

# Memorandum



**Seattle  
Public  
Utilities**

**Date:** May 12, 2023  
**To:** Ellen Stewart, Ben Marre, Tracy Tackett  
**From:** South Park Water Quality Facility Project Team  
**Re:** Racial Equity Toolkit for South Park Water Quality Facility Project:  
Planning and Options Analysis Phases

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## 1. Executive Summary

The South Park Water Quality Facility (SPWQF) project team gathered to conduct a Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) at the beginning of Options Analysis. In addition to removing pollutants from stormwater before discharging to the Lower Duwamish Waterway (LDW), the SPWQF project intends to co-develop surplus property not used for the Water Quality Facility for additional community benefit. The RET provided a platform for the project team to discuss opportunities to lead with racial equity early in the project planning processes for the project: Water Quality Facility and Co-Development. The project team agreed upon four recommendations for next steps that will inform and guide the development of the Public Engagement Plan and Co-Development Plan.

1. Conduct an engagement audit of past and current projects in South Park.
2. Research co-development legal framework SPU must operate within.
3. Develop a Roadmap of current and planned projects within South Park.
4. Identify levels of engagement for key project decisions.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to document the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) series performed for the South Park Water Quality Facility (SPWQF) project (the project). The RET series comprised three touch points wherein we met various goals. These touch points and goals were:

1. Grounding Workshops: Provide an opportunity for City of Seattle (City) and Consultant staff members to receive Race and Social Justice training which provided a common foundation and shared understanding of racial equity values and principles to build upon during the RET.
2. “Co-Development 101” meeting: Introduce the range of co-development structures and options for community involvement at various stages of the development process. At this meeting the Consultant presented introductory information about co-development to ground the entire team prior to the RET Workshops to make the RET Workshops more effective.

- RET Workshops: Discuss the challenges of delivering a community centered capital project as a City Department and how we must find or create ways to break down racial and social inequities in our work. We also identified goals for achieving inclusive and racially equitable project planning and community engagement work for the Options Analysis (OA) phase.

### 3. Project Background:

The project objective is to construct a Water Quality Facility to meet stormwater treatment goals listed in Seattle Public Utilities’ (SPU) Integrated Plan component of the Long-Term Control Plan for reducing combined sewer overflows (CSO) from SPU’s system into Waters of the State (as legally committed to in the CSO Consent Decree (Action No. 2:13-cv-678)).

The primary goal of the SPWQF is to remove pollutants from stormwater before discharging the cleaner water to the Lower Duwamish Waterway (LDW). Secondary goals include:

- Remediating contaminated property along the LDW,
- Providing long-term community benefit,
- Improving urban livability by providing connectivity along the LDW,
- Living the utility’s environmental and social justice values,
- Identifying partnering opportunities with other projects (this includes City-family and external organizations)

### 4. RET Process

The framework for the SPWQF RET series took shape after several brainstorming meetings with Steve Hamai and Pam Emerson. The meetings were hosted in-person and virtually (hybrid) and attended by City staff and Consultant staff.

The framework of the RET series is presented in Table 1 and the goals, discussion topics, and outcomes for each of the workshops are described in detail in the following sections.

Table 1: SPWQF RET Series	
<b>Leadership Gathering</b>	December 2022
<b>RET Grounding #1</b>	January 2023
<b>RET Grounding #2</b>	January 2023
<b>Co-Development Mechanics Learning</b>	January 2023
<b>Leadership Engagement</b>	February 2023
<b>RET Workshop #1</b>	February 2023
<b>RET Workshop #2</b>	March 2023
<b>RET Workshop #3</b>	March 2023

<b>RET Workshop #4</b>	March 2023
<b>RET Report Out to Leadership</b>	May 2023

#### 4.1. RET Participants

The grounding workshops were attended by City staff and members of the Consultant team. The following people participated in the workshops:

- Steve Hamai, SPU Environmental Justice and Service Equity, Advisor & Facilitator
- Shailee Sztern, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, DWW Section Manager
- Christina Kapoi, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Project Manager
- Tracy Tackett, SPU Drainage & Wastewater, Capital Portfolio Manager
- Ingrid Wertz, SPU Drainage & Wastewater, Line of Business Representative
- Joelle Torre, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Project Engineer
- Ann Grodnik-Nagle, SPU Corporate Policy & Planning, Climate Adaptation Advisor
- Elaine Yeung, SPU Community Affairs, Outreach Strategy Lead
- Mark Jusayan, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Environmental Scientist
- Megan Joplin, City Attorney's Office, Environmental Protection Assistant City Attorney
- Consultant team:
  - Water Quality Facility: Chris Baersten, Ben Fuentes (Kennedy Jenks), Ida Ottesen (Nakano Associates), Mike Denlinger (Schemata Workshop)
  - Community Investment: Shannon Lee, Deb Guenther (Mithun), Robin Thaler (Mayfly Engineering)

