INTRODUCTION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Fort Pierce Utilities Authority serves Fort Pierce, Florida as a municipal utility provider borne by charter in 1972. Over 27% of the population lives in poverty, and 45% of the population is African American (U.S. Census Data). This is a stark difference from the 13% poverty in the State of Florida and 11% poverty in the U.S. at large.

We are fully committed to serving our community in ways that both reduces the cost burden infrastructure upgrades on our customers, and also provides our community with the greatest opportunities for employment either through direct employment or contracting. In that respect, the following document represents a Community Benefits Plan: Job Quality and Equity that encompasses the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority ongoing and regular engagement with our community and the ways in which we commit to continuing and furthering this engagement with the support of the Department of Energy through the GRIP grant.

Below, we outline our ongoing commitment to 1) Community and Labor Engagement, 2) Quality Jobs, 3) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA), and 4) the Justice40 Initiative.

1. COMMUNITY AND LABOR ENGAGEMENT

Fort Pierce Utilities Authority is a local, municipal utility provider that prides itself on its community ownership. Our mission is to provide our customers with economical, reliable, and friendly service in a continuous effort to enhance the quality of life in our community. FPUA is consistently engaging with Fort Pierce residents, businesses, and local governments in order to strategically plan how to create a resilient community for both environmental and economic growth. Because we are community-owned and locally managed, we focus on serving local needs, through low rates, stable jobs, and contributions to the city. Revenue is not distributed to stockholders; instead, it is reinvested back into the general fund through charter, to improve the quality of life for our customers.

COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT AWARDS

FPUA is proud to be designated as a Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) by the American Public Power Association. Since 2007, we were awarded and have maintained the Diamond Category. The utility that receives the Diamond designation must successfully meet 100 percent of the defined criteria. The RP3[1] program measures each of the following categories of a utility's operation: Reliability, Safety, Workforce Development, and System Improvement. These categories are ranked against standards set by the Public Power Communities across the nation.

[1] American Public Power Association. https://www.publicpower.org/rp3-designated-utilities

FPUA also consistently receives the annual Building Strong Communities award from the Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA) for its contribution to the community. FMEA recognizes FPUA for its programs and projects that improve the environment, provide community education, focus on crime prevention and other special programs, such as lighting ball fields and playgrounds, taking part in community and holiday celebrations, and more, that strengthen communities in which they served. FPUA was also awarded FMEA's Safety Award, which recognizes utilities' commitment to safety. Further, St. Lucie County recognized FPUA as one of 2022's Best Places to Work.

