a good organization," Masterson said. "There are a lot of knowledgeable people... and they're willing to help."

For Bagley, partnership isn't just a structure—it's also a mindset. It's how a small community stays strong, adaptable, and ready for whatever comes next.

Baudette

Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1906

Where Resilience Meets the River

In Baudette, place matters.

Set along the banks of the Rainy River and just minutes from Lake of the Woods, Baudette is defined in part by its setting—northern, scenic, and closely tied to the outdoors. But according to city leaders, what truly shapes the community is not just the landscape. It is also the people who call it home.

“Baudette is a small, welcoming northern Minnesota community with a cozy hometown feel,” said Tina Rennemo, City Administrator. “Life here moves at a pace that allows you to know your neighbors, support local businesses, and truly feel part of something bigger than yourself.”

That balance of natural beauty and close-knit community is central to Baudette’s identity. As a border town with world-class fishing, outdoor recreation, and year-round tourism, it offers opportunities that reach far beyond its size. Yet even with those advantages, Rennemo said the community’s greatest strength is its character.

“When something needs to get done, the community shows up.”

Investing in What Matters

That mindset is reflected in the way Baudette continues to invest in itself.

Rennemo said the community is proud of its ongoing focus on revitalization and infrastructure improvements that support both tourism and everyday quality of life. Local businesses continue to evolve and expand, while civic leadership remains focused on sustainable growth that preserves the character of the community.

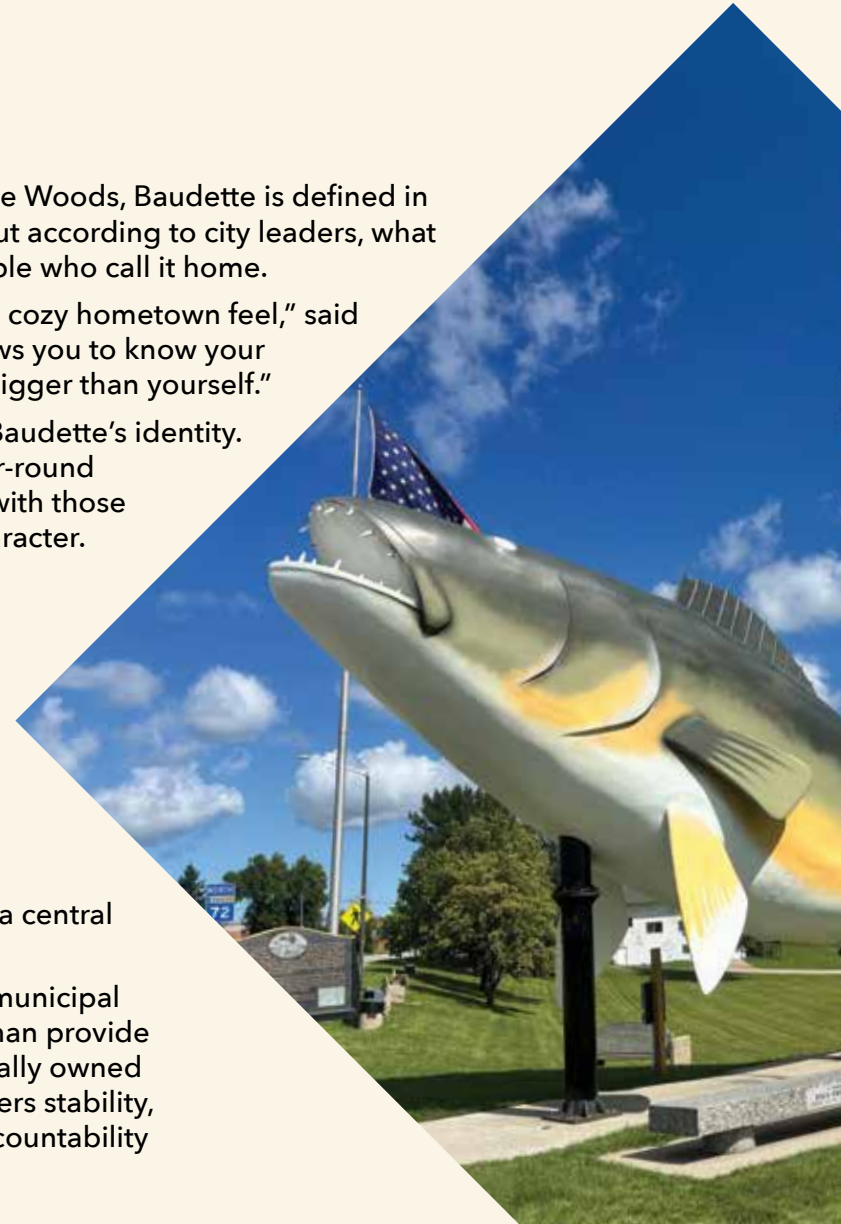
Rather than chasing change for its own sake, Baudette is building thoughtfully,

strengthening the assets that matter most to residents while supporting long-term economic stability.

Powering Daily Life

Reliable local power plays a central role in that effort.

Rennemo said Baudette’s municipal electric utility does more than provide electricity. Because it is locally owned and governed, it also delivers stability, responsive service, and accountability





that residents can see and trust. Revenues are reinvested back into the community, strengthening local priorities rather than leaving them.

That reliability supports every part of life in Baudette. Tourism and hospitality businesses, fishing resorts, manufacturing operations, healthcare facilities, and schools all depend on consistent service. For residents, it means comfort and peace of mind during long northern Minnesota winters.

The Strength of Partnership

Baudette's partnership with the Northern Municipal Power Agency has helped strengthen that foundation.

Rennemo said being part of NMPA provides "strength through partnership," offering access to reliable power resources, long-term planning expertise, regulatory guidance, and shared services that would be difficult for a small utility to manage alone.

That collaboration has helped ensure stable rates and dependable service while preserving local control. It allows Baudette to remain locally accountable while benefiting from regional knowledge and support.

Rennemo also pointed to key upgrades at the Minnkota plant as especially meaningful. Improvements that enhanced reliability during severe weather stand out because they demonstrate the value of preparation.

"Our municipal electric utility does far more than provide power – it provides stability."

- Tina Rennemo

"Moments when the lights stayed on during challenging conditions remind us of the value of careful planning and strong partnerships," she said.

Looking Ahead

Like many communities, Baudette's relationship with energy has evolved.

Rennemo said energy is now viewed as a strategic priority tied to sustainability, affordability, and long-term planning. Technology has improved efficiency and reliability, while partnerships like NMPA help communities adapt to industry changes.

Looking forward, Baudette is focused on emerging technologies, diversified energy resources, and maintaining affordability while preparing for future infrastructure needs.

Public power remains central to that approach.

"Public power means local control, accountability, and reinvestment," Rennemo said. "Our residents aren't just customers—they're stakeholders."

As NMPA celebrates 50 years, Baudette reflects on a partnership that has helped small municipal utilities remain strong, independent, and forward-thinking.

Fosston

Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1941

A Small Town That Delivers More

In Fosston, the definition of a small town goes beyond size.

It is a place where people know each other, where pride in the community is visible, and where local connections matter. And as City Administrator Cassie Heide explained, it is also a place that consistently delivers more than people expect.

"It's a small town that really has everything you need," Heide said. "You get the feeling of being part of a neighborhood and a close community, but you also have the conveniences and services you'd expect from a much larger place."

That balance—small-town connection paired with strong amenities—is part of what sets Fosston apart. Heide pointed to the pride residents take in their homes, businesses, and community as a defining characteristic.

A Culture of Steady Progress

That pride is reflected in Fosston's consistent forward momentum.

Rather than a single defining project, Heide described a pattern of steady investment. Each year, the city improves streets, upgrades utility infrastructure, and secures funding for new initiatives. At the same time, businesses expand and residents continue to invest in their homes.

