

# Open Space and Recreation Plan Element

Township of Moorestown  
Burlington County, New Jersey

August 4, 2022

Clarke Caton Hintz

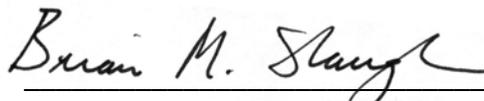


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Planning Board  
Township of Moorestown  
Burlington County, New Jersey

August 4, 2022

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Open Space and Recreation Plan Element of the Township of Moorestown's Master Plan is being prepared pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28(7) and -(8), the Municipal Land Use Law, and pursuant to the guidelines promulgated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for participation in the department's Green Acres Planning Incentive Program. The program awards up to 50% matching grants to local governments to preserve lands identified in the municipality's Open Space and Recreation Plan Element. Once the Open Space and Recreation Plan Element has been approved by the Green Acres program, the Township will be able to acquire lands identified in the Plan. In anticipation of such funding, the Township has authorized appraisals to investigate the possibility of four acquisitions.

Participation in the Green Acres program requires a municipality to have passed and implemented an open-space tax pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7.d. Under this law, a county or municipality may assess a tax, approved by voter referendum, for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of lands for recreation and conservation purposes; for acquisition of farmland for preservation purposes; and for acquisition and preservation of historic properties. Moorestown Township's open-space tax referendum first passed in 1998, allowing the Township to levy an assessment of up to 2 cents per hundred dollars of property valuation for each of the following three years, for the purpose of acquiring open space. In 2001, Moorestown voters approved by referendum an extension to 2008 of the open-space tax and approved an increase in the maximum levy to 6 cents per hundred dollars of assessed value. In November 2007, Moorestown voters supported by referendum another extension, to 2028, of the open-space levy. The levy has been set at 1 cent per hundred dollars of valuation every year since its 2008 revaluation. Funds raised through this tax are deposited into the Township's Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. Since inception, the tax has brought in almost \$15 million, which has allowed the Township to secure more than \$7.3 million in County and State matching funds.

This plan identifies open space currently available to Township residents and organizations, whether Township-owned, quasi-public, or private. It highlights current needs, particularly for consolidation of youth sports facilities. It discusses and identifies priority parcels for acquisition in order to implement the goals and policies discussed below and to address current and future needs. It examines the extent of currently available funding mechanisms, and it sets an action plan for implementation of the Township's goals and policies for open space.

## INTRODUCTION

The Township of Moorestown covers 14.93 square miles on the western side of Burlington County. It is bordered to the northeast by the Rancocas Creek, to the southeast by Interstate 295, and to the southwest and west by Strawbridge Lake and the Pennsauken Creek. It has easy access to major highways, and to Philadelphia via either the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge or the Betsy Ross Bridge.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Moorestown's population was 21,355 people on April 1, which is an increase of 3.0% from the population of 20,726 in 2010. As recently as the 2019 municipal estimate however, it was thought that the population had declined by about 1.0%, or 210 people, instead of increasing by 629. More detailed information from the 2020 U.S. Census is not yet available. Using the U. S. Census's American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates instead, the percentage of children under 18 years of age, a key indicator of demand for youth sports facilities, declined steadily between 2010 and 2018, from a high of 27.5% of the population, or 5,659 children, to a low of 24.3%, or 4,966 children. In 2019, the estimated the percentage of children under 18 rose marginally to 24.8% (5,084 children), and in 2020 the percentage fell slightly, to 24.5%, or 5,010 children. The COVID pandemic starting in 2020 has resulted in significantly lower U.S. birth rates, but whether temporary or the start of a longer-term trend is not yet clear. On the other hand, an increase in allowed housing units in Moorestown resulting from the court-approved housing plan means potentially more recreational demand in the future. For recreation facilities and program planning purposes, it will be important to keep close track of these population trends to determine whether youth sports, a key driver of demand for recreational facilities, will increase or decrease.

Open space includes lands designated for active recreation, passive recreation, and conservation. Farmland preservation is sometimes thought of as open space, but lacks the access for the public that is the hallmark of public lands or even the more restricted access of private recreation. Preserved farmland shares the visual amenity of leaving the land in essentially an undeveloped state and thus provides a counterpart to the suburban landscape of Moorestown. To that degree it has been included in this document. Active recreation is the term used to describe organized sports, such as baseball, football, soccer and tennis, which require specialized equipment and fields and have a set of rules. Passive recreation includes less formal activities, such as hiking and birdwatching. Conservation areas are intended to be left in their natural state to protect environmentally sensitive land or water resources, to help protect wildlife, and to provide buffers between developed areas. Greenways, which are connected corridors of land or open space, are intended primarily for conservation purposes, but may include passive recreation in the form of trails. Large areas can include more than one type of open space – playing fields on level areas, hiking trails, areas near waterbodies left in their natural state to protect water quality. Preserved farmland is intended to remain in agricultural use for mainly crop production.

Open spaces of all kinds are integral to a community’s ecological, physical and fiscal health. They provide opportunities for outdoor exercise and recreation; they protect viewsheds and create natural vistas that counterbalance the surrounding built environment. Community open space provides a gathering place for Township-wide events. Such acreage supports environmentally sensitive lands such as flood plains, freshwater wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, land for the preservation of wildlife habitats and the biota that depend on natural systems. They can help manage stormwater and mitigate the effects of a changing climate. Proximity to open space has been found to increase the value of residential property. In Chester County, PA, for example, homes within one-quarter mile of protected open space were found to be on average 3.6% more valuable than those that were not.<sup>1</sup>

### **GOALS AND POLICIES**

Moorestown Township’s 2002 Master Plan lists three primary goals that involve how the Township manages its open lands and recreation resources, with recommendations to implement each. The relevant goals and recommendations are:

#### **Protecting the Land**

- Promote the preservation of land for stream corridors, wetlands, flood plains, and woodlands to maintain or improve the quality of air and water.
- Encourage new open space areas throughout Moorestown for land conservation and scenic vistas.
- Strive to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic aspects of the community and its environment.

#### **Envisioning the Future**

- Maintain a physical relationship between development and open space that will be visually pleasing and that will endure for future generations.
- Ensure that as the Township matures, that its balance of open space, residential, institutional, industrial and commercial uses will provide sufficient revenue for the provision of public services at a level that meets the needs of its people.
- Recognize the value of open space lands for habitat, relief from urbanization and ecological processes beneficial to humankind.

#### **Improving the Environs**

- Promote the development of leisure and recreational opportunities for all ages and new public park areas in the Township in support of them.
- Establish open space lands to ensure a sense of openness to the land in selected areas and closure of the landscape in others.

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<sup>1</sup> - <https://www.chescoplanning.org/OpenSpace/ROE-PropertyValue.cfm>, accessed July 15, 2022



The 2018 Master Plan Re-Examination Report recommended revision of the Open Space and Recreation Plan to assess the capacity and need for new or redeveloped recreational facilities, and to address bicycle and pedestrian routes and facilities. This plan assesses the need for new and redeveloped recreational facilities. Any future revisions to address bicycle and pedestrian routes and facilities will be addressed in the Circulation Element as needed.

