



OGDEN POINTE

AT THE WHEATLANDS IV

WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM

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Executive Summary

Ogden Pointe at the Wheatlands IV (OPW) is a condominium community in Southwest Aurora, Illinois where residents are not charged per unit for the water they consume. Instead, residents pay a monthly assessment that covers water and other expenses. This feeds into a belief that water is a 'free' resource. Given that water expense is such a huge draw on the Association's annual budget the OPW Board of Directors is exploring a water conservation program as part of a comprehensive Green initiative, to curb expenses. The Board believes a program to decrease individual water waste can alleviate annual water expenses; stabilize yearly increases in monthly assessments; and contribute to global water conservation efforts.

1.0 Background, Purpose and Focus

The U.S. Geological Survey (Survey, 2009) predicts at least 36 states will face water shortages within five years because of a combination of rising temperatures, drought, population growth, urban sprawl, waste and excess. On the global front, environmental groups like USAID (USAID, 2007) assert that by 2025, one-third of the world population will experience severe and chronic water shortages. These statistics point to a growing need for water conservation beginning at the local level.

Ogden Pointe at the Wheatlands IV (OPW), a condominium neighborhood located in the 9th Ward of Aurora, Illinois has an opportunity to contribute to water conservation measures locally, nationally and perhaps globally.

OPW is less than ten years old and comprises 108 condo units. The Association Board of Directors contracts with a management company to oversee the affairs of the community. The Board approves an annual budget each year which is ratified at the Annual Meeting. Monthly assessments are set for each homeowner and become the primary source of revenue for the Association. Assessments cover monthly expenses like landscaping, snow removal, hazardous insurance, property management fees, legal fees and water. In 2009, 31% of the Association's annual budget was allocated to water expenses, which represented 94% of total operating expenses.

When OPW was constructed, a single water meter was placed on each building to measure water usage for all four units. This configuration makes it infeasible to accurately detect

which condo unit is consuming the most water. In addition, outdoor water spigots were installed on every other building, which amounts to roughly 13 spigots on the property.

The Board of Directors receives a monthly management report that includes expenditures for water. The board also receives advisory notices from the City of Aurora Water Department regarding buildings with excessively high water bills. When notices are received, the Board contracts with an outside vendor to conduct an audit to find potential leaks in toilets or faucets. If leaks are detected, repairs are made and the cost is charged back to the homeowner.

There are common area lawns and plant material that require watering. However, less than half of homeowners participate in lawn watering during the summer. Of the small percentage of homeowners that do water, some have a propensity to water lawns during the middle of the day, a clear violation of the city's water conservation ordinance.

The purpose of this campaign is to educate homeowners about behaviors they can adopt to conserve water in their individual unit; encourage homeowners to become more knowledgeable about why it is important for everyone to do their part to conserve water; and to elevate OPW's water conservation program in the minds of homeowners and tenants so that it becomes a normal way of life. This campaign will include initiatives to engage and education residents about water quality and conservation. As the level of awareness increases, efforts will be made to motivate homeowners to adopt cost-saving measures, i.e., take initiative to check for leaky toilets and faucets, install low flow faucets and toilets and minimize water waste in everyday activities.

The barriers to changing behavior are lack of knowledge, old habits and research data that shows a large percentage of OPW residents do not think they are wasting that much water, while a third of residents admit they don't know how to conserve water. These findings are the basis for a comprehensive communications strategy to educate and encourage residents to learn more about water conservation and to take necessary steps to conserve this natural resource.

2.0 Situation Analysis

2.1 SWOT

Strengths:

- OPW is a relatively new subdivision that comprises multi-unit condominiums situated in between single-family homes and townhomes.
- Members of the Association (homeowners) pay monthly assessments to cover expenses, including water. Ninety-five percent of homeowners are in compliance.
- OPW is managed by a property management company, which relieves the day-to-day responsibilities from the Board of Directors.
- The Board of Directors is composed of volunteers from the community.
- In most instances, OPW homeowners are generally responsible citizens and appreciate living in a community where they are not responsible for exterior maintenance of their homes.

Weaknesses:

- There is a perceived lack of engagement on the part of residents based on minimal attendance at Condo Association board meetings.
- OPW is a working community, i.e., many residents commute to the city or nearby suburbs for work. Therefore, neighbor-to-neighbor engagement is a challenge.
- Due to the design of units, residents are more likely to use the garage entrance more frequently than their front doors, which also impacts neighbor-to-neighbor engagement.

- OPW residents are not billed individually for water usage as this expense is included in monthly assessments. This leads to the perception that water is ‘free.’
- Of the four units per building, the water meter is installed in only one unit. This is a challenge when trying to target which unit is consuming the most water.
- Outdoor spigots are installed on every other building. Again, this is a challenge when attempting to accurately measure water usage in the summer specifically as it relates watering the lawn and plant material in the common areas.

Opportunities

- A survey of homeowners found a majority are not aware or not sure about the City of Aurora’s water conservation measures. This creates an opportunity to educate this audience about the city’s program and connect it to OPW’s water conservation program.

- The same survey two-thirds of residents believe they are not wasting that much water. This attitude supports the belief found in national studies that most people perceive water as a ‘free’ resource.
- The one documented source to measure water waste is bi-monthly reports from the city water department. Prior history sourced water wasted to leaky toilets and faucets. While nearly 70% of homeowners say they check periodically for leaky toilets and faucets and make the necessary repairs there is no correlation between this finding and the specific buildings that have been identified with high consumption rates.
- The City of Aurora launched a rain barrel program this spring which enabled residents to purchase the barrel for \$50 and install it on their home. When asked if they would support a rain barrel program for OPW, almost 70% said yes.
- Finally, over 60% of homeowners say they would replace old toilets with ultra-low flow toilets or high-efficiency toilets if the city offered a rebate. This finding and the response to the rain barrel program supports the notion of a partnership with the city to conserve water as part of its sustainability project.

Threats:

- Lifestyles and habits of residents have created a spirit of detachment to community-based efforts directly related to OPW.
- Residents do not seem to care about the increases in water expense to the Association, nor do they seem to care about modest increases in monthly assessments.

- Other than the advisory notices sent to the Board, the city of Aurora does not strictly enforce water conservation as part of its sustainability plan.
- Due to budget restrictions, the city of Aurora does not have staff to implement its sustainability plan which includes a citywide water conservation program.
- Partnering with the City of Aurora on rebates for energy efficient fixtures is contingent upon the city's budget.

2.2 Past Efforts

There are numerous documented efforts of water conservation programs spurred by local municipalities and water districts around the country. The Douglas County Water Resource Authority (DCWRA) in Castle Rock, CO, for instance, is a 19-member regional water district that comprises municipalities, water providers and Douglass County, CO government serving 325,000 residents (Authority, 2009). The district conducted a survey of its membership in 2009 and discovered rebates to promote water conservation had a higher success rate in communities where it was offered compared to communities that did not offer such incentives. Rebates also scored high among respondents to the OPW survey.

At the 2010 Water Symposium (Deal, 2010) held on the North Central College campus, Joe Deal, Director of External Affairs for the City of Chicago Mayor's Office, said Chicago, like most cities, faces a challenge with water conservation program because of three primary reasons:

- Need for infrastructure upgrade
- A growing region

- Lack of perceived threats to an abundant water supply

During his presentation titled, *Urban Water Politics*, Mr. Deal stated that surveys of Chicago residents regarding water usage found the cost of water represents approximately 2% of a typical household utility bill; therefore, people view water differently than they do other utilities like gas and electricity.

“They expect it for free,” he said.

The perceptions of Chicago residents are similar to those of residents in OPW. The quantitative research collected from homeowners led to qualitative findings that illustrate the acuities of water as an unlimited resource. One resident questioned her neighbor about his tendency to water the common lawn during the day and for several hours at a time. He responded:

“I like to water the grass because the water is *free*, and you should water your grass too.”

Alternative programs to conserve and replenish natural water sources have been introduced in several communities, including Aurora. Stephane Pfifer of the Aurora City Planning and Zoning Department (Pfifer, 2010) said the city’s 2009 Sustainability Plan contains a number of initiatives like rain barrel programs. The city announced such a program for the first time in 2010 and according to Ms. Pfifer it was well received by residents. Ms. Pfifer added the program stems from a sustainability project list that fosters partnerships between the city and

local organizations to promote the harvesting and reuse of natural rain water. Instead of using fresh tap water, rain barrels can capture rain from gutter systems and store it for reuse. OPW seeks to partner with the city on this initiative.

