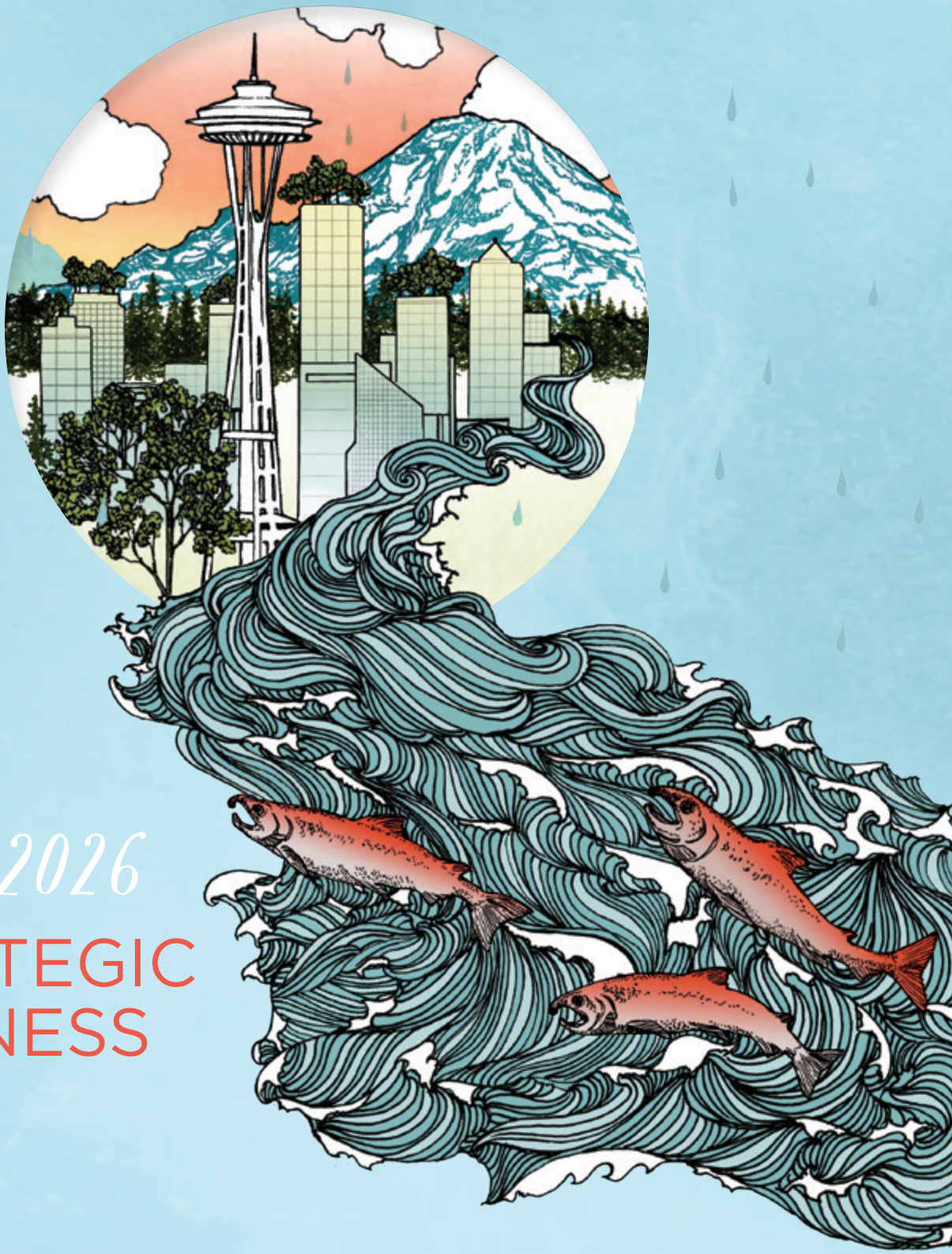
Seattle Public Utilities



2021-2026

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES

COMMUNITY CENTERED ONE WATER ZERO WASTE

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YOUR INVITATION TO JOIN US

Thank you for making a difference in our community. Your water stewardship, recycling, and waste reduction help keep Seattle Public Utilities' (SPU) rates affordable and reflect your commitment to our region's environmental ethic.

This utility, with our community, is a national leader in protecting and sustaining community health and the environment. At SPU, we have long recognized that how we manage water and waste has the power to drive transformative change for people and the planet. Today, this is more important than ever, as new and continuing challenges test our resiliency and resolve.

The challenges of the coronavirus pandemic have been difficult. There has been tremendous suffering, but also hope—people supporting others, opportunities for greater connection with the outdoors, and emerging innovations and adaptation. Together, we have the power to confront challenges such as climate change, water and waste pollution, affordability, racial and social justice, and the impacts of the coronavirus crisis. It is time to rethink how we live and manage our resources, including water and materials that become waste.

Imagine a future where together we:

- **Transform how we capture and use water and protect our waterways;**
- **Reconsider what we produce, consume, and waste;**
- **Reimagine and restore our connections with nature, with each other, and with the most vulnerable in our community;**
- **Refocus how we invest our resources to be strategic, equitable, and affordable; and**
- **Stimulate jobs and a green economy.**

These imperatives shape our aspirational vision to be your Community Centered, One Water, Zero Waste utility.

We understand this vision can only be achieved through community-wide partnerships with residents, businesses, environmental leaders, and others. By advancing our part of Seattle's Green New Deal, we can collaboratively prevent waste; prioritize sustainable resource management; facilitate greener and more efficient building; invest in and maintain our aging utility infrastructure; and partner to create new, green jobs that will benefit traditionally underserved communities and restore our environment.

We will work tirelessly to deliver essential utility services that match your values and exceed your expectations. We are creating a strong community inside and outside our organization. We want to be a place where equity, affordability, and sustainability guide our daily actions. We encourage continuous learning and improvement. We aim to always understand and respect customer and employee rights and responsibilities.

We ask you to help us achieve this shared vision. Please lend your imagination, your voice, and your actions to conserve our water resources, reduce waste, restore our environment, and build a stronger Seattle.

Let's work together,

Mami Hara

Mami Hara

GM and CEO, Seattle Public Utilities

Volunteers at a community cleanup event in Seattle's Rainier Beach neighborhood. SPU supports community cleanup efforts through our Adopt-a-Street program, part of the City of Seattle's Clean City Initiative.

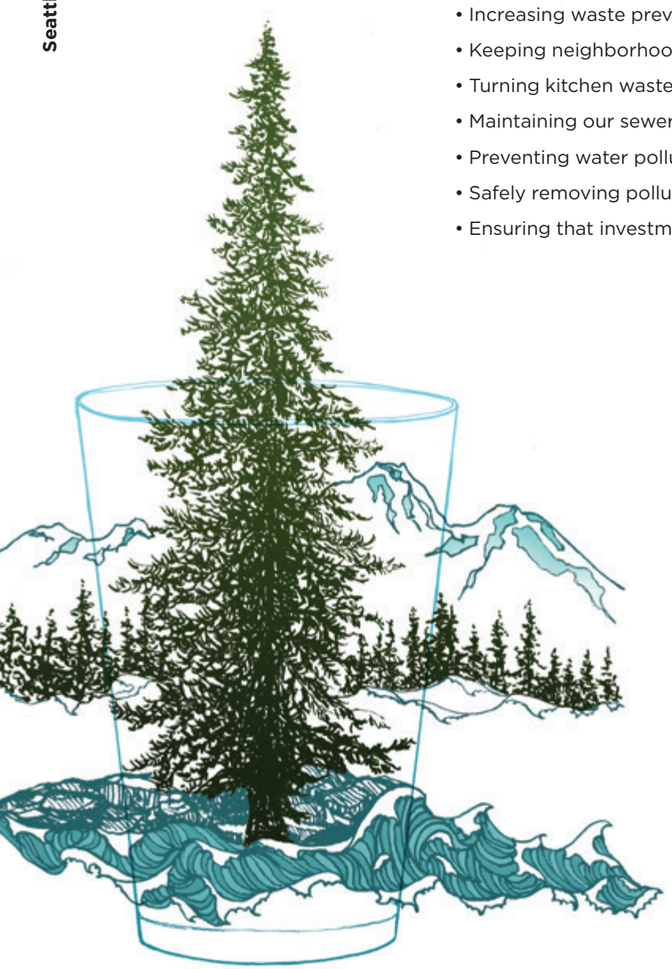
SPU General Manager Mami Hara with, from left, William Primacio, Construction Maintenance Equipment Operator; Tom Bagwell, Water Pipe Worker; and Anthony Chappelle, Senior Water Pipe Worker.

