



Eco-Friendly Water System Developed for Philly Park

Local residents celebrate new water managements system and aesthetic changes at Liberty Lands.

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By Krissa Smith, HF Assistant Editor

Has the city of brotherly love also become the city of eco-love? Philadelphia's popular park, Liberty Lands, is being renovated with a stormwater management system to cut water waste, decrease erosion and keep water out of the city's system.

The park also has a new ADA-accessible performance stage, contoured lawn and new plantings of native trees and grasses.

To kick off the changes, the Northern Liberties Neighbors Association held a Spring Music Festival on June 6 with over 1,000 residents in attendance.

Janet Finegar, co-coordinator of Liberty Lands, said the music festival was a success, and attendees' reactions to the changes were positive. "We see the park as not just an amenity for the neighborhood, but an example of things we can do differently.

"We knew this system worked—the cisterns were full and water was going where it was supposed to—so Saturday was an opportunity to get the news out to the community," she says.

The Philadelphia Horticulture Society has worked on a master plan for the park's water system for the past three year. The storm system plans include an inlet on Third Street to capture stormwater runoff. The runoff travels under the sidewalk, is released along a grass swale into a rain garden, and drains into an underground cistern for park irrigation.

With the park's new water management system, is Philadelphia is one step closer to becoming one of the nation's greenest cities—the goal of Mayor Michael Nutter?

According to the PHS, Joan Reilly, senior director of PHS' Philadelphia Green program thinks so.

"This neighborhood treasure now has a high-tech system that will reduce stormwater flow into the city's system," she says. "Sustainable stormwater management—rain gardens, rain barrels, and other nontraditional methods of controlling stormwater—is an important next step in making Philadelphia one of the greenest cities in the country."

Philadelphia Green, the nation's most comprehensive urban greening program, has partnered with the Philadelphia Water Department's Office of Watersheds to improve stormwater 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, reports the PHS.