

2025 DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL RETREAT (PART I)
NOVEMBER 13, 2025 – 5:30 PM
5555 PERIMETER DRIVE, DUBLIN

Mayor Amorose Groomes called the Thursday, November 13, 2025 Council Retreat – Part I to order at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Vice Mayor Alutto, Mayor Amorose Groomes, Ms. De Rosa, Ms. Fox, Mr. Keeler, Ms. Kramb and Mr. Reiner.

Staff Present: Ms. O'Callaghan, Mr. Ashrawi, Mr. Rubino, Ms. Rauch, Ms. Willis, Mr. Earman, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Hammersmith and Ms. Blake.

Others Present: Dr. Kerstin Carr, Board Member, Rapid 5.

Guest Speaker – Dr. Kerstin Carr, Rapid 5

Mayor Amorose Groomes welcomed the guest speaker and asked Ms. O'Callaghan to provide the introduction.

Ms. O'Callaghan thanked the team for preparing all the materials and gathering background information for the retreat. Ms. O'Callaghan emphasized that gathering this information had been valuable since residents greatly value and appreciate the City's natural resources. She explained that the objective was to determine whether the City has all the necessary policy direction, whether that direction is being executed to Council's satisfaction, and whether all programs, processes, and tools are in place to continue caring for these valued community resources.

Ms. O'Callaghan then introduced Dr. Kerstin Carr to discuss the Rapid 5 Initiative. She highlighted that Dr. Carr was a founding board member of Rapid 5 who had worked extensively with MORPC as their Chief Regional Strategy Officer, leading regional planning efforts and sustainability initiatives.

Dr. Carr apologized that the CEO of Rapid 5 could not attend due to disaster relief work in North Carolina. She provided background on Rapid 5, explaining its initial vision of creating an interconnected greenway system in Central Ohio through a partnership between MORPC and the Urban Land Institute. The initiative was supported by strong funding from local governments including Dublin and involved hiring landscape architects to develop creative ideas for spaces around five river corridors.

Dr. Carr explained that Rapid 5 was established as a nonprofit in 2022 and hired Luke Messenger as CEO in 2024. The organization recently completed strategic planning that solidified Rapid 5 as Central Ohio's land trust. The vision remained focused on ensuring everyone has access to clean waterways, thriving natural areas, and green spaces that inspire, heal and connect. She emphasized that nature is not a luxury but a necessity, noting research shows access to green space is important for physical health, mental health, community vitality, and economic success.

Through GIS mapping, Rapid 5 identified over 35,000 acres of parcels touching riverbanks within Franklin County, with two-thirds being publicly owned land. About 20,000 acres were in

flood plains, with 13,000 in publicly owned land. This database helps evaluate opportunities for land donations or purchases based on whether parcels could fill trail network gaps, support stormwater management, restore natural habitat, or provide recreation access.

Dr. Carr outlined three ways land trusts secure land: donation of fee simple title (where landowners donate land and receive tax benefits), direct purchase (using grants or donations), and conservation easements (voluntary agreements restricting development while retaining private ownership). She emphasized that Rapid 5 wants to be "a tool in the toolbox," working with stakeholders and communities rather than doing everything alone.

The organization's goals include becoming fully accredited as a land trust within three years while securing initial parcels to demonstrate value and learn what works. Dr. Carr encouraged communities to be inspired by ideas in the Rapid 5 book regardless of location and to think of Rapid 5 as a tool for securing parcels, conservation, and education.

During discussion, Ms. O'Callaghan noted that staff has engaged with Rapid 5 throughout various planning processes including Envision Dublin and recent discussions about kayak launch locations. Mayor Amorose Groomes emphasized the importance of remembering that creative ideas from Rapid 5 are location agnostic and can be implemented anywhere, not just where originally mapped.

Natural Resources Discussion

Ms. Rauch presented on Envision Dublin, highlighting the Plan's dedicated chapter on natural resources and environment. The focus was on enhancing environmental sustainability while preserving natural systems through watershed management, tree canopy preservation, soil preservation, and environmentally sensitive development. The plan reinforces elements from the Sustainability Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan, addressing tree preservation and replacement, appropriate plants and landscaping, stream corridor preservation, and development-sensitive design that connects people with nature.

Mr. Barker discussed the Sustainability Plan's key recommendations, including complete green streets that accommodate all users while incorporating green infrastructure to reduce environmental impacts. Other recommendations focused on water management and resource protection through regional cooperation with organizations like Rapid 5 and MORPC's Central Ohio Water Advisory Council. The Plan emphasizes water efficiency strategies, stormwater management, and reuse options like utilizing pond water for irrigation.

Mr. Barker highlighted the importance of maintaining and improving water quality in critical waterways through the Waterways Maintenance Plan and water quality monitoring. The volunteer monitoring team, including industry experts and environmental scientists, conducts annual sampling that shows Dublin has high-quality streams. The program also focuses on reducing private contributions to stream impairment through expanded code enforcement.

Regarding natural areas and open spaces, recommendations include pilot projects for pollinator habitats and gray water reuse, staying current with emerging technologies, and strengthening management coordination through a One Water Framework. The Plan suggests partnering with groups like Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District to collect native plants from development sites for use on City properties.

Notable successes in 2024 included planting over 1,800 trees citywide, managing over 80 acres of prairie and native areas, providing 44 rebates to residents (for rain barrels, compost bins, native plants, and trees), certifying 8 wildlife habitats, and installing a rain garden at Dublin Community Recreation Center (DCRC) for stormwater management.

Mr. Earman presented on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan adopted in October 2023, emphasizing how it dovetails with other planning documents. The Plan resulted from intensive community feedback and focuses on honoring local heritage while maintaining commitment to sustainability. It envisions exceptional parks that further Dublin's vision as a global city of choice, with implementation projects integrating native landscaping and renewable energy features while addressing climate change impacts.

The Plan aligns closely with Rapid 5's vision of celebrating water, creating memorable destinations, expanding green corridors, highlighting natural resources, and sustaining health, habitat, and recreation. The Scioto River corridor study examined navigability and access opportunities for recreational use, demonstrating how the river running through the City is a highlighted element of future planning.

During Council discussion, Ms. Kramb asked about tree rebate programs, which Mr. Barker explained are facilitated through Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District when residents remove invasive species. Ms. Kramb emphasized the need to better advertise these programs and expressed concern about implementing sustainability requirements on private development, questioning progress on code changes.

Ms. Rauch responded that a zoning code audit is underway that will specifically address sustainability requirements, with opportunities expected to be identified in the coming year. The discussion acknowledged tension between pushing requirements and managing costs.

Ms. De Rosa suggested elevating sustainability criteria in planning and zoning reviews using Envision Dublin as guidance rather than waiting for code completion. She also shared resident feedback that rain barrel rebate requirements are confusing, suggesting the City might purchase barrels directly to offer at cost.

Mr. Keeler noted the need to determine where different requirements fit on the spectrum of "encourage, incentivize, and require." Mr. Reiner asked about conservation design overlays for areas south of Route 161, explaining how such zoning creates natural environments with common areas while saving developers money on infrastructure.

Ms. Fox emphasized the need for better communication with residents about sustainability programs, suggesting many more than eight people would pursue wildlife certification if aware of opportunities. She recommended looking at context and atmosphere rather than just specific zoning requirements, citing Hilton Head Island's approach where stormwater ponds serve as enjoyed amenities.

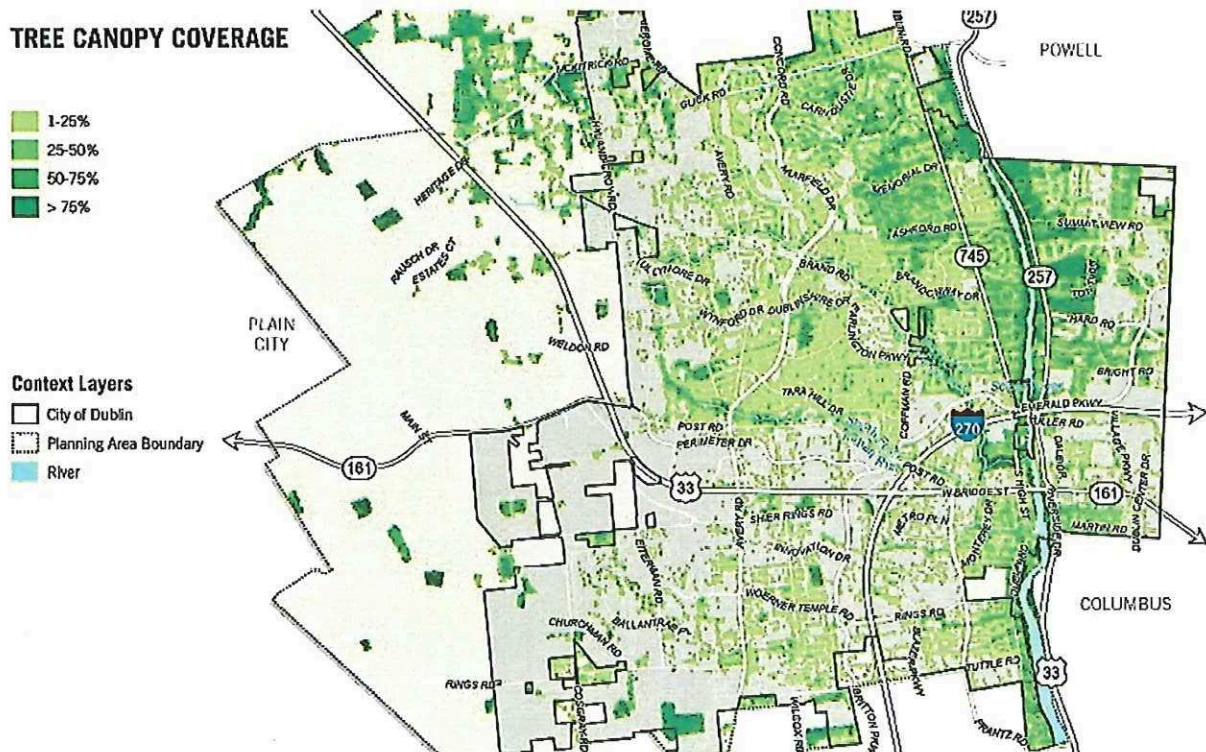
Vice Mayor Alutto asked about active partnerships with Rapid 5 and MORPC to influence neighbors along shared corridors. Staff explained engagement occurs through planning processes for private development, ensuring river connections, riparian buffers, and connectivity opportunities are incorporated. She emphasized ensuring ADA accessibility and sustainable design elements like adequate space for both garbage and recycling dumpsters in commercial developments.

Mayor Amorose Groomes noted MORPC's sustainability awards (silver, gold, platinum) as one way to participate in influencing neighbors. She asked about the breakdown of the 1,800 trees planted in 2024, learning approximately 800-900 were City installations. Mayor Amorose Groomes suggested conducting a mapping exercise to identify where the City wants forests to be located, noting that while Dublin has impressive tree canopy coverage, there is room for improvement in forestation practices.

Greenways

Ms. O'Callaghan shifted discussion to greenways and trees, explaining Dublin's participation in MORPC's Central Ohio Greenways (COG) initiative. This regional planning effort convenes representatives from member communities with Dublin's transportation mobility staff participating in routine meetings. The objective is ensuring regional connectivity of path systems across jurisdictional boundaries while connecting residents with nature, parks, rivers, and attractions throughout Central Ohio.

Ms. O'Callaghan presented the tree canopy coverage map from Envision Dublin, showing various shades of green reflecting coverage levels. Darker green areas indicate more dense coverage, particularly along the Scioto River corridor and east side of the river.



Mr. Anderson then presented on tree canopy inventory and benefits. The comprehensive study performed with Franklin County and Columbus examined changes from 2011 to 2021, measuring the physical extent of foliage coverage. Dublin had an estimated 612,000 trees with 4.7% growth in urban forest from 2011 to 2022, compared to the street tree program's approximately 38,000 trees. Staff has tracked this internally since 2017 using the i-Tree program, with results tracking consistently with the formal study.

Mr. Anderson highlighted Dublin's designation as Tree City USA for 37 years with 9 consecutive growth awards. The tree canopy spans nearly 2,000 acres, representing 26% coverage in 2022 with a goal to reach 30%. The City tree maintenance program focuses on four fundamental practices: supporting new tree growth with supplemental water and nutrients, monitoring vulnerable trees under stress, enhancing resilience through pruning programs, and planning for climate adaptation by replacing declining native trees with climate-resilient species and natives.

The woodlot maintenance program established in 2023 focuses on City-owned woodlots, selecting sites based on health and biodiversity to preserve the best woodlots first. Priorities include removing hazardous trees, clearing dead wood accumulations, and conducting invasive

species removal where appropriate. Benefits include increased biodiversity, enhanced water quality through proper flow regulation and reduced erosion, and improved carbon capture.

Upcoming projects include Darree and Avery woodlots in 2026, Coffman Park in 2027, and Hutchins Open Space in 2028 where they plan to clear a long-sought path connection to Leatherlips. Completed projects include Red Trabue woodlot and Wellington woodlot, with current work at Coffman Park focusing on opening view sheds to the river through invasive clearing and selective tree removal.

During Council discussion, Mr. Keeler asked about the timeline and number of trees needed to increase canopy coverage from 26% to 30%, acknowledging this would require further analysis. Mr. Reiner inquired about invasive honeysuckle removal methods. Mr. Anderson explained the process involves cutting followed by immediate chemical treatment within 12-24 hours, return treatments on sprouts after 1-2 years, then monitoring every five years as seeds continue spreading. Areas are then converted to prairie or replanted with native trees.

Mr. Reiner also asked whether air quality impacts from Dublin's tree canopy have been studied compared to Columbus's 22% coverage. While no specific studies exist, Mr. Anderson noted the Franklin County report addresses asthma correlations and heat island effects are clearly reduced in Dublin. Mayor Amorose Groomes added that MORPC installed 36 new air quality sensors this year to build more granular data on surrounding use impacts.

Ms. De Rosa asked about mapping stressed trees beyond street tree inventory. Mr. Anderson explained the canopy study uses satellite imagery, so individual woodlot assessments are not available, though climate change is expected to increase tree loss rates. The City has increased annual plantings from 1,000 to 1,800 trees to compensate.

Mayor Amorose Groomes noted the importance of considering both tree loss and growth, emphasizing that good growing seasons contribute to canopy expansion. She questioned whether code updates should require larger tree lawns for plant health, particularly given early Bridge Park phases had inadequate tree pit construction. Ms. Rauch confirmed current code has planting requirements being monitored through inspections coordinated between engineering and forestry staff.

Ms. Kramb suggested requesting GIS shapefiles from developers' tree studies to build a database of tree conditions on non-City property. Vice Mayor Alutto supported this idea, noting artificial intelligence (AI) tools could help stitch together disparate files to create comprehensive mapping.

The discussion then turned to homeowners' association (HOA) common area maintenance. Ms. O'Callaghan explained this topic has arisen periodically when HOAs request the City take over or assist with maintenance, particularly for ponds and street maintenance. Most recently, Ms. Kramb shared a request from Wyandotte Woods for assistance maintaining woodlots in reserve areas where land is City-owned but designated for HOA maintenance per plat restrictions.

Ms. O'Callaghan presented GIS maps showing green areas under City maintenance responsibility (over 2,200 acres) versus purple areas under HOA responsibility (nearly 300 acres). Another map showed woodlots within HOA areas, particularly concentrated in Wyandotte Woods along Riverside Drive where heavily wooded lots overlap with HOA maintenance areas. The current structure has evolved through negotiations during development between staff and developers, with ponds, entry features, and interior reserves typically assigned to HOA maintenance. Each neighborhood differs intentionally - some prioritize woodlots, others water features or ornate entries. Previous analyses concluded no one-size-fits-all solution would be equitable citywide, with concerns about assuming maintenance in one

neighborhood creating a slippery slope and different maintenance expectations across neighborhoods.

When HOAs request assistance, the City reviews their financial records to determine what portion of dues goes to maintenance versus other activities, comparing costs across HOAs to identify any extraordinary hardships. Ms. O'Callaghan recommended applying this practice to Wyandotte Woods if Council wishes to proceed.

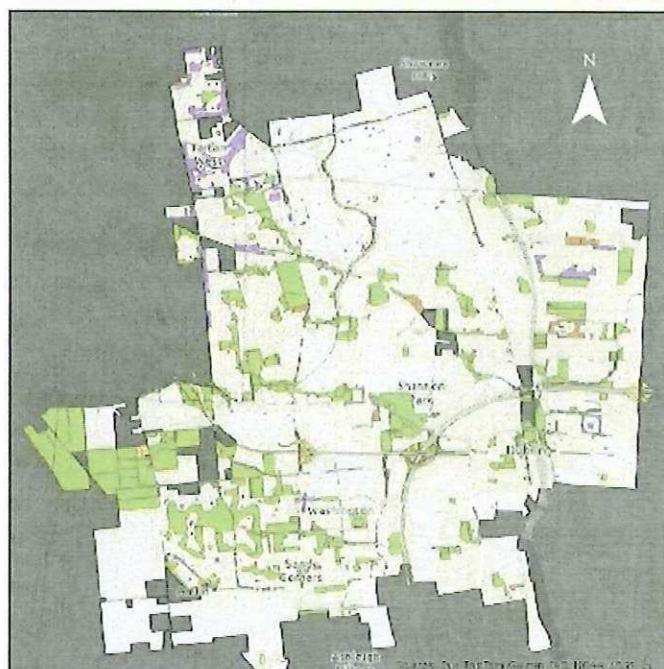
Ms. Kramb clarified that woodlots present unique challenges because developers decades ago assigned maintenance to HOAs without considering long-term costs. Now landmark trees are dying, invasives spreading, and waterways are becoming blocked by fallen trees, but HOAs lack the resources for proper management. She emphasized the City needs to help HOAs understand costs for clearing waterways and reforestation, noting many HOAs might prefer letting woodlots decline rather than investing in preservation.

Mr. Anderson shared that city forester Jeff Myers evaluated Wyandotte Woods' woodlots, finding many dead ash trees and challenges for reforestation due to shade. While honeysuckle thrives, opportunities exist for screening along Riverside Drive, though clearing invasives would increase road noise and potentially destabilize slopes currently held by honeysuckle roots. Staff regularly provides consultation and quote reviews to HOAs.

Council members discussed potential solutions. Ms. Fox suggested matching grants for reforestation similar to beautification grants, requiring HOAs to contribute funds and maintain accountability. Mayor Amorose Groomes advocated for separate grant programs for beautification, aquatic preservation, and woodland maintenance to ensure intentional focus rather than having woodland needs compete with easier landscaping projects. Vice Mayor Alutto agreed different criteria would be needed for each program type.

