MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY
CITY OF PROVIDENCE

INVESTING IN PROVIDENCE

Our plan to fix flooding and replace aging pipes

Summer 2026

Department of Sustainability
Priscilla De La Cruz, Director



Developing a plan

Urgency: 13 flash flooding events in a two-year period

Action: 2024 City forms Stormwater and Sewer Task Force



Wide-range of community stakeholders to address core issues

- Environmental Justice
- Regulatory compliance
- Increased localized flooding
- Chronic underfunding



2024 Stakeholder Task Force

Councilor Sue AnderBois
City Council

Councilor Helen Anthony
City Council

April Brown
REJC

Siobhan Callahan
West Broadway Neighborhood Assoc.

Leandro (Kufa) Castro
Building Futures

Al Dahlberg
Brown University

Anthony DeMatteo
Dimeo Construction

Carla DeStefano
SWAP, Inc.

Michael DiBiase
RIPEC

Topher Hamblett
Save The Bay

Michele Jalbert
Providence Resilience Partnership

John Kelly
Meeting Street

Alicia Lehrer
WRWC

Cris Llopoz Osorio
Providence Human Relations Commission

Adam Lupino
LiUNA!

Jonesy Mann
AS220

Alex Miller
Cornish Associates

Amelia Rose
Groundwork RI

Anusha Venkataraman
One Neighborhood Builders

Chandelle Wilson
Southside Community Land Trust

Seth Zeren
Armory Revival

2024 Task Force: TA + City Staff

Technical Assistance

Mary Tchamkina
Raftelis

Laura Collins
New England Environmental Finance Center

Elizabeth Scott
SNEP Network

Martha Sheils
New England Environmental Finance Center

Jen West
Narragansett Bay Research Reserve

Anna Patterson
UNC Environmental Finance Center

City Staff

Brian Byrnes
Deputy Superintendent of Providence Parks

Priscilla De La Cruz
Director of Department of Sustainability

Clara DeCerbo
Director of PEMA

Sheila Dormody
Chief of Policy and Resiliency

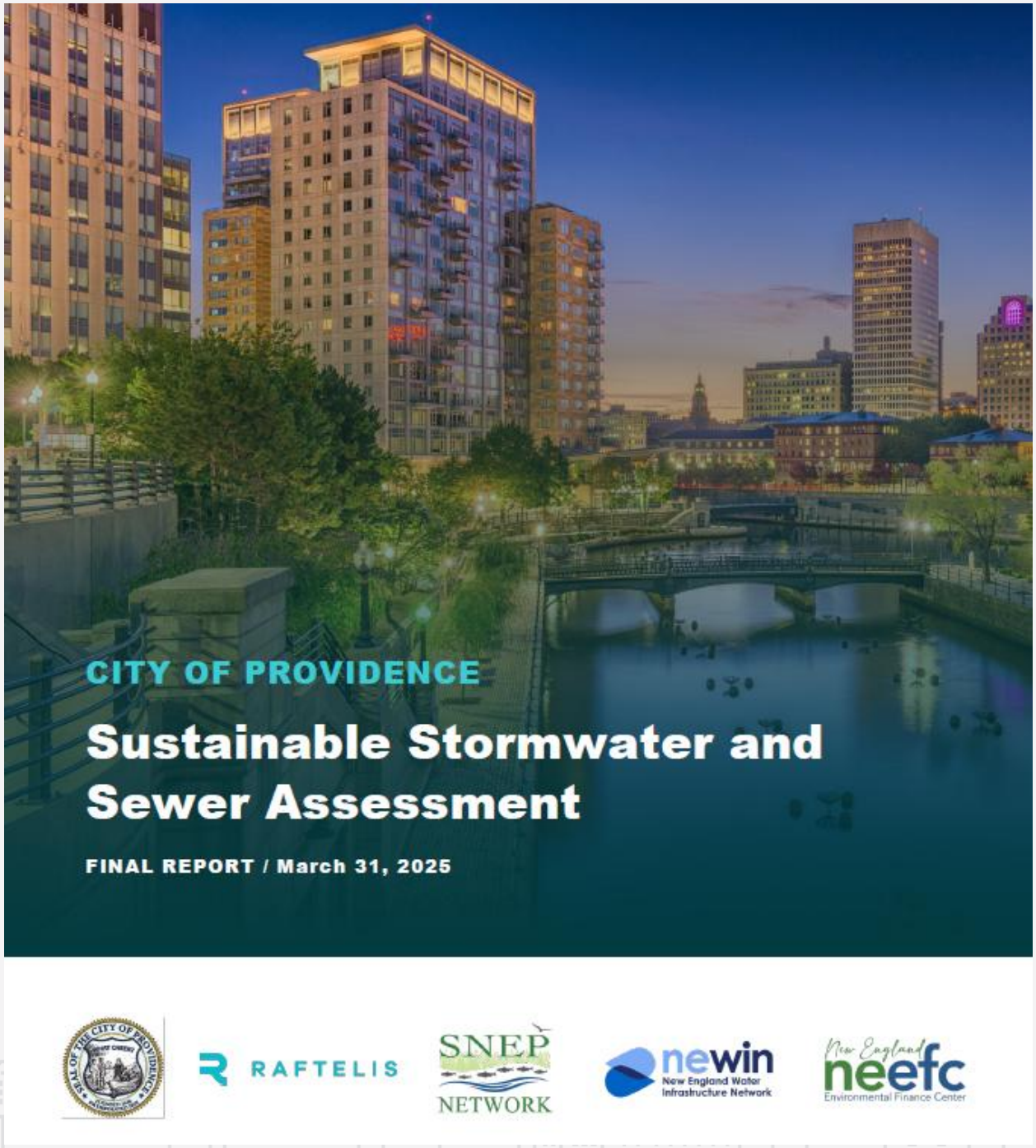
Craig Hochman
Chief Engineer, Department of Public Works

Matt Shumate
Deputy Chief of Staff

Alexis Thompson
Zoning Official, Inspection and Standards

Sophie Worsh-Farnum
Sustainability Policy Associate

2024 – 2025 City-specific analysis



Task Force Recommendations

Stormwater User Fee

Sewer User Fee

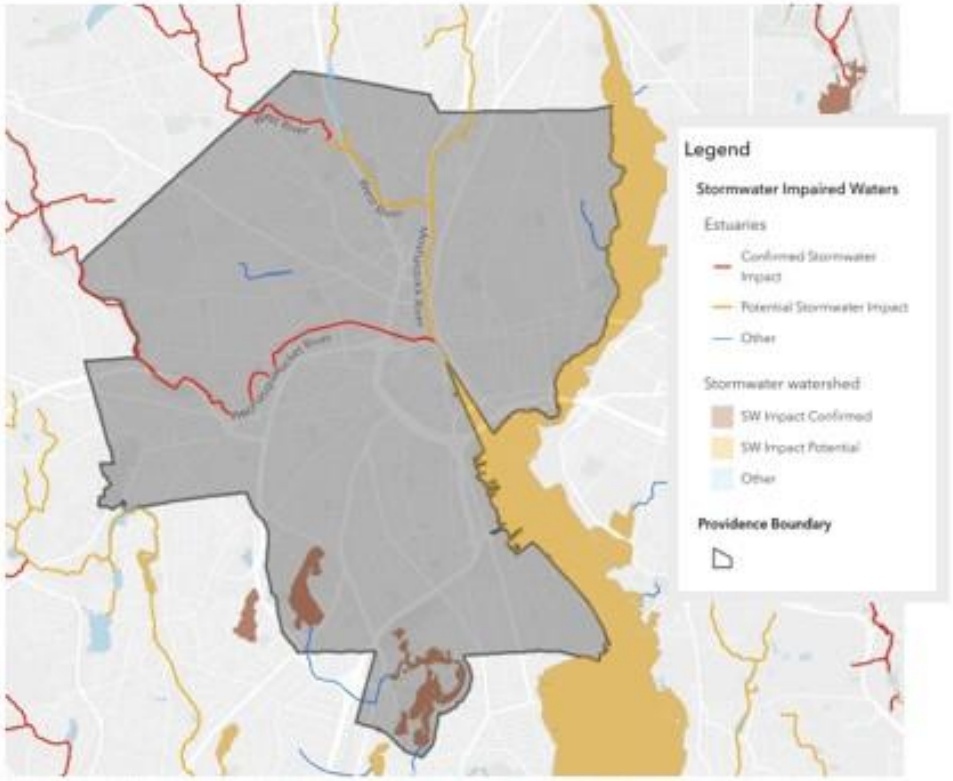
- Education & outreach
- Transparency & accountability
- Equity
- Alignment with other City plans
- Job training opportunity
- Driving behavioral change

