



# **Joliet Alternative Water Source Program 2021/2022 Public Outreach Strategy**

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**May 2021**

## 1.0 Purpose

Joliet's Alternative Water Source Program (AWSP) represents a major commitment by the City of Joliet (Joliet) to provide residents, businesses, and institutions with a sustainable, reliable, and high-quality water supply that will support the public health, safety, and economic interests of the community. As the AWSP will benefit and impact all of Joliet, it is critically important that the program include a well-defined strategy for clearly and consistently communicating important information in a manner that reaches all parts of the community.

The purpose of this Public Outreach Strategy is to define a meaningful process through which residents, businesses, public officials, and stakeholder groups in Joliet may be informed and effectively participate in the design and implementation of the AWSP. It is also intended to keep stakeholders and members of the public informed about related Department of Public Utilities efforts focused on water conservation and updating Joliet's aging infrastructure. For the purpose of this document, these efforts are collectively referred to as the "Program."

This Public Outreach Strategy describes the objectives, target audiences, key messages, and guiding principles for public outreach to be conducted during 2021/2022, as well as ongoing and new outreach activities proposed to achieve Joliet's public outreach objectives.

## 2.0 Objectives

The overarching goals of the 2021/2022 outreach activities are to: (1) increase broad public awareness and excitement about the Program, (2) maintain a high level of transparency regarding Program activities, (3) educate water customers as to the costs and benefits associated with the Program, and (4) promote confidence in Joliet's role as a water provider and steward of the region's natural resources.

Specific outreach objectives for 2021/2022 include the following:

- Increase awareness of the Program and participation among all members of the community, especially those in low income and/or multi-cultural neighborhoods, who may not have actively engaged in previous public involvement activities.
  - Address concerns around water affordability by informing stakeholders and members of the public about Joliet's efforts aimed at securing alternative funding for Program elements and implementing specific strategies to manage the impact of increasing water supply costs on vulnerable residents.
  - Increase awareness about the economic and environmental benefits of water conservation and provide resources to help Joliet water customers reduce their water demand.
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- Support regional outreach activities (being conducted outside this Public Outreach Strategy) by preparing educational materials and content that can be shared to highlight the regional nature and benefits of the Program.

Joliet's 2021/2022 Public Outreach Strategy defines specific actions to be taken to communicate key messages to and solicit meaningful input from Joliet's target audiences as to achieve the goals described above. Implementation of the Public Outreach Strategy will:

1. **Increase broad public awareness and excitement about the Program** through a structured, regular program of public communication and engagement designed to reach all parts of the Joliet community through the use of a range of methods, activities, formats, and media;
2. **Maintain a high-level of transparency regarding Program activities** by communicating Program milestones and progress, posting relevant Program materials to a publicly accessible website, and participating in and broadly advertising public meetings and presentations;
3. **Educate water customers as to the costs and benefits associated with the Program** through the regular distribution of Program development and design updates and highlights; and
4. **Promote confidence in Joliet's role as a water provider and steward of the region's natural resources** through the promotion of water conservation practices throughout the community and the provision of regular updates regarding Joliet's water efficiency efforts.

### 3.0 Key Messages

During the time leading up to Joliet's selection of an alternative water source in January 2021, the city's water-related outreach activities were focused on promoting water conservation efforts, explaining the need for development of a new water source, informing the community about alternatives being considered, and soliciting public feedback and comments. Now, as Joliet works to design and implement the selected alternative water source, the focus of the public outreach effort has shifted.

Messages to be highlighted in the 2021 /2022 Public Outreach Strategy include:

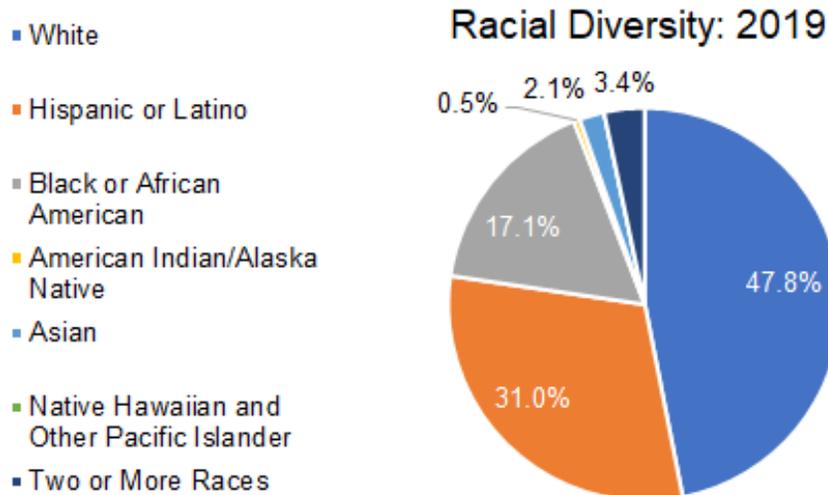
- Joliet is excited to be moving forward with a major infrastructure investment to provide a sustainable, reliable, and high-quality Lake Michigan water supply to the community by 2030. (Adapted from the Mission Statement in the Strategic Plan)
- Joliet has chosen to obtain Lake Michigan water from the City of Chicago, an established water utility with decades of experience in the reliable delivery of high-quality drinking water to millions of customers.
- Joliet recognizes that water rate increases required to fund the Program may be a burden for some households in the community. Joliet is committed to the implementation of an affordability strategy and controlling the overall cost of the new water source through creative funding and regional partnering.
- Joliet is actively engaging with other nearby communities to promote a comprehensive solution that will benefit the region and reduce the unit cost for the new water supply to Joliet customers and customers throughout the region.
- Members of the public can stay informed as to the progress of the Program by signing up for the Program mailing list, following the Program on social media, visiting the Program website, and participating in stakeholder meetings.
- Water is a precious resource. By practicing water conservation at home, residents and businesses can reduce their own water use, save money on current and future water bills, and contribute to efforts to conserve local and regional natural resources.

## 4.0 Audiences

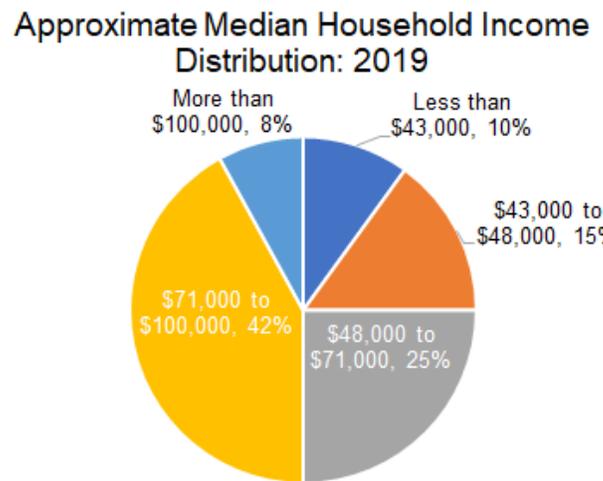
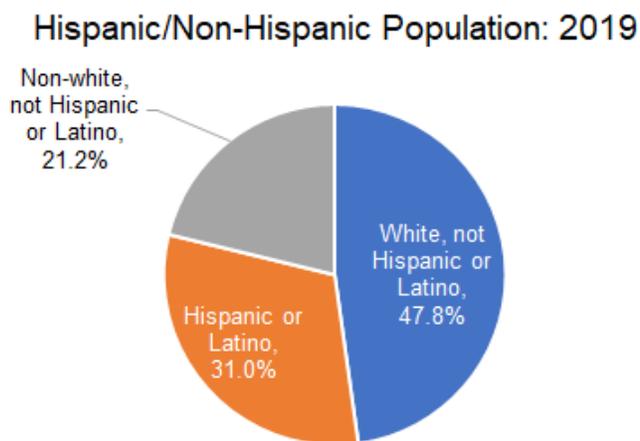
The outreach activities identified in this Public Outreach Strategy aim to inform and engage the diverse set of audiences that make up the general public within Joliet. However, it is also important that information about the Program is made available to potential regional partners and other interested stakeholders in the region. Considerations relevant to target audiences are described in the following sections.

### General Public

For the purposes of this strategy, the term “general public” refers to residents, businesses, landowners, and other individuals in Joliet that may be affected by Program activities. As shown in the figures below, these individuals come from diverse racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Over 30% of the population in Joliet identifies as Hispanic or Latino and nearly 29% of the population greater than five years old lives in households where English is not the primary language spoken. At the same time, the distribution of median income includes households at both the high and low ends of the income range.



*Total exceeds 100% as individuals identifying as Hispanic may be of any race and in some cases are also included in other categories*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts. April 8, 2021.  
[www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/jolietcityillinois/IPE120219](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/jolietcityillinois/IPE120219).