Research on various residential water conservation programs indicates that education and engagement are critical to success because as the DCWRA survey revealed, most people ‘will not place a high value on, nor conserve the things they do not understand...’ This is consistent with findings in the OPW survey in which a third of residents admit they don’t know how to conserve water.

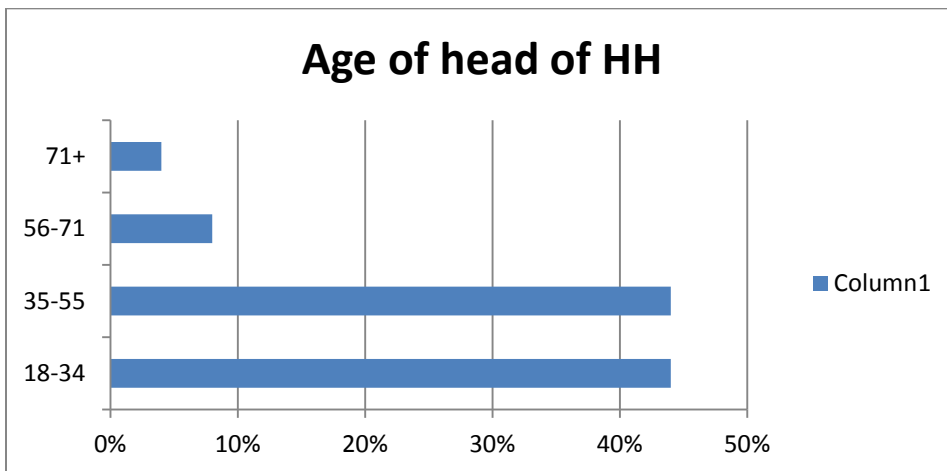
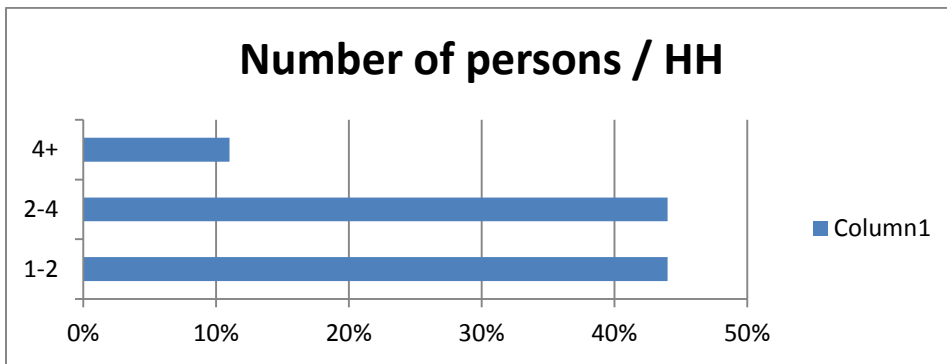
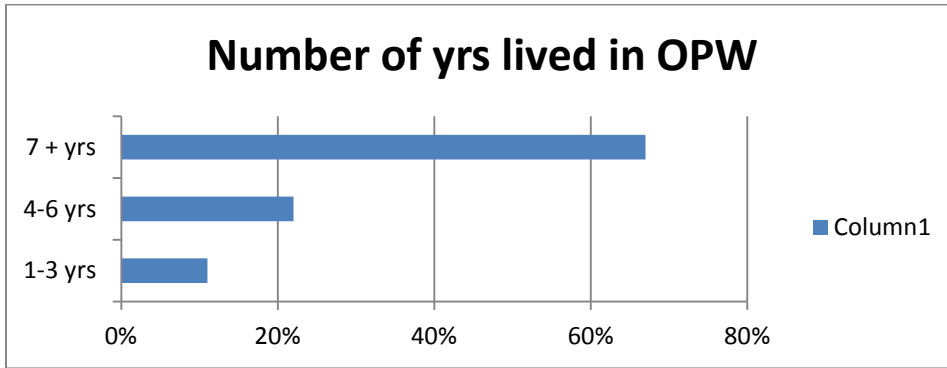
3.0 Target Market Profile

3.1 Size

The target audience for this campaign will be adults living in the OPW neighborhood. Based on records kept by the property management company, the neighborhood is composed of estimated 150-170 residents.

