

# Payment Processing Made Easy: Ames, IA Case Study

AMES, IOWA

## ABOUT AMES, IOWA

Ames, Iowa, is located approximately 30 miles north of Des Moines in central Iowa and is the home of Iowa State University (ISU). Ames has a population of 66,427, making it the state's ninth-most populous city, with 30,000 Iowa State University students accounting for approximately one half of the city's population.

A longtime NaviLine™ customer dating back to the 1990's, Ames integrated CentralSquare® Payments into their NaviLine™ platform in May 2022 to help streamline their payment processing for their citizens, while also creating one single, full-integrated ERP platform with one support contact: CentralSquare®. The benefits the Ames internal team and their citizens experienced from this integration were almost instantaneous, driving an increase in online payments and removing burdensome manual work from the staff.

## CHALLENGES

As the System Analyst within the IT department at the City of Ames, Linda Sills has extensive experience in managing leading ERP solutions, such as CentralSquare's NaviLine™ which the city has been using for over 30 years. As a fully-integrated ERP suite that specializes in supporting small to mid-size local governments that want an easy, comprehensive solution to manage finance operations across all their departments, building a payment processing solution into NaviLine™ was the ultimate need for Ames.

## AGENCY

**City of Ames**

**Population:** 66,427

**Customer Since:** 1990

## SOLUTION

**NaviLine™ and CentralSquare® Payments**

With limited staff and resources like many smaller cities experience, Ames needed a better way to manage the increasing amount of citizen payment requests specifically utility payments and for a college town – bus passes, rental housing payments and parking tickets. The trigger for Ames was an onslaught of phone calls to pay bills over-the-phone that put the Ames finance team in a difficult situation where they simply could not keep up. This led Linda to seek help from CentralSquare®, resulting in the implementation of CentralSquare® Payments.



## THE SOLUTION

In May of 2022, Linda and the Ames team found a way to address their need to reduce phone call payments, move more citizens to online payment and do it within their existing NaviLine™ ERP – all under one vendor they trust: CentralSquare® Payments. As a leading cloud-based payment processing solution that helps communities manage in-person and online payments more efficiently, CentralSquare® Payments was integrated into NaviLine™ and an online payment portal was successfully launched. This meant citizens now no longer needed to visit in-person or call the Ames office to make a payment, thus reducing the workload on the Ames staff to handle calls.

Equally as important, now that Ames had one contact in CentralSquare® to reach out to when issues arise, Linda and team were able to easily get it resolved because they're not managing multiple vendors and CentralSquare® has deep expertise not only in Payments but NaviLine™. Providing the CentralSquare® team a full-view into both solutions as one, support concerns can be resolved faster compared to a 3rd party payment processing vendor.

From a customer experience perspective, having one vendor also allows Ames to provide citizens with one online location to pay for all their payment needs – whether it be bus passes or parking tickets.

Implementation was also easy for the Ames team with training taking "5-10 minutes", so CentralSquare® Payments was up-and-running in no time.

## RESULTS

Immediately after using CentralSquare® Payments within their NaviLine™ system to send notifications to links to pay online to their citizen base via their invoice emails and paper bills, the Ames team saw a dramatic decline in phone call payments to their office. The easy click to online payments for citizens was "life-changing" according to Linda, as the simplicity of paying online not only relieved citizens payment woes but allowed her team to spend more time on their more critical tasks they are responsible for day-to-day. The Ames IT team also saw the benefit of this change as they no longer had to spend hours operating in between multiple vendors and multiple credit card companies.

Finally, an unexpected benefit Ames has seen as a result of working with one vendor in CentralSquare® was the decrease in the amount of fees needed to pay when dealing with several different payment processing vendors, allowing them to see cost savings. Ames has lower rates because all of their credit card transactions are now all going through CentralSquare®, with the goal to move even more departments to CentralSquare® Payments in the near future.

***"We like it because it's all one product. We like the one shop stop. If something goes wrong, I make one phone call. I'm not stuck in between the financial vendor and the credit card payment. We like it that it's one vendor and I make one call and they just fix it."***

**- Linda Sills**

Systems Analyst, City of Ames, Iowa