



COUNTY OF MERCER
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

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*Mercer City PB
Master Plan
Amendments
8/2021*

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County Administrator



July 14, 2021

*(plans & documents
scanned on
server)*

Dear Planning Board Secretaries and Municipal Clerks:

The Mercer County Planning Department is presenting three (3) Master Plan amendments to the Mercer County Planning Board on August 11, 2021.

- The Farmland Preservation Element, last adopted September 8, 2010, has been revised and updated in accordance with the requirements of the State Agriculture Development Committee;
- The Open Space Element, last amended in May 2016, has been revised and updated in accordance with the requirements of the NJ State Green Acres program;
- The Mobility Element, last amended in May 2016, is being amended to reflect updates to Desired Typical Section 1A in light of the County Bicycle Plan, adopted in March 2020.

A public hearing will be held on Wednesday, August 11, 2021 at 9:00 am in Room 211 of the McDade Administration Building, 640 South Broad Street, Trenton, NJ, 08611. Masks are required.

Enclosed are the amendments and a copy of the public hearing notice. The proposed documents and amendment can also be found on the Department's website:

<https://www.mercercounty.org/departments/master-plan-updates/-fsiteid-1>

Upon adoption, electronic copies of the new documents will be provided to your office.

If you have any questions, please contact this office.

Sincerely,

Leslie R. Floyd
Planning Director

Enc.

**LEGAL NOTICE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

The Mercer County Planning Board will conduct a public hearing on Wednesday, August 11, 2021 at 9 AM at the McDade Administration Building, 640 S Broad Street, Trenton, NJ 08611. Masks will be required. The hearing is to consider three amendments to the Mercer County Master Plan: an updated and revised Farmland Preservation Element, an updated and revised Open Space Element and an Amendment to the Mobility Element.

Public comments regarding the proposed Farmland Preservation Element, Open Space Element or Mobility Element Amendment may be submitted on or before the date of the public hearing to the Mercer County Planning Department for consideration. Any comments submitted prior to the date of the hearing must be in writing and signed by the commenter. Written and oral comments will be considered at the public hearing. Since the Mobility Element Amendment has not yet been the subject of a more extensive outreach process, as was conducted for the Farmland and Open Space Elements, Planning Department staff will ask the Planning Board to keep the public hearing record on the Mobility Element Amendment open until October 13, 2021. This will ensure adequate opportunity for public and municipal input.

Written comments should be submitted to: Leslie R. Floyd, Planning Director, County of Mercer, 640 South Broad Street, PO Box 8068, Trenton, New Jersey 08650-0068. Any questions concerning the hearing procedure should be referred to the Planning Director, who can be contacted at the aforementioned address, or by telephone at (609) 989-6545. Copies of the updated Elements and Mobility amendment and all elements are available for review by contacting the Mercer County Planning Department. Copies of this plan and its elements can also be found on the Mercer County Planning Department website under <https://www.mercercounty.org/departments/planning/plans-and-reports/mercer-county-master-plan>. Copies of these Elements and the Amendment have also been sent on electronic media to every municipality and public library in the County.

In order to encourage full participation at this public hearing please address any requests for accommodation of people with disabilities to the Planning Department, McDade Administration Building or call (609) 989-6545. People who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired should access this service by contacting the NJ Relay Service at 1-800-852-7899 (TTY).

Mercer County Planning Board
By: Leslie Floyd, Planning Director
July 16, 2021



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ELEMENT

Draft: July 2021 | Open Space Preservation Board Adoption: June 1, 2021



PREPARED FOR THE

Mercer County Planning Board

Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board

BY THE

Mercer County Planning Department

ADOPTED:

MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ELEMENT

County of Mercer

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Wendy Mager, Millstone Region
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Kathleen Sar, Supervising Drafting Technician
Jill Benner, Principal Clerk

The original plan has been signed and sealed in accordance with the New Jersey Professional Planners Licensing Act.

Leslie R. Floyd, AICP/PP
Planning Director

Adopted by the Mercer County Planning Board

Matthew Zochowski, AICP
Secretary

Date

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PHOTO CREDITS

Photos courtesy of Elise Fritzinger, Lisa Fritzinger, Jay Watson, Mercer County Park Commission, and Lawrence Hopewell Trail.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Mercer County has been aggressively preserving open space and farmland since 1990. This work has been undertaken as a result of the County's first open space preservation trust fund tax ballot question, overwhelmingly approved by the voters in 1989 and continually supported since. Prior to 1989, County residents were served by a handful of County park facilities including Mercer County Park in West Windsor/Hamilton/Lawrence; two County golf courses, Mountain View in Ewing and Princeton Country Club in West Windsor/Princeton; and Howell Living History Farm and Rosedale Park in Hopewell. In the 1980's and 1990's many areas in the County were experiencing substantial residential, commercial and corporate development. Suburban sprawl was encroaching upon the County's rural landscape and threatening the natural environment. It was evident that there was a need for more protected open space, both for recreation and to protect natural resources. Opportunities were present. Large environmentally significant lands were unprotected, but still undeveloped and available, and the new open space trust fund and a favorable real estate market provided the financial resources needed for preserving lands of regional importance. So began the race for open space.

Thirty years later, over 27%¹ (up from 9% in 1990) of Mercer County's land area is permanently preserved in one form or another, either as public parkland and open space, privately-owned conserved land or farmland. This was done collectively by the County, local non-profit land conservancies, local governments and the State of New Jersey. Most of the properties preserved as County-owned open space have been preserved in a largely natural or undeveloped state to protect sensitive environs and critical habitat, while also providing significant regional open space. These preserved lands are mostly in rural areas of the County, where undeveloped land was available. The Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain, Mercer Meadows, the expansion of Howell Living History Farm, and the expansion and enhancement of Roebling Park and its new Tulpehaking Nature Center enrich the quality of life for all residents of Mercer County and protect and enhance valuable environmental lands. In addition, lands preserved along the Assunpink Creek, Crosswicks Creek, Stony Brook and other streams protect watersheds, create critical greenways and the potential to connect people to open space. The tax also helped fund several park improvements such as the Visitor Center at Baldpate Mountain and the Tulpehaking Nature Center at Roebling Park as well as historic preservation efforts at the Kahn Bathhouse in Ewing, the restoration of the Hunt House in Mercer Meadows, the Rogers House constructed ruin at Mercer County Park and the preservation of 87 farms throughout the County. In 2012 the voters approved a referendum to allow 10% of the trust fund revenue to be used for stewardship purposes and many programs and projects have been implemented. Stewardship efforts on county land include grassland, meadow, wetland and forest restorations, invasive species management, deer management, green infrastructure implementation and enforcing the removal of private encroachment violations on public parkland.

There have been many changes over the last 30 years which impact the County's thinking about open space, recreational lands and stewardship of those lands. Today we are more mindful about the effects of climate change, and the resulting damage to our lands and communities. There is a heightened awareness about addressing issues such as social justice, healthy communities, climate change and sustainability. There is a need to provide more urban, walkable settings for living and working and for quality urban open space. What has also changed is the amount of land that the County manages. It has increased by more than double over thirty years. In addition to an increase in general park maintenance is the growing need to care for the lands' natural and ecological values. Damage from invasive species, overabundant deer, natural disturbance and increased public use in our parks have negative impacts and can degrade the quality of the land for the public enjoyment as well as the

¹ The 27% was calculated using spatial GIS data layers and does not reflect actual surveyed acres.

environment. Since the authorization of stewardship as a permitted expense, the Park Commission and Planning Department have hired professional staff dedicated to identifying stewardship needs and implementing programs on the ground. The stewardship team has completed numerous projects throughout the Park System to address invasive species management, wildlife management and habitat restoration. The lands that the County has so diligently preserved require land stewardship and resource management, now and into the future. Finally, the pace of land acquisition for preservation purposes has slowed over the last decade. This is due, in part, to limited State funds but mostly because there is less land available to acquire and the lands remaining for preservation are much smaller in scale and more challenging to acquire.

There is still much to be accomplished. Over the last decade the County has preserved linkages in our Greenways, expanded our parkland and focused on providing open space close to where people work and live, while also instilling good land stewardship practices and policies. The 2021 Plan continues to address the goals and strategies of the 2010 Plan. This Plan examines updated data, including population, and a County-wide inventory of open space lands to identify gaps and new opportunities.

New technological tools and more accurate data provide new and interesting methods for analysis and ways in which to measure progress. Although all the preservation entities working in the County have preserved additional land over the last 11 years, it is likely that the 27% figure is the result of more accurate and improved data and mapping tools. There are new GIS tools available to the public such as CHANJ from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the NJ Blueprint created by Rowan University. These tools provide GIS information that can be layered and analyzed to illustrate and prioritize lands for acquisition.

In the summer of 2020 Mercer County undertook a Return on Environment study with the cooperation and assistance of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). This study will provide data-based calculations of economic and environmental benefits of protected open spaces in Mercer County and enhance and support the open space and farmland preservation goals and objectives of Mercer County. The Return on Environment study is expected to be released in September 2021. (add hyperlink on release)

In May 2021, President Biden announced a goal of conserving 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. This goal relies on “locally led and voluntary” efforts and is part of the administration’s overall

objective of tackling the climate crisis.² Fortunately, Mercer County has had a 30-year head-start on this “30 by 30” goal. As our population grew, Mercer County residents recognized the need for land preservation and the County has been hard at work to achieve substantial land preservation objectives since 1990, while enjoying the many benefits associated with land preservation. Although the President’s goal is important and worthwhile, it will be challenging to achieve in Mercer County. To accomplish this goal would require the preservation of an additional 4,397 acres by 2030, which is ambitious but possible as we continue to work cooperatively with our partners and leverage available funds. The President’s goal is for the nation as a whole; some areas of the country will exceed 30% while others preserve much less. Nevertheless, Mercer County, along with our land preservation partners, will continue our efforts to preserve land for its environmental qualities, for use by people, and for its public health and economic benefits.

² US Government report “Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful” developed by the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce departments and submitted to Biden’s National Climate Task Force.

I. OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION FARMLAND AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION TRUST FUND TAX



The Open Space Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Tax (Trust Fund) is the key to the thousands of acres of land permanently preserved in Mercer County. The Trust Fund was established in 1989 by the voters of Mercer County who approved it by a large margin. The tax approved at that time was the collection of one cent (\$.01) per \$100 of equalized assessed value. The first year the tax was collected was in 1990. Over the last 30 years the voters continued to support the Trust Fund Tax in four additional referenda, outlined below.

1989

Levy up to \$.01

100% Farmland and open space preservation

1998

Levy up to \$.02

85% Farmland and open space preservation

15% Recreational development and historic preservation

2004

Levy up to \$.03

85% Farmland and open space preservation

15% Recreational development and historic preservation

2012

Levy up to \$.03

70% Farmland and open space preservation

20% Recreational development and historic preservation

10% Stewardship

The Mercer County open space tax has contributed to the preservation of:

- 5,174 acres of County parkland, open space and conservation easements
- 5,997 acres through the Mercer County Municipal and Non-Profit Open Space Assistance Program utilizing grants to local governments and nonprofit conservation organizations
- 5,413 acres through the County farmland preservation program
- 167 County acres transferred to municipal open space
- 1,903 acres of cooperative open space and farmland properties with direct County funding
- Examples of stewardship projects funded with the Trust Fund:
 - Native meadow and grassland restoration
 - Forest restoration
 - Freshwater tidal wetland restoration
 - Invasive species management
 - Parkland and open space boundary monitoring
- Historic preservation projects funded with the Trust Fund include:
 - Petty Run Interpretive restoration in Trenton
 - Rogers House Interpretive restoration at Mercer County Park
 - Hunt House restoration at Mercer Meadows
 - Abbott Farm National Landmark Interpretive Plan and signage
 - Kahn Bathhouse restoration and associated improvements in Ewing
- Examples of park planning and development projects funded with Trust Fund:
 - Dam Site 21 Master Plan
 - Moore's Station Quarry Master Plan
 - Stony Brook Pedestrian Bridge
 - Mercer County Park Splash pad
 - Baldpate Mountain building renovations, parking and site improvements
 - Tulpehaking Nature Center

This tax along with all state, local and farmland preservation funds helped to ensure that over 27% of the county's land has been protected and preserved. As open space acquisition slows and as the need to provide for park development, public access and stewardship grow, the County plans to go out to Mercer County voters in November 2021 to adjust the open space tax allocation accordingly.

II. VISION

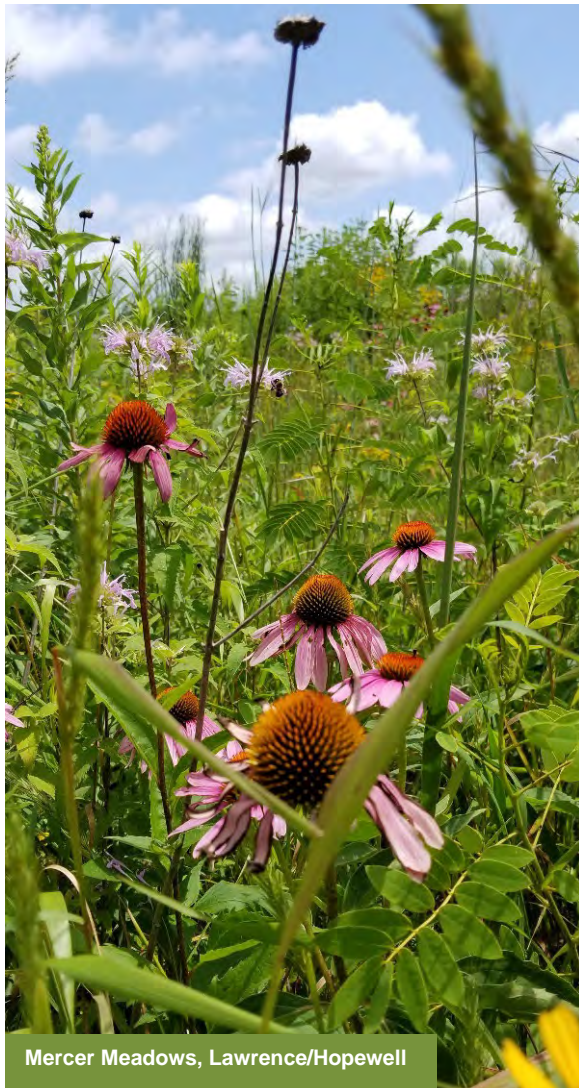


South Riverwalk Park, Trenton

Preserved land has a significant impact on our future and affects how people live, work and play. The benefits to the environment, health, economy and society are seemingly limitless. Land preservation is critical to the quality of life for current and future generations.

This Plan updates and articulates the County's vision for open space preservation which includes protecting the environment while being responsible stewards of the land in which the County has invested, serving the recreational needs of the people, providing opportunities that promote public health, and promoting a sustainable economy.

A. Preserving and Maintaining Land for Nature and the Environment



Natural lands have always been purchased with the intention of protecting biodiversity and providing ecological services. While protected land alone cannot correct the increased effects of climate change, the preservation of natural lands assists in offsetting these effects, such as increased flooding and drought. Protected open space reduces the impact of impervious surfaces, reducing run off and flooding. Intact forests, grasslands and wetlands store and sequester carbon. The preservation of stream corridors protects the water supply, water quality, and wildlife as well wetlands within the stream's floodplains (stream corridors are typically old forest, as stream corridors were not used for agriculture as much as uplands). Mature forests absorb CO₂ while producing oxygen, keep the forest floor cool, and filter pollutants from water. *According to the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture, a mature forest canopy can reduce air temperature five to ten degrees, helping to counteract the urban heat island effect.* The preservation of large natural areas fosters the health and natural beauty of our community for future generations.

The successful acquisition of land for preservation is integrated with the responsibility to care for and protect the ecological features of these preserved lands. Funds and programs to steward natural land are essential. In many cases, preserved land that is not cared for will degrade over time. Historic use influences the land's resiliency to ecological threats such as invasive species, overabundant deer, and natural disturbance. Much preserved land was once either harvested or utilized for agriculture, and both have impacts in how land today responds to disturbance. Land that was once in agriculture is more prone to invasion of invasive species, and currently is hit harder by Emerald Ash Borer. Large tracts of old forest, areas untouched by man since the late 1800's, are more resilient to some of the current ecological threats, harbor different organisms, and sequester carbon at a greater rate than disturbed

younger forests. When available, old forest should be preserved for these important benefits. Performing stewardship in forests is vital to their ability to function; deer management, invasive species control, restoration fencing, and small to large reforestation plantings are vital to conserving preserved forest land. Grasslands and meadows benefit declining wildlife communities such as grassland breeding birds, reptiles and amphibians, and pollinators, in addition to their ability to sequester carbon. To keep these herbaceous habitats, annual maintenance is required to promote native grasses and wildflowers, while controlling non-native and woody plants. Natural land management, including practices such as deer population control, creating and maintaining meadows and grasslands, stream bank and wetland protection and preserving sensitive and rare species ensures that the land performs its ecological function. Diligent stewardship and management are essential for protecting our lands' natural resources. The acquisition of open space is the initial investment in the land and its inherent values, where stewardship maintains or enhances these values. Good stewardship protects environmental features, natural beauty, and the recreational opportunities it provides. Through good stewardship practices, programs, and dedicated staff, the ecological values are preserved along with the land.

B. Preserving Land for People



Baldpate Mountain, Hopewell

Large natural preserves are in the rural areas of the County far from the major population areas because that is where the acquisition opportunities exist. Public access to them through mass transit, educational programs and community events are important tools that connect people to these natural areas.

Although areas of dense population are challenged by the scarcity of land available for passive or active recreation, opportunities on vacant land in the city and older suburbs is balanced with open space and other needed land uses such housing and economic development.

Urban parkland can be created by reclaiming lands degraded by industry and neglect. These under-utilized lands provide opportunities for recreation in the more populated and under-served urbanized areas. Environmental remediation of such parcels is a valuable community investment. It not only increases close to home recreation but also increases the value and marketability of the surrounding neighborhood. Public plazas, improved streetscape, and pedestrian scale outdoor spaces, soften and naturalize the urban landscape. Urban trees improve air quality and create cooler spaces in the warm weather months. Recent research also suggests that there is significant ecological value to natural land in urban areas.

It is important to make all of our parks and open spaces accessible to all users. Visible and clear signage, well-marked trails and adequate parking, information made available through the internet, and publications such as trail maps and brochures provide valuable information to improve and increase access, making the spaces inviting for new and repeat users alike.

Greenways provide physical linkages to connect people to open spaces, as well as connections that conserve the environment, by creating large continuous areas for habitat and watershed protection. Linking our green infrastructure promotes walkable communities, encourages walking and bicycling in lieu of driving and promotes healthy living options for our residents. County, local and statewide bicycle paths and plans are important connections to parks and greenspaces. Abandoned rail lines and abandoned and existing utility corridors have the potential to connect to and through natural areas and bicycle paths. Obtaining public access rights of way on utility and rail corridors is challenging and, in some instances, may benefit from a coordinated effort at the County level.

C. Preserving Land for Recreation and Public Health

Creative development patterns that prevent sprawl, while providing pedestrian and bicycle friendly facilities and quality parkland and greenways, increase opportunities for physical activity. Parkland and recreational land located close to where people work and live also increases opportunities for physical activity. The earliest days of the Covid-19 pandemic illustrated the importance of parkland and recreational areas in close proximity to residences as many County residents sought out parks and open space when gyms and other indoor recreational options were closed. In addition, time spent in parks and



open spaces contribute to improved mental health. We should seek quality public mass transit in the urban and suburban areas with connections to our suburban and rural passive recreation and natural resources. These connections would permit residents living in more urban areas to access our natural areas, resulting in more physical activity. The very existence of preserved lands improves public health. As noted above, preserved land improves water recharge, reducing run off and flooding in

more densely population areas of the County. Healthy forests and urban trees all contribute to air quality. All these open space benefits play a significant role in improving public health.

The availability of recreational land and open space is beneficial to public health. There has been national concern regarding the nation's physical inactivity resulting in health problems including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. This concern is addressed in the publication from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) entitled "The Health Benefits of Parks," published in 2006. This health concern is not only for the aging population but also for the younger generation. According to the Center for Disease Control, only 25 percent of American adults engage in the recommended levels of physical activity and 29 percent engage in no leisure-time physical activity. The statistics for children and adolescents are similar: only 27 percent of students in grades 9-12 engage in moderate to intensive physical activity. According to the TPL "strong evidence shows that when people have access to parks, they are more likely to exercise, which can reduce obesity and its associated problems and costs. A group of studies in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine showed that "creation of or access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach" produced a 48.4 percent increase in the frequency of physical activity.

D. Preserving Land for the Community and Economy

Quality open space is good for the local economy and fosters community cooperation and unity in addition to increasing nearby land values. Studies show that open space provides positive opportunities and alternatives for youth, resulting in the reduction of crime. Mercer County's active parks generate economic activity from residents and day and overnight visitors. The variety of available activities serves audiences of every age and ability. Among the County's preserved farms, several have pick-your-own operations and other forms of agri-tourism which contribute directly to the County's economic health. These farm operations are a source of locally grown produce which reduces the carbon footprint of the produce and improves public health.

According to the Trust for Public Land, "The Benefits of Parks," there are significant social and economic benefits from quality open space. Studies show that many people are willing to pay more for property adjacent to parks and open space. Parks and open space also increase commercial land values and are an important factor in where corporations decide to locate. Parks and open space provide tourist attractions and contribute the monetary and economic benefits of tourism. There are also social benefits. Parks provide a sense of community. According to the TPL, "Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and in particular to reduce juvenile delinquency. Recreational facilities keep at-risk youth off the street, gives them a safe environment to interact with their peers, and fill up time within which they could otherwise get into trouble."

III. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The following Policies and Strategies have been established to promote the vision of the Plan.

A. Acquisition Policies

Policy 1: Preserve open space and recreational lands which are connected to where people live and work.

Policy 1 Strategies:

- Preserve regionally significant land for passive and recreational use.
- Help local government and non-profit environmental and land preservation organizations preserve land of local importance.
- Preserve, redevelop, and reclaim land in the urban areas to better serve and provide quality open space and recreation to the underserved population.
- Preserve land within redevelopment projects and properties as a catalyst for economic growth and quality land use.
- Connect densely populated areas and communities to natural areas through the preservation and acquisition of lands along utility easements, streams, abandoned rail lines, and lands that may need to be reclaimed from environmental degradation.
- Connect communities by preserving recreational land for the creation of walking and bike trails.



South Riverwalk Park, Trenton

Policy 2: Where appropriate, purchase lands that add to or protect property or environmental features previously preserved by the County.

Strategies:

- Actively pursue the purchase of lands which are critical to the protection of an existing County resource or environmental feature on County lands or which adds to or completes lands necessary to construct a trail, Greenway or similar amenity.

B. Development Policies

Policy 1: Recognizing the financial limits of the current tax authorization, provide active and passive recreational opportunities through well-designed parks, preserves and greenways. Invest in historic structures, especially as they support recreational opportunities.



Mercer County Park, Rogers House, West Windsor

Strategies:

- Provide for both active and passive recreational development on County-owned lands.
- Design recreation improvements to limit impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
- Identify opportunities for public access on farms prior to preserving farmland.

- Design and create recreational opportunities for all user groups to help keep the community healthy and fit.
- Restore and maintain historic and cultural resources to educate and enhance recreational opportunities.

Policy 2: Provide active and passive recreation located in or near population centers and provide multi-modal connections.

Strategies:

- Provide recreational opportunities and improvements in urban areas that will serve the recreational needs of underserved populations.
- Redevelop, reclaim and remediate appropriate brownfield sites to expand recreational opportunities.
- Connect people to open space and places of



Lawrence Hopewell Trail

- of interest through the creation of Greenways, trails, and other multi-modal facilities.
- Support public mass transit opportunities that will connect people to open space and parkland within urban areas as well as to the rural and suburban areas.
- Improve existing properties to be accessible to everyone with quality parking and signage, and provide information through a variety of electronic and other media.
- Support the goals and objectives of County and local bike plans and cooperate with local government to provide access to open space, community services and businesses through greenways, bike paths on road and off road, and through the implementation of complete streets efforts.

Policy 3: Maintain and protect the environment when developing all open space.

Strategies:

- Ensure that impacts of recreational development are appropriate to maintain and sustain the natural environment.
- Design and construct all recreational development according to all required regulations and practices necessary to preserve environmentally sensitive land, water, scenic vistas and plant and animal habitats.
- Minimize the clearing of land by situating active recreation in already cleared areas where possible and implement reforestation and restoration where appropriate.
- Maximize usable space to limit the impact on the land. Maintain and operate recreational open space to ensure the protection of environmentally sensitive features such as woodland and grassland habitat, wetlands, watersheds, streams, and water bodies.

Policy 4: Appreciate and care for all the ecological values of preserved open space by being custodians and stewards of the land.

Strategies:

- Evaluate and monitor the ecological significance of preserved lands and ensure that good stewardship and best management practices are implemented.
- Restore land degraded by invasive species, harmful human impacts, effects of climate change and other impacts.
- Invest in educational outreach, professional staff and resources to provide the tools and expertise for managing and protecting the county's natural resources on all preserved land.



IV. CRITERIA

Criteria have been established to determine the appropriate lands for preservation and development. The following criteria set forth the characteristics of land which are desirable to implement the County's Policies and Strategies. These criteria are not listed in priority order.



A. Lands in a Largely Natural or Undeveloped State:

The protection of natural resources and ecologically sensitive and significant land, such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, waterways, slopes, mature woodlands, large stands of forests and ridge lines in their natural state is the primary goal of this plan. This is the first criterion of all open space acquisitions and will govern the proposed uses of acquired lands. These large natural areas should only be developed for passive recreation.

1. Water quality protection: The protection of our watersheds and potable water supply benefits the environment and public health and is critical for the maintenance of healthy plant and animal populations. As the human population grows and development expands, there is an increased demand for both potable water and recreation. Recreation in environmentally sensitive

lands must be compatible with the natural values of the site, as noted in the policies and strategies above.

2. Wetlands and slope protection: Wetlands and steep slopes are often protected in part by government regulations. Nevertheless, it is still important to ensure protection for these sensitive environments. Disturbances to these areas and in the buffer areas surrounding them can result in flooding, erosion, increased water pollution, and loss of wildlife and vegetation.

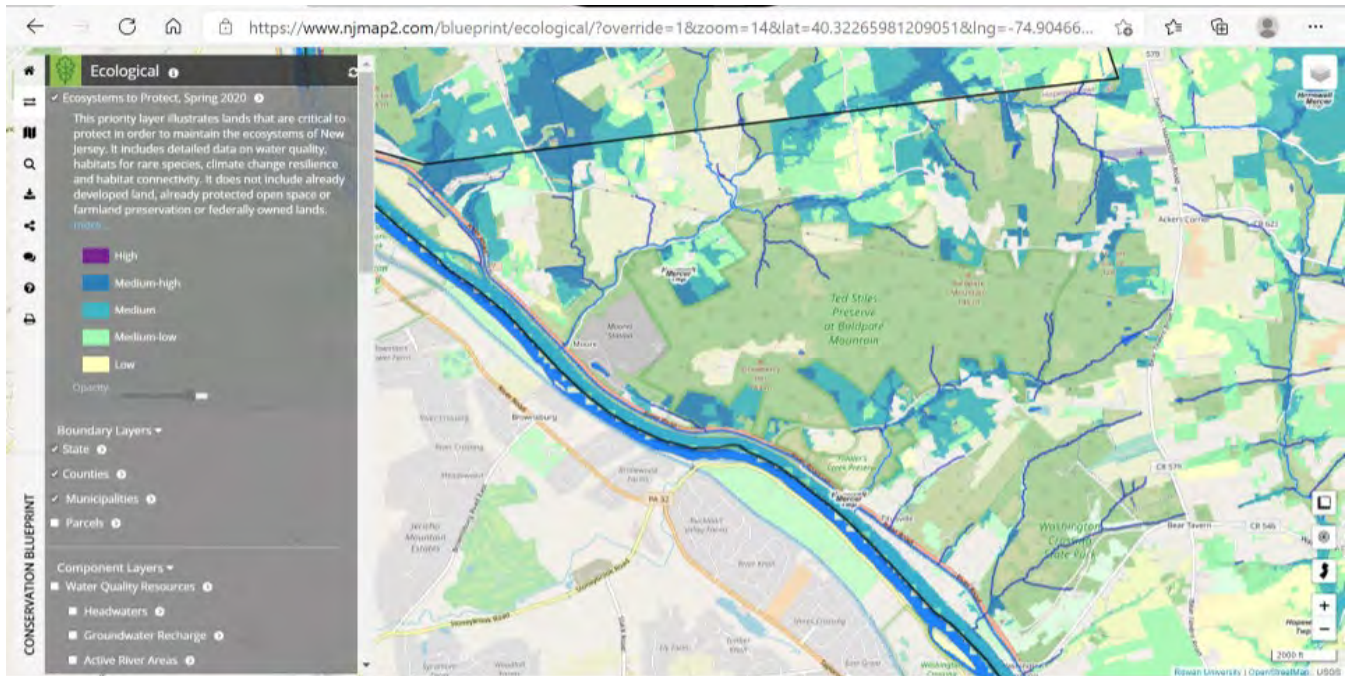
3. Plant and animal habitat: Conservation of the wildlife habitat is necessary to the survival of many unique and rare species, and maintains healthy environments for diverse communities of plants and animals that generate higher biodiversity, increasing the quality of life for the residents of Mercer County.

4. Size of open space: To provide adequate protection of a natural area, the protection of large areas of land containing many smaller natural communities is encouraged. Large natural areas reduce the edge effects that adversely affect natural communities. Large areas may include larger portions of watersheds, which serve to protect water quality and sensitive plant and animal habitats.

5. Connections with other open spaces: Open spaces that are near to or connected to other open spaces offer advantages in shared facilities and maintenance. Connected open space also provides increased protection of the natural environment by increasing the effective size of the protected open space. Although larger tracts are prioritized, the objective can also be achieved by the acquisition of smaller tracts over time that result in tracts or Greenways of significant size.

6. Threatened or endangered species: Preservation of land containing the potential habitats of endangered or threatened species and the species themselves is needed to prevent their extirpation and promote biodiversity.

7. Geological significance: Geologically significant features such as high ridges, unique land formations, and unique rock formations are to be considered as valuable natural areas for preservation and unique plant and animal communities.

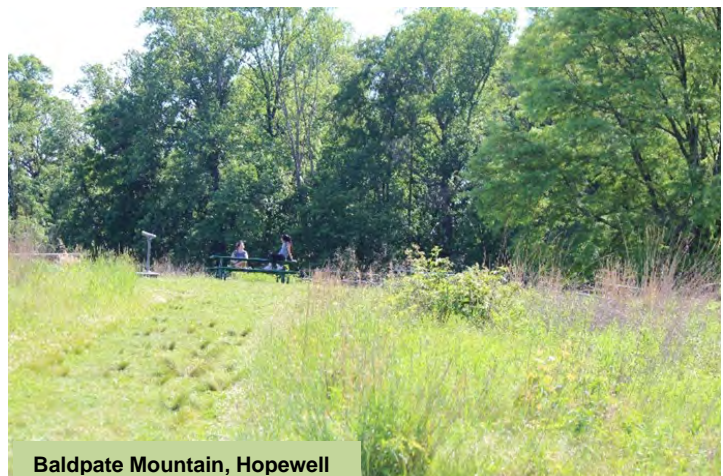


The NJMAP2, New Jersey Conservation Blueprint, and CHANJ, Connecting Habitat Across NJ both provide a visual mapping tool to identify resources and where opportunities are located throughout the County. The use of these tools can provide valuable information and analysis in identifying the criteria of this Plan such as, greenways, large forested areas, critical habitat, population related to open space needs, water features, wetlands and where the most ecologically sensitive lands can be preserved.

B. Acquisition for Passive and Active Recreation

Open space for public recreation is important and in high demand. The preservation of recreational land that will serve a diverse community and major population areas is a criterion for acquisition.

1. Relationship to natural and undeveloped open space: The preservation and development of open space for recreational uses should provide for the preservation of the natural environment when developing recreational facilities.



2. Public access: Recreational facilities should be accessible to the public which they are meant to serve. Access in urban areas should be available through local pedestrian circulation and local mass transit systems. Regional parks outside of urban areas should also be accessible via mass transit, whenever possible. Bike trails, nature trails, and urban paths are also important public access systems. Bike trails are for use by non-motorized vehicles; motorized vehicles should be prohibited except under extraordinary circumstances.

3. Need as it relates to population: Urban areas and high population growth areas are important considerations to the location of recreational facilities. These areas have high demand for open space and there is little or no land available close to these population centers.

4. Use-specific size: The size of a park to be developed for recreation must be compatible with the use. Larger areas which are acquired for passive recreation may include activities such as hiking, horseback riding, and biking. Smaller sized parks may be appropriate for developed recreational facilities integrated with natural habitats. Small urban parks may be more suitable for playgrounds and other active recreation facilities.

5. Water access: Water access provides many possible amenities for recreation and scenic enjoyment. A river can provide a greenway for trails, non-motorized boating, and fishing. Lakes and other waterways may provide a setting for other water sports that may be practicable while maintaining the quality of the natural environment.

6. Aesthetic views and vistas: Significant and especially unique and beautiful views and vistas should be maintained. A scenic overlook of a natural, historical or expansive landscape is valuable.

7. Passive recreation: Passive recreation is best suited for natural and environmentally sensitive lands. Great care should be taken in selecting the appropriate recreational development and locating the recreational amenities appropriately.



View from Baldpate Mountain, Hopewell

8. Active recreation: Active recreation should be limited to lands that can sustain the impact of recreational development in a way that assures the maintenance of the natural environment.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has developed a GIS program for Mercer County that can be utilized to evaluate where there are recreational needs in the County, where there are unserved areas and also where existing parks can be improved to create pedestrian and bicycle access to adjoining neighborhoods. Planning Department staff utilized and considered the results from this tool in the development of this plan.

C. Acquisition in Urbanized Areas

Preserving lands in urbanized areas, near where people live and work, is a priority for acquisition. Land is not plentiful or readily available in urban areas. Criteria to increase open space opportunities in the underserved urbanized areas have been established.

1. Vacant or Abandoned Properties: Many urban areas have properties that are vacant and uncared for. These properties can be preserved to help meet the open space needs of the underserved and will also help to build stronger communities by improving and utilizing vacant land.
2. Brownfield Sites: Old industrial sites and environmentally degraded lands blight the landscape and create unsafe and unclean communities. These neglected properties can be reclaimed and restored through environmental remediation and provide public open space, improve community health and safety, and provide a catalyst for economic growth.
3. Redevelopment: Urban redevelopment projects are planned to restore and promote economic growth. Successful redevelopment projects need to include elements such as public urban plazas and green spaces that will serve the community in and around the redeveloped area.
4. Community Gardens: Community Gardens should be encouraged and preserved where strong nonprofit and community organizations are involved and dedicated. These gardens provide fresh produce and support sustainable living. A community garden should also be a place

where the community gathers and socializes, while providing hands-on experience and knowledge of growing fresh produce.

5. Greenway and Open Space Connections: Greenways can provide pedestrians and cyclists with safe recreational opportunities and connections. River fronts, canals, abandoned transportation corridors, and utility rights of way can provide linear open space and alternative modes of transportation.

6. Safe and functional Open space near Schools and Community Facilities: Many urban schools do not have a proper place for children to play. Land preserved in urbanized neighborhoods should be encouraged near and adjacent to schools and other community facilities. Urban open space in the form of playgrounds and pocket parks are best utilized and protected when there is coordination with schools and other community facilities and should provide good visibility and safe access.



D. Historic and Culturally Significant Lands

The preservation of cultural and historic sites is essential in the preservation of our community's and country's history.



Mercer Meadows, Hunt House, Hopewell

1. Relationship to natural and undeveloped open space: The preservation of an historic site should also include the preservation of surrounding open space. It is important that the historic resource be viewed in context as much as possible. This will enhance the preservation of the natural environment as well as the historical preservation effort.
2. Historical significance and value: Historical and cultural sites are educational and are important reminders of our heritage and our past. Preservation of historically significant landscapes must be provided.

E. Farmland Preservation:

It is the intent of the Open Space Plan to include significant preservation of the County's farmland. This plan complements the Farmland Preservation element of the Master Plan.

1. Relationship to natural and undeveloped open space: As with all other preserved open space, farmland needs to coexist with and help maintain the preservation of the natural environment. Farmland with associated natural open space preserves our heritage of land use in Mercer County.
2. Mercer County Farmland Preservation Plan: The County shall preserve farmland consistent with the Farmland Preservation element of the Master Plan.
3. Mercer County Agricultural Development Board Criteria: Farmland preservation project selection will be based upon the established Agricultural Development Area (ADA) developed by the County Agricultural Development Board, utilizing the criteria set forth in the Farmland Preservation element of the Master Plan.
4. State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) Criteria: Farmland acquisitions will also reflect the criteria and policies set forth by the State Agriculture Development Committee.

F. Administration and Acquisition

The following administrative criteria need to be addressed for each open space acquisition:

1. Development pressure: Projects that are otherwise appropriate for preservation but which are also under immediate threat from development will require priority and swift action. In some situations, the development pressure must be weighed against the time frame and the feasibility of the project's success.
2. Relation to planning efforts: To the greatest extent possible projects should reflect the goals set forth in the master plans of the local municipality, County, State and adjoining regions.

3. Support from other public and private groups: The support of the community, non-profit conservation organizations, local businesses and surrounding organizations is beneficial to the success of a project. Support outside of government can lead to donations and public involvement.
4. Costs: The market value of the land should be compared to the open space value of the land. A project that has a moderate or low market value along with the potential to serve a large population with a quality facility is often more appropriate than a more expensive property of equal open space value. The cost of maintenance and operating expenses must also be considered. Facilities close to existing parks that can be cared for by the same agency is more cost efficient. Generally, facilities with passive activities are less costly to develop and maintain.
5. Bargain Sales and Donations: A project with support and donations or a bargain sale to the County or a nonprofit is considered favorably. The State Green Acres program may match funding of all non-profit donations. Leveraging funds from a variety of sources and partners is essential.
6. Acquisition expediency: The lack of conflict, availability of funds, support, ease of transaction of sale and a cooperative seller are all helpful in acquiring open space relatively quickly and with minimal obstacles.

G. Administration and Recreational Development

The Mercer County Park Commission has primary responsibility for the recreational development of County owned parks and open spaces. These criteria address overall goals for the use of the County's Open Space Trust Fund Tax in the development of these lands. The following administrative criteria need to be considered when developing County parkland:

1. Cost: The cost to develop land for recreational purposes is significantly higher per acre than the cost of acquiring land. Active recreation facilities such as ball fields, tennis and basketball courts are costly to develop, operate and maintain. Careful consideration to the limits of the open space trust fund should be considered when selecting recreational development projects. Passive opportunities such as nature trails, picnic areas, boating and fishing have less impact on the environment and are less costly to develop and maintain.

2. Private Investment and Partnerships: Due to the high cost of developing land for recreation, projects that can secure funding from public/private partnerships or other funds should be encouraged.

3. Protection of the Environment: Protection of the natural environment is an essential consideration in type and location of recreational facilities to be developed.

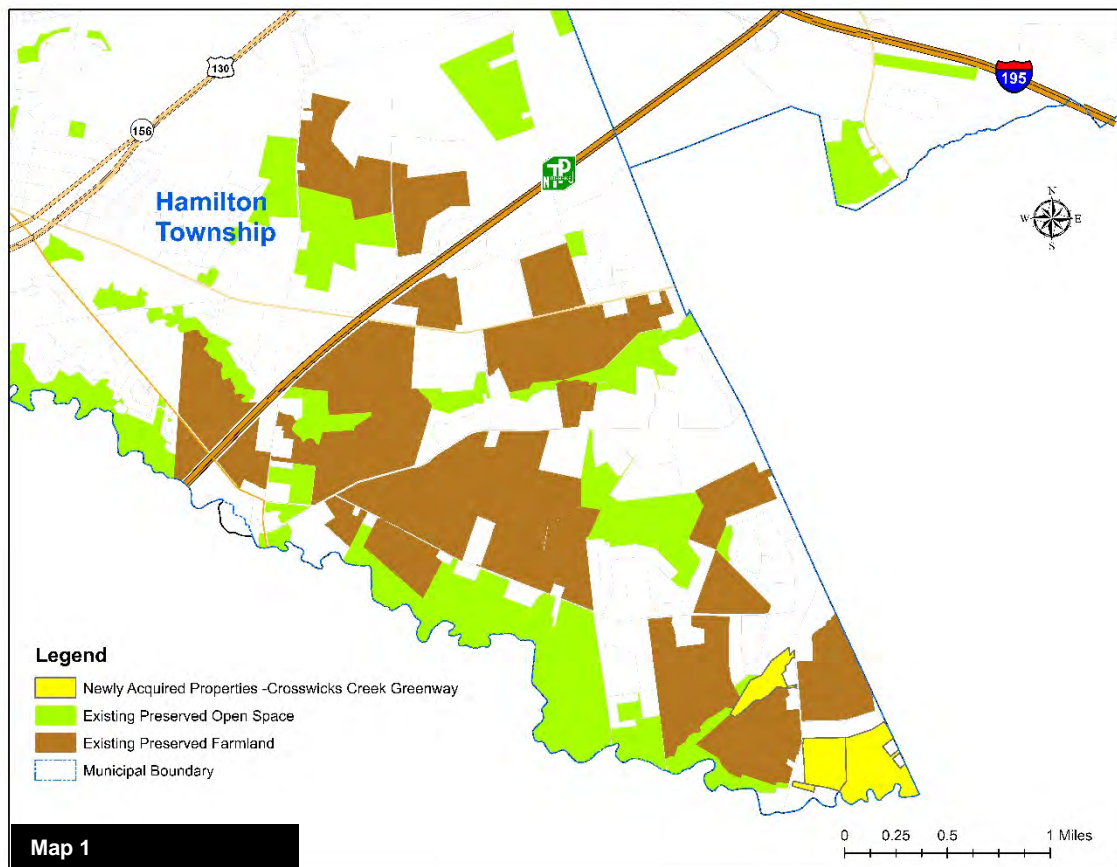
4. Coordination of development projects with the Mercer County Park Commission: It is necessary to coordinate all land acquisition and recreational development projects with the County Park Commission. The Commission is responsible for the management of these properties and their ongoing operational and maintenance costs.

V. COUNTY LAND ACQUISITION ACTIVITY SINCE 2011 PLAN

A. Regionally Significant County Open Space

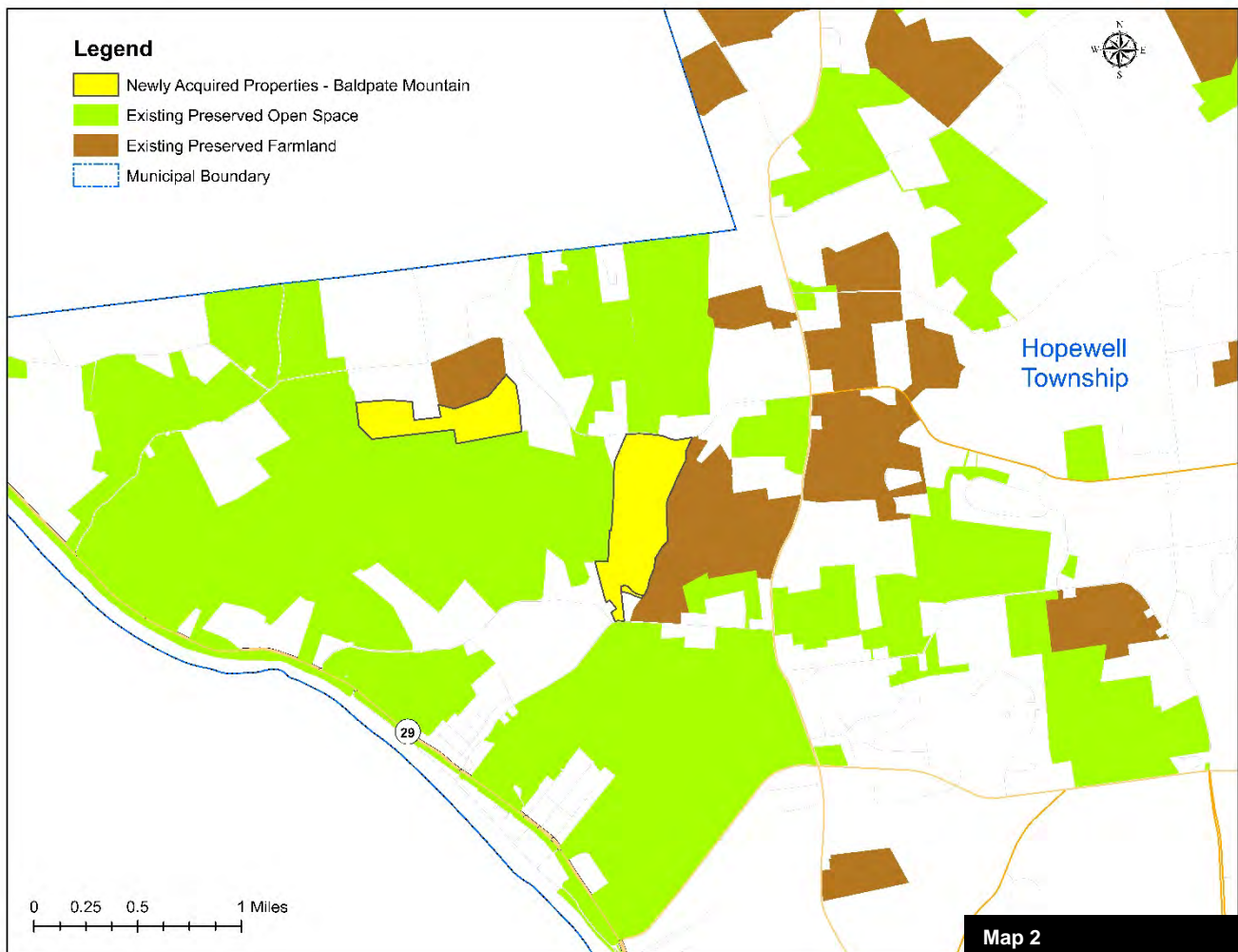
Since 2010 the County has preserved 637.5 acres in fee simple for county public open space. While this may appear to be a small gain over an 11-year period, it consists of 15 significant properties that have enriched county owned land and improved connections. The properties that have been acquired range from 186 acres to 0.67 acres; eight of the fifteen acquisitions were less than 10 acres. Preserving key lands that connect to existing county land and or land that is along greenways has been a priority. Greenways provide regional connections to existing open space and provide opportunities to connect people to larger open space through hiking, bicycling or walking.