ABOUT SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES

We provide essential drinking water, drainage and wastewater, and solid waste services to more than 1.5 million people in the greater Seattle area. About 1,400 SPU employees work with our community to provide affordable and equitable stewardship of our water and waste resources for future generations.

Our staff and our community work together on essential resource management, including:

- Protecting our mountain drinking water sources;
- Keeping our tap water safe and enjoyable;
- Educating residents, businesses, and youth about our protected watersheds, urban forest, waterways, and resource management stewardship;
- Increasing waste prevention, recycling, and composting;
- Keeping neighborhoods clean, healthy, and beautiful;
- Turning kitchen waste into healthy soil;
- Maintaining our sewer and drainage systems and reducing urban flooding;
- Preventing water pollution and supporting rain gardens;
- Safely removing pollutants from streets, sidewalks, and open spaces; and
- Ensuring that investments benefit our customer-owners.



David Weatherspoon,
North Transfer Station Crew Member

Photo Credit: Shann Thomas

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our shared values guide all we do. To be community-centered and act in service to our customer-owners, we collaborate to uphold SPU CARES principles:

C — CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY
We strive to understand and respond to customer and community needs—inside and outside our organization.

A — AFFORDABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
We do our best to ensure that utility services are available to everyone regardless of ability to pay and we responsibly manage and leverage every ratepayer dollar.

R — RISK AND RESILIENCE
We seek to minimize utility risks, reduce our environmental footprint, and improve our community's capacity to adapt to change and persevere in the face of hardship.

E — EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT
We work to dismantle institutional racism by building trusting relationships, prioritizing equity and inclusion in decision-making, and creating opportunities for all. This includes listening to and investing in our people—the valued employees of Seattle Public Utilities.

S — SERVICE AND SAFETY
We focus on delivering high quality, reliable, and sustainable services and infrastructure that prioritize the health and safety of our employees and our community.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

The profound impact of the coronavirus pandemic revealed, in new ways, our local community's compassion, hardiness, and strength. Most of all, it has shown that working together is a requirement for success. We must apply this sense of partnership, resilience, and resourcefulness to address the challenges that lie ahead.

HOW WILL WE:

- Ensure the resilience and robustness of our infrastructure through all types of threats?
- Contribute to affordability in the face of increasing wage inequity and the challenges of a post-coronavirus economic recovery?
- Address climate changes, such as extreme storms, rising sea levels, and dry periods?
- Dismantle systemic racism and achieve social justice?
- Change the way we work, behave, and incentivize opportunities so prosperity is enjoyed by all?
- Stop millions of gallons of stormwater pollution and sewer spills that threaten our streams and waterways?
- Save our oceans and earth from overwhelming volumes of plastic and other waste?
- Eliminate toxic substances from what we use and consume to lead healthier lives and to prevent land and water pollution and expensive post-remediation efforts?
- Maintain our aging water and sewer infrastructure in ways that support environmental and resiliency goals?
- Find creative ways to reduce food waste and increase food security?

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN OVERVIEW

This plan builds on our strength and focuses and guides essential service delivery and comprehensive business strategy for SPU's drinking water, drainage and wastewater, and solid waste responsibilities. It reflects and responds to values consistently expressed by customers and community: service, sustainability, equity, and affordability.

In the pages that follow, we identify SPU's focus areas and describe our long-term goals, near-term strategies, and highlighted initiatives and investments.

This plan looks forward to the next six years (2021-2026) and provides our customers with a predictable three-year rate path to be adopted by City Council and projections for the subsequent three years. We will update our plan and adopted rate path on a three-year cycle to allow for future uncertainties and adjustments.

OUR COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC APPROACH

As a public utility, SPU affects the community in ways that go beyond our delivery of service, collection, and billing. We have a responsibility to maximize our investments and long-term outlook for our customers. Our long-term sustainability and well-being depend on our entire community collaborating to drive down costs and reduce risks. Every home, office, and organization between the mountain watersheds to Puget Sound is in the water and waste business together.

OUR APPROACH MAXIMIZES:

- Environmental and public health benefits to build long-term restoration and resilience, while ensuring environmental justice in water and waste resource management.
- Community benefits to create equity and empowerment for residents and employees, recognizing the impact SPU work can have on economic opportunities, social cohesion, and cultural identity.
- Economic benefits to ensure that accountability, affordability, efficiency, and risk management drive how we manage the public's investments and infrastructure.

Anthony Grant,
North Transfer Station Crew Chief

YOUR UTILITY, YOUR VOICE

We work in partnership with you, our customers, to keep your water safe, your garbage sorted, and waste disposed of in ways that are good for the environment and our community. Customer voices helped shape this plan and will be vital to our success.

WE CONDUCTED BROAD RESEARCH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Voice of the Customer Research Review: To better understand residential and business customer experiences, opinions, and preferences, as well as employee perspectives, we conducted a comprehensive review of 28 research studies commissioned by SPU and others from 2010-2019. These studies captured feedback on a wide range of topics and included input from different types of SPU customers.

Community Outreach: We engaged diverse communities (including low-income and other hard-to-reach populations) through interviews with community leaders and outreach by Seattle Department of Neighborhoods community liaisons. These conversations took place in multiple languages and within neighborhoods. A five-question (translated) survey was promoted through community events, social media, bill inserts, our website, and other communications.

Employee Engagement: SPU employees shared their ideas through an online survey and group discussions. A series of workshops, focus groups, and online engagement tools refined our mission, vision, and values.

Business Interviews: In-depth interviews were held with a diverse cross-section of large, medium, and small business customers.

Customer Review Panel and Community Advisory Committees: Advisory groups provided feedback on the Strategic Business Plan, community outreach questionnaire, and SPU's progress in implementing the current plan.

WHAT WE LEARNED:

1. SPU services are essential and highly valued. We are known for providing safe, high-quality drinking water; reliable drainage and sewer service; and effective garbage disposal and waste prevention.

2. People appreciate SPU's thinking about the future. Issues associated with growth, affordability, and climate change are recognized challenges for the utility.

3. Many recognize that SPU is doing more to create authentic partnerships in communities that have long been underserved—and there is more to be done.

OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS:

944 survey responses

52 in-depth interviews with community and business leaders

82,378 reached via Facebook

4.4 million impressions via digital and ethnic media

Community perspectives helped shape this plan and will be vital to our success.

Our bold vision reflects SPU's goals for the next 50 years of service, infrastructure investment, and management of water and waste. We will lead with equity and work in partnership with communities and employees to create a just and sustainable future. We understand that the actions we take today have the power to transform our employees, community, environment, and economy for generations to come.

OUR VISION

ONE WATER

Water is essential for life. Our health, wealth, and livelihoods depend on it, and we must protect it for future generations.

One Water means we value and carefully manage water in all its forms: through conservation, capture, restoration, and reuse. Whether it is fresh water or wastewater, all water is protected and managed in an integrated and sustainable way, and all people and species have access to healthy waters.

COMMUNITY CENTERED

We put people at the heart of our work and work with them to understand and address their priorities. We seek to better understand and address employee, customer, and community needs, and build the long-lasting, equitable, and inclusive relationships necessary to address these needs.

SPU strives to live by this inclusive principle and embed it in all we do.

ZERO WASTE

All resources have value, and we strive to waste nothing. We must look at the whole life cycle of materials so we can eliminate waste, prevent pollution, encourage product durability and reusability, conserve natural resources, and ultimately build a circular and inclusive economy.

Zero Waste protects health and the environment through the conservation of all resources from production through consumption without burning or pollution to land, water, or air.

OUR MISSION

Seattle Public Utilities fosters healthy people, environment, and economy by partnering with our community to equitably manage water and waste resources for today and for future generations.