"It's the overall trajectory forward that the city is on," she said. "It's not stagnant. It just continues."

One recent example is the city's industrial park and airport T-hangar project. Supported by \$5.8 million in federal funding and nearly \$1 million in state funding, the \$7.2 million project represents the largest single federal award in the city's history.

While the new pavement and hangar are visible, Heide emphasized the importance of what lies beneath.

"You can see the structures, but what you don't see is all the utility infrastructure that sets us up for the future," she said.

That long-term investment is part of a broader strategy. Much of Fosston's electric system is underground, contributing to both reliability and the clean, well-kept appearance of the community.

Reliability That Supports Growth

That infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting Fosston's economy and quality of life.

Heide said Fosston Municipal Utilities provides a full range of services—electric, natural gas, water, sewer, and more—through a system that is highly reliable and locally managed.

"When the wind is blowing and there's a storm, we're pretty well insulated," she said. "We provide very reliable service to our customers."

That reliability is especially important for local industries, for which even brief interruptions can be costly. Improvements to feeder lines and coordination with regional partners have helped strengthen service and reduce disruptions.

For businesses, that consistency builds confidence.

"It's very important for us to be able to tell that story," Heide said. "Reliable power supports everything we're trying to do."

The Strength of Partnership

Fosston's partnership with the Northern Municipal Power Agency plays a key role in maintaining that reliability.

Heide pointed to both tangible and strategic benefits, including access to funding opportunities such as electric vehicle charging infrastructure, as well as ongoing training and industry insight.

"You have a wealth of knowledge and expertise at your fingertips," she said. "You're not going it alone."

That support is especially valuable as the energy landscape continues to evolve, helping the city stay informed and prepared.

Local Control, Shared Purpose

In Fosston, the connection between the utility and the community is especially strong.

The city and its utilities operate closely together, with aligned leadership and shared goals. That structure ensures decisions reflect local priorities and that services support broader community objectives.

"It's really one and the same," Heide said. "We're all working toward the same goals."

For residents, that means a seamless experience and reinforces the idea that public power is truly local.

"Public power is your neighbors," she said. "They're the ones making sure your lights stay on and making decisions in your best interest."

Looking Ahead

As Fosston looks to the future, Heide sees both opportunity and responsibility.

Emerging technologies and increasing energy demands are shaping the next phase of the industry. At the same time, she expressed confidence in the partnerships and planning that position the city for continued success.

As NMPA celebrates 50 years, Fosston reflects on a partnership that has supported its progress and helped create a strong foundation for the future.

In Fosston, that future is being built the same way it always has been—through steady investment, local pride, and a community committed to moving forward.

"There's a lot of opportunity ahead, and we're well positioned to handle what comes next."

- Cassie Heide



Grafton

North Dakota

A Municipal Utility Since 1937

A Community That Gets Things Done

In Grafton, small-town life and forward momentum go hand in hand.

It is a community with deep agricultural roots and a historic downtown, and the kind of place where people still know each other by name. But as Community Development Director Jenny Dusek explained, Grafton is not standing still. It is a town that values its history while continuing to invest in its future.

"Grafton is a thriving and wholesome small town in northeast North Dakota," Dusek said. "People still know your name, but we're not standing still."

That balance is part of what makes Grafton distinctive. Dusek pointed to the community's location and its connection to larger regional hubs, along with its ability to offer both quality amenities and opportunity. It is large enough to support important services and recreation, she said, but still small enough that people can get involved and make a difference quickly.

Just as important is how things get done. Grafton has invested in housing, childcare, healthcare, and flood protection through strong local engagement. "When Grafton sees a need," Dusek said, "it's not just a conversation. We actually organize and build and create solutions to get those things done."

Momentum That Matters

Rather than pointing to a single project, Dusek said what stands out most right now is momentum.

"It wouldn't be just one project," she said. "What I'm most proud of is momentum."

That momentum is visible across the community. New apartments are under construction, housing developments are underway, childcare capacity has expanded, and the local healthcare system continues to grow. While these may not always be headline-grabbing announcements, they are foundational investments that support long-term success.

These efforts help employers recruit and expand while also giving families the confidence to stay. In Grafton, progress is not about one big moment—it is about steady, intentional movement forward.

Powering Confidence

Reliable local power plays a critical role in that progress.

Dusek said Grafton's municipal utility does more than deliver electricity. It also helps keep costs stable, reinvests



locally, and provides responsive service. Because decisions are made locally, the benefits stay within the community.

That reliability supports both quality of life and economic growth. "Reliability and local accountability matter," Dusek said, "especially for businesses that depend on consistent power to operate and to grow."

She described reliable electricity as something people may not notice when it works—but depend on completely when it does not. In Grafton, it supports everything from healthcare and manufacturing to local retail businesses.

"Growth requires infrastructure," Dusek said. "And power is one of the most foundational pieces to that equation."

The Strength of Partnership

Grafton's partnership with the Northern Municipal Power Agency has helped strengthen that foundation.

For Dusek, the value of NMPA lies in what it makes possible for a small city. The partnership supports reliable, affordable energy, provides purchasing stability, and offers access to shared expertise and long-term planning.

"I think it just makes us stronger overall," she said.

That strength allows Grafton to maintain local control while benefiting from

regional collaboration. It also helps protect residents and businesses from the kind of volatility that small communities might otherwise face.

Looking Ahead

Dusek said the role of energy in communities like Grafton has become more strategic over time. It is no longer just about keeping the lights on—it is also about long-term resilience, efficiency, and planning for the future.

Looking forward, she is most encouraged by innovation paired with practicality—finding ways to improve efficiency and sustainability while maintaining affordability. The goal is to grow responsibly, support employers, and continue attracting families to the community.

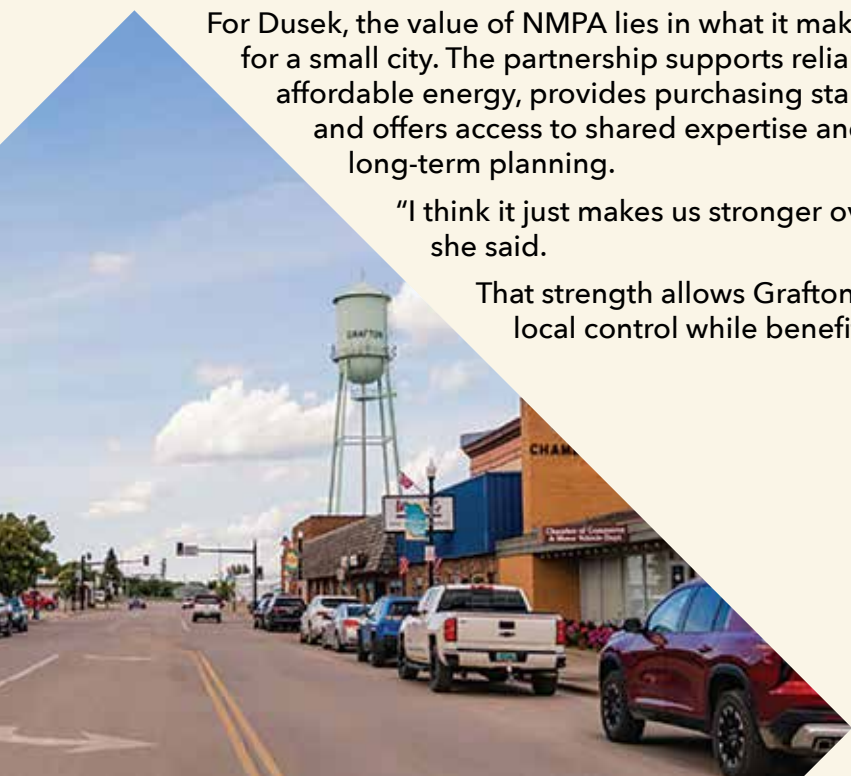
For Grafton, public power is part of that approach. "It means local control, local accountability, and local benefit," Dusek said. "We solve problems together and invest in what strengthens our future."

As NMPA celebrates 50 years, Grafton reflects on a partnership that has helped provide the stability needed to grow with confidence.

In Grafton, that confidence is showing up not in a single moment, but in steady momentum and a community that continues to get things done.

***"We're not just thinking
about five years ahead.
It's 20, 30 years ahead."***

- Jenny Dusek



Halstad Minnesota

A Community With a Can-Do Attitude

A Municipal Utility Since 1939

Tucked along the Red River in the heart of the Red River Valley, Halstad, Minnesota, is a community shaped by agriculture, strengthened by resilience, and sustained by a commitment to serving its residents. For Lucas Spaeth, Utilities Superintendent for the City of Halstad and President of the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) Board, Halstad's story is one of preparedness, partnership, and a steady, forward-looking approach.

"It's a very open, friendly community," Spaeth said. "It offers all the necessities of life and excels in community service."

Halstad is surrounded by prime farmland, and agriculture remains a key driver of the local economy. But what truly defines Halstad is its mindset. "We're small, but we have a can-do attitude," Spaeth said. "We're responsive to local needs and always looking for ways to serve the community long term."

Built to Withstand

That mindset has been tested over time, most notably during the Red River flood of 1997.

While flooding impacted much of the region, Halstad's preparation helped it weather the storm.

A ring dike system, completed in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1984, protects most of the community. Combined with strong leadership and planning, it has made a lasting difference.

"We had backup generators running for

about five days," Spaeth said. "We were one of the few communities that still had power and essential services available."

That experience still shapes expectations today. "People remember that," he said. "They want us to be ready."

Investing in the Essentials

Halstad continues to take a proactive approach to infrastructure. Rather than waiting for problems, the city is steadily reinvesting in its utility systems.

"We're replacing infrastructure that's 60 years old," Spaeth said. "These are big projects, but they're necessary."

The municipal utility plays a central role not just in delivering services, but also in maintaining a direct connection with residents.

"You can walk down the street and talk to someone about your concerns," Spaeth said. "That's the benefit of local control."

Powering Possibility Through Partnership

Halstad has been part of NMPA since 1976, a partnership that has expanded what a small city can achieve.

"NMPA has helped with infrastructure planning, rate predictability, and new opportunities like EV chargers and renewable energy credits," Spaeth said.

One of the most significant milestones came in the early 1980s, when participating communities invested in a share of the Coyote Station—something Halstad could not have done alone.

"For a small city to be involved in that is a big deal," Spaeth said.

Meeting Modern Expectations

As technology advances, expectations have changed. Reliable power is no longer a convenience—it's essential.

"Years ago, if the power went out for a few hours, people were fine," Spaeth said. "Now, even a blink can be disruptive."

From healthcare facilities and financial institutions to telecommunications providers, nearly every aspect of daily life depends on consistent power.

To meet those demands, Halstad continues to invest in both infrastructure and innovation. The city has begun using geographic information system (GIS) technology to improve system mapping, planning, and efficiency.

"Technology is really exciting," Spaeth said. "It helps us operate smarter and serve our community better."

Looking Ahead

For Spaeth, the future of Halstad depends on staying grounded in the same principles that have guided it for decades: local decision-making, strong partnerships, and a commitment to residents.

"Public power means local control," he said. "It means fair rates, transparency, and being able to respond directly to your community."

As NMPA celebrates its 50th anniversary, that collaborative model continues to prove its value.

"All the participating communities made a long-term investment years ago," Spaeth said. "Now we're working together to make the next set of decisions—ensuring the future is reliable, sustainable, and affordable."

In Halstad, that future is already taking shape—powered by experience, strengthened by partnership, and built on a community that knows how to plan ahead and move forward together.

"That partnership allows us to plan for the long term—reliable, affordable power for our community."

- Lucas Spaeth

Hawley

Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1910

Small-Town Spirit, Powered for Growth

Located along Highway 10 between Detroit Lakes and Moorhead, Hawley blends the close-knit character of a rural Minnesota community with the momentum of a growing regional hub. Known for its strong schools, thriving businesses, and deep community pride, Hawley has steadily built a reputation as a place where families, entrepreneurs, and industry can grow together.

With a population of just over 2,200 residents, Hawley offers the advantages of small-town living while remaining closely connected to the Fargo-Moorhead region. Residents point to the community's welcoming atmosphere, strong volunteer culture, and quality of life as reasons people continue to choose Hawley as home.

A Community That Continues to Grow

Over the years, Hawley has seen steady residential and commercial development. New housing, expanding businesses, and investments in infrastructure have helped to position the community for long-term success. Community leaders have consistently focused on balancing growth with the hometown values that define Hawley.

The city's location along a major transportation corridor has also helped attract development. Businesses benefit from access to regional markets, while residents enjoy the convenience of nearby urban amenities without sacrificing the slower pace and strong community connections that define life in Hawley.

One of Hawley's most unique historical claims to fame is its connection to the Viking ship Hjemkomst, which was constructed in Hawley before famously sailing to Norway in 1982. This story reflects the creativity, ambition, and determination that residents say still characterize the community today.

***"Reliable public power helps
Hawley plan ahead, support
businesses, and continue growing
while keeping decisions local."***

- Lonnie Neuner, City Administrator

More Than a Utility

Public power has been part of Hawley's story for more than a century. The Hawley Public Utilities Commission was established in 1909, making it one of the long-standing pillars of the community. Early utility leaders worked to bring electric service to homes and businesses at a time when reliable electricity was still a new concept in many rural communities.

Today, Hawley Public Utilities continues to provide reliable electric service while operating under the same core principles that guided its founders: local control, dependable service, and fair rates. The utility is governed locally through an independent commission appointed by the City Council, allowing decisions to remain closely tied to community priorities.

