



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

## 2017 Update to the 2015–2020 Strategic Business Plan

# Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

In 2015, the Executive Team reviewed the 2011–2014 strategic plan and determined that the goals and strategies had been significantly advanced. The vision to “Improve Our Environment” in the areas of Finance, Employee, Public and Natural Environments served the District well. Although it remains important to keep our eyes focused on these areas to ensure that we continue to maintain excellence, the team set new goals for the next five years.

On June 16, 2016, the District held a public meeting to kick off the budget season and to present to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) the draft Strategic Business Plan (SBP) update that was developed for 2017. The executive team had previously performed a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and from this information formed goals and strategies for the plan. At the public meeting, staff received input from the BOC and the public and incorporated these comments into the plan. It was clear that the BOC wants to make certain that we maintain the improvements made in the four areas of focus.

During the past SBP, the District passed a Watershed Management Ordinance and a new infiltration and inflow program. These programs are aimed at improving flood controls throughout the county and maintaining important infrastructure. The District also received additional authority from the Illinois General Assembly authorizing local support to flood mitigation projects and the purchase of flood prone properties – two important tools that are used in our work to protect the community from the impacts of severe storms.

During the current SBP cycle, Thornton Composite Reservoir came online and the first phase of McCook Reservoir will also be placed in service. This dynamic duo will provide over 10 billion gallons of flood protection to residents and water quality improvements to the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS).

In 2015, the District received authority to recover resources from the treatment process and resell these assets to help offset treatment costs. Becoming a sustainable partner in the region by recovering resources, lowering carbon emissions, creating new revenue streams and promoting resiliency are all part of the goals set for the near future. The District has a great soil enhancer product, nutrients, clean water and energy that can all be used to encourage economic job creation and add benefit to our communities. The District has real estate resources that can also be used to add value to the communities we serve.

Decisions were made to keep the Mission Statement and Values that have been adopted in the past. So, without further ado, the District is excited to introduce the 2017 update to the Strategic Business Plan.

# Values

## **Excellence**

*We believe excellence is a never ending journey to exceed the expectations placed upon us as individuals and as an organization.* Individual excellence is exhibited by performing one's responsibilities to the best of his or her ability. We promote employee development and encourage everyone to perform at their best. Organizational excellence is obtained by continuous improvement to existing processes. Excellence at both levels is achieved through proactive, resourceful, reliable, and prudent execution of processes and responsibilities. Striving for excellence will result in continuous improvements in the way we operate and the quality of the environment.

## **Innovation**

*We seek optimal solutions to provide the best services and products available.* Innovation increases efficiency and performance by being adaptable and strategic in the face of change. Meaningful, productive change involves looking at challenges and opportunities from new perspectives and then developing and implementing new ideas to address the challenge. We are open to implementing new concepts and sharing what we have learned from our diverse experiences and, in the process, evolving. Embracing growth within the District's mission, we continue to be a model of wastewater treatment and stewardship of the water environment.

## **Respect**

*We create an atmosphere of open communication that rewards commitment and performance and is responsive to the needs of our employees and our communities.* Respect is measured by how we treat each other, by

the contributions that flow from our diversity, by the productivity of our relationships, and by a job well done, no matter what the job. To meet our goals, we depend on the integrity, knowledge, skill, diversity, and teamwork of our employees. Creating a respectful, courteous, and fair workplace will lead to improved communication, heightened levels of workplace participation, and innovation due to diverse thinking.

## **Safety**

*We are dedicated to safeguarding our greatest assets – our employees – together with the environment and our communities.* There is always time to do it safely. We strive to provide a safe environment for our employees and our communities. We continually seek new ways to improve safety performance by routinely training employees in safe operating practices and regulatory responsibilities. We incorporate safety in all planning, operations, and activities. Continuously improving our safety practices will improve the well-being of our employees and the District as a whole.

## **Accountability**

*We are dedicated to fulfilling our responsibility by being accountable to our taxpayers, coworkers, and the environment in a prudent manner.* As public service employees, we bring a high degree of integrity, professionalism, quality and caring to our work. We have a commitment to our communities to provide service with the highest level of integrity, transparency and accountability. Acting with accountability will make us a stronger organization by earning the respect, trust, and confidence of our coworkers and the communities we serve.

# Mission

The District will protect the health and safety of the public in its service area, protect the quality of the water supply source (Lake Michigan), improve the quality of water in watercourses in its service area, protect businesses and homes from flood damages, and manage water as a vital resource for its service area. The District's service area is 883.6 square miles of Cook County, Illinois. The District is committed to achieving the highest standards of excellence in fulfilling its mission.

# Vision

The vision statement "Recovering Resources, Transforming Water" captures the changing landscape taking place in the water industry. The District is looking to add value in traditional and non-traditional ways. This vision has produced six main goals for the organization. These goals are listed below with a descriptive statement that captures the thinking behind each goal.

- **Add Value:** Every employee at the District will look for opportunities to add value
- **Excellence:** Nothing of consequence is accomplished without enthusiasm
- **Resource Recovery:** The District will pursue the beneficial recovery of natural resources
- **Develop Employees:** Value is measured through personal contribution and growth
- **Leading Partnerships:** We recognize the importance of active involvement in the world around us
- **Technology:** The District will embrace a new era of technology that delivers reliable and useful information

# Goals and Strategies

The strategic plan outlines six major goals aimed at achieving the vision of the District. Under each goal, strategies were developed to accomplish the goal. Each strategy will have performance measures. The measures will be used to ensure efforts are achieving the desired results. During the strategic planning review, the measures will be used to make adjustments to the plan as needed so the District can remain focused on continual improvement.

