



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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MWRD Board approves five-year strategic plan to guide water environment, sustainability, innovation and Chicago area resilience

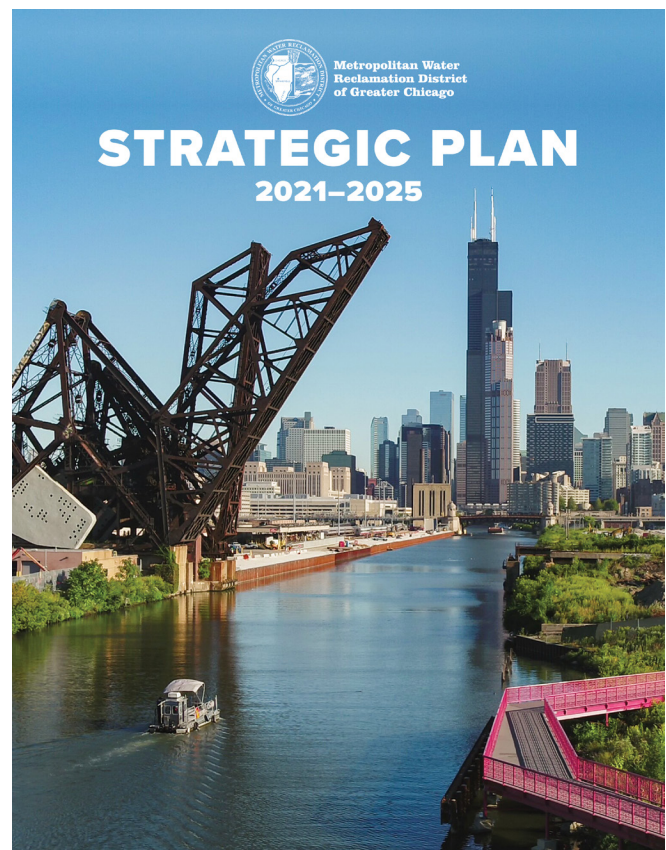
A first-of-its-kind robust collaborative strategic planning process that occurred over nine months has culminated in the approval of a landmark strategic plan document to guide the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago's (MWRD's) efforts to protect the region's water environment and enhance the quality of life for Chicago area residents.

The MWRD's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 was approved by the MWRD Board of Commissioners on June 3, 2021, following an elaborate planning process utilizing public participation, a steering committee and engagement with local government agencies and consultants. To view the plan, visit mwrdd.org and click on "About."

"The District's new strategic plan is an ambitious roadmap for 21st century leadership on climate change, protecting fresh water, and guiding our region to a safe and sustainable future," said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. "We are so grateful for the valuable time and energy that everyone put into this plan and for the public's participation in the planning process. And now, the real work begins."

Commissioner Shore and Commissioner Marcelino Garcia co-chaired a steering committee that included MWRD Executive Director Brian Perkovich, Treasurer Mary Ann Boyle, General Counsel Susan Morakalis, Director of Maintenance and Operations John Murray and Director of Engineering Catherine O'Connor. The planning process also engaged an exceptionally talented cast of consultants from Arup, Civic Consulting Alliance and Kearney, contributing hundreds of hours of pro bono support.

The strategic planning process also gathered input from community representatives, engineering and consulting



firms, professional organizations, regional planning organizations, and local, state, and federal entities.

"This is the first time that external voices have been invited into the MWRD's strategic planning process and we appreciate and value their input," said Commissioner Garcia. "This is important at a time when water utilities are fundamentally rethinking their role in society – from managers of waste to managers of valuable resources."

The MWRD's five-year Strategic Plan articulates the vision and strategic goals for the MWRD, (*continued*)

MWRD Board approves five-year strategic plan, *cont.*

identifies a set of strategic initiatives to achieve those goals, and provides a framework for measuring progress against the plan. All aspects of the strategic planning process will be informed by an equity lens. The MWRD Steering Committee remained cognizant that the planning has a deep impact on all residents, no matter where they live or work in the MWRD's 882-square-mile service area. As a result, the Strategic Plan focused on diversity, equity and inclusion to guide engagement with all communities across Cook County.

From September 2020 through February 2021, the Steering Committee led a multi-phase strategic planning process, against the backdrop of a global pandemic and the growing threat of climate change, using the lens of racial and social equity in the communities served by the MWRD.

The planning process looked externally and internally to ensure that our operations reflect the communities that the MWRD serves. The strategic planning process included:

- In-depth interviews with the MWRD's Executive Team and Board of Commissioners;
- A workshop, facilitated by Arup, which engaged approximately 50 attendees, including local governments, community organizations, regional planning and policy organizations, environmental organizations, and others;
- An employee survey that garnered almost 550 responses from MWRD staff;

- Public-facing surveys that provided the opportunity for more than 200 members of the public to offer their ideas and feedback; and
- A review of internal documents and existing performance measures.

The Steering Committee then participated in a two-day Strategic Planning Workshop to consider input from the engagement process and align on five overarching strategic goals for the new Plan. Working Groups were then formed around each strategic goal that included representatives from the MWRD's Executive Team, Board of Commissioners, and more than 50 members of MWRD staff who were selected based on their expertise and commitment to the MWRD's ongoing success. These Working Groups were tasked with developing and finalizing 32 strategies that support the five strategic goals, as well as measures to gauge progress.

"It has been an honor to work with our executive leadership, staff, Commissioners, volunteers and the public to create a living, breathing document that will help guide our work now and into the future," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "It was very important to incorporate community engagement as we continue to fulfill our mission of ensuring that people's health and safety are guarded and as we expand into new and innovative areas that will expand our mission."



Approach

- Solicit input from stakeholders, external and internal
- Collect data on key performance metrics
- Assess the current state and identify the desired future state
- Align on strategic vision and goals with leadership
- Identify gaps that will need to be addressed to achieve strategic goals
- Identify preliminary strategic initiatives through working sessions with MWRD staff
- Engage stakeholders around preliminary initiatives
- Align on strategic roadmap with leadership
- Finalize 5-Year Strategic Plan, to include:
 - Vision
 - Goals
 - Roadmap
 - Performance indicators
 - Framework for annual review and updates

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water