### **INVENTORY OF OPEN SPACE**

The Township of Moorestown currently owns 630± acres of recreation facilities and open space intended for various recreation and conservation purposes. Table IV-1 below lists these municipally owned sites and provides a general description of the current facilities and uses.

Table IV-2 identifies other types of open space not owned by the municipality, such as land owned by the Township Board of Education, land that is deed-restricted from further development or for agricultural use, land that houses recreation-oriented community facilities, and land owned by Burlington County. These two tables identify existing resources.

With this revision to the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Plan Element, four sites have been added to Table IV-1: No. 19, Percheron Park, No. 24, the Tom Brown Road Conservation Area, No. 27, the Flying Feather Farm/Vesaki and No. 31 Centerton Road Park. Four sites have been removed from Table IV-1, the Fisher, Maybury and Nagle Tracts, all of which have been earmarked to one degree or another for both open space and housing, depending on the Township's requirements, and the Township's Landfill site on Creek Road, that is presently licensed as the municipality's leaf and brush composting facility. The Fisher Tract is a 10-acre parcel on New Albany Road adjacent to the Pompeston Creek Greenway, the second is a 10.5-acre tract called the Maybury Tract on Westfield, and the third is a Township-owned 12.5-acre tract called the Nagle Tract. The Nagle Tract is directly across from the Lockheed Martin facility in the Township and is the subject of a transaction between the Township and Lockheed Martin that is still in process, that involves transfer of title to Lockheed Martin, thus making it unavailable for open space.

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

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Block	Lot(s)	Acres	Facilities/ Character
Township Parks and Recreation Facilities	1	Wesley Bishop Park	502	5	56.55	Field Sports, Conservation
	2	Walter Maahs Fields	607	1	3.21	Field Sports
	3	New Albany Rec. Ctr./ Jeff Young Park	1300	3	7.65	Indoor Meeting Space, Field Sports, Courts
	4	Maple Dawson Park/ West End Field	2301	2	4.13	Courts, Playground, Field Sports
	5	Yancy-Adams Park	2301	2	2.58	Passive Recreation/Field Sports
	6	Locust Street Park	2103	22, 23	4.48	Passive Recreation
			2400	1, 2, 29, 30		
	7	Perkins Memorial and Grounds/Remembrance Park	2001	7-9	3.98; 0.63	Arts Center, Community Gardens, Memorial
			2109	1		
	8	Kay Smith's Waterworks Woods/ Strawbridge Lake	2800	1-3	95.65	Passive Recreation, Playground
			2900	1, 15		
			3104	1, 2		
			3301	39, 53		
	9	Church Street Recreation Center	2403	Pt. 1	2.29 <sup>2</sup>	Indoor Recreation
	10	Beech Street Park	4307	9	0.57	Passive Recreation, Playground
11	Frank Fullerton Park	5909	1, 2, 3, 5	4.29	Courts, Field Sports, Playground	
12	Stokes Hill	6300	7	8.50	Sledding, Passive Recreation	
13	Wigmore Acres	7000	1	11.08	Passive Recreation	
14	Swede's Run Fields	5800	23, 46	140.98	Passive Recreation, Pollinator Field, Dog Park, Wildlife Meadow	
		7200	12.58			
15	John Pryor Park	7200	4.01	14.36	Field Sports, Playground	

<sup>2</sup> - Lot also includes municipal building and associated parking; not counted in this total



**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN**

**TOWNSHIP OF MOORESTOWN**

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Block	Lot(s)	Acres	Facilities/ Character
	16	McElwee Road Open Space	8100	1	5.42	Passive Recreation
	17	Camden Avenue Pocket Park	1103	3	0.61	Passive Recreation
	18	LeDuc Pocket Park (Block 2704, lots 9,10)	2704	9, 10	0.91	Passive Recreation
	19	Percheron Park	4605	20	0.10	Passive Recreation
<b>Total Acres:</b>			<b>367.97</b>			
Conservation and other Township Lands	20	N. Lenola Road	100	8	6.27	Pennsauken Greenway
	21	Red Leaf Road	502	43	4.89	Conservation
	22	Pompeston Creek Park	3900	17	26.25	Next to Pompeston Greenway <sup>3</sup>
	23	Pompeston Creek Greenway	3500	44	75.83	Conservation
			3900	18, 25		
			3902	16, 17, 36-41		
			3904	6-9		
			3905	7-10		
			3906	9-12		
	4101	23-28, 84, 88, 89				
	24	Tom Brown Road Conservation Area	5200	7	4.54	Conservation
	25	Stokes Woods	5602	13	4.35	Swede Run Greenway; Conservation
	26	Tiver Avenue	6400	20.02, 25	1.50	Conservation
	27	Flying Feather Farm/ Vesaki	7000	12.02	11.53	Agriculture
28	M & L Winner Fields	7100	43	13.70	Passive Recreation	
29	Esther Yanai Preserve	7100	11	35.36	Conservation	
30	Test Open Space	7100	30	5.38	Passive Recreation	
31	Centerton Road Park	9103	1	13.03	Temp. Passive Recreation; Future Active Recreation	

<sup>3</sup> - Includes a playing field and other active recreation, but the site is predominantly for passive recreation and conservation.



**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN**

**TOWNSHIP OF MOORESTOWN**

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Block	Lot(s)	Acres	Facilities/ Character
	32	Susan Stevens Halbe Preserve	8700	18	18.12	Conservation
	33	Barbara Rich Preserve at Little Woods	8600	8	15.11	Rancocas Greenway; Conservation
	34	Creek Road	8000	1	16.34	Rancocas Greenway; Conservation
<b>Total Acres:</b>					<b>252.20</b>	
<b>Total Township Acres:</b>					<b>619.63</b>	

Previous Open Space and Recreation Plan Elements have included the Township Landfill parcel on Creek Road, consisting of 72.41 acres, in the Recreation and Open Space Inventory. The land is a DEP-approved location for leaf composting following the closure of the landfill. It was erroneously placed on the ROSI and with this new plan the municipality will petition the Green Acres Program to remove it from the inventory.

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

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Block	Lot(s)	Acres	Facilities/ Character
Board of Education Facilities	35	Baker Elementary	4101	35	9.31	Playground, gym
	36	Memorial Field	2500	25	21.40	Field Sports, Track
	37	Roberts Elementary	2500	53	7.76	Playground, gym
	38	Moorestown HS/ Middle School	5700	1, 82	101.95	Stadium, baseball, field sports, tennis, gym
	39	South Valley Elementary	6406	1	12.60	Playground, gym
	40	Upper Elementary	7403	2	24.34	Playground, field sports, gym
<b>Total Acres:</b>					<b>177.36</b>	
Development Restricted	41	Browning-Hess Farm	400	5-7, 11, 12, 19	41.09	Agricultural Easement
	42	Moorestown West	3500	47, 49	10.62	Conservation Easement



OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN

TOWNSHIP OF MOORESTOWN

Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Block	Lot(s)	Acres	Facilities/ Character
Properties	43	Hill House (private residence)	6300	Pt. 12	26.20	Conservation Easement
	44	South Valley Woods	6300	20-29, 32-39	44.77	NJ Natural Lands Trust (42.20 acres) Township Owned (2.57 acres)
			6301	1-8		
			6302	3-9		
			6303	1		
			6304	9, 9.01, 10, 11, 19		
			6305	3		
			6404	1-21, 24-33		
			6405	3-9, 11-16, 18-32		
			6407	1-20, 22, 24-29		
			6408	2		
			6409	3-5, 7, 8, 10, 13-15		
			6410	1-8, 11, 15-23		
			6411	1-10		
			6412	1-8, 11		
			6413	1-9		
			6500	1-6, 8-18, 20-25, 28, 29		
			6501	1-18, 21, 23, 25		
			6502	1-21, 24, 26, 28		
	6503	1, 3-25				
6504	1-21					
6505	19-23, 25, 30, 31, 35-37					
45	Stowe Farm	7100	Pt. 1	11.25	Agricultural Easement	



**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN**

**TOWNSHIP OF MOORESTOWN**

<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Map No.</b>	<b>Name of Site</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>Lot(s)</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Facilities/ Character</b>
	46	Moorestown Farms/ Moriuchi	7400	1	45.32	Agricultural Easement
	47	Borton Landing Road (private residence)	8200	17	21.43	Restricted Development
	48	Kendle's Run/ Giffen	8300	14	18.06	Conservation Easement
<b>Total Acres:</b>					<b>218.74</b>	
Community Facilities	49	Sunnybrook Swim Club	1301	15	3.40	Pool, court games, playground
	50	Moorestown Field Club Golf Course	5602	39, 52	55.80	Private 9-hole course, clubhouse, pickle ball and tennis
	51	Community House	4605	14	2.30	Non-profit offices, banquet facility, meeting rooms
	52	Moorestown Friends School	4605	40-43	37.58	Field sports, tennis, gym
			4900	1, 2, 2.01, 42, 43		
	53	YMCA	6800	7	5.03 <sup>4</sup>	Pool, gym
54	Laurel Creek Country Club	8700	3, 4, 4.01, 4.02, 21, 21.01, 21.02, 22, 23	212.30	Private 18-hole course, pool, tennis, pickle ball, clubhouse (in Mt. Laurel)	
		8800	1, 2			
<b>Total Acres:</b>					<b>317.95</b>	
Burlington County	55	Camishion	8000	28	9.10	Conservation
	56	Boundary Creek	8000	2, 23, 29	74.01	Conservation/ Passive Recreation
	57	Burlington County Agricultural Center	8801	2, 3	46.35	Farm Market, Community Gardens
<b>Total Burlington County Acres:</b>					<b>129.46</b>	

4 - The YMCA building straddles the municipal boundary with Mount Laurel; acreage only includes the Moorestown lot.



Ownership	Map No.	Name of Site	Block	Lot(s)	Acres	Facilities/ Character
<b>Total Other Open Space/Facilities:<sup>5</sup></b>					<b>843.51</b>	
<b>Total Municipal Open Space:</b>					<b>619.63</b>	
<b>Total Open Space and Community Facilities:</b>					<b>1,473.82 acres</b>	

Table IV-3 was primarily developed for the 2009 update to the Open Space and Recreation Plan Element Map by the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC), which was appointed by the Township Council to establish criteria and identify sites for the purpose of additional open space preservation. The OSAC also gave input on several important historic resources. These latter sites are also included on the historic resources map in the Master Plan.

In this revised Table IV-3, several sites have been removed as the Township has determined that the current landowners are not interested in any form of agreement that would make the land available for open space and recreation purposes. In addition, the Pulverizing Services site has been removed because there is a NJ Department of Environmental Protection deed restriction rendering it unavailable for residential or recreational use. Table IV-3 contains OSAC’s proposed list of lands for acquisition. The Trucksess property (Letter N on the Open Space and Recreation Plan), is Moorestown’s top priority for acquisition, a designation also shared by Burlington County. The second priority is the acquisition of the Carson Woods/Evergreens tract on Hartford Road for additional active recreational fields (Letter K). The other sites are not listed in any priority or ranking order.

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

Map Letter	Name of Site	Block	Lots	Acres	Comments
A	Reidenbaker	100	1	7.89	Agriculture/Conservation
B	NJDOT	100	3, 4, 6	31.20	Conservation use
C	Cope, J., L. and M.	400	4	17.84	Historic property; Pennsauken Greenway
D	Stevens	800	4	10.90	Agricultural use
E	High Dollar Realty/ Goodman	1801	17	1.03	Historic Cowperthwaite House
F	Flying Feather Farm/ Boenitsch	5500	13, 14, 15, 16	14.67	Agricultural use

<sup>5</sup> - Includes buildings, parking and facilities, clubhouses and other recreation and community facilities on the sites.



**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN**

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<b>Map Letter</b>	<b>Name of Site</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>Lots</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Comments</b>
G	Moorestown Field Club	5602	39, 52	55.80 <sup>6</sup>	Recreation use
H	Pearson, E.	6300	40	4.32	Conservation use
I	Zalkind, S.	6300	41	8.82	Conservation use
J	DiPaolo, A. and A. and Georgetti, R.	7000	23.02, 23.03	19.12	Conservation use
K	Carson Woods/ Evergreens	7100	25-29, 31, 32, 45	74.73	Identified for Active Recreation/ parts for Conservation
L	Holzinger, R. and D.	7100	24	55.36	Extension of Carson Woods
M	LMC Properties	7401	1, 2, 4-8	185.20	Multiple open space uses
N	Trucksess, J.	8000	3, 4, 5	58.68	Township reviewing for possible purchase
<b>Total Acres:</b>				<b>545.56</b>	

All the lands in Tables IV-1, IV-2 and IV-3 are depicted on the Open Space and Recreation Plan Map at the end of this document.

Moorestown’s land and water area is 9,555 acres, or 14.93 square miles. Parks and recreation land in the town is equal to 3.85% of its total area. Lands designated for conservation add another 2.75%, for a total of 6.48% of municipally owned open space. Including the lands identified in Table IV-2, another 8.83% is added, for a total of 15.31% of Moorestown’s land and water area in public open space, public facilities, private facilities for recreation, land trust ownership or restricted from development. Potentially, the lands identified in Table IV-3, not including the Moorestown Field Club acreage, could add another 5.13% of open space, for a potential total of public and other open space of 20.44%. By any measure, this is a significant amount of open space and deed-restricted land in the municipality.

**Moorestown Parks<sup>7</sup>**

Moorestown Township has a well-developed parks and recreation system that engages the entire community, from youth sports, arts and education to senior and special-needs programming, to events such as a concert series and partnership fundraisers. Township-owned sites mainly used for active recreation include the Church Street Recreation Center, Maple Dawson Park, Fullerton Memorial Park, the New Albany Community Center/Jeff Young Memorial Park, Walter Maahs Fields, Memorial Field

<sup>6</sup> Also included in Table IV-2.

<sup>7</sup> - Information for this section and the following sections was provided by Moorestown’s Recreation Director, Theresa Miller and Community Development Director, Nancy Jamanow, PE, PP.



(with the knowledge of the Board of Education), John Pryor Park and Wesley Bishop Park. Walter Maahs Fields and Jeff Young Park had new playgrounds constructed at the parks from generous donations from private foundations.

