

**Blueprint Columbus  
Community Advisory Panel  
Summary Meeting #2**

Goodale Park Shelterhouse  
120 W. Goodale Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

October 29<sup>th</sup> 2013,  
6:00 - 8:00 PM

The members of the Community Advisory Panel (CAP), a group convened by the City of Columbus (the City) to advise the City on the development of the Blueprint Columbus approach, held their second meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at the Goodale Park Shelterhouse in Columbus, Ohio. The CAP is composed of representatives from Columbus neighborhoods, business, environmental interests, construction, homebuilding, and ratepayer groups and others. The CAP is scheduled to meet quarterly over the course of the Blueprint Columbus planning phase, which will conclude in September of 2015 when the draft Blueprint Columbus proposed plan is submitted to the Ohio EPA.

Meeting Objectives:

- Share highlights from green infrastructure tour
- Present an overview of the Columbus sewer system
- View the Blueprint Columbus video
- Present and discuss the process and criteria for prioritizing the neighborhood work schedules that will be included in the City's proposed plan
- Review target/representative neighborhoods and provide updates on outreach and engagement activities in these neighborhoods
- Solicit input and assistance regarding outreach and engagement activities

The meeting was convened and facilitated by a team from the Ohio State University John Glenn School of Public Affairs and by Columbus' Department of Public Utilities employees Susan Ashbrook and Dax Blake. A list of meeting attendees is included at the end of this summary. Meeting documents, including the presentation slides will be made available at: [www.blueprint.columbus.gov](http://www.blueprint.columbus.gov).

## **Welcome and Introductions**

The facilitation team welcomed participants and invited brief introductions from the CAP members and the project team.

## **Highlights from September 14<sup>th</sup> Green Infrastructure Tour**

Maria Mone of the facilitation team gave a brief overview of the September 14<sup>th</sup> green infrastructure tour. The purpose of the tour was to give the CAP members an opportunity to view various examples of green infrastructure across Columbus. Meeting participants were provided a copy of the tour route along with a summary of the questions and answers from during the tour. Mone also shared a brief slide show of photos from the various locations that were visited during the tour. CAP members who participated in the tour were invited to share comments.

## **Sewers 101: An Overview of the System**

### ***Why we are here: the problem***

Susan Ashbrook, Assistant Director for Sustainability, Columbus Department of Public Utilities explained that Blueprint Columbus is a potential new approach to an old problem -- sewers that overflow. The typical approach to dealing with overflows is to build bigger sewers. The City's current wet weather management plan, submitted in 2005, involves building two large underground tunnels to eliminate overflows. As an alternative Blueprint Columbus focuses on using green infrastructure to address overflows. Blueprint Columbus would take the investment and put it above ground where it could provide greater benefit to the community.

Columbus is under a consent order with the Ohio EPA to eliminate the sewer overflows. The city was sued by the Ohio EPA in 2002 and 2004 for violating the Clean Water Act. Sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) that discharge into storm sewers and then into rivers are prohibited under the Act. The city entered into negotiations with the Ohio EPA and agreed to eliminate SSOs overtime. Therefore, there is no do nothing option. The city has to do something, and all options are costly. The Blueprint Columbus approach and the 2005 plan involving tunnels are each estimated to cost \$2.5 billion over the next 30 years.

### ***The Sewer System***

Dax Blake, Administrator Division of Sewerage and Drainage, Columbus Department of Public Utilities provided an overview of the Columbus sewer system (See PowerPoint presentation on Sewers 101 – Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> CAP Meeting).

- Blake explained that the city is not flat. There is a 460 feet change in elevation across the city, and the sewer system takes advantage of this slop -- everything flows from the north to the south, taking advantage of gravity.

