

An aerial photograph of a city river, likely the Elgin River, flowing through a city. The river is surrounded by parks, bridges, and urban buildings. The water is calm, reflecting the sky. The city skyline is visible in the background, with various buildings and trees. The overall scene is a mix of natural and urban environments.

• CASE STUDY •

# Engineering the *success* of our communities

Discover how the City of Elgin's Public Works Department has partnered with Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. to extend their staff and increase the number, size, and impact of their public works projects

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**Aaron Neal**

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR  
CITY OF ELGIN

## OPPORTUNITY

# Partnering with a solutions-focused civil engineering firm that could extend the reach of city staff

As the sixth largest municipality in Illinois, the City of Elgin has a lot of infrastructure to create and maintain to support its approximately 115,000 residents – a substantial amount of which includes the water, sewer, streets, and intersections that fall under the domain of the City's Public Works Department.

So when the Public Works Department experienced a staff reduction in 2007, they needed to figure out how to cover their full-time workload with significantly less full-time staff.

One option was to bring in outside help, so Public Works senior staff reached out to Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. (HLR) – a civil engineering firm based in Elgin that provides a full suite of services including civil engineering, structural engineering, land surveying, and environmental

services – and whom they've had a working relationship with since 1977.

The Public Works Department has always been impressed with the firm's technical depth and breadth, but also of something just as important: their deep commitment to the communities in which they work.

"HLR recognizes that they're providing a service to the community at large, and want to have an active role in that community," said Aaron Neal, the City of Elgin's Public Works Director.

Excited by the potential of having Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. as a go-to outsourced partner, the Public Works Department first brought HLR in to help them with some roadway design projects. Satisfied, they engaged HLR to take over the management of their traffic signal network, which includes 44 City-owned traffic signals as well as 20 additional joint-owned signals with Kane County, Cook County, and the state of Illinois.

"Bringing them on as our traffic signal consultant was the true beginning of the long-standing partnership we've had with HLR," Aaron said. "It really ingrained them into the daily operations of the City and our relationship just bloomed from there. They have maintained our traffic signal program for decades now, as well as done so many other projects with us along the way."





## A decades-long partnership of impactful work and relationships

The portfolio of work Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. has conducted for the City of Elgin is as **vast and as varied** as possible, with some of the most notable projects in recent years including the following award-winning projects:

### Airport Road Detention Basin Retrofit

#### APWA Fox Valley Branch, 2025 Public Works Project of the Year

The Airport Road Detention Basin Retrofit addressed a critical need for improved water quality and enhanced environmental stewardship in the City of Elgin. Historically, stormwater runoff entering the basin carried pollutants. This runoff flowed through the detention basin via a concrete-

lined swale that offered no filtration or water quality benefits, ultimately discharging into the Fox River. Recognizing the opportunity to improve water quality and reduce maintenance costs, the City of Elgin initiated a transformative project to naturalize the detention basin.

#### Project Highlights:

- Removed the concrete flume and repaired discharge structures
- Regraded the basin for improved infiltration and created a meandering flow path for stormwater treatment
- Installed native plantings, including custom seed mixes (upland, wetland, and wet prairie) and wetland plugs, to boost biodiversity

*"It was impressive how quickly they got this project completed. HLR consistently met — and continues to meet — our expectations. They truly lead the process and make things easier for us."*

**Ron Rudd**  
City of Elgin Engineer



## DuPage Court Revitalization

### ACEC-IL, 2025 Engineering Excellence Special Achievement Award

DuPage Court has long been a central gathering place for live performances, seasonal events, and local businesses. However, its outdated infrastructure and limited functionality posed challenges to realizing its full potential. Guided by the City of Elgin's vision for a vibrant and multifunctional public space, the revitalization project has turned DuPage Court into a dynamic and inviting area designed to serve the community for generations to come.

### Project Highlights:

- **Aesthetic Enhancements:** A striking gateway arch, sculptures, upgraded pavers, canopies, and artist-designed manhole covers contribute to a welcoming and unique environment.
- **Functional Improvements:** Movable tables, chairs, and benches provide flexibility for various events and everyday use. Expanded electrical capacity supports large-scale performances and vendors without the need for noisy generators.
- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** New water, sewer, and sanitary lines ensure improved utility reliability and safety, addressing long-term community needs.



