

# City of Olympia

City of Olympia leverages Itron Advanced Metering Infrastructure to streamline operations, identify leaks & improve customer service



## OVERVIEW

Based in Western Washington, the City of Olympia provides water services to 20,000 residential and light commercial customers. Serving an environmentally-conscious customer base, the City of Olympia embarked on its infrastructure upgrade project as not only an opportunity to jump into the 21st century utilizing technology to streamline operations, but to also provide customers with new opportunities to learn more about their personal water usage and conserve.

The City of Olympia began the project with a formal RFP process open to a number of water automation technology vendors, and they did not have a single technology in mind. The city hoped to modernize its system to facilitate meter reading efficiencies and opportunities for leak detection, as well as the sharing of usage data with customers. In addition, the city aimed to keep infrastructure costs as low as possible.

## PILOT PROJECT

In order to ensure the correct technology was identified for deployment, the City of Olympia asked all technology vendors bidding on the project to participate in a small pilot project in order to compare system performance side-by-side.

“We had all vendors set up systems in six challenging geographical areas of our service territory, and we asked them to perform operations in mobile and fixed network environments, then report back performance metrics,” said Meliss Maxfield, City of Olympia water quality supervisor and project manager. “It was eye opening to see how well Itron performed against other companies. We were biased towards another vendor, but once we saw the software and were able to demo in the field, we were able to see how effectively it worked.”

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— Meliss Maxfield, City of Olympia Water Quality Supervisor and Project Manager

## CUSTOMER

- » City of Olympia, Washington

## SERVICE TERRITORY

- » Located in Western Washington in the Pacific Northwest, the City of Olympia provides water service to 20,000 customers.

## GOALS

- » Automate meter reading, billing and customer service
- » Identify and eliminate distribution system leaks
- » Minimize infrastructure costs

## SOLUTION

- » ChoiceConnect AMI solution equipped with ZCorr leak detection technology

## BENEFITS

- » Analytics Support
- » Read Rates Exceeding Expectations
- » System Flexibility



“With this automation in place, we are gathering read rates ranging from 90 to 95 percent for our 20,000 endpoints, and we’re very happy with that. Our mobile reads are minimal and the propagation study done by Itron to determine placement of network hardware was very accurate.”

— Ernie Klimek  
Drinking Water Operations Supervisor

## SOLUTION

Utilizing knowledge gained during the pilot project, the City of Olympia elected to install Itron’s Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) solution, equipped with ZCorr leak detection technology. With the system installation nearly complete, the city is already seeing benefits from the technology, and city staff is transitioning from installation-related activities to understanding new system functionality and how to leverage the system to its fullest potential.

The Itron AMI network is designed to reliably collect water consumption data and transform that data into valuable and actionable intelligence for users across

the utility. For the City of Olympia, two key benefits of AMI technology, outside of automating the meter reading process, are providing detailed, customer-specific consumption data and identifying system leaks.

The ZCorr portable leak detection system combines a network of digital correlating loggers, a computer docking station, and easy-to-use sound-analyzing software to strategically target a section of distribution system pipe and pinpoint the locations of leaks within the defined coverage area.

“We are setting up a maintenance group that will target areas of interest noted from other maintenance activities or information gathered from the AMI network,” said Ernie Klimek, drinking water operations supervisor at the City of Olympia. “We are following up with customers regarding leaks identified on their property at this time. Our system is under 10 percent water loss, so we’re looking to focus more on infrastructure equipment at this time and will shift our focus to leak identification as the initial deployment is completed and more of our staff is available to focus on this area of the system.”

## BENEFITS

“With this automation in place, we are gathering read rates ranging from 90 to 95 percent for our 20,000 endpoints, and we’re very happy with that,” added Klimek. “Our mobile reads are minimal and the propagation study done by Itron to determine placement of network hardware was very accurate.”

The utility billing department is already looking at leak alarms and sending out notices to customers. In addition, they can review data with customers over the phone to identify increases in usage that appear to be leaks. Move-in and move-out reads are all done by the network, eliminating the need to send out a technician and associated costs from rolling a truck.

As installation winds down, the city is excited about utilizing the AMI network to its fullest potential and transitioning meter reading staff to be proactive system technicians.

“We’re flexing and adjusting to the system,” said Klimek. “I want to have people believe the data versus the old model of ‘go out and make sure’. We need to look at the data, accept and understand the accuracy of what we’re working with—we’re very excited about this!”

## WHAT’S NEXT?

The City of Olympia’s customers have always been conservation-minded and the water department is always in search of ways to proactively assist customers in this regard. Prior to installing the AMI system, City of Olympia Mayor Stephen Baxbaum joined the National Mayor’s Challenge for Water Conservation. Olympians responded by reducing water consumption by almost 9 percent—more than 98 million gallons.

“I can have a customer call about the simplest water-related matter, and I think that’s what helps put the utility in a good light with our customers,” said Klimek.

“They see water as the number one priority in our community, and getting our customers access to their usage data is really critical.”

The next step for the City of Olympia’s AMI project will be to provide customers access to their own usage data to aide in conservation efforts.

“Itron Analytics is the next step for us so we can have customers log onto our website and view personal usage,” added Maxfield. “We are sure this could turn into a healthy competition around conservation, which is a win-win for both our customers and our city.”



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