



JERSEY CITY
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

STORMWATER FEE

The USEPA has issued a Consent Decree that will require studies, upgrades and repairs that will help bring the City's sewer system into compliance with the Clean Water Act. The Decree will require that Jersey City eliminate dry-weather overflows, prevent tidal intrusion, maximize flow to treatment plants and eliminate discharge to public and private property. The projected cost for these structure upgrades and repairs is estimated at \$52 million dollars.

To help offset the tremendous costs associated with the upgrade of the Jersey City Sewer system by the Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA), the Jersey City Environmental Commission recommends that Jersey City revise its stormwater fee structure. Currently, Jersey City recovers the costs of operating and maintaining stormwater infrastructure through a service charge collected from metered customers.

While this fee structure may seem reasonable, it has one major drawback in that non-metered properties such as parking lots and utility right-of-ways do not have to pay a stormwater fee. In addition, the largest generators of stormwater, like malls and parking garages, contribute little or nothing to maintaining the City's stormwater infrastructure. Stormwater user fees are an effective way to redirect the costs for stormwater management towards those properties that generate the most runoff.

In addition to being more equitable, a stormwater fee, based on a property's amount of impervious area, will encourage the use of low impact development techniques and retrofits of large impervious areas. For example, Philadelphia implemented a similar stormwater fee, which encouraged the retrofit of Wissahickon Charter School, a large impervious site, which now intercepts all parking lot runoff with rain gardens.

Since impervious cover is the primary factor in determining the amount of runoff a property will generate, the Environmental Commission recommends that 80 percent of the city's new stormwater fee be based on a property's impervious area, with the remaining 20 percent based upon the



Rain Garden – Wissahickon Charter School



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property's gross area. In this way, stormwater fees will reach non-metered customers such as rail lines, parking lots and utility right-of-ways that account for significant impervious space (and stormwater runoff) within the city.

Jersey City should offer a stormwater fee discount for customers who reduce impervious cover using green infrastructure practices, including rain gardens, infiltration trenches, porous pavements, vegetated swales, and green roofs. If a property is retrofitted with any of these features, the MUA should re-calculate that property's stormwater fee based on the 80/20 impervious/gross area formula.

We recommend that the MUA implement this new fee among its large-meter non-residential customer base over a four-year period. However, for residential and other small-meter customers, a detailed analysis of each of the City's residential properties would be problematic. As a result, all residential properties should be combined and treated as a single land parcel with the total costs of the 80/20 calculation divided equally among all households.

When this fee structure was implemented in Philadelphia, the majority of customers saw a reduction in their fees because the cost was spread out and shared over a larger customer base. For those customers that experience a noticeable increase in their fees, the City provided site-design recommendations that helped decrease the amount of impervious area on these properties and thus decreased their stormwater fees.

The increased revenue stream generated by the storm water fees should be dedicated to addressing the increasing investment Jersey City will have to make to comply with the Consent Decree and control both combined sewer overflows and storm water runoff. In addition, we recommend that Jersey City allocate these funds to demonstration projects, sustainable infrastructure, capital improvements, and operations and maintenance of stormwater facilities.

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Approved: