

October 25, 2016

Dear Water Department of Philadelphia,

I am so impressed by all the ways Philadelphia is a vanguard in sustainability for older, industrial cities in the Northeast region. We are literally showcasing for the rest of the country ways that urban planners and agencies can create a more green climate and retrofit old structures.

As you know, one of the jewels in our sustainability crown is the city's thriving support of urban gardening. I represent the voices of one such garden.

We are located on the border of Southwest Germantown and Nicetown, less than a mile from your offices on Cambria. Ours is a low-income area in a dense neighborhood. In fact, the garden is the only green spot in our entire block. Our block is all rowhomes with no front yard whatsoever. Our garden, however, located at the top of the hill, is an amazing spot of grass, vegetables, and open space. It stops many cubic feet of water from plunging down the hill of pavement, soaking in all the rain. In addition, we have seven barrels to catch and use rain. We are installing now boards (trash-picked) to make a solid barrier against any soil or water erosion on the slope.

Currently, our dues are more than modest due to incomes in our neighborhood, and we hope to keep them that way. If we had to have any charge for stormwater control, we would not be able to cover those charges without raising dues.

I believe our gardeners work very hard to keep corners of the city green. They grow and share organic produce with our neighborhood food pantries for free distribution to the hungry. They keep our block green and alive. I believe we all deserve your support by not levying a stormwater bill on our garden property.

Let us all continue to work together. Making Philly green takes hours and hours of volunteer labor. Let us not ask those same faithful volunteers to pay the city for stormwater management when in fact, their work is helping to control stormwater and the problems it creates. There is already a way for properties that handle stormwater well to be rewarded by not being charged stormwater fees. Gardens handle this problem very well. I hope they can be extended the same courtesy.

And thank you for all your work for a green Philadelphia.

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