

WATER METERING POLICY FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS, GATEWAY GARDENS, AND VACANT LAND GREENING PROJECTS

Updated January 2025

It has long been Pittsburgh Water's practice to make potable water available to community-driven greening projects such as vegetable and gateway flower gardens. Pittsburgh Water understands that the long-term viability of these projects depends on seasonal watering and sees this contribution as a way to support the overall health and improvement of the City of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Water's participation in the City's development of a Vacant Lot Toolkit in 2015 led to the formalization of this policy. Based on water usage for greening projects across the City, Pittsburgh Water developed the following standards and process for new greening projects classified under the Adopt-A-Lot Program through the City Planning Department. There are more than 27,000 vacant lots within the City of Pittsburgh, 26% of which are City owned. Non-profits, development corporations, government agencies, and motivated citizens can use the Adopt-A-Lot Program to turn these vacant lots into community assets. Adopt-A-Lot projects follow the same process on lots owned by the City and by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). The water request process is the same in either case. Vacant lot projects on private property should be directed to Pittsburgh Water's existing process for requesting a water tap (not free). Detailed info is available on Pittsburgh Water's website at <https://www.pgh2o.com/developer-manual>.

The assisted water limit for eligible gardens is set at **a donation not to exceed \$500.00 per growing season.**

Process for Adopt-A-Lot Projects to Request Water

1. Leaders of potential Adopt-A-Lot projects first submit an intake form to City Planning's Open Space Specialist (OSS). The OSS reviews the project and has a conversation with the project leader. During this conversation, the OSS will encourage the project leader to consider water access for the project, including rainwater harvesting opportunities whenever feasible (see note below). As needed, as part of the site selection process, the OSS will ask Pittsburgh Water's Underground Asset Manager to determine the feasibility of installing a water access point based on Pittsburgh Water's maps of existing water lines.
2. When a project is entering into a legal agreement with the City of Pittsburgh and is interested in requesting water, the OSS will send a copy of the Design Package submitted by the applicant to water4gardens@pgh2o.com. The Design Package should include the block and lot number, project description, detailed site plan, and construction timeline. The OSS will ask the Underground Asset Manager at Pittsburgh Water to assess the proposed design and determine whether a water tap is feasible.
3. At the time of signing of legal agreements with the City, the OSS will give the applicant a Water Access Request Form to sign. This form, developed by Pittsburgh Water, will include:
 - a. Name, address, phone, and email of person signing the agreement.
 - b. Lot and block number and a brief project description referencing the Design Package, which will be attached to the completed form.
 - c. Preferred date by which to have water, based on construction/planting timeline.
 - d. Calculation of square footage of planting area, based on the site plan.
 - e. Water assistance agreement, stating that the project leader understands that Pittsburgh Water will offer a donation not to exceed \$500.00 per growing season, and that the project leader (whoever is signing the agreement) will be billed at the residential rate for consumption.
 - f. A reminder that Pittsburgh Water will shut off the tap in the fall (on or around December 1) and reopen only if requested before the beginning of each planting season.
 - g. Ink signature of person taking responsibility for the project.

When the Water Access Request Form has been signed, the OSS will send it to water4gardens@pgh2o.com and the Underground Asset Manager at Pittsburgh Water will approve or deny the request.

4. When approved, Pittsburgh Water will schedule tap and meter installation for approved projects. The Underground Asset Manager will coordinate this with the Plumbing Superintendent and will forward the account details to the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)/Billing department. When a meter has been installed, the Plumbing Superintendent will attach the meter information to the request form and provide both to Customer Service management.

5. The garden project leader will be set up to receive monthly bills showing water used.

Process for Public/Community Gardens to Request Water

Other gardens that provide public benefits to the City that are not in the City's Adopt-A-Lot Program may request water directly from Pittsburgh Water.

1. Leaders of potential garden projects complete the Water Access Request Form and submit it to water4gardens@pgh2o.com. Supporting documents must include a project description, plan of the garden, and construction timeline. Rainwater harvesting must be used whenever feasible.
2. As listed above, the Water Access Request Form, developed by Pittsburgh Water, will include:
 - a. Name, address, phone, and email of person signing the agreement.
 - b. Lot and block number and a brief project description referencing the Design Package, which will be attached to the completed form.
 - c. Preferred date by which to have water, based on construction/planting timeline.
 - d. Calculation of square footage of planting area, based on the site plan.
 - e. Water assistance agreement, stating that the project leader understands that Pittsburgh Water will offer a flat donation not to exceed \$500.00 per growing season, and that the project leader (whoever is signing the agreement) will be billed at the residential rate for consumption.
 - f. A reminder that Pittsburgh Water will shut off the tap in the fall (on or around December 1) and reopen only if requested before the beginning of each planting season.
 - g. Ink signature of person taking responsibility for the project.
3. Pittsburgh Water's Underground Asset Manager will determine the feasibility of installing a water access point based on Pittsburgh Water's maps of existing water lines, and approve or deny the request.
4. When approved, Pittsburgh Water will schedule tap and meter installation for approved projects. The Underground Asset Manager will coordinate this with the Plumbing Superintendent and will forward the account details to the Advance Metering Infrastructure (AMI)/Billing department. When a meter has been installed, the Plumbing Superintendent will attach the meter information to the request form and provide both to Customer Service Supervisor management.
5. The garden project leader will be set up to receive monthly bills showing water used.

Additional Components of the Policy

1. Pittsburgh Water plumbing crews will open all taps in the spring (on or around April 1) and close all taps in the fall (on or around December 1). Before the beginning of each planting season, garden leaders must request to have their taps opened in writing.
2. Bills will be issued to garden project leaders on a monthly basis. At the end of the season, a final reading of the meter will occur when the taps are shut off. Project leaders *must contact Pittsburgh Water* each spring to request that taps be turned back on.
3. **Important Notes**
 - a. Pittsburgh Water encourages rainwater harvesting whenever possible. This can include rain containers on neighboring buildings, designs that use swales, berms or the natural slope of the land to keep rain on site, or other creative solutions. Garden leaders may contact Pittsburgh Water's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Team at greeninfrastructure@pgh2o.com for assistance evaluating rainwater harvesting opportunities.
 - b. If large numbers of requests are received, Pittsburgh Water may need to restrict the number of new taps. This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure feasibility. Lots that have pre-existing water lines are easier for Pittsburgh Water to tap than lots where new lines are needed. This could be a deciding factor if new taps must be limited in number.

Water Access Request Form

Contact Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Project Information

Address/Intersection: _____ Block and Lot Number: _____

Project Description:

Square Footage of Planted Space: _____ Requested Date for Water Access: _____

Vegetables: _____ Flowers: _____

Terms and Conditions

I, _____, understand that Pittsburgh Water will provide a donation not to exceed \$500.00 per growing season for the project at _____ for the growing season (May – November) as referenced above. I will ensure that water is only being used for the greening activities indicated in the project proposal as submitted. I agree to be billed monthly at Pittsburgh Water's current residential rate.

I also understand that water will be turned off by Pittsburgh Water crews on or around December 1 of each year, and I must inform the City's Open Space Specialist (for City lots) and Pittsburgh Water every year in early spring (March/April) if I wish to have water turned back on.

If my project's water needs change, I agree to notify the Open Space Specialist (for City lots) and Pittsburgh Water.

Project Representative Date: _____

Pittsburgh Water Representative Date: _____