

## Planning for Sustainable Brownfield Redevelopment

### URBAN PARK ENHANCEMENT FOR THE ASSUNPINK CREEK

#### TRENTON, NEW JERSEY, EPA REGION 2

The Assunpink Creek is 25 miles long, and drains approximately 91 square miles in central New Jersey. The Creek is the major natural feature within the Assunpink Greenway and adjacent Mill Hill Park. In the late 1970s, a 500-foot section of Assunpink Creek, between Broad and Warren streets in Trenton, New Jersey was channeled into an existing culvert and covered to make room for development projects that were never constructed. Since then, this brownfields property sat vacant and underutilized.



Over the years the culvert experienced several structural failures resulting in a public safety hazard. In late 2017, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) and the City of Trenton, began a project to restore this section of the Assunpink Creek to a more natural ecological condition. The stream “daylighting” project will remove the culvert, allowing the stream to be exposed to natural sunlight and no longer run underground. The project will stabilize and naturally align the daylighted creek with river stone, boulders and other native materials; improve fish migration from the Delaware River; and create two acres of new open park space for passive recreation. In addition to reducing the public safety hazard, the removal of the deteriorating culvert will improve community aesthetics.

In September 2017, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Land Revitalization Team provided technical assistance to the city by preparing a 30% Construction Drawing (CD) Set for the approximately 2-acre park that will occupy the brownfields space reclaimed following the daylighting of Assunpink Creek. The EPA Land Revitalization Team reviewed the USACE Stream Daylighting and Restoration Plans, assessed existing site conditions, met with city and local stakeholders, analyzed potential opportunities and constraints based upon stakeholders’ input and needs, and developed a schematic design of the park.

This new park is at an important location within the planning framework of downtown Trenton. The park design and 30% CD Set incorporates and connects features of historic Mill Hill Park immediately adjacent to the project. It is located in the heart of the downtown business and historic district, and is the location of the Second Battle of Trenton during the American Revolution. The recovering urban stream connects several greenway and other urban park facilities in the city.

The proposed park design will restore the natural ecosystem and freshwater ecology of the creek, while providing a series of small, well-defined spaces that range from natural “nooks” to urban, streetscape focused plazas. This plan enables residents to experience the new park in a variety of ways. The daylighting and park enhancement project will create a gathering place and hub to the community, and help to revitalize the community and local economy.

For more information, please contact Sabina Byck EPA Region 2 at [byck.sabina@epa.gov](mailto:byck.sabina@epa.gov).



Figure 1: Assunpink Creek restoration project.

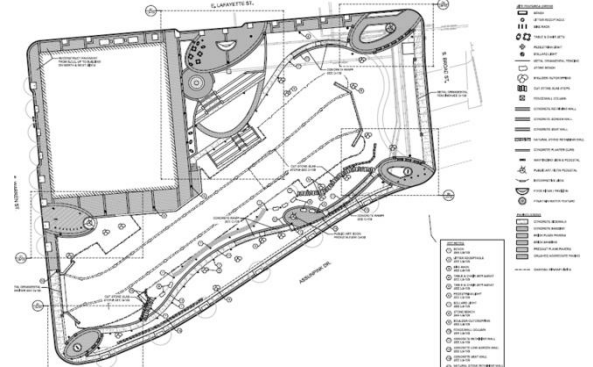


Figure 2: Assunpink 30% Plan Set Design.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

- Early collaboration amongst city departments and state environmental agencies can lead to effective and efficient decision-making.
- Daylighting urban streams improves water quality, mitigates flooding, and revitalizes the local economy.

#### PLANNED POST-TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

- Engage local stakeholders to enhance the design and advance the 30% Construction Drawing set.
- Work with USACE to ensure that the park construction plans fall within the final restoration work that USACE will conduct.
- Study the non-daylighted portion of the culvert to determine if it can support the planned redevelopment design.