Focus on

DELIVERING EQUITABLE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Essential service delivery represents the day-to-day services our customers and community need to live healthy lives. Our staff work year-round to deliver reliable water, drainage and wastewater, solid waste services, and Clean City services to homes, businesses, schools, nonprofits, and other organizations and places across our entire community.

Goal

Provide high-quality services: We're here 24/7, providing safe tap water, reducing waste and litter, managing wastewater and stormwater, and responding to all our customers.

STRATEGIES

STRIVE FOR BEST IN CLASS

Stay knowledgeable and operate at the top of our field; demonstrate leadership in cost-effective, equitable, and cutting-edge service, engagement, and partnership.

PROVIDE RELIABLE AND REWARDING EXPERIENCES

Focus on improved and equitable customer service interactions and satisfaction with each individual experience using customer involvement, input, data, and analysis to improve performance.

MEET OR EXCEED EXPECTATIONS, REQUIREMENTS, AND COMMITMENTS

Deliver excellent service and response to our customers, regulators, and community through every contact and in all areas of responsibility, whether it is installing water taps, responding to flooding, complying with environmental and public health regulations, or reporting on SPU performance.

Abelolm Abraha,
North Transfer Station
Maintenance Crew Member

OUR ESSENTIAL FRONT-LINE WORKFORCE

DRINKING WATER WORKFORCE

Manages and delivers safe and pure drinking water to Seattle and the King County region.

The drinking water supply system includes:

- Two pristine watersheds, supporting reservoir and transmission infrastructure and operations staff that bring water from the mountains to the City of Seattle and SPU's wholesale contract customers;
- Two water quality treatment facilities treat water and a regional water quality lab continuously tests and monitors drinking water purity; and
- Water distribution reservoirs, distribution infrastructure, and metering system operations and maintenance within Seattle.

DRAINAGE AND WASTEWATER WORKFORCE

Manages wastewater and stormwater systems, compliance monitoring, pollution source control, waterway restoration, and spill response within Seattle.

- The wastewater system collects and conveys sewage and a portion of the city's stormwater to King County's regional wastewater treatment system.
- The stormwater system is a network of storm drains, ditches, culverts, outfalls, green stormwater infrastructure, and structures that control how rainwater moves through our urban area. The system works to prevent flooding and clean the water that feeds into our creeks, our lakes, and Puget Sound.
- Systems operations, maintenance, and source and pollution control crews help keep the water clean and flowing to the right places.

SOLID WASTE AND CLEAN CITY PROGRAM WORKFORCE

Manages garbage, recycling, and organic waste for residents and businesses, helping to keep Seattle clean and welcoming for all.

- The solid waste system includes overseeing waste collection, processing, and landfill disposal contracts and inspections; operation of transfer stations; maintenance of former landfills; and, through regional collaboration, household hazardous waste management.
- Clean City services address litter, graffiti, and illegal dumping needs and assist with trash, needle collection, and hygiene services for Seattle's unsheltered population.

CUSTOMER SERVICE WORKFORCE

Builds strong customer relationships, listens to input from customers, helps customers navigate City services, and improves the customer experience.

- The Contact Center (which also supports Seattle City Light) and SPU billing teams resolve billing and service inquiries, read customer water meters, and issue accurate and timely utility bills.
- The Operations Response Center dispatches staff to respond to infrastructure breaks, hazards, spills, and emergency conditions.
- The Development Services Office helps developers and homeowners obtain new water utility services and supports staff working within Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection on side sewer permitting.

UTILITY-WIDE WORKFORCE

Provides critical support to front-line staff and utility asset infrastructure.

- SPU project delivery, engineering, construction management, survey, materials lab, and asset and facilities maintenance staff who directly support the front line and lines of business, ensuring infrastructure safety and effectiveness.
- Shared services, facilities, fleets, warehouse, and logistics staff reduce SPU carbon emissions, keep assets painted, repaired, and functioning, and equip SPU's front-line crews with the facilities, vehicles, supplies, and support they need to do their work.
- Emergency management, safety, security, risk, quality assurance, and environmental management staff who manage system risks, preparedness, and response and keep our staff safe and prepared.

"IT HASN'T TAKEN A PANDEMIC TO MAKE ME FEEL ESSENTIAL."

Sabrina Clark-Bentley,
Senior Water Pipeworker

Photo Credit: Adam Jabari

2018-2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LEARNINGS

- Continued essential service delivery during COVID-19.
- Met all regulatory permit requirements and negotiated improved approaches.
- Improved billing practices to keep estimated meter reading to low levels, ensure billing accuracy, eliminate billing backlogs, and reduce call volumes.
- Reduced peak period call waiting times at the Customer Contact Center by over 17 minutes since 2017, and used data and lessons learned to anticipate and respond to spikes in call volume.
- Implemented Utilities Customer Self Service Portal Phase 1 in collaboration with Seattle City Light and Seattle Information Technology Department.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS

We strive to achieve quarterly essential service delivery performance targets, meet all regulatory and financial commitments, and report our progress regularly. This information helps us track and improve our performance.

LEARN MORE!
Additional details about the investments and initiatives that advance this focus area are provided in the appendix.

Focus on

STEWARDING ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Community well-being depends on a healthy environment fostered by good stewardship of water and waste resources. Without new strategies, we will continue to experience increasing costs and degradation created by pollution, disease, climate change, overconsumption, and waste. Stresses on our region's natural systems also threaten the sustainability and affordability of our utility services and our local economy.

As the local utility responsible for managing most forms of pollution, waste, wastewater, litter, illegal dumping, spills, and graffiti, our work is directly tied to our community's actions and stewardship. Together, we can build regenerative, healthy ecosystems and circular economies that improve our quality of life.

We will work with our partners and community to embrace a nature-based, science-informed, and whole-systems approach to the management of water and waste resources. We will incentivize green technology and innovations that ensure equity in human and environmental health outcomes regardless of race or neighborhood. We will restore and maintain a healthy community with clean and safe water, greater contact with nature, and efforts toward zero carbon and waste pollution—and we will do this work in beneficial, fair, and low-cost ways.

Goals

Develop One Water Resilience: We protect water sources by cultivating healthy, adaptable watersheds and ecosystems and by using integrated and equitable water management strategies.

Advance Zero Waste: We support and promote policies and practices that create a circular economy and reduce Seattle waste and carbon pollution as rapidly as possible.

SEATTLE'S GREEN NEW DEAL

City departments, including SPU, are collaborating to eliminate climate pollution, prioritize climate justice, and invest in an equitable transition to a clean energy economy.

Between 2018 and 2020, SPU captured 29 million gallons of polluted stormwater runoff through RainWise program partnerships like this rain garden installation at the Tiny Tots Development Center in Rainier Valley, where preschool students participated in planting and learned how the garden will help filter roof runoff, cleaning it before it enters Lake Washington.

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

INVEST IN KEY WATER, STORMWATER, AND WASTEWATER PROJECTS AND PLANS

Using more flexible, collaborative, and integrated water management approaches (e.g., water conservation, capture, restoration, and reuse) on substantial projects and plans will help maximize resilience benefits at lower costs.

HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

Shape Our Water: A Drainage and Wastewater Plan for a Water Resilient Future

Given uncertainty related to climate change, growth, and increasingly stringent regulations, SPU is developing an integrated system plan called 'Shape Our Water.' The plan includes a long-term vision and a short-term implementation plan and will guide investments, policies, programs, and projects that will improve the performance and resilience of our drainage and wastewater systems while optimizing social and environmental benefits for the city.

Key Commitments:

- Complete the Shape Our Water Integrated System Plan.

The SCWQP tunnel boring machine is named after Seattle band Mudhoney, shown here with SPU General Manager Mami Hara.

Ship Canal Water Quality Project

The Ship Canal Water Quality Project (SCWQP) will improve regional water quality by keeping more than 75 million gallons of polluted stormwater and sewage from flowing into the Lake Washington Ship Canal, Salmon Bay, and Lake Union on average each year.

