

# WATER FORWARD

2024 **PLAN** REPORT



AUSTIN'S 100 YEAR PLAN



## Water Forward 2024

### Austin's 100-Year Integrated Water Resource Plan

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February 11, 2025



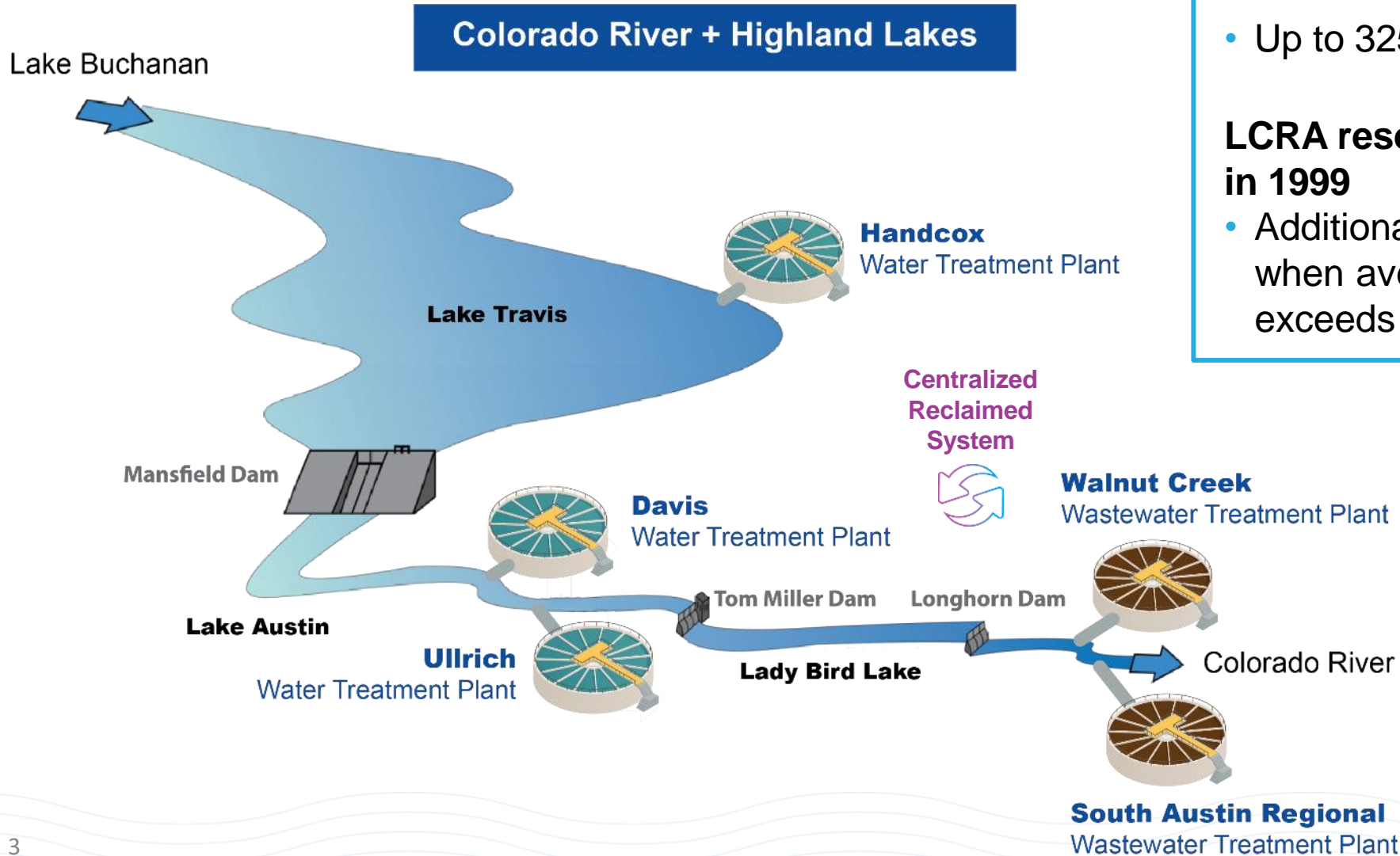
# Water Forward

Water Forward is **Austin's 100-year integrated water resource plan**, unanimously adopted by Council in November 2018. Water Forward identifies diverse and environmentally-conscious water management strategies to **adapt to growth, drought, and climate change** and ensure a sustainable, resilient, equitable, and affordable water future for our community.

The first update to the Water Forward plan was unanimously adopted by Council in November 2024. Water Forward 2024 was created through a collaborative process led by Austin Water and involving the Water Forward Task Force, outside experts and consultants, and community stakeholders.