- The city has three different types of sewers – separate sanitary sewers, storm sewers, and combined sewers (separate and storm).
- Separate sanitary sewers are designed to take sewage from homes and businesses to treatment plants, and are still being built today. These are the more modern sewers.
- Storm sewers collect storm water when it rains and carry it to the rivers, and combined sewers are both separate sanitary and storm in a single pipe -- largely built before the 1930s and are no longer being built today.
- During heavy rainfall the combined sewers are designed to overflow into rivers. These overflows (CSOs) are permissible or allowed. The city keeps a close eye on these types of overflows, and is already addressing these. CSOs are not the focus of Blueprint Columbus.
- When rain water gets into the sanitary sewers through leaky joints, roofs, downspouts, cracks and breaks in aging pipes the excess water causes overflows to rivers and streams and basement back-ups. These types of overflows are the sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) prohibited under the Clean Water Act.
- When clean water gets into the sanitary sewers this is referred to as infiltration and inflow (I&I).
- Water in basements (WIB) occurs when the sewer system is overwhelmed. It is a problem that the city is addressing through project dry basement and longer term solutions such as Blueprint Columbus. The city is not required under the consent order to address these, but the city wants to address WIB.
- CAP member Ed Lentz recently wrote an article about the very early sewer system in Columbus, dating back to 1849. The article can be found at <http://www.thisweeknews.com/content/stories/2013/10/24/as-it-were.html>.

### ***Blueprint Columbus Video***

CAP members viewed the two-minute Blueprint Columbus video. The video can be accessed by visiting the Blueprint Columbus webpage at <http://publicutilities.columbus.gov/blueprint/>.

## **Process and Criteria for Prioritizing the City's Neighborhood Work Schedule**

### ***The City's 13 SSO Areas***

Susan Ashbrook clarified that the city's Blueprint Columbus Plan is due to Ohio EPA in September 2015, and the plan has to show that the SSOs will be eliminated. She explained that there are 13 areas citywide where SSOs are located. The 13 areas include: Clintonville; Kenny-Henderson; Linden/North East; James Livingston; Plum Ridge; Far South; Hilltop; Franklinton; Fifth by Northwest; Miller Kelton; Maize Morse; Driving Park; and Barthman Parsons.

These 13 areas will be divided into 1,000 acre areas, and the city anticipates that it will be able to address 1,000 acres per year. Clintonville is the first area required by the Ohio EPA to be addressed. The second area is a part of Linden. CAP members were given a map identifying the 13 SSO areas (See Map of 13 SSO areas).

### ***Proposed Criteria to Prioritize***

To prioritize the order in which the remaining SSO areas will be addressed, the city presented six proposed criteria (unranked):

- Sanitary sewer overflows
- Leaky sewers
- Public exposure
- Basement backups
- Structural operational problems
- Water quality

Susan Ashbrook asked CAP members to think about what criteria may be missing from this list. For example, should the city consider geographic diversity as a criterion? Should the city continue to focus on what is most cost effective to eliminate overflows?

CAP members suggested adding social parameters such as community acceptance, eagerness, and ease of implementation as a seventh criterion. They also suggested that the city keep the prioritization process simple, not overly complicated.

Social parameters were added to the list of proposed criteria. CAP members were then given 3 colored dots and asked to prioritize the 7 criteria by putting a colored dot by those they think are most important. All three dots could be placed on one criterion. The purpose of the exercise was to prioritize the weight of each criterion. What should the city focus on first? What should they be most concerned about?

Number and size of overflows received the greatest number of dots (11), and leaky sewers having a downstream impact received the least number (2).

- Number and size of overflows (11)
- Leaky sewers having a downstream impact (2)

- Public exposure to overflows (7)
- Water in basement event (7)
- Structural/Operations and Maintenance Concerns (3)
- Water quality (3)
- Social parameters (community acceptance, ability to implement cleanly and efficiently, neighborhood involvement) (6)

## Questions & Answers

*The following questions were posed by CAP members. Responses were provided by Susan Ashbrook and Dax Blake, Columbus Department of Public Utilities.*

**Question: If there is an overflow where does the water go if not into someone's basement?**  
*It goes into the river.*

**Question: Are there fines for Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs)?**  
*Yes, and the city has to track SSOs and there are different fines for different types of SSOs. Fines are higher in dry weather because those should not happen at all. Wet weather fines are on a fine schedule. To date, all fines have been diverted to an environmental project, the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Dam Removal. Future fines may go towards the removal of the Main St. Dam Removal.*

**Question: Are you able to pinpoint the greatest leakiness?**  
*Yes, we think we can quantify this. We didn't want to pick something we can't measure.*

