

Side Sewer Maintenance Research Results and Recommendations

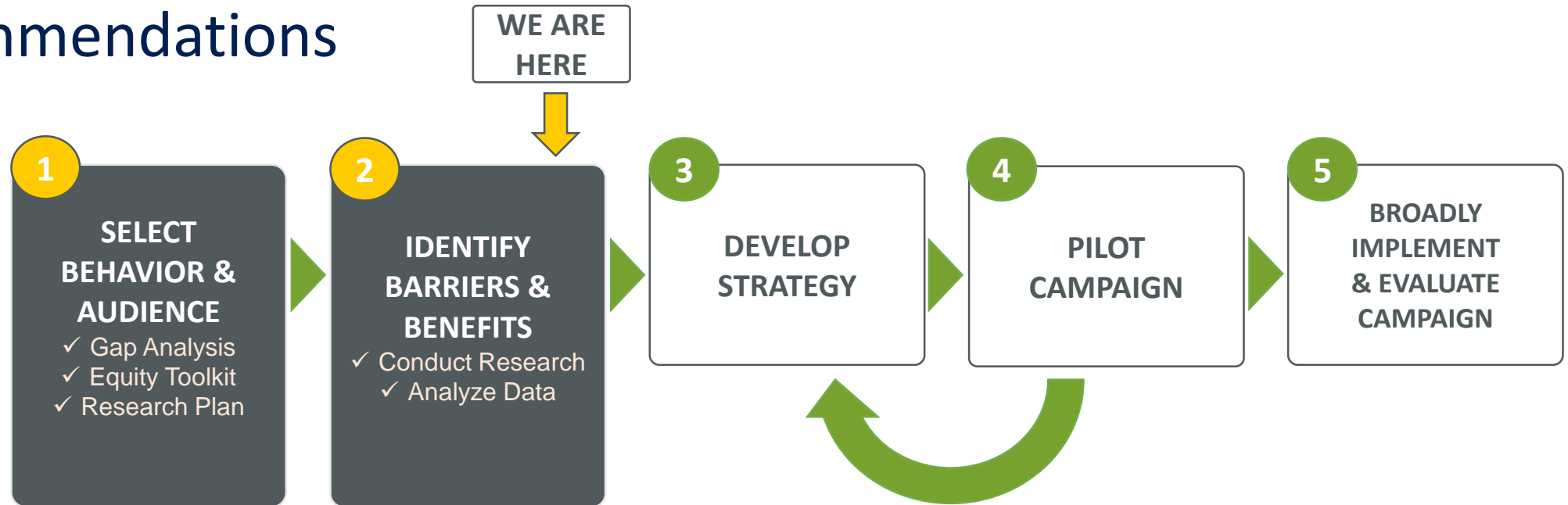
*Presentation to Creeks, Drainage and
Wastewater Advisory Committee*

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What We're Covering Today

- Audience research goal
- What we learned
- Recommendations



Customer Research Goal:

- Develop research-based strategies for SPU to better inform and educate Seattle property owners about their responsibility to maintain privately-owned pipes (side sewers).



Research Audience Groups

- Single-family homeowners
 - Survey (WWSA/DSA partnership)
 - Direct outreach
- Multi-family property managers (6)
- Plumbers (12 – completed in Dec 2017)
- Real estate professionals (7)
- Side sewer inspectors (3)

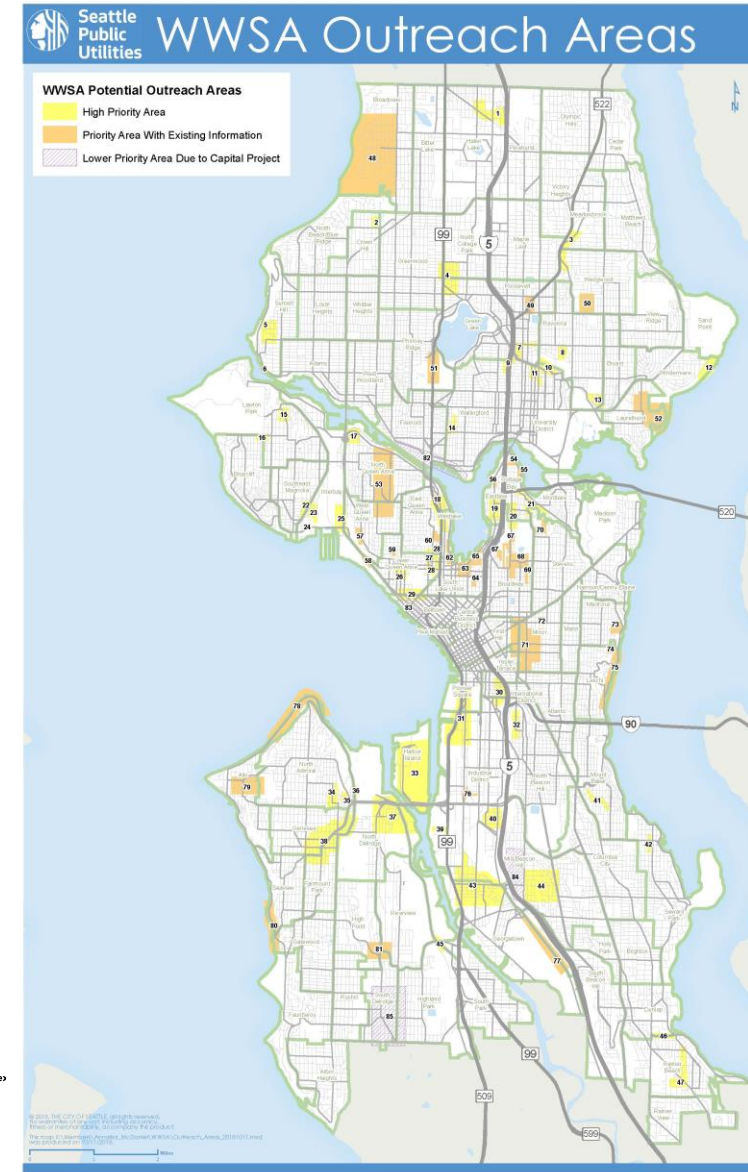
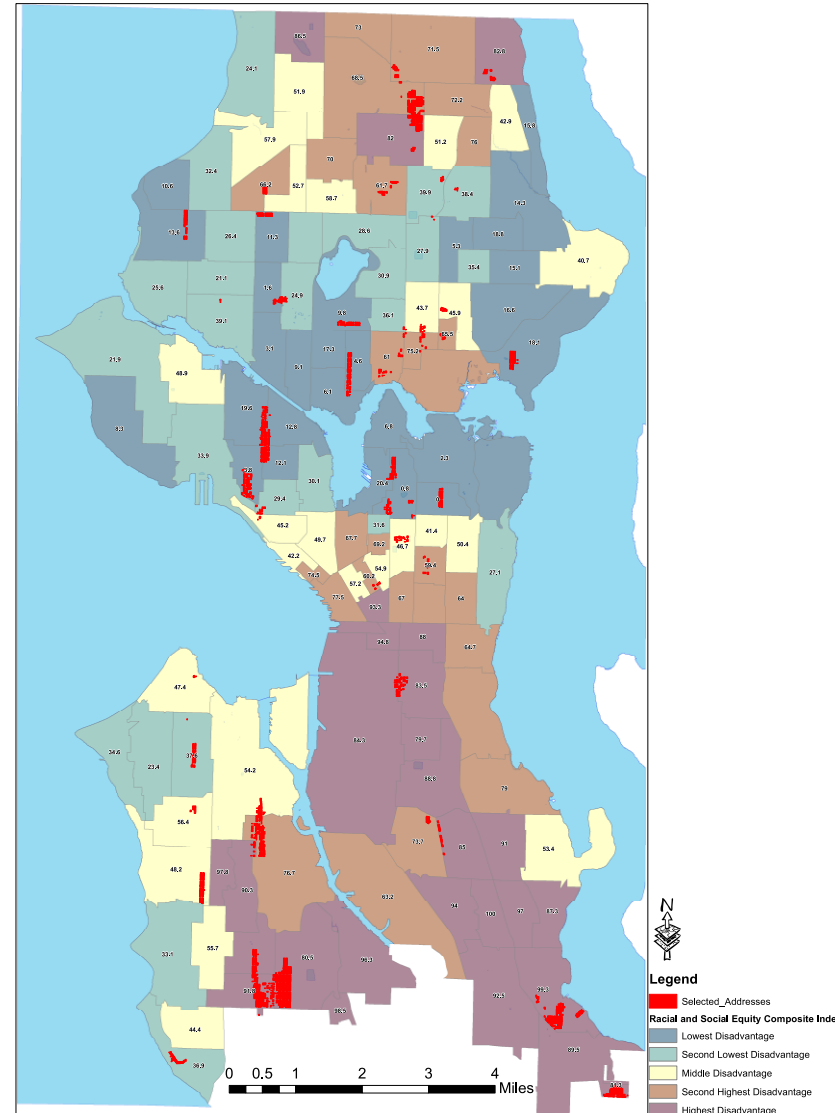


Mailed Survey Locations

Single-family zoned areas based on SPU's analysis of:

- Tree root data
- Modeled sewer overflow high-risk areas
- Income and homeowner data to identify lower-income participants (Race & Social Justice Composite Index)
- High priority outreach areas

ROOTS IN SIDE SEWER :
SELECTED LOCATIONS FOR MAIL OUTREACH



Demographics of Survey Respondents

Seattle Public Utilities

Share your experiences with flooding and sewer backups

Seattle Public Utilities is studying flooding in the drainage and wastewater systems. Information you and your neighbors share will help us understand where the system isn't working and plan future upgrades.

Please fill out our online survey. We are especially interested in hearing from you if you have experienced flooding or sewer backups, noticed flooding on the street or sidewalk in your neighborhood, or if you own a building that has flooded in Seattle.

If you'd like a paper survey, or to complete the survey over the phone, please call (206) 274-4944

WHO SHOULD I CALL IF I HAVE PROBLEMS NOW?

