

Open Space and Recreation Plan Element

Township of Moorestown

County of Burlington



PLANNING BOARD
OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF MOORESTOWN
DECEMBER 3, 2009

Planning Board

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Open Space and Recreation Plan Element

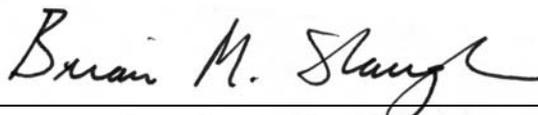
Township of Moorestown County of Burlington

Prepared pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28(7) and -(8)*,
the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law

Adopted by the Moorestown Township Planning Board
December 3, 2009

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Open Space & Recreation Plan Element

(adopted December 3, 2009)

INTRODUCTION

Master Plans, of which this element is a part, often analyze and recommend how land should be developed or redeveloped in response to economic, social and cultural factors. Open space differs in that it is land intended to remain largely undeveloped. Open space produces many benefits to the municipality but one of the most important is the contrast with buildings and streets, often called the “built environment”. Open space provides opportunities for recreation, land for the preservation of wildlife habitats and other natural environments, a gathering place for community events and visual relief from urbanization. Setting aside land for these purposes also supports property values.

Open space includes active recreation, passive recreation, conservation lands and preserved farmland. Active recreation consists of organized sports or leisure activities that usually require specialized fields or equipment and have a list of rules. Baseball, football, soccer and tennis are examples of active recreation. Passive recreation includes less formal activities, such as kite flying, bird watching and hiking. Conservation areas are intended to be left in their natural state for wildlife refuges, as buffers between developments or to protect environmentally sensitive land and water resources. Preserved farmland is intended to remain in agricultural use. Large parks usually encompass more than one type of open space. For instance, level areas may be used for ball fields, with steeper areas near streams retained for conservation purposes. Passive uses, such as hiking trails, complement the conservation land.

This element will examine existing recreation uses and open space lands in Moorestown. The Township’s recreation programs and other sports associations will be described in brief. The amount of land devoted to recreation will be compared to state and national standards. Criteria will be proposed for ranking open space parcels for acquisition, easement, or other development limitation. Recommendations are proposed to complete the element.

Within the structure of the Master Plan, this element is closely aligned with the Conservation Element that describes the natural environment of Moorestown and the Community Facilities Element that proposes policy for governmental, educational and institutional uses within the municipality.

PARKS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

The Township currently owns nearly 667 acres of open space that is intended for recreation and conservation purposes. Table IV-1 below lists these municipally owned sites and provides a general description of the recreational facilities or other uses present at the park. Table IV-2 identifies other types of open space not owned by the municipality such as land deed restricted from further development or for agricultural use and land for recreation-oriented community facilities. These include Board of Education facilities, golf courses and non-profit recreation associations that provide opportunities for Moorestown residents. These two tables identify existing resources. Table IV-3 includes agricultural land or other potential open spaces which might be retained by acquisition, development easement purchase or other means. Table IV-3 was primarily developed by a committee appointed by the Township Council, the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC), to establish criteria and identify sites for the purpose of open space preservation. The OSAC also gave input on several important historical resources. These latter sites are also included on the historic resources map in this Master Plan. With this revision to the plan, six additional sites have been added to Table IV-1, map numbers 19, 20 and 31-34.

Table IV- 1. Existing Municipal Parks, Conservation & Other Township Lands

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Acres	Facilities/Character
Township Parks and Recreation Facilities	1	Wesley Bishop Park	58.00	Field Sports, Conservation ⁽³⁾
	2	Lenola Road Athletic Fields	3.14	Field Sports
	3	New Albany Com. Ctr./ Jeff Young Memorial Park	9.10	Indoor Meeting Space, Field Sports, Courts
	4	Maple Dawson Park/ West End Field	4.33	Courts, Playground, Field Sports
	5	Yancy-Adams Park	0.52	Passive Recreation
	6	Locust Street Park	4.50	Passive Recreation
	7	Perkins Memorial & Grounds	4.61	Arts Center, Passive Recreation, Community Gardens
	8	Strawbridge Lake Park	103.07	Passive Recreation, Playground
	9	Memorial Field	26.00	Field Sports, Track
	10	Church St. Recreation Cen.	0.50	Indoor Recreation

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN TOWNSHIP OF MOORESTOWN

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Acres	Facilities/Character
Township Parks and Recreation Facilities	11	Beech Street Park	0.75	Passive Recreation, Playground
	12	Fullerton Memorial Park	3.50	Courts, Field Sports, Playground
	13	Stokes Hill	10.46	Sledding, Passive Recreation
	14	Wigmore Acres	12.10	Passive Recreation
	15	Swede Run Fields	129.61	Passive Recreation, Agriculture
	16	Maybury Tract	10.50	Affordable Housing Site ⁽³⁾
	17	Salem Road Park	14.27	Field Sports, Tot Lot
	18	McElwee Rd. Open Space	5.00	Passive Recreation
	19	Camden Avenue Pocket	0.32	Passive Recreation
	20	LeDuc Pocket Park	0.90	Passive Recreation
Subtotal Acres			401.18	
Conservation and other Township Lands	21	N. Lenola Road	5.19	Pennsauken Greenway
	22	Red Leaf Road	3.67	Conservation
	23	Pompeston Creek Park	77.25	Pompeston Greenway ⁽¹⁾
	24	Fisher Tract	10.00	Pompeston Greenway ⁽¹⁾
	25	Stokes Woods	2.50	Swede Run Greenway
	26	Tiver Avenue	1.63	Conservation
	27	Creek Road	7.00	Rancocas Greenway
	28	Little Woods	11.00	Rancocas Greenway
	29	Twp. Landfill Parcel ⁽²⁾	64.00	Leaf Composting
	30	Nagel Tract – Hartford Rd.	12.50	Affordable Housing Site ⁽³⁾
	31	S. Stevens-Halbe Preserve	17.30	Passive Recreation
	32	Esther Yanai Preserve	34.50	Passive Recreation
	33	M & L Winner Fields	13.70	Passive Recreation
	34	Test Open Space	5.00	Passive Recreation
Subtotal Acres			265.24	
Total Municipal Open Space			666.42 acres	