Ms. De Rosa highlighted extensive purple HOA-maintained areas in newer northwest developments, referring to the HOA Common Area Maintenance map, warning the City is creating future challenges. She suggested referring the topic to Public Services Committee for further discussion, emphasizing the need to reconsider policies for future developments.

HOA Common Area Maintenance



City of Dublin Maintenance Responsibilities

- City of Dublin
- Dublin Contractor
- HOA
- HOA and Dublin

City of Dublin - 2,260 Acres

Dublin Contractor - 307 Acres

HOA - 282 Acres

HOA and Dublin - 97 Acres

Mr. Reiner expressed concern about the responsibilities from HOAs to the City, first with sidewalks and ponds, now woodlots. He suggested requiring HOA fees tied to property taxes for new developments to prevent future bailout requests, noting some HOAs effectively manage their own woodlots including selling firewood. Different HOAs have varying resident involvement and management effectiveness.

Council reached consensus to refer the topic to Public Services Committee in the near future for detailed discussion on grant program structures and policy considerations for future developments.

The discussion of the Avery Muirfield greenway pilot project began with Mr. Earman explaining the program initiated in 2020 and involved the Indian Run Meadows subdivision. The City acquired easements from participating property owners to maintain screening areas after significant tree loss along the corridor. Holding individual property owners accountable would have been expensive and required extensive code enforcement for unclear requirements.

Of 31 properties, 25 opted into the program. The City removed 84 dead or decaying trees and planted 124 new trees and shrubs to code requirements at a cost of about \$92,000 plus administrative expenses. Properties not participating must maintain code compliance independently.

The program was successful with positive resident feedback. Council previously identified four potential areas for expansion: Frantz Road, Emerald Parkway, Dublin Road, and Coffman Road. Mr. Earman promoted continuing the program based on its success but noted decisions were needed on extent and location.

Mr. Reiner emphasized the importance of maintaining Dublin's green corridors as Norway Spruces planted by developers reach their 30-40 year lifespan, warning Dublin will not remain attractive if screening is lost. Mr. Keeler requested visual assessments of the four areas similar to the original Avery Muirfield analysis to inform decisions.

Ms. De Rosa shared mixed feedback from the Indian Run Meadows HOA meeting, where some residents felt the City was heavy-handed in threatening code enforcement for non-participants who had never been held accountable before. She supported moving forward but recommended reconsidering consequences for non-participation to avoid creating ill will in established neighborhoods.

Discussion was held regarding the desire to maintain community standards while respecting long-time residents.

Mayor Amorose Groomes suggested focusing on Frantz Road given planned infrastructure investments and fewer single-family homes, making negotiations less invasive. She recommended returning to original planting designs as the standard rather than creating new aesthetic requirements, holding properties to their approved conditions.

Mr. Reiner noted landscape plans from the 1980s-90s exist for Frantz Road that residents had committed to, suggesting the City should enforce those original standards. Ms. Fox proposed sending educational materials about the original landscape intentions to encourage voluntary compliance before pursuing enforcement.

Council reached consensus for staff to prepare materials advancing this conversation through Public Services Committee, including assessments of the four identified corridors with visual documentation and original planting requirements.

Tree Canopy

Ms. Rauch presented on tree preservation, replacement, and funding within the zoning code for private development. The code requires detailed tree preservation plans showing what is being preserved or removed, with replacement required inch-for-inch for trees over 6 inches in good condition. If full replacement cannot be accommodated on-site, developers pay a fee in lieu.

The fee calculation can be adjusted through tree waivers that must meet specific criteria before coming to Council. All replacement fees go into the general fund for planting trees in public spaces. The process continues through development to ensure additional trees are not removed without accounting.

