

General Management Plan

Tices Lane Park



Prepared in April, 2017

By: Daryl Krasnuk

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 2

 ACQUISITION..... 2

 MISSION STATEMENT 2

 STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE..... 2

 HISTORY..... 2

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT 4

THEMES & OBJECTIVES 4

 NATURAL AND HISTORIC CONTEXT 4

 INTERPRETIVE THEMES 4

 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND VISITOR SERVICE OBJECTIVES 5

DEMOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT 6

GENERATION OF ALTERNATIVES 6

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND ACTION PLAN..... 7

BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS..... 8

COOPERATING ORGANIZATIONS & FRIENDS GROUPS..... 8

NEXT STEP 9

BIBLIOGRAPHY 10

Introduction

Acquisition

Tices Lane Park is a unique natural resource in a heavily developed area. The topography of the park, relative to surrounding areas, prevented the land from being used for agriculture like much of the surrounding area. The steep slopes, hydric soils and winding stream likely played a role in steering development away from this small plot of land as well. To ensure this land remained in its natural state, the Green Acres program purchased three parcels of land the park sits on today. East Brunswick Township and the Green Acres program purchased the first parcel in 1981 and the next two were purchased in 1985. The land was designated as public property (Class 15C) with the goal to preserve the natural environment and resources for the public. The three parcels of land total 23.7 acres in size and as of 2016 list the township of East Brunswick as the owner.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of Tices Lane Park to create educational opportunities for growth and enhancement by integrating on site resources with local schools to promote citizen involvement and a strong sense of community that will ultimately create a healthier park.

Statements of Significance

- Tices Lane Park is a unique natural area as an outlier of the pine barrens
- The site is a haven in a densely developed industrial and residential area
- The park provides an opportunity for recreation and education for the community and local students
- This site has remained in its natural state for nearly 100 years as the surrounding area has changed

History

Archeologists cannot say for sure who the first human inhabitants of East Brunswick were, but there is evidence supporting settlement by the Native Americans known as the Lenape. In 1651 the Dutch purchased a large tract of land that included all of present day Middlesex County north of the Raritan, from the Lenape. Many of the trails that the Lenape had used to transverse the wilderness was widened by the Dutch and used for commerce.

Some of these trials passed close to the present-day site of Tices Lane Park. New Netherland was established on the Raritan close to present day New Brunswick and settlement gradually expanded south.¹

Beginning in the 1660s the first few Middlesex County Townships were founded, Woodbridge and Piscataway were the first two. Towns acted as the central hubs for farming initially before a slow transition to transportation of goods became the centralized feature of organization. Thomas Lawrence settled along present day Lawrence Brook on the northern side of what is now East Brunswick. The key location between New York and Philadelphia along with the convenience of the Raritan River, and the Lenape established trails, put Middlesex County in a position to attract settlers at a high rate. After more than a century and a half of power struggles, wars and the American Revolution, New Jersey became the first State to ratify the Bill of Rights and Middlesex County continued to establish new townships.² East Brunswick was still not formerly settled but continued to serve a key role in agriculture and transportation of raw goods.

After incorporating in 1860 and with the onset of the Civil War East Brunswick began to industrialize. Railroad networks were expanded including one that appeared to cut through, or very close to present day Tices Lane Park (TLP).³ Middlesex County became major manufacturer of Terra Cotta due its rich clay belt. It is unclear if any of this excavation took place at TLP, but historical imagery and existing evidence of excavation suggests that some sort of mining activity did in fact occur at TLP.⁴

East Brunswick continued to have a strong agricultural sector as manufacturing shifted to New Brunswick for a time. Population was increasing rapidly and by now Rutgers was well established and influencing other educational programs in Middlesex County. In 1918 Douglass College for Women formed (which later became part of Rutgers). From this point forward TLP was largely undistributed and former railroad tracks were being removed. The areas around the site slowly transitioned from agriculture to industrial lots, the first being what is today a major scrap yard across from TLP on Harts Lane. Shortly after these industrial and commercial buildings were built residential housing exploded on and around Tices Lane. The area was transformed vastly over 10 – 15 years. The surrounding area continues to grow, but changes to TLP have not been documented.

¹ De Angelo, 2008

² Ibid.

³ <http://www.friendsebec.com/> reports evidence of a railroad bed

⁴ Ibid.

Resource Assessment

Tices Lane Park is in the northern portion of East Brunswick, in the central part of Middlesex County, New Jersey. The site is an undeveloped wooded area 23.7 acres in size. The entire park is undeveloped, there are no driveways, parking areas, trails, infrastructure or signage. The park contains a rare patch of forested land and is the northern most outlier of the Pine Barrens.⁵

The northeast corner of the park is situated at the intersection of Harts Lane and Tices Lane. The southern end of the park is enclosed by a mixed forest and the western boundary is bordered by an unnamed private road/driveway. A complete resource assessment can be found in *Tices Land Park - East Brunswick, NJ Inventory & Analysis*.

Themes & Objectives

Natural and Historical Context

Tices Lane Park represents a relatively constant natural environment embedded in a historically rich, lively and developing region. While it is true that the area is the center of diverse culture and historical establishment that played a crucial role during the founding years of the country, the most interesting areas in this region are the ones that didn't change much, or even at all.

Prior to urbanization, most of the land cover in the immediate region was used for either agriculture, rail transportation or industrial activity. The small ridge that runs through the middle of Tices Lane Park, along with the Sawmill Brook and the sandy soils located between the hydric soils kept the majority of the park in its natural state.

Interpretive Themes

Community accessibility to natural areas and awareness of a changing landscape are the two defining themes at Tices Lane Park. As our world population continues to increase and our natural landscape shrinks so does our ability to access the state of land that preceded our existence. In many areas this access is still readily available and well understood. In urban environments, which are so common within the region of Tices Lane Park, these spaces may only be conceptual to some, and beyond thought for many.

⁵ <http://www.friendsebec.com/parks/eb-parks/20-tices-lane-park>

Thematic Statements for Tices Lane Park

- A rare plot of land primarily left in its natural state for 100 years or more
- A unique pinelands habitat that is typically found about 30 miles to the south
- An example of extensive stream degradation from upslope development
- A walkable park – 10,000 people live within one mile of the park

Resource Management and Visitor Service Objectives

Resource Management Objectives for Tices Lane Park

This resource was acquired and set aside to promote protection of the land in its natural state. Unfortunately, these resources have been degraded due to both onsite and offsite activities. In order to preserve this natural landscape, natural resources onsite require protection remediation and safe public access.

- Upgrade cross walk to include pedestrian walk signal
- Install sidewalk on the park side of Tices lane
- Remove accumulated debris dumped over the last several decades
- Mitigate erosion at the discharge point of a major culvert

Visitor Service Objectives for Tices Lane Park

The park is driven by the interaction of people and natural resources. More specifically, the future health of the park is dependent upon the interest and education of the community. This can be divided into two major purposes. The primary purpose of the park is to provide the public with safe access to a natural area. The secondary purpose is to promote community stewardship through education at two local schools.

- Educate local students and the community about pinelands habitat and biodiversity
- Link the natural resources of the site to the classroom at the local school districts
- Instill an appreciation for the importance of a healthy watershed

- Demonstrate the consequences that poor urban planning can have on natural resources such as the Sawmill Brook
- Develop an understanding of the importance of natural undeveloped parks and why they are of at least equal importance to the manicured parks the community is accustomed to

Demographic Assessment

East Brunswick has an area of about 22.2 square miles. In 1990, the population was 50,300 people, a density of 2,226 people per square mile (ppsm). In 2010, the population was 52,400 with a density of 2,360 ppsm, an increase of about 4% and 6% respectively. Tices Lane Park is located in the north-central part of East Brunswick Township, located in Middlesex County New Jersey. As a walkable park the focus demographic area of interest is a one mile radius from TLP. This focus area has a population of 9,841 over an area of 3.14 square miles for a density of 3,134 ppsm. The population in the area is still growing with expanding urban development.

The target audience can be broken into two groups which are related to the proximity of the park and the age of the individual. The non-educational casual park user generally lives within one half mile of the park. These users are typically in their early 20s to upper 40s and include an equal distribution of males/females. These park goers live in one of two apartment complexes (Royal Gardens or Crestwood) or in single residential housing on Tices Lane or University Road.

The educational demographic stems from two local schools located within one mile of the park. The first, Churchill Junior High School is located on 18 Norton Road and the second school, Lawrence Brook Elementary School is located at 48 Sullivan Way. Students at these schools will create smaller third interest group in the form of their parents regardless of the distance they live from the park. They may not be primary park users, but they will be a key offsite remediation factor through active projects assigned to their children.

Generation of Alternatives

This area of East Brunswick is underrepresented by parks of any kind, and people often prefer the recreational opportunities that developed parks provide. This 24-acre plot of land can provide residents of all ages a semi-natural area to recreate with relatively limited cost. The installation of walking/hiking paths could provide an excellent alternative to the disjointed network of sidewalks that serve as the primary means of outdoor exercise for residents.

The perimeter of the central ridge in the park would serve as the location for a winding trail that would form a loop. The trail would be accessible from both Harts Lane and Tices Lane. This trail would be left in its natural state and supplemented with woodchips as necessary in hydric areas or in the case of heavy use. The shorter length of the trail may be attractive to people who are otherwise intimidated to venture into larger parks as a means of exercise. Due to an expansive riparian zone, wetlands and erodible soils, some stabilization will be required prior to trail installation. This would be in the form of retaining walls and foot bridges.

Preferred Alternative and Action Plan

The preferred alternative is to focus on safe community access, educational integration and leave as much of the park in its natural state as possible after an exhaustive onsite cleanup of the site. This plan involves minimal funds and looks to piggy back onto a previously proposed project.

Accessibility

- Upgrade cross walk to include pedestrian walk signal
- Install sidewalk on the park side of Tices lane
- On October 10th, 2016 East Brunswick approved a road widening project that will cut into the edge of Tices Lane Park
- This project presents an opportunity to integrate a sidewalk into the plan

Education

- Work with local schools to use Tices Lane Park as a learning recourse for science classes
- Focus on basic ecology for elementary students
- Focus on land use planning for junior high students

Cleanup

- Notify surrounding businesses about the new plans for the park
 - A letter from the schools about the importance of the park
 - A warning letter from East Brunswick Police Department regarding illegal dumping

Boundary Adjustments

Natural habitat is a rare resource in most of Middlesex County, including East Brunswick. This is especially true in areas with heavy commercial and industrial activity combined with medium and high density urban development. Finding natural habitat connectivity is even more unusual in the region. Fortunately, there is natural habitat that are directly connected to the current parcels that make up Tices Lane Park. These parcels are owned by a single owner. The directly connected parcels total 14 acres and were valued at approximately \$380,000 in 2016. The land was originally purchased in 2004 and the owner unsuccessfully attempted to rezone the property for residential development in 2006. It is possible that this land will be rezoned with time, possibly in the near future as East Brunswick considers the possibility of using these lots for low income housing.

Cooperating Organizations & Friends Groups

The most critical part of a successful remediation project is community involvement. Community involvement can be bolstered with strong partnerships with non-profit organizations. Partnerships with municipal and state officials will help provide support, knowledge and oversight from planning to implantation and maintenance of the site.

- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
 - Enforcement of through public use of their crowd sourcing app to report illegal dumping
 - Geographic Information System data
 - Water quality data
 - Many other types of scientific data
- East Brunswick Township
 - Plan and install the basic infrastructure proposed
 - Police to enforce laws related to illegal dumping
 - Funding for addition land acquisition
- Green Acres
 - Research suitability of adjacent parcels to expand the park
 - Funding for land acquisition
- Friends of East Brunswick Environmental Commission
 - Community clean up coordination
 - Promoting awareness of park

- Unitarian Church
 - Located on Tices Lane
 - Currently active in cleanup
 - Generate local interest
- Lower Raritan River Partnership
 - Assist in local community stewardship
 - Data sharing
 - Link to other partners to provide funding for cleanup and restoration
 - Education
 - Use Project WADES (Watershed Action Dialogue Education and Stewardship) as a model to develop a curriculum at local schools that can take advantage of the learning opportunities available at Tices Lane Park
- Lawrence Brook Elementary School & Churchill Junior High School
 - Draw awareness to the relationship between urbanization and degradation of watersheds
 - Get parents involved with small home projects such as rain gardens
 - Promote education to make smarter planning decisions in the future

Next Step

The next step is to educate, draw awareness and create an interest in Tices Lane Park. This can be accomplished by working with parents, the community and the planning board.

- Propose an amendment to resolution #15931 (road widening) to include a sidewalk
 - Work with the township Parks and Recreation Department and submit a proposal for review at the East Brunswick Council Agenda\Action Meeting
 - Request an additional sidewalk on Harts Lane
- Collaborate with teachers, parents and board members at the two local schools
 - Highlight and present the best parts of the park and how it can provide an education that extends beyond the classroom
 - Learn more about how the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership started WADES
- Notify surrounding businesses about the new plans for the park
 - A letter from the schools about the importance of the park
 - A warning letter from East Brunswick Police Department regarding illegal dumping

- Organize a series of volunteer cleanup efforts
 - Assistance provided by the East Brunswick Public Works Department
 - Collaborate with the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership and the Unitarian Church
 - Grants for restoration and land acquisition
 - Nature Conservancy "Roots for Rivers" may be able to provide funding for the purchase and planting of native riparian species
 - Find out if Green Acres would be interested in expanding the park
-

Bibliography

Allamuchy State Park Saxton Falls Area General Management Plan

“Data.” United States Census Bureau, 2010. <https://www.census.gov/data.html>

De Angelo, Walter. 2008. “History Buff’s Guide to Middlesex County.” Middlesex County Administrator

“Frost Woods.” Friends of East Brunswick, 2016. <http://www.friendsebec.com/parks/eb-parks/17-frost-woods>

“Geographic Information.” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017. <https://www.bls.gov/regions/news-release-finder.htm?states=NJ>

“Tices Lane Park.” Friends of East Brunswick, 2016. <http://www.friendsebec.com/parks/eb-parks/20-tices-lane-park>

“Web Soil Survey.” USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2016. <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm>