

**Blue Print Columbus
Community Advisory Panel
Summary Meeting 1**

Goodale Park Shelter House
120 W. Goodale Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

July 16th 2013,
6:00 to 8:00 pm

The members of the Community Advisory Panel (CAP), a group convened by City of Columbus (the City) to advise the City on the development of Blueprint Columbus, held their inaugural meeting on July 16, 2013 at the Goodale Park Shelter House in Columbus, Ohio. The CAP is composed of representatives from Columbus neighborhoods, businesses, environmental interests, construction, homebuilding, and ratepayer groups and others. The CAP will meet approximately every quarter over the course of the Blueprint Columbus planning phase, which will conclude in September 2015 when the draft Blueprint Columbus plan is submitted to the Ohio EPA for review.

The meeting goals were to:

- Present an overview of Blue Print Columbus and answer clarifying questions
- Present the community engagement plan and receive initial CAP input
- Clarify CAP roles and responsibilities
- Identify next steps

- The meeting was convened and facilitated by a team from the Ohio State University - John Glenn School of Public Affairs and the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) of Cambridge, Massachusetts. A list of meeting attendees is available at the end of this summary. Meeting documents, including the presentation slides are available at: www.blueprint.columbus.gov.

- CAP Meeting 1 Agenda
- Draft CAP Purpose and Objectives
- Blueprint Columbus Overview
- Community Engagement Plan
- List of Panel Members
- Project Contact Information

Additional information is available at the city website or by emailing the city's dedicated email address:

- **City Website:** www.blueprint.columbus.gov
- **Blueprint Columbus Email Access:** blueprint@columbus.gov

Action Items from Meeting 1

The following action items were identified during the meeting:

CAP Members:

- Identify additional constituencies that should be invited to participate in the CAP and send names of potential representatives to Maria Mone (Mone.1@osu.edu or 614-292-7781)
- Consult with their constituencies and relay their thoughts in an on-going basis about the project to the facilitation team
- Send suggestions for public events where education and outreach activities could occur to Mo Wright (wrightmdt@rama-consulting.net).
- Review your contact information for accuracy and notify the facilitation team if changes are needed.
- Inform the facilitation team and RAMA if they identify synergies between other projects they are involved with and the Blueprint Columbus planning process.

RAMA:

- Send email to the CAP to request suggestions for public events where education and outreach activities could occur.

Facilitation Team:

- CBI to draft the meeting summary and distribute for review and revision.
- Facilitation team to poll the CAP members to identify an opportune time for the next meeting, which will likely be held in October.

Blue Print Columbus Overview

Susan Ashbrook, Assistant Director for Sustainability in the Department of Public Utilities, described Blue Print Columbus, the role of the CAP, and the anticipated process moving forward. The main points from her presentation are summarized below.

As long as there are no rain events, the City's sewer systems work well. Wastewater is collected from homes and businesses and transported through sanitary sewers to a wastewater treatment plant that cleans the water before returning it to the river. However, large rain events can cause excessive rainwater to enter sanitary sewers, which were not built to handle significant rainwater. Excess rainwater from large storm events can cause sewers to back up into basements and overflow into streams. Not only is this a nuisance and a health hazard to the business and homeowners, but excess discharges into local waters also reduces water quality.

In 2005, the City began to implement an Ohio EPA-approved Wet Weather Management Plan (WWMP) to address the sewer overflows and back-ups. This plan proposes solving sewer overflows almost exclusively by making the sewer system bigger – primarily by adding several large, deep tunnels. Recently, the City decided to explore whether it should take a new approach, which will include green infrastructure. Green infrastructure projects are engineered solutions that mimic natural processes such as water retention and filtration. These might include rain gardens, retention basins, permeable pavement, and other means. The idea to draft a plan to address the issues through green infrastructure solutions was approved by the

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the project was eventually named Blueprint Columbus.

Still in the early stages of planning, Blueprint Columbus is an approach that will be designed to treat the cause of the issues (rain water entering the sanitary sewers) rather than the symptoms (sewage overflows and back-ups) while simultaneously investing in the City's neighborhoods and developing local employment opportunities. Instead of creating underground tunnels and pipelines, Blueprint Columbus would take such actions as reducing impervious areas, creating green spaces such as pocket parks, building rain gardens and swales, and investing in green roofs, porous concrete and other technologies. Blueprint will also focus on keeping rainwater out of sewers by fixing leaking pipes and directing runoff from roofs away from sewers. This may require the City to work in homeowners' front and back yards, and possibly in some basements.

Two pilot projects are underway in Clintonville and Barthman Parsons to evaluate some of the approaches under consideration in Blueprint Columbus. More information about these pilot projects is available on the Blueprint Columbus Overview PowerPoint slides (referenced on page 1 above).

The City convened the CAP to serve as liaisons with community members to ensure Blueprint Columbus is designed and implemented in a way that is responsive to community concerns, needs, and opportunities. As liaisons to community groups, the role of the CAP will be to provide the City with guidance on aspects of Blueprint Columbus the community will or will not accept and recommend potential trade-offs between a mixture of green and grey infrastructure solutions throughout the City.

CAP members had the following questions and comments about the Blueprint Columbus overview presentation (*Susan Ashbrook's responses are italicized*):

- How much will Blueprint Columbus cost? *The engineering work is about 8 million dollars. Construction cost is still unknown, but the City set aside 80 million dollars for initial construction work.*
- Where were the big tunnels supposed to go? *The Alum Creek Relief and the Olentangy Relief tunnels were on the west side and east side of Interstate 71, respectively. Each tunnel would channel water into a treatment facility and eventually discharge into the Scioto River.*
- A CAP member said the City would need to change residential housing codes to enable homeowners to use porous concrete for parking pads in driveways.
- What have community members in Clintonville said about the pilot project? *We've been in several backyards in Clintonville and the City has not received many comments or complaints from the residents.*
- Why is the project called Blueprint Columbus? *Kim Blackwell, CEO PMM Agency, responded that they wanted the project to reflect transitional change, so blueprint was selected to connote the evolving nature of the project.*
- Do you have a sense of what the final blueprint will look like? Will it be a listing of best practices with average cost and average benefit to then use while comparing puzzle pieces between grey and green infrastructure? *We anticipate using modeling programs to show how all the pieces come together.*

- Are you already planning specific options for different neighborhoods? *No. We want people to have choices about how to best get residential inflow and infiltration out of the sewer system. It will be a neighborhood-by-neighborhood decision.*
- Are you aware that Reeb-Hosack is undergoing significant renovation and many houses are being replaced. *Yes, we are in contact with the facilities manager who is overseeing the renovation and we are working with them to include green infrastructure in the redevelopment.*
- It seems as if you're primarily focused on runoff from residential homes rather impervious landcover? *We've spent years fixing up the public side of the infrastructure and the remaining problems are primarily from the privately owned pipes connecting into the public infrastructure, which we've never addressed. We will focus on the laterals, downspouts, and foundation drains since these are the largest contributing factors to the remaining issues. But if there is public infrastructure that is still a problem, we'll also address it.*
- Is Blueprint Columbus modeled off another city's efforts? *No. We have reviewed other cities' projects, but what we are proposing to do is something new and different.*
- Will the ultimate solution be a combination of green and grey infrastructure? *It is likely the final solution will be a mixture of both green and grey due to cost and the capacity we'll need to address anticipated rain events.*
- What is the approval process? *We will submit the plan in September 2015 and then negotiations with the Ohio EPA will begin.*
- Will submitting the Blueprint Columbus plan require City Council action? *No. Like in the past, we will brief everyone on the plan before submitting it to the Ohio EPA, but it does not require Council action to be approved.*
- Rate approval would require Council action, correct? *Yes, but we are not planning to spend more than what was already planned with the two tunnels.*

Maggie Lewis, a member of the facilitation team from the OSU John Glenn School of Public Affairs, summarized the feedback the facilitation team heard from the interviews conducted with the CAP members. The main points from her presentation are below.

Some of the CAP members have either experienced problems with the city's wet weather water management systems, or they know people who have experienced problems. Other members have not experienced any problems. CAP members have a wide range of knowledge and levels of understanding about green infrastructures. Many CAP members said they wanted to participate in a group that has the ability to influence or make decisions. Many CAP members also requested information to provide to their neighbors about the project, field trips to learn about different issues and solutions, and information about what has or hasn't worked in other cities.

Community Engagement Plan

Mo Wright, President and CEO at RAMA Consulting, presented the community engagement plan that will be reaching out to specific neighborhoods. Main points from his presentation are summarized below:

RAMA's community engagement plan has five key messages:

1. Columbus faces a big challenge and all residents are part of both the problem and the solution.
2. Doing nothing is not an option. Traditional approaches could work, but green infrastructure might provide a solution while also contributing to the development of local jobs and the beautification of the city.
3. Eventually, water quality of the local streams and rivers will improve because of this action.
4. The project will take time, potentially up to 30 years. But for the project to be successful, the public must accept and support the approach from the beginning.
5. The project is a blueprint—all residents of Columbus need to contribute to the drafting of the plan to make sure it works for everyone

RAMA used a clustering demographic sample approach to identify four representative samples of Columbus residents, whom they will reach out to over the next 24-month Blueprint Columbus planning process to seek diverse citizen input. The four selected areas include: Early Ditch, West 5th Avenue/Francisco-Teteridge, Northwest Alum Creek, and Livingston-James. The four areas provide a sample of the Columbus population with the following characteristics: sewer issues are known to be an issue in the area, one third of the existing housing stock is pre 1960s construction, some areas consist of owner occupied homes and others of rental units and businesses, a broad range of income and education levels, and racial diversity.

The community engagement process will start with high level, city-wide education and engagement forums. During this phase, RAMA will present information about Blueprint Columbus and answer initial questions at various community events and public forums, provide information at larger community events, use direct mail and handouts, conduct focus group sessions, develop website and video presentations, and canvass door-to-door. After the city-wide education and engagement phase, RAMA will begin to assess community perceptions and attitudes about Blueprint Columbus.

During the second phase of the community engagement, RAMA will reach out directly to homeowners in target areas and ask community members to provide their opinions about Blueprint Columbus and identify trade offs they would make between green and grey infrastructure projects. Ideally, this phase of the engagement will identify the aspects of Blueprint Columbus that are acceptable to implement and those that are not. This assessment will be done through surveys, phone polling, mail and online surveys, face-to-face interviews, interactive audience response and moderator sessions, and focus group discussions.

During the 24 months of community engagement, which is outlined in the Community Engagement Plan slide deck (referenced above on page 1), RAMA will seek guidance from the CAP to ensure the approaches they utilize will adequately capture the input from a broad spectrum of the Columbus community. CAP members should anticipate that RAMA will request their assistance in identifying how to best engage the CAP members' constituencies. CAP members had the following comments and questions about the Community Engagement Plan (*Mo Wright's responses are italicized*):

- Would you be willing to make presentations on Saturdays? *Yes, we will be glad to present on Saturdays.*
- How will RAMA measure whether or not community members' perception about the project changes over time? *RAMA will conduct a survey to gather baseline data in the*

beginning of the project. We will then return to survey the same individuals a few months after the education phase is completed to ask them more questions about the project.

- Will you be requesting area associations to endorse the project? *The engagement is more about asking the community how they want to see the project developed rather than asking for endorsement of a particular green or grey infrastructure development.*
- One member notified RAMA that the West 5th Avenue area is part of two civic associations, but neither of the civic associations are represented on the CAP. The member suggested adding a representative.
- Another member suggested RAMA coordinate outreach and engagement activities with the workshops her organization convenes to teach community members about rain barrels.
- A member said that nearly all the civic associations have an entrance area into the neighborhood that may serve as sites to model rain gardens and other green infrastructure installations.
- A member suggested RAMA identify methods to reach the elderly population, too.

Wrap Up

The facilitators reviewed the next steps (see the Action Items section of this document) and draft CAP Purpose and Objectives document (see link on page one). They reminded CAP participants that they can share all documents from the CAP with their constituencies. Future CAP meetings will include more in-depth descriptions of green infrastructures such as rain gardens and the group may take a field trip to visit some of these throughout the city. The next meeting will likely be in October.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 pm.

Meeting Attendees

Jennifer Adair, North Linden Area Commission

Lisa Boggs, South Central Hilltop

Michael Cadwell, Knowlton School of Architecture, OSU

Kristen Easterday, Columbus Chamber of Commerce

Jennifer Fish, Franklin Cty. Soil & Water Conservation District

Steve Gladman, The Affordable Housing Trust

Catherine Girves, University Area Enrichment Association/Yay Bikes!

Linda Henry, Reeb Hosak Planning Committee

Ed Lentz, Columbus Landmarks Foundation

Robert Patterson, Columbus Sewer and Water Advisory Board

Malcolm Porter, Building Industry Association

Elwood Rayford, Northeast Area Commission

Rachel Robinson, Southern Orchards Civic Association

Fran Ryan, Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging

David Rutter, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

Alice Waldhauer, Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed

Gloria Zebbs Anderson, Argyle Park Civic Association

Maria Mone, The John Glenn School of Public Affairs, OSU

Mo Wright, RAMA

Kristen Atha, Brown & Caldwell

Margie Hiermer, RAMA

Maggie Lewis, The John Glenn School of Public Affairs, OSU

Pat Field, Consensus Building Institute

Eric Roberts, Consensus Building Institute

Kim Blackwell, PMM