



VILLAGE OF RIDGEWOOD

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Jennifer B. Leynes, M.H.P.
Historic Preservation Office

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

**RE: PARK DEVELOPMENT OF ZABRISKIE-SCHEDLER PROPERTY
VILLAGE OF RIDGEWOOD, BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
PROJECT AUTHORIZATION APPLICATION (HPO #20-0608-29)**

Dear Ms. Leynes:

In follow-up to our meeting on July 2, 2025, the Village of Ridgewood ("Village") has prepared the following additional information and clarifications for the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office ("HPO") staff in preparation of the presentation to the Historic Sites Council on July 21, 2025. Please note, some of this information has been submitted under previous submissions. This packet is condensed and provides clarity with the information requested.

Letters of Support – Attached is a compilation of letters of support and petition signatures in favor of the proposed project at the Zabriskie-Schedler property. The petition was a collaborative effort between the Ridgewood Baseball and Softball Association, Ridgewood Junior Football, Maroons Soccer, Ridgewood Lacrosse, and Ridgewood High School sports programs. Supporters include a wide range of individuals, from current Ridgewood families to former Ridgewood athletes, reflecting strong and broad-based community support for the project and its anticipated benefits.

Analysis of the Village of Ridgewood Parks – Attached is the *Alternatives Analysis Report* for the Zabriskie-Schedler Property Park. The report reviews a range of potential park layouts and uses, with a focus on location-specific constraints and overall feasibility. Each alternative is assessed in terms of its suitability for the site,

considering factors such as topography, environmental sensitivity, access, and compatibility with surrounding uses. The analysis concludes that the proposed plan offers the most practical and effective use of the property, balancing recreational needs with the physical and logistical realities of any other park developments within the Village.

- **Analysis on Alternative Locations for Synthetic Turf** – The existing Village of Ridgewood fields are not suitable candidates for turf installation due to a variety of environmental and logistical constraints. Veterans Field (natural grass) and Maple Field (turf) both experience severe flooding, which makes them unreliable for consistent use. Hawes Field, which also lies within a floodplain, was just renovated in spring 2025 at a cost of \$100,000, making additional modifications impractical at this time. Habernickel Park, the Village’s newest park developed in 2012/2013, remains in good condition, and there is currently no compelling reason to replace its surface with turf. Citizens Park, located at the busy intersection of Godwin Avenue and South Monroe Street, has only 14 parking spaces (two of which are handicapped), making it a poor choice for a turf field due to limited access and safety concerns. Additionally, all other athletic fields in Ridgewood are owned by the Board of Education, over which the Village has no jurisdiction, further limiting viable options for turf installation. A report was provided in previous submissions. Information is within updated report.
- **Analysis on Alternative Locations** – Concerns regarding alternative locations have been discussed. Section 5 of the report emphasizes that there are no other available open spaces within the Village suitable for developing new athletic fields. This highlights the limited options for expanding recreational facilities and underscores the importance of the proposed project at the Zabriskie-Schedler property as a key opportunity to meet the community’s needs.
- **Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club Information** – Regarding comments about the potential acquisition of a new park parcel as recommended in the Village’s Open Space Master Plan, the Village cannot pursue acquiring the Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club property referenced in the plan because it is not for sale and also presents significant environmental challenges that make acquisition and development problematic. The Upper Ridgewood Tennis Club (URTC) property has been considered by some as a potential location for athletic fields, but several critical factors make it inappropriate for this purpose. First and foremost, the property is privately owned, as shown in the attached tax map, meaning it would require acquisition before any development could be considered. While parts of the land are level, they lie directly adjacent to the Ho-Ho-Kus Brook. As a result, any construction would require extensive environmental permitting from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), including stream encroachment permits, wetlands permits, and compliance with riparian buffer regulations—none of which are required at the Schedler site.

Moreover, portions of this level land fall within a designated flood hazard area and floodway. The Village has been actively moving away from placing recreational fields in such high-risk zones due to safety, maintenance, and sustainability concerns. The remaining areas of the URTC site are composed of steep, heavily wooded slopes, which are not conducive to athletic field development and would require significant clearing and grading.

Adding to the site's limitations is its location directly across from the Northwest Bergen County Utilities Authority (NBCUA) wastewater treatment plant. During thermal inversions, unpleasant odors from the facility can linger in the area, creating a poor environment for recreational use. Access to the property is also problematic, limited to a single narrow road, which would pose traffic and safety challenges for organized sports events.

Additionally, the URTC site sits adjacent to Habernickel Park, which would result in a concentration of recreational resources in one part of the Village. In contrast, the Schedler property is located on the east side of Ridgewood, a part of the community that currently lacks sufficient park and field space. This geographical imbalance is a key consideration in future planning.

Finally, there are unresolved questions about the URTC property's environmental conditions, which would require thorough assessment before any development could proceed. Notably, the property includes ownership of a dam that spans the brook. This dam is in poor condition, has been flagged by the NJDEP, and presents a significant liability requiring costly repairs. Taken together, these factors clearly demonstrate that the URTC property is not a viable or practical alternative to the Schedler site for the development of new athletic fields.

Synthetic Turf Field vs Grass Analysis – Attached is correspondence from Scott Bills, a Certified Sports Field Manager of Sports Field Solutions, who was engaged to develop a comprehensive grass vs. turf field analysis for the Zabriskie-Schedler property. With his expertise in athletic field design and maintenance, Bill has evaluated the benefits, limitations, and long-term feasibility of natural grass compared to synthetic turf, taking into account factors such as usage demands, maintenance requirements, environmental impact, and cost-effectiveness. His analysis informs the decision-making process by providing objective, professional insight into the most suitable surface option for the proposed park.

Berm Calculation Request – Based on the previous survey of the Zabriskie-Schedler property, the berm area totals approximately 37,100 square feet, which represents about 12.5% of the overall lot coverage. This measurement provides important context for understanding how much of the property is occupied by the berm and helps inform planning decisions related to land use, grading, and potential reconfiguration of the site.

Fields Policy & Fees – Attached are the Village of Ridgewood’s field use fees and policies, provided for reference. These documents outline the regulations, scheduling procedures, and associated costs for the use of Village-managed athletic fields. They serve as a guideline for how field access is granted to various organizations and help ensure consistent and equitable use of recreational facilities across the community.

Field Percentage – At your request, approximately 31.27% of the Zabriskie-Schedler property will be dedicated to the athletic field itself. This allocation ensures that a significant portion of the site is reserved specifically for sports and recreational use, while allowing the remaining area to accommodate supporting facilities, open space, and natural features.

Other Examples of Turf in Parks – In comparison to similar projects previously presented to this Council—such as those at Goffle Brook Park in Passaic County, River Bank Park in Essex County, the Homestead Farm at Oak Ridge in Union County, and The Great Hall at Shadow Lawn in Monmouth County—the proposed project at the Zabriskie-Schedler property would likewise offer a combination of cultural and recreational use. These referenced projects have successfully demonstrated how public spaces can serve dual purposes: honoring and preserving important historic and cultural assets while also meeting the active recreational needs of the surrounding communities. Similarly, our proposal seeks to protect and interpret the historic Zabriskie House and landscape, while integrating functional, well-planned athletic and passive recreation areas. This balanced approach not only aligns with successful precedents across the state but also ensures that the space becomes a dynamic, inclusive, and educational asset for Ridgewood residents of all ages.

In closing, all documents can be found at the shared link provided. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Best Regards,



Keith Kazmark
Village Manager