**Question: Why is the east end area of the city excluded from the 13 areas?**  
*The 13 areas reflect areas where there are SSOs or sewer overflows. There are not any SSOs in that area. When your area floods, it is your storm sewer that isn't draining; your sanitary sewer is not overflowing. There may be basement back-ups in that area and CSOs, but there are no SSO's, which is what we are required to correct under the consent decree.*

**Question: Can you explain lining of pipes?**  
*Lining the laterals that run from homes to the streets is currently the homeowners' responsibility. If Blueprint Columbus takes this on and relines laterals, this would eliminate having to build a big tunnel and homeowners would have new laterals. There may be minor excavation needed to address laterals. This depends on the condition of the pipe. If a pipe is crushed, the city will have to do more excavation. If a pipe is in good condition, relining can occur with minor excavation.*

**Question: What is the cost to reline a lateral?**  
*It is roughly \$10,000 per home.*

**What about cost to the city?**  
*This is what the city is paying right now (\$10,000), but hopefully that price goes down as this process is done on more homes. Blueprint is not a cheap option. It's a green option.*

**Question: Do you see a connection with Project Dry Basement and the target areas you have identified?**

*Certainly, but this project is available to anyone in Columbus. Those 13 areas definitely see more WIB events.*

**Question: I have heard about other cities being sued for similar problems. Is this a trend that is arising?**

*Almost every large city is under some type of consent decree. But we are only dealing with Ohio EPA, while other cities have to also deal with US EPA. We are also ahead of the game compared to other cities and have already made progress. We've spent over \$1 billion already.*

**Question: Who provides the service of lining the piping?**

*It is contracted out. There are a couple local companies that focus on either main lines or laterals that essentially provide a new pipe for 30+ years.*

**Question: What is the cost of a city block?**

*We don't yet have a cost per block, but it has become cheaper because vendors are getting more efficient and the process is being streamlined.*

**Comment:** Columbia Gas did a nice job of communicating with the community in South Clintonville when they came door to door and this process could be modeled. Columbia Gas (and their contractors) is a good model in the work they are doing with regard to installing new meters. Their service has been getting so much better. They're contracting out the jobs, but controlling the communication.

**Question: Is the approach going to be Blueprint, or the current plan, or some combination of tunnel and green infrastructure?**

*The city does not know yet. It could be any of these. We will be seeking community input and looking at what is the most cost effective.*

**Question: What if the public does not want Blueprint Columbus?**

*The city wants an honest discussion with the public and will listen.*

**Question: Are there trends nationally with the Blueprint Columbus model?**

*Yes, Columbus is ahead of the curve because it is already addressing the CSOs. What is not as common is going after the SSOs with green infrastructure approach. This is more unique to what Columbus is looking at. If this is successful it will most likely be replicated. Many cities are looking into it. The program is unique for focusing on sanitary sewers. Milwaukee is considering a similar approach.*

**Question: Has the city considered a partnership with Keep Columbus Beautiful?**

*To date they have not, but the city has worked with them in the past and will look into a future partnership.*

**Question: Is the city in a position to be a leader with this type of approach?**

*Yes, the city is leading and wants to lead. This is why the Ohio EPA is allowing the city to develop an alternative approach.*

**Community Engagement: Review and Update of Neighborhood Activities**

Mo Wright, President of RAMA, reviewed the approach to neighborhood outreach and engagement. (See Power Point Presentation on Neighborhood Engagement Plan)

He also shared an example of the educational collateral that is being handed out in the neighborhoods to help inform citizens regarding Blueprint Columbus. CAP members can request copies of these information cards to share in their neighborhoods from RAMA.

The four target or representative neighborhoods that are the focus of Blueprint Columbus outreach and engagement activities include:

- Hilltop
- 5<sup>th</sup> by Northwest
- Linden
- Livingston-James

The goal of the first phase of neighborhood outreach and engagement is to distribute 25,000 education pieces to in the representative neighborhoods. RAMA is well over halfway to this goal. RAMA is currently focusing on owner-occupied residences and businesses.

RAMA has also just completed a round of focus groups with citizens in Clintonville. Results of these focus groups will be summarized and shared at the January CAP meeting.

Mo Wright asked CAP members to continue to forward to RAMA information about events in their neighborhoods where RAMA should have a presence. The Glenn School will continue to share the link in its communications with CAP members.