Key Commitments:

- Deliver SCWQP on time and within budget.
- Complete final design of the pump station and Wallingford and Ballard conveyance projects.
- Complete tunneling of the 2.7-mile storage tunnel for polluted stormwater and sewage.
- Start operation in 2025.

STRATEGY 2

ADVANCE CLIMATE-RESILIENT, NATURE-BASED, COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

When communities lead, we see improved innovation and sustainability around environment and health issues that matter most. Working together, we will use science and best practices to retool our water and waste practices. This will help build climate resiliency and restore connections between people and nature to improve the health of our waterways, watersheds, and neighborhoods.

HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

Climate Justice, Adaptation, and Mitigation for Water and Waste

Climate resilience work includes investing in the leadership and ingenuity of communities to accelerate a just climate transition, adapting our natural and built systems and operations to a changing climate, and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

Key Commitments:

- Adaptively manage water supply and stormwater operations and make strategic system investments to adapt to a changing climate.
- Work with City departments and the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition to build Resilience District partnerships to inform drainage and wastewater investments in South Park and prevent displacement of residents and local businesses from rising sea levels.
- Develop a de-carbonization strategy for existing and new SPU-owned buildings.
- Partner with King County to establish a carbon emissions footprint related to Seattle-area consumption and solid waste generation.
- Complete a wildfire risk assessment and management strategy to mitigate risks to the municipal water supply.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure

SPU is investing in Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) to improve water quality, manage flooding, reduce regulatory costs, and build resilient infrastructure while maximizing community benefits and value for our customers. We are growing innovative cross-sector and community-led partnerships, tools, and approaches to leverage these nature-based investments and impacts throughout the city.

Key Commitment:

- Manage 510 million gallons of stormwater runoff annually with GSI investments.

STRATEGY 3

REDUCE MATERIALS AND CARBON POLLUTION

Pursuing changes that reduce the effects of waste and toxins and help transition Seattle to a more circular economy is a top SPU objective.

HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

Waste Diversion

Waste diversion relies on improving the quality of recycling and composting streams, food rescue, and extended producer responsibility to reduce landfill volume and costs. SPU supports the statewide goal of cutting food waste by 50 percent by 2030. Our extended producer responsibility efforts engage product developers to create environmentally sound and socially responsible solutions for the end-of-life management of a wide variety of products.

Key Commitments:

- Work with state and regional partners to finalize a statewide framework for extended producer responsibility.
- Increase food rescue innovation partnership work.

Waste Prevention

Waste prevention work targets product consumption and consumer behavior, addressing the root cause of waste and toxins to reduce their impact. Product consumption accounts for about 42 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, making waste prevention an important climate change mitigation strategy. SPU will leverage partnerships to prevent waste, respond to changing recycling markets, and reduce the volume of single-use plastics.

Key Commitments:

- Develop and adopt a Waste Prevention Strategic Plan and metrics.
- Fund waste prevention innovation through SPU waste-free community grants.

2018-2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LEARNINGS

- Completed a 10-year SPU Water System Plan and collaborated with the Saving Water Partnership to set an ambitious new regional water conservation goal during a period of anticipated population growth.
- Recognized as the U.S. solid waste industry's greenest fleet—200 fossil-fuel free vehicles by 2020.
- Reduced the residential per capita waste generation rate to approximately half the national average.

Chris Davis,
South Transfer Station Crew Member
Photo Credit: Shann Thomas

- Completed a watershed vulnerability assessment evaluating climate change impacts and restoration approaches to protect Cedar River Watershed ecosystem functions.
- Became the first U.S. city to widely promote a ban on plastic straws and partnered with the Lonely Whale Foundation to inspire others to do the same.

LEARN MORE!

Additional details about the investments and initiatives that advance this focus area are provided in the appendix.

Focus on

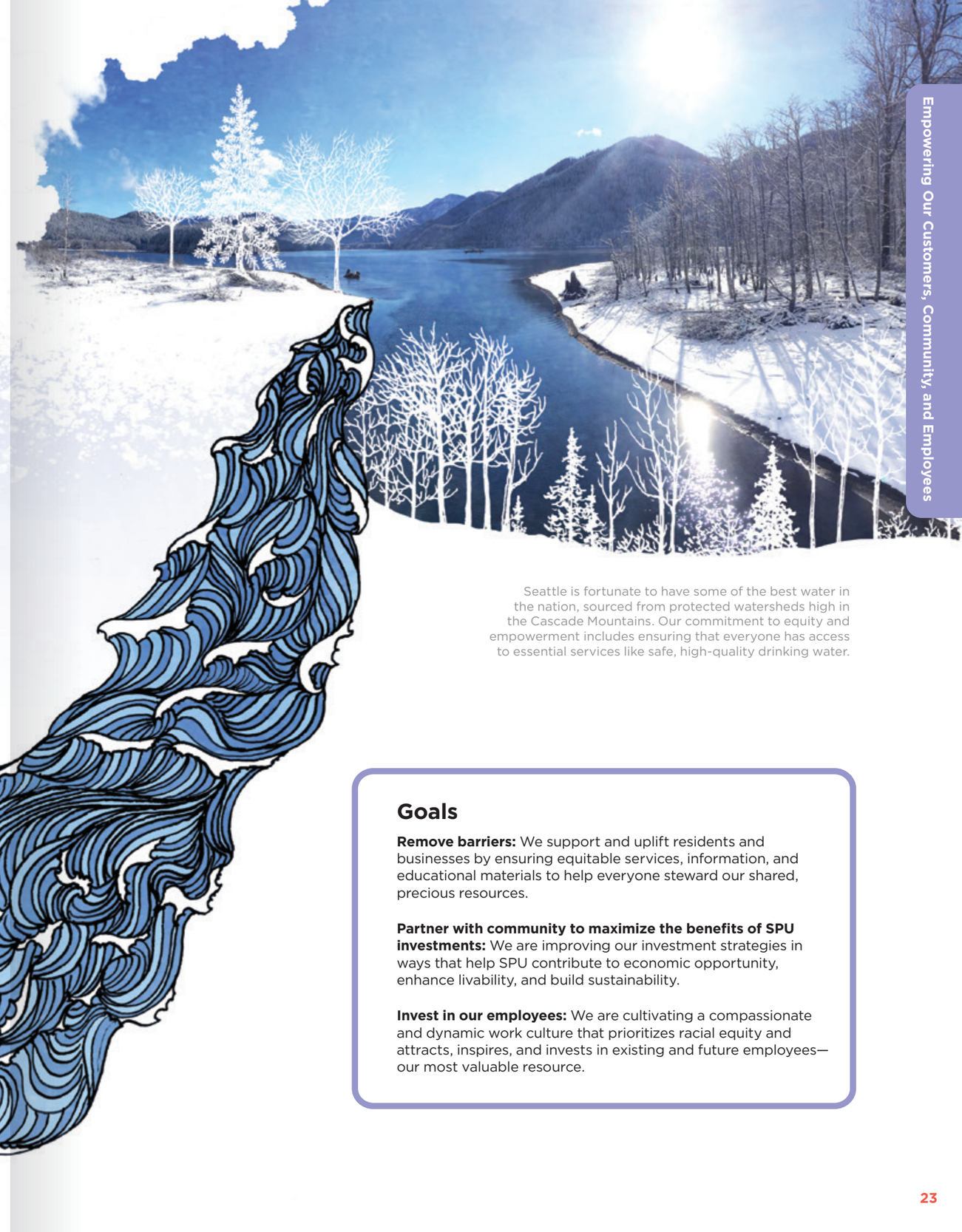
EMPOWERING OUR CUSTOMERS, COMMUNITY, AND EMPLOYEES

We work with our customers, community, and staff to identify and refine our utility's priorities and approaches. Collaboration, both inside and outside the utility, will help us build a more just, livable, and resilient Seattle.

At the heart of this work is SPU's commitment to equity and empowerment—giving voice and power to all our customers, community, and employees. This work begins with addressing the insidious effects of racism and race and social justice disparity and acting to uplift disadvantaged populations through our work in whatever ways we can. This demands intentional and focused efforts and needs to be incorporated into all we do.

Over the long term, this means investing to address service, infrastructure, and assistance inequity; deepening inclusive engagement and partnership efforts; and enhancing opportunities for economic advancement and job opportunities related to utility work.