*"DuPage Court was a tremendously difficult project, and it was HLR's ability to not just manage the project but take a very active role in working with the utility companies and the contractor that made things go so successfully and smoothly."*

**Mike Pubentz**

City of Elgin Public Services Director



# Differentiators that truly make a difference

City of Elgin senior staff said that while the award-winning nature of Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc.'s work is certainly impressive, there are several additional things they love about working with the firm.

Some of the key factors that make working with Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. a unique and results-driven experience include:

## A focus on building relationships

The City's Public Works Director Aaron Neal said HLR has consistently shown their capacity and commitment to embedding the human element into everything they do.

"HLR is as equally great at relationships as they are as engineers, which isn't something you can say about every engineering firm. No matter what they're doing, they come in with a mind to build relationships and are as far from transactional as you can get. They are always there to support us, and the way that they think, care, and often foresee beyond what I'm able to see is unbelievable. That only happens when a company is dedicated to their clients and to the community they're working in."

## A commitment to taking ownership

For the City of Elgin's Public Services Director Mike Pubentz, Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick's dedication to owning all aspects of a project

is what really sets them apart from other engineering firms.

"When we work with an outside firm, it's very important to me that they protect the interests of the city, because they are operating on behalf of the city. HLR does a great job of taking ownership over all aspects of the job and resolving every problem that might come up. I think the level of ownership they take is really unique. They truly see themselves as part of the City's team."

## A community consciousness that's second to none

Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. doesn't just perform work inside of a community — they deeply consider how their work and their team can positively impact that community. They also get involved wherever and whenever they can.

For example, several HLR staff members are actively involved in the Elgin community through the Chamber of Commerce, School District U-46, and the Alignment Collaborative for Education. HLR's CEO, ReJena Lyon, served as the Chamber's Board Chair in 2024 and was honored with the 2025 Leadership Award, and the firm also received the 2025 Large Firm Award, which recognizes a company's contributions to the Elgin community.

The interest they take in the communities they work within is something the City of Elgin Public Works Department greatly appreciates.



"They participate in events, they adopt highways and do cleanup initiatives, and they are at our job fairs," Aaron Neal said. "When they're working on a project, they always keep in mind the impact on the community and the surrounding neighbors. Everyone I've worked with inside HLR has the same level of commitment, pride, and community focus."

## **A vast network of colleagues and connections**

With a 60-year history as one of the most well-respected civil engineering firms in the Chicago suburbs, HLR is well-known in the engineering industry. That benefits the City of Elgin in the way they are able to facilitate the smooth progress of projects at every step.

"For so many of our projects we can just hand it off to HLR and they know what permits we need to get and who we need to talk to," said City Engineer Ron Rudd. "That's a big perk of working with HLR. They have so many contacts. They have contacts within the Illinois Power Agency and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and various agencies we need to work with, so they facilitate getting permits and approvals. It's a big help for us."

## **A proactive partner in forecasting future needs**

A final key feature of working with Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. is how they support senior staff in forecasting future needs, as well as potential financing opportunities to help offset costs.

Both Mike Pubentz and Aaron Neal said how helpful this expertise has been for the Department's planning and budgeting, and how great it's been to work with a firm that is such a strategic thought partner.



"When working with HLR, I have brought my idea of what a project is and have watched time and time again as they bring their deep level of expertise to the conversation," Aaron said. "They understand what the county and the state are doing, how things operate between all parties, and what funding opportunities are available. We really value their point of view because they've demonstrated their commitment and knowledge over all of these years, and there's been so much trust built between us. I've definitely yielded to their recommendations on many occasions."

## **Decades of work together...and counting**

With a productive and effective relationship that has spanned nearly 20 years, the City of Elgin's Public Works Department considers Hampton, Lenzini and Renwick Inc. an essential ally in helping them achieve the Department's tactical and strategic goals and extend the reach of their full-time staff.

"Staffing is always an issue in local and state government, and we're all doing more with less," Aaron said. "Having HLR working on our behalf and in the best interests of not only the City of Elgin but of each of us individually is a level of service that is outstanding. They are such an extension of our staff, and having a partner that we can trust as much as we trust HLR is fantastic."





To see how Hampton,  
Lenzini and Renwick Inc.  
can engineer success  
in ***your*** community, visit  
[hlrengineering.com](http://hlrengineering.com)