Stronger, more frequent storms



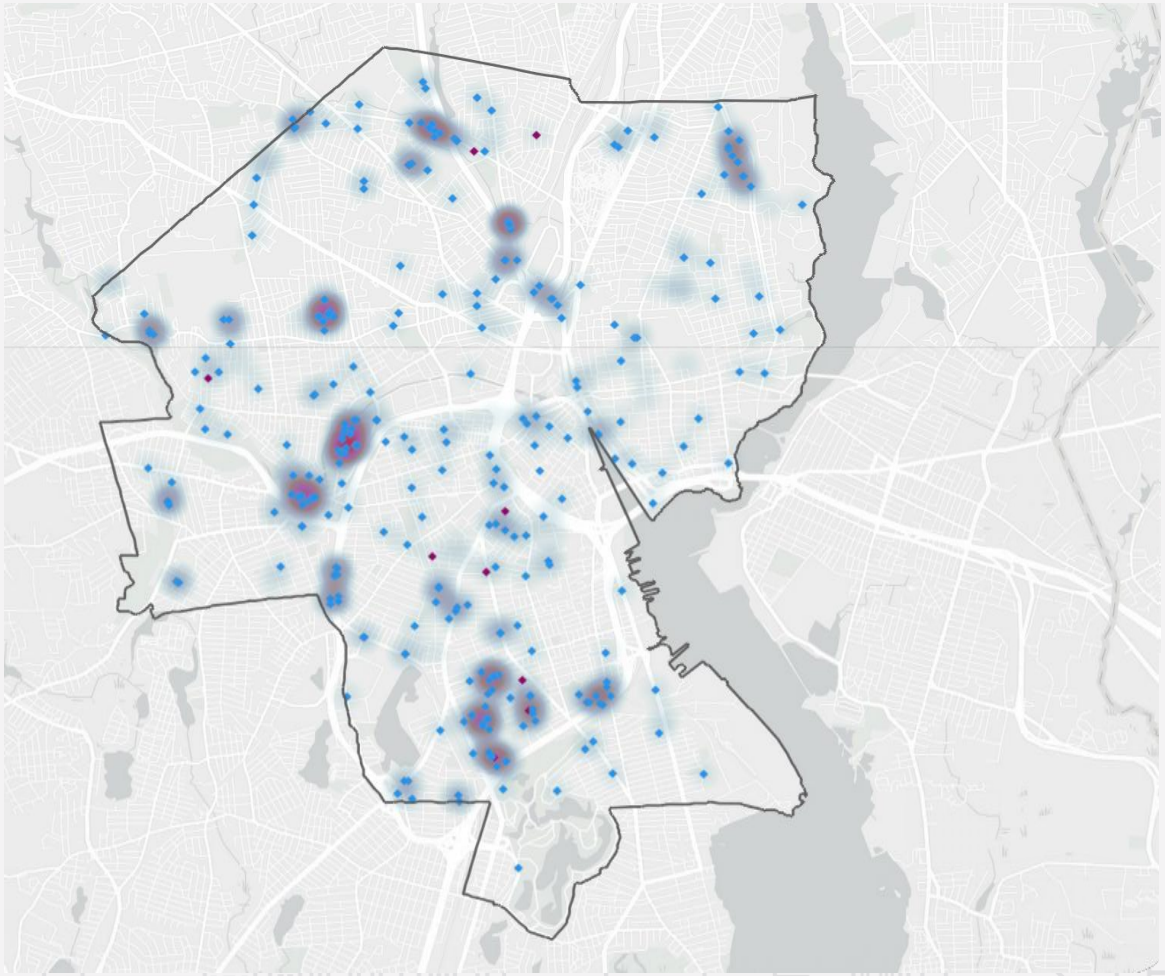
https://www.bostonglobe.com/video/2023/07/05/metro/new-england/rhode-island/video-university-avenue-street-flooding-in-providence-ri/

Stormwater Impaired Waterways





Flooding and sewer backups citywide



Legend

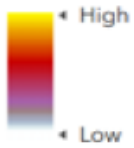
Flooding events due to known sewer backups and unidentified infrastructure failure between August 2022 and May 2024.

