

NoLibs Stormwater Catchment Goes Online

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A popular neighborhood park in Northern Liberties is not only being outfitted with new plantings and an amphitheater, but with an innovative storm water management system that will keep water out of the city's overburdened system and feed back to watering plants at the park.

The improvements at Liberty Lands, located at Third and Wildey streets, are expected to be completed by June 6. The project, made possible by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), Philadelphia Water Department, and Northern Liberties Neighbors Association, was funded by more than \$300,000 from the Pennsylvania departments of Environmental Protection and of Conservation and Natural Resources along with \$25,000 from Tower Investments and \$3,500 from nearby restaurant the Standard Tap.

The Northern Liberties Neighbors Association will kick off the improvements with their first event of the season, the NLNA Spring Music Festival on June 6 starting at 4PM .

"This neighborhood treasure now has a high-tech system that will reduce storm water flow into the city's system," said Joan Reilly, Senior Director of PHS' Philadelphia Green program. "Sustainable storm water management- rain gardens, rain barrels, and other non-traditional methods of controlling storm water- is an important next step in making Philadelphia one of the greenest cities in the country."

Over the last three years, PHS worked with residents on a master plan for the storm water system for the 2-acre site. The park will be completed with an ADA-accessible performance stage and contoured lawn to accommodate audiences. An inlet on Third Street will capture storm water runoff, where it will travel under the sidewalk before being released along a grass swale into a rain garden. Water captured by the rain garden will feed underground cisterns that will be used for park irrigation.

Plantings will include native grasses and several native trees provided by Morris Arboretum.

"Our park is a great fit for a storm water management demonstration project," said Janet Finegar, secretary of the Northern Liberties Neighbors Association and co-chair of the Liberty Lands Committee, which oversees the maintenance, preservation, and improvements to the park. "Not only will the improvements cut down on erosion at the park, but we have something to show developers who are building in the neighborhood this is something they can do."

The park, a former industrial site now home to 36 garden plots and a playground, is rapidly surrounded by new town homes with balconies overlooking the park. Studies show property values can increase up to 30 percent next to cleaned and greened open spaces.

Philadelphia Green, the nation's most comprehensive urban greening program, has partnered with the Philadelphia Water Department's Office of the Watersheds to improve storm water management at more than 20 sites in Philadelphia, including Cliveden Park in East Mount Airy, the Springside School in Chestnut Hill and Clark Park's basketball Court in West Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Green is a program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Since 1974, Philadelphia Green has supported the development and ongoing care of community gardens, neighborhood parks and high-profile public green spaces in Philadelphia. Working in partnership with neighborhood residents, community organizations and city agencies, Philadelphia Green uses greening as a community building tool. PHS educates and empowers people to make the city a more attractive and livable place through horticulture. More at pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org .