# Austin's Water



## Colorado River:

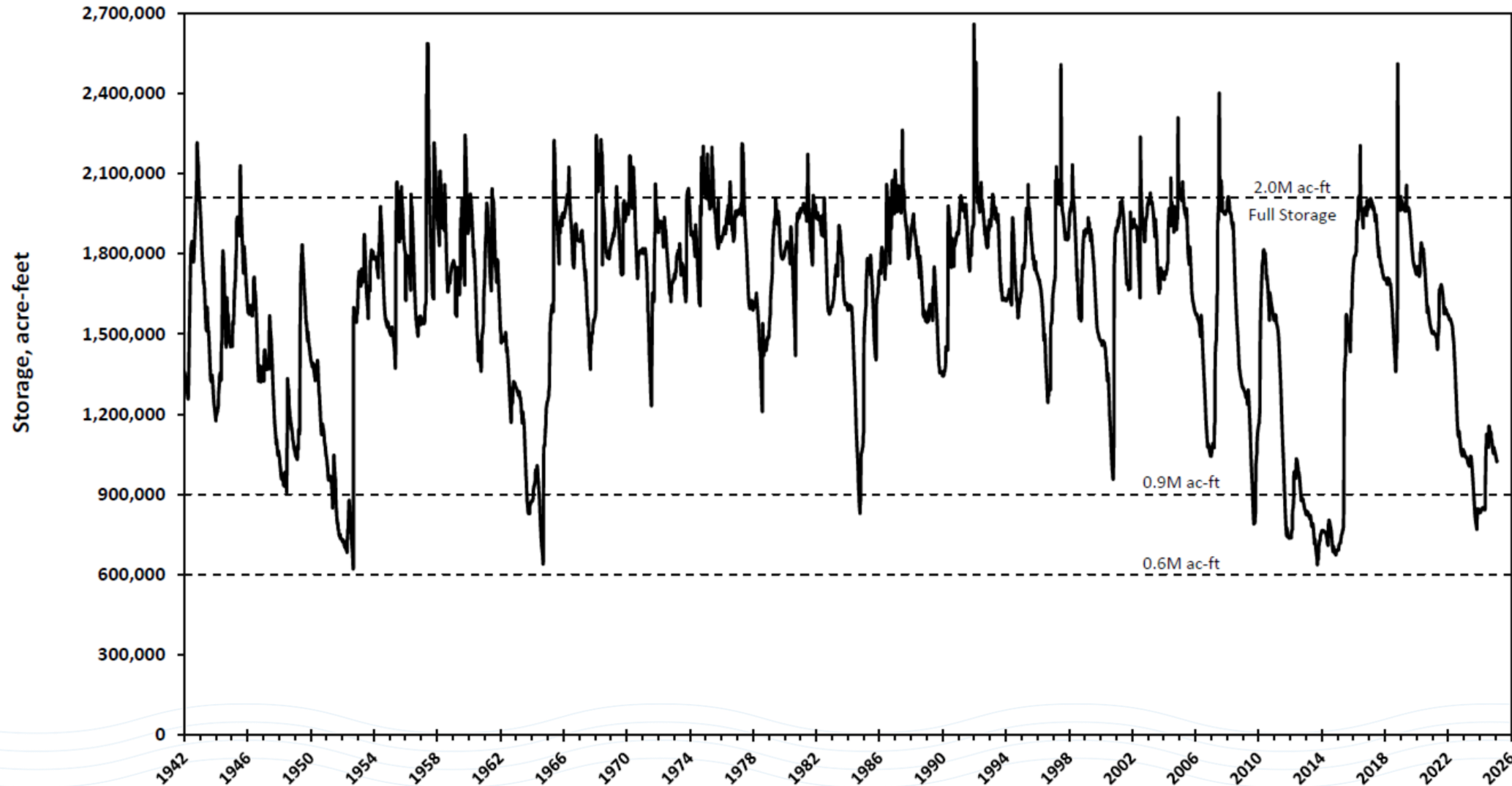
- Combination of State-granted water rights & long-term contract with LCRA
- Up to 325,000 acre-feet per year (afy)

## LCRA reservation & use fees pre-paid in 1999

- Additional use payments trigger when average for 2 consecutive years exceeds 201,000 afy

# Combined Storage

## Lakes Buchanan and Travis



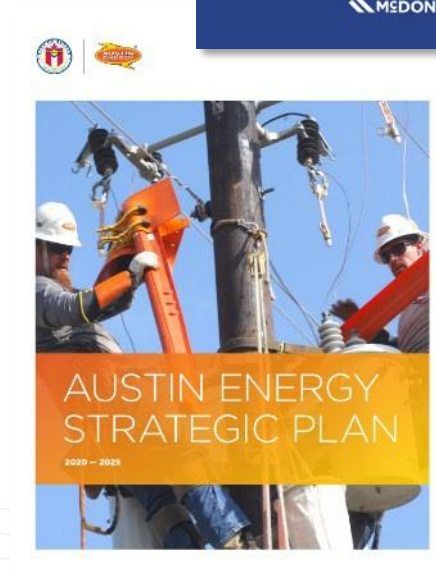
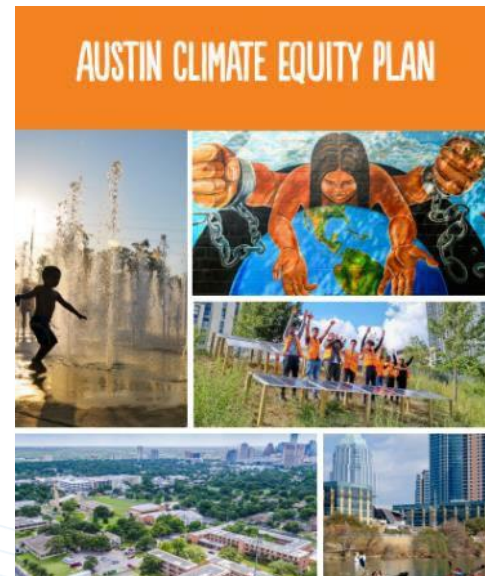
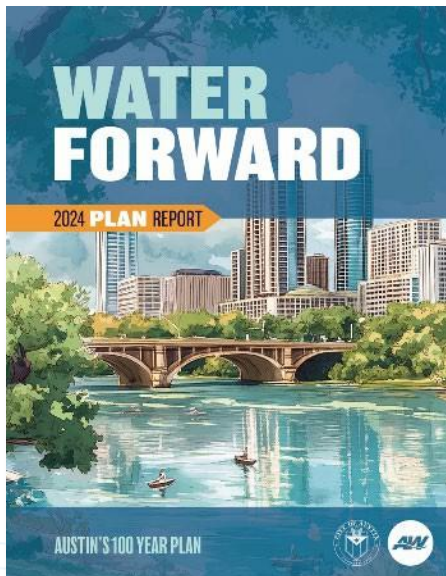
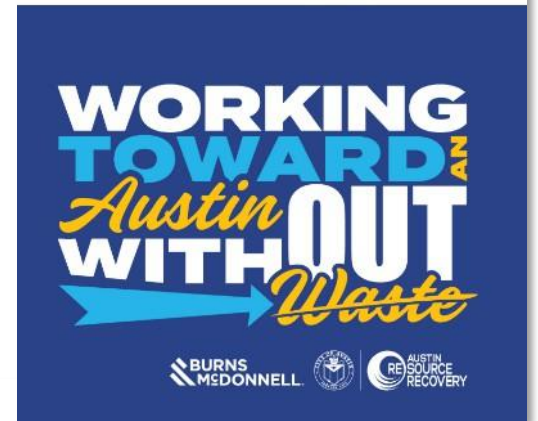
# WATER FORWARD

## One City One Water One Approach

- Environmental Sustainability & Climate Equity
- Affordability
- Reliability & Resiliency