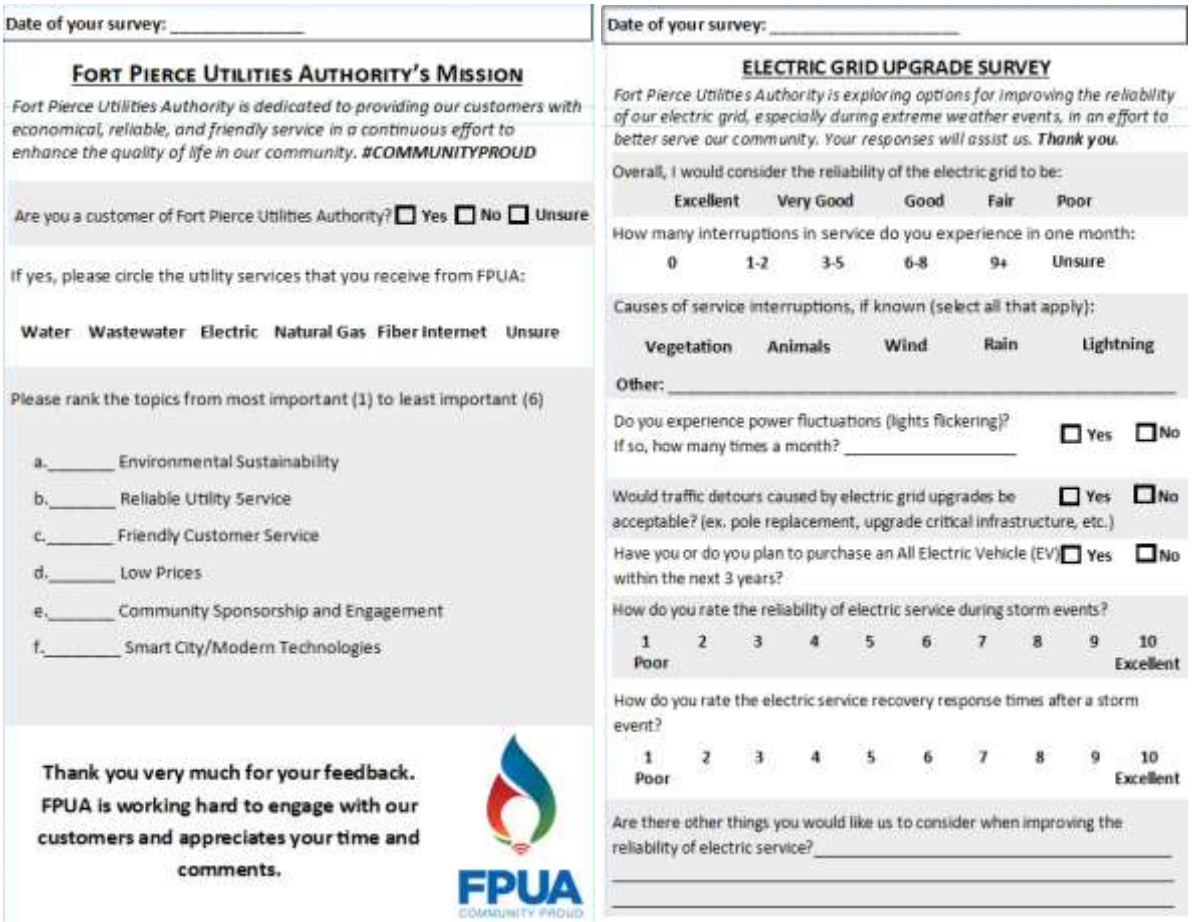
COLLABORATIVE RESILIENCY PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FPUA fully understands, and embraces engaging with our community, as demonstrated below:

- **GRIP Project-Specific Energy Grid Surveys** (see surveys on page 3).

In preparation for this project's activities, FPUA conducted surveys at community events on 2/25/23 and 3/4/23 to gauge the public's response of our project, with the following results:

- 29 Participants
  - FPUA Customers – 18
  - Non-FPUA Customers – 9
  - Unsure – 2
- Question: Would traffic detours caused by electric grid upgrades be acceptable? (ex. pole replacement, upgrade critical infrastructure, etc.)
  - Yes – 19
  - No – 2
  - No Response - 8
- Question: Have you or do you plan to purchase an All Electric Vehicle (EV) within the next 3 years?
  - Yes – 3
  - No – 18
  - No Response - 8
- Question: Do you experience power fluctuations? (Lights flickering)
  - Yes – 4
  - No – 17
  - No Response – 8



Date of your survey: _____

FORT PIERCE UTILITIES AUTHORITY'S MISSION

Fort Pierce Utilities Authority is dedicated to providing our customers with economical, reliable, and friendly service in a continuous effort to enhance the quality of life in our community. ***#COMMUNITYPROUD***

Are you a customer of Fort Pierce Utilities Authority? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

If yes, please circle the utility services that you receive from FPUA:

Water Wastewater Electric Natural Gas Fiber Internet Unsure

Please rank the topics from most important (1) to least important (6)

a._____ Environmental Sustainability
b._____ Reliable Utility Service
c._____ Friendly Customer Service
d._____ Low Prices
e._____ Community Sponsorship and Engagement
f._____ Smart City/Modern Technologies

Thank you very much for your feedback. FPUA is working hard to engage with our customers and appreciates your time and comments.

FPUA
COMMUNITY PROUD

Date of your survey: _____

ELECTRIC GRID UPGRADE SURVEY

Fort Pierce Utilities Authority is exploring options for improving the reliability of our electric grid, especially during extreme weather events, in an effort to better serve our community. Your responses will assist us. ***Thank you.***

Overall, I would consider the reliability of the electric grid to be:
Excellent Very Good Good Fair Poor

How many interruptions in service do you experience in one month:
0 1-2 3-5 6-8 9+ Unsure

Causes of service interruptions, if known (select all that apply):
Vegetation Animals Wind Rain Lightning
Other: _____

Do you experience power fluctuations (lights flickering)? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If so, how many times a month? _____

Would traffic detours caused by electric grid upgrades be acceptable? (ex. pole replacement, upgrade critical infrastructure, etc.) ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you or do you plan to purchase an All Electric Vehicle (EV) within the next 3 years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How do you rate the reliability of electric service during storm events?
1 Poor 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Excellent

How do you rate the electric service recovery response times after a storm event?
1 Poor 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Excellent

Are there other things you would like us to consider when improving the reliability of electric service? _____

Figure 1: Community engagement surveys in preparation for our GRIP grant proposal.

