

Watershed Protection Department

Equity Update

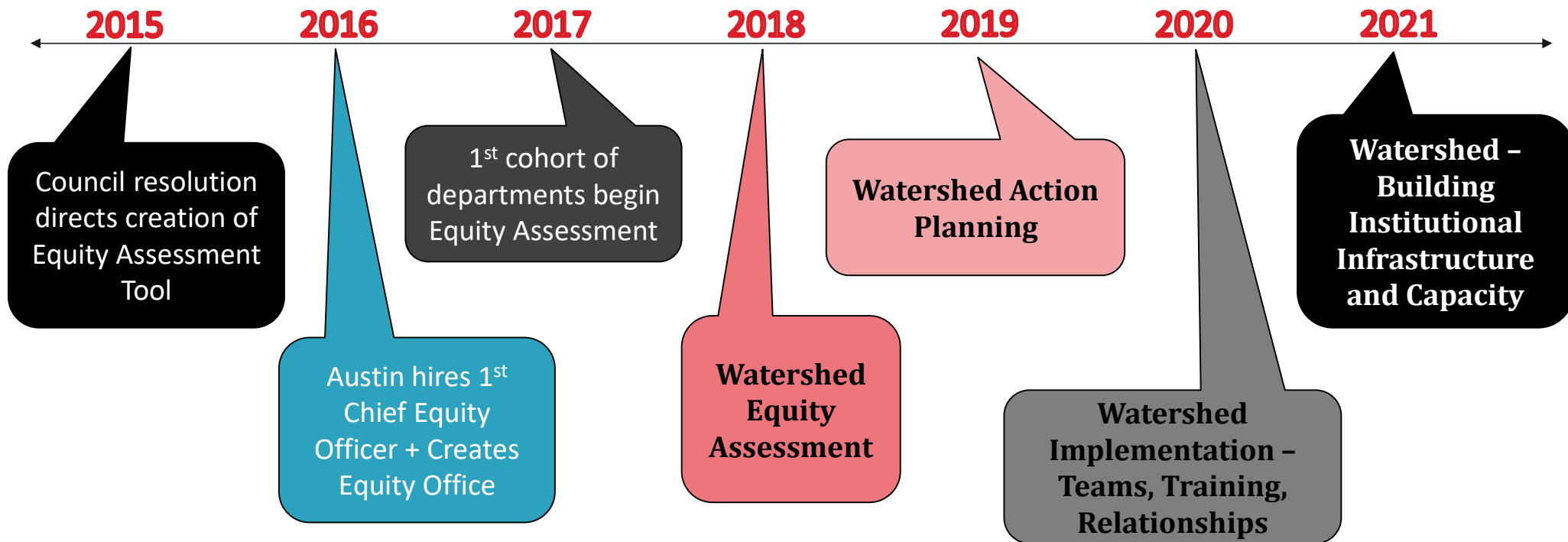
Environmental Commission
February 17, 2021

Presenters: Jorge Morales, Nikki Fowler, Kelly Gagnon, Victor Nelms, Janna Renfro, Ramesh Swaminathan