- For emergencies, call 911
- If you experience sewer backups or bad flooding during a storm, call our 24/7 Emergency Services line at (206) 386-1800
- For non-urgent plugged storm drains, use our online drain report form by visiting seattle.gov/util/myservices/drainagesewer; a crew member will respond in 3-5 business days

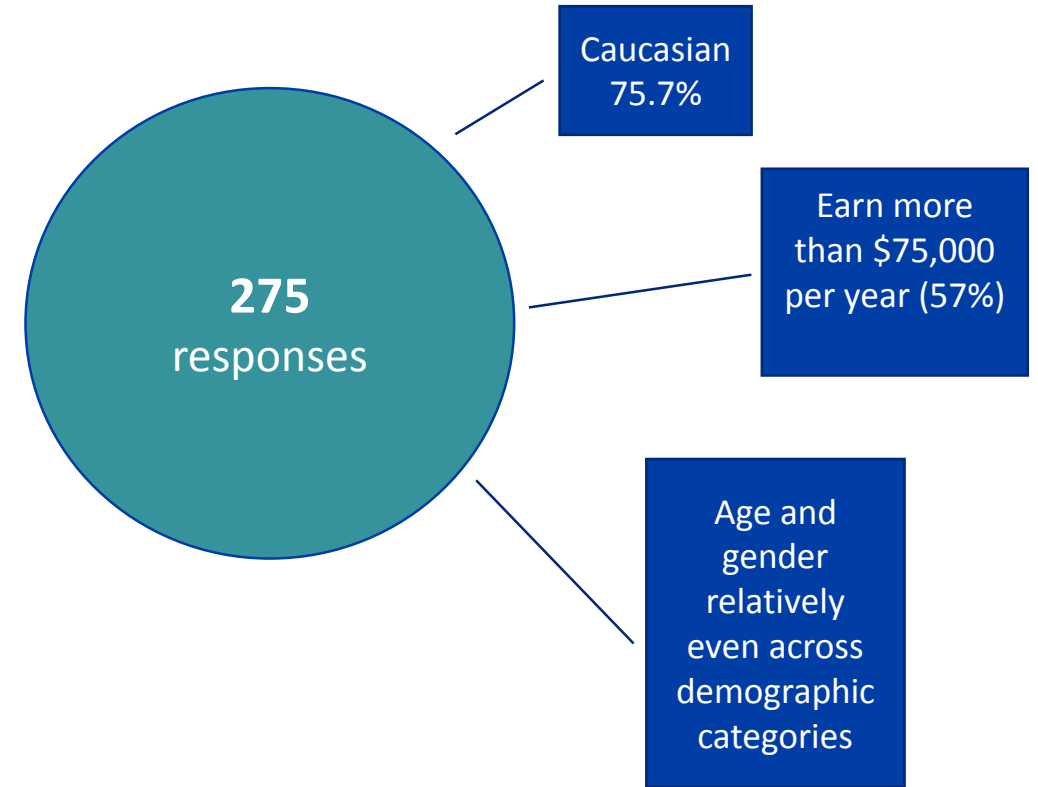
After filling out our survey you can enter into a raffle to receive prizes from these local EnviroStars businesses:

Duke's SEAFOOD & CHOWDER Choice Aaron's Bicycle Repair HONEST BISCUITS WOODLAND PARK ZOO

Take our survey go.participate.online/SPU1

For more information about this project, please visit SPURainCheck.participate.online