- (1) Includes a playing field and other active recreation, but the site is predominantly for passive recreation and conservation.
- (2) Proposed location for boat ramp for high school rowing activities; otherwise not proposed for recreational activities or restriction to open space use.
- (3) At Wesley Bishop Park, a portion in the eastern corner may be used for affordable housing. For the Maybury and Nagle tracts, the land is to be used for open space only in the event that the land is not required for affordable housing purposes.

Greenways are primarily for conservation purposes, but may have passive recreation in the form of trails.

Table IV-2. Other Community Facilities, Private and Quasi-Public Open Space.

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Acres	Facilities/Character
Board of Education Facilities	35	Moorestown HS/ Allen Middle School	79.32	Stadium, baseball, field sports, tennis, gym
	36	Baker Elementary	8.81	Playground, gym
	37	Roberts Elementary	8.09	Playground, gym
	38	South Valley Elementary	13.42	Playground, gym
	39	Upper Elementary	22.66	Playground, field sports, gym
	Board of Education Subtotal			132.30
Development Restricted Properties	40	Moorestown West	13.25	Conservation Easement
	41	Hill House	27.00	Conservation Easement
	42	South Valley Woods	43.98	NJ Natural Lands Trust (42.20 acres) Township Owned (1.78ac.)
	43	Stowe Farm	10.78	Agricultural Easement
	44	Moorestown Farms/Moriuchi	30.00	Agricultural Easement
	45	Kendle's Run/Giffen	19.25	Conservation Easement
	46	Borton Landing Road	21.02	Restricted Development
Development Restricted Properties Subtotal			165.28	
Community Facilities	47	Sunnybrook Swim Club	3.70	Pool, court games, playground
	48	Moorestown Field Club Golf Course	56.00	Private 9 hole course and tennis
	49	Community House	2.30	Pool, meeting rooms
	50	Moorestown Friends School	20.37	Field sports, tennis, gym
	51	YMCA	10.00	Pool, gym
	52	Willowbrook Golf Course	54.00	Public 18 hole course
	53	Laurel Creek Country Club	194.70	Private 18 hole course, full service clubhouse
Community Facilities Subtotal			341.07	
Burlington County	54	Camishion	7.12	Conservation
	55	Boundary Creek	68.65	Conservation
	56	Community Agricultural Center	67.40	Farm Market, Community Gardens
	Burlington County Subtotal			143.17
Total Other Open Space/Facilities			781.82 acres	
Total Municipal Open Space			666.42 acres	
Total Open Space & Community Facilities			1,448.24 acres	

Table IV-3. Sites Identified for Preservation and Open Space.

Map Letter	Name of Site	Block	Lots	Acres	Comments
A	Winner, A. and B.	100	1	7.70	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
B	NJDOT	100	3	7.88	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
C	NJDOT	100	4	21.52	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
D	NJDOT	100	6	2.22	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
E	Solomon, J. and E.	100	7	5.43	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
F	Red, White and Blue, LLC	100	13	3.38	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
G	Mayberry, Inc.	100	14	11.41	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
H	Cope, J., L. and M.	400	4	17.84	Pennsauken Creek Greenway
I	Pulverizing Services, Inc.	900	3, 7-9	15.59	Retain in open space if not usable for industrial use.
J	Whitcraft, R. and P.	1801	17	1.00	Historic Cowperthwaite House
K	Thiede, D.	1902	13	2.63	Conservation easement on historic site, Camden Ave.
L	JVS, Ltd.	4405	19	0.90	Historic Burr House
M	Boenitsch, B.	5500	13-16	14.67	Flying Feather Farm & market
N	Allen and Allen	5800	49	28.44	Horse and dog kennel
O	Canton Family Partners, LP	6001	22	5.00	Conservation use
P	Pearson, E.	6300	40	4.32	Conservation use
Q	Zalkind, S.	6300	41	7.70	Conservation use
R	Brown, G.A.	7000	2	4.25	Conservation use
S	Flying Feather Farm, Inc.	7000	12	14.70	Flying Feather Farm
T	DiPaolo, A. and A.	7000	23.02	8.77	Conservation use
U	Georgetti, R.	7000	23.03	10.35	Conservation use
V	Core Realty, Inc.	7000	28	14.50	Active recreation
W	Johnson, G.	7100	12	10.00	Agriculture/Conservation
X	Holzinger, R. and D.	7100	24	55.36	Agriculture/Conservation/ Active recreation
Y	Evergreens/Hartford Rd.	7100	25- 29,31,3 2,45	74.24	Agriculture/Conservation/ Active recreation
Z	Lockheed Martin	7401	1,2, 5-8	182.63	Agriculture/Active recreation
Total Proposed Additional Open Space			516.43 acres		

Parcel I is a site that has been contaminated from past industrial practices and if it is not usable for future industrial purposes would be left fallow for conservation purposes. Parcel Z is Lockheed Martin’s radar field and the intent with its designation is to ensure that whatever development may take place in the future includes recreation. The acreage shown is for the entire site, but the open space use would only be a small portion of the total.