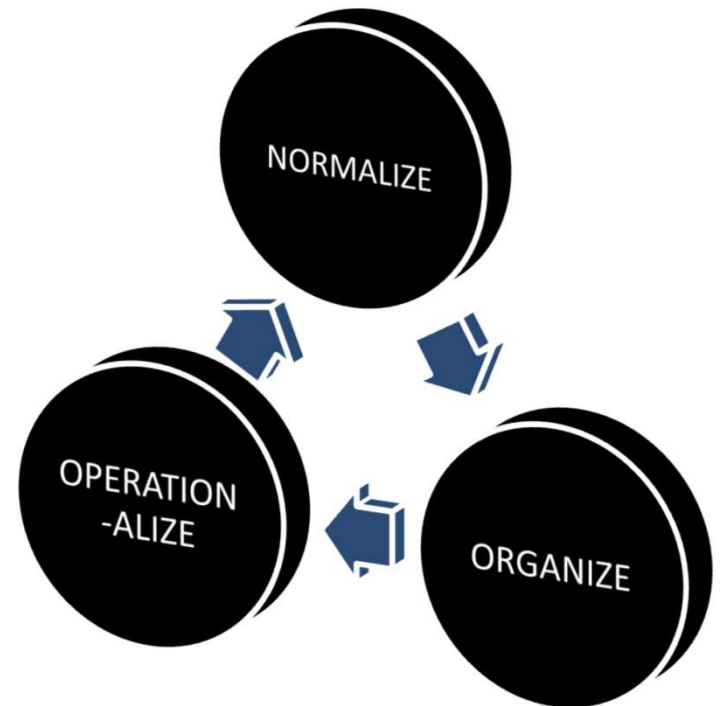
City of Austin
**WATERSHED
PROTECTION**

WPD Equity Timeline

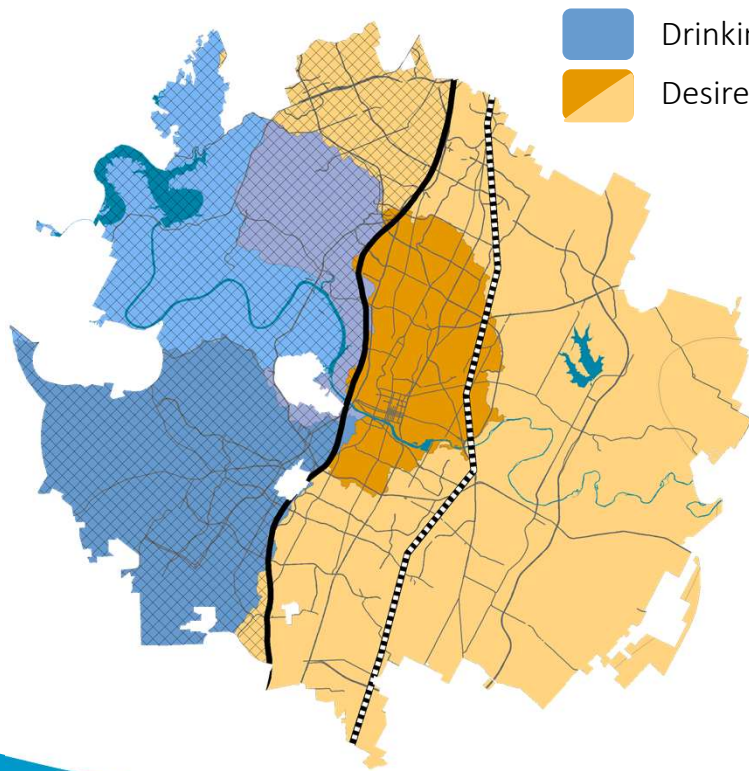


Guiding Principles

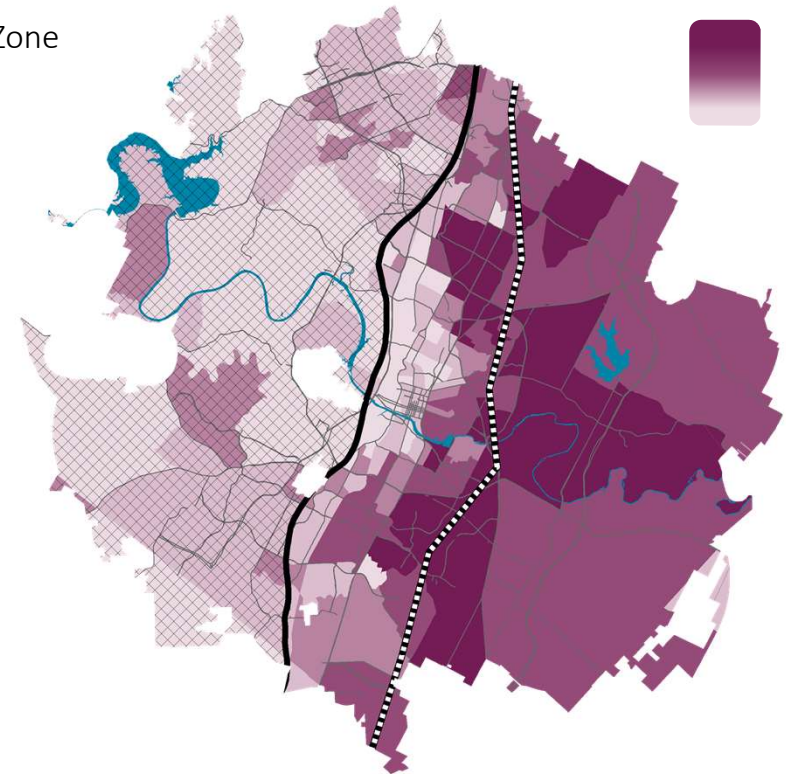
- Shared definition of equity:
 - *Racial equity is the condition when race is no longer a predictor of quality of life outcomes in our community.*
- Lead with Race:
 - *Race is the most reliable predictor of quality of life in Austin.*
- Transformation, not transaction.
- Normalize. Organize. Operationalize.



Watershed Focus



- Drinking Water Protection Zone
- Desired Development Zone



- High SVI
- Low SVI

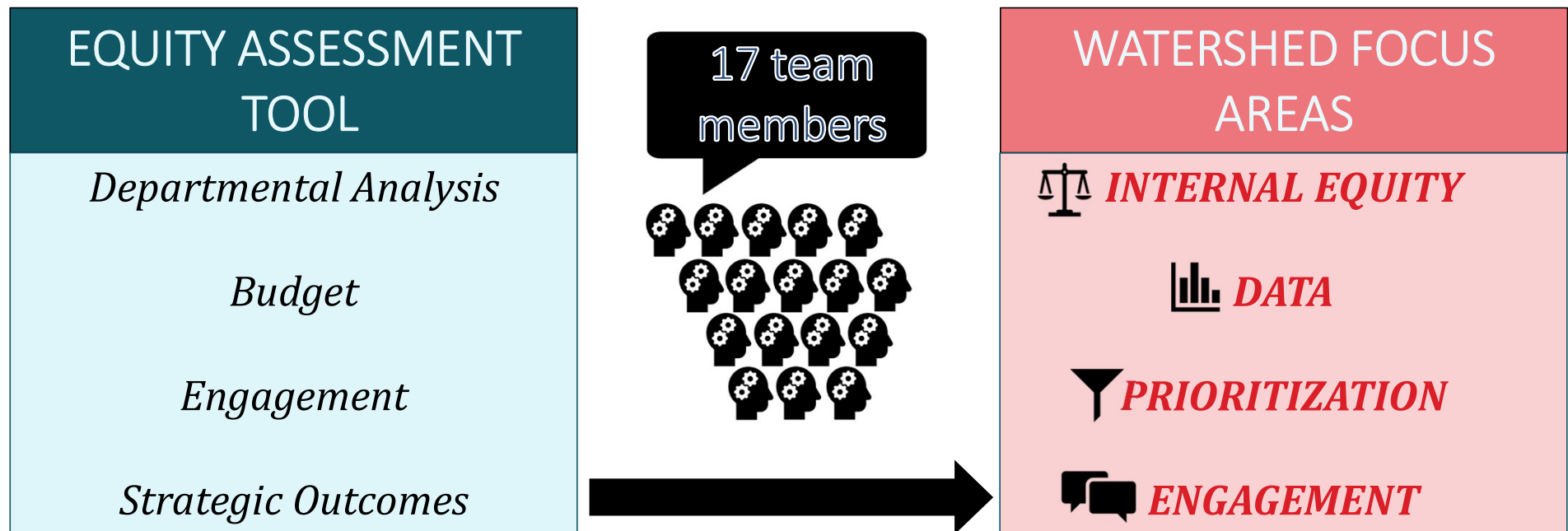


Edwards Plateau

Blackland Prairie Transition Line

SVI = Social Vulnerability Index
as defined by the Center for
Disease Control (CDC)

2018 Equity Assessment Process



Internal Equity

- People of color primarily work in Operations & Maintenance compared to “office” staff which is whiter. How are power + resources shared between these two spaces? How does quality of life differ?
- Is Watershed culture inclusive of all?
- Can we adequately serve the community if we don’t “look” like the community we serve across all areas?
- Are we meeting our full potential as an organization without a diverse professional staff across all areas?