Mailed to 10,000 residents



What We Heard - *Words Used*

sewer sewer lateral
pipes side
sewer

What We Heard - *Awareness*

86%
aware of
maintenance
and repair
responsibility

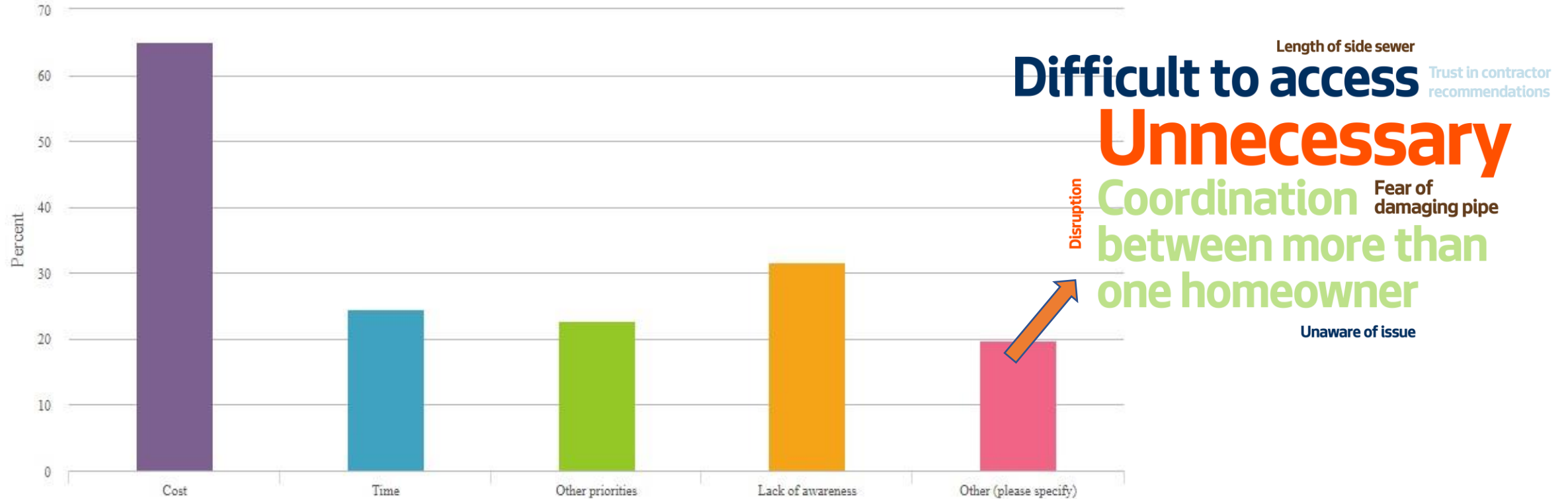
66.8%
aware of side
sewer's
location

- Self-selected respondents
- Largely white, earn \$75k+
- Interest in issue



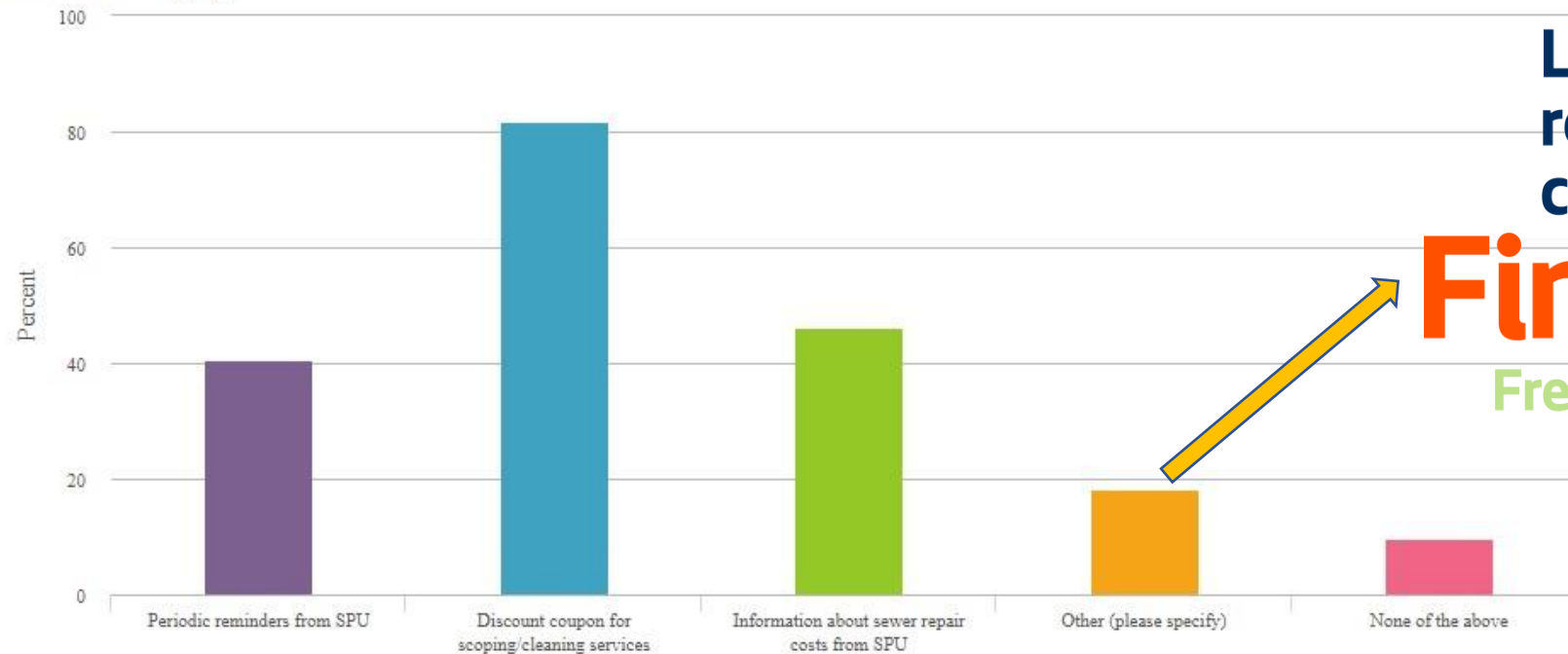
What We Heard - *Barriers*

72. What factors make it difficult to inspect or clean your home's sewer pipes? (Please select up to three factors)



What We Heard - *Motivators*

73. Sewer pipe repair can often be avoided by having your home's pipes inspected and cleaned every one to five years, depending on site conditions. What if anything, would motivate you to have your home's sewer pipes inspected/cleaned more often? (Please check all that apply).