The Crosswicks Greenway has been an ongoing preservation area for the County for three decades. Almost the entire corridor of the Creek in Hamilton Township has been preserved. The Crosswicks Creek flows into the Delaware River and the Abbott Marshlands. This Greenway is also connected to the

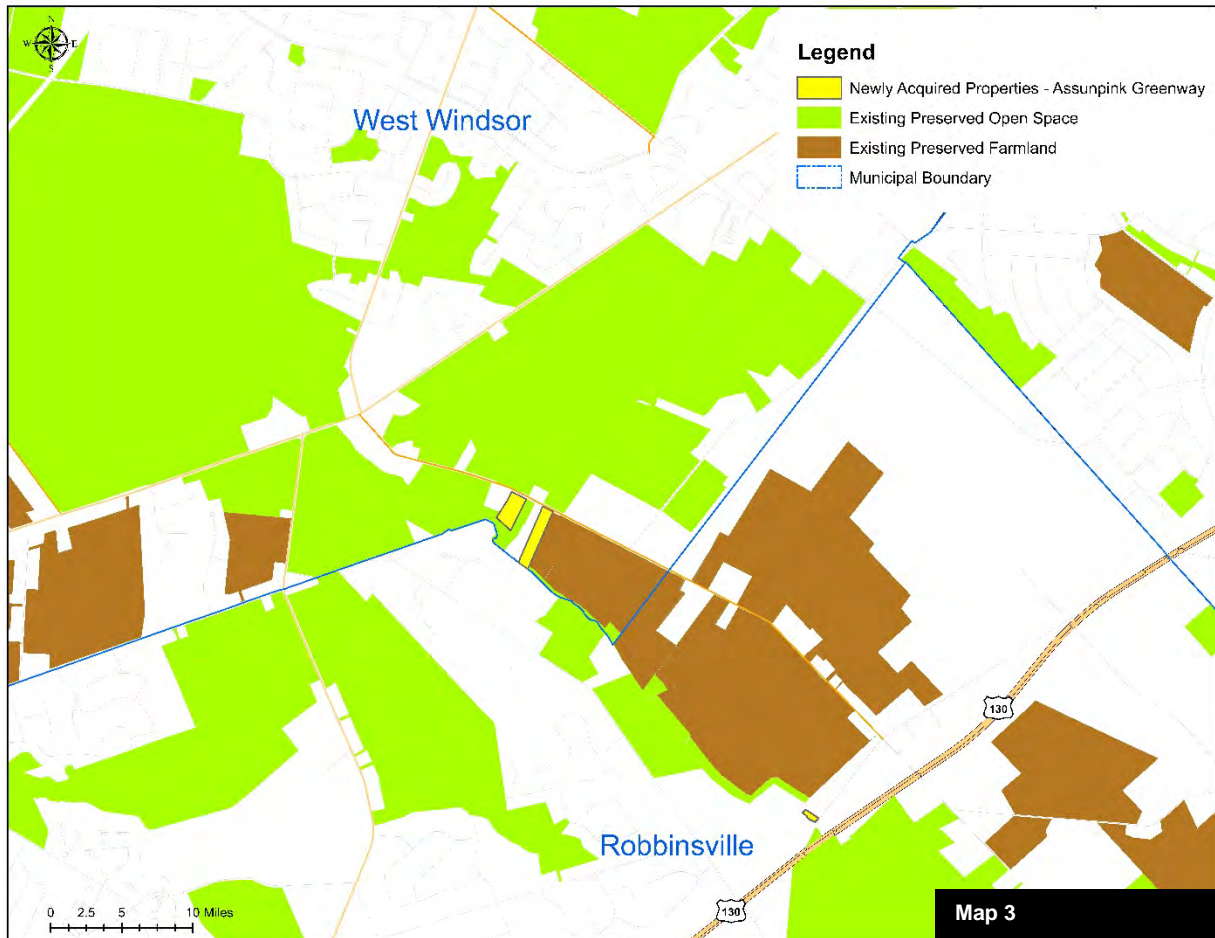


Monmouth County Greenway. Three new Crosswicks Creek greenway properties were preserved since 2010 providing small but critical missing links, stream corridor preservation, forest and grassland (see map 1).

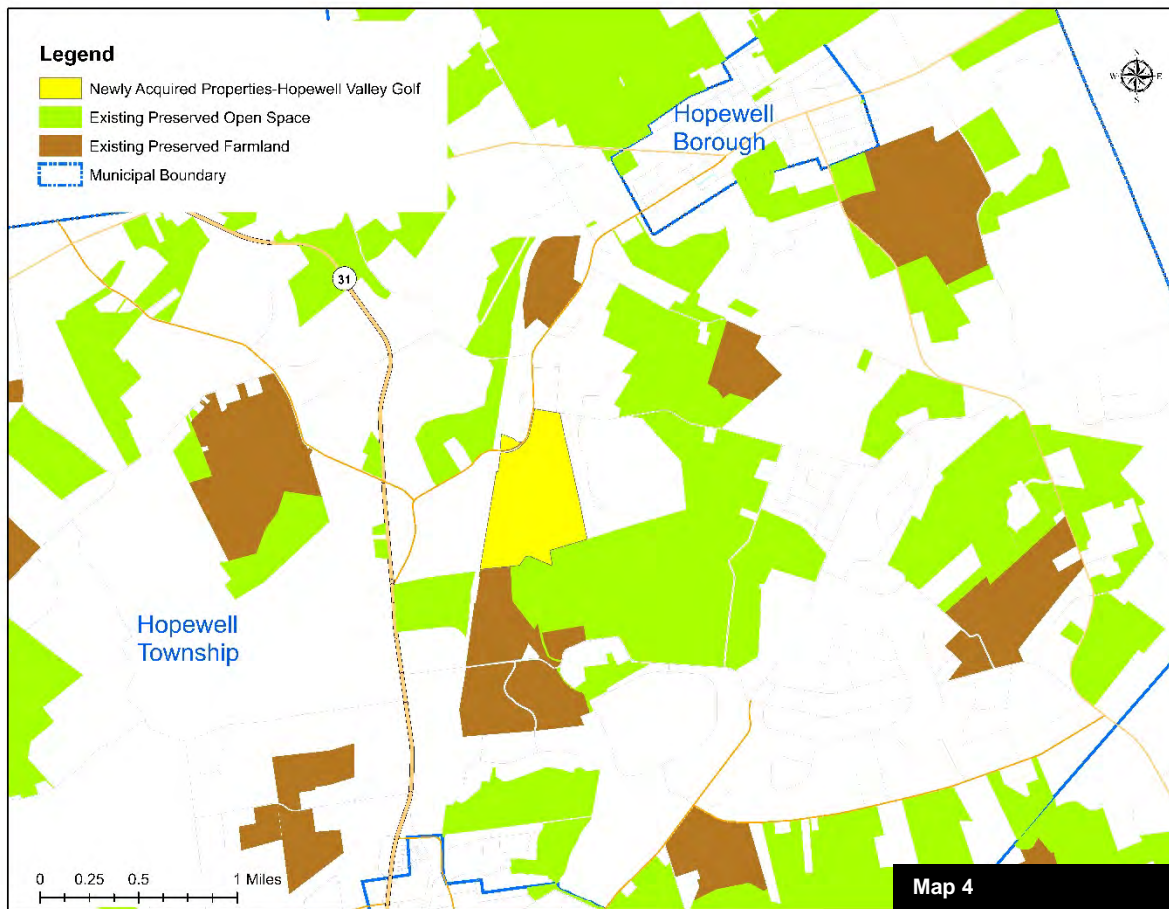
Recent additions to the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain enhance the high quality passive open space for many enthusiastic public users. Mercer County partnered with the State Green Acres acquisition program to preserve 128 additional acres on Fiddlers Creek Road and 88 additional acres were preserved by the County on the northwest side on the mountain. Another parcel that is only 0.9 acres was preserved and will provide for a trail crossing over Fiddlers Creek from the former Honey Hollow Bridge (see map 2).



Three key properties have been preserved along the Assunpink Creek. A small parcel of .67 acres which has frontage on Main Street in the Village of Windsor, Robbinsville Township provides street access to the Assunpink Greenway and the proposed future Rails-To-Trails corridor along the abandoned Camden Amboy Rail line. The second property is 5.5 acres along the Assunpink on Windsor Road. There remains only one small property between Main Street in Windsor and Mercer County Park to complete this portion of the Assunpink Greenway. The County also acquired 4.4 acres adjacent to previously preserved county land along the Assunpink in a land exchange with West Windsor (see map 3).



A significant acquisition and addition to the County's recreational facilities was the preservation of the Hopewell Valley Golf Course. The HVGC is 186 acres with an eighteen-hole golf course, a club house, swimming pool, paddle ball and tennis courts and several maintenance structures that will provide the County with a high quality public recreational facility (see map 4).



Other key acquisitions include:

- Land adjacent to Dam Site 21 in Hamilton Township
- Land adjacent to the Stony Brook Greenway (managed by The Watershed Institute)
- A small parcel next to the equestrian center in Mercer Meadows.
- Land in Princeton Township adjacent to Herrontown Woods managed by the D&R Greenway Land Trust
- Land on the Bear Brook Greenway

B. Land Transfers

To better maintain lands on a local level the County transferred ownership of two properties to local ownership. Herrontown Woods in Princeton is adjacent to several open space properties owned and managed by the Municipality of Princeton. Transferring these 141 acres to Princeton gives the municipality the responsibility and ownership in an area where they are already providing resources and lessens the burden on the County. The second property was 26 acres of land in Mercer County Park on

Conover Road which was transferred to West Windsor Township. This portion of Mercer County Park was being used primarily for West Windsor recreational programs. In exchange, the township transferred 4.4 acres of preserved land along the Assunpink Greenway to the County.

The County has also purchased numerous farmland properties in fee that were later deed restricted and auctioned, now privately-owned preserved farmland. Therefore, these properties remain preserved but are no longer under county management and reduce the amount of County-owned fee acres.

C. Trenton



In 2014 the County purchased almost 2 full acres in Trenton on North Clinton Avenue and Escher Avenue next to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK). The land was deeded to the City and together the City and the D&R Greenway addressed the existing environmental remediation issues. The D&R Greenway has managed and implemented an urban farm known as Capital City Farm since 2014. In 2021 the County and the City of Trenton entered into an agreement to have the Mercer County Park

Commission oversee the management of the Farm, partnering with a nonprofit to lead the community engagement effort. The site was a vacant and undesirable blight on the neighborhood and today there is a green space and an urban farm growing fresh produce and engaging the neighborhood. Fresh produce is utilized immediately by TASK to serve their clientele. This project is an example of how the nonprofit community and the County can work together with the City to find creative opportunities for green space in Trenton and other urban areas of the County.



Before



Capital City Farm, Trenton, After

D. Municipal and Nonprofit Assistance Program

The Mercer County Municipal/Non-profit Assistance program provides grants to municipal and nonprofit land conservancy organizations to acquire lands of local importance. Local parkland and open space that serves a community is important in meeting the goal of providing “close to home” recreation and open space. Since 2010 the County has provided 50 grants to preserve an additional 1,733.5 acres.

VI. NEEDS ANALYSIS

Mercer County contains 144,640 acres, over 27% of which is permanently preserved land. The preserved 27% includes all State, County, municipal, and nonprofit public open space, conservation easements and preserved farmland³.

This Plan recognizes the farmland preservation program in the total land preserved because those lands are free from residential and non-agricultural commercial development in perpetuity. Including preserved farmland also gives a more complete picture of the preservation landscape in Mercer County. Although preserved farmland is in private ownership, there are conservation, economic and health benefits associated with the preservation of the land and the maintenance of an agricultural economy in the County. Of the 27% of preserved land, approximately 6% is preserved farmland and open space and conserved open space is approximately 20%.

The development of accurate acreage figures for this Plan is challenging and has been for many years. There are several existing programs and data sources being used for the open space inventory that do not provide the same results. It is possible to evaluate the acreage of a preserved parcel using data from our Geographic Information System (GIS data), tax parcel data and the property survey and have three different acreage figures. Advances in software are available to more accurately manage and interpret the open space preservation data at the county and local levels. A new software program is being implemented by the Planning Department and the Park Commission staff. This will be a tool to improve and refine the way data is stored and evaluated for preservation goals and stewardship programming. It will also provide a more concise and accurate count for how many acres are preserved and provide a tool to better categorize the inventory and improving analysis. Implementation of this system will require the use of a single data source for property acreage (survey data, for example) which will still result acres which may differ from other source such as tax parcel or GIS data. Consistency is critical in the reporting of road rights-of-way (not preserved) and non-severable farmland exception areas (preserved in that they must remain with the preserved farm, but not subject to the Deed of Easement in the same manner).

The purpose of this Plan is the analysis of preserved public open space and conservation lands with public access. The County open space program preserves land for County parks and recreation to serve the countywide passive and active recreational needs. The program also preserves lands by working

³ The 27% was calculated using spatial GIS data layers and does not reflect actual surveyed acres.

cooperatively with the State and by providing grants to municipalities and land conservation non-profits for the preservation of locally significant open space.

Total County owned public open space including all county parkland and preserved open space, plus non-farmland conservation easements, less land transferred totals 9,537 acres. This does not include state, municipal or nonprofit open space. These open spaces are typically large open spaces or parks. There are three County parks that are over 1200 acres in size: The Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain, Mercer Meadows, and Mercer County Park. The parks operated and maintained by the Mercer County Park Commission are regionally significant and provide high quality passive and active recreation to all citizens in the County. As noted previously, larger preserved open spaces also provide offer more protection of natural resources and habitat.

Based on the Balanced Land Use Guidelines from the NJ Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), it is recommended that Mercer County preserve 7 percent of the developed and developable land which excludes steep slopes, wetlands and federal and state regulated lands. The area of developed and developable land so described equals 126,054 acres in Mercer County, resulting in a preservation target of 8,824 acres. Mercer County meets this Guideline with 9,537 acres of County open space and parkland. Although this slightly exceeds the Guideline, the County will continue to preserve land of regional significance to protect natural resources and provide passive and active public recreation.

NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION		
Recommended Classification System for Local and Regional Recreation Open Space		
COMPONENT POPULATION	DESIRABLE SIZE	AC/1000
MINI - PARK	1 ACRE OR LESS	0.25 - 0.5
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK/PLAYGROUND	15+ ACRES	1.0 - 2.0
COMMUNITY PARK	25+ ACRES	5.0 - 8.0
TOTAL CLOSE TO HOME		6.25-10.5
REGIONAL SPACE		
REGIONAL/METROPOLITAN PARK	200+ ACRES	5.0 – 10.0
REGIONAL PARK/RESERVE	1000+ ACRES	VARIABLE
TOTAL REGIONAL SPACE	15-20 ACRES	

Chart 1

The National Recreational and Park Association (NRPA) recommends regional parkland of 15-20 acres for every 1000 people in the County. County parkland of 9,537 acres represents 26 acres per 1000

population. Per this standard, as the population increases the need for more open space increases and open space needs continue to be in demand in more urban and growth areas of the county (see chart 1).

The New Jersey affordable housing mandate has resulted in an expected increase of residential development across the County. Court-ordered Settlement Agreements are estimated to produce an additional 9,750 residential units and 23,607 people over the next 10 years. This growth is expected to have an effect on local and county infrastructure. It is necessary to consider the impact of population growth on our systems including but not limited to transportation, water supply and treatment, libraries, and environmental mitigation measures as well as open space and recreational needs. If the anticipated population growth occurs, the County will still continue to meet the NRPA regional parkland standard of 15-20 acres per 1000 people, but by 2030 the acres per 1000 would drop to 23.6 acres. To maintain the current standard of 26 acres per 1000 population this increase in population requires the preservation of an additional 614 acres.

Geographically, County owned open space and parkland is well distributed around the County. But the balance is not evenly distributed by population. The more populated municipalities such as Trenton, Ewing, and Hightstown have little or no County parkland. Hamilton has the largest population in the County. Roebling Park is a quality County Park in a populated section of Hamilton Township, but other urbanized areas could be better served. This is a difficult issue to resolve. The more populated areas have less land available for preservation, and the larger undeveloped and natural lands are in the rural areas.

A. Regional Open Space Opportunities

As noted, Hamilton has the largest population in the County and the County's Roebling Memorial Park is located there. In addition to being a regionally significant open space, Roebling Park serves a more urban population in the Township and is close to the City of Trenton. Other than Roebling Park and a portion of Mercer County Park in a more suburban part of Hamilton Township, the remaining County-owned land in Hamilton Township is undeveloped and provides no public recreational facilities. The Crosswicks Creek Greenway and Dam Site 21 are examples of undeveloped land that County has preserved that currently do not provide facilities for public use. These properties should be improved to provide regionally significant open space by creating safe public access and incorporate stewardship practices and resources to protect and enhance the environment and habitat of the land and the water

resources. A Master Plan process has been completed for Dam Site 21 which will bring much-needed passive recreational opportunities to this County-owned resource.

The need for regionally significant open space will continue to be a priority of the Plan. The County recognizes that much of the urban population is underserved because the larger natural recreational areas are in the rural parts of the county. Preserving land for Greenways along streams, abandoned rail lines and other land for bicycle trails, on and off road, are tools that will help increase opportunities to connect regionally significant land to more citizens of Mercer County. Improving access to Roebling Park from Trenton will help serve residents of the City of Trenton.

Based on these two standards, the Balanced Land Use Guidelines from the NJ Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and the National Recreational and Park Association (NRPA) population guideline, Mercer County is doing well preserving land of regional significance. This will continue to be an important goal for the County and will be accomplished with State and County funds and through cooperative partnerships. The focus will be to preserve lands that create connections through greenways and to expand upon regionally significant open space opportunities. The need and the challenge will be to manage and maintain these valuable public lands. The County must manage these lands to protect their natural resources, and plan and develop the land to provide for safe, quality recreational access to all citizens. Meeting these needs will be costly, but they are essential to the quality open space that the county parks must provide. Increases in funding at the county as well as the state level will be necessary in the future to meet this crucial need.

B. Local “Close to Home” Urban Open Space Analysis

The open space deficits in Mercer County are primarily local, existing predominately in the most densely populated urban areas. Mercer County’s most densely populated municipalities are Trenton, and Hightstown Borough. Portions of other municipalities such as the townships of Ewing, Hamilton, Princeton and Lawrence also have areas of dense population. According to the Trust for Public Land, popular urban parks such as Lincoln Park in Chicago and Central Park in New York, have more annual visitors than the Grand Canyon. Obviously, Mercer County’s urban areas do not compare to these large cities, but it demonstrates the need to serve urban areas.

There are several other properties that the county owns or has invested in, in addition to Capital City Farm described in Chapter V, that serve the more urban population.



South Riverwalk Park, Trenton

South Riverwalk Park, next to the County-owned Waterfront Park (baseball stadium), is a County park developed with State funds when the Route 29 tunnel was constructed. The County owns and manages this park. South Riverwalk Park provides an urban walkway elevated over the Route 29 tunnel and overlooking the Delaware River. The Riverwalk provides access and views of the Delaware River and an interpretive timeline of the City of Trenton. The County has committed significant maintenance resources to this facility and this urban park will continue to be a priority for the County.

The Abbott Marshlands formerly referred to as the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh is an abundantly diverse freshwater tidal wetland in Hamilton Township just outside Trenton's City limits. The Abbott Marshlands contains the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark. The Abbott Farm played a significant role in the development of the fields of archaeology and geology. Archaeological research of the site was encouraged by the work of Charles Conrad Abbott in the mid-1800s and was continued internationally, as well as nationally and locally, including with Dr. Dorothy Cross of the New Jersey State Museum in the 1930s and 1940s. The "Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark Interpretive Plan" was prepared by

the County in May 2009. Tulpehaking Nature Center at Roebling Park was opened in 2014 and provides educational programs for schoolchildren and families, telling stories of the cultural, historic, and natural resources of the Abbott Marshlands. The naming of the Tulpehaking Nature Center and renaming of the Abbott Marshlands were recommended in the Abbott Farm National Landmark Interpretative Plan. Finding a way to make a walkable connection between the Nature Center and the City of Trenton and the State's D&R Canal towpath is a goal of Mercer County, as well as the Friends of the Abbott Marshlands and the Abbott Marshlands Council.

Mercer County is also working closely with the City to acquire lands along the Assunpink Greenway. The County will continue to provide the City with grants, valued at 50% of the Certified Fair Market Value, for the purchase of parcels on the Assunpink. These urban properties require a great deal of environmental remediation. Therefore, the County staff continues to support Trenton's planning process and remediation. The county is also active where the Greenway continues into the suburban areas of the County from Mercer County Park to the Village of Windsor and the State's Assunpink Wildlife Management Area.



Tulpehaking Nature Center, John Roebling Memorial Park, Hamilton

This plan recognizes the need to support local government in the urban areas of the County and will seek to be partners in the planning process, provide staff assistance and expertise, and continue to fund neighborhood and community acquisitions by providing urban grants of up to 50% of the certified fair market value of the land. The County will continue investing in the Abbott Marshlands and other regional open spaces that are in, or are easily accessible to, urban neighborhoods.

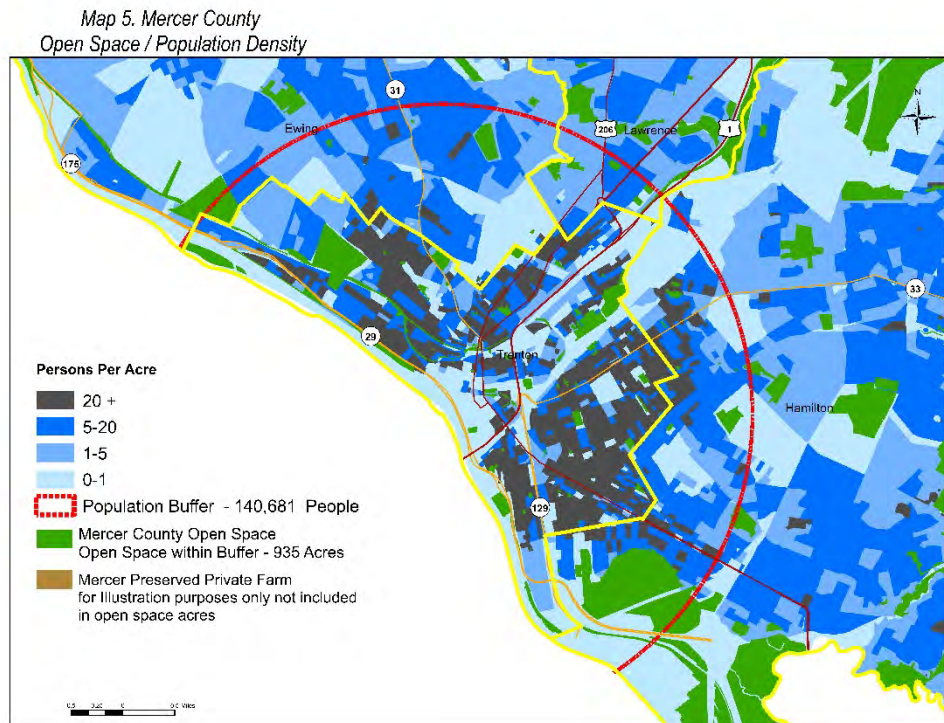
The County also recognizes the burden the City of Trenton and others have maintaining and developing urban parks. However, County development funds are extremely limited and only available for county-owned and maintained parkland. The quantity of open spaces and their size are important, but the quality, how well a park is maintained and how well it provides the aesthetics and amenities to create a functioning safe community park, are critical. The need for maintenance and development funding continues to be a concern at all levels of government.

In the sub-urban regions of the County this plan continues to support local efforts and provides municipal and non-profit open space grants, encouraging partnerships with all levels of government and land preservation organizations to preserve land that will serve the recreational needs of all the citizens in the County. It is important to ensure that these suburban and rural areas preserve adequate local recreational land for today as well as the future, particularly in pockets of population such as in the hamlets and villages within the larger community.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends meeting recreational open space needs based on population. This recommendation is appropriate for assessing local open space needs in the more populated areas of the County. As analyzed in the previous section, regional open space needs have been well addressed through the county park system in addition to some state and larger community municipal parks. These lands are primarily in the suburban and rural areas of Mercer County.

This Plan recognizes the needs of the most populated areas in the County. But it is not the intention of a county wide plan to base needs on municipal boundaries. Therefore, further analysis, based on an urban core that includes all of Trenton and the urbanized areas of Hamilton, Lawrence and Ewing, has been done to more accurately reflect the local open space needs as they relate to the County's urban population.

To better understand the need for open space for a significant portion of the County's urban population, the open space and population for the area shown on the map below was analyzed. This relatively limited area represents almost 1/3 of the total County population and has only 731 acres of preserved open space. This is less than 6 acres per 1000



people as recommended. Of these 731 acres, many are contained within the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park, Trenton's Cadwalader Park and Mercer County's Roebling Park, which provide quality urban open spaces but do not provide local "close to home" open space for all.

C. Local "Close to Home" Open Space Opportunities

Remediation and reclamation of under-used or contaminated properties can provide land to help meet open space needs in urban areas. Remediation and environmental cleanup take considerable time and funding, as well as qualified staff to administer the regulatory processes. Mercer County needs to work closely with the urban community to support these efforts.

VII. PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

Taxpayer support has been the key to the success of the County Open Space and Farmland Preservation program. The County's accomplishments have also relied on the many partnerships and programs that have leveraged and supported the county program. The many funding programs and partnerships include NJDEP State Green Acres program, NJDEP Environmental Infrastructure Trust financing program and the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) as well as local government and non-profit organizations. The availability of multiple funding sources has allowed Mercer County to leverage its taxpayer money.

In the early days of our program, the Green Acres program provided grants and loans to Mercer County for assistance in preserving several significant county properties. The funding structure was typically a 25% grant and a 75% low interest loan. Projects funded under this program including 1100 acres on Baldpate Mountain, the 243-acre equestrian facility and Curlis Lake Woods, the 812-acre AT&T (Pole Farm) property and land along the Crosswicks Creek in Hamilton Township, among the most well-known. Since the Garden State Preservation Trust was established in 1998 and new State funding was established in 2009, the County has received \$12,725,000 in Green Acres planning incentive grants. These grants are based on 50% of the Certified Fair Market Value for each property acquired and have helped to keep the County acquisition program active. From 1998 through 2010, these grants have helped fund acquisitions along the Bear Brook in East Windsor, land in the Abbott Marshlands, additional land adjacent to Howell Living History Farm and Baldpate Mountain, land in Lawrence on Fackler Road, land of historic significance in Princeton, as well as properties in the Washington (now Robbinsville) Greenbelt and land adjacent to Veterans Park in Hamilton. Since the 2010 Open Space Plan, Green Acres grants provided funds for the Tulpehaking Nature Center, preserved additional land on Baldpate Mountain known as Hollystone, and several properties along the Crosswicks Greenway. Green Acres funds were also provided to the County for land purchased by the County and transferred to Ewing Township. This 44-acre site has been the County's only land purchase in Ewing Township and this purchase provided for the preservation of the former Jewish Community Center, now known as the Ewing Senior and Community Center. The County holds both conservation and historic preservation easements on the site.

Many other projects that have already been preserved by the County are eligible for Green Acres grants and Green Acres reimbursement is expected in the future.

The County open space program and County Agricultural Development Board work together to ensure that the goals of each program are accomplished where possible. For example, when preserving farms with a stream on the property boundary which is part of a priority Greenway, the County seeks to preserve an area along the stream corridor for public access while preserving irrigation rights for the farmer. This cooperative effort illustrates the value in having all of the County's land preservation efforts directed by one office with access to Trust Fund dollars. In these projects and others, State Green Acres funds and SADC funds have been leveraged with county funds. (See Farmland Preservation element of the Master Plan)

Since its inception in 1997, the County Non-profit and Municipal Assistance Program has awarded over 140 grants to municipalities and non-profit land conservancies resulting in the preservation of 5997 acres of locally important open space. Non-profits leverage these grants, and through their outreach and landowner relations they have been extremely successful in securing bargain sales and private individual and business donations. These funds raised by the non-profits, along with Green Acres grants, and county grants have been the formula for the success of this program.

The County has also partnered on large regional acquisitions such as the historic Tusculum property, lands that expand The Watershed Institute (formerly Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association) preserve, State purchases next to Baldpate Mountain and the State Assunpink Wildlife Management Area, land adjacent to Hamilton's Veterans Park and property in the Hopewell Borough Greenbelt. Large partnership projects since 2010 include the preservation of the Mount Rose Preserve on Carter Road in Hopewell Township, involving six funding partners and four managing owners, and 146 acres known as Woosamonsa Ridge. Preserving large costly projects cooperatively with numerous partners and programs has provided the opportunity to leverage multiple funding sources and greater flexibility, leading to great success.

The continued availability of a stable source of State funding is critical to the County open space program, as well as programs throughout the entire State. Future voter support for local and county open space initiatives is also essential.

The County continues its cooperation and partnerships with non-profit organizations, not just as it relates to funding, but to share all resources including professional staff knowledge and experience as well as volunteer groups and efforts. With the current state of the economy due to Covid-19 and the

demonstrated importance of open space and public recreation during the pandemic, it is vital that all these funding sources and efforts continue to be available.

PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION

NJDEP Green Acres

Grants and loans for acquisition and development

NJDEP

National Trails Grants

NJDEP Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program

Acquisition loans

NJDOT

Trail Grants

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Regional Trail Grants

Local Governments

Local open space funds

Regional Non-Profits

D&R Greenway Land Trust Inc.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation

Funding, landowner negotiations, programming, staff support, volunteers

Local Open Space and Friends Organizations

Funding, volunteers

Corporations and Local Business

Volunteers, donations, program support

Volunteers

Time, labor, support

Innovative tools and techniques for preservation are also important to leverage the available funds. Often the recreational and environmental values of certain lands can be preserved through easement purchases. The county purchases the development rights and preserves the land, but the owner continues to care for and own the land. This can save the county in acquisition and maintenance costs. The County should support and encourage local ordinances that encourage and allow for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), cluster development and stream corridor preservation. Through site design the County and private developers should continue to build creative partnerships to further expand

preservation. Tax benefits for landowners, and creative financing are effective tools that can benefit the seller.

VIII. GOALS AND PROGRAM ACTION AREAS

A. County Regional Open Space Preservation Areas

Goal: Preserve regionally significant open space that enhances the county-wide park system.

The County's Regional Open Space Preservation Project Areas are identified as being large areas for preservation that will protect lands in a largely natural or undeveloped state and provide regionally significant recreational opportunities. These project areas are to be owned by the County and maintained by the Mercer County Park Commission as public parkland, regional greenways, stream corridors and greenbelts. These areas are primarily to be funded through the County Open Space Tax and State Green Acres funds and provide for passive and active recreation. This category recognizes expanding existing county parkland by adding lands which would protect or enhance existing facilities, provide additional regionally significant public recreation opportunities or preserve large naturally significant environs. The



Baldpate Mountain, Hopewell

County should consider opportunities to purchase nonprofit and privately held recreational facilities that may become available, especially if the facility can be permanently preserved and provide regional recreation opportunities and programs.

B. Regional Cooperative Open Space Projects and Green Corridors

Goal: Preserve land through cooperative partnerships to leverage funds on properties of regional significance and greenways.

As funding at all levels has become more competitive, it has become imperative to work cooperatively with all preservation organizations and governments to pool all resources, expertise, experiences and funds. Many projects are too large and costly for one entity to preserve. These cooperative projects require that all funding sources be utilized, including State, County and local money, but also to leverage these public dollars with private funds. Employing non-profits to raise private funds from the community, businesses, and individuals can be very effective. These cooperative land acquisitions will require using tools such as conservation and view-shed easements, bargain sales, and innovative financing and land use principles. The ownership of these properties may result in an undivided interest with all funding entities on a single deed or divided into several properties with specific uses or restrictions that are best suited to each organization. These transactions must include clear management and stewardship responsibilities for the maintenance and use of the property.

Greenways are regional projects that most often span multiple jurisdictions and will best be accomplished through a cooperative approach. Long term, Greenways and linear parks are proposed along the Assunpink Creek, Jacobs Creek, connecting to the Stony Brook, Bear Brook, Millstone River, Crosswicks Creek, Shipetaukin and Shabakunk Creeks, Miry Run and other smaller streams. Larger patches of open space along the streams, and connections with other open spaces are proposed where important wildlife habitat, valuable farmland, or sensitive habitats are identified. These greenways and corridors are coordinated with similar proposals at the municipal level for these and other streams. Connections should be made to the efforts of the State D&R Canal Commission to reclaim and restore portions of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Park throughout the County.

C. Mercer County Municipal and Nonprofit Assistance Program

Goal: Assist municipalities and nonprofits in preserving locally significant open space through the County grant program.

Pursuant to NJSA 40:12-15.6, distribution of grants for land preservation to municipalities and local non-profits is permissible from the County Open Space Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust fund. The Mercer County Municipal/Non-profit Assistance program provides grants to municipal and nonprofit land conservancy organizations to acquire lands of local importance. Local parkland and open space that serves a community is important in meeting the goal of providing “close to home” recreation and open space. It is recommended that the local entity secure Green Acres funds as well as landowner donations and private funds from business and foundations. The County grant is designed to fill in funding gaps. Since the County has limited funding for park development, the County grants can only be used for acquisition. Local government is encouraged to develop local parkland for active recreation.

Funding is eligible to all municipalities and non-profit land conservancy organizations for the preservation of open space. The property must be consistent with the Mercer County Master Plan Open Space element or the open space element of the municipal master plan. All applicants must apply to the Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board for recommendation to the County Administration and approval by the Board of County Commissioners. The current policy is appended to this Plan.

The Open Space Preservation Board reviews the program and the grant structure guidelines annually and makes a recommendation to the County Administration for approval. Projects demonstrating regional significance, urban projects and all projects in the City of Trenton qualify for enhanced funding.

D. Urban Open Space

Goal: Support the preservation of urban land preservation through priority funding through the County grant program.

This program recognizes the importance of supporting the need for recreation and open space in the urbanized and under-served areas of the County. The City of Trenton and other urbanized areas in the County can receive 50% acquisition funding from the County and the State; the difficulty is finding land in the urban area that is vacant, available and clean from contamination. This initiative seeks to assist in the acquisition, remediation and maintenance of urban parkland. To accomplish this, the County will partner with the City to purchase and remediate identified parcels for acquisition and clean up. These lands could be cooperatively owned and managed by the City and or the County. The Assunpink

Greenway, lands along the Trenton waterfront, and the Abbott Marshlands are currently identified for this program.

E. Coordinated County Wide Trails Systems and Connection

Goal: Preserve land that creates or expands connections to open spaces, greenways and trail systems.

Mercer County recognizes the many initiatives for trails systems within the County and for trails that connect from outside the County and State borders. Mercer County has been supportive and an active participant in the Lawrence Hopewell Trail, East Coast Greenway, Capital to Coast Trail, Heritage Trail, Crossroads of the Revolution, and Rails to Trails. Preserving lands that connect trails is a high priority not only to connect people to nature and community but also to provide alternatives to the automobile and protect corridors of wildlife habitat. This Plan supports preserving and providing land for multi-modal trail connections and supporting local and county bike plans, rail trails, as well as the efforts of local and regional organizations such as the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association's *Greater Mercer Trail Plan* and Heritage Trail Connector and other Circuit trails identified throughout the Trenton



Lawrence Hopewell Trail

Philadelphia area. The Delaware River Heritage Trail initiated by the Delaware River Greenway Partnership and now part of the Circuit Trail is envisioned as a 60-mile-long trail along the Delaware River that will link 24 communities, from Trenton to Palmyra on the New Jersey side.

F. County Farmland Preservation

Goal: Support the County Farmland Preservation Program.

A Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan has been prepared as required for SADC cost share grants, and it sets the goals and policies for farmland preservation in Mercer County. Mercer County open space and farmland preservation efforts are coordinated and cooperatively implemented to ensure the integrity of both programs. Where appropriate, it is often best to partner with the farmland program on certain properties that may have agricultural values, as well as recreation and environmental values.

G. Development of County Open Space

Goal: Working with the County Park Commission, identify priorities to provide funding to improve and develop recreational opportunities within the County Park System.

Mercer County parkland development projects are specifically for improvements on lands in which the county has an ownership interest. These projects are intended to improve public access and use of these County lands for recreation. Funding for parkland development and historic preservation is currently authorized up to 20% of the County Open Space Preservation tax and is therefore limited. The referendum authorizing the three cents tax imposed this limit. Therefore, the limit cannot be raised without a new referendum. The primary use of these funds is to improve access to the many County lands that have been preserved through the County Open Space Preservation tax. The acquisition of land has been aggressive and successful. These properties now need to be made accessible through trails and trail head parking, signage and comfort facilities. Development projects for major active recreational projects such as playing fields are costly and must be carefully designed to fit into natural landscapes. County open space trust funds for recreation should continue to be leveraged with County capital and Green Acres funds.

All lands preserved by the County and that are owned and operated by the County are the responsibility of the Mercer County Park Commission. All county open space is required to have public access and can be developed for active and or passive recreation at any time.

Recognizing the limited development funds allocated by the Open Space Tax, the following projects and similar projects on County parkland are currently under development for public recreation with available funds from the open space tax. Additional projects are developed as time and resources permit.



Moore's Station Quarry, Hopewell Township. When Mercer County and others purchased Baldpate Mountain in 1998, a condition of the purchase was the lease back of the quarry to Trap Rock Industries. Trap Rock's rights in the property end in April 2023 at which time management of the quarry itself reverts to Mercer County alone. A master plan effort for the recreational development of the site began in fall 2020.

Miry Run Ponds, (also known as Dam Site 21), Hamilton and Robbinsville Townships. Dam Site 21 was constructed as part of the Assunpink Watershed flood control project. Dam Site 21 is southeast of

Mercer County Park and it lies along the Miry Run. The land was purchased in the late 1970's to be held and used for permanent recreation and conservation of land and water resources. It consists of 370 acres. The Miry Run Master Plan, involving a comprehensive public process, was completed in January 2020. The Master Plan provides for passive recreation and environmental restoration. Master Plan implementation is anticipated in phases over the next several years.

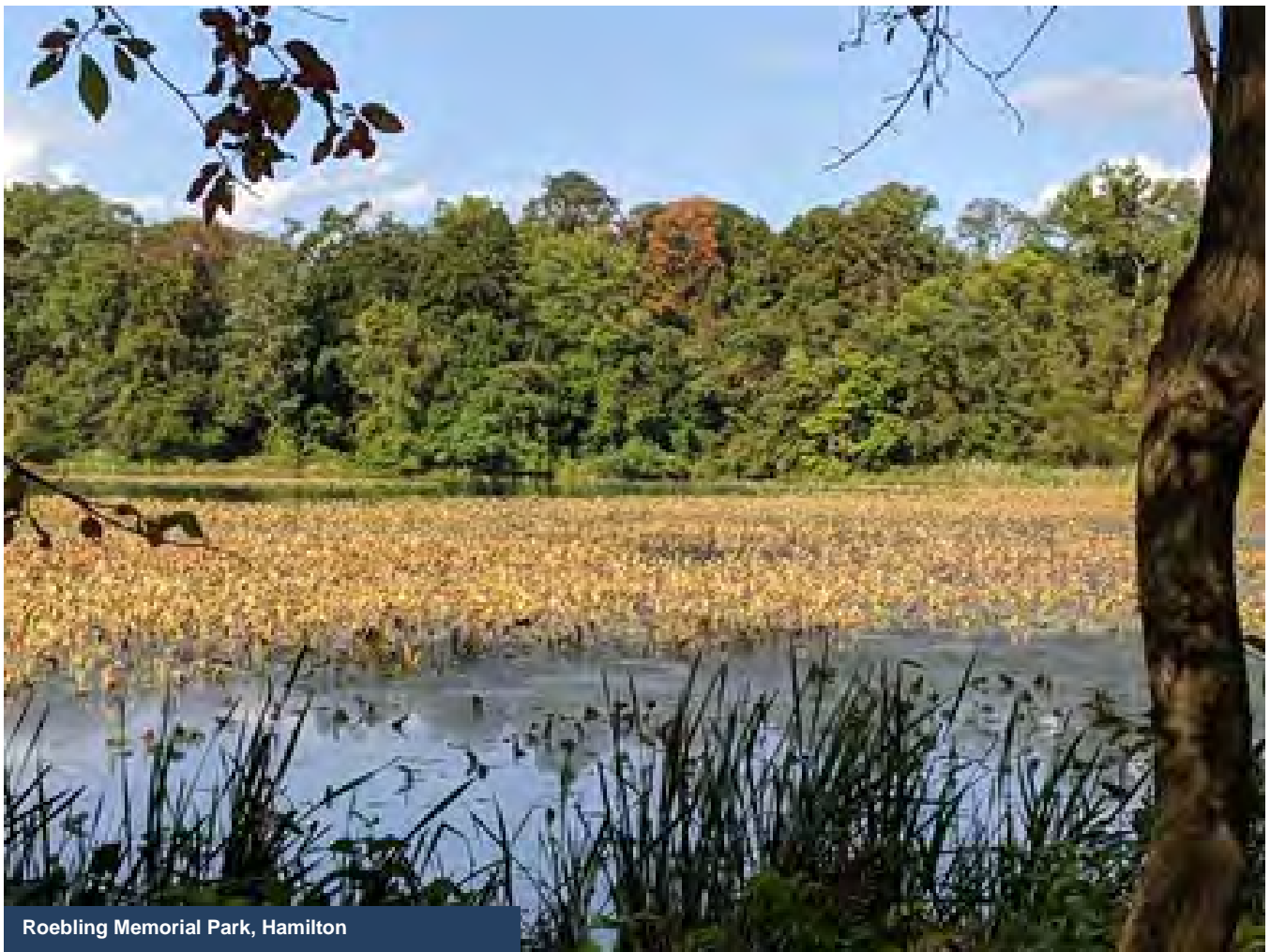


Dam Site 21, Hamilton

Crosswicks Creek Greenway, Hamilton Township. Mercer County has preserved several significant properties along the Crosswicks Creek in Hamilton Township. The northern portion of the Creek from Extonville Road downstream to and including the 130 acres preserved on Iron Bridge Road, has undergone some preliminary master planning and design. The design includes comfort facilities, ADA trails, parking, and canoe launches at Extonville and Iron Bridge Roads. Passive recreational improvements that will create a continuous public access trail for hiking, canoeing and associated passive recreation along the Crosswicks Creek to the Delaware River and the Abbott Marshlands are proposed.

Assunpink Greenway, Robbinsville, West Windsor, Lawrence Townships and City of Trenton. The County has preserved land along the Assunpink Creek from Mercer County Park to Main Street in the Village of Windsor, Robbinsville Township. Public access and the development of a trail along the Assunpink will provide regional connections to Mercer County Park and the five miles of a proposed Rail Trail along the former Camden Amboy Rail line. The Greenway also has the potential to connect to the Union Transportation Trail (UTT) in development in East Windsor and Miry Run Ponds.

John Roebling Memorial Park, Hamilton Township. Roebling Park is one of the County's oldest parks. A Roebling Park Master Plan should be undertaken to consider improvements to the Park including enhanced connections to Abbott Marshlands and the Tulpehaking Nature Center as well as improvements to public use and access.



Master Gardeners. The activities of the Master Gardeners at the County's Equestrian Facility (part of Mercer Meadows) are cramped and the County's equestrian programming is expanding. Therefore, it is desirable to consider an alternative location for the Master Gardeners which would allow for continued public programming, educational outreach and potential growth.

H. Land Stewardship

Goal: Working with the County Park Commission, identify stewardship priorities to protect and improve the environmental qualities of preserved lands.

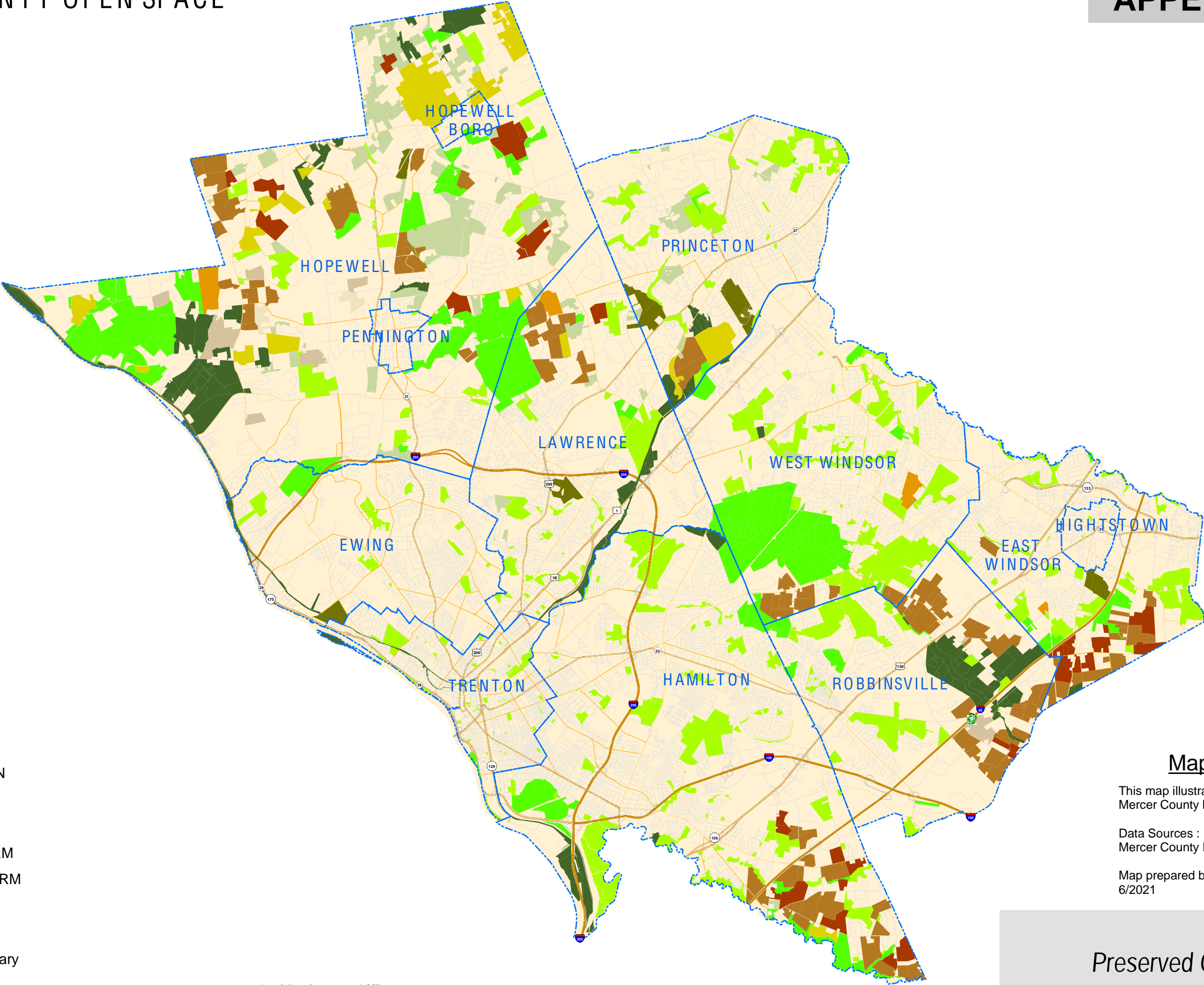


It is of utmost importance that the Open Space Preservation Plan recognize the critical need for stewardship of the preserved lands in which the County has invested. In response to this need the voters of Mercer County approved a referendum in 2012 that provides for up to 10% of the trust fund tax to be utilized for stewardship activities. These funds have been used on numerous projects throughout the County Park system and County-owned open space. Staff and resources must continue to be provided to protect and enhance the natural and environmentally significant resources of all existing and future county preserved open space.