Moorestown's land and water area is 9,555 acres (14.93 square miles). Parks and recreation land is equal to 4.19% of the total area. Lands earmarked for conservation add another 2.77%, or a total of 6.96%, of municipally owned open space. Including the other land noted in Table IV-2 increases the percentage to 15.16% of Moorestown's land area. Potentially, the land identified in Table IV-3 could add 6.44% open space to the municipality for a potential total of public and other open space of 21.60%. By any measure, this is a significant amount of open space and deed restricted land.

Municipal parks and recreational facilities, Township-owned open space, Board of Education facilities, deed restricted land, quasi public or community recreation sites, golf courses and potential open space sites are depicted on the attached Open Space and Recreation Plan at the end of this document.

MOORESTOWN'S PARKS

Moorestown Township has a well developed parks and recreation system that provides a strong emphasis on youth sports activities. Township-owned sites mainly used for active recreation include the Church Street Recreation Center, Maple Dawson Park/West End Field, Fullerton Memorial Park, New Albany Community Center/Jeff Young Memorial Park, Lenola Road Athletic Fields, Memorial Field, Salem Road Park and Wesley Bishop Park. Strawbridge Lake is used mainly for passive recreation and is the location of well-attended community activities. Fullerton Memorial Park is the location of an R. D. Leathers playground notable for the intensive community involvement in its design and construction. Salem Road Park and Wesley Bishop Parks (formerly N. Church Street Park) are the most recent sites developed for active recreation and are already well used. They were developed over the past 7 years and demonstrate the demand for fields fueled by the remarkable growth of youth sports activities in the Township. Use of these active recreation sites is divided among programs operated by the Moorestown Recreation Department and youth athletic associations that are typically organized around a particular sport, such as soccer, baseball, football, basketball and lacrosse.

Stokes Hill, located on East Main Street, occupies a unique place among the Township's open space parcels. Stokes Hill has been traditionally used for sledding in Moorestown. The hill, with Main Street at the top, is across the street from the home of the inventor of the Flexible Flyer, arguably the most famous name in sleds. This land was held privately until purchased by the

Township to maintain its traditional use for sledding. Stokes Hill also includes a wooded area at its bottom.

The Perkins Memorial, located at the intersection of Camden Avenue and West Main Street, was donated to the Township as a park area in 1965 and is the site of weekly outdoor concerts in the summer and community gardens. The grounds of the property include specimen trees from the Perkins Nursery. It also includes a small triangular-shaped parcel formed by the intersection of Camden Avenue and West Second Street that is known as Remembrance Garden and is used for passive recreation. A three-story building and converted garage at the first site is leased by the Perkins Center for the Arts, a non-profit organization that offers a variety of visual, tactile and dramatic arts as well as music programs for the community.

Sites that are intended primarily for conservation with some passive recreation uses include the following: Stokes Woods, Pompeston Creek Park, Red Leaf, lands along the Pennsauken Creek north of the Township's sewage treatment plant (N. Lenola Road), lands located along the Swede Run (Wigmore Acres, Winner Fields, the Test Property and Esther Yanai Preserve), and lands located within the Rancocas Creek (Creek Road) watershed (Boundary Creek, Little Woods and the Stevens Property). The Little Woods and the Stevens Property also have a stream bisecting them the locals refer to as Little Run. The Township's former landfill, now the site of its leaf composting facility, is open space but not designated for conservation purposes at this time. Leaf composting occupies the front center of the site which has frontage both on Creek Road and Rancocas Creek. A vision for the future development of this site would be to create a walking trail around its perimeter.

BIKEWAYS

The Township has an ambitious plan for establishing bikeways and bike routes throughout the municipality. Though the term "bikeway" is used, the system is intended for both pedestrians and bicyclists and has been designed accordingly. Either as a municipal capital improvement project or as part of the development of adjacent properties, 8.0 miles of Class 1 bikeways have been constructed. These are depicted as solid red lines on the Open Space and Recreation Plan at the end of this document. The bicycle routes are also depicted and discussed in the Circulation Element. This class represents paved bicycle paths that are horizontally separated from the paved cartway

of a road. Class 3 bikeways are routes designated on existing streets and total about 2.3 miles. The Plan proposes the extension of the bikeway system along most major thoroughfares with connections through neighborhoods to parks, schools, and community facilities. Planned Class 1 bikeways are either funded or required to be constructed as part of a site plan or subdivision approval. Proposed bikeways are the routes necessary to complete the entire network of bicycle paths throughout the Township. Funding for this program comes from the municipal capital improvement budget, contributions to the Bicycle Trust Fund, and state grants.

BOARD OF EDUCATION FACILITIES

Included in Table IV-2 are four school sites that also provide recreational facilities for Moorestown residents. The Township offers a number of recreational activities at the Moorestown High School and William W. Allen Middle School sites, including basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, theater workshop and field hockey clinics. Additionally, the Roberts Elementary School is utilized by the Department of Parks and Recreation as one of the locations for a summer playground program. When necessary, the Recreation Department provides custodial services following recreational activities as part of its agreement with the Board of Education regarding use of these school facilities.