City of Providence Boundary

Flood Events

- Flooding (Building + Street)
- Sewer Backup

Flooding Hotspots



University of Rhode Island, Esri, Tom Tom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS

Our systems weren’t designed for today's storms

Much of the storm system is 75+ years old

At least 60% of the sewer pipes are over 100 years old

Older pipes + stronger storms = more flooding

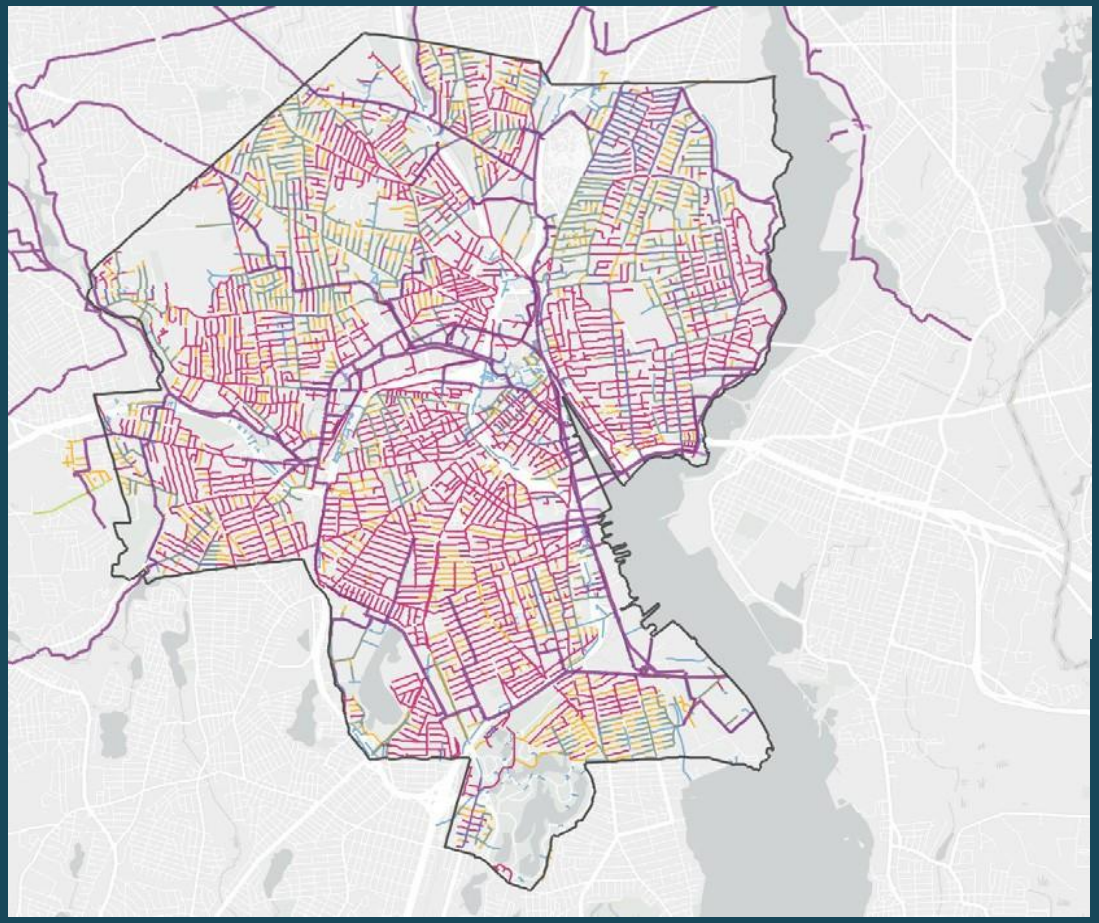


Atwells Ave 2022

Providence's storm and sewer systems today

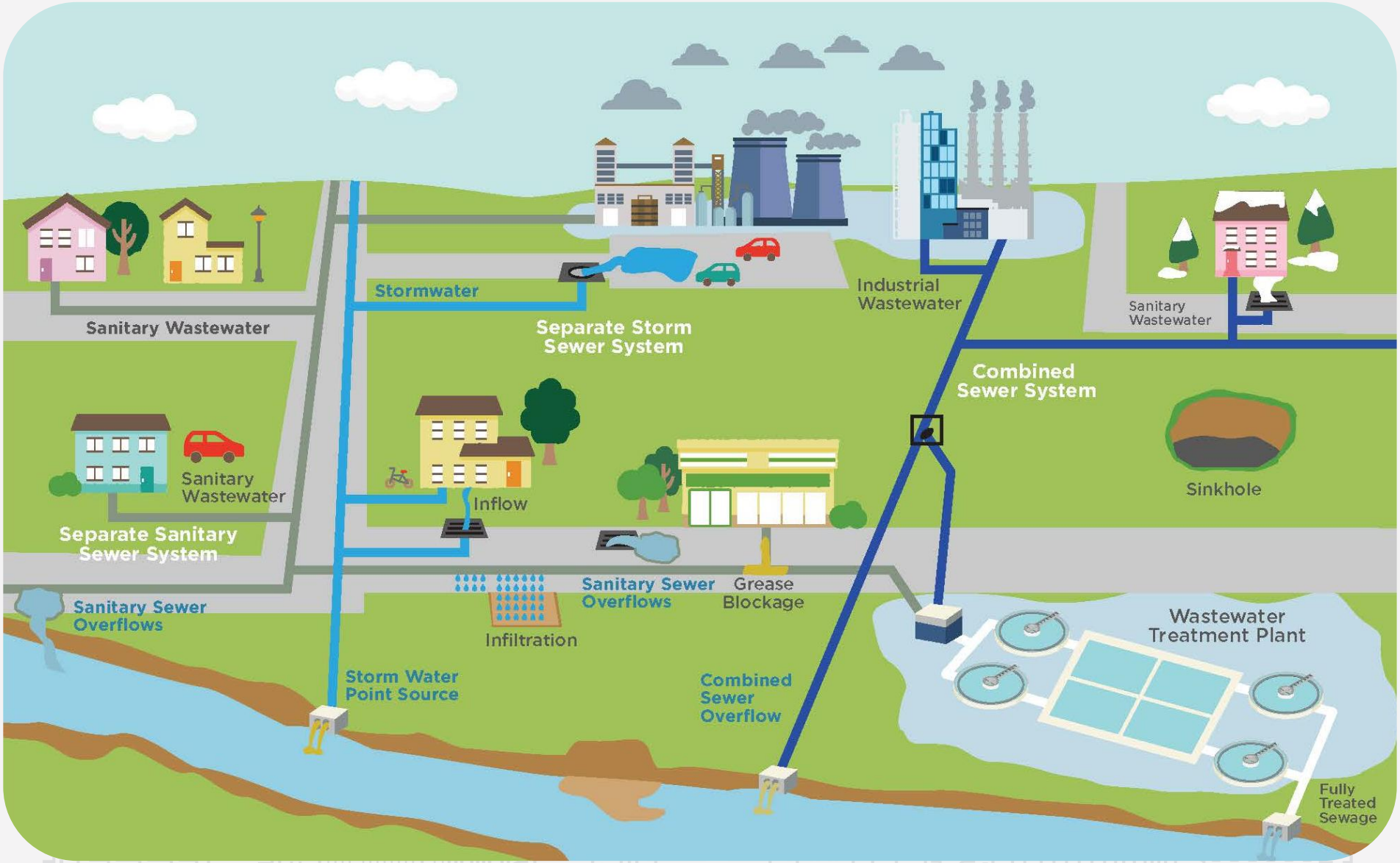
The City maintains 451 miles of stormwater and sewer pipes.

There is **no dedicated funding source** to keep it all working.

