



# CITY OF HENDERSONVILLE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Operations Center - Assembly Room | 305 Williams St. | Hendersonville NC 28792  
Tuesday, March 14, 2023 – 5:30 PM

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## MINUTES

Present: Jayne Jennings, Chair, Josh Williams-Vice Chair, Laura Bannister, Nancy Diaz, Eric Gash and Melinda Lowrance

Absent: Florence Allbaugh

Liaisons Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, and Mayor Pro Tem Lyndsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet, City Clerk Jill Murray, and Communications Manager Allison Justus

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jayne Jennings called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance.

*Melinda Lowrance moved, seconded by Laura Bannister to add Public Comment to the agenda. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.*

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

### 3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

*Committee Member Melinda Lowrance moved to approve the agenda as presented. Laura Bannister seconded the motion. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.*

### 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of January 10, 2023 Minutes- Jill Murray, City Clerk

*Committee Member Nancy Diaz moved to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2023 as presented. Melinda Lowrance seconded the motion. A unanimous vote of the Committee followed. Motion carried.*

### 5. OLD BUSINESS

### 6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation by Ahkirah Legal & Diversity Consultants – John Connet, City Manager

City Manager Connet introduced Bahiyyah Greer of Ahkirah Legal & Diversity Consultants. Bahiyyah presented her City of Hendersonville Midmost Update via Zoom.

# City of Hendersonville Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultancy Services

## Midmost Timeline



## City of Hendersonville Strategic Planning Process Map

Objective: to design a robust and inclusive engagement process that identifies and comprehensively addresses social inequalities, models of industry best practices, and strengths and challenges to fostering equitable local governance.



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## City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

*Do you feel that employees can be themselves within the office setting? What do you attribute to this?*

Administrative Stakeholder Responses

*"I hope so. If not, there needs to be additional training"*

*"I feel employees should be able to be themselves in an office setting, but I don't feel they do because of fear of others. Polarization of the society. Making snap judgements."*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering and Synthesis

October 2022



## City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

*Do you feel that employees can be themselves within the office setting? What do you attribute to this?*

Community Stakeholder Responses

*"No, as African Americans. It's very difficult for African American leadership in Hendersonville. When I deal with the city and the majority population, I have to act like them. When you talk about equity, we have to look at each other as African Americans."*

*"If your office has a code, they expect certain dress codes and when employees care about and want a job they should agree to the code. It depends on the department heads"*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022

## City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

*What does your department do well when it comes to promoting equity?*

Administrative Stakeholder Responses

*"We extract all the wishes of the city council. We promote equity as much as the law will allow."*

*"We have honest conversations about equity. We ask ourselves what kinds of roadblocks are in front of the minority population."*

*"We talk with the hiring managers and try to give them advice on hiring the best candidates."*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022

## City of Hendersonville Stakeholder Engagement Meetings

Objective: to gain critical insight into the specific challenges, community-facing objectives, and forthcoming endeavors of City Administrative Departments and Community Stakeholders

*What does your agency do well when it comes to promoting equity?*

Community Stakeholder Responses

*"Our mission statement is to focus on the most vulnerable kids, not just race. We try to give them equal access."*

*"Value representation"*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022

*"Pass."*

## City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey

Objective: An environmental audit allows City of Hendersonville Administrative Departments to provide information and perspectives on each Department's programmatic practices, cultural perspectives, organizational support and other human considerations

*Please take a moment and think back.....can you pick three words to describe the office/department culture you experienced when you FIRST started your role?*

*"supportive, eager, adaptive"*

*"Friendly"*

*"Dip Lazy Cold"*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022



## City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey

Objective: An environmental audit allows City of Hendersonville Administrative Departments to provide information and perspectives on each Department's programmatic practices, cultural perspectives, organizational support and other human considerations

*Please take a moment and think about your present workplace. How would you describe your CURRENT office/department culture?*

*“very supportive, willing to teach and listen”*

*“becoming more welcoming and accepting”*

*“very supportive, willing to teach and listen”*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022

## City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey

Pick three words to describe the office/department culture NOW and when you FIRST started your role.

Respondents highlight positive work environment as a feature of office/department culture when they started, and that has grown over time. There are fewer mentions of apprehension/confusion and negative work environment now.

### First Started



### Now



Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

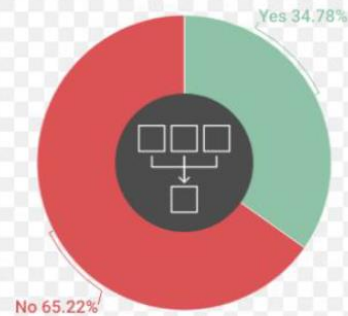
October 2022

## City of Hendersonville DEI Environmental Survey

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022

Do you think that most city residents understand the role and responsibilities of your office/department?



Do you think that most city residents understand the specific challenges faced by your office/department?



## The City of Hendersonville DEI Change/Growth Questionnaire

Objective: To assist The City of Hendersonville in identifying internal and external factors which influence and effect departmental performance. This questionnaire is used as an analysis tool to assist The City of Hendersonville with establishing DEI metrics and the Strategic Plan.

*What do city residents say that your department does well?*

*“Compassion”*

*“Provide high-quality water”*

*“Respond to resident concerns”*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022



## The City of Hendersonville DEI Change/Growth Questionnaire

Objective: To assist The City of Hendersonville in identifying internal and external factors which influence and effect departmental performance. This questionnaire is used as an analysis tool to assist The City of Hendersonville with establishing DEI metrics and the Strategic Plan.

What do city residents say that your department *does not* do well?

*“Inspections of Businesses”*

*“slow, loud, too much disruption from construction”*

*“Get valuable public input on all projects”*

Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022

## The City of Hendersonville DEI Change/Growth Questionnaire



Strategic Plan Information Gathering  
and Synthesis

October 2022



## The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the third step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, procure documentation related to department processes, initiatives, resident feedback and workforce engagement. To procure specific data to assist The City of Hendersonville in assessing how both codified and customary practices within all departments work harmoniously between departments.

### The City of Hendersonville Engineering Department

#### Codified Practice

*Who in your office does the hiring?*

Human Resources advertises all Engineering Department vacancies, screens applications for minimal qualifications and schedules interviews. Qualified applicants' resumes are sent to a four-member department management team that conducts interviews and makes hiring decisions.

*Who conducts the onboarding?*

The Engineering Department onboards all new hires.

*How do referrals originate within the office?*

Referrals can originate by word of mouth or from other departments. All referrals must apply for vacancies through the City of Hendersonville job application process.

#### Customary Practice

*Is it possible for a person to hear about a job opportunity with the City outside of the ways mentioned earlier?*

The engineering Department posts job vacancies in trade magazines that have large circulation; therefore, it is possible for a person to hear about a job opportunity with the City outside of the ways mentioned earlier.

*Is it possible for a person to receive an interview outside of the ways mentioned?*

All applicants must be qualified to receive an interview and follow the City's application process.

*Nepotism/Circles Of Familiarity*

All inquiries pertaining to position vacancies are referred to either Human Resources or the Departmental website, [www.hendersonvillenc.gov/engineering](http://www.hendersonvillenc.gov/engineering).

Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022

## The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the third step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, procure documentation related to department processes, initiatives, resident feedback and workforce engagement. To procure specific data to assist The City of Hendersonville in assessing how both codified and customary practices within all departments work harmoniously between departments.

### The City of Hendersonville Finance Department

#### Codified Practice

*What process does your office follow to receive and respond to resident complaints? Can you walk through the process with me?*

The Finance Department has no established process for handling resident complaints. Usually, if a complaint arises, the area supervisor will handle the complaint by responding directly to the complaint, in-kind. If the complaint is not resolved at this level, the complaint is sent to the City Manager. If no resolution is achieved at this level, the complaint is sent to the City Council for final resolution.

*How do residents receive information regarding your departmental policies or departmental rules?*

Residents receive information regarding Finance Department policies and or rules primarily from the City of Hendersonville website customer and billing page, [www.hendersonville.gov/customer-service/view-or-pay-my-bill](http://www.hendersonville.gov/customer-service/view-or-pay-my-bill) or [www.hvlna-authoritypay.com/site/login](http://www.hvlna-authoritypay.com/site/login).

*In what form (written, visual, auditory, online, in-person) can a resident receive information regarding your department policies or departmental rules?*

Billing policies are on the billing services application that's available to all customers. Residents can receive information regarding the Finance Departmental policies in English and Spanish in any manner they choose such as walk-in, e-mail or via phone.

#### Customary Practice

*What efforts are undertaken to ensure that residents understand who makes the day-to-day decisions that impact them most memorably?*

Other than what City Council releases to the public or what is sent out through social media, The Department is not sure how residents understand who makes day-to-day decisions that impact them.

*If a resident communicated to you an unpleasant experience, unfortunate issue, grievance, or general complaint, would they receive a response from you personally?*

If the issue is related to Billing or Utility the Finance Director will respond personally. However, if the issue is related to another matter, the issue will be handled by the supervisor in the relevant department.

*Would that response be communicated in-person, virtually, in-writing or through another departmental employee?*

Responses to all issues from residents are communicated in-kind by the relevant department supervisor.

Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022

## The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the fourth step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, to co-develop and/or reframe the organizational purpose, mission, core values and vision for each administrative department.

### *What aspirations keep your department going?*

#### Engineering Department

Staff commitment to the job is the greatest aspiration that keeps the Engineering Department going. According to the City Engineer, many of their staff could make more money working in the private sector, however, they find great satisfaction providing good service to the community and choose to continue serving residents of the City of Hendersonville.

#### Water and Sewer

The Water and Sewer Department is 100% dependent on the quality of their people to perform their jobs. In some instances, to even rise above the call of duty during an emergency. This was demonstrated in December 2022 when their employees performed beyond the expectations of their jobs to help residents during an emergency. This overwhelming show of concern is what aspires Water and Sewer to keep going.

#### Human Resources

Within Human Resources, the delivery of efficient and effective customer service is central to their work. The staff aspires to continue providing high quality service as the demand increases in the future. The Department finds the many expressions of appreciation from the customers they serve to be inspiring and motivating, whether at the Annual Employee Appreciation dinner/lunch, or phone calls of thanks. These acts of kindness are very motivating and inspiring.

Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022

## The City of Hendersonville DEI Strategic Planning Procurement

Objective: To support the fourth step in our DEI Strategic Planning Process, to co-develop and/or reframe the organizational purpose, mission, core values and vision for each administrative department.

### *What would you want to change in your department pertaining to mission, goals, values and/or vision?*

#### Engineering Department

The Engineering Department desires to have input from all their staff members as they update their mission statement. The Department believes that speaking as a collective, one voice, is more important for producing outcome and establishing more cohesion within the department. Whatever changes are made, if any, will represent the voice of the whole department.

#### Water and Sewer

The Department would not change a thing. The mission, goals, values and vision as stated on their website reflects their work. [www.hendersonvillenc.gov/water-sewer/about-us/policy](http://www.hendersonvillenc.gov/water-sewer/about-us/policy).

#### Human Resources

The Department feels the mission, goals, values and vision for the Dept. of Human Services are clearly expressed and implemented daily throughout their service delivery. The Department does not desire nor see a reason to change their stated internal beliefs.