DEVELOPMENT RESTRICTED PROPERTIES

As indicated in Table IV-2, several private properties within the Township are deed-restricted from development. A conservation easement was granted next to the Pompeston Creek greenway as part of the Moorestown West business park development. The acquisition of almost 42 acres of land in the South Valley Woods which is at the headwaters of Hooten Creek, a tributary of the Pennsauken Creek, has been accomplished over many years by the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust, a non-profit conservation organization. The Trust continues to pursue the acquisition of land in this area. The portion of the Hill property outside of the sanitary sewer service area adjacent to South Valley Elementary School has been deed restricted for conservation purposes. An agricultural easement was established on the remainder of the Stowe Farm when a portion of the land was subdivided. A development restriction was placed in a similar fashion on three other properties located on Borton Landing and McElwee Roads, and Commonwealth Drive. Finally,

Moorestown Farms, owned by a Moriuchi family, is a 30-acre site that is deed-restricted under an agricultural easement.

QUASI-PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The YMCA, or Family “Y” of Burlington County, is located on Centeron Road and straddles the Township’s border with Mount Laurel Township. This non-profit organization offers a number of social and recreational programs, including swimming, basketball, tennis, dance, exercise and fitness classes for both youth and adults.

Moorestown Community House, a privately owned facility located on East Main Street, opened in 1926 to provide a community gathering place with recreational facilities, offices for nonprofit organizations and meeting rooms. The facility was funded by a gift from Moorestown resident, Eldridge R. Johnson, who was founder and president of the Victor Talking Machine Company (a forerunner of the Radio Corporation of America). His gift was contingent on the community raising money to develop a maintenance fund. The community responded and the facility was built. The site features offices for non-profit organizations, a banquet hall, meeting rooms, and an indoor swimming pool. It is the meeting home for more than 95 local clubs and organizations. The Community House features prominently in community activities around Town Center including the Annual 8K Run that attracts over 1,000 runners, Moorestown Day, Autumn in Moorestown and Candlelight Night, and Moorestown Public School’s Unity Day.

The Sunnybrook Swim Club is a private swimming club that has a wide membership in Moorestown. Located at the end of Covington Terrace, off Devon Road, it is a seasonal facility that includes two adult pools, a wading pool, a basketball court, playground and picnic facilities. Sunnybrook hosts a youth swimming team that competes against similar clubs in the area.

There are three golf courses located in or partially in Moorestown. The Recreation Department offers golf lessons at the Willowbrook Golf Course, an 18-hole public golf course that is located along the Township’s northern border and extends into Delran Township. The 9-hole course at Moorestown Field Club is the oldest course in the Township and also features tennis and a dining facility. The 18-hole Laurel Creek Country Club is part of the Laurel Creek Planned Unit Development which includes a mixture of housing and office uses. Tennis courts and the clubhouse for the country club lie in Mt.

Laurel Township. The Field Club and the Laurel Creek Country Club are under deed restriction for no further development. Both are private clubs.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING¹

Recreation programs are administered by the Moorestown Department of Parks and Recreation, nonprofit organizations such as the YMCA and the Perkins Art Center, and a number of youth sports organizations. The Township Council appointed a Recreational Advisory Committee made up of nine regular members, two high school student representatives, and liaisons to the Board of Education and the Township Council.

The Department of Parks and Recreation, located at 2 Executive Drive, currently has three full-time staff members, including a Director, Assistant Director, and a Senior Clerk typist. The number of part-time staff employed by the Department ranges from 20 to 70, depending on the season along with a large number of volunteers. Additionally, staffs are responsible for coordinating use of athletic facilities with many of the sports organizations including the turf field that opened in April, 2007 and for maintaining parks and recreational facilities along with the common areas with the Department of Public Works.

The Department of Parks and Recreation offers a variety of programs for residents of all ages including pre-school, youth, special needs, teens, adults and seniors. These programs are scheduled at the New Albany Recreation Center, Township Library, the Board of Education facilities and the Moorestown Community House.

A range of programs are offered throughout the year that include but are not limited to art, basketball, bowling, dance, golf lessons, swimming, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, tennis, and volleyball. Additionally, the Department provides an open gym and game room for upper elementary students through high school age after school and weekend evenings on a regular basis. The Department organizes a summer concert series held at the Perkins Center for the Arts, coordinates an extensive six week summer theatre program for ages 7 through 15, summer recreation program for youth ages 5 through 12 years at five sites throughout the Township, a Counselor In Training summer program (C.I.T), sponsors special events, bus excursions for seniors and co-sponsors events throughout the year including parades and tournaments.

¹ - This information was supplied by Theresa Miller, the Parks and Recreation Director for Moorestown.

The Department's records indicate that the number of participants in the Township's overall programs is increasing. The number of sports organizations based within the Township is also an indicator of the high level of interest in recreation pursuits, and in particular, a strong interest in youth sports programs. For example, the Director of Parks and Recreation estimates that approximately 825 youth play baseball, approximately 550 play in street/roller hockey leagues, flag football has reached a high of 810 youth, and the numbers continue to climb in soccer, lacrosse, football and softball programs offered through these volunteer organizations.

In general, the Recreation Department offers a wide range of programs designed to meet the needs of their residents. In addition to the traditional sports programs indicated above, the summer concert series and the Summer Children's Theatre Program are very well attended. Programs offered by the Department are intended to emphasize the recreational aspect of each activity and to learn the basic skills of the activity while having fun, and those with more competitive interests are directed to join regional league and club organizations.

FACILITY NEEDS²

Given the high level of interest in recreational pursuits, demands on existing parks and facilities within the Township are also very high. While the Township attempts to balance the space needs of all of its own programs and the needs of local sports clubs, scheduling at municipal parks and indoor recreation areas is very tight, with many facilities in use every day of the week during peak seasons. Additionally, the heavy use of fields and indoor recreation facilities makes maintenance and upkeep of these facilities more difficult and expensive. In particular, proper maintenance of field areas should include periodic rest to allow grass to recover but this can not occur when these facilities are constantly in use.

Since 2002, the Township has developed several facilities at Wesley Bishop Park. These facilities include two new softball fields, two batting cages, and a multi-purpose field that is home to the Flag Football organization, a second street hockey rink, play area for children pre-school through 10 years (donated by Commerce Bank) and a skateboarding facility. They also developed site improvements which include parking, lighting, landscaping, storage buildings and restroom facilities. In April, 2007, the Township

² - *ibid.*

opened their premier turf field facility at Wesley Bishop Park which serves the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Moorestown Youth Football Association, the Moorestown Lacrosse Club, the Moorestown Soccer Club and many other township organizations. This schedule is handled through the Department with a permit and fee schedule.

Another new facility that has been requested in the 2002 Master Plan is a dock site to be developed along the Rancocas Creek for use by the high school crew team at the Township's leaf composting site.

As noted above, maintenance of existing Township recreational facilities continues to be a concern, especially given the high level of use of these facilities. The Parks and Recreation Department is also concerned with the increasing amount of staff time that must be devoted to operations, including set up and removal of nets and equipment, marking fields, and coordinating with Public Works staff for the regular maintenance and improvements to fields, areas, and indoor recreation areas.

GUIDELINES FOR THE ADEQUACY OF OPEN SPACE

There are several guidelines against which the adequacy of the amount of open space and recreation facilities in the Township may be measured.

NEW JERSEY GREEN ACRES PROGRAM

The New Jersey Green Acres Program, in the Department of Environmental Protection, disperses funds for acquisition and development of open space to municipalities, counties, and non-profit groups by a grant and loan program that originated in 1961. The funding for the program has come from voter-approved state bonding. A new consistent funding source from the sales tax was approved by voters in November 1998. Over the years, the focus of funding has shifted towards acquisition rather than development and towards sites that have multiple benefits. Moorestown Township, like most municipalities in New Jersey, has received Green Acres funding for acquisition and development projects. The Green Acres program recommends a desirable goal of 8 acres of land per 1,000 persons for conservation, passive and active recreation open space earmarked for municipal purposes. Application of the guideline results in a desirable standard of 153 acres for the current estimated population and 180 acres for the projected build-out population. The Township, from Table IV-1, has

401.18 acres of developed (or to be developed) parkland and 265.24 acres of conservation land for a total of 666.42 acres, thereby meeting the minimum state standards.

The Green Acres guidelines also suggest that a minimum of 3% of the municipal land area be set aside for all types of open space; the municipal total is nearly 7%. By both of these broad measures, the Township meets the minimum suggested guidelines established at the state level.

NATIONAL PARK AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is an organization devoted to promoting and developing recreational opportunities. The NRPA has published a number of standards for "developed" open space. As a broad measure, the NRPA has established a range of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed park land per 1,000 residents. Applying this standard to the April 2000 U.S. Census count of 19,017 persons would result in a range of 119 to 200 acres of developed park land. By these standards, the Township is significantly above this range, with 401 acres.

It should be noted that these standards are exclusive of recreational facilities provided by school districts or non-active open space. Some of the land that has been placed in the active recreation table also contains environmentally sensitive land that should be preserved from development, such as the south end of Wesley Bishop Park; however, the amount devoted to active recreation would still fall within the recommended range.

New Jersey has the highest household income in the country with sufficient disposable income, in the aggregate, to enable many households to purchase their recreational needs from commercial providers; for example, ice hockey rinks are provided by commercial operators in South Jersey. This situation lessens the need for the municipality and school district to provide certain active recreation facilities.

The NRPA has also categorized active recreation parks into three types based on size and service area. These are mini-parks, neighborhood parks and community parks. Mini-parks are usually playgrounds, tot lots, or other small scale parks within close proximity to residences. Mini-parks are categorized as one acre or less in size, though larger areas are common in the Township. The NRPA recommends that neighborhood parks be 15 acres or larger. Such parks commonly constitute home parks for youth sports

organizations that serve a development of homes. Community parks should be at least 25 acres but preferably larger, according to the NRPA. Under the NRPA rubric, community parks are multifunctional entities intended for a wide variety of recreation.

Moorestown’s park system does not fall into such neat classifications. Some municipal facilities are special purpose uses (such as the Church Street Recreation Center) that serve the entire community but are on small lots. Accordingly, the Township’s existing parks have been classified by function, rather than strictly by size. Parks have been classified under this functional approach in Table IV-4.

Table IV-4. Existing Municipal Parks and Recreation Facilities by Functional Classifications.

Park Type	Map No.	Name of Site	Acres	Comments
Community	1	Wesley Bishop Park	58.00	Field Sports, Conservation
Neighborhood	2	Lenola Road Athletic Fields	3.14	Field Sports
Neighborhood	3	New Albany Com. Ctr./ Jeff Young Memorial Park	9.10	Indoor Meeting Space, Field Sports, Courts
Neighborhood	4	Maple Dawson Park/ West End Field	4.33	Courts, Playground
Mini-Park	5	Yancy-Adams Park	0.52	Passive Recreation
Neighborhood	6	Locust Street Park	4.50	To be determined
Community	7	Perkins Memorial & Grounds	4.61	Arts Center, Passive Recreation
Community	8	Strawbridge Lake Park	103.07	Passive Recreation, Playground
Community	9	Memorial Field	26.00	Field Sports, Track
Community	10	Church St. Recreation Center	0.50	Indoor Recreation
Mini-Park	11	Beech Street Park	0.75	Passive Recreation, Playground
Neighborhood	12	Fullerton Memorial Park	3.50	Courts, Field Sports, Playground
Community	13	Stokes Hill	10.46	Sledding, Passive Recreation
Neighborhood	14	Wigmore Acres	12.10	Passive Recreation
Community	15	Swede Run Fields	129.61	To be determined
Neighborhood	16	Maybury Tract	10.50	Only if not used for affordable housing
Community	17	Salem Road Park	14.27	Field Sports, Tot Lot
Neighborhood	18	McElwee Road Open Space	5.00	Passive Recreation
Mini-Park	19	Camden Avenue Pocket Park	0.32	Passive Recreation
Mini-Park	20	LeDuc pocket Park	0.90	Passive Recreation

Applying the broad ranges established by the NRPA standards allows a comparison of the types of parks needed within each size category. Table IV-5 below compares the NRPA standards applied to the Township’s estimated current population with the existing parkland acreage in the Township.

Table IV-5. NRPA Standards and Existing Population.

Type of Park (recommended acreage)	Recommended Acreage in Moorestown Township (1999 Population)	Existing Acreage	2009 Surplus or (Deficit)
Mini-Park (.25 -.5 ac /1,000 pop.)	4.8 to 9.6	2.49	(2.31)
Neighborhood (1 - 2 ac/1,000 pop.)	19.1 to 38.3	52.17	13.87
Community (5 - 8 ac./ 1,000 pop.)	95.7 to 153.1	346.52	193.42
TOTAL	119.6 to 201.0	401.18	200.18

Based on this breakdown in the types of parks in the system, mini-parks are the only category experiencing a deficit under the NRPA standards. Recently, the NRPA has developed additional guidelines that are based on user surveys of recreational facilities. Interviews and anecdotal information clearly indicate a heavy demand for active recreation facilities. This is apparent from the rapid growth in certain youth sports organizations, the difficult scheduling that occurs in trying to accommodate the demand, and the increased costs for maintenance and worn fields that occur after a season.

OPEN SPACE NEEDS

Open space is more than the active recreation described so far. Open space provides benefits for the ecology of the Township and region by supporting environmentally sensitive lands such as flood plains, freshwater wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, and the biota that depends on natural systems. Open space creates vistas of scenic beauty, preserves view sheds of historic properties, and provides a setting for buildings and people. Maintaining and preserving open space in the face of development pressure is very difficult, because by their democratic nature, governments are slower to act than commercial interests. The land remaining undeveloped in Moorestown is sought for many different and often competing purposes. Over the past 20 years, Save the Environment of Moorestown (STEM) and several Township

committees were formed to examine the open space issue. A new impetus was gained by the passage of open space questions on the November 1998 ballot and the Township's 20 year referendum of November 2007 at the state, county and local level. Concern for the preservation of open space through the long economic progression of the mid- to late-1990's when development pushed into previously rural areas was galvanized by the positive votes .

OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SITES

In response to the referendum, in June 1999 the Township Council established an Open Space Advisory Committee to identify properties within Moorestown which should be preserved and protected from development. The Committee continually refines a list of proposed property to acquire for the Township Council's consideration, based on various criteria. The factors that are considered include the following:

- Open space – The extent to which preservation would satisfy open space deficits in the Township or in the surrounding neighborhood;
- Recreation – A property's usability for active or passive recreation;
- Use Preservation – The extent to which preservation would permit continued farming or the retention of natural features and systems;
- Historical Significance – A property's historical significance.
- Development Pressure – The perceived likelihood of development in the near future;
- Environmental Sensitivity – The adverse impact of development on environmentally sensitive land;
- Habitat – The effect that development of the property would have on wildlife;
- Viewshed – The importance of the property in maintaining open and attractive vistas;
- Aesthetics – The scenic beauty of the land especially where it serves as a gateway into the Township;
- Property Size – An evaluation of the size of the property in comparison to the open space needs of the Township and the local neighborhood.
- Farmland Preservation – The ability to preserve agricultural operations, prime soils, and adding to existing preserved farmland in the same area of the Township.

Table IV-3 presents the work completed by the Committee in identifying properties for inclusion in this Open Space and Recreation Plan modified to account for the other goals and objectives of the Master Plan by the Planning

Board. These sites are incorporated into this element as the Township's priority list for acquisition, purchase of development rights, conservation easements, farmland preservation or other appropriate means of restricting the use of the land to open space.

BURLINGTON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

Currently, there are three County-owned open space sites located in Moorestown. The sites were purchased under the County's Local Open Space Land Grant Award program. Burlington County acquired Block 8000, Lots 2, 23 and 29 (Boundary Creek) in November 2002 (68.65 acres) and Block 8000, Lot 28 (Camishion) in January 2005 (7.12 acres) as part of their long range plan for the preservation of the Rancocas Creek stream corridor (see below). The third acquisition, Block 8801, Lots 2 and 3 (Pleasant Valley Farm) was purchased in December 2004 and consists of 67.4 acres and has been turned into the Burlington Community Agriculture Center.

The County's Open Space Strategic Plan, approved in 1996 and adopted in 1998 includes the active pursuit of riverine greenway projects, such as the Rancocas Creek Greenway, as a key objective. In the fall of 2000, the County Freeholder Board agreed to take the lead in the administration of the Watershed Management Area Planning process for the Rancocas Watershed. A recent draft amendment to the Open Space Strategic Plan, notes that "it is expected that this process will yield an inventory of lands that are particularly significant in protecting water quality, the preservation of which would be encouraged". All of the sites acquired by the County are located within the Rancocas Creek watershed. Subsequent planning activities by the County may identify other sites for potential acquisition.

