

# SPU Customer Review Panel (CRP) Foundational Briefing

Seattle Public Utilities  
February 28, 2023



City of Seattle



A blue-tinted photograph of the Seattle skyline. In the foreground, the Great Wheel is visible on the left, and Pier 56 is on the right. The background is filled with various high-rise buildings.

# Welcome

## Andrew Lee

### CEO and General Manager, SPU

# Public Comment

Andrés Mantilla, BDS Planning



# Upcoming CRP Charter Amendments

- At the March 13 quarterly meeting, there will be discussion and possible vote on three proposed CRP charter amendments that will:
  - Allow for virtual attendance
  - Allow for CRP member stipends
  - Reduced required co-chairs to at least two
- Proposed language will be sent after this meeting for review and feedback





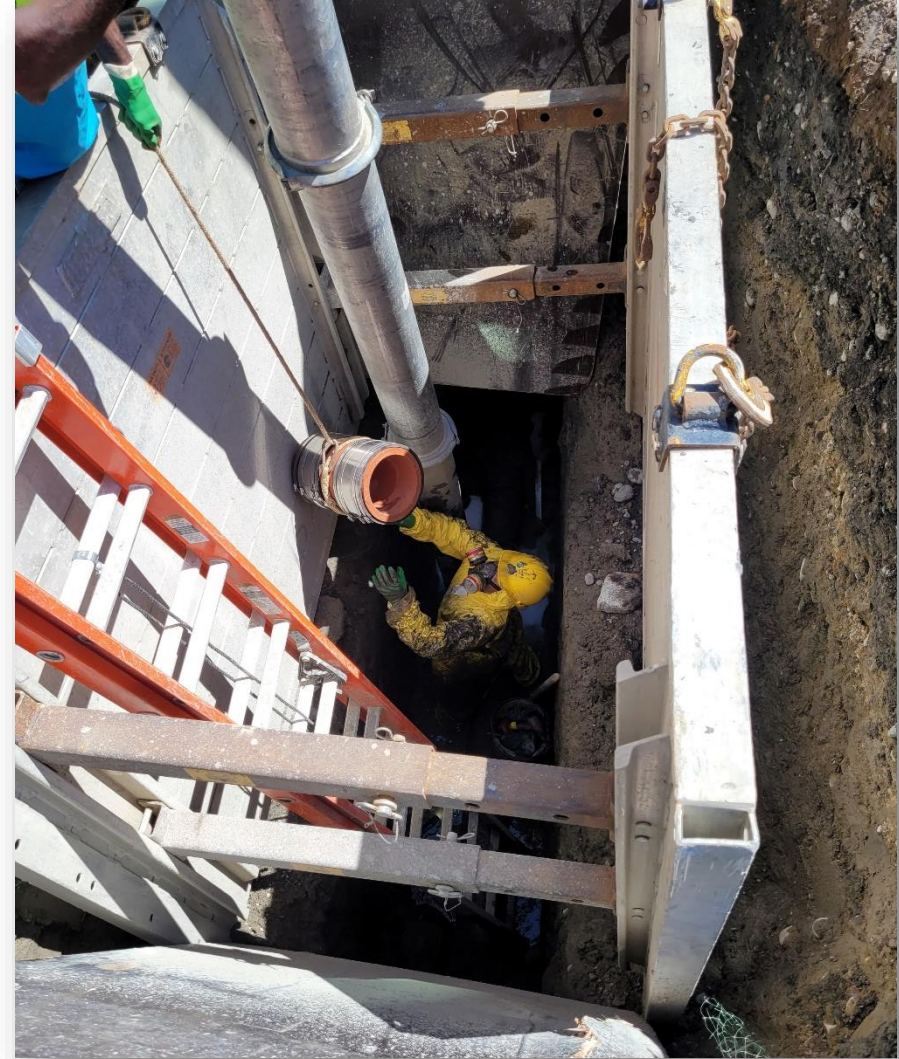
# Drainage and Wastewater Logistics

SBP Update Foundational Briefing  
Ben Marré & Tara Wong-Esteban



# Agenda

1. General introduction
2. About our programs
3. Metrics & Budget
4. CARES Alignment
5. 2020-2023 SBP
6. Challenges and Priorities



# About Drainage & Wastewater (DWW)

## Drainage

*It's about stormwater*

Rain and melting snow that runs off of rooftops, lawns, streets, sidewalks, bridges, and parking lots and continues into drainage systems.

## Wastewater

Used water from drains (sinks, toilets, showers, etc.) moves through private side sewers and into publicly owned sewer pipes, pump stations, and storage tanks.



# Drainage (Stormwater) System

- 485 miles of storm drains
- 307 storm drain outfalls
- 20,473 catch basins
- 56.4 miles of ditches
- 53.3 miles of culverts
- 10 acres green stormwater infrastructure
- 233 flow control facilities,
- 17 detention/treatment ponds
- 482 water quality structures

## Regulated by our NPDES Permit

- First issued by Ecology in 1995. Current Permit expires in July 2024
- General Permit covers Snohomish, King, Pierce and Clark Counties, City of Tacoma, City of Seattle, Port of Seattle and Port of Tacoma
- Authorizes discharge of stormwater from our municipal stormwater sewer system (MS4)
- Permit applies to all City Departments. SPU is designated as the lead department for permit coordination and communication with the Washington Department of Ecology.





# Wastewater System

- 368 miles of sewers
- 1,052 miles of combined sewers
- 12,886 catch basins into the combined sewers
- 67 pump stations
- 82 combined sewer overflow outfalls
- 42 combined sewage detention tanks/pipes

## City of Seattle

### ***Regulated by our NPDES Permit***

- First issued by Ecology in 1975
- Authorizes overflows from CSO outfalls (84) during rain events

### ***Regulated by our Consent Decree***

- With DOJ, EPA, and Ecology, effective July 2013
- Requires control of CSO outfalls to State standard (<1/year/outfall on 20-year average)
- Limits sewer overflows to SSO performance threshold (<4/100 miles on 2-year average)

## King County

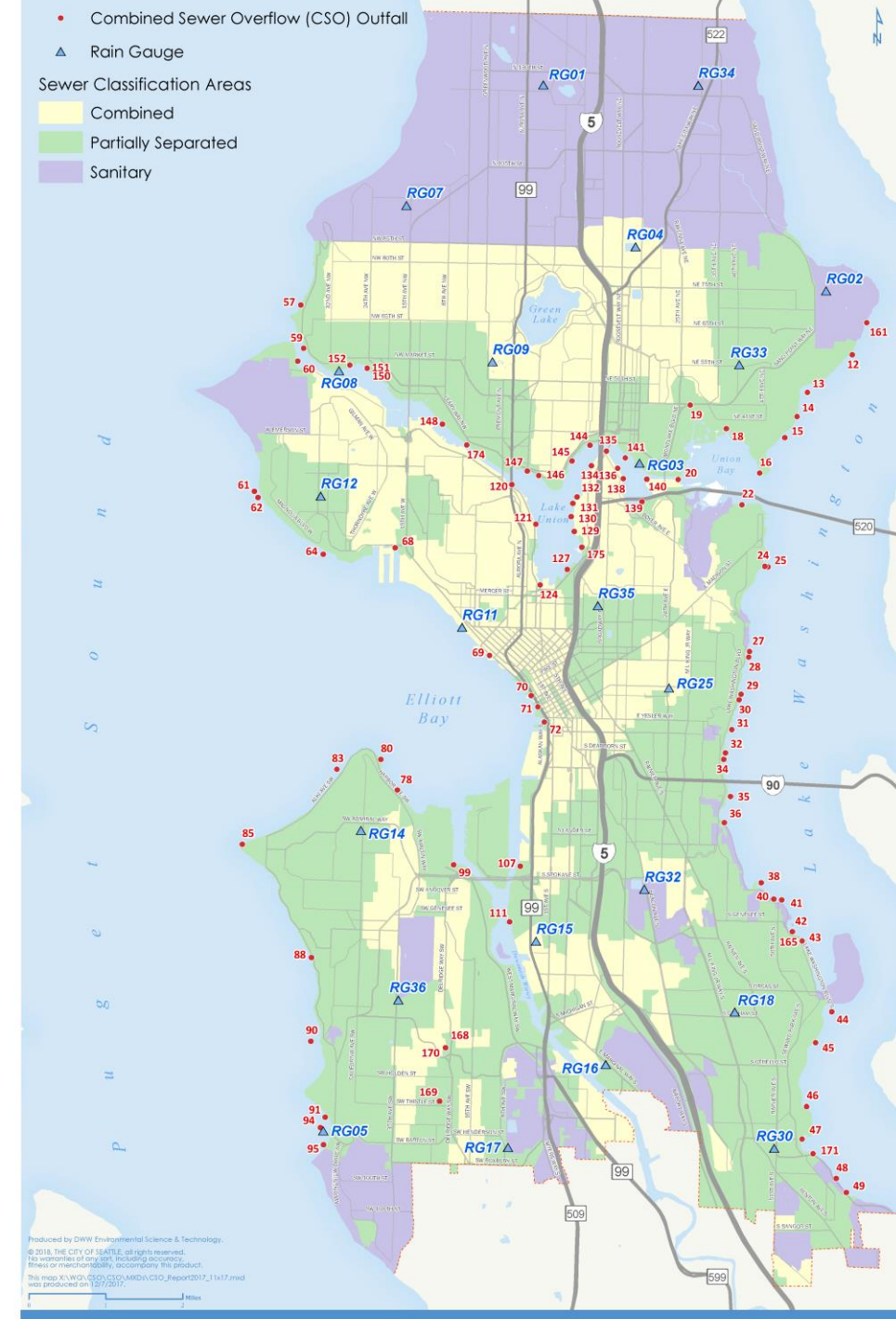
### **Regulated by similar NPDES Permit and Consent Decree requirements**

- Has 39 CSO outfalls in the City of Seattle



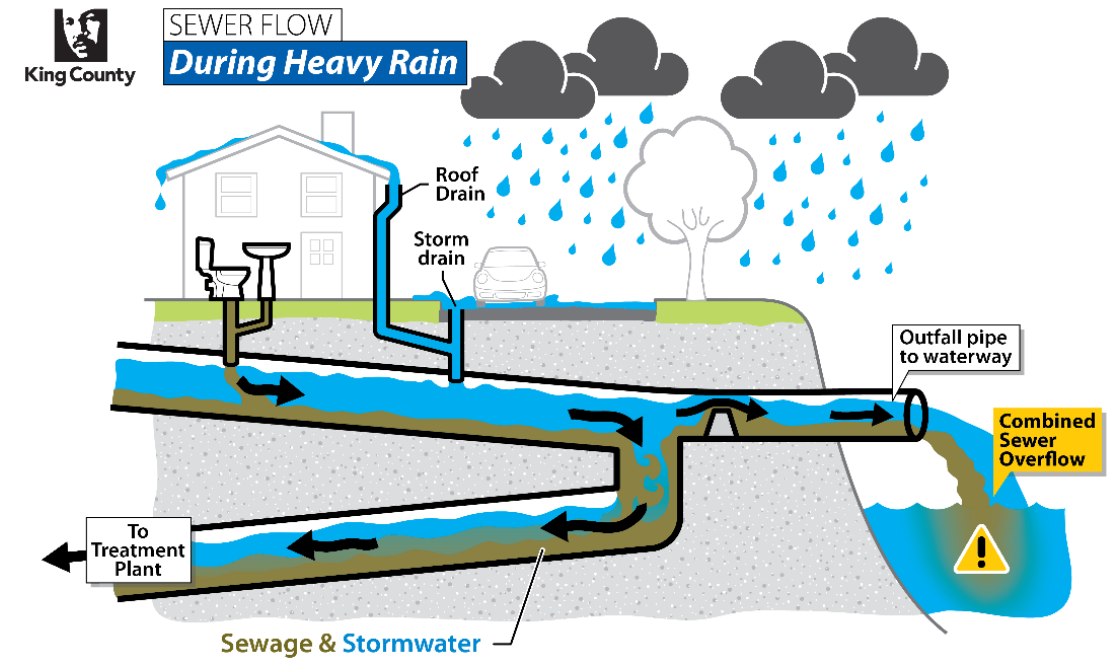
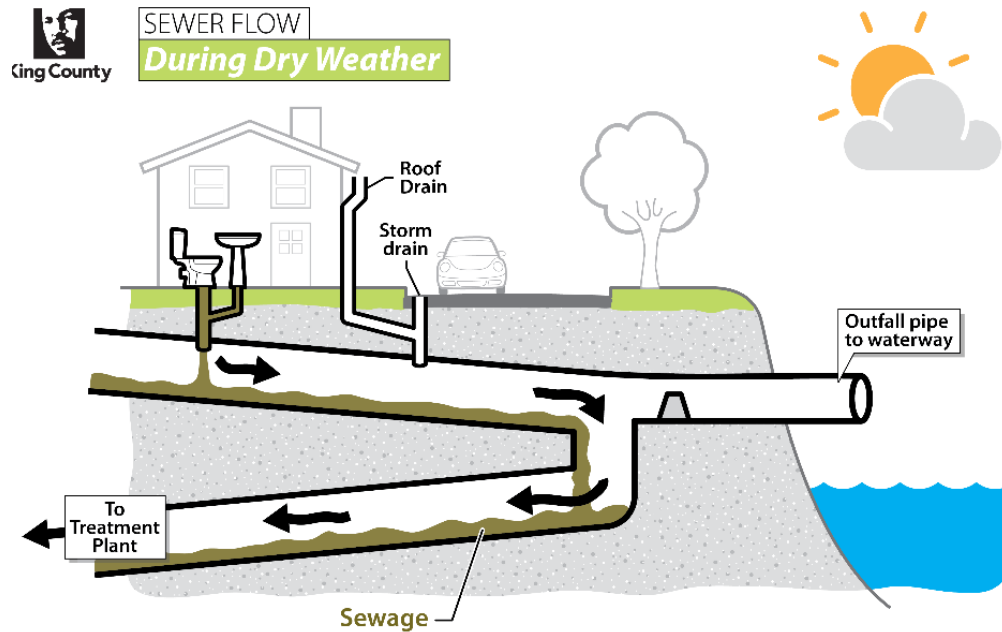
# The System

- 1/3 separated
  - Wastewater only; Stormwater from private property and roads into drainage system
- 1/3 partially separated
  - Wastewater plus stormwater from private property directed
  - Runoff from roads directed to drainage system
- 1/3 combined
  - Wastewater and stormwater