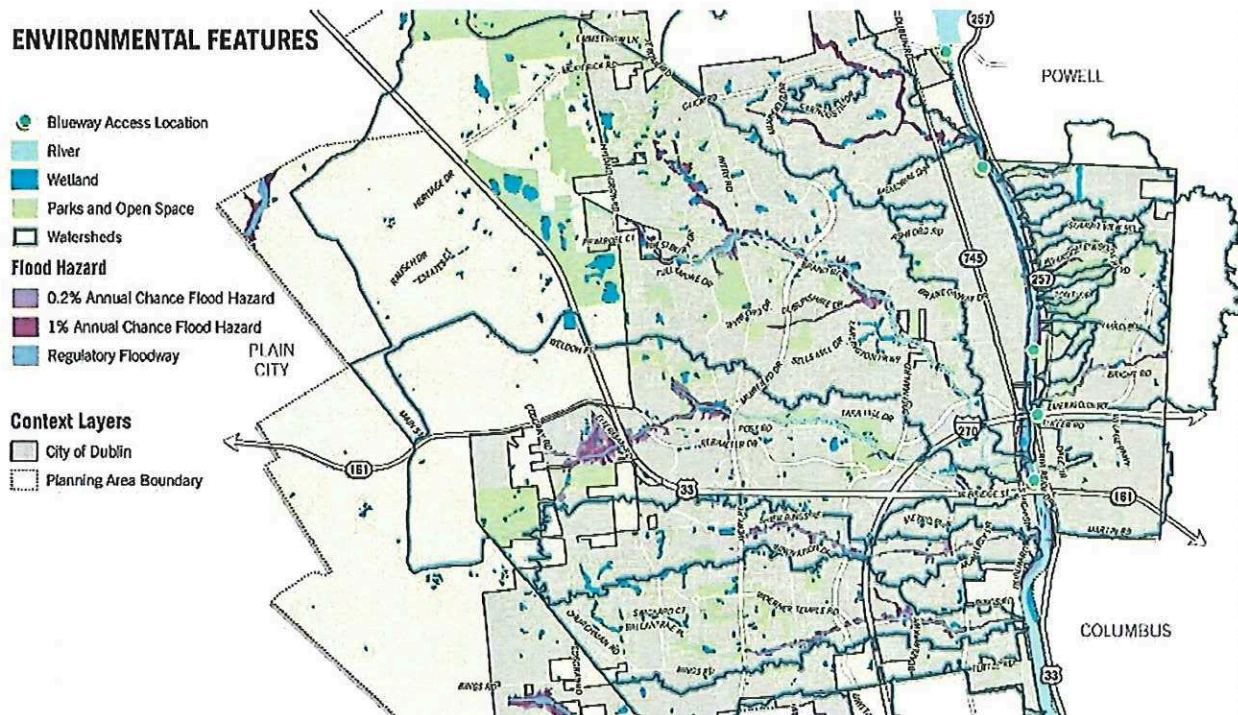
Mr. Rubino reported approximately \$894,000 available from tree fees, with 70-80% accumulated between 2016-2020 from large development projects. Recent accumulation has slowed to less than \$40,000 annually. Discussion included potentially using these funds for HOA woodland grants.

Ms. Fox observed that newer developments use grid-like patterns lacking the curvilinear streets and deep screening characterizing older Dublin neighborhoods. She emphasized maintaining Dublin's character requires thoughtful approaches to stormwater management and greenways, noting older retention ponds were designed as amenities with rock edges while newer dry beds appear weedy.

Mr. Reiner reiterated that conservation design zoning would address Ms. Fox's concerns by mandating preservation of existing tree groups, building in fields, and creating radiating street patterns that provide natural privacy without expensive landscaping.

Blueways

Ms. O'Callaghan introduced the blueways discussion, explaining MORPC's Central Ohio Blueways Initiative focuses on increasing awareness and accessibility to the region's five major rivers and streams in an environmentally responsible manner. She presented Dublin's specific blueway map showing rivers, wetlands, parks, and open spaces.



Mr. Hammersmith presented the waterways maintenance program, emphasizing Dublin's commitment to water quality for community health and safety while recognizing waterways' stormwater conveyance functions for flood protection. The program protects riparian areas, aquatic habitats, and adjacent infrastructure through responsible maintenance on city property and within city easements.

