

Draft
Open Space and Recreation Plan Element
March 9, 2011

Hamilton Township has long demonstrated a commitment to fulfilling the open space, recreation, and historic preservation needs of its residents. This commitment, evident in the Township's numerous preserved properties, municipal parks, historic sites, and extensive recreational programs and facilities, is a response to the wide range of recreational needs and interests of Hamilton Township residents. Furthermore, the Township values the role that open space and recreation facilities play in building strong communities. Through investing in its parks and recreation inventory, the Township assumes a proactive role in promoting physically and mentally healthy residents, strengthening communities, promoting social networks, and supporting youth.

The Township exceeds the open space goal set by the New Jersey *2008-2012 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* ("SCORP") by 100%. The SCORP utilizes the Balanced Land Use Concept approach to estimate the open space necessary for recreation purposes across the State, counties and municipalities. This approach suggests that municipalities should have 3% of their developable land devoted to recreation purposes. This approach uses developable land as the basis for the calculation since the demand for recreation land is generated by the presence of people, expressed as developed area. With 6% of the Township's land consisting of developed parks, State-owned open space and recreation areas and County-owned open space and recreation areas, the Township far exceeds this goal.

The Township was rewarded for its efforts at fostering a healthy environment through outdoor activities by being named a 2010 Playful City USA community. Hamilton was one of 118 communities in 35 states to receive this award, which recognizes communities that have taken special action to support play and physical activity.

The benefits of ready access to park and recreational amenities on physical and mental health are well established. Residents who engage in recreational activities reduce their risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and osteoporosis. Additionally, increased activity is proven to boost the immune system and increase life expectancy. Recreational activity is also associated with reduced risk of depression, improved quality of life, and diminished stress levels. Through investing in parks and recreational facilities, Hamilton Township is not only improving the character of the Township, but also the health and well being of its residents.

This investment supports the recently started *Let's S.H.A.P.E. Hamilton 100,000 Pound Challenge*. This program, started in September 2010, challenges Township residents to lose 100,000 pounds over the course of the year. In addition to advocating health screenings, maintaining a healthy weight, abstaining from smoking and eating healthy, this program recommends that each person engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day. The Township's park and recreational amenities provide opportunities for residents to achieve this goal.

"Open space", as used in this Master Plan, is distinguished from parks and recreation amenities in that it is intended to remain largely undeveloped. Like the built environment, open space adopts many different forms and provides a diversity of benefits. As is described in the Conservation Element, Hamilton Township is home to lands that are of critical environmental importance to both

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the region and the state of New Jersey. Through its land use decisions, the Township has the opportunity to conserve areas that significantly benefit the region's water quality, protect areas designated with high aquifer recharge, preserve critical wildlife corridors, and promote biodiversity.

Hamilton acknowledges its responsibility in preserving the ecological integrity of the area. The Township has actively conserved lands that are of environmental significance, such as the over 400 acre Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh at the southwest part of the Township along the Delaware River. This responsibility is further evidenced by the system of preserved land along much of the Township's stream corridors and other environmentally sensitive lands. These lands have been preserved through Township purchase, conservation easements and through State and County land purchase.

Another type of open space in Hamilton Township is preserved farmland. Hamilton Township has approximately 3,340 acres of assessed farmland, the vast majority of which is located in the southern portion of the Township, east of Route 130. This area has the Township's largest concentration of agricultural activities – which creates a system of support and acceptance of farm practices – in part due to the presence of highly productive farmland. The character of those lands east of Route 130 in the RRC district is heavily influenced by farming with the resulting character being one of a rural and agrarian landscape.

Open Space and recreation are known for their positive impact on municipal revenue, property values and enhancing the quality of life in the community. People are attracted to parks and this attraction creates the potential for Hamilton's parks to generate tangible economic benefits for surrounding neighborhoods. The economic benefits of parks are realized when vacant lands are converted to park space and the value of surrounding land is enhanced as a result of the increased desirability of the immediate area. As a result, property values increase which can attract further private investment.