Each day, that commitment means ensuring our customers are heard, have service, and are empowered and educated to value water and reduce waste. It means we are working alongside community-based organizations, governments, schools, and businesses to maximize the collective benefits we can provide. And, at our workplace, it means that with each hire and at each meeting we are cultivating a diverse workforce and creating engaging and inclusive leadership opportunities and facilities so that we can attract and retain the next generation of essential workers.



Seattle is fortunate to have some of the best water in the nation, sourced from protected watersheds high in the Cascade Mountains. Our commitment to equity and empowerment includes ensuring that everyone has access to essential services like safe, high-quality drinking water.

Goals

Remove barriers: We support and uplift residents and businesses by ensuring equitable services, information, and educational materials to help everyone steward our shared, precious resources.

Partner with community to maximize the benefits of SPU investments: We are improving our investment strategies in ways that help SPU contribute to economic opportunity, enhance livability, and build sustainability.

Invest in our employees: We are cultivating a compassionate and dynamic work culture that prioritizes racial equity and attracts, inspires, and invests in existing and future employees—our most valuable resource.

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

PROVIDE UTILITY ASSISTANCE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Understanding and responding to customer and community needs is good for business and the right thing to do. We are committed to continually improving financial and basic service assistance, including support for unsheltered persons and those with low or fixed incomes; coordinating home, business, and industrial sustainability assistance and education; and enhancing customer self-service and smart utility and information technologies.

HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

Customer Affordability Programs

We can make a meaningful difference in people's lives when we improve the effectiveness of financial assistance to customers in need. Our work in this area focuses on shut-off prevention, leak assistance, Utility Discount Program, Emergency Assistance Program, and payment plans.

Key Commitments:

- Expand outreach and participation in assistance programs (Utility Discount Program, Emergency Assistance).
- Expand leak adjustment policy for residential and commercial customers.

Side Sewer Assistance

To enhance affordability, SPU will implement a pilot program that eases the financial burden of repairing side sewers.

Key Commitments:

- Make pilot program incentives available to low-income customers in the form of grants, loans, rebates, or repairs.
- Use pilot results to potentially expand the program to serve a wider range of customers.

SPU Support Services for the Unsheltered

Relying primarily on non-ratepayer funding from the City of Seattle's Clean City program, SPU will work to provide cost-effective sanitation and disposal solutions for unsheltered populations, including, trash, sharps, and RV services to address health, hygiene, and environmental needs.

Key Commitments:

- Pilot and evaluate cost-effective RV pump-out service.
- Achieve 90 percent voluntary compliance rate for RV vehicles encountered by RV remediation pilot program.
- Pilot and evaluate alternative approaches to effectively deliver garbage and sharps collection services for the unsheltered population.

STRATEGY 2

GIVE VOICE AND POWER THROUGH MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Building more inclusive, equitable, trusted, and mutually beneficial relationships with community, businesses, and our most vulnerable populations will diversify our perspective and guide how decisions are made. Our efforts are aligned with the City's Race and Social Justice goals and prioritize outreach to traditionally hard-to-reach communities, improve connections with and between employees (especially those on the front lines of service delivery), and enhance regional partnerships and collaboration. We will also work to incentivize the creation of job opportunities that support responsible water and waste utility innovations in building, industry, and nature-based technologies.

HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

Seeds of Resilience Impact Investment Proposal

SPU seeks to build water resiliency, encourage a circular economy, and grow blue-green job opportunities with an emphasis on supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities through an innovative investment program. This project will assess viable approaches for designing, funding, managing, and evaluating a pilot program that fosters Community Centered, One Water, and Zero Waste entrepreneurship.

Key Commitments:

- Develop a proposal and enabling ordinance for Mayor's Office and City Council approval.
- If approved, launch pilot investment program.

Race and Social Justice (RSJ) Strategic Plan

When we build trust and strengthen partnerships with community organizations, we improve equity and social outcomes for the City of Seattle. SPU will update its existing RSJ plan to reflect current needs, assess the extent to which RSJ policies are supported across the utility, and recommend opportunities to improve our policies and practices.

Key Commitments:

- Revise Environmental Justice and Service Equity Division Race and Social Justice Strategic Plan.

STRATEGY 3

FOSTER A MORE EQUITABLE WORKPLACE, WORK CULTURE, AND BETTER WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Investing in changes that strengthen the diversity and appeal of working for SPU will reap rewards today and tomorrow. Our goal isn't just to be better—it's to be the best place our employees have ever worked. We cannot fully deliver on our service or policy priorities without investments in our people and the places they work. This includes investments in workforce attraction and recruitment, learning and development, and retention. It also means improving facilities and workspaces.

HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

SPU Workforce Development

Workforce planning is an interconnected set of solutions to meet employment needs. It can include changes to culture, changes to employee engagement, and improvements to employee skills and knowledge that will help to positively influence SPU's future success. This is important to rebuild, retain, and recruit our workforce. We can stay ahead of changes by building on internal programs and creating opportunities for employees to stay within SPU and the City of Seattle. An equity, race, and social justice lens will be applied to all our work.

Key Commitments:

- Implement SPU's Workforce Development Plan.
- Model shared and inclusive leadership and what it means to be a community-entered utility in structuring the work of SPU's people, culture, and community branch.

Workforce Facilities Investments

The workforce facilities program includes efforts to improve working conditions for front-line employees at South Operations Center (SOC), North Operations Complex (NOC), and Cedar Falls Phase 2, as well as improved space utilization efficiencies at the Seattle Municipal Tower and in the SPU Facilities Master Plan. Work that improves operational efficiencies will be prioritized and facility improvements will address maintenance issues.

Key Commitments:

- Complete planning and begin design and construction for NOC, SOC, and Cedar Falls Phase 2 projects.
- Develop recommendations for Seattle Municipal Tower renovations that consider a reduction of rented space, expanded use of telecommuting, and more collaborative and temporary workspaces that leverage learnings from the coronavirus pandemic.
- Complete Facilities Master Plan Strategy update.

2018-2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LEARNINGS

- Applied learnings from customer assistance pilot work and customer feedback to improve notification and assistance to low-income households and small businesses.
- Filled all 20 SPU water pipe apprenticeship positions from a pool of over 680 applicants.
- Sponsored more than 60 youth over three years for City summer youth employment programs.

Seattle Youth Employment Program interns tour the Cedar River Watershed.

- Leveraged SPU South Park investments by helping to secure $22 million in outside grants and partnerships.
- Used the experience of COVID-19 to honor and continue to improve support and connection to our front-line employees who have ensured uninterrupted delivery of our essential water and waste services.

LEARN MORE!

Additional details about the investments and initiatives that advance this focus area are provided in the appendix.

Focus on

STRENGTHENING OUR UTILITY'S BUSINESS PRACTICES

How we manage utility business practices matters. Our customers expect their faucets to flow, toilets to flush, and garbage to be picked up. These services are delivered under increasingly complex and costly regulations and via aging infrastructure that must be resilient in the face of challenges such as earthquakes and climate change. At the same time, we must be attuned to what the community can afford. The utility will examine its business practices and assess ways to improve service, be more efficient, and provide value. We will also use the best available science, data, and analysis to inform utility decision making and performance.

We are committed to providing utility pricing and assistance to customers that ensures everyone receives the services they need. The cost of our services is often constrained by the need to maintain infrastructure, encourage conservation, safeguard the environment, and protect public health. However, we recognize the importance of addressing affordability and we are taking actions to reduce costs, increase productivity and efficiency, invest in assets that have multiple benefits, and remove barriers to service access.

SPU's commitment to affordability is comprehensive and extends beyond rates to include capital project delivery and implementation of utility business processes and practices. Our infrastructure asset management approach is systematic and balances short- and long-term risk with cost and public benefit. We will continuously evaluate and adjust our work to ensure our assets are in good condition.

Israel Gregorio, Jr., Mechanical Technician, has been with SPU for more than two decades.

Photo Credit: Adam Jabari

Goals

Enhance ratepayer affordability: We are focused on financial sustainability and careful use of our resources to help us manage costs for our ratepayers.