3.2 Demographic Profile

Data derived from an online survey residents captured number of years lived in OPW, number of people per household and age of head of household.



The management company does not maintain records on race, marital status, household income, education level or employment status, which are factors to consider when formulating

the marketing message. Therefore, this campaign will rely on data from the Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System to supplement the demographic profile.

BRFS Will County Adults		
Racial Categories	White	79%
	Non-White	21%
Marital Status	Married	68%
	Widowed	5.20%
	Divorced/Separated	7.70%
	Never married	16.80%
	Member of unmarried couple	2.30%
Household Income	< \$15,000	1.90%
	\$15-\$35,000	22.30%
	\$35-\$50,000	14.90%
	>\$50,000	60.90%
Education Level	< High school	3.20%
	High school grad	24.90%
	> High school grad	71.90%
Employment Status	Employed	65.10%
	Out of work	5.70%
	Homemaker/student	15.60%
	Retired/unable to work	13.70%

3.3 Stage of Change

Initial research conducted for this project indicates OPW residents fall somewhere between the beginner and intermediate stages of embracing a change in behavior. Many already perceive themselves as water conservationists. (See Figure 1)

¹ Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2009

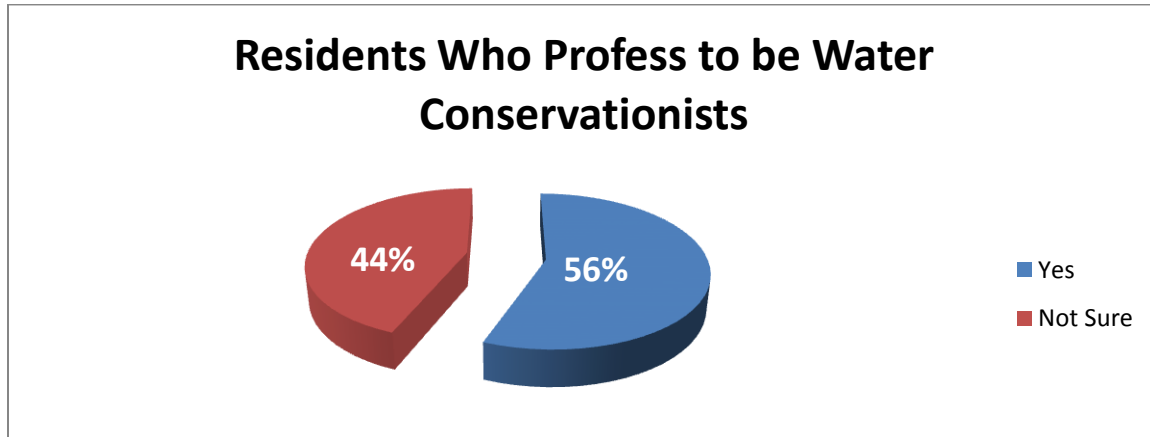


Figure 1 Response from OPW residents when asked, "Do you consider yourself a water conservationist?"

4.0 Marketing Objectives and Goals

4.1 Objectives

The OPW Water Conservation Program seeks to:

- Engage residents in a community-based water conservation program.
- Educate residents how to adopt individual behaviors and habits to reduce water waste and stabilize increases in monthly assessments

4.2 Goals

Based on the previous history of other communities, the OPW Board acknowledges the success of implementing this program is contingent upon how well it resonates with residents.

As a method of increasing engagement, the Board seeks the following goals:

- The Board will conduct a door-to-door canvas of the community to seek volunteers for the **OPW Green Committee**, as an effort to get neighbors talking to each other.
- The Board and the OPW Green Committee will launch an education series to reduce by 10% the amount of wasted water per building over the next 12 months. Residents in each building will be incentivized to check for leaky toilets and faucets.

Later goals:

- The Board will issue a directive to the management company to submit records for water consumption rates per building (provided by the City of Aurora Water Department) to establish a benchmark by which to effectively measure conservation efforts.
- The Board will partner with the management company to analyze the data and identify buildings with high consumption rates.
- The Board will amend the rules and regulations to impose fines on homeowners who water common area grass during the day. The amendment will have to be ratified by a majority of residents.
- Since two-thirds of residents favor an incentive program for replacing toilets with new, ultra-low flow toilets or high-efficiency toilets, the Board will pursue a potential partnership with the City of Aurora to offer rebates.
- Partner with the City of Aurora on its Sustainability Plan to install rain barrels in strategic locations throughout the property.

5.0 Barriers, Benefits, Competition

5.1 Barriers

Studies on water conservation behaviors reveal exposure to messages alone, in many instances, do not influence knowledge, attitudes or behavior change (Rogers, 1995). However, researchers acknowledge that a focus on messaging that seeks to improve self-efficacy may be a better approach (O'Keefe, 2001).

The initial barriers to this program include limited exposure to previous and current messaging regarding the existence of a water conservation program in the city (See Figure 2).

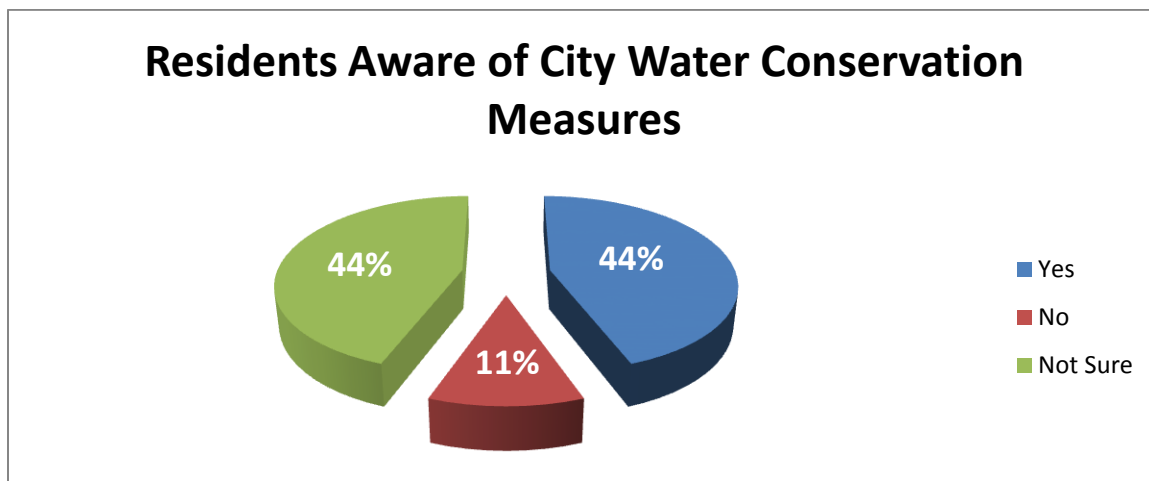


Figure 2 Responses from residents when asked about awareness of water conservation program in the City of Aurora.

However, there appears to be a gap between what residents claim to know about the city of Aurora’s water conservation plan and their own individual responsibilities toward lowering consumption habits. (See Figure 3).

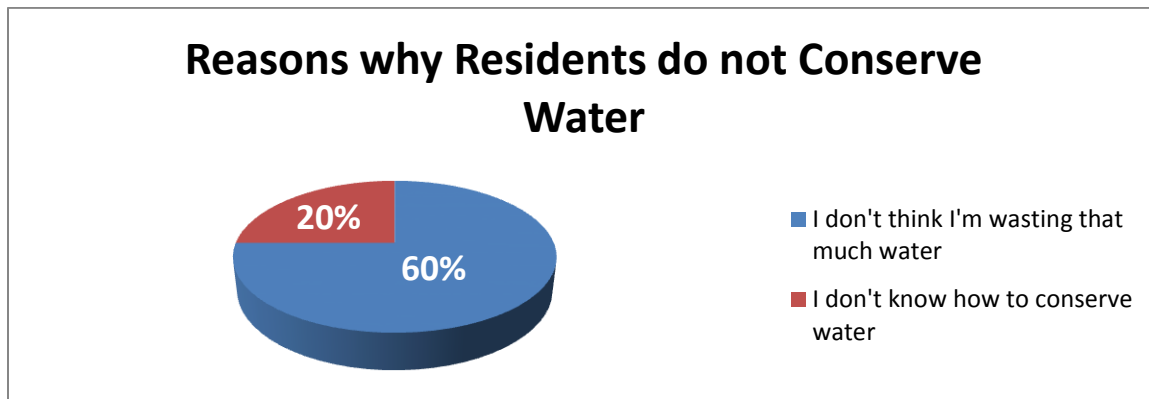


Figure 3 Responses from residents about individual consumption habits.

5.2 Potential Benefits of Desired Behaviors

As stated earlier, the desired benefit of changing behaviors is the potential cost savings to the Association – and to residents. Because water expense alone constitutes 94% of the total operating fund, reducing or stabilizing this cost can potentially be passed on to residents or allocated to other improvements in the neighborhood, i.e., landscaping, capital improvements, etc.

6.0 Positioning Statement

The purpose of this campaign is to motivate OPW residents to adopt a new attitude towards water as a natural resource; an attitude that translates to renewed efforts to curb unnecessary water waste individually and collectively.

7.0 Marketing Mix Strategies

7.1 Product Platform

Core Product: Collective savings to OPW residents in the form of reduced or stabilized assessments if everyone adopts different attitude and behavior to water conservation.

Actual Product: Conscientious residents who are diligent about changing behavior to save water.

Augmented Product: Rebates or financial incentives offered to residents who install low-flow or high efficiency toilets.

7.2 Price

The Board will monitor water usage per building and compare usage year-to-year. Homeowners in buildings that show a consistent decrease in water consumption of 10% or more will receive a \$10 reduction in their monthly assessment for six months.

Once the Association rules and regulations are amended, residents observed in violation of city water restrictions will face a \$25 fine for the first offense and a \$100 fine for every subsequent infraction.

As an added incentive, the Board will work with the City of Aurora to offer rebates to homeowners who install low flow or high-efficiency toilets and water efficient shower heads. The Association will propose a rebate program similar to that in other communities whereby residents receive a \$10 rebate per shower head and a \$100 rebate per toilet.

7.3 Place

The effectiveness of this campaign is contingent upon the honor system; meaning residents will be asked to exhibit new behaviors within the confines of their unit. However, as indicated earlier, the Board of Directors will actively monitor water usage reports to determine how well the campaign is gaining traction.

7.4 Promotion

Given the demographics of the target audience, this campaign is based on the assumption that the dissemination of compelling information will transform attitudes and beliefs about water as a natural resource. The key message draws a connection between survey responses and independent reports from the City of Aurora Water Department. While nearly 70% of residents said they check toilets and faucets periodically for leaks and make repairs, the Board has evidence that leaky toilets are the biggest contributor to excessive water bills per building. The gap between what residents say and the evidence leads to messaging with a greater emphasis on the steps residents can take to address the problem and save money.

Communications channels will consist of the following:

- Monthly e-newsletter sent to residents registered on the OPW website
- Splash page on the OPW website to inform residents how to conserve water
 - Link to *eartheasy* (http://www.eartheasy.com/live_water_saving.htm).
Provides 25 steps residents can take to save water individually.
 - Link to *Greening Schools*
(http://www.greeningschools.org/resources/view_resource.cfm?id=764).
Contains information for parents and students to teach water conservation and other environmental practices. This website is a partnership between Illinois EPA, Waste Management Resource Center and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.
 - *I'm Saving Water and Here's How* blog on the OPW website. Residents will be encouraged to blog about their conservation measures – a before and after depiction of their transformation.
- Posters placed on each side of mailboxes on the property. These are highly visible touchpoints that residents cannot ignore as everyone has to retrieve their mail (See exhibit 1)
- Website address with water conservation logo on all postcards mailed to homeowners to announce board meetings (See exhibit 2)
- Letters to all homeowners (to fill the gap of those not yet registered on the Association website) announcing the water conservation program, explaining steps to take, the benefits to homeowners and incentive program

- Flyers inserted in envelopes with the letters to homes

8.0 Evaluation Plan

The evaluation of this campaign will focus on outcome-based measurement to determine if residents are adopting the desired behavior. As each of the above mentioned touchpoints are released, the Board will conduct quantitative research in the form of online and paper surveys, asking residents for feedback on the effectiveness of the campaign message. The Board will consult with members of the OPW Green Committee to ascertain feedback from residents as a form of qualitative data to determine if attitudes and beliefs are changing.

This form of outcome-based measurement will provide evidence as to whether residents are adopting the desired behavior. Adjustments to the campaign will be made as needed.

9.0 Budget

This budget assumes the Association will incur the cost of materials for the campaign. However, the budget must be ratified by homeowners at the Annual Meeting, held in March of each year.

Annual Revenue:

Monthly assessments	\$185,000
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Annual Expenses:

Printing & postage	2,000
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Ogden Pointe Water Conservation

Postcards	
Letters	
Posters (12)	100
Flyers (500)	300
Website hosting	170
Splash page	N/C
E-newsletter	N/C
Online survey	150
Meeting venue	N/C
Total Expenses	\$2,720

10.0 Implementation Plan

Key Activity	Lead	Start Date	End Date	Budget
Formation of OPW Green Committee e-blast	Board Pres.	1/21/11		N/C
OPW Green Committee mtg. announcement mailed to homes	Property mgr.	1/28/11		N/C
Green Committee neighborhood canvas	Board of Directors & volunteers	2/5/11		N/C
OPW Green Committee meets to organize	Board Pres./ Green Committee Volunteers	2/12/11		N/C
OPW Green Committee kick-off mgt.	Board of Directors	2/19/11		N/C
Letter campaign to announce water conservation prog.(includes flyer)	Property Mgr.	2/15/11		\$100
Create Splash page on	Green Committee	2/15/11	2/22/11	N/C

Ogden Pointe Water Conservation

OPW website	volunteer			
Create E-newsletter template (link to splash page)	Green Committee volunteer	2/15/11	2/22/11	N/C
Launch splash page on OPW website	Board President & Green Committee volunteer	2/25/11		N/C
1 st E-mail blast to residents to announce kick-off mtg.	Board President	3/1/11		N/C
Posters rollout on mailboxes throughout the property	Board and Green Committee	3/1/11		\$100
Postcard reminder mailed to homes re: kick-off meeting	Property Mgr	3/8/11		\$90
2 nd E-mail blast to residents to announce kick-off mtg.	Board President	3/18/11		N/C
Kick-off meeting	Board of Dirs./Property Mgr./Green Committee	3/22/11		N/C
Online Survey to gauge response	OPW Green Committee	4/26/11	4/29/11	\$20
Evaluate feedback and make adjustments	OPW Green Committee/Board of Dirs	5/2/11	5/6/11	N/C
Launch water conservation (WC) blog post on OPW website	OPW Green Committee	5/18/11		N/C
3 rd E-mail blast to announce WC blog	Board president	5/16/11		N/C
Posters/letters/e-mail blasts	Board of Dir/Property Mgr./Green Committee	Ongoing		
Evaluation of program	OPW Green Committee	Ongoing		



Exhibit 1 Frontal view of mailboxes on OPW property



Exhibit 2 Profile view of mailboxes on OPW property where 11 x 17 posters will reside



Exhibit 3 Example of 11 x 17 poster to be displayed on the side of mailboxes throughout the OPW property.



Exhibit 4 OPW Water Conservation logo will appear on meeting notices with website URL where residents can obtain more information to save water.

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Front side of tri-fold brochure:



Sign up to receive the
OPW Green Committee e-
newsletters

Visit the OPW website
and register to receive
information on water
conservation, future
rebates on low flow
high-efficiency fixtures,
rain barrels and more.

OgdenPointeIV.org



You can make a difference
In your home
In your neighborhood
In your community
Join the OPW Green Committee
Visit OgdenPointeIV.org to sign up
Or
Come to the kick-off meeting 10 AM
Sat., Feb 19 at Fire Station #8 on
McCoy Road in Aurora



**OPW GREEN
COMMITTEE**

Conserve Water. Save Money

For more information contact:
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