Additionally, open space and recreational amenities provide broader community benefits. They provide the community with central gathering points, encourage interaction between residents, and supports the development of community youth. In particular, the Town's league sports promote social bonding, instill civic pride, and build cultural diversity and harmony. Furthermore, access to recreational amenities has also been correlated to reduced crime rates, increased volunteerism, and greater community participation.

Recognizing the benefits, Hamilton Township is actively engaged in maintaining its existing open space and recreation lands and expanding its parks and recreation facilities through the following goals and objectives.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan Element is an update of the 2003 Open Space and Recreation Plan Element and the draft 2009 update.

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Goals & Objectives

- Goal 1. Preserve open space sufficient to meet the current and future needs of Township residents.
- Objective 1.a Acquire land which would help meet perceived needs for future recreational opportunities.
- Objective 1.b Acquire lands for environmental protection and to satisfy open space objectives such as farmland and/or rural preservation. Lands in need of environmental protection include greenways, wetlands, steep slopes, stream corridors, floodplain, floodways, aquifer recharge areas, and the like.
- Objective 1.c Supplement Hamilton Township Municipal Open Space Funding with other funding sources such as State, County, and non-profit programs including but not limited to: State Green Acres Program; Mercer County Trust Fund Tax Acquisitions; and the State Farmland Preservation Program; the Infrastructure Trust Monies for stream corridor acquisition; and non-profit agencies and private donations.
- Goal 2. Develop open space and recreational facilities sufficient to meet the current and future needs of Township residents.
- Objective 2.a Expand park lands with active recreational facilities to meet the present and future needs of Hamilton Township. Develop linear linkages between parks, historic properties, and from residential neighborhoods which promote alternative transportation.
- Objective 2.b Enhance existing community parks to reflect the needs of the local community.
- Objective 2.c Promote recreational activity with appropriate and adequate access by all age and user groups throughout the Township.
- Objective 2.d Foster continued cooperative use of facilities and open space with the Hamilton Township Board of Education.
- Objective 2.e Foster continued and expanded cooperation with private commercial landowners and residential communities to utilize open space for shared recreational activities.
- Objective 2.f Periodically review and update the recreation inventory and needs analysis to evaluate and provide for estimated needs.

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- Objective 2.g Explore modifications of the Township Open Space Plan to achieve symbiosis with State, County, non-profit groups, and adjacent Community Greenway Plans, and to include passive recreational activities (i.e. public access, nature trails, picnicking).
- Objective 2.h Encourage pride and a sense of ownership of park facilities by Township residents through facilities which are well maintained and serve the needs of its users.
- Goal 3. Balance the provision of open space with other land uses.
- Objective 3.a Reinforce the planning efforts of the Township, County, and State Master Plans.
- Objective 3.b Balance open space and recreational facilities throughout the Township relative to neighborhoods to provide adequate access and opportunity to all people of the Township, and enhance the well being of residents.
- Objective 3.c Promote the development of mini-parks within neighborhoods where there is consensus they will enhance surrounding property values.
- Objective 3.d Identify and correct deficiencies in neighborhood-scaled parks and open space and recreation facilities.
- Objective 3.e Foster cooperative efforts to preserve regionally significant areas with the State, County, and adjacent municipalities.

Inventory of Existing Open Space & Recreation Lands

Hamilton Township has one of the most extensive municipal park systems and recreational systems in the State. Recreation facilities can be put into two categories – active and passive. Active recreation facilities are defined as improved land capable of hosting formal or organized recreation activities; examples include but are not limited to playgrounds, baseball fields and soccer fields. Passive recreation facilities are defined as unimproved or minimally improved land capable of hosting outdoor activities that are compatible with conservation functions; examples include but are not limited to walking trails, bicycle trails and bird watching. Large parks typically encompass more than one type of recreation. For instance, Veteran’s Park, at 314 acres, offers both hiking trails as well as baseball fields.

With a total of 21 Township owned parks and 522 developed park acres, few municipalities can match this extensive system which ranges from active parks to passive gardens and arboretums. This

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park system includes such notable parks as Veterans Park, Sayen Gardens, and the Kuser Farm. The facilities at these parks include traditional active sporting fields, such as soccer and baseball fields, as well as more specialized facilities such as a new skateboard park and street hockey court.

