

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

CITY OF SOMERS POINT

APPLICATIONS FOR GREEN ACRES PARK FUNDING

PURPOSE: The City of Somers Point is seeking funding through the State of New Jersey Green Acres Program to build an inclusive playground at John F. Kennedy Park and for Somers Point Bike Path improvements.

PROJECT SCOPE: An inclusive playground is planned at John F. Kennedy Park, located at 24 Broadway in Somers Point. This playground will be designed in accordance with standards that generally exceed those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and result in accommodating people with disabilities to the greatest degree feasible. Also, the City plans to make improvement to the Somers Point Bike Path including upgrading the railroad station and adding historical plaques and interpretive signs to show different stops/historical areas along the Bike Path, adding concrete pads under the benches, adding exercise stations, and planting trees along the Path.

PUBLIC HEARING INFORMATION: The public is encouraged to attend a public hearing to learn more about the proposal and to ask questions or provide comments on the proposed plan for Thursday, January 23, 2025, at 7:00 pm at City Hall, 1W New Jersey Avenue, Somers Point, NJ. The meeting will be held in-person, as part of the regularly scheduled City Council meeting. Written comments on the proposed application may be directed to Jason Frost, City Manager at jfrost@spgov.org. Additional information regarding these applications and a survey are available on the City's web site at www.somerspointgov.org.

Public Engagement and Notice Requirements

Meaningful public engagement is critical in order to accurately determine community open space and recreation needs and create better parks. Involving the public in project planning ensures that the investment of public funds reflects the community's needs and priorities for *where* open space should be acquired and *how* it should be developed.

Community Engagement

All applications to the 2025 funding round must reflect meaningful community engagement during the project planning stage. As previously noted, **the required public hearing (see below) does not fulfill the application public engagement requirement, and applications that do not demonstrate additional community involvement during the project planning stage will not be funded.**

Instead of limiting engagement to one or two organizations (e.g., the open space committee or a particular sports league), applicants must strive to solicit broad community feedback from varied sources. Whatever means are used to engage the public during project planning, outreach efforts should be well-advertised and offer ample opportunities for participation. The project application should document the public engagement efforts and clearly identify how final project plans incorporate community input.

To be eligible, applicants must implement at least two of the following outreach methods and submit documentation of completion for each:

- 1) Community survey
 - On-line surveys, advertised on websites, in local news sources, flyers, etc.
 - Paper surveys available at public buildings and events – e.g., library, municipal building, recreation center, senior citizen center, school functions

Note: To qualify as meaningful outreach, the survey should 1) Include open-ended questions to solicit respondent opinions and 2) Be conducted early enough in the process to allow sufficient time for response and to incorporate findings into project planning and design.
- 2) Community meeting (*in person and/or virtual; on site or elsewhere*)
 - Open house meetings
 - Design charrettes
 - Focus groups
- 3) Invitation for community input
 - Pop-up feedback sessions at park and/or at public buildings and community events
 - Mailers to households inviting input
 - Social media posts inviting input

Public Hearing & Notice Requirements – Local Governments and Nonprofits

In addition to the public engagement requirements, all local government applicants must advertise and hold a public hearing before applying. Requirements for the public hearing announcement, the hearing itself, and the hearing minutes were updated in recent funding rounds, and the complete requirements can be found in the attached checklist. Most notably, there is no post-deadline grace period for submitting the required public hearing documents. Minutes of the public hearing (draft is acceptable) must be submitted *by the application deadline* or the application will be incomplete and deemed ineligible.

County applicants are also required to forward the notice of the public hearing to the clerk of the municipality(ies) within which their project is located, preferably at least 15 days prior, but at a minimum 48 hours before the hearing.

Public Hearing Checklist (Local Governments)

PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

1. _____ Public hearing notice published in a prominent location on applicant's website and through social media account(s) that link to the application information page on the applicant's website at least 15 calendar days prior to hearing (e.g., if the hearing is on January 20th, the notice must be posted on the website on or before January 5th).
Date of posting _____ Date of hearing _____
2. _____ Public hearing notice published in the official newspaper of the municipality in which the proposed project is located, preferably at least 15 days prior, but at a minimum 48 hours before the hearing.
Date of publication _____ Date of hearing _____
3. _____ For county projects, public hearing notice also published in a newspaper of general interest and circulation, preferably at least 15 days prior, but at a minimum 48 hours before the hearing.
Date of publication _____ Date of hearing _____
4. _____ For county projects, public hearing notice forwarded to the clerk of the municipality(ies) within which the project is located, preferably at least 15 days prior, but at a minimum 48 hours before the hearing.
5. _____ Hearing notice published in the newspaper(s) as a display ad (encouraged) or a public notice.
6. _____ Hearing notice specifically mentioned the Green Acres application.
7. _____ Website/social media hearing notice included a link to information about the application – the full application package or, at a minimum, the Concept Plan, Environmental Impact Assessment, and Units and Quantities Cost Estimate. Proposed athletic field construction or restoration must be identified as natural turf or artificial turf.
8. _____ Newspaper hearing notice included the link address for accessing the application information and instructions for how to access a hard copy of the application package.
9. _____ If public meeting was held remotely, meeting access information included in the public notice.