

**2006 Master Plan**

**Township of Franklin, Somerset County, New Jersey**

**March 2006**

Prepared By:

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Adopted By:

Franklin Township Planning Board on March 22, 2006

**A. Existing Land Use**

1. Maintain the diversity of housing, but encourage infill and stabilization of current residential areas rather than continuing sprawl patterns of development.
2. Encourage commercial and industrial development in areas with access to major regional highways and in established areas.
3. Differentiate between neighborhood commercial nodes and regional commercial development.
4. Maintain the character of the existing villages of Kingston, Griggstown, Franklin Park, Middlebush and East Millstone.
5. Protect the Township's cultural heritage by encouraging the continuation of farming as a viable land use.
6. Support the redevelopment of declining areas within the Township.

**B. Existing Land Use**

Preserved land currently represents the largest percentage of land use classification in the Township (31.1%). Industrial and commercial acreage have increased modestly since the 1999 Master Plan and most vacant land was converted to preserved or public-quasi public land.

**C. Community Facilities Plan**

The Community Facilities Plan provides an evaluation of the facility needs of the Township's public schools, library and fire, first aid and police protection. The goal of this plan is to provide adequate community services and facilities to serve the needs of all current and future residents in the Township.

- Schools

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The Franklin Township School District provides a comprehensive educational program with a total of eight schools in the Township. There are approximately 6,700 students and over 900 staff members.

Recent Facility Improvements include: a new high school designed to accommodate 2,000 students, new wings were added to the Elizabeth Avenue School and the Pine Grove Manor School, and renovations were also performed at the MacAfee School.

Franklin Township has experienced steady enrollment growth since 2000 and is anticipated to reach an enrollment of 7,619 by the 2009-2010 school years.

The Franklin Township school system has a number of recreational facilities that are available for use by students, and residents when not in use by the schools. Due to the sharing of school recreational facilities, issues of overuse and maintenance have surfaced. The Board of Education can take action by creating maintenance planning schedules for the facilities, purchasing additional land for recreational purposes, or discounting the sharing of recreational facilities, and create separate facilities for each entity.

- **Library Facilities**

One public library is located in Franklin Township, and is currently undergoing significant renovations, which will double its size and capacity from 18,000 to 36,000 square feet. The Public Library has a current circulation of approximately 227,498. Once the expansion is completed, the library's total circulation will increase by an additional 156,000 books.

In addition to traditional library services such as reading, researching, and borrowing books, the Franklin Public Library offers a variety of activities and programs to residents of all ages.

According to the New Jersey State Library Standards, the Franklin Public Library is well below the size it should be for its population, however after the expansion is complete, the library will exceed the recommended square footage.

- **Fire Services and Facilities**

There are four fire districts containing nine fire departments. The Township's fire departments are staffed by volunteers who live and work in the community.

- **First Aid Services and Facilities**

The Township's first aid squads are staffed by volunteers who live and work in the community. Currently, the first aid services are concerned about their ability to serve the impending influx of more than 2,000 units of senior housing in the northwest sector of the Township.

- **Police Services and Facilities**

The Franklin Township Police Department serves the entire Township, including residents and employees of local businesses. The Department covers and extensive

service area and consequently requires a significant amount of equipment, particularly vehicles, to patrol the area.

The officers and staff of the Township Police Department are responsible for law enforcement, public safety programs and support functions. The Department also incorporates community policing, which is characterized by an emphasis on officer initiative in deterring and preventing crime, establishing relationships and effective communications with members of the local community to solve problems. The Department utilizes a variety of community policing techniques depending on the needs of the community and the available police resources.

### ***Community Facilities Recommendations***

1. Schools: Plan for adequate facilities to serve areas of the Township projected to experience residential development.
2. Public Library: Monitor opportunities to provide greater access in the southern portion of the Township to library services.
3. Fire Facilities: Maintain and improve existing facilities.
4. First Aid Facilities: Maintain existing facilities; plan for adequate daytime first aid service and coverage by recruiting volunteers, coordinate with police and fire departments, and improving response times; Plan for the future improvement or replacement of facilities; The “Strategic Plan” stated there is a need for a stable source of funding to support the operations of first aid squads in the Township.
5. Police Facilities: Increase personnel and equipment levels in step with increases in resident and business populations.

### **D. Parks, Recreation and Open Space**

Voters of Franklin approved a referendum in November of 1998, recommending the Township Council create a Municipal Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. The ordinance was accepted in 1999. As a result of the Township-approved open space tax, the Township has become eligible for funds for open space acquisitions and park development from the State. The township is also eligible for monies under the Garden State Preservation Trust, and the Somerset County Open Space and Preservation Trust Fund.

The goal for parks, recreation and open space is to provide adequate facilities to serve the needs of all current and future residents of the Township. This includes:

1. Determining the proper balance between neighborhood and regional recreational facilities and between active and passive recreational areas.
2. Leveraging local funds to increase the Township’s share of the State and County funds to purchase open space, conservation easements and development rights.
3. Use existing resources such as local parks and open spaces.

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4. Continue to provide open space buffers around existing facilities.
5. Retaining existing Township-owned land and facilities.
6. Expanding parklands and preserves to incorporate significant adjacent open space areas.
7. Promoting the development of park and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the Township residents.
8. Promoting the development of multi-use paths connection residential areas to recreation and community facilities, schools, parks, playgrounds, and shopping areas.

Other goals include, protecting natural resources and preserving agricultural lands.

### ***Recreation Facilities and Programs***

The Township Department of Recreation offers a variety of recreational activities for all ages. Activities for teens include but are not limited to aerobics, roller hockey, open basketball, volleyball, tennis, and arts and crafts. Adult activities include but are not limited to aerobics, “executive” basketball, and co-ed volleyball. There are also specialized activities for senior citizens including a walking club, “sit and fit exercise”, yoga, aerobics, fine arts, technology courses, and Spanish courses. Some of the activities for youth include a variety of sports leagues and clinics, swimming and tennis instruction, and summer camp. For the youngest age groups, toddler activities such as arts and crafts, parachute games, and parent-child courses are available. Preschoolers can enjoy intro to sports programs, music and craft activities and Safety Town in the summer. The Township also maintains a policy of inclusion in its various recreation programs and works with families to address special needs.

Recent Municipal Park and Recreational Facilities Improvements include the following:

- Middlebush Park: Improvements included an access road, parking lots, and playing fields.
- Naaman Williams Park: Improvements included refurbishing the public pool, tennis courts, baseball and soccer fields, playgrounds, hiking trails and a picnic area.
- Dunham Lebed Park: Improvements include one baseball field, two basketball courts, one playground, a picnic area and 0.5 miles of hiking trails.

### ***Recreation Needs Assessment***

The Township Recreation Council and Director of the Department of Recreation recommended the following:

- Maximize the use of the Board of Education facilities.
- Maintain existing facilities.

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- Middlebush Park should serve as a northern community park. Further development should entail:

a. 2-3 Softball fields	b. 2-3 Soccer/football fields
c. Amphitheater	d. 2-4 Basketball courts
e. Skate park	f. Paved jogging and bike trails
g. Tot lot	h. Restrooms
i. Picnic shelter	j. Roller hockey

- A southern community park is recommended to include:

a. 2-3 Softball fields	b. 2-3 Soccer/football fields
c. Cricket pitch	d. 2-4 Basketball courts
e. Skate park	f. Water spray park
g. Paved jogging and bike trails	h. Tot lot
i. Restrooms	j. Picnic shelter
k. Roller hockey	l. 2 Tennis courts

- Lighted athletic fields

Currently, there are no lighted athletic fields. The Department recommends that they be installed in areas where there are no residences nearby.

- New Neighborhood Parks

- Development of a neighborhood park is recommended in the US Homes and Wildflower Ridge areas each with a softball field, a basketball court, open field space, a tot lot and a picnic shelter.
- Tot lot development is recommended in pocket parks.
- The Laurel Avenue School should remain a community meeting resource.

- Community Center and Pool

- Two indoor community pools are recommended at the high school and YMCA.

- Additional Community Center

A second community center could assist in meeting the demand for services. A teen recreation center is recommended for the Hamilton Street neighborhood.

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- **Negri-Nepote Grassland Preserve and Ten Mile Run Greenway Natural Areas**

The Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve is 163, bounded by Bennett’s Lane to the north and Skillman’s Lane to the south. Ten Mile Run is 684 acres that extends from Canal Road in Griggstown east to South Middlebush Road in Franklin Park. The western portion of the tract is known as “Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve-Part of the Ten Mile Run Greenway. The Middle portion of the tract is known as “Bunker Hill Natural Area-Part of the Ten Mile Run Greenway and the eastern portion is known as the “Bunker Hill Natural Area-Part of the Ten Mile Run Greenway”.

The main focus of the Habitat and Recreation Management Plan is passive recreation and maintenance of wildlife habitats. The Plan emphasizes the restoration and management of native grasslands. Recommendations include, but are not limited to:

- a. Restoration of 111 acres of native grassland
- b. Restoration of 47 acres of native grassland
- c. Wetlands restoration
- d. Creation of 13 miles of hiking trails

### ***Priority Acquisition Areas***

- **Canal Preservation/Millstone Valley Area**

The area is located along the D&R Canal on the western and northeastern border of the Township. The main project initiative is to connect the D&R Canal Greenway into a system of greenways within the region.

- **Kingston/Griggstown Preserve**

Kingston/Griggstown Preserve is located in the southern portion of the Township and includes one of the largest contiguous land areas remaining in the Township.

- **Village Greenbelts**

Village greenbelts have formed around the historic villages in the Township. The Plan recommends that these greenbelts are worthy of protection in order to preserve the historic settlement patterns.

- **Agricultural Preservation Area**

The Agricultural Preservation Area would link Six Mile Run State Park lands with the Village of Zarephath to the north.

- **Stream Greenways**

Buffers of 300 feet on either side of a stream that serve as greenways to link open space and recreational areas.

- **State/County Lands Preservation Area**

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The Plan indicates that land adjacent to the State and County-owned land should be preserved to expand upon existing open space/recreational land.

- Scenic Resources

A number of scenic resources are worthy of acquisition.

- Farmland Preservation

The Township actively pursues acquisition of lands to be kept as open space and lands to be preserved as working farms.

Relevant goals and objectives for farmland preservation and sites that are to be acquired include the following:

- a. Maximize efforts to preserve active farms.
  - b. Focus on preservation of prime agricultural lands.
  - c. Work with willing landowners in pursuing the best method of preservation for the Township and the landowner.
  - d. Coordinate the open space preservation effort of Franklin Township with all interested agencies, including other municipalities, counties, state and federal governments, and private organizations and individuals.
  - e. Protect farmland by purchase of development rights, continued use of farmland assessment and other effective mechanisms.
  - f. Discourage the extension of utilities to large farms.
  - g. Maintain the open space dedication requirement under cluster options.
  - h. Encourage on-going dialogue between Township officials and farmers to determine needs and opportunities.
  - i. Urge the State of New Jersey to dedicate all viable land to be used for agricultural purposes.
  - j. Develop a wildlife management plan to reduce crop damage.
  - k. Develop and foster alternative agricultural opportunities.
- County Holdings
    1. Colonial Park/Spooky Brook
    2. Quail Brook Golf Course
    3. Open Space: The following are County open space and parkland initiatives:
      - a. Colonial Park/Spooky Brook: Additional land is needed to meet the existing demand for group picnic and other recreational activities, for buffering to maintain the park setting, and to create more park frontages for public use along the D&R Canal.

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- b. Greenways/Flood Plains and Ridgelines: The County will continue to preserve important greenways, floodplains and ridgelines.
- c. Millstone River Valley Initiative: The County Park Commission would acquire outright or preserve through easements up to 2,000 acres in the Valley. The County Park Commission is also planning to prepare a Plan for the Valley to enforce development regulations and provide financial incentives.

### **State Facilities**

- Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park

The D&R Canal State Park is a 70-mile linear park that runs from New Brunswick to Trenton. It is a part of the National Recreational Trail system and serves as a recreational corridor for canoeing, jogging, hiking, bicycling, fishing, and horseback riding. It also serves as a historic resource with its 19<sup>th</sup> century bridges, bridge tender houses, past and present locks, cobblestone spillways, and hand built stone architectural culverts.

- Six Mile Run State Reservoir

The Six Mile Run Reservoir site is a 3,307 acre tract, purchased by the State with Water Facilities monies to regulate the flow and provide storage capacity for the D&R Canal as a water supply. The reservoir features wetlands, forests, farmlands and old fields. The Township supports the use of the Six Mile Run State Lands for agricultural and recreational use only. If the State of New Jersey decides to sell any portion of the land, the Township would like to retain the right of first refusal for purchase of land.

- Non-Profit Land Holders
- Privately-Owned Facilities

### **Recommendations for the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**

1. The Open Space Advisory Committee should continue its conservation and preservation efforts in conjunction with all pertinent recommendations of the Master Plan and the goals and objectives of the Master Plan and the adopted Open Space and Recreation Plan.
2. The Township Department of Recreation should continue to work with the Board of Education regarding the sharing of facilities.
3. The recommendations of the Department of Recreation and the Recreation Advisory Council should be followed when planning new parks, park amenities and programs.
4. Efforts to make existing facilities more usable via installation of synthetic turf and similar materials should be pursued.
5. Public-private partnerships with recreation providers should be encouraged.



6. County open space and farmland acquisitions that are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Township Master Plan are supported.
7. Six Mile Run State lands should be used for passive recreation and farmland purposes only, and if sold, the Township should have the right-of-first-refusal to purchase the lands.

### **E. Conservation Plan**

The Conservation Plan is intended to set forth how the Township will preserve, conserve, or utilize its natural resources. The goals and objectives for the Conservation Plan include the following:

1. Identify and protect such resources by continued use of the Open Space Trust Fund and non-contiguous parcel clustering.
2. Maintain open space and link to other open spaces and community resources.
3. Maintain clustering as a design technique which preserves open space and protects environmentally sensitive areas.
4. Limit the extension of utilities to currently approved service areas, unless otherwise indicated.
5. Promote retention of wildlife and species diversity by conserving contiguous tracts of differing vegetative types.
6. Maintain design and siting standards to protect the Township's historic and rural character, particularly in villages and along scenic corridors.
7. Continue to support the Right to Farm Ordinance.
8. Strongly enforce limits on impervious coverage and encourage innovative water quality enhancement techniques to site design.

### ***Federal and State Initiatives***

- **Watershed Management Plans**  
The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection joined with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1997, to promote a watershed management approach as a means to protect the water quality of New Jersey.
- **Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association**  
The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association is a non-profit group that provides data and expertise in support of informed land use decision making, the protection of water quality and supply, and the improvement of the community's awareness of environmental issues.
- **New Jersey Stormwater Regulation Amendments**  
New Jersey adopted additional stormwater rules to protect the State's drinking water supply and limit sprawl in January of 2004.

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### a. Category-One Streams

A significant amendment involves naming additional Category-One (C1) streams in the state, and requiring a 300-foot buffer around these water bodies. C1 is the highest form of water quality protection in the State where the buffers will protect critical drinking water sources and limit degradation by additional pollutants. C1 water bodies are classified by their clarity, color, scenic setting, ecological significance, exceptional water supply significance, or exceptional fisheries resources.

The new rules allow some flexibility on the size of the buffers required depending on whether the municipality has approved a stormwater management plan for the specific area and for minor disturbances around existing development within the 300-foot buffer.

### b. Stormwater Management

New rules added stricter stormwater controls to the Residential Site Improvement Standards. Municipalities are also required to amend their ordinances to better control non-residential uses and those not governed by the Residential Site Improvement Standards. The Township is also in the process of adopting new stormwater standards for non-residential uses that will require the use of Best Management Techniques.

Municipal Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SPPP) and Municipal Stormwater Management Plans (MSWMP) are now required pursuant to legislation adopted by the State of New Jersey in accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 1999 Phase II Stormwater Permitting Rules. SPPP's document a municipality's stormwater pollution prevention strategies in all areas, including public education and maintenance of public facilities and equipment. The MSWMP mainly presents a plan for regulating development that is not currently regulated by the Residential Site Improvements Standards. Goals of MSWMPs include:

- Protect areas that provide water quality benefits or areas particularly susceptible to erosion and sediment loss.
- Minimize impervious surfaces and break up or discount the flow of runoff over impervious surfaces.
- Maximize the protection of natural drainage features and vegetation.
- Minimize the decrease in the "time of concentration" from pre-construction to post construction.
- Minimize land disturbance including clearing and grading.
- Minimize soil compaction.
- Provide low-maintenance landscaping that encourages retention and planting of native vegetation and minimizes the use of lawns, fertilizers.

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- Provide vegetated open-channel conveyance systems discharging into and through stable vegetated areas.
- The Landscape Project  
The Landscape Project began in 1994 with a mission to “protect New Jersey’s biological diversity by maintaining and enhancing imperiled wildlife populations within healthy and functioning ecosystems”. The Landscape Project divided the State into large land areas based upon their ecological characteristics and similarities. There are three areas that were identified as critical habitats which include Forest, Grassland, and Forested Wetland.

### ***Local Initiatives***

- Open Space Acquisitions  
Some of the notable acquisitions have been the grasslands, and lands that will add to the acreage of existing holdings.
- Woodlands Study  
The purpose of this study was to document mature forests, their extent, history and composition. Results showed that in the northern and central regions of Franklin, deforestation and disturbance have been severe, while the southern region was found to be moderately forested. The riparian region was found to be heavily forested.
- Stream Sampling Study  
Recommendations from the results study include:
  - a. Developers should be required to monitor streams for turbidity and take additional protective measures if there is excessive suspended matter.
  - b. There should be greater protection of riparian corridors via riparian vegetation.
  - c. The amount of impervious surfaces should be limited to foster infiltration of stormwater.

### ***Additional Environmental Planning Considerations***

- Capacity-Based Planning  
Capacity-based planning relates to the carrying capacity of the land in terms of supporting utilities, not impacting sensitive environmental features such as wetlands, floodplain, groundwater recharge areas, forested areas and species habitat, not creating burdens upon the circulation system and fitting in with the desired character of an area.
- Soils and Geology  
Most of Franklin Township is relatively level in terms of topography, and possesses soils in the highest and second highest classifications for agricultural capability. Land in these categories that is currently farmed has been included in the Agricultural zoning district and is widely sought for development rights acquisition

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when funding is available. A majority of the soils in the Township also exhibit relatively shallow depth to shale bedrock, as well, which results in relatively poor storm water infiltration. The majority of land in the Township is underlain by Brunswick Shale. Steeply sloped lands occur primarily along the Millstone River and other stream corridors.

A small portion of the southern tip of the Township is underlain by diabase material, which is igneous in origin, meaning it is very strong and impermeable. It is not suitable for septic fields, or for potable water production. In the same area, there is also a very small amount of Magothy Formation, which is known to yield significant amounts of water.

- **Critical Areas for Water Resource Protection**  
The majority of the Township is ranked levels One and Two, which are lower in priority. These areas are mainly located along stream corridors. The most critical areas are located in the vicinity of Simonson Brook south of Bunker Hill Road, and in the vicinity of Carter's Brook and its tributaries.
- **Wetlands and Floodplain**  
Wetlands and Floodplain are protected by State regulations. Due to severe flooding that has occurred in the Township in recent years due to the extensive amount of up-stream development that has occurred in the region, adherence to the Stream Corridor Protection Ordinance has gained additional importance.

### ***Recommendations for the Conservation Plan***

1. Enhanced stormwater ordinances should be adopted for non-residential site design.
2. Capacity based planning should be considered when creating standards for lands in the Township.
3. Sewer service areas should be extended only in accordance with the Master Plan, and should include an extension to the Griggstown Quail farm at the corner of Canal and Bunker Hill Roads to control current water pollution in that area.
4. The construction design standards should be amended to require developers to monitor turbidity in adjacent streams during construction, and to require corrective measures if preconstruction levels are exceeded.
5. Variance relief for impervious coverage is discouraged, particularly in areas of critical water resource protection.
6. The use of land banked parking is recommended where appropriate to reduce impervious coverage.
7. Where appropriate, stands of significant trees or individual trees should be preserved where feasible.
8. Greenbelts should be planned and acquired to define a hard edge between centers and environs around historic villages.

9. Open space acquisition should include lands that contain sensitive natural resources. Lands near the D&R Canal are recommended for acquisition.
10. Important view sheds should continue to be protected through sensitive site design.
11. The Right to Farm Ordinance should continue to be supported.
12. The Stream Corridor Protection Ordinance should continue to be supported.
13. The Shade Tree Commission should continue its coordination with other Boards and Commissions within the Township to more effectively serve the Township.

### **F. Circulation Plan**

The Circulation Plan provides an inventory of the existing and proposed transportation network, and includes recommendations to address compatibility with future land uses.

#### *Franklin Township Bikeway Master Plan*

The goals of the plan are to make all streets and roadways bicycle compatible by creating a bikeway system that makes bicycling a viable alternative to driving, creating an increase in recreational bicycling opportunities, improving bicyclist safety and creating policies that encourage bicycling.

In October 2005, the Township created an ad hoc Trails Committee to determine the best places for hiking and biking in the Township.

#### *Franklin Township Scenic Corridors*

The purpose of the Scenic Corridor Ordinance is to: protect the Township's aesthetic resources; direct the location and design of development so that it will enhance the visual character of the Township and to provide sufficient visual buffers and view sheds for future residential development; and to protect the Township's remaining open spaces from conventional development patterns and measures that tend to compromise the intrinsic value of farmlands, fields, hedgerows, woodlands, mountain profiles or ridgelines, plateaus, and water bodies and water courses.

Scenic Corridors are defined as areas that are visible from scenic roadways. The ordinance regulates development along the corridor within 1,000 linear feet of the centerline of the scenic roadway, on either side of the roadway.

### **G. Historic Preservation**

A historic preservation ordinance is currently under consideration. Some of the amendments include: greater emphasis on the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission and a new submission process to nominate a site or property for historic designation. The proposed amendments would also provide greater protection of existing or newly designated historic sites or properties by establishing criteria and standards for site plan reviews.

#### *Franklin Township Open Space and Recreation Plan*

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The purpose of the Plan is to establish a coordinated system and planned approach for the preservation of open spaces.

### *The Meadows Foundation*

A non-profit historic preservation organization that owns and manages size historical properties in Franklin Township.

### **Local Historic Districts**

#### *State and National Historic Districts*

Land within the State and National Historic Districts are not subject to local zoning requirements.

- D&R Canal Historic District
- East Millstone Historic District
- Griggstown Historic District
- King's Highway Historic District
- Kingston Village Historic District
- Rocky Hill Historic District
- Six mile Run Historic District
- Proposed Middlebush Village District
- Proposed Franklin Park Historic District

### **H. Economic Plan**

#### **I. Utility Plan**

The Utilities Plan analyzes the need for and shows the future general location of utilities infrastructure including water, sewer, storm sewer and stormwater management.

#### **J. Recycling Plan**

#### **K. Plan Consistency**

The Municipal Land Use Law requires that all municipal Master Plans include a specific policy statement indicating the relationship of the proposed development of the municipality, as developed in the Master Plan. The intent is to coordinate planning and land use activities, and reduce potential conflict.

### **Southern Park Survey Report**

Prepared By:

The Southern Park Ad-Hoc Committee

The Southern Park Ad-Hoc Committee conducted a survey of Franklin Township residents to determine the interest for a park in the Franklin Park area of the community. Three parcels were identified as potential sites: Catalpa Property, the Dun and Gunther Farms, and a Franklin Township Board of Education Parcel.

#### **A. Survey Results**

A total of 2,300 surveys were mailed to residents living within 1,000 feet of the three parcels. The survey was available in the Township's 2009 Spring Newsletter and residents could also respond to the survey on the Township website.

- A total of 478 surveys were received.
- A total of 228 surveys were returned from residents living within 1,000 feet of the identified properties.
- 197 responses were received from the online survey.
- 53 residents returned responses to the survey that appeared in the Township Newsletter.

Residents of Franklin Park were generally in favor of park development at the Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther Sites. The recommendations included:

- Trails for walking, running, and biking
- Nature trails
- Tot lots
- Picnic areas

A wide range of responses for active recreation were also received, including areas for:

- Basketball
- Baseball/softball
- Bocce
- Boating
- Camping
- Concerts
- Cricket
- Dog Park
- Educational areas
- Fit trails
- Football
- Gardens
- Grills
- Historic Preservation
- Hockey
- Lights
- Ponds
- Pool
- Putting greens
- Racquetball
- Restrooms
- Skate Park
- Soccer
- Volleyball

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The online surveys show favor of park development on each parcel, while the newsletter responses were inconsistent and showed opposition to park development on Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther, and more interest in park development on the Claremont parcel.

### ***Comments from Residents***

- Comments in support of developing a park
- Comments in favor of leaving the property undeveloped
- Comments in favor of historic preservation.
- Recommendations of no development in order to maintain natural areas, agricultural areas, to prevent an increase in taxes, to prevent additional traffic, and to prevent hang outs and delinquent behavior.
- Online responses included recommendations for an YM/YWCA, more facilities for sports leagues, a teen center in Somerset, a turf field, and a community water park.

The Southern Park Ad-Hoc Committee looked at both positive and negative points when evaluating the properties. Primary interest of the residents within 1,000 feet of these properties is for passive to medium activity. Athletic field deficits and demands create a desire for additional space for active recreation.

#### 1. Claremont Parcel

Park development is not recommended at this time, since future access may be limited. The Township, should still maintain open communication with the Franklin Township Board of Education regarding the need to preserve as much land as possible on this tract for active recreation for area residents as well as school children. The Township may want to consider a joint project with the Franklin Township Board of Education regarding development of athletic fields for community use once a school facility is located on this property.

#### 2. Dunn and Gunther Farms

The Southern Park Ad-Hoc Committee is interested in preserving the historical and agricultural heritage of this property. They do, however, see the potential for using a portion of the property for active recreation. If part of the site were to be used for active recreation, the town would have to apply to the NJDEP, Division of Natural and Historic Resources/Historic Preservation for any projects that were not involved with historic preservation. Several points of concern in the application are listed below:

- The need to have support of the Historic Preservation Commission and other Historic Preservation groups that would share interest in the property.
- The potential need for a professional study indicating the needs for more facilities for active recreation.
- The need to indicate if there are any alternatives.



### 3. Catalpa Parcel

The Catalpa property was purchased by the Township for future park and conservation purposes and should fulfill the goal of a community park. This property has the potential to accommodate one cricket field, and two soccer or softball fields. Space is also available for basketball and/or tennis courts. Catalpa has a variety of natural areas, such as a wooded tract, stream, and interior wetlands that may limit the development of active recreation areas.

#### ***Additional Considerations***

The potential limitations on the three southern parcels may not provide sufficient area to meet the needs for active recreation for the entire community. Franklin exceeds many other communities in preservation of open space, however it is not meeting the recreational needs of its growing population or its volunteer sports organizations. The committee recommends that in addition the Middlebush Park and a Southern Park that the Township should identify and preserve one or more parcels of land that can be reserved for sport leagues and tournament play.

The following are recommendations of the Southern Park Ad-Hoc Committee based upon the study.

1. Complete the development of Middlebush Park located on Demott Lane in Somerset.
2. Begin the process of stabilizing and preserving the Gunther Farmstead. Investigate possible grant and funding opportunities including a tenant for security, preservation and maintenance.
3. Further develop plans for a community park on the Catalpa parcel.
4. Investigate the potential use of the corner of South Middlebush Road and Suydam Road for active recreation and begin the application process with the appropriate agencies.
5. The Township should continue looking for additional sites for active recreation to meet the recreational needs of the community.

#### ***Survey Response Summaries***

- Claremont/BOE Responses
  - Of the 22 responses from residents living within 200 feet of the Claremont parcel, 8-10 residents were opposed to park development on all three of the parcels.
  - Approximately 90-98% of the 49 responses from residents living 200(+) to 1,000 feet from the Claremont parcel were in favor of park development on the Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther Site. 81% of responses were opposed to park development on the Claremont parcel.
- Catalpa Responses

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- Approximately 45% of respondents within 200 feet were in favor of park development on the Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther sites, while 30% were opposed to development.
- Approximately 56% of residents living with property located 200(+) to 1,000 feet were in favor of park development on Catalpa, and ~49% were in favor of development on the Dunn and Gunther property.
- Dunn and Gunther Responses
  - 3 of 7 responses from residents within 200 feet of the Dunn and Gunther Farm were opposed to park development, while 1 was in favor. Residents were also opposed to development on other parcels.
  - 19 responses were received from residents 200 (+) to 1,000 feet from the Dunn and Gunther farm. 6-9 were in favor , while 4-5 were opposed to development.
- Newsletter Responses
  - The majority of 53 respondents were opposed to park development on the Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther properties. 27 respondents were in favor of development on the Claremont site.
- Online Responses
  - The responses in favor of park development outnumber the responses opposed to development by 300%.
- Review
  - A total of 478 surveys were received. 41% were in favor of park development and 10% were opposed to park development.
  - The majority of Franklin Park residents were opposed to development on the Claremont parcel (48% No and 28% Yes).
  - Recommendations from residents supporting park development were generally in favor of passive to moderate park development.
  - Newsletter and online responses appear inconsistent with other responses.
  - A wide range of comments were in support of developing a park, leaving the property undeveloped, and maintaining historic preservation. Some residents (primarily those in Franklin Park) recommended no development in order to maintain natural areas, to maintain agricultural areas to prevent and increase in taxes, to prevent additional traffic and to prevent hang outs conducive to delinquent behavior. Other residents felt that Franklin was lacking facilities that other communities had.
- Newsletter
  - 53 surveys were received from the Newsletter
  - 42 people did not want park development on Catalpa
  - 43 people did not want park development on Dunn and Gunther
  - 27 people were in favor of park development on Claremont/BOE

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- 11 people did not want park development

### **Potential Park Development Sites**

- Claremont Road/BOE:
  - 22 surveys were received from residents within 200 feet of the Claremont Road/BOE parcel. In each case, more people were opposed to the park.
  - 49 surveys were received from residents within 500 feet of the Claremont Road/BOE parcel. More residents within 500 feet of this parcel were in favor of park development on Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther than those opposed to park development.
- Catalpa:
  - 56 surveys were received from residents within 200 feet of the Catalpa parcel. More residents within 200 feet of the parcel were in favor of park development on Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther than those opposed to park development.
  - 75 surveys were received from residents within 500 feet of the Catalpa property. More residents within 500 feet of this parcel were in favor of park development on Catalpa and Dunn and Gunther than those opposed to park development.
- Dunn and Gunther
  - 7 surveys were received from residents within 200 feet of the Dunn and Gunther parcel. More residents within 200 feet of Dunn and Gunther were opposed to park development on Dunn and Gunther and on the Claremont/BOE parcels than those in favor of park development.
  - 19 surveys were received from residents within 500 feet of the Dunn and Gunther parcel. More residents within 500 feet of Dunn and Gunther were in favor of park development on all three parcels than those opposed to park development. Most were in favor of development on Dunn and Gunther.

### **Online Survey Results**

197 residents responded to the online survey. 148 (75%) were in favor of park development. Recommendations for each site include:

1. Catalpa
  - Tot lot (38 responses)
  - Walking (28 responses)
  - Tennis (28 responses)
  - Soccer (33 responses)
  - Cricket (21 responses)
  - Athletic fields, baseball, basketball, bike paths, nature trails, open fields, picnic areas, running track (10-19 responses)

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- Bocce, camping, concert area, dog park, education area, fit trails, football, gardens, grills, historic preservation, hockey, lights, pond, pool, putting green, restrooms, skate park, softball, volleyball, water fountains (9 or fewer responses)
  - Sports (81 responses)
2. Dunn and Gunther
- Soccer (36 responses)
  - Cricket (33 responses)
  - Tot lot (30 responses)
  - Walking (27 responses)
  - Tennis (24 responses)
  - Baseball, basketball, bike path, picnic area (10-19 responses)
  - Athletic fields, camping, dog park, education area, fit trails, football, gardens, grills, historic preservation, hockey, lights, nature trails, nothing, open field, pond, pool, putting green, restrooms, running trail, skate park, softball, volleyball, water fountains, softball, volleyball (9 or fewer responses)
  - Sports (88 responses)
3. Claremont/BOE
- Tot lot (30 responses)
  - Soccer (21 responses)
  - Baseball, cricket, nothing, picnic area, tennis, walking (10-16 responses)
  - Basketball, bike path, bocce, camping, concert area, dog park, education area, fit trails, football, gardens, grills, historic preservation, lights, nature trails, open field, pond, restrooms, running trail, skate park, softball, volleyball, walking, water fountain (9 or fewer responses)
  - Sports (58 responses)

### **B. Gunther Farm Preservation Recommendations**

1. History: The Stoothoof/Gunther/Suydam farmstead is linked to original Dutch settle families in Franklin. It is one of the earliest buildings in the township, with the original dwelling built in the 1740s. The farmstead has several noteworthy farm outbuildings and has been continuously farmed for more than 270 years, presenting an opportunity for insight into 20<sup>th</sup> century farming. The site is also part of a scenic view shed. Preservation is in keeping with the goals of the Franklin Township Master Plan.
2. Site Description: The Stoothoff/Sudam/Gunther farmstead is a contributing property within the Six Mile Run Historic District listed on the State National Register of Historic Places. The Township owns the property, and no specific plans have been made.  
The farm is located on Block 36, Lots 11.01 and 11.02. The Historic American Buildings Survey of 1940 includes photographs, architectural drawings and 7 pages

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of history and description. In these records, the farmstead is known as the Cornelius Stoothoff house and it is noted that the condition at the time was original and well maintained.

3. Proposed Use: To honor Franklin’s agricultural heritage by:
  - Continuing tenant farming with periodic on-site visits by school children to see how farming is done today and learn about Franklin’s agricultural heritage.
  - Establish agriculture and food based programs such as community gardens, Edible Garden Program, colonial gardening and cooking.
  - Display and interpret farm equipment, farmstead culture in Franklin, role of women on farms and in Franklin etc.
  - Recognize the unique opportunity this farm represents to allow the public to interactively experience farming on the local level. It should be noted that:
    - Franklin has a number of farms protected under the farmland preservation program, but these are not open to the public.
    - Meadows Foundation properties, which are open to the public, such as the Hageman Farm, still have historic farm features, but the intended use is not for farming, but for cultural programming.
4. Goal: To stabilize the farmhouse with a preservation treatment approach and to assess feasibility of proposed use as honoring the agricultural heritage of Franklin Township.
  - Part 1: Anticipated funding from the 2009 Somerset County Historic Preservation Grant
  - Part 2: Anticipated funding from the 2009 Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund Historic Site Management Grants in the range of \$50,000.

### **C. Benchmark Survey Analysis (Brandstetter Carroll Inc.)**

A benchmark survey was completed for Middletown Township, New Jersey. Some of the results in regards to the comparison of Franklin Township are listed below.

- **Budget Comparison**  
Franklin has the lowest spending per capita of \$12 per person with a total budget of \$711,000. This includes 25% in revenue and 75% in the allocated municipal budget. The median per capita spending for the communities surveyed is \$47 per person and the average is \$46 per person.
- **Staff Comparisons**  
Franklin is serving a population of 57,000 with 5 full time staff members. The median number of full time staff is 6 and the average is 7. Franklin has approximately 0.8 staff per 1,000 residents for the Administration of Recreation

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Programs in comparison to the average of 1.39 per 1,000 and the median of, 29 per 1,000.

- Active Parkland Comparison

Franklin has an abundance of open space, but also a shortage of active park acres. Franklin ranks #8 out of 16 communities, when comparing the number of citizens/active department developed parkland. Franklin appears to have the average amount of active parkland, however the acreage is based on the Recreation and Open Space Inventory, which includes 10 acres of historic properties, 95 acres of the Bunkerhill Environmental Center, Inman Park which is only developed on half of the property, and Middlebush Park which is only developed on 1/3 of the property leaving 50 acres undeveloped. This reduces the active parkland to approximately 120 acres instead of 307.

- Athletic Fields Comparison

Franklin Soccer Club only has access to 3 regulation soccer fields. There are 8 softball/baseball fields that the Recreation Department has access to in peak season. Five fields from the Franklin Township Little League Property and two fields from the South Bound Brook Little League, increase the field total to 15, bringing Franklin within the median/average. Despite this, Franklin would still have more users per field than 14 of the other communities. The football program has grown in size and the fields are overused.

Eight of the seventeen communities indicated having an aquatic facility. Franklin's pool primarily serves the children that attend the Williams Park Day Camp.

Seven of the communities indicated having a center with a gymnasium. Ten communities indicated having a center with space for senior citizens. It is very difficult to compare community centers in different towns. The towns with a gymnasium are indicative of an active as opposed to a passive facility.

**An Analysis of the Demands on the Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund**

Prepared By:

LOOS Consulting  
Land Preservation & Management

**A. The Open Space Trust Fund**

The Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, was established in 1998. It was to be funded with by a property tax approved by the voters. This dedicated tax can be used for any of the following:

- Acquisition of lands (for recreational and conservation purposes)
  - Development of lands (for recreational and conservation purposes)
  - Maintenance of lands (for recreational and conservation purposes)
  - Acquisition of farmland ( for farmland preservation purposes)
  - Historic preservation (of historic properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas, or objects and the acquisition of such for preservation purposes)
  - Payment of debt service (on indebtedness issued or incurred by a municipality for any of the purposes listed above.
1. Acquisition of Land: Preserving land as township-owned open space.
  2. Maintenance of Lands: Maintenance of open space for public access, trails and wildlife habitat.

Once open space has been obtained, it should be managed to meet the township's objectives, which might include maintaining it in an agricultural state, wildlife habitat and/or public access. If the property goes unmanaged, the fields will go into succession.

*Maintaining the grassland preserves*

Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve and Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve are two properties currently managed as Native Grassland Preserves. These grasslands are under contract with the Federal Government's Natural Resource Conservation Service, which requires the fields be mowed no less than once every three years.

*Establishing and maintaining the trails*

The ongoing maintenance of trails is performed by a combination of the following:

- Citizen volunteers through Adopt-a-Trail program
- A portion of the Public Works staff time
- A portion of the Land Preservation Consultant's annual contract to periodically inspect the trails and direct Public Works staff.

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In addition, twenty-one Eagle Scout projects have been constructed on open space at virtually no cost to the Township.

### 3. Acquisition of Farmland: Farmland preservation

The Township has been actively pursuing farmland by purchasing the development rights to the land since the inception of the Open Space Trust Fund.

### 4. Historic Preservation

The Township has given grants through a historic grant program which provides grants to charitable organizations that apply for township-grant funds to preserve a historic property. The Township has also purchased an interest in two historic properties through the open space trust fund, and had two Canal Road houses donated from the Trap Rock Corporation and the Township owns other properties that it leases to the Meadow's Foundation. Lastly, the Township applies for historic grants for historic properties.

### 5. Payment of Debt Services

The Township bonded over \$45 million dollars to have money immediately available to purchase land as it became available.

### 6. The FY 2010 Open Space Budget

The trust fund is anticipated to take in over \$4.6 million in the current fiscal year. The cost of running the above programs is encompassed in the annual Open Space budget.

### 7. Future Demands on the Trust Fund

Anticipated future demands include:

#### a. Cost of purchasing additional development easements to preserve farmland

It is unlikely that all of the targeted farms for will be preserved, but if at least 75% of these farm acres are preserved, the estimated cost to preserve them would be over \$26 million.

#### b. Cost of purchasing additional land as open space

Two properties have been targeted as open space preservation targets: Central Jersey Jewish Home, and Starlight Meadows.

#### c. Cost of purchasing additional historic properties.

#### d. Cost of maintaining all currently owned historic properties.

#### e. Cost of paying for the development of recreational facilities.

### 8. Conclusion

The Open Space Trust Fund has many demands placed on it. Certain assumptions are made about land costs, how many landowners might want to sell their property, and projected trust fun revenues. In making these projections, the recent downturn in the



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economy was not taken into consideration. The Township can control the aggressiveness with which they preserve land. Questions that the Council needs to consider when it thinks about spending money from the open space trust fund are:

- What additional land preservation should be pursued?
- What will be the demands on the open space trust fund for historic preservation?
- How much money, if any, from the Trust Fund should be earmarked for addressing the need to develop active recreational fields and any associated needed infrastructure.

**The Open Space Trust Fund**

**Franklin Township**

The voters of Franklin Township approved a referendum, which established the Open Space, Recreation and Farmland Historic Preservation Trust Fund

Resolution:

Submission of non-binding referendum to voters establishing a municipal open space, recreation and farmland and historic preservation trust fund.

Interpretive Statement:

The proposed Municipal Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund will be used to acquire land, easements, development rights or other interests in real property for the purpose of preserving open space for conservation and recreation for acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes, for historic preservation or historic properties and the acquisition of such properties and for payment of debt service on indebtedness lawfully issued or incurred for such purposes.

A. Funding the Trust Fund

**74.9** There is hereby established a reserve in the general capital fund, which shall be noted and designated as the “Municipal Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund” commonly known as the “Open Space Trust Fund”.

A separate bank account shall be established and maintained therefore entitled “Franklin Township Municipal Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Account.”

Funds from the Open Space Trust Fund may be utilized to acquire all types of interests in real property. Including, not by way of limitation, fee simple acquisitions, easements, development rights, or any other lesser property interests, which will further the goal of open space acquisition and preservation including all purposes delineated at N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7(a)(1)(a) through (f).

The lands in which such interests may be acquired shall include undeveloped land as well as land containing improvements at the time of acquisition, provided the principal purpose of the acquisition is to preserve open space for conservation and recreation, preserve farmland for farmland purposes, and to preserve historic properties. The Township Council shall have the option of paying for land acquisitions with improvements upon them either solely through the Open Space Trust Fund or by apportioning the cost thereof by charging the Open Space Trust Fund for the land portion and the capital account for the improvement portion. It is understood that such acquisition may occur through gift, purchase or by eminent domain proceedings pursuant to N.J.S.A. 20:3-1 et. seq. Township Council may authorize the disbursement

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of monies from the Open Space Trust Fund to assist the County of Somerset, the State of New Jersey, the United States government, private not-for-profit organizations, or charitable conservancies in acquiring interests in real property, located within the Township, and for the purposes stated herein, provided that suitable arrangements are made to assure that such lands are made subject to restrictions substantially similar to those imposed by this article and that in the event such interests subsequently are sold as delineated and restricted by 74-12, that the net proceeds of such disposition will be paid over to the Township's Open Space Trust refund in the same proportion that the Township's contribution bore to the original purchase price.

**74.10** Beginning on January 1, 1999, a special tax rate shall be added to the total Township tax rate in the amount of \$0.03 per \$100 of the annual assess valuations and tax rate, the revenue from which shall be deposited into the Open Space Trust Fund. The Township Council may, in its discretion, deposit additional monies into the Open Space Trust Fund, which deposits shall then be subject to all of the provisions governing the Open Space Trust Fund.

The funds accumulated within the Open Space Trust fund shall be utilized for the acquisition of real property and interests in real property as more fully delineated in **74.9**. Funds may be utilized for appraisals and other items of expense permitted by law in connection with the acquisition or as down payment for the issuance of bonds or for debt service for the same purpose at the discretion of the Township Council. Any and all interest accruing shall remain in the Open Space Trust Fund and may be utilized for the above described purposes. In no eventuality, shall the Township pay more than fair market value for the land to be acquired.

### B. The Open Space Advisory Committee

**74.3** There is hereby established an Open Space Advisory Committee to review and recommend historic properties, open space lands, conservation lands, recreational lands, farmlands and various interests therein including, but not limited to, acquisition, acquisition of development rights, easements and parcels of land and interests therein for acquisition and preservation as open space within the Township of Franklin.

The Open Space Advisory Committee shall prepare and submit to the Township Council an Open Space Plan for the Township of Franklin. It shall develop an inventory of open space properties, farmland, conservation, recreation and historic sites within the Township and evaluate and prioritize such open space properties through the development of appropriate criteria.

The Open Space Advisory Committee shall assist the Township Council in the establishment of an Open Space Tracing Program to catalog the state of privately owned open space in the Township and record the Township's progress with respect to open space preservation.

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The Open Space Advisory Committee shall provide guidance and support to the Township Council, Planning Board, Environmental Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and Recreation Council on issues and matters of open space.

The Open Space Advisory Committee shall periodically review its functions and submit a recommendation to the Township Council as to whether additional duties should be assigned to delegate to the Advisory Committee.

The Open Space Advisory Committee shall annually select from among its members, a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson to serve as the presiding officer in the absence of the Chairperson. The Committee may also select a secretary.

The Open Space Advisory Committee, with the direction and approval of the Township Council, shall prepare grant and other applications to Somerset County, the State of New Jersey, the United States government, private organizations and charitable conservancies for financial and other matching support for land acquisition and other interest in property and historic projects in the Township.

The Open Space Advisory Committee shall encourage public and private contributions of land, interests in land and financial donations to the township and the Open Space Fund.

The Open Space Advisory Committee shall develop an application and grant program to fund publicly held properties and projects which are determined to be of direct benefit to the public and the Township.

Review and comment upon proposed acquisition by the Township of real property or any interest therein for open space or conservation purposes as referred to them pursuant to **74.16** of this article.

Prior to the acquisition by the Township of real property, or any interest therein, for the purpose of open space conservation, the Township Council shall request that the acquisition be reviewed by the Open Space Advisory Committee. The report of the Committee shall be advisory only, and the final determination concerning any acquisition shall rest with the Township Council.

Referenced above in 74.9, is the N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7 (a) through (f), the state law that authorizes the uses of such trust funds. This statute states, Pursuant to NJ Law, (NJSA: 40:12-15.7.A (1), the dedicated tax can be used for any of the following purposes:

- a) Acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes.
- b) Development of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes.
- c) Maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes.
- d) Acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes.

- e) Historic preservation of historic properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas, or objects and the acquisition of such things.
- f) Payment of debt services on indebtedness issued or incurred by a municipality for any of the purposes set forth in subparagraph (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) of this paragraph.

### **Canal Access Vision and Strategic Plan**

Franklin Township, Somerset County, New Jersey

December 2009

Prepared by: Heyer Gruel & Associates

#### **A. Introduction**

The Delaware and Raritan Canal forms a majority of the northern and western boundary of the Township. The Canal adds a scenic value to the township as it winds through rural and densely populated suburban areas. The Canal Towpath serves as a bike/walkway and a major open space and recreation resource of the Township. One flaw is that access to the Canal and the towpath is very limited, especially in the Somerset Area of the Township. The limited access hampers the effective use of the historic and natural resource.

Improving access to the Canal has gained significance over the years. Public input regarding solutions to the issue vary from treating the portion of Easton Avenue as a potential focus of economic development with restaurants, to more modest improvements such as, a canoe launch and benches. The Township hired the firm Heyer, Gruel and Associates to help develop a unified vision for access to the Canal and to prepare a strategic plan to realize that vision. Two primary objectives that were achieved in the planning exercise were:

- Development of a Unified Vision
- Preparation of a Strategic Plan

#### **B. Study Area**

##### **1. Location and Description**

The general boundaries of the study area are: Foxwood Drive in the east, D&R Canal in the north, Easton Avenue in the south and DeMott Lane in the west. A number of restaurants and shops are located within the boundaries of the study area. Single and multi-family residential dwellings, shops, restaurants, and Rutgers Preparatory School are located within close proximity to the study area.

##### **2. Focus Area**

The focus area of the canal crossing is the vacant land located immediately adjacent to Somerset Diner. The study area serves the purpose of a long-term vision, while the focus area accommodates the physical access across the canal.

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The focused study area has a big advantage due to the presence of the following existing linkages:

- Foxwood Drive has an improved intersection with crosswalks at Easton Avenue and sidewalks down to Easton Avenue.
- Easton Avenue has sidewalks along the south side for nearly its entire length in the area.
- JFK Boulevard has an improved intersection with crosswalks at Easton Avenue and sidewalks down to Easton Avenue.
- Marconi Plaza Park is at the intersection of JFK Boulevard and Easton Avenue.
- Improved intersection with crosswalks at the entrance to Unclaimed Freight Plaza.
- DeMott Lane has an improved intersection without crosswalks at Easton Avenue.
- The extension of DeMott Lane serves as the entrance to the Van Wickle House, which has a bridge over the Canal providing access to the towpath.

### 3. Master Plan

The Master Plan references the study area and recommends that the parcel located between the Somerset Diner and McDonald's may be an additional access to the Park from the Easton Avenue area. The Master Plan also states the importance of Easton Avenue due to it being one of the heaviest traveled roadways within Franklin Township.

### 4. Zoning

The study area and immediate area generally consists of single and multi-family residential, general business, canal preservation, and office professional.

### 5. Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission Jurisdiction

The study area lies within the jurisdiction of the D&R Canal Commission, which reviews development plans within a designated area around the park. The D&R Canal State Park is a 70-mile linear park that runs from New Brunswick to Trenton, serving as a recreational corridor and a historic resource. The D&R Canal and towpath are part of the National Recreational Trail System.

The study area lines in the "5 Mile Lock to Landing Lane Bridge" section of the Canal Master Plan. The Development Plan of the D&R Canal Commission characterizes this area as the "suburban" environmental type. The Commission defines a Suburban Environmental Type as places that have a dominant feeling of open space, but are chiefly defined by structures.

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The Commission reviews development projects within its “review zone” for their impact on storm drainage and water quality, stream corridors, visual and natural quality, and traffic.

The Canal has been greatly improved with the addition of a pedestrian bridge at Franklin Township’s The Meadows. Another bridge is planned for an access area near Landing Lane. The Development Plan calls for improved access at 5 Mile Lock, improvements to the house there, and development of a major access area at Freda Marden Common.

### C. Planning Process and Analysis

#### 1. Case Study

A small group of professionals visited the study area to identify potential points of access across the Canal. Three specific locations were studied for their convenience of physical access, availability of adequate parking, visibility and approach from Easton Avenue, and their potential for long term development.

#### 2. The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was created to provide leadership and assistance in preparing the plan. Shortly after the site visit, the committee met to generate ideas that would contribute to the ultimate vision for the Canal access. A few of these ideas were:

- A canal crossing at the Study Area to bridge the gap in population served the existing Canal Crossing at: Route 287, the Meadows Foundation, Freda, and Landing Lane.
- A museum dedicated to the life and legacy of Guillermo Marconi, as an anchor use on the site of the canal access.
- A public park and parking area for the Canal visitors, on the vacant lot next to Somerset Diner.
- Barge tours up and down the length of the Canal, beginning at Franklin Township.
- Historic preservation to play a major role in any Canal access improvements
- Bicycle and foot-bridge over Easton Avenue to enhance pedestrian connectivity to residential areas located across Easton Avenue.
- Long-term reinvestment in the commercial properties within the study area.

#### 3. Public Input

A public workshop was organized to focus mainly on access, opportunities for an access, potential constraints, scenic duality of the Canal environs, and ideas for the

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Canal access and revitalization of the area. The public input played a vital role in the development of this plan. The following are some of their ideas:

- A footbridge across Easton Avenue to enhance pedestrian connectivity.
- Accommodate canoeing and kayaking as a major recreational activity.
- Enhance the existing crossing area at DeMott Lane.
- Provision of improvements associated with fishing.
- “Incremental” waterfront development along the canal, as opposed to full-scale redevelopment.
- A symbolic tower as a major landmark to identify the connection between the site and the history of Guillermo Marconi.
- Celebration of the Canal History with informational signage, monuments, etc.
- A variety of uses that capitalize on the scenic beauty of the canal, and a strong visibility on Easton Avenue.
- Provision of basic amenities such as public restrooms, coffee/snack shops etc.
- A walkway/trail along the canal edge to run parallel to the towpath.

The development of a Canal access within the Study Area is faced with opportunities as well as constraints. The following is a detailed analysis of the opportunities and constraints in creating an access to the Canal within the Study Area.

### *Proximity of Population*

The study area is located in close proximity to a large amount of residential population. The close proximity of their presence is essential for success.

### *Land Uses*

Retail and quasi-public spaces surround the study area and benefit from the presence of a recreational activity that can attract more people to the area. Success of a Canal access would also create opportunities for re-investment in surrounding retail uses, eventually leading to a revitalization of the entire area.

### *Access and Location*

One of the greatest benefits of the study area is its situation on Easton Avenue. Easton Avenue is a major connector between the City of New Brunswick in the East, and Route 287, South Bound Brook, and Bound Brook to the west. The addition of basic canal access or waterfront development will attract people regionally.

### *Canal History*



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The Canal was built in the 1830s as a connection between the Raritan and Delaware River. The purpose of the Canal was to serve as an inland freight route between New York and Pennsylvania.

Franklin Township is located on the “main” section of the canal that was primarily used for the transport of goods from Bordentown to New Brunswick. The elevated pathway along the Canal, which is currently used as a walkway/bikeway, was the original towpath along the canal. The total length of the entire Canal system was approximately 66 miles.

The Canal declined with the advent of railroad, and has been in use as a water supply system since 1932. The Canal and its remaining structures entered the National Register of historic places in the year 1973, and over 60 miles of the Canal and narrow strip of adjoining land were made a state park in 1974. The trail system of the park was designated a National Recreation trail in 1992.

### *Marconi History*

The study area was one of the many testing locations of Guillermo Marconi. The historic connection provides valuable inspiration, and a unique marketing opportunity for new development.

### *Scenic Corridor & Recreational Opportunity*

The scenic imagery of the canal includes: a view of the Raritan River, changing colors of the foliage, a walkway between the river and the canal, views of the park across the river, wildlife along the Canal, and a microclimate that is hidden from the noise of traffic. A functional and inviting access could provide for activities such as canoeing, biking, jogging, fishing, and horseback riding.

### *Existing Shopping Centers*

The site and building design of the study area is dated. The necessity for change in development patterns offers a unique opportunity for new development, placing a greater emphasis on the Canal. The possibility of reconstruction provides an opportunity to minimize impervious coverage and expand the amount of open space.

### *Environmental Constraints*

Physical/environmental constraints that affect the potential for revitalization include wetlands and flood plains, along with a narrow ditch between the Focus Area and the Canal embankment. This narrow ditch has to be spanned over, or filled-in to create an access to the canal and towpath.

### *Size of Focus Site*

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The focus site measures a little more than an acre and is adequate for a formal entrance, small museum or landmark monument. Any major improvements many have to spill into the surrounding properties.

### *Easton Avenue*

The location along Easton Avenue provides the study area with ample convenience, however pedestrian access is limited. A footbridge will provide a safer and stronger pedestrian and bicycle access across the busy roadway without interrupting the flow of traffic.

### *Financial Limitations*

Several components of this plan are faced with financial constraints. Even minor, improvements will only be possible through well-organized public-private partnerships.

### *Scenic Duality*

The scenic beauty of the Canal is a result of the fact that it is practically cut off from the densely populated suburban environment. This, along with the architectural treatment of new development along the edge of the Canal should be carefully resolved to achieve a well-balanced result.

## 4. Vision Plan

The Plan envisions that the Study Area will be an inviting vibrant access point into one of the most treasured recreational resources of the State. It is envisioned that this plan will provide recreational, social and economic benefits to the residents of the Township and will be a cohesive assembly of individual elements that will be realized incrementally.

### *Elements of the Plan*

#### a. Stage 1

- Canal Access

Access to the Canal and a footbridge to the towpath are two of the most immediate physical improvements. It is recommended that the bridge across the canal be furnished with the insignia of the Township as well as the D&R Canal.

- Parking

Availability of adequate parking is also very important for canal access. This plan recommends that at least 20 to 25 dedicated spaces be provided for the Canal visitors. In addition to parking for vehicles, installation of an adequate number of bike racks is recommended.

- Public Park

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The Focus area at the intersection of JFK Boulevard along Easton Avenue is the ideal site for the construction of a “gateway park” into the Canal.

- Fishing Access

The canal access from the proposed canal parking area will provide a location for fishing along the canal. The Plan anticipates locating fishing access in this area and eventually constructing a formal fishing pier.

- Pedestrian Connections

This plan envisions the Canal area be less dependent on automobiles and more pedestrian friendly. It is recommended that:

- Pedestrian and bike connectivity be enhanced along, and across, Easton Avenue and JFK Boulevard.
- Sidewalks be provided along the frontage of new development.
- Bike racks be required in new construction as a ratio of floor area.
- Pedestrian connections to the Meadows Foundation site be enhanced.
- The location, design and economic feasibility of creating a foot bridge across Easton Avenue be explored.
- ADA provisions be part of new development and Canal access improvements.

b. Stage 2

- DeMott Lane Access Improvements

- Roadway improvements on DeMott lane to accommodate two travel lanes.
- A designated and expanded parking area.
- Repair and improvement of the existing canoe launch.
- Educational signage at the canal crossing.
- Gateway signage at the intersection of DeMott lane and Easton Avenue.
- Signage.
- A turn-around point at the Canal crossing.
- Lighting fixtures along DeMott Lane.
- An adequate number of bike racks at the Canal Crossing.

- “Loop” trail, Canoe Launch and Fishing Pier

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It is recommended that a trail/bikeway be constructed along the southern edge of the Canal and should connect at the two canal crossings. This “loop” trail will provide for an alternate route, in addition to the towpath. It is also recommended that a canoe launch and a fishing pier be constructed, adjacent to the footbridge across the canal.

- Fishing Pier and Additional Access Points

The informal fishing access mentioned in stage 1, should be replaced by a fully furnished fishing pier. It is anticipated that the existing access to the fishing/recreation area, extending from the rear of the Van Wickle House and picnic area will be repaired. This will aid in providing safe access to the fishing point.

Additional fishing points are recommended along various points on both sides of the canal. These points offer unique opportunities to incorporate activities associated with the canal, and not found in the public park area.

- Pedestrian Connections

It is anticipated that all pedestrian access on both sides of Easton Avenue continuing up to the residential neighborhoods and along the Van Wickle House will be improved.

- Van Wickle House

It is recommended that the Township work with the Meadows Foundation to integrate the Van Wickle Site with the Canal Access improvements. The Van Wickle House represents an example of early 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Architecture.

c. Stage 3

- Marconi, D&R Canal and Environmental Museum

This plan recommends that a small museum dedicated to the history of the life of Marconi be constructed as an anchor use within the gateway park area. The museum will house artifacts contributed by the Marconi Foundation, explaining the work of Marconi and the significance of the New Brunswick Station in Franklin. The museum will serve as a venue to support environmental education projects that enhance the public’s awareness, knowledge, and skills to help people make informed decisions that affect environmental quality.

- Monuments and Landmarks

It is proposed that a strong landmark such as a fountain, a clock tower, or a form of public art, be installed within the gateway park. A strong focal element with the backdrop of the canal and the entrance park has the

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potential to capture the attention of passerby and also to announce the historic significance of the area.

- Public Amenities

Public amenities will be installed within a short distance from the Canal access.

- Canal Recreation Rental Facility

The plan recommends that a rental facility be located within the museum building to facilitate the participation of people in activities such as canoeing, cycling, kayaking, fishing, and sightseeing. This location will be conveniently located for use by the museum and in close proximity to the canal access.

d. Stage 4

- Mixed-Use Development

This plan envisions a comprehensive revitalization of the existing shopping area and the Somerset Diner Property. The existing type of development patterns should be replaced with compact mixed-use development that contains the following elements:

a. Building Design

The new development will consist of mixed use buildings, two or three stories in height, and will host a variety of retail uses at the ground floor. None of the retail uses within these buildings will be auto-oriented. The second floor will be occupied by offices, residential units, or even restaurants with patios that provide views of the Canal.

b. Dual Frontage

Buildings will be designed with a dual-frontage. The Easton Avenue frontage should be inviting and inspired by the historic architecture of the Canal and Marconi cottages. The building colors should be “earth tones” that are complementary to the natural environment of the Canal. Heights of the buildings should be reduced along the edge of the Canal.

c. Canal Frontage

Restaurants and cafes should occupy the canal frontage of buildings.

d. Historical Appearance

All buildings would require a historical look back to the time of Marconi.

e. Surface Parking

The new development will mainly depend on surface parking. It is recommended that parking be distributed into smaller surface parking lots

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that are hidden from active public areas, instead of one large parking area. Individual surface lots within the development should be internally connected.

f. Shared Parking

Shared parking is encouraged, and based on the principal that in mixed-use developments, each user has a different time of maximum use throughout the day. Shared parking helps minimize the impervious area and increase the open space.

g. Utility Areas

The location and design of utility areas will need to be carefully planned. Utility areas should be located as far as possible from residences to minimize potential impacts related to noise, odor and fumes.

Many lessons can be learned from previously implemented canal redevelopment in close proximity to the study area.

- Monotonous, Cookie Cutter Residential Development

It is important to illustrate imaginative design to create residential interest.

- Unproductive Use of Waterfront Area

Opportunities to create an attractive arrival point, sitting area, or a landscaped amenity have been overlooked.

- Lack of Coordination with Mixed-Use Development

- Historically Appropriate Structural Design

Blank, industrial design has been incorporated instead of attractive historic architecture.

### 5. Implementation

In order to achieve an end result that is successful, this plan proposed an incremental or phased approach to development. The ultimate vision of this plan has been broken down into four stages of development.

- Stage 1 (1 year)

This stage consists of immediate improvements intended to bring in people and introduce the Canal to the surrounding neighborhoods. Improvements include:

- Canal Access
- Parking Area
- Public Park

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- Fishing Access
- Pedestrian Connections
- Stage 2 (1-2 years)

This stage consists of projects that complement and expand on the improvements of stage 1. Improvements include:

  - DeMott Lane Access Improvement
  - The Loop Trail
  - Canoe Launch and Fishing Pier
  - Fishing Access Points
  - Pedestrian Connections
- Stage 3 (3-5 years)

This stage consists of projects that extend the improvements in the previous phase and take advantage of the increase in activity due to the established canal access. Improvements include:

  - Marconi and Canal Museum
  - Monument/Landmark
  - Public Amenities
  - Rental Facility
  - Continuation of developing informal signage
- Stage 4 (10-20 years)

This stage consists of an extensive revitalization of the existing commercial property through the revision of zoning regulations and private re-investment. Improvements that are anticipated to be in place by the end of this phase are:

  - Mixed-Use Development
  - Introduction of new development regulations and design standards
- Potential Funding Resources

All the improvements will require a combination of private capital and public funding as well as the support of the governing body and the participation of private property owners. Below are examples of possible public grant monies.

  - a. Somerset County Parks Commission – Land Acquisition Program (Grant/Loan)
  - b. Trust for Public Land – Park Design and Development Services (In Kind Service)
  - c. NJDEP Green Acres Program - Matching Grants Program (Grant)

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- d. New Jersey Historic Trust Historic Preservation Revolving Loan Fund (Loan)
- e. New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust (Loan)
- f. Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (Grant)
- g. New Jersey Conservation Foundation (Grant/Partner)
- h. DEP – Community Forestry Program - Green Communities Challenge Grants (Grant)
- i. USEPA, Office of Environmental Education – Environmental Education Grants Program (Grant)
- j. USEPA, Sustainable Development Challenge Grants (SDCG) Program (Grant)
- k. DOT, Local Government Services – Livable Communities Program (Grant)
- l. DOT, Local Government Services – Municipal Aid Program – Bicycle Projects (Grant)
- m. DOT, Local Aid and Economic Development – Bicycle Projects (Grant)
- n. DOT, Local Government Services – Municipal Aid Program – Pedestrian Projects (Grant)
- o. DEP, Natural Lands Management – National Recreation Trails Program (Grant)
- p. DEP, Community Forestry Program – Tree Planting Grant (Grant)
- q. DCA, Housing and Community Development – Recreation and Park Departments Assistance (Grant)



**Pathways and Trails Plan for Township of Franklin  
Connecting Franklin’s Communities**

**December 19, 2008**

Prepared By:

Trails Advisory Committee  
Loos Consulting

**I. Executive Summary**

The Franklin Township Pathway and Trails Plan identifies existing trails in the Township and offers a design for an interconnected, township-wide trail system, connecting neighborhoods to local parks, schools, historic sites, cultural centers, shopping areas, and regional trail systems. It also provides an alternative transportation network for bicyclists and pedestrians. The network of trails envisioned is for non-motorized use and meant to guide the Township and other levels of the government in the development of safe, comprehensive, and enjoyable trails for residents within and outside of Franklin Township. An important factor in the development of the Pathway and Trails Plan (PTP) was the attempt to connect the various geographic zones of the township. Other important factors include: connecting the residential areas with commerce and educational centers, and connecting many of the existing Township trails to each other.

**A. Development of the Pathway and Trails Plan**

The Trails Advisory Committee (TAC) got started by becoming familiar with the existing trails and pathways already located throughout the Township. Sub committees were formed to identify needed trails and pathways in different areas of the Township.

A consultant John Loos, was contracted by the Township, under an eco-tourism grant, to map all existing trails in the Township using a global positioning system (GPS). This mapping was completed in April of 2006 and created baseline information that was useful for the committee’s discussions.

The Trails Advisory Committee presented a draft version of the PTP to a number of Township boards. Input and feedback from these groups was evaluated and resulted in revisions to the plan.

**B. The Six Mile Run Reservoir Site**

The New Jersey Trails Plan recommends that all field edges in the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site include a 20-foot wide corridor adjacent to lands currently or recently under agricultural tillage. This would result in over 37 miles of trails on the Site. The TAC found this excessive, and would remove too much land from

agricultural production and recommends a much more modest trail system be located within the boundaries of the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site.

### **C. The Milestone-New Brunswick Railroad right of way**

The Milestone-New Brunswick Railroad right of way is nearly a 1.2 mile long linear area composed of two segments. One segment stretches from South Middlebush Road to Amwell Road, and the other from Amwell Road to Elizabeth Avenue.

### **D. Mapping**

Mapping was done in GIS format that was compatible with the Township's mapping software.

### **E. Funding the construction of paths and trails**

The most expensive step in implementing most trails plans, is obtaining the land on which the trails/pathways will be located. In Franklin, this will not be the case since this plan works with land that is already owned in the public sector.

The majority of the cost implementing this plan will be the specific costs of laying out the trails, the cost of buffering or fencing locations, and the cost of paving the bike paths.

The TAC believes that, spread over multiple years, the construction of multi-use paved paths for passive recreation, is an appropriate use of the Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, and that the Open Space Advisory Committee and the Council should give serious consideration to such budgeting.

### **F. Next Steps**

It is anticipated that the PTP will be incorporated as an element of the Township's Master Plan, acting as a guide for incorporation and construction of the proposed trails. It would also enable planners and engineers to study potential development applications and recommend recreational designs for inclusion of this trails system into development proposals.

## **II. The Franklin Township Pathway and Trail Plan**

### **A. Why Have a Pathway and Trails Plan**

"Places to walk" was the number 1 response on many surveys when respondents were asked what recreational opportunities are most wanted and/or most utilized. The Trails Advisory Committee (TAC) was established with this in mind.

The ordinance that established the TAC states that the purpose, mission and duties of the TAC are:

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Purpose: A Township of Franklin Trails Advisory Committee is hereby established to involve trail users and Township residents in advising Township departments, the Manager and the Council, on issues related to trail acquisition, design, maintenance, and use.

Mission and Duties: The Township of Franklin Trails Advisory Committee is advisory to the Mayor, the Manager and Township Council, and makes recommendations to promote, protect and assist in development of enjoyable, safe, convenient trail opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians throughout the Township of Franklin planning area. Duties of the Trails Advisory Committee include:

1. Identifying current and future trails interests and needs of the community.
2. Identifying trail opportunities and options during development review, and analyzing alternatives for maximum potential benefit.
3. Making recommendations to the Township Council on trail policies and design issues.
4. Making recommendations on acquisition and development of trail facilities and trail use.
5. Conducting trail surveys for maintenance and safety recommendations.
6. Reviewing and commenting on public and private development actions to promote trails interests.

### B. General Recommendations and Proposed New Trails and Pathways

Future development should be planned with pedestrian and bicycle movement in mind. The PTP proposed a township-wide pathways system that would make Franklin Township one of the more biker, hiker, walker, equestrian, and cross country skiing friendly townships in the State. Additional recommendations include the following:

1. Pathway and Trails Plan should be an addition to the Master Plan.
2. Bike Path/multi-use trails should be constructed through the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site.
3. Adoption of a “Trails Fund” that could potentially receive contributions from developers towards the cost of constructing trails and bike paths throughout the Township.
4. The Open Space Trust Fund is a possible source of funds for trail construction.
5. Sidewalks along Route 27.
6. Support the newly developed Colonial Park Development Plan.

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7. Implement an Adopt-a-Trail program.
  8. Canal Road.
  9. Enforcement of the Township's ordinance that states parks and open space are closed dusk till dawn.
  10. Permit dogs on the trails.
  11. Utility Right-of-Ways.
- C. Issues to be Considered in Implementing the Pathway Trails Plan
- The Trails Advisory Committee found that in general, people were supportive of trails and pathways, but they often do not want trails and pathways adjacent to their property. The TAC recommends the following in an attempt to balance the general public's interest with those of adjacent or nearby landowners.
1. Property rights should be respected.
  2. Existing road right-of-ways should be utilized when possible.
  3. Buffering of trails that run adjacent to nearby property owners' land.
  4. Sensitive Design of Trails Adjacent to Residential Areas.
  5. Trails nearby agricultural lands.
  6. Coordination with other levels of government.
  7. Prohibit and discourage the use of ATVs on trails.
- D. Coordination with other Township Plan
- *The Franklin Township Bikeway Master Plan*  
This Plan is meant to assist the Township to focus on the priority of projects that would provide critical linkages throughout the Township and make the Township more friendly to movement without utilizing the existing roadway system.
  - *The Meadows Foundation*  
The Meadows Foundation is the Township's Historic Preservation Foundation. The organization leases many Township-owned historic structures and works to preserve and interpret them.
  - *The Franklin Township Eco-Heritage Tourism Plan (EHTP)*  
The Pathway and Trails Plan is meant to assist the Township to focus on implementing many of the recommendations in the Eco-Heritage Tourism Plan. Some of the EHTP recommendations are listed below:
    1. Make an Elizabeth Avenue bike lane.
    2. Hunting promotion.

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3. Fishing expansion.
  4. Expand “official” hiking trails on the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site.
  5. Link the Negri-Nepote Site with the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site.
  6. Improve Inman Park with better signage for the trails, a kiosk with a trail map at the parking lot and a “Wetland” interpretive sign.
  7. Promoting the waterways.
  8. Develop a “Franklin Township Birding Trail Guide”.
  9. Develop new, unpaved, trails in the natural areas of the Township.
  10. Enhance Canal Road biking by closing a portion of Canal Road for short periods to all but local motorized vehicle traffic for a portion of Sunday mornings.
  11. Market, in conjunction with others, connections to the Crossroads of the Revolution and the East Coast Greenway Trail.
  12. Expand, improve and maintain the bike paths in the Township.
- E. Appendix: Recommendations for New Trails or Enhancements to Existing Trails
1. Municipal
    - Amwell Road
      - Bike path and trail markers paralleling the south side of Amwell Road from Van Cleef Road intersection to the former Galdi railroad right-of-way. This should only be construction if the alternative East-West connector is not constructed through Six Mile Run Reservoir.
      - Bike lane and lane signs in the existing wide shoulder on both the north and south sides of Amwell Road from the intersection at Van Cleef Road to the intersection with Elizabeth Avenue.
    - East-West Connector: Amwell Road to South Middlebush Road.
      - An east-west bike path connector and trail markers through block 61, Lot 10 of the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site and then through the Scott property or a bike path and trail markers along the former Galdi railroad right-of-way.
    - Dunn and Gunther Open Space
      - Bike path and trail markers more or less paralleling South Middlebush Road from the southern edge of the Six mile Run Reservoir Site to the intersection of Suydam Road.

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- Elizabeth Avenue
  - Converting the existing wide shoulder to a marked and signed bike lane. Accordingly, the Township should re-apply for this grant in order to implement this recommendation.
- Franklin Township Memorial Forest
  - Parking lot.
  - New hiking path from Amwell road to Elizabeth Avenue along field edges and then along a portion of the old railroad right-of-way.
  - New bike path from Amwell Road to Elizabeth Avenue along edge of existing driveway, past the forest, then turning west and running along the two northernmost field edges and then along a portion of the old railroad right-of-way.
  - Equestrian and dogs-on-leash should be permitted on all trails.
- Franklin Township Demott Lane Connector to Easton Avenue
  - Bike path paralleling Demott Lane from northern terminus of the existing bike path to the intersection of Easton Avenue.
- Inman Park
  - Kiosk, trail markers, signage to interpret wetlands.
- Kingston Rockingham Connector, Rt. 27 to Laurel Avenue, Kingston
  - Hiking path and markers through DOT and Trap Rock property that would connect Rockingham and Rt. 27.
- Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve
  - 1/3 mile handicapped trail from parking lot to wetlands and a handicap access ramp to the wildlife viewing blind near reconstructed wetlands.
- Ten Mile Run Greenway, Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve
  - Ravine trail along the northern border along Simenson Brook.
  - All the double-track trails located along field edges should permit equestrian use and have signage that clearly indicates where equestrians are permitted and where they are prohibited.
- Treptow Road/Martino Drive Path Connection
  - Construct a bike path to connect the existing bike path on Treptow Road with the existing bike path on Martino Drive.
- Gauguin Way Pathway Extension into Middlebush Park

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- Construct a bike path to connect the existing bike path on Gauguin Way to Middlebush Park’s proposed trails.
  - Weston Road
    - Add bike paths to missing sections, as feasible.
    - Bike path from the existing bike path along most of Weston Road to the intersection of Weston Road and Elizabeth Avenue.
  - Weston Canal Road
    - Bike path to link D&R Canal towpath to existing bike path along Schoolhouse lane.
2. County Parks
- Colonial Park
    - Bike path to link Rose Garden to Franklin Inn.
    - Pedestrian swing bridge from behind Rose Garden to D&R Canal towpath.
    - Bike path or lane along Mettlers Lane from Weston Canal Road to meet up with existing bike path in Colonial Park.
  - Spieden and Hoebel Farms, Little Valley Natural Area
    - Trail realignment to avoid wetter areas and decrease erosion along with trail markers.
3. State Parks
- D&R Canal State Park, Easton Avenue and JFK Boulevard
    - Pedestrian swing bridge from land adjacent to Somerset Diner to the D&R Canal towpath.
  - Six Mile Run Reservoir Site
    - Have several loop trails that are shorter in length. Possible locations include trails off of Cortelyous lane and off of Claremont Road.
    - Bike path and trail markers more or less paralleling South Middlebush Road from edge of Galdi farm to the Dunn/Gunther Township open space property.
    - Bike path and trail markers more or less paralleling Blackwells Mills Road from Canal Road parking area to the intersection with Van Cleef Road.
    - Bike path and trail markers along Van Cleef Road to intersection with Blackwells Mills Road.

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- Trail and trail markers more or less paralleling the east and western sides of the Nine Mile Run stream beginning from Claremont Road to Cortelyous Lane.
- Trail and trail markers from South Middlebush Road to Sommer property along Canal Road beginning at parking lot on South Middlebush Road.
- Trail and trail markers from Jacques Lane to meet up with the existing Red trail.
- Pedestrian bridge over the Six mile Run Stream to connect the existing red trail and yellow trails at the “oxbow” of the stream near south Middlebush Road.
- Pedestrian walkway and guardrails to be constructed along the eastern side of the existing Canal Road bridge that goes over the Six mile Run Stream.

### F. Appendix: Colonial Park Development Plan-Natural Preserve Area

The recommendation for the forested portion of Colonial Park’s northwestern corner is for the area to remain a Natural Preservation Area within Colonial Park. The physical conditions of this area make it difficult to develop active recreation there. It was mentioned that a network of multi-use trails and boardwalks should be developed, that would function in creating a strong connection between the various areas of Colonial Park. The multi-use trails should incorporate equine use in addition to pedestrian use and should link Weston Road to the family-use core of the park and Colonial Drive. It is suggested that the trails should also have a direct connection to the existing Lois Howe Nature Trail. Vegetation should be examined to support existing native vegetation and the removal of invasive vegetation.