Memorial Field, which is owned by the Board of Education but which functions as a Township park, has four baseball fields named in honor of four Vietnam veterans who died in service who played at the fields as young boys. These memorials were updated in 2021 and rededicated in April 2022. The park also has four soccer fields and a track, since it was formerly the high school outdoor facility. The track was renovated in 2015 with a new cinder track surface (replenished in 2020), curbing and drainage improvements.

Kay Smith Waterworks Woods/ Strawbridge Lake provides both passive and active recreation, with picnic areas, non-motorized boating (canoes and kayaks) with a floating dock, fishing, a playground for children ages 2 thru 12 that was refurbished in 2021, and a dedicated children's pond adjacent to the playground. Fullerton Memorial Park is the location of a playground, a Cal Ripken regulation Little League baseball field with ADA-accessible bleachers and restrooms, and two lighted tennis courts.

Use of these active recreation sites is divided among programs operated by the Moorestown Department of Parks and Recreation and youth athletic associations that are typically organized around a particular sport, such as soccer, baseball, tackle football, flag football, basketball, lacrosse and street/roller hockey.

Stokes Hill, located on East Main Street, occupies a unique place among the Township's open space parcels as a favorite spot for sledding. The hill is across the street from Breidenhart, the historical home of Samuel Leeds Allen, the inventor of the Flexible Flyer sled. This land was held privately until purchased by the Township in 1993 to maintain its traditional use for sledding. There is also a wooded area at the base of Stokes Hill.

Perkins Memorial Park and Grounds was donated to the Township as a park area in 1965 and is the site of community gardens and weekly outdoor concerts in the summer. A three-story building and converted garage on the property is leased by the Perkins Center for the Arts, a nonprofit organization that offers a variety of visual, tactile and dramatic arts as well as music programs for the community. The grounds of the property include specimen trees from the Perkins Nursery. Across the street is Remembrance Garden that includes a small triangular-shaped parcel formed by the intersection of Camden Avenue and West Second Street that includes a circular seating area.

Sites that are intended primarily for conservation with some passive recreation uses include Stokes Woods, Pompeston Creek Park, Pompeston Creek Greenway, Red Leaf,

lands located along the Swede Run (Wigmore Acres, Winner Fields, the Test Property and Esther Yanai Preserve), and lands located within the Rancocas Creek watershed along Creek Road (Boundary Creek, Barbara Rich Preserve at Little Woods and the Susan Stevens Halbe Preserve). The Barbara Rich Preserve at Little Woods and the Stevens property also have a stream bisecting them that locals refer to as Little Run.

The Swedes Run Dog Park opened in 2016. For safety reasons, the small and large dogs have separate areas, and the park has a double access gate to prevent escape. There is a picnic pavilion for pet owners, agility structures for dogs, a drinking fountain, pet waste station, information kiosk and portable ADA toilet. Across Westfield Road from the dog park are Swede's Run Fields, where, with the aid of the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife and the Moorestown STEM organization, a native meadow has been planted to attract butterflies and birds as well as a pollinator garden to attract bees. A walking path has also been constructed, including a pedestrian bridge over Swedes Run itself.

The Tom Brown Road Conservation Area is the result of a NJDEP action against a group of homeowners in The Grande, a subdivision located on the opposite side of Tom Brown Road. Due to mistakes in the surveying of wetlands and wetlands transition areas, landscaping and other disturbances took place in contravention of the Freshwater Wetlands Act. NJDEP entered in an Administrative Consent Order with the homeowners which allowed the restoration of these areas and required the acquisition of Block 5200, Lot 7 as compensation for the filling/disturbance. About two-thirds of the conservation property is freshwater wetlands and was acquired to replace the wetlands that were disturbed. The property is deed-restricted from further development and was transferred to the Township in April 2012.

Centerton Road Park is land that was recently accepted by the Township Council as part of an approved subdivision for the development of the Mews at Laurel Creek. This land is located across Centerton Road from the Burlington County Agricultural Center. At this point in time the property is temporarily designated for passive recreation, but is intended for active recreation in the future as demand for recreation facilities grows.

Percheron Park is a pocket park at the site of a former Puritan Oil company fueling station on Main Street. After a long gestation and a strong effort by the Friends of Percheron Park, the site has been remediated and construction has been completed for a seating area and raised planting beds. The landscaping installation should be finished in the fall 2022. The park celebrates the efforts of Edward Harris II in 1839 to bring the first Percheron horses from France to the United States. Superb draft horses, the breed came to dominate this type of horse. Harris lived in the Smith-Cadbury mansion, a short distance from the park on High Street and the headquarters of the Moorestown historical Society. Much of the cost came from individual donations with a final boost by an allocation from Township Council.

## Recreation Centers

The Church Street Recreation Center is part of the municipal complex, sharing a parking lot with the combined Town Hall and Library. The three-story building was constructed in the late 1930's and served as the town's high school gymnasium and cafeteria until the new high school was constructed at Bridgeboro and N. Stanwick Roads in the 1960's. It is the remaining portion of the old high school. It contains a full-size gymnasium with three basketball courts on the 1st floor. The Department of Parks and Recreation's administrative offices are on the 2nd floor. The third floor contains a game room, art room, and fully functioning commercial kitchen used for culinary classes. There is a weight room in the basement level.

The New Albany Recreation Center is located adjacent to Jeff Young Park on New Albany Road. This building contains several meeting rooms, a small kitchen, restroom facilities, and an open porch area.

## Bikeways

The Township's Circulation Element, adopted in 2014, includes a plan for establishing bikeways and bike routes throughout the municipality. Though the term "bikeway" is used, the system is intended for both pedestrians and cyclists and has been designed accordingly. Either as a municipal capital improvement project or as part of the development of adjacent properties, 12 miles of Class I bikeways have been constructed. Class III bikeways are routes designated on existing streets, and total about 2.3 miles in Moorestown. Class II bikeways have yet to be established in the Township.

The Class I category represents paved bicycle paths that are horizontally separated from the paved cartway of a road. Class II bikeways are those where the existing cartway is striped out for use as a bicycle lane. Class III routes are signed. (See p. VII-18 in the Township's Circulation Element for a fuller explanation of the difference classes of bikeway.)

The Township's Bicycle Route Plan is part of the Circulation Element, which was last updated with the addition of the *Moorestown Bicycle Circulation and Safety Plan* when it was adopted as a technical appendix to the Master Plan. The Bicycle Route Plan depicts existing and future Class I bikeways, future Class II bikeways and existing and future Class III bikeways. An additional statement of purpose was adopted as an objective of the Circulation Element: "[improvement of] bicycle mobility and circulation by creating a bicycle network that links attractions within the Township of Moorestown and to regional destinations outside of Moorestown." Planned Class I bikeways are either funded or required to be constructed as part of any site plan or subdivision approval. Proposed bikeways are the routes necessary to complete the entire network of bicycle paths throughout the Township.

### **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, football, baseball, soccer, and field hockey clinics. Additionally, the Department of Parks and Recreation utilizes the Roberts, Baker and South Valley Elementary Schools, Upper Elementary and Moorestown High Schools as locations for summer camps.

### **Development-Restricted Properties**

As indicated in Table IV-2, several private properties in 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 New Jersey Natural Lands Trust, a nonprofit conservation organization, has over many years succeeded in acquiring almost 42 acres of land in the South Valley Woods, which is at the headwaters of Hooten Creek, a tributary of the Pennsauken Creek. The Trust continues to pursue the acquisition of land in this area. The portion of the Hill House 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 the 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 Centerton Road and straddles the Township’s border with Mount Laurel Township. This nonprofit organization offers a number of social and recreational programs, including swimming, basketball, tennis, dance, and 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, a place for various organizations devoted to the betterment of Moorestown to meet and hold charitable events. 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, which was an important employer in the economy of South Jersey until the mid-1980s). His gift was contingent on the community raising money to establish a maintenance fund, which it did. While the building no longer offers recreational facilities, it features offices for non-profit

organizations, a banquet hall, and meeting rooms. It is the 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 typically attracts more than 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, and playground and picnic facilities. Sunnybrook hosts a youth swimming team that competes against similar clubs in the area.

There are two golf courses in Moorestown. The nine-hole course at Moorestown Field Club founded in 1892 is the older course, 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 Mount Laurel Township. The golf course opened in 1988 and the clubhouse in 1996. Both are private clubs.

### **Moorestown Department of Parks and Recreation Programs**

Recreation programs are administered by the Moorestown Department of Parks and Recreation, as well as by a number of youth sports organizations. The Township Council appoints a Recreational Advisory Committee, made up of nine regular members, four high school student representatives (two sophomores and two juniors), and liaisons to the Township Council.

The Department of Parks and Recreation, located at 111 W. 2nd Street, currently has four full-time staff members, including a Director, Assistant Director, Maintenance Supervisor and a Senior Clerk-Typist. The number of part-time staff employed by the Department of Parks and Recreation ranges from 20 to 70, depending on the season, and there are also a large number of volunteers. Staff is responsible for coordinating use of athletic facilities, including the synthetic turf fields, with many of the sports organizations, and for maintaining parks and recreational facilities in general.

The Department of Parks and Recreation offers a variety of programs throughout the year for residents of all ages, including pre-school, youth, special-needs, teens, adults and seniors. Programs include but are not limited to art, pottery, basketball, yoga, group fitness classes, dance, pickleball, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, tennis, and volleyball. These programs are scheduled at the Church Street Recreation Center, the New Albany Recreation Center, facilities at the Moorestown Township Public Schools, and various Township parks. The Department of Parks and Recreation provides senior programs throughout the year and supports senior bus excursions and entertainment.

During the summer, the Department of Parks and Recreation organizes a summer concert series, including a children's entertainment component, that is held on the lawns of the Perkins Center for the Arts and the Moorestown Community House. There is a six-week summer Children's Theatre Program for ages 7 through 13, a Summer Parks Program for youth in kindergarten through sixth grade, separate summer camps for 4- and 5-year-olds, and a camp for individuals with special needs, all at multiple sites throughout the Township. In addition, The Department of Parks and Recreation runs a Counselor in Training summer program (C.I.T.) that develops leadership skills.

The Department of Parks and Recreation's youth sports are a core component of programming and include youth in pre-school through high school. The Department of Parks and Recreation runs sports programs on its own and in conjunction with local youth sports clubs. There are leagues with teams by age and gender, and many sports clinics. Department of Parks and Recreation's sports provide equitable participation for all players of varying abilities. Volunteer and parent coaches are vital to the success and growth of these team programs.

The Department of Parks and Recreation offers the following youth sports and recreation activities:

- **Field Hockey:** 1st through 8th grades
- **Soccer:** Pre-k through 6th grade; also for individuals with special needs ages 5 and up co-sponsored with Maple Shade
- **Basketball:** 1st through 12th grades
- **Volleyball:** 3rd through 12th grades
- **Tennis:** age 5 and up
- **S.M.A.S.H.:** Social Meeting after School Hours, for individuals with special needs grade 7 to age 21.
- **Challenger Baseball:** For individuals with special needs ages 5 and up

In addition, the following Moorestown Youth Athletic Clubs take advantage of various Township facilities:

- Moorestown Youth Baseball Federation
- Moorestown Youth Basketball Club
- Moorestown Youth Football Association
- Moorestown Youth Flag Football
- Moorestown Lacrosse Club
- Moorestown Soccer Club
- Moorestown Youth Softball Association
- Moorestown Youth Street Hockey Association
- Moorestown Box Lacrosse

- Moorestown Weightlifting Club

In addition, the Department of Parks and Recreation offers a wide range of programs designed to meet the needs of a large cross-section of the local community, and recently there has been an increase in types of programming and participation. The Community Kitchen at the Church Street Rec Center was rehabilitated into a commercial-grade kitchen that offers culinary classes for youth in kindergarten through high school. In 2019, the Moorestown Community Kitchen was given the New Jersey Recreation and Parks Association (NJRPA) Excellence in Educational and Interpretive Programming award. Culinary classes develop life skills for young students and the “Bow Wow Bakery” program provides vocational training for the special-needs community. The Social Meeting After School Hours (SMASH) also has a cooking component for special-needs middle and high school participants. The SMASH and Bow Wow Bakery programs received the Excellence in Therapeutic Programming award from the NJRPA in 2018 and 2021, respectively.

Art, pottery, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs have become integral parts of the Department of Parks and Recreation’s offerings for youth. These disciplines are offered throughout the year and as stand-alone summer camps. In 2019, the art class themed “The Art of Polynesia” was given the Excellence in Visual and Cultural Arts Programming award by NJRPA.

The Department of Parks and Recreation plans and puts on events, such as the annual Memorial Day ceremony that includes participation of youth groups, religious leaders, the Mayor and featured speakers. Partnerships with local nonprofits and businesses provide funding and youth scholarships for programming, enhanced programming, community outreach and education, and defrayal of program costs. These include fundraising events, guided nature walks through the park system, food bank drives, adopt-a-park volunteer groups, and pantry items for culinary programs. Partners include Mission Voice, the Monica Buckley Foundation, Live Civilly, MoorArts, MooreKids, Moorestown Community House, Moorestown Creates, Moorestown Breakfast Rotary, Moorestown Rotary Charities, Moorestown Youth Basketball Club, Perkins Center for the Arts, Save The Environment of Moorestown (STEM), the Strawbridge Lake Beautification Committee, and Wegmans.

### **Burlington County Open Space**

Currently, there are three County-owned open space sites in Moorestown. The sites were purchased under the County’s Local Open Space Land Grant Award program. Burlington County acquired the 74.01-acre Boundary Creek property (Block 8000, Lots 2, 23 and 29) in November 2002 and the 9.1-acre Camishion property (Block 8000, Lot 28) in January 2005 as part of its long-range plan for the preservation of the Rancocas Creek stream corridor. The County’s 2002 Parks and Open Space Master

Plan listed the Rancocas Greenway as a focus area for the County's open-space preservation and parks development efforts. The County plan includes an extensive list of national, state and County funding resources for open space acquisition, preservation and maintenance. All of these sites acquired by the County are located within the Rancocas Creek watershed.

The third acquisition, a part of the former Pleasant Valley Farm, now known as the Burlington County Agricultural Center (Block 8801, Lots 2 and 3), was purchased in December 2004, consisting of 46.35-acres. In addition, in 2013 an easement was recorded preserving as farmland the 41± acre Browning-Hess property on North Lenola Road which used, in part, funding from the County's farmland preservation program. The County's 2020 proposed budget for its Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund allocates 75% of its proposed \$14.8 million in revenues, or \$11.1 million, toward open-space acquisition and historic preservation. The County operates a Municipal Park Development Program that provides funding assistance to local government for acquisition of open space, the development and improvement of parks for active and passive recreation and to help offset the local match for farmland preservation efforts in the County's Farmland Preservation Program. This is funded through the County tax levy of up to \$.04 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The grant award is limited to \$250,000 per municipality per grant cycle.

## **FACILITIES STATUS AND NEEDS ANALYSIS**

### **Current Status**

Increased level of interest from outside organizations and increased community participation in recreational pursuits make scheduling of Township recreational facilities complex and physical demands on the overall system 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. This demand necessitates staff involvement beyond standard daily upkeep. Ongoing inspections of facilities for safety purposes and assessing sites' needs for repairs, reconditioning or rebuilding due to deterioration from use and age is a constant priority.

In April 2007, the Township opened its first premier synthetic turf field facility at Wesley Bishop Park, which has become one of the Department of Parks and Recreation's most used sites. The original turf was replaced in 2017. A second synthetic turf field was added in 2013. Outside youth sports clubs schedule games, practices and events through the Department of Parks and Recreation, which vets each request.

Substantial park improvements have been undertaken in the last decade. John Pryor Park has two youth baseball fields (referred to as the Upper Field and the Lower Field)

that have synthetic turf installed in 2013 in the infields only and have natural grass in the outfields and a dirt pitcher's mound. The Lower Baseball Field had lights installed when the park was constructed and the Upper Baseball Field lights were installed in 2013. There is an 11 v. 11 regulation soccer field with lights and an 8 v. 8 soccer grass field. There is a restroom facility with a concession stand and playground. In 2017, the four tennis courts and two basketball courts at Maple Dawson Park were completely reconstructed. New lights were installed in 2013. This park also includes a playground with a restroom building and a storage room for equipment. Jeff Young Park includes a basketball court, two dedicated pickle ball courts and 2 tennis/pickle ball courts which are lighted. In 2016, the Roller/Street Hockey court at Wesley Bishop Park was completely reconstructed with new boards, fencing, asphalt surface and scoreboard. In 2017, Maple Dawson Park the courts were completely reconstructed to rebuild the four tennis courts and two basketball courts. In 2020/2021, the south softball fields at Wesley Bishop Park were reconstructed. The infields of both softball fields were upgraded and drainage in the outfields improved, as well as the flag football fields were re-graded to improve runoff. Four new dugouts with benches were installed on concrete pads and permanent roofs were installed. In 2020 a pedestrian path at Strawbridge Lake Park was installed that goes from Kings Highway to Spring House Lane along Haines Drive.

Volunteer organizations contribute to some park maintenance through regular trash removal and "adopt-a-park" partnerships. Jeff Young Memorial Park was adopted by the Moorestown Rotary Breakfast Club, and Fullerton Memorial Park and the Swede's Run Dog Park were adopted by the Moorestown Rotary Charities. The municipality has also benefitted from donations to its programs and parks, in particular for the development of the latest park, Percheron Park on Main Street.

In addition to the municipality's own programs, outside organizations that use Department of Parks and Recreation resources include Moorestown Youth Baseball Federation, Moorestown Youth Basketball Club, Moorestown Youth Football Association, Moorestown Youth Flag Football, Moorestown Lacrosse Club, Moorestown Soccer Club, Moorestown Youth Softball, Moorestown Youth Street/Roller Hockey, and Moorestown Weightlifting Club.

Ideally, proper maintenance of fields would include periodic rest to allow grass to recover, but finding the time required for that to occur continues to be challenging since facilities are in constant demand. Overall maintenance also continues to be a concern in terms of the stress it puts on buildings, equipment and outdoor facilities and the amount of staff time required, including coordination with Public Works staff for regular maintenance and improvements.

## Needs Analysis

At a public Open Space Workshop conducted on July 27, 2021 in the Township Council chambers, the main focus was on the needs of various youth sports programs. A particular concern was that youth sports facilities are scattered throughout the Township, making maintenance difficult and creating a need for multiple sets of various equipment so that a set can be kept at each location. In addition, some active-recreation locations are close to residences and do not offer sufficient parking, thus forcing participants and spectators to park on nearby residential streets. All in attendance felt the ideal situation would be to find a way to consolidate all youth sports facilities at one large location, thus allowing greater efficiency and freeing up other locations for additional uses.

Discussion at the July 27, 2021 meeting then turned to how best to consolidate youth-sports facilities. Participants agreed the strongest possibility is for the Township to acquire the Holzinger and Carson Woods/Evergreens sites (locations K and L in Table IV-3 and on the Open Space and Recreation Plan). These parcels are adjacent to the Esther Yanai Preserve, M&L Winner Fields and Test Open Space. Acquisition of these lands would make it possible to provide sports facilities near Hartford Road and allow the environmentally sensitive land farther away from the road to be conserved.

However, when a subsequent meeting was held with the Presidents of the Moorestown Youth Athletic Club on June 20, 2022, including representatives of Flag Football, Tackle Football, Softball, Travel Softball, Soccer and Lacrosse, (a representative of Baseball was contacted also) they did not believe that additional fields would be required if modifications were made to the existing sports facilities. In particular, the recommendations are as follows:

- Convert the Upper Field at Wesley Bishop, which is presently a grass field with lights, to a synthetic turf field.
- Convert the former skate park at Wesley Bishop to a high school regulation size softball field with lights.
- Convert the existing 11 versus 11 soccer field with lights at John Pryor Park, to a synthetic turf field.

The Presidents felt that with these modifications, there is no need for additional fields or lands to be purchased in the immediate future.

Two other topics were discussed at the Open Space Workshop on July 27, 2021. The first centered around development of more trails, and better linkages both to the trails from various entry points and among the trails, in particular along the Rancocas, in Mount Laurel and in Barbara Rich Preserve at Little Woods, and by establishing a loop around Kay Smith Waterworks Woods/Strawbridge Lake.

In a subsequent meeting at the Planning Board workshop on June 30, 2022, Recreation Director Theresa Miller noted the problem of maintenance of any expanded facilities, since the Department of Parks and Recreation is running at full capacity already. She said that while the idea of enlisting volunteers to do some of the maintenance work was laudatory in concept, in reality, unless there is a formal organization dedicated to it, relying on individual volunteers or civic organizations has proven to be a sporadic, hit-or-miss method of keeping the Township's recreation facilities in good order. For that reason, she suggested focusing on the proposals to expand or connect the Township's trail system that could be accomplished with existing Township resources.

The second additional topic at the Open Space Workshop focused on the possibility of creating a new skate park to replace the one that has been removed, a request that came from a young attendee at the meeting. It was noted that the old skate park had been constructed of wood, making maintenance costly, and it was eventually removed because the wood had deteriorated extensively. As the children who originally wanted the skate park matured and used it less, interest waned accordingly among the original group of parents who had volunteered to maintain it, allowing the wood to fall into disrepair. Ms. Miller also noted concern with large amounts of litter at the old skate park and the fact that the park was not monitored by adults. Attendees noted that construction of a new skate park would be expensive.

#### **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 Guidelines**

The New Jersey Green Acres Program, which is part of the Department of Parks and Recreation of Environmental Protection, disburses funds to municipalities, counties, and nonprofit groups for acquisition and development of open space via a grant and loan program that originated in 1961.

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 eight acres of land per 1,000 residents for conservation, passive and active recreation open space earmarked for municipal purposes. Application of the guideline results in a desirable standard of 170.84 acres for the population of 21,355. The Township, from Table IV-1, has 367.43 acres of developed (or to be developed) parkland and recreation facilities and 300.05 acres of conservation land, for a total of 667.48 acres, thereby meeting the minimum state standards.

The Green Acres guidelines also suggest that a minimum of 3% of municipal land area be set aside for all types of open space; the municipal total in Moorestown is almost 7%. By both of these broad measures, the Township meets the minimum suggested guidelines for open space based on population, as recommended by the state.

### **National Recreation and Park 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 parkland per 1,000 residents. Applying this standard to the estimated population would result in a range of 128 to 215 acres of developed parkland to serve the population of Moorestown. By these standards too, the Township is significantly above the recommended range, with almost 370 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 above the recommended range.

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 or neighborhood 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, such as the Church Street Recreation Center, are special-purpose facilities that serve the entire community but are on small lots. For that reason, this Plan classifies the Township's existing parks by function, rather than strictly by size, in Table IV-4, below:

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

Park Type	Map No.	Name of Site	Acres	Facilities/Character
Community	1	Wesley Bishop Park	56.58	Field Sports, Conservation
Neighborhood	2	Walter Maahs Fields	3.21	Field Sports
Neighborhood	3	New Albany Rec. Ctr./ Jeff Young Park	7.65	Indoor Meeting Space, Field Sports, Courts
Neighborhood	4	Maple Dawson Park/ West End Field	4.13	Courts, Playground, Field Sports
Mini-Park	5	Yancy-Adams Park	2.58	Passive Recreation
Neighborhood	6	Locust Street Park	4.48	Passive Recreation
Community	7	Perkins Memorial and Grounds/Remembrance Park	3.98; 0.63	Arts Center, Community Gardens, Memorial
Community	8	Kay Smith's Waterworks Woods/Strawbridge Lake	95.65	Passive Recreation, Playground
Community	9	Church Street Recreation Center	2.29	Indoor Recreation
Mini-Park	10	Beech Street Park	0.57	Passive Recreation, Playground
Neighborhood	11	Frank Fullerton Park	4.29	Courts, Field Sport, Playground
Community	12	Stokes Hill	8.50	Sledding, Passive Recreation
Neighborhood	13	Wigmore Acres	11.08	Passive Recreation
Community	14	Swede's Run Fields	140.98	Passive Recreation, Pollinator Field, Dog Park, Wildlife Meadow
Community	15	John Pryor Park	14.36	Field Sports, Tot Lot
Neighborhood	16	McElwee Road Open Space	5.42	Passive Recreation
Mini-Park	17	Camden Avenue Pocket Park	0.61	Passive Recreation
Mini-Park	18	LeDuc Pocket Park	0.91	Passive Recreation
Mini-Park	19	Percheron Park	0.10	Passive Recreation
Community	34	Memorial Field *	21.40	Field Sports, Track

\*- Memorial Field is owned by the Moorestown Board of Education but is used jointly for recreation purposes and is listed on the Township's ROSI.

Applying the broad ranges established by NRPA standards allows a comparison of the types of parks needed within each size category. Table IV-5 below compares the NRPA



standards based on the Township’s current 2020 population of 21,355 with the existing parkland acreage in the Township.

**Table IV-5. NRPA Standards and Existing Population and Acreage**

Type of Park and Recommended Acreage per 1,000 Population	Recommended Acreage in Moorestown based on 2020 Population	Existing Acreage in Moorestown	Surplus or (Deficit) Compared to Minimum
Mini-Park 0.25 to 0.5 acres	5.34 to 10.68	4.77	(0.57)
Neighborhood 1.0 to 2.0 acres	21.36 to 42.71	40.26	18.90
Community 5.0 to 8.0 acres	106.78 to 170.84	343.83	237.05
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>133.48 to 224.23</b>	<b>388.86</b>	<b>255.38</b>

Based on this analysis, mini-parks are the only category experiencing any deficit according to NRPA standards. However, the deficit is minimal, and as noted above, the increasing demand in the Township for active recreation facilities suggests that Moorestown’s allocation of its recreation resources means it is well equipped to meet that demand.

**ASSESSMENT OF LAND RESOURCES**

In response to the 1998 referendum, in June 1999 the Township Council established an Open Space Advisory Committee to identify properties within Moorestown that 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 above reflects the application of these criteria to the list of potential sites for acquisition and the prioritization of focusing on the Trucksess and Carson Woods/Evergreens tracts as the two top locations for acquisition. Table IV-3 represents the total list of 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.

A review at the Open Space Workshop of the other parcels identified for acquisition yielded the following:

- Attendees suggested that the owners of parcels H and I on the Open Space and Recreation Plan, which are adjacent to Stokes Hill and to South Valley Woods, may be amenable to executing easements in order for their properties to link to nearby preserved open space.
- The Trucksess property, identified as letter N on the Open Space and Recreation Plan, was noted as a property originally prioritized by the County for preservation since it consolidates preserved space along the Rancocas Greenway. The County has indicated it wishes the Township to take the lead in trying to get the property preserved, and the County will assist if resources are available.

### CONSERVATION MECHANISMS

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 may be explored in order to fulfill the goals of preserving open space.

No one of the techniques discussed below 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 of open space include:

### **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.

### **Conservation Easements**

The acquisition of easements is a technique sometimes used by the Township in preserving wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas. While ownership of the land remains in private hands, conservation easements effectively protect lands of ecological importance. Private nonprofit conservation organizations are substantially involved in identifying prospective properties and working with interested landowners to secure conservation easements. The monitoring of conservation easements after dedication to prevent encroachment and to insure the proper maintenance of the easement is an important aspect of securing the easement, and a program for stewardship should be established.

### **ASSESSMENT OF FUNDING RESOURCES**

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 has been through the state Green Acres Program, which provides low-cost loans (typically 2% annual interest).

### **New Jersey Green Acres Program**

Funding for the state's Green Acres program came originally from voter-approved state bonding. In November 1998, voters approved a consistent funding source for the program from the sales tax, which established a \$98 million fund per year for 10 years. Additional open space funding has come from a \$200 million Green Acres bond referendum in 2007 and another Green Acres bond referendum in 2009, which approved \$242 million for state land, local government, nonprofit, and Blue Acres projects. Beginning in July 2015, 4% of the revenue derived from the Corporate Business Tax Act (CBT [C.54:10A-1 *et seq.*]), estimated to be \$71 million, has been

dedicated to Green Acres, Blues Acres, and Farmland Preservation programs as well as historic preservation under the New Jersey Open Space Preservation Funding Amendment. In 2019, the CBT dedication for these programs increased to 6%, which generates an estimated \$117 million annually. Yet, even with state funding at a historically high level, applications to the Green Acres program have exceeded available funding.

### **Burlington County**

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 programs, and 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 earmarked to assist municipalities and charitable conservancies through a grant award program called the Municipal Park Development Program. Moorestown has previously received funding under the grant program and the Township will apply for additional funding through the program in the future.