APPENDICES



- Legend
- COUNTY
 - STATE
 - MUNICIPAL
 - NONPROFIT
 - CONSERVATION
 - DEED PRIVATE
 - COUNTY FARM
 - MUNICIPAL FARM
 - NONPROFIT FARM
 - STATE FARM
 - GOLF
 - Municipal Boundary



1 0.5 0 1 Miles

Map Summary

This map illustrates the existing open space within Mercer County by category of preservation.

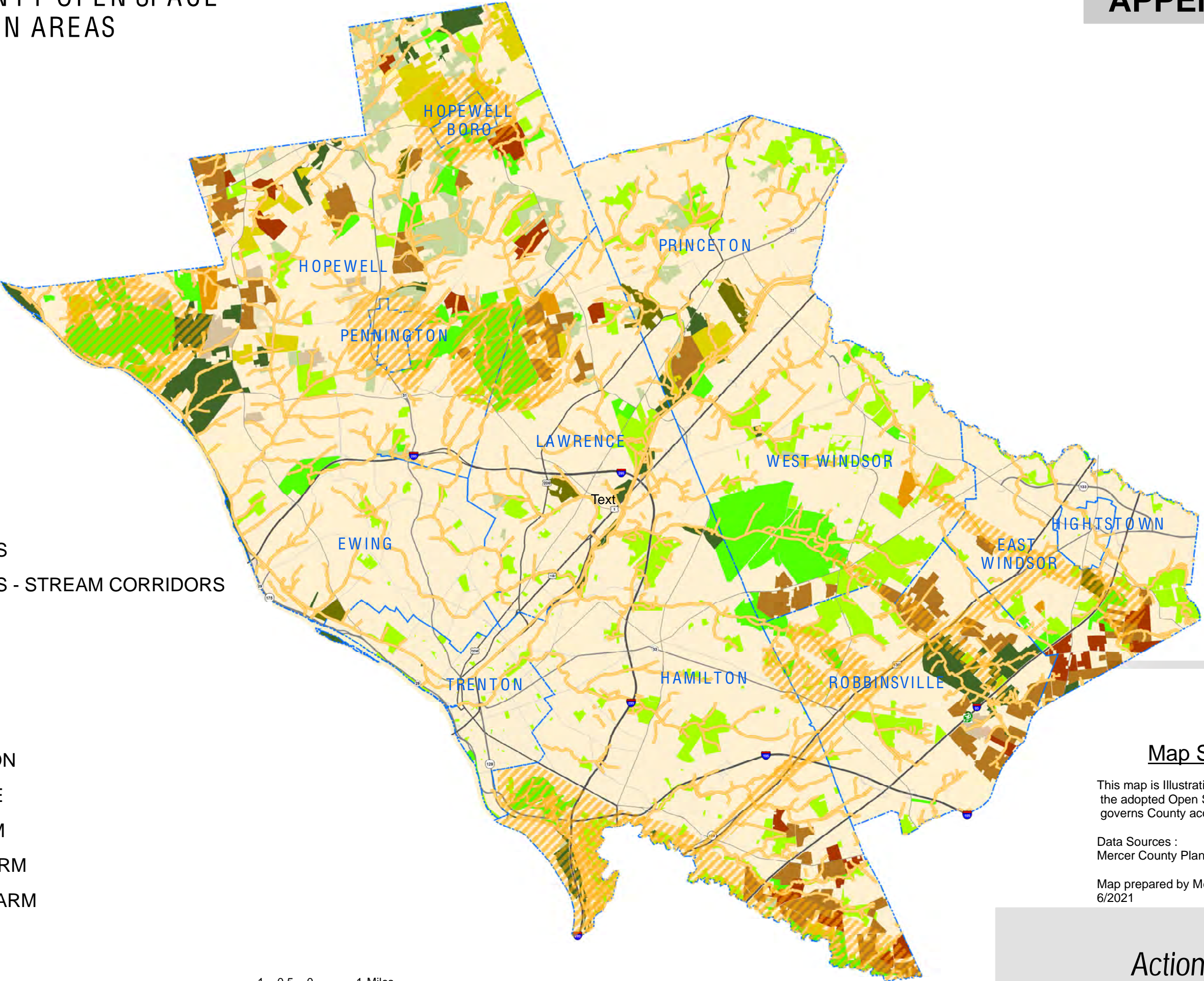
Data Sources :
Mercer County Planning Open Space Data

Map prepared by Mercer County Planning Department
6/2021

Preserved Open Space

MERCER COUNTY OPEN SPACE
ACTION AREAS

APPENDIX. MAPS



- ACTION AREAS
- ACTION AREAS - STREAM CORRIDORS
- COUNTY
- STATE
- MUNICIPAL
- NONPROFIT
- CONSERVATION
- DEED PRIVATE
- COUNTY FARM
- MUNICIPAL FARM
- NONPROFIT FARM
- STATE FARM
- GOLF

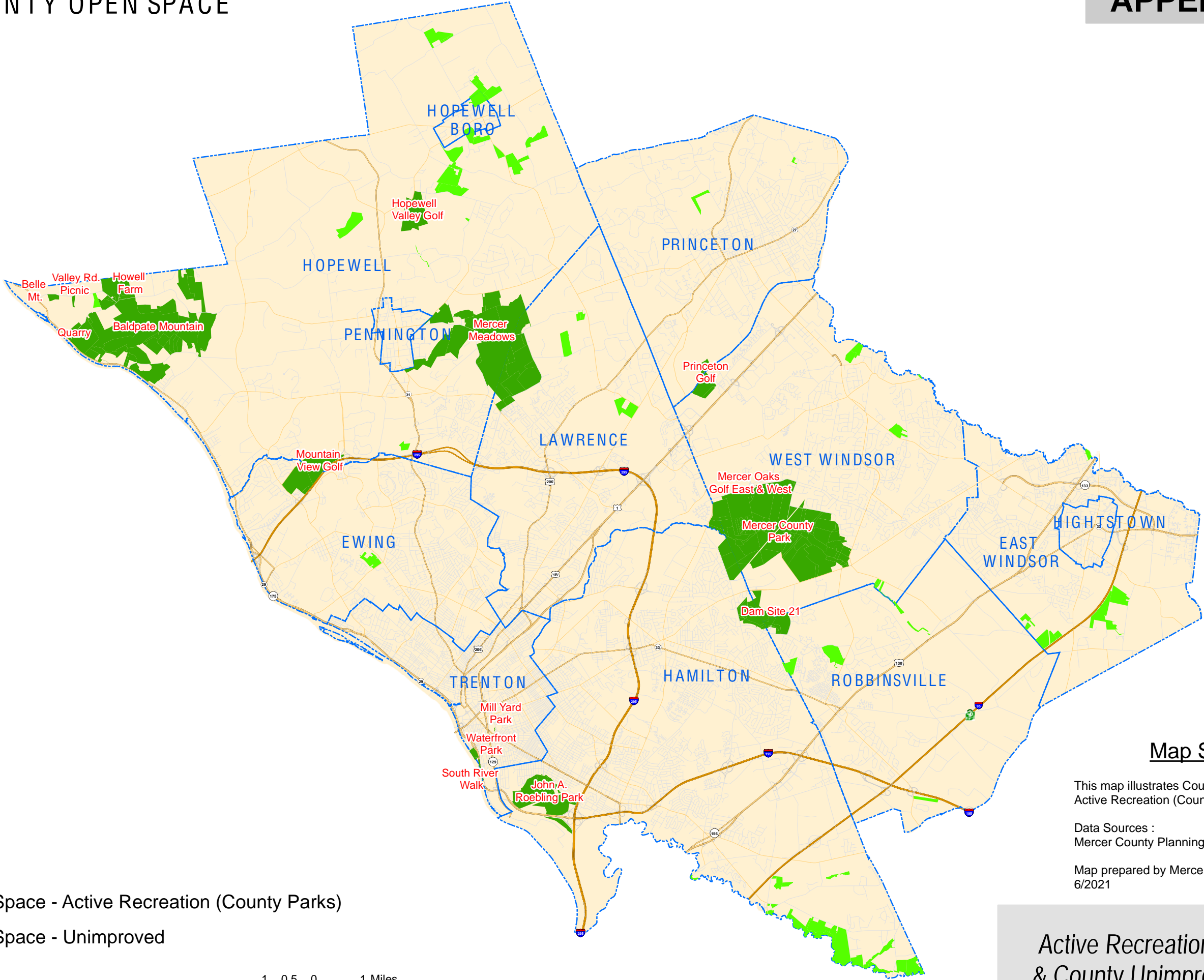
Map Summary

This map is illustrative of County preservation Goals: the adopted Open Space Plan governs County acquisition priorities.

Data Sources :
Mercer County Planning Open Space Data

Map prepared by Mercer County Planning Department
6/2021

Action Areas



- County Open Space - Active Recreation (County Parks)
- County Open Space - Unimproved

1 0.5 0 1 Miles

Map Summary

This map illustrates County Open Space
Active Recreation (County Parks) & Unimproved Open Space

Data Sources :
Mercer County Planning Open Space Data

Map prepared by Mercer County Planning Department
6/2021

Active Recreation (County Parks)
& County Unimproved Open Space

APPENDIX-County Open-Active Recreation(County Parks

Facility	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	acres
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	37.00	14.4
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	5.00	516.6
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	32.00	43.5
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	7.01	5.2
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	38.00	3.9
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	23.03	17.3
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	27.00	24.9
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	23.02	15.6
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	17.00	7.5
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	7.00	23
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	59.00	14.1
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	6.00	172.2
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	31.00	20.9
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	21.00	60.3
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	23.01	19.8
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	43.00	24.1
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	59.00	2.00	20.1
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	50.00	1.4
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	52.00	8.00	15
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	52.00	19.01	64.8
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	18.00	17.5
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	52.00	32.00	77
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	133.00	14.02	113.1
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	28.00	139.4
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	29.03	143.2
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60	4.02	85.1
Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60	54	1.4
Belle Mountain	Hopewell Twp	59	3	15.8
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	29.01	60.9
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	72	0.7
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	28.01	12.2
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	5	0.7
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	7	0.9
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	3	1.9

Facility	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	acres
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	2	16.3
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	40	20
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	45	4.4
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	43	4.9
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	42	29
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	44	42.2
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	41	2.8
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	74	3.3
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	64	16.7
Dam Site 21	West Windsor Twp	29.00	3.01	4.2
Dam Site 21	West Windsor Twp	29.00	5.01	25.1
Dam Site 21	West Windsor Twp	29.00	6.00	27.4
Dam Site 21	Robbinsville Twp	4	78.01	2.2
Dam Site 21	Hamilton Twp	1631	46	4.3
Hopewell Valley Golf Club	Hopewell Twp	37.00	6.00	178.2
Hopewell Valley Golf Club	Hopewell Twp	34	3	3.5
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	55.00	2.00	2.2
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	54.00	5.00	5.5
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	54.00	7.00	14.3
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	54.00	8.00	1.3
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	55.00	1.00	82.6
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	54.00	6.00	42.8
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	59	13.02	3.5
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	59	13.03	3.7
Howell Living History Farm	Hopewell Twp	59	13.01	29.6
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2405	3	122.8
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2370	2	0.5
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2370	3	0.3
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2406	3	15.8
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2370	1	0.5
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2405	6	55.3
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2218	1	0.3

Facility	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	acres
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2405	7	58
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2405	10	4.7
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2406	2	118.1
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2405	8	2.1
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2359	10	0.2
John A.Roebling Park	Hamilton Twp	2507	4	26.3
Mercer County Park	Hamilton Twp	1512	26	42.3
Mercer County Park	Hamilton Twp	1512	28	39.9
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	40.00	33.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	35.00	10.3
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	33.00	7.9
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	34.00	0.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	16.00	67.2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	48.00	8.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	92.00	26
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	50.00	10
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	42.00	5.2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	38.00	4.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	22.00	3.6
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	2.00	8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	17.00	40.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	3.00	100.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	93.00	0.6
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	41.00	9.3
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	102.00	1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	9.00	13.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	70.00	2.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	20.00	10.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	3.00	51.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	2.00	74.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	27.00	34.3
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	46.00	12.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	39.00	8.6
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	13.00	9.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	53.00	8.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	18.00	17.8

Facility	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	acres
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	72.00	6.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	19.00	29.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	6.00	20.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	4.00	43
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	17.00	24.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	26.00	122.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	32.00	32.9
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	28.00	161.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	15.00	10.2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	55.00	2.9
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	52.00	5.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	12.00	5.6
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	21.00	0.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	14.00	22.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	13.00	37.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	10.00	22.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	48.00	14.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	12.00	35.6
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	56.00	3
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	47.00	3.9
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	54.00	16
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	45.00	11.2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	1.00	19.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	4.00	10.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	101.00	0.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	5.00	53.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	91.00	0.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	7.00	63.2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	6.00	9.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	1.00	56.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	27.00	9.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	34.00	128.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	24.14	23.00	4.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	14.00	38.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	105.00	1.3
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	47.00	30.5

Facility	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	acres
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	43.00	3.2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	24.00	5.9
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	25.00	42.3
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	24.00	53.2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	35.00	52.7
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	44.00	3.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	11.00	30.9
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	43.00	31.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	85.00	0.6
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	59.00	2
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	36.00	18.8
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	5.00	8.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	84.00	1.1
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	23.00	17.6
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	25.00	15.00	53.5
Mercer County Park	West Windsor Twp	23.00	103.00	0.6
Mercer County Park	Lawrence Twp	4301	3	20.3
Mercer County Park	Lawrence Twp	4301	2	5.9
Mercer County Park	Lawrence Twp	4301	4	12.2
Mercer County Park	Lawrence Twp	4301	1	11.7
Mercer County Park	Hamilton Twp	1512	27	42.4
Mercer County Park	West Windsor	25.03	18	7.9
Mercer County Park Mercer Oaks Golf East	West Windsor Twp	23	8	180.6
Mercer County Park Mercer Oaks Golf West	West Windsor Twp	23	9	60
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	77.00	1.00	310.7
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	72.00	35.00	114.3
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	77.00	8.00	8.3
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	72.00	4.00	125.6
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	44.00	11.02	32.7
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	45.00	1.03	78.3
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	3	13.9
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	4	94.1
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	12	7
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	5	76.5
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	7	17.8
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	8	17.1

Facility	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	acres
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	6	6
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	14	22.3
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	13	5.7
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	2	119.6
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	15	45.5
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	11	57.3
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6101	1	10.4
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	6008	1	0.5
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	44.00	10.00	70.2
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	44.00	9.00	118.4
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	44.00	6.00	62.8
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	44.00	7.00	173.3
Mercer Meadows	Lawrence Twp	7201	28	47.8
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	44.00	12.00	27.7
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	44.00	17.02	10.1
Mercer Meadows	Hopewell Twp	72	4.01	9.6
Mill Yard Park Roebling	Trenton	16001	4	0.8
Mill Yard Park Roebling	Trenton	13701	27	0.1
Mountain View Golf Course	Ewing Twp	372	3	28
Mountain View Golf Course	Ewing Twp	372	2	23.5
Mountain View Golf Course	Ewing Twp	372	1	133.2
Mountain View Golf Course	Hopewell Twp	94.00	1.00	89.8
Mountain View Golf Course	Ewing	372	4	8.6
Mountain View Golf Course	Hopewell Twp	94.01	3	17.2
Princeton Golf Course Country Club	West Windsor Twp	7.00	70.00	12.3
Princeton Golf Course Country Club	West Windsor Twp	7.00	69.00	73.8
Princeton Golf Course Country Club	Princeton Twp	10201	1	22.8
Quarry - Baldpate Mountain	Hopewell Twp	60.00	1.00	138.9
South River Walk - Tunnel Park	Trenton	11403	0	6.4
Valley Road Picnic	Hopewell Twp	59	3	6.8
Waterfront Park	Trenton	11403	6.01	13.8
Waterfront Park	Trenton	11403	5.01	1.6

APPENDIX - County Open Space - Unimproved

Project_Ar	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	name_1	acres
Assunpink Greenway	West Windsor Twp	32.00	2.01	Jany Stream Corridor	1.03
Assunpink Greenway	West Windsor Twp	32.00	3.00	Pietrinferno	5.89
Assunpink Greenway	West Windsor Twp	32	2	Jany Stream Corridor	1.23
Assunpink Greenway	Robbinsville Twp	10	29.02	Cuhna	0.66
Assunpink Greenway	West Windsor Twp	32	10	Wolff	5.53
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	30	24	East Windsor Regional Park	2.08
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	45	17	Lenox	9.89
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	44	9.02	Delre	2.43
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	46	26	Saltman	12.11
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	44	1.06	Frey/ Bear Brook	2.82
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	30	18	East Windsor Regional Park	91.85
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	30	16	East Windsor Regional Park	62.36
Bear Brook Greenway	West Windsor Twp	32.00	4.02	Thompson/Olenickz ak	4.37
Bear Brook Greenway	Robbinsville Twp	10	part	Windsor-Upick Greenway-PARTIAL LOT	10.39
Bear Brook Greenway	Robbinsville Twp	10	55	Updike- Herman Greenway	10.09
Bear Brook Greenway	West Windsor Twp	19	24.02	PRL -Mercer Play -WW	34.96
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	44	6	East Windsor Park	41.45
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	45	18	Lenox	14.2
Bear Brook Greenway	East Windsor Twp	44	9	Rita	4.28
Crosswicks Greenway	Hopewell Borough	25	41	Ruhland	12.74
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2731	1	Village Green	0.87
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2731	2	Village Green	0.52
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2731	4	Village Green	4.35
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2743	6.02	Runge Stream	14.8
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2726	20	Crosswicks	1.34

Project_Ar	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	name_1	acres
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2716	1.02	Groveville-Crosswicks Creek Main St.	4.49
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2743	31.02	Sakowsky	22.01
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2730	18	Banner Farm	132.25
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2743	36	Camp Meta	29.91
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2730	1	Crosswicks Main	5.83
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2730	9.02	Sawmill	50.36
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2730	14.04	Hamilton YMCA Stream Cooridor	20.94
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2730	15.02	Tall Cedars County Stream	8.63
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2743	22.02	Allentown/Princeton Nursery	21.42
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2746	4	AT&T	1.93
Crosswicks Greenway	Hopewell Borough	2	2	Ruggieri -Easement	38.54
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2730	15.01	Tall Cedars Conservation Easement	14.82
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2730	14.01	Hamilton YMCA Conservation Easement	52.89
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2746	14	Princeton Nurseries	56.38
Crosswicks Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2746	6	Princeton Nurseries	31.18
Doctors Creek Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2732	45	Nami	9.54
Doctors Creek Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2738	1.02	Samu Trail	12.3
Doctors Creek Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2732	3	Nami	2.46
Doctors Creek Greenway	Hamilton Twp	2732	4	Nami	21.03
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	17.00	1.00	Saint Alphonsus	16.85
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	15.00	14.03	Hopewell Township	44.46
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	18	8.02	Ruhland	19.02
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	18	13	Ruhland	23.36
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	18	2.02	Hopewell Greenbelt- Hoge	45.77
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	16	18.01	Country Properties	54.57
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	16.00	4.013	Hopewell Township	10.15

Project_Ar	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	name_1	acres
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	8.00	56.00	Ruggieri -Easement	34.32
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	8.00	41.024	Hopewell Boro Greenbelt - Easement	41.53
Hopewell Borough Greenbelt	Hopewell Twp	8	41.023	Hopewell Boro Greenbelt - Easement	3.53
Millstone River Greenway	West Windsor Twp	5.00	15.00	Astura	21.59
Millstone River Greenway	West Windsor Twp	5.00	16.00	Astura	24.05
Millstone River Greenway	East Windsor Twp	14.00	91.00	County Wetlands Millstone	2.1
Millstone River Greenway	East Windsor Twp	8	12	Thompson Millstone	10.82
Robbinsville Greenbelt	Robbinsville Twp	6	16	Robbinsville Greenbelt	72.26
Robbinsville Greenbelt	Robbinsville Twp	3	31	Saint Gregs	32.1
Robbinsville Greenbelt	Hamilton Twp	1841	138	Saint Gregs	5.54
Stonybrook Greenway	Hopewell Twp	46.00	5.02	Stonybrook Greenway	2.19
Stonybrook Greenway	Hopewell Twp	37.00	25.02	Niederer Trail/StonyBrook	1.51
Stonybrook Greenway	Hopewell Twp	18.00	31.00	Stony Brook Millstone	11.09
Stonybrook Greenway	Hopewell Twp	20.00	11.00	Stony Brook Millstone	57.68
Stonybrook Greenway	Hopewell Twp	20.00	70.00	SBMWA-MANNIX	8.49
Stonybrook Greenway	Hopewell Twp	20.00	32.00	Stony Brook Millstone	77.49
Stonybrook Greenway	Hopewell Twp	37	1.01	Stony Brook	2.24
X Non Project Area- Doerler	Lawrence Twp	7301	54	Doerler	8.68
X Non Project Area- Doerler	Lawrence Twp	7301	3	Doerler	7.59
X Non Project Area- Fackler Road	Lawrence Twp	5801	24	Fackler Road-Gatterdam	64.03
X Non Project Area- JCC	Ewing Twp	348	1	JCC - Jewish Community Center-Easement	42.23
X Non Project Area- Jusick	Lawrence Twp	7301	9	Jusick- Easement	52.39
X Non Project Area - Indian Run	Robbinsville Twp	41.01	22	Indian Run	18.49
X Non Project Area - Pizzini	Hopewell Twp	59	6.01	Pizzini - Easement	18.18
X Non Project Area - Powell	Princeton	3001	8	Powell	1.68
X Non Project Area - Powell	Princeton	3001	11	Powell	2.55

Project_Ar	MUN	BLOCK	LOT	name_1	acres
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2.00	9.02	Sommers Park	61.21
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2.00	29.00	Sommers Park	0.72
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2.00	35.00	Sommers Park	1.09
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2.00	37.00	Sommers Park	2.09
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2.00	32.00	Sommers Park	0.88
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2	33	Sommers Park	0.85
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2	36	Sommers Park	1.24
X Non Project Area - Sommers	Hopewell Twp	2	31	Sommers Park	1.02
X Non Project Area - Tusculum	Princeton	5201	4.02	Tusculum	24.94
X Non Project Area -Denow Rd	Hopewell Twp	88	5.03	Denow Rd \ Weidel	16.1
X Non Project Area -Woodward	Hopewell Twp	31.00	7.01	Woodward	76.66



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

MOBILITY ELEMENT



PREPARED FOR THE

| *Mercer County Planning Board*

BY THE

| *Mercer County Planning Department*

September 8, 2010

Amended May 2016





COUNTY OF MERCER

MASTER PLAN MOBILITY ELEMENT

September 8, 2010

Amended May 2016

Brian M. Hughes, County Executive

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The original of this plan has been signed and sealed in accordance with the New Jersey Professional Planners Licensing Act.

Adopted by the Mercer County Planning Board, September 8, 2010.

Amended by the Mercer County Planning Board, May 2016

Leslie R. Floyd, AICP, PP # 5681
Planning Director

Richard J. Smith
Secretary



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MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

MOBILITY ELEMENT

The national and international economies are much different in 2010 than they were when the Master Plan update began in late 2003. The theme of this proposed plan is balance, which seems even more relevant today. No longer can one component of our physical environment drive the others. This is not only an impractical approach, it is also an unsustainable approach. This plan seeks to balance the challenges and opportunities presented by our transportation system, our economy, and our environment through an interrelated set of policies and strategies. Together these policies and strategies will ensure that Mercer County is positioned to succeed in the new economy to guarantee on-going improvements to places where residents live and work.

Donna M. Lewis, Director
Mercer County Planning Division

March 2010

Since the Master Plan's adoption in March 2010, there have been changes to open space and transportation funding. The Open Space Board in consultation with the County Administration will review funding through the Local Municipal/Nonprofit Assistance Program on an annual basis. This will allow more flexibility in funding open space projects with urban and regional significance. The Transportation Development District (TDD) was established 24 years ago, and over that time as land was developed or preserved, transportation improvements changed to meet the needs of new land uses. Upon approval by the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Transportation to dissolve the district, the Mobility element of the Master Plan, and all other references to the TDD throughout the Plan, including on several maps, will reflect the TDD no longer exists. The Mercer County Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) was adopted in October 2013. Lastly, to meet the recommendations of the Master Plan, the WMP will be incorporated by reference into the Mercer County Master Plan.

Leslie R. Floyd, Director
Mercer County Planning Department

May 2016



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transportation infrastructure is the skeleton on which land development depends, and land development is key to both economic and environmental sustainability. In terms of the economy, roads deliver raw materials to factories and workers to their homes. Roads also facilitate public access to open space, but when new development extends along a rural road, unprotected open space may be quickly consumed. It is critical that mobility plans carefully balance conditions for economic growth and preserving environmental quality of life.

This plan presents a vision for the future of mobility in Mercer County that is conservative about recommending new roads and increased vehicular capacity. While the future presents uncertainties, the best predictor of tomorrow is today. This is not only because New Jersey, as a state, is nearing buildout under current land development policies, but also because the number of vehicles on our roadways now nearly equals the number of licensed drivers. If development policies shift to encourage density in existing centers (as NJ State policy has done and municipal policy is following), then a larger population can be supported with a mode shift to mass transit. While New Jersey counties have no direct authority over land development, this plan seeks to support economic growth in existing development centers and to add new highway capacity only when necessary to mitigate demonstrated congestion.

Over time, with sub-element additions, this plan will further support transportation mode choice by planning highway and multipurpose trail facilities to support pedestrians and cyclists. The plan also enjoins the County to work closely with state, municipal, and private transit agencies to develop a transit system that provides an effective alternative to single occupancy vehicles for longer trips.



I. INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

New Jersey's County Planning Act (NJSA 40:27-1 *et seq.*) enables counties to plan for the orderly physical development of their territories, with special reference to highways and storm-water. This document updates and expands the 'Highways' element of the County Growth Management Plan that was developed in the late 1980s and amended periodically, and which continues to yield planned transportation improvements.

The context for transportation planning today is considerably different from the 1980s. The 'paradox of development pressures' was already clear then. This is the paradox that, on the one hand, reducing roadway congestion with new highways and new highway capacity can induce new land development and that, on the other hand, new land development can require new highway capacity to reduce congestion. The adage 'build it and they will come' works in both directions. The policy of the last plan was to designate highway improvements that will mitigate potential future congestion, but implement them only when land development requires it ($LOS < D$).¹ This policy will be carried forward in this update of the plan. This is prudent, not only because land-use decision-making rests in the hands of municipalities, but also because improvements that add single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) highway capacity now come under strict federal review for conformity with air quality attainment standards under the Clean Air Act Amendment of 1990.

Concerns about global warming are much greater today than when they inspired the Clean Air Act, and motor vehicle emission standards are likely to soon grow much tighter. While the automobile industry is vigorously seeking alternative fuel technologies, other local and international forces point to changes in transportation needs. These include the prospect of 'buildout' of the entire state of New Jersey under current land development practices; higher gasoline costs from exponential growth in developing nations; and concomitant changes in the role of the United States in global production markets.

Both the prospect of buildout and rising energy costs suggest changes in land use and transportation facilities. To continue to provide economic development opportunities while preserving open space and general quality of life, permitted development density should be increased in centers where infrastructure already exists. In response to higher energy costs and concerns about global warming, transportation facilities should provide for mode choice, that is, for leaving the car at home, or at the dealership, and walking, biking, or taking mass transit to get where you need to go.

In the global division of labor, the United States is producing fewer hard goods and more information as a commodity, with finance, R&D, design, marketing, information technology, and healthcare becoming dominant industries. New Jersey is a state leading this transformation. On one hand, globalized production increases the importance of freight transport. In Mercer County, this means accommodating local delivery services and freight distribution centers

1. Level of Service (LOS) is a measure of motor vehicle travel delay at signalized intersections, in seconds, where $LOS\ A < 10 < B < 20 < C < 35 < D < 55 < E < 80 < F$. That is, at an intersection with LOS A, vehicle delay on average is less than ten seconds, while at LOS F, average delay is greater than 80 seconds. This plan requires mitigation when planned development will degrade LOS below D. See FHWA *Signalized Intersections: Information Guide* FHWA-HRT-04-091, S.7.1.2, <http://www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pubs/04091/07.htm>.

serving the northeast region. On the other hand and perhaps more importantly, almost all the industries that are growing in the US today are virtually independent of place. Not only can headquarters be moved to best attract workers, but new communication and information technologies allow individuals to work from almost anywhere. This creates pressure to attract and retain these businesses and individuals by affordably providing the highest quality of life possible. Affordability also serves location-specific workers, from firemen and school teachers to construction and landscape laborers. Mixing affordable housing into high-quality, relatively dense development centers must play a role here, together with expanding choices of travel modes for people of all income levels.

The forces identified above are only somewhat predictable, and present uncertainties that may accelerate the need for plan implementation, or change assumptions entirely:

- Online shopping and home delivery may not only change the scale and scope of brick-and-mortar retail, but also lead to greater social isolation and segregation;
- Energy costs may rise quickly and dramatically, leading to much higher demand for mass transit and mixed residential and commercial land uses;
- Global outsourcing of production may increasingly apply to 'knowledge' jobs as well as to manufacturing, regressing American prosperity to a global mean;

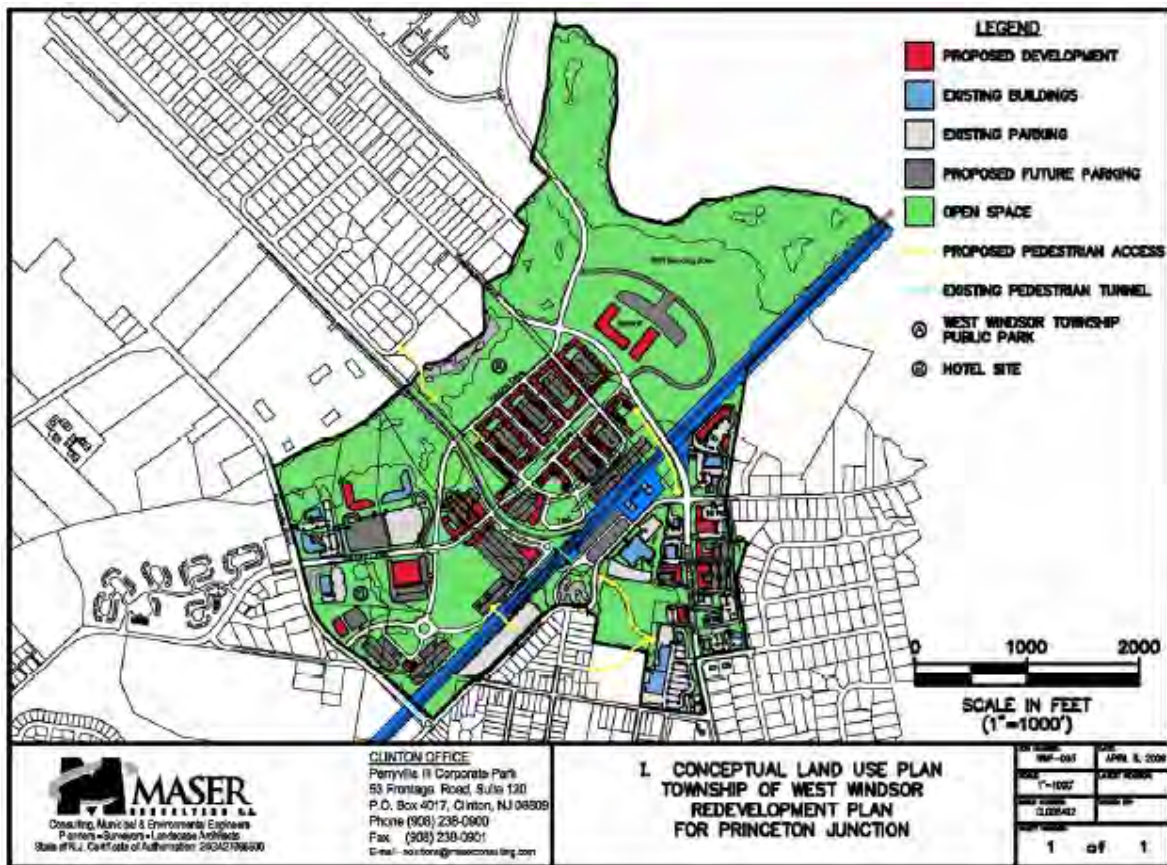


Figure 1. Princeton Jct. Station Area Plan, West Windsor 2009



INTRODUCTION

- Global warming and sea level rise may lead to mass migrations, with New Jersey as an attractive destination;
- A global pandemic may dramatically affect human population growth and undermine almost all our assumptions about the future.

To the extent that these forces point to any common direction for managing future growth, it is to increase density in mixed-use centers where infrastructure already exists and to provide for transportation mode choice.

This common direction is already central to the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's 2030 Plan (DVRPC is the federally-authorized Metropolitan Planning Organization [MPO] for the nine counties around Philadelphia, including Mercer). Federal policy is also turning in this direction. Both the State and the DVRPC have programs to support planning for center-based development, and the State has programs like the urban transit hub tax credit to encourage denser development. While land use zoning decisions are made at the municipal level, the State, MPO, and County can plan transportation facilities under their jurisdictions that enhance mode choice and minimize additional SOV capacity. And the County can work closely with municipalities to coordinate planning in the face of an uncertain future.



NJ TRANSIT | Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects | CLARKE • CATON • HINTZ

Figure 2. Hamilton Township Station Area Plan, NJ Transit 2002



II. HISTORY



HISTORY

Except for the intra-coastal waterway, almost all of the surface traffic on the eastern seaboard passes through Mercer County. Major facilities include the New Jersey Turnpike, Interstates I-95, I-195, and I-295, US Route 1, the Northeast Corridor commuter rail line (three rail operators serve Trenton Station), two freight rail lines (CSX and Conrail), inter-regional oil and natural gas pipelines, and a bulk freight seaport. In addition, state highways (especially US 206 and NJ 31) provide arterial connectors between I-95 in Mercer County and US 202/I-287 in Hunterdon and Middlesex Counties. The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission controls all five river crossings to Pennsylvania. Bus transit is provided by NJ Transit and private carriers, who mostly deliver commuters to New York City.

While the transportation resources in Mercer County are vast, the County government's formal jurisdiction over real resources is smaller than most municipalities, as shown by Figures 3 & 4 and Table 1 (see also Appendix B: Map 1). Generally, highways under state jurisdiction are interstates and principal arterials serving regional and inter-state traffic. County highways in New Jersey mostly consist of secondary arterials and collector roads serving multiple counties (500-level routes) or multiple municipalities (600-level routes). Municipalities maintain local streets as well as major and minor collectors. With suburban growth following the completion

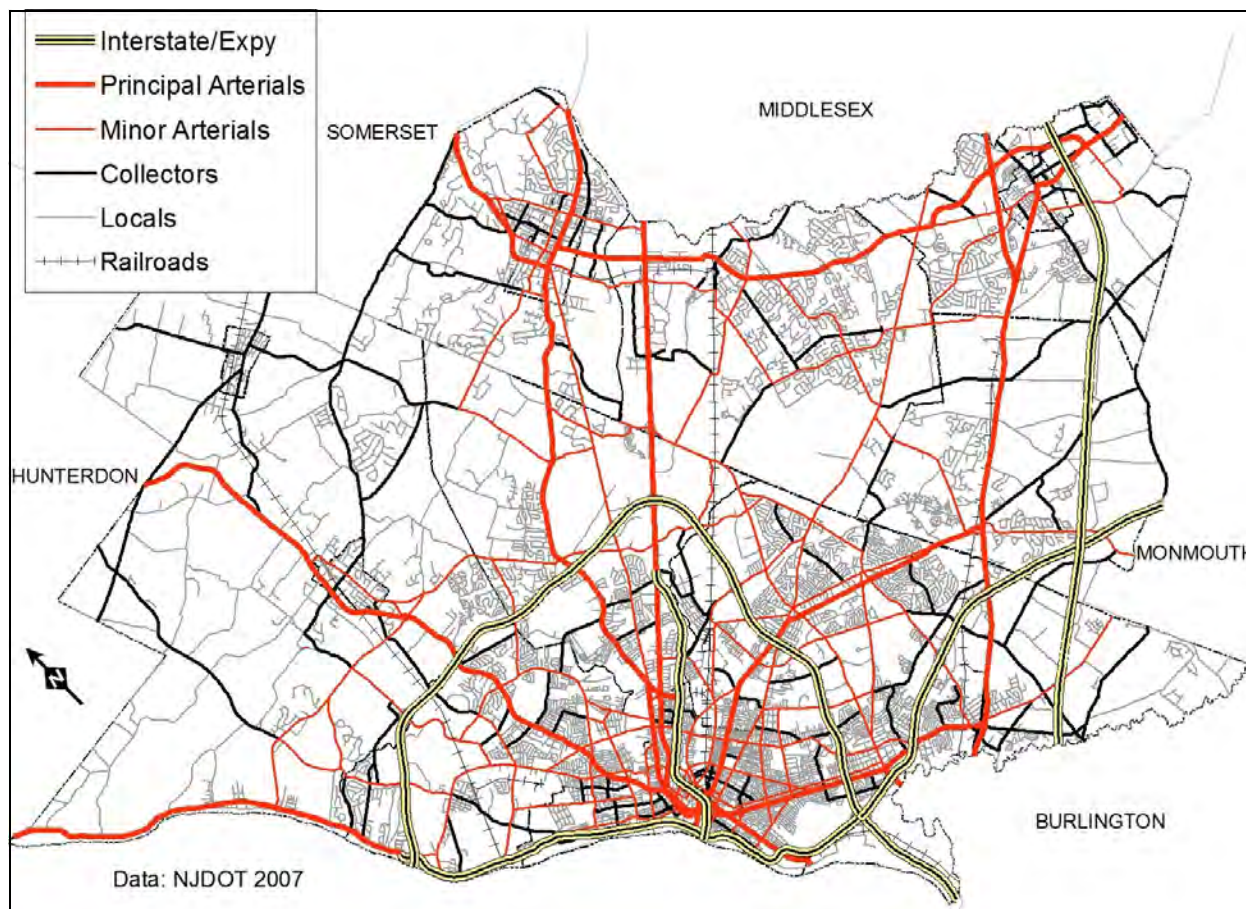


Figure 3. Roadway Functional Classification



of the interstate system in the 1970s,¹ municipal collectors now span more miles than county collectors. To maintain the inter-municipal and inter-county emphasis of county highways, the County may from time to time negotiate jurisdiction swaps with municipalities, as improvements are made, with net County mileage remaining at current levels. With jurisdiction over merely 11% of the roadway miles in the county, Mercer County must work in cooperation with its municipalities and the State to ensure a safe and efficient transportation network.

An historic example of such cooperation is the County's Transportation Development District. Authorized in 1989 by the New Jersey legislature, TDDs offered a new mechanism for funding transportation improvements. Shortly thereafter, Mercer County began working with Ewing, Hopewell, and Lawrence Townships to plan for an area targeted for development along I-95

1. Federal and State plans for major new highways in Mercer County have now been abandoned, including an I-95 connector to I-287; a realignment of NJ 31 to bypass Pennington to the Brunswick Circle on US 1B and US 206 in Trenton; and a connector between the NJ Turnpike and US 206 north of Princeton (Route 92). Plans to systematically widen state and county highways to higher classifications are also reduced, for reasons given under 'the paradox of development pressures' above.

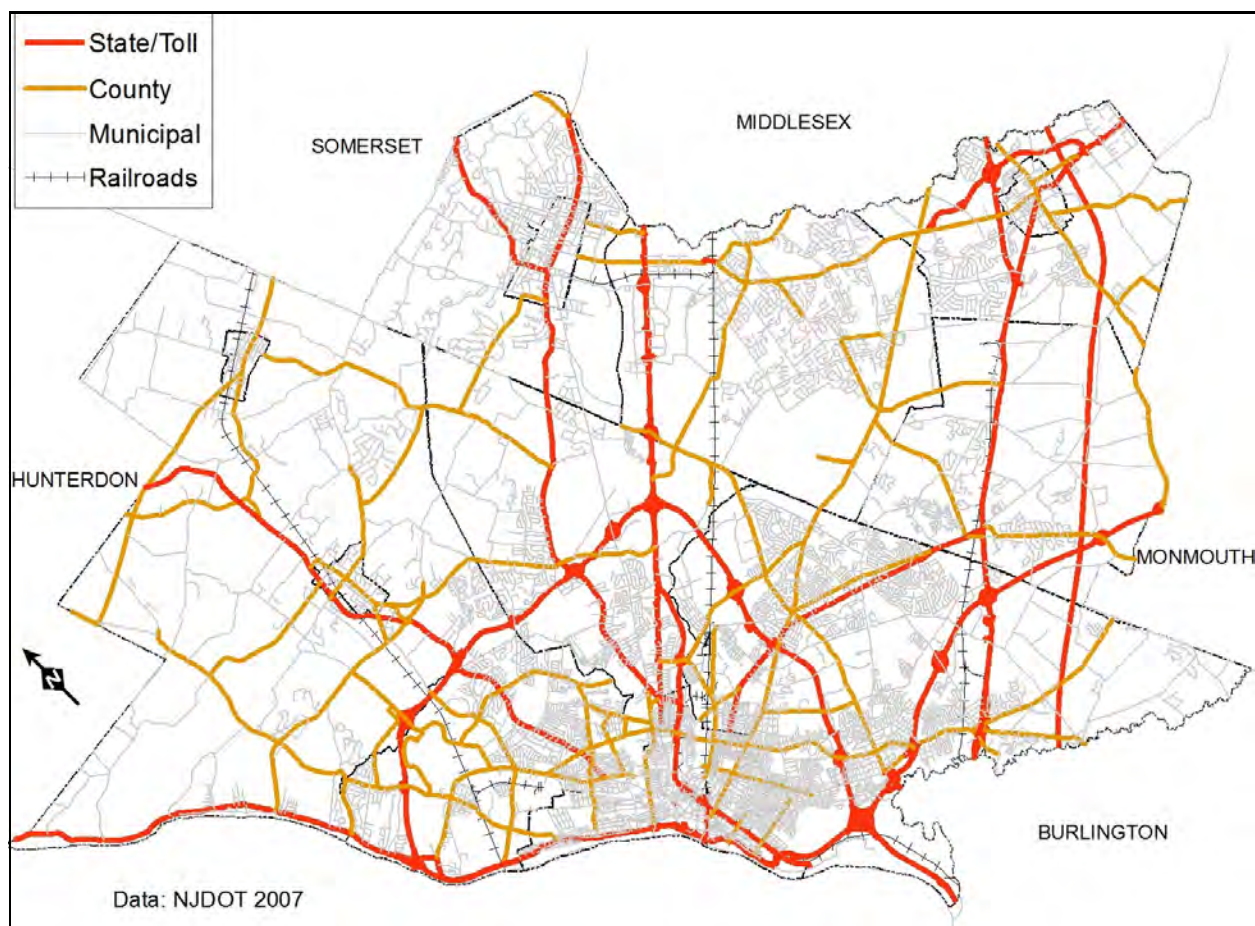


Figure 4. Roadway Jurisdiction



between Federal City Road and Scotch Road. The planning process generated consensus on long-range capital improvements to regionally manage traffic impacts from local development. Once implemented, the TDD plan created a more predictable environment for developers, with a formula for fair-share off-site traffic impact mitigation costs and the County determining where off-site mitigation efforts should be directed within the TDD. With a plan in place and the State as a partner, significant improvements were made and all substantial, buildable improvements within the boundary have been constructed. In 2016, the concerns that led to the TDD have been addressed and the majority of the land is either developed or preserved. In May 2016 the TDD was dissolved in accordance with the provisions of the Transportation Development District Act, N.J.S.A. 27:1C-14.

The role of this Mobility Element within the County's Master Plan is not only to identify specific improvements to the County highway network, but also to provide a framework for cooperation among jurisdictions with attention to potential future regional transportation needs. This is particularly a concern for preserving right of way for future uses. For example, in the 1989 update of the Mercer County 'Highways' sub-element, the most important transportation priority was supporting economic development in the US Route 1 corridor, north of the intersection of I-95, I-295 and US Route 1. The plan identified right of way for a supportive network of new or improved parallel collector roads to divert local traffic from Route 1. Significant segments of these roads have been built, and more will be as development intensifies. However, because of environmental constraints, parcels along what would be Canal Point Boulevard between Meadow Road and Nassau Park Pavilion may not be developed. Nevertheless, the transportation right of way could still be used for an elevated roadway reserved for bus rapid transit vehicles, the routes for which are now being planned by NJ Transit. This example suggests that, as the future comes closer, our vision may become clearer, and that in the interim it is important to plan for the development of a rational system to the extent possible.

What holds for motor vehicle travel holds for cooperation on other modes of transportation. Mercer County's Transportation Resources to Assist the Disabled and Elderly (TRADE) operates handicap-accessible 16-passenger mini-buses. Despite being the second largest public

	State	County	Municipal	Total	%
Interstate/Expy	117.2			117.2	6.5
Principal Arterial	210.3	9.4	10.8	230.5	12.7
Minor Arterial	1.2	117.2	78.0	196.3	10.8
Collector	1.3	57.4	108.8	167.5	9.2
Local/Ramp	46.1	12.3	1,045.3	1,103.7	60.8
Total	376.0	196.3	1,243.0	1,815.3	100.0
%	20.7	10.8	68.5	100.0	

Table 1. Roadway Functional Class and Jurisdiction¹

1. Data from NJDOT 2007 GIS centerlines. See 'Access Management' below for a more detailed discussion of highway functional classification.



transit provider in the county, TRADE's services pale in comparison to the on-demand accessible services that, under federal ADA requirements, NJ Transit must provide within three-quarters of a mile of each of its scheduled bus routes (see Figure 5). Recognizing the efficiencies that may be gained, the federal United We Ride initiative in 2006 required local coordination among human service transportation providers. These include TRADE, municipal, and non-profit services that apply for funding under several federal programs, as well as NJ Transit. New Jersey identified counties as the units of 'local' coordination (Pennsylvania units are MPOs) and Mercer County subsequently appointed the Executive Director of TRADE as the local lead for coordination. Under his direction, a variety of transportation providers, passengers, and social service agencies developed the County's Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan, which now governs the allocation of federal funds to a variety of service providers, and promises to increase transit system efficiency in years to come.

