



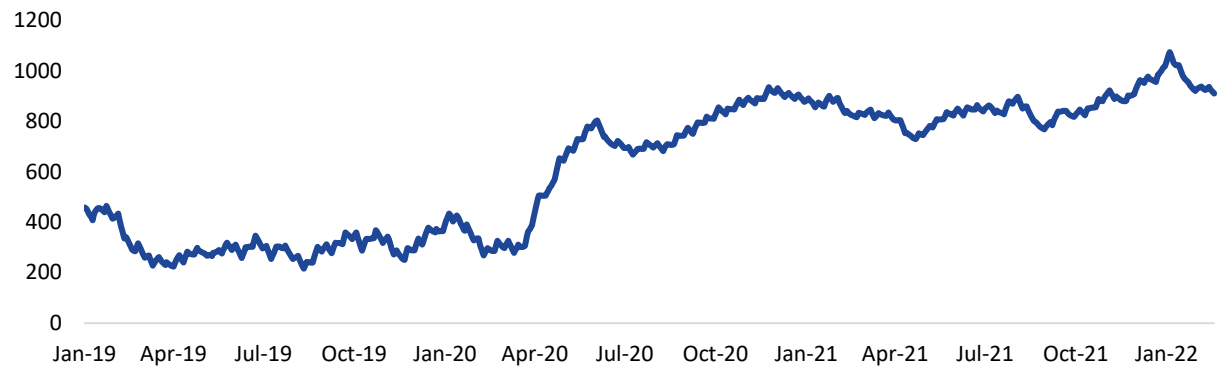
2021 AFFORDABILITY PLAN UPDATE

The goal of OWASA's Affordability Program is to increase community awareness of options to manage and reduce water and sewer bills and to empower low-income customers, and the local agencies that serve them, with information and tools to manage and reduce water and sewer bills. We constantly strive to balance the need to invest in the community's water and wastewater infrastructure and to maintain affordable rates. This year as the COVID-19 pandemic stretched into its second year, maintaining that balance has been increasingly difficult.

In 2021

550+ Households that are 60+ days past due	\$475 Average overdue amount	200 Customers received bill assistance from one or more sources
49% Increase in Care to Share donations since 2020	1,075 Customers who gave to Care to Share	0 Customers had their water shut off

TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAST DUE (January 2019 – December 2021)





As a result of the economic stress caused by the pandemic and the limitations of in-person engagement opportunities, our Affordability Program once again focused almost exclusively on engaging with the community regarding the disconnection moratorium and the identification and promotion of programs and strategies to provide bill assistance to customers.

COMMUNICATING TO CUSTOMERS STRUGGLING TO PAY THEIR BILLS

We sent emails or letters to all customers with overdue balances in March, August and December. These emails connected customers to financial assistance programs. One focus of this work was to inform our customers with overdue balances about the new federal Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) which launched in December 2021.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

OWASA staff met one-on-one with 11 of our community partners to discuss their programs and how we can work together more closely to reduce the water bills of our low-income customers. We sent regular emails to our 21 affordability partner organizations and attended monthly Orange County Housing Preservation Council (OCHPC) meetings. These meetings allowed us to keep our partners informed about rate increases, the temporary disconnection moratorium and our plans for when we return to normal collection practices, and how to connect partners' clients with financial assistance programs, such as the new LIHWAP program.

PROMOTING WATER CONSERVATION

In 2021, OWASA provided kits containing toilet leak tablets, low-flow shower heads, and faucet aerators to community partners to install in the homes of low-income customers. We also partnered with the OCHPC to present a workshop in the Northside neighborhood teaching residents how to save money by saving water.

GROWING CARE TO SHARE GIFTS

In November, OWASA celebrated Care to Share Day with a feature on WCHL's Wonderful Water and OWASA's website, social media amplified by our partners, proclamations by the Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, and a media release. We highlighted Care to Share in our annual Water Quality Report Card and postcard that was mailed to all customers. We also emailed and mailed all donors a thank you note and reached out to OWASA vendors and encouraged them to donate through IFC. New this year: OWASA included a printed insert in all mailed water bills encouraging customers to add a monthly on-bill donation to Care to Share and emailed all customers who have shared an email address with us asking them to consider a gift to Care to Share. In 2021, donations were up almost 50% compared to 2020.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2022

In 2022, we expect much of our affordability program to center around our continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **As of February 2022, OWASA has no specific plans to lift the moratorium.**

We have a plan in place to help ease the burden for our customers with overdue balances when we return to normal collection practices. This includes deploying a comprehensive communications strategy and leveraging our partnerships with community organizations to connect customers with financial assistance and sign them up for 6-, 12-, or 18-month extended payment plans.