# What is a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)?



# King County's Regional System

Wastewater transmission  
and treatment





# DWW Programs

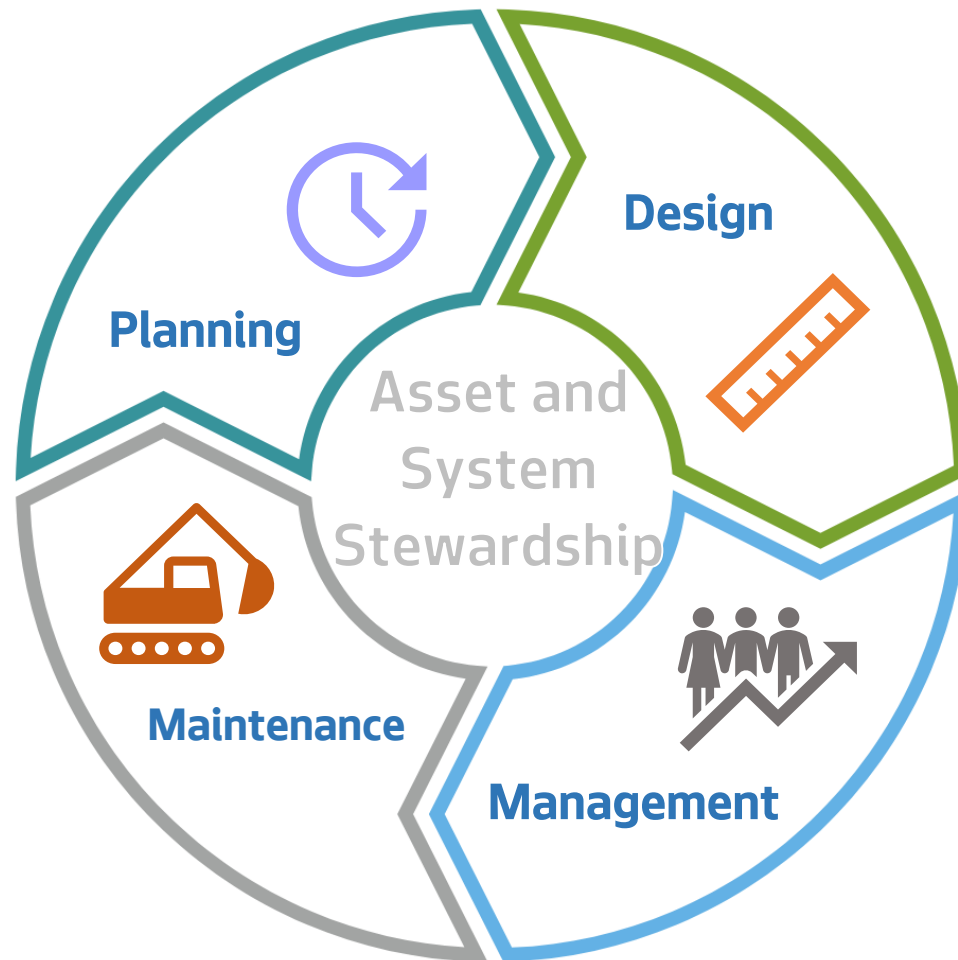


**Asset and System  
Stewardship**



**Context -  
Drivers & Values**

# DWW Programs



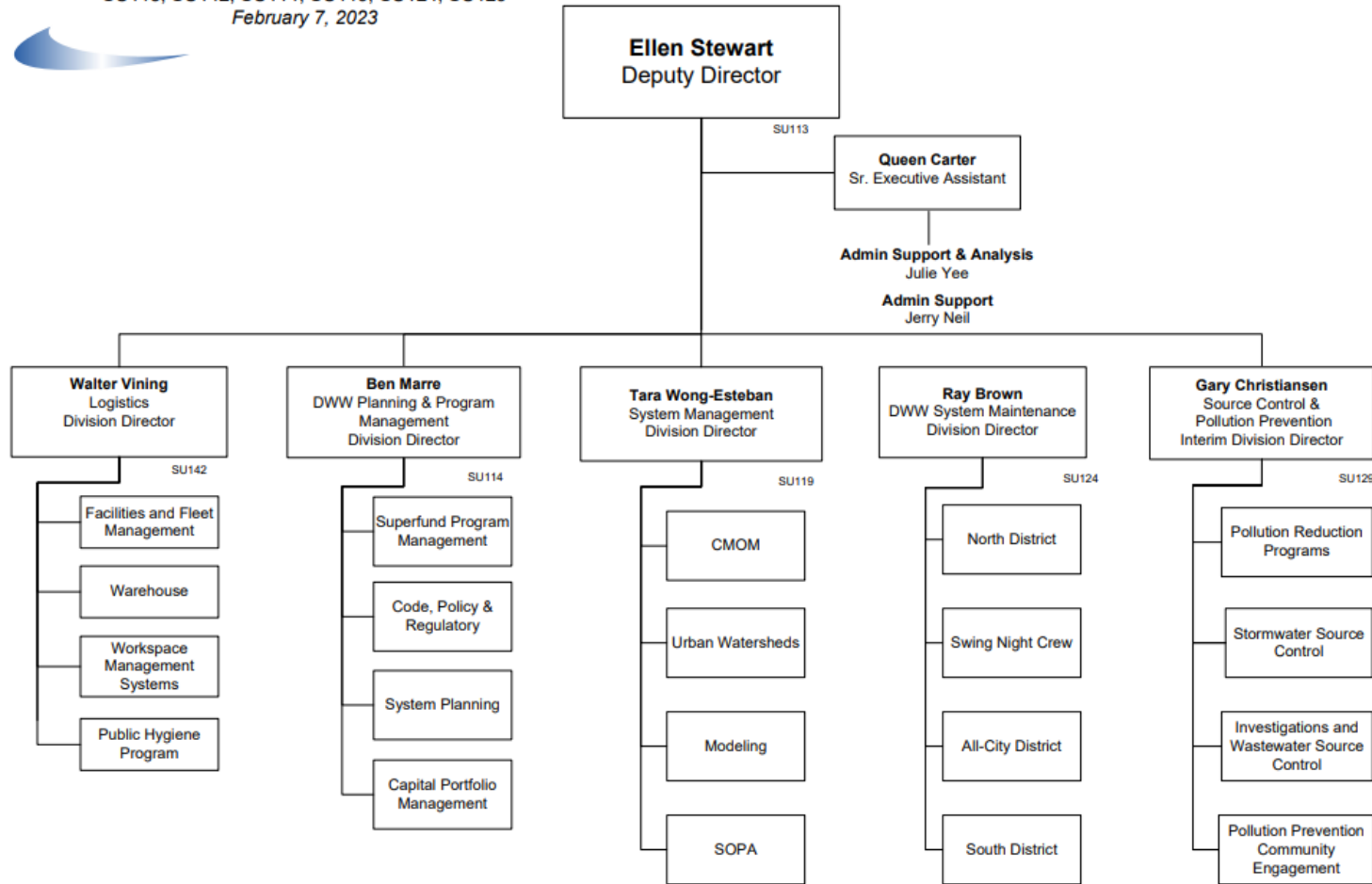
## Context - Drivers and Values

- Service Equity**
- Community Engagement**
- Environmental Compliance**
- Regulatory Compliance**



# DWW and Logistics Branch

SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES  
Drainage and Wastewater Line of Business  
SU113, SU142, SU114, SU119, SU124, SU129  
February 7, 2023



# Logistics

## **We serving and support SPU and the community:**

- Acquire, store, transport and distribute materials, equipment and tools
- Plan, manage, and maintain fleets, facilities and systems
- Provide risk and resiliency support:  
Equipment and materials for emergencies,  
mutual aid for governments and departments

### **Assets**

- Warehouse (Equipment, materials, tools)
- Facilities
- Fleets
- Work management systems

### **Special Projects**

- Fleet and facility electrification  
Grinder pumps
- Public Hygiene Program



# DWW & Logistics Vital Signs

[DWW Vital Signs Report](#)

## Top health indicators



TOP HEALTH METRICS



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



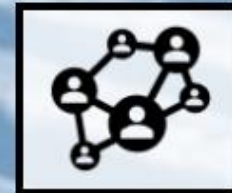
STORMWATER COMPLIANCE METRICS



DWW FINANCIALS



WASTEWATER COMPLIANCE METRICS

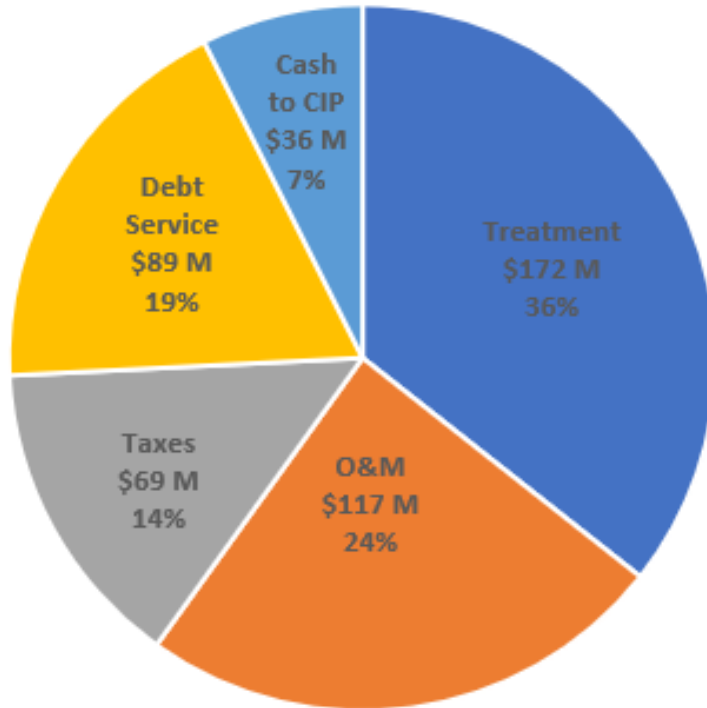


DWW EQUITY METRICS

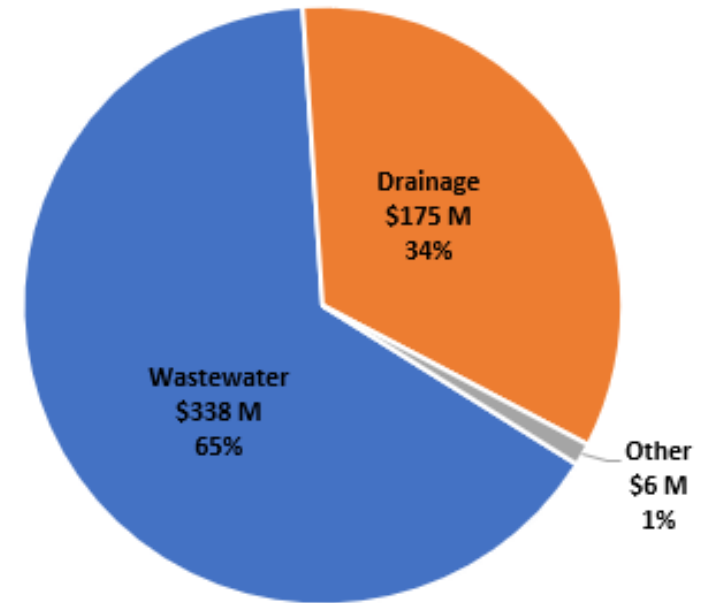


# Expenses and Revenue

Expenses - \$483 Million



Revenues - \$519 Million



# Adopted & Updated SBP Rate Path

## 2021-26 SBP Original Adopted SBP

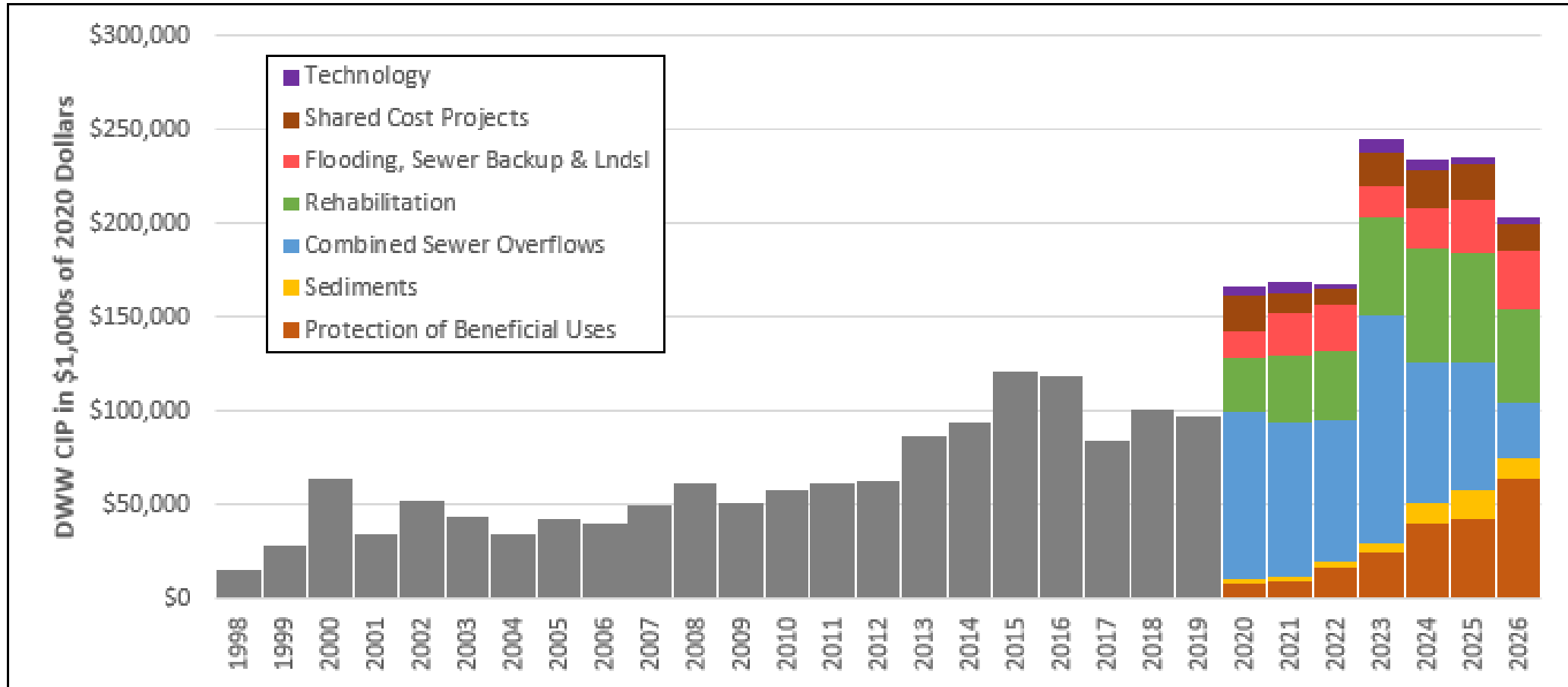
<u>SBP Update</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2021-26</u>
Water	0.0%	2.7%	4.7%	3.6%	4.2%	5.5%	3.4%
Wastewater	7.3%	3.1%	5.9%	0.5%	7.8%	3.6%	4.7%
Drainage	7.4%	8.6%	7.2%	3.9%	6.5%	6.7%	6.7%
Solid Waste	2.9%	2.9%	2.2%	2.3%	2.1%	2.1%	2.4%
Combined	4.5%	3.9%	5.0%	2.2%	5.4%	4.2%	<b>4.2%</b>