List of
reputable
contractors

Only if there
was a problem

Financial help

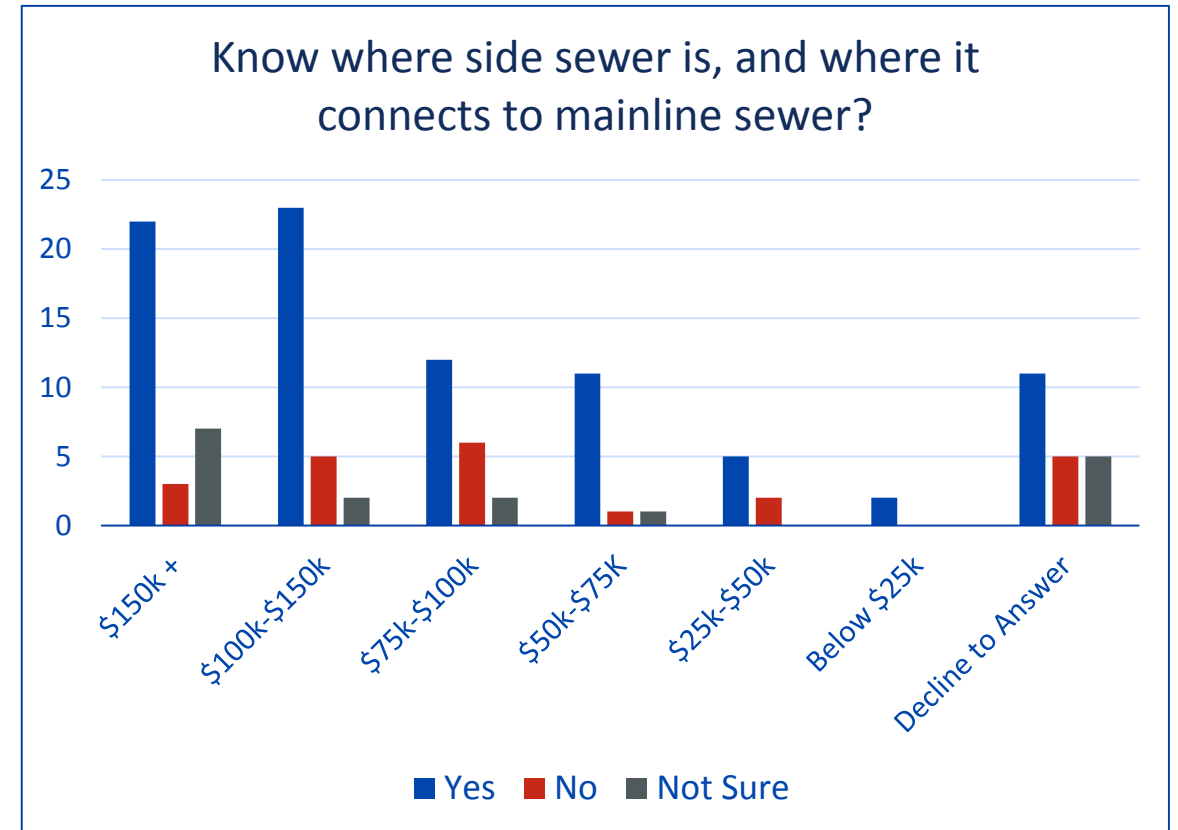
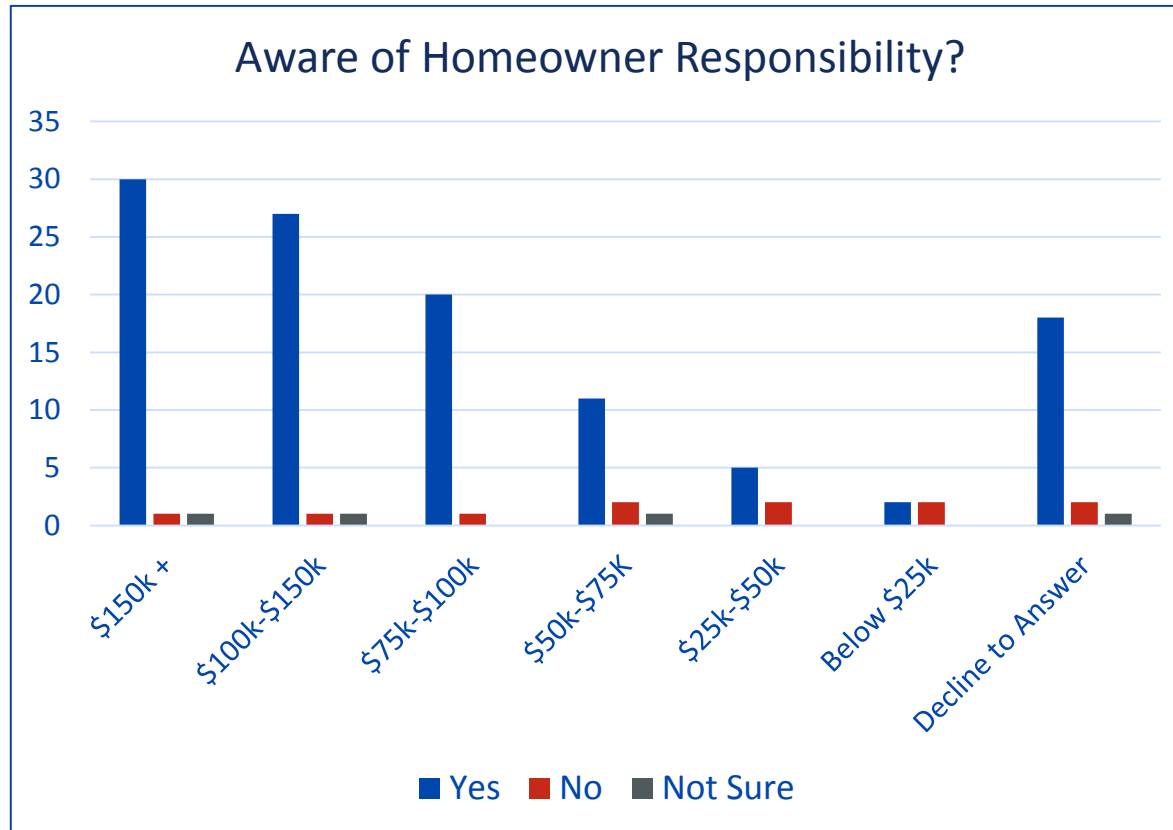
Free cleaning/inspecting service

