

MSD's work to further equity in contracting, environmental justice, and recruiting future engineers earns top honors at national clean water awards

LOUISVILLE, KY – Louisville MSD's efforts to promote equity in contracting and procurement; environmental justice with the ongoing transformation of flood-prone land into a park for all; and gain an early introduction to the area's future engineers garnered three National Environmental Achievement Awards from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) for outstanding contributions to environmental protection and clean water at the 2023 NACWA Winter Conference held in Sonoma, CA.

"Winning just one of these national awards is a great honor, but winning three is a fantastic tribute to the hard work of so many at MSD to not only provide safe, clean waterways for our community but to do so in an equitable way with an eye on the future for our community and region," states MSD Executive Director Tony Parrott.

Ensuring Equity in Contracting and Procurement Award Summary

In September 2020, Louisville Metro Mayor Greg Fischer created an Equity in Contracting and Procurement Task Force. He noted that while black residents accounted for 22 percent of the city's population, they owned only 2.4 percent of businesses. He also cited a Brookings Institution statement, "At \$171,000, the net worth of a typical white family is nearly 10 times greater than that of a Black family (\$17,150) in 2016."

Mayor Fischer created the Equity in Contracting and Procurement Task Force to ensure the fair and equitable distribution among Black-owned and diverse businesses of the Louisville Metro community's anticipated expenditure of approximately \$5 billion in public and private capital infrastructure investments over the next five years.

Metropolitan Sewer District Executive Director Tony Parrott and then LG&E Chief Executive Officer Paul Thompson were tapped to co-chair the task force. The September 9, 2020, task force announcement cited the fact that "both MSD and LG&E have a significant history of promoting supplier diversity through their own procurement policies."

Also on the task force roster are the local water company, airport authority, city housing authority, public school district, transit authority and the University of Louisville, along with the city council and executive agencies and community partners ranging from the Urban League to the Greater Louisville Inc. Chamber of Commerce.

In 2021, collaborating Task Force participants spent over \$700 million in capital expenditures with 12.1% of that being spent with local diverse businesses, including 3.9% spent with black-owned businesses. Through the second quarter of 2022 Task Force participants spent close to \$260 million in capital expenditures, with 13.2% of that being spent with local diverse businesses, including 4.0% spent with local black-owned businesses.

Maple Street Greenspace Award Summary

See attached release from MSD and Parks Alliance of Louisville.

Cornerstone Course and Video Award Summary

Rarely do utilities have the opportunity to consistently reach new and focused audiences with a vested interest in learning about the benefits of their services. Louisville MSD, in partnership with the University of Louisville, has done just that with a freshman-level “Cornerstone” course geared explicitly toward combined system collection, wet-weather storage, and treatment. Students design, build, program, and optimize a physical model using environmental and engineering principles through the curriculum.

To make this course more sustainable, MSD also created a video focusing on how our combined sewer system works and the water quality impacts of overflow mitigation solutions that have helped make Louisville the vibrant river community it is today.

By championing this course and video messaging, MSD is educating customers on the benefits of safe, clean waterways; developing new and innovative ways to comply with its Consent Decree commitments; and attracting talent when finding quality engineering applicants is highly competitive. Up to 480 students per year will take the Cornerstone course – through this unique model, our clean water workforce has a distinct opportunity to forge purposeful connections and expand MSD’s reach holistically and meaningfully.