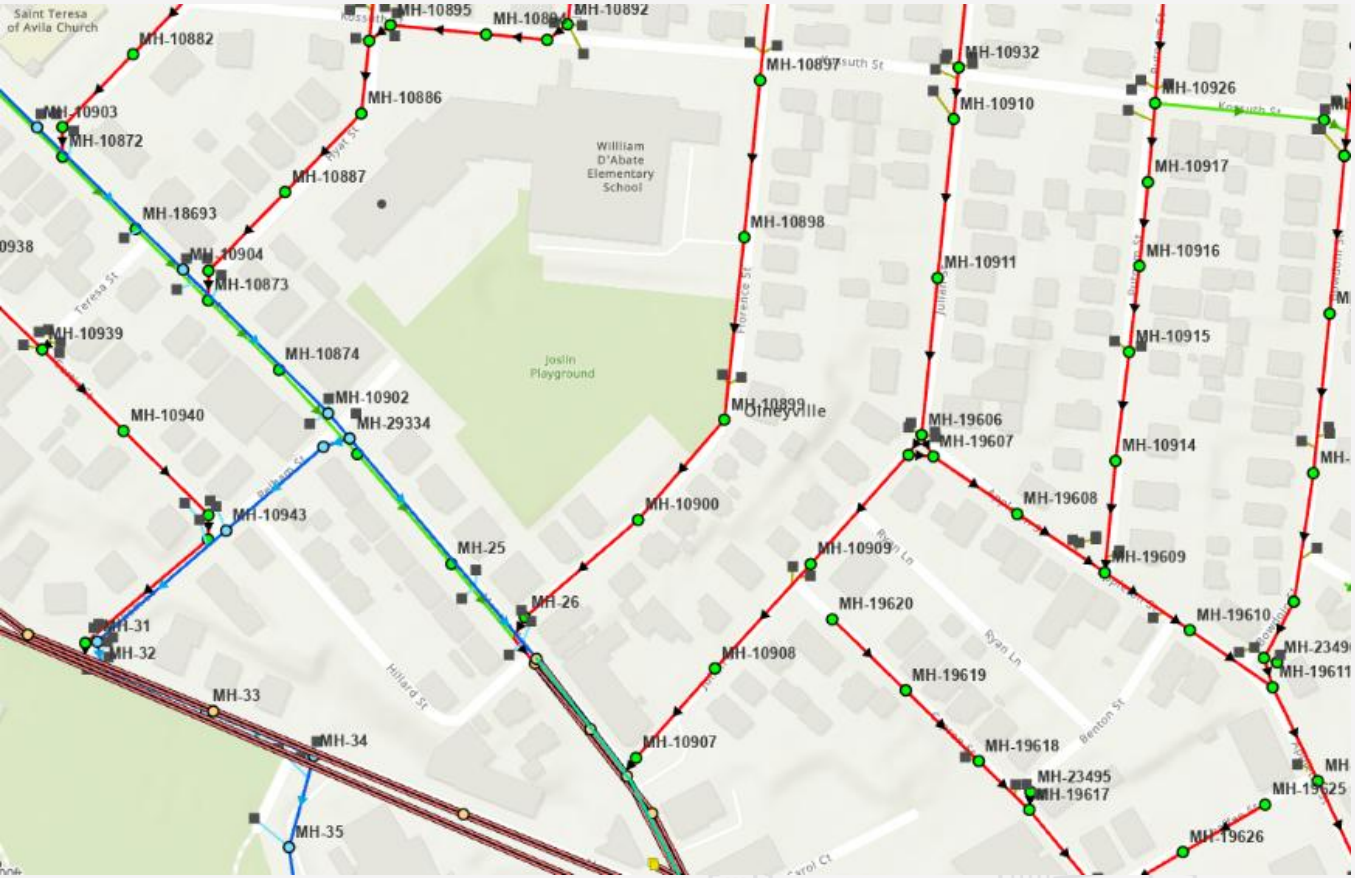




How these systems work



Improving these systems



Storm Sewer
(stormwater)

Sanitary Sewer
(wastewater)

Combined Sewer

Providence can follow best practices

Tax-Funded Storm & Sewer



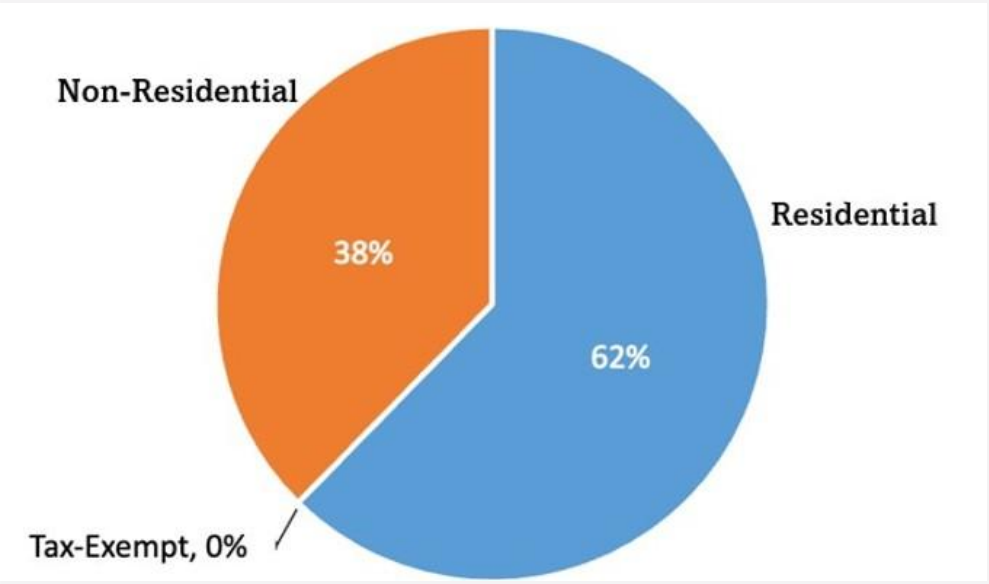
- Only taxpayers pay
- Amount based on property value

Dedicated Funding

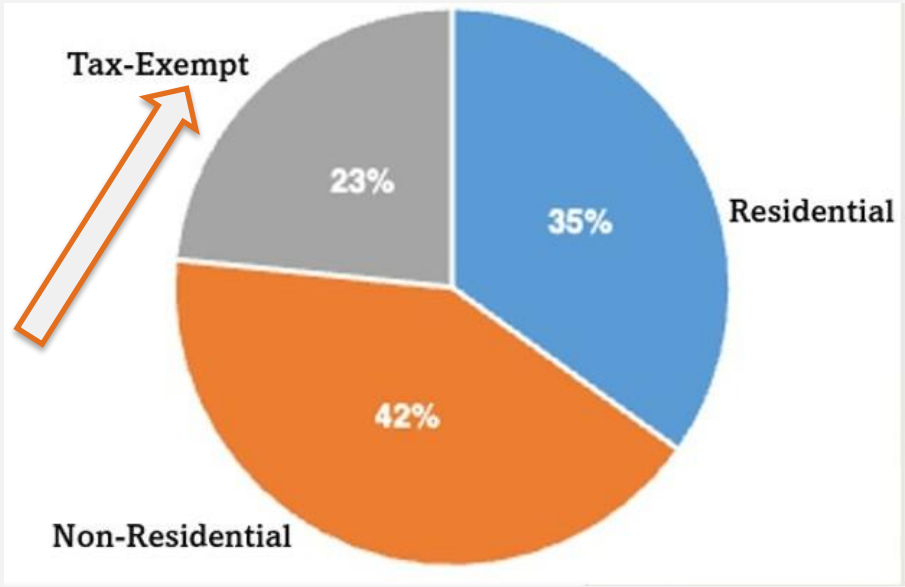


- Everybody pays
- Amount tied to demand

Property taxpayers



Everyone pays fair share



Our plan:
Repair and right-size pipes and work with nature

Steady, reliable investment in our aging pipes that need to be replaced and right-sized



Rain gardens and other green infrastructure that soak up polluted runoff and reduce flooding



Ways we can work with nature

Investing in Green Infrastructure

- Infiltration basins
- Sand filters
- Rain gardens
- Runoff systems (bioswale)
- De-pavement to reduce impervious areas

The Greenway – Before and After





There’s a cost to inaction



Getting it right: fee assistance

Creating Incentives to Reduce Stormwater Pollution and Flooding

MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY
CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Every Providence resident should feel safe knowing that a big storm will not flood their street or damage their home. That is why the City is planning now to repair and upgrade its aging pipes and drains so they can handle today's storms and last for years to come. The City is also adding green features like rain gardens, trees, and ponds to soak up rainwater and reduce flooding.

To pay for these repairs and green infrastructure, the City is proposing a stormwater fee. This fee will give the City a steady source of funding for stormwater maintenance and projects. Each property owner will pay based on how much stormwater runs off their property. Even properties that are exempt from property taxes will pay their fair share. That way, everyone who uses and benefits from the system helps pay to keep it working.

> Just as you can lower your water or electric bill by using less, you will also be able to lower your stormwater fee by reducing the amount of rainwater runoff your property produces. You would earn credits by making changes on your property that reduce flooding and treat runoff.

Actions Eligible for Credits

With a credit program, property owners could lower their stormwater fees by earning credits for managing rainwater on their property to prevent it from entering the storm system. The City wants your feedback on which changes will qualify for credits. In general, credits will be given for proven effective strategies that improve water quality and help reduce the amount of runoff that can cause flooding.



How It Will Work

In most cities with credit programs, property owners fill out a form that describes what they have done to reduce their runoff, along with details and

Customer Assistance Program (CAP)

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As part of its new sewer and stormwater utility, the City of Providence is looking to create a Customer Assistance Program (CAP) for its most vulnerable residents. The City has set a goal of simplicity of administration to reduce the burden on customers and minimize administrative costs while providing meaningful assistance to customers in need.

