

# **Brown Initiative for Policy**

Brown University's Student-Run, Nonpartisan Think Tank

# Water Quality Research Team

#### Who We Are

3 people, 2 team leads (freshman, sophomores, and juniors at Brown)

Varying backgrounds and interests with a common interest in getting closer to public health parity

#### **Our Vision**

See Providence move toward total lead line replacement.

#### **Our Goals**

Speak to stakeholders, policymakers, and other decision-makers to understand the problem and who has power to change it.

Assist in research that can help facilitate a policy change and this transition.

# Today's Objectives



PRESENT OUR
RESEARCH ON
CITIES THAT
IMPLEMENTED
TOTAL LEAD LINE
REPLACEMENT



DISCUSS SOME KEY TAKEAWAYS



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STEPS PW HAS TAKEN AS THEY RELATE TO WHAT OTHER CITIES HAVE DONE



DISCUSS IDEAS WE HAVE FOR FUTURE PROJECT DIRECTION



ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

# Research Approach

- Formulated a series of broad questions to investigate related to:
  - · Impetus/Motivation, Logistical Implementation, Financing
- Picked three cities based on:
  - Similarity to Providence w/ regard to size and water utility (quasi-public)
  - Variety in their approach to solving the problem
- Desk Research
  - News stories
  - Scientific reports
  - Policy papers
- Primary Research when needed
  - Phone calls and meetings with:
    - Community organizations
    - City officials and Replacement Project Leaders in Madison, Pittsburgh, and North Providence

### Madison

#### **Impetus**

 2001, chemical engineer found additives to be ineffective and a pollutant

## Implementation Model and Logistics

- City Ordinance mandating private replacement
   Residents were for
- Residents were forced to find private contractors, were notified when neighborhood public lines were being replaced to foster collaboration between public and private contractors

#### Financing

- Common Council approved sewer rates
- Antenna revenue funded rebates for half the private cost up to \$1000

#### Community Engagement

- Despite public reluctance, the program has been heralded as a national example
- Non-compliant households were deemed uninhabitable

- Advanced notice was typically missing
- Environmental factor played a role for Madison, in addition to the health factor
- Community meetings to demonstrate scratch tests
- Heavily relied on City Council

# Pittsburgh

#### **Impetus**

 2014, unauthorized change of anti-corrosion chemicals led to a classaction lawsuit by residents

### Implementation Model and Logistics

- Prioritize areas with children, pregnant women, high LSL density, and limited income
- Pay for almost all privateside replacements
- Integration with water main repair program to preserve cost and efficiency
- Implement machinelearning model to predict location of lead pipes

#### Financing

- PENNVEST low-interest loan and grants
- Rate increase proposed up to 19% hike by 2021

#### Community Engagement

 Lead help desk program conducts lead outreach and obtains right-ofentry signatures - cited difficulty with responsiveness, particularly in lowincome communities

- Formation of expert committee to create and maintain targeted objectives
- Integration with small-diameter water main replacement makes this an ambitious project
- Burden falls 100% on the utility to initiate and coordinate the repairs
- Extremely dependent on relations with Public Utilities Commission and PENNVEST
- Robust outreach, yet problems with responsiveness, particularly in limitedincome communities

Duration: up to 2026

Cost: est. \$326 M

### North Providence

#### **Impetus**

 Could take advantage of public line work already being done

### Implementation Model and Logistics

- Town council voted to approve the program and ensured no conflict with zoning provisions
- Contractors bid on the year's project; must price each house individually
- Project manager works individually with houses to ensure all legal forms are complete
- Timing of work is coordinated with PW's public side work

#### Financing

 CDBG provides the community financing, allowing for about 100 removals a year in qualifying low income neighborhoods

#### Community Engagement

- Direct contact with qualifying homeowners is quite critical to the success of this program
- Engagement includes mailers, a town hall, and direct phone calls with about 80% of applicants

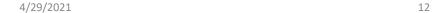
- Community buy-in is highly important without a top-down mandate
  - Even free of charge, some folks are uncomfortable agreeing to the repairs
- Working individually with every homeowner is infeasible but assistance is necessary
  - Could PW host advocacy hours in local neighborhood centers?
  - Could PW make use of website design like Newark has?

- There are federal resources that could complement the current loan program
- Would require support from the city government Many barriers to logistical implementation remain

  - Contractors: could they be sourced from neighboring Massachusetts?
    Timeline and priorities: who gets picked first and why?
    Comprehensive database of confirmed lead presence would be critical

# Takeaways

- Legal + financial support from legislative bodies seem like the lynchpin to success
- State Governments
  - Pass a law allowing municipalities to adopt an ordinance to enter properties without property owner permission
  - Pass laws clarifying public dollars can be used for private replacement, if legality seems to be a barrier



# Takeaways

- City Government
  - Pass an ordinance mandating that lead pipes are replaced by the homeowner within a window of time or upon sale of home
  - Pass an ordinance mandating people sign up for a replacement program if one is implemented
  - Apply for CBDG funding for low income households to supplement other efforts
  - Authorize the sale of bonds to fund the program
- Other Governing Bodies
  - Amend seller disclosure requirements to require that homeowners disclose lead pipes

# Looking Forward

- Hope to carve out ways to contribute to the goal of seeing more pipes replaced in Providence
- Want to help out in more tangible ways. Some ideas:
  - Expanded case study looking at other cities like Newark, NJ
  - Evaluating the demographics of those who utilize the 0-interest loan program
  - Focus groups to determine efficacy of PW lead outreach (was in progress, on hiatus due to COVID-19)

- What questions do you have for us?
  - Regarding our research
  - Regarding our goals
- Do you have suggestions for how we could be most useful to you and/or the effort?
- Our questions:
  - What is Providence Water's relationship with the city council?
  - What is Providence Water's relationship with RIIB?
  - What funding sources have been looked into?
  - Is it possible for the Public Utilities Commission to raise rates for only one area?
     e.g. Just PVD
  - Have any of the legislative efforts been suggested or attempted in Providence?