



Michael B. Coleman, Mayor

GreenSpot Program One Year Strong

Columbus residents, businesses and community groups have embraced the GreenSpot program, developed to inspire, educate and recognize those in our community who are taking steps to protect the environment.

Launched by Mayor Michael B. Coleman in July 2008, the Web-based program has more than 1,200 members committed to making an impact on the health and future of Columbus. Other communities are looking to GreenSpot as a guide for reaching out to their residents.

Residences, businesses, non-profit organizations, schools and community groups can obtain GreenSpot recognition by committing to environmentally-friendly choices in the areas of energy conservation, water conservation and waste reduction.

GreenSpot offers information and practical steps concerned citizens can take to make a difference and gives people an opportunity to be recognized for their commitment to protect the environment. It provides a framework for those who are just beginning and also those who want to expand on their commitment.

The GreenSpot Website is user-friendly and visitors will learn that by changing some simple everyday routine behaviors, businesses and households can have an impact on driving positive environmental change in our community. Many businesses sign on to set an example of ways employees, customers and vendors can implement similar changes in their homes or businesses.

Environmental Benefits

GreenSpot not only educates residents and provides a competitive advantage to businesses, it also provides real environmental benefits to Columbus. Some practical and easy to implement commitments suggested by the program include:



- Driving 10 fewer miles per week per household saves approximately 400 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per year.
- Turning down a household's thermostat by 1 degree in winter saves approximately 350 pounds of CO₂ per year.
- Replacing five 75-watt incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights will reduce CO₂ emissions by approximately 600 pounds per year.

Residential Impact

The 850 households in central Ohio who have committed to these three steps could result in a reduction of nearly 400 tons of CO₂ annually.

Economic Benefits

In May, Mayor Coleman presented a GreenSpotLight award to three businesses that stood out as driving positive environmental change in our community: Homeport (small business category), Whole Foods Market – Dublin (medium business category) and Battelle Memorial Institute (large business category). Examples of savings derived from implementing green practices by these businesses include:

- Reusing furniture saved Battelle over \$60,000 in 2008, and contracting to have documents shredded and recycled kept 54.45 tons of waste from going to the landfill last year. In total, Battelle saved over \$241,000 through waste reduction.
- For fiscal year 2008, Whole Foods Market diverted 85.1% of their waste stream – over 2.5 million pounds of waste – from the landfill; recycling efforts brought \$20,000 in revenue and saved an additional \$23,000 in fees.
- Homeport goes to great lengths to produce housing that is affordable and sustainable and recognizes that the residents are the ones who can make the biggest difference. Homeport has utilized GreenSpot to introduce a comprehensive initiative to residents.

For additional information on Columbus GreenSpot visit www.columbusgreenspot.org.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sewer Overflows

What are CSOs and SSOs?

Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are discharges of wastewater and stormwater from the combined sewer system that serves downtown and surrounding areas. Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) are discharges of wastewater from the sanitary sewer system. Sewer overflows can occur at various discharge points along local waterways when volume temporarily exceeds capacity, typically during wet weather.

Why do overflows exist?

Many years ago, prior to the existence of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Clean Water Act, it was common for such relief points in a sewer system to exist in order to prevent backups into homes during major rain events.

Are overflows an issue in other cities?

Yes; it is the biggest challenge facing most sewer districts today.

What is the City of Columbus doing about overflows?

The Department of Public Utilities developed a Wet Weather Management Plan in 2005, identifying an estimated \$2.5 billion in sewer capital improvements over 40 years. Sewer improvement projects are underway.

How will these projects affect rates?

Sanitary sewer rates are expected to continue to rise in order to fund the improvements. An affordability analysis was conducted to ascertain the community's ability to finance the projects. Revenue needs are reviewed annually.

How are sewer improvements financed?

Funding is provided through customer sewer rate revenue and by low-interest loan programs such as the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund through the Ohio EPA.

How will central Ohio residents benefit?

Anything that improves our environment benefits our community. Solving the capacity issues will also reduce sewer backups into basements.

Where are the overflow points located?

Discharge locations are along the Olentangy River from Worthington to First Avenue, on the Scioto River from around Neil Avenue to S.R. 104, and on Alum Creek from Main Street to I-70. The locations are marked with signage.



How many discharge locations are in Columbus?

Columbus has 33 SSO, 18 CSO and two SSO/CSO discharge points that can potentially overflow. Additional locations in the Columbus area are owned by other municipalities, two of which are maintained by Columbus under contract.

How often do they overflow?

The most active one is on the Scioto River near Whittier Street, which receives partial treatment. The activity at this CSO location will be significantly reduced through improvements to be completed by 2014. Frequency and volume depend on the amount of rainfall received. More information is available at: www.gis.columbus.gov/ssocso.

If I see an overflow sign, is it safe to swim near it?

No. First, be aware that swimming in Columbus waterways is prohibited by city code and is considered a drowning risk in some locations due to lowhead dams and utility crossings. Avoid water contact near a marked overflow location, especially following periods of heavy rain. For more information on possible health and environmental effects, please visit the Web address above.

Can residents help prevent overflows?

Yes. Please check your downspouts and foundation drains to make sure they are *not* connected to the sanitary sewer. These outdated connections, common in homes built before 1963, add excess water to the system during rain events. For a brochure on how to disconnect downspouts, please call 645-2926. Please dispose of grease properly to avoid blockages in city and home sewers, which can cause overflows and basement backups. Place grease in the trash in a sealed container such as a coffee can; do not pour down the drain. Make needed repairs on your home sewer line.

Should residents report overflows and backups?

Yes. Please report sewer overflows or basement backups in Columbus immediately to the 24-hour Sewer Maintenance Operations Center by calling 311, 645-3111 or 645-7102. Reporting a basement backup is necessary to determine eligibility for the Project Dry Basement backflow prevention program for single and two-family homes in Columbus.

For more information, please call 311, 645-3111 or visit www.utilities.columbus.gov.