## 2021-26 SBP with Adopted Rates

<u>CURRENT</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2021-26</u>
Water	0.0%	2.6%	3.6%	3.4%	5.0%	5.7%	3.4%
Wastewater	7.3%	2.0%	3.6%	3.8%	3.6%	6.3%	4.4%
Drainage	7.4%	6.1%	5.8%	6.1%	3.3%	8.8%	6.3%
Solid Waste	2.9%	2.9%	2.0%	2.3%	2.5%	2.3%	2.5%
Combined	4.5%	3.1%	3.6%	3.7%	3.6%	5.6%	<b>4.0%</b>

 Approved rate legislation that is currently in effect

# DWW Capital Improvement Projects





# Major Capital Work, 2023

## Capital Projects

- Ship Canal Water Quality Project
- South Park Pump Station & Drainage Conveyance
- South Park Water Quality Facility
- Broadview Sewer Overflow & Drainage Improvements
- South Operations Complex

## Capital Programs

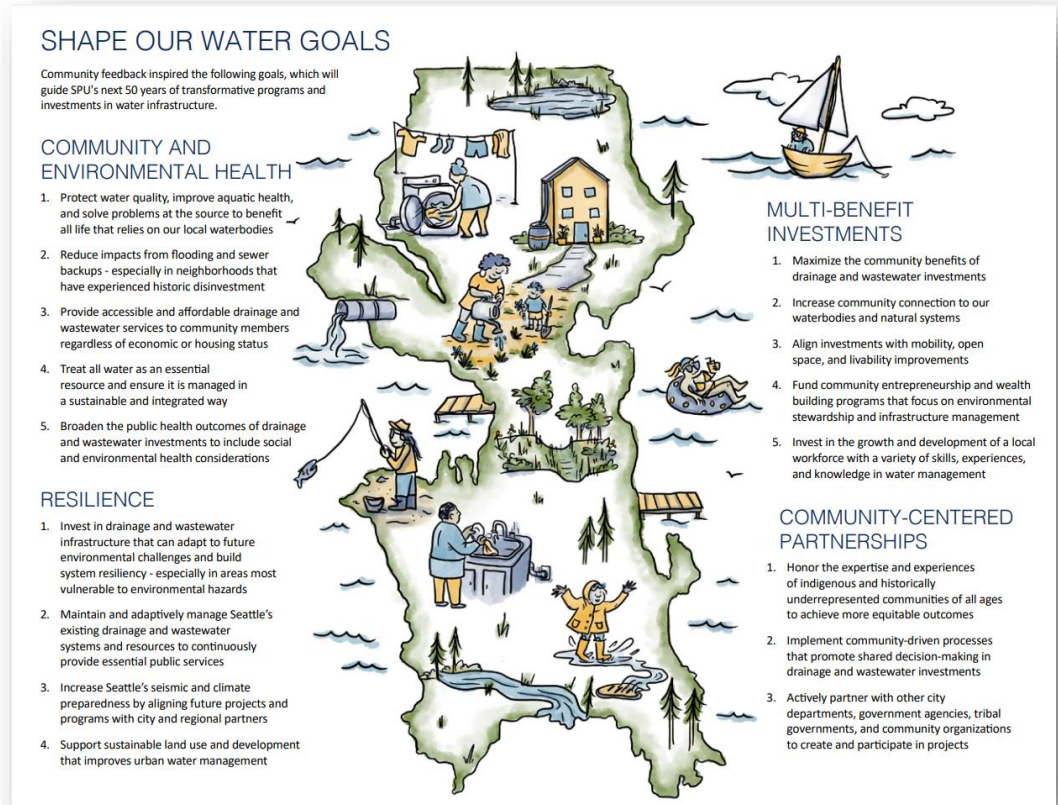
- Transportation project related system improvements (STS3, SDOT Transportation levy)
- Wastewater pipe rehabilitation
- Wastewater pump station rehabilitation
- Wastewater outfall rehabilitation
- CSO reduction
- Green stormwater infrastructure
- Sediments
- Stream culvert replacement



# CARES Alignment: Shape Our Water

SPU is developing a 50-year plan for water resilience that is rooted in community and equity:

- **The Community Vision** was developed through engagement with BiPOC community groups, youth, artists, and organizers.
- **The Equity Framework** articulates the racial equity principles of the plan and provides direction in decision-making and practice.



# CARES Alignment: Equitable, accessible services



RV Wastewater Program



Public hygiene programs



Language access improvements



# CARES Alignment: Customers and Community

Division	Primary Community Touch points
Logistics	Public Hygiene Program South Park Grinder Pumps and sandbags
Planning and Program Management	Shape Our Water – Community Vision Construction project engagement
Source Control and Pollution Prevention	Engagement programs – FOG, Flushables, Rainwise Business and restaurant inspections Spill response Drainage Investigations
System Maintenance	Construction Notifications On the ground interactions
System Management	Creek Stewardship



# 2020-2023 SBP Investments and Initiatives

1. Shape Our Water	Initiative
2. Ship Canal Water Quality Project	Investment
4. Green Stormwater Infrastructure	Investment
8. Side Sewer Assistance	Investment
9. SPU Support for the Unsheltered	Investment
18. DWW Asset Management & Opportunity Work	Investment



# Current and Future Challenges

## System Stewardship

### Asset Resiliency

*System age, capacity, security, climate readiness, density & development...*

### Operational Adaptation

*density, development and opportunity projects, inflation, supply chains*

### Partnership Challenges

*Treatment costs and regulatory pressures*

## Workforce Resiliency

### Workforce Facilities

*age, risks, security, Climate Change, more...*

### Workforce Stewardship

*workloads, safety, hire & retain, succession planning, COVID mitigation*





# SPU Corporate Functions #1

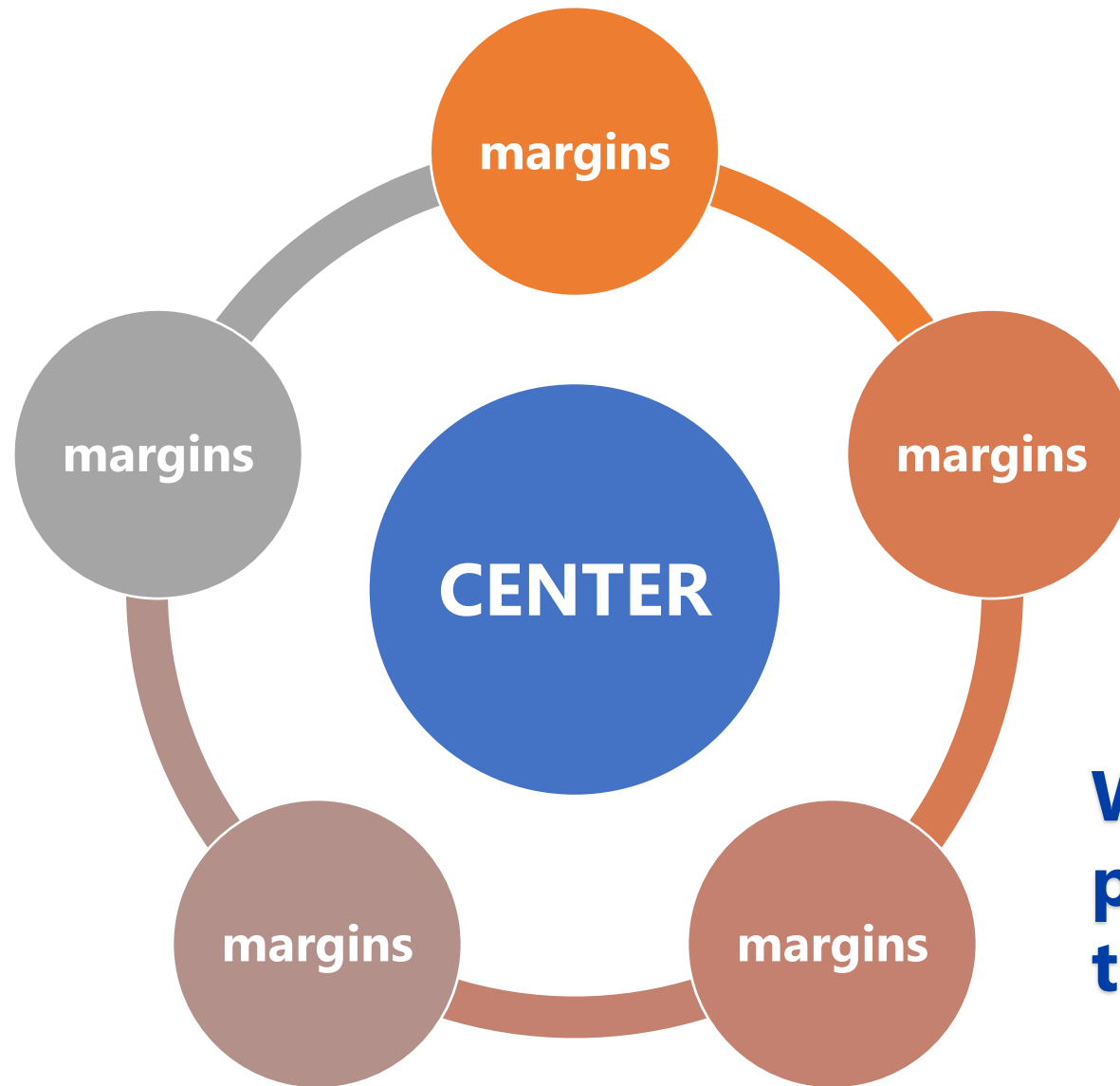
## People - Race and Social Justice, Human Resources, Customer Assistance and Affordability Initiatives



# Race and Social Justice at SPU

Steve Hamai and Andrew Lee

**Who lives  
at the  
center?**



**Who is  
pushed to  
the margins?**



# What is Equity?



Public Restrooms in Kumasi, Ghana

# SBP CARES Principle: Equity & Empowerment

*“We work to dismantle institutional racism by building trusting relationships, prioritizing equity and inclusion in decision-making, and creating opportunities for all.”*

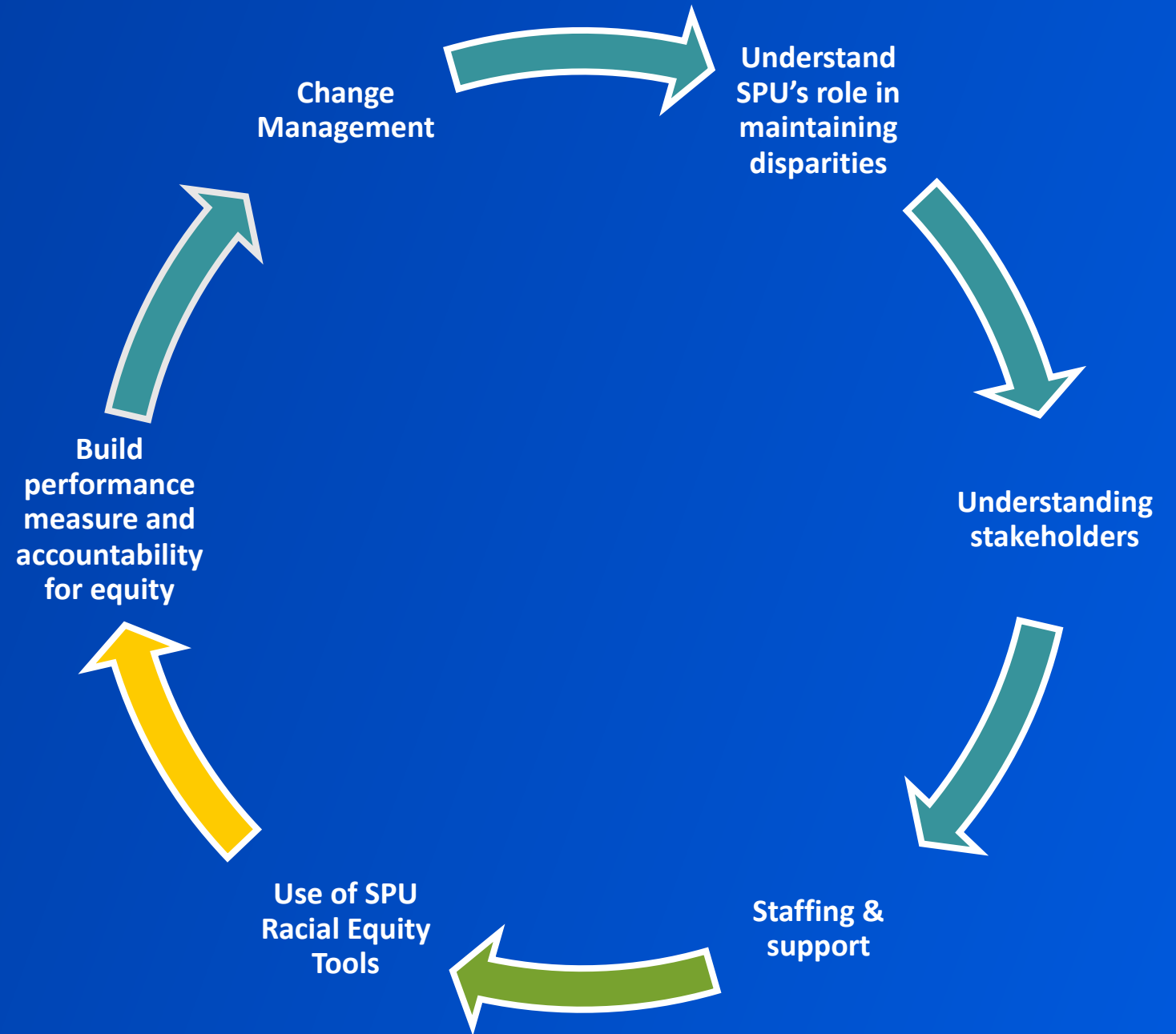


*Photo from recent Women in the Trades event*



# SPU's Approach

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# First, Acknowledge Racial Equity as an Issue

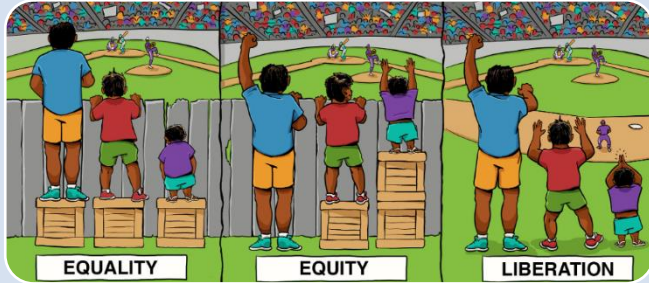
*Ask how our utility may create racial or other socio-economic disparities through:*

- Policies
- Plans
- Procedures
- Services
- Programs
- Projects





# Three RSJ Work Streams Across SPU



**SPU Culture,  
Learning and  
Development  
(Internal)**



**Institutional  
Changemaking  
(Policy, Programs,  
Investments)**



**Community  
Relationships and  
Empowerment  
(External)**

# EQUITY



# Embedding Equity Throughout the Utility

**Women & Minority Owned Businesses**   Customer Service   Climate Resiliency  
Utility Discount Program   **Community Connections**   Waste Reduction  
Cedar River Education Center   **Pollution Prevention**   Youth Stormwater Education  
**Side Sewer Assistance Pilot Program**   **Summer Youth Employment Program**   Clean Cities  
Solid Waste Advisory Committee   **RV Wastewater Pump-out Pilot Program**   **Public Health**  
**Language Access**   Customer Review Panel   **RainCity Partnership**   **Shape Our Water**  
**Adopt A Street**   Duwamish Valley Youth Group Partnership   **Emergency Assistance**   Clear Alley Program  
Community Partnerships   **Adopt-A-Drain**   Hygiene Stations   **Environmental Stewardship**  
**Water Conservation**   Workforce Equity   **Apprenticeship Program**   Emergency Management  
**Essential Services**   Capital Improvement Project Engagement   **And More**



# RSJI Collective Work Efforts – A Few Highlights

## Equity Dashboard

Develop and promote dashboard showing data & context

## Racial Equity Toolkits

Perform toolkits on key investments – South Park Water Quality Facility project, etc

## Training

Advance equity-focused trainings, learning and development

## Knowledge Basin

Invite practitioners and guest speakers to share their work with others

## Equitable Hiring

Advance equity-focused hiring practices, policies, procedures, and/or standardization

## Customer Affordability Assistance Improvements

Assess key needs from customer perspective and propose revised, new approaches

## Environmental Justice Operating Framework

Develop guidance for how SPU can meet community needs and expectations.

## Branch Equity Teams

Engage and survey staff in all 6 branches to support internal equity learning, development and community of practice conversations.

## WMBE Contracting

Set and achieve procurement goals for consultant and purchasing. Achieved 23.67% (goal was 22%) and 21.77% (goal was 18%) respectively.





# Affordability at SPU

Wayne Liou, Maryam Mason, Dee Reed,  
Leslie Brinson

# Customer Affordability Efforts

## ***Delivering Equitable Essential Services***

- Conservation helps stretch our water supply
- Customers are connected by our customer service workforce to the assistance they need to maintain access to essential services

## ***Stewarding Environment and Health***

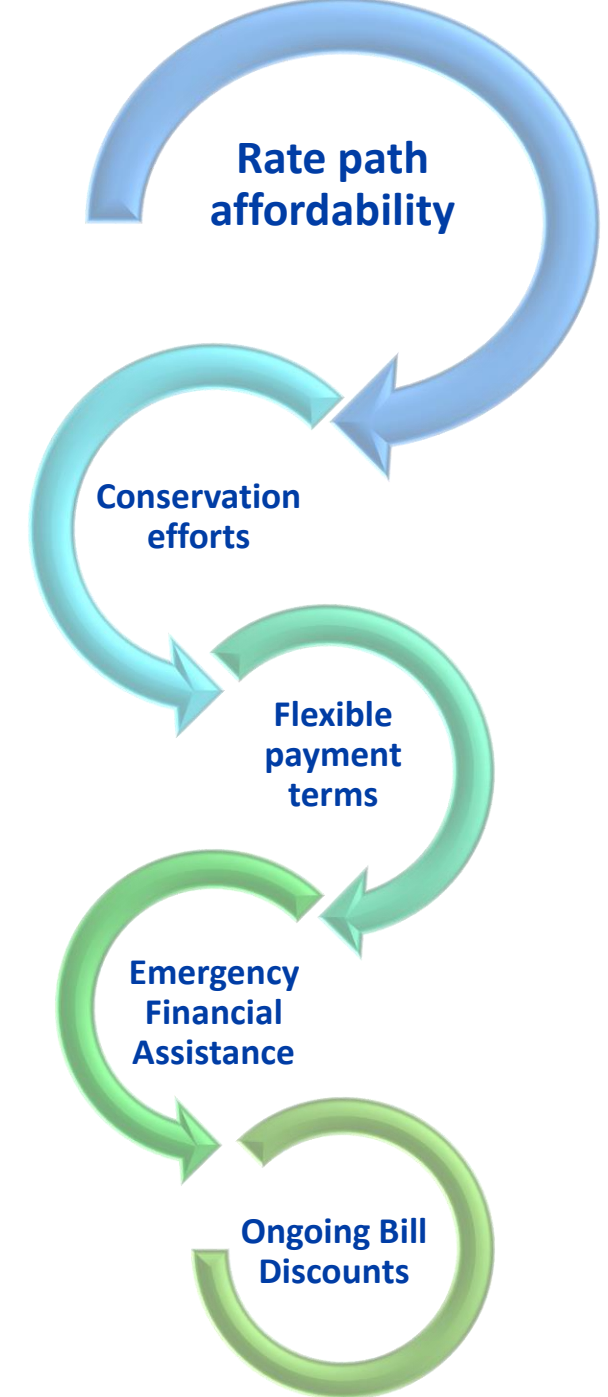
- Conservation protects the environment

## ***Empowering Our Customers, Community, and Employees***

- Conservation helps reduce utility bills
- Utility bill assistance empowers customers experiencing financial hardship

## ***Strengthening our Utility's Business Practices***

- Accountability and Affordability Commitments center ratepayer affordability





# Affordability and Accountability Initiative

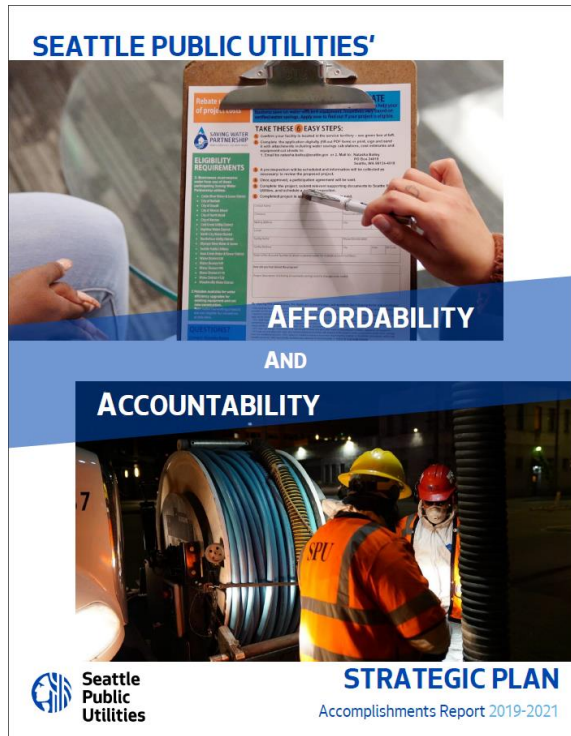
- Strategic plan: identifying strategic priorities and commitments for improving overall ratepayer affordability and business performance



- 7 focus areas
  - Capital planning and project delivery
  - Funding and financial management
  - Regulatory strategies
  - Work improvements and efficiencies
  - Customer assistance
  - Technology management
  - Service contract negotiations
- 15 strategies
  - e.g., integrate capital planning across LOBs, optimize alternative funding practices and tools, develop a culture of continuous improvement, improve access to self-service utility services
- 55 actions

# Affordability and Accountability Initiative

- [Accomplishments report](#): overview of affordability and accountability outcomes, including lessons learned



- 2019-2021 Accomplishments Highlights:
  - Lowered planned 6-year rate path by 20%
  - Cost-savings of over \$300M through low-interest loans, rate forecast cost containment efforts, and bond refinancing
  - Increased customer assistance to around \$37M, including the establishment of a Community Donation Program
  - Expanded CRP quarterly performance reporting



# Customer Affordability Programs - Water Conservation



- Seattle & 18 wholesale customers
- Provide efficient hardware and encourage conservation habits through education, technical assistance, and financial assistance
- Current programs:
  - Youth education and community outreach
  - Water efficient gardening classes
  - Rebates – toilets, sprinkler timers, more
  - Free toilets for low income (Seattle only)



# Water Conservation - Accomplishments & Future Opportunities

## 2021 accomplishments:

- **447** classroom presentations, reaching **9,877** students
- Provided **277** low-flow toilets to **220** homes
- Installed **257** water-efficient fixtures in 3 custom projects
- Provided **235** leak kits, **265** leak signs, and **33** aerator kits to businesses
- Offered **15** “Savvy Gardener” Classes to **615** attendees (**94** new students)

## • Future opportunities:

- Metering technology to monitor use & leak alerts
  - Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) by utility
  - Customer-installed flow monitoring devices (e.g., Flume)
- Onsite Non-Potable Water Systems
  - Rainwater/stormwater/greywater substitution instead of potable water
  - Ex: Potential pilot project at North Seattle College using rainwater to flush toilets



# Customer Affordability Programs - Utility Bill Assistance

- Provide customers with financial assistance to lower utility bills, reduce outstanding balances, and negotiate payment plans
- Current programs
  - SPU Emergency Assistance Program
  - Utility Discount Program
  - Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)
  - Short-term and Long-term payment plans
  - Federal and State COVID Assistance Grants (2021-2022)



## Get Help with Your Utility Bills

If you're behind on your utility bills, Seattle City Light (electricity) and Seattle Public Utilities (water/sewer/garbage) offer payment plans and bill assistance to help you pay down your bills and maintain your utility services.

# Utility Bill Assistance - 2022 Accomplishments

- New team within the Customer Care Division focusing solely on supporting utility bill assistance programs
  - Alignment of processes across SPU and SCL utility bill assistance programs to reduce customer effort and confusion
  - Moved to one online application system for SPU and SCL utility bill assistance programs
- Cross-functional work with conservation programs to help identify qualifying customers
- COVID Recovery created opportunity to pilot new approach to collections and repayment

## By the numbers...

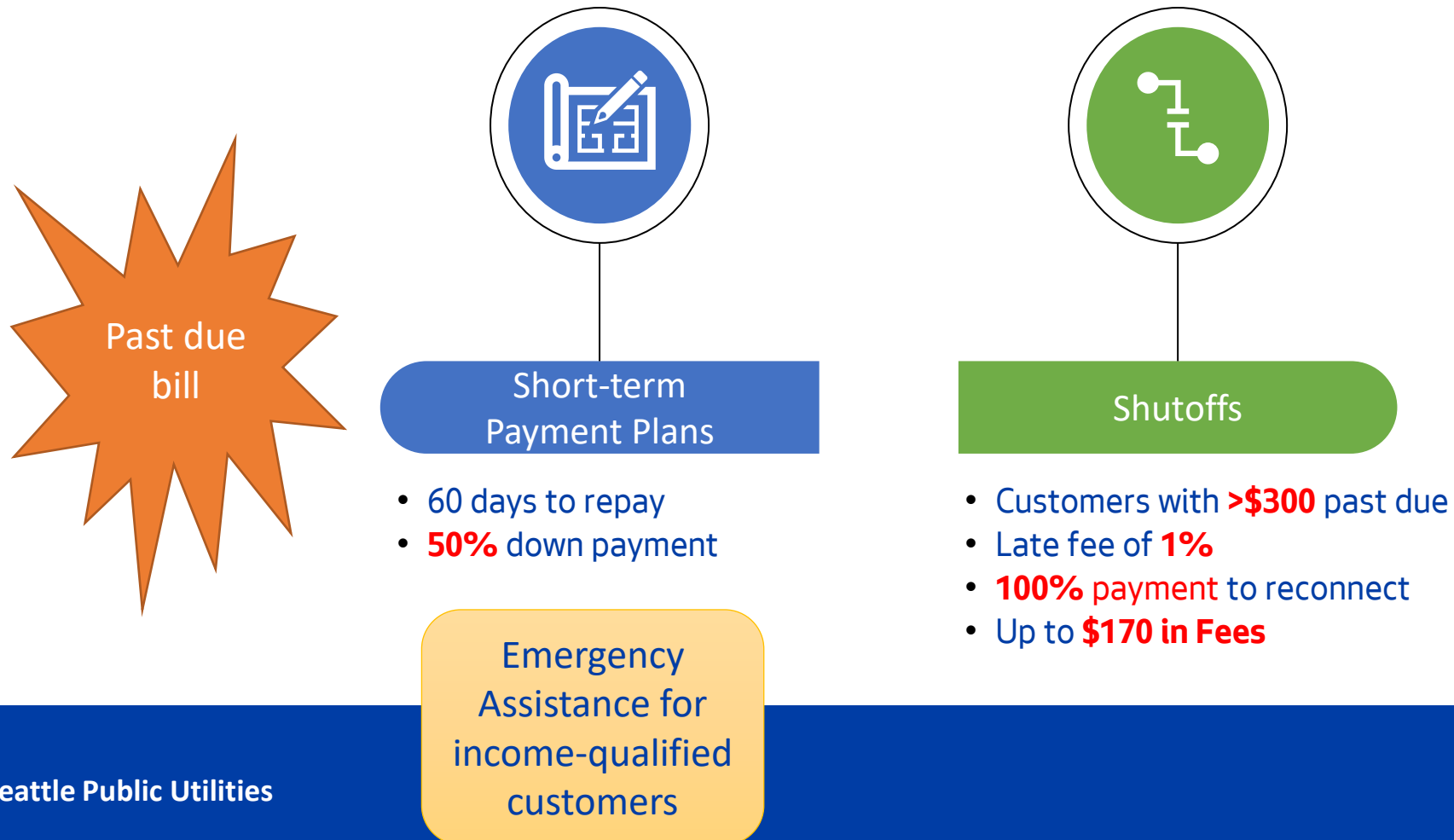
- **35,382** UDP enrolled households as of 12/31/2022
- WA State COVID Utility Assistance Grant: **\$3,600,000** applied to **3,761** accounts
- SPU Emergency Assistance Program: **\$714,300** applied to **1,076** accounts
- LIHWAP: **\$162,800** pledged and applied to **143** accounts
- Community Donation Program: **\$5,850** raised in 2022





# Pre-COVID Approach to Collections

- SPU's approach to collections prior to COVID resulted in minimal delinquencies of ~\$2-3M.
- When the COVID shutoff moratorium ended in April 2022, SPU had ~\$17M in delinquencies.



# COVID-19 Recovery Approach 2022-2023

Past  
due bill



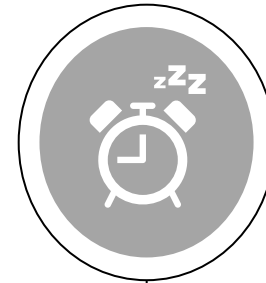
## Short-term Payment Plans

- Easy access online
- 60 days to repay
- **25%** down payment



## Long-term Payment Plans

- Set up through Call Center
- **36 months** to repay
- No down payment



## Late Fee Waiver

- Expires June 30, 2023



## Shutoffs

- Customers with **>\$1000** past due
- Avoid shutoff with **payment plan**
- **25%** (with cap) to reconnect
- **All fees waived**
- Notices translated for first time

Expanded  
Emergency Assistance for income-qualified customers



# Utility Bill Assistance – Key Future Opportunities

## Elevate Customer Voice

- 2023 customer-centered evaluation of SPU and SCL utility bill assistance programs to inform program design, outreach and technology improvements in 2024 and beyond

## Increase Access

- Increase cross-enrollment partnerships with other low-income programs
- Improve accessibility of bill assistance communications, especially in languages other than English

## Increase Internal Efficiencies

- Implement system and process enhancements

## Continue Learning from COVID Recovery Efforts

- Implement new approaches to help customers pay their bills and avoid shutoffs



# Clean City & Unsheltered Services at SPU

Lee Momon

# Clean City Programs



Keeping Seattle clean is an essential element of a safe and vibrant community. Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) has several programs to clean up or reduce litter and debris. These services have expanded as needs have evolved.