Awareness

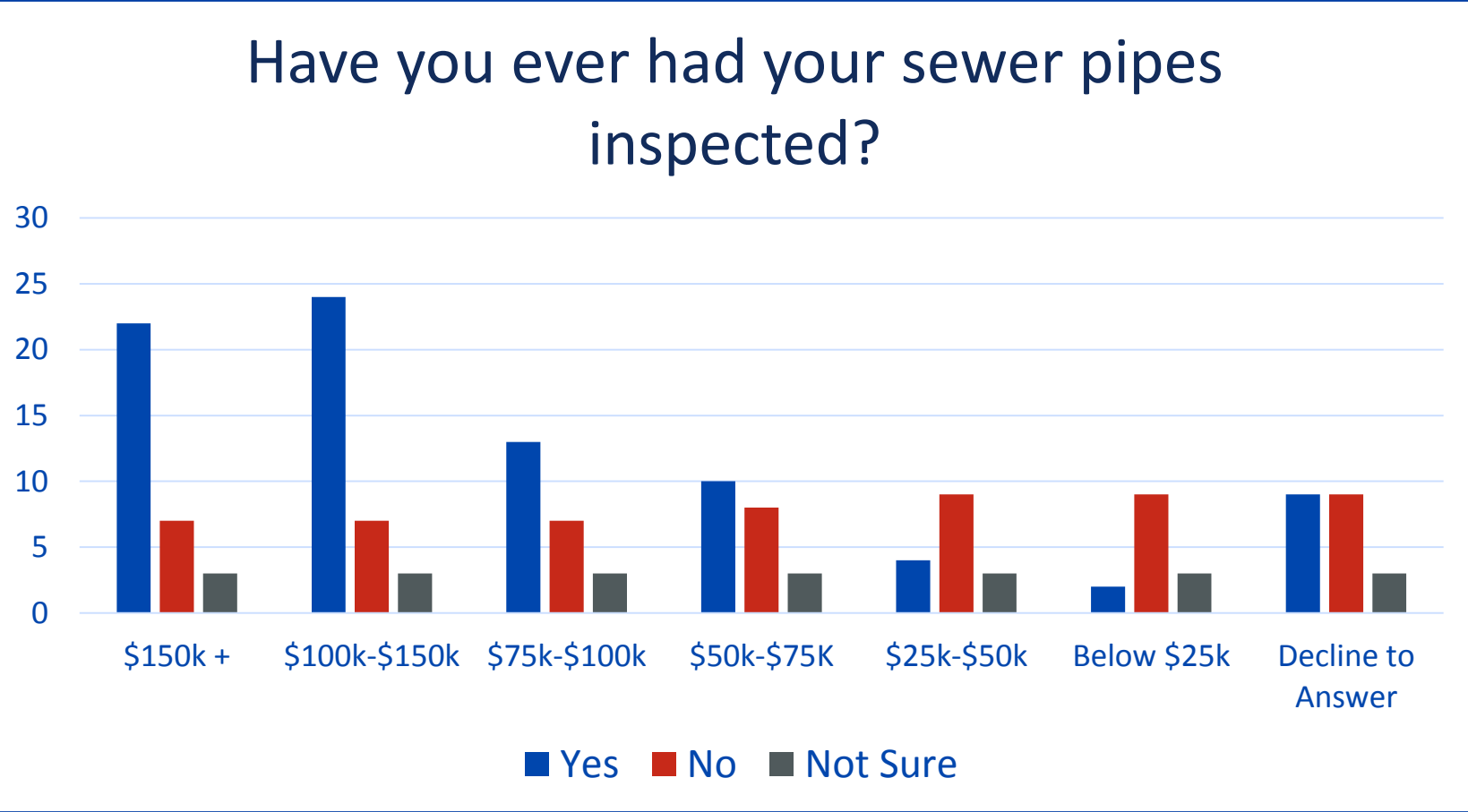
Discount on improving
infrastructure to access pipe

Easy way to
collaborate
when side sewer
is shared

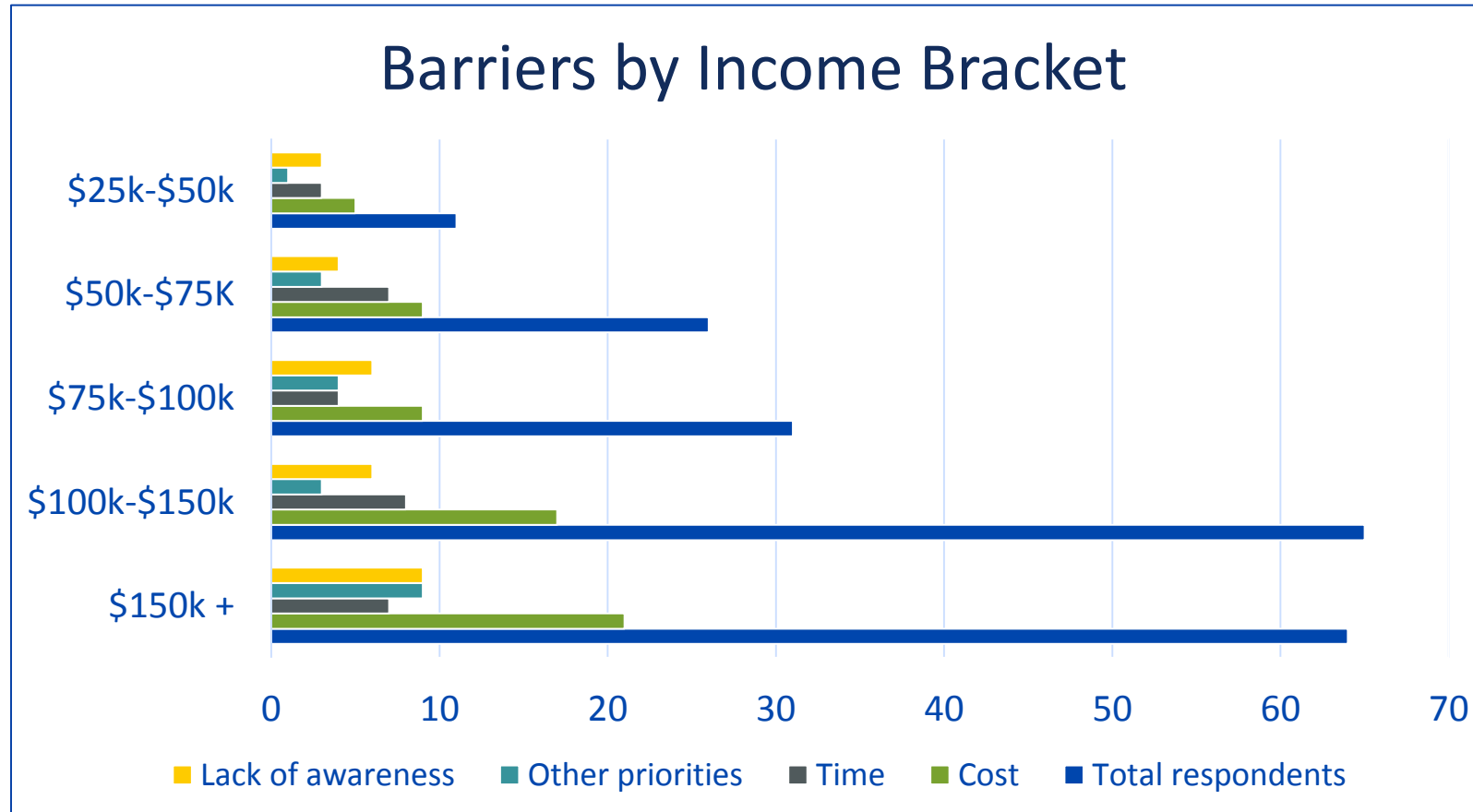
Income Level and Awareness



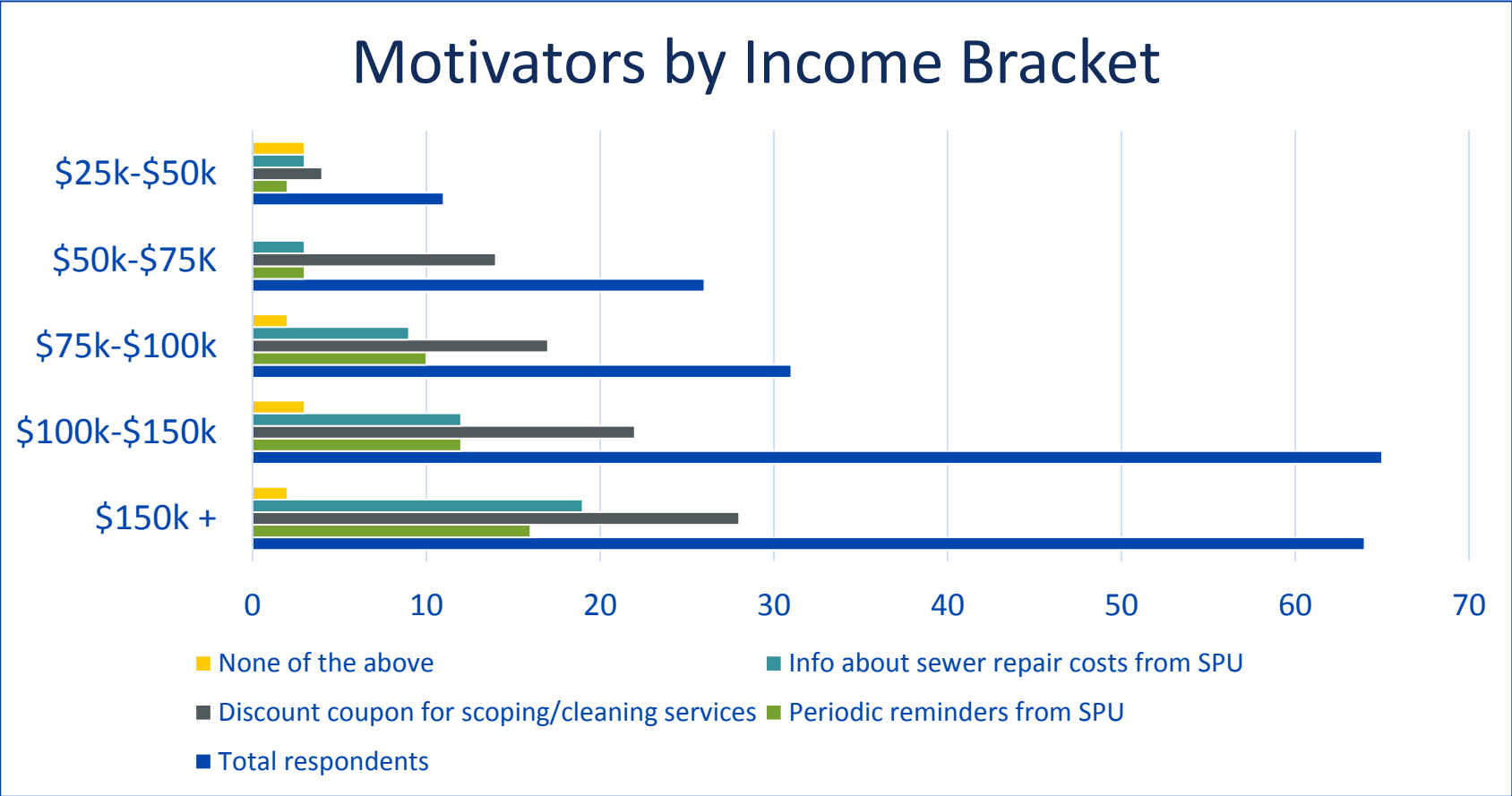
Income Level and Behavior



Income Level and Barriers



Income Level and Motivators



What We Heard - *Horn of Africa Services* (n=28)

100%

Knew it was the homeowner's responsibility to maintain and repair their side sewer

Did **not** know where their side sewer was located

57.7%

Prefer to repair their sewer pipe when it fails vs having it routinely inspected

42%

Would like to have a coupon available for inspections or cleanings

42.9%

Have had their pipes inspected; primarily as part of a remodel or as part of a repair

What We Heard - *Multifamily Property Manager* (n=4)

Interviews took place in Beacon Hill, Queen Anne & University District/Wallingford

- Do not proactively scope or clean side sewers unless purchasing or constructing a new building
- Not unusual to have monthly backups in larger buildings
- Use contractors from an approved list provided by the management company or by word of mouth
- Would use an easy-to-navigate website that offered potential costs, steps to fix problem & who to call

Most issues in multifamily buildings are backups that can be solved by a handyman with a snake



What We Heard - *Real Estate Professionals*

n=6 (1 agent was Chinese bilingual and works primarily with Asian / Asian American customer base)

- Most first-time buyers are unaware of responsibility
- Homeowners know more if there has been a previous issue
- Scoping frequency correlates to the real estate climate
- Home inspectors do not always encourage sewer scoping
- Not a lot of support for mandatory scoping regulations
- Agents willing to help educate new homeowners about side sewer responsibility



Recommendations from the Interviewed Real Estate Agents

Resources Real Estate Agents would like to see:

- Educational piece in mail / bill insert
- Email blast
- Local MLS offer class or webinar to agents
- Sample sewer line scope reports and videos
- Classes for residents about side sewers

Other recommendations:

- Offer economic resources / incentive to pay for a sewer scope
- Provide list of City-approved sewer scoping companies
- Offer credit on utility bill

Observations - *Side Sewer Inspectors* (n=3)



Observations:

- Roots a major issue
- More issues in the International District area
- Many inspections for new development
- Most scoping happens at point of sale
- ~5% of owners aware of responsibilities
- ~10% of owners can locate side sewer
- Few property owners do their own repairs

Inspectors:

- Think SPU could provide better resources
- Prefer online resources
- Want more translated information

Plumbers: Feedback from the Field (Dec 2017)

Common Residential Behaviors



- Improper use of garbage disposal
- Hygiene products (feminine hygiene, wipes, etc.)
- Hair in both sink and shower drains
- Grease/oil from cooking, especially after the holidays

Focus group participants = 9 (*serving general population in Seattle*)

1:1 interviews = 2 (*providing services in-language to Spanish and Chinese residents*)

Recommendations: *Improve Access to Information*

- “No One Wants Their Sewage Back” umbrella campaign
 - ✓ *Sewer Scoping and Cleaning Save Money*
 - ✓ *Scope and Save on Expensive Plumbing Surprises*
- **Distribute information** to property owners about how to locate and maintain side sewer
 - ✓ *Prioritize high-risk areas*
 - ✓ *Include a reminder to have sewer scoped*



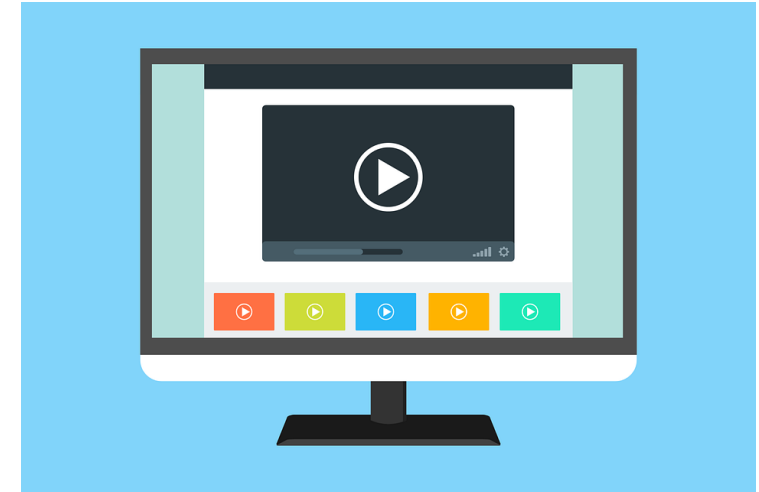
Recommendations: *Improve Access to Information*

- **Improve online tools**

- ✓ Side sewer locator
- ✓ Sample sewer scope videos or reports
- ✓ Advice for new buyers and current homeowners
- ✓ Focus on visuals

- **Connect with real estate network**

- ✓ Educate buyers and sellers
- ✓ Provide online resource for agents
- ✓ Consider additional training for agents



Recommendations: *Other Tools & Interventions*

- **Explore financial incentive options**
 - ✓ Discounted scoping/cleaning
 - ✓ Consider existing programs
- **Improve Coordination with other city departments**
 - ✓ Update online resources
 - ✓ Registered side sewer contractor list

Recommendations: *Engage Multicultural Homeowners*

- **Expand survey audience**
 - ✓ Delivery methods matter
- **Partner with CBOs and other programs**
 - ✓ Horn of Africa Services model
 - ✓ Test outreach materials widely
- **Identify additional needs**
 - ✓ Are we reaching Seattle property owners at risk of losing their homes?



Questions