## **Goal 1 – Add Value**

*Every employee at the District will look for opportunities to add value.* The District will be focused on adding value at every level in the organization. Each employee is challenged to add value in every interaction either internal or external to the agency. The following specific strategies have been developed to meet this goal:

**Customer Service:** Every employee's action should mindfully fulfill the customer's needs.

- Issue permits in less than 30 days
- Transition from an enforcement perspective to informed compliance
- Develop and implement effective flood mitigation programs for our customers
- Structure a multi-dimensional, culture changing strategy around Green Infrastructure implementation
- Develop and implement targeted odor control strategies

**Real Estate:** Explore opportunities for community partnerships aimed at reducing waste, our carbon footprint or revitalizing the environment.

- Utilize wood chips in biosolids compost blend
- Work with community to revitalize the urban forest using property adjacent to water reclamation plants (WRPs)
- Utilize Fulton County property for nutrient control

**Service Levels:** The District will establish service level agreements that meet the needs and expectations of the internal customer.

- Establish contract turn-around timeframe agreements for all contract classes
- Develop planning schedules and adhere to project time frames
- Streamline and simplify budget process

## **Goal 2 – Excellence**

*Nothing of consequence is accomplished without enthusiasm.* Excellence should be our goal in everything we do from meeting compliance objectives to delivering projects on time. In order to achieve excellence, the organization should focus on results. It is the measure of the result that determines the degree of success.

**Finances:** Ensure the responsible use of resources in the delivery of services.

- Continue the prioritization of projects to ensure best use of current spending
- Provide base budget targets and assure approvals above base are tied to strategic initiatives
- Manage resources to ensure financial stability targets are met

**Process Evaluation:** Develop processes that are results oriented.

- Optimize energy intensive processes
- Optimize chemical intensive processes
- Optimize work distribution processes and work flow

**Sense of Urgency:** Establish a sense of urgency in delivering community services.

- Deliver and implement flood relief plan for Cook County
- Establish excellence in maintenance and operations
- Expedite capital improvement program projects in design, bid, contract award and construction schedule

**Performance Management:** The District will develop performance measures that reflect the excellent contributions of staff.

- Develop automatic measures that indicate performance to our public

## **Goal 3 – Resource Recovery**

*The District will pursue the recovery of natural resources.* The District understands the obligation of every organization to implement sustainable and resilient practices. The District also understands the importance of a sustainable economy and financial base. Therefore, the District will seek to recover resources in a way that has a return on investment and can produce private sector jobs in our region.

**Water:** Pursue reuse applications for the high quality water produced at our plants and for the capture and reuse of stormwater.

- Explore reuse opportunities in the Calumet and Stickney industrial corridors
- Evaluate park and golf course water reuse
- Evaluate cistern capture and reuse opportunities in Cook County

# Goals and Strategies (continued)

**Phosphorus:** Recover phosphorus in a slow release fertilizer for environmentally-friendly reuse.

- Implement recovery process at the Stickney WRP by 2016
- Implement recovery process at the Calumet and Egan WRPs by 2022
- Explore algae nutrient reduction processes as an additional recovery resource

**Energy:** Achieve energy neutrality by 2023.

- Implement food to energy, doubling gas production at the Calumet WRP
- Maximize use of digester capacity at the Stickney WRP
- Market electrical capacity at Lockport to maximize return on investment
- Optimize aeration processes and reduce energy consumption by 25%

**Biosolids:** Pursue the sale of biosolids to the marketplace for repackaging.

- Work with IEPA to adopt federal standards concerning exceptional quality biosolids
- Successfully bid sale of biosolids to private partners

**Recycle and Prevention:** Promote environmental stewardship through recycling and preventative measures.

- Recycle demolition material on all District projects
- Ensure availability of medical disposal options
- Explore opportunities for recycle partnerships
- Develop prevention education materials

## Goal 4 – Develop Employees

*Value is measured through personal contribution and growth.* Employees at the District are the best in the industry. In order to maintain a leadership role in wastewater, the District needs to develop future leadership and pass down competencies. The District will invest in its future by investing in its employees.

- Develop and implement leadership initiatives that support succession planning
- Develop and implement competency-based individual development plans

The District Strategic Business Plan is used throughout the year to measure results and communicate progress to the Board of Commissioners and staff. This plan is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. It serves as a guiding document until replaced by a new strategic plan.

- Develop a culture that recognizes the value of every employee

## Goal 5 – Leading Partnerships

*We recognize the importance of active involvement in the world around us.*

**Relationships:** Develop strategic relationships with constituents through active involvement in a variety of venues and organizations on a local, state and national level.

- Inventory and align professional memberships and participation
- Participate in active leadership roles in a variety of organizations
- Utilize our enhanced awareness from strategic relationships to make informed decisions

**Leadership:** Promote the District as one of the top leaders in the water industry.

- Provide active leadership in the invasive species discussion
- Provide active leadership in water issues in Cook County
- Provide active leadership in state water issues
- Provide active leadership in federal water issues

## Goal 6 – Technology

*The District will embrace a new era of technology that delivers reliable and useful information.* We live in an age of information. Information allows for good decision making and navigation toward success. The District has always collected volumes of data. This initiative to focus on accessing that data and converting it to useful information will help the District navigate a successful future.

- Simplify SAP to increase utilization, maximize effectiveness and bring up to date
- Provide reliable system services to every user
- Utilize current capability and develop a shared IT vision
- Ensure consistent data input from all users to produce useful information
- Enhance use of current technology platforms

## Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

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