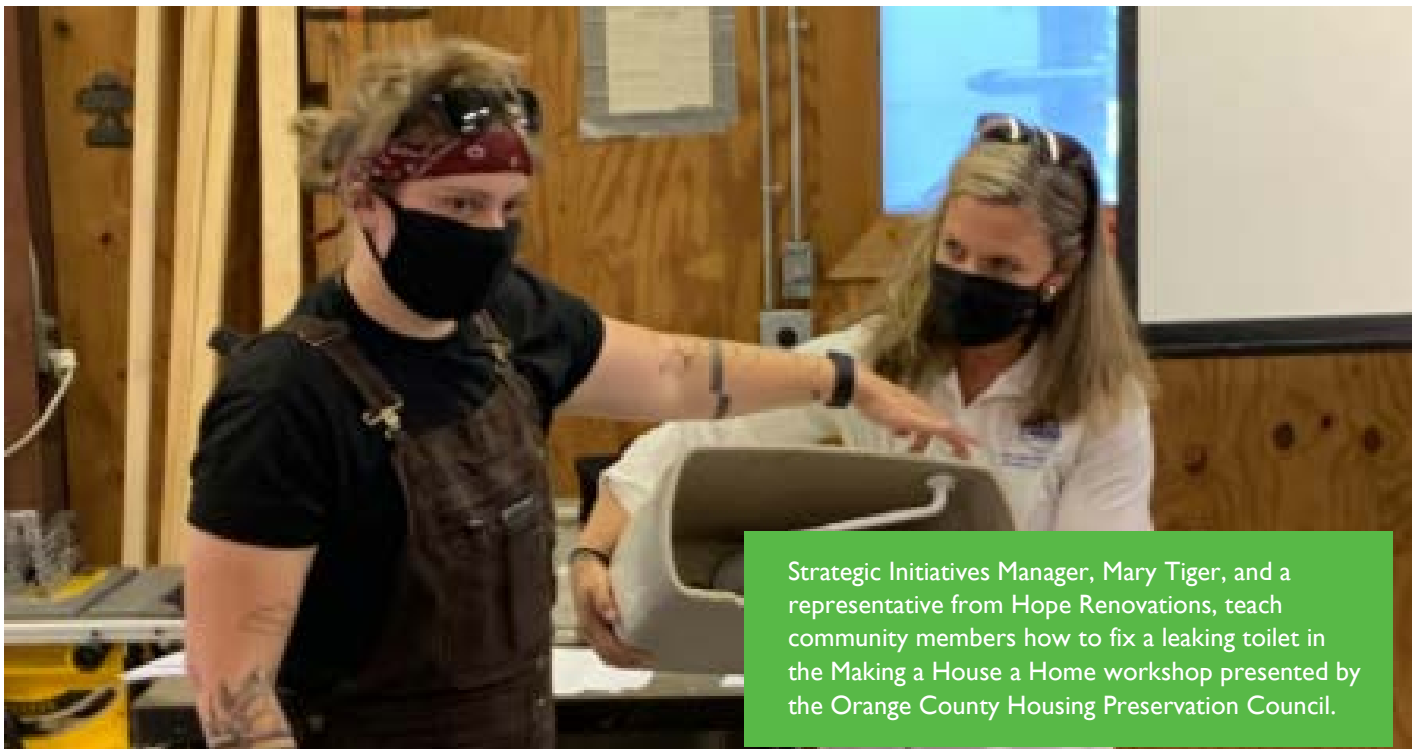
In addition to our COVID-19 response, we will continue our successful partnerships with members of the Orange County Housing Preservation Council and other local organizations to help our low-income customers save water and reduce their bills by:

- Giving away low-flow shower heads, faucet aerators, and toilet leak detection kits to install in low-income households
- Connecting customers to various sources of bill assistance, including LIHWAP
- Delivering another workshop to low-income neighbors on how to save water and fix toilet leaks
- Communicating changes to our rates or collection practices well in advance – in Spanish and other languages spoken in our service area where possible
- Notifying customers of potential leaks with AguaVista
- Encouraging customers to sign up AguaVista

NEW in 2022

We'll be partnering with a local plumbing company to offer a plumbing tune-up free of charge to interested low-income homeowners. Carrboro Plumbing will donate their services, fixing leaking toilets, showers, and faucets that could cause high water bills.

We hope to serve 20 Chapel Hill and Carrboro families this Spring!



Strategic Initiatives Manager, Mary Tiger, and a representative from Hope Renovations, teach community members how to fix a leaking toilet in the Making a House a Home workshop presented by the Orange County Housing Preservation Council.