In addition to the surveys, over the last twelve months FPUA has been, and will continue to be, involved in a number of community engagement and resiliency planning opportunities, such as:

- **<u>City of Fort Pierce Resiliency Taskforce</u>**

  FPUA is an active member of the Resiliency Taskforce that the City of Fort Pierce is currently developing. The goal is to identify vulnerabilities and funding mechanism for implantation of Capital Improvement projects, and ordinances. This taskforce will also establish partnerships with public and private sector entities to assure successful implementation of resilience objectives.

  - February 14th, 2023
  - April 4th, 2023

- **<u>St. Lucie County Resiliency Committee Meetings</u>**

FPUA is an active participant in the Resiliency Steering Committee led by St. Lucie County where personnel from different governments and agencies within the county worked in groups to develop a countywide Community Resilience Plan.

- August 10th, 2022
- August 24th, 2022
- August 31st, 2022
- April 22nd, 2023 (Upcoming)

- **Direct Community Engagement at Events (including sponsorships)**

FPUA participates in many events throughout the year, supporting community-based organizations that work with our underserved community members, providing FPUA the opportunity to include stakeholders' perspectives that can be incorporated into a project, allows for transparency, and helps reduce or eliminate certain risks associated with a project. diverse set of populations in the development of resilience strategies that focus on communities and equitable access to opportunities and the benefits that derive from them.

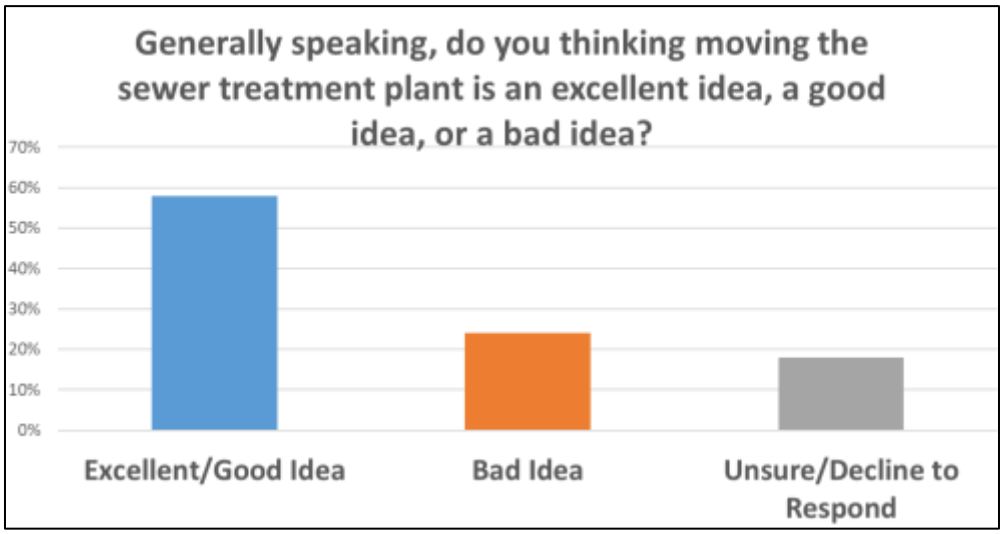
- Back to School Stuff the Bus – August 6th, 2022
- Public Power Week Friday Fest – October 8th, 2022
- Boys and Girls Club Grand Reopening – February 18th, 2023
- NatureFest – February 25th, 2023
- Great American Clean Up – March 4th, 2023
- Fort Pierce Police Department Bicentennial Event – April 22nd, 2023 (Upcoming)