Data

- Are people of color more likely to face adverse impacts from flooding, erosion, and poor water quality?
- How are we collecting data so that it can be disaggregated by race?
- What are the best ways to measure, analyze, and predict outcomes related to Watershed mission areas?

Prioritization

- Once we know where inequity exists, how do we prioritize funding to close those gaps?
- How do we make sure our dollars are reaching the right communities?
- Are we choosing solutions in a way that considers the different ways in which communities are situated?
- How do we improve infrastructure without worsening gentrification?

Engagement

- How can we expand our model of public participation to fully reflect community values and reach those we have marginalized?
- How can we work better with people already organizing within communities of color?
- What does it look like to share power with community?

2019 Action Planning + Rollout



- **Action Plan Goals**

- Develop Teams around Focus Areas
 - *Internal Equity*
 - *Data*
 - *Prioritization*
 - *Engagement*
- Expand Training Opportunities
- Continue to build existing relationships

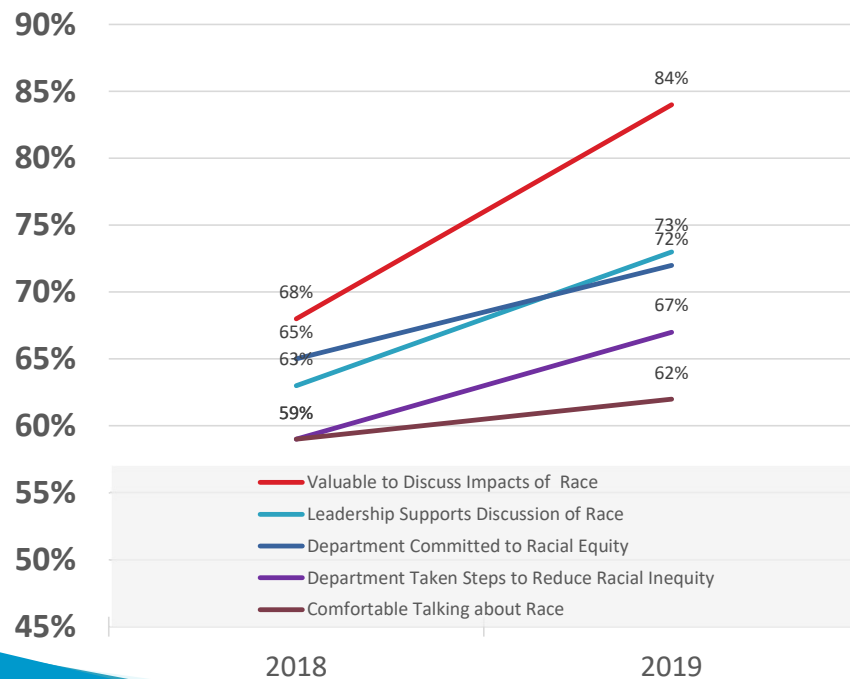
- **Rollout + Recruit**

- 19 presentations to all staff
- Recruited 100+ staff interested in participating

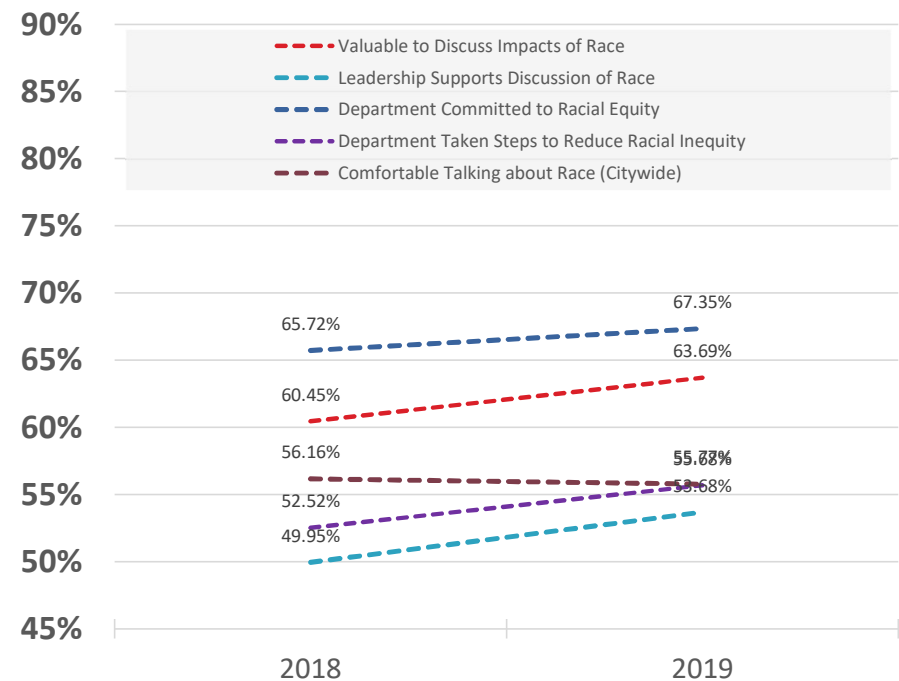
Seeing results in the workforce...