As with transit services, the County's role in facilitating bicycle and pedestrian mobility must primarily be one of coordination. For pedestrians, this is because most pedestrian traffic will be within municipal population centers that County highways connect. For cyclists, coordination is necessary because local streets are generally safer than high-speed, high-volume county col-

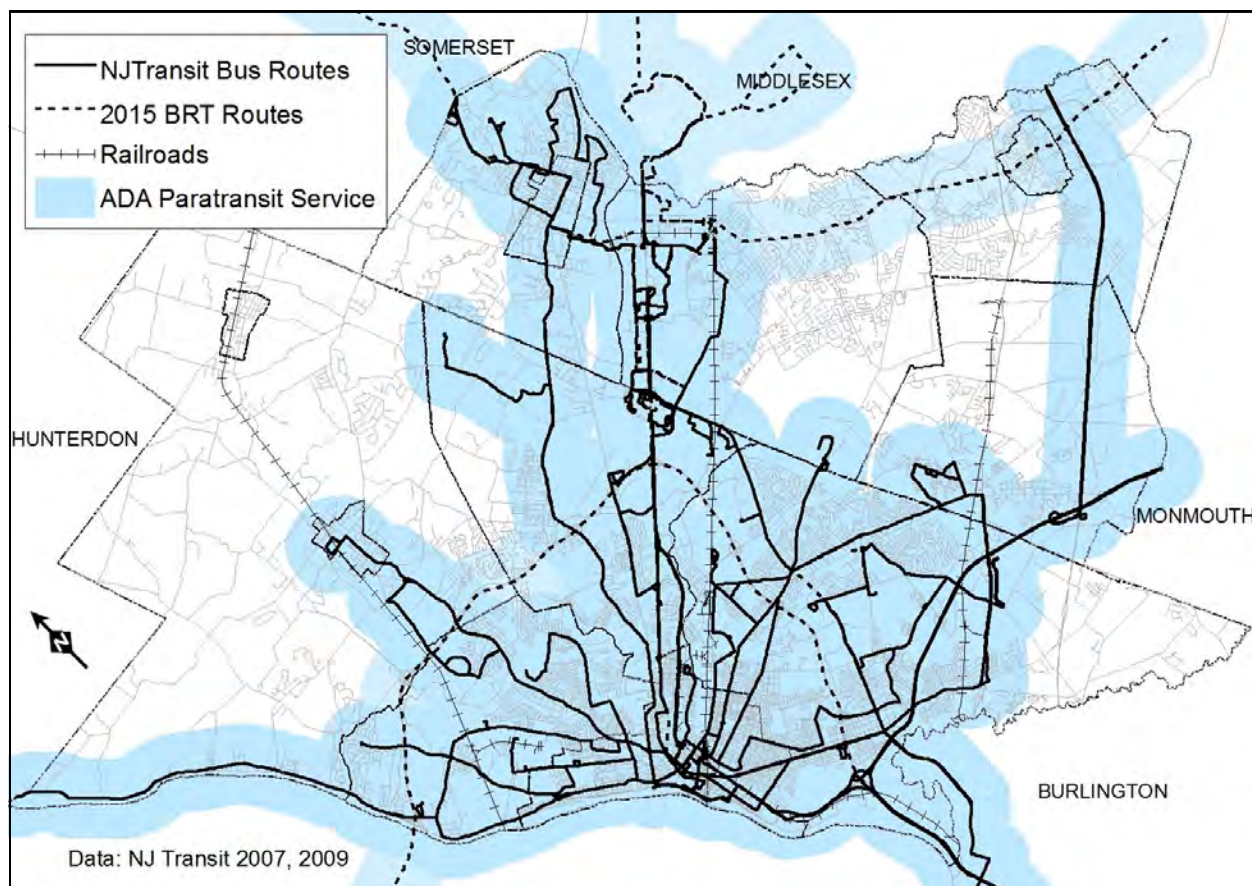


Figure 5. Bus Routes & ADA Service Area



lectors and arterials. The County therefore must encourage municipal streets that accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, and connected networks of local streets that can serve as 'bicycle boulevards' separated from high-volume motor vehicle traffic. One means for this is County staff participation in the Mercer County Bicycle-Pedestrian Task Force convened by the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association. Of course, the County must also ensure that its own roads appropriately accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

In aviation, Mercer County's Trenton-Mercer Airport (TTN) is the only FAA-certified commercial airport in the County, though general aviation facilities remain in operation at the Trenton-Robbinsville Airport and at the Princeton Airport, just outside of Mercer in Montgomery Township, Somerset County. In recent decades, commercial carriers have intermittently operated regional commuter services out of TTN. Sustainable commercial service probably depends on Newark and Philadelphia airports exceeding capacity. With Philadelphia undergoing major renovations and planning a new runway, it is not clear when this will be, but the administrators of Trenton-Mercer Airport continue to participate in regional aviation coordination efforts.

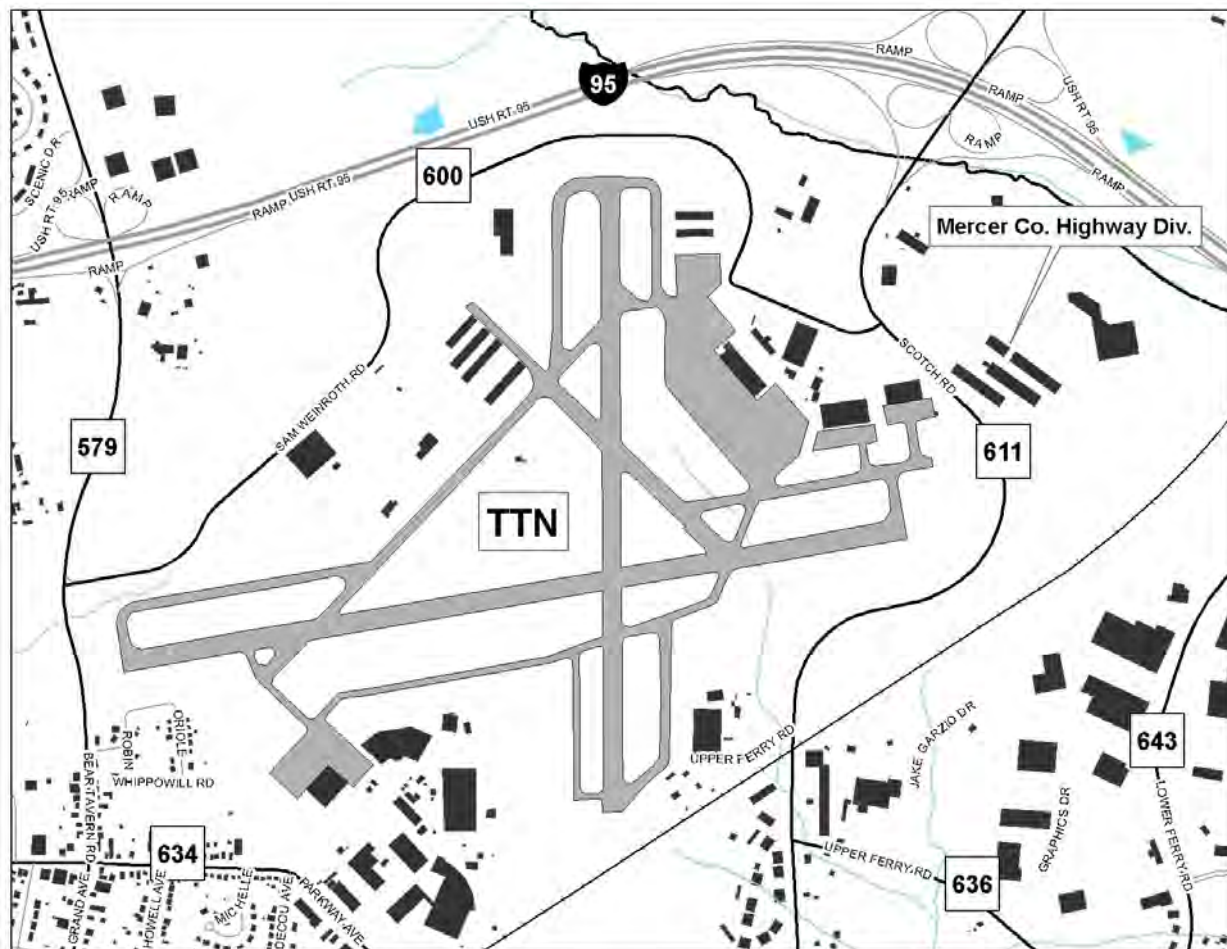


Figure 6. Trenton-Mercer Airport (TTN)



II. VISION (GOALS)



VISION (GOALS)

The vision for the County's transportation system in this plan was developed in two intensive outreach efforts with stakeholders. The first took place in 2002 in a series of interviews and meetings with municipal representatives identifying desirable characteristics and current issues for each segment of County highway (see Figure 6). The goal of this effort was to develop a plan and code for managing access points (intersections and driveways) on County highways in order to increase safety and maintain traffic capacity (see Policy 1, Strategy 2, p. 16). The other outreach effort, in 2007, convened municipalities and other stakeholders to identify a vision for growth in the county as a whole. That vision is elaborated in the core of the Mercer County Master Plan (see Figure 9). Congruent with the direction pointed by the local and global forces cited above, stakeholders painted a vision of denser growth in established centers arrayed on existing major transportation corridors, in nodes at major commuter rail stations, and in existing commercial centers augmented with residential uses.

A recent study by the New Jersey Department of Transportation has confirmed the long range viability of this vision. The US Route 1 Regional Growth Strategy gathered a similar mix of stakeholders from an area covering much of Mercer County and large portions of Middlesex and Somerset Counties where future development will impact the Route 1 corridor. Consultants interviewed municipal officials about their development visions and planned transportation improvements. Employment, population, and traffic congestion growth were modeled under 'build-out' and 'vision' scenarios. Under the build-out scenario, congestion predictions were dire. However, the vision scenario showed that denser development, combined with transportation projects currently on the drawing board, would retain acceptable levels of service (see Figure 7). The threats to achieving this vision are that municipal land use visions are mostly not yet codified in zoning and that funding has not been identified for most of the transportation projects. Continued coordination among municipalities, counties, MPOs, and the State of New Jersey is imperative.

The vision that grows out of these efforts is a transportation system that will enhance local development opportunities and quality of life for current residents and future generations. The system will be fitted to land use, with characteristics varying with the scale and density of development. Figure 8 illustrates elements of this variation.

In center-based developments and borough main streets, sidewalks will support pedestrian traffic and shoulder widths will accommodate cyclists, where compatible with pavement width and municipal parking ordinances. Street trees and building fronts adjacent to sidewalks will give motorists the sense that the street is a place available to a variety of users. Rear-lot park-

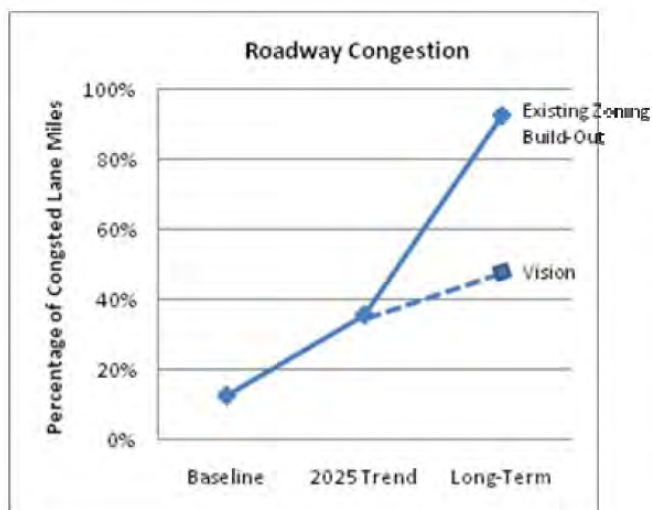


Figure 7: US1RGS Congestion Analysis (NJDOT)

ing with side-street, alley, or backage-road access will increase predictability on the main street and reduce conflict hazards for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Bus pull-outs will reduce delay for cyclists and through motorists.

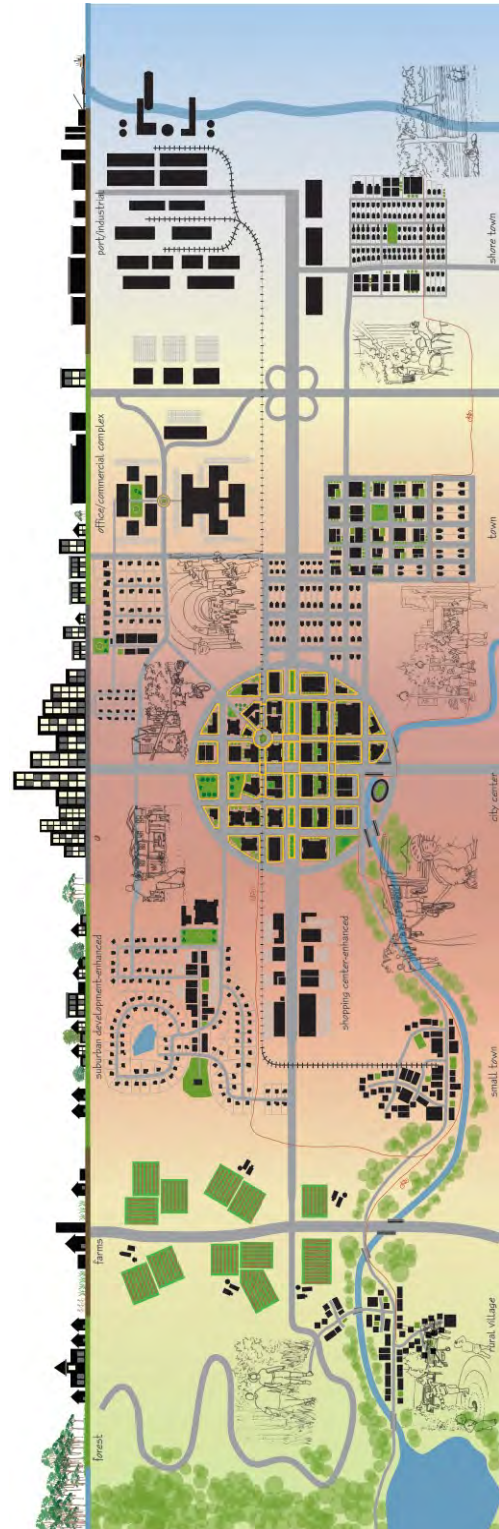
On more rural roadway segments, shoulders will accommodate cyclists where compatible pavement widths consistently exist. Shared and consolidated driveways will reduce conflict hazards for travelers. Roadway design, appurtenances, and roadside vegetation will be appropriate to local contexts.

To preserve vehicular capacity and to provide safe alternate routes for cyclists, the County will encourage municipalities to develop a network of parallel connector roads for land access. Cul-de-sacs in new subdivisions should convert to through streets upon development of adjacent parcels, and new commercial developments should provide for off-street cross-access to neighboring parcels.

In all cases, County roadway facilities will provide adequate access to emergency service vehicles. Where feasible, signal prioritization should enhance progression for emergency service and mass transit vehicles.

Sensitive to local context, this vision of the future of mobility in Mercer County is one of “complete streets,” with facilities appropriate to all travel modes. This vision will be achieved through implementation of the policies and strategies in the next section.

Figure 8. Transect from Mobility & Community Form: A Guide to Linking Transportation & Land Use in the Municipal Master Plan, NJDOT 2006



VISION (GOALS)

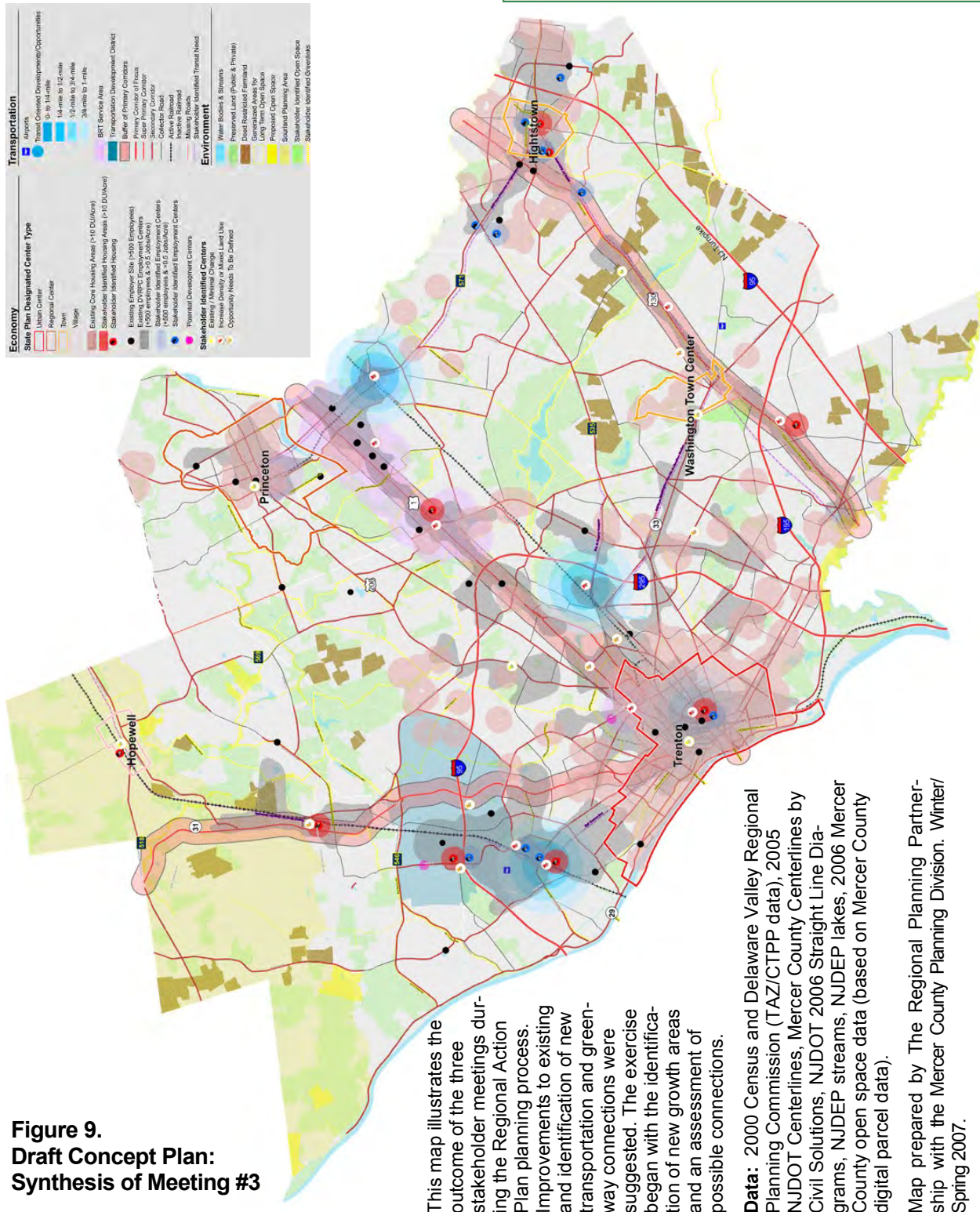


Figure 9.
Draft Concept Plan:
Synthesis of Meeting #3



IV. Policies & Strategies



POLICIES & STRATEGIES

The policies outlined in this section are intended to yield “complete streets” on the Mercer County highway system. They were developed in reference to complete streets policies recently adopted by the Federal Highway Administration, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, and other agencies. They extend beyond those examples because policies here must cover the full range of responsible management of a multi-modal system.

Policy #1: Preserve existing transportation facilities

Strategy #1: Apply standards-based strategies, developing standards and information resources where necessary, to cost-effectively manage roadways, bridges, traffic controls, and safety devices

- *Transportation asset management information system:* The County will implement a computerized system for capital cost accounting and maintenance management for highway capital infrastructure. The system should facilitate cost-effective maintenance scheduling, permit processing, coordination with agencies maintaining under-pavement utilities, and customer responsiveness.

Strategy #2: Preserve highway capacity by developing an access management code for County facilities and working with stakeholders to implement local access management plans

- *Access Management Plan and Code:* The County will continue to develop and implement a network-level plan for reducing and mitigating vehicular conflict points at intersections and commercial driveways with standards for intersection and driveway spacing and geometry. Access levels for particular County routes were developed following interviews with municipal officials in 2002 and are indicated on Map 2 and Appendix A of this plan element. Full implementation of access management measures requires revision (by ordinance) to the County's Land Development Standards. Authority for counties to implement access management strategies is given by the State Highway Access Management Act (N.J.S.A. 27:7-91e).
- *Local access management plans:* The County will work with municipal stakeholders and property owners to develop strategies to better manage traffic operations, roadway design, and driveways in locations where more intensive development is planned, or where existing safety and congestion concerns warrant retrofit applications.

Policy #2: Improve safety for all travelers

Strategy #1: Include context sensitive solutions that enhance safety for all travel modes whenever implementing an improvement

- When management systems (asset management, access management, safety management) or planning studies indicate operational or geometric changes to County highways, all travel modes and local context will be considered in concept development and alternatives analysis for each project. Accommodations for pedestrians and cyclists



will be included except where their cost is excessively disproportionate to need or probable use.

Strategy #2: Analyze crash history and traffic operations to identify locations for safety improvements

- *Crash Analysis:* The County will conduct a network-level screening of mappable crash data from NJDOT to identify high-incidence intersections and segments. High priority locations on state highways and municipal streets will be referred to appropriate jurisdictions (see Figure 13, p. 27).
- *Roadway Safety Audits:* Highest incidence locations on County highways will be subjected to office and field condition reviews by a multi-disciplinary team (Highway Traffic, Engineering, Planning, local public safety) to identify and prioritize potential safety improvements.

Policy #3: Promote choice of travel mode

Strategy #1: Develop mode-specific plans for travel on County facilities

- *Transit:* New Jersey Transit and the NJ Department of Transportation have developed phased implementation plans for an express bus (bus rapid transit or BRT) core and feeder system for the US Route 1 Corridor. In light of this, as part of its 2010 federally funded planning work program, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is developing a bus transit long range concept plan for all NJ Transit bus services out of the Hamilton Garage (all of Mercer County and parts of adjacent counties). This plan will be incorporated herein in part or by reference, when complete, and Mercer County will continue to work with DVRPC and NJ Transit to refine and implement the plan.
- *Bicycle:* At the request of Mercer County in 2009, consultants to NJDOT are developing a county bicycle master plan to complement statewide and municipal bicycle master plans. This plan will be incorporated herein in part or by reference when complete, and Mercer County will begin implementing high-priority bicycle improvements on its own facilities and continue coordination with the State and municipalities on other recommended network improvements.
- *Freight:* Work with NJDOT, DVRPC, and municipalities to develop standard routes for feright vehicles, both through the county and to destinations within the county, including retail and commercial and industrial sites, distribution centers, and intermodal facilities.

Strategy #2: Strategically improve existing highway facilities to provide multi-modal transportation choices, including transit, cycling, and walking, as well as automobile travel

- Identify and implement improvements to facilities based on priorities from mode-specific plans, in addition to roadway safety audits and asset and access management systems.

Strategy #3: Work with state and local stakeholders to develop a network of off-road multipurpose trails to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian travel



POLICIES & STRATEGIES

- Ensure that trails developed with County open space funds are, minimally, accessible to highway and transit networks and, optimally, serve as connectors or substitutes to the highway system for non-motorized travelers.
 - Continue active participation in interagency coordination efforts, including the Mercer County Bicycle-Pedestrian Task Force, Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board, Mercer County Park Commission, NJDEP, municipalities, and nonprofit agencies.
- Strategy #4: Coordinate with New Jersey Transit and local community human service transit providers to implement new transit services where they are lacking and to better coordinate existing services to improve efficiency.
- *Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan (CHSTP)*: A 2006 Executive Order required recipients of federal funding for human service transportation to coordinate services. Initially only three of 70 federal funding streams were included (seniors, disabled, low-income job access); eventually all are intended to be. With DVRPC support, Mercer County developed a service coordination plan (2007), the implementation and maintenance of which is now in the hands of a committee of service providers, customers, and social service agencies led by the Director of Mercer County's Transportation Resources to Assist the Disabled and Elderly. Mercer County will continue to support the steering committee of the CHSTP and plan implementation.

Policy #4: Promote land uses that reduce reliance on automobiles

- Strategy #1: Support municipal plans that concentrate mixed-use, walkable and bikeable (re)development in centers and corridors where infrastructure already exists
- Where invited, participate actively in preparation of municipal redevelopment plans and master plan updates.
 - Share materials and media on the benefits of denser, mixed-use development with municipal officials and planning boards.

Policy #5: Link transportation improvements to economic and environmental goals

- Strategy #1: Promote transit options to and within the County to serve regional commuters, in recognition that a jobs-to-housing imbalance is likely to persist
- Support implementation of NJ Transit Bus Rapid Transit system and complementary local bus routes to support a mode shift in favor of transit.
 - Support NJDOT in linking transportation project funding to supportive changes in land use zoning.
 - Continue interagency coordination in the Central Jersey Transportation Forum and support regional governance entities that may evolve from it.
- Strategy #2: Promote transit options for urban commuters to suburban job sites and for intra-county commuters between neighborhoods and employment centers



- Continue close coordination with the City of Trenton and Mercer County Improvement Authority on economic redevelopment in the City, including Urban Land Institute 'triangle of opportunity' (between the State House, the Arena, and Waterfront Stadium), NJ 29 Boulevard conversion, and redevelopment efforts adjacent to Trenton Station and River LINE stations.
- When complete, incorporate in part or by reference the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's long range strategic plan for bus transit.
- Investigate and, where appropriate, implement dedicated lanes, intersection queue jumping, and signal prioritization for buses.

Strategy #3: Target single occupancy vehicle capacity-adding improvements to serve areas where infrastructure already exists and limit improvements that encourage green-field development

- Implement access management plan (Policy #1, Strategy #2).
- Screen projects for unwarranted additions of SOV capacity.



Figure 10. Suburban Arterial Re-Visioned as a Complete Street
(NJDOT Complete Streets Policy PowerPoint presentation, 2010)

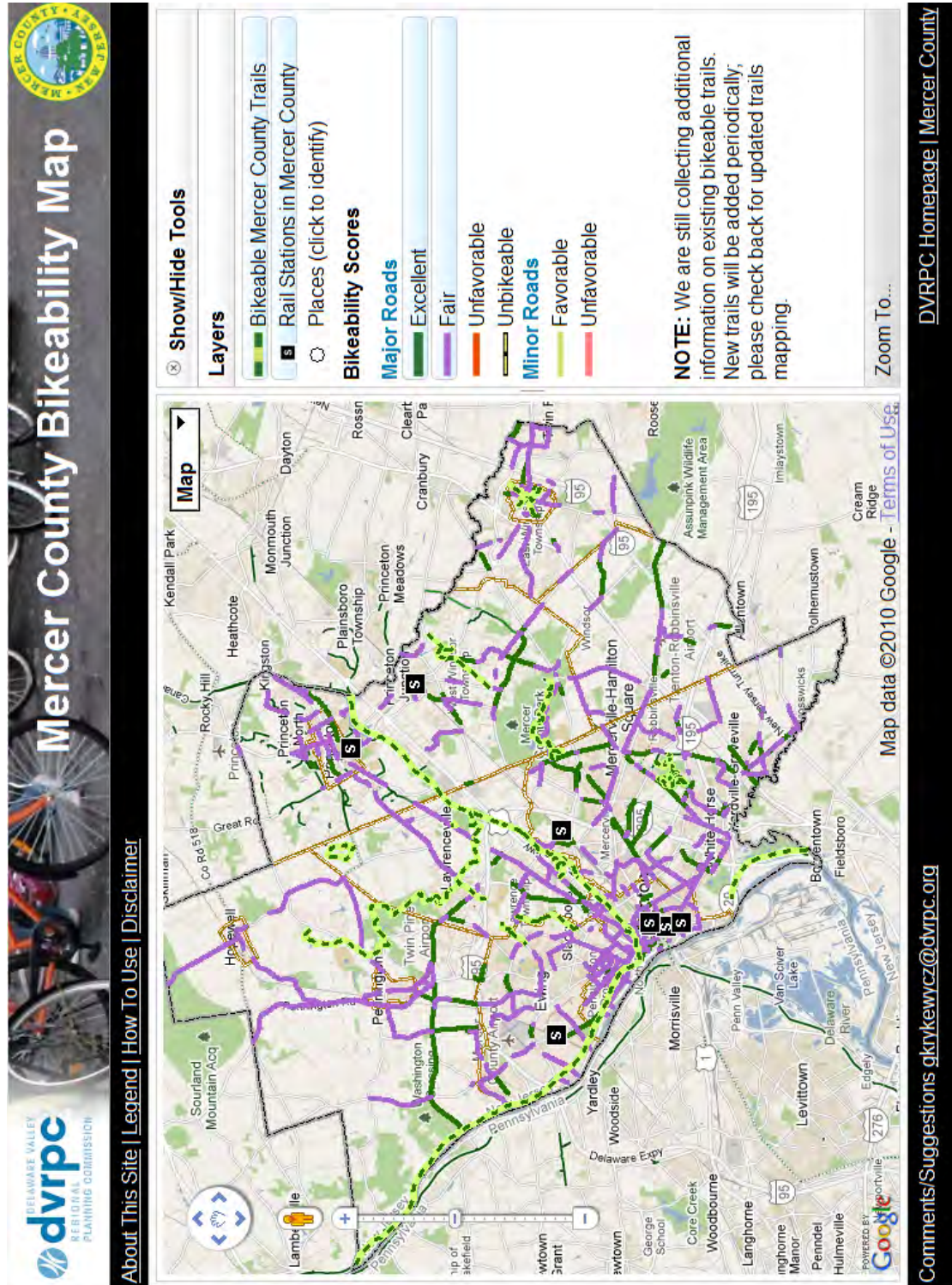


Figure 11. DVRPC Interactive Web Map used to gather community comment on 'bikeability' (bicycle level of service scores) on roads in Mercer County, 2010.



V. Partnerships and Funding



PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING

Mobility planning and transportation-related capital improvements at the county level involve a wide variety of partners and stakeholders. Sections below outline the roles of major contributors.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

The DVRPC is the federally-authorized metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Philadelphia metropolitan area. As an MPO, DVRPC is a quasi-governmental organization whose member governments (Mercer, Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester Counties in New Jersey and Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, Delaware, and Philadelphia Counties in Pennsylvania, and the cities of Chester, Camden, and Trenton) cooperatively ratify federally-funded projects for inclusion in a 10-year, fiscally constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is driven by DVRPC's 25-year regional plan. DVRPC also models travel demand to evaluate transportation system conformity with air quality standards set by the US Environmental Protection Agency and supplies federal funds for regional transportation planning, executing special projects in-house at the request of member governments and making grants to support local planning.

New Jersey Department of Transportation

NJDOT is a primary partner with Mercer County for local project implementation through its local aid formula funding (state funds) for bridge and highway maintenance. NJDOT is also a very active participant in developing DVRPC's TIP, since most federal funding goes to projects on state-maintained interstates and federal highways. County participation and support for these projects is vital because federal and state highways are the primary links in the county's transportation network.

New Jersey Transit Corporation

NJ Transit is the major provider of mass transit in the state of New Jersey. The County works closely with NJ Transit for bus route and service planning, identifying bus stop locations, and supporting local inter-agency coordination. NJ Transit actively cooperates with local governments to implement transit-oriented development in the vicinity of its commuter rail stations.

Municipalities

Mercer County municipalities are close partners in mobility planning because their land development plans significantly impact county highways and the mobility needs they identify are a significant stimulus for County projects. In all cases, the County carefully considers their visions for streetscape and traffic operations whenever undertaking new projects.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Several NGOs play a role in mobility planning for the County. These include:



The Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association: Locally, the TMA plays a lead role in travel demand management, with partnerships and financial support from local corporations and a mission to develop alternatives to single occupancy vehicle travel (telecommuting, ridesharing, vanpools, shuttle service subscriptions, bicycle racks and lockers, etc.). The TMA convenes the Mercer County Bicycle-Pedestrian Task Force and participates actively in transit system planning.

The Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission: The bi-state Bridge Commission owns and operates all five highway crossings of the Delaware river in Mercer County and occasionally makes grants to municipalities for roadway improvements that affect river crossings.

Rutgers University hosts several centers that serve local needs, including the *Voorhees Transportation Center*, which undertakes contract research for federal and state agencies with frequent relevance to local issues, such as the recent US Route 1 Regional Growth Strategy and managing the Penn's Neck Environmental Impact Statement process. Rutgers also hosts the federally-funded *Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation* (CAIT) and a *Local Technical Assistance Program* (LTAP), which provide technical assistance and training to local transportation agencies.

Municipal and nonprofit human service transportation providers: A variety of agencies provide transportation services to seniors and to medical service clients that complement services provided by Mercer County's Transportation Resources for the Disabled and Elderly (TRADE) and the Mercer County Board of Social Services. The County has developed closer relations with these organizations through the coordinated human service transportation planning process.

Local and municipal committees and non-profit advocacy groups, such as the Transportation Sub-Committee of the Princeton Regional Planning Board, the West Windsor-Plainsboro Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance, Ewing Township's Environmental Commission, the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail, the D & R Greenway Land Trust, and others.

Mercer County Offices & Agencies

The *Mercer County Planning Division* is responsible for long-range transportation planning and is the technical liaison to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, but is only one of several County offices responsible for developing and implementing mobility services. Others include:

The *Mercer County Department of Transportation and Infrastructure*, which is comprised of four Divisions:

The Engineering Division recommends the County's annual capital program for highways, bridges, and stormwater, and develops specifications for and manages highway and bridge projects. The County Engineer is also responsible for technical review of land development proposals that impact County highway and stormwater facilities;

The Highway Division maintains County mobility infrastructure with maintenance units for roads, traffic, street trees, and mosquito control. Highway Division staff support emergency



PARTNERSHIPS & FUNDING

services and manage snow-plowing and other critical maintenance activities;

Transportation Resources for the Disabled and Elderly (TRADE) operates a fleet of wheelchair accessible shuttle buses to provide scheduled and on-demand point to point transportation services for subject populations. Its call center maintains user subscriptions and schedules trips;

The Trenton-Mercer Airport (TTN) is a commercial and general service airport servicing about 9,000 flights a year. No commercial carriers currently serve the airport, but several local corporations and Ronson Aviation lease hangars and parking. The airport also hosts a Mercer County College flight school and an Air National Guard unit.

Mercer County Board of Social Services contracts for transportation services for Medicaid clients, providing more trips with van service and taxi fare reimbursements than Mercer County TRADE.

Mercer County Office of Economic Development and Sustainability manages a transit route subsidized by the federal Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, contracting with a vendor to provide scheduled service between Hamilton Station, urban neighborhoods in Trenton and Hamilton, and employers in Robbinsville, East Windsor, and Monroe Township in Middlesex County.

Private Land Developers

Private land developers are integral partners in developing transportation facilities because significant changes in land use trigger traffic studies and may require off-site mitigations when additional traffic will impact County highways.

Taxpayers

Finally, the residents of Mercer County are important partners in planning and implementing mobility services. Their taxes pay for County-funded capital maintenance and improvement projects; their calls to the Highway Division alert County staff about immediate maintenance needs; and their concerns are considered in, and often initiate, specific facility planning projects.



VI. Needs Analysis



NEEDS ANALYSIS

Figure 12 shows traffic volume-to-capacity ratios for collectors and arterials in Mercer County based on 2005 data from DVRPC's Congestion Management Process. While the data are suggestive, they must be interpreted with care, as traffic volumes were imputed for many segments where counts were missing. Thus some locations that experience severe, recurrent congestion, such as the I-95 approach to the Scudders Falls Bridge, show no congestion, while segments of Spruce Street (CR 613) that experience free flow at all times are rated congested based on counts for adjacent, higher capacity segments. In 2009, at the request of the County, DVRPC began a more systematic traffic counting program that promises to deliver a more accurate and comprehensive analysis when a full cycle of counts is complete after 2011. Figure 13 shows crash rates per mile, also from the DVRPC Congestion Management Process. Data in this case are from the NJ State Police reportable crash database, in which only about 60% of crashes are mappable. On most high-incidence segments of County routes, safety projects are completed, under way, or planned. For example, the highest incidence

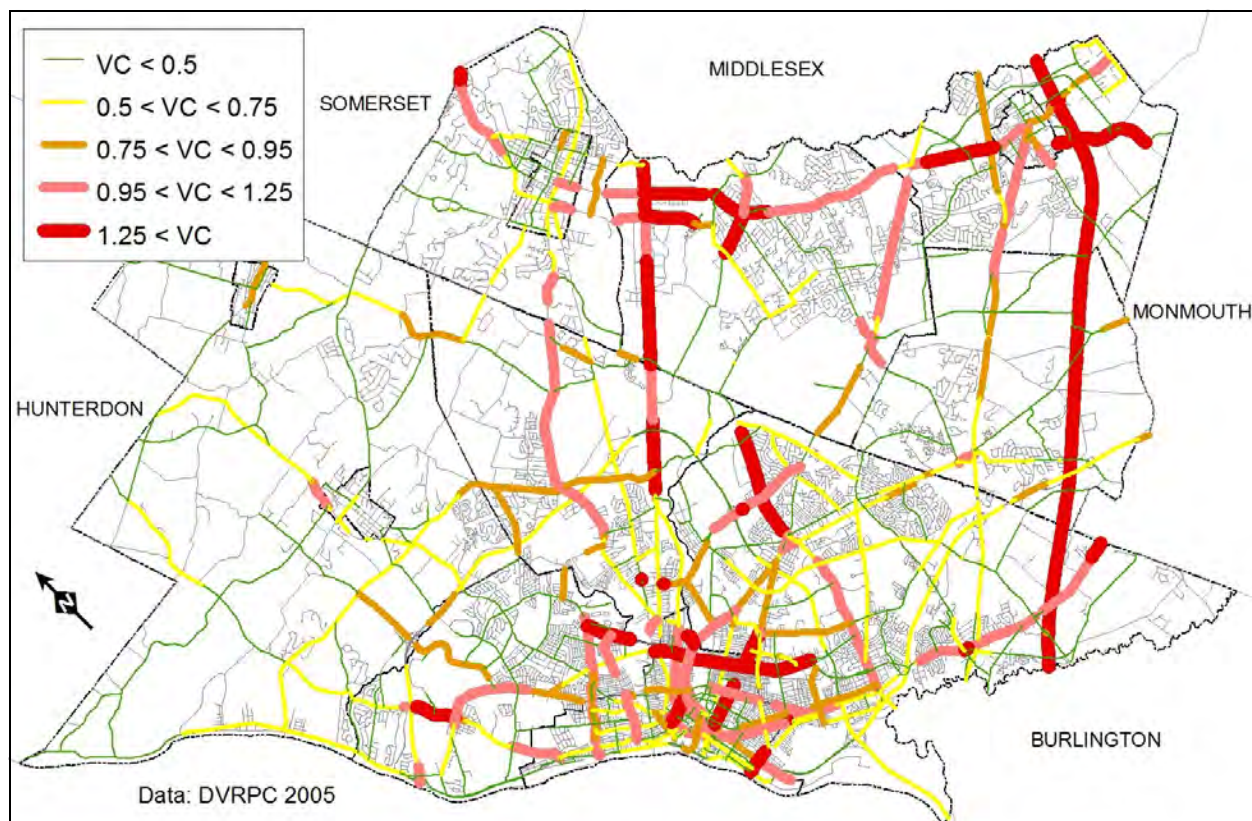


Figure 12. Volume / Capacity Ratios



segment of Hamilton Avenue (CR 606) has had a turn radius widened and signals upgraded at Clinton Avenue. Signal upgrades are programmed for Olden Avenue (CR 622), and signal upgrades are planned for Quakerbridge Road (CR 533). (These and other projects of similar minor scope are not detailed below.) In 2009, NJDOT and Rutgers University unveiled a new map-based crash analysis tool. County staff will undertake a more thorough analysis of crash frequencies on county route segments and intersections in 2010 and 2011.

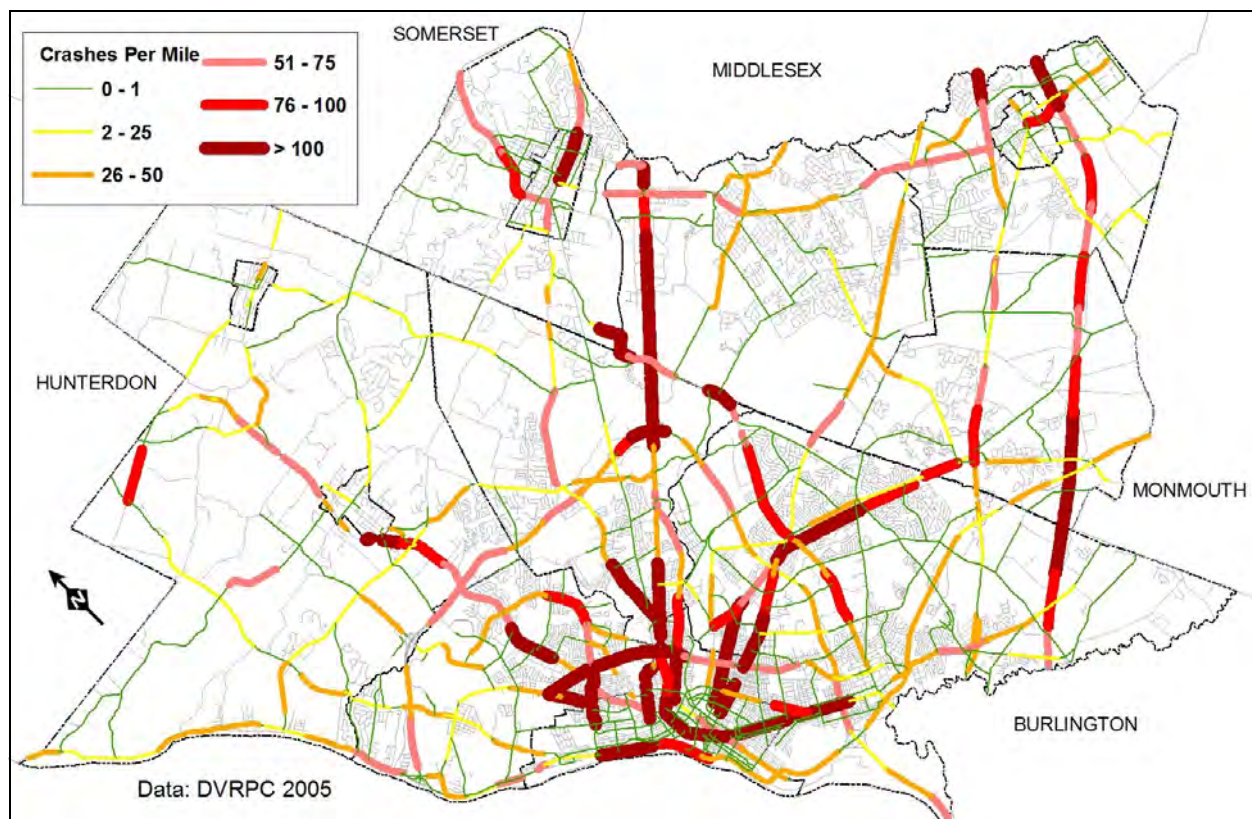


Figure 13. Crash Rates per Mile



NEEDS ANALYSIS

Road Type	Interstate			State Highway			County			Municipal			Private		
	Property Damage	Injury	Fatal	Property Damage	Injury	Fatal	Property Damage	Injury	Fatal	Property Damage	Injury	Fatal	Property Damage	Injury	Fatal
2003	555	135	1	2253	871	12	2392	945	8	4261	1108	6	1826	149	
2004	560	146	3	2221	809	11	2573	956	2	4076	1182	7	1753	148	
2005	548	127	3	2275	758	14	2316	946	7	4022	1084	9	1841	145	
2006	538	117	6	2003	800	10	2181	829	8	3664	1029	8	1637	143	1
2007	584	156	3	2040	731	4	2169	778	12	3844	1001	3	1892	136	
2008	498	152	4	2050	758	5	2177	719	2	3453	866	6	1715	147	
2009	568	171	1	2256	687	4	2151	691	8	3837	765	7	1753	143	
% Chg.	2.3	26.7	0.0	0.1	-21.1	-66.7	-10.1	-26.9	0.0	-10.0	-31.0	16.7	-4.0	-4.0	0.0

Table 2. Crash Severity by Facility Type in Mercer County

Source: Rutgers CAIT Plan4Safety (<http://plan4safety.rutgers.edu>)

Year	Statewide Rural	Statewide Small Urban	Statewide Other Urbanized	Trenton Urbanized	Hightstown Urbanized	Statewide Total
2003	18,912,000	3,504,000	164,391,000	7,134,000	1,296,000	195,237,000
2004	19,286,000	3,638,000	167,544,000	7,302,000	1,349,000	199,119,000
2005	19,696,000	3,702,000	170,736,000	7,463,000	1,479,000	203,076,000
2006	19,913,000	3,808,000	174,224,500	7,658,500	1,527,000	207,131,000
2007	18,961,000	3,741,000	176,519,700	7,645,300	1,552,000	208,419,000
2008	17,292,000	3,348,000	171,219,000	7,253,000	1,539,000	200,651,000
2009	17,107,000	3,452,000	170,177,000	7,353,000	1,497,000	199,586,000
% Chg	-9.54	-1.48	3.52	3.07	15.51	2.23

Table 3. Daily Vehicle Miles Travelled, by Area

Source: NJ DOT Bureau of Transportation Data Development
(http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/roadway/pdf/hpms2009/VMT_HIST_09.pdf)



VII. Highway Improvements

- | State Projects
- | Active County Projects
- | Long Range County Projects



As a member government in the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Mercer County participates in the development of the federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the region, as well as the New Jersey State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The majority of TIP and STIP funds are formulaic and categorical, for instance for bridge, pavement, and safety management programs, with only large projects specifically listed separately. Projects that add vehicular capacity to roadways are reviewed for conformity with federal air quality attainment goals, simulating pollution reductions from congestion mitigation or pollution increases from higher travel demand induced by new, free-flow capacity.

In sections below, this plan supports and advocates projects for state, county, and a few significant municipal facilities. For the most part, these projects stem from identified issues and have undergone at least some formal planning. In some cases, such as the Penn's Neck Area congestion mitigation plan, the project has an approved Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and awaits funding in a constrained capital program. In general, the sections below do not include improvements to existing intersections, addition of auxiliary lanes, shoulders, etc. as such improvements are implemented programmatically to address safety and congestion concerns.

Projects listed below (see Appendix B: Maps 2-6) focus mainly on two primary goals, mobility and encouraging denser development where infrastructure already exists. Projects that foster the goal of improving travel mode-choice will be identified in forthcoming bicycle and transit sub-elements. The 1989 Highways plan element (superseded by this plan) was updated to include by reference projects identified in the 1992 East Windsor Traffic and Infrastructure Analysis and the 1992 Allentown Regional Transportation Study. The condition assessments in those plans are outdated, so those plans are no longer included herein. However, extant regionally-significant projects from them are included below.

The focus on mobility in projects below is represented primarily by closing gaps in network connectivity. These include, in Hopewell, the completion of Denow Road; in Ewing, extensions of Sylvia Street, Calhoun Street, and Parkway Avenue; in West Windsor completing Vaughn Drive and New Meadow Road; and in Robbinsville and Hamilton, completing the Town Center Bypass on NJ 33.

Preserving the possibility of future connections is one of the most important functions of this mobility plan. Several connections in this plan are almost inconceivable today, either because of current environmental regulations or stakeholder opposition. Conditions of the moment, however, should not forever preclude the possibility of a sensible project. For a cautionary example, the de-designation of an interstate link between I-95 in Hopewell Township and I-287 in Somerset County was hailed as a victory for preservationists in the 1970s. Today, the same groups rue the heavy truck traffic on US 206 and NJ 31 that the interstate link would have carried, and development has come anyway, filling in the proposed right of way. Seeking to avoid that fate, this plan identifies projects that may be highly desirable if conditions change. These include, in East Windsor, an arterial connector between US 206 and the NJ Turnpike (SR 92); in Lawrence, the extension of Whitehead Road; in Hamilton, missing links on Flock Road, Kuser Road, Paxson Avenue, and Estates Boulevard; in Princeton Township, the re-opening of Province Line Road; and in West Windsor, the last segment of Canal Point Boulevard and a



new connection between Village and Meadow Roads. Mercer County fully supports the preferred alternative in the Penn's Neck EIS ('Route 1 in a Cut', Alternative D2a), but would not oppose a less costly routing of a bypass closer to the Millstone River.

Projects that encourage denser development along existing corridors emphasize capacity preservation over expansion. This means that, as denser development is conceived and approved, it is crucial to implement access controls and roadway designs that elicit driver behavior appropriate to a pedestrian-oriented, main street environment. In most cases, this involves the land-side of the highway more than expensive cartway widening and realignments. For example, on US 206, Lawrence Township envisions main street development in Lawrenceville and Eldridge Park, and Princeton Township and Borough envision the road being more of an urban street than a rural highway. On NJ 31, Hopewell and Ewing Townships are developing or considering main street commercial developments. Main street character is also desired on NJ 33 in Hamilton, Robbinsville, and Hightstown. On County highways, the County supports main street designs for CR 571 in Princeton Junction (West Windsor Twp) and Hightstown, as well as on CR 622 (Olden Avenue) in Ewing. The most dramatic 'main street' project supported by the County is the conversion of NJ 29 from a limited access highway into an urban boulevard to support new, high-density, high-quality development in the core of Trenton.

STATE PROJECTS:

NJ Turnpike Extension (State Route 92) – East Windsor Twp.

Mercer County continues to support a primary arterial connection between US 206 and the New Jersey Turnpike. This would relieve congestion and truck traffic through Princeton Borough and provide an east-west alternative to CR 571, Princeton-Hightstown Road.

NJ Turnpike widening – East Windsor, Robbinsville & Hamilton Twps.

Widening the NJ Turnpike between Exit 9 and Exit 6 (PA Turnpike) from six to ten lanes is currently underway. This will improve access to distribution facilities in the eastern margin of the county and relieve congestion for through traffic on US 130 and US 1.

US 1, Penn's Neck Bypass – West Windsor Twp.

In 2004, the US EPA approved an Environmental Impact Study for "Route 1 in a Cut" rather than the initially preferred alternative of an at-grade arterial adjacent to the Millstone River. The EIS alternative would relieve congestion on the US 1 corridor by removing signals and restricting access via east and west frontage roads. New overpasses would allow continued east-west mobility on CR 571 (Princeton-Hightstown Road) and Harrison Street. Very importantly, the EIS also included the Vaughn Drive Connector, a new collector between CR 571 and Alexander Road that would improve intermodal access between US 1 and the Princeton Junction station on the Northeast Corridor commuter rail line. The signal at Carnegie Center Boulevard would also be removed.

**HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS****US 1, Southbound to I-95 Safety Improvements – Lawrence Twp.**

This project would mitigate congestion from access points to US 1 south of CR 533 (Quakerbridge Road) by creating an east-west connection between Quakerbridge Mall and Mercer Mall on the existing Quakerbridge Mall overpass, and creating a backage (rear site access) road along commercial uses to the south on the west side of US 1. Site access from US 1 would be right-in/right out only. These improvements would reduce congestion on CR 533 and eliminate numerous commercial driveways.

US 1 at Franklin Corner Road – Lawrence Twp.

In conjunction with the above projects, a flyover at this intersection would remove the last traffic signal on the main line of US 1 through Mercer County.

NJ 29 Boulevard Conversion – City of Trenton

The County supports efforts by the City of Trenton to convert the limited access portions of NJ 29 through downtown Trenton into an urban boulevard, in conjunction with parking improvements and a local street network that would create substantial infill development opportunities and re-establish connections between the City and the Delaware River.

NJ 31, Pennington Circle – Hopewell Twp.

The County supports NJDOT plans to improve the safety of operations at this location and to implement access management measures along the corridor to preserve mobility.

US 206, Whitehorse Circle – Hamilton Twp.

The County supports study and improvements at this key connector between the interstate, state, county, and local systems, where operations are confusing and hazardous.

US 206, Traffic Calming – Princeton Borough and Twp.

The County supports a concept plan for roundabouts and complete street concepts developed in an NJDOT study in service of the Princetons.

I-295 Ramps at NJ 33 – Hamilton Twp.

Several incomplete interchanges now provide access between I-295 and state and local highways. A concept development study by NJDOT recommended pairs of roundabouts that would provide better access while consuming less right of way. A street parallel to NJ 33 between Hamilton Avenue and NJ 33 would relieve congestion on the roadway segment that now carries NJ 33 and the convergence of County Routes 618, 614, 606 and 535. A complete interchange at NJ 33 might also permit local stops and an intermodal station for express busses (BRT) routed between Burlington County and the US Route 1 corridor.



NJ 33, Robbinsville Town Center Bypass – Robbinsville Twp.

Township plans for town center development on both northeast and southwest sides of NJ 33 depend on implementation of a bypass providing arterial access to US 130. The County supports the bypass, as well as connections to it and to the town center via Kuser Road and Estates Boulevard.

ACTIVE COUNTY PROJECTS:

Active County projects are mostly associated with (re)development opportunities. DTS (desirable typical section) denotes the travelled way and roadside buffer characteristics for the segment, as detailed in Section VIII below.

Princeton Junction & Penn's Neck – West Windsor Twp.

To support more intense development in Princeton Junction around the Northeast Corridor train station, a number of pedestrian safety and access management improvements are planned for Princeton-Hightstown Road (CR 571). In conjunction with the Penn's Neck improvements on US Route 1 and the Vaughn Drive Connector, modifications will be made to the western approaches to the CR 571 Northeast Corridor overpass (DTS 2B). West of Route 1, a realignment of Harrison Street (CR 629) to pass over 'Route 1 in a Cut' will provide continued access to Route 1 from northern Princeton Borough (DTS 2A).

New Meadow Road – West Windsor Twp.

To provide better access to the new Meadow Road overpass from the east side of US Route 1, Meadow Road will be straightened (DTS 2A) and its intersection with Clarksville Road (CR 638) will be improved. A further extension of Meadow Road to Village Road would further improve east-west travel options (see below). The Clarksville Road bridge over the Northeast Corridor tracks is an 'orphan' from transfer of the Northeast Corridor from Conrail to Amtrak. This bridge is functionally obsolete and should be replaced with state or federal funds.

Denow Road Extension – Hopewell Twp.

No longer an active county project in accordance with the May 2016 Mercer County Master Plan amendment to dissolve the Transportation Development District, future improvements are not expected.

**HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS****Mercer Crossings (CR 653, CR 583, CR 613, CR 622) – Ewing Township**

In support of Ewing Township's Olden Avenue Redevelopment Plan and in an effort to bring more consistent planning to adjacent areas in Lawrence Township and the City of Trenton, Mercer County has been coordinating a multi-municipal redevelopment planning process. Main street/complete street and access control recommendations are being developed for Princeton Avenue (CR 583/US 206-S), Spruce Street (CR 613), and Olden Avenue (CR 622), almost entirely within the existing cartway. The most significant improvement would be an extension of Calhoun Street (CR 653, DTS 2B) through the vacant Boehm Porcelain facilities and perhaps through Capitol Plaza, thus enhancing mobility options and frontage for infill development.

Sylvia Street/Scotch Road Extension (CR 611) – Ewing Twp.

Vacant General Motors and Naval Air Warfare Station industrial sites in Ewing provide 100+ acres of infill development opportunity. Extending Scotch Road south of Parkway Avenue (CR 634, DTS 2A) would enhance mobility options and frontage for development.

West Trenton Bypass (CR 634) – Ewing Twp.

Redirecting Parkway Avenue (DTS 2B) closer to the Trenton-Mercer Airport, between parcels fronting West Upper Ferry Road and the 'Birdland' neighborhood, would improve interstate access to the GM and Navy redevelopment sites and reduce congestion at the constrained intersection of West Upper Ferry and Bear Tavern Roads. Developer traffic impact studies may indicate sufficiency of intersection improvements rather than a bypass.

Allentown Bypass (CR 539) – Robbinsville Twp.

Allentown Borough in Monmouth County directly abuts Robbinsville Township in Mercer County. Monmouth County and Allentown have developed a concept for a new road that would allow through traffic to bypass the historic borough. A very short segment of this road would be in Mercer County, making a connection to County Route 526 over property owned by the Township of Robbinsville (DTS 2A).

LONG-RANGE COUNTY PROJECTS:

While the County has no immediate plans for their implementation, the network connections listed below may be desirable to support future development opportunities. In most cases, current environmental regulations for stream and wetland encroachment create a very high hurdle for implementation. In some cases, stakeholder opposition deferred earlier implementation. The County will continue to work closely with state and local stakeholders to facilitate projects when they become feasible.



Canal Point Boulevard Extension – West Windsor Twp.

Extending Canal Point Boulevard across Duck Pond Run to Nassau Park Boulevard would nearly complete a collector road (DTS 2B) reliever on the western side of US Route 1 and provide right of way for a bus rapid transit guideway.

Bus Rapid Transit Right of Way through 'Cyanamid' & Carnegie Center – West Windsor Twp.

To provide reasonable access to development sites on the east side of US Route 1, a right of way corridor should also be preserved for bus rapid transit guideway or a collector road (DTS 2A) through the former Cyanamid agricultural experiment station (now owned by mall developer General Growth Properties), across Duck Pond Run, and through Carnegie Center to the Princeton Junction 'Dinky' right of way.

Bus Rapid Transit Right of Way I-95/295 to Quaker Bridge Mall – Lawrence Twp.

To provide access to a planned transportation center at or adjacent to Quaker Bridge Mall, right of way should be preserved to move express bus vehicles (BRT) between dedicated lanes on the interstate to the transportation center (DTS 2A).

Meadow Road Extension – West Windsor Twp.

A 95 foot right of way corridor exists between housing developments to the west of Village Road that could connect to the Clarksville Road bridge over the Northeast Corridor line without crossing Duck Pond Run. This would provide another connection to the US Route 1 corridor (DTS 2A), via Meadow Road, relieving congestion on Quakerbridge Road (CR 533) and Princeton-Hightstown Road (CR 571).

Fackler Road Extension (CR 569) – Lawrence Twp.

County Route 569 connects Hopewell Borough to the US Route 1 corridor via Carter Road, Fackler Road, with a jog on Princeton Pike and Province Line Road. DVRPC recommended aligning the intersection of Carter Road and Fackler Road at US 206 in Lawrence.

Parkway Avenue Extension (CR 634) – Ewing Twp.

Another east-west connection could be improved by extending Parkway Avenue in Ewing directly through to Southard Street in Trenton (DTS 2A), continuing on Perry, Lincoln, and Chambers to connect to US 206 east of the City. Through traffic currently has to jog south on Calhoun Street and Ingham Avenue. Vacant industrial buildings now stand in the right of way, which lies in Ewing Township's Olden Avenue Redevelopment Area.



HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Whitehead Road Extension (CR 616) – Lawrence Twp.

The segment of Whitehead Road Extension through Lawrence Township was opposed in the 1970s and deferred. Completing this segment (DTS 2B) would provide a continuous east-west connection (combined with the completion of Flock Road) from Robbinsville Town Center to the Trenton-Mercer Airport. Improving this travel-way would remove through traffic from neighborhood streets in Lawrence traveling between US 1 and US 206, and to points west via Spruce Street and Eggerts Crossing Road.

Flock Road Extension (CR 649) – Hamilton Twp.

Completing Flock Road across Miry Run (DTS 2A) would provide a direct connection from the Robbinsville Town Center to I-295 at Sloan Avenue and on to Hamilton Station on the North-east Corridor line. Congestion would be relieved on Old Trenton Road (CR 525) at Hughes Drive and at Flock Road.

Paxson Avenue – Hamilton Twp.

Paxson Avenue has a missing link across Miry Run. Filling in this link (DTS 2A) would provide a direct connection between Whitehorse-Hamilton Square Road and Hughes Drive at the entrance to Mercer County Park, bypassing Hamilton Square and providing an alternate travel route avoiding several congested intersections.

Kuser Road Extension – Hamilton Twp.

With the completion of the Robbinsville Town Center Bypass on NJ 33, the extension of Kuser Road (DTS 2B) to the bypass and the planned southern section of the Town Center would provide an alternate route (off NJ 33) to the commercial development at the Town Center and on US 130.

Estates Blvd Extension – Hamilton Twp.

Completing the missing segment of Estates Boulevard (DTS 2A) and connecting it to Kuser Road near the Town Center bypass would provide benefits similar to Kuser Road Extension. Both Kuser and Estates would then provide alternative travel ways and relievers to NJ 33.

Province Line Road Bridge – Princeton Twp.

The replacement and restoration of traffic on the Province Line Road bridge over Stony Brook would re-open another east-west connection (DTS 2A) and provide an alternative to Carter Road in Lawrence and the Great Road in Princeton.



VIII. ACCESS MANAGEMENT

- | Functional Classification & Access Levels
- | Access Management Implementation



ACCESS MANAGEMENT

For every mile traveled, limited access freeways are the safest and highest capacity roadways in America. They are so because of access controls, that is, because of controls on the spacing, geometry, and operations of the points at which vehicles can access the roadway. In recent decades, a considerable body of research and engineering practice has evolved that implements access management controls on lower classes of roadway. Under the authority granted by the New Jersey State Highway Access Management Act (N.J.S.A. 27:7-89 *et seq.*), this mobility plan partially implements a set of standards for managing access to County primary and secondary arterials and major and minor collectors. Full implementation (e.g., driveway geometry) requires an update to the County's Land Development Standards, implemented by ordinance.

The safety and mobility benefits of access management result from reducing potential conflicts between vehicles. Each potential conflict increases the chances for a crash and increases 'friction' for through drivers, who must slow or stop to accommodate the other driver's movement. For example, a driver turning left may present conflicts for drivers behind, approaching, and on the cross street. Geometric changes can dramatically reduce the number of conflicts. For example, converting a standard intersection into a modern roundabout reduces the number of conflict points from 32 to twelve. Auxiliary lanes increase safety and maintain capacity by removing turning vehicles from through traffic. Table 2 shows the safety benefits of reducing the number of driveways.

Unsignalized Access Points per Mile	Average Spacing (ft)	Relative Crash Rate
10	1056	Reference
20	528	+ 40%
30	352	+ 80%
40	264	+ 110%
50	311	+ 140%
60	176	+ 200%
70	151	+ 250%

Table 4. Driveway Spacing & Crash Rates¹

Functional Classification and Access Levels

For federal regulatory compliance and funding, every public highway is assigned one of the Federal Highway Administration's functional classifications (see Table 5 for a summary and http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/fcsec2_1.htm for details). Because of the rural-urban distinction, the classification is clean only at the level of arterials, collectors, and locals. Even there, the classification of individual road segments may change across the urban-rural boundary, such as CR 571 and CR 579 changing from urban minor arterials into rural major collectors (see Appendix B, Map 1). From FHWA's perspective, this is appropriate because of the hierarchy of access associated with functional classification. Rural major collectors should have about the same access priority as urban minor arterials.

1. Transportation Research Board *Access Management Manual* (2003) p. 150.

While some jurisdictions tie their access levels to highway functional classification (Figure 14), there are problems with doing this in New Jersey, where a principal arterial like US 206 evolved from a pre-colonial footpath and crosses a 1792 stone arch bridge that remains structurally sufficient for heavy trucks. Consequently, when NJDOT adopted an access management code in 1992, it identified six 'access levels' that define permitted turning movements to and from the highway, and it designated 19 'desirable typical sections' (DTS) to define cross section elements,

including medians, the number of travel lanes, shoulders, and required right of way. While there remains an association with functional classification, both access level and DTS assignments vary somewhat independently over the length of a highway, depending on the character of development the road is passing through. These assignments are detailed for every segment of every state highway in 'Appendix B' of the NJ State Highway Access Management Code (see <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/business/accessmgt/NJHAMC/>). In some cases, including for US 206, some segments have an access level equivalent to 'local street' and a DTS to remain 'as existing', even if it is a principal arterial with one lane in each direction and no shoulders.

In addition to roadway geometry, an effective access management system should identify desirable spacing standards for signalized and unsignalized access points, whether those are other highways or private driveways. On limited access interstates and freeways, abutting properties are permitted no direct access to the highway. On 'land access highways', the New Jersey State Highway Access Code (N.J.A.C. 16:47) permits driveways for 'conforming' parcels, that is, for parcels with longer frontage lengths at higher speed limits (single family residential driveways are deemed 'conforming' regardless of frontage). Access permits for 'non-conforming' parcels are conditional on a set of complex

Class	Rural	Urban
Arterials	Interstates	
	Principal	Freeways & Expys.
	Minor	Principal
Collectors	Major	Collector
	Minor	
Locals	Road	Street

Table 5. FHWA Functional Classifications

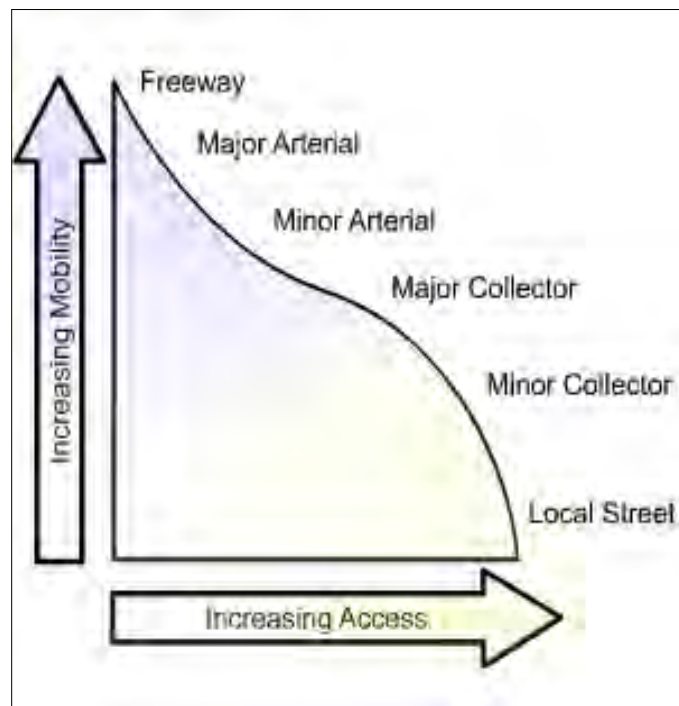


Figure 14. Functional Classification and Access Priority



ACCESS MANAGEMENT

equations.

A common complaint with the New Jersey Highway Access Code is that it is too complex. The Mercer County access management code is intended to be much simpler.¹ This is possible because the County does not expect any of its highways to 'grow up' to be freeways and because only a relatively small area of the county is still classed as 'rural' by the Census Bureau. Though simpler, this system satisfies the requirements of the State code [N.J.S.A. 27:16-1(i)] because its spacing standards are more rigorous.

Table 6 (p. 41) summarizes key characteristics for each of the access levels used by Mercer County. The first column lists a numerical code indicating the access level associated with a particular functional class designation (in column 3). The second column lists the *highest* NJDOT access level associated with roadways of this classification. (For reasons explained above, the lowest NJDOT access level in almost every functional class is effectively 'local street'.) Other columns contain characteristics associated with each of the County's access levels.

The driveway spacing standards adopted here are based on access management standards for local jurisdictions recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, which were developed following a nationwide review of state and local practices (see 'codes and programs' at <http://www.accessmanagement.info/resources.html>). The last columns in Table 4 compare driveway spacing standards from the NJDOT Access Code (based on stopping sight distance at various speeds) to those in the PennDOT access management model local ordinance. As with the NJDOT code, Mercer County exempts individual and dual-shared driveways to single family residences from driveway spacing requirements, other than corner clearance. Mercer County will apply NJDOT standards for signalized intersection spacing. Paragraphs below illustrate Mercer County access levels.

Access Level #1—Major Arterial.

The primary function of roads with this access level is to serve major through traffic movements. These roads are typically high-volume and high-speed, with four travel lanes and a curbed median or two-way center left turn lane (TWTL), and are subject to the highest level of site access control. Typically, driveway access is right-in/right-out only, with acceleration and deceleration lanes for high volume driveways. Left turns are limited to protected left turn lanes or jug-handles, with queue storage adequate to remove exiting vehicles from through traffic. New or altered driveways should be spaced at least 600' apart, with signalized intersections separated by 1/2 mile.

Examples of roads with features similar to Access Level #1 in Mercer County include Quakerbridge Road (CR 533) between Lawrence Station Road and Province Line Road and Scotch

1. The County is authorized to implement its own code by the act of legislature that enabled the state code [N.J.S.A. 27:7-89 *et seq.*] This act also revised county powers over highways under their jurisdiction [N.J.S.A. 27:16-1(i)] and the Municipal Land Use Law, which requires that municipal subdivision and site plan ordinance provisions be in 'conformity with any access management code adopted by the county under R.S. 27:16-1 with respect to any county roads within the municipality' [N.J.S.A 40:55D-8b(11)].



Mercer Driveway	600	400	200	100	*
NJDOT Driveway	330	275	185	150	105
NJDOT Intersection	2,430	1,980	1,760	1,540	1,100
Turning	Right-in/right-out, left turn bay/jug-handle, right turn & acceleration lanes	Right & left turn lanes, acceleration lanes	Left turn lanes, two-way left turn lane	Left turn lane as necessary for spacing and safety	Spacing and safety
Median	Non-traversable	Non-traversable, striped	None, striped	None	None
DTS	4F	4F, 2B	2B, 2A	2A	2A
Lanes	4	2-4	2	2	2
Speed	50-55 (55)	35-50 (45)	30-40 (40)	30-35 (35)	25-35 (25)
Functional Class Corresp.	Major Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major Collector	Minor Collector	Local Street
NJDOT Acc. Level	3	4	5	6	6
Mercer Co. Acc. Level	1	2	3	4	5

Table 6. Mercer County Access Levels

Notes:

Mercer Co. Acc. Level: Mercer County Access Level code.

NJDOT Acc. Level: Most restrictive NJDOT Access Level code applicable to roads in this functional class.

Functional Class Corresp.: Indicates rough correspondence between Access Levels and FHWA Functional Classification of roadways.

Speed: Speed range for this class of road (target for progression speed for signalized access point spacing [*NJDOT Intersection*] & unsignalized access point spacing [*NJDOT Driveway*]).

Lanes: Typical number of through travel lanes.

DTS: Desirable Typical Section code (lane configuration and right of way required) for roadway 'buildout'.

Median: Typical median treatment.

Turning: Desirable turning controls.

NJDOT Intersection: Illustrative, optimal spacing (feet) for signalized intersections.

NJDOT Driveway: Illustrative, New Jersey DOT's speed-based spacing (feet) for lot frontage 'conformity' from Access Code, excluding single-family homes.

Mercer Driveway: Non-residential driveway spacing (feet), developed from Pennsylvania DOT's Model Municipal Ordinance Handbook. Spacing on local streets controlled by stopping sight distance and corner clearance.

Road (CR 611) between I-95 and Washington Crossing Road.



Figure 15. Quakerbridge Road (Access Level 1)

Access Level #2—Minor Arterial.

The primary function of roads with this access level is to serve major through traffic movements, but speeds and volumes are somewhat less than for Level #1 roads, and the level of access control is somewhat lower. There may be one or two through travel lanes in each direction. Auxiliary lanes will be required for left or right turns, with bay lengths adequate to remove expected queuing from through traffic. Where existing driveway spacing is close, the left turn lane may be in the form of a two-way left-turn lane. New or altered driveways should be spaced at least 400' apart, with signalized intersections about 2/5 mile apart.



Figure 16. Whitehorse-Mercerville Road (Access Level 2)

Examples of County roads with this proposed access level include Whitehorse-Mercerville Road (CR 533) near Klockner, and Olden Avenue (CR 622) between Parkway Avenue and Arctic Parkway.

Access Level #3—Major Collector.

These roads should balance the needs for mobility and access, with moderate volumes and speeds. The existing level of development on adjacent land is relatively low, and while development potential is relatively high, planning, zoning, and roadway DTS should all point to low-density development. The access controls on these two-lane roads will be left and right auxiliary turn lanes at intersections and high-volume commercial driveways. Signalized intersections should be about 1/3 mile apart, but driveways may be as little as 200' apart.



Figure 17. Carter Road (Access Level 3)

Examples of County roads that may have this access level are Carter Road (CR 569) between US 206 and Elm Ridge Road, and most segments of CR 636 along its entire length (Parkside Avenue, Ewingville Road, Upper Ferry Road).



Figure 18. Potential Implementation of Mercer County DTS 2B, Access Level 3



ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Access Level #4—Minor Collector.

These roads also have a balance between mobility and access needs. The characteristics of these roads are similar to those for Level #3 roads, but in contrast to Level #3 roads, the existing level of development on adjacent land is relatively high, and development potential is relatively low. The proposed regulations for this level would govern access only with spacing standards and related safety design standards, including turn lanes at high volume intersections. Signalized intersections should still be at least 1500' apart, but driveways may be spaced 100' apart.



Figure 19. Bear Tavern Road (Access Level 4)

Examples of County roads proposed to have this level are Cranbury Road (CR 615) between CR 571 and the County line, and Bear Tavern Road (CR 579) through Hopewell Township.

Access Level #5—Local Street.

The primary function of these roads is to provide direct access to adjacent land uses. While still serving regional mobility, the history of these roads requires them to also serve as local streets with low speed limits. Signalized intersections should be no closer than 1000' apart. Driveway access controls for this level focus upon safety standards (e.g., stopping sight distance, corner clearance).



Figure 20. Hamilton Avenue (Access Level 5)

Examples of roads with this access level are urban streets, such as Hamilton Avenue (CR 606) and Chambers Street (CR 626) in Trenton.

Access Management Implementation

This plan implements right of way reservation standards based on five access levels and associated desirable typical sections (DTS). Table 6 above shows DTS associations with access levels. Maps 2-6 (in Appendix B) display DTS assignments for each segment of County highway, showing comparable DTS assignments for State highways. County access level and

NJDOT			Mercer		
Cartway	Travel Lane	12(11)*	Travel Lane	12(11)	12(11)
	Left Turn Lane	14(11)	Center Aux/ Median	14(11)	14(11)
	Shoulder	12(8)	Bike Lane	6(5)	15(12)
			Parking	9(7)	
			Shoulder (no prkg.)	12(8)	12(8)
Border	Border	15(10)	Streetside Buffer	7(5)	15(10)
			Sidewalk	7(4)	
			Property Side Buffer	1(1)	

* Preferred element width (minimum width) in feet.

Table 7. Roadway Cross Section Elements



ACCESS MANAGEMENT

DTS assignments are displayed in tabular form in Appendix A. State data are from the State Highway Access Management Code's Appendix B (<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/business/accessmgt/NJHAMC/>).

Mercer County Desirable Typical Sections (DTS) were developed with reference to NJDOT DTSSs. However, because the County does not maintain roads of a similar scale, the County has only five DTSSs, compared to nineteen for the state. State DTSSs were developed before highway agencies commonly considered the needs of cyclists. Mercer County bicycle lane and shoulder requirements were taken from more recent standards promulgated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and add six feet to the cartway width. Table 5 shows the preferred and minimum cross-section elements used to calculate right of way requirements. Table 6 applies those cross section element specifications to DTS categories used by the County, which are comparable to the State's. In locations where a municipality desires on-street parking, an additional six feet of right of way is required to accommodate both parking and cyclists on shoulders. At intersections and high volume access points, the County Engineer may require additional right of way for auxiliary lanes. Finally, like the State, Mercer County includes a DTS that maintains the road in its current configuration (1A), applied where road widening would destroy the existing urban land use fabric. In such settings, the County will require right of way consistent with existing nearby parcels (also considering future operational and intersection improvements), and will work with municipalities on accommodating cyclists with strategies such as limiting parking to one side of the street.

DTS Code	Description	Lanes	LTL/ Median	Shoulders	Borders	ROW
	Pref. Width ft)	12	14	12	15	
2A	2 lanes	2	0	2	2	78
2B	2 lanes + TWTL*	2	1	2	2	92
4F	4 lanes + TWTL	4	1	2	2	116
1A	As Existing**					As Existing

* Curbed median with left turn storage and U-turn provision preferred over two-way turn lane (TWTL).

** DTS 1A retains current geometry and ROW where limited by urban character. Cyclists can be accommodated by limiting parking to one side only.

**Table 8. Mercer County
Desirable Typical Sections (DTS)**

Desirable typical sections for County highways are intended to be the 'buildout' for those highways, with associated capacity limits. They were assigned considering existing local context, municipal land use zoning, open space and farmland preservation efforts, and development opportunities. With the adoption of this plan, these desirable typical sections, as applied to particular county road segments, will define right of way dedications required for approval of subdivision and site plans.

Access management provisions of this plan are prospective, not retroactive. That is, existing driveways and intersections are grandfathered with temporary access permits, which are revocable upon changes in land use that generate significant new traffic or upon owner-initiated changes in driveway design. Where size or configuration of a site or subdivision under review precludes compliance with driveway spacing standards identified in Table 6, the developer may be required to install access and site circulation facilities that anticipate shared- or cross-access by neighboring properties when they develop. In this case, the right to future cross or shared access will be recorded with the deed and a temporary permit will be granted that expires with development of the neighboring site(s). Triggers for County review of subdivision and site plans, including traffic impact studies, are as identified in Mercer County's Land Development Standards in effect at the time of application.

Where existing access conditions create hazards or interrupt the free flow of traffic, the County may work with municipalities and property owners to develop and implement local access management plans. Such plans may require shared- or cross-accesses and driveway consolidation, as well as changes to traffic operations on the County highway.

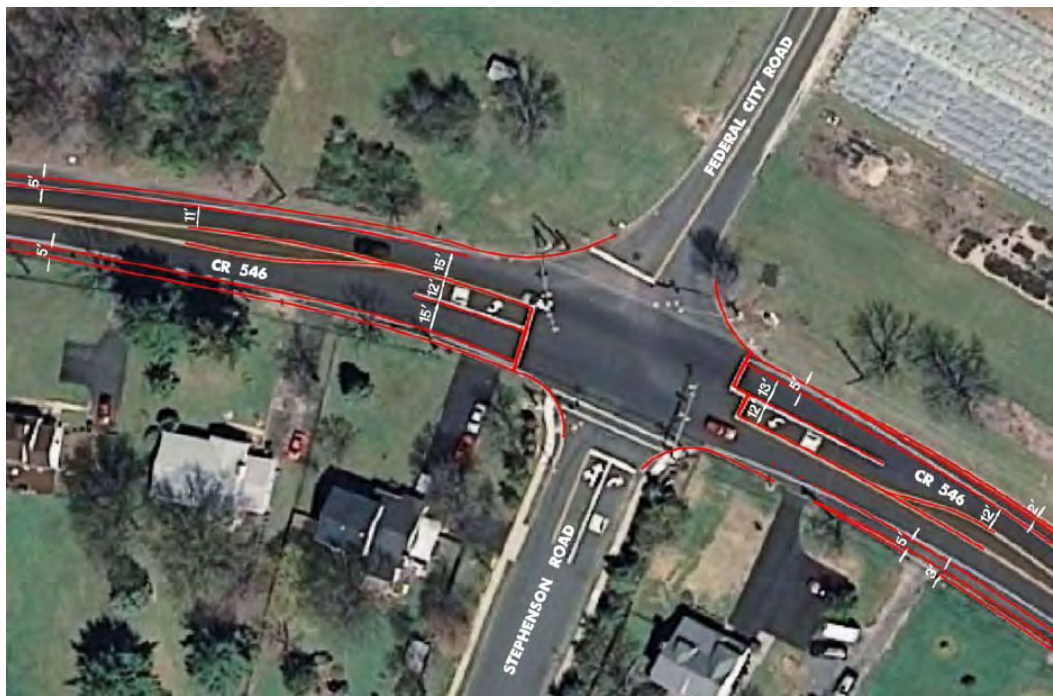


Figure 21. Concept for Bike Lanes on CR 546 at Federal City Rd.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

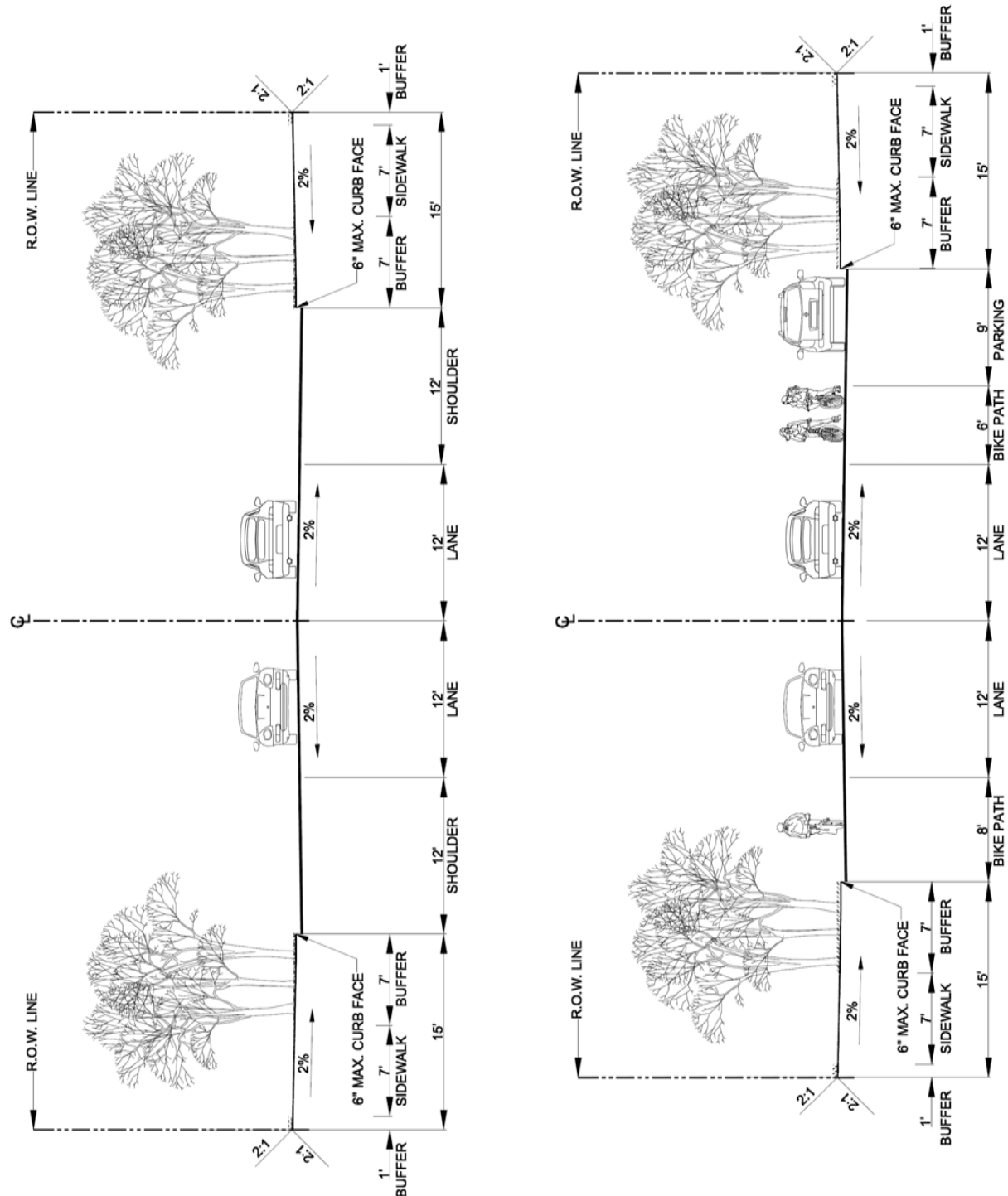


Figure 22. Alternative Implementations of Mercer County DTS 2A



**Appendix A: Access Class and
Desirable typical section assignments**



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

MOBILITY ELEMENT

Town	CR Name	From	To	SRI	MP Start	MP End	Miles	Access	DTS
E Windsor	524 Old York Rd	County Line	I-195/New Canton	00000524	7.68	8	0.32	3	2A
E Windsor	539 N Main St	Boro Line	County Line	00000539	52.619	53.162	0.543	4	2A
E Windsor	539 Old York Rd	Boro Line	I-195/New Canton	00000539	44.905	51.084	6.179	3	2A
E Windsor	571 Princeton-Hightstown Rd	Rt 130	NJ 133	00000571	35.368	36.47	1.102	2	4F
E Windsor	630 Windsor - Perrineville Rd	Old York Rd/Rt 539	County Line	11000630	0	1.1	1.1	4	2A
E Windsor / Hights	571 Stockton St	N Main St Hightstown	Rt 130	00000571	34.52	35.365	0.845	5	1A
E Windsor / Hights	571 Etira Rd	County Line	S Main St Hightstown	00000571	31.307	34.09	2.783	4	2A
Ewing / Lawrence	613 Spruce St	Princeton Ave	1860' N of Shabakunk Cr	11000613	0	0.555	0.555	4	2B
Ewing / Trenton	634 Parkway Ave	Parkside Ave	Ingham	11000634	4.1	4.93	0.83	3	2A
Ewing Twp	579 Bear Tavern Rd	Upper Ferry Rd	I-95	00000579	2.21	3.109	0.899	3	4F
Ewing Twp	579 Bear Tavern Rd	I-95	Bus Turnaround	00000579	3.109	3.89	0.781	3	2B
Ewing Twp	579 Bear Tavern Rd	Bus Turnaround	Township Line	00000579	3.89	4.303	0.413	3	2A
Ewing Twp	579 Grand Ave	Sullivan Way	W Upper Ferry Rd	00000579	1.529	2.21	0.681	4	2A
Ewing Twp	579 Sullivan Way	Lower Ferry Rd	Grand Ave	00000579	0.942	1.529	0.587	3	2A
Ewing Twp	600 Sam Weinroth Dr	Scotch Rd	CR 579/Bear Tavern Rd	11000600	0	1.69	1.69	5	2A
Ewing Twp	600 Sam Weinroth Dr	CR 579 Bear Tavern	CR 611 Scotch	11021387	0	1.1	1.1	5	2A
Ewing Twp	611 Scotch Rd	Parkway Ave	Ewing Cemetery	11000611	0	0.27	0.27	3	2B
Ewing Twp	611 Scotch Rd	Ewing Cemetery	Reading RR Br	11000611	0.27	0.966	0.696	3	2A
Ewing Twp	611 Scotch Rd	Reading RR Br	I-95	11000611	0.966	1.9	0.934	2	2A
Ewing Twp	613 Spruce St Ext	1860' N of Shabakunk Cr	Stoneham Rd	11000613	0.555	1.223	0.668	5	2A
Ewing Twp	613 Spruce St Ext	Stoneham Rd	Ewingville Rd	11000613	1.223	1.28	0.057	5	2A
Ewing Twp	622 N Olden Ave Ext	CR 634	CR 583	11000622	4.125	6.33	2.205	2	4F
Ewing Twp	627 Prospect St	Parkway Ave	Olden Ave	11000627	0	0.678	0.678	5	2B
Ewing Twp	627 Prospect St	Olden Ave	Spruce St.	11000627	0.678	1.25	0.572	5	2A
Ewing Twp	634 Parkway Ave	Decou Ave	Olden Ave	11000634	1.46	3.25	1.79	3	4F
Ewing Twp	634 Parkway Ave	Olden Ave	Parkside Ave/Rt 636	11000634	3.25	4.1	0.85	3	2B
Ewing Twp	634 W Upper Ferry Rd	Rt 29	CR 579/Bear Tavern Rd	11000634	0	1.173	1.173	4	2A
Ewing Twp	634 W Upper Ferry Rd	CR 579/Bear Tavern Rd.	Decou Ave	11000634	1.173	1.46	0.287	3	4F
Ewing Twp	636 Ewingville Rd	500' NE of Buttonwood	Scotch Rd/Rt 611	11000636	2.16	5.71	3.55	3	2B
Ewing Twp	636 Parkside Ave	Parkway Ave.	Olden Ave	11000636	0.921	1.57	0.649	4	2B
Ewing Twp	636 Parkside Ave Ext	Olden Ave	500' NE of Buttonwood	11000636	1.57	2.16	0.59	4	2B
Ewing Twp	637 Jacobs Creek Rd	Rt 29	Bear Tavern Rd/Rt 579	11000637	0	1.05	1.05	4	2A
Ewing Twp	639 Arctic Pkwy	N Olden Ave	Spruce St	11000639	0	0.33	0.33	5	2A
Ewing Twp	643 Lower Ferry Rd	Ewingville Rd	Hopewell Twp line	11000643	3.02	4.13	1.11	4	2B
Ewing Twp	643 Lower Ferry Rd	NJ 29	Ewingville Rd	11000643	0	3.02	3.02	4	2A
Ewing Twp	648 Whitehead Rd Ext	CR 636	Ewing Business Park	11000648	0	0.62	0.62	5	2B
Hamilton / Lawr	616 Whitehead Rd	620' N PA RR Br	Assumpink Cr	11000616	0.262	0.867	0.605	5	2A
Hamilton Twp	524 S Broad St	Us 206	I-195	00000524	0	1.637	1.637	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	524 S Broad St	I-195	Yardville 5 Pts	00000524	1.637	1.912	0.275	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	524 Yardville-Allentown Rd	Yardville 5 Pts	Rt 130	00000524	1.912	2.182	0.27	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	524 Yardville-Allentown Rd	Rt 130	County Line	00000524	2.182	5.324	3.142	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	533 Mercerville-White Horse Rd	S Olden Ave	Nottingham Way	00000533	1.418	3.495	2.077	2	4F



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

MOBILITY ELEMENT

DTS ASSIGNMENTS

Town	CR Name	From	To	SRI	MP Start	MP End	Miles	Access	DTS
Hamilton Twp	533 Mercerville-White Horse Rd	Nottingham Way	Sloan Ave.	00000533	3.495	4.397	0.902	2	4F
Hamilton Twp	533 Quakerbridge Rd	Sloan Ave.	Lawrence Station Rd	00000533	4.397	6.825	2.428	2	4F
Hamilton Twp	533 White Horse Ave.	S Broad St	S Olden Ave	00000533	0	1.418	1.418	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	535 E State St	Logan Ave/City Line	Whitehead Rd	00000535	0	0.599	0.599	5	1A
Hamilton Twp	535 E State St Ext	Whitehead Rd	Klockner Rd	00000535	0.599	1.901	1.302	4	1A
Hamilton Twp	535 Mercerville-Edinburg Rd	Rt 533	Dube Rd	00000535	3.42	4.36	0.94	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	535 Mercerville-Edinburg Rd	Dube Rd	Flock Rd	00000535	4.36	4.75	0.39	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	535 Mercerville-Edinburg Rd	Flock Rd	Hughes	00000535	4.75	5.11	0.36	3	4F
Hamilton Twp	535 Mercerville-Edinburg Rd	Hughes	Township Line	00000535	5.11	5.519	0.409	3	4F
Hamilton Twp	535 Nottingham Way	E State St Ext	Mercerville 5 pIs	00000535	3.29	3.44	0.15	3	4F
Hamilton Twp	606 Hamilton Ave	Johnston Ave	Rt 33	11000606	2.01	3.57	1.56	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	609 Church St	Yardville 5 PIs	Rt 130	11000609	0	0.25	0.25	5	2A
Hamilton Twp	609 Church St	Rt 130	Main St Groveville	11000609	0.25	0.68	0.43	5	2A
Hamilton Twp	614 Nottingham Way	Assumpink Creek	Rt 33	11000614	0	0.97	0.97	4	1A
Hamilton Twp	616 Whitehead Rd	E State St Ext/Rt 635	620' N PA RR Br	11000616	0	0.262	0.262	5	2A
Hamilton Twp	618 Nottingham Way	Rt 535 & Rt 533	Rt 33 At Twp Line	11000618	0	2.81	2.81	5	2A
Hamilton Twp	619 Kuser Rd	225' SE Rudner Ave	Rt 533	11000619	0	1.41	1.41	4	2B
Hamilton Twp	619 Kuser Rd	CR 606	225' SE Rudner Ave	11000619	1.41	1.75	0.34	4	2B
Hamilton Twp	620 Arena Dr	I-295	S Broad St	11000620	0	1.05	1.05	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	620 Arena Dr	Olden Ave	I-295	11000620	1.05	2.13	1.08	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	649 Flock Rd	CR 533 QB Road	CR 535 Old Trenton Rd	11031986	0	0.945	0.945	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	649 Sloan Ave.	American Metro	I-295	11000649	0.875	1.64	0.765	2	4F
Hamilton Twp	649 Sloan Ave.	I-295	CR 533	11031986	0.945	1.59	0.645	3	4F
Hamilton Twp	649 Sweet Briar Ave	Whitehead Rd	American Metro	11000649	0	0.875	0.875	3	2A
Hamilton Twp	652 Nottingham Way	East State St ext	new Rt 33	11000652	0	0.13	0.13	3	2B
Hamilton Twp	672 S Broad St	Groveville-Allentown Rd	County Line	11000672	0	1.486	1.486	3	2A
Hamilton Twp	672 S Broad St	Rt 524	Groveville-Allentown Rd	11000672	1.486	2.17	0.684	3	2A
Hightstown / E Wind	633 Monmouth St	Broad St Hightstown	Rt 33	11000633	0	1	1	5	2A
Hightstown Boro	539 N Main St	Franklin St/Rt 33	Boro Line	00000539	51.874	52.619	0.745	5	1A
Hightstown Boro	539 Old York Rd	Etra Rd/Rt 571	Boro Line	00000539	51.084	51.518	0.434	5	1A
Hightstown Boro	539 S Main St	Mercer St Hightstown	Etra Rd/Rt 571	00000539	51.518	51.874	0.356	5	1A
Hightstown Boro	571 S Main St	Etra Rd	Stockton St.	00000571	34.09	34.52	0.43	5	1A
Hopewell Borough	518 Louellen Ave / Broad St	W Boro Line	E Boro Line	00000518	9.504	10.813	1.309	5	1A
Hopewell Borough	654 West Broad St	borough line	CR 518	11000654	2.521	3.05	0.529	5	1A
Hopewell T / Ewing	647 Nursery Rd	CR 579	CR 611	11000647	0	1.78	1.78	4	2A
Hopewell T / Lawr	546 Penn-Law Rd	Blackwell Rd	Rt 206	00000546	6.366	8.129	1.763	3	2B
Hopewell T / Lawr	640 Main St	Pennington Circle	Welling Ave	11000640	0	0.83	0.83	5	2A
Hopewell Twp	518 Hopewell-Rocky Hill Rd	E Boro Line	County Line	00000518	10.813	11.906	1.093	3	2B
Hopewell Twp	518 Lambertv-Hopewell Tp	Harbourn-Mt Airy Rd	Borough Line	00000518	4.508	9.504	4.996	3	2A
Hopewell Twp	546 Wash Cross-Penn Rd	Rt 29	Penn-Law Rd	00000546	0	6.366	6.366	3	2B
Hopewell Twp	569 Carter Rd	Elm Ridge Rd/Rt 625	2836' N R Hill/Cherry V	00000569	4.801	6.628	1.827	3	2A
Hopewell Twp	569 Hopewell-Princeton Rd	2836' N R Hill/Cherry V	4314' N R Hill/Cherry V	00000569	6.628	6.697	0.069	3	2A



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

MOBILITY ELEMENT

Town	CR Name	From	To	SRI	MP Start	MP End	Miles	Access	DTS
Hopewell Twp	569 Hopewell-Princeton Rd	4314' N R Hill/Cherry V	Boro Line	00000569	6.697	8.232	1.535	3	2A
Hopewell Twp	579 Bear Tavern Rd	Township Line	497' NE Mt Airy Rd	00000579	4.304	8.911	4.607	3	2A
Hopewell Twp	611 Scotch Rd	I-95	Rt 546	11000611	1.9	3.55	1.65	2	4F
Hopewell Twp	612 Marsh. Corner-Woodv. Rd	Rt 654	County Line	11000612	0	2.45	2.45	4	2A
Hopewell Twp	623 Pennington-Harbourton Rd	Rt 579	Borough Line	11000623	0	2.77	2.77	4	2A
Hopewell Twp	624 Pennington-Rocky Hill Rd	Boro Line	Centerville-Titus Mill	11000624	0.663	1.98	1.317	3	2A
Hopewell Twp	624 Pennington-Rocky Hill Rd	Titus Mill Rd & CR 624	Arvida Dr	11061002	0	0.141	0.141	3	2A
Hopewell Twp	625 Elm Ridge Rd	Rt 624	Carter Rd/Rt 569	11000625	0	2.21	2.21	4	2A
Hopewell Twp	631 Ingleside Ave	Rt 546	Borough Line	11000631	0	0.559	0.559	5	2A
Hopewell Twp	632 Blackwell Rd	Penn. Law Rd	1000' Northeastly	11000632	0.62	0.87	0.25	4	2A
Hopewell Twp	632 Pennington-Lawrenceville Rd	Cr 640	Blackwell Rd	11000632	0	0.62	0.62	4	2A
Hopewell Twp	654 Pennington-Hopewell Rd	Rt 31	borough line	11000654	0	2.521	2.521	3	2A
Lawrence Twp	533 Quakerbridge Rd	Lawrence Station Rd	D&R Canal	00000533	6.8	8.622	1.822	1	4F
Lawrence Twp	546 Franklin Corner Rd	Rt 206	Rt 1	00000546	8.148	9.98	1.832	3	2B
Lawrence Twp	569 Carter Rd	Rt 206	Rosedale Rd/Rt 604	00000569	2.1	4.123	2.023	3	2A
Lawrence Twp	569 Carter Rd	Rosedale Rd/Rt 604	Elm Ridge Rd/Rt 625	00000569	4.123	4.801	0.678	3	2A
Lawrence Twp	608 Lawrence Station Rd	Quaker Bridge Rd	near Fire Center	11000608	0	0.77	0.77	4	2A
Lawrence Twp	616 Whitehead Rd Ext	Assumpink Cr	Alt Rt 1	11000616	0.867	1.35	0.483	4	2B
Lawrence Twp	638 Grovers Mill Rd ext	US 1	Quaker Bridge Rd	11071417	0	0.81	0.81	2	4F
Lawrence Twp	645 Brunswick Circle Ext	Brunswick Circle	CR 583	11000645	0	0.21	0.21	4	2B
Pennington Boro	623 W Franklin Ave	W Borough Line	Rt 31	11000623	2.77	2.87	0.1	4	2A
Pennington Boro	624 Delaware Ave	Main St	Town line	11081029	0	0.64	0.64	5	1A
Pennington Boro	624 Delaware Ave.	Main St.	Boro line	11000624	0	0.663	0.663	5	1A
Pennington Boro	631 Ingleside Ave	Borough Line	Rt 640	11000631	0.559	0.77	0.211	5	1A
Pennington Boro	640 Main St	Welling Ave	1000' S Of N Boro Line	11000640	0.83	2.035	1.205	5	1A
Pennington Boro	640 Main St	1000' S of N boro line	NJ 31	11000640	2.035	2.23	0.195	5	2A
Princeton Boro	604 Elm Rd	Rosedale Rd	Stockton St/Rt 206	11000604	2.501	2.95	0.449	5	2A
Princeton Twp	571 Washington Rd	Us 1	Boro Line	00000571	42.383	43.671	1.288	2	2A
Princeton Twp	605 River Rd	Rt 27	Somerset Co Line	11000605	0	0.76	0.76	4	2A
Princeton Twp	629 Harrison St	Borough Line	N End Carnegie Lake Br	11000629	0	0.539	0.539	5	2A
Princeton Twp	629 Harrison St	N End Carnegie Lake Br	D&R Canal	11000629	0.539	0.636	0.097	4	2A
Princtons / Lawr	604 Rosedale Rd	Carter Rd	Elm Rd Princeton	11000604	0	2.501	2.501	3	2A
Robbinsv / W Wind	526 Robbinsville-Edinburg Rd	Merced St	CR 535	00000526	3.639	6.22	2.581	3	2A
Robbinsv / W Wind	641 Windsor Rd	CR 535	Main St	11000641	0	2.2	2.2	4	2A
Robbinsville Twp	526 Robbinsville-Allentown Rd	Us 130	Rt 33	00000526	6.58	6.876	0.296	3	2A
Robbinsville Twp	526 Robbinsville-Allentown Rd	County Line	Us 130	00000526	6.876	10.124	3.248	3	2A
Robbinsville Twp	526 Robbinsville-Allentown Rd	CR 526 Realignment	Us 130	11121762	0	0.26	0.26	3	2A
Robbinsville Twp	526 Robbinsville-Edinburg Rd	Rt 33	Merced St	00000526	6.22	6.58	0.36	3	2B
Robbinsville Twp	641 Church St	Main St	Rt 130/33	11121039	0	0.181	0.181	5	2A
Trenton / Ewing	653 Calhoun St	W State St	Princeton Ave.	11000653	0	1.53	1.53	4	1A
Trenton / Hamilton	606 Hamilton Ave	S Broad St	Johnston Ave	11000606	0	2.01	2.01	3	1A
Trenton / Hamilton	622 Olden Ave	N Clinton Ave	Arena Dr	11000622	0	2.921	2.921	4	1A

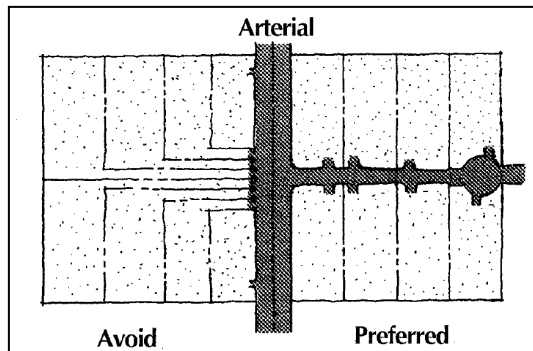


MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

MOBILITY ELEMENT

DTS ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Town</u>	<u>CR</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>SRI</u>	<u>MP Start</u>	<u>MP End</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Access</u>	<u>DTS</u>
Trenton / Hamilton	626	Chambers St	RR Bridge Near E State	Broad St	11000626	0	2.07	2.07	5	1A
Trenton / Hamilton	650	Lalor St	Rt 29	S Broad St	11000650	0	1.2	1.2	5	1A
Trenton / Lawrence	583	Princeton Ave	Calhoun St	Rt 206	00000206Z	44.291	45.36	1.069	4	2B
Trenton City	579	Sullivan Way	Rt 29	Lower Ferry Rd	00000579	0	0.942	0.942	3	2A
Trenton City	622	Olden Ave	CR 583	N Clinton Ave	11000622	2.921	4.125	1.204	4	1A
Trenton City	635	E State St	Wall St	City Line	11000635	0.191	1.13	0.939	5	1A
Trenton City	636	Parkside Ave	State St	Parkway Ave.	11000636	0	0.921	0.921	4	2A
Trenton City	n/a	Cass St	S Broad St	Rt 29	11111527	0	0.58	0.58	5	1A
Trenton City		Raoul Wallenberg	S Clinton Ave	E State St/Rt 635				0	5	2A
W Windsor / E Wind	535	Old Trenton Rd	Robbinsville-Edinburg	N of Millstone Br.	00000535	7.62	10.2	2.58	3	2B
W Windsor / E Wind	535	Old Trenton Rd	N of Millstone Br.	County Line	00000535	10.2	11.823	1.623	3	4F
W Windsor / E Wind	571	Princeton-Hightstown Rd	NJ 133	S Mill Rd	00000571	36.47	39.797	3.327	2	4F
W Windsor Twp	526	Edinburg Rd	Village Rd W	CR 535	00000526	1.9	3.42	1.52	3	2A
W Windsor Twp	526	Old Trenton Rd	CR 535	CR 535 W of Edinburg	00000526	3.42	3.64	0.22	3	2B
W Windsor Twp	526	S Mill Rd	Woodmere Way	Rt 571	00000526	0	0.864	0.864	3	2A
W Windsor Twp	535	Old Trenton Rd	Township Line	Robbinsville-Edinburg	00000535	5.519	7.39	1.871	3	2B
W Windsor Twp	571	Princeton-Hightstown Rd	S Mill Rd	CR 638	00000571	39.797	40.314	0.517	2	2B
W Windsor Twp	571	Princeton-Hightstown Rd	CR 638	S Approach Pr Jct Br	00000571	40.314	40.97	0.656	3	2B
W Windsor Twp	571	Washington Rd	N Approach Pr Jct Br	Rt 1	00000571	41.33	42.383	1.053	3	2B
W Windsor Twp	602	S Post Rd	Old Trenton Rd/Rt 535	Lake Mercer	11000602	0	0.64	0.64	5	1A
W Windsor Twp	615	Cranbury Rd	Rt 571	County Line	11000615	0	1.85	1.85	4	2A
W Windsor Twp	629	Harrison St	D&R Canal	Rt 1	11000629	0.636	1.13	0.494	4	2A
W Windsor Twp	638	Clarksville Rd	NEC Bridge	N Post Rd	11000638	2.334	3.5	1.166	3	2B
W Windsor Twp	638	Clarksville Rd	N Post Rd	Cranbury Rd/Rt 615	11000638	3.5	5.03	1.53	4	2A
W Windsor Twp	638	Grovers Mill/Clarksville Rd	US 1	NEC Bridge	11000638	0	2.334	2.334	2	4F
W Windsor Twp	644	Village Rd East	CR 526	New Village Rd	11000644	0	0.81	0.81	4	2A



23a. *Flag Lots* should be avoided because they create many adjacent openings.

23b. *Out-Parcels* in commercial developments should be accessed via internal circulation.

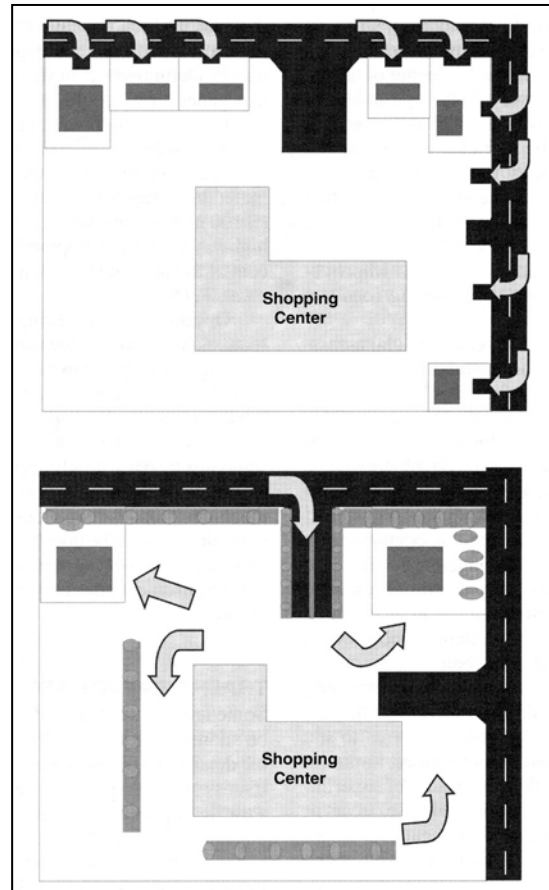
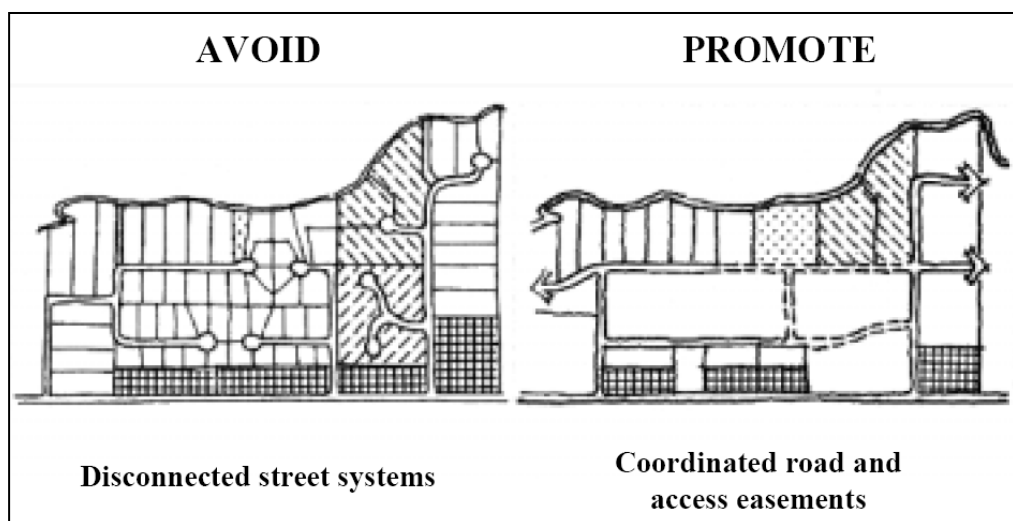


Figure 23. Access Management Concepts

Source: TRB Access Management Manual, 2003

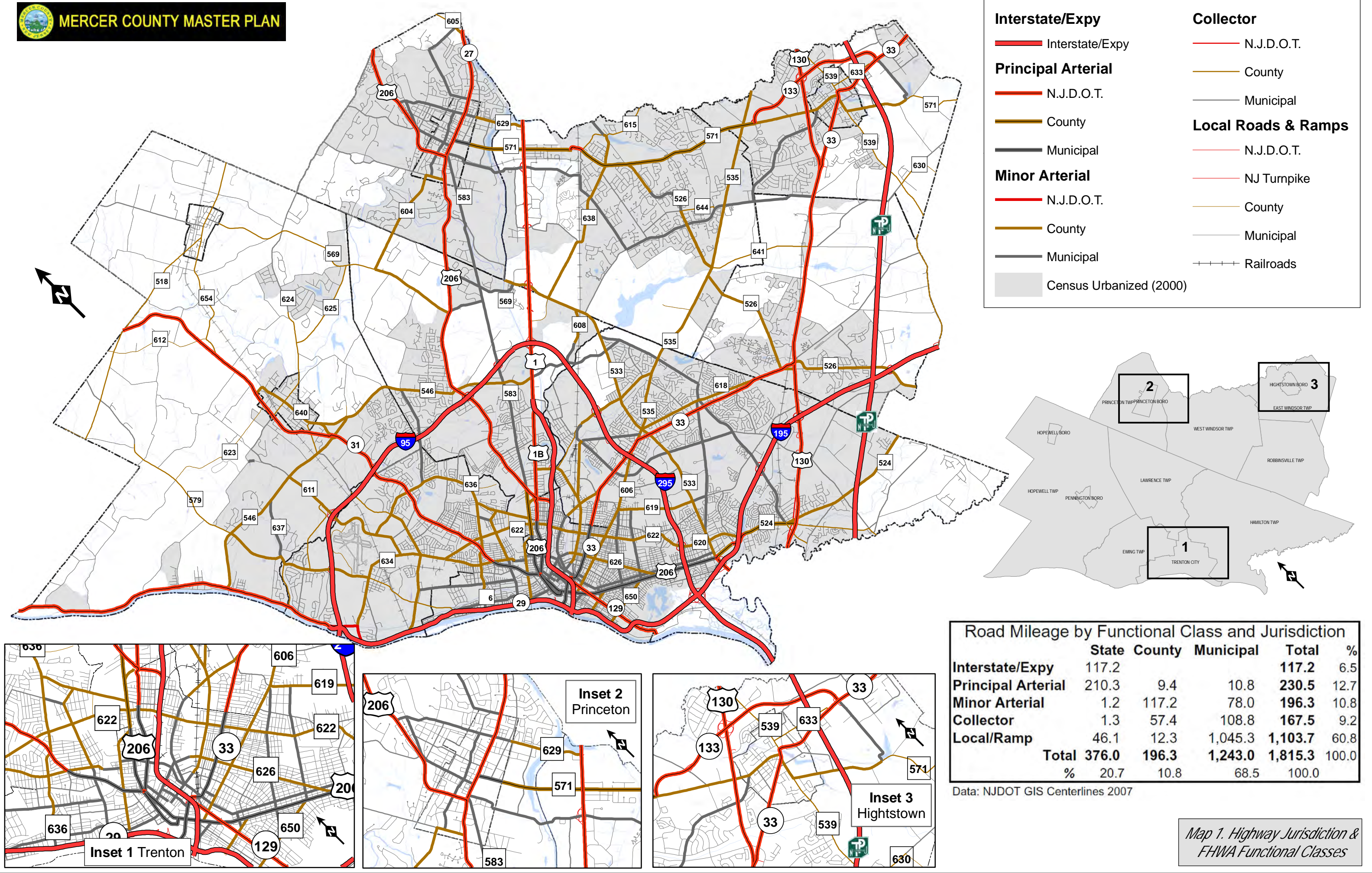
23c. *Connected network* of local streets allows local trips off of arterial roads. Break 'super-blocks,' connect cul-de-sacs.





APPENDIX B: MAPS

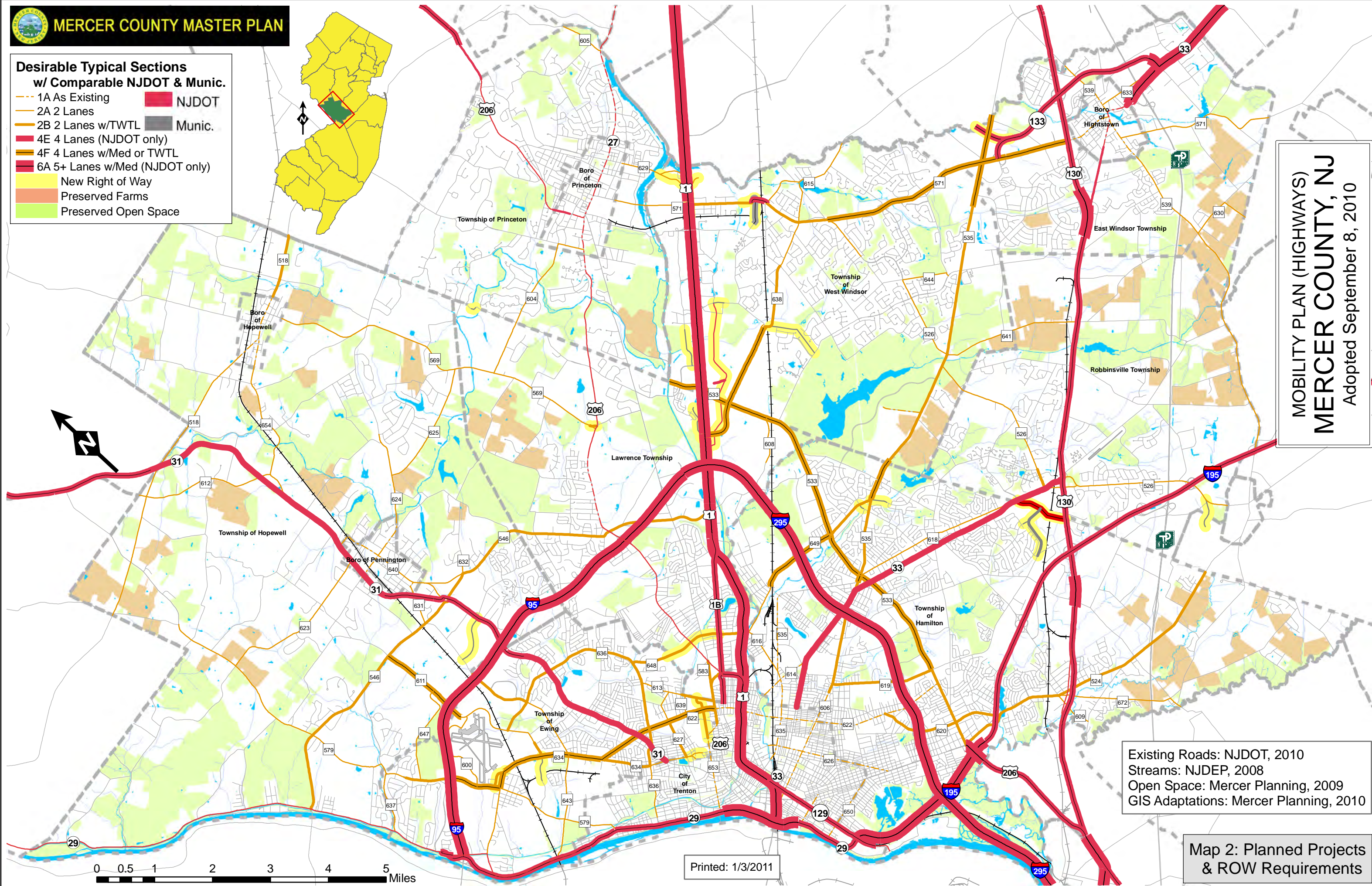
- | 1. Jurisdiction and FHWA Functional Classes
- | 2. Planned Projects - County Extent
- | 3-6. Planned Projects - Quadrant Maps





MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

- Desirable Typical Sections
w/ Comparable NJDOT & Munic.**
- 1A As Existing
 - 2A 2 Lanes
 - 2B 2 Lanes w/TWTL
 - 4E 4 Lanes (NJDOT only)
 - 4F 4 Lanes w/Med or TWTL
 - 6A 5+ Lanes w/Med (NJDOT only)
 - New Right of Way
 - Preserved Farms
 - Preserved Open Space
- NJDOT**
- Munic.**

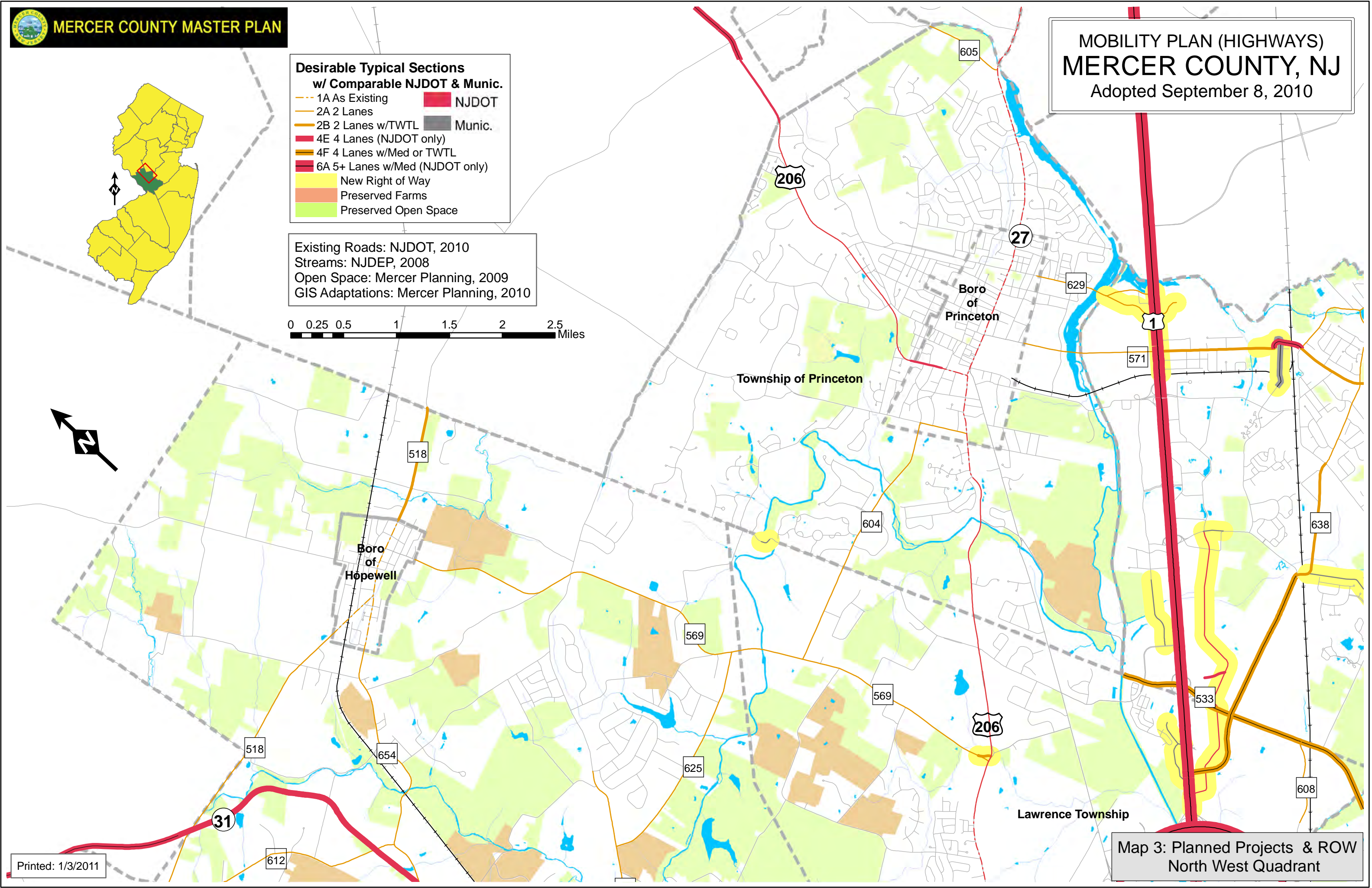




- Desirable Typical Sections
w/ Comparable NJDOT & Munic.**
- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| 1A As Existing | NJDOT |
| 2A 2 Lanes | Munic. |
| 2B 2 Lanes w/TWTL | |
| 4E 4 Lanes (NJDOT only) | |
| 4F 4 Lanes w/Med or TWTL | |
| 6A 5+ Lanes w/Med (NJDOT only) | |
| New Right of Way | |
| Preserved Farms | |
| Preserved Open Space | |

Existing Roads: NJDOT, 2010
Streams: NJDEP, 2008
Open Space: Mercer Planning, 2009
GIS Adaptations: Mercer Planning, 2010

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 Miles





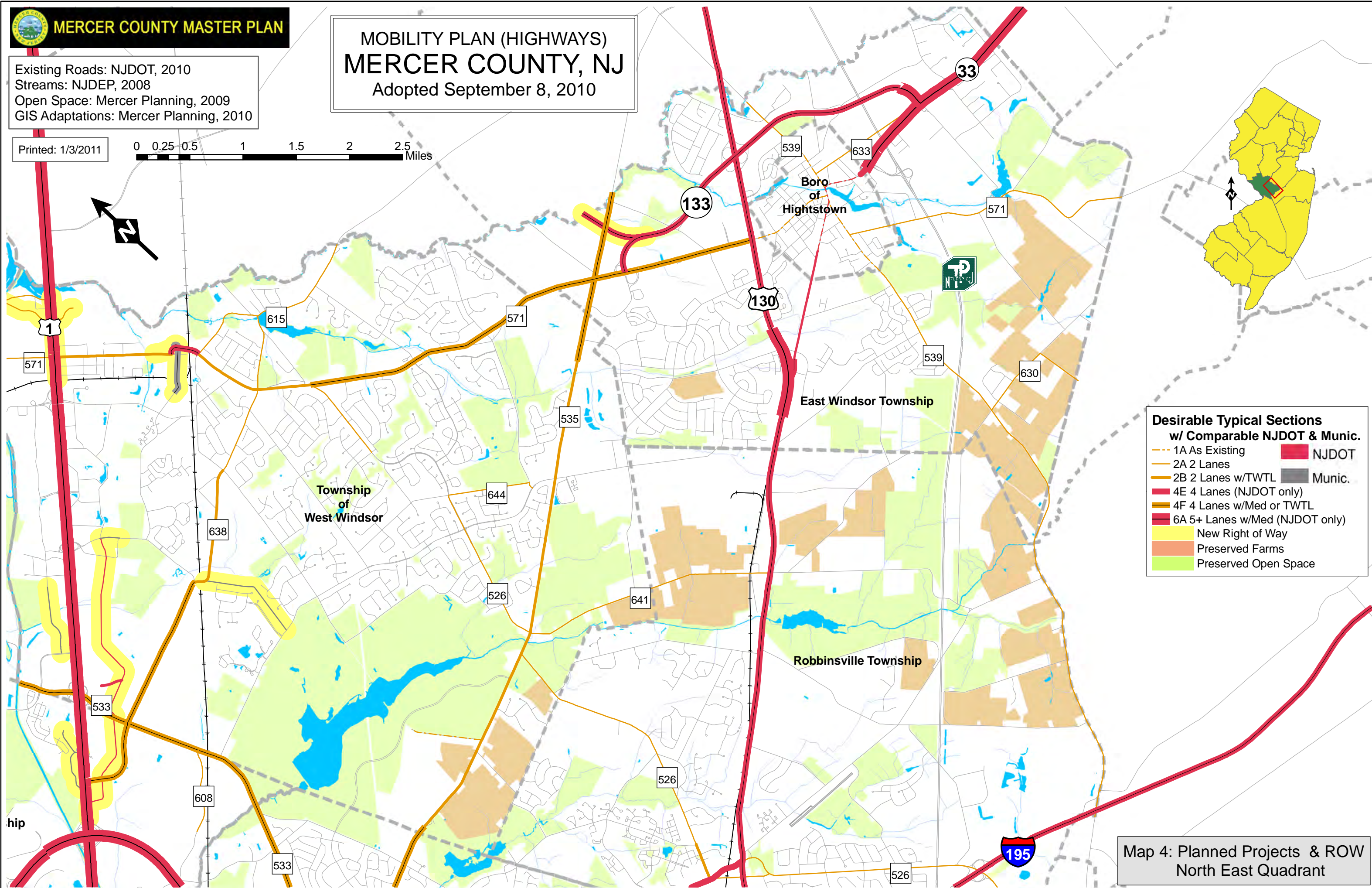
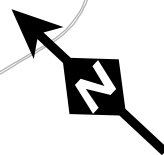
MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

Existing Roads: NJDOT, 2010
Streams: NJDEP, 2008
Open Space: Mercer Planning, 2009
GIS Adaptations: Mercer Planning, 2010

MOBILITY PLAN (HIGHWAYS) MERCER COUNTY, NJ Adopted September 8, 2010

Printed: 1/3/2011

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 Miles



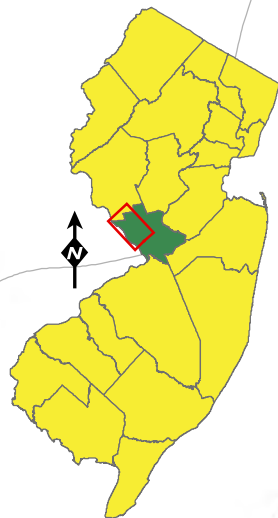
- Desirable Typical Sections
w/ Comparable NJDOT & Munic.**
- 1A As Existing
 - 2A 2 Lanes
 - 2B 2 Lanes w/TWTL
 - 4E 4 Lanes (NJDOT only)
 - 4F 4 Lanes w/Med or TWTL
 - 6A 5+ Lanes w/Med (NJDOT only)
 - New Right of Way
 - Preserved Farms
 - Preserved Open Space
- NJDOT**
- Munic.**

Map 4: Planned Projects & ROW
North East Quadrant

- Desirable Typical Sections
w/ Comparable NJDOT & Munic.**
- 1A As Existing
 - 2A 2 Lanes
 - 2B 2 Lanes w/TWTL
 - 4E 4 Lanes (NJDOT only)
 - 4F 4 Lanes w/Med or TWTL
 - 6A 5+ Lanes w/Med (NJDOT only)
 - New Right of Way
 - Preserved Farms
 - Preserved Open Space
- NJDOT**
- Munic.**

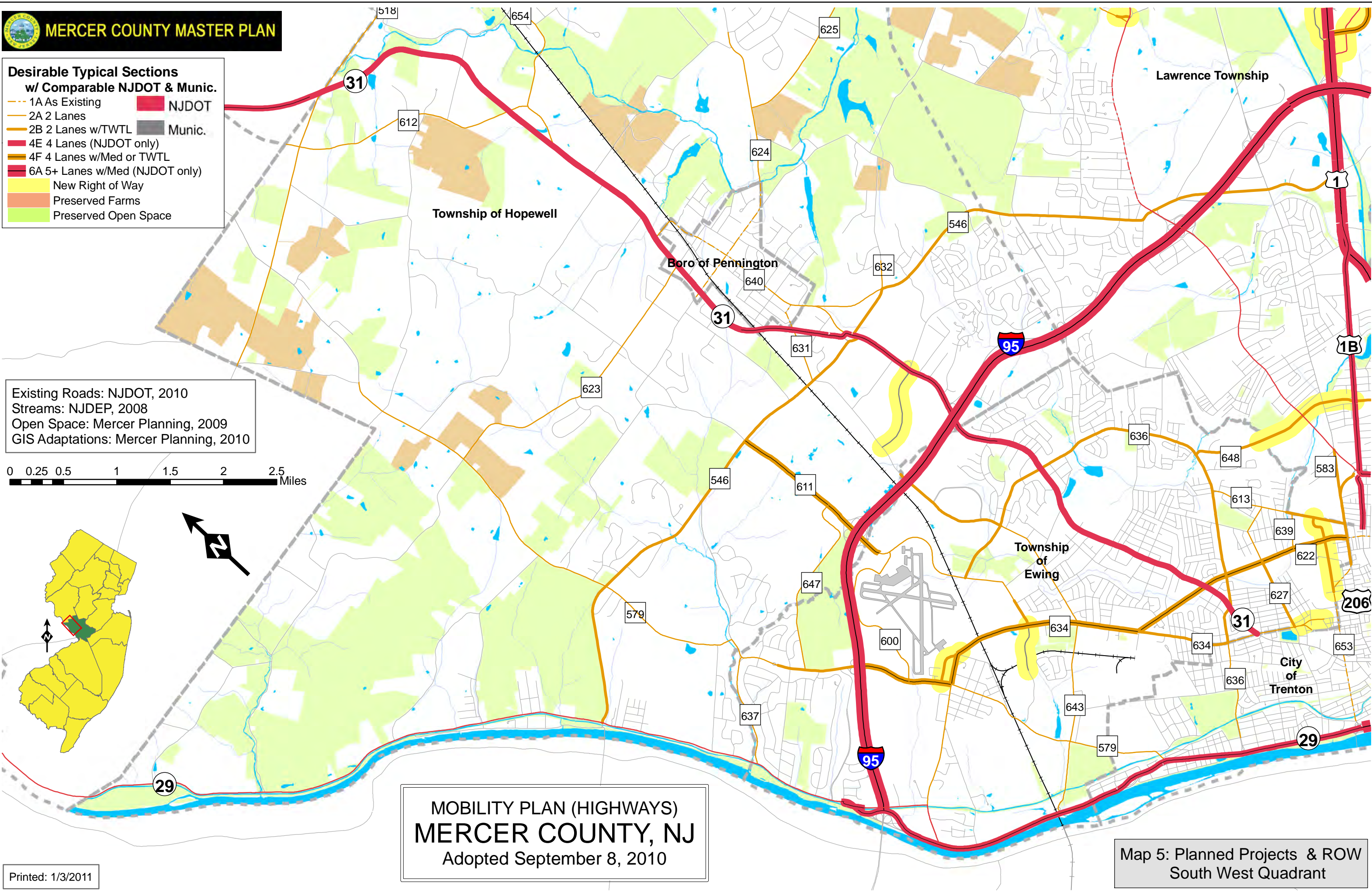
Existing Roads: NJDOT, 2010
Streams: NJDEP, 2008
Open Space: Mercer Planning, 2009
GIS Adaptations: Mercer Planning, 2010

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 Miles



MOBILITY PLAN (HIGHWAYS)
MERCER COUNTY, NJ
Adopted September 8, 2010

Map 5: Planned Projects & ROW
South West Quadrant



MOBILITY PLAN (HIGHWAYS)
MERCER COUNTY, NJ
 Adopted September 8, 2010

Desirable Typical Sections

w/ Comparable NJDOT & Munic.

- 1A As Existing
- 2A 2 Lanes
- 2B 2 Lanes w/TWTL
- 4E 4 Lanes (NJDOT only)
- 4F 4 Lanes w/Med or TWTL
- 6A 5+ Lanes w/Med (NJDOT only)
- New Right of Way
- Preserved Farms
- Preserved Open Space

NJDOT

Munic.

Existing Roads: NJDOT, 2010
Streams: NJDEP, 2008
Open Space: Mercer Planning, 2009
GIS Adaptations: Mercer Planning, 2010

Printed: 1/3/2011

Map 6: Planned Projects & ROW South East Quadrant



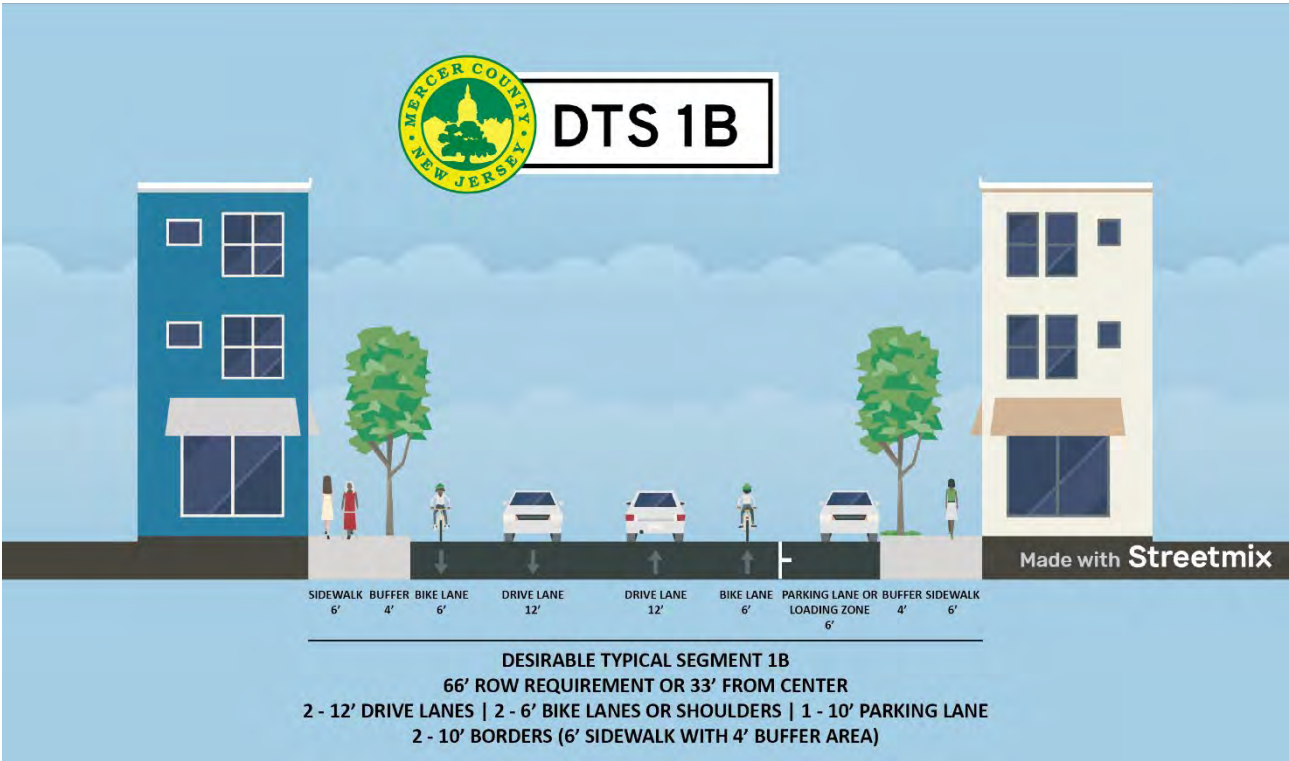
Mercer County Mobility Master Plan Addendum

Since the County Master Plan update was released in 2010, Mercer County has experienced significant development and redevelopment. Areas on the periphery of the County have seen significant greenfield development and several parts of Lawrence, Ewing, Hamilton, and Trenton are seeing redevelopment of former industrial sites. As the County continues to grow into the 2020s, the County needs to preserve right-of-way for use by the public before it is lost to development. In general, the 2010 update of the Mobility Element designated right-of-way widths that sufficiently accommodate future uses by identifying a ‘Desirable Typical [cross] Section’ for each road segment under County jurisdiction. This addendum re-evaluates roads previously designated ‘**DTS 1A: As Existing.**’

The 2010 update acknowledged that the State, County, and each of our municipalities had by then adopted Complete Streets policies. These indicate a governing body desire include dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the public transportation network. To include such facilities on highways under County jurisdiction, a minimum desirable typical segment is required.

Upon adoption of this addendum, Desirable Typical Segment 1A is discontinued as a designation. To accommodate bicycles and pedestrians into an urban fabric, a new DTS has been created, 1B, and roads previously designated 1A have been assigned new desirable typical segments, typically 1B or 2A. The appended table provides these designations.

County Highway segments designated DTS 1B will now have a minimum 66’ right-of-way to accommodate all travel modes. The cross section includes two vehicle travel lanes, two bicycle lanes or shoulders, one parking lane or loading zone, and two sidewalk areas with border zones for plantings or other street-side uses. The DTS cross section below shows a sample layout.



COUNTY OF MERCER

COMPREHENSIVE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

2020



Preliminary Draft: August 3, 2020
Final Draft: October 5, 2020
CADB Adoption: December 7, 2020

Prepared through funding from the State Agriculture Development Committee



Mercer County Agricultural Development Board

Steven Jany, Chairman
Frank D'Amico, Vice-Chairman
Scott Ellis
Laurie Emde
Gary Mount
Kristine Walsh
Theodora Wang

Meredith Melendez, Cooperative Extension of Mercer County
William Agress, Planning Board Representative

Mercer County Department of Planning

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Cover Photo: Old Mill Road Barn; Hopewell Valley Regional School District Website; Pictures around the Community



2020
COUNTY OF MERCER
COMPREHENSIVE
FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

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Introduction

New Jersey is a state of extremes, having some of the highest population densities in the country and, at the same time, having some of the most pristine wilderness such as the Pine Barrens region. Within this diverse landscape are counties like Mercer with very fertile and productive farmland that enables the Garden State to live up to its name.

The goals of the Mercer County Farmland Preservation Plan are to guide Mercer County's efforts to:

Preserve its remaining viable agricultural land; and,
Enhance and protect its agricultural industry.

The Plan recognizes:

- That farming is an important component of the County's economy;
- That preserving farming is in the public interest; and
- That farmland is an irreplaceable natural resource.

This Plan has also been prepared to meet requirements of the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) for state farmland preservation cost-share funding. The format of the Plan follows the SADC's "Guidelines for Developing County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans", approved December 14, 2006 and readopted July 25, 2019. This 2020 update is adapted from the version approved by the Mercer County Agricultural Development Board on June 7, 2010, prepared by Dan Pace, Mercer CADB Administrator for 17 years.



Lee Acres Farm, East Windsor; Dan Pace

Chapter I. Agricultural Land Base of Mercer County

- | **A.** Location and Size of Agricultural Land Base
- | **B.** Distribution of Soil Types and Characteristics
- | **C.** Number of Irrigated Acres and Available Water Resources
- | **D.** N.J. Farmland Assessment and U.S. Census of Agriculture:
Statistics and Trends



Chapter I: Agricultural Land Base of Mercer County

A. Location and Size of Agricultural Land Base

Utilizing Farmland Assessment records as an indicator for the current location and size of the County's agricultural land, Figure 1 illustrates that most agriculturally assessed lands in Mercer County are found in the northern municipality of Hopewell Township and the northern portion of Lawrence Township, plus, the southern municipalities of West Windsor, Robbinsville, and East Windsor Townships. Hamilton Township, especially near the border of Burlington and Monmouth counties, also has significant acres of farmland. The total acreage of farmland assessed properties in 2018 Tax Year (2017 data) is 29,227 acres. This represents approximately 20% of Mercer County's total land area of 144,640 acres.

Figure 1 also illustrates how Mercer County's farmland assessed parcels relate to agricultural land in the adjacent Counties of: (clockwise from the top) Hunterdon, Somerset, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Burlington.

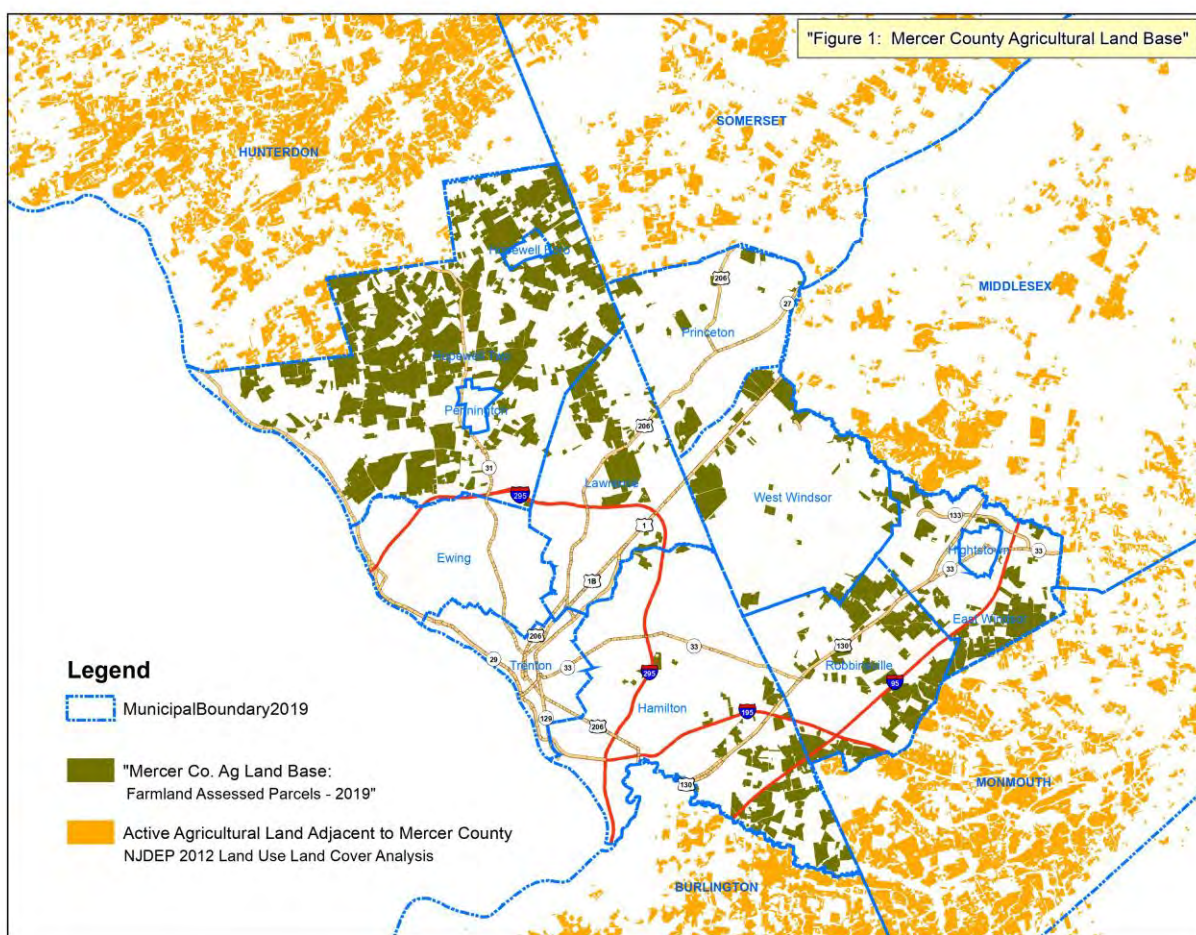


Figure 1. Mercer County Agricultural Land Base.

1. Mercer Municipalities:

Table 1 identifies farmland assessed properties by type of farmland assessment land class and by municipality. Hopewell Township has by far the greatest amount of agriculture and farmland assessed property in the County. Five municipalities (Ewing, Hightstown, Hopewell Borough, Pennington, and Trenton) have very little acreage assessed for agriculture - or none at all. Note that since the last County plan was written, Princeton Township and Princeton Borough merged to form one municipality, Princeton.

Table 1. Tax Year 2018 Data: Municipal Farmland Assessed Parcels – Agricultural Classes.

New Jersey Farmland Assessment 2017									
TAX YEAR 2018 - Mercer County									
Town	Cropland Harvested (acres)	Cropland Pastured (acres)	Permanent Pasture (acres)	Unattached Woodland (acres)	Attached Woodland (acres)	Equine Acres (acres)	Renewable Energy (acres)	Total For AG Use (acres)	Total FA-1 Forms (acres)
East Windsor Twp	1,670	114	114	179	225	6	-	2,308	2,517
Ewing Twp	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hamilton Twp	1,795	46	79	301	292	8	-	2,521	2,640
Hightstown Boro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hopewell Boro	34	-	11	8	3	-	-	56	59
Hopewell Twp	5,127	1,407	2,597	2,909	2,541	73	20	14,674	15,796
Lawrence Twp	601	82	524	191	376	1	30	1,805	2,056
Pennington Boro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trenton City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Robbinsville Twp	2,300	76	94	443	371	68	1	3,353	3,600
West Windsor Twp	1,105	26	44	229	221	5	-	1,630	1,660
Princeton	304	-	36	402	103	4	-	849	899
--- Total ---	12,936	1,751	3,499	4,662	4,132	164	51	27,196	29,227

B. Distribution of Soil Types and Characteristics

North of Route 1, sandstone, shale, argillite, and diabase underlies much of the area but many rich alluvial deposits can also be found. As one moves north, slopes progress from gently rolling hills to relatively steep hills and ridges. Generally, in this part of the County, field crops such as corn and soybeans can be found on the lands with gentle slopes while greater slopes are better suited for pastureland and niche farming ventures.





Image from: http://www.njaudubon.org/Education/Oases/Images/Physiographic_Map_copy2.jpg

1. Agricultural Soil Types: Mercer County

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifies soils into several categories related to suitability for farming. The categories within the “Important Farmlands Inventory” in descending order of importance are: Prime, Statewide Importance, Local Importance, and Unique. The Prime and State Importance Soils Map (Figure 2, next page) identifies Prime and Statewide Significant soils throughout Mercer County.

Conveniently, Route 1 divides the County roughly in half in an East-West direction. North of Route 1, a broad band of alluvial deposits and Prime Soils exists up to the aptly named Sourland Mountains. South of Route 1, Prime soils are scattered; but there are significant quantities of Statewide Significant Soils. Mercer County comprises 226 square miles midway between New York City and Philadelphia. It lies in both the Inner Coastal Plain and Piedmont physiographic provinces. As illustrated in the map above and in Figure 2, in Mercer County, Route 1 can be roughly considered as the red line divider of these two provinces.

South of Route 1, unconsolidated sediments composed mainly of sands, silts, and clays underlie the coastal plain, and, consistent with coastal plain conditions, slopes are gentle. These lands are very suitable for many forms of agriculture.

Areas shown as white spaces in Figure 2 are densely developed, water and wetlands; or, can be soils of local, unique, or of no importance.



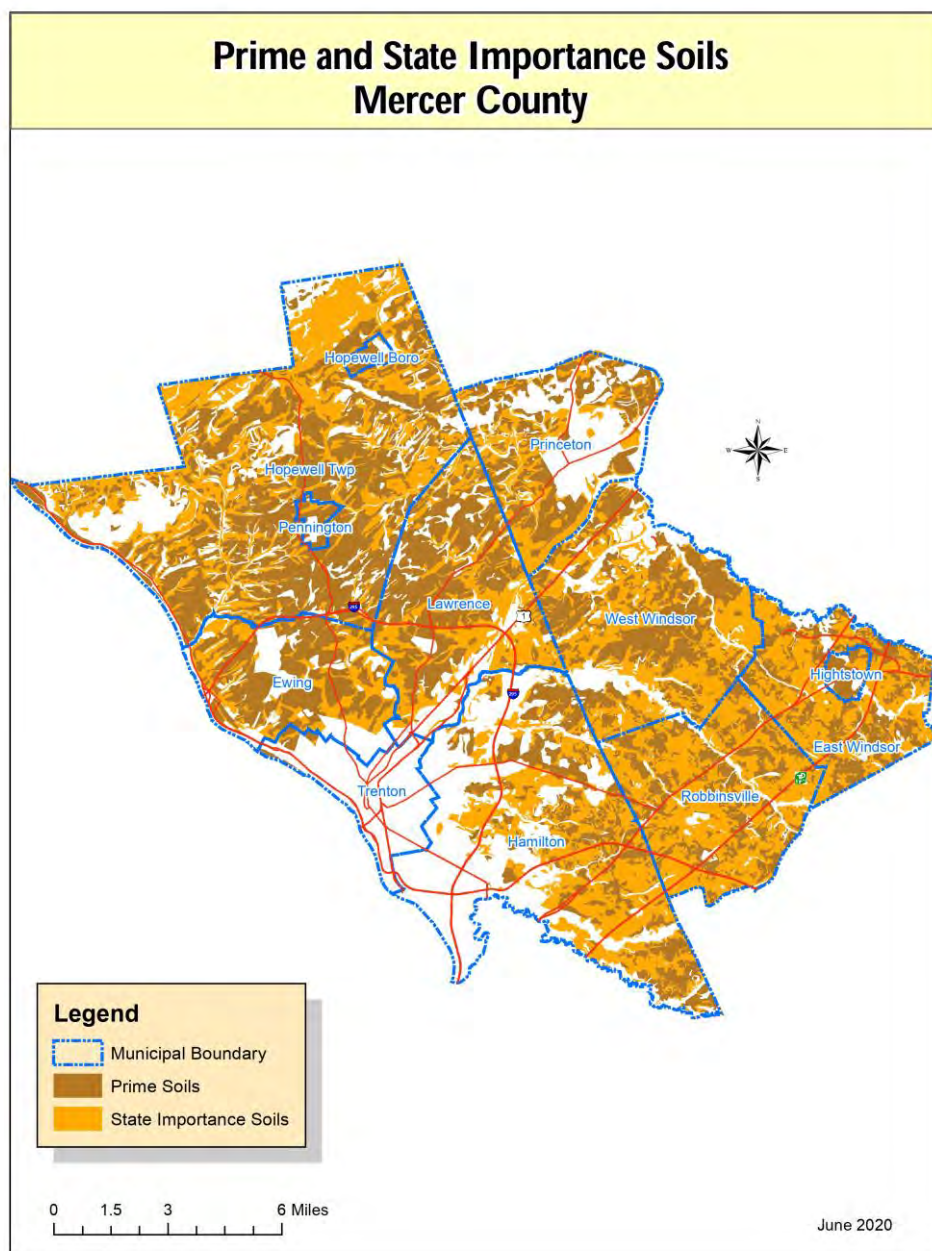


Figure 2. Mercer County Prime and Statewide Important Soils. (Source: USDA, 2012)

2. Mercer Municipalities:

As Table 1 illustrated, Mercer County has eight municipalities with Tax Assessed Farmland. To determine the area and type of agriculturally important soils being farmed within those municipalities, USDA soils and NJDEP 2012 Land Use Land/Cover Analysis “Agriculturally Active Land” data was combined to create Table 2.

Table 2. Agriculturally Important Soils, under Active Agricultural Land, within Municipalities with Tax Assessed Farmland.

Total Municipal Acreage	Active Ag Land Acres	Prime Soils Acres	Statewide Soils Acres	Local Importance Soils Acres	Unique Soils Acres	Non Agricultural Land Acres
E WINDSOR- 9,984 acres	2,333 23 %	1,186 12%	1,084 11%	59 >1%	4 >1%	7,651 77%
EWING - 9,664 acres	655 7%	562 6%	82 1%	11 >1%	0	9,009 93%
HAMILTON -25,216 acres	2,735 11%	1,260 5%	1,298 5%	9 >1%	128 >1%	22,481 89%
HOPEWELL BORO -512 acres	55 11%	27 5%	14 3%	14 3%	0	457 89%
HOPEWELL TWP- 37,120 acres	10,212 28%	5,909 16 %	3,700 10%	320 2%	0	26,908 72%
LAWRENCE - 14,080 acres	1,633 12%	1,263 9%	279 2%	58 1%	0	12,447 88%
PRINCETON - 10,432 acres	539 5%	352 3%	180 2%	7 1%	0	9,893 95%
ROBBINSVILLE -13,248 acres	3,764 27%	1,695 12%	2,020 15%	28 1%	21 1%	9,484 72%
W WINDSOR - 17,152 acres	2,723 16%	1,307 8%	1,186 7%	120 1%	83 1%	14,429 84%
TOTAL Acres	24,266	13,561 55%	9,843 40%	626 4%	236 1%	112,759

Source of Active Agricultural Land: NJDEP 2012 Land Use/Land Cover Analysis
Source of Agriculturally Important Soils: USDA/NRCS/SSURGO, 2012

C. Number of Irrigated Acres and Available Water Resources

A number of waterways crisscross the County (e.g. larger ones being Assunpink Creek, Stony Brook, Crosswicks Creek, and Doctors Creek) and adjacent farms sometimes utilize them for irrigation purposes. In addition, a relatively abundant and high groundwater table is found in most sections of the County, making well water or farm ponds a viable option for farms not located on a waterway.

Utilizing U.S. Census of Agriculture Data, Table 3 identifies the number of farms and number of irrigated acres for the past eight censuses.



Table 3. Number of Irrigated Farms and Farm Acres in Mercer County, 1982 - 2017 (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

Census Year								
	2017	2012	2007	2002	1997	1992	1987	1982
Irrigated Farms	82	61	66	61	65	66	48	44
Acres	1,008	1,073	1,028	1,110	880	1,226	747	1,003

Given the total number of farms and farm acres historically documented by the census for Mercer County (See Table 4), the low number of irrigated farms indicates that irrigation has not been an important aspect of Mercer County's agriculture industry in recent history.

D. N.J. Farmland Assessment and U.S. Census of Agriculture: Statistics and Trends

1. Number of Farms, Farms by Size (actual, average, and median)

The most significant trend over time in Mercer County has been the loss of farmland. Since 1987, Mercer has lost over 16,000 acres of farmland. The rate of loss has stabilized over the last 20 years, but farmland assessment data continues to show a decline over time in the County (Table 5). Data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture indicates that the County has actually gained 5,400 acres of farmland in the last five years (Table 4). But, we believe that this data may not be comparable to previous years' census results due to a low census response rate in 2017 and the methods that were used to adjust the data (<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/FAQ/Methodology/Census-Sub-Sampling-Method-Report.pdf>).

Statewide, farmland loss was most significant during the later part of the 20th century, with 52% of New Jersey's farmland lost since 1950 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. While this loss largely took place prior to 1980, recent work by the Regional Planning Partnership, a consultant on the County Master Plan, documented that Mercer County experienced the second greatest loss of farmland in New Jersey between 1982 and 1987 (RPP.ENV.ELEMENT.MERCER.MP12.08.05; Paragraphs 3.1 and 5.0).



Table 4. U.S. Census of Agriculture– Mercer County, 1987-2017.

Census Year							
	2017	2012	2007	2002	1997	1992	1987
Farms (number)	323	272	311	304	285	296	309
Farms (acres)	25,230	19,744	21,730	25,070	28,391	35,786	41,303
Avg. Farm Size (acres)	78	73	70	82	100	121	134
Median Farm size (acres)	18	23	22	22	25	n/a	n/a
Estimated Market Value of Land and Bldgs							
Avg. per Farm (dollars)	\$1,414,874	\$1,474,301	\$1,314,520	\$1,296,915	\$1,359,262	\$1,310,693	\$458,712
Avg. per Acres (dollars)	\$18,114	\$20,310	\$18,813	\$18,855	\$13,871	\$11,180	\$4,093
Market Value of Ag Products Sold (\$1,000)	\$24,981	\$19,729	\$18,646	\$12,247	\$13,255	\$15,879	\$13,956
Avg. per Farm (dollars)	\$77,341	\$72,534	\$59,956	\$40,286	\$46,510	\$53,647	\$45,164

Other significant and interesting trends from Table 4 are:

That the number of farms over this 30-year time frame has remained fairly constant, with an increase in the last five years; but, farm size has significantly decreased and most farms in the County are very small, with the median size at 25 acres or less over the last 20 years.

That while the value of agricultural land and buildings increased dramatically – as it has throughout the state for agricultural and non-agricultural uses – the market value of agricultural products has seen little change relative to the increased value of land since 1987. However, according to a more detailed census report comparing 2012 and 2017 data, there has been a noticeable increase in the value of certain agricultural products, namely 1) Vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes, 2) livestock, poultry and their products, 3) crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops, 4) berries, and 5) nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod. The same report shows a large increase in the value of food sold directly to consumers – an increase from \$1,060,000 to \$5,704,000 from 2012 to 2017 (2017 Census of Agriculture- County Data. Table 2: Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold Including Food Marketing Practices and Value-Added Products: 2017 and 2012).

In contrast to the U.S. Census of Agriculture data showing that Mercer County gained farmland in the past five years, New Jersey Farmland Assessment data (see Tables 5 and 6) shows a continued downward trend in farmland assessed acreage. We believe that the farmland assessment data more accurately reflects the trends in the County than the census data.



2. Cropland Harvested, Pastured, Woodland, Equine, and Total for Agricultural Use

Table 5. New Jersey Farmland Assessment – Mercer County, 1983- 2018.

Acreage by Tax Year							
	2018	2011	2008	2000	1995	1990	1983
Cropland Harvested	12,936	14,658	15,976	22,199	25,182	28,369	30,474
Cropland Pastured	1,751	2,182	1,986	1,995	1,752	2,159	1,691
Permanent Pasture	3,499	3,541	3,856	4,000	3,795	3,944	3,899
"Active Agriculture" Subtotal	18,186	20,381	21,818	28,194	30,729	34,472	36,064
Unattached Woodland	4,662	4,190	4,341	5,292	5,584	4,818	n/a
Attached Woodland	4,132	5,066	4,962	7,696	8,508	9,442	12,563
Equine	164	135	116	87	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Farmland Assessed	27,144	29,772	31,237	41,269	44,821	49,101	48,642
% Cty Farmland Assessed	18.8%	20.6%	21.6%	28.5%	31.0%	34.0%	33.6%

Source: SADC County Agricultural Profile, provided in February 2020.

NOTE: The total farmland assessed acreage shown here is less than the total land recorded for Farmland Assessment in Table 1 because the value in Table 1 includes non-ag land and land with a farmhouse.

* Cropland Harvested 2018 Tax Year acreage in order of importance (from Table 8):

- 9,404 acres in field crops, especially corn for grain, soybeans and hay
- 1,792 acres in nursey, especially trees and shrubs, Christmas trees and sod
- 918 acres in vegetables, especially snap beans, melons, sweet corn, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes and other mixed vegetables
- 254 acres in cover crop
- 225 acres in fruit, especially apples, pears, peaches and grapes
- 164 acres in equine



3. Mercer Municipalities:

Six of the County's 12 municipalities have **97%** of all farmland assessed lands in the County (see Tables 1 and 6). Portions of these six municipalities are now, and have historically been, "target areas" for the County's farmland preservation program. They are: East Windsor, Hamilton, Hopewell Township, Lawrence, Robbinsville, and West Windsor.

Although these municipalities have lost significant farm acres over time, preservation activities by the County, the State, these local governments and non-profits has enabled a solid viable land base for the agricultural industry. The types of industry are discussed in the following chapter and the amount of preserved farmland by municipality can be found in the Appendix.

Table 6. Farmland Assessment over Time – Mercer's Six Farming Municipalities Total Acres for "Agricultural Use".

Ag Use Acres by Tax Year				
	2018	2008	2001	1996
East Windsor Twp	2,308	2,652	3,426	4,358
Hamilton Twp	2,521	2,942	4,599	5,312
Hopewell Twp	14,674	15,807	19,475	19,830
Lawrence Twp	1,805	1,829	2,186	3,166
Robbinsville Twp	3,353	4,556	6,276	7,140
West Windsor Twp	1,630	2,392	4,486	5,546
--- Total ---	26,291	30,178	40,448	45,352

Source: SADC County Agricultural Profile, provided February 2020



Chapter II: Agricultural Industry: An Overview of Mercer County

- | **A. Trends in Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold**
- | **B. Crop Production Trends over the Last 20 Years**
- | **C. Support Services within Market Region**
- | **D. Other Agricultural Related Industries**



Chapter II: Agricultural Industry: An Overview of Mercer County

Mercer County's early economy, like other New Jersey counties, was based on farming. The rise of the County's manufacturing industry in the late 1800's through the 1900's, diminished the prominence of agriculture, but farming remained an important component of the local economy.



Hopewell Twp. Farm: Photo by Dan Pace

Utilizing 2017 Census of Agriculture data, Figure 3 shows that among the 17 of 21 New Jersey counties with a significant number of agricultural products sold (discounting Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Union Counties), Mercer County ranks 10th.

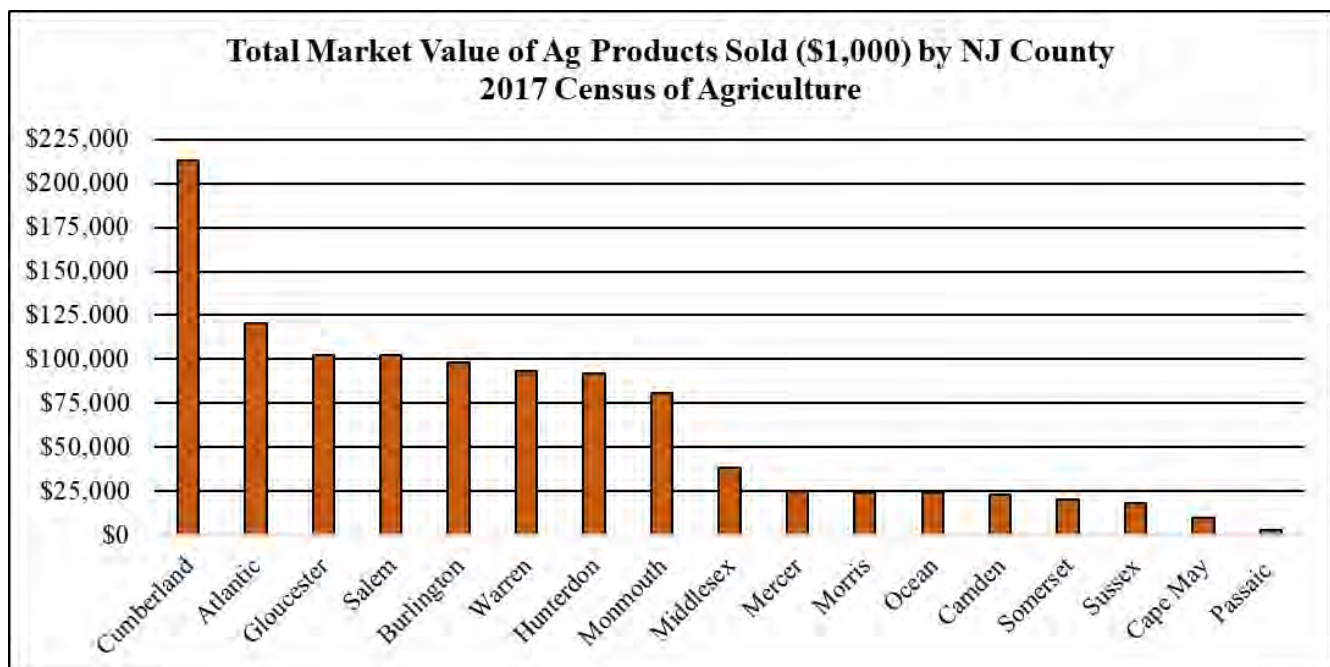


Figure 3. 2017 Census of Agriculture: Total Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold (\$1,000) by NJ County.



In addition, utilizing 2017 Census of Agriculture data, Mercer County's average product market value of \$77,341 per farm fell well below the state-wide average value of \$111,095, despite County average and median farm size (78 and 18 acres, respectively) being similar to the State-wide average and median farm size (74 and 16 acres, respectively).

A. Trends in Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold

The table below illustrates how Agricultural Product Value and farmland acres trends for the County have fared between 1987 and 2017 as reported by the Census of Agriculture.

Table 7. Total Market Value of All Agricultural Products Sold and Farmland Acres in Mercer County, 1987 – 2017 (U.S. Census of Agriculture).

Market Value of Ag Products Sold (\$1,000) by Census Year						
	2017	2007	2002	1997	1992	1987
Value	\$24,981	\$18,646	\$12,247	\$13,255	\$15,879	\$13,956
Farm acres	25,230	21,730	25,070	28,391	35,786	41,303

The reversal of the downward market value trend is likely related to economic factors such as more value-added products, higher commodity prices, and greater sales in certain sectors.

Despite the loss of farmland acreage since the 1980s and 1990s, the Mercer County agricultural community remains an important part of the County's economy and a contributor to the state's farming industry. Census data from 2017 shows that in certain sectors, the County ranked:

- 12th Statewide for sale of vegetables (primarily sweet corn and pumpkins);
- 10th Statewide for the sale of livestock, poultry and products; and
- 8th Statewide in sale of grains, oil seeds, and beans (primarily corn and soybeans).

In addition, Mercer County farmers' ability to respond to changes in the marketplace has contributed to the overall economic health of the agricultural industry in Mercer County. Evidence of this is the growing number – and increasing size – of farm stands and farmers markets, plus, growth in niche agriculture sectors like wineries and organic farms. For example, Hopewell Township is not only home to one of three wineries in Mercer County and half a dozen organic farms, but also to multiple Community Supported Agriculture farms. One, Honey Brook Organic Farm, is the oldest and largest organic CSA in the state.

B. Crop Production Trends over the Last 20 Years

Table 8 illustrates how traditional field crop (corn for grain, soybeans, wheat, and rye) acreage has dramatically been reduced over the past 35 years (well over 50%). This is likely because these larger farm lands are most sought after by housing and commercial developers. Cover crop acreage has remained relatively stable.

Table 8 also illustrates:

Nursery acres (trees, sod, ornamentals) remain important in the County, though there was a decline over the past 10 years;

Fruit, berries and vegetable acreages have remained relatively stable, as pick-your-own and CSA



operations continue to be popular and producers of Asian fruits and vegetables continue to operate in the County. Grape acres nearly doubled, reflecting the addition of a third winery in the County.

It is important to note that “Equine Acres” in Table 8 are dedicated solely for “boarding, rehabilitating or training livestock”. More representative figures for equine related farm acreage come from a 2007 study by the Equine Science Center at Rutgers. In it, Mercer County is identified as having 2,300 equine related acres – far greater than the 116 acres reported in 2008 and the 278 farmland assessed acres in 2007. Indeed, just within the County’s farmland preservation program, four farms totaling approximately 350 acres are breeding facilities while several hundred more acres on other preserved farms have equine as ancillary to other agriculture production. There are three notable equine trainers and breeders in Hopewell Township (including one preserved farm) and three (also preserved farms) in East Windsor.

Table 8. Mercer County Farmland Assessment Crop Sectors by Acre, 1983-2018*

Crop Sector Acres by Tax Year							
	2018	2008	2004	2000	1995	1990	1983
Field Crops	9,404	11,160	13,714	17,921	20,157	21,768	24,962
Cover Crops	254	396	247	302	595	381	421
Equine	164	116	136	87	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Fruit	225	305	251	209	159	160	176
Berries	20	18	30	45	23	53	61
Grapes	117	59	41	15	1	1	1
Nursery	1,792	2,155	2,374	1,706	2,005	2,439	2,521
Vegetables	918	1,033	1,027	1,323	1,296	1,064	1,711

*Not all sectors shown

C. Support Services within Market Region

Within Mercer County, there are few support services for the agricultural industry. In fact, Tri County Auction in East Windsor, a traditional auction house that hosts a produce auction three nights a week, is the only existing wholesale market support for the industry in Mercer County. When asked where they get agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizer, chemicals, etc) local farmers say they go to Grow Mark in Burlington County, Farmers Brokerage and Supply in Monmouth County, and the Plant Food Company in Middlesex County.

For equipment purchases, local farmers will go to Central Jersey Equipment in Columbus, NJ, Pole Tavern Equipment and Sales in Salem County, Farm-Rite in Cumberland County, and Hoober in Intercourse, PA. However, Mercer County’s farmers have become very adept at minimizing the need for many repair services by fixing many mechanical problems themselves. In doing so, they rely heavily upon mail order and out-of-state retailers for their equipment parts.

When asked where they bring their agricultural products, growers of the vastly predominant field crops (see Table 8) like corn for grain, soybeans, and wheat go to Perdue in Salem and Cumberland Counties and also into Pennsylvania. Vegetable farmers, of which sweet corn and pumpkins are the dominant products, sell direct to the consumer from their farms and also to supermarkets and roadside stands.



Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Salem County had a very good website for farmers to find suppliers, services and many other resources at <https://salem.njaes.rutgers.edu/>. As of this writing, this website no longer exists, but an update is in progress.

In addition, the Trenton Farmers Market provides a daily year-round direct marketing outlet for farmers – as it has been doing since the 1930's. However, the number of participating farmers is limited by the Market's member's rules. There are also a large number of smaller but viable weekly farmer's markets appearing around the County on both public and privately-owned lands. These markets are further discussed in Chapter 6.

D. Other Agricultural Related Industries

There are no other industries directly related to agriculture in Mercer County; however, many small businesses in Mercer County such as landscapers, restaurants, liquor stores, supermarkets, and schools buy locally produced agricultural products directly.

One school in particular, The Lawrenceville School, a private four-year boarding school, has made significant strides towards providing student and staff meals with food purchased locally through their Sustainable Food Project – such as fruits from Terhune Orchards in Lawrence and vegetables from Sandy Acres in East Windsor (<https://www.lawrenceville.org/campus-life/dining>).



Chapter III: Land Use Planning for Agriculture

- / **A. State Development and Redevelopment Plan**
- | **B. Special Resource Areas**
- | **C. County Master Plan and Development Regulations**
- | **D. Current Land Use and Trends**
- | **E. Sewer Service Areas / Public Water Supply Areas**
- | **F. Municipal Master Plans and Zoning Overview**
- | **G. Discussion of Municipal and Regional TDR Opportunities**



Chapter III: Land Use Planning for Agriculture

A. State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The *New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan* (SDRP), adopted in 1992 and updated in 2001, strongly supports the preservation of agriculture and recognizes the fact that farming not only contributes to the state's economy but to the quality of life. The promotion and the preservation of agriculture is a major goal of the SDRP as identified by 15 separate statewide agricultural policies to be used by state, county and local agencies in their planning and decision-making processes. The application of these statewide policies through a framework called the Resource Planning and Management Structure forms a balanced approach to preserving agriculture in the state.

The Resource Planning and Management Structure identifies "centers" and "planning areas."

Centers are defined by the SDRP as "compact forms of development that are desirable and necessary to assure efficient infrastructure and protection of natural and environmental resources in the various regions of the state." Five types of centers are identified by the SDRP based on varying levels of population, employment, density, housing and infrastructure: Urban Centers, Towns, Regional Centers, Villages and Hamlets.

Planning areas are defined by the SDRP as "regions of the state within which there are critical natural and built resources that should be either protected or enhanced in order to achieve the goals of the State Planning Act." Planning areas are geographically delineated to reflect the state's varying levels of development, infrastructure capacities and presence of natural resources.

Mercer County contains the following 2001 SDRP Plan state designated planning areas:

- Planning Area 1 – Metropolitan
- Planning Area 2 – Suburban
- Planning Area 3 – Fringe
- Planning Area 4 – Rural
- Planning Area 4B – Rural/Environmentally Sensitive
- Planning Area 5 – Environmentally Sensitive

Mercer County municipalities designated as centers with endorsed plans are:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Hopewell Borough | Village Center |
| Princeton | Regional Center |
| Hightstown | Town Center |
| Robbinsville Town Ctr. | Town Center |
| Trenton | Urban Center |



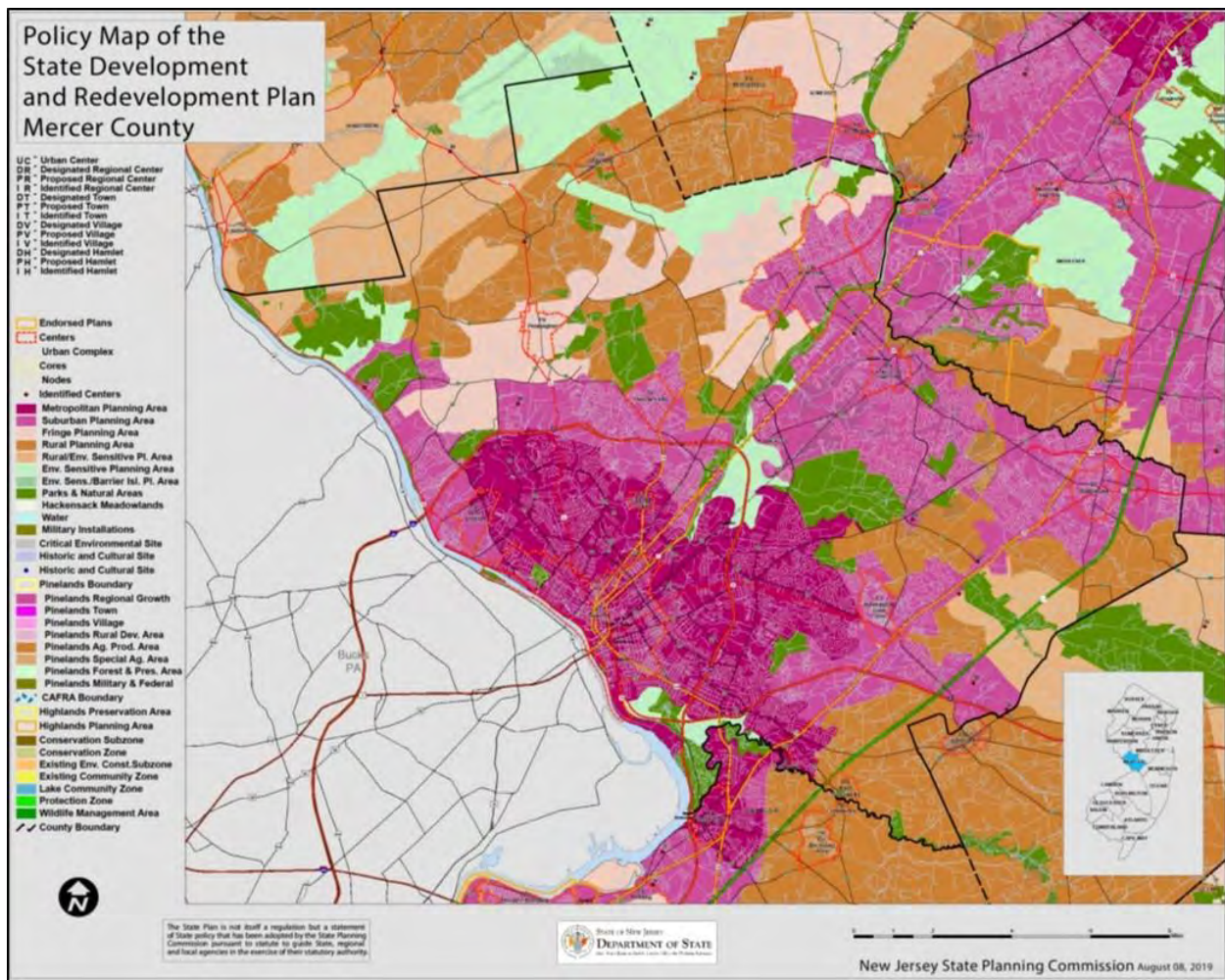


Figure 4. Adopted Mercer County Planning Areas and Centers: 2001 Policy Map (current as of August 8, 2019).

The following chart illustrates the percentage of the County within each Planning Area:

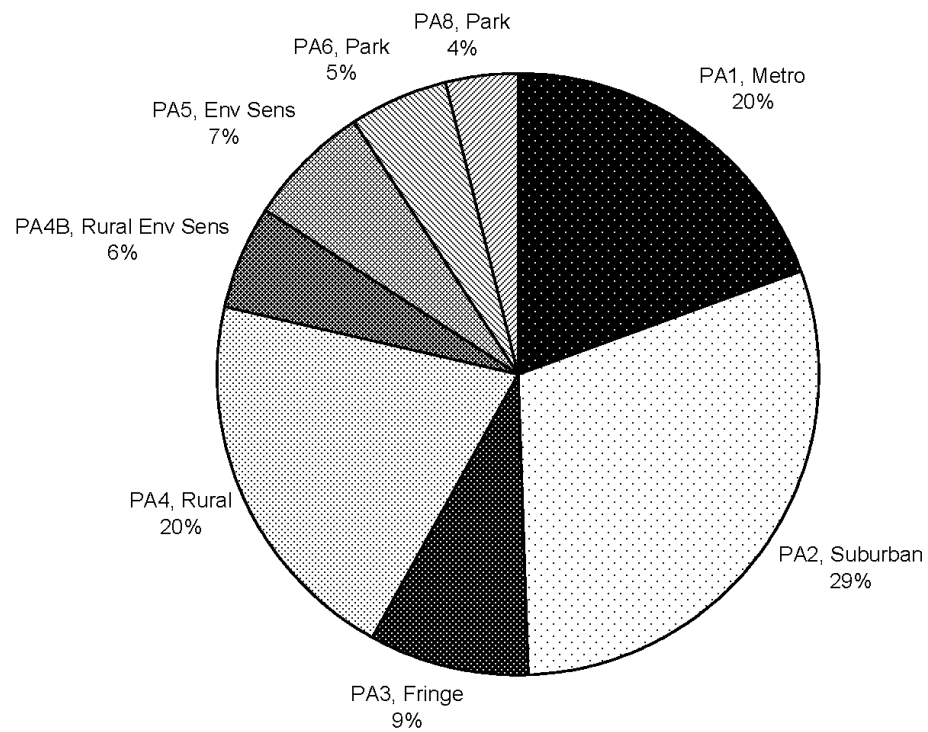
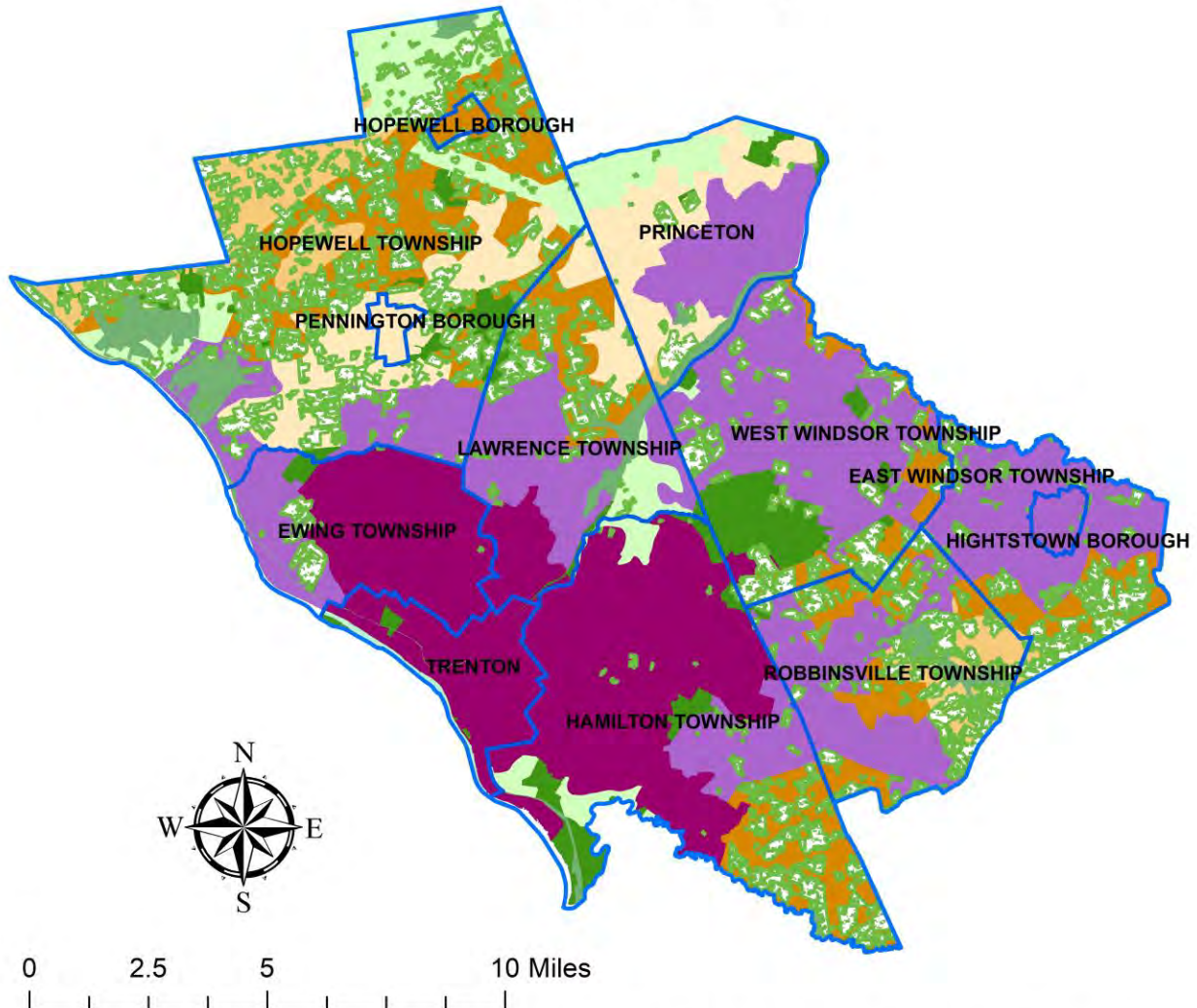


Figure 5. Percentage of Mercer County within each State Planning Area.

Mercer County State Planning Areas with Active Agriculture Land Use (NJDEP 2012)



Legend [Data Sources: 2012 DEP LULC, 2019 State Plan Map]

- Agriculturally Active Land, 2012 DEP LULC - 20,704 Acres
- Area 1- Metropolitan - 28,453 Acres [19.6% of County area]. Active Ag Land - 129 Acres; 0.5% of Metropolitan
- Area 2 - Suburban - 43,242 Acres [29.8% of County area]. Active Ag Land - 3,175 Acres; 7.3% of Suburban
- Area 3 - Fringe - 12,689 Acres [8.7% of County area]. Active Ag Land - 1,660 Acres; 13.1% of Fringe
- Area 4 - Rural - 29,842 Acres [20.5% of County area]. Active Ag Land - 10,325 Acres; 34.6% of Rural
- Area 5 - Env. Sensitive - 9,682 Acres [6.7% of County area]. Active Ag Land - 830 Acres; 8.6% of Env Sensitive
- Area 4B - Rural Env. Sens. Areas - 8,058 Acres [5.5% of County area]. Active Ag Land - 2,826 Acres; 35.1% of Rural Env Sens
- Area 6 - Parks and Natural Areas - 8,258 Acres [5.7% of County area]. Active Ag land - 1,178 Acres; 14.3% of Parks/Natural
- Area 8 - State Parks - 5,660 Acres [3.9% of County area]. Active Ag Land - 443 Acres; 7.8% of State Parks

Figure 6. Active agriculture (2012 NJDEP LULC data) in each Planning Area, Mercer County.



The County's Town and Village Centers have been addressing the development pressures in surrounding fringe and rural planning areas primarily through the county and state open space and farmland acquisition programs (Mercer County Master Plan Framework, p. 42 <http://www.mercercounty.org/home/showdocument?id=1242>).

The Town and Village Centers in Mercer County, such as the historic boroughs (Hightstown, Pennington, Hopewell Borough), do not have jurisdiction over the lands which surround them. As such, the only tool available to them to protect their environs is the purchase of land for open space or agricultural use. Robbinsville Township created an innovative Town Center with the express intent that the center would absorb most of the demand for growth into the future. Hopewell Township completed a comprehensive study of water capacity to support a significant down-zoning effort in 2002. That effort, combined with the identification of "municipally identified hamlets" in Hopewell Township's Valley Resource Conservation (VRC) zone, fosters the use of their Noncontiguous Cluster Development Ordinance to direct development away from the more rural and environmentally sensitive areas of the community. Again, this effort is paired with an aggressive land acquisition program. The two "donut-hole" boroughs of Hopewell and Pennington cooperate and contribute to land preservation outside their borders in conjunction with Hopewell Township. East Windsor, West Windsor, Hamilton, and Lawrence Townships all have utilized a land acquisition method to direct or discourage growth. Both West Windsor and Lawrence have been buying land for so long that little developable land remains available in the more rural or environmentally sensitive areas.

The SDRP states that, "New development should be guided into Centers to preserve open space, farmland, and natural resources and to preserve or improve community character, increase opportunities for reasonably priced housing and strengthen beneficial economic development opportunities." Efforts are underway to establish transit villages in Hamilton and West Windsor Townships, both of which may absorb growth which might otherwise occur in Planning Areas 4 and 5. Elsewhere in Mercer County, Robbinsville Town Center, existing boroughs, and the potential of "municipally identified hamlets" in Hopewell Township are the other center-based development opportunities.

B. Special Resource Areas

There are no Special Resource Areas within Mercer County. However, the County of Mercer supports the lead agency efforts of The Sourlands Conservancy (formerly the Sourlands Regional Planning Council) to create a Sourlands Special Resource Area (Figure 7) that would encompass part of northern Hopewell Township in Mercer County as well as municipalities in adjacent Hunterdon and Somerset Counties (<https://www.sourland.org/comprehensive-management-plan-ii>). Portions of this Area are within the County's ADA and the County's Hopewell Project Areas as well as Hopewell Township's own farmland preservation Project Area.

The Sourlands Conservancy is a nonprofit group, dedicated to the protection and preservation of the 90-square-mile Sourlands region, which has been spearheading efforts to preserve the ecological integrity, historical resources, and special character of the Sourlands and has been supported by State Smart Growth Grants.

Late in 2010, a Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) was presented to the seven municipalities (Hillsborough, Montgomery, East Amwell, West Amwell, Hopewell Township, Hopewell Borough, and Lambertville) and three counties (Somerset, Hunterdon, and Mercer) that share the Sourlands (Smart Growth Planning and Management Project for the Sourland Mountain, Final report, p.12). After holding a series of public meetings in each township, and having received considerable public comments, in 2011 this CMP was endorsed by each of the five townships, creating a blueprint for cooperative cross-municipality management of this fragile and irreplaceable resource.



The Sourlands CMP identifies strategies to preserve the Sourlands including acknowledging the importance of preserving agriculture on prime farmland soils while discouraging or preventing agriculture where it will damage sensitive ecosystems or overstress limited water supplies. As shown on the below map, the portion of the Sourlands Region that is in Mercer County is located in Hopewell Township and Hopewell Borough. Well over half of the active agricultural acreage in Hopewell Township is located within the Sourlands Region.

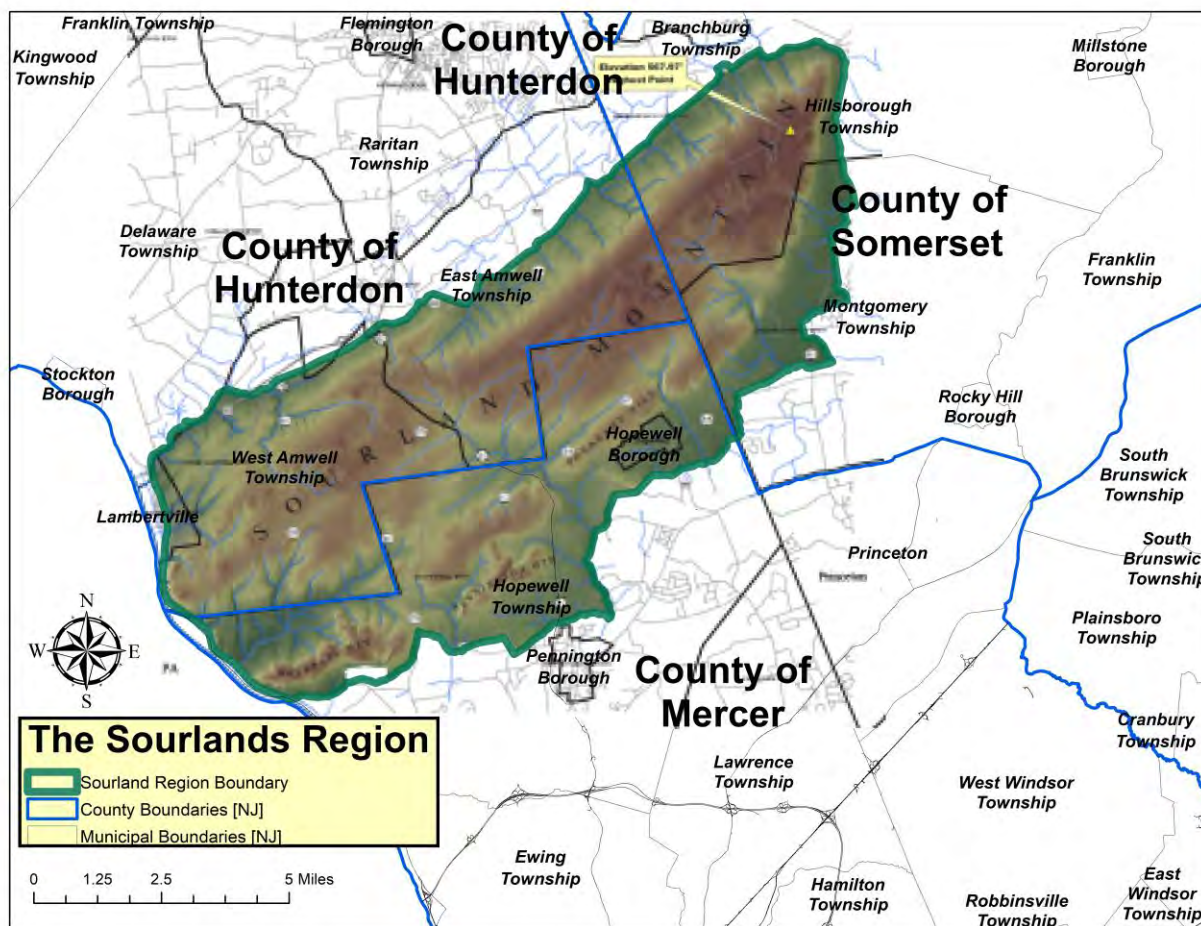


Figure 7. The Sourlands (from Sourlands Conservation Management Plan, 2011).

C. County Master Plan and Development Regulations

1. County Master Plan and Policy Framework Background

The current Mercer County Master Plan (as adopted by the Mercer County Planning Board in 2010, and amended by the same in 2016) acknowledges that agricultural land is under development pressure, and that an aggressive farmland preservation program is therefore appropriate for the County. The preceding Master Plan (1986) set the framework for such a program, highlighting the following goals related to Agricultural Development: 1) Reserve and protect sufficient land to support agricultural activities, and 2) Encourage and support a viable agricultural economy. That Plan divided the County into two general growth management areas, Growth Areas (Urban, Regional and Suburban) and Limited Growth/Agricultural Areas. Most lands designated by the CADB in its 1985 Agricultural Development Area map fell into the Limited Growth/Agricultural Area, and this holds true today.



The 1986 Plan articulated several policies for the Limited Growth/Agricultural Area, including limiting growth-inducing infrastructure, encouraging the use of cluster and village development patterns, limiting non-residential development to local retail and service uses and limiting expenditure of public funds for farmland preservation to this Area. The Plan went on to say that prime agricultural soils should be preserved in appropriate areas and that agricultural land is an important cultural resource, deserving of protection. The Plan also identifies existing Village Centers and a desire to protect the boundaries of the centers via parks and cluster development.

The County's 1986 Growth Management Plan recognizes the importance of preserving agricultural lands and limiting growth-leading infrastructure – each of these being within the jurisdiction of the County. The Plan encourages the use of zoning and other innovative techniques (such as clustering) by municipalities to minimize the intrusion of development into valuable agricultural areas.

As indicated above, the 1986 Plan's Limited Growth/Agricultural Areas also served as a measure for the CADB's 1985 ADA map. Interestingly, the CADB's current ADA map is a reasonable reflection of the 1990 and 2000 land use projections. The ADA is discussed with further detail in Chapter IV.

2. Current Master Plan (2016) and Farmland Preservation Element

In further recognition of the importance of farmland preservation, and the use of appropriate land use policy tools within its purview, Mercer County has worked to evolve the policy framework mentioned above into an independent but fully integrated "Farmland Preservation" Element of the Master Plan. In developing the current County Master Plan (as adopted in 2010, and amended in 2016), the County Planning Department provided Mercer's municipalities with regional analysis of the current and future state of the county's transportation, economic, and environmental systems. These regional systems are the infrastructure that support land use within the county. The Plan deployed a method for developing consensus among the municipalities on development and redevelopment goals for land use.

During consensus-building, also known as the Regional Action Plan (RAP), municipalities were introduced to indicators used to measure how well the region was meeting its goals for future development. Municipalities were able to consider existing and proposed preserved open space and farmland as attributes to those indicators.

D. Current Land Use and Trends

1. Current Land Use

Today, Mercer County contains few areas that resemble the agricultural landscape of its past. Suburban development with increasingly larger homes on larger lots is what one currently and predominantly finds in the outer suburban rings surrounding Trenton. In the vicinity of Interstate interchanges, business parks and warehouse construction have occurred on former farmland. The County's agricultural areas, described in Chapter I as being concentrated within six out of 12 municipalities (representing 97% of all farm assessed land) are now relegated to shrinking farm belts in Hopewell Township to the north, and the southeasterly portions of Hamilton, East Windsor, and Robbinsville Townships (Rt. 130/NJTPK corridor). A smaller, but nonetheless significant, concentration also occurs within north Lawrence Township and in West Windsor near Mercer County Community College/Park. The Urban *Land Cover* illustration displayed as Figure 8 and Tables 9a, 9b and 9c on the next page illustrate the fluid nature of land uses in Mercer County since roughly the turn of the 21st century.



2. Trends in Land Use, Population, and Development Pressures: 2002-2015

An analysis of trends in land use, population, and new residential building permit issuance reveals the complex setting within which the Mercer County Farmland Preservation Program operates, allows us to posit correlations, and, perhaps most importantly, provides a framework within which Mercer County can assess its current and future objectives as related to Farmland Preservation tactics. Broadly speaking, when comparing these current trends with those that emerged during preparation of the 2009 Farmland Preservation Plan, the following summary appears to have solid footing:

Continued pressure on active agricultural land from residential or otherwise ‘urban’ development (including commercial developments such as warehouses and light industry) is evident, leading to a more or less steady rate of conversion of agriculture lands to other uses, which underlines the need for continued efforts at preserving land in active agricultural use in Mercer County.

a. Land Use

As is the case in any analysis of land use over time, causal links are difficult to identify and support with clear data. This reality is exacerbated by the existence of multiple data sources relating directly or indirectly to land use trends – such as NJ DEP and DVRPC Land Use GIS data layers (derived from analysis of digital aerial imagery), Census of Agriculture survey results, and data on land that is assessed as “Farmland” by municipal tax officials. The best one can hope is to identify correlations and attempt to develop potential narratives that help explain apparent changes in land use. What follows is an attempt to do just that, while objectively accepting the limitations of such an effort.

According to NJ DEP state data, the trend from 1986 to 2012 in New Jersey as a whole was that agriculturally active acreage went from 14% of the State land in 1986, down to 10% by 2012. At this time scale, the situation in Mercer has been even more dramatic, going from 37,587 acres in 1986 (25.7% of land in County), to 20,588 acres in 2012 (14.1% of land in County). More recently, there appears to be some evidence pointing to the idea that Mercer County may be bucking that trend. As stated in the Census of Agriculture Mercer County Profile, from 2012 to 2017, the County has had a very positive trend of more farms (+19%), and larger farms (average size = +8%), leading to a +28% of total acres in agricultural production. Additionally, the NJ DEP 2015 Land Use update GIS data layer shows that Mercer County only “lost” roughly 300 acres of agricultural land between 2012 and 2015 – a much lower amount per year than in any period since 1986. However, as shown by the following data analysis, such positive indications, as hopeful and positive as they are, may be the result of changing land use determination methodologies, greater aerial imagery resolution available, the fluidity of land use when analyzed during a short period of economic fluctuations, and even the somewhat subjective ‘semantics’ of land use categorization.

A comparison of the U.S. Census of Agriculture (Volume 1, Part 30, Chapter 2, Table 1, “County Summary Highlights: 2017”) with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection 2015 Land Use/Land Cover data (Table 9b) claim significantly different acreage of land in farms in Mercer County (25,230 acres, and 20,289 acres, respectively). The difference is most likely attributable to the different methodologies employed – the US Census of Agriculture collects participant citizens’ survey answers as its source data, while the NJ DEP Land Use GIS coverage is derived from analyses of aerial photography. It is interesting to note that the 2015 DVRPC Land Use/Land Cover GIS data does more closely match the 2017 Census of Agriculture, defining 23,918 acres as “Agricultural” in Mercer County. As is true with any such analysis, the actual figures should be treated as estimates; one can often gather a clearer picture of something as dynamic as land use by basing said analysis on a consistent data source, and looking at change over time. With respect to that, we will use the NJ DEP Land Use/Land Cover data from 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2015 in order to ascertain trends.



Within this decade-plus worth of data, a few interesting trends emerge, both across the entire span, and when comparing the 2002-2007 period with 2007-2015. As illustrated by the DEP data in Table 9c, the largest change in land use in Mercer County between 2002 and 2015 occurred through the conversion of farmland to urban lands. Total land in farms decreased by 4,391 acres (18%) during that time, while urban land use increased by 5,871 acres (9%). This conversion of farmland since 2002, usually into single-family residential, is further illustrated by Figure 8 (unshaded areas of the map are predominantly preserved open space, wooded or wet areas, and farmland – preserved and unpreserved).

Comparing the 2002-2007 and 2007-2015 time periods is interesting, because the “Great Recession” occurred during the transition period, roughly 2007-2009. One might expect to notice a dramatic effect from this recession in the data, but as Tables 9a-c illustrate, the latter period after the recession took hold evinces only small changes in ‘loss’ of agricultural land (0.5% less acres converted), loss of forest land and wetlands (2.3% and 0.55% less acres converted, respectively) and expansion of ‘urban’ land use (2.2% less growth in urban land cover). Indeed, as noted in the 2016 Rutgers University report “Changing Landscapes in the Garden State: Land Use Change in NJ 1986 to 2012,” due to factors such as the data being derived from estimates based on aerial imagery ‘snapshots,’ and the availability of ever-better resolution imagery, changes in land usage from any one period to another should only be considered significant if they are greater than or equal to 5%

(https://crssa.rutgers.edu/projects/lc/download/NJ_Urb_Growth_III_executive_summary_2012_LathropHasse.pdf).

Using this +/- 5% threshold of significance, one may not be surprised to note that in the 2002-2007 timeframe, the overall story is one of agricultural land and barren land being converted to ‘urban.’ Indeed, looking at the 2002-2015 timeframe as a whole (Table 9c), supports this overall trend in land use conversion (along with a 3% loss of wetlands, which, although less than 5%, is important to note given the vital ecological services they provide).

Breaking down the 2007-2015 land use change into two separate periods, 2007-2012 and 2012-2015, there appear to be some nuanced correlations worth considering, especially as related to the impacts on land use by greater economic forces such as downturns or recessions. While this data at first appears to offer a healthy amount of ‘good news’ for farmland preservation in Mercer County, and even, perhaps, the recent success of the Mercer County Farmland Preservation Plan itself, as the following narrative illustrates, it may be too soon to confirm such good news, at least empirically.

The 2002-2007 time period saw an increase in urban land cover (3,461 acres) that matches up more or less with the loss in sum of agricultural land, barren land, forest, and wetlands (3,478 acres), so we can reasonably conclude that these acres were converted to development. However, during the (post-recession) 2007-2015 period, while ‘urban’ land use increased by 2,128 acres, more than 500 more acres (2,691) were converted to another use from agriculture, barren land, or wetlands, and forest acreage actually increased by 165 acres. As mentioned, it is difficult to draw straight causal lines from this data, However, this reading of the data may at least shed light on the fluid nature of land use, perhaps as it pertains to apparent changes in use of agricultural land on either side of an economic downturn.

Indeed, when one separates the 2007-2015 timeframe into two periods, 2007-2012 and 2012-2015, and compares land use changes, the following nuances emerge:

- From 2007 to 2012, 1,578 acres of agricultural land was ‘lost,’ but the ‘urban’ land use only claimed 987 of those acres. The remainder appears to be accounted for by an increase in barren land (241 acres) and forest land (577 acres), and a reduction in the loss of wetlands (only 110 acres, compared to 357 acres from 2002-2007). This increased barren and forest acreage may have been land that developers bought, but then let sit idle for a few years while the construction



industry slowed down. It is also possible that some of these acres were land that farmers did not farm at the time due to economic challenges from the recession.

- From 2012-2015, while urban land use increased by 1,141 acres, only 299 of these acres appear to have been converted from agriculture. The rest appears to have been converted to 'urban' use from barren (575 acres), forest (412 acres) and wetlands (370 acres). These "losses" actually total almost 500 more acres than the 'urban' category claimed. This may be accounted for by a more efficient attributing of land use based on higher resolution imagery, as some of the 440 acres of "water" that were converted may have been water bodies on farmland that were not attributed as 'urban' when developed, but rather 'water.'
- Putting this all together, as best as one can, it may point to the idea that, during economically challenging times, some agricultural land is 'under-utilized' to the point that it appears as 'barren,' 'forest,' or 'wetlands,' but when the pressure for development rebounds, this newly-categorized land is likewise converted to 'urban' development. When looked at within a long enough data window, these nuances may find an equilibrium of sorts, as seen by the overall 2002-2015 land use trends.

Table 9a. Change in Mercer County Land Use, 2002 to 2007.

	NJDEP 2002 (acres)	NJDEP 2007 (acres)	Change 2002-2007 (acres)	% Change
Agriculture	24,679	22,465	-2,214	-8.97%
Barren Land	1,847	1,420	-427	-23.12%
Forest	26,788	26,309	-479	-1.79%
Urban Land	66,345	69,806	3,461	5.22%
Water	3,357	3,372	15	0.45%
Wetlands	23,313	22,956	-357	-1.53%

Table 9b. Change in Mercer County Land Use 2007 to 2015.

	NJDEP 2007	NJDEP 2012	NJDEP 2015	Change 2007-2015	% Change
Agriculture	22,166	20,588	20,289	-1,877	-8.47%
Barren Land	1,422	1,663	1,088	-334	-23.49%
Forest	26,628	27,205	26,793	165	0.62%
Urban Land	70,088	71,075	72,216	2,128	3.04%
Water	3,982	3,893	3,453	-529	-13.28%
Wetlands	23,072	22,962	22,592	-480	-2.08%

*Note: The 2007 values are revised to match the 2012 imagery and will differ slightly when compared to the 2002-2007 and 2002-2015 data analyses.



Table 9c. Change in Mercer County Land Use, 2002 to 2015

	Change 2002-2015 (acres)	% Change
Agriculture	-4,391	-17.79%
Barren Land	-759	-41.09%
Forest	5	0.02%
Urban Land	5,871	8.85%
Water	96	2.86%
Wetlands	-721	-3.09%

Source: NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover GIS datasets for 2002, 2007, 2012, 2015
(<https://gisdata-njdep.opendata.arcgis.com/>)



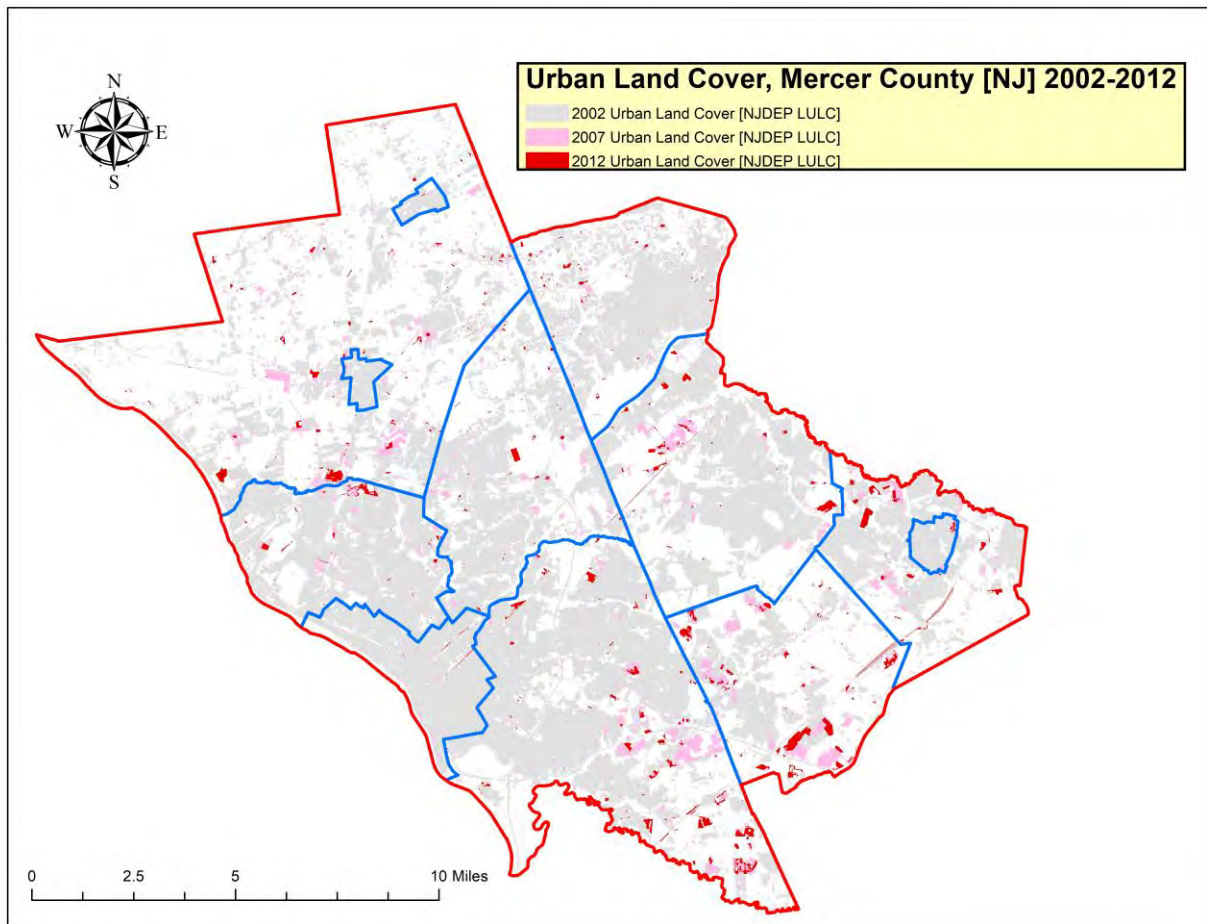


Figure 8. Mercer County over Time (Urban Land Cover highlighted).

b. Development Pressure: Trends in Population and New Building Permits

This analysis now turns to data on population (2000-2019) and the issuance of new building permits over time (2000-2018) to seek a fuller understanding of the forces that continue to lead to the conversion of active agricultural land to other uses in Mercer County.

Population Trends

The 2009 Plan posited a direct correlation between the loss of agricultural land in the County from 1986-2002 (34%), and a considerable uptick in population in the suburban (agricultural) townships of West Windsor, Hopewell, Lawrence, and Robbinsville between 1980 and 2000 (a 79% increase). During the time frames this plan update considers, the agricultural land loss stands at roughly half of the 1986-2002 loss (18%), while the population in these same areas increased by about one quarter of the previous rate (21%). This makes it clear that the population growth in these areas continues, but at a slower rate. Indeed, as we update this plan it makes sense to add another municipality to the “Top 5” growth municipalities list, East Windsor Township. However, East Windsor’s rate of growth in this time frame, 9.5%, is only roughly half of what it was between 1980 and 2000 (which, at the time, placed it in only 7th place out of 13 municipalities in terms of population growth).

It may appear, at first glance, that there is less of an impact in terms of agricultural acreage converted to other uses based on booming populations in agricultural areas. Indeed, this would be expected, as the more land that is developed, the less there is available to develop, and therefore smaller population increases can be supported in these areas. To this point, the following statement can be made in 2020, as it was in 2009: the two agricultural areas in Mercer County with the fastest growing populations are Robbinsville and West Windsor townships, which are both growing between three and four times as fast as Hopewell and Lawrence townships.

However, it is interesting to note that the much-reduced population growth (about 1/4 of that seen previously) has still been enough to cause about half of the agricultural acreage loss. This may be explained by less dense housing being developed on previously-farmed land, as well as said land being converted to uses other than residential, such as the many commercial warehouse and light industrial uses that compete for large lots of land near transportation interchanges. Further analysis would be required to determine the validity of these potential explanations.

Whether it is coming from residential or commercial development, the data analyses performed in preparation of this plan makes it clear that there continues to be considerable pressure on agricultural land from development interests within Mercer County.



Table 10. Mercer County Population Change, 2000 to 2010 to 2019.

Municipality (with Regional Subtotals)	2000 Population	2010 Population	% Increase 2000-2010	2019 Population (Estimate)	% Increase 2010-2019	% Increase 2000-2019
East Windsor Township	24,919	27,190	9%	27,288	0.4%	9.51%
Hightstown Borough	5,216	5,494	5%	5,304	-3.6%	1.69%
Robbinsville Township	10,275	13,642	33%	14,543	6.2%	41.54%
Rt 130 Area Subtotal	40,410	46,326	15%	47,135	1.7%	16.64%
Ewing Township	35,707	35,790	0%	36,303	1.4%	1.67%
Hamilton Township	87,109	88,464	2%	87,065	-1.6%	-0.05%
Lawrence Township	29,159	33,472	15%	32,435	-3.2%	11.23%
Inner Suburbs Subtotal	151,975	157,726	4%	155,803	-1.2%	2.52%
Hopewell Borough	2,035	1,922	-6%	1,906	-0.8%	-6.34%
Hopewell Township	15,105	17,304	14.6%	17,725	2.4%	10.06%
Pennington Borough	2,696	2,585	-4%	2,576	-0.3%	-4.45%
Hopewell Valley Subtotal	20,836	21,811	5%	22,207	1.8%	6.58%
¹ Princeton	30,230	28,572	-5%	31,187	8.4%	3.17%
West Windsor Township	21,907	27,165	24%	27,895	2.6%	27.33%
Princeton Area Subtotal	52,137	55,737	7%	59,082	5.7%	13.32%
Trenton	85,403	84,913	-1%	83,203	-2.1%	-2.58%
Mercer County Total	350,761	366,513	4%	367,430	0.2%	4.75%
New Jersey Total	8,414,347	8,791,978	4%	8,882,190	1.0%	5.56%

¹ Since the adoption of the 2009 Mercer County Farmland Preservation Plan, the former Princeton Borough and Princeton Township have joined to form the Municipality of Princeton.



New Building Permits as an Indicator of Development Pressure

Other factors contributing to the slowed residential growth in Mercer County more recently may be economic in nature. Broadly, one can perhaps point to the Great Recession (2007-2009) and its lingering effects on the housing market, and development in general. We can gain more specific insights by analyzing the trend line of new residential building permits issued by municipalities since 2000 (Table 11). One striking element of this data is that between 2000-2008, six of the seven municipalities with the most permits issued were those that are more agriculturally active (Hamilton, West Windsor, Lawrence, Robbinsville, East Windsor, Hopewell Township). By 2018, this trend had inverted. All of the more agriculturally vigorous municipalities showed a decrease in new residential building permits issued per year between 2009 and 2018 (with all but West Windsor showing a reduction of 50% or more) and five of the top six municipalities in terms of new buildings permitted were those that can be considered less agriculturally-based (Pennington, Princeton, Trenton, Hopewell Borough and Ewing Township).

This data seems to support the idea that there is decreased pressure overall in agriculture areas from residential development. However, as mentioned above, further research could indicate that those permits that are issued may be for developments that convert the land use of larger lots of land in ways that do not lead to commensurate increases in population, such as large lot single-family residential developments, or warehouses and other commercial developments. Recent work compiled by the NJ Department of Community Affairs (<https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/codes/reporter/>) seems to lend some credence to this idea. For example, in 2018 Robbinsville Township issued commercial development permits for almost 900,000 square feet of commercial development – an amount 10 times the average for Mercer County municipalities. This could help explain how this township continues to lose agricultural land at a rate about twice what one might expect based on new residential permits.



Table 11. Trends in Residential Building Permits Issued by Municipality, Mercer County.

Municipality	# Permits 2000-2008	Avg per year ¹	# Permits 2009- 2018	Avg per year ¹	Percentage of new permits issued per year in 2009-2018 compared to 2000-2008
East Windsor Twp	1091	121.2	351	35.1	29.0%
Ewing Twp	946	105.1	538	53.8	51.2%
Hamilton Twp	2649	294.3	987	98.7	33.5%
Hightstown Boro	110	12.2	46	4.6	37.6%
Hopewell Boro	12	1.3	7	0.7	52.5%
Hopewell Twp	790	87.8	201	20.1	22.9%
Lawrence Twp	1155	128.3	208	20.8	16.2%
Pennington Boro	19	2.1	49	4.9	232.1%
Princeton	478	53.1	1154	115.4	217.3%
Trenton City	205	22.8	316	31.6	138.7%
Robbinsville Twp	1115	123.9	610	61	49.2%
West Windsor Twp	1793	199.2	1271	127.1	63.8%

¹ "Average per year" is used to normalize the data, since the first timeframe (2000 to 2008) is nine years, while the latter is 10 yrs.

Source: NJ Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development
(https://nj.gov/labor/lpa/industry/bp/bp_index.html).

E. Sewer Service Areas / Public Water Supply Areas

1. Sewer Service Areas

Sewer service areas identify planning areas for wastewater management, they are not illustrative of existing sewer pipes. It is important to note that where the ADA overlaps sewer service areas (predominantly in north Lawrence Twp.), the County of Mercer, through the State Development and Redevelopment Guide Plan Cross-Acceptance process with local municipalities, has identified where sewer lines are not in the ground. In north Lawrence Township's largely preserved agricultural area, there are no pipes servicing existing development either now or for the foreseeable future. We also note that throughout the County's ADA, given an ever increasingly stringent State regulatory environment, current zoning practices, and public sentiment, it is unlikely that new pipes will be laid anytime in the foreseeable future. In addition, as part of its role as a Designated Water Quality Management Agency, Mercer County maintains and amends Sewer Service Area (SSA) mapping through site specific amendments, and comprehensive planning. Through these tools, Mercer County has amended SSA mapping to reflect that areas of ADA are not consistent with the growth the connections to sewer allows; this has occurred especially within those portions of Lawrence Township that are designated as ADA land.



Mercer County submitted an update to its adopted Wastewater Management Plan to NJ DEP in 2019. Preserved farms, agricultural conservation easements, Farmland Preservation Project Areas, and the Agricultural Development Area were utilized to identify possible conflicts with agricultural preservation goals; no such conflicts became evident through said analysis.

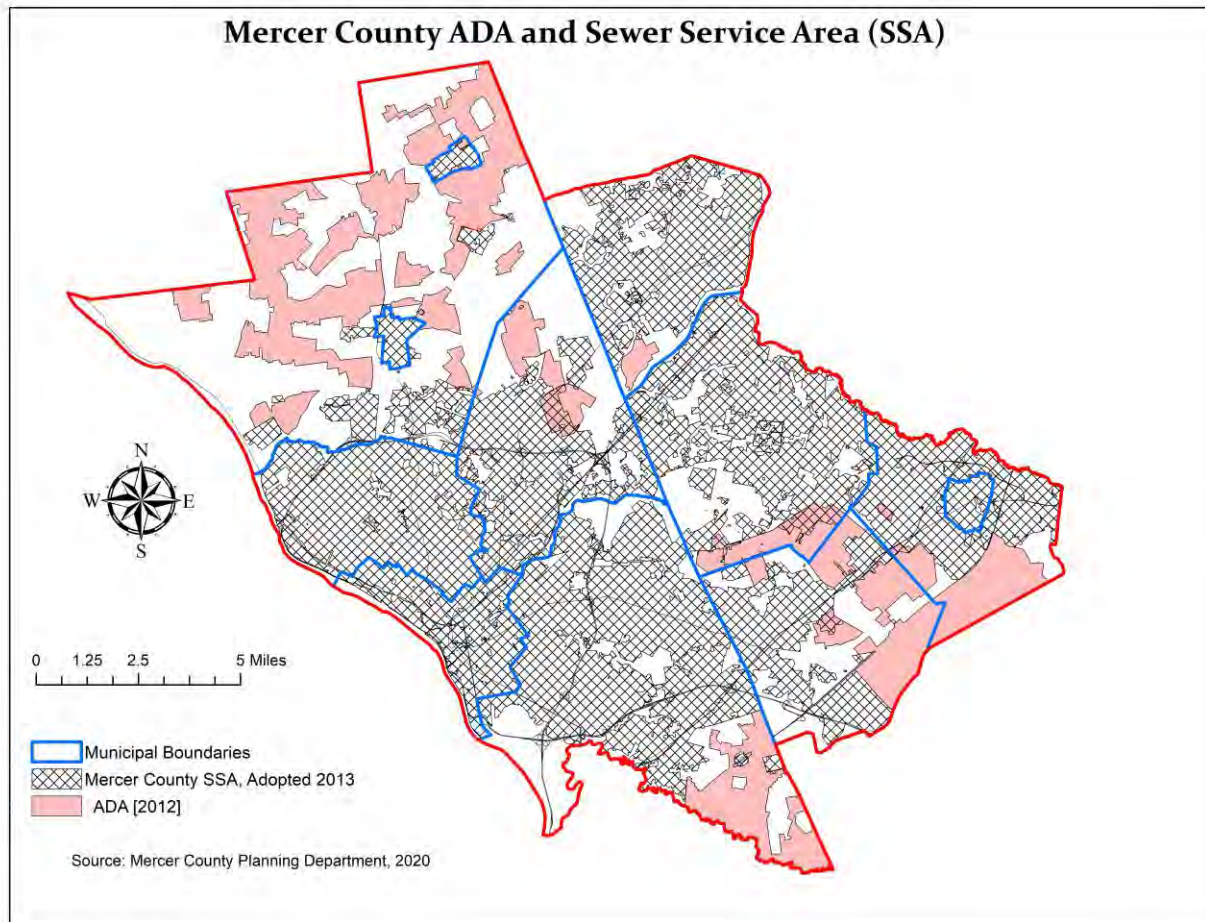


Figure 9. Mercer County Sewer Service Area and Mercer ADA.

2. Public Water Supply Areas

Trenton Water Works supplies water from the Delaware River to the majority of residents in Mercer County – serving Trenton, plus parts of Ewing, Lawrence, and Hopewell and Hamilton townships (RPP EnvElementMercerMP12 08 05.doc chapter 7.1.3).

Pennington, Hightstown, and Hopewell Boroughs have their own water companies and provide water almost exclusively to residents only. Additional companies providing water to much of Mercer County are: New Jersey American Water; East Windsor MUA; and Aqua New Jersey. Although no County-wide map exists of these companies' water supply pipes, they are seldom found in the agricultural preservation Project areas that have been targeted by the County, and, the likelihood that they will be extended is remote – especially given the amount of existing preserved farms within those Project areas and for reasons similar to those expressed in the preceding sewer service area section.



F. Municipal Master Plans and Zoning Overview

Because only six of Mercer County's 12 municipalities have significant farmland acreage (97% of all tax qualified farmland), only those municipal Zoning Ordinances and Master Plans were reviewed. The six municipalities are: East Windsor, Hamilton, Hopewell, Lawrence, Robbinsville, and West Windsor Townships.

1. Master Plan Overview

The six municipal Master Plan (MP) reviews in this "Overview" all express a desire to balance historical agricultural activity with social, economic and physical characteristics of each municipality.

East Windsor MP

Identifies as a "Local Economy Goal and Objective", the continuation of farming as part of an agriculturally related economic base. This goal has been reaffirmed in the East Windsor Township's Master Plan Re-Examination Report (2019), with additional policy emphasis on promoting cluster developments, and considering value of agricultural land when reviewing applications for "solar farms."

Hamilton MP

Identifies the following goals related to farmland preservation: To "acquire lands for environmental protection and to satisfy open space objectives such as farmland and/ or rural preservation," and to "target acquisition of farmland properties, via purchase and/or easement, to those within the Mercer County Agricultural Development Area (ADA) for Hamilton Township."

Hopewell Township MP

Identifies six specific agricultural objectives under the Goal of Resource Conservation and Protection. These are also found within the Master Plan Farmland Preservation Element, along with the following overarching vision statement: "(Hopewell) Township recognizes the value of the agricultural soils found in most of the Township ... the long-term utility and viability of this resource is enhanced if critical masses of agricultural lands and soils are maintained wherever they currently exist. The combination of prime soils, access to densely populated markets and the Township's regional location all combine to assure an agricultural future, so long as the farmland base can be preserved."

Lawrence MP

Identifies the following Land Use Goal objectives: "To promote the establishment of appropriate population densities and concentrations that will contribute to the well-being of persons, neighborhoods, communities and regions and preservation of the environment," and "To preserve remaining farmland and rural areas."

Robbinsville MP

Robbinsville Township's newly adopted (June 2020) Master Plan references two broad land use policies found in Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) which tangentially relate to farmland preservation: "(To) promote the establishment of appropriate population densities and concentrations that will contribute to the well-being of persons, neighborhoods, communities and regions and preservation of the environment," and "(To) provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space ... in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens."

More specifically, this Master Plan includes a *Farmland Preservation Policy*, which "recognizes that much of Robbinsville's heritage as a rural, farming community remains in the form of large and small tracts of agricultural lands located throughout the Township, but that the development pressures detailed



throughout this Master Plan Update threaten to reduce the number and size of the farms from the municipality’s inventory.” This policy includes the following strategies: “(To) provide a land use environment where those who wish to farm may do so and preserve these agricultural lands and activities,” and “(To) establish a Township initiative to acquire lands where the owners of agricultural properties wish to sell; thereby accommodating their needs while protecting against overdevelopment and sprawl.”

West Windsor MP

West Windsor Township’s newly updated and revised (2020) Master Plan identifies a goal of “Preserving remaining open space, farmland and natural areas in the Township through all practical means, including, but not limited to the fee simple acquisition of lands, development rights purchase, dedication and greenbelt protection measures.” Like Hopewell Township, West Windsor includes an Agricultural Preservation Plan Element in its Master Plan, and hosts an Agricultural Advisory Committee.

2. Zoning Overview

a. General Lot Size Categories and Distribution by Municipality

The County of Mercer does not have a county-wide zoning database that can identify the size and distribution of municipal zoning. However, the County Planning Department can state that using the general lot size categories identified in the SADC farm plan guidelines, most local zoning in these six municipalities are either:

- “Small” lot (less than 1 acre lots with water and sewer), or
- “Medium” lot (greater than 1 acre but less than 5 acres with septic and well).

There are two exceptions to this county-wide generalization. Hamilton and Hopewell Townships in addition to “small” and “medium” lot zoning also have “large” and “very large” lot zoning. They are:

- “Large” lot (between 5 and 10 acre) zoning in Hopewell Township’s VRC Zone, and Hamilton’s RRC zone, and
- “Very Large” lot (over 10 acre) zoning in Hopewell Township’s MRC zone.

The following table illustrates the area of these “large” and “very large” lot zones within each municipality while the maps in Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the ADA as it relates to these zones.

Table 12. “Large” and “Very Large” Lots, Mercer County.

Municipality	Zone	Minimum Lot Size [Acres per D.U.]	Area of Zone (acres)	Percentage of Municipality
Hamilton Twp	RRC	6	5,021	19.7%
Hopewell Twp	VRC	5.88	16,437	44.0%
Hopewell Twp	MRC	13.33	13,011	34.8%



The seal of Mercer County, New Jersey, is a circular emblem. It features a central illustration of a classical building with a dome, surrounded by trees and a path. The words "MERCER COUNTY" are written in a semi-circle at the top, and "NEW JERSEY" is written in a semi-circle at the bottom, separated by small dots.

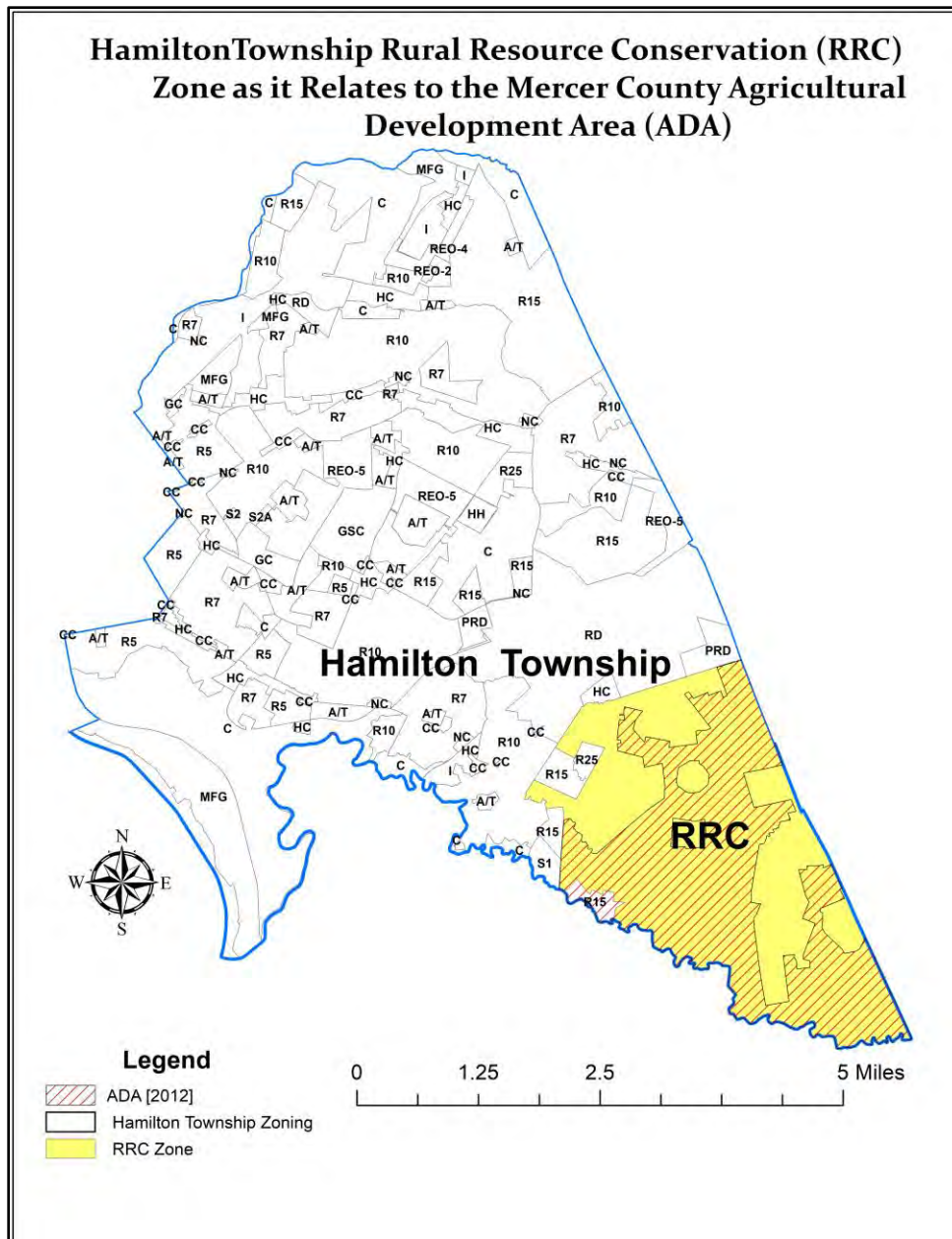


Figure 11. Hamilton Township Large-Lot Zoning and ADA.

b. Innovative Planning Techniques

Table 13 on the next page identifies techniques that are enabled by ordinances in Mercer’s six municipalities with significant farmland. They include:

Cluster Zoning – Residential cluster development is a form of land development in which principal buildings and structures are grouped together on a site, thus saving the remaining land area for common open space, conservation, agriculture, recreation, and public and semipublic uses. Cluster development has a number of distinct advantages over conventional subdivision development. A well-planned cluster

development concentrates dwelling units on the most buildable portion of the site and preserves natural drainage systems, vegetation, open space, and other significant natural features that help control stormwater runoff and soil erosion. Later savings can be realized in street and utility maintenance (less surface area that needs repaving and fewer feet of water and sewer line to maintain). Clustering also enhances the sense of community, allowing for example, parents better supervision of children playing in common areas and promoting social interaction among neighbors.

Non-Contiguous Cluster Zoning – Noncontiguous parcel clustering is a planning technique under New Jersey’s Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) that allows one parcel to be preserved while its density is transferred and developed instead on a different, noncontiguous parcel. This technique, first authorized in 1996, allows a municipality to approve “planned developments” consisting of two different parcels, where the “sending area” parcel is preserved, for example, as farmland or open space, and the “receiving area” parcel is developed at a higher than otherwise normally permitted density. The development rights from the “sending area” parcel are transferred to and combined with the existing development rights at the “receiving area” parcel. The different parcels may be miles apart. Amendments to the MLUL from 2013 now allow municipalities to permit noncontiguous clustering in conventional development applications, as well as planned developments. Noncontiguous parcel clustering is potentially simpler than TDR programs, as balancing between the transferable development potential of a multiple-owner sending area or areas and the available density that may be accepted in a multiple-owner receiving area or areas is not required. Instead, the density transfer under this technique is a comparatively simpler transaction involving only a few, or as little as two, parcels.

Transfer of Development Rights - Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a municipal planning and preservation tool offering communities a way to protect agricultural, historic or environmental resources while accommodating the needs for growth. TDR is a realty transfer mechanism permitting owners of “sending area” land to separate the development rights of their property from the property itself and sell them for use elsewhere. Developers who purchase these “development credits” may then develop “receiving areas” deemed appropriate for growth at densities higher than otherwise permitted. Once the development rights of a property are sold the land will be permanently restricted from further development. TDR is also an equity protection mechanism that, unlike traditional zoning, enables “sending area” landowners to potentially be compensated for reductions in development potential. When well-designed, TDR can provide benefits to landowners, developers, and municipalities. With TDR, towns preserve their open lands at far less cost than outright purchase. Growth is directed to places where it can enrich community and regional growth (www.nj.gov/dep/opsc/docs/Compact_Development.pdf). See also: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/tdr/>.

Lot Size Averaging - Lot size averaging is a simple method to permit flexibility in lot size on a parcel of land. This is an effective technique for smaller parcels (10-20 acres) that are proposed for subdivision where flexibility in lot size may help to preserve resources. The overall density remains the same-only the lot sizes vary (<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/innovativeconservationplanning.pdf>).



Table 13. Innovative Planning Techniques, Mercer County.

	East Windsor Township	Hamilton Township	Hopewell Township	Lawrence Township	West Windsor Township	Robbinsville Township
Cluster	X	X	X	X	X	X
Non-Contiguous Cluster	-	-	X ¹	X ²	X ³	X ⁴
Lot Size Averaging	X	X	X	X	X	X
TDR	-	-	-	-	- ⁵	-
Mandatory vs. Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary

¹ Allows increase of development potential within municipally-identified hamlets in the VRC or VRC-HLI Districts by transfer of development potential from the MRC and VRC Districts.

² Allows transfer of development potential from EP-1 and EP-2 agricultural zones to Regional Commercial Zone for increased commercial density. Referred to as “TDR” but does not meet State TDR Act requirements (40:55D-137).

³ Allows the transfer of development potential from District R-5 to R-3, but is designed to preserve land for parks, wetlands and stormwater management, not for agricultural uses.

⁴ Allows non-contiguous clustering by transfer of development potential from the Rural Residential (RR) District to the Town Center by way of Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD) transfer program.

⁵ “Goals and Policies” section of Zoning Code includes discussion of potential for TDR mechanism to help preserve Sarnoff Woods, but not for agricultural use. Referred to as “TDR” but does not meet State TDR Act requirements (40:55D-137).

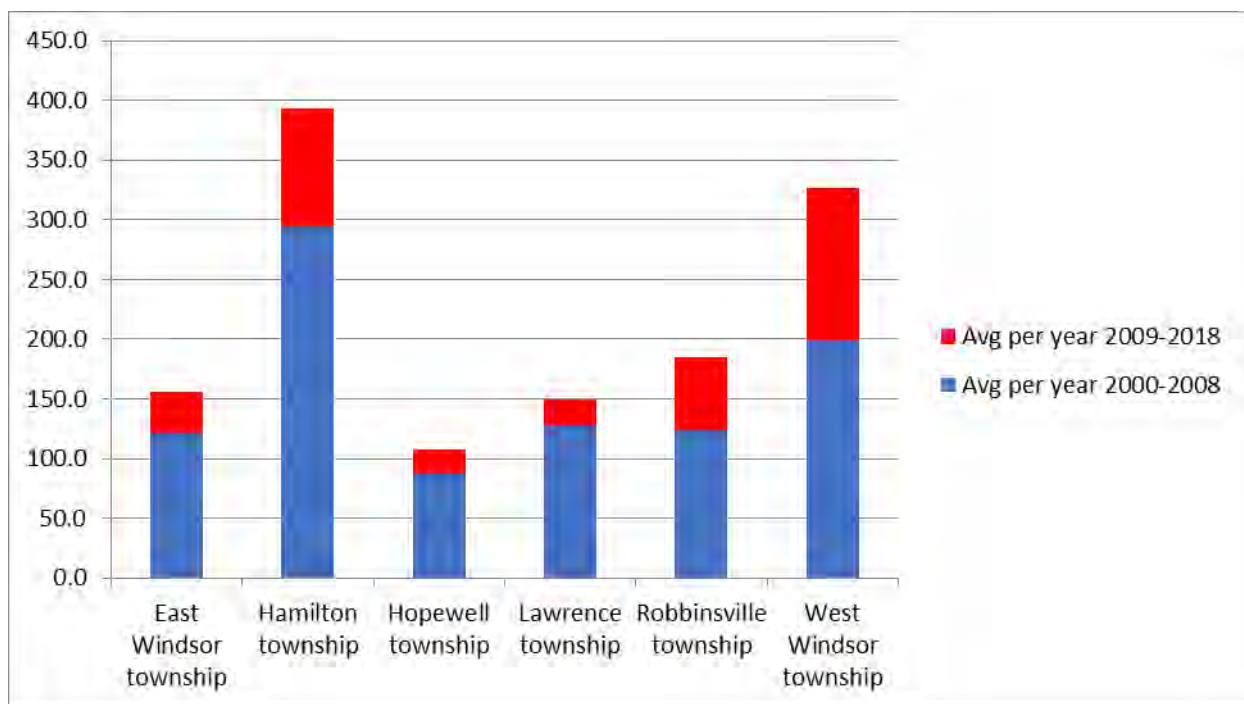
3. Development Pressures and Land Value Trends

In part “D” of this chapter, we analyzed some aspects of how development pressures have affected the County’s six farming municipalities since adoption of the previous Farmland Preservation Plan (2009) in terms of changes evident from NJDEP Land Use data. Here we look at similar correlations, but rely on data for acreage that is “Farmland Assessed” as reported by municipal tax offices.