- **Community Input for Wastewater Treatment Plant Relocation Project**

FPUA conducted surveys and held two Townhall meetings to discuss and receive feedback about its project to relocate the Wastewater Treatment Plant. FPUA also developed a specially dedicated website to discuss this project and share updates with our community, which can be reached at www.SustainableSewer.net. One town hall was recorded and is accessible at the link provided (May 14th):

- February 21st – February 23rd, 2022 - National Research Center Vancore Jones
  - 300 customers, of different ages, races, regions, and gender, were polled over three days.
- May 5th, 2022 – Townhall at Lincoln Park's Incubate Neighborhood Center[2]
- May 14th, 2022 – Townhall at Lincoln Park's Incubate Neighborhood Center

[2] Fort Pierce Incubate Neighborhood Center. Who We Serve (incbiz.org)



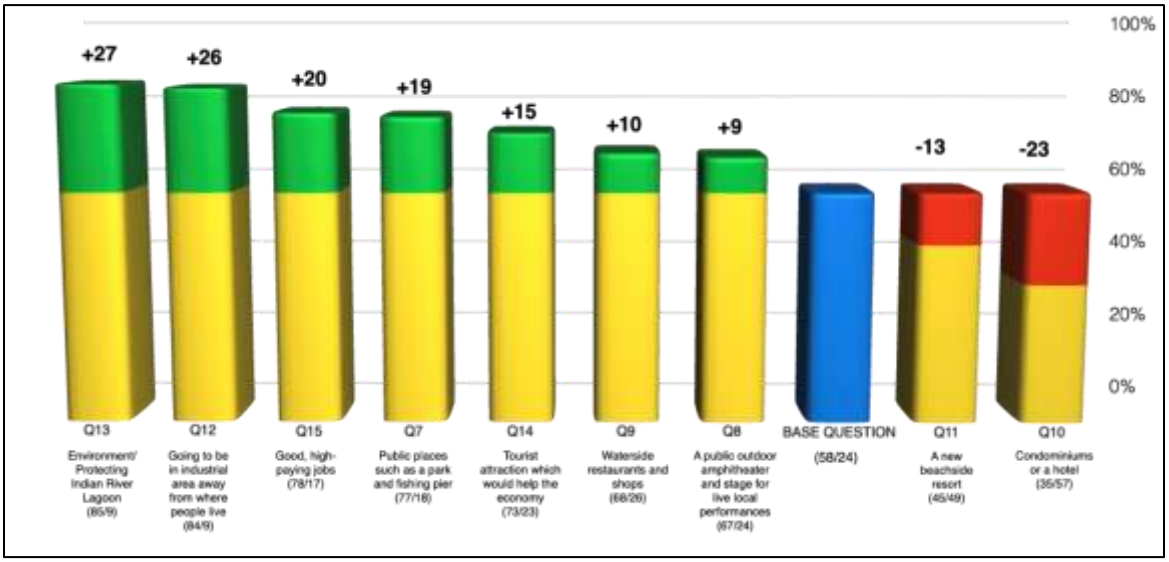


Figure 2: Results of surveys given to 300 FPUA customers in February 2022 regarding the relocation of our wastewater treatment plant off of South Hutchinson Island.

- **<u>FPUA Presents at Workshops, Seminars, and Council meetings</u>**

FPUA regularly presents at local workshops and seminars to discuss upcoming projects and receive feedback from our customers and local partners. For example (not listed below), FPUA participates in the City of Fort Pierce's monthly Coffee with the Mayor, where citizens gather together to discuss the future of Fort Pierce. The links below will take you to videos of some of the presentations.

- October 1st, 2022 – City of Fort Pierce
- October 22nd, 2022 – City of Fort Pierce
- November 11th and 18th, 2022 – Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program
- November 18th, 2022 – FPUA sponsored Coffee with the Mayor
- December 6th, 2022 – St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners
- February 14th, 2022 – Ocean Village Long Range Planning Committee

- **UF/IFAS Energy & Water Conservation Workshop, including Take Home Conservation Kit sponsored by FPUA**

After record-breaking natural gas price hikes in Summer 2022, FPUA partnered with UF/IFAS Extension of St. Lucie County and hosted four workshops focusing on the importance of conservation and ways to lower energy and water costs. FPUA also provided conservation kits to all attendees.