The County has also undertaken its own program of land purchase. While in the past, County money has largely been earmarked for farmland preservation, a new emphasis on other open space needs has emerged, including expanding preserved lands along the Rancocas Creek. The purchase of the Moriuchi tract on Creek Road from Toll Brothers, Inc. for Boundary Creek Park in 2002 was the first County acquisition in Moorestown and was followed by the purchase of a portion of the Pleasant Valley Farm for the Burlington County Agricultural Center in 2004 and the Camishion properties in 2005.

The County has indicated an interest in the preservation of the Trucksess property on Creek Road in order to expand the Rancocas Greenway. The County is reviewing resources for funding of the purchase of the parcel.

### **Moorestown Township**

Moorestown voters supported not only the statewide referendum for state purchase of open space, but also the County and Township levies. Voters have extended the duration of the Township levy twice by referendum since its inception in 1998, most recently to 2028. An open space survey in 2001 indicated additional support to raise the municipal open space assessment as high as 6 cents per hundred dollars of assessed valuation. As noted above, this levy has raised almost \$15 million since 1999 for the Township's Open Space, Recreation, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.

## ACTION PLAN

Based on the above analysis, the recommendations detailed below are intended to help the Township fulfill the goals and enact the policies governing open space in Moorestown:

- Continue to refine the open space acquisition list in Table IV-3. This process should take advantage of the criteria established by the Open Space Advisory Committee.
- Evaluate the degree to which acquisition of a parcel will allow the Township to further any of the goals set forth in this Plan, and related goals set forth in other Master Plan elements.
- Create an Open Space zoning district for municipally owned open space as part of the Township’s Zoning Ordinance.
- Pursue funding on a priority basis for acquisition of lands or easements that will expand and connect the Rancocas Greenway.
- Establish a formal mechanism for monitoring conservation easements to prevent encroachment and ensure proper maintenance.
- If possible, identify a champion from the Open Space Advisory Committee to lead an outreach effort to neighborhood groups to build consensus on the development and/or expansion of recreation facilities and trails.
- In locations where consensus is reached, seek the connections of existing trails and creation of new trails, including street crossings as needed.
- Identify youth volunteer/service groups and involve them on an ongoing basis in the creation and maintenance of trails and other open space and recreation facilities. Additionally, work to create dedicated “Friends of ...” groups to focus on maintenance of recreational facilities.
- Survey current and potential users of parks and recreational facilities to identify and quantify unmet demand for open space and recreation, and to project future demand for existing facilities and programs.
- Consider increasing the open space tax. As undeveloped land in Moorestown becomes more scarce, it will increase in value.
- Install modern heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment to the senior center.

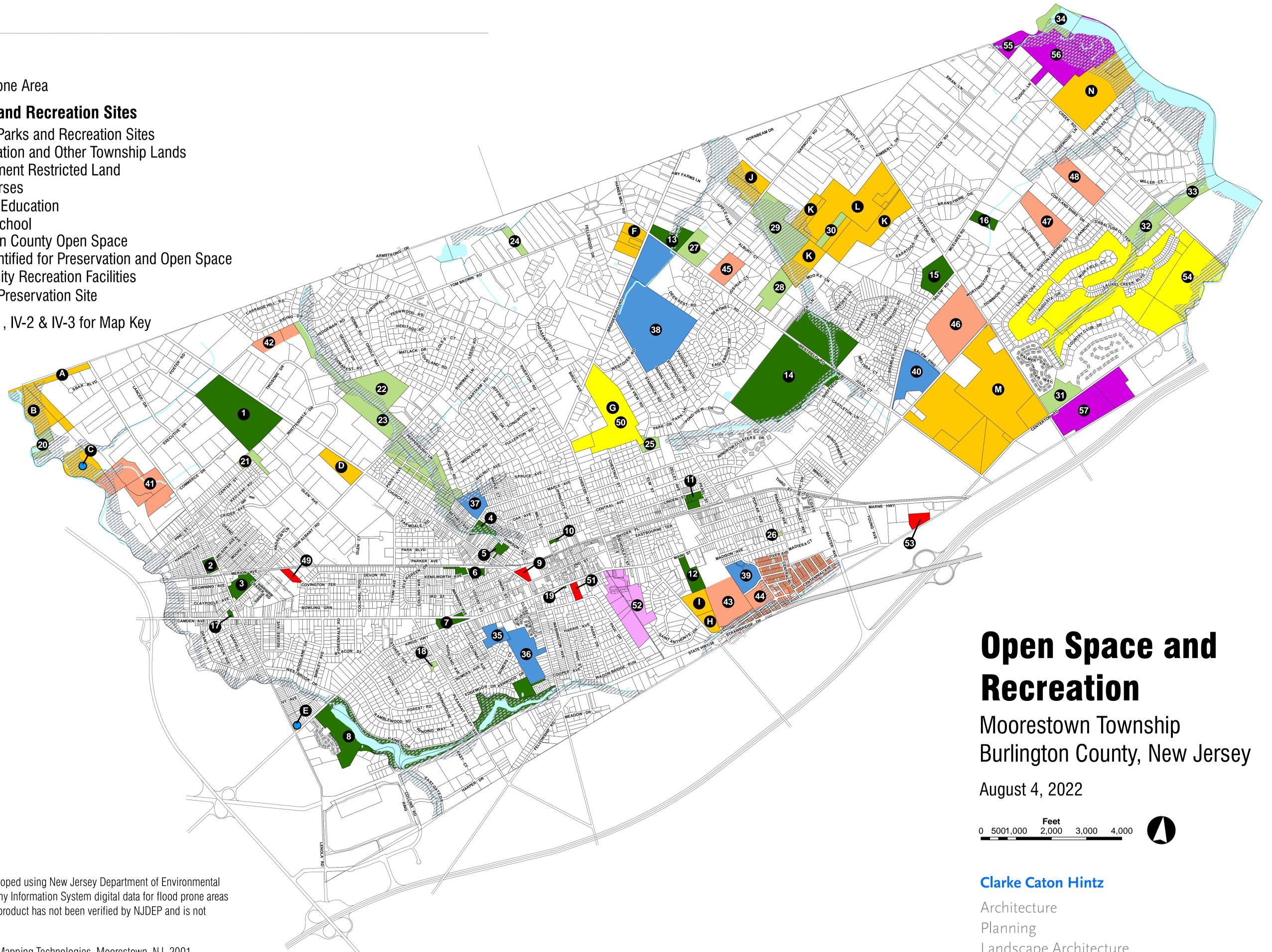
# Legend

-  Streams
-  Water
-  Flood Prone Area

## Open Space and Recreation Sites

-  Existing Parks and Recreation Sites
-  Conservation and Other Township Lands
-  Development Restricted Land
-  Golf Courses
-  Board of Education
-  Private School
-  Burlington County Open Space
-  Sites Identified for Preservation and Open Space
-  Community Recreation Facilities
-  Historic Preservation Site

See Tables IV-1, IV-2 & IV-3 for Map Key



# Open Space and Recreation

## Moorestown Township Burlington County, New Jersey

August 4, 2022



Clarke Caton Hintz

Architecture  
Planning  
Landscape Architecture

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