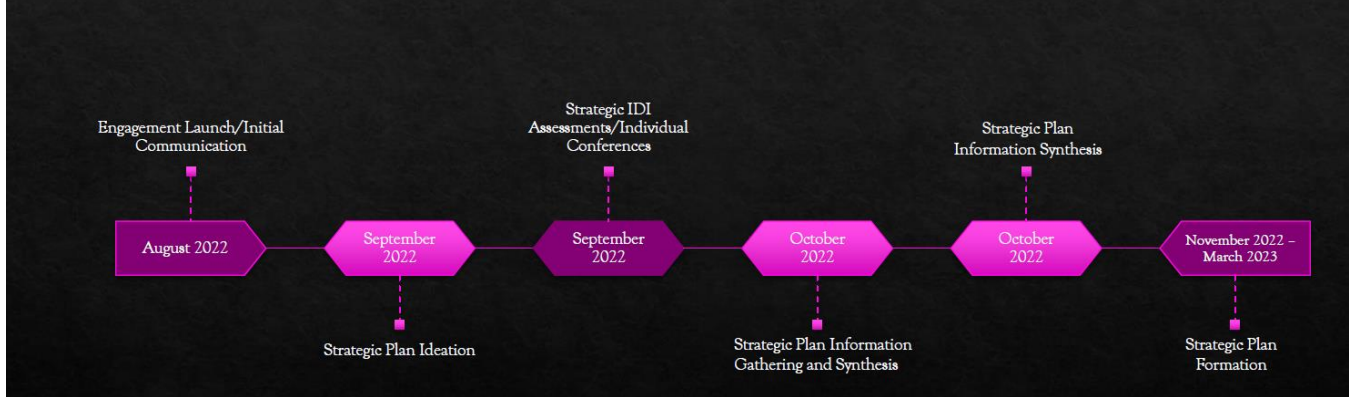
Strategic Plan Information Synthesis

November 2022



# City of Hendersonville Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultancy Services

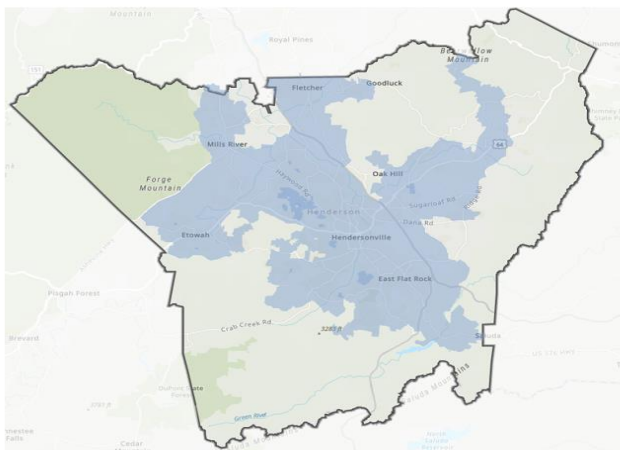
## Midmost Timeline



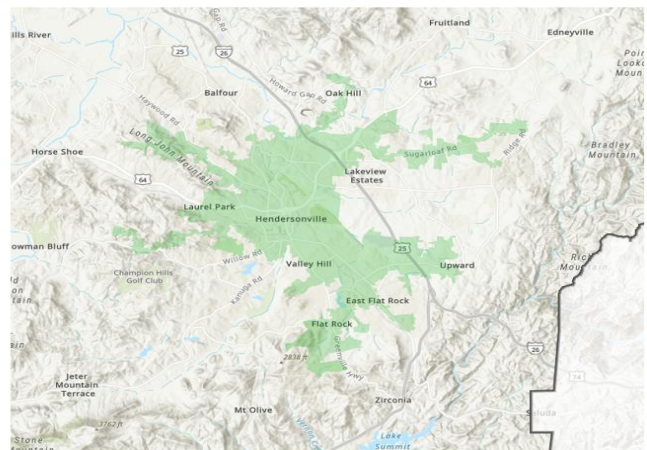
The plan is to present the final plan to everyone at the end of April.

### B. Presentation of Utility System DEI Research – *Adam Steurer, Utilities Engineer*

Adam is participating in a America Water Works Association Leadership Program and as part of the program he has completed research on the importance of insuring that water and sewer policies are equitably applied across all areas of a community. He gave a PowerPoint presentation to present his findings.



Water Service Area



Sewer Service Area

### Hendersonville Utility Overview



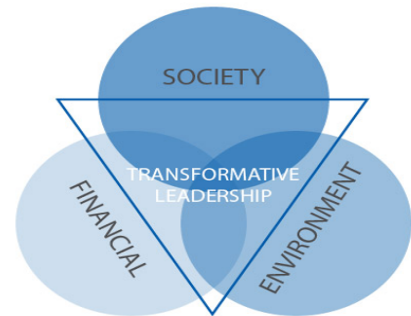


## Transformational Water Leadership Academy

Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the utility. The most effective utilities reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and provide equitable access to water services.



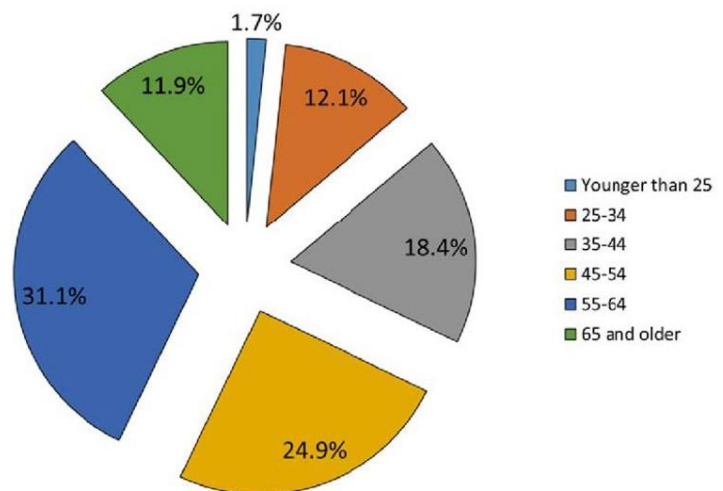
A collaboration between AWWA and WaterNow Alliance



## Employment: Age Diversity in Water Sector

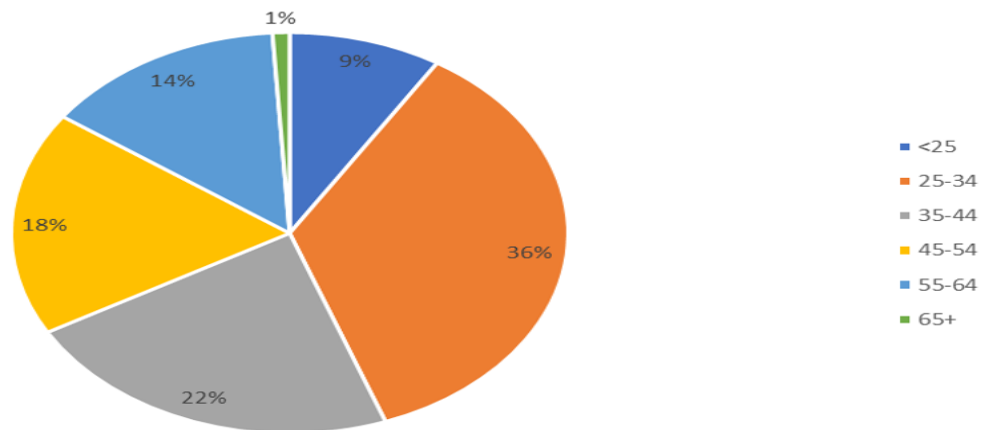
67.9%- over 45  
2017 SOWI

41.7%  
2020 Census



REF: The American Water Works Association's 2017 State of the Water Industry (SOTWI) report. Credit – Isle, "Embedding Diversity and Inclusion in the Water Sector: Challenging Culture for Change, September 23, 2020