2023 Austin Resource Recovery Comprehensive Plan



# Water Forward Guiding Principles

Resiliency

Inclusive approach +  
Community values

Diverse strategies

Equity +  
Affordability

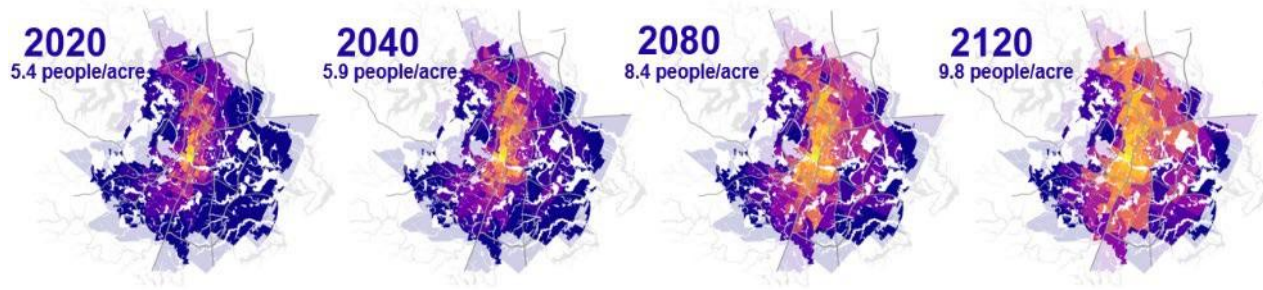
Protect the  
Colorado River

Reduce  
operational risks

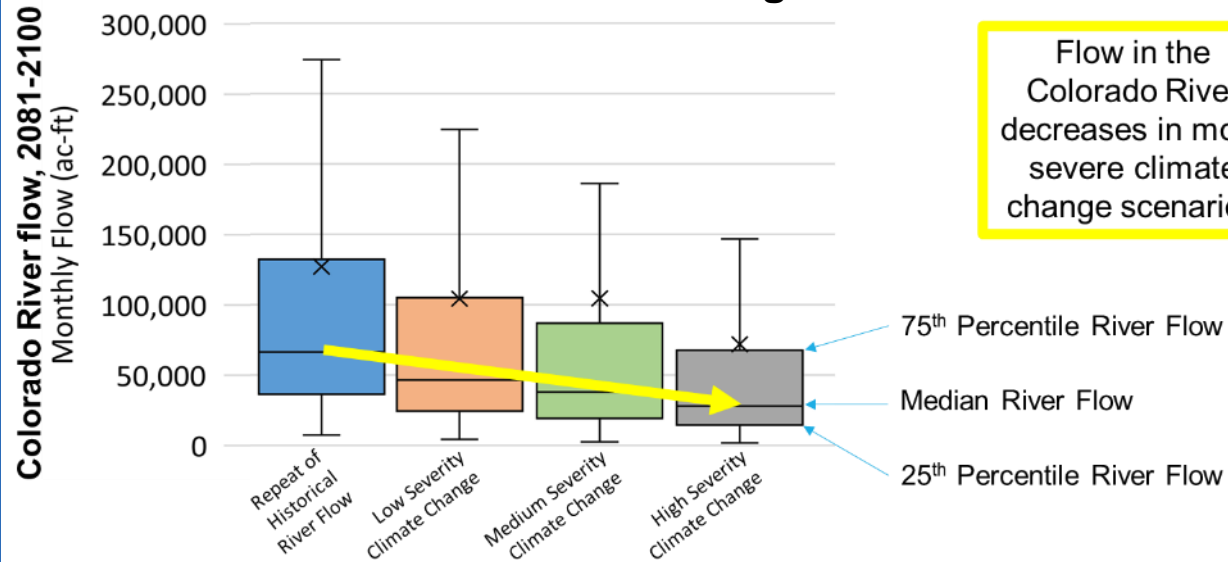
Focus on  
local supplies

# Planning for Uncertainty

## Population Growth



## Climate Change



# Plan Development

- Projected water demands
- Developed climate and streamflow projections
- Modeled future supply needs
- Identified strategies





# Equity Tasks

## Community Ambassadors Group (CAG)

- Formed to help develop the Water Forward 2024 Equity and Affordability Roadmap and Tool
- Membership of community volunteers reflecting diverse backgrounds

## Staff and CAG Equity Grounding

- Developed shared equity lens
- Discussed historical context of institutional and structural racism

## Equity and Affordability Roadmap and Tool

- Framework to evaluate the distribution of benefits and burdens of plan implementation outcomes
- Describes approaches for more equitable community engagement



# Equity and Affordability Framework



Reliable Supply



Protect Public Health

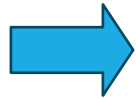


Accountable



Affordable

# Water Forward 2024 Objectives



| Objective               | Sub-Objective  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Water Supply Benefits   | Maximize reliability and resiliency, minimize vulnerability                          |
|                         | Maximize portfolio diversity   |
| Economic Benefits       | Maximize cost-effectiveness  |
| Equity Benefits         | Minimize impacts and maximize benefits of plan outcomes for marginalized communities |
| Environmental Benefits  | Minimize ecosystem impacts   |
|                         | Minimize net energy use  |
|                         | Maximize water use efficiency  |
|                         | Minimize water quality impacts   |
| Implementation Benefits | Minimize implementation and operational risk   |
|                         | Maximize water distribution and wastewater collection system resiliency              |
|                         | Maximize Local Control/Local Resource  |



# Water Forward 2024 Strategies



## Utility-Side Water Loss Control

- Production meter improvements
- Expanded active leak detection programs
- Additional analysis of smart meter data



## Customer Side Water Use Management

- Expanded customer incentives for conservation
- Use of smart meter data for customer-side leak identification, education, and outreach
- Water use budgeting



## Native & Efficient Landscapes

- New landscape ordinances & incentives
- Irrigation efficiency incentives
- Landscape conversion programs



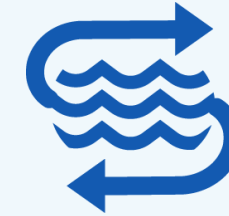
## Non-Potable Reuse

- Onsite Water Reuse Systems
- Decentralized Reclaimed
- Centralized Reclaimed

## Water Supply Storage

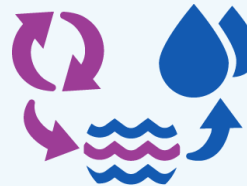


Aquifer Storage and Recovery



Decker Lake Off Channel Reservoir

## Potable Reuse



Indirect Potable Reuse

Strategies reliant on Colorado River and LCRA supplies

## New Water Supplies



Brackish Groundwater Desalination



# Water Forward 2024 Equity and Affordability **Conservation Mitigation Approaches**

- 💧 Design water budget program to work for larger households
- 💧 Tailor landscape and irrigation programs for marginalized communities
- 💧 Provide water conservation education, training programs, grants, and financial assistance



# Water Forward 2024 Equity and Affordability

## Reuse Mitigation Approaches

- 💧 Provide programs for maintenance support, training for building management, etc. for dual plumbed systems
- 💧 Promote programs to help people navigate the permitting process
- 💧 Continue to work with the Watershed Protection Department to allow centralized reclaimed water for outdoor irrigation across our community
- 💧 Continue to identify locations for onsite reuse to make reuse water more widely available
- 💧 Continued implementation of the GoPurple program, including code exemptions for affordable housing and financial and development incentives



# Water Forward 2024 Equity and Affordability Supply Mitigation Approaches

- 💧 Continue to minimize rate impacts through Customer Assistance Programs
- 💧 Use low-cost implementation project funding through Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) programs
- 💧 Address construction impacts on marginalized communities (traffic, noise, etc.)
- 💧 Explore options to minimize potential impacts to neighboring communities that may be impacted by strategies located outside of Austin Water's service area
- 💧 Partner with community organizations to provide education on water supply strategies and water quality





# Questions?



Austin  
**IN WATER**





An aerial photograph of a river with a person in a red kayak. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and the surrounding forest is lush green. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue horizontal band containing the title and subtitle.

# Rain to River

A Strategic Plan to Protect Austin's  
Creeks and Communities

Erin Wood – Planning Manager, Watershed Protection

# What is Rain to River?

- The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) protects the lives, property, and environment of our community by reducing the impact of flooding, erosion, and water pollution
- Rain to River is a strategic plan that will guide the work of Watershed Protection for the next 10 years
- We will use this plan to set goals, prioritize our work, and guide our decision making to tackle urgent challenges



# Goals for the Update

- ❖ Reflect the vision and values of our community
- ❖ Incorporate equity and climate resilience
- ❖ Be informative and accessible



## Focused Efforts to Reach:

- ❖ Historically under-served groups
- ❖ Impacted groups
- ❖ Organizations with relevant expertise

We are striving for a representative sample of the Austin community



# Broad Community Engagement

- Launched **RaintoRiverATX.com**
- Created a **Community Vision Survey** for people to share their experiences with natural spaces, waterways, and drainage infrastructure
- Advertised the survey using **yard signs** at community gathering spaces and via **social media and radio**
- Attended **60+ community events**
- Worked with consultant to conduct a **statistically valid survey** to validate Community Vision Survey results



# Focused Engagement

- Worked with **MEASURE**, a local black-owned nonprofit, to conduct five compensated focus groups designed by and centered on historically-excluded communities
- Conducted 11 more **focus groups** with organizations like Austin Youth River Watch, Foundation Communities, and Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
- Hired a cohort of **community ambassadors** – a group of paid community members who gathered stories and perspectives from racially and economically diverse communities



# Focused Engagement

- Awarded six **\$5K mini-grants** to partner organizations who gathered additional input from historically-excluded communities
- Reached out to over 120 different priority stakeholder organizations and met 1:1 with more than a dozen organization leaders to **build relationships**
- Surveyed **community organizations** to gather their expertise-informed perspectives
- Promoted Community Vision Survey by mailing **postcards to addresses in flood risk areas** and attending **community events** serving priority stakeholders

# What's Next?

We brought on a consultant team to work collaboratively with staff and the community to develop the content of the plan

We recruited a Community Activation Group (CAG), comprised of diverse community leaders with expertise in environmental advocacy, community health, and disaster recovery

We will launch our second phase of engagement this summer to share back what we learned and ask the community to help us evaluate strategies and trade-offs

The plan will be completed in early 2026







# Rain to River

[www.RaintoRiverATX.com](http://www.RaintoRiverATX.com)

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