To promote inclusive outreach to all communities with Joliet, Joliet will conduct targeted outreach to communities that may have been underrepresented in past activities, including low-income residents, multi-cultural audiences, and individuals with limited English proficiency. This outreach may include partnering with local community-based organizations (CBOs), preparing outreach materials in English and Spanish, and

evaluating the potential for auto translation of website content from English to Spanish.<sup>1</sup> Targeted outreach activities are described in **Section 7** below.

### **Potential Regional Partners**

Joliet is actively engaged in discussions with communities that have expressed an interest in potentially participating in the development of a regional Water Commission. Joliet has established a regular framework for interaction and information-sharing with these potential partners through Technical Advisory Group meetings and meetings of representative Mayors and City Managers. This effort is separate from the public outreach activities defined in this strategy document. However, the AWSP Team will confirm that information being provided as part of the regional outreach efforts is consistent with other public outreach materials developed as part of this Public Outreach Strategy.

## **5.0 Outreach Tools**

This section describes the suite of tools that Joliet has developed, plans to develop, or may develop to disseminate information to the public and engage stakeholders in Program outreach activities. Joliet intends to, on an as-needed basis, translate materials in Spanish or other languages to reach alternative-language communities. For unity, a common visual identity will be used for all printed and electronic information materials intended for public and stakeholder audiences.

### **Website**

Joliet has established a Program website ([www.rethinkwaterjoliet.org](http://www.rethinkwaterjoliet.org)) to keep stakeholders and members of the public informed about Program activities and host Program documents and informational materials. Hosted by WIX.com – a website content management and hosting platform – the website was updated in April 2021 to include new information about Joliet's selected alternative water source (purchased water from the City of Chicago) and will continue to be updated and maintained on a monthly basis.

### **Stakeholder List**

Joliet maintains a stakeholder list with the names and contact information of individuals who have asked to be kept informed about Program activities. This list is managed through a subscription to ConstantContact, an email and stakeholder contact management service. As of January 2021, the stakeholder list includes nearly 1,200 parties, including many individuals and/or organizations based outside of the immediate Joliet region. Interested parties can opt to be added to the list through the website, email, virtual comment form, or public meeting and workshop sign-in sheets. The stakeholder list will continue to be updated on a monthly basis and prior to public

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<sup>1</sup> Automated translation capabilities have recently been added to select versions of the software being used for the RethinkWaterJoliet.org website and are being evaluated for use by Joliet.

meetings and workshops. The list will serve as the contact database for monthly e-blasts, quarterly newsletters, and other Program communications.

### **Outreach Collateral**

Joliet will develop a suite of informational materials aimed at educating members of the public and stakeholders about key topics related to the Program and stewardship of the region's water resources. Select materials will be translated into Spanish (and potentially other languages) on an as-needed basis to reach communities with low English proficiency.

These documents are fit-for-purpose outreach tools that include the following:

- **Fact sheets:** Fact sheets keep stakeholders informed about key Program topics and prepare stakeholders to provide meaningful input on Program activities. Fact sheets will be one to two pages in length and may be distributed electronically through the stakeholder list and at stakeholder meetings and community events. Fact sheet topics may include an overview of the Program, Lake Michigan Water Supply Allocation Permit, water affordability strategy, and/or the plans for formation of the regional Water Commission.
- **Presentation slides:** Joliet has developed a set of template presentation slides aimed at educating members of the general public about the Program. These slides help provide consistent messaging and reinforce a cohesive visual identity that unifies materials across outreach activities. These slides may be adapted for use at public meetings, workshops, and presentations to community groups or City Council updates. Copies of slides presented at stakeholder meetings, community workshops, and City Council updates will be posted on the Program website.
- **Informational white papers:** Joliet has developed a series of one- to two-page white papers on technical topics related to the Program. Topics covered by the white papers include water quality and treatment, water loss, water conservation, grant funding options, and land acquisition. These papers are housed on the Program website. Additional white papers may be developed, as needed, to support Program activities.

### **Notices**

Notices include e-blasts, press releases, flyers, newspaper ads, utility bill inserts, and other materials used to notify the public about opportunities for public participation. E-blasts, further described in **Section 6** below, are the primary method used to notify stakeholders about Program activities. Additional notices, including flyers or ads in local newspapers and media channels, may be used for community workshops and to notice opportunities for public comment.

In addition, where appropriate, Program information may be incorporated into other utility mailings (e.g., Water Quality Report, utility bill inserts, etc.) distributed to Joliet water customers to raise broad public awareness.