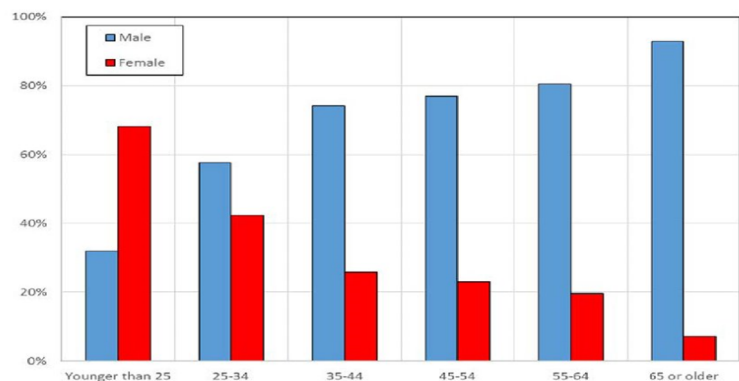
COH Employment - Age



## Employment: Gender Diversity in Water Sector

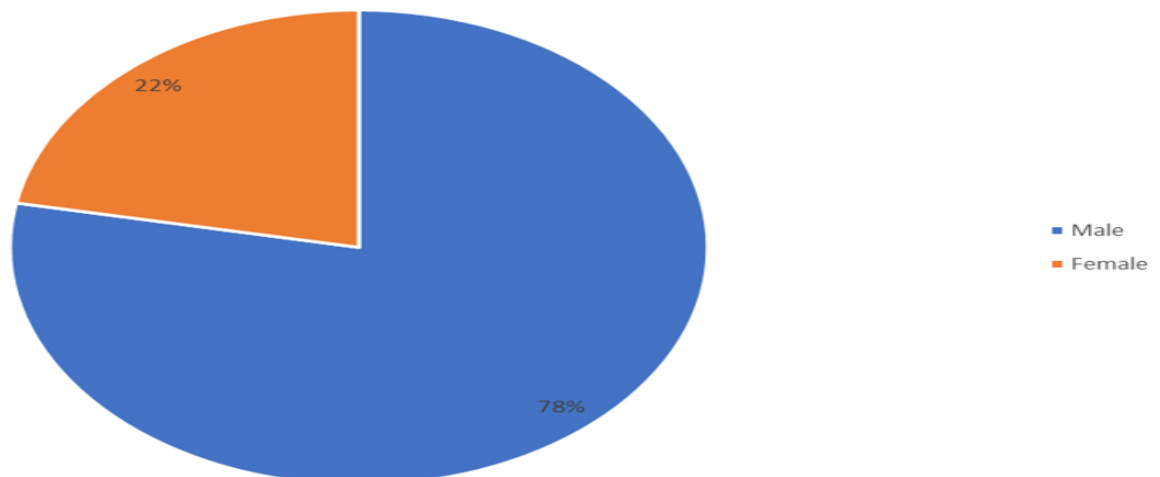
**76% Male**  
2017 SOWI

**51% female**  
2020 Census



EF: The American Water Works Association's 2017 State of the Water Industry (SOTWI) report. Credit – Isle, Embedding Diversity and Inclusion in the Water Sector: Challenging Culture for Change, September 23, 2020

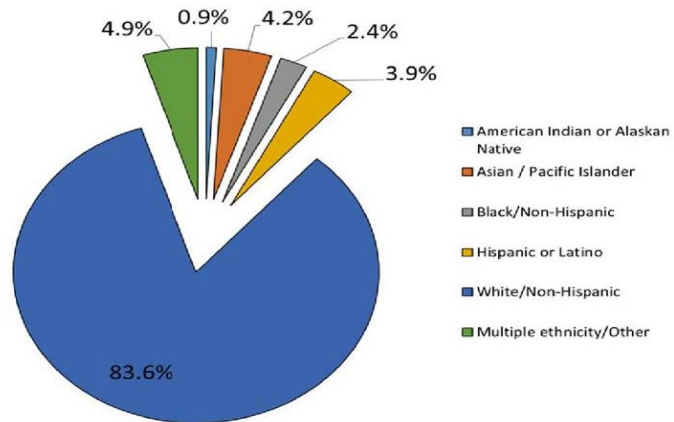
COH Employment - Gender



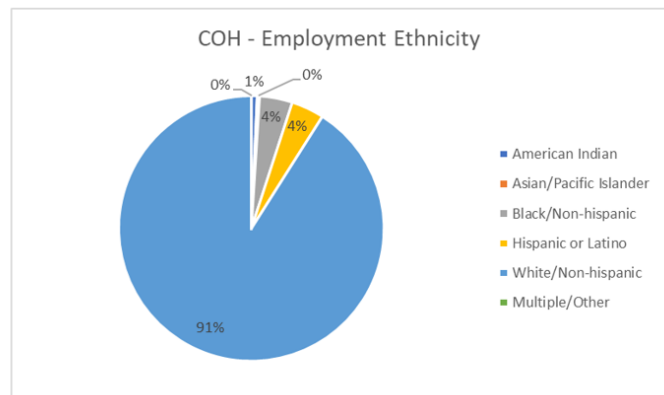
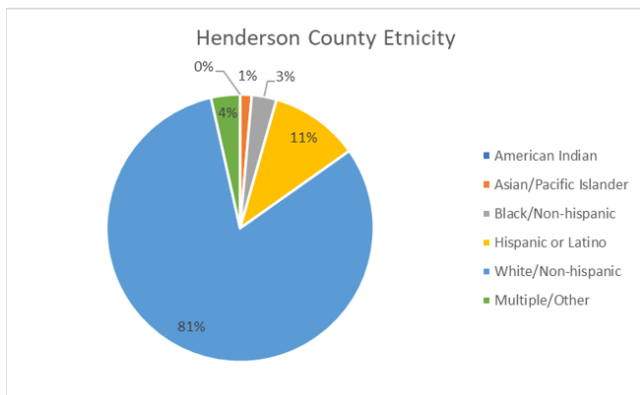
## Employment: Ethnic Diversity in Water Sector

**83.6%**  
White/Non-Hispanic or  
Latinx  
(2017 SOWI)

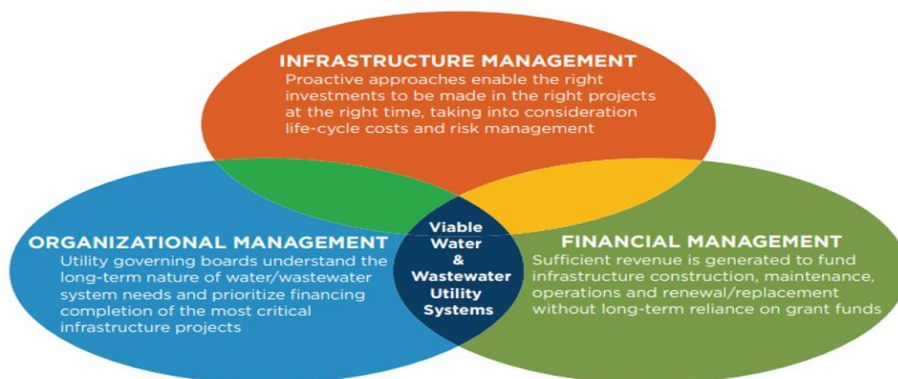
**60.1%** White/Non-Hispanic  
or Latinx ( 2020 Census)



REF: The American Water Works Association's 2017 State of the Water Industry (SOTWI) report. Credit – Isle, "Embedding Diversity and Inclusion in the Water Sector: Challenging Culture for Change, September 23, 2020



## Utility Systems Management



### Vision for Viable Utilities

The state will best be able to meet its water infrastructure needs by ensuring individual utilities are, or are on a path to be, viable systems

.....

A viable system is one that functions as a long-term, self-sufficient business enterprise, establishes organizational excellence, and provides appropriate levels of infrastructure maintenance, operation, and reinvestment that allow the utility to provide reliable water services now and in the future

REF: "North Carolina's Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan: The Road to Viability". State Water Infrastructure Authority





REF: "North Carolina's Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan: The Road to Viability". State Water Infrastructure Authority

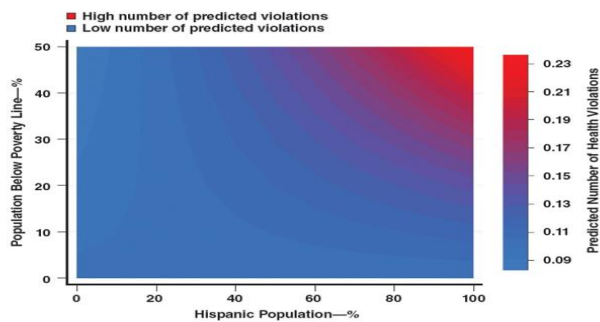
## Utility Service Area - (Un)Viability Criteria

- Small Customer Base
- Customer Economic Indicators worse than benchmarks
  - Population change
  - Poverty rate
  - Median household income
  - Unemployment
  - Property valuation per capita
- High rates
- High debt service

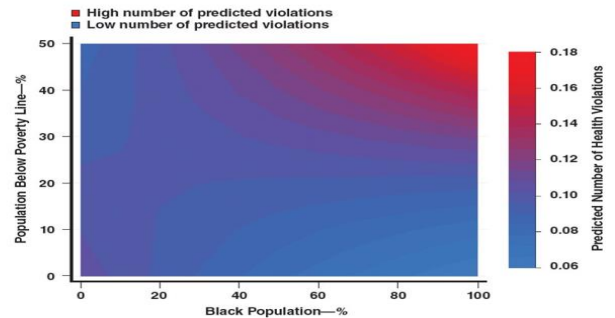
REF: "North Carolina's Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan: The Road to Viability". State Water Infrastructure Authority.

## Trends in Safe Drinking Water Act Violations

**FIGURE 1** Effect of percent Hispanic population and poverty on Safe Drinking Water Act violations



**FIGURE 2** Effect of percent black population and poverty on Safe Drinking Water Act violations



Ref: Switzer and Teodoro, "The Color of Drinking Water: Class, Race, Ethnicity, and Safe Drinking Water Act Compliance"

# Recent Water System Failures



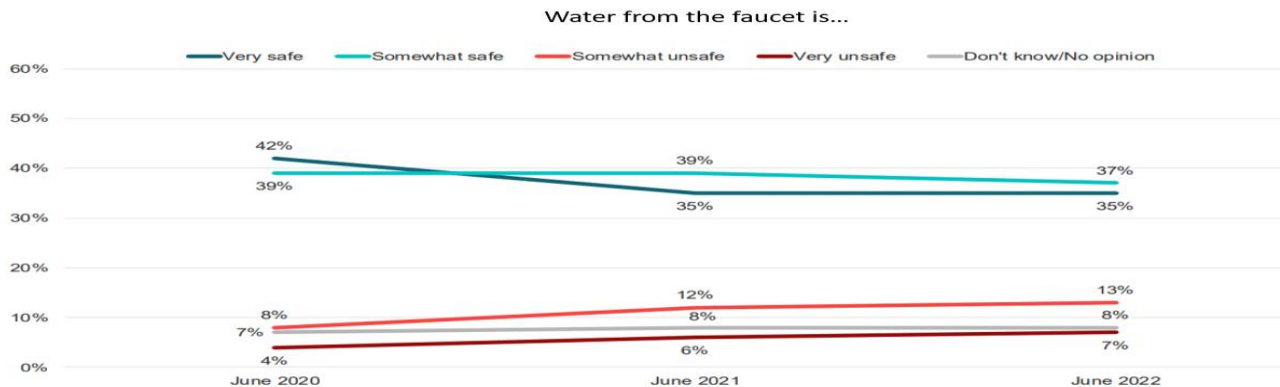
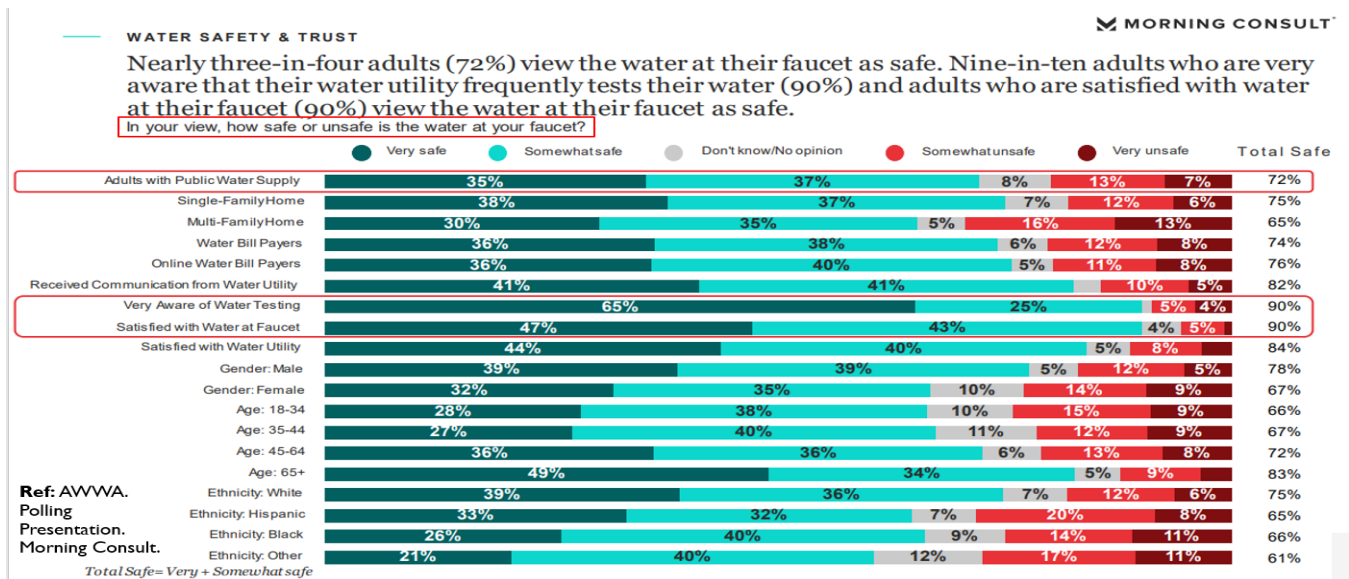
Flint, Michigan