The second phase of the neighborhood outreach and engagement will begin in January 2014 and conclude in April 2014. This will be the in neighborhood phase where RAMA will be engaging with residents and providing in-person education at locations such as community centers and public libraries.

This phase will include four strategies:

- Road shows in high traffic areas – RAMA will bring message into the neighborhoods.
- Surveying to collect baseline data on how citizens are reacting to Blueprint Columbus.
- Presentations to groups and organizations where people already naturally gather.

- Educational forums – hour/ hour and one-half forums that will be used to educate and to gather input on how citizens feel about the approaches.

There will be a second piece of educational collateral developed during the second phase.

Mo Wright asked CAP members for their ideas on where RAMA should have a presence? Members shared the following suggestions:

- Main business strips (i.e., Sullivan Ave.)
- Shopping venues (i.e., North Market, Lucky's Supermarket)
- Broad and High Streets by the Statehouse
- Businesses such as Lowe's and Home Depot (due to the high number of homeowner customers)
- School events with parents (i.e., PTO meetings, science fairs)
- School classrooms
- Churches
- Clintonville Women's Club
- Nurseries (Oakland)
- Food co-ops
- The various civic associations
- Major public events (Arts festivals, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Italian Festival)

RAMA also asked for CAP volunteers to serve as ambassadors to assist with neighborhood outreach and engagement.

The following CAP members volunteered to assist:

- Lisa Boggs, South Central/Hilltop area
- Angela Mingo, Near Southside/Nationwide Children's area
- Robert Patterson, Southside
- Rob Wood, Clintonville & Linden
- Jennifer Fish, Franklin SWCD
- Alice Waldhauer, Clintonville & Linden
- Elwood Rayford, any neighborhood
- David Rutter, "where I can be most helpful"
- Ed Lentz, any neighborhood

## **Review of Communication Channels**

CAP members were reminded that they can access information regarding Blueprint Columbus by visiting the city's website at [www.blueprint.columbus.gov](http://www.blueprint.columbus.gov)., and can send questions or comments related to the project to [blueprint@columbus.gov](mailto:blueprint@columbus.gov).



## Next Steps

- CAP members interested in more in-depth discussion on the process and criteria for selecting what neighborhoods to address, or other Blueprint Columbus topics, are encouraged to contact Susan Ashbrook or Maria Mone of the project team. The city is open to convening subcommittees of the CAP as a forum for these discussions.
- Visit the city's website at [www.blueprint.columbus.gov](http://www.blueprint.columbus.gov) to view the Blueprint Columbus video and other meeting documents.
- Continue to provide RAMA with any ideas for neighborhood venues or events where they should outreach to and engage citizens regarding Blueprint Columbus.
- RAMA will be following up with those who volunteered to serve as ambassadors to assist with outreach and engagement activities in the neighborhoods.
- Future CAP meetings are scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup> and April 29<sup>th</sup> at the Goodale Shelterhouse 6-8 PM.

## Meeting Attendees

### CAP Members

Lisa Boggs, South Central Hilltop  
Michael Cadwell, Knowlton School of Architecture, OSU  
Jennifer Fish, Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Ed Lentz, Columbus Landmarks Foundation  
Angela Mingo, Nationwide Children's Hospital  
Robert Patterson, Col. Sewer and Water Advisory Board/Marion-Franklin Civic Assoc.  
Malcolm Porter, Building Industry Association  
Elwood Rayford, Northeast Area Commission  
Rachel Robinson, Southern Orchards Civic Association  
David Rutter, MORPC  
Alice Waldhauer, FLOW  
Laura Fay, FLOW  
Rob Wood, Clintonville Area Commission

### Blueprint Columbus, Project Team

Susan Ashbrook, Columbus Department of Public Utilities  
Dax Blake, Columbus Department of Public Utilities  
Anita Musser, Columbus Department of Public Utilities  
Michael Kasler, Columbus Department of Public Utilities  
Kathleen Smith, Arcadis  
Cosmo Bertino, Arcadis  
Maria Mone, John Glenn School of Public Affairs  
Cody Vermillion, John Glenn School of Public Affairs  
Maggie Lewis, John Glenn School of Public Affairs  
Mo Wright, RAMA  
Margie Hiermer, RAMA  
Jon Ross, RAMA  
Lesley Westerfelt, RAMA  
Kristen Atha, Brown and Caldwell