Eligibility

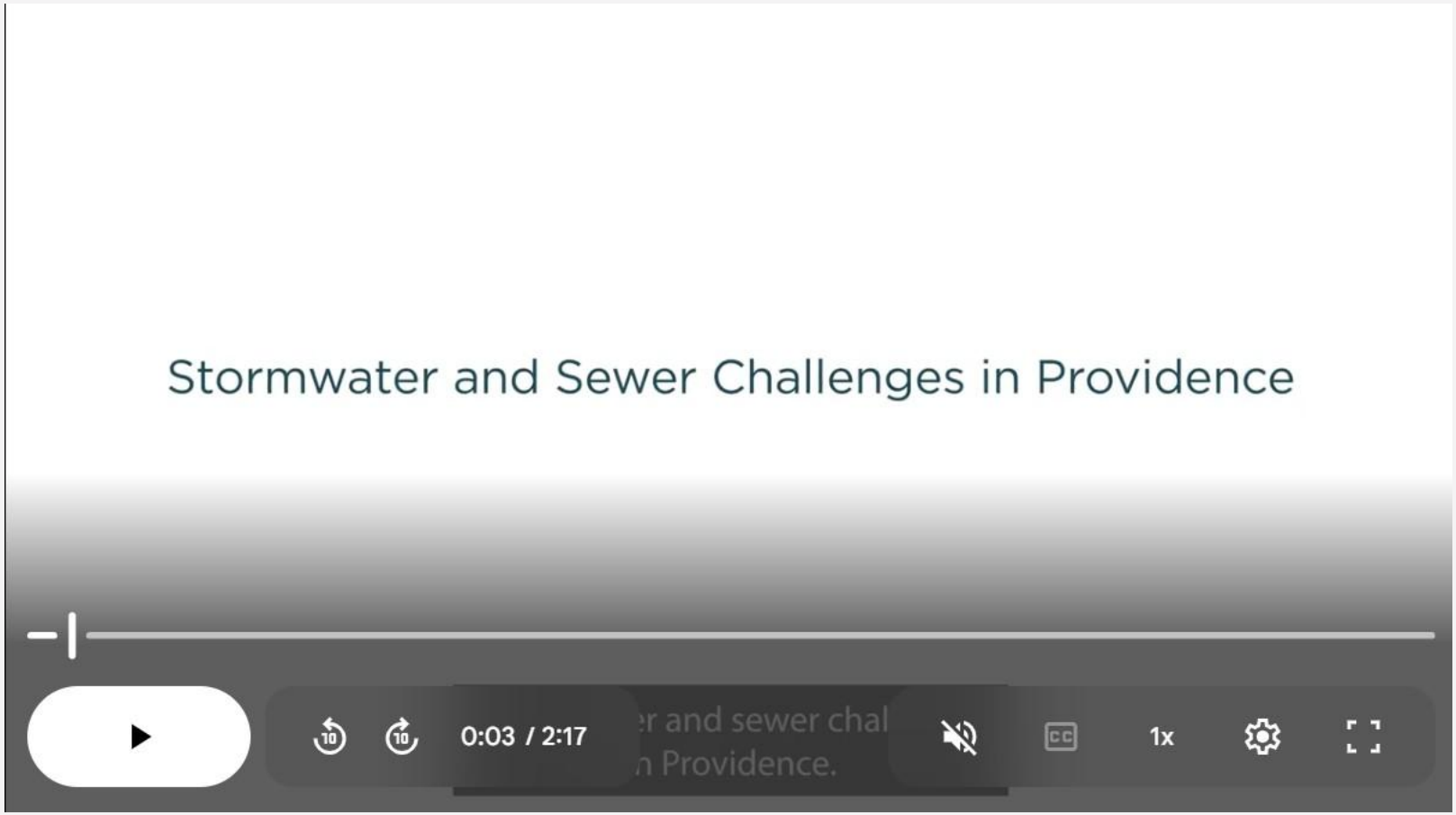
The City is looking to align its CAP with eligibility for state low-income programs already administered by the State of Rhode Island. The City is considering alignment with the following programs:

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) -- depending on senior and/or disabled status



How It Will Work

To be enrolled in the City's CAP, the residential customer would need to be the owner of the property (not renter) and provide proof that they are receiving any



https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-0_FNMfueP_7g8tIdFFaDL7wZxYZtxEy/view?usp=sharing

Discussion

- How's flooding impacting you?
- Do you agree this is a priority?
- Do you agree we need dedicated funding for stormwater and flooding?
- If we do this,
  - Is an impact-based fee a fair solution?
  - Would you make changes to your property to get a discount? (e.g. rain garden or de-paving)
  - What do you think about a 30% low-income discount?

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THANK YOU

Visit ClimateReadyPVD.providenceri.gov

for more information

