



Michael B. Coleman, Mayor

## City of Columbus Launches GreenSpot Program

Families and businesses everywhere are beginning to see the value of getting green. Everyone benefits! Getting green means we are protecting our vital resources -- air, water and soil -- and we are saving money.

**Are you looking for ideas, support or resources to help your business, community group or your home get green?** The City of Columbus is pleased to announce a brand new program, GreenSpot, developed to inspire, educate and recognize those in our community who are taking steps to get green.

**What is GreenSpot?** Mayor Michael B. Coleman created the GreenSpot program as part of the Get Green Columbus initiative. It is an innovative approach to learning what we can do each day to protect the environment. And it's a way for Columbus residents, businesses and community groups to be recognized for the work they are doing to promote a sustainable future. Sustainability simply means that we are using our resources in a responsible way that will conserve and protect them for future generations.

**Who is eligible?** Any resident, business or community group within the city of Columbus is eligible.

**How can my family participate?** Family members can go to [www.columbusgreenspot.org](http://www.columbusgreenspot.org) and take a short quiz to find out just how green they already are. Learn some fun facts and helpful tips along the way. Then take the pledge to conserve energy and water, reduce waste and recycle. It's that simple. Resources are available to help you meet your goals, including a checklist to track your family's progress and plan your next step toward getting green.

**How can my business participate?** Whether your business is a restaurant or grocery, industrial or commercial, office or retail, the GreenSpot program can support you as you get green. Begin by visiting

[www.columbusgreenspot.org](http://www.columbusgreenspot.org) and reviewing the application to determine which commitments your business is willing to make. There are four categories: waste reduction and recycling, energy conservation, water conservation and stormwater protection. Once you have chosen the commitments your business will make, fill out the on-line form, sign the certification and submit your application.

**How can my community group participate?** Is your scout troop, volunteer organization, neighborhood association or other community group giving time and talent to make Columbus a greener city? Go to [www.columbusgreenspot.org](http://www.columbusgreenspot.org) to learn the simple steps you can take to get recognition for your work.

**How do we get recognized?** Once eligibility has been confirmed, you will receive a window decal for your home or business. The decal has the GreenSpot logo on it, letting others know that you are making a substantial contribution to our community through your efforts to get green.

**What are the benefits of becoming a GreenSpot?** You will know you are making an important contribution to our community. Your family, business or community group will be recognized as a leader and a protector of the environment. You will save money as you conserve natural resources and reduce your carbon footprint. GreenSpot businesses are listed on the web site and can use the logo in their advertising.

**Where do I go for more information?** Whether you are a resident, business owner, or a member of a community group, you can find all the information required for becoming a GreenSpot at [www.columbusgreenspot.org](http://www.columbusgreenspot.org). You can also call 311 (or 645-3111) and the customer service representatives will direct your call to staff who can answer all your questions.



## 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, identifying an estimated \$2.5 billion in sewer capital improvements over the next 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 35 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 2010. Frequency and volume depend on the amount of rainfall received. More information is available at: [www.gis.columbus.gov/ssocso](http://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 645-2123. 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](http://www.utilities.columbus.gov).