FUNDING FOR OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION

Purchasing the acreage necessary to establish additional parks and other open space represents a significant financial cost to the Township. Costs may be reduced through donation of land or funds for open space, and utilizing existing land owned by the municipality or other governmental entities. The traditional method of funding acquisitions is through the State Green Acres Program that provides low cost loans (typically 2% per annum). The 1998 state-referendum established a \$98 million fund per year for ten years and the 2006 county-referendum established funding for 30 years for parks, other open space, farmland preservation and historic preservation. Yet, even with

state funding at a historically high level, applications to the Green Acres program have exceeded the available funding.

Moorestown voters supported not only the state-wide referendum for state purchase of open space, but also the county and township levies in 1998. Voters in Moorestown strongly backed an added assessment of 2 cents per hundred dollars of property valuation in 1998 to purchase open space. An open space survey in 2001 indicated additional support to raise the municipal open space assessment as high as 6 cents per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation. In November 2007 Moorestown voters supported, by referendum, a 20-year annual levy in an amount between one and six cents per \$100 of assessed value of real property for the Open Space, Recreation, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.

In 1996, Burlington County began collecting funds for preservation of farmland and open space lands by establishing a new property tax at a rate of 2 cents per \$100 of total county equalized real property value. In 1998, an additional 2-cent tax was approved by the voters to expand the County's farmland and open space preservation program, and also to fund the preservation of historic resources, improvement and maintenance of county parkland, and payment of debt service. Together, the 4-cent tax assessment raises just over \$9.0 million per year, with a portion of the funding to be used to assist municipalities and charitable conservancies through a grant award program. As noted above, Moorestown has previously received funding under the grant program and the Township will apply for additional funding through the program in the future. Further, the County has undertaken its own program of land purchase. While in the past, County money has been largely earmarked for farmland preservation costs, a new emphasis on other open space needs has emerged. The purchase of the Moriuchi tract from Toll Brothers, Inc. on Creek Road was the first County acquisition in Moorestown and was followed by Pleasant Valley Farm and Camishion.

CONSERVATION TECHNIQUES

There are a number of methods of preserving open space apart from direct purchase by government or by a private nonprofit conservation organization. Purchasing large tracts of land in fee simple is expensive and other avenues should be explored in order to fulfill the goals of preserving open space.

Techniques discussed here to conserve land include conservation design, performance zoning based on environmentally sensitive land, purchase or donation of development rights, conservation easements, and site design.

No one technique will achieve the goals of the Master Plan. Rather, all techniques should be scrutinized to select the best methods for achieving each objective in this document.

Specific techniques for conservation are as follows:

CONSERVATION DESIGN

This form of development concentrates buildings on a small portion of a site while preserving the remainder for open space including conservation lands, and agricultural use. This technique maintains the overall (gross) density for the entire parcel while preserving environmentally sensitive land from development. Moorestown has embraced this technique for residential development in its zoning districts with larger lot sizes (see Site Design, below) through revisions to the zoning ordinance and site plan/subdivision ordinance.

PURCHASE OR DONATION OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Under the "bundle of rights" theory of property ownership, development rights are an additional right inherent in a property along with the better known air, water, and mineral rights. Development rights may be separated from the property and sold or donated to governmental agencies or conservation organizations. The sale of development rights requires the landowner to pay federal capital gains taxes which may be offset depending on the individual landowner's tax situation. The donation of these rights, however, can be treated as a charitable contribution and provide the donor with a tax deduction. The sale of development rights also reduces the property assessment for tax purposes. Since development rights are less than fee simple ownership, their cost is substantially less.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The dedication of easements is a technique sometimes used by the Township in preserving wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas. While retaining ownership in private hands, conservation easements effectively protect lands of ecological importance. Donation of an easement and donation of development rights have similar tax advantages. Donations may include other general benefits, such as public access. Private nonprofit conservation organizations are substantially involved in identifying prospective properties and working with interested land owners in securing conservation easements. The future monitoring of conservation easements, after dedication, to prevent encroachment and to insure the proper maintenance of the easement is an important function of acquisition, and a program for stewardship should be established.

SITE DESIGN

Site design – the layout of buildings, circulation, and utilities – is the single largest factor in the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands. To achieve the best results, design should be guided by a development suitability map that shows the environmental constraints of the land. From this starting point, a design sensitive to the preservation of natural and environmentally sensitive features may be produced. The Township Council adopted conservation design ordinance standards for the R-1, R1-A and R-2 zoning districts in the municipality where the largest parcels that could be developed are located on September 22, 2008.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The following recommendations are made to fulfill the goals and objectives for open space in Moorestown:

- 1) The continual process of refinement of the open space acquisition list is recommended. Table IV-3 constitutes the current list developed with input from the Township's Open Space Committee. The process of refinement should use the criteria established in this element and the Conservation Element for the ranking of land for acquisition or easement purchase. The intent is to identify only lands in which the

- landowner is willing at least to entertain the notion of an easement or purchase.
- 2) Seek aggressively to share the costs of open space acquisition through funding from Burlington County, the Green Acres Program and the State Agricultural Development Board, as appropriate.
 - 3) Survey park users to gain a profile of the people using the facility. Use this survey to project existing needs and trends for future programs and facilities. Meet the demand for recreation in the future through adequate budgets for capital improvements and maintenance of facilities or the imposition of fees where appropriate.
 - 4) Use the land development process and capital improvements to establish both greenways and bicycle routes in accordance with the Conservation Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
 - 5) Continue the roles of the Recreation Advisory Committee and the Open Space Advisory Committee in the planning for recreation and open space acquisitions in relation to this document.
 - 6) Utilize professional site planning assistance in concert with neighborhood groups to create a consensus plan for the development of recreational facilities.
 - 7) Preserve environmentally sensitive land in the development of active recreation sites.
 - 8) Create a stewardship-maintenance program for the monitoring of open space and easement acquisitions, such as undertaken by Save the Environment Moorestown for natural area care. Citizen participation in this type of program should be encouraged.
 - 9) Work with the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust to acquire additional vacant lots located within the South Valley Woods area.
 - 10) Continue to upgrade and maintain the existing park facilities and to develop a capital projects plan.

