



 Santa Rosa, CA

ENHANCING PARTICIPATION IN WATER EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS FOR LATINX & SPANISH-SPEAKING RESIDENTS

fish statue in Prince Gateway Park

A GENERAL NOTE ON “LATINX...”

This case study uses the term *Latinx* when discussing Latin American or Hispanic identifying community members, to be inclusive of all genders, with the understanding that this label may not best fit all community members in this group. An exception to this is in the use of Census data, with the terms “Hispanic / Latin American by race” or “by origin”. We have retained the original Census terms when discussing Census data.



OUR APPROACH

WaterNow Alliance partnered with the City of Santa Rosa to analyze the participation of the City's Latinx communities in its water use efficiency programs and identify best practices to increase program participation. To understand the context for improvement and identify opportunities to address participation gaps, the project team used both qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews with the City staff and members of the City's Latinx communities, community customer surveys in English and Spanish, and a review of US Census demographic data.

IMPACT

Through their investigation, research, and analysis, the project team gained a deeper understanding of the current state of participation in Santa Rosa Water's water use efficiency programs. For example, the team was able to quantify the size of the program participation gap between Santa Rosa's Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities and the City as a whole.

31

median number of water use efficiency participants per neighborhood across the City

17

median number of water use efficiency participants per neighborhood in Latinx & Spanish-speaking communities

10.9

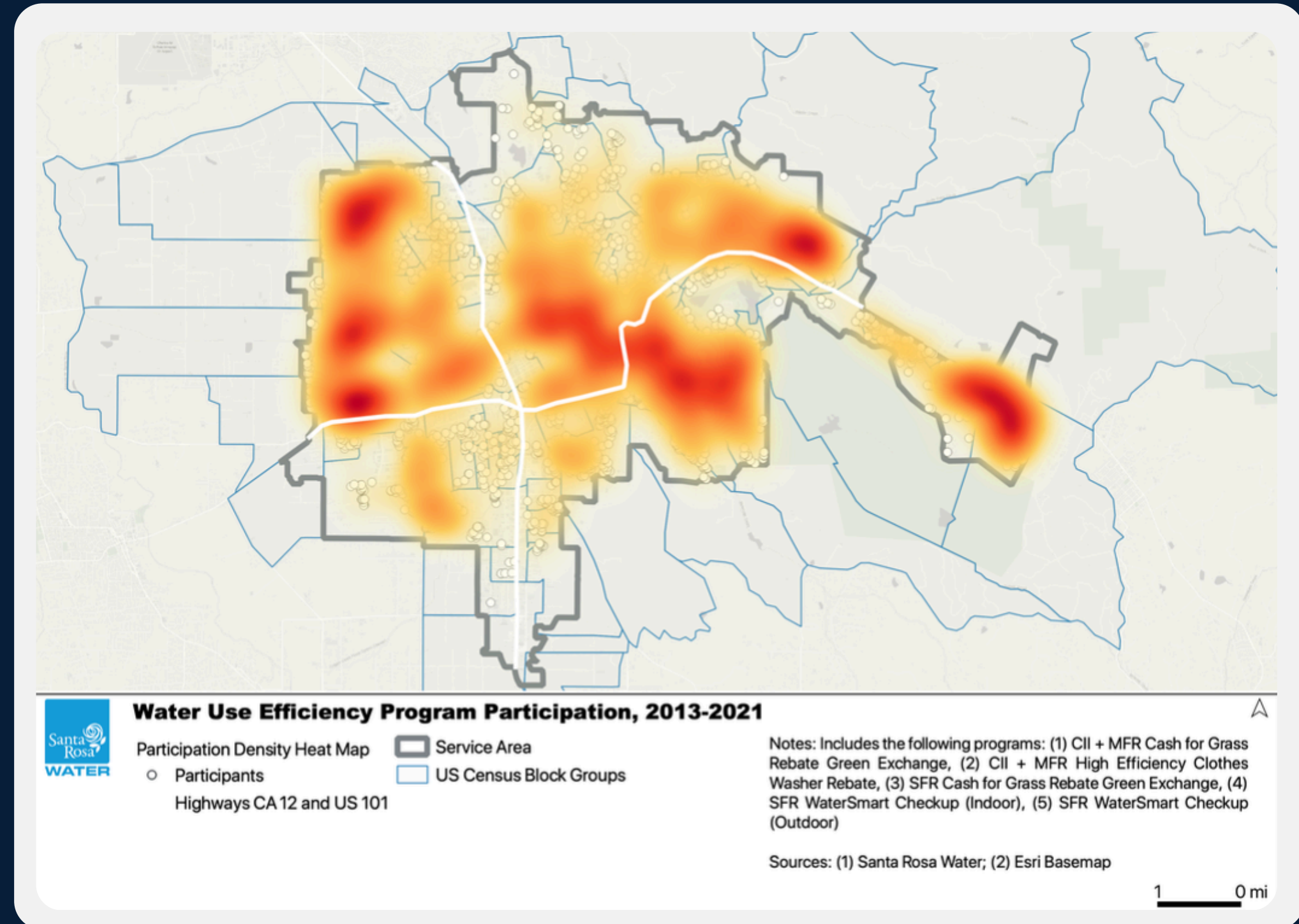
acre-feet of water saved annually if Latinx & Spanish-speaking communities participated at the City rate

