

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Over \$100 Million Investment in Urban Parks, Playgrounds, and Open Spaces Across New Jersey

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UNION CITY – Governor Phil Murphy, alongside New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette and Senator Brian P. Stack, today announced a proposed investment of over \$100 million in urban parks, playgrounds, open spaces, and other local park improvement projects through the Green Acres Program. The over \$100 million proposal, which is pending final approval by the Garden State Preservation Trust, would establish new parks and expand existing ones, develop athletic fields and playgrounds, improve access to waterways, create open spaces, build flood resilience, and enhance stewardship by restoring lands for nature and public enjoyment. New Jersey has more than 20 percent of its land dedicated to parks and wildlife – more than any other state in the continental United States.

“With these investments, we will take another significant step toward ensuring all New Jersey communities have access to recreational opportunities and enjoy the benefits of natural resource conservation,” **said Governor Murphy**. “The proposed projects will provide equitable and meaningful access to urban parks, help address the impacts of climate change, and advance our long-term resilience goals. Investing in our communities through these projects will improve the quality of life for families living across New Jersey now and in the future.”

“From our incredible Green Acres investments in local parks, to our historic investments in the restoration of natural resources throughout the state, including at Liberty State Park, our Administration has put its money where its heart is,” **said New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn LaTourette**. “With Governor Murphy’s vision and leadership, we are accelerating our work to put all of New Jersey’s residents in touch with their environment, with a long overdue focus on those communities that have not shared equally in the environmental benefits of our great state.”

For this round of Green Acres funding, applicants were encouraged to develop projects that anticipate and address climate change impacts, advance long-term resilience goals, provide equitable and meaningful public access, and maximize social, environmental and health benefits to the public, particularly within overburdened communities.

The Garden State Preservation Trust will consider the following recommended allocations:

- \$42.2 million in grants and loans for 49 park development projects in urban, suburban and rural communities. Nearly 84 percent of these funds are for local park development projects and land acquisitions in municipalities with overburdened communities;
- \$35.8 million in grants and loans for 57 county and municipal land acquisitions projects;

- \$8.8 million for acquisition projects by 14 nonprofit organizations;
- \$4.9 million for park development projects by 11 nonprofit organizations;
- \$2.3 million for 10 local stewardship projects; and,
- \$901,000 for six nonprofit stewardship projects.

The Garden State Preservation Trust will forward its final recommendations to the Legislature for funding approval.

Other funding allocations include:

- \$54.5 million for improvements to state parks, forests and wildlife management areas;
- \$38.4 million for the state to acquire and preserve open space;
- \$6 million in the FY21 and FY22 budgets for land acquisition, park development, and historic preservation projects in overburdened communities, through a new Urban Parks initiative to promote environmental equity. Eligible communities were invited to apply for funding and 13 will receive grants;
- \$4.6 million for the Blue Acres Buyout Program to purchase flood-prone properties.

Some of the major Urban Parks Grants include:

- Renovating Tippin's Pond Park in **Pennsauken, Camden County**, with fishing docks, viewing platforms, trail improvements and volleyball courts;
- Acquiring a half-acre property, demolishing a former firehouse on site and creating a firehouse-themed splash park for children in **Guttenberg, Hudson County**;
- Acquiring an 11.5-acre parcel in **Edison Township, Middlesex County**, to create a waterfront park;
- Expanding the Holmes A. Adams Recreation Complex in **Neptune City, Monmouth County**; and,
- Stabilizing the historic Colt Gun Mill on the Allied Textile Printing site in **Paterson, Passaic County**, to preserve the mill and transform the property for passive open space.

Some of the major local projects approved for matching Green Acres grants and loans include:

BERGEN COUNTY

- Multiple improvements would be made to Riverside County Park South in **Lyndhurst** and **North Arlington**, including a new all-access point at Park Street and a foot path connection at the Bergen Avenue and River Road intersection. An extended walkway system with footbridges and lighting; fitness stations; a playground and spray park with safety surfacing; riverfront overlooks; a relocated baseball field; a pavilion; landscaping, fencing, stormwater management improvements and more are also proposed.
- Basketball courts and walkways would be improved at Carver Park, while playground and athletic field improvements are proposed for Columbus Park, both in **Hackensack**.

BURLINGTON COUNTY

- The second phase of improvements at Willingboro Lakes Park in **Willingboro** would expand parking and improve public access to the lakes and Rancocas Creek.
- Sports lighting would be added to two baseball/softball fields at the Pemberton Sports Complex, and to two football fields, a practice field and a game field at Nesbit Park in **Pemberton**.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

- The Joseph E. Romano Sports Complex in **Vineland** would use its grant to develop an inclusive playground and sensory garden, exercise circuit stations around the existing running/walking track, and construct restrooms.

ESSEX COUNTY

- Oval Park in **East Orange** would see multiple improvements: a turf restoration of the multi-purpose playing field, constructing a circuit rubberized walking path encircling the field, razing and rebuilding the field house, resurfacing the basketball courts, adding spectator seating, and landscaping.
- **Newark**, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, would develop Broadway Park to include playgrounds, playing fields, additional lighting, art, rain gardens and a community garden.

GLOUCESTER COUNTY

- The existing grassed football field at South Delsea Drive Park in **Glassboro** would be replaced with a synthetic turf multi-purpose field that can be used for football, soccer, lacrosse and field hockey.

HUDSON COUNTY

- **Kearny** proposes improvements at Passaic Avenue and Bellevue Turnpike, including a new floating dock and ramps along the Passaic River shoreline, riverbank stabilization, bulkhead reconstruction and stabilizing the area around the boathouse. A new gazebo picnic area is also proposed. Additionally, the town would upgrade the existing soccer and baseball fields at Harvey Field to synthetic turf and convert an existing parking lot to a green infrastructure permeable surface to improve drainage. Sidewalks also would be installed.
- **Union City** proposes to acquire a small land parcel on Palisade Avenue to demolish an existing building there and redevelop it with a soccer field for younger children.

MERCER COUNTY

- The former American Biltrite Rubber site at 3 Amtico Square in **Trenton** would be converted into a skatepark with lighting and a shade structure. Several multi-purpose game courts would be constructed at the park for bicycle polo, street soccer, tennis, basketball and volleyball. Additionally, a trail would be built along the creek toward Capital City Farm and the D & R Canal Towpath.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

- **Old Bridge** would develop the Cottrell Farm property over four phases. Phases 2 through 4 propose a walking/fitness trail, splash pad, community/memorial garden, gazebo and picnic grove with pavilion, playground, amphitheater, parking improvements, various landscaping upgrades, stormwater management improvements and a restroom building.
- The Veterans Memorial Youth League Complex in **Perth Amboy** would see multiple improvements including the conversion of four grass baseball fields to synthetic turf multi-purpose fields for baseball, softball, soccer and lacrosse. An expanded patio and picnic area with a shade structure, sheltered dugouts, scoreboards, landscaping, fencing, stormwater management improvements and a walking trail connecting to Willow Pond Park are also proposed.

OCEAN COUNTY

- **Brick** would complete the third phase of a multi-park improvement project at Bayside Park, with playground equipment and safety surfacing, shade structures, fish bait cleaning stations and safety ladders, walkways, lighting, utilities, irrigation, security improvements, landscaping and parking lot work.

PASSAIC COUNTY

- The county, city and the Trust for Public Land are partnering to do multiple upgrades at Dundee Island Park in **Passaic City**. A second phase of improvements proposes improved parking, a refurbished

soccer field, playground and spray park, exercise equipment area, community garden, boat launch, river walk and landscaping.

- **Passaic** plans improvements at Veteran’s Memorial Park and Pulaski Park. Baseball field lighting and drainage, playground safety surfacing, parking lot improvements, tennis court rehabilitation and lighting, basketball court lighting and landscaping are proposed for Veteran’s Memorial Park. Pulaski Park would get a new fitness trail, pump track, bike park, dog park, playground equipment, landscaping and security cameras.

UNION COUNTY

- Improvements to the pool and playground area are planned at the Rushmore Avenue Recreational Complex in **Plainfield**. The kiddie pool would be replaced with a splash pad and the city would construct a new pavilion and asphalt walkway. Park benches, picnic tables, and a decorative park entranceway arch are also proposed.
- Home Terrace Park in **Roselle** would undergo significant renovations including the relocation and installation of playground equipment with a rubber safety surface, construction of a splash park and concrete walkways, and installation of decorative lights, park benches and landscaping.

“Everyone in New Jersey deserves quality parks and recreation facilities that give children places to play, help connect us to nature, improve our physical and mental health, and enhance quality of life, especially in our most vulnerable and overburdened communities,” **said Martha Sullivan Sapp, Director of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Green Acres Program**. “These proposed grants and loans enhance the Murphy Administration’s historic commitment to environmental justice on all levels, helping to improve public health and drive economic development statewide.”

“I am excited for all the changes that are coming to our community thanks to the Green Acres funding award,” **said Senator Brian P. Stack**. “As a mayor in one of the mostly densely populated areas in the state, my administration has focused on the creation and preservation of green spaces for community and recreational use. I have made it my mission to bring equity to our community in form of green spaces and through the maintenance of our local parks. Special thanks to Governor Phil Murphy and his administration for their commitment to the preservation of green spaces.”

For the complete list of projects proposed for funding, visit www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/>).

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