

Environmental Impact Assessment

In accordance with the Green Acres Program Grant Application, we offer the following assessment to demonstrate the suitability of the site for the proposed activities.

1. Description of Proposed Project

Dawes Park is a 1.4-acre multi-use park located adjacent to the Roger C. Cook Greenway Trail. This park has playground equipment designed for younger children (2-10 years of age). The park includes a small open field for sports play and the only public basketball courts available in any of the Hightstown parks. The proposed improvements will include the restriping and possible expansion of the existing basketball court, addition of bleachers with possible skating elements adjacent to the basketball court, installation of park benches and picnic tables to the existing open areas of the park, addition of new play surface and new play equipment, including some ADA compliant equipment to the existing playground, improvement of ADA access through the park and from the parking lot and improvements to the multi-use open grass area.

Project Objectives:

- The design will provide active recreation opportunities with the addition of new play equipment and play surfaces.
- Increase park usage by encouraging older children to engage in park play.
- Maintain open areas for passive recreational use.
- Maintain the existing tree canopy to the maximum extent possible.

2. Description of the Environment

a. Vegetation

Existing vegetation includes native grass areas and deciduous trees, including several white pine trees.

b. Wildlife

The park provides a habitat for various birds and small mammals like squirrels and rabbits. There are no known state or federally threatened or endangered species or critical habitats within the project limits.

c. Geology, Topography, and Soils

The Borough of Hightstown is in the Piedmont Plains landscape as per NJDEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife. According to the NJDEP's NJ-GeoWeb, the surficial geology consists of the Pensauken Formation. The bedrock geology consists of the Kmv Merchantville Formation. The Pensauken Formation consists mainly of sand that includes weathered feldspar and clayey sand.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Conservation Services, the soils at Dawes Park are comprised of mostly Sassafras sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes, well drained (SacB). This soil covers 80 percent of the site and has a capacity to transmit water between 0.20 to 2.00 in/hr.

Typical Sassafras (SacB) profile:

- *Ap – 0 to 12 inches: sandy loam*

- *Bt1 – 12 to 18 inches: sandy loam*
- *Bt2 – 18 to 28 inches: sandy clay loam*
- *BC – 28 to 40 inches: loamy sand*
- *C1 – 40 to 58 inches: sand*
- *C2 – 58 to 80 inches: sand*

d. Water Resources/Hydrology

As per NJDEP's GeoWeb, the Borough of Hightstown is located over the Merchantville-Woodbury confining unit (mewcu), an "E" ranked aquifer with a median yield of 25 to 100 gpm).

e. Historic/Archeological Resources

The site is within the Camden and Amboy Railroad Main Line Historic District.

f. Transportation/Access to Site

The site is accessible by car, public transportation via the Route 130 bus, bicycle and walking. The main entrance to the park is through the parking lot on Railroad Avenue.

g. Adjacent Land Uses

NJDEP's GeoWeb classifies the site as urban. The surrounding properties are a mixture of residential and commercial properties. The northwestern portion of the site is classified as forest.

3. Environmental Impact Analysis of Proposed Action

The affected resources are the entire park area. The footprint of the existing playground area may be enlarged. Proposed improvements will be in areas that are already cleared or will require minimal additional clearing.

As one of the larger parks in the Borough, the topography and soil conditions will not change from existing conditions. The project will minimize impacts to existing trees and drainage features while providing public access to safe and healthy ways to experience the recreational features of the park.

Short term impacts include barricading the proposed construction areas, limiting access to the park during construction, minimal disruption of soil surfaces and measures to control soil erosion will be taken during and after the construction activities until vegetation is established. In the long term, the proposed project will support the improved maintenance of Dawes Park. The proposed improvements will increase park usage by encouraging older children to engage in park play and improve the health and wellness of the residents of the Borough.

The proposed improvements will create a much more inviting, aesthetically pleasing public recreation space, which will increase visitation to the park. The refurbishment and addition of new park amenities will also encourage more of the community to use the park.

Preliminarily, the area of disturbance for the project may not exceed 5,000 square feet, therefore a Soil Erosion Permit may not be required for these improvements.

This project is not expected to be impacted by sea level rise.

4. Alternatives to Proposed Action

a. Identify Alternate Site

- This option is null because the proposed improvements are to upgrade and improve the existing park amenities.

b. Discuss alternate levels and types of development

- Not applicable

c. Compare environmental impacts of each alternative

- Not applicable

5. Mitigating Measures

No adverse impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed improvements. Should any issues arise during or after construction, the Borough will respond accordingly to any neighbor concerns or environmental issues.

6. Author(s) and Qualifications

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