

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANEL**  
**MEETING 8**

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

July 22, 2015 | 6:00 PM – 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 Blueprint Columbus, held their eighth meeting July 22, 2015 at the Goodale Park shelter house in Columbus, Ohio. The CAP is composed of representatives from Columbus neighborhoods, businesses, environmental interests, construction and homebuilding firms, 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 plan is submitted to the Ohio EPA. More information is available at [www.blueprint.columbus.gov](http://www.blueprint.columbus.gov) or by emailing [blueprint@columbus.gov](mailto:blueprint@columbus.gov).

The next CAP meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 26, 2015.

**Action Items**

*Panel Members*

- Review revised letter of support and provide any additional feedback/revisions to the facilitation team.
- Indicate in writing to Maria Mone [mone.1@osu.edu](mailto:mone.1@osu.edu) by Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup> whether you or your organization will sign the letter, or submit a separate letter of support.

*Facilitation Team*

- Revise sample letter based on CAP member feedback and provide electronic copy to the CAP.
- Draft and distribute July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting summary.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Maria Mone, facilitator from the Ohio State University John Glenn College of Public Affairs, welcomed the group, invited brief introductions, and reviewed the meeting agenda. Meeting objectives included providing a recap of both the Blueprint and Gray plans and a discussion of a sample letter of support. To allow for more candid conversation regarding CAP support for the Blueprint plan, City representatives were not present.

**Review of the Blueprint and Gray Plans**

Maria provided a brief overview of the Blueprint and Gray plans. Key points are summarized below.

The Blueprint and Gray plans both achieve the requirements outlined in the consent order, but do so in different ways. The Gray plan addresses the symptoms of the problem and the Blueprint plan addresses the cause of the problem.

**Blueprint** - The Blueprint plan is designed to address the cause of the problem – excess water entering the sewer system – by eliminating the opportunities for excess water to enter the system. This plan includes a combination of four strategies —(1) home sewer lateral lining, (2) roof water redirection, (3) sump pumps, and (4) green infrastructure – as well as some gray infrastructure (new pipes or tunnels). The Blueprint plan’s gray infrastructure includes the construction of the Lower Olentangy Tunnels (LOT) 1 and 2 and some new infrastructure in neighborhoods.

**Gray/2015 WWMP** - The Gray plan addresses the symptoms of the problem – basement backups and sanitary sewer overflows -- by managing the excess water entering the system. The Gray plan is an updated 2005 Wet Weather Management Plan (WWMP) consisting of only gray infrastructure. It would require construction of LOT 1, LOT 2, LOT 3, the Alum Creek Relief Tunnel (ART), and gray infrastructure in neighborhoods. The Gray plan or 2015 WWMP requires less new infrastructure than estimated in the 2005 WWMP -- 14 miles of tunnel as compared to 28 miles of tunnel estimated in the 2005 WWMP.

**Costs** - The costs of the Gray and Blueprint plans to meet the consent order requirements are similar. The Gray plan would cost \$1.61 billion and the Blueprint plan would cost \$1.77 billion. Both costs are lower than the estimated cost of the 2005 WWMP, \$2.47 billion.

The City must consider the total capital costs of the two approaches, and rates will be based on the total capital cost. The total capital cost includes the repair and replacement of existing infrastructure. The total capital costs of the Blueprint plan and the Gray plan are \$3.64 billion and \$3.63 billion, respectively. The City is scheduled to present its rate and affordability analysis of the plans to the Water and Sewer Advisory Board August 19, 2015 and to the CAP August 26, 2015. In response to a CAP member question, Maria clarified that the City will present the rate and affordability figures for both the Blueprint and Gray plans in its September 2015 report to the Ohio EPA.

**Benefits of Blueprint** - The City’s preferred plan, the Blueprint plan, provides several benefits. In addition to addressing the cause of the problem rather than just the symptoms, the Blueprint plan would improve water quality by removing 342 tons of sediment from local rivers and streams annually, once construction is complete. It is also more effective than the Gray plan at resolving water in basement events. Regarding economic impact, the City anticipates that the Blueprint plan would benefit the local economy by funding local companies to complete the required work and by relying more heavily on local products and services. The Blueprint plan also provides an opportunity to create green infrastructure maintenance jobs and jobs needed for smaller construction projects. Neighborhood impacts under the Blueprint plan include renewed infrastructure (lateral and sewer linings) and green amenities, for example rain gardens and porous pavement sidewalks.

Maria briefly reviewed a comparison of the two plans (see Table 1 below) and a summary of community engagement efforts (see Table 2).

**Table 1:** Comparison of Blueprint and Gray/2015 WWMP

	<b>Blueprint</b>	<b>Gray / 2015 WWMP</b>
<b>The Problem</b>	Addresses the cause: too much water entering the system	Addresses the symptoms: sewer overflows and basement backups
<b>Water Quality</b>	Significant improvement in storm water, removing 342 tons of sediment	No significant improvement in storm water
<b>Water in Basement (WIB)</b>	More effective at resolving WIB	Less effective at resolving WIB
<b>Economic Impact</b>	Keeps more money local	Greater need for out-of-town labor, goods, and equipment
<b>Job Creation</b>	Greater opportunity for job creation	Less opportunity for job creation
<b>Neighborhood Impact</b>	Improved property values, renewed infrastructure, and green amenities	Little impact on individual properties and neighborhoods, no green amenities
<b>Cost</b>	\$3.64 Billion	\$3.63 Billion

**Table 2:** Overview of Community Awareness and Education Efforts

<b>Collateral and Residential Canvassing: 44,966</b>		
Baseline Educational Materials (passive canvassing): 28,269	Reinforcing Educational Materials (active canvassing): 9,965	General ongoing literature distribution (includes Clintonville): 6,732
<b>“Roadshows” and Events: 85</b>		
Four Target Blueprint Areas (Libraries, Community Centers, Civic Groups, etc.): 40	City-wide Events (Fairs and neighborhood festivals, community events, etc.): 45	
<b>Business and Civic Outreach</b>		
Active canvassing to businesses in 4 target areas: 291	Civic Associations, Area Commissions, and Faith-based: 18	
<b>Clintonville Engagement</b>		
Door-to-door canvassing with reinforcement education materials: 3,000 homes	Invites to 3 educational open houses and 6 neighborhood meetings	

**Group Discussion**

Comments made during group discussion are summarized below.

**Plan Implementation and predictability:** As far as implementation, it seems that the Gray plan is more predictable since this is the typical approach that has been done before and the Blueprint plan is more unique to each neighborhood. However, a participant noted that the OARS tunnel currently under construction is over budget, so the predictability of cost for a Gray plan may not be so solid.

**Community Outreach, Engagement, and Support:** CAP members acknowledged the significant public engagement effort made to date. Some members commented that many community members do not see the immediacy of the plan because they are not impacted during storm events, or because they have yet to connect the benefits to the work that must be done. Additionally, some people are not that concerned because the work will not start in their neighborhood for several years. Members noted that ongoing education will be required.

The group discussed the need for additional, targeted, outreach and education about the Blueprint plan. A member suggested the use of tactical urbanism outreach and education strategies instead of more meetings. Tactical urbanism strategies are, as discussed by the group, low cost, experiential education opportunities completed in the neighborhoods where Blueprint would be implemented to help residents visualize and understand the approach. An example might be to lay down the contours of a rain garden in a few locations so people can walk by and see what it might look like in the neighborhood. This would teach people about the scale of the rain gardens, the locations where they might be constructed, and provide an opportunity to explain its benefits. One member recalled how the City Council conducted targeted outreach to residents in Northland to successfully gain support for a capital improvement ordinance to address flooding issues.

A member, who indicated support for the Blueprint plan, commented on the need to capitalize on rain events as education opportunities to build support for the plan. For example, teams would hit the streets after a large rain event while water is still standing in the street to educate passersby about Blueprint and how it would address the standing water or other storm water related issues that people see after the storm event. Mo Wright, RAMA Consulting, added that experiential opportunities, such as the roadshows events that were completed, helped to build awareness and understanding by enabling people to interact with a model home to see how the Blueprint plan works. The group also noted that the City must take into account the fact that different neighborhoods have different relationships, whether good or bad, with the City that may influence their support for the project.

Members briefly commented on additional examples of successful community engagement. A member said that residents in South Central Hilltop were satisfied with the outreach process Columbia Gas used to install new gas lines. Another member noted that Columbia Gas was able to do directional boring to lessen above ground disturbance, which may not be possible with the Blueprint plan.

**Water quality benefits:**

Noting this is a key issue for her organization, a member asked whether the volume of water being sent to the waterways under the Blueprint plan would negatively impact the streams and rivers, and whether or not Blueprint has a way to control water from surging into the waterways? It was noted that the description of the roof redirect on one of the City's brochures makes it sound as if Blueprint does not control water volume impacts.

**Questions**

The group identified several questions for the City:

- Will the rate structure that will be presented to the CAP in August be part of the report submitted to the Ohio EPA?
- Are the cost figures for the Gray plan more solid or predictable than the Blueprint plan?
- Is there any impact on storm water quality with the Gray plan?
- Are there volume controls for storm water under Blueprint? Does it reduce surges in water entering the watershed system?
- Does the total capital cost include maintenance costs? If maintenance is not included, what is the comparison between Blueprint and Gray?
- Will there be any ongoing community education under Blueprint?
- Did the City consider smaller WWTF in different neighborhoods?
- What is the timeline for the project and how is prioritization happening?
- Can we receive the exact parameters of what is considered Near East and South to identify where Nationwide Hospital falls?

*The City's responses are attached at the end of this summary.*

### **CAP Support for the Blueprint Plan and Timeline of Next Steps**

During the June 2015 meeting, CAP members generally indicated they would be willing to provide letters of support for the Blueprint plan to both the Mayor of Columbus and to Columbus City Council. To aid this process a sample letter of support was drafted by the facilitation team and shared with the CAP.

The facilitation team described the process moving forward: The CAP will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the sample letter tonight. An electronic version of the sample letter will be provided to CAP members. The City will present information on affordability and rate structures to the CAP August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015. After the August 26 CAP meeting, CAP members will have until Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup> to indicate support. If they support the Blueprint plan, their name and organization will be included on the letter of support to the Mayor and to City Council. If an organization would prefer to submit a separate letter of support they should feel free to do this.

CAP members reviewed the sample letter of support drafted by the facilitation team and provided the following suggestions and comments:

- Area commission representatives noted that their commissions do not meet in August so a decision on signature will not happen until September.
- Separate the phrase 'eliminating the source of sanitary sewer overflows while addressing the specific needs of each neighborhood' into two clauses, '...eliminating the source of sanitary sewer overflows; addressing the unique needs of each neighborhood...'
- Include as a benefit that the Blueprint plan invests in repair and replacement of infrastructure.
- Add language emphasizing that Blueprint will "address the cause of the problem, not the symptoms of the problem."
- Add language indicating that the Blueprint Plan is a significant improvement over a traditional/conventional, gray solution.
- Be sure to collect email or other written record of support so there is clarity on who indicated support on behalf of which group or individual.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:25 pm.

- **Will the rate structure that will be presented to the CAP in August be part of the report submitted to the Ohio EPA?**
  - *Yes. The report to Ohio EPA will include an affordability analysis that includes predictions on future rate increases based on the various schedules.*
  
- **Are the cost figures for the Gray plan more solid or predictable than the Blueprint plan?**
  - *The gray costs are more straightforward to calculate, as the City is very familiar with how to build sewers, although, significant cost overruns are possible, especially with large tunnels (as evidenced by our current experience with OARS). The blue costs were harder to calculate simply because much of the work has not been done by the City before, or not at this scale. However, we have contacted a number of other cities that are doing similar work and checked with local companies to determine unit prices. We are comfortable with the estimates we have.*
  
- **There are other things that impact water quality other than suspended solids/sediment. Is there any impact on stormwater quality with the Gray plan?**
  - *Suspended solids was chosen as the metric for measuring the Blueprint alternative in Clintonville because it is a pollutant of concern in the TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load: maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards) for the Olentangy. The green infrastructure will also remove other pollutants, such as trash, oil and grease, etc. The gray plan does not impact stormwater directly. It improves water quality by eliminating sewer overflows (as does the Blueprint alternative.)*
  
- **Are there volume controls for stormwater under Blueprint? Does it reduce surges in water entering the watershed system?**
  - *Yes, the green infrastructure component of Blueprint includes both quantity and quality control. The minimum standard for Blueprint green infrastructure is “do-no-harm” which is designed to make sure that flooding and run-off rates are no worse than they are now.*
  
- **Does the total capital cost include maintenance costs?**
  - *No, the capital costs do not include O&M (Operations and Maintenance). O&M is estimated to be significantly more with Blueprint, as rain gardens are relatively high maintenance features, compared to tunnels. We estimate that over 20 years, O&M for gray will be over \$1 million, while O&M for Blueprint will be over \$60 million. While this is a large difference between the plans, it is a small part of the overall price tag, and will not impact rates significantly. The biggest difference is that the Blueprint O&M is assumed to be paid for by stormwater fees, not sewer fees, so Blueprint increases that charge more. However, it is a small part of the overall bill, and the rate increases between the two plans are very similar.*
  
- **Will there be any ongoing community education under Blueprint?**
  - *Yes, there will be annual outreach in the communities we are working in.*
  
- **Did the City consider smaller WWTF in different neighborhoods?**
  - *The original WWMP had looked at a local treatment option in the area of Whetstone Park. However, the City has determined that a small treatment option is not feasible because of the space it would require, and the issues with finding an acceptable location. More fundamentally, the City’s state of the art treatment plants are a better option, and Blueprint will allow those treatment plants to be more fully utilized by eliminating sewer overflows.*

- **What is the timeline for the project and how is prioritization happening?**
  - *Timeline is contingent on Ohio EPA approval. If we get approval in time, we are prepared to start construction in Clintonville in the summer of 2016. Currently, we are planning for construction to take 4 years, starting with green infrastructure, then lateral linings, and finishing with roof redirect (sump pumps would be available for the whole 4 years.) The schedule would then include starting in the next area in 2018, again for 4 years. The prioritization has not changed. The order for the first five is:*
    - *Clintonville 1 (there are three Clintonville areas),*
    - *North Linden 1 (there are 3 Linden areas),*
    - *Hilltop 1 (there are 4 Hilltop areas) and Miller Kelton,*
    - *Fifth by Northwest, West Franklinton and Hilltop 4, and*
    - *Clintonville 3.*
  
- **Where does Nationwide Hospital fall?**
  - *Nationwide Children's Hospital is no longer in a Blueprint area. It was in the area known as Barthman-Parsons, but that area has been shrunk down into a smaller area known as the Near South. This was based on new modeling results. The Miller Kelton area is just east of the hospital.*