

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Green Acres- Park Development

Riverfront Park

SPARK

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

a. Briefly describe the total development project

The proposed project will create necessary improvements to Riverfront Park, located in the Ironbound district of Newark. This park is the only public green space in Newark along a waterfront. The proposed project will provide improvements to the current basketball and tennis courts and baseball fields at Riverfront Park. The scope of work includes site demolition, preparation, and earthwork, installation of synthetic turf, tennis and basketball improvements, playground improvements, related park equipment installation (dugouts, benches, backstops, bases, fences, gates, park appurtenances), and site landscaping.

b. State objectives of the project

This objective of this project is to make necessary upgrades to Riverfront Park, specifically the basketball and tennis courts, as well as the ballfields, which remain heavily used by children in the local public schools, youth athletic teams, adult sport leagues, and those looking for personal recreation and leisure. These improvements will create safer facilities that will enhance playability and the overall experience, increase fitness and wellness within the community, and decrease the complaints of the current conditions.

c. Fully describe multi-phase projects

Not applicable because this project is not a multi-phased.

d. Synthetic Turf Addendum

Due Diligence:

1. *Synthetic turf field drainage systems must be well-designed and properly maintained to avoid increased run-off from synthetic turf fields. Successful applicants whose projects include a synthetic turf field should design their projects in conformance with the requirements of the NJDEP Stormwater Management rules, even if the project is otherwise exempt.*

SPARK, in cooperation with the County of Essex, will work to ensure that the construction of the drainage systems will be adequately designed to mitigate run-off and comply with NJDEP Stormwater Management rules.

2. *Turf type should be evaluated to address potential ecosystem contamination.*

SPARK will work with consulting engineers to evaluate turf types to ensure no ecosystem contamination.

3. *Synthetic turf fields can increase the ambient temperature of the neighborhood, especially in highly developed areas.*

The increase of ambient temperature is not expected with this project.

4. *Synthetic turf fields have been shown to have elevated surface temperatures, which can increase the risk of heat-related injuries, especially in children. Applicants are strongly encouraged to design projects so that adjacent shade trees are preserved whenever possible, additional shade trees are planted, and/or shade structures are provided to mitigate this risk.*

The proposed scope of work will update current recreational facilities at the park and will not remove trees.

5. *The industry standard for synthetic turf field warranties is eight years, though properly maintained fields may last up to fifteen years. Applicants should ensure that the individuals responsible for field maintenance adopt best management practices to maximize the life of the field. End-of-life recycling for the turf carpet and infill is available and should be explored. When budgeting for a synthetic field, applicants should keep in mind the anticipated life of the facility, cost and frequency of replacement, and Green Acres' policy to not re-fund facilities for at least 20 years.*

The Essex County Parks Department will be responsible for park maintenance and will continue to work diligently to increase the sustainability and longevity of the proposed facilities. Once the proposed turf has reached the end of its life, it will be properly recycled.

Alternative: *Discuss in the Environmental Impact Assessment Alternatives to the Proposed Actions section why synthetic turf is a necessary or preferable alternative to natural turf.*

Synthetic turf is preferable for this project as it limits necessary maintenance and can withstand flooding and extreme weather better than natural turf or grass.

Communication: *Discuss the potential benefits and risks, including the Environmental Impact Analysis of Proposed Action and Alternatives to the Proposed Actions sections of the Environmental Impact Assessment, during the required public hearing for the project application.*

SPARK is a nonprofit organization and not required to host a public hearing.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Describe existing environmental features:

a. vegetation

The site of the proposed project will take place in Riverfront Park, which is 14 acres, and adjacent to Riverbank Park via a public greenway stretching nine city blocks long. Within Riverfront Park, there are existing walking trails, benches, trees, shrubbery, and vegetation for the residents of Newark and visitors to enjoy.

b. wildlife, including State and federal threatened and endangered species and critical habitats

Because of the City of Newark's urban landscape and environment, there is wildlife consistent with developed and highly dense areas, such as squirrels, skunks, chipmunks, and regional bird species.

c. geology, topography, and soils

Unfortunately, at one time, the Newark area and banks of the Passaic River were home to a former Agent Orange dioxin factory, which lead to significant pollution and extensive environmental damage in the local environment. Because the site of the now Riverfront Park was one used as a toxic herbicide and pesticide dumping ground, the area is an EPA Superfund site, and underwent major renovations in the last two decades to eliminate any remaining contamination within the soil. The river and park have experienced significant and complex approaches of removing the contaminated soil and sediments have been completed, and now the soil that fills the park is safe. However, the restoration of the park has allowed the community to increase their environmental conservation efforts, and investment into the new park infrastructure. At this time, there are no environmental factors of concern at this project site.

d. water resources/hydrology

As its name is derived from its location, Riverfront Park is located directly behind the Passaic River. This significant body of water flows about 80 miles long, and from the area of the river in front of the park, joins the Hackensack River at the northern end of the Newark Bay, which is a back bay of the New York Harbor.

e. historic/archeological resources

Per the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Historic Preservation Office, Riverbank Park, which is adjacent to Riverfront Park, is recognized as a historic property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. However, Riverfront Park is not recognized as a historical or archaeological resource.

f. transportation/access to site

Riverfront Park remains easily accessible via foot, bike, car, bus, and train. There is a parking lot directly attached to the park entrance which allows dozens of vehicles to park easily and accessibly to the park. 0.4 miles from the park is Newark Penn Station, a major rail and bus carrier ranked in

the top 10 list of busiest rail station in the United States. Similarly, NJ Transit buses 108, 40, 378, and 1 all remain in the vicinity of the park. Lastly, the paths around and within the park allow for individuals to access the path via foot or bike.

g. adjacent land uses/description of the surrounding neighborhood

Not applicable

3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION

Impacts are defined as direct or indirect changes to the existing environment, whether beneficial or adverse, that are anticipated to result from the proposed action or related future actions and uses. Any off-site impacts, such as increased traffic on neighborhood roads or increased noise levels in surrounding areas, should be described. Whenever possible, environmental impacts should be quantified (i.e., number of trees to be removed, cubic yards of cut/fill, etc.).

a. Discuss all affected resources and the significance of each impact

The proposed project consists of replacing existing facilities within a fully developed park. For that reason, there are no affected resources expected in the project. No trees will be removed, and soil inspection and testing will be conducted, as well as soil erosion and sediment control measures.

b. Discuss short-term and long-term project impacts

There are no expected impacts, either short or long-term, from the proposed project. Any minor disturbances will be limited to the installation and improvements of the existing ballfield and courts. The long-term result of this project will provide a safer and more easily accessible open space for the community, and the new materials and facilities used will be easily maintained to be used for a long time.

c. Discuss anticipated increase in recreation and overall use of site over time

Many people flock to Riverfront Park, given its highly residential and commercial environment. The current facilities still attract many people to the fields and area, so with the proposed improvements, the Essex County Parks Department and SPARK anticipate minimal increase in the parks use compared to current usage levels. Local sports teams, families, adult leagues, and more rely on this park, and with the proposed improvements, additional park goers will utilize the site for active and passive recreation.

d. Identify adjacent environmental features that may be affected by the proposal

No adjacent environment features will be affected by the project.

e. *List any permits required for project and brief status (i.e., waterfront development)*

A Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Permit is needed to complete the project.

f. *For development that would impact an undisturbed portion of the project site, the local government must submit a [Natural Heritage Data Request Form](#) to the DEP's Office of Natural Lands Management (form available at the website or by writing to Natural Heritage Program, PO Box 404, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0404). Please attach and discuss the results of the search.*

Not Applicable

g. *Discuss if/how the project may be impacted by sea level rise and any related design considerations.*

The proposed project is not anticipated to be impacted by sea level rise.

4. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

a. *Identify alternate sites*

As the project proposes improvements to existing recreational amenities at an existing recreation site, alternative sites for the proposed improvements do not exist.

b. *Discuss alternate levels and types of development*

The proposed improvements are to be completed within the existing Riverfront Park site. There are no alternative sites or types of development.

c. *Compare environmental impacts of each alternative*

Not applicable.

5. MITIGATING MEASURES

Describe the measures that will be undertaken to mitigate adverse impacts

Mitigation of adverse impacts to Riverfront Park or the surrounding environment are not necessary, as this project will be completed in the already existing developed park.

6. AUTHOR(S) AND QUALIFICATIONS

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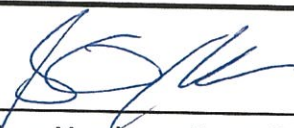


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2024 GREEN ACRES
County of Essex
RIVERFRONT PARK - BASKETBALL, TENNIS AND BASEBALL
IMPROVEMENTS

Cost Estimate

RIVERFRONT PARK - BASKETBALL, TENNIS, PLAYGROUND AND BASEBALL FIELD IMPROVEMENTS	
Site Demolition	\$325,000.00
Site Preparation and Earthwork	\$350,000.00
Synthetic Turf Surface System Ball Fields	\$310,000.00
Tennis Courts improvements	\$325,000.00
Basketball Courts improvements	\$125,000.00
Playground Improvements	\$175,000.00
Dugouts, Backstop, Bleachers, bases	\$150,000.00
Concrete and HMA Walkway	\$180,000.00
Chain Link Fence and Gates	\$150,000.00
Miscellaneous Drainage	\$150,000.00
Landscaping, trimming, irrigation	\$450,000.00
Park appurtenances	\$150,000.00
SUBTOTAL	\$2,840,000.00
Professional Services @ 13%	\$369,200.00
Contingency @20%	\$568,000.00
RIVERFRONT PARK - TOTAL BUDGET	\$3,777,200.00



Sanjeev Varghese, Essex County Engineer
Essex County Department of Public Works



Date