

**Thomas A. Edison County Park**  
**GSA Control Number: D – NJ – 440C**

**AMENDED PROGRAM OF UTILIZATION**  
**(July 2023)**

**1. Background Information**

In 1964, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreational/National Park Service (NPS) conveyed approximately 162 acres of land to the County of Middlesex which is currently known as Thomas A. Edison Park. The County of Middlesex acquired the property at the cost of \$253,125.00 via a 1964 quitclaim deed through what is now called the Federal Lands to Parks Program (formerly the Surplus Property Program for Parks and Recreation administered by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and subsequently by the NPS) pursuant to the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act, as amended (40 U.S.C. 550 [b] and [e]).

The property deed requires that the property be used and maintained as a public park and public recreational area and for those purposes only, as set forth in the deed dated October 15, 1964.

The original Program of Utilization (POU) was submitted by Freeholder Thomas H. Lee on February 11, 1964, and it is contained within Exhibit A of the Application for Federal Surplus Property for Public Park or Recreational Use.

Pursuant to the POU issued in 1964, Middlesex County has operated Thomas A. Edison Park as a county park, providing numerous active and passive recreational activities for its residents. Since that time, Thomas A. Edison Park has served Middlesex County residents well, and the County has worked to expand the recreational opportunities available to its residents. For example, in March of 1974, the County of Middlesex entered into an agreement with Middlesex College (formally Middlesex County College) for the construction of various physical and recreational facilities on Middlesex County Park property. As the agreement states, Middlesex College provided the funding for the facilities, and the facilities were to be made available for use by Middlesex College students and Middlesex County residents. Note that the proposed Amended POU does not require an agreement with Middlesex College, as the College is not providing funding for the new facilities, and the original agreement is set to expire in 2024.

In April of 2008, Middlesex County submitted an Amended POU to the NPS. This POU highlights the capital improvement projects the County has commissioned to improve the park and recreational facilities to serve the growing needs of Middlesex County residents. Capital improvement projects which took place between the mid-1990's and 2008 can be found in **Table 2** and improvement projects which took place between the years 2008 and 2023 can be found in **Table 1**.

In order to reflect the current use of the park land and a proposed future expanded recreational use, the County of Middlesex is submitting this Amended POU setting forth the current park and recreational uses of Thomas A. Edison Park. It is the County's intent that this Amended POU will continue, update, and enhance the basic objectives and land uses described in the 1964 POU and, once approved by the Department of the Interior, will supersede the 1964 Plan in its entirety.

## 2. Financial Statement

### 2.1. Revenue

In the year 2022, the total revenue generated by Thomas A. Edison Park was \$21,000.

### 2.2. Capital Expenditures

The major completed improvement projects between the years of 2008 and 2023 are detailed in **Table 1**. The total cost within this timeframe was \$4,693,779.00.

**Table 1: Thomas A. Edison Park Capital Expenditures 2008 - 2023**

Improvement Project	Year	Cost
Running Track Renovation to NCAA Standards	2011	\$1,655,810.00
New Track Equipment	2014	\$37,090.00
Pathway Resurfacing	2014	\$854,780.00
Soccer Field Renovation	2015	\$701,417.00
Track Resurfacing	2020	\$309,775.00
Tennis Court Resurfacing	2018	\$498,479.00
Tennis Court Lighting to LED (in-house)	2020	\$130,962.00
New Playground	2021	\$481,761.00
Pathway Lighting to LED (in-house)	2019	\$23,705.00

## 3. Park and Receptions Uses and Management

Thomas A. Edison Park is located on Block 395 Lots 1.23 and 1.01 in the Township of Edison, New Jersey. There are a total of 19 County Parks within Middlesex County which, in total, encompass over 2,900 acres, and Thomas A. Edison Park is one of the busiest parks in the County.

Since the time of the County's ownership of Thomas A. Edison Park, the County has enhanced the park by installing and maintaining several baseball fields, several tennis courts, a track, several soccer fields, a playground, and a model airplane field. The capital improvement projects outlined in **Table 1** highlight the County's commitment to continuous improvement and investment in the park facilities.

Thomas A. Edison Park is under the care and control of Middlesex County personnel, and the entire park is maintained by the County on a regular basis. No concession agreements have been entered into by the County of Middlesex with any vendor to provide for assistance in operating a recreational facility.

### 3.1. Public Park Use

The public utilizes the entirety of Thomas A. Edison Park. Passive uses include picnicking; walking, jogging, and bicycling on the paved pathways; birding; and accessing the model airplane field. Active uses include organized and unorganized baseball games and tennis, soccer, and track matches. Fields and courts can be reserved for events such as local soccer games, Little League baseball tournaments, and college recreational sports leagues. The public also utilizes the playground equipment.

The annual visitor use of Thomas A. Edison Park is estimated to be between 475,000 and 500,000 people. This value includes 33,050 people who participated in “registered” events. Use during the daytime is by the general public and Middlesex County College students, in accordance with approved agreements. Use during the nighttime is by the general public, including organized leagues and tournaments. There is no overnight use of the facility.

### 3.2. Recreational Areas

#### 3.2.1. Soccer Fields, Baseball fields, and Tennis Courts

There are 5 soccer fields, 3 baseball fields, and 16 tennis courts within Thomas A. Edison Park. These fields are used by the general public, including organized leagues and tournaments, and Middlesex County College students.

#### 3.2.2. NCAA Standard Track Field

There is one NCAA standard track field which is used by the general public, including organized leagues and tournaments, and Middlesex County College students.

#### 3.2.3. Public Amenity Areas

The park and recreational areas of Thomas A. Edison Park are served by one 200-space parking area located on Walnut Drive. This parking lot serves members of the public and Middlesex College students, as the Middlesex College campus is currently separated from the park by the Conrail freight line and must be accessed by vehicle via this parking lot or on foot via West Patrol Road.

## 4. **Contamination**

Thomas A. Edison Park is located within the Former Raritan Arsenal (FRA) which consisted of over 3,200-acres and operated between approximately 1918 and the early 1960s. Thomas A. Edison Park is situated in an area referred to as Area 10 which was a part of the Former Wastewater Treatment and Magazine Areas. Previous investigations and removal actions by the USACE adequately addressed munitions and explosives of concern. Other contaminants, primarily arsenic and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), were also identified at levels exceeding NJDEP Soil Remediation Standards (SRS). In August 2019, the USACE concluded that the risks relating to the presence of these contaminants were within acceptable limits.

Elevated levels of arsenic and PAH compounds have been identified in soil samples within the area of the proposed action at concentrations exceeding NJDEP SRS. The soil contamination was found primarily in the surface soils, and the collection and analyses of numerous additional surficial samples identified areas of impact requiring remediation.

NJDEP Bureau of GIS data indicates two groundwater plumes have migrated into Thomas A. Edison Park from an off-site source. The plumes of groundwater contamination within the designated Classification Exception Area (CEAs) are due to elevated levels of chlorinated solvents. The presence of chlorinated solvents within the area of proposed action was confirmed by analysis of groundwater samples from temporary well points and existing monitoring wells. This analysis indicates the groundwater impact by chlorinated solvents is not contained within the boundaries of the existing CEAs. Additionally, the groundwater sampling/analyses from the temporary well points identified elevated levels of several metals, including arsenic, across the entire study area. Additional investigation relating to the volatile organic compound (VOC) contamination in the groundwater is planned. As samples from temporary well points typically contain colloidal matter that tends to elevate metals levels, much of the groundwater impact by metals may be attributed to turbid samples. Further evaluation of the influence of turbidity on metals levels in groundwater is on-going.

In order to mitigate possible vapor intrusion, a passive sub-slab venting systems would be installed within the multi-sports concession building located atop a contaminated groundwater plume. This system would vent contaminant vapors that have accumulated beneath a structure to the exterior atmosphere, thereby preventing contaminant vapors from entering the building and accumulating within the indoor air environment.

Delineation efforts are ongoing to define the extent of the soil and groundwater impacts more precisely and determine the volume of contaminated soil requiring remediation. Replacement of soils in certain contaminated sites where excavation occurs may be warranted as a result of the proposed action, and these excavated soils would be sampled and analyzed to characterize them for disposal purposes.

## **5. Historic Properties**

Thomas A. Edison Park is located within the boundaries of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible Edison Facility Historic District (also referred to as the Raritan Arsenal Historic District). The Edison Facility Historic District was determined eligible for the NRHP in 1992 (7/15/1992), and the period of significance for the historic district is from 1918, when the arsenal was established, to 1964, when the arsenal was closed. Two buildings that date from the arsenal's occupation of the project area are extant on Patrol Road, Standard Magazine No. 465 and Standard Magazine No. 466. Both buildings are located outside the area of proposed action.

Thomas A. Edison Park was developed in the mid-1970s and has no association with the historic district, other than being located within its boundaries; therefore, it is not considered to be historically significant. It is a modern park and does not contain any potentially significant historic buildings or structures. One element 50 years or older which was

identified in the area of proposed action is a series of simple concrete culverts that date from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. These culverts likely date from U.S. Army occupation of the site and would have been part of the Army's general improvement of the stormwater drainage of Raritan Arsenal. The culverts are standard mid-20th century culverts and lack distinguishing characteristics, such as inscribed dates or markings of any sort. As a result, the culverts aren't considered contributing elements to the Edison Facility Historic District., and the proposed action would not be considered to have an adverse effect on the historic district and any contributing buildings associated with the historic district. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has confirmed that the proposed action only has a low potential to affect historic and archaeological remains. Consequently, SHPO does not recommend further consideration prior to permit issuance. No other potentially historic structures are located within the site.

## **6. Confirmation of Adherence to Covenants**

The Middlesex County Department of Parks and Recreation confirms that all covenants to the Deed of Conveyance have been adhered to at Thomas A. Edison Park (former portion of Raritan Arsenal).

## **7. Proposed Amended Use**

The purpose of the proposed action is to enhance the County's parks and recreational options at Thomas Edison Park with facilities that support the existing and future Middlesex County community, Middlesex College students, and the greater region. According to U.S. Census data, Middlesex County and the Township of Edison have experienced population growth in the last decade of approximately 7 percent (53,304 persons) and 8 percent (7,621 persons), respectively. According to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)'s Plan 2050, the populations within the Middlesex County and the Township of Edison are forecasted to increase by 13 percent (109,423 persons) and 8 percent (7,836 persons) between the years 2015 and 2050, respectively.

Based on the forecasted County and regional growth increases, Middlesex County is proposing to respond to the high need for more efficient use of park land with a sports focus. Currently, Thomas A. Edison Park is one of the busiest in the County, and with its important location the County envisions creating a more active facility that can support a regional presence and destination as an athletic complex.

## Amended Program of Utilization

### 1. Original 1964 POU

The original POU was submitted by Freeholder Thomas H. Lee on February 11, 1964, and it is contained within Exhibit A of the Application for Federal Surplus Property for Public Park or Recreational Use.

The POU that was submitted with the 1964 application states:

- a. Proposed uses: The site is deemed suitable for either an eighteen-hole golf course or a substantial addition of general park and recreational plans to the 2,023 acres already within the Country's possession or in the process of acquisition. A final decision on one of the two recreational uses will be made within a year.
- b. General Development Plan: Although there are no detailed plans available for either the golf course use or the general park and recreational use, it is anticipated that a park planner will be commissioned to develop detailed plans in 1964. As far as the general park and recreational use is concerned, it is expected that such activities as basketball, softball, soccer, football, basketball, tennis, picnicking, etc. will be included, the main emphasis being on those activities associated with industry (i.e., softball diamonds and picnic areas for lunch).

### 2. 2008 POU Amendment

In April of 2008, Middlesex County submitted an Amended POU to the NPS. The amendment reflected the capital improvement projects from the mid-1990's to 2008, show in **Table 2**, and the planned future capital improvement listed in **Table 3**. Two additional projects were completed by Middlesex County between the Mid-1990's and 2008, the model airplane flying field and a baseball field renovation, yet these improvements did not require capital expenditure as they were completed by the County. The projects listed in **Tables 2 and 3** total \$6,309,000.

**Table 2: Major Facility Improvement Projects from Mid-1990's - 2008**

<b>Improvement Project</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Pathway System ADA Compliant	\$25,000
Sport Field Lighting Renovation (All Fields)	\$726,000
New Soccer Fields (3)	\$995,000
Path, Street & Parking Lighting Renovation	835,000
Tennis Courts Renovation	\$1,218,000

**Table 3: Pending Projects from 2008 - 2009**

<b>Improvement Project</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Running Track Renovation to Current NCAA Standards	\$1,650,000
Soccer Field Renovation	\$115,000
Path System Renovation	\$745,000

**3. Proposed Amended Use**

Middlesex County requests Thomas A. Edison Park’s POU be amended to include the following project improvements aimed at meeting the existing and future needs of Middlesex County residents: ten multi-sport synthetic fields lined for lacrosse, soccer, and rugby; three multi-sport synthetic fields lined for baseball, lacrosse, soccer, and rugby; sixteen hard surface tennis courts; a championship synthetic field and track with large grandstands; a 500-foot diameter natural grass, recreational cricket field; protective netting, performance lighting, and bleachers; a fieldhouse for concessions, restrooms, and maintenance equipment; comfort stations throughout the park; pedestrian pathways; a playground; and parking for 1,350 cars. These additional uses will continue, update, and enhance the basic objectives of the 1964 POU and continue Middlesex County’s commitment to meeting the park and recreational needs of the County’s residents.

**4. Plan of Utilization Amendments**

The County of Middlesex respectfully requests an amendment to the original POU. Our park utilization for recreational activities has increased over the last 60 years due to the increase in the number of residents that utilize the park for recreational purposes, and the need for a greater diversity of recreational opportunities to reflect the demographic diversity of Middlesex County. The amended use will provide amenities to the area residents and Middlesex College students that currently do not exist in Middlesex County.

Specifically, the County proposes to construct 3 multi-sport synthetic fields north and south of Sandelwood Road thereby elevating the park user experience by creating standardized field sizes for informal and competitive recreational purposes. The tennis courts located south of the Conrail train line will be replaced with sixteen hard surface tennis courts, all located in one location without separation by a vehicular roadway, as the configuration currently is. South of the 16 hard surface tennis courts, the County proposes the creation of a championship synthetic field and track with large grandstands, a facility which currently does not exist within Thomas A. Edison Park.

A 500-foot diameter natural grass, recreational cricket field is proposed, flanked by the tennis courts and field and track to the east and a 1,350-car park to the west. Ten multi-sport synthetic fields are proposed to extend from the south side of the cricket and track field to Patrol Road. The placement of these 10 multi-sport synthetic fields was strategically designed to minimize impact to the onsite wetlands. The existing playground will be replaced with a new playground facility.

The amended use of Thomas A. Edison Park will not inhibit the intended use of the property for park and recreational purposes. Instead, the proposed project will significantly increase the recreational opportunities, thereby building upon the intended use of the land while

remaining true to the deed requirement that the land, “shall be forever used and maintained as and for public park and public recreational and for those purposes only.”

The County’s original intent for this property, as stated in the original POU of 1964, was to provide a “substantial addition of general park and recreational plans.” This intent will remain intact with this Amended POU by providing robust innovative and inclusive improvements to the Thomas A. Edison Park.