



The Avalon Home and Land Owners Association

The Borough of Avalon is currently undertaking consideration of a multi-phased project towards the restoration and enhancement of Armacost Park (Park). The objective of the project is to restore the parks natural resources, and enhance wildlife viewing access and facilities for the enjoyment of the community and attraction of ecotourism.

The Park is a largely undeveloped tract of land approximately 11 acres in size between 74th and 76th street in Avalon. Current residents and town managers report that approximately 30 years ago efforts were made by the community of Avalon to enhance the natural resources at this location and create a means of pedestrian access to these resources via viewing platforms, a boardwalk and a nature trail. Visitors to the Park during this time recall viewing breeding colonies of wading birds, a variety of wildlife, viewable and vibrant wetland and pond systems, and a trail through the eastern upland (maritime forest) section of the Park.

Overtime the original natural resource value of the Park to the community has been diminished as non-native or invasive vegetation has out competed and displaced more desirable species, wetland and pond systems have been natural filled and overtaken by *Phragmites* (common reed), and viewing facilities have reached the end of their useful life or allowed to be overgrown. The resultant monocultures of vegetation are less complex and believed to host and provide for a lower diversity and numbers of desirable wildlife. With minimal existing valuable natural resource viewing opportunities, visitors to the Park today are limited to the access and enjoyment of playground facilities located in southeastern portion of the park.

Project objectives are proposed to be accomplished primarily through habitat modification and management, and facility upgrades. Strategies to control non-native and invasive plant species and the introduction of native plant species and enhance wetland and pond systems will be proposed. Park amenities require modification or upgrades, including the addition of nature trails and improving observation decks and board walks. Ensuring adequate restroom facilities will be emphasized.

To enhance enjoyment and understanding of native natural resources by residents and tourists, and to attract ecotourism, it is proposed that Armacost Park be managed primarily as a bird sanctuary with a secondary emphasis on butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies. The design for the bird sanctuary will focus on restoration, enhancement, and the long term low-level maintenance of a diversity of habitat to establish utilization by a variety of birds and insects. This includes re-establishing high profile breeding colonies of wading birds for the enjoyment of the community and novice birders as well as creating a migrant trap for enjoyment by more experienced birders. An emphasis will be placed on attracting families utilizing the children's playground facilities to peak their interest to observe, penetrate, and learn about their surrounding natural resources. Once attracted to the natural resources of the Park these and other youth and novice observers will be educated by a series of educational placards placed about the Park. Further benefit to the youth and other stakeholders in the community should be realized through the numerous work study opportunities provided by the initial enhancements and ongoing maintenance required by a project of this kind.

The conceptual design phase of the project is the first of a multi-phased approach. Initial funding will contribute to development of a conceptual design options for the park and the identification of key capital expenditure, funding, and project scheduling considerations. Integral to the concept design



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phase of the project will be the identification and involvement of the various community stakeholders. Following a broad scale inventory of the Park's current natural resources and facilities the community will be presented with use and value considerations and budgetary capital and maintenance costs for enhancement options. During this process stakeholder involvement will be encouraged so the final options best represent the community's collective interests.