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ORD 1724-2008 Proponent Testimony to Columbus City Council
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The Sierra Club appreciates your consideration for ORD 1724-2008, which allows the Department of Public Utilities to analyze and implement water quality best management practices. While sewer infrastructure improvements are necessary to protect public health and the environment, we encourage the City to use proactive measures that control stormwater runoff at the source and reduce sewer overflows triggered by wet weather.

In the U.S., the biggest source of water pollution is runoff. When it rains, stormwater travels quickly across our urban landscape and carries pollution to our rivers and streams, including trash, lawn chemicals, fertilizers, bacteria, and automobile fluids. To make matters worse, our combined sewers are not equipped to handle wet weather, so they often overflow into local waterways and release a nasty brew of raw sewage and stormwater pollution.

Alternative strategies must be considered to enhance conventional pipe and tunnel projects. Green infrastructure controls both water quantity and quality on site, increasing the landscape's ability to capture and filter stormwater before it pollutes our waterways. Examples of green infrastructure strategies include rain gardens, rain barrels, green roofs, pervious pavement and bioswales. All of these innovative techniques, and more, have been used in cities around the country to reduce sewer overflows and protect drinking water.

There is solid justification for the city to move forward with analysis to define best management practices and identify incentives to encourage their application on both public and private property. The contractors currently under consideration have a credible background in the analysis and implementation of green infrastructure. I offer a few suggestions to strengthen the proposals:

- Keep stakeholders informed and include stakeholder input during draft report review. An advisory committee could benefit this process.
- Regarding focus groups convened by Strand Associates, include representation from the Department of Transportation in the group representing "other governmental units". The impact of roads and highways must be addressed while we consider and develop green best management practices.

Finally, we encourage the City to use final reports to direct a long term, comprehensive approach for sustainable development in Columbus. We recommend an ordinance modeled after New York City to codify low-impact development practices and increase watershed protection.

The US EPA in Chicago recently convened a workshop about the role of green infrastructure in combined sewer overflow control, which included resources from the Center for Neighborhood Technology and Low-Impact Development Center. Columbus has the potential to move forward with cutting edge practices and create green jobs in the process. Cities like Chicago and D.C. have included green infrastructure projects, like green roofs and parking lot retrofits, in their green jobs programs. According to D.C. Greenworks, five jobs are created for every 100,000 square feet of green roofs installed.

The Sierra Club encourages City Council to vote for ORD 1724-2008 so we can propel watershed protection and improve quality of life. We are pleased that the Department of Public Utilities is taking steps to seriously consider stormwater management practices that bring far reaching benefits. In the long run, the City can save money, beautify neighborhoods, increase property values, reduce global warming pollution and improve water quality by implementing green stormwater practices.