



*City of Columbia, Missouri*  
*Columbia Utilities*

**Strategic Plan**  
2017-2020

# City of Columbia Utilities

## A Letter from the Director

Friends and Colleagues,

I am pleased to share with you this document which is intended to help communicate our Department's Strategic Plan and the steps for implementation. Our management team went through a process of identifying goals, objectives and action items intended to support the City's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan.

Starting in FY16 five enterprise funded utilities were combined to form the Utilities Department for the City of Columbia. These five utilities are Electric, Solid Waste, Stormwater, Wastewater and Water. In addition to these operating utilities there are three support divisions that provide services for the operating divisions. These utility divisions are Utility Customer Service, Utility Service and Rates/Fiscal Planning. For the purpose of planning and name recognition we have divided these functions into three groups as follows:

- The First Group is Columbia Utilities, This group includes:
  - Administration
  - Utility Customer Service (customer billing)
  - Utility Services (utility customer outreach, program and education)
  - Rates/Fiscal Planning (budgeting, utility rate setting and studies)
- The Second Group is Environmental Services, This group includes:
  - Landfill
  - Solid Waste Collection
  - Stormwater
  - Wastewater collection
  - Wastewater treatment
- The Third Group is Water & Light, This group includes:
  - Electric Distribution
  - Electric Production
  - Water Distribution
  - Water Production
  - Engineering
  - Columbia Terminal Railroad and Transload

In planning both our daily activity and our annual budgets we are always balancing the need to maintain utility service to our existing customers and extending utility service to our new customers. With the impacts of seasonal variation on demand, the per capita reduction in consumption for some utilities and ever increasing fixed cost of operations, we are faced with the increasing challenge to maintain stable revenues.

There are many challenges facing the Columbia Utilities and this plan is intended to help guide us on a path to address these and future challenges while developing an environment of continuous improvement.

# *Columbia Utilities*

## **Vision**

Columbia Utilities will be a nationally recognized leader in the sustainable delivery of exceptional utility services.

## **Mission**

To provide safe, reliable and cost effective utility services to meet our citizen owners' needs while protecting public health and contributing to the economic, environmental and social vitality of our community.

## **Core Values**

- ❖ **Customer Service:** Columbia Utilities exists to provide the best possible service to all customers.
- ❖ **Employee Leadership and Development:** Achieve results through ethical, honest and responsible utility employees; valuing diversity and partnerships within our organization and the community.
- ❖ **Environmental Stewardship:** Responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices.
- ❖ **Financial Viability:** Ensure all utilities have the ability achieve their operating objectives and fulfill their missions over the long term.
- ❖ **Reliability:** Be a trusted source for utility service and information.
- ❖ **Resource Management:** Be responsible for the resources the community entrusts to us.
- ❖ **Stakeholder Outreach:** Listen to our customers and respond with clear, compassionate and timely communication

## **Core Competencies**

- Full-service City
- Excellent Customer Service
- Opportunities for Citizen Involvement
- Strong Financial Management

# *Columbia Utilities*

*The divisions tasked with the following goals and objectives include; Administration, Rates and Fiscal Planning, Utility Services, and Utility Customer Service.*

## **Goal #1: Financial Health**

Meet the overall financial needs of the department while maintaining a strong reserve fund, maintaining strong credit rating and using resources efficiently.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Maintain a reserve fund appropriate for a capital intensive operation
- Improve the rating associated with issuing of debt
- Identify short term and long term requirements that impact funding needs
- Regularly review existing policies, programs and contracts to determine operational efficiency
- Place more responsibility for financial health at the division level

## **Goal #2: Workforce Development**

Create an environment that supports engaged, high performing employees; enables Columbia Utilities to recruit, retain and compete for talent; and ensures retention of institutional knowledge.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- No work related injuries or occupational illnesses
- Cultivate an environment which encourages employees to maintain their health
- Cultivate an environment which allows employees to stay connected
- Improve job specific training programs with emphasis of knowledge transfer
- Encourage professional and career development
- Increase competitiveness in the labor market

## **Goal #3: Customer Feedback**

Utilize customer feedback to improve processes and quality of services.

### **Strategic Objective**

- Develop a utility billing survey to gather customer feedback to use for quality improvement.

- Plan for system expansion in a equitable and transparent fashion.
- Change the scope of existing customer surveys for use by all utilities

#### **Goal #4: Operational Efficiency**

Increase operational efficiency through expanded quality improvement and external partnerships.

##### **Strategic Objectives**

- Implement a new Enterprise Resource System (ERP)
- Develop individual training plan for employees for the new ERP software
- Invest in system communication tools and models

#### **Goal #5: Employee Development and Training**

Provide employees with tools needed to grow and develop in their careers.

##### **Strategic Objectives:**

- Provide career path and succession planning
- Adjust job descriptions and duties as needed
- Provide employee training opportunities
  - Construction material science and properties
  - Construction techniques state of the part new products
  - Specifications and Standards

#### **Goal #6: Customer Engagement & Education**

Increase educational efforts and connections with customers.

##### **Strategic Objectives:**

- Increase avenues of notification for service interruptions and ways for customers to report issues
- Establish a standard to rate the energy efficiency of a building and make that information publicly available
- Provide customers easy access to their detailed city billing data
- Increase the utilities' educational outreach
- Establish an identity for Environmental Services and work for name recognition by customers

# *Water and Light Department*

*The divisions tasked with the following goals and objectives include; Administration, W&L Engineering, Water Production and Distribution, Electric Production and Distribution.*

## **Goal #1: Robust Infrastructure**

Ensure that there is sufficient knowledge and resources to meet existing and future physical infrastructure demands.

### **Strategic Objectives:**

- Improve quality of infrastructure mapping and data to support the continuous evaluation of existing water and electric infrastructure to identify areas that need to be upgraded or replaced
- Provide reliable electric and water service in a safe and efficient manner
- Ensure that the quality and quantity of water and electric production is capable of meeting community needs
- Improve capital improvement planning to efficiently match growth
- Implement a strategic asset management program to repair/replace critical infrastructure in a timely and efficient manner

## **Goal #2: Sustainability**

Improve the efficiency of energy and water use and increase generation from renewable resources.

### **Strategic Objectives:**

- Evaluate new and existing efficiency programs
- Encourage the development of local renewable distributed generation
- Regularly evaluate renewable against current non-renewable energy resources
- Increase the utilities operational efficiencies

## **Goal #3: Innovation**

Consistently seek new processes to accomplish our mission and to generate extraordinary results through creative and forward-thinking technological solutions.

**Strategic Objectives:**

- Continue platform modernization
- Improve business intelligence and analytics
- Expand communication capabilities
- Modernize electric and water control systems

DRAFT

# *Environmental Services*

## *Stormwater and Sewer Utilities*

### **Goal #1: Integrated Management Plan**

Develop a comprehensive integrated management plan for both the Sewer Utility and Storm Water Utility.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Identify current and future regulatory requirements for both storm water and sewer and determine actions required to achieve compliance and a schedule that allows compliance achievement while maintaining affordable rates for the community.

### **Goal #2: Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) Reduction**

Further develop and implement the program to reduce the problem with Inflow & Infiltration in the sanitary sewer collection system.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Identify and reduce both public and private sources of inflow and infiltration.
- Reduce wet weather sanitary sewer overflows and sewer backups into homes and business during periods of heavy rainfall.

### **Goal #3: Infrastructure**

Provide planning for the expansion, maintenance and upgrades to the current storm water and sewer infrastructure.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Develop a comprehensive asset management program for the infrastructure of both utility systems.
- Identify and secure funding for the ongoing needs to adequately implement the asset management program for both utility systems.

## *Solid Waste*

### **Goal #1: Professional Service**

Provide professional service.

#### **Strategic Objectives**



- Develop professional atmosphere
- Develop professional working environment
- Provide outstanding customer service
- Practice what we preach
- Implement Annual After-Action Review for this Strategic Plan

## **Goal #2: Environmental Safety**

Provide environmentally safe opportunities

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Continually improving collection and disposal methods
- Look for improvements for customer service
- Manage resources in an efficient and safe manor
- Promote safety through training

## **Goal #3: Sustainability**

Practice sustainability.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Develop alternatives to waste generation
- Select purchases based on impact to environment
- Design programs around sustainability
- Create plan to reduce fuel consumption in vehicles and equipment
- Improve routing using GPS
- Develop written policy and procedure manual

## **Goal #4: Cradle to Grave Services**

Offer Cradle to Grave Services.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Maintain a current divisional master plan
- Minimize the amount of waste generated; reuse and recycle whenever possible
- Partner with other agencies to improve environmental related projects

## **Goal #5: Engaged and Informed Community**

Increase partnerships and foster an engaged, informed community.

**Strategic Objectives**

- Expand volunteer opportunities in composting, recycling, reuse, and reduction areas
- Search for new opportunities to work with community stakeholders and enhance existing cooperation
- Expand opportunities for citizen feedback

DRAFT