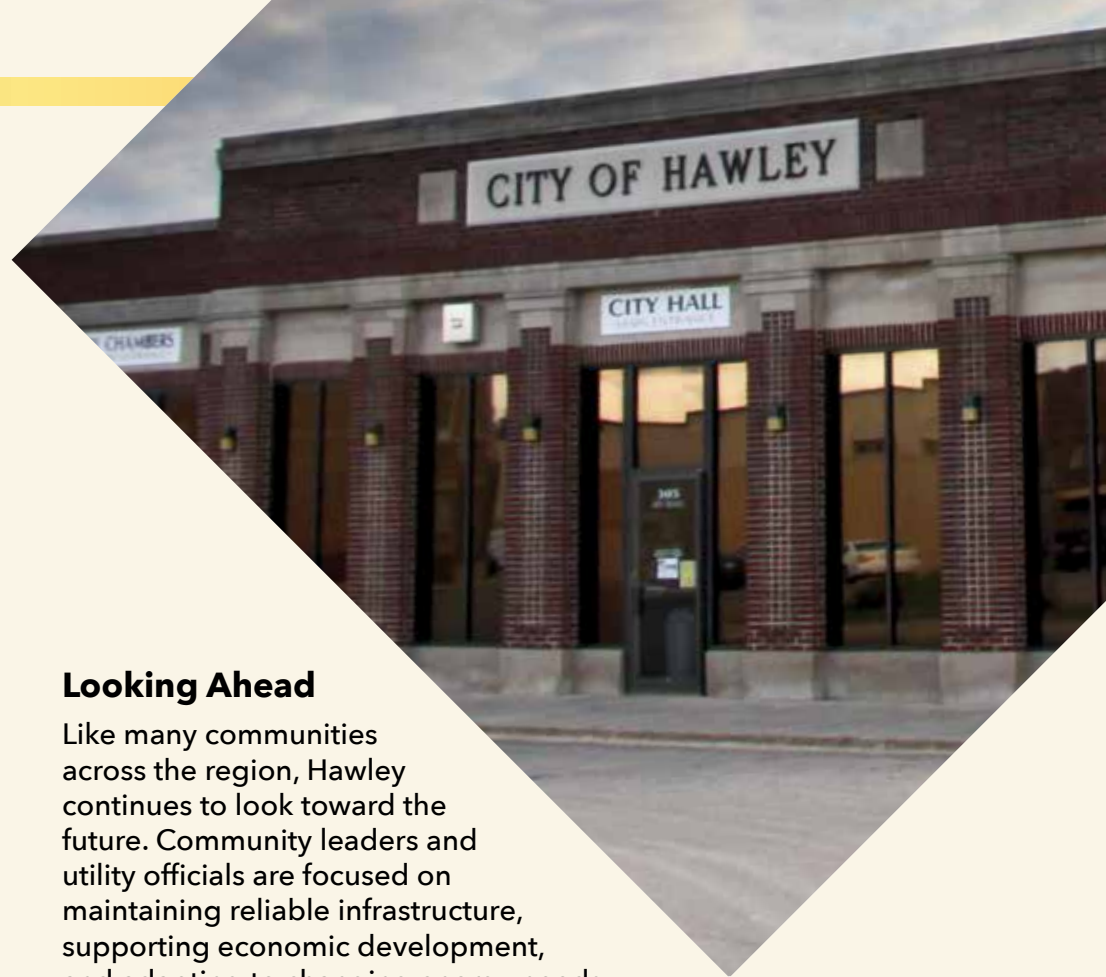
That local approach has helped Hawley adapt as the community has grown. Investments in electric infrastructure, including substation upgrades completed through its partnership with NMPA, have helped support expanding residential neighborhoods and business development.

The Value of Partnership

As a member of the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA), Hawley benefits from a regional partnership focused on delivering reliable, long-term energy solutions for municipal utilities across northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota. Founded in 1976, NMPA provides wholesale power and related services to 12 member communities.

For Hawley, that partnership means access to expertise, infrastructure investment, and long-range planning that would be difficult for a small utility to manage alone.

The relationship also reflects the broader value of public power, keeping service dependable while maintaining accountability to the people who live and work in the community.



Looking Ahead

Like many communities across the region, Hawley continues to look toward the future. Community leaders and utility officials are focused on maintaining reliable infrastructure, supporting economic development, and adapting to changing energy needs and technologies.

At the same time, residents say the community's greatest strength remains its people. Whether through schools, local businesses, civic organizations, or public service, Hawley continues to demonstrate how a small community can achieve long-term success by working together.

As NMPA celebrates 50 years of service to member communities, Hawley stands as an example of what public power partnerships can help make possible: steady growth, local decision-making, and a strong foundation for future generations.



Park River

North Dakota

A Municipal Utility Since 1908

From strong schools to expanding healthcare, Park River continues to invest in what matters, supported by a reliable public power system that keeps life moving forward.

In Park River, community pride shows up in ways both big and small.

It's in the crowds that gather for one of the largest Fourth of July parades in North Dakota. It's in the annual county fair that brings people together each fall. And it's reflected in steady investments in schools, healthcare, and the future of the town.

But some of Park River's greatest strengths are less visible, like the reliable power system that supports everything behind the scenes.

"Park River is a warm, inviting, family-friendly community," said Mayor Kyle Halvorson. "We have everything that we need and then some."

For a town its size, that's a powerful statement. Park River offers a strong school system, a hospital, clinics, pharmacies, grocery stores, and a wide range of essential services. It's a place where people choose to live—not just for convenience, but for quality of life.

Investing in the Next Generation

That commitment to quality of life is evident in recent community investments.

One of the most notable is the new Early Learning Center, located next to the school. Designed for children ages 3 and 4, the facility blends early education with daycare, meeting a critical need for families while helping prepare young learners for success.

"It's an early model of what rural education and daycare should look like throughout the state," Halvorson said.

Another major investment is on the horizon. A planned hospital expansion will bring additional services to Park

River, allowing residents to access more specialized care close to home.

Reliability That Matters

In northeastern North Dakota, reliability is essential. Harsh winters mean even short outages can have serious consequences. Stable power keeps homes safe, businesses running, and critical services—like the hospital and nursing home—operating without interruption.

"That's something I noticed right away," Halvorson said. "We don't deal with long power outages."

It also supports local industry, where advanced equipment depends on consistent, high-quality power.

Where Reliability Powers Community

***"We can reinvest into the city.
Those dollars stay here."***

- Kyle Halvorson

Park River's utility crews work around the clock to maintain that reliability. Outages are rare, and when they do happen, they are typically resolved quickly—even in the middle of the night.

The Power of Partnership

That level of service is built on long-term planning and strong partnerships.

Former Public Works Director Dennis Larson, who served the city for 35 years and now represents Park River on the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) board, has seen that impact firsthand.

Before joining NMPA, Park River relied on a mix of hydropower and purchased energy, often at higher and less predictable costs. The partnership brought greater stability and a long-term power supply.

"It's made a difference," Larson said. "We've had a pretty flat line as far as our rates."

That stability allows the city to support community priorities in meaningful ways. The utility works with local projects by helping extend infrastructure and, in some cases, offering favorable electric rates for key facilities like the hospital.

Resilience in Action

Park River's system strength was put to the test during Blizzard Hannah in 1997.

While many communities in the region were without power for days—or even weeks, Park River's longest outage lasted about 12 hours. The difference came down to system design. With power fed from two directions, the city could reroute electricity when one line failed.

"The redundancy... that's what made the difference," Halvorson said.

After restoring power locally, Park River crews went on to help neighboring communities—an effort that left a lasting impression.

Local Control, Local Impact

Because Park River operates its own municipal utility, decisions are made locally, and the benefits stay in the community.

That local control helps maintain infrastructure, support growth, and keep rates stable while ensuring the community's needs come first.

"We really work with our business community to make it easier for them to get up and going," Halvorson said.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, Park River's focus is on sustainability—maintaining what it has built while continuing to improve.

Investments in new technology, including wireless metering systems, are helping the city operate more efficiently and better serve residents.

As NMPA celebrates 50 years, Park River reflects on a partnership that has helped provide stability, reliability, and local control.

"It's a valuable partnership," Halvorson said. "Thank you for being a strong partner with the community of Park River."

In a place where people show up for each other—during celebrations, in times of need, and every day in between—that kind of reliability helps power more than just homes and businesses. It helps power the community itself.

Roseau

Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1913

A Small Town That Thinks Big

Roseau is a small town that doesn't think small.

Tucked into the far northwestern corner of Minnesota, it is a community shaped as much by necessity as by choice. Its distance from larger cities has required Roseau to build, sustain, and grow many of its own services, employers, and amenities—creating a place that functions far beyond what its size might suggest.

Community Development Coordinator Todd Peterson describes it simply as “a big, small town.”

“It's small because it's small,” Peterson said, “but it's big because it has things that most small towns don't have.”

That reality has shaped Roseau into a regional hub, with healthcare, retail, and employment opportunities that serve not only local residents, but also the broader area. It is also a place with a reputation that reaches far beyond its borders, rooted in both its deep hockey tradition and the origins of Polaris.

“There's other communities that have hockey,” Peterson said, “but not many to the level that Roseau has it.”

A Community That Takes Action

What defines Roseau most, however, is not just what it has, but also how it responds.

Peterson said one of the community's greatest strengths is its ability to take action when challenges arise. Rather than waiting for outside solutions, Roseau consistently brings together local partners to solve problems and move projects forward.

That mindset has been evident time and again, from rebuilding efforts after the flood to more recent work addressing housing needs. Peterson pointed to a new apartment development that required roughly a dozen

local partners—including banks, the city, and the Economic Development Authority—to come together to make it happen.

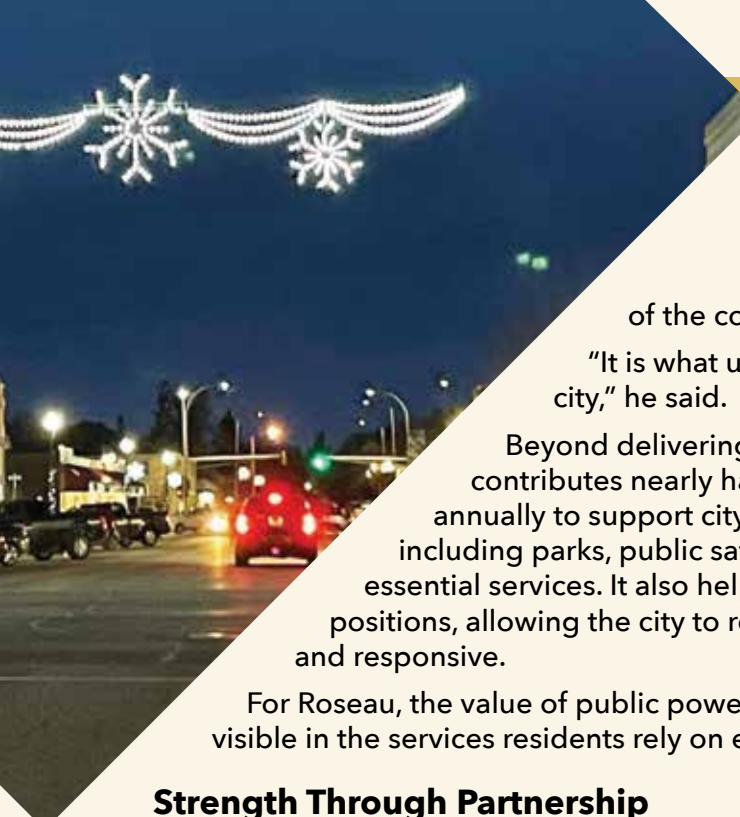
That kind of collaboration is not unusual in Roseau. It is how the community operates—by building momentum locally and staying committed until the work is done.

Powering More Than Electricity

That same practical approach extends to the city's municipal utility.

Peterson said Roseau's electric utility tends to “fly under the radar,” but its impact is significant. It provides reliable, affordable service while also supporting the broader needs





of the community.

"It is what underlies our whole city," he said.

Beyond delivering power, the utility contributes nearly half a million dollars annually to support city operations, including parks, public safety, and other essential services. It also helps fund staff positions, allowing the city to remain competitive and responsive.

For Roseau, the value of public power is not abstract—it is visible in the services residents rely on every day.

Strength Through Partnership

That foundation has been strengthened through Roseau's long-standing partnership with the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA).

Peterson said joining NMPA was a turning point. Prior to that, the city purchased power at higher retail rates, making it difficult to remain competitive and keep up with demand. Through NMPA, Roseau was able to join with other communities to access more affordable wholesale power.

"There's definitely power in numbers," he said.

That affordability has been critical in supporting local businesses, particularly in a community where location alone does not drive growth. Instead, Roseau has had

to create its own competitive advantages, starting with reliable, cost-effective utilities.

Without that support, Peterson said, the community's ability to grow would have been significantly limited.

Local Control, Lasting Impact

For Peterson, public power ultimately comes down to accountability.

In a municipal system, decisions are made locally by people who live in the community and share in its outcomes. That connection ensures that service, pricing, and long-term planning reflect the needs of residents.

That level of access and responsiveness sets municipal utilities apart and reinforces the sense that the system exists to serve the community, not the other way around.

Looking Ahead

As the energy industry enters a period of significant change, Peterson acknowledged that the future brings uncertainty, particularly around new technologies and rising costs.

Even so, Roseau's history offers a clear pattern. When faced with challenges, the community works together, adapts, and moves forward.

As NMPA celebrates 50 years, Roseau reflects on a partnership that has helped make that progress possible—providing the stability, affordability, and collaboration needed for a small town to think big.

"The owners are your neighbors. They're people you can talk to."

- Todd Peterson

Stephen Minnesota

A Small Town With Deep Roots

A Municipal Utility Since 1900

Nestled in the rich agricultural landscape of northwestern Minnesota, Stephen is a community built on resilience, relationships, and a strong sense of local pride. With a population of just under 600 residents, Stephen reflects the enduring spirit of the Red River Valley—where neighbors know one another, community involvement matters, and local services remain essential to everyday life.

Founded in the late 1800s as a railroad community, Stephen grew alongside the region's agricultural economy. The city was named after George Stephen, a Canadian Pacific Railway official, and has remained closely tied to farming and regional commerce ever since.

Today, Stephen continues to embrace its small-town identity while maintaining the infrastructure and services needed to support residents, businesses, and future generations. Community events like Stephen Days, local volunteer organizations, and active civic groups help maintain a strong sense of connection and belonging.

The Importance of Public Power

Stephen operates a municipal electric utility and is a member of the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA), a partnership that provides wholesale power and shared expertise to member communities throughout Minnesota and North Dakota.

For communities the size of Stephen, collaboration with organizations like NMPA provides important advantages. It allows the city to benefit from economies of scale and long-term planning while continuing to make decisions locally. That combination of regional cooperation and local governance is one of the defining strengths of public power.

Reliable electricity is especially important in northwestern

Minnesota, where severe winter weather and rural geography can create unique challenges. From homes and schools to agricultural operations and local businesses, dependable energy service supports both quality of life and economic stability.

The city's utility services extend beyond electricity to include natural gas, water, sewer, sanitation, and recycling—services coordinated locally through the City of Stephen.

Community Strength Through Local Leadership

Like many rural communities, Stephen has adapted over time while remaining grounded in the values that have sustained it for generations: hard work, stewardship, and community involvement.

Local leadership and volunteerism continue to play an important role in maintaining that quality of life. The community supports organizations and services ranging from volunteer emergency responders to programs that help older adults remain active and connected within the community.

Stephen's scale is part of its strength. Residents often work together to solve challenges directly, whether improving community facilities, supporting local events, or maintaining infrastructure. In a town where relationships are personal, local government and public utilities remain closely connected to the people they serve.

That connection is one reason public power continues to resonate in communities like Stephen. Decisions are made locally by people who understand the community's priorities, not by distant corporate offices.

Looking Ahead

As the energy industry evolves, communities like Stephen continue balancing tradition with innovation. Reliable

infrastructure, thoughtful planning, and strong regional partnerships position the city well for the future.

While technology and energy systems may continue to change, Stephen's core values remain remarkably consistent: service, reliability, and community connection.

As Northern Municipal Power Agency celebrates 50 years, communities like Stephen demonstrate the lasting value of public power. The story of Stephen is not one of rapid growth or flashy headlines—it is a story of steady commitment, local leadership, and neighbors working together to sustain a strong rural community.

And in northwestern Minnesota, that kind of strength still matters every day.

"Our community has always valued working together. Partnerships like NMPA help small towns remain strong while still maintaining local control and local decision-making."

- Kristen Gajeski, City Clerk



Thief River Falls

Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1901

In Thief River Falls, two rivers meet—and so do many of the qualities that define a strong community: trusted schools, major employers, accessible healthcare, and a municipal utility that is locally owned and locally accountable.

Ask residents how they would describe their hometown, and the answer is simple. “It’s a place that you feel comfortable and safe living in,” said Dale Narlock, former electric superintendent for the City of Thief River Falls. Barry Froiland, a retired city employee, values the small-town familiarity: “I go to the store, and I spend more time talking than I do shopping.”

That sense of connection shapes daily life. Young families return. Grandparents fill the stands at school activities. Neighbors know one another by name. For a town its size, Thief River Falls also offers a rare combination of assets—strong public schools, major manufacturing employers, and a working power plant and dam that doubles as a gathering place.

“The power plant dam is one of the most utilized parks we have,” said Electric Superintendent Brian Jacobson. “People are fishing there all summer long. That’s a unique thing for a city to have.”

Reliability That Fuels Growth

Beneath that quality of life is a municipal electric system designed for stability. Built with multiple substations, loop-fed lines, and the ability to reroute power, the system is engineered to keep electricity flowing.

“Thief River Falls has done an exceptional job as far as providing reliability to its customers,” Narlock said.

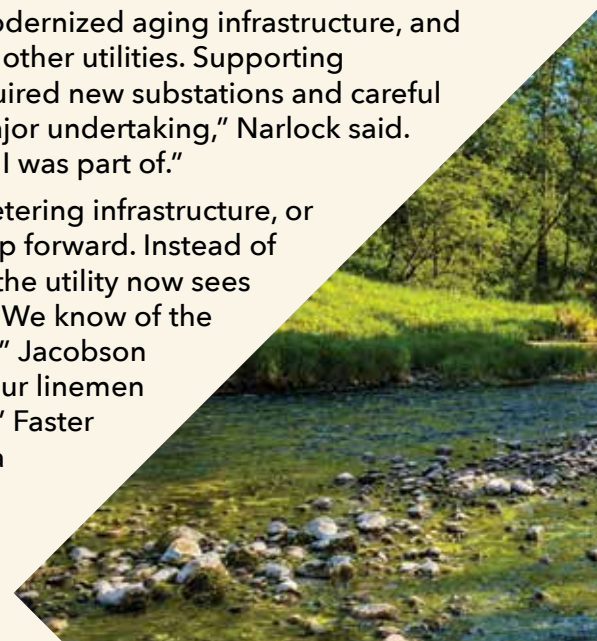
That reliability matters to major employers like DigiKey and Arctic Cat, where even brief disruptions can be costly.

Keeping outages rare protects jobs, production, and local investment.

Over time, the city has strengthened its system through major upgrades. Crews converted older overhead lines to

underground service, modernized aging infrastructure, and coordinated closely with other utilities. Supporting DigiKey’s expansion required new substations and careful planning. “That was a major undertaking,” Narlock said. “One of the finest things I was part of.”

The shift to advanced metering infrastructure, or AMI, marked another step forward. Instead of waiting for outage calls, the utility now sees disruptions in real time. “We know of the outage when it happens,” Jacobson said. “Most of the time, our linemen are already on their way.” Faster response and better data have improved service across the system.



Powered by People, Built for the Future

Local Control, Local Service

Public power in Thief River Falls is not just about infrastructure. It is also about relationships.

Customers can walk into the office and speak directly with the people who run the system. When concerns arise, staff take time to investigate. "We dig into their bill... we'll go over to their house and try to determine what is causing this," Jacobson said.

That hands-on approach builds trust. "If you give the public a voice, it goes a long way," Narlock added.

The utility also works closely with businesses and institutions to help manage demand and control costs.

Schools, manufacturers, and agricultural operations adjust usage during peak times, helping keep rates stable while maintaining reliability.

In Thief River Falls, public power means local ownership and local voice. It also means

collaboration through the Northern Municipal Power Agency, where communities of all sizes work together.

That shared approach has helped build a diversified power supply while preserving affordability and reliability. It has also created a network of communities that rely on one another for ideas, support, and solutions.

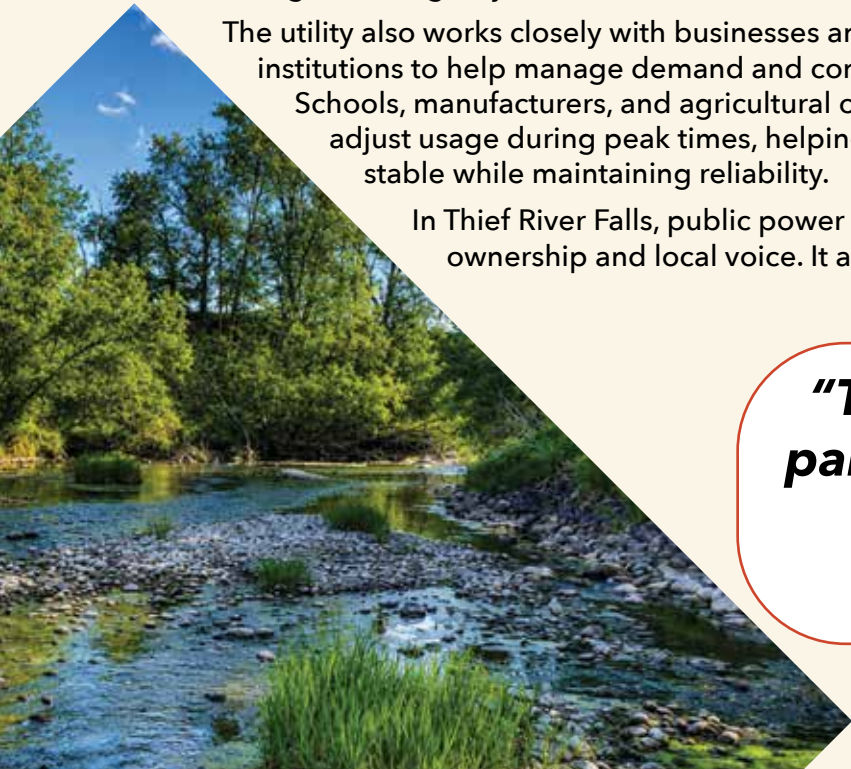
As NMPA marks 50 years, the message from Thief River Falls is one of gratitude. The leaders who helped build the agency were, as Narlock described them, "thinkers of the future." Their vision continues to shape the region today.

In Thief River Falls, public power is more than a utility model. It reflects the community itself—practical, collaborative, and focused on the future.

As Jacobson put it, "Great job—keep it coming [for] another 50 years."

"The power plant dam is one of the most utilized parks we have. People are fishing there all summer long. That's a unique thing for a city to have."

- Brian Jacobson



Warren Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1904

A Community That Keeps Building

In Warren, community pride shows up in practical ways.

It can be seen in the care given to downtown buildings, in Friday night lights, and in the everyday connections that make small-town life matter. It is also evident in the choices the community makes—choosing not to simply get by, but to invest, rebuild, and keep moving forward.

“Warren is a small town with a big heart, where neighbors know each other by name,” said Brett Kuznia, City Administrator. Rooted in agriculture and hard work, he said, Warren is also defined by strong community pride, local businesses, and traditions that bring people together.

For Brent McMillan, operations manager and lineman, Warren’s determination stands out most.

“Warren is striving to grow and move into the future,” McMillan said. “People take pride in that. They don’t want to see Warren die. They want to see it flourish.”

Investing in What Matters

That determination is clear in one of Warren’s most significant recent projects: childcare.

