

John J. Collins Memorial Park

Size & Type of Project:

Expansion of Passive Park from 3.75 acres to 6.7 acres

Location:

Galeton, Potter County, Pennsylvania

Projected Budget:

\$20,000-\$25,000

Project Phase:

Land Acquisition and Construction

Project Overview

The project involved the expansion of John J. Collins Memorial Park from 3.75 acres to 6.7 acres. The additional land was acquired to preserve Galeton's natural landscape as well as to create more recreational opportunities for the community. A new park design was created in 2005 that focused on creating a more pedestrian-friendly access to the park by repositioning the entryway to a less congested area and making the park more accessible to those on foot, as well as enabling direct access to the park's river walk and community overlook deck and fishing area so that the public could have far greater access to these park amenities. The community also felt it was important for the park to contribute to the "Dark Skies Initiative." John J. Collins Memorial Park is located very close to Cherry Springs State Park which is regarded as having the best dark skies in the northeastern United States. The predevelopment plan focused on ways that the Memorial Park could keep its light pollution to a minimum.

Site Context

John J. Collins Memorial Park is located in Galeton Borough, Potter County. Galeton is a small community nestled in between the mountains of the Susquehanna State Forest. Within this park and throughout the region runs Pine Creek, a PA Exceptional Value Stream. Pine Creek provides many sources of recreation for the area such as canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and trout fishing. Prior to becoming a public park - originally named Galeton Town Center Park - the site had been used as a vegetable tannery, community pool, and a saw mill.

Sustainable Practices

Stormwater Management/ Habitat Preservation:

In Phase I, naturally occurring meadows and wetlands on the site were upgraded to improve overall stormwater management. Riparian restoration was not needed because the streambanks were in excellent condition and already served as a good stormwater



Pedestrian path at newly repositioned entryway



Preserved Wetlands

management practice. A rain garden around the park is planned to be constructed in Phase II to further enhance effective stormwater management. The rain garden will be relatively small, and is estimated to cost around \$6,000. The walkways and riverwalk will be regraded so as to prevent destruction of habitat and soil erosion from rain events.

Light Pollution Reduction:

To reduce its carbon footprint, John J. Collins Memorial Park bought conifers from a local tree farm to be planted along its new entryway. Also the surrounding community became part of the “Dark Skies Initiative” and made the necessary precautions to reduce its light pollution and contribute to the region’s claim to fame of being the darkest skies in the northeast. All new and existing lights within the park were made to be “dark skies approved”. This involved using only shielded light fixtures which project the light down so the least amount of light possible ventures into the skies above the community. Each fixture cost \$1,200; additional light fixtures will be added to the site, but because fewer fixtures will be bought, the projected cost of each fixture is \$2,500. High pressure sodium bulbs which are highly energy efficient are used in these light fixtures to reduce the park’s energy consumption.

Light pollution is a significant problem throughout the world because non-shielded lights let light shine freely into the sky. The light bounces off molecules in the air and is scattered; dust and moisture in the air only worsen the pollution. Air pollution is especially noticeable on cloudy nights because the escaped light illuminates the night-sky when reflected off the clouds. To reduce or eliminate air pollution, well-designed shielded lights with lower power bulbs are needed. This will decrease energy usage and financial costs. However, this is not the only benefit from using shielded lights; shielded lights yield more privacy, without decreasing safety, when light pollution in the area is decreased. Shielded lights are able to be as bright as unshielded lights because the beam, only pointing downward, is more direct and does not let light escape. Safety is not decreased, but is actually increased by the reduction of glare on the roadways. Also, the most obvious benefit is the enhancement of being able to view the stars. Light pollution does not only affect people. Plants and animals are also directly affected by intensely lit areas; these areas can cause changes in the environmental, behavioral, and biological aspects of an organism.

Engage Community:

Meetings of the Galeton Borough Council as well as the local Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce were used to introduce the community to the park’s “dark skies” goal. Interpretive signage that will be added in Phase II will feature information about the “Dark Skies Initiative” and how Galeton is enhancing this vision. These park improvements have become a source of great pride for the Galeton community.



Shielded light fixture used in park

Project Construction

To achieve the vision for the park, John J. Collins Memorial Park was designed to occur in two phases:

Phase I -started with the acquisition of additional land needed for the park site and continued with the development of a new master site plan. The entryway was relocated to Union Street—a road with much less traffic – and the riverwalk and park walkways were merged with the new public entrance. Due to the site’s many uses over the years, the issue of contamination was raised. Environmental testing was undertaken in Phase I and the results concluded that the site

posed no threat to Pine Creek or to a recreational reuse of the additional acreage for a public park. With the completion of the master site plan and the above improvements made on the site, Phase I was finished in June 2009.

Phase II- has yet to be started; it is estimated that it will be started in 2-3 years and take approximately 1-2 years to complete. Phase II will involve the continuation of the riverwalk and walkways within the park, upgrades to the existing facilities on the site, interpretive signage, and further improvements to facilitate a broader usage of the park. A budget has not been developed yet, but the target budget is \$20,000 - \$25,000.

Budget

Total—\$320,000
Site Acquisition—\$30,000
Design/Professional Services—\$30,000
Planting Amenities—\$40,000
Construction Costs—\$220,000

Partners:

Department of Conservation & Natural Resources grant—\$100,000
Community Development Block Grant—\$100,000
Department of Community and Economic Development grant—\$40,000
Donations from local individuals and organizations—\$80,000

Monitoring Information/ Maintenance

Much of the site is designed to require little ongoing maintenance, due to the goal of retaining a naturalized landscape. Once Phase II is constructed, monitoring and maintenance will be required on the rain and wildflower gardens. Minor maintenance is needed for the walkways and riverwalk within the park to prevent erosion and mowing is required to maintain the center of the park where all the recreation activities take place.

Issues/ Constraints of the Site

No issues so far have been reported.

Project Consultants

Joe Pagano	Potter County Housing and Redevelopment
Susan Kefover	Potter County Commissioner
Mike Messian	Former Borough Manager
Chip Harrison	Superintendent at Cherry Springs, Lyman Run and Colton Point State Parks
YSM	Phase I design consultant
Jill Campbell	Landscape Architect
Hawbaker Inc.	Contractor