Much of the Township's preserved open space is located in the southern portion of the Township, along the Township boundary with Bordentown Township. Many of these lands, which include the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh, are environmentally sensitive with wetlands, flood plains and wildlife habitat. Another concentration of open space is in the northern section of the Township, along the Assunpink stream corridor and those portions which are part of Mercer County Park. These areas play an important role since they encompass regionally significant environmental resources and serve as a buffer between those resources and surrounding development. Additionally, some of these areas provide public access, therefore fulfilling educational and recreational needs of Township residents.

The Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh is part of the larger public area consisting of Mercer County Roebling Park and the State D&R Canal. This area not only preserves significant environmental resources but also provides a greenway along the Township's southern boundary. Additionally, this area hosts historic sites, most notably the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark. The Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark Interpretive Plan, prepared by Mercer County, recommends improvements that would enhance pedestrian access to the Marsh and construction of an interpretive center at Roebling Park that will provide educational programs.

The majority of Hamilton's farmland, and all of its preserved farmland, is located in the southeastern portion of the Township. Of the 3,340 acres of assessed farmland in the Township, 1,223 acres, or 37%, have been preserved. This success in farmland preservation enhances the rural character of Rural Resource Conservation (RRC) zone district in the southeastern portion of the Township. Mercer County has identified a 3,185 acre Agricultural Development Area (ADA) within the southern part of the Township, which encompasses the existing preserved farmland as well as a number of preserved open space parcels. An ADA is defined as an area where the County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) has determined that farming is viable over the long term. All of the lands in the Township's ADA are also designated as a "Project Area" by the County, that portion of the ADA which is prioritized for farmland preservation activities.

There are also numerous Township parks integrated into neighborhoods. These parks provide passive and active recreation within or proximate to neighborhoods and their location ensures convenient access. They also provide a place for social interaction – for neighbors to get to know each other – and thus contribute toward a sense of community. Additionally, and critical to sustainability, locating these facilities in or near concentrations of users will reduce vehicle miles traveled as visitors will have less distance to travel to reach the facilities and may not need to rely upon a car to do so.

In addition to these recreation offerings, the Township also has several areas of walking/hiking and biking trails. Residents can walk/hike and bike in Mercer County Park, Veterans Park, the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh, Roebling Park, as well as others.

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Please note that the final draft and adopted versions of this document will be reformatted to provide a more pleasing appearance and to incorporate maps, graphics and photographs.

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The following table provides a summary of open space and recreational areas in Hamilton Township:

Hamilton Township Open Space & Recreation Inventory Summary

Owner/Designation	Acreage (Approx.)	Percentage of Total Township Acreage
State of New Jersey	264	1.0%
Mercer County	855	3.0%
Township Parks (Developed)	526	2.0%
Township Open Space (undeveloped or easements on private property)	1,647	6.0%
Farmland Preservation	1,223	5.0%
Total	4,514	17.0%

The following tables provide a list of all preserved open space and farmland properties in the Township.

Hamilton Township Open Space & Recreation Inventory
Detail Listing

General	Size
1. AMC Dedication	42.28 ac.
2. Apollo Park	2.41 ac
3. Vacant Land	153.25 ac
4. Bear Swam	23.53 ac
5. Bernard Foley Park	0.17 ac
6. Bromley Park	5.05 ac
7. Brooklane Field	13.05 ac
8. Cedar Lawn Park	0.12 ac
9. Raymond Dwier Center	1.67 ac
10. Connecticut Ave Playground	1.06 ac
11. Cornell Heights	4.77 ac
12. D'Arcy Street Park	0.42 ac
13. D'Arcy Street Park	0.39 ac

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General		Size
14.	Deutzville Park	8.48 ac
15.	Deutzville Playground	0.54 ac
16.	Drialo Park	2.26 ac
17.	Drialo Park	4.14 ac
18.	Farmingdale Park	0.69 ac
19.	Farmingdale Park	1.10 ac
20.	Fred Sayen Park	10.90 ac
21.	Fred Sayen Park	3.16 ac
22.	Sayen Gardens	28.10 ac
23.	Fred Sayen Park	0.14 ac
24.	Fred Sayen Park	0.07 ac
25.	Future Bike Path	2.09 ac
26.	Future Bike Path	1.22 ac
27.	George Dick Field	3.52 ac
28.	George Dye Tract	1.65 ac
29.	George Dye Tract	4.40 ac
30.	Township Land	0.82 ac
31.	Gropps Lake	28.84 ac
32.	Anchor Thread Park	3.61 ac
33.	Hamilton Green Limewood	2.03 ac
34.	Hamilton Green Limewood	3.40 ac
35.	Hamilton Green Limewood	0.34 ac
36.	Hamilton Green Limewood	0.34 ac
37.	Hamilton Green Limewood	0.34 ac
38.	Hamilton Green Limewood	0.34 ac
39.	Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh	403.81 ac
40.	Hamilton Playground	3.67 ac
41.	Hamilton Playground	2.00 ac
42.	Hamilton Playground	1.00 ac
43.	Hamilton Square Park	3.81 ac
44.	Highlands Playground	0.28 ac

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General		Size
45.	Highlands Tot Lot	0.18 ac
46.	Highlands dedication	73.68 ac
47.	Homedell School	1.93 ac
48.	Homestead Gardens	24.63 ac
49.	Kuser Farm Park	21.26 ac
50.	McClellan Ave Park	0.72 ac
51.	Mercerville Park	12.31 ac
52.	Municipal Bldg Athletic Fields	5.84 ac
53.	Neighborhood Center	1.19 ac
54.	Township Land	0.91 ac
55.	Periwinkle Park	0.39 ac
56.	Periwinkle Park	0.20 ac
57.	Periwinkle Park	0.21 ac
58.	Township Land	0.70 ac
59.	Township Land	0.78
60.	Pintinelli Tract	5.96 ac
61.	Samuel Perro Park	6.42 ac
62.	Shady Brook Park	28.75 ac
63.	Sharps Lane Crestwood Park	9.70 ac
64.	Liberty Park	0.33 ac
65.	Sunnybrae Park	11.59 ac
66.	Sunset Manor Park	6.79 ac
67.	Township Land	0.63 ac
68.	Switlik Park	18.53 ac
69.	Van Horn Park	11.45 ac
70.	Veterans Park	313.57 ac
71.	West Acres Playground	5.03 ac
72.	Whitehead Park	1.11 ac
73.	Township Land	1.88 ac
74.	Township Land	2.89 ac
75.	Township Land	.075 ac

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General		Size
76.	Blank	15.34 ac
77.	Township Land	15.77 ac
78.	Township Land	0.20 ac
79.	Township Land	3.01 ac
80.	Township Land	0.28 ac
81.	Township Land	23.94 ac
82.	Township Land	0.48 ac
83.	Township Land	5.32 ac
84.	Township Land	7.09 ac
85.	Township Land	9.51 ac
86.	Bear Swamp	193.48 ac
87.	Township Land	12.15 ac
88.	Township Land	5.30 ac
89.	Township Land	32.86 ac
90.	Murray Ave Park	2.06 ac
91.	Township Land	16.25 ac
92.	Township Land	36.14 ac
93.	Township Land	0.40 ac
94.	Township Land	10.74 ac
95.	Township Land	34.16 ac
96.	Township Land	13.97 ac
97.	Township Land	2.07 ac
98.	Township Land	4.88 ac
99.	Township Land	2.89 ac
100.	Hamilton Golf Center	14.41 ac
101.	Township Land	31.24 ac
102.	Tindale Farm Park	8.61 ac
103.	Isaac Pearson House	5.54 ac
104.	Township Land	4.48 ac
105.	Township Land	0.42 ac
106.	Township Land	9.34 ac

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General		Size
107.	Township Land	0.91 ac
108.	Township Land	2.23 ac
109.	Township Land	3.45 ac
110.	Township Land	5.34 ac
111.	Township Land	1.87 ac
112.	Township Land	0.98 ac
113.	Township Land	2.16 ac
114.	Township Land	1.84 ac
115.	Township Wetlands	8.28 ac
116.	Township Land	1.53 ac
117.	Township Land	0.25 ac
118.	Township Land	3.66 ac
119.	Township Land	21.68 ac
120.	Township Land	10.46 ac
121.	Township Land	2.00 ac
122.	Township Land	5.92 ac
123.	Township Land	2.47 ac
124.	Township Land	1.42 ac
125.	Township Land	5.08 ac
126.	Township Land	14.18 ac
127.	Township Land	2.32 ac
128.	Township Land	4.31 ac
129.	Township Land	3.50 ac
130.	Papps Village Playground	2.39 ac
131.	Grafton House	14.11 ac
132.	Franciamore Gardens	0.07 ac
133.	Township Land	14.27 ac
134.	Township Land	4.71 ac
135.	Braghelli Tract	84.67 ac
136.	Klockner Woods	51.57 ac
137.	Cubberly Meadows donation	14.96 ac

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General		Size
138.	New Cedar Lane Park	0.39 ac

Schools	
Elementary Schools	
S-1	Alexander
S-2	Greenwood
S-3	Kisthardt
S-4	Klockner
S-5	Kuser
S-6	Lalor
S-7	Langtree
S-8	McGalliard
S-9	Mercerville
S-10	Morgan
S-11	Our Lady of Sorrows
S-12	Robinson
S-13	St. Anthony
S-14	St. Gregory
S-15	St. Raphael
S-16	Sayen
S-17	Sunnybrae
S-18	University Heights
S-19	Wilson
S-20	Yardville
S-21	Yardville Heights
S-22	Holy Angels
Middle Schools	
S-23	Crockett
S-24	Grice
S-25	Reynolds
High Schools	
S-26	Hamilton East (Steinert)
S-27	Hamilton West
S-28	Hamilton North (Nottingham)
S-29	McCorriston

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Farmland Preservation		
1.	Doerler	122.12 ac
2.	Kim (formerly Facey)	145.25 ac
3.	Blank	—
4a.	Pyrros (formerly Skeba)	41.13 ac
4b.	Brittain (formerly Skeba)	55.58 ac
5.	Samu	100.67 ac
6.	DePaulis (formerly Runge)	121.56 ac
7.	McDade (formerly Renbord)	62.44 ac
8.	Hunt (purchased by State)	49.63 ac
9.	Lengyen (purchased by State)	128.55 ac
10.	Bielanski (purchased by State)	48.86 ac
11.	Danch (purchased by State)	21.33 ac
12.	Ellis (purchased by Township)	91.95 ac
13.	Zygmunt (purchased by County)	101.89 ac
14.	Blank	—
15.	Verde (purchased by County)	32.95 ac
16.	Rock Hill Farm	54.48 ac

Stream Corridor Easements and Parcels		
A.	Locust Hill Back Creek conservation easement	39.85 ac
B.	Pedestrian and bicycle easement	—
C.	Doctor's Creek Linear Park easement	5.86 ac
D.	CYO Doctor's creek Stream Corridor	1.24 ac
E.	Certified Steel Assunpink Stream Corridor easement	.88 ac
F.	Miry Brook Stream Corridor	49.83 ac
G.	Pond Run Stream Corridor	7.03 ac
H.	Doctor's Creek Stream Corridor	3.75 ac
J.	Doctor's Creek Tributary	2.36 ac
K.	Doctor's Creek Tributary Stream and Bicycle easement	7.62 ac
L.	Branch of Doctors creek	108.43 ac
M.	Doctors Creek corridor	29.37 ac
N.	Anderson Property	18.90 ac

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As shown in the following table, Hamilton Township and the Hamilton Board of Education offer extensive recreation opportunities.

Recreation Use	Existing Township Owned Facilities	Existing Board of Education Owned Facilities	Existing Private Facilities
Softball	3	4	1
Small soccer fields	0	0	0
Full Sized Soccer fields	2	26	8
Indoor Soccer (Full sized)	0	0	2
Football fields	1	9	0
Baseball fields	2	10	0
Swimming Pool - Indoor	0	3	5
Swimming Pool - Outdoor	0	0	4
Lacrosse	1	0	0
Skateboard Park	1	0	0
Track (For track and field events)	0	3	0
Full Basketball court-Outdoor	14	12	1
8 Sets of 2 Tennis courts	48	0	7
Quoit Courts	4	0	4
Outdoor Volleyball court	4	0	2
Picnic groves with pavilion and outdoor cooking	14	8	6
Ice skating rink (indoor)	0	0	2
Street hockey rink	2	0	0
Field Hockey	0	1	0
Half Court Basketball	4	14	0
Little League Baseball	15	0	2
Baseball/Softball	3	4	1
Practice Football	0	2	0
Playground	30	17	1
Fishing	2	0	0
Lawn Bowling	2	0	0

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Recreation Use	Existing Township Owned Facilities	Existing Board of Education Owned Facilities	Existing Private Facilities
Bocce	3	o	6
Shuffleboard	2	o	3
Miniature Golf	1	o	o

Targeted Open Space & Recreation Lands

It is important that each neighborhood have convenient access to open space and recreation areas. To enable this access, the Township should continue to develop additional passive and active recreation facilities and provide safe and convenient access to them via alternative modes of transportation. Creation of municipal recreation facilities should be largely based on outreach efforts to the future users – residents and community organizations – to determine the type of facilities most desired. This will help integrate the facilities into the social and physical fabric of the neighborhood and ensure that that the facilities are enjoyed by the residents. The presence of safe and convenient facilities for alternative modes of transportation, such as sidewalk, bike lanes and bike racks, will also provide linkages between the open space and recreation areas as well as neighborhoods and commercial centers. These facilities will encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation and will enhance the attractiveness and usefulness of the open space and recreation areas. Additionally, providing pedestrian and bicycle access is critical for ensuring access by those who do not drive, such as the young, elderly and disabled.

While Hamilton is well known for its array of active sports organizations there appears to be an interest among residents for less structured recreation. An online survey done during the Master Plan process revealed a preference for additional “natural” or “unstructured” recreation features – 77% of respondents said Hamilton needs more nature education, 68% of respondents indicated Hamilton needs more biking trails and 63% of respondents indicated Hamilton needs more hiking/walking trails. While this survey was not a mathematically representative sample of the Township’s residents, it does provide anecdotal information which can be of value.

To assist with maintenance of open space and recreation areas, the Township should engage resident organizations, formal and informal, since they can be critical to maintaining parks. Users of the park are often a municipality’s first line of defense against crime and can alert the Township to maintenance needs.

In addition to neighborhood-centric recreational opportunities it is also important that “destination” type commercial development - such as that permitted along the Route 130 corridor –provide open

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space or recreation facilities as well. The addition of recreation in these large-scale commercial centers will create a more pleasant experience for visitors to the destination and will create a broader mix of complementary uses.

A network of greenways is being established throughout the Township, including along the Township's approximately 44 miles of stream corridors. The Township should continue to develop the greenway system. This recommendation is echoed in the Conservation Element for the purpose of preserving environmentally sensitive lands and providing recreation areas. The greenway system should include pedestrian/bicycle trails and linkages as well as environmentally sensitive lands such as stream corridors. Greenways are an integral component of the Township's green infrastructure and will effectively tie the park system together to form a continuous park environment. Additionally, greenways linked to existing preserved lands, parks and historic sites would increase access to those lands and better integrate them into the Township's park system. For example, a greenway link along the abandoned Camden-Amboy railroad, which is the oldest rail line in New Jersey and the third oldest in the nation, would provide linkages to environmentally sensitive lands along Crosswicks Creek at the border with Bordentown Township to the south and environmentally sensitive lands along the Edges Brook at the border with Robbinsville Township to the north.

The greenway system in the Township will provide linkages between preserved open space, parks, preserved farmland, environmentally sensitive lands and neighborhood destinations – such as schools, community buildings and neighborhood commercial centers. The Township should coordinate its greenway efforts with those of the surrounding area, including but not limited to the efforts of the Crosswicks Creek / Doctors Creek Watershed Association, which prepared the Crosswicks Creek / Doctors Creek Watershed Greenway Plan and the *Crosswicks Creek / Doctors Creek Trail Feasibility Plan*, as well as the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Association, which prepared the document *Closing the Missing Link on the Assunpink Creek Greenway*.

A successful greenway example of this in Hamilton Township is at the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh and Roebing Park. This park at the southwest corner of Township provides recreational trails throughout the site and also to the Historic Abbott House. Additionally, the trails connect to the nearby Broad Street Park neighborhood and the Independence Shopping Center is just a short distance away. This area was the subject of the *Cooperative Stewardship Plan Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh 2010* prepared by Friends of the Marsh and D&R Greenway Land Trust. The *Stewardship Plan* provides strategies for enhancing the ecological integrity of the Marsh and its educational and recreational opportunities. Future improvements of this area, including but not limited to greenway development should be coordinated with the recommendations in the *Stewardship Plan* and with the activities of Friends of the Marsh and D&R Greenway.

Greenways should be developed for one or more modes of recreational travel, i.e. walking/hiking, biking and/or canoeing. However, where that travel infrastructure is a long term goal or is not possible, greenways can still provide valuable environmental benefits, such as stream corridor and wildlife corridor protection. In addition to tying the park system together, a system of greenways

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could integrate historic sites into the park system, create wildlife corridors and offer opportunities for alternative means of transportation.

Stream corridor protection, through a comprehensive greenway network would serve multiple purposes: maintain water quality by filtering run-off entering the streams and maintaining moderate temperatures in those waters, provide wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for passive recreation. To this end, the Township has a goal of acquiring approximately 21 miles of corridors along streams. With an average width of 200 feet, these corridors would constitute approximately 500 acres of land. The Township, County and State currently control 23 miles along stream corridors in Hamilton. This equates to approximately 1,806 acres.

Acquisition and Preservation Policies

In light of its commitment to open space and recreation, the Township passed a bond ordinance in 2002 which provided \$5 million for the acquisition of open space. This bond provided a stable source of funding for open space and recreation acquisition. All funds from the bond have been used for the acquisition of open space; however the term of the bond extends to 2012. Additionally, the Township established an open space fund in 2004. Since its inception, there have been nearly \$2 million in deposits to the fund principally through developer contributions and State reimbursements for the purchase of open space. Currently, the fund contains approximately \$1,082,500. These funds should continue to be combined with State, County, private, and non-profit programs to implement the open space and recreation needs of the community in concert with other land development goals.

All municipalities are eligible for a 25% match of funds toward the acquisition of open space and farmland through the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres program – one of the State's most prominent sources of open space funds. Municipalities are eligible for a 50% match of funds if they have an approved Open Space and Recreation Plan and either an open space tax at a rate equivalent to at least one half of one cent per \$100.00 of assessed value of real property or an equivalent alternative funding means such as a bond ordinance or annual appropriation in an equivalent amount. The Township's \$5 million dollar bond ordinance was previously found to meet the criteria for an equivalent alternative funding means.