- 55% Black
- 40% Poverty

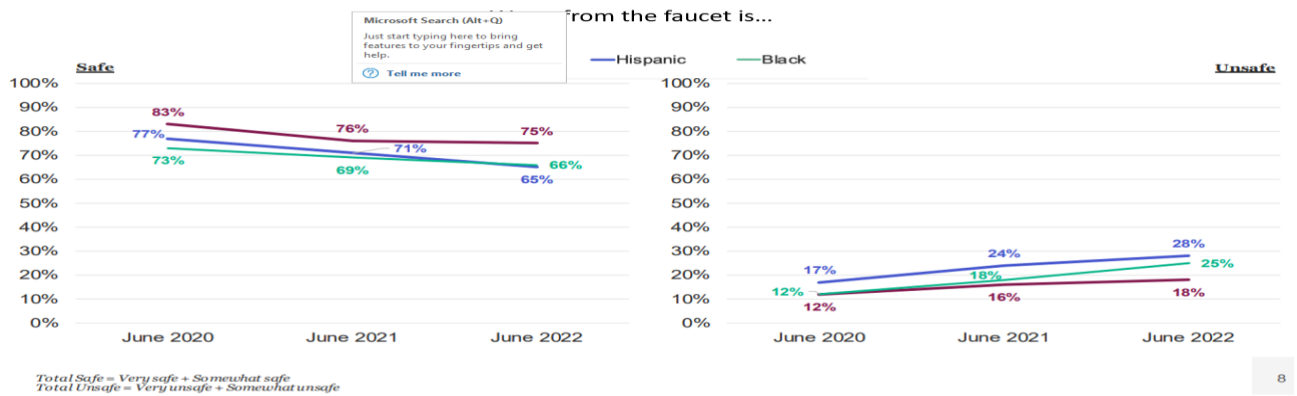
Jackson, Mississippi

- 80% Black
- 25% Poverty

*"Water system failures anywhere affect trust in water systems everywhere."*



Ref: AWWA, Polling Presentation, Morning Consult.

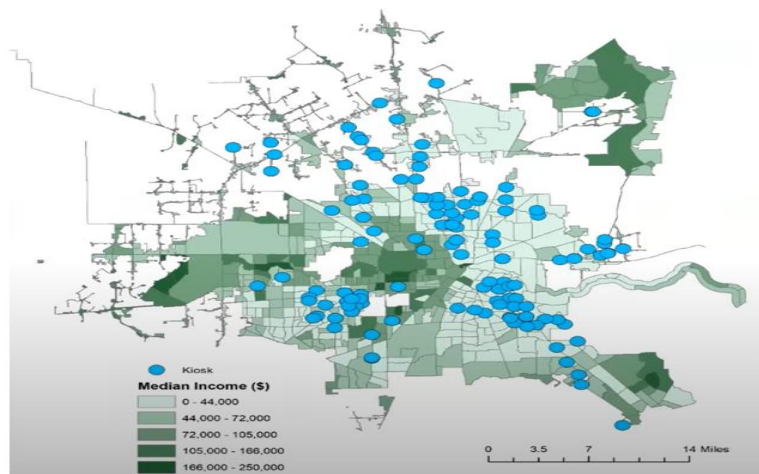


Ref: AWWA, Polling Presentation, Morning Consult

## The Alternative..



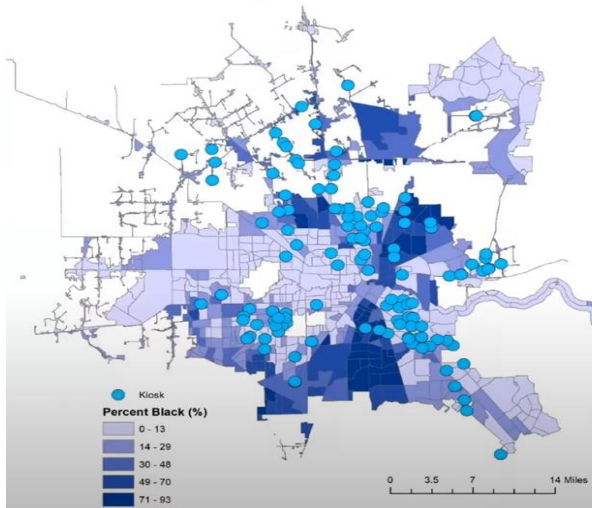
## Drinking water kiosks in Houston by income, 2017



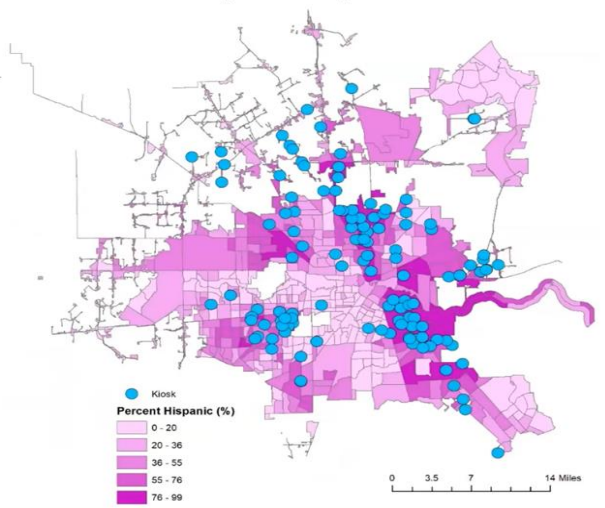
REF: *The Profits of Distrust*. Teodoro, Zuhlke, Switzer.



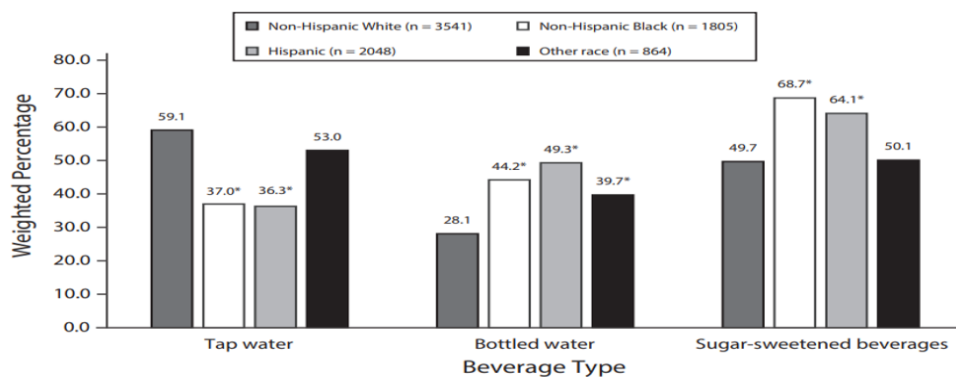
## Drinking water kiosks in Houston by %Black, 2017



## Drinking water kiosks in Houston by %Hispanic, 2017



REF: *The Profits of Distrust*. Teodoro, Zuhlke, Switzer.



REF: *Racial/Ethnic and Socioeconomic Disparities in Hydration Status Among US Adults and the Role of Tap Water and Other Beverage Intake*. Brooks et al. American Journal of Public Health, September 2017.