Manage assets and risk optimally: We are investing in operations, infrastructure, and technologies that carefully manage SPU risks, resilience, and effectiveness.

Be an adaptive, learning organization: We are continuously improving and deepening our culture of safety, excellence, and innovation.

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1

DELIVER ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY COMMITMENTS

Affordability and accountability are top priorities for our customers and for SPU. We will make changes that reduce our rate increases and holistically improve transparency and performance reporting. We will align and adapt our environmental regulatory work, improve the speed and efficiency of capital planning and delivery, streamline budget and financial planning practices, and build collaborative partnerships that refine our priorities, help manage our costs, and increase our impact.

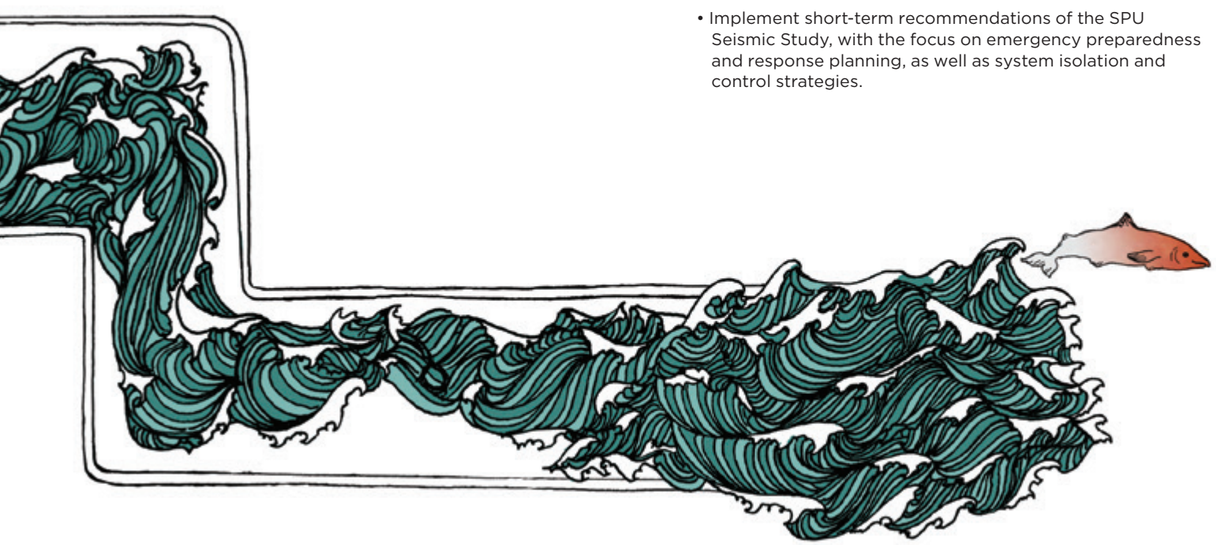
HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

Accountability and Affordability Strategic Plan

As Seattle residents contend with a tumultuous economy, high costs of living, and inequitable access to opportunity, SPU must help customers who are struggling to afford essential utility services. This strategy proposes a holistic approach to deliver our essential services, keep rate increases lower, focus corporate culture on continuous improvement, and make investments that deliver multiple benefits to the community. The implementation plan targets improvements in several areas, including capital planning and delivery, process efficiency improvements, financial management, alternative funding and partnerships, and improved reporting about SPU performance and investments.

Key Commitment:

- Implement three-year actions and recommendations of the Accountability and Affordability Strategic Plan.



STRATEGY 2

IMPROVE HOW WE MANAGE RISK AND INVEST IN SYSTEM ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Upgrading how we manage, maintain, and invest will help us reduce risk, improve resilience, and take better advantage of opportunities. We will focus on strengthening overall strategic asset management investment and performance, addressing high-risk infrastructure, and prioritizing work that yields multiple benefits.

HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES AND INVESTMENTS:

Risk and Resilience Strategic Plan

To improve SPU's ability to respond to risks and unexpected events, SPU will seek organization-wide opportunities to encourage and facilitate experimentation and investment that maximize benefits and reduce negative impacts. Our work in this area focuses on collaborative planning, capacity development, and vulnerability reduction.

Key Commitment:

- Create and implement tools and guidance for SPU work units to identify risk, take action, and increase resilience.

Water Seismic Resilience

A recent SPU-commissioned study found that a catastrophic earthquake in the region would result in total water pressure loss within approximately 20 hours and take 10 to 25 days to restore 50 percent of water service, but that seismic upgrades could significantly cut down service restoration time. This effort aims to improve the seismic resiliency of the water system to mitigate the impact of earthquakes.

Key Commitment:

- Implement short-term recommendations of the SPU Seismic Study, with the focus on emergency preparedness and response planning, as well as system isolation and control strategies.

Drainage and Wastewater Asset Management Work

The average age of SPU's wastewater infrastructure is over 80 years old. SPU will invest in the rehabilitation of our sewer pipes, pump stations, combined sewer overflow outfalls, and force mains to address infrastructure needs. A renewal program will also be developed for making future investments in the City's drainage system assets.

Key Commitments:

- Complete rehabilitation schedule for sewers, pump stations, force mains, and drainage assets.
- Clean, replace, and rehabilitate key Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) outfalls.

Water Asset Management and Opportunity Work

This program focuses on asset management and enhanced investment in SPU's aging drinking water infrastructure and deferred maintenance to reduce long-term system costs. Efforts include infrastructure opportunity work that supports transportation projects and other City capital investments and leverages savings from reduction of paving restoration costs.

Key Commitments:

- Complete planned water main and service line replacements and install new corrosion control (cathodic protection) on transmission pipes.
- Complete priority planning, replacement, and rehabilitation work.
- Reduce backlog of maintenance work orders for hydrants and critical valves.
- Report on budget and schedule deviations larger than 25 percent for externally driven transportation opportunity projects.

STRATEGY 3

SUPPORT A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CULTURE

When all employees practice continuous improvement, we can improve services, create efficiencies, and learn from each other. Our objectives are to train and develop a culture of constant improvement focused on experimenting and streamlining processes, employ a "plan-do-check-adjust" approach, and reduce waste. SPU will reflect this commitment in all aspects of our work and across all initiatives and investments.

2018-2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LEARNINGS

- Reduced SPU's adopted rate path by 20 percent and paved the way for greater reductions in future years through adoption of our Accountability and Affordability Strategic Plan.
- Saved $66 million by securing a $192.2 million low-interest EPA Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan for the Ship Canal Water Quality Project and broke ground on its delivery.
- Negotiated new solid waste collection contracts, lowering costs.

Ballard Site, Ship Canal Water Quality Project
Photo Credit: Minh Carrico

- Launched a Drainage and Wastewater pipe lining crew to increase the life span of our assets.
- Completed a water system assessment of seismic vulnerabilities and priority investments.

LEARN MORE!

Additional details about the investments and initiatives that advance this focus area are provided in the appendix.

KEEPING RATES PREDICTABLE AND AFFORDABLE

A key element of a utility strategic business plan is to balance forward-looking improvements with the thoughtful use of ratepayer revenue.

Previous sections of our plan describe SPU's vision and long-term goals and highlight key initiatives and investments. This section explains how SPU's rates are structured to collect only the amount of revenue needed to support its business operations and financial obligations, while responding to regulatory requirements and preparing for future challenges.

Ratepayers pay for essential services, infrastructure, and day-to-day operations through their utility bills. This ensures our services are there when needed. These utility rates assume that the current level of operations will continue and that SPU is responding to the needs of the future.

To deliver value, enhance affordability, and demonstrate accountability, SPU develops rates by evaluating a complex mix of factors. The analysis includes operating costs, capital investment needs, long-term risks, debt repayment, service demands, financial policies, and anticipated revenue associated with delivering services across three lines of business—water, drainage and wastewater, and solid waste.

FACTORS IMPACTING RATES

SPU's rates are driven by the cost of services. SPU has been working to reduce costs and flatten rate increases over time. While a consistent growth in rates is expected due to inflationary factors, SPU's rate path for 2021-2026 is projected to be lower than what was anticipated in previous rate paths (2018-2023 and 2015-2020).[3]

Factors lowering the growth in the cost of services include:

- Improving capital infrastructure planning to better reflect probable investments,
- Using cash balances to smooth rate changes,
- Negotiating lower solid waste contract rates, and
- Reducing the cost of borrowing money.

There are also factors that are increasing costs at a faster pace and offsetting cost savings.

These include:

- Higher than expected increases in King County's wastewater treatment charges to Seattle,
- Funding for large capital projects required for state and federal regulatory compliance,
- Targeted funding increases to address deferred maintenance of aging capital assets, and
- Increased commitment and obligations to keep pollutants out of our water.

Chart 1 (see next page) further explains what drives the projected rate path by showing SPU's expenses by category.

[3]The utility reviews and recommends "rate paths" within its Strategic Business Plan, over six-year periods.

SPU EXPENSES BY CATEGORY (2021-2026)

Costs Summary

Capital/Debt Service: 41%

Major Service Contracts: 23%

Taxes/Fees/Other City Depts.: 20%

Operations & Maintenance: 16%

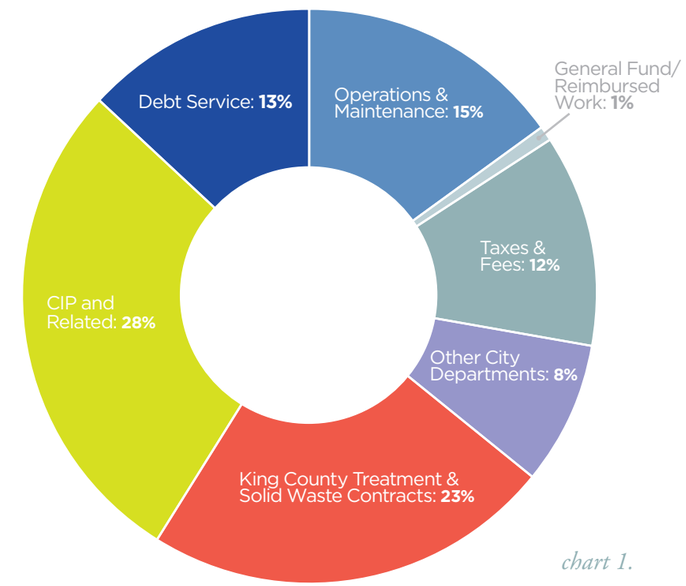


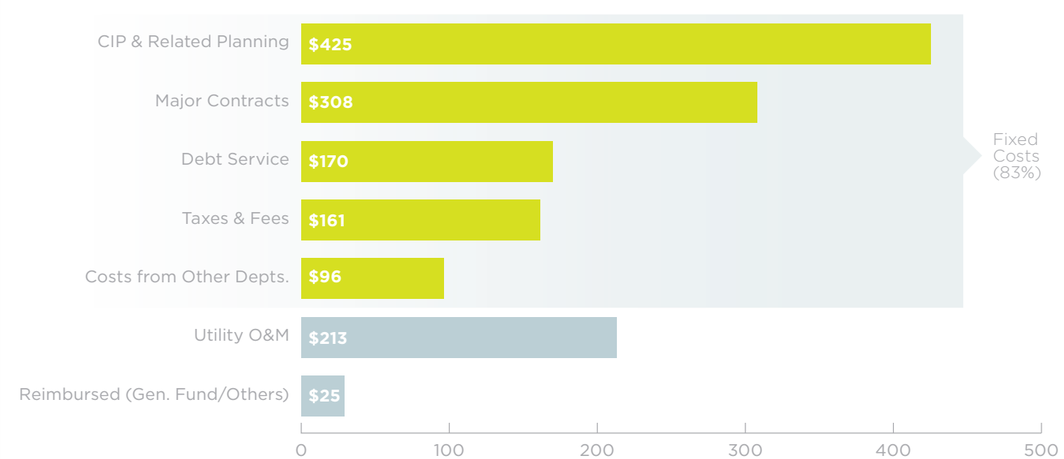
chart 1.

SPU's largest cost area consists of capital costs and related debt service, accounting for 41 percent of the budget. Major service contracts, including King County wastewater treatment, account for 23 percent; and taxes, fees, and costs paid by SPU to other City departments make up 20 percent. Utility operations, which includes work required to deliver essential services and work on behalf of the City's General Fund, and work that is reimbursed by other departments, makes up 16 percent.

Chart 2 further explains expenses by showing costs for 2021. The total 2021 annual budget is $1.4 billion. Fixed (non-discretionary) costs and capital improvement program (CIP) costs make up 83 percent of the budget (or $1.2 billion for 2021).

EXPENSES BY CATEGORY (2021) IN MILLIONS $

chart 2.



THREE-YEAR RATE PATH AND THREE-YEAR PROJECTION

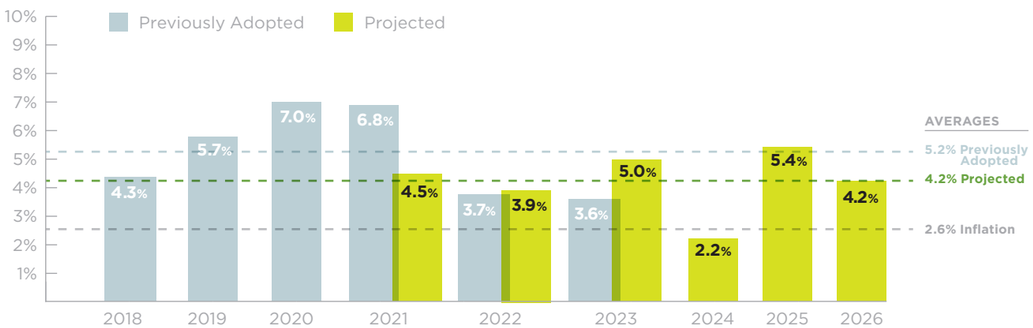
SPU's projected rate path is provided in chart 3. This six-year planning horizon is updated every three years.

The projected 2021-2026 average annual rate increase is projected to be lower than the adopted 2018-2023 rate increase. Chart 3 illustrates that updated growth rates are expected to average 4.2 percent (green line) and 20 percent lower than the last adopted Strategic Business Plan, and 9 percent lower than the 2015-2020 Strategic Business Plan.

PROJECTED RATE PATH

The 2021-2026 plan **lowers the average rate path by 20%**

chart 3.



PROJECTED 2021-2026 AVERAGE RATE INCREASES

table 1.

	Rate Path			Rate Forecast			
	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**	**Average**
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%**	**4.2%**

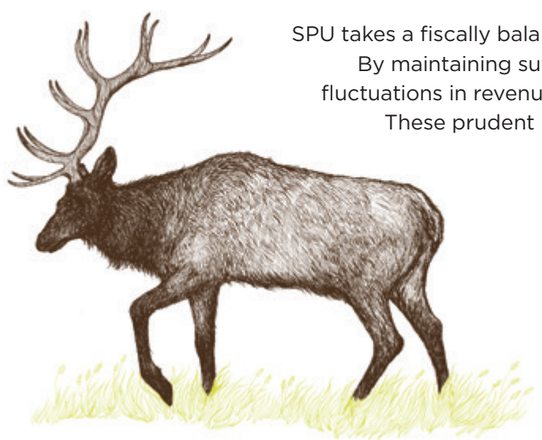
Anthony Chappelle,
Senior Water Pipeworker

"THE CEDAR RIVER WATERSHED IS AN UNMATCHED RESOURCE. I HOPE FUTURE GENERATIONS RECOGNIZE AND PROTECT IT."

Mark Hopf,
Watershed Resource Technician

Photo Credit: Adam Collet

OUR FINANCIAL POSITION IS STRONG



SPU takes a fiscally balanced approach to its financial policies and reserves. By maintaining sufficient reserves, the utility is better able to weather fluctuations in revenues and expenses and navigate financial uncertainty. These prudent practices protect our asset investments and benefit customers through the avoidance of extraordinary rate increases and volatility.

RATE IMPACT TO CUSTOMERS

Table 2 shows typical monthly bills for three types of customers.