The program began with Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District inspecting 50 miles of waterways for blockages, erosion, sediment accumulation, and yard debris. Staff determined city versus private maintenance responsibility and developed a scoring system considering accessibility, constructability, channel stability and capacity, severity, and criticality to infrastructure. Higher scores indicated increased threats from erosion or flooding.

Since developing the program in 2022, the City completed Year 1 bank stabilization in spring 2024 along North Fork and South Fork Indian Run. Council recently approved combining Years 2 and 3 for acceleration, including areas in Wyandotte Woods, Shannon Glenn, and other locations. Next steps include updating inspection data completed in 2024, continuing Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding through 2026, and alternating design and construction years through 2029.

Mr. Hammersmith highlighted partnership with Mad Scientist Associates and volunteers for water quality monitoring, an essential component of the MS4 stormwater permit. Data shows Dublin has exceptional water quality far beyond regional typical levels.

Mr. Earman briefly presented the Scioto River corridor study from O'Shaughnessy Dam to past Route 161 into Griggs Reservoir. The study identified improvement areas for kayak/canoe navigation and determined the preferred public launch site location below the I-270 bridge at city-owned property in Riverside Crossing Park. This provides a 4-mile navigable approach with pristine kayaking opportunities.

Two areas need improvement: the confluence of Indian Run into the Scioto River and south of the Route 161 bridge to allow upstream loop return. The location aligns with Rapid 5 strategies and was discussed with their representatives.

Ms. Fox questioned plans for guiding kayakers at the shallow historic rock area near Dublin Spring Park. Mr. Earman clarified improvements would be on the river's eastern side, not impacting the scenic western view or historic rock location.

The presentation concluded with discussion of connecting to nature through the Scioto River kayak livery and public launch, which Mr. Earman confirmed aligns with Rapid 5 strategies. Ms. Willis presented on the signature trail to be discussed further at Monday's council meeting (11/17/25).

The signature trail concept from Envision Dublin and the Multimodal Thoroughfare Plan will serve as the centerpiece active transportation network providing safe, continuous east-west connectivity. Sustainability has been a pillar throughout analysis, supporting an ecological and resilient Dublin while providing user well-being and connectivity.

During robust public engagement, the community emphasized nature-forward design, separation from cars, and strong neighborhood connections as essential features. The trail's relationship to the natural environment has been considered from the beginning, with the east-west alignment connecting waterways and providing vital connections to parks, green spaces, and streams for recreation, wellness, and environmental health.

The preferred alignment aims to be Dublin's mobility heart, combining safe pathways with natural beauty while connecting parks, neighborhoods, and commercial destinations. With over

29,000 workers and approximately 3,700 households having direct access, the trail opens connectivity to a large portion of residents.

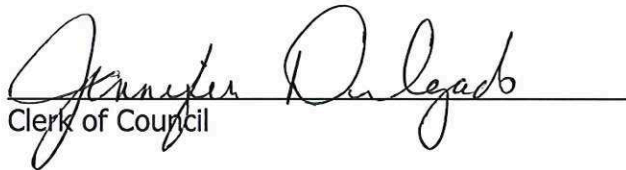
The trail strongly aligns with Rapid 5's pillars by providing regional connectivity through an east-west spoke connecting more residents to the river corridor, supporting both recreation and everyday mobility, and providing direct connections to parks, schools, workplaces, and community destinations while ensuring river corridor access.

Ms. Kramb asked about connections to the Heritage Trail and new Columbus trail on Dublin Road. Ms. Willis confirmed the signature trail would connect through historic Dublin to the Dublin Road improvements. Ms. De Rosa asked whether Monday's presentation would address phasing, which Ms. O'Callaghan confirmed would include both phasing and cost information.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.



Presiding Officer – Mayor



Clerk of Council