- Primo: \$1.40/gallon (Filling station, Ingles)
- Aquafina: \$1.89/gallon (32-pack, Wal-Mart)
- FIJI: \$10.52/gallon (24-pack, Wal-Mart)

Hendersonville Tap Water: < \$0.01/gallon





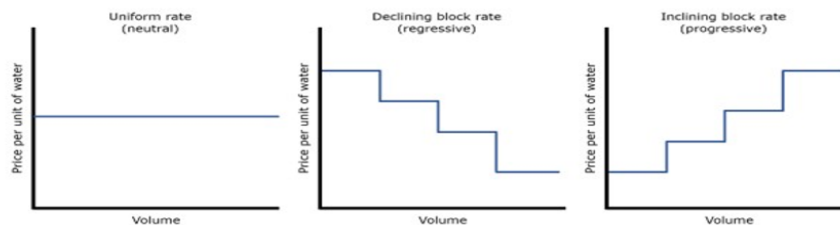
## The importance of quality

*Providing and maintaining high-quality tap water service is the most important thing any utility can do for affordability*

*Educating the public about the quality and value of tap water is part of an effective affordability strategy*

## Affordable Rate Design

- Monthly billing
- Smaller base charges
- Inclining block
- Low initial volume tiers

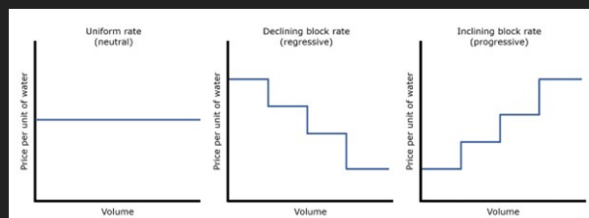


REF: *Of Bills and Balance Sheets*. Teodoro.

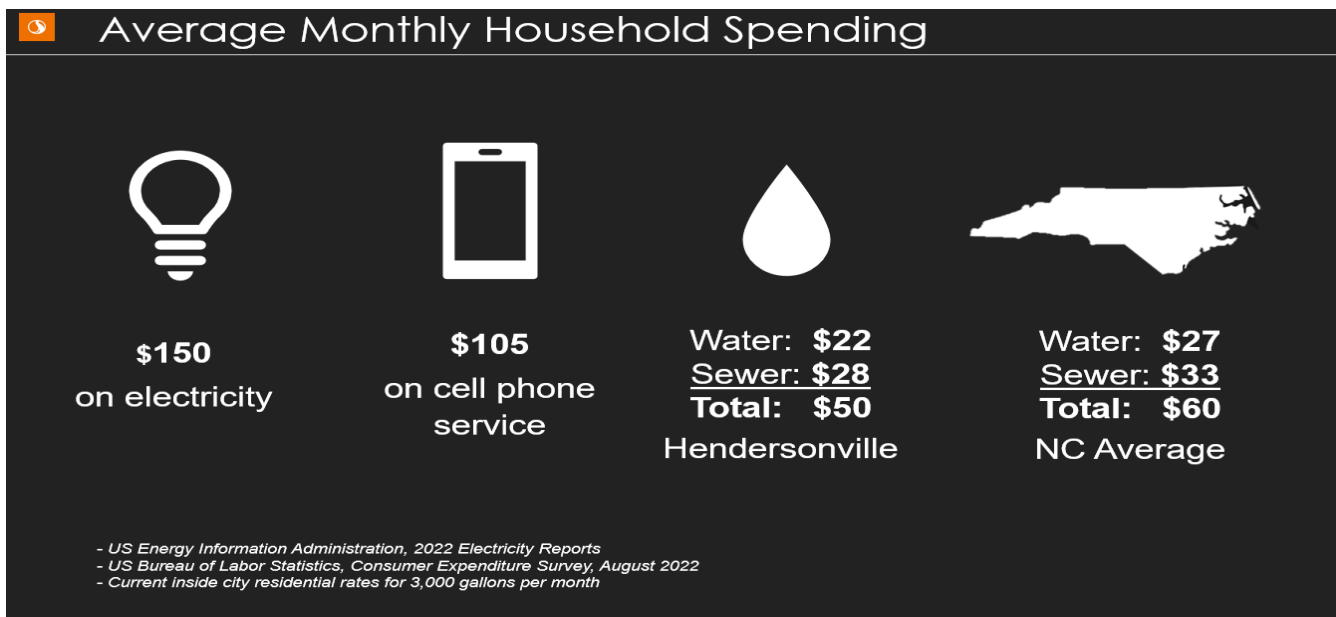


## City's Current Water Rate Structure

Water Base Charges	Inside City	Outside City
3/4"	\$8.32	\$11.23
1"	\$9.71	\$13.11
1.5"	\$13.15	\$17.75
2"	\$17.55	\$23.69
3"	\$27.88	\$37.64
4"	\$42.60	\$57.51
6"	\$79.40	\$107.19
8"	\$123.56	\$166.81



Water Usage Rates (per 1,000 gallon)	Inside City	Outside City
<b>Residential</b>		
0 to 6,000 gal.	\$4.48	\$6.05
6,001 to 14,000 gal.	\$4.93	\$6.65
14,001 gal. and over	\$5.60	\$7.56
<b>Commercial/Industrial</b>		
0 to 40,000 gal.	\$4.48	\$6.05
40,001 to 200,000 gal.	\$4.28	\$5.78
200,001 gal. and over	\$3.80	\$5.13
<b>Irrigation</b>		
0 to 40,000 gal.	\$5.60	\$7.56
40,001 gal. and over	\$6.10	\$8.06
<b>Municipal/Wholesale</b>	\$4.48	
<b>Bulk Water</b>	\$7.56	



## Customer Assistance Program

**Want to help some members of our community?**

**H2O Helping Hand Outreach** Donate to the H2O Program!

We invite you to help families in need through our automatic monthly or one-time annual donation program called "Helping Hand Outreach" or H2O. The Hendersonville Water and Sewer and the Interfaith Assistance Ministry (IAM) started this program as a way for our customers to contribute money and resources to our families in our community when they are unable to pay for a water and/or sewer connection to City, water and/or sewer bill. IAM will make every effort to help our families in our community when they are unable to pay for a water and/or sewer bill. IAM will make every effort to help our families in our community when they are unable to pay for a water and/or sewer bill.

**An easy way to help.**

If you would like to become a donor, our bills will automatically include a donation chosen by you.

- You can select any dollar amount to add to your monthly bill as the donation.
- If you would prefer to be a one-time or annual donor, you may send a check to the City of Hendersonville's H2O Assistance Program.

**Hendersonville Water & Sewer**

**Need Help Paying Your Bill?**

If you are having difficulty paying your Hendersonville Water and Sewer bill, the following options may help.

**H2O Helping Hand Outreach**

**1 Payment Extensions:**  
In certain circumstances the City may allow an installment payment agreement to pay a balance over time.

**2 Helping Hand Outreach (H2O):**  
This assistance program helps low to moderate income customers when they are temporarily unable to pay for water and/or sewer connection costs or a City water and/or sewer bill.

H2O donations are administered by the Interfaith Assistance Ministry (IAM), a non-profit agency which has helped local families in need since 1986. The IAM provides food, shelter, health, crisis intervention, utility bill assistance and other services to thousands of people each year. The IAM is a tax-exempt charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. Below is IAM's contact information. If you are in need of this service, please contact IAM and mention the H2O program.