The Howe Farmstead has given County residents an opportunity to preserve a farmstead and open space. The majority of the property is recommended to be maintained as a Natural Resource area however; there is one field on Elizabeth Avenue that is possibly feasible to develop as an athletic field.

Opportunities may exist for the adaptive reuse of the structures based on the results of a historic building report. The building could be used as an environmental and information center, housing information on trails and providing information to the public about the differing environments found in Colonial Park and New Jersey.

### G. Appendix: Six Mile Run Reservoir Site Trail System

The Six Mile Run is on the State and National Register of Historic Places and is a tributary of the Millstone River.



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A proposed trail system would exist within a 20-foot wide corridor adjacent to lands currently or recently under agricultural tillage. The trail would be multi-use and should help relieve overcrowding at D&R Canal State Park and Somerset County facilities.

Presently, the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site has been assigned to the D&R Canal State Park for administration. The trail system would be excluded from leased agricultural lands, and any trail planning would include farmers leasing those lands.

### H. Appendix: The Millstone-New Brunswick Railroad Right-of-Way

South Middlebush Road to Amwell, and Amwell to Elizabeth Avenue are two possible segments of this trail. This plan proposes a north-south bike path that will run roughly parallel to South Middlebush Road and will connect the northern portion of the Township with the southern portion. An earlier draft of the PTP was to have a bike path running east-west, connect into the north-south bikeway, and provide a way for people to head toward Colonial Park and the western portion of the Township.

An early draft of the Pathways and Trails Plan suggested a segment that run from South Middlebush Road to Amwell Road, exit onto a to-be-constructed bike path that would run along the southern side of Amwell Road down to the intersection with Van Cleef Road, pick up the existing bike path along Old Amwell Road, enter the Memorial Forest Site, eventually connect to a portion of the abandoned Millstone-New Brunswick Railroad right-of-way, and end at Elizabeth Avenue.

Input from a public hearing and several site visits and discussions with adjacent landowners and residents, generated a list of concerns, listed below:

1. All open space is owned by the citizens of Franklin Township and as such should have public access to it.
2. The segment that runs from South Middlebush Road to Amwell Road has in some locations, private intrusions onto it from adjacent property owners which need to be eliminated.
3. The adjacent property owners have expressed concern that the Township open space, in its present condition, compromises the privacy that they feel they have a right to in their backyards.

Keeping these concerns in mind, the Trails Advisory Committee proposed the following:

1. The Township contact the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to inquire about whether or not the DEP will permit the construction of the north-south pathway through the Six mile Run Reservoir Site. If it is not permitted,

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the east-west connector to this becomes less important, as it would be a stand-alone pathway, instead as an important connector to a Township wide trails plan.

2. If the DEP is open to the construction of the north-south pathway through the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site, the Township should also seek approval to continue that the pathway east-west along the edge of Block 74.01, Lot 10. If the DEP will approve of this east-west connector trail, this is a far superior location for the east-west connector.
3. The Township should identify precisely the boundaries of the railroad corridor through a survey along both the northern and southern portion of the abandoned Millstone-New Brunswick Railroad right-of-way that runs between South Middlebush Road and Amwell Road. Additionally, any wetlands should be identified and a Letter of Interpretation , and a recreational trail wetlands permit should be obtained before implementing any of the below recommendations. After establishing the boundaries of the railroad corridor, the Township should clearly delineate the boundary of the Township-owned land and work to establish a dense vegetative buffer along the northern edge of its property.
4. The buffering plan should be implemented if the Council approves buffering.
5. If the DEP approves the alternative east-west bikeway, the concept of a paved bike path along this section of the abandoned Millstone-New Brunswick Railroad right-of-way should not be pursued.
6. If the DEP does not approve the alternate east-west pathway, and after a buffering plan is implemented, the Township should hold another public hearing on the issue of the east-west bike path being constructed along the abandoned Millstone-New Brunswick Railroad right-of-way. If the DEP does not approve of the east-west connector, after a buffering plan is implemented, a small, single track walking path should be maintained along the abandoned Millstone-New Brunswick Railroad right-of-way. No development of the single-track trail should begin until the boundaries of the Township open space are clearly identified and the buffering established.

### *The Amwell Road to Elizabeth Avenue Segment*

Similar concerns to those outlined above should guide planning for this segment of any proposed pathway. The Trails Advisory Committee is recommending the following:

1. A walking path along these segments.
2. A bike path constructed on the site.

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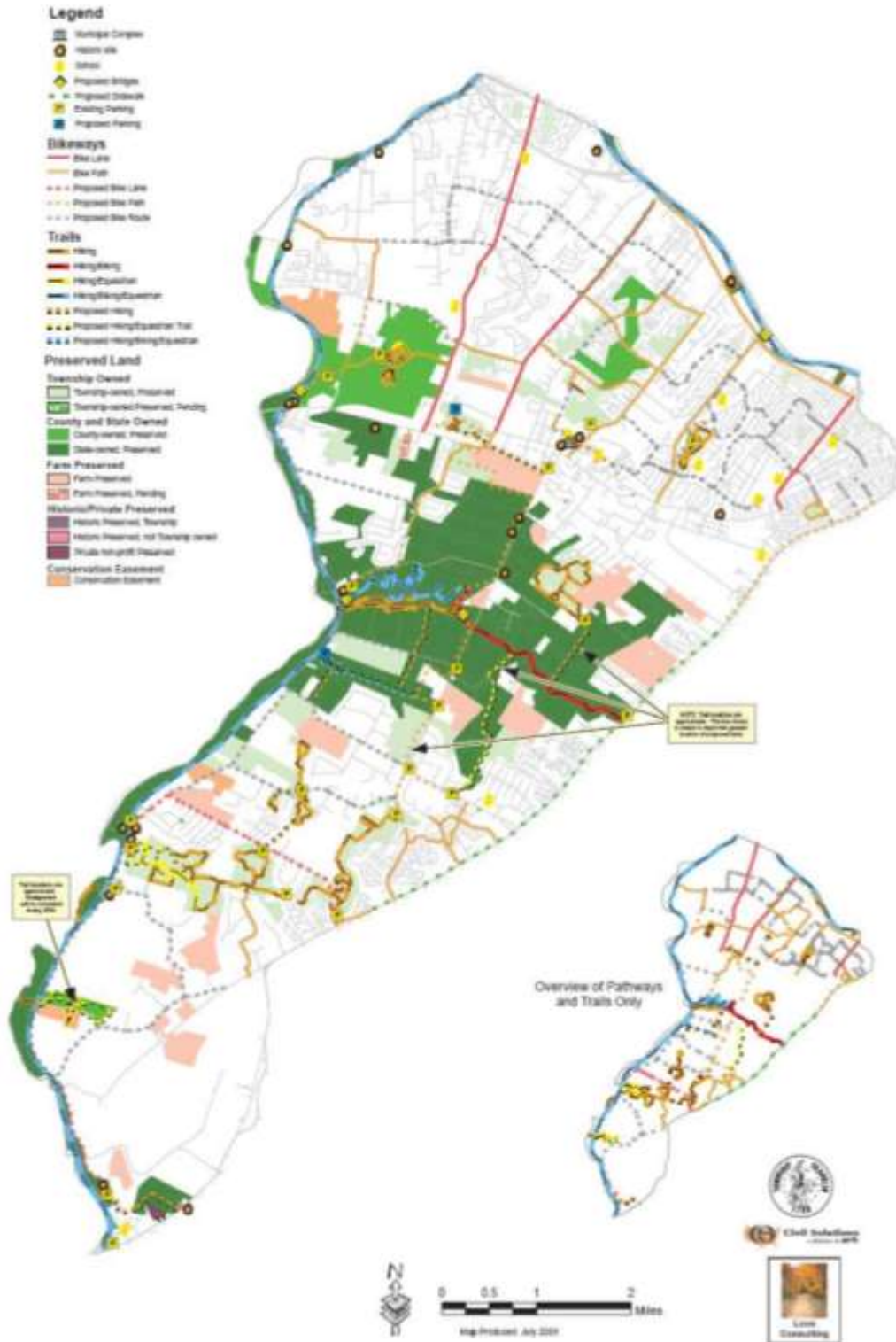
3. Property boundaries should be identified through a comprehensive survey, wetlands, wetlands should be identified, and a Letter of Interpretation and a recreational trail wetlands permit should be obtained before implementing any of the below recommendations.
4. The Township should clearly delineate its boundary and work to establish a dense vegetative buffer along the edge of the property.
5. These trail segments should permit equestrian use and leashed dogs.

The Memorial Forest Path is a critical link in a proposed continuous bikeway. This continuous bikeway is composed of the following segments:

1. An existing bike path along South Middlebush Road in Franklin Park.
2. A proposed bike path from Franklin Park continuing northward roughly paralleling South Middlebush Road.
3. Proposed bike path from South Middlebush Road running west across the Six Mile Run Reservoir Site and then continuing west across the Townships' Scott open space property.
4. Existing bike path that runs along Van Cleef Road and leading to a signalized intersection of Van Cleef and Amwell Roads.
5. Existing bike path that runs along Old Amwell road and then along Amwell road.
6. Proposed bike path through the Memorial Forest.
7. Proposed bike lane that would be made in the existing shoulder of Elizabeth Avenue.
8. Existing bike path located in Colonial Park.
9. Proposed pedestrian bridge from Colonial park for the Canal towpath.

If the bike path is implemented, a pedestrian-controlled signalized crossing might need to be constructed where Colonial Drive and Elizabeth Avenue intersect.

## Appendix 1: Franklin Pathways and Trails Plan



**Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan  
November 2007**

**Township of Franklin**

**Somerset County, New Jersey**

Prepared For:

Agricultural Advisory Commit, Township of Franklin  
Planning Board, Township of Franklin

Prepared By:

John Loos, Loos Consulting

Mark Healey, PP, AICP, Director of Planning, Franklin Township

**A. Introduction**

Pressures have raised the price of farmlands in such a way that the current generation of farmers can no longer afford to buy land for farming alone. In today's agricultural climate, farmers must rely on opportunities to rent farmland from speculative landholders, or the State, as is the case with the Six Mile Run lands.

The Township established an Agricultural Advisory Committee that evaluates and ranks farmland preservation applications received from landowners. The lots that comprise the list of Franklin Township's targeted farms were recommended by the AAC for the purchase of development rights after taking into consideration the above criteria and ranking these properties against other potential preservation opportunities.

In August of 1999, the New Jersey State Legislature adopted the Planning Incentive Grants Program to preserve farmland in New Jersey. The purpose of this legislation is to "provide grants to eligible counties and municipalities for the purpose of preserving a significant area of reasonably contiguous farmland that will promote the long term economic viability of agriculture as an industry in a municipality or county". In July of 2007, the State adopted new regulations to provide grants to eligible counties and municipalities for the purpose of preserving a significant area of reasonably contiguous farmland that will promote the long term economic viability of agriculture as an industry in a municipality of county.

To be eligible for a grant, the municipality or county must identify project areas, appoint and agricultural advisory committee, establish and maintain a dedicated source of funding for farmland preservation, and prepare a Farmland Preservation Plan Element of the Master Plan.

The Farmland Preservation Plan Element is required to contain:

1. An inventory of farm properties in the entire municipality and a map illustrating significant areas of agricultural land.

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2. A detailed statement showing that municipal plans and ordinances support and promote agriculture as a business.
3. A plan for preserving as much farmland as possible in the short term by leveraging monies made available by the Garden State Preservation Trust Act.
4. A statement of farming trends, characterizing the type(s) of agricultural production in the municipality.
5. A discussion of plans to develop the agricultural industry in the municipality

### Goals and Objectives

The Master Plan Element also serves as Franklin Township’s guide for farmland preservation. The Conservation Plan Element of the 1999 Franklin Township Master Plan suggested that a preservation plan be prepared to ensure the viability of farming in the township. The following goals for agricultural preservation have been identified:

- Maximize efforts to preserve active farms.
- Focus on preservation of prime agricultural lands.
- Work with willing landowners in pursuing the best method of preservation for the Township and the landowner, taking into account available funding, landowner needs and Township goals.
- Coordinate the open space preservation effort of Franklin Township with all interested agencies, including other municipalities, counties, state and federal governments, and private organizations and individuals.
- Protect farmland by purchase of development rights, continued use of farmland assessment and other effective mechanisms.
- Discourage the extension of utilities to large farms.
- Maintain the open space dedication requirement under cluster options.
- Encourage on-going dialogue between Township officials and farmers to determine needs and opportunities.
- Urge the State of New Jersey to dedicate all viable land to be used for agricultural purposes.
- Develop a wildlife management plan to reduce crop damage.
- Develop and foster alternative agricultural opportunities.

In June of 2000, the Franklin Township Council created the “Municipal Agricultural Advisory Committee”, which is responsible for the preparation of the Master Plan Element.

### **B. Franklin’s Agricultural Land Base**



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The predominant land use in the Township is farmland. As of August 2007, there was 4,849 acres of classified farmland, which is 17% of the Township's total acres. In addition, approximately 1,300 acres in Six Mile Run are currently leased for farmland, and another approximately 400 acres of the Township-owned open space is leased to farmers, bringing the farmland in the Township to 23.4% of the Township.

Franklin Township has been an active participant in the State Farmland Preservation Program, and has also preserved several farms on their own. Currently there are 15 farms in the State or County program and 2 additional farms that were preserved by the Township, with a total of 676.6 farmland acres currently preserved. Only the development rights for these properties have been purchased, leaving the land in private ownership to continue agricultural use.

Currently there are five additional farms that are under contract to be preserved in the Township. These farms total 316.95 acres. When these five additional farms are preserved, the total preserved will be 3.6% of the Township. Additionally, there are another 8,120 acres that are permanently preserved as open space or parkland.

The Township is applying for a new Planning Incentive Grant Program from the SADC. In order to qualify for the grant funding, the following information is required:

1. An inventory of all farm properties in the entire municipality and a map illustrating these areas of agricultural land.
2. A map and description of the municipality's agricultural resource base including, at a minimum, the proposed farmland preservation project areas.
3. Identification and detailed map of the county's adopted ADA within the municipality.
4. An inventory showing the number of farms or properties, and their individual and aggregate acreage for the categories of land within the project area.
5. Aggregate size of the entire PIG project area.
6. Density of the project area expressed as the ratio between the total area of the properties listed for lands from which and application for sale of a development easement has been granted final approval, lands from which development easements have already been purchased, other permanently deed-restricted farmlands, lands enrolled in an eight-year farmland preservation program or municipally-approved farmland preservation program, or other permanently preserved lands dedicated for open space purposes that are compatible with agriculture, and the total area of the project area.
7. Description of soil productivity of the targeted farms in the project area expressed as the ratio between the total area of the following important farmland soils and that total area of the targeted farms.

Franklin Township has no irrigated acres and must use wells, ponds, streams and public water to support their enterprises.

### **C. Franklin’s Agricultural Industry**

Franklin Township’s farmers are at an economic disadvantage to farmers in many other parts of New Jersey because they do not have seed suppliers or equipment dealers located in the Township. Because of this, getting supplies and equipment is more costly to them, than if these services were located locally. Local farmers do direct marketing of some crops such as Christmas trees and farm-market vegetables.

### **D. Land Use Planning Context**

#### **1. Site Development and Redevelopment Plan**

A significant portion of the Township is located in planning areas most compatible with farmland preservation and agricultural retention. The Rural Planning Area and Rural/Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area are intended to maintain farmland as contiguous areas, to promote agriculture as a viable industry, and to confine sewer and water service to Centers.

The Municipal Self-Assessment report will contain a detailed analysis of the Township’s consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The following critical issues of consistency will be stressed in the report:

- The Township planning documents are highly consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
- Agricultural preservation is a fundamental goal of the Township Master Plan.
- Public water and public sewer service areas within the Township correlate highly with the delineation of growth areas on the SPPM. Conversely, the areas of the Township with those state planning areas most compatible with farmland preservation and agricultural retention are almost entirely located outside of public water and public sewer service areas.
- The Township’s Land Development Regulation is highly consistent with the SPPM.
- The Township’s Cross Acceptance Committee has been actively involved with County planning staff and the Office of Smart Growth in the third round of the Cross Acceptance process.

#### **2. Township Development Regulations**

- **Agricultural Zone:** To preserve those agricultural areas in the Township where it is necessary and desirable because of their highly productive agricultural capability to promote, maintain and enhance the use of the land for agricultural purposes, and to protect from encroachment by non-agricultural uses, structure or activities.



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- Canal Preservation Zone: To protect unique resources of the D&R Canal, protect groundwater and surface water which flow into the Canal, maintain the scenic amenity of the Canal, reduce the impact on streets adjacent to the Canal, protect wooded slopes from development, and maintain agricultural resources.
- Rural Residential Zone: To recognize the development opportunities with respect to the Brunswick shale formation and underlying soils, protect groundwater, maintain and enhance forested areas, preserve stream quality which feeds into the Canal, and permit low-density single-family residential development.

Also, to recognize the development opportunities to the diabase formation and overlying soils, protect groundwater, maintain and enhance forested areas, preserve stream quality which feeds into the Canal, and permit low-density, single-family residential development.

The following techniques are available in the Township's development regulations towards farmland preservation and agricultural retention:

- Lot Size Averaging
- NRCP Cluster Option: The purpose is to recognize, preserve and protect certain defined natural resources and to preserve an environment for the continuance of viable agricultural and horticultural uses; preserve open space to serve environmental scenic, and public service purposes promote imaginative, well-designed residential subdivisions; and respect the physical and socioeconomic qualities of the land.
- Agricultural Cluster Option

The following zoning provisions are also consistent with farmland preservation, agricultural retention and the preservation or rural character.

- Scenic Corridor Ordinance: The purpose is to preserve the aesthetic character of Township-designated scenic corridors. The purpose of the ordinance is to protect the Township's aesthetic resources, to direct the location and design of development so that it will enhance the visual character of the Township, to provide sufficient visual buffers and view sheds for future residential development, and to protect the Township's remaining open spaces from conventional development patterns and measures that tend to compromise the intrinsic value of farmlands, fields, hedgerows, woodlands, mountain profiles or ridgelines, plateaus, water bodies and watercourse.

The ordinance regulates development along the corridor, within 1,000 linear feet of the centerline of the scenic roadway, on either side of the roadway.

- Township Right-to Farm Ordinance

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### 3. Consistency with Somerset County’s Agriculture Retention and Development Plan

The County’s Agriculture Retention and Development Plan provides a master plan to retain and develop agriculture in the county.

### 4. Consistency with Somerset County’s Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan

Franklin Township’s Farmland Preservation Plan is consistent with the County plan in many ways:

- The County ADA for Franklin Township and the Township PIG target areas are consistent.
- The County’s Millstone Valley East project area overlaps with the Township’s PIG target areas.
- The ranking criteria utilized in both plans are consistent.
- The eligibility criteria in both plans are consistent.

### 5. Consistency with the SADC’s Agricultural Smart Growth Plan

Preserving Franklin Township’s targeted farms is consistent with the foundation of the Agricultural Smart Growth Plan of the State Agricultural Development Committee’s Strategic Targeting Project, which encourages county agriculture development boards and county planning boards to:

- Adopt comprehensive farmland preservation plans that identify existing farmland.
- Coordinate efforts to sustain the agricultural community within municipal and regional master plans.
- Promote the expansion of agriculture as an industry that is key to their region and New Jersey’s economy.

To stem the loss of farmland to development, innovative planning and design is necessary. Maintaining the land’s equity is central to the economic viability and retention of farming operations. The steady appreciation in land equity is an essential component of a farmer’s long-term commitment to agricultural production.

The Department’s approach to smart growth coordinates farmland preservation efforts with economic development strategies at the county and municipal levels.

### 6. Special Resource Areas

Franklin Township is not located within any special resource area; however, the regulations of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission govern development throughout the Township. The Township works closely with Canal Commission and its staff to ensure that the Canal Commission’s regulations are adhered to.

## **E. Farmland Preservation Program – Overview**

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As mentioned earlier, there are 15 farms in the State or County program and two additional farms that were preserved by the Township, with a total of 676.6 farmland acres currently preserved. Only the development rights for these properties have been purchased, leaving the land in private ownership to continue in agricultural use.

The Township's open space and farmland preservation efforts are closely coordinated. The following areas of open space emphasis identified within the Township's open space plan are compatible with the Township's farmland preservation efforts:

- Canal Preservation/Millstone Valley Area: The main project initiative is to connect the D&R Canal Greenway into a system of greenways within the region.
- Kinston/Griggstown Preserve: It includes one of the largest contiguous areas of woodlands remaining in the Township and includes large areas of sensitive environmental features.
- Village Greenbelts: The plan recommends that these greenbelts are worth of protection in order to preserve the historic settlement patterns of the Township.
- Agricultural Preservation Area: This area would link Six Mile Run State lands with the Village of Zarephath to the north in order to make farming a viable practice in the area.
- State and County Lands Preservation: The plan indicates that land adjacent to State and County-owned land should be preserved to expand upon existing open space/recreational land.
- Scenic Resources: The plan indicates that a number of scenic resources are worthy of acquisition.

The Greenway and Open Space Plan also describes a variety of farmland protection measures other than financial, that should be explored, such as cluster subdivisions, greenway plans, best management practices, scenic corridor plans, riparian buffer plans and historic and village preservation plans.

### **F. Future Farmland Preservation Program**

Franklin Township remains committed to the preservation of agriculture and the rural character of the community. In 2007, Somerset County published "Partner's in Preservation", outlining various non-profits that might partner on any give preservation project. The idea is that "Partners in Preservation" could be referenced on a project-to-project basis to see if there might be funding partners on future preservation efforts. Leveraging the local tax monies this way, will put the Township in the most favorable position to protect and preserve the remaining farmland. The preservation goals are as followed:

- 1-year acreage target: 130 acres
- 5-year acreage target: 650 acres
- 10-year acreage target: 1,300 acres

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The annual tax that will be collected into the Open Space, Farmland, Recreation and Historical Preservation Trust Fund will be \$0.05 per hundred dollars of assessed value.

Currently there is more than \$25.5 million left in the Open Space Trust Fund. Of this, about 12,879,000 is available for future land preservation projects. The Township's Open Space Advisory Committee and the AAC have both recommended to the Township Council that the vast majority of this amount be utilized to preserve additional farmland. It is expected that some of these farms will be preserved through the Somerset County farmland preservation program, reducing the Township's cost of preservation.

Franklin Township voters approved a referendum on November 3, 1998, recommending a 3 cent per 100 dollars assessed property value tax to generate funds to be used for open space purposes. The ordinance to implement the referendum was adopted on January 4, 1999.

The Township is also committed to utilizing revenues from its open space tax to serve as seed money for alternative grants and loans, and to pattern with other governmental entities and non-profits. Consideration will also be given to any alternative appropriate funding mechanism.

The AAC has adopted a Resolution that establishes eligibility requirements for farm owners who apply for farm preservation under the Township's PIG Program. They have also adopted a Resolution that establishes a list of targeted farms in each of the PIG areas.

The Township has hired a land preservation consultant to perform various duties with respect to open space and farmland preservation. This position is necessary to provide assistance with the application process for the various farmland preservation programs, for outreach efforts to promote agricultural preservation, and to explain the various methods of preservation from the perspective of the property owner, as well as assisting in the identification of future parcels for preservation and the various methods to fund such preservation.

The following Township Staff and consultants are used to facilitate the preservation of farms:

1. Kenneth W. Daly, Township Manager: Oversees the entire farmland preservation effort.
2. John Loos, of Loos Consulting: Oversees all aspects of the Township's farm preservation program.
3. Scott Thomas, senior engineer: Coordinates all surveying work associated with farmland preservation projects.
4. Karen Buckley, Township Engineering office employee: Provides administrative support to the AAC.

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5. Louis Rainone, Township’s attorney and he: Provides all legal support to the farmland preservation program.
6. Mark Healey, Township Planner: Assists with the preparation of the PIG grant application.
7. Civil Solutions, Inc.: Provides GIS mapping support to the Farmland preservation program.
8. Bonnie von Ohlen, Township’s Grants Coordinator: Provides assistance and all township farmland preservation grants.

### **G. Economic Development and Agricultural Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion**

Franklin Township has taken the following actions to promote agricultural economic development in order to sustain the agricultural industry.

1. Adopted a Farmland Preservation Element of the Master Plan.
2. Appointed an Agricultural Advisory Committee that meets monthly.
3. Adopted a Right-to Farm Ordinance.
4. Appointed an Agricultural Ombudsman to assist farmers in navigating the Township’s code enforcement process.
5. Hired a Land Preservation Consultant for the past five years to assist the Township in preserving farmland and in providing staffing support to the AAC.
6. Prepared an eco-heritage tourism map that shows the location of all farm markets and all Christmas tree farms that are located in the Township.
7. Established an “Open Space, Farmland, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund” that collects over \$4 million each year for property preservation efforts.
8. Bonded for over \$45 million for land preservation projects.
9. Applied for and received two PIG grants from the SADC.
10. Applying for a new PIG grant for the period beginning in FY 1009.
11. Working with the Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Parks and Forestry to develop a land management plan for the State-owned 3000 acre Six Mile Run Reservoir Site.
12. Managing a white-tailed deer hunting program on Township-owned open space to reduce the deer population in the Township.

**Heritage & Vision A Partnership Proposal**

*Taking the Best from the Past... Applying the Energy of the Present... To Ensure the Quality of the Future...*

The Meadows Foundation, Inc. Since 1977

**A. Hageman Barns – Conceptual Design for Restoration & Adaptive Reuse**

John Miller Associates, Inc. was selected in October of 1990, to undertake the development of a long range plan for stabilization, restoration and adaptive reuse of the Hageman Farm House and Dairy Barns. Their plan was to create a truly unusual Community Meeting and Events facility for Franklin Township and the region in the Six Miles Historic District.

The Horse and Dairy Barn have a historical significance due partly from Benjamin Hageman’s interest in the new ideas and machinery that would bring America to the forefront as a leader in agricultural production.

Benjamin Hageman was an 1868 graduate of Rutgers College, a civil engineer, land surveyor and notary. He kept a unique diary of daily events, including chores, marriage, design of the barns, the purchase of the building materials, and the sources of various construction features and building materials. These recorded details offer insight into this time period.

The Hageman family settled in what is now Franklin Park, in 1702. Franklin Park has been a farming community for over 300 years and the families were of the buildings and owners of the historic homes currently under the Meadows Foundation umbrella. The Meadows Foundation has ongoing restoration projects, maintenance and programming for the public in all of its historic houses.

**1. A Multi-Purpose Community Center**

The main purpose was to accommodate:

- Business and Community Meetings
- Banquets and Receptions
- Seminars and Training Meetings
- Arts and Crafts Shows or Events
- Entertainment and Performing Arts Events
- Weddings and other Family Events

One of JMA’s objectives has been to maintain and provide for usage that will make it possible for the Hageman Barns to be self-sustaining through its programming and fees for services. Another priority has been to provide all this in a setting that still looks like a farm.

### **2. The Horse Barn (4,040 sq. ft.)**

The Horse Barn is a gabled roof bank barn of framed construction, which provided shelter, food and equipment storage for the farm's horses.

#### *Preview of the Adaptive Reuse Plan*

The plan provides for a main entrance to the complex through an opening originally used by the horses at ground level off the courtyard. As you enter, there is a coat room, restroom facility, and space for storage and an office. The second floor can be reached through the second floor of the Atrium, and will provide space for approximately 160 moveable seats. The large room would be unrestricted from any location. The original carriage or wagon entrance would be used transitionally as the entrance but also as an emergency exit.

### **3. The Dairy Barn (2,964 sq. ft.)**

The Dairy Barn is two stories and has a gabled roof and large framing construction. The first floor enclosed area was where the cows were milked, the milk room, and the feed preparation. The second floor was used primarily for hay and feed storage.

#### *Preview of the Adaptive Reuse Plan*

The Dairy Barn can be reached through the second floor of the Atrium. The ground floor would include a kitchen and storage area, two medium size meeting or breakout rooms, and a stairway to the second floor for service. The second floor would consist of a medium sized banquet room, able to accommodate approximately 84 people. If used for a buffet affair, the second floor could hold more.

#### **The Atrium/Lobby**

The Atrium/Lobby is proposed to facilitate use of both barns and minimize the duplication of various amenities. The Atrium/Lobby is behind the Horse Barn and adjacent to the Dairy Barn on the side away from South Middlebush Road. There will be unobstructed views from the Lobby of the state park and farm country north and west of the complex.

The conceptual plan has people entering from the courtyard into the Horse Barn. From there, they will enter the Atrium/Lobby and ascend the stairs for the event taking place in either the Dairy Barn or Horse Barn or both. The addition has been designed to be unobtrusive to maintaining a genuine farm-like appearance of the exterior of the complex.

### **B. Hageman Farm Barns Progress**

The donations received in the late 1980s and early 1990s made it possible for a New Jersey Historical Trust grant in 1991, based on the plan developed by JMA. The initial phase was to restore the Horse Barn foundation, sill, associated support timbers and first floor flooring.

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In 1997, a Somerset County referendum was held, asking the voters to consider establishing a fund for the purchase land for open space, farm and park land as well as for the acquisition and restoration of historic structures. It was favorably received and the first round of grants were accepted. In 1999 and 2000, the Meadows Foundation received their largest grant monies ever, setting the goal to proceed with all the restoration on the Horse Barn above the first floor.

The original planning that resulted in the JMA plan for restoration and adaptive reuse is still a sound plan. The potential for a Unique Multi-Purpose Community Center in a historic Dutch farm complex would be unmatched anywhere else in the state of New Jersey.



**Open Space and Recreation Plan**

**A Strategy for Preserving Open Space, Agricultural, and Recreational Resources**

**May 2000**

**Franklin Township,**

**Somerset County, New Jersey**

Prepared By:

Franklin Township Open Space Advisory Committee

**A. The Planning Context**

The character of Franklin’s landscape has been the focus of two groups with very different agendas – developers eager to turn farmland and forests into houses, and residents determined to preserve the Township’s rich legacy. The Township has a diverse community in terms of social, economic, and land use character. The diversity creates numerous demands and challenges when planning for open space and recreation.

*Open Space*

Open space represents diverse resources including scenic roadways and landscapes, historic sites and districts, agricultural activity, natural diversity of plants and animals, clean streams and waterways, and recreational resources.

The arrangement and character of open space and its relationship to the built environment can play a major role in definition of community character. Open space character is primarily perceived visually. It offers aesthetic, psychological and recreational benefits whether or not physical access is permitted. Open space areas also serve important environmental functions. Floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes should remain in open space due to the hazards they create if developed. If maintained in a natural state, they also promote the retention of floodwaters, diminish the threat of erosion, promote groundwater recharge, offer wildlife habitat, and provide opportunities for a variety of recreation activities.

*Recreation*

Passive recreation usually refers to informal activities by individuals or small groups on natural or semi-natural surroundings, such as hiking, biking, driving, picnicking, nature study, or a place to sit and enjoy the scenery. Only minimal site improvements are required to accommodate most passive recreational activities.

Active recreation refers to activities that are relatively intensive, both in terms of participation and in users of the land or facility where the activities take place. Active recreation generally requires specific facilities and tends to be group-oriented, demanding some form of organizational structure.

*Municipal Role in Providing Open Space and Recreation*

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Every municipality should assume a role in ensuring the conservation of notable open space resources. Municipal government also assumes a role in providing for the day to day park and recreation needs of its residents. In Franklin Township, this is accomplished through the provision of a system of regional, community and neighborhood parks provided by state, county and local agencies.

### *Franklin Township Open Space Trust Fund*

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1998, Franklin Township voters approved a referendum recommending to the Township council the creation of a Municipal Open Space Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust fund. This Open Space Trust Fund is to be used to acquire land, easements, development rights, or other interests in real property for the purpose of preserving open space for conservation and recreation for acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes and for the preservation of historic properties.

- **Open Space Advisory Committee**

A 14-member committee consisting of nine voting members and five ex-officio members. The committee shall perform the following duties and functions:

1. Prepare an Open Space Plan.
2. Assist in the establishment of an Open Space Tracking Program to catalog the state of privately owned open space in the Township.
3. Provide guidance to Township Boards and Commissions on issues and matters of open space.
4. Review its functions and recommend additional duties to be delegated to the committee.
5. Assist with the preparation of grant applications.
6. Encourage public and private contributions of land or financial donations to the Open Space Trust Fund.
7. Develop an applications and grant program to fund publicly held properties and projects in the Township.

### *Garden State Preservation Trust Act*

The Garden State Preservation Trust Act allows New Jersey to preserve 1 million acres over the next ten years.

### *Somerset County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund*

The Somerset County Trust Fund is funded by an open space tax of 3 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. The fund provides approximately \$7.5 million per year to purchase open space, farmland development rights and local greenways, and to preserve historic structures.

## **B. Goals and Policies**

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The vision is to establish a well-planned program to identify, prioritize, and preserve critical open space, farmland, historic and recreation areas. The plan is intended to provide a coordinated and planned approach to maximizing the benefits associated with preserving open spaces. The following goals have been established to support the Plan's vision and intent.

### *Goals for Resource Protection*

1. Protect natural resources.
2. Protect unique and endangered habitats.
3. Preserve the remaining large tracts of open land in the township.
4. Establish a connected, area-wide system of greenways, parks, trails, natural areas, scenic landscapes, and farmland.
5. Protect areas of scenic value, especially those visible from public roads and areas that are unique, defining the character of Franklin Township.

### *Goals for Agricultural Preservation*

1. Maximize efforts to preserve active farms.
2. Focus on preservation of prime agricultural lands.
3. Preservation of Agricultural Planning Area as identified in this Plan.

### *Goals for Land Preservation and Acquisition*

1. Preserve a minimum of 50% of the remaining undeveloped land in Franklin, Township over the first five years.
2. Develop and implement a system for objectively evaluating and prioritizing sites worthy of preservation and/or acquisition.
3. Acquire property or property rights in an equitable manner to insure that important open space is not lost.
4. Use the most appropriate and fair technique for preserving land.
5. Work with willing landowners in pursuing the best method of preservation for the Township and the landowner, taking into account available funding, landowner needs and Township goals.
6. Coordinate the open space preservation effort of Franklin Township with all interested agencies, including other municipalities, counties, state and federal governments, and private organizations and individuals.
7. Advocate growth management and open space preservation techniques.
8. Establish partnerships with corporations located within the Township and identify opportunities for corporate participation in land preservation efforts.

### *Goals for Recreation*

1. Provide open space for passive and active reservation.
2. Expand existing parklands and preserves to incorporate significant adjacent open space areas.
3. Promote the development of park and recreation facilities to meet the needs and desires of townships residents.
4. Promote the development of pedestrian/bicycle paths connecting residential areas with recreation and community facilities, schools, parks, playgrounds, shopping areas, historic sites, and employment centers.

### *Goals for Cultural Resources*

1. Protect historic resources by preserving land around them and protecting their historic context.
2. Maintain and protect the existing villages through the identification and establishment of “greenbelts” surrounding the historic villages.
3. Protect and rehabilitate historic resources including those that have been abandoned and/or neglected and identify opportunities for ongoing maintenance of the resource.

### *Goals for Public Education and Involvement*

1. Foster development of a stewardship ethic.
2. Educate the public around the value of land conservation practices and thoughtful development approaches and their related economic and environmental benefits.
3. Establish an information clearinghouse for land preservation and resource protection data.
4. Maintain communication with key property owners in the Township.
5. Provide technical assistance to property owners interested in exploring land preservation options.
6. Explore opportunities to work with the school district to develop and implement a public education program building upon the success of the Environmental Education Center.

### **C. Plan Coordination**

- Franklin Township Master Plan of 1999  
The construction of several new recreational facilities is recommended over the short and long terms. The short-term (0-5 years) goals include: maintenance of existing facilities, maximizing the use of Board of Education Facilities, Fostering public/private partnerships, New Memorial Park, New Northern Community Park, New Southern Neighborhood Park, and Six Mile Run State Lands. The long-term (5-10 years) goals

include: New Southern Community Park, Community Center and Pool, and a new Northern Neighborhood parks.

- **Franklin Township Bikeway Master Plan**  
The Bikeway Master Plan depicts the proposed route of a Township-wide bikeway. The Bikeway attempts to link the existing Bikeway in the Easton Avenue area to parks, open space and educational facilities via existing roadways and through currently undeveloped areas.
- **1994 Somerset County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan**  
The 1994 County Plan recommends the following: Greenways, new County Park. Expanding Six Mile Run as a State Park, State acquisition of Trap Rock Quarry, and Colonial Park recommendations.
- **New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan**  
This plan divides all the land within the State into six different land use categories called “planning areas”. These planning areas are: metropolitan Planning Area, Suburban Planning Area, Fringe Planning Area, Rural Planning Area, and the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area.
- **Open Space Plan Consistency with other Plans**  
This Open Space Plan has been developed to be consistent with and further the goals of the Franklin Township Master Plan; the Somerset County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, and the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

### **D. Inventory of Existing Resources**

This section identifies open space, recreation, and agricultural areas in Franklin Township that are under public or private ownership.

#### *Township Owned Lands*

The existing Township parkland system consists of 12 dedicated parks totaling over 100 acres; two preserves totaling over 100 acres; and two softball/baseball facilities totaling over 11 acres. The Township also owns an additional 640 acres that includes areas such as the Hutcheson Forest buffer and developer-dedicated open space.

- **Municipal Parks:** the Township contains 12 municipal parks.
- **Baseball Facilities:** Baseball leagues utilize the Franklin Little League and South Bound Book Little League private facilities. These facilities are generally not available for non-league public use.
- **Preserves:** three facilities are owned at least partially by the Township, which lie somewhere between strictly open space and improved outdoor recreation space. These facilities are considered as natural preserves for passive recreation.

#### *Board of Education Facilities*

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Ten educational facilities contain active recreation facilities that are used by school children during the day and are utilized by the Recreation Department during off hours for indoor and outdoor space.

### *County Facilities*

- Colonial Park: a County-owned facility that contains walking and biking trails play equipment, ponds, a tennis center, an arboretum, connections to the D&R Canal, picnic areas and the Spooky Brook Golf Course.
- Quailbrook Golf Course: a 200-acre County-owned facility that features an 18-hole golf course, clubhouse, senior center, and a mini park with picnic tables, playground, and a fishing pier.

### *State Facilities*

- Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park: features a towpath walking/biking trail between the canal and the Millstone and Raritan Rivers.
- Six Mile Run State Lands: 3,300 +/- acres purchased by the State of New Jersey as a reservoir site to regulate the flow and provide storage capacity for the D&R Canal as a water supply.

### *Privately Owned Facilities*

- Bunker Hill Golf Course: a privately-owned facility that features an 18-hole golf course, clubhouse, and associated amenities.
- Tara Greens: a par-3 executive golf course with a driving range.

### *Inventory of Natural resources*

- Wetlands: are recognized for their special ecological values. They are often found at the heart of important headwater areas and offer critical wildlife habitat and are important “storage” areas for both surface and groundwater regimes.
- Floodplains: a relatively flat area adjoining a stream, river, or watercourse that has been or may be covered by floodwater.
- Steep Slopes: Steep (25% and greater) and moderate (15%-25%) slopes are important resources because of the impact generally resulting from slope disturbance. Uncontrolled disturbance of slopes and vegetation on slopes results in increased storm water runoff, erosion, sedimentation, and siltation of nearby streams, downstream flooding, and decreased stability of the slope itself.
- Woodlands: an extensive study was done to determine the quality of Franklin Township’s natural forest resources. In the North and mid regions, deforestation and disturbance have been severe and forest size and total coverage are low. The South region is moderately forested and includes several large blocks of continuous forest. The Riparian region is heavily forested.

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- **Critical Soils:** defined as having a depth to limiting zone less than 36 inches, soils with hydric components or solid classified as poorly drained. Franklin Township does not specifically regulate development activity in areas underlain with “critical soils”.
- **Stream Corridor and Watercourses:** are often locations of steep slopes, floodplains, forests, wetlands, and critical soils. The Township currently has protection standards that limit development within a specified distance depending on the stream and the resource to be protected. The implementation of more aggressive stream corridor ordinance could provide the opportunity to establish greenways as part of the development process and could minimize or eliminate the expenditure of public funds to protect these areas.
- **Natural Diversity/Habitat:** A number of state resources can be utilized to identify critical habitat areas in Franklin Township including, the Natural Heritage Database and the Endangered and Nongame Species Program.

### *Inventory of Agricultural Resources*

- **Preserved Farmland:** Four property owners have participated in the Somerset County agricultural preservation program, resulting in the preservation of approximately 330 acres of farmland.
- **Active Farms**
- **Prime Agricultural Soils:** Class I and II agricultural soils are predominant in Franklin Township, per the Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey of Somerset County.

### *Inventory of Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Resources*

- D&R Canal Historic District
- Kingston Village Historic District
- Griggstown Historic District
- East Millstone Historic District
- Six mile Run Historic District
- Middlebush Village Historic District
- Franklin Park Village Historic District

### *Inventory of Open Space Competition Factors*

The likelihood that a given property will be developed is an important factor to consider with assessing priorities for preservation and/or acquisition.

- **Public Sewer Service Areas:** Areas served by public sewers have a greater chance of being developed.
- **Sites with Approved or Pending Developments:** sites that have already attracted the attention of developers and are well on their way to becoming developments.

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- Areas with Suitable Soils for On Lot Disposal: areas that have also been mapped as a potential open space competition factor.
- Sites not capable of being subdivided: sites that are not able to be further subdivided based on existing development, lot size and the zoning district in which they are located.

### **E. Priorities and Options for Open Space Preservation and Resource Protection**

- Land Evaluation Methodology  
A subcommittee ranks parcels by their conformity with a “concept plan” consisting of a set of preservation areas. This establishes a system in which properties can be evaluated based on criteria deemed relevant by the open space committee during the evaluation of a potential property. Using this process, no property in the Township is eliminated from consideration.
- Land Preservation Areas
  1. Canal Preservation/Millstone Valley Area  
The Canal is one of Green Acres State Acquisition project areas. Green Acres would like to widen the park and provide greater protection to neighboring resources. One of the major project initiatives is connecting the D&R Canal greenway into a system of existing and planned greenways within the region.
  2. Kingston/Griggstown Preserve  
This area includes one of the largest contiguous areas of woodlands remaining in the Township, which has large areas of sensitive environmental features.
  3. Village Greenbelts  
Village Greenbelts have been established around the historic villages in the Township. They represent the historic settlement patterns in the Township and are worthy of protection.
  4. Agricultural Preservation Area  
This planning area connects lands in and around the Six mile Run Reservoir area and the Village of Zarephath to the north.
  5. Stream Greenways  
Stream greenways include areas within 300 feet on either side of a stream. These areas can also provide critical links between open space/recreation areas and contain scenic and environmental resources worthy of protection.
  6. Ten Mile Run Greenway
  7. State/County Lands Preservation Area  
Properties adjacent to the state and county owned lands that would serve as a logical extension to these areas are included in this preservation area.
  8. Recreational Opportunity Overlay



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The overlay was created to ensure that no property is eliminated from consideration as an active or passive recreational resource. The site in question will be evaluated for its recreation potential.

### 9. Scenic Corridor Planning Area

The objective for this planning area is to protect views along scenic roads through a combination of acquisition, management and regulatory techniques.

#### *Tools to Achieve Open Space and Recreation Planning Goals*

- **Land Acquisition/Donation**  
Land acquisition or donation is the most straightforward method for protecting land in perpetuity. While this method is preferred, limited financial resources require that other conservation methods be investigated.
- **Conservation Easements and Land Trusts**  
Conservation easements are legal documents that limit certain activities on the land and conserve specific natural features.
- **Financing Open Space Acquisitions**  
When a municipality considers land acquisition, it typically has cash, bank loan, and bond funding as funding alternatives.
- **Conservation Subdivision**  
This type of design involves the identification of resources through a site analysis plan and the design of a proposed development in the least intrusive manner. Conservation subdivision design, when combined with other planning techniques can greatly assist in the protection of an interconnected network of open space within the municipality.
- **Greenways**  
Greenways are linear networks of open space that fulfill a variety of functions. Greenways are link between manmade features and the natural environment. It is a concept of planned development and conservation – a coordinated vision between many different parties that strives to balance a healthy local economy with historic, natural and scenic conservation. This concept has applications in all areas of Franklin, Township.
- **Best management Practices**  
Stormwater management has evolved over the years to include a broad array of techniques to control the quality of stormwater runoff. The concept of these practices implies that site design will include the most suitable technique or combination of techniques that will best manage the anticipated stormwater flow and quality based on an evaluation of site conditions and planning requirements.
- **Scenic Roads**

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Scenic roads contribute to the experiences of residents and visitors and help define Franklin Township as a unique place. Scenic roads provide visual and physical access to different landscapes and are defined in terms of both the character of the roads themselves and the landscapes through which they pass.

- **Riparian Buffers**  
Preserving and restoring riparian buffers are among the most effective techniques used to protect and enhance the quality of groundwater, surface water and wildlife habitats. “Riparian” refers to the vegetated area of land adjacent to a pond, lake, stream, creek, river, or wetland. Riparian areas form the transition between the aquatic and terrestrial environment.
- **Historic Preservation Planning**  
Historic preservation planning can help a community ensure that historic preservation values are considered a priority in community development decisions. One of the most significant benefits of historic preservation planning is that it provides a forum through which a municipality can formalize existing policies. At a minimum, master plans should reference historic preservation as a consideration in particular plan elements or strategies such as those related to economic development, housing, and community development.
- **Historic Preservation Design Guidelines**  
Historic preservation design guidelines are the general principles or policies on which recommendations concerning the appropriateness of physical changes in historic districts are based. The use of guidelines helps to ensure that the characteristics that make a historic district unique are conserved.
- **Village Protection Program**  
A plan of action that a municipality can implement to preserve its historic villages.