

# **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Switlik Park Completely Inclusive Playground Project**

## **1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **a. Briefly describe the total development project**

The proposed project involves the development of a completely inclusive playground at Switlik Park, located at 55 Fisher Place, Hamilton Township, Mercer County, NJ. The playground will be designed to be accessible to individuals of all abilities, meeting or exceeding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and the standards outlined in Jake's Law.

### **b. State objectives of the project**

- Create a safe, accessible, and inclusive play space for children and adults of all abilities.
- Improve recreational opportunities within Switlik Park while maintaining environmental integrity.
- Encourage community engagement and enhance public use of the park.
- Adhere to the Green Acres Program's mission of preserving open space for recreation and conservation.

### **c. Multi-Phase Development**

- The primary phase includes the creation of a completely inclusive playground at Switlik Park

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **a. Vegetation**

Switlik Park features a mix of maintained lawns, deciduous trees, and shrubs. The development will aim to minimize vegetation disturbance and incorporate native plantings.

### **b. Wildlife, including State and federal threatened and endangered species and critical habitats**

The site does not contain federally or state-listed endangered species habitats. However, the surrounding areas may serve as habitats for common urban wildlife, such as squirrels, birds, and small mammals.

### **c. Geology, Topography, and Soils**

The park sits on relatively flat terrain with well-drained soils. Soil stability tests will be conducted to ensure suitability for construction.

### **d. Water Resources/Hydrology**

There are no major water bodies on-site, but stormwater management will be incorporated to mitigate runoff impacts.

**e. Historic/Archeological Resources**

A preliminary assessment indicates no historically significant structures or archeological sites within the project area.

**f. Transportation and Access**

Switlik Park is accessible via Fisher Place and surrounding residential streets. The project will include improved pathways and parking accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

**g. Adjacent Land Uses**

The park is surrounded by residential areas, schools, and other recreational facilities. The project aligns with existing community land use.

**3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION**

**a. Affected Resources and Significance of Impact**

- Increased foot traffic could lead to minor soil compaction and vegetation wear.
- Stormwater runoff may increase but will be mitigated with permeable surfaces.

**b. Short-term and Long-term Impacts**

- **Short-term:** Construction-related noise, dust, and potential minor disruptions to nearby residents.
- **Long-term:** Increased recreational use, improved community wellness, and enhanced property values.

**c. Increase in Recreation and Site Use**

The playground is expected to significantly boost park visitation, particularly among families with children of diverse abilities.

**d. Adjacent Environmental Features Affected**

No significant adverse effects on nearby green spaces, with mitigations planned for noise and lighting.

**e. Required Permits**

- Local construction and zoning permits.
- Soil erosion and sediment control certification.
- NJDEP stormwater management permit (if required).

**f. Natural Heritage Data Request**

A request will be submitted to confirm no impact on protected natural areas.

**g. Sea Level Rise Considerations**

Not applicable as Switlik Park is not a coastal site.

**4. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION**

**a. Alternate Sites**

Other locations in Hamilton Township were considered. However Switlik Park offers the best accessibility and existing infrastructure.

**b. Alternative Development Levels**

A reduced-scale project with fewer features was considered but deemed insufficient to meet community needs.

**c. Comparison of Environmental Impacts**

Alternative sites would require more extensive land clearing. The selected site minimizes disruption and maximizes public benefit.

**5. MITIGATING MEASURES**

- **Noise Reduction:** Limiting construction to daytime hours and installing sound-buffering vegetation.
- **Wildlife Protection:** Scheduling construction outside nesting seasons for local bird species.
- **Sustainable Materials:** Use of recycled, non-toxic, and low-maintenance materials.

**6. AUTHOR(S) AND QUALIFICATIONS**

- Prepared based on the Environmental Impact Assessment Outline provided by the NJDEP Green Acres Jake's Law FY25 program. Specific project details provided by the Township of Hamilton.