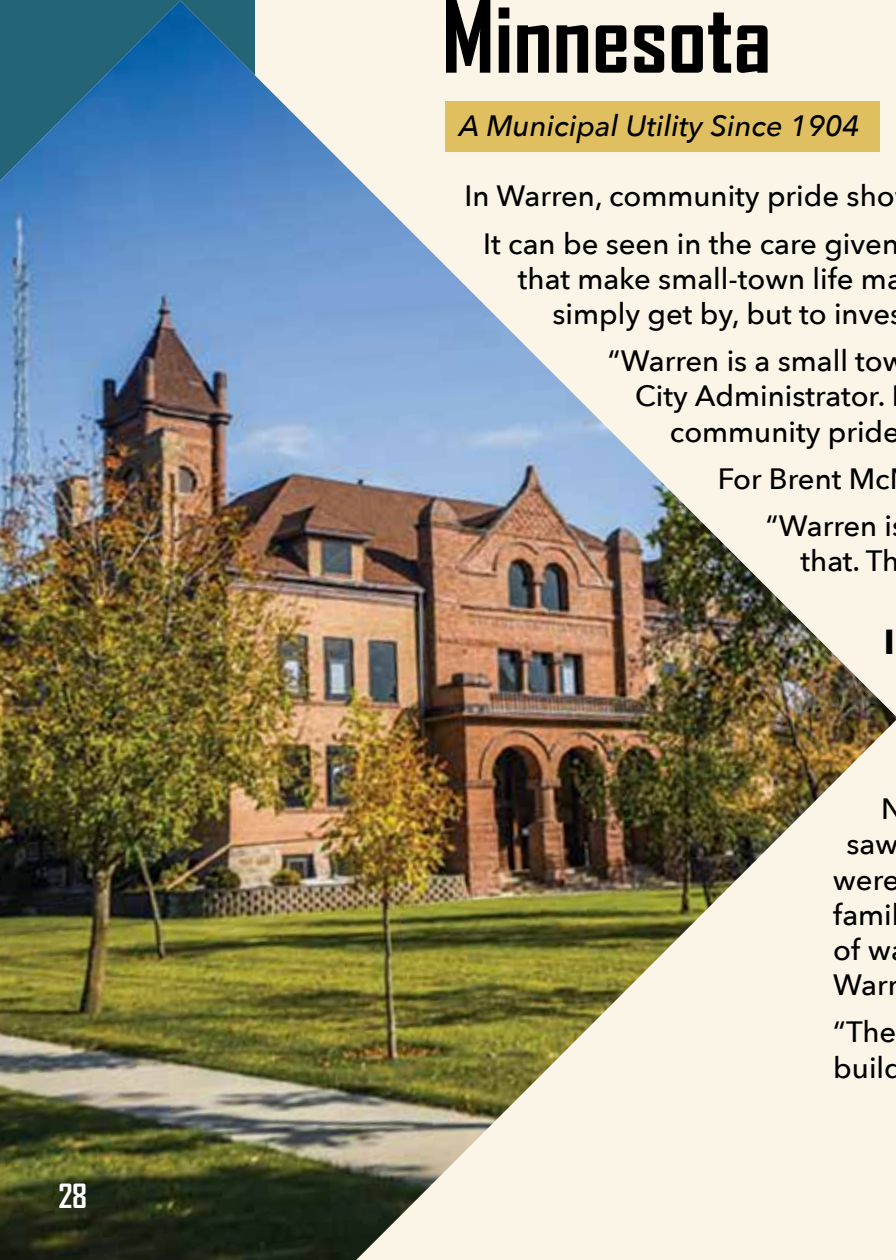
Nearly a decade ago, the community saw a growing need. Home daycares were declining, capacity was limited, and families were feeling the strain. Instead of waiting for a solution, the City of Warren stepped in.

“The city took it upon themselves to build a daycare,” McMillan said.

The project brought together federal funding, nearly \$800,000 in private donations, and local sales tax support. The city owns the building, while operations are handled by an existing provider.

“It never would have been built without all those partners coming together,” McMillan said.

Kuznia said the effort reflected the character of the community. “It speaks to who’s here, and the heart, and the care,” he said.



Warren continues to invest in quality of life. This fall, the city plans to renovate its outdoor swimming pool, originally built in 1965, choosing to reinvest in a valued amenity rather than let it fade.

"It'd be a lot easier financially to just watch the pool close," Kuznia said. "But you want the amenities for the community."

Powering Daily Life

That same mindset carries into Warren's municipal utility.

The city provides electric, natural gas, water, sewer, and garbage service—something McMillan described simply: "From the time you open your eyes till the time you go to bed, we're in your life."

Over time, Warren has made significant investments in reliability, including converting its electric system entirely underground. Today, the city is 100 percent underground, which means fewer outages and stronger performance during northern Minnesota winters.

That reliability matters to both residents and employers. "Businesses know there's reliability of power," Kuznia said. "They're not worried about losing power."

That confidence supports growth. CHS recently completed a \$15 million addition in Warren, and Nordic Fiberglass continues to expand as well.

"If they don't trust us, they're not going to spend that money," McMillan said.

The Value of Partnership

Warren's long-standing relationship with the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) has helped provide that stability.

McMillan, who has been associated with NMPA for 35 years,

summed it up simply: "Stability."

He also noted the difference that local service makes. In a municipal system, residents know who serves them, and help is close at hand.

"We're just there," he said. "And I think that gives people a little bit of [a] sense of security."

Looking Ahead

Like many utilities, Warren faces growing expectations around reliability and future energy needs. McMillan pointed to emerging technologies like battery backup and distributed generation, along with the need to stay ahead of change.

"We have to stay out in front of it or we're going to be behind," he said.

As NMPA celebrates 50 years, Warren is thankful for the decades of reliable partnership that have helped the community thrive.

For Warren, the future is not about standing still. It is about continuing to invest in the things that make a small town strong—good infrastructure, practical leadership, and a community that shows up for itself.

***"We know where our power's coming from. We don't have to stress about that."
- Brent McMillan***

Warroad

Minnesota

A Municipal Utility Since 1948

*Where Tradition,
Industry, and
Innovation Meet*

In Warroad, Minnesota, life is shaped by a rare combination of natural beauty, deep-rooted tradition, and global impact. Tucked along the southern shore of Lake of the Woods and surrounded by the Beltrami Forest, the community offers something both simple and extraordinary: small-town living with a wide-reaching footprint.

Ask Dan Trosen, Utility Superintendent for the City of Warroad, how he would describe the town, and his answer comes easily: "It's a place grounded in the outdoors, where snowmobiling, fishing, hunting, and trail riding are part of everyday life." Seasonal tourism fuels the local economy, with visitors drawn year-round to the lake and surrounding wilderness.

But Warroad is more than a destination—it's also a community with a strong identity.

Known as "Hockeytown U.S.A.," Warroad has produced Olympic athletes and national champions, with a legacy that spans generations. From youth programs to Olympic gold medalists, hockey is woven into the fabric of the town.

At the same time, Warroad is home to a global manufacturing presence. Marvin Windows and Doors employs more people than the town's population itself—an extraordinary dynamic that underscores the importance of stability, infrastructure, and local support.

A Community That Builds for the Future

While Warroad's identity is rooted in tradition, its future is being actively built.

One of the most significant projects underway is a long-awaited harbor on Lake of the Woods. Originally started in the 1970s and left unfinished, the effort was revived nearly a decade ago through local initiative and city leadership.

Today, that vision is becoming reality.

The city has dredged a connection to the lake, constructed harbor walls, and installed 46 dock slips. When complete,

the harbor will be the only safe harbor on the U.S. side of Lake of the Woods, offering protection from storms and expanding recreational access.

Set for substantial completion this year, the project reflects persistence, local leadership, and long-term investment in the community's future.

Powering Community and Connection

Behind the scenes, Warroad's municipal utility plays a critical role in both daily life and long-term growth.

First and foremost, it ensures reliable power—but its impact

goes well beyond that. Utility crews help decorate the town for holidays, support beautification efforts, and assist with community projects year-round. From seasonal banners to spring flower pots, the team is deeply connected to the life of the community.

"We keep the power on," Trosen explained, "and after that, we help with anything we can to keep the community going strong."

That connection is a defining feature of public power. Decisions are made locally, and residents have a direct voice through city leadership and utility governance.

The Value of Partnership

Warroad's partnership with the Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) has been central to maintaining both reliability and affordability.

