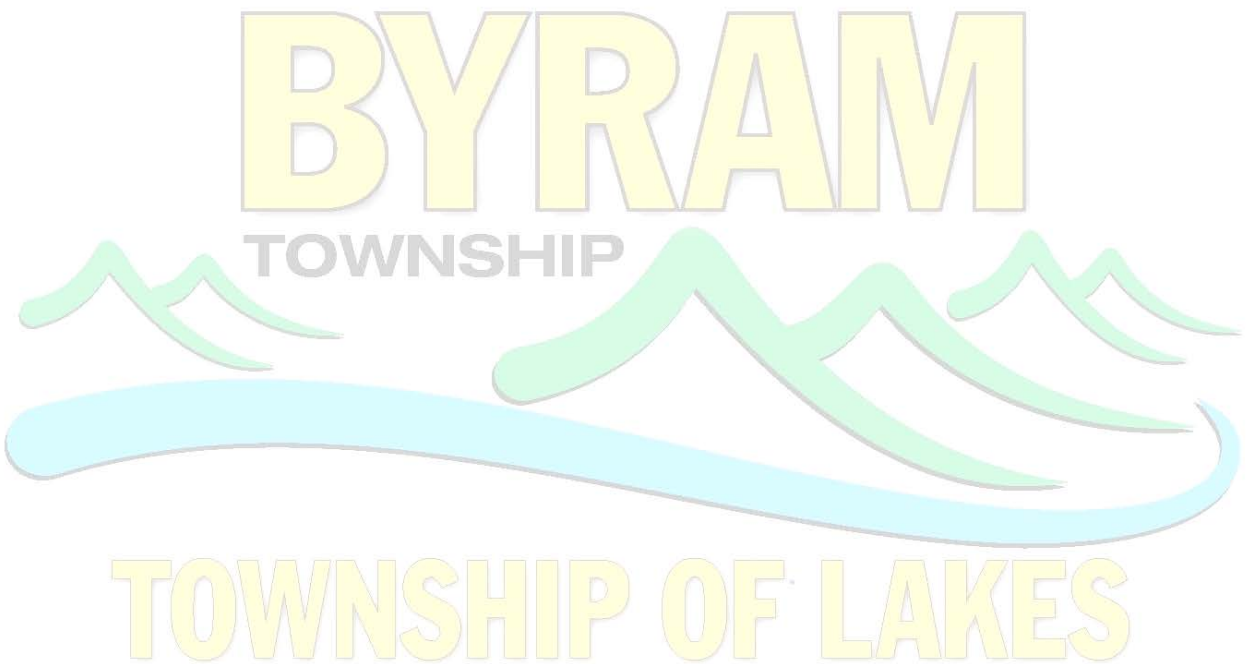


Environmental Impact Assessment



**Township of Byram
C.O. Johnson Park
Inclusive Playground Project**

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed all-inclusive playground project will take place at C.O. Johnson Park located at 117 Roseville Rd. in Byram Township. C.O. Johnson Park is a 55.6-acre parcel located in the Township of Byram near the Forest Lakes section of the township. With this funding the full scope of work for the proposed project will include removal of the old, damaged playground equipment, minimal playground surface grading and installation, installation of Jake's Law compliant fully inclusive playground equipment and play surface, and general maintenance of access points to provide access for visitors of all abilities. The project will be completed at one time and phasing will not be required.

Byram Township spans an area of 22 square miles and the communities contained within the Township are vastly spread out into pocket communities. Currently, there are no playgrounds or similar amenities nearby to serve visitors of all abilities throughout our community. Therefore, C.O. Johnson Park would be the ideal location for an all-inclusive playground as this is the Township's most active recreational facility. C.O. Johnson Park is the center of the Township's recreation programs and accommodates our primary sports fields, tennis/pickleball courts, basketball courts, walking paths, bocce ball courts, skate park and a children's playground.

Project Objectives

- To create additional recreational facilities to meet the needs of Byram Township and surrounding communities. Provide physical benefits through active play and engagement with other children.
- Provide a new, completely inclusive playground that will accommodate residents of all abilities in alignment with the grant program objectives.
- Provide a playground that can meet the needs of small children as well as older children.
- Promote sensory friendly spaces that have previously not been available in a playground setting in the Township.
- Facilitate group interaction which assist in social skills as well as communication skills.
- Update play equipment to meet the current standards in play.
- Accommodate people with disabilities to the greatest extent possible.
- Enhance the overall recreation facilities at C.O. Johnson Park.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Byram Township is located in the Highlands Region as defined by the Highlands Water Protection & Planning Act of 2004 (Highlands Act). Nearly the entire Township is within the Act's designated "Preservation Area". The provisions of the Highlands Act require Highlands municipalities to conform their zoning ordinances and planning guidance documents with the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) for all areas of the municipality located within the Preservation Area. Byram Township has also opted to conform with the RMP for all areas of the municipality located within the "Planning Area" of the Highlands as well.

Vegetation

There are no tree removals, plantings or major landscape changes associated with this project. As such, the environment surrounding the project footprint will continue to promote the stewardship of our natural resources.

Wildlife

Wildlife consists of animals typically found within wooded areas surrounded by existing residential and commercial development. There are no species of State Threatened or Endangered ranking found on-site. Additionally, no species listed on the Department's Critically Dependent on Regulated Waters for Survival list are present on the site.

Geology, Topography and Soils

The site is already developed with an existing playground and has minimal slope from south to north across the play area. Per the USDA Web Soil Survey, the playground is located entirely within the HkrgBb – Hinckley loamy coarse sand, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony soil type. The soil has a restrictive layer greater than 80 inches and rock should not interfere with the installation of the playground equipment or safety surface.

Water Resources/Hydrology

There are no water resources identified within the project area immediately surrounding C.O. Johnson Park.

Historical/Archeological Resources

Per the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office LUCY 2.0 mapping, there are no known areas of historical or archeological resources within the proposed project site. The project site is not a historic property, located within any archaeological grid, or within a historic district.

Transportation/Access to Site

There is parking on the property with paved walking paths that lead from the parking areas to the fields and playground. The system of paved walking paths that traverse the park linking the fields, parking areas and playground help facilitate access to park goers with ambulatory disabilities. Currently public transportation is not available to C.O. Johnson Park however, a rail station is currently being constructed in Andover Township within one mile of the park.

Adjacent Land Uses/Description of the Surrounding Neighborhood

The surrounding area is primarily wooded to the north, east south and southwest. Single-family residential development is located to the northwest.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION

Affected resources and the significance of each impact

The development of the all-inclusive playground will encompass the current footprint of the existing playground. Therefore, there will be no impact to the existing facilities and landscape, nor will it affect any environmental resources.

Short-term and long-term project impacts

As previously mentioned, short-term impacts will include minimal soil disturbance and surface grading to install the playground surface. The project does not pose any long-term threats to cultural or natural resources.

Anticipated increase in recreation and overall use of site over time

C.O. Johnson currently hosts hundreds of visitors a year. The project will increase interest and visitation through its facility improvement efforts and public outreach. This site is well known for its recreational and outdoor opportunities, specifically for sports teams, seniors, families with children and outdoor passive recreation enthusiasts of all ages. Adding an all-inclusive playground and maintaining accessible walking paths will enhance visitor experience by creating more active spaces for families, residents, and visitors to enjoy. They will be able to engage in outdoor public programs and participate in passive recreational activities.

Adjacent environmental features that may be affected by the proposal

No adjacent environment features will be affected by the project.

Permits needed

The project will require the following permits, to be obtained during the design of the project:

- Upper Delaware Soil Conservation District
- Local Construction Permits

The Township is familiar with the process to obtain these and will begin this process when necessary.

4. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Due to the fact that there is an existing playground at the location of the proposed playground and the footprint will not be expanded, an alternative location was not considered. Any alternative location will require disturbance of vegetation and soil. After a review of the needs of the community, the playground was designed to provide as many new, inclusive play elements as possible in the current space. After a thorough review of all options for the playground location there are no alternative locations which would create less of an environmental impact.

5. MITIGATING MEASURES

The proposed improvements are to be completed within an existing developed park and will have limited impact on existing resources; therefore, mitigation will not be required for this project.

6. AUTHOR(S) AND QUALIFICATIONS

Cory L. Stoner, P.E., C.M.E., P.P., Byram Township Municipal Engineer