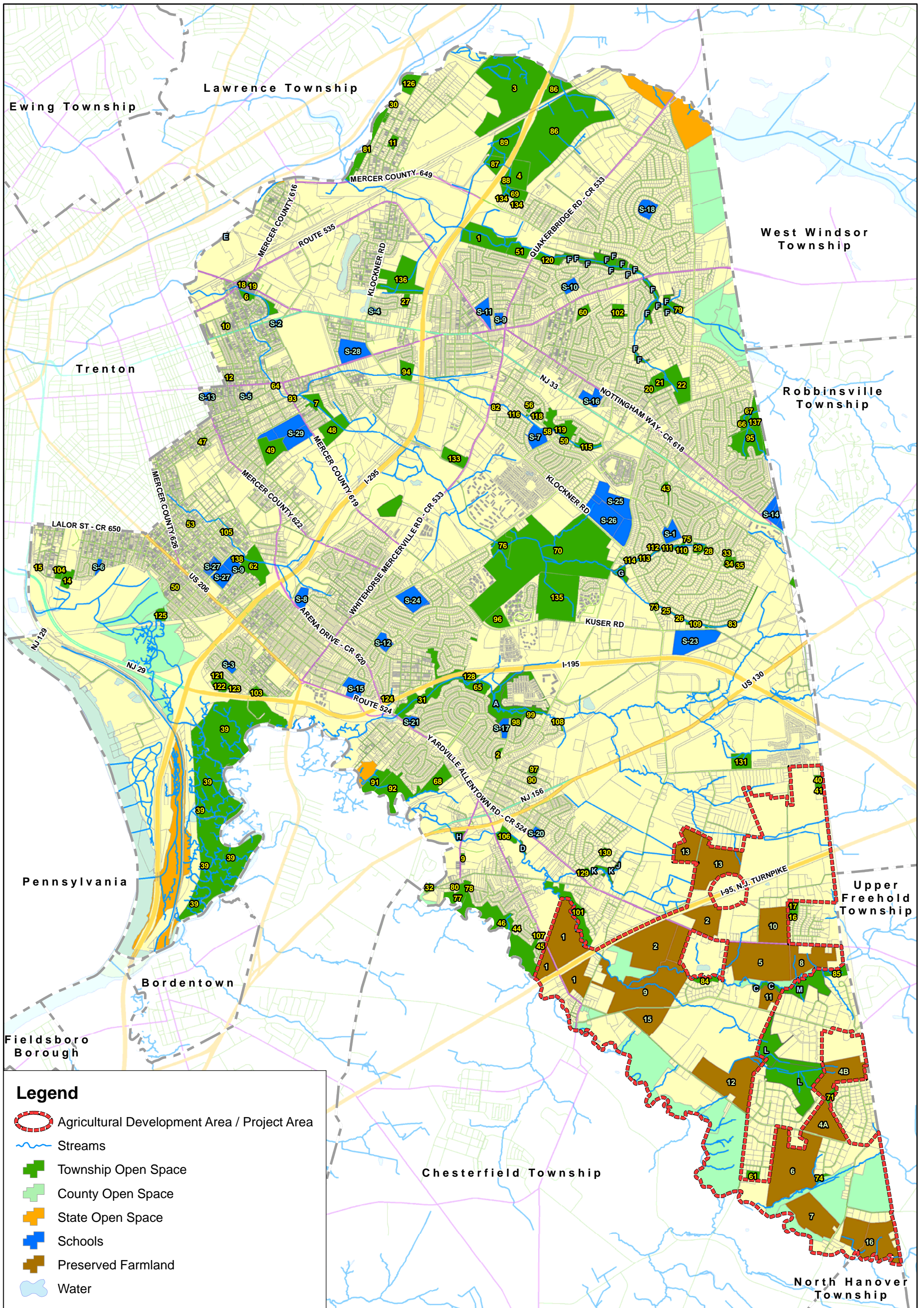
The Township should prioritize its purchase of farmland to those lots within the County's ADA for Hamilton Township in order to maximize the availability of the County's farmland preservation funds. In addition to purchase of lands, the Township will continue to work with property owners to create conservation easements along environmentally sensitive lands and farmland preservation easements on active agricultural lands. This tactic is especially valuable when development is proposed to be clustered with remaining lands to remain undeveloped.

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Implementation Plan

The following action items are recommended for implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Element of the Master Plan.

1. Target acquisition of open space and recreation properties, via purchase and/or easement, to those neighborhoods lacking convenient access to passive and or active open space and to those properties that will contribute to a comprehensive greenway system throughout the Township.
2. Target acquisition of farmland properties, via purchase and/or easement, to those within the Mercer County Agricultural Development Area (ADA) for Hamilton Township.
3. Coordinate creation of new recreation facilities with the needs and desires of the intended users.
4. Engage resident organizations, formal and informal, about the ongoing maintenance needs of the Township's open space and recreation areas.
5. Install walking/hiking and biking facilities such as sidewalks, bike lanes and bike racks at the Township's park and recreation areas and greenways.



Legend

-  Agricultural Development Area / Project Area
-  Streams
-  Township Open Space
-  County Open Space
-  State Open Space
-  Schools
-  Preserved Farmland
-  Water

This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.



2011 MASTER PLAN

Open Space

Hamilton Township, Mercer County, NJ March 2011

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 Planning
 Landscape Architecture