The RET series were attended by City staff and members of the Consultant team. The following people participated in the workshops:

- Steve Hamai, SPU Environmental Justice and Service Equity, Advisor & Facilitator
- Shailee Sztern, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, DWW Section Manager
- Christina Kapoi, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Project Manager
- Ingrid Wertz, SPU Drainage & Wastewater, Line of Business Representative
- Joelle Torre, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Project Engineer
- Ann Grodnik-Nagle, SPU Corporate Policy & Planning, Climate Adaptation Advisor
- Elaine Yeung, SPU Community Affairs, Outreach Strategy Lead
- Mark Jusayan, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Environmental Scientist
- Megan Joplin, City Attorney's Office, Environmental Protection Assistant City Attorney
- Alberto Rodríguez, Office of Sustainability & Environment, Duwamish Valley Advisor
- David Goldberg, Office of Planning & Community Development, Strategic Advisor
- Consultant team:
  - Water Quality Facility: Chris Baersten, Ben Fuentes (Kennedy Jenks), Ida Ottesen (Nakano Associates), Mike Denlinger (Schemata Workshop)

- Community Investment: Shannon Lee, Deb Guenther (Mithun), Cadence Petros, Jade Aguilar (EcoNW), Annalise Ritter, Melanie del Rosario (Triangle), Priya Saxena (Equitable Future), Robin Thaler (Mayfly Engineering)

The SPU leadership meetings were attended by:

- Ellen Stewart, SPU Drainage & Wastewater, Deputy Director
- Ben Marre, SPU Drainage & Wastewater, Planning & Program Management Division Director
- Tracy Tackett, SPU Drainage & Wastewater, Capital Portfolio Manager
- Keri Burchard-Juarez, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Deputy Director
- Frank Coulter, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, PMCD Division Director
- Tara Wong-Esteban, SPU DWW System Management, Division Director
- Steve Hamai, SPU Environmental Justice and Service Equity, Advisor & Facilitator
- Shailee Sztern, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, DWW Section Manager
- Christina Kapoi, SPU Project Delivery & Engineering Branch, Project Manager

#### 4.2. Leadership Gathering

The goals of the leadership gathering were to confirm that the appropriate SPU and City staff are engaged in the project, to highlight the decisions and milestones in the upcoming two years and confirm the leadership engagement plan.

The team members engaged in Options Analysis represent Drainage & Wastewater (DWW) Line of Business (LOB), Project Delivery and Engineering Branch (PDEB), and Corporate Policy. The leadership engagement plan consists of monthly DWW briefings attended by staff from each branch (Ellen Stewart, Ben Marre, Tracy Tackett, Keri Burchard-Juarez, Frank Coulter, Shailee Sztern, Christina Kapoi, Joelle Torre, Ann Grodnik-Nagle), elevation of key topics by project leads, and engagement in the *Leadership Engagement* and *Report Out* meetings included within the RET process.

#### 4.3. Grounding Workshops

Led by Steve Hamai, the goals of the Grounding Workshops were to provide workshop participants with an introduction to Race and Social Justice principles in order to hold meaningful discussions during the RET. The Grounding Workshops were optional but strongly recommended for team members who had not participated in an SPU RET or received Race and Social Justice learning. SPU questioned whether the Consultant teams should bill the project for SPU provided training as the training is transferrable and marketable to other SPU projects. The Consultant teams agreed that the training would not be billable to SPU, but recommended that consideration for WMBE firms billing in the future be considered.

The first grounding workshop provided foundational training on the types of racism, why the City leads with race, and the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative. An overview of the RET process and the purpose of completing the RET was also discussed.

During the second grounding workshop, participants discussed an SPU specific scenario-based example regarding power and racial inequity (a training commonly known as 'Meet Ming'). The

workshop was interactive, and volunteers read through the script and then the group collectively discussed a series of questions that considered the power and racial inequities through the lens of a community member (Ming) and the fictitious project team. The questions also prompted the group to consider our actions through a structural lens in order to support the dismantling of racial inequity.

#### 4.4. Co-Development Meeting

The objective of the co-development meeting was to introduce a range of co-development structures and outline options for community involvement at various stages of the development process. There is a tendency to focus on equitable outcomes however there should be a greater focus on integrating equity throughout the whole process. The co-development meeting aligns with the RET series because it requires deep thinking about power sharing and how SPU can center community through building relationships and better understanding the community's goals and capacity for co-development.

Prior to engaging community, SPU needs to reflect and conduct an honest self-assessment regarding the Utility's tolerance for power sharing and the boundaries that the project team is operating within. The team needs to have a common understanding of what is possible and what the constraints are so we don't overpromise to community. "Clear is Kind. Unclear is Unkind" (Elaine Yeung).

#### 4.5. Leadership Engagement Meeting

The objectives of the leadership engagement meeting were to bring SPU leadership together to discuss staff and leadership participation and contributions to the project using the Shape Our Water Equity Framework Power Analysis tool and to review the 'Spectrum of Public Participation'.

The Power Analysis tool was used to guide participants' reflection on their role on the project team and the type of influence (time, resources, information, perceived ability to influence outcomes) they have within the decision-making process and how they are personally or professionally impacted (positively, negatively, or missed opportunity) by the project's benefits. Participants were asked to consider if there are SPU or City stakeholders that are impacted by the project and have not been included on the leadership or project team.

The 'Spectrum of Public Participation' was introduced and utilized to describe a scale of power sharing with community and what the varying types of community engagement approaches look like along the spectrum. Selecting one level or approach may not be appropriate for the entire scope or duration of the project. The project team utilized the 'Spectrum of Public Participation' as a discussion tool during the RET to help frame recommendations to leadership.

#### 4.6. RET Workshops

The goals of the RET series were to better understand and define the South Park community within the context of the SPWQF project, discuss the challenges and opportunities of delivering a community centered capital project as a City Department, and identify goals for achieving

inclusive and racially equitable project planning and engagement work. Steve Hamai facilitated these sessions.

During the first RET workshop, the workshop participants shared their knowledge of the South Park community, Government's presence and pre-existing relationships in South Park, and current and planned projects within South Park. It was important for the team to look beyond the project's influence and acknowledge that government's presence within South Park has spanned many decades and will continue to do so which is why it's important to recognize the burden this has placed on the community. Understanding the context of where the SPWQF project fits in relation to other past, current or planned projects within South Park will guide the development of the engagement plan.

Workshop participants were provided several sample RET Statements and asked to write down what they thought the SPWQF project's nexus to racial equity included. After the workshop, the meeting facilitators identified themes in the individual statements and used them as the basis for developing the project's draft RET Statement.

During the second RET workshop, participants collectively reviewed and commented on the draft RET Statement. Due to the number of comments and time constraints within the workshop, the meeting facilitators revised the RET Statement off-line for the team to review during the fourth RET session.

Workshop participants were then divided into small groups to discuss a subset of questions selected from *SPU's Comprehensive List of Racial Equity Toolkit Questions*. The questions focused on identifying the racial or socio-economic composition of the affected groups and disparities or inequities that have occurred in the past, the power dynamics between the project and the affected groups, how our position, perspectives, or implicit bias may influence our decisions, and what actions we can take to advance equity. At the end of the session, the small groups rejoined the larger group and shared responses to each of the questions.

During the third RET workshop, participants discussed a new subset of questions selected from *SPU's Comprehensive List of Racial Equity Toolkit Questions* in small breakout groups. These questions asked the team to consider inclusive stakeholder engagement, identify key project decisions and shared decision-making opportunities with the community, and identify opportunities to leverage engagement efforts with other services or projects. At the end of the session, the breakout groups shared their responses to the questions with the larger group.

Before the final RET workshop, the facilitators identified themes from the second and third workshop breakout group discussions. These themes formed the basis for the team's recommendations for next steps.

During the final RET workshop, the participants reviewed and agreed upon the RET themes and proposed next steps. The themes highlight the importance of considering what the project team can do to reduce community engagement fatigue (where different departments and agencies repeatedly ask community members for their input sometimes with little to no outcome), leverage the engagement efforts of other projects, and build authentic relationships with the

community. A detailed discussion of the themes and recommendations is presented in Section 5.0.

Participants were then provided an opportunity to review and edit the revised RET Statement in breakout groups. The RET Statement defines who the project intends to benefit and lists the project's racial equity goals. After the session, the facilitators synthesized the edits and comments from the breakout groups into the final RET Statement which is presented in Section 5.0.

## 5. RET Statement

The RET Statement is a nexus between the project and racial equity. It asks the project team to look beyond the technical scope of the project and describe how the project can include racial equity principles and values throughout project processes, delivery, construction, and operation. The SPWQF project team's RET Statement is:

As a government institution, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) holds the power to make decisions and implement projects that have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts to its communities. Because of this, SPU is uniquely situated to undo harmful outcomes of racial inequity. The South Park Water Quality Facility (SPWQF) project includes purchasing private property (Silver Bay Logging (SBL)) along the riverfront and remediation of contaminated soils and groundwater. Redevelopment of the property can accommodate both a stormwater treatment facility that will clean stormwater before it is discharged into the Duwamish River and community space. This offers an opportunity for SPU to find a partner that can create a space to benefit the community.

The SPWQF project will provide community benefit opportunities as prioritized in the Duwamish Valley Action Plan (DVAP) and other community engagements for Duwamish Valley residents and workers, focusing on Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), immigrants, refugees, people with low wealth, youth, and limited English proficiency individuals. This project will endeavor to:

- Define what it means to center community in regard to decision making and power sharing.
- Be intentional and authentic about how SPU is present in the community for near-term engagements and long-term capacity. Prioritize quality community engagement over a higher quantity of engagement. Act in a way that considers both the project's relationship to community and the long-term relationship between government representatives, the property (SPU and partner), the identified community, and the environment.
- Build upon past work and identify synergies with other projects within the project's vicinity including the Duwamish Valley Resilience District and King County.
- Support long-term community cohesion, social connectedness, and resiliency during the community engagement phase, the construction phase, and the implementation phase.
- Learn from other City Departments' delivery and community presence strategies.
- Be a model for how future projects are delivered at SPU.

## 6. Themes and Recommendations

To advance the project's racial equity goals identified within the RET Statement the project team agreed upon a set of recommendations for near term next steps. These actions are based on the themes that were identified from the responses to the RET questions discussed during the workshops.

### 6.1. Learn from and acknowledge the work of other project teams.

**Recommendation:** Conduct an engagement audit of past and current projects in South Park.

By conducting an engagement audit, the project team will learn from and build upon other projects and City Departments' engagement strategies. The team will review feedback that the community has provided regarding their priorities and goals which will focus the project's initial engagement effort and reduce community fatigue. During the audit ask ourselves:

- What has the community already told us and who from the community told us? Did the project incorporate the community's feedback? If so, was it successful? If not, why?
- Whose voices have been prioritized in the past?
- What engagement strategies have been utilized and were they successful?
- What engagements are planned for in the future?

### 6.2. Understand what co-development means in terms of what SPU can and cannot do.

**Recommendation:** Research what legal framework SPU must operate within and define foundational co-development boundaries with SPU leadership.

Understanding the legal framework and completing an honest self-assessment regarding SPU's capacity for co-development will help to narrow down the co-development options and define boundaries before approaching potential partners and the community. Ask the project team and leadership:

- How much time does SPU have for co-development? Staff capacity? Ability to grow community capacity?
- What are SPU's objectives for co-development?
- What decisions will the community be involved in making?
- Is SPU ready to embark on co-development? Public private partnership?

### 6.3. Leverage the engagement efforts of other current or upcoming projects.

**Recommendation:** Develop a roadmap of current and planned projects in South Park that includes a timeline of key milestones/decisions and engagement opportunities for each project.

The roadmap will be a resource for the project team and help guide coordination with other projects. The roadmap will also provide transparency to the community regarding



the scope and duration of current and planned projects which allows the community to choose when they want to be engaged (and for which project). The roadmap will:

- Identify opportunities to build upon past/current relationships from other projects.
- Identify opportunities to align with other projects or community events to lessen the engagement burden on community.
- Right size our engagement efforts based on the context of all the other projects within South Park.

6.4. Build consensus within SPU and the community on the level of power sharing with community for key project decisions that will have shared decision making.

**Recommendation:** Use the 'Spectrum of Public Participation' to select and agree upon an engagement level(s) for each key project decision.

Selecting an engagement level(s) for key project decisions at the onset of Options Analysis and co-development planning ensures that the project team has a shared understanding of the degree to which the project will be "Community Centered". It will guide the development of the engagement plan. Ask the project team and leadership:

- What level of power sharing does SPU have capacity for? What additional learning, training, or process improvements might SPU need to make and implement a decision?
- What capacity does community have to participate?
- Which decisions will community be involved in or want to be involved in? Will community be involved in all components of the SPWQF?

## 7. Reflections & Next Steps

At the conclusion of the RET, the team had the following observations and reflections:

- Very few people on the team have established relationships in the South Park community and building relationships takes time.
- Our team is not fully reflective of the South Park community. We need to be especially thoughtful in how we show up with South Park community members.
- Finding opportunities to connect authentically with members of the South Park community will be part of the responsibility of the team members. We plan to build on existing relationships that City staff have, including Alberto, David, Grant, Ann, and Tracy.
- Messaging to leadership and elected officials needs to emphasize that the project team is redefining norms and pushing boundaries.

After completing the recommendations in Sections 6.1 through 6.4 the RET workshop participants will reconvene to debrief and discuss next steps including:

- How should we develop a public engagement plan? If community is involved, what does that look like?
  - How much capacity does the community currently have for this work?
  - What type of engagement is appropriate for a project with a CD deadline?

- Do we think a project-specific Community Advisory Group is needed? If so, how would we go about building one that is equitable, inclusive, and thoughtful of participant’s time?
- Are we ready to develop a Co-Development Plan? If not, what else do we need?

During development of the public engagement plan, acknowledge that there are many communities within South Park and the project team should not rely on a single voice or perspective. Include a balance of perspectives. The team plans to:

- Focus outreach efforts with Duwamish Valley residents and workers, including Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), immigrants, refugees, people with low wealth, youth, and limited English proficiency individuals. We anticipate this being a balance of consult/involve/collaborate (understand that true “collaboration” opportunities may be limited and there may be none depending on the co-development pathway).
- We plan to provide information to the broad community as well through more general outreach means using the “inform” approach.

During outreach, be clear and honest about what the WQF and co-development projects can and cannot accomplish.

- Let the community know how their information will be used and why it’s important to have their input.
- Provide the community with context; where we’ve been, where we are now, and where we’re going.

## 8. Conclusion

As a result of applying the RET to the SPWQF project, the project teams identified the following next-step follow-up tasks:

Task Description	Intended Benefits of Described Task	Staffing/Resource Needs
<b>1. Conduct an engagement audit of past and current projects in South Park.</b>	See Section 6.1 above	Scope and authorize new task under Consultant’s current Work Assignment
<b>2. Research co-development legal framework SPU must operate within.</b>	See Section 6.2 above	Already included within Consultant’s scope.
<b>3. Develop a Roadmap of current and planned projects within South Park.</b>	See Section 6.3 above	Scope and authorize new task under Consultant’s current Work Assignment

<b>4. Identify level(s) of engagement for key project decisions.</b>	See Section 6.4 above	Developed by SPU Project Manager and SPU Leadership
<b>5. Reconvene RET group.</b>	See Section 7 above	SPU and Consultant project team members

As a result of applying the RET to the SPWQF project, the following items should be considered by appropriate 'upstream' management or governing bodies:

<b>Recommendation &amp; Brief Description</b>	<b>How and when will this recommendation be presented to the appropriate upstream management or governing body?</b>
1. Reach consensus on the level of power sharing with community for key project decisions	
2. Define foundational co-development boundaries before approaching partners (boundaries beyond just legal boundaries)	

As a result of applying the RET to the SPWQF project, key lessons were learned that should be applied to future related plans, projects, programs or services:

<b>Lessons Learned</b>
<p>1. We included the Consultant Team, which we don't always do for project-specific RET. It offered two benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consultant team members brought valuable insights and enriched the RET discussions. Their experience on similar projects identified the need for follow-up tasks that may not have been otherwise identified.</li> <li>- The consultant team representatives (who are leaders on the consultant side) are now leading with SPU values to some extent, more than they would have if they were not participants.</li> <li>- Engaging the consultant team and SPU helped to deepen working relationships and empathy.</li> </ul>
<p>2. More time is always needed. We added a fourth session, and we plan to return for a fifth session after more data gathering has been done (outreach audit, co-development possibilities, etc.)</p>
<p>3. If the project team has limited experience with the community or neighborhood, providing more past and current context for the community is important. This helps the team work from a common understanding including learning more about the community or neighborhood.</p>