**IAM P.O. Box 2562 • Hendersonville, NC 28703-2562  
 (828) 497-7020 • Email: interfaith@iam-hc.org**

- Helping Hand Outreach (H2O)
- Donation Based
- Interfaith Assistance Ministry (IAM)
- ~\$4,000/year on average over past 10 years

## Customer Assistance Program

- Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)
- NC Department of Health and Human Services
- Temporary program

**Do you need assistance paying your water bill?**

**Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) can help!**

LIHWAP is a temporary emergency program that will help eligible households and families afford water and wastewater services, providing a one-time payment for eligible low-income households paid directly to the utility company. LIHWAP runs through September 2023 or until the funds are exhausted.

**How Do I Know if I Qualify for LIHWAP?**

If your water or wastewater services have been cut off or if you have received notice that your services are in danger of being cut off because your bill is past due, or you simply need help paying your water bill, you may be eligible!

**Who is eligible to receive LIHWAP?**

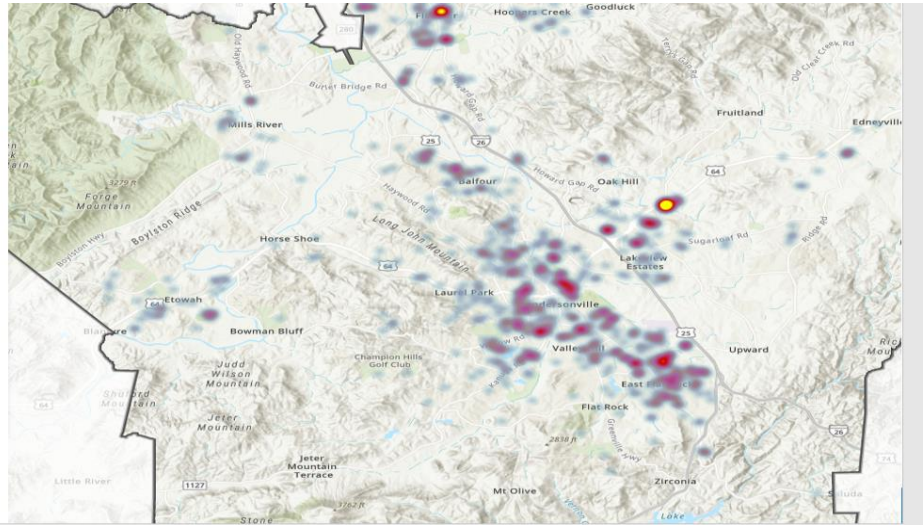
To be eligible for the LIHWAP program, a household must have at least one U.S. citizen or eligible legal permanent resident and:

- Have income equal to or less than 150% of the federal poverty level,
- Have water or wastewater services that are disconnected, in jeopardy of being disconnected or have a current outstanding bill, and
- Is responsible for paying the water bill.

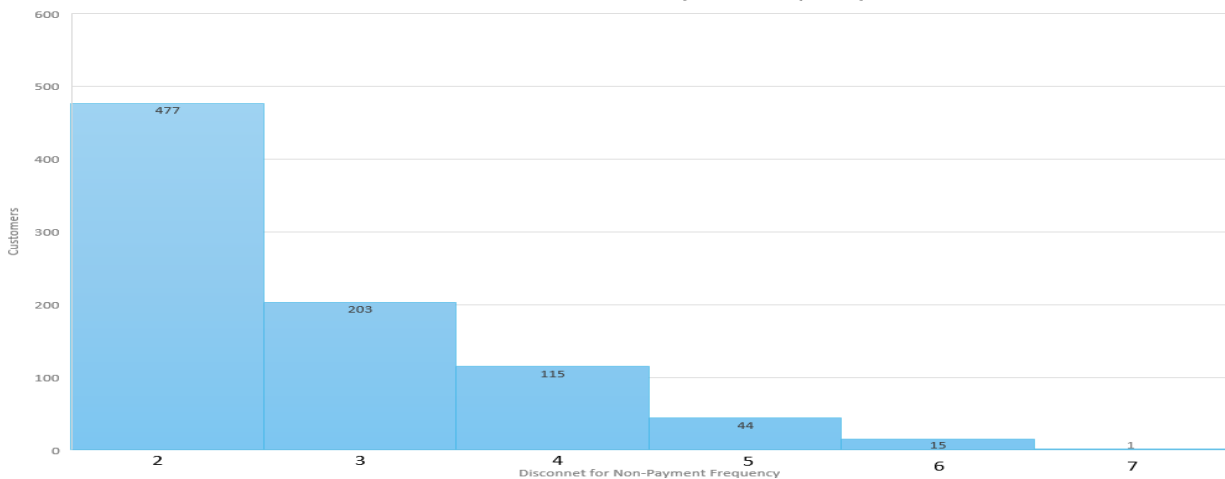


## Disconnects for Non-Payment

- 2022
- 855 accounts
- 2 or more disconnects



2022 - Disconnect for Non-Payment Frequency



## Utility Goals

- Improve Workforce Diversity
- Improve Public Trust through Education and Outreach Programs
- Affordable Service
  - Efficient Operations
  - Produce high-quality water
  - Rate and Fee Design
- Improve Customer Assistance Programs
- Policy and Procedures Improvements
- Opportunities for Historically Underutilized Businesses

**C. Brooklyn Creek Streambank Restoration Project** – Mike Huffman, *Stormwater Division Manager*

Stormwater Division Manager Mike Huffman provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Brooklyn Creek Streambank Restoration Project and sought input from the Diversity and Equity Committee.



## Sullivan Park Stream Restoration

- Restore 800 LF of degraded urban stream channel
- Enhance natural ecosystem resiliency, improve water quality and aquatic habitats
- Provide nature-based community recreational and educational opportunities
- Received \$240,000 in grant funds to complete project

## Name That Creek Program

Initiative in which communities submit name suggestions for unnamed creeks and vote for an official name.

**The goal of the program is foster connection and a sense of shared stewardship of our local waterways**

July 2022, RiverLink staff worked with residents in the Green Meadows community to select the name 'Brooklyn Creek' for the unnamed stream that flows through Sullivan Park and into Mud Creek



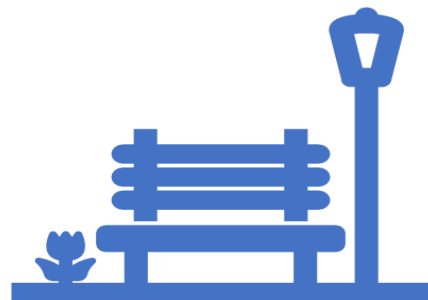
Formal approval of the naming was given at the September 2022 City of Hendersonville City Council meeting.

RiverLink then applied to the USGS Board of Geographical Names (USGS-BN).



## Next Steps

- Develop a sign to honor the history of the Brooklyn/Green Meadows community and its relationship with Brooklyn Creek
- Begin Stream Restoration Design
- Begin Stream Restoration Construction
- Organize community planting day





## **7. OTHER BUSINESS**

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Chair Jayne Jennings adjourned the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

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Jayne Jennings, Chair

ATTEST:

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Jill Murray, City Clerk