## **6.0 Public Outreach Activities**

Joliet will conduct a variety of public outreach activities to inform, engage, and respond to stakeholders and other interested parties about Program milestones and opportunities for public input. Each month, Joliet will distribute an e-blast, place information on community billboards and Pace buses, and send information out via the City's social media sites. These monthly outreach activities will include information on a single topic related to the AWSP, water conservation, or city water infrastructure upgrades. A list of planned monthly outreach topics for 2021 is provided as Appendix A to this document. Topics for 2022 will be selected during the fourth quarter of 2021.

Once a quarter, Joliet staff will provide an update on Program activities via a presentation at a regular City Council meeting and distribution of an electronic newsletter to parties included in the stakeholder database. Stakeholder meetings are currently planned to occur once every four months.

In addition to monthly and quarterly activities, Joliet will conduct as-needed outreach to keep the public informed about key Program milestones, expand broad public awareness, and educate members of the public about technical topics. These activities may include distribution of educational videos, engagement with the media, community workshops, and tabling at community events.

In response to social-distancing and local health ordinances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Joliet is prepared to adapt these activities to virtual or other distance-engagement formats. Joliet will utilize online collaboration platforms and implement best practices for virtual engagement, where appropriate.

### **Monthly Activities**

#### *Social Media Posts*

Social media posts raise broad public awareness about the Program, identify opportunities for public involvement and comment, and educate members of the public on key topics. Joliet will continue to promote information about the Program through its Facebook and Twitter accounts. Topics may include Program milestones and successes, upcoming meetings, water conservation, water infrastructure updates, and water affordability. Topics for the social media posts will be aligned with those for the PACE bus posters, billboards, and e-blasts, described below.

### *E-blasts*

E-blasts are short email messages distributed to the stakeholder database. E-blasts highlight key Program topics and keep stakeholders informed about Program updates and milestones. Joliet will continue to distribute e-blasts to the stakeholder list at a minimum on a monthly basis.

### *Community Billboards*

Joliet maintains digital billboards throughout the city. Twice a month, Joliet will display notices on the digital billboards about the Program and related program topics. These billboard notices serve to raise broad public awareness about the Program and highlight resources for members of the public to increase their water efficiency.

### *Pace Bus and Community Posters*

Posters placed in Pace buses and community buildings, such as City Hall and community centers, raise broad public awareness about the Program, particularly in low-income communities. In 2021/2022, Joliet will continue placing posters in Pace buses, City Hall, and other community locations on a monthly basis.

## **Quarterly and Other Activities**

### *City Council Updates*

Joliet staff provide quarterly updates about the status of the AWSP and past and upcoming program milestones at regular Joliet City Council meetings. These meetings are open to the public and listed on program website calendar. Presentations made and/or materials presented at Council updates will be posted to the program website following each Council update.

### *Newsletter*

Joliet distributes an electronic newsletter to keep interested parties informed about key Program milestones and progress, the City's water conservation programs, and opportunities for public input. Each newsletter is typically one to two pages in length and distributed electronically through an email to the stakeholder list. Copies of the newsletter are also made available on the Program website. In 2021/2022, the newsletter will be distributed on a quarterly basis. Distribution of the newsletter will typically follow updates to the City Council.

### *Stakeholder Meetings*

Approximately every four months, Joliet will host a meeting to keep stakeholders and members of the public informed about key project milestones, progress, and next steps. These meetings are intended to provide a live, interactive format for communicating information to interested parties and obtaining input on program topics. The meetings will include a presentation from Program staff followed by a question-and-answer

session with the meeting participants. Until further notice, meetings will be held virtually. Stakeholder meetings will be promoted through an e-blast distributed to the stakeholder list as well as posting on the Program website calendar.

## **As-Needed Activities**

### *Media Engagement*

Engagement with the media includes both planned media activities to increase Program awareness, as well as as-needed support to respond to questions and requests from media outlets. Planned activities include press releases issued by Joliet to notify the media and public about key program milestones and periodic radio interviews.

### *Community Workshops*

Community workshops will be held on an as-needed basis to increase broad awareness about the Program. While stakeholder meetings are focused on key project stakeholders and members of the general public that have expressed interest in the Program, community workshops serve to educate individuals that may not have been engaged in previous outreach activities. Community workshops will be promoted through e-blasts to the stakeholder list, posts on the Program website and Joliet social media accounts, ads in local papers or magazines, Pace bus posters, and community billboards.

Plans for community workshops will be developed in collaboration with local community representatives to establish schedules and formats that increase the potential for engagement and effective communication with community members. Topics to be covered will focus on issues of primary concern to residents or businesses such as water quality, water rates, affordability strategies, efforts to promote local participation in program activities including construction, and plans for managing local construction disruption impacts.

### *Informational Video Series*

Joliet will investigate options for producing a series of short, informational videos to increase public awareness about the necessity of the switch to a new water supply, inform interested members of the public about how the Program elements fit together, and explain key components of the AWSP. Video topics may include:

- Rethinking Water – Where Joliet water comes from, why Joliet needs an alternative water source, and brief overview of the Program
- Water Affordability – Components of a water bill, anticipated water bill increases, what Joliet is doing to identify alternative funding sources for the Program
- Joliet's Water System – Overview of Joliet's water system and what upgrades are being made to maintain long-term water reliability

- Regional Approach/Water Commission – Overview of how Joliet is working together with other communities, the benefits of a regional approach, and the Water Commission

Videos may be posted on the website, Joliet's YouTube and social media pages, and Channel 6.

#### *Community Outreach Events*

Pending public health and safety guidelines around COVID-19, Joliet and Program team members will staff a table at local community events to raise public awareness about the Program and sign interested parties up to the stakeholder list. Collateral and materials used for community outreach events may include a Program brochure or fact sheet, table tent, branded sign-up list, and water conservation related giveaways.

#### *Water Conservation Program-Focused Events*

Water conservation is a key part of maintaining long-term water reliability for Joliet. Joliet currently has a robust Water Conservation Program, which includes the following activities:

- Water Conservation Subcommittee
- Rain Barrel Subsidy Program
- Low-Flow Toilet Rebate Program
- Restaurant Water Conservation Program

These activities will continue in 2021/2022 and will be coordinated with other public outreach activities to leverage resources and information. Messaging about water conservation is incorporated on the website and social media posts.

## **7.0 Outreach to Underrepresented Stakeholder Groups**

In addition to the outreach activities described in **Section 6** above, Joliet will focus specific energy and resources on the development of outreach tools and promotion of activities to inform and engage members of the public underrepresented in previous outreach activities. This includes low-income residents, multi-cultural audiences, and individuals with limited English proficiency. To engage these individuals, Joliet will provide translation of select Program materials and partner with local community-based organizations (CBOs) to tailor key messages and disseminate outreach materials. These strategies are further described below.

### **Translation of Program Materials**

Based on recent demographic information, Spanish is the largest secondary language spoken in Joliet. To reach members of the public with limited English proficiency, Joliet will translate key outreach collateral into Spanish. Joliet may also, at request, provide interpretation services at stakeholder meetings and community workshops. Key website content may also be translated into Spanish.

### **Targeted Community Outreach Events**

Partnerships with CBOs in Joliet will be used to increase awareness about the Program in communities previously underreached by existing outreach activities. Joliet staff will meet with local and regional CBOs and individuals that work with low-income and limited English proficiency communities to tailor Program communication strategies and messages for targeted communities, identify new communication channels, and distribute Program materials. Potential CBOs may include the Spanish Community Center, Eastside Neighborhood Council, Alianza De Negocios, Forest Park Community Center, the Southside Neighborhood Council, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Joliet.

## **8.0 Program Rebranding**

It is anticipated that there may be a need for the Program to undergo a rebranding in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2021 as the planned regional Water Commission begins to take shape. With the implementation of the Water Commission, effort will be needed to clearly communicate both the regional focus and benefits of the AWSP and the Joliet-specific features, costs, and benefits associated with a transition to a Lake Michigan water source. Options may include rebranding of the AWSP to reflect its regional scope (e.g., changing the existing tagline “Rethink Water Joliet” to “Rethink Water Together”) and more clearly delineating information related to the Water Commission from information of specific relevance to just Joliet. The existing logo and branding guide may be reused with the new tagline or rebranded with a new scheme. Details of the rebranding initiative will be developed as progress is made toward the formal creation of the Water Commission.



**APPENDIX A**  
**MONTHLY OUTREACH TOPICS - 2021**

<b>Month/Year</b>	<b>Public Outreach Topic</b>
March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fix a Leak Week</li></ul>
April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wyland National Mayors Challenge for Water Conservation</li></ul>
May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water Main and Lead Service Line Replacement Benefits</li></ul>
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water Conservation: Rain Barrels</li></ul>
July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water Conservation: Outdoor Water Use</li></ul>
August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Benefits of Lake Michigan Water Source</li></ul>
September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Back to School: Water Conservation 101</li></ul>
October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Imagine a Day without Water</li></ul>
November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alternative Water Source Program Schedule Update</li></ul>
December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water Affordability Strategies</li></ul>