Customers who decrease their service consumption through conservation will experience smaller bill impacts. For instance, customers might reduce their cost by conserving water and switching to smaller garbage bins through recycling and composting more. We also offer incentives to divert and keep rainwater on private property through rain gardens and cisterns.

TYPICAL MONTHLY BILL EXAMPLES

table 2.

SINGLE-FAMILY HOME

Typical Monthly Bill for a Single-Family Home

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Water	$46	$47	$49	$51	$53	$56
Wastewater	$72	$75	$79	$79	$85	$89
Drainage	$50	$54	$58	$60	$64	$69
Solid Waste	$55	$56	$58	$59	$60	$61
Combined	**$223**	**$232**	**$244**	**$250**	**$263**	**$275**
Monthly Change	**$15**	**$9**	**$12**	**$6**	**$13**	**$12**

MULTIFAMILY UNIT

Typical Monthly Bill for a Multifamily Unit (Apartment Building)

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Water	$25	$26	$27	$28	$29	$31
Wastewater	$65	$67	$71	$71	$77	$80
Drainage	$9	$10	$11	$11	$12	$13
Solid Waste	$28	$29	$30	$30	$31	$32
Combined	**$127**	**$132**	**$138**	**$141**	**$149**	**$155**
Monthly Change	**$4**	**$4**	**$7**	**$2**	**$8**	**$6**

CONVENIENCE STORE

Typical Monthly Bill for a Convenience Store

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Water	$107	$110	$115	$120	$125	$131
Wastewater	$325	$335	$355	$357	$385	$399
Drainage	$121	$131	$140	$146	$155	$166
Solid Waste	$556	$573	$585	$599	$611	$623
Combined	**$1,109**	**$1,149**	**$1,196**	**$1,221**	**$1,275**	**$1,319**
Monthly Change	**$38**	**$40**	**$47**	**$25**	**$55**	**$44**

Information in this table is for illustrative purposes. SPU bills water, wastewater, and solid waste charges to property owners who may pass these costs to renters or tenants. Drainage charges are billed to customers on their King County property tax statements. Totals may vary due to rounding.

Residential and commercial customers each account for approximately 45 percent of the rate revenue across all three utility funds. The remaining 10 percent comes from wholesale customers, including other cities and districts.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Chart 4 shows how a typical residential customer's bill is spent across utility expense areas.

TYPICAL CUSTOMER BILL BREAKOUT

chart 4.

Single-Family Home Monthly Bill: $222.62

$62.08	$60.24	$33.80	$66.50
CAPITAL FINANCING	OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	FEES & TAXES	KING COUNTY TREATMENT/ SOLID WASTE CONTRACTS
28%	27%	15%	30%

Photos: 1. Food and yard waste truck spotted on collection day 2. Venema Creek Natural Drainage Project
3. Summer Hepburn, Water Operations 4. Meadowbrook Pond stormwater detention and flood control facility
5. Chinese Information Service Center community members tour the South Transfer Station

1.

2.

3.

CUSTOMER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

SPU's affordability and accountability work aims to keep rate increases to the lowest possible level, reducing potential hardship for our customers. But if customers need financial assistance, we can help them in several ways:

- Conservation and education programs that help people understand their usage and bills and identify ways to potentially reduce them;
- The Utility Discount Program, which provides ongoing bill assistance to the lowest-income families and uses customer data to target marketing, sign-up, and assistance to those in need;
- The Emergency Assistance Program, which provides credits toward one bill per year for lower-income households or two bills per year for households with children;
- Payment plans that provide customers with flexibility in payment arrangements that fit their needs; and
- The Community Donation Fund, which allows for voluntary contributions to help those in need.

SPU has been actively promoting these programs to ensure people know help is available when they need it. We have also improved these programs to make rates more affordable for low-income customers, and we plan to continue this work in the years ahead. To date, we have:

- Worked proactively with low-income customers and small businesses;
- Increased Utility Discount Program enrollment through a self-certification pilot;
- Improved the Emergency Assistance Program and shut-off prevention and notification;
- Created more flexible payment arrangements;
- Eliminated interest charges on late bills; and
- Started to use customer data and predictive analytics to target our efforts.

4.

5.

ESSENTIAL

by Jourdan Imani Keith

I.

Most seasons Seattle hears voices that sound like rain drums singing
like rain drops drumming like Sky crying for the droplets—
so much water races off the surface to the Sound,
so much soil covered by the endless roads
like black band-aids
painted with yellow and white lines
covering the places where earth has been hurt.
Now, the water's wounded too, all that runs off after
another 100-year flood, just five years after the last one—
salmon rush home
swim across rivers in the road like workers driving
around closed highway signs
to get to work on green rain gardens, to be rain wise
with you, to sound like rain drums singing—

from the water at your tap to your garbage
from the rain on the roof to the streets
in the morning when the blue bin rumbles
in the day when you're walking on the streets
from the kitchen to the garden to the soil
from the roof to the runoff at your feet
SPU is the industry that's protecting
One Water from the Sky to the Sea

II.

In the morning when the blue bin rumbles
The sound is a check mark I call Tuesday
They descend from the thunder of their truck—
Masked, they cross my driveway
Only now I realize, how much like a deity
Carrying myth they are,
Carrying discarded bottles to
Glass mountain. Hands as swift as wings
Sort what we wish for, from what actually is
Recyclable.
In the dayless daze of quarantine, it is not the
Pale gray wisps in fuchsia sunsets, that let me know the human world is OK
It is the morning It is Tuesday when the blue bin rumbles

III.

There is a city above
the city beneath
we flush our toilets
people sleep in the street
pipes are held from bursting
we wash ourselves, our towels, our dishes
hands yank the choking clogs of what should not be flushed
from the throat of the city
we work at home
in the midst of a pandemic
There is no heavy rain in summer
In the hour of our city
no combined sewage risk overflowing
in the midst of tear-gassed dreams
but the vulnerabilities are seismic
when inequity quakes

Just as clouds come to earth from these storms one water rises
like sun on gathered rain. we shape the future—

from the water at your tap to your garbage
from the rain on the roof to the streets
in the morning when the blue bin rumbles
in the day when you're resting on the streets
From the kitchen to the garden to the soil
from the roof to the runoff at your feet

CUSTOMER REVIEW PANEL

SPU's Customer Review Panel provides advice and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on the utility's strategic plan and rates. The panel includes representatives from private, public, and nonprofit sectors, utility experts, business leaders, and community representatives. The panel regularly met with SPU leaders and provided valuable input that shaped this effort.

PANEL:

Noel Miller, Chair
Suzanne M. Burke
Bobby Coleman
Dave Layton
Laura Lippman
Maria McDaniel
Thy Pham
Rodney Schauf
Puja Shaw

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND APPENDICES

The 2021-2026 Strategic Business Plan and supporting materials are available at: *seattle.gov/utilities/about/plans/strategic-business-plan*

APPENDICES:

A. Accountability and Performance Reporting
B. Highlighted Initiative and Investment Detail
C. Community Research and Outreach Summary
D. Financial Forecast
E. Seattle Public Utilities Accountability and Affordability Strategic Plan
F. Seattle Public Utilities Risk and Resiliency Strategic Plan
G. Customer Review Panel Letter

"IF WE WANT REAL TRANSFORMATION, WE NEED TO THINK BEYOND ONE GENERATION. WE MUST PLAN FOR THE NEXT FIVE OR SIX GENERATIONS TO COME."

Paulina López,
Executive Director,
Duwamish River Valley Cleanup Coalition

THANK YOU TO THE ARTISTS WHO HELPED US MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE.

Frida Clements is a Seattle-based designer and illustrator known for her intricate line drawings and nature-inspired aesthetic. SPU partnered with Clements to create the visual representations of our Community Centered, One Water, Zero Waste vision found throughout this report.

The mixed media works are collaborations with Seattle-based photographers, including Minh Carrico, Adam Collet, and Adam Jabari, who were hired through the City of Seattle's Essentially Seattle portrait project, supported by SPU's 1% for Art funds.

Seattle Civic Poet Jourdan Imani Keith is a playwright, naturalist, educator, and storyteller whose work blends the textures of political, personal, and natural landscapes.

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