Before joining NMPA, the city relied on short-term power agreements that created uncertainty. Today, the partnership provides long-term stability, predictable rates, and dependable service—critical for both residents and major employers.

For a company like Marvin, which relies heavily on energy, that consistency is essential. Reliable power supports not only business success but also the broader local economy.

Meeting Growing Energy Demands

Like many communities, Warroad is seeing increasing demand for electricity as technology evolves and usage expands.

"We will have the only safe harbor on Lake of the Woods on the U.S. side."

- Dan Trosen

The city has responded by installing EV charging infrastructure, supporting initiatives like electric school buses, and planning for future capacity needs.

"Energy needs are growing," Trosen noted, "and we have to manage that expectation."

Built on Strength, Looking Ahead

Warroad's story is one of balance—between tradition and progress, recreation and industry, local roots and global reach.

It is a place where a small population supports a major employer, where a hockey legacy spans decades, and where community-driven projects shape the future.

As NMPA celebrates 50 years, Warroad stands as a clear example of what that partnership makes possible.

"We're stronger together," Trosen said. "That's why NMPA was formed and why we'll keep moving forward."

In Warroad, the future isn't just being imagined—it's being built, powered, and sustained by the people who call it home.





Leading Through Change

In a faster-moving electric industry, NMPA is drawing on five decades of experience to make decisions for generations yet to come.

The electric utility business requires a long view. Power plants, transmission lines, and other major assets are built to serve for decades, and the people who use electricity ultimately bear the cost. What has changed is the speed and complexity of the decisions utilities must make.

Northern Municipal Power Agency (NMPA) CEO Jasper Schneider describes the industry's evolution as exponential. The traditional model was comparatively straightforward: Build a central generating plant, transmit electricity in one direction, sell it at retail, and send customers a monthly bill. Today, technology, public policy, and consumer expectations are reshaping every part of that model.

Customers have more information and more choices. Smartphones and advanced controls offer greater visibility into energy use. Electric vehicles, rooftop solar, efficient lighting, electric heating and cooling, and other technologies are changing both demand and the relationship between the customer and the grid. At the same time, utilities are adding new energy resources, navigating changing regulations, and preparing for new large loads.

Lucas Spaeth, president of the NMPA board, sees those forces converging. During his time with the agency, renewable resources have expanded, technology has advanced, and regulation has continued to shift. Now data centers, electrification, and other forms of

growth are creating the prospect of rising demand in places that may not have experienced it for years.

That observation reflects a wider national turn. After nearly two decades of relatively little change, U.S. electricity use has begun growing again. The U.S. Energy Information Administration expects the 2024-2027 period to be the strongest four-year stretch of electricity-demand growth since 2000, driven substantially by large computing centers. The trend reinforces the question NMPA's leaders are already asking: How can the agency provide the power its communities will need while maintaining reliability and affordability?

From a Stable Model to a Dynamic System

Dalene Monsebroten has watched the industry change over more than 30 years with NMPA. When she arrived, the Coyote Station investment was still relatively new, and the central task was improving an established model. Today, the range of possible resources is broader, electricity must travel long distances over the transmission network, and the uses of electricity are multiplying.

For a period, efficiency gains helped moderate demand. Now Monsebroten sees that direction changing. New technologies require energy, and utilities must find ways to add resources

while still delivering power economically and responsibly. "The last 10 years have shown how quickly things can change," she said. "What we see now and how we use electricity will be extremely different in the next 20 years."

Change is not new to NMPA. Former General Manager Darryl Tveitbakk recalls the rise and collapse of Enron, the transition toward regionally organized power markets, new pressures on pricing, and successive layers of regulation. He also saw renewable energy become a larger part of the resource mix. Through those shifts, NMPA continued to add wind, solar, and hydropower resources while relying on firm generation and transmission to support dependable service.

The challenge is not simply choosing one technology over another. It is building a portfolio and a system that work together. Schneider describes NMPA's responsibility as balancing three priorities: reliability, affordability, and sustainability. Each matters, and at times they can pull decisions in different directions.

The American Public Power Association describes the same tension in the adoption of emerging energy technologies: Utilities must determine which tools can improve operations and customer service while keeping the system reliable and power affordable. Innovation, in other words, is not change for its own sake. It is the disciplined use of new tools to serve customers better.

Decisions Measured in Generations

NMPA's founders understood long-term decision-making. In 1981, the agency used public financing to make an investment of roughly \$280 million in Coyote Station and associated transmission resources—an extraordinary commitment for 12 rural communities. That

choice gave the members a resource they could grow into and helped power them for the next 45 years.

Today's board again faces decisions whose consequences will extend far beyond the next annual budget or five-year plan.

"In a power agency that we're in, you need to make decisions now that will affect you for 40 years," Spaeth said. He hopes that when NMPA celebrates its centennial, future leaders will look back and recognize that this generation made sound investments and thoughtful choices at the board table.

Schneider calls the utility sector a "forever business." "When we make decisions, they're not just for the next fiscal year," he said. "They're for the next generation and the generation after that." When NMPA invests in generation or transmission, customers may pay for and rely on those assets for 30, 40, or 50 years. That demands stewardship across generations: decisions that are fiscally responsible, environmentally sustainable, and fair to both today's ratepayers and those who will follow.

No board has perfect information about the future. The standard, Schneider says, is to act based on the best information available, always remembering who will pay for the decision. Public power makes that responsibility personal. The ratepayers are not anonymous customers; they are neighbors, local businesses, and community institutions. NMPA's leaders have skin in the game.

Innovation Through Partnership

NMPA does not have to meet the industry's evolution alone. Its operating model is built around partnership, allowing a three-person staff



to draw on the capabilities of Minnkota, Coyote Station's co-owners, technical consultants, financial and legal advisors, and the broader public power community.

Monsebroten sees information sharing as a critical advantage. Municipal utilities across the country encounter many of the same issues, and their experience gives NMPA a tested starting point. The agency does not have to reinvent every solution.

That network expands NMPA's ability to evaluate emerging technologies and understand their practical implications. It also preserves the organization's most important advantage: It remains accountable to the 12 member communities. Innovation can be assessed not as an abstract industry trend, but in terms of whether it improves reliability, supports affordability, and creates value for the people NMPA serves.

The same leadership culture is evident within the board. Its members bring different professional backgrounds, community perspectives and operating realities. Schneider says they ask hard questions and "trust but verify" staff recommendations. That diversity of thought raises the quality of the debate, while a common commitment to the agency keeps the board moving toward shared decisions.

Stewardship for the Next 50 Years

The founders' greatest legacy was not a single asset. It was the willingness to define the future rather than let others define it for them.

That spirit remains essential as NMPA considers its next

era. The agency will need to respond to changing loads, technologies, customer expectations, resource options, and public policy. It will need to move quickly enough to meet emerging needs, but carefully enough to avoid burdening future generations with the wrong asset or unnecessary debt.

Looking ahead, NMPA's staff and board members express confidence in the capability of the agency to meet emerging needs. Chris West, NMPA board vice president and Mayor of Grafton, points to NMPA's sound financial position, its power resources, and, most importantly, its people. "NMPA is surrounded by people who care and are passionate about what they do," he said. Spaeth trusts a board willing to wrestle with difficult choices. Monsebroten trusts the knowledge available through the public power community. Schneider trusts "the strength of our people and the power of our partnerships." Tveitbakk trusts a model that has already served its members through decades of change.

Together, those qualities form NMPA's blueprint for the future: Learn continuously, invest deliberately, collaborate broadly, and remain accountable.

Fifty years from now, Schneider hopes the agency's successors will see that today's leaders made decisions for the right reasons—thoughtfully, responsibly, and with the people they serve at the center.

That is next-generation stewardship: keeping the lights on today while providing tomorrow's communities with the capacity to write their own next chapter.



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