



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the project?

City Utilities is expanding our robust fiber optic backbone to support and enable advanced utility services and to support City Utilities SpringNet customers and the community. Making unused or "dark" fiber strands available for lease by private communications providers is an effective way to ensure high speed broadband services and their associated benefits are available to the community.

How will this project benefit the Community?

Access to reliable high-speed broadband services drives economic development and is essential to every community. Communities or neighborhoods who lack access are at a disadvantage to those who provide it. High-speed broadband enables services essential for a growing community from education, medicine, business and entertainment. Partnering with private industry to make the best use of public infrastructure minimizes disruption in the public rights-of-way and helps to ensure that all areas of our community have access to affordable broadband choices.

What about 5G and wireless broadband?

Wireless communication such as the movement to 5G, the next generation of wireless technology, depends on a robust fiber backbone to deliver data to and from the increased number of 5G small cell sites required. Communities with a rich fiber network will be among the first to be able to effectively take advantage of this technology.

What have other communities done?

There are many examples of communities successfully collaborating to bring affordable high-speed broadband to their citizens with similar projects. Communities like Huntsville Alabama have utilized their fiber networks that provide efficiency to their electric, natural gas and water customers to connect their community to affordable high-speed providers such as Google. Huntsville is just one example of many successful public-private partnerships.

Will My electric, natural gas or water rates go up because of this project?

No. Service to SpringNet customers is not subsidized by the electric, natural gas or water customers. In fact, leasing of excess dark fiber helps ensure there is a robust fiber network that can be used for the communication needs of the electric, natural gas and water distribution systems. City Utilities 2020 Operating Plan does not include any unapproved electric, natural gas or water rate increases.



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How will City Utilities existing SpringNet Customers be affected?

SpringNet will continue to ensure that their customers will receive the utility grade, reliable high-speed broadband services, with exceptional customer service, in which they have become accustomed.

Will the City of Springfield benefit financially in any way?

Just as City Utilities pays the City of Springfield Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) based on sales of electric, natural gas and water to the community, an annual right-of-way fee is paid to the City for every foot of fiber installed in City rights-of-way. This fee will continue or will be replaced by a PILOT type payment.

Are there any other value-added services this project could add to the community?

Tomorrow's smart cities will depend on having easy access to high-speed data connectivity. Whether it is connecting equipment for increased security and efficiency or providing underserved areas of our community, our need for data is ever increasing.

Does this type of project provide unfair competition to private firms?

No. In fact, the purpose of this project is to use community assets such as rights-of-way and excess fiber optic cable to fast-forward investment in our community by private communications providers. By providing access to dark-fiber openly and fairly, our community should benefit from communication providers ability to affordably and quickly provide expanded services to all areas of our community. Depending on their needs and business models, private providers will have the ability to lease excess fiber capacity.

Why City Utilities?

In 1991 City Council adopted its Telecommunications Strategic Plan. This forward-looking document envisioned the future where "telecommunications networks and technologies are becoming essential infrastructure as we enter the 21st Century". This strategy specifically asked that City Utilities be empowered to develop and offer its excess telecommunications capacity to those segments of the Springfield Market that made economic sense for the Community. Fast-forward 30 years and this vision has become a reality. We are at a time where affordable and reliable access to broadband services is essential for our daily lives. If Springfield is going to meet the goals the City Council established at that time, we must have networks that can drive the economy and improve our quality of life for the next 30 years. Leveraging community assets to facilitate private investment into this area is a win-win for all involved.