IMPACT (CONTINUED)

The team also identified several best practices, tools, and strategies for increasing program awareness, building community trust, and reducing participation barriers so Latinx and Spanish-speaking members can access these cost-saving water use efficiency programs. This includes outreach efforts that synergize with familiar community anchors like schools and faith-based institutions like churches, offering hard copy materials for those who don't have internet access, dedicating program funds to reaching Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members, and participating in local media outlets. For example, the City was invited to be a guest on a local Spanish-language radio program, Nuestra, on a segment discussing how residents can save money by addressing water leaks.

KEY DRIVERS

Situated in a drought-prone area, the City of Santa Rosa, California, faces water uncertainty and scarcity. The City has taken a comprehensive approach to enhancing water efficiency by providing technical support, education, information, rebates, and incentives across for single- and multi-family residential customers, as well as commercial customers, for over 25 years. However, the City was not sure whether its efforts were reaching residents who identify as having Latinx heritage, which make up about 32% of Santa Rosa’s population.



HOW IT WORKS

To address this inquiry, the project team combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. WaterNow interviewed City water conservation and outreach staff to understand current programs and outreach practices, and to identify challenges, best practices, suggestions, and goals. The team then integrated data on water use efficiency program participation with US Census demographic data, including language(s) spoken, median income, renter and homeownership status, and identification as Hispanic or Latino. This analysis quantified the gap in water use efficiency program participation among Latinx and Spanish-speaking neighborhoods and identified additional trends in participation across the City.



HOW IT WORKS (CONTINUED)

2. Santa Rosa Water currently offers all of the following water efficiency programs, tools, and incentives to customers. Prior to this survey, which of the following programs were you aware that Santa Rosa offered to their customers? (Please check all that apply.)

Note: This question is asking only if you are aware of these programs, not if you have participated in them.

- WaterSmart Home Check-up (free indoor and/or outdoor water use efficiency audit and suggestions on how to lower water use)
- WaterSmart Home Kit, with tools and instructions for a do-it-yourself home water audit
- Cash for Grass rebate to replace a high water-use lawn with low water-use plants
- Irrigation Efficiency rebate for equipment and hardware to make irrigation more efficient (smart irrigation controllers, sprinkler nozzles, etc.)
- Clothes Washer rebate for purchasing a high-efficiency clothes washer
- Rainwater Harvesting rebate for creating rainwater storage with rain barrels
- Graywater rebate for installing gray-water reuse fixtures or systems
- Recirculating Hot Water Pump rebate for installing recirculating hot water pump
- None of the above

Sample survey question

The team also surveyed approximately 800 customers to gauge their awareness and experiences with the water use efficiency program, along with their suggestions for improving outreach and programming. The survey, available in both English and Spanish, contextualized the groundwork and participation gap identified earlier in the inquiry process, shedding light on drivers behind patterns in water use efficiency program participation. The team also interviewed local community organizations and utility providers engaging Latinx and Spanish-speaking community members for best practices and strategies for outreach and communication.



SANTA ROSA WATER STAFF HAD LONG DESIRED A PROJECT TO RESEARCH THE FREQUENCY AND SATURATION OF WATER USE EFFICIENCY PROGRAM UPTAKE IN OUR SPANISH SPEAKING COMMUNITY BUT DID NOT HAVE THE INTERNAL EXPERTISE AND CAPACITY TO PURSUE THIS. WATERNOW . . . PROVIDED THE ESTABLISHED TECHNICAL EXPERTISE [AND] EXPANDED THE SCOPE TO PROVIDE VALUABLE STATISTICAL AND SPATIAL ANALYSES.

– Claire Nordlie, Water Use Efficiency Coordinator,
Santa Rosa Water

THE PATH FORWARD

With the support of WaterNow's findings, the City identified immediate next steps and outlined longer-term goals for expanding participation among Latinx communities. Building on its multi-pronged outreach approach, the City will add new outreach avenues, including local grocery stores and community libraries. The City also plans to add more bicultural and bilingual staff to support more in-person and in phone conversations and provide culturally relevant workshops in Spanish. The City will also continue to build community partnerships with established community organizations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- (1) Recognize community outreach as an ongoing relationship, rather than a one-time effort or project
- (2) Meet customers where they are when developing content, outreach strategies, and the program.
- (3) Approach outreach and engagement from a customer's perspective by asking what they care most about, what formats work best for them, where would they like to go to get resources, and what barriers may be preventing them from doing so, so that outreach and communication will resonate with them.

SOURCES

City of Santa Rosa, *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* (2018), <https://www.srcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/23040/Bicycle-and-Pedestrian-Master-Plan-Final-Draft-Update-2018---for-Print>.

City of Santa Rosa, *Flat Rock Park*, <https://www.srcity.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/Flat-Rock-Park-68>.

City of Santa Rosa, *Parker Hill Open Space*, <https://www.srcity.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/Parker-Hill-Open-Space-180>.

City of Santa Rosa, *Water Use Efficiency Survey Questions*, https://waternow.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SurveyMonkey_Santa-Rosa-WUE-Survey-Questions_English-and-Spanish.pdf.

Sonoma Water, Facebook (Mar. 26, 2022), <https://www.facebook.com/sonomawater/posts/tune-in-to-listen-nuestra-tierra-radios-drought-program-series-sponsored-by-sono/431557622176552>.

WaterNow Alliance, *Project Summary: Spanish Language Water Use Efficiency Program Enhancements* (2023), <https://waternow.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Santa-Rosa-Project-Accelerator-Summary.pdf>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SEMINAR: MEETING WATER CHALLENGES WITH EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTED INFRASTRUCTURE

MEMORANDUM: RESEARCH & BEST PRACTICES FOR OUTREACH TO LATINX AND SPANISH-SPEAKING

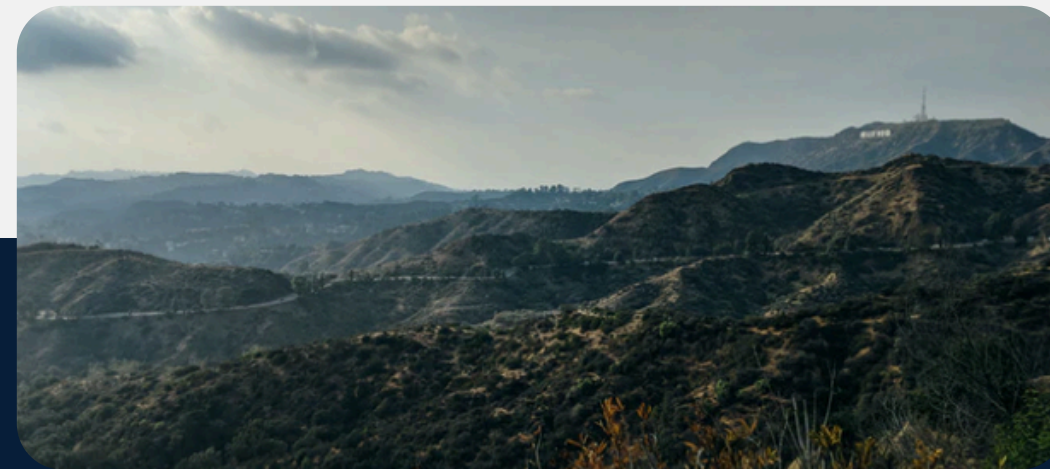
COMMUNITIES IN THE US

RELATED PROJECTS



WELLINGTON, CO

Developing a communication toolkit for the diverse audience of the City's water program



WALNUT VALLEY WATER DISTRICT, CA

Developing a communication toolkit on the City's water program to reach Mandarin-speaking and Asian American and Pacific Islander community members



EAST BAY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT, CA

Enhancing water conservation communications and outreach

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