- August 27th, 2022 – at Fort Pierce's Fenn Center
- September 10th, 2022 – at Fort Pierce's Hurston Library
- October 1st, 2022 – at Fort Pierce's UP Center
- October 15th, 2022 – at the Incubate Neighborhood Center at Lincoln Park

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED IN 2022

In 2022, FPUA and the City of Fort Pierce jointly launched its very first Utility Advisory Committee, which meets monthly and is comprised of individuals who are citizen customers of FPUA. Each member was appointed by either an FPUA Board Member or a City Commissioner. The Committee works closely with the Public Affairs & Sustainability Department to identify staff presentations that they would like to see during their monthly meetings, with the ultimate goal of providing citizen feedback and input to ensure that FPUA policies and procedures are in line with citizen needs and limitations. To date, this advisory committee has viewed and discussed topics such as FPUA Communications and Power Cost Adjustment protocols, Storm Response protocols in the SCADA operating room, meter-reading, including manual and AMI meter-reading, and a full tour of all of FPUA's utility services provided. In April, they will receive a presentation about Solar and FPUA's Net Metering Program, in response to questions they have posed about the process and validity of it.

COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOLS

FPUA works directly with the City of Fort Pierce leadership for major projects and budget approval, and to ensure project efficiencies where different municipal divisions may be able to collaborate (i.e. combining roadway projects and water/wastewater projects). Similarly, the Fort Pierce Mayor sits on FPUA's governing board. FPUA also collaborates with local governments and agencies, such as the Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency, St. Lucie Economic Development Council, and Indian River State College, a federally recognized Minority Serving

Institution[3], to identify projects and ways to better serve our community and provide economic, reliable, service with resilient infrastructure.

First, FPUA and the Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency have identified multiple projects that will increase the private sector investment and business development within the community. One of our goals is to evaluate additional regulatory and financial incentives for potential implementation that encourages private sector investment and business development[4]. FPUA's proposed project in its entirety enables the electric grid to support the increased demand for electric services related to achieving this goal.

Second, FPUA collaborates with the St. Lucie Economic Development Council (EDC) to bring quality jobs to St. Lucie County and diversify the local economy. FPUA worked with the EDC alongside the City of Fort Pierce to secure a $2.7 million grant from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity **Florida Job Growth Grant Fund** to revitalize Fort Pierce's downtown, including electric and water utility upgrades and installations. In August 2022, Governor DeSantis visited Fort Pierce to announce this highly celebrated grant for our community[5].

Third, FPUA partners with Indian River State College, a federally recognized Minority Serving Institution, **for workforce development and community engagement opportunities.** For example, FPUA attends the IRSC Job Fair and, as a protocol, lists its job opportunities on the IRSC College Central job bank. FPUA also attends job fairs within the community like the UP Center, local churches, and various other locations throughout St. Lucie and Indian River County. Further, FPUA also posts job opportunities on GovernmentJobs.com, and Indeed. Recently, FPUA welcomed IRSC student interns to its Public Affairs & Sustainability Department and its Electric & Gas Engineering Department. FPUA has also participated in previous years' internship programs, specifically in the Electric & Gas Engineering, and Water/Wastewater Engineering departments.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS RE-IMAGINED THROUGH NEW DEPARTMENT IN 2022

In 2022, FPUA created the Public Affairs and Sustainability Department, which leads these efforts and uniquely combines grants and community engagement. The Public Affairs and Sustainability Department ensures that FPUA's projects are designed with the community in mind, for every grant opportunity. As mentioned earlier, this department launched a second website, www.SustainableSewer.net, as an added effort to communicate its monumental project of relocating its Wastewater Treatment Plant off the Indian River Lagoon. FPUA also created a designated email address for direct communications - Community@fpua.com.

[3] 2022-2023 List of Minority Serving Institutions. 2022-2023 List of Minority Serving Institutions (nasa.gov)

[4] The 2020 Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency Community Redevelopment Plan, Page 36. https://cityoffortpierce.com/DocumentCenter/View/9381/2020-Updated-FPRA-Plan

[5] Governor Ron DeSantis Awards $2.7 Million to City of Fort Pierce for Infrastructure Improvements through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund. https://www.flgov.com/2022/08/30/governor-ron-desantis-awards-2-7-million-tocity-of-fort-pierce-for-infrastructure-improvements-through-the-florida-job-growth-grant-fund/

2. INVESTING IN THE AMERICAN WORKFORCE

FPUA knows that quality of life starts with the security provided by a good, reliable job. The City of Fort Pierce and the surrounding demographic area have suffered for years due to generational poverty, lack of education, and access to quality jobs. The investments and commitments made by new investment in the community will mitigate these barriers and provide needed access to jobs at all levels, enhancing the quality of life of residents in the Fort Pierce community and surrounding area.

FPUA considers labor to be an investment, placing importance on skill-set growth for career advancement opportunities. Toward that end, FPUA also has several tiered positions and an apprenticeship program in order to promote within. For example, an employee can begin working as an Apprentice, or Trainee, for our wastewater plant. That employee can then work towards becoming a Plant Operator C. From there the employee can become a Plant Operator B, Plant Operator A, and potentially a Plant Foreman or Senior Plant Operator, with training and educational support from FPUA along the way. As previously mentioned, FPUA also participates in internship opportunities to provide hands-on training for various positions within the company, and has been successful in providing permanent positions for interns in previous years, including key project personnel Thierry Sydne, who is now a full-time FPUA Engineer.

Since 2018, FPUA has invested over $190,000 through its Education Assistance Program (EAP), which provides the opportunity for training, development and advancement at no cost to the employee. The EAP covers 100% of the cost of tuition, text books, fees, equipment, supplies and fees at the local Indian River State College, which is a federally recognized Minority Serving Institution. To date, 17 of FPUA's current employees have graduated, 9 employees are still enrolled, and 7 employees utilized the EAP to take classes but are not currently enrolled. Of these employees 68% are male, 32% female with 1% Hispanic, 26% Black, and 73% White.

This project will be driven by local engineers who are municipal utility employees for FPUA. It will provide FPUA staff with critical opportunities for professional development including strategic storm hardening priorities planning and follow-through. In fact, this project will provide a hands-on opportunity for our Substation, Systems Operator, and Line Specialist Apprentices, as well as our GIS Intern.

It is important to FPUA that its employees work in safe, healthy, and inclusive workplaces with equal opportunity, free from harassment and discrimination. As part of the employee benefits package, employees receive hands-on training, education, and skill development along with support to advance in their careers. FPUA offers paid sick and vacation time, employer-sponsored health insurance, and a retirement/savings plan and pension, along with continuing education for employees to earn credentials and degrees relevant to their career pathways.

FPUA also ensures its employees are current on all required certifications. Recently, FPUA held a Recertification training and examination for Maintenance of Traffic (MOT), and also has two MOT Full Certification classes scheduled in April, for employees receiving their first certification. Further, FPUA partners with local safety vendors, such as Big John's Feed/Clothing Store, Fort Pierce Red Wing Shoes, Safety and Boot Center, and Taylor Creek Optical, in order to ensure its

employees have the proper Personal Protective Equipment. FPUA employees are reimbursed for their eligible safety purchases, such as steel toe boots, prescription safety glasses/sunglasses, puncture resistant gloves, and more.

By supporting FPUA and our proposed project, DOE would be investing in a local, municipal employer whose operational mission includes job quality and workforce continuity. Aligning with the Executive Orders on **Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America's Workers (EO 14005), Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (EO 14008), Boosting Quality of Federal Construction Contracts (EO 14063), Promoting Competition in the American Economy (EO 14063), and Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (EO 14052),** Fort Pierce Utilities Authority strengthens prosperity by expanding good-paying, secure and safe jobs accessible to all employees.

3. ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA)

This project will advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility by ensuring that one of the most demographically diverse and impoverished communities in Florida receives support to modernize its electric grid. Without this support, the utility will be required to rely on rates revenue, and possible rate increases, to pursue the identified projects in the near future. **DOE's support will ensure that federal funds are driven to a diverse area with a demonstrated need, reducing the community's vulnerability to storm events and outages.**

Fort Pierce is a Historically Disadvantaged Community[6] with challenges in common with many urban areas in Florida. These challenges include limited resources, aging infrastructure, and environmental degradation. Fort Pierce is also demographically diverse. According to the most recent U.S. Census (2021 figures), nearly 44% of Fort Pierce's population of 47,297 identifies as African American alone and 23% identifies as Hispanic or Latino[7].

Fort Pierce Utilities Authority recognizes the value and importance of diversity and inclusivity, including diversity of thought, throughout its staff and Board of Directors. As of 2022, FPUA's major demographic make-up is 180 Caucasian, 57 African American, 19 Hispanic employees, and 6 Other. That amounts to approximately 69% Caucasian, 22% African American, 7% Hispanic, and 2% Other of the major demographic make-up categories.

FPUA encourages employees to conscientiously maintain acceptably high ethical standards and has adopted the ethical standards as set forth in the Florida Constitution and Statutes. These provisions are standard in nature and encourage political subdivisions, including municipalities and authorities, to adopt ethical standards tailored to their particular needs.

To encourage underserved individuals and applicants of all skill-sets to join our team, FPUA provides highly organized apprenticeship programs that train and promote within the company. For example, an employee can begin working as an Apprentice, or Trainee, for our wastewater plant. That employee can then utilize FPUA's Education Assistance Program for a fully-funded

[6] Disadvantaged Communities Reporter. Energy Justice Dashboard (anl.gov)
[7] U.S. Census. U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Fort Pierce city, Florida

degree at our local, federally recognized Minority Serving Institution, Indian River State College and work towards becoming a Plant Operator C. From there the employee can become a Plant Operator B, Plant Operator A, and potentially a Plant Foreman or Senior Plant Operator. FPUA has supported the education of its employees for decades and has invested over $190,000 since 2018. Of FPUA's current employees, 17 have graduated with an Associate's Degree or higher, 9 employees are still enrolled, and 7 employees utilized the EAP to take classes but are not currently enrolled. Of these employees 68% are male, 32% female with 1% Hispanic, 26% African American, and 73% Caucasian.

Further, FPUA attends job fairs at IRSC, the UP Center, local churches, and various other locations throughout St. Lucie and Indian River County, and as a protocol, FPUA lists its job opportunities on the IRSC College Central job bank. FPUA also posts job opportunities on GovernmentJobs.com, and Indeed.

FPUA employees are able to participate not only in the Education Assistance program, but also its Volunteer Program, which encourages community engagement, its Wellness Program, to encourage healthy living, and a retirement program that vests at 5 years, alleviating the possibility of future financial burden.

4. JUSTICE40 INITIATIVE

FPUA strives to provide and maintain a healthy, resilient, and sustainable community. The City of Fort Pierce in its entirety is a financially disadvantaged city with 2 times the Florida poverty rate. The median per capita income in Fort Pierce is $21,781, with 27.1% of the population living in poverty[8] according to the United States Census. In comparison, the statewide median per capita income is $35,216, with 13.1% of the population living in poverty[9].

Further, the U.S. Government's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool recognizes a majority of the City of Fort Pierce as a disadvantaged community under multiple variables, including Energy[10]. Specifically, Census Tracts 3801,3802, 3803, and 3809 are all at or above the 94th percentile for Energy cost, and at least 83rd percentile for Low income households. The cost of energy is a well-known local issue tied to the age and condition of the homes in Fort Pierce, which are often uninsulated, unsealed, and running with window-unit air conditioners. FPUA revamped its weatherization program in 2022 to focus on providing insulation for community homes to help address this issue.

DOE's mapping tool, the Disadvantaged Communities Reporter, identifies Census Tracts 3801, 3802, 3803, and 3809 as DACs, with an average National Ranking of 81.25% and State Ranking of 88.75%. Further, all four Tracts have at least five of the same indicators, such as Low-Income Population, which was the top indicator for all Tracts and ranked 98% of the National Percentile, Energy Burden, Uninsured, Single Parent, and Renters.

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[8] United States Census, QuickFacts Fort Pierce, FL
[9] United States Census, QuickFacts Florida
[10] See Climate and Economic Justice map and Fort Pierce information: https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#7.89/27.009/-80.878

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The benefits of this project for this disadvantaged community are:

1. Increase energy democracy in DACs – **measured by** number of citizens reached through informative events, Utility Advisory Committee results, and customer surveys
2. Decrease energy burden in DACs – **measured by** number of grant dollars directed at energy grid resilience (dollars that would otherwise be provided by community rates)
3. Increase clean energy jobs, job pipeline, and job training for individuals from DACs – **measured by** number of participants in job training programs, apprenticeship programs as well as tuition or salary paid by FPUA toward those training programs.
4. Increased reliability, resilience, and infrastructure to support reliability and resilience in our disadvantaged community – **measured by** list of completed infrastructure upgrades

Increase Energy Democracy in DACs

As mentioned above, FPUA understands the importance of community engagement, and how it contributes to increased energy democracy, especially in DACs. In the last year, not only did FPUA launch a new Citizens Advisory Committee that meets monthly to learn and provide feedback for staff, but FPUA also participated in over 20 community and stakeholder events. FPUA will continue to engage with organizations and residents of Fort Pierce through community workshops, seminars, and other outreach opportunities. Further, FPUA will continue to educate its customers and stakeholders in order to provide the knowledge and tools to increase resiliency in the Fort Pierce community.

FPUA is a municipal utility company, specifically owned by its ratepayers. Because of this unique quality, all investments made by FPUA and its partners, contribute to the number of assets owned by the disadvantaged Fort Pierce community. For example, FPUA currently owns **5.16%** of a Florida-based solar farm, through its membership with FMEA, meaning FPUA customers own the same percentage of this clean energy source. Further, FPUA will increase its ownership as two new FMEA solar farms go live this year.

Increase Clean Energy Jobs, Job Pipeline, and Job Training for Individuals from DACs

Through its partnership with Indian River State College, a federally-recognized minority serving institution, FPUA encourages staff to further their education in order to advance their career. Through the Education Assistance Program, employees have received their degree, or will receive their degree, in Engineering, Information Technology, Cyber Security & Management, Organizational Management, Accounting, Law, and Business Administration.

As mentioned above, FPUA has invested over $190,000 since 2018, in its Education Assistance Program (EAP), which provides the opportunity for training, development and advancement at no cost to the employee. The EAP covers 100% of the cost of tuition, text books, fees, equipment, supplies and fees. To date, 17 of FPUA's current employees have graduated, 9

employees are still enrolled, and 7 employees utilized the EAP to take classes but are not currently enrolled. Of these employees, 68% are male, 32% female with 1% Hispanic, 26% Black, and 73% White.

Decrease Energy Burdens in DACs

Funding from the DOE will enable FPUA to increase its resilience and reliability in the disadvantaged community of Fort Pierce, without financially impacting its citizens by having to increase electric rates. FPUA is reliant on grant opportunities such as these to permit us to more proactively carry out grid resilience mitigation projects in our area. Without grant support, we are forced to rely on our annual budgeting process and rates revenue, which is challenging and limited due to the income demographics of our area.

Further, Downtown Fort Pierce is the historic epicenter of St. Lucie County. As such, the majority of utility infrastructure is dated (in some cases 100 years old or more) and undersized to support the unprecedented growth in our area. This lack of modern infrastructure stifles local economic growth and challenges FPUA and the City of Fort Pierce's efforts to revitalize, placing the burden on the citizens.

ANTICIPATED NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS ON DACS (IF APPLICABLE)

There are no negative environmental impacts anticipated for this project.

METHODOLOGY AND TIMELINE OF BENEFIT FLOW

The anticipated benefits (metrics identified above on page 11) will flow to the Fort Pierce community throughout the project and as project components are completed. The Public Affairs & Sustainability Department will track number of citizens engaged in an ongoing fashion throughout the project to demonstrate continued citizen involvement in this and other utility matters. The Finance Department will track number of grant dollars invested in the FPUA electric grid (and other utilities) to demonstrate an ongoing reduction of utility The Human Resources Department will track number of employees participating in education and apprenticeship programs to demonstrate an ongoing prioritization of local labor development and workforce investments. Completed infrastructure upgrades will be tracked by utility project management teams of engineers and contractors, and reported to the grants team for publication.

In conclusion, the proposed project provides an increased ability to support activities that will modernize the electric grid and reduce impacts from extreme weather and natural disasters while also supporting the incoming and much-needed growth of good, high-paying jobs in our community. **DOE's support will ensure that federal funds are driven to a diverse and disadvantaged area with a demonstrated need, reducing the community's vulnerability to storm events and outages.** This opportunity will increase the resiliency of the electric grid as well as reduce outage frequency and duration.