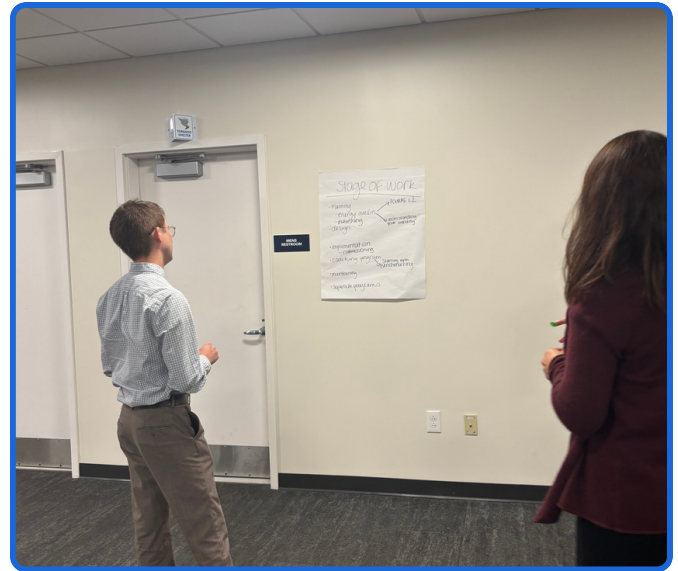


HEALTHY BUILDINGS ADVISORY GROUP: MEETING 4

Meeting Summary + Emerging Themes October 30, 2025



INTRODUCTION

On October 30, 2025, the City of Columbus convened stakeholders for the fourth of five feedback sessions to help inform the Building Performance Standard (BPS) policy in development. Over the course of five advisory group meetings, this group of stakeholders will provide insight into how a BPS would affect the sectors and industries they represent, as well as provide suggestions as the City crafts a BPS that best serves Columbus' building owners, meets the moment of growing energy demand in Central Ohio, and preserves affordability and prosperity for residents and businesses.

The meeting began with an overview of the content covered in the previous Advisory Group meeting, in which Dr. Amanda Webb shared data modeling for various BPS policy scenarios and how they would impact Columbus's building stock.

Key Findings from Meeting 3

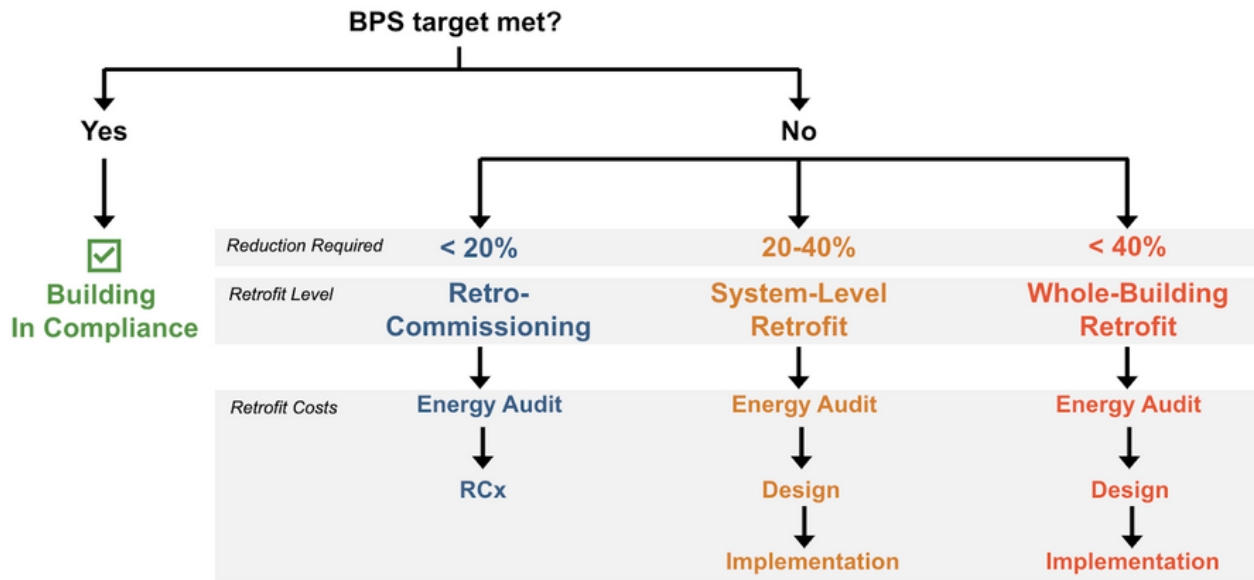
- A BPS with a scope of 50kft² and above and a target set at the 50th percentile EUI would garner 8% energy use savings across the entire Columbus building stock.
- With this data example, 488 buildings would be subject to improvement under the BPS.

Many examples of different scope, metrics, targets, and timeframes were shared in the data deep dive during meeting 3. In meeting four, the Advisory Group explored what the building retrofit process entailed, what current financial support existed for building owners to do these retrofits, and thought about what additional funding sources would best support building owners.

BUILDING RETROFIT PROCESS

Dr. Webb began by explaining the three “buckets” used to understand the scale of improvements needed for building retrofits:

- Retro-Commissioning: <20% EUI Reduction Required
- System-Level Retrofit: 20–40% EUI Reduction Required
- Whole-Building Retrofit: >40% EUI Reduction Required



¹Modeled after the Washington DC Department of General Services, [Energy Management Plan](#), June 2022

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For all of these retrofit buckets, the first step in undergoing a building upgrade is conducting an energy audit. For buildings that fall into the retro-commissioning category, the likely next step is operational upgrades, such as updated control systems and training for facilities managers. The latter two buckets, system-level and whole-building retrofits, will similarly begin with an energy audit. However, since more in-depth retrofits will likely need to take place, the second step would fall under “design,” in which building owners would work with engineers and/or architects to identify the upgrades needed and how to integrate these into the building. The final stage for these two categories would be implementation – the purchasing and physical installation of new equipment, such as HVAC systems, or physical labor to repair aspects of the building.

There was discussion amongst advisory group members who have been through the retrofit process themselves. Some of the insights shared were:

- A building retrofit is very rarely a “one and done” process. Often, lower-hanging fruit is tackled first, while saving up for larger upgrades / aligning these investments with capital cycles.
- Benchmarking a building for a year or so before undertaking an energy audit can be helpful – this identifies a baseline.
- Complicated buildings often result in complicated retrofit processes.
- Understanding and helping navigate the financial landscape for EE improvements can be the greatest value of a project manager. PM’s familiar with sustainable design practices but not financing will need assistance beyond building recommendations.

- Efficiency 'champions' that continue to advocate for energy efficiency improvements within organizations are rare; however can be helpful in seeing energy efficiency conservation measures to completion as capital resources can be scarce and maintenance is always the priority.

CURRENT FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

After discussing what the retrofit process entailed, the Advisory Group then moved into discussing the current landscape of financial incentives and funding to support these upgrades. Nat Ziegler of Power a Clean Future Ohio shared research they have done that explores financing options for building owners.

Funding streams for energy efficiency upgrades at the federal level are currently in flux, so their research focused mainly on state and local opportunities. Some highlights include:

State funding

- Ohio Department of Development:
 - Energy Efficiency Program & Energy Loan Fund
 - Advanced Energy Fund
- Ohio Air Quality Development Authority:
 - Clean Air Improvement Program (CAIP), financing for larger businesses, including multi-family housing
 - Clean Air Resource Center (CARC), financing for small businesses

Local funding

- Commercial Tax Abatement, offers tax incentives to spur revitalization of existing housing stock and support new development
- Property Assessed Clean Energy Financing (PACE), Finances energy-related upgrades to commercial and multi-family properties
- Columbus Region Greenfund, uses concessionary financing, meaning favorable terms for the borrower and subordination to primary debt

Representatives from the Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority further discussed the CPACE program. They shared that they provide financing for projects between \$200,000 and \$10 million, which requires proven energy use reduction demonstrated by an ASHARE II Audit. Representatives from the Columbus Region Greenfund also discussed their financing approach, which often serves as a bridge loan for projects that need to fill a financing gap while waiting for a tax credit, grant, or some other established funding source.

Nearly all of these funding sources discussed fund implementation of energy efficiency retrofits – that is, the purchase and installation of physical upgrades. Cassie Johnson shared a case study on a municipal building that underwent a retrofit process. The cost of the project was \$1.5 million, with a 15% energy savings cost and a 9-year ROI.

In the discussion, Advisory Group members mentioned ODOD's Energy Efficiency Program as a method to receive grant funding to offset the cost of ASHRAE II energy audits. Other comments from the group highlighted that applying for and receiving funding can be burdensome, and many funds require an ASHARE II audit, which can be cost-prohibitive to obtain.

These grant programs are competitive, and historically do not have enough funds for all applicants.

CURRENT GAPS AND BARRIERS

Advisory Group members then engaged in small group discussions to identify barriers and gaps in the current funding landscape. They then shared their key takeaways with the full group, including:

- Long ROIs can be unattractive to some building owners
- Lack of understanding around all of the steps in the retrofit process and the funding landscape. Support in accessing and securing funding is needed.
- Complexity of creating capital stacks, and competitive programs at every level can make this more challenging.
- PACE financing requires lender consent, so if a building owner has a mortgage, that lender must approve the upgrades and financing, which can be a barrier.
- Project management for the life of a retrofit and funding access is a need. Lack of capacity and understanding is a barrier.

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER CITIES

Then, Nat shared an overview of the incentives other jurisdictions have in place to support their BPSs. These range from offering information (St. Louis, MO) to direct public subsidies (Washington State). The financial incentives are presented in a variety of formats, such as grants, tax credits, and rebates.

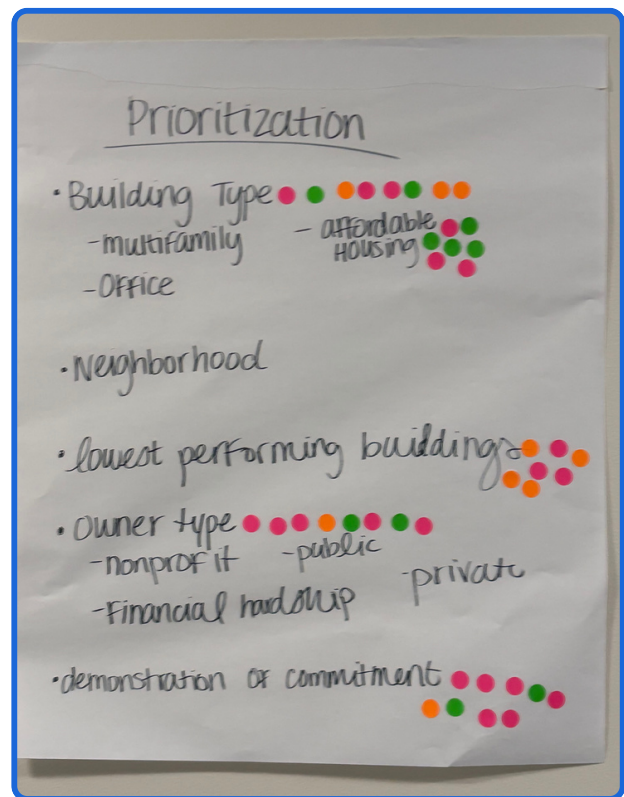
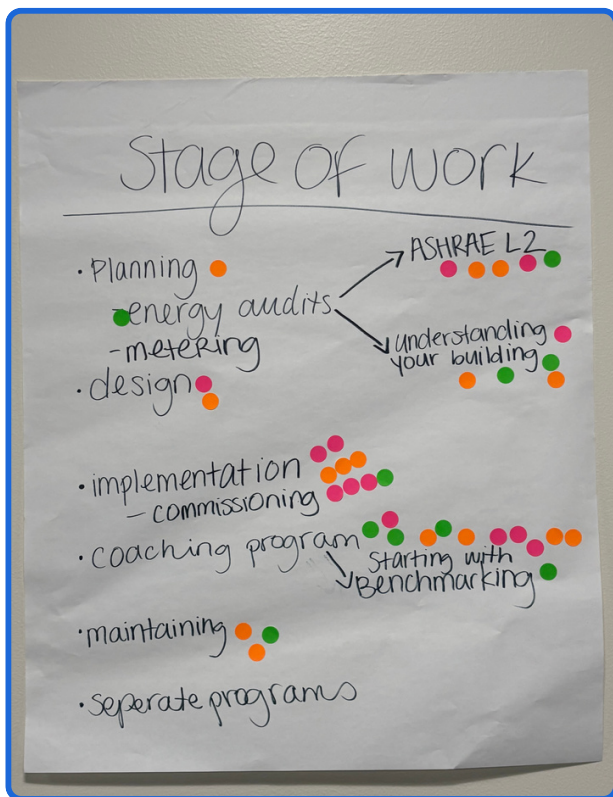
This exploration of how other cities have structured financial incentives to support BPS implementation wrapped up the final presentation of the meeting. After learning about the different steps of the retrofit process (planning, implementation, and design), the Advisory Group discussed funding sources and identified the gaps and barriers that exist, and what other jurisdictions are providing to building owners. With all of these topics covered, the final portion of the meeting was an interactive workshop.