Watershed



Citywide



2020 Implementation

- Teams worked from July — September
 - Normalize and organize
 - Developed recommendations for further exploration
- Training
 - Undoing Racism
 - Groundwater Analysis
- Building Relationships



2021 Infrastructure + Capacity



STRATEGIC


Equity
Coordinator

- **New FTE**
- 100% dedicated to Equity
- Primary lead for initiative

COORDINATED

Equity Support
Team
(5 PPL)



- Training Organization
- Equity Assessment/Action Planning
- Equity Office Coordination

CREATED FROM WITHIN

Equity Technical
Team
(10-15 PPL)



- Representative of department
- Technical Experts
- Common Equity Analysis

CULTURAL

WPD Equity
Action Team
(OPEN DOOR)



- Open Door
- Community Included
- Horizon issues and discussion

Strategic Plan Update + Engagement

- Strategic Plan Purpose
 - Guiding Blueprint for Department
 - Evaluation Framework
 - Communication Tool
- Purpose of Update
 - Original adoption in 2001; last major update completed in 2014
 - Time to re-engage community and address current challenges
 - Assess values, evaluate guiding principles, update goals and objectives, revise prioritization methods, track progress

Strategic Plan Update + Engagement

- Goals for Update
 - Reflect Community Values
 - **Incorporate Equity and Climate Resilience**
 - Accessible and Informative
- Community Engagement Priorities
 - Under-served groups
 - Impacted groups
 - Community expertise

Strategic Plan Update + Engagement

- **Draft Timeline**
 - 2021: Planning (*in progress*) and Community Engagement (rounds 1 & 2)
 - 2022: Community Engagement (cont.) and Plan Development
 - 2023: Community Engagement (round 3) and Document Adoption
- Late Spring 2021: Send proposed Scope of Work to Council (by 4/30) and present to Environmental Commission

Resources

- Equity Office Website

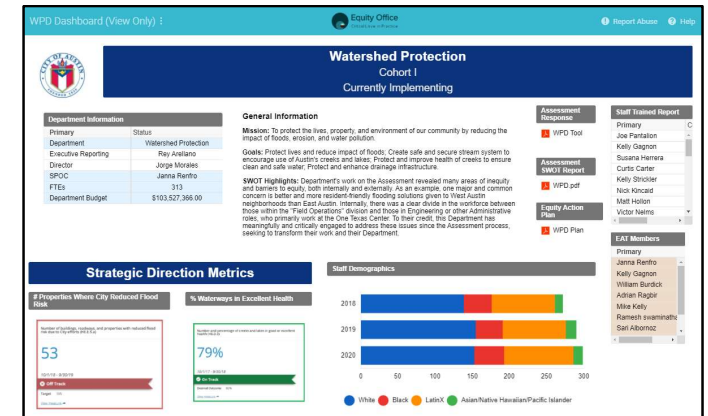
<https://austintexas.gov/departments/equity-office>

- Watershed Protection Equity Dashboard

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=abc25cbc68c041249aa79dab1d9253ae>

- Watershed Protection Strategic Plan Website

<https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/watershed-protection-master-plan>



Questions?