All Clean City programs are funded through Seattle's General Fund. In 2022, about \$14 million was budgeted for these efforts.



In 2022 Clean City Programs collected over 3.3 Million pounds of garbage and debris from the ROW in Seattle.





# Clean City Programs

## Graffiti Rangers and Intake team

- Cover 142.55 Miles with 5 Full time and 2 TES painters
- 95% of all Reported abatement completed within 6 days or less
- 100% of vulgar or hate graffiti is cleaned up within 24 hours.
- In 2022 611,690 SQ FT of graffiti was abated, which is equal to 12.5 football fields





# Clean City Programs

## Encampment Trash Program

2022 - YTD

- ❖ SPU has collected **3,470,433** pounds of litter since July 2017;
- ❖ Distributed over **121,221** authorized bags
- ❖ Made **17,206** contacts with people living in Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments (UHEs); and
- ❖ Serviced **45** different UHEs through the program.



Safe traffic & pedestrian conditions



Safe conditions for encampment residents



Safe conditions for outreach



Trash collection location at least 20 ft away



Site not immediately scheduled for removal



## Report this bag!

CONTACT US:

**206-684-7587**



OR USE THE FIND IT FIX IT APP.



**Find It, Fix It**

[seattle.gov/finditfixitapp](https://seattle.gov/finditfixitapp)

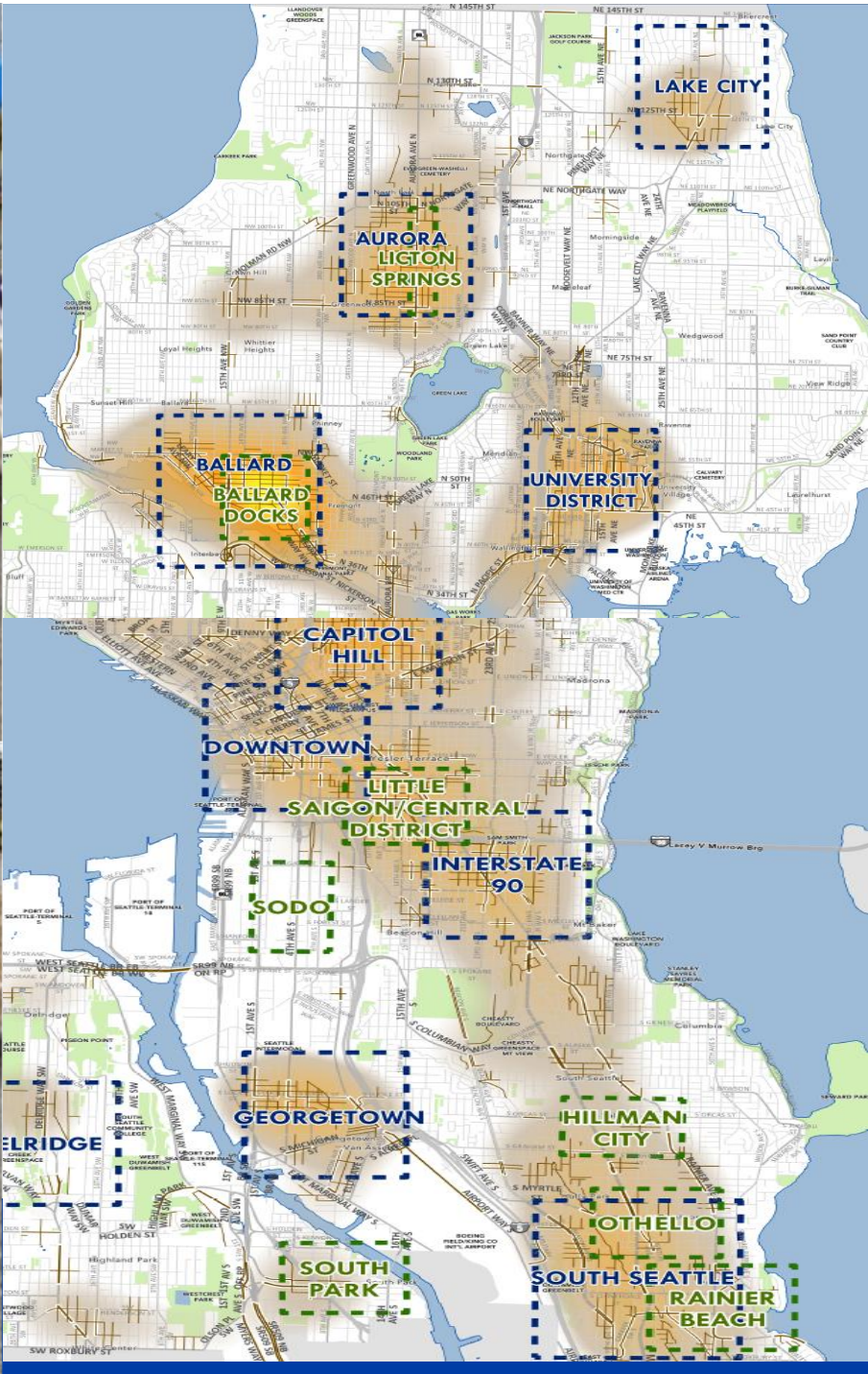




# Litter Abatement Routes

2016	No data collected
2017	49,978 pounds of debris
2018	652,361 pounds of debris
2019	660,786 pounds of debris
2020	854,289 pounds of debris
2021	1,070,006 pounds of debris
2022 YTD	1,667,045 pounds of debris

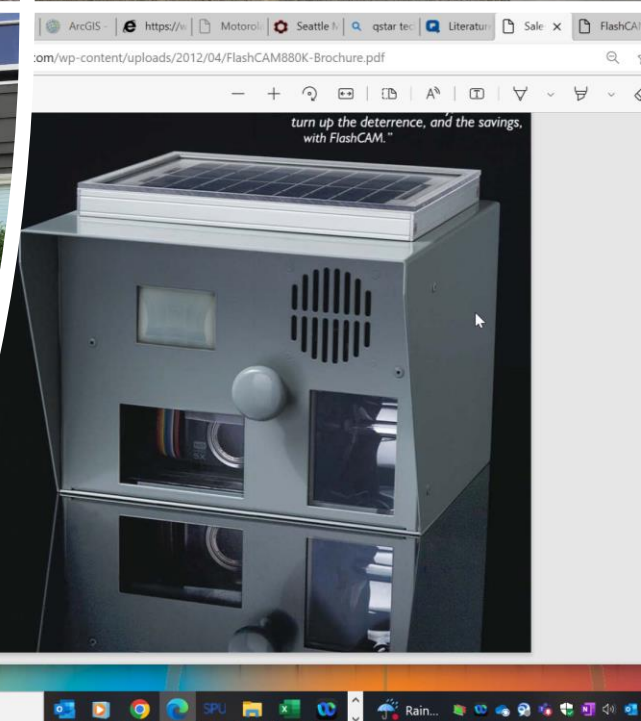
- SPU Litter Abatement Program (proactive litter routes) has collected **4,954,465 pounds** of litter since July 2017. SPU collected **1,667,045 pounds** of litter in the 31 neighborhood routes between in 2022.





# Clean City's Illegal Dumping Education and Enforcement Program

- The program's mission is to educate communities about illegal dumping and give them information about proper methods to remove bulky items.
- Install Pilot ID camera in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023
- Outreach about the pilot was performed: In person, phone calls, emails, and a postcard mailout. Completed in 2022.
- To stop the opportunistic dumping by mostly businesses that dumped over 5k tires in the West Seattle area in 2022, and the first camera pilot location.
- SPU will lead with education and possible community service for individuals that are caught illegally dumping before assessing a fine.





# Opportunities and Challenges

## Top priorities for 2023

- Providing focused equitable community cleanup for under reported areas because silence does not mean everything is OK.
- Conduct more ROW cleans in all sectors of the City weekly or bi-weekly.
- Evaluate the camera pilot for its effectiveness and expand in other illegal dumping hotspots to offset the opportunistic dumpers

## Challenge

- Try to continue to offer private property graffiti abatement to low income or others with medical issues that are unable to abate their property within the SMC code guidelines, since the funding was cut.

# Future Focus for Clean Cities

- **Empowering our Customers, Community & Employees**

By Recruiting volunteers from underserved communities and areas with high levels of litter on how the AAS and Litter abatement programs work and how they can help by using the FIFI app or joining clean up efforts in their community.

- **Stewarding Environment & Health**

By addressing the growing community concerns and associated public health risks with the Goal of keeping Seattle a Clean and Safe Community by partnering with Community groups and other public agencies.

- **Delivering Equitable Essential Services**

By working with the Mayor's Office Unified Care team to address issues around Seattle with a One-Seattle approach and not silos by branches.



A blue-tinted photograph of the Seattle skyline. In the foreground, the Great Wheel is visible on the left, and Pier 56 is on the right. The background is filled with various high-rise buildings. The text 'Human Resources at SPU' and 'Adrienne Thompson' is overlaid in white.