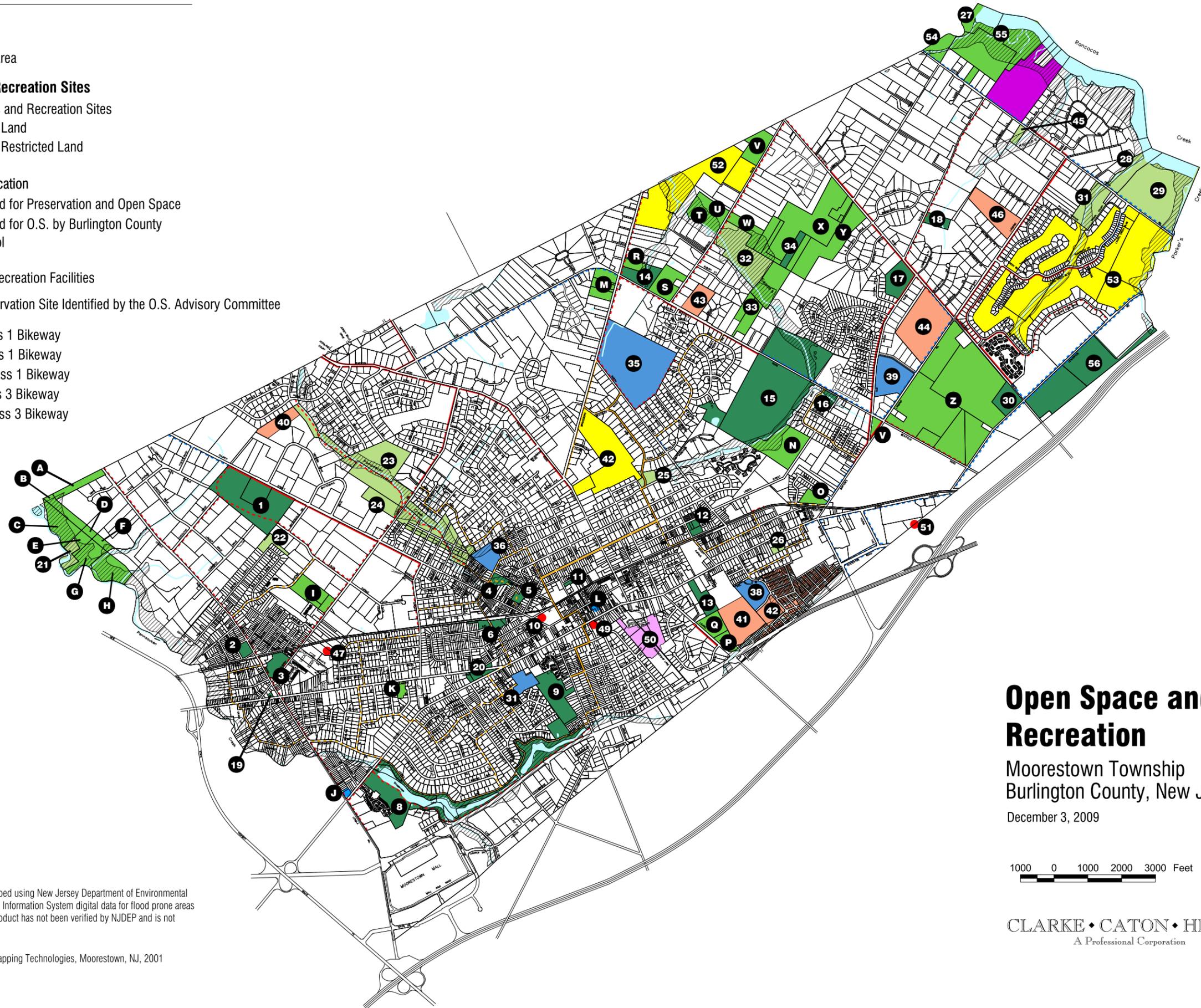
- 11) To continue the efforts of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program with handicapped accessibility projects for all of the Recreation and Park facilities.
- 12) To review all options of the Church Street Recreation Center in order to provide more services for Township residents.
- 13) To work closely with the Community Initiative Youth Program.
- 14) Ensure funding to continue to improve the Church Street Recreation Center to provide recreational opportunities at a high quality level.

Legend

-  Streams
-  Water
-  Flood Prone Area

Open Space and Recreation Sites

-  Existing Parks and Recreation Sites
-  Conservation Land
-  Development Restricted Land
-  Golf Courses
-  Board of Education
-  Sites Identified for Preservation and Open Space
-  Sites Identified for O.S. by Burlington County
-  Private School
-  Community Recreation Facilities
-  Historic Preservation Site Identified by the O.S. Advisory Committee
-  Existing Class 1 Bikeway
-  Planned Class 1 Bikeway
-  Proposed Class 1 Bikeway
-  Existing Class 3 Bikeway
-  Proposed Class 3 Bikeway



Open Space and Recreation

Moorestown Township
Burlington County, New Jersey

December 3, 2009

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 Feet



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This Map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geography Information System digital data for flood prone areas but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.

Base Map Source: Mapping Technologies, Moorestown, NJ, 2001