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

The final section of the meeting involved an activity in which Advisory Group members were asked:

- What stage of work should the City prioritize and direct funding to?
- What format should funding be in?
- Where should funding be prioritized?

Group members suggested answers to these three questions, which were written on flipchart papers, and placed around the room. Then, each group member was given two sticker dots per page to place by the answers that most resonated with them.

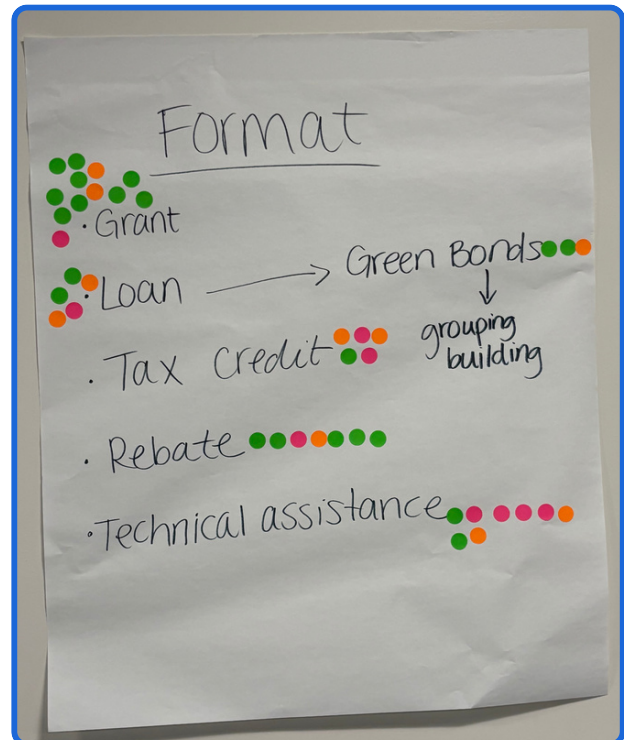


LOOKING AHEAD

The final Advisory Group meeting will focus on compliance, alternative compliance pathways, and next steps regarding engaging in policy design.

ATTENDING ORGANIZATIONS

Columbia Gas
 AEP Ohio
 Columbus Water and Power
 Clean Energy Ventures
 Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio
 IMPACT Community Advocates
 IMPACT Community Action
 Columbus Chamber of Commerce
 Ohio Environmental Council
 Smart Columbus
 Ohio State University Sustainability Institute
 Ohio Hospital Association
 American Institute of Architects Columbus Chapter
 NAIOP
 Columbus Region Green Fund
 Franklin County Finance Authority
 Columbus City Council
 University of Cincinnati
 Power a Clean Future Ohio



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