# Human Resources at SPU

Adrienne Thompson



# High Level Overview of Key Initiatives

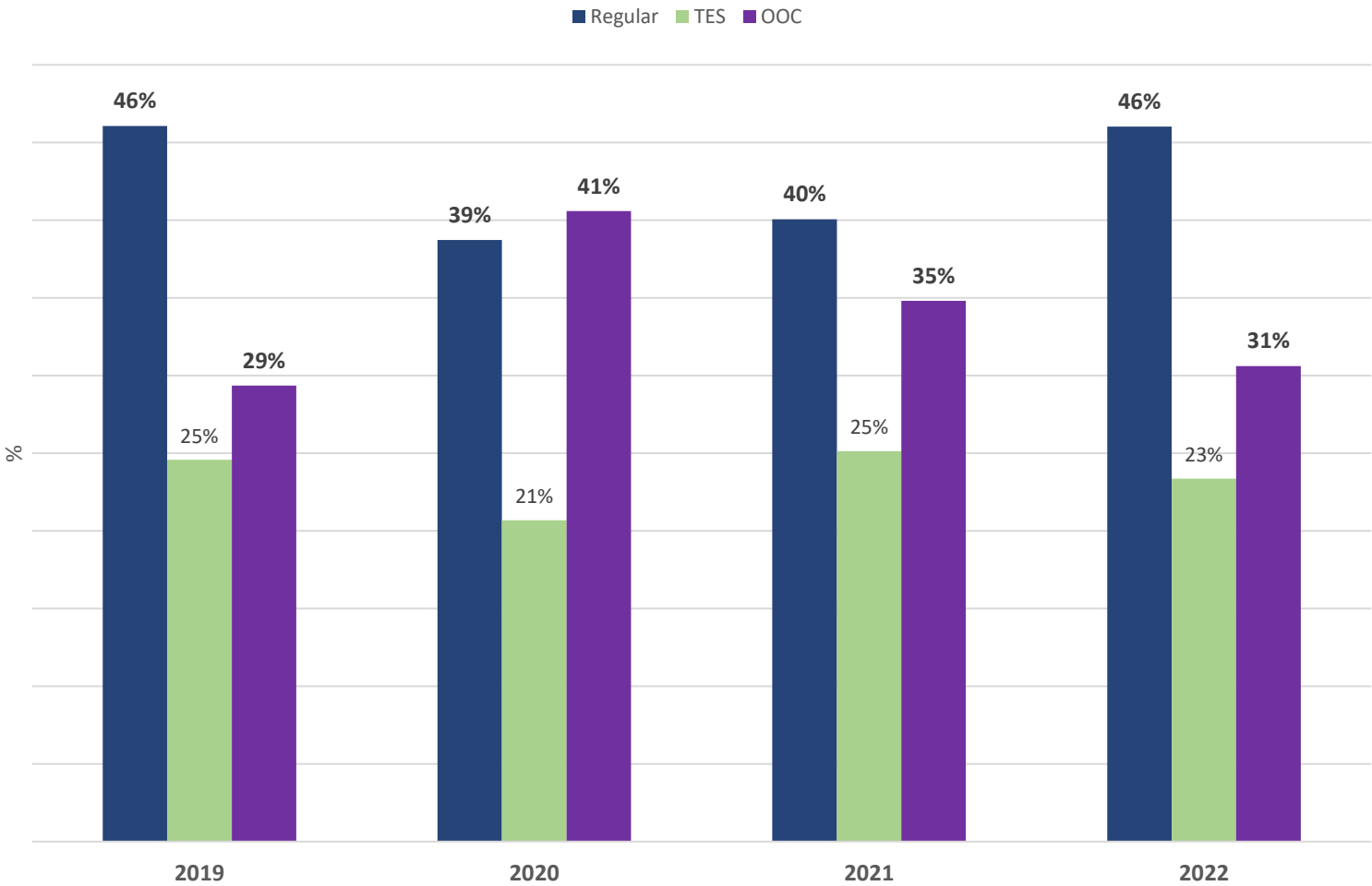
- **Workplace Culture** – Create a culture in the workplace where employees feel like they belong. Utilize the annual Employee Engagement Survey to gain continuous feedback and take actions in response to our employees.
- **Workforce Development** – Attract and retain a diverse workforce. Partner with outside organizations focused on equity attracting our future workforce. Provide professional development tools and opportunities for existing employees to grow within SPU.
- **Succession Planning** – Being prepared for the future workforce to transfer skills, knowledge and ability to continue to deliver equitable services to the community. Identify areas that will need to be mapped, make process improvements and create standard operating procedures. Develop training in those areas there are gaps and create redundancy in roles where one person holds all of the knowledge.



# 2022 Total Hires

- Most challenging positions to fill:**
- Water Pipe Workers
  - Positions requiring a Commercial Driver’s License
  - Positions requiring a Professional Engineering License

Year	Regular	Temp	Out of Class	Total
2019	193	103	123	419
2020	146	78	153	377
2021	145	91	126	362
2022	197	100	131	428



# BIPOC Hires and SPU Demographics

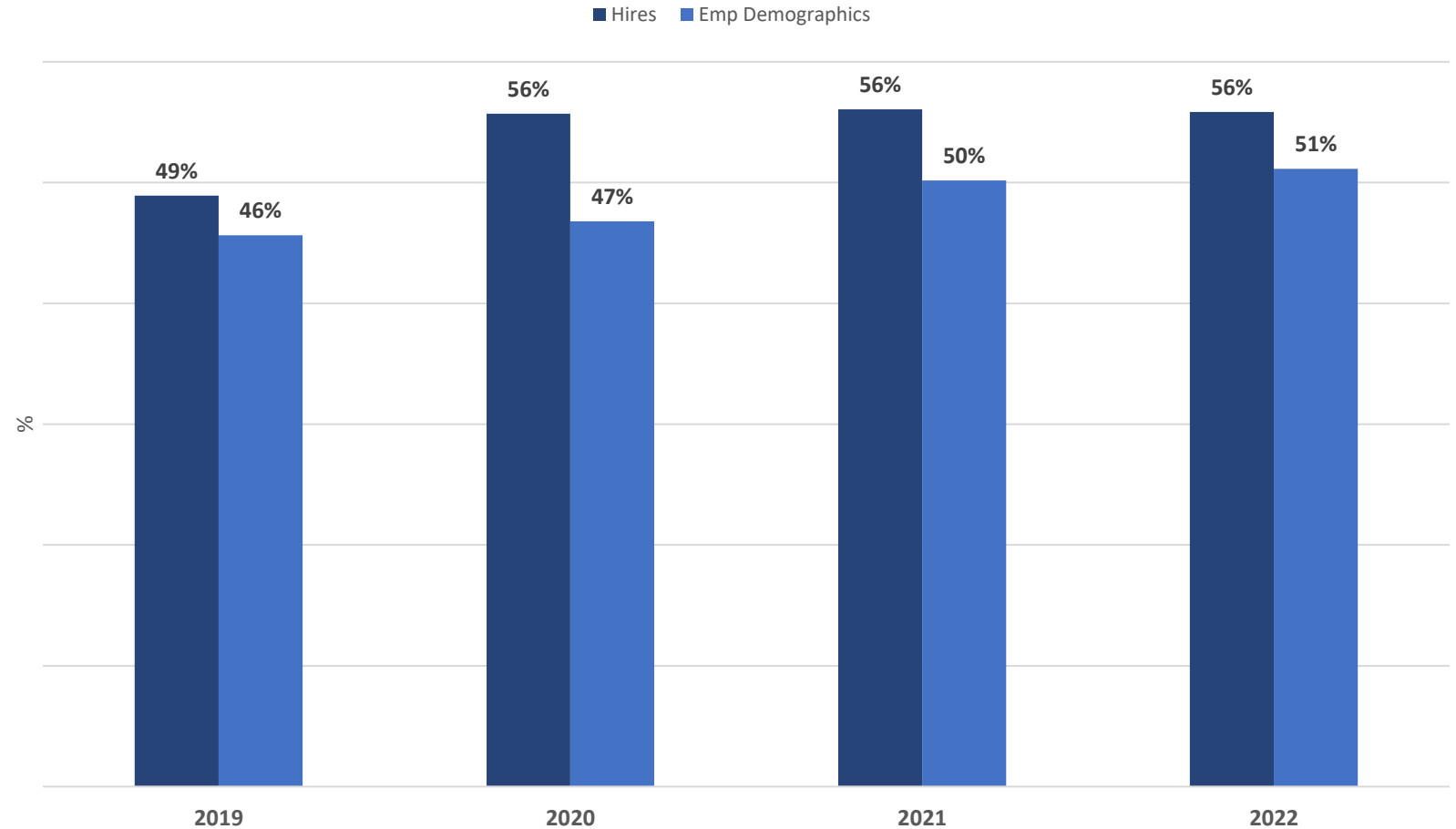
2019: 419

2020: 377

2021: 362

2022: 428

SPU All BIPOC Hires vs SPU Employee Demographics





# Opportunities and Challenges

- **COVID** – Human Resources Division faced many challenges during COVID needing to be agile throughout the pandemic, creating and implementing new processes, and being a resource for each of our employees.
- **Technology** – We have an opportunity to update and implement new technology to support our employees and track our improvements.
- **Workforce Equity** – We have experienced over the past two years a higher-than-normal rate of employees exiting our workforce, due to COVID, vaccine mandate and changes to the retirement system. This is in addition to what is often referred to as the “silver tsunami.” This provides opportunity as SPU to focus on workforce equity and succession planning.



# Top Priorities

- **Workplace Culture** – Create an environment where employees feel like they belong.
- **Workforce Development** – Develop a program internally for professional growth for employees and externally to recruit an equitable workforce.
- **Technology** – Implement and utilize technology that enhances the experience for all employees.
- **Transparency** – Standardize processes and make it available for all employees.

# CRP Discussion

Andrés Mantilla, BDS Planning





# Themes We Have Heard So Far

- **Workforce development:** high vacancy rate, attraction and retention concerns; concerns about current workload affecting programs
- **Succession planning:** silver tsunami, average age of workforce
- Maintenance and **upkeep of existing infrastructure;** asset management
- **Community focus;** commitment SPU CARES efforts
- **Affordability,** how are customers impacted
- **Equity/Race and Social Justice**
- **Accountability** to rate payers and transparency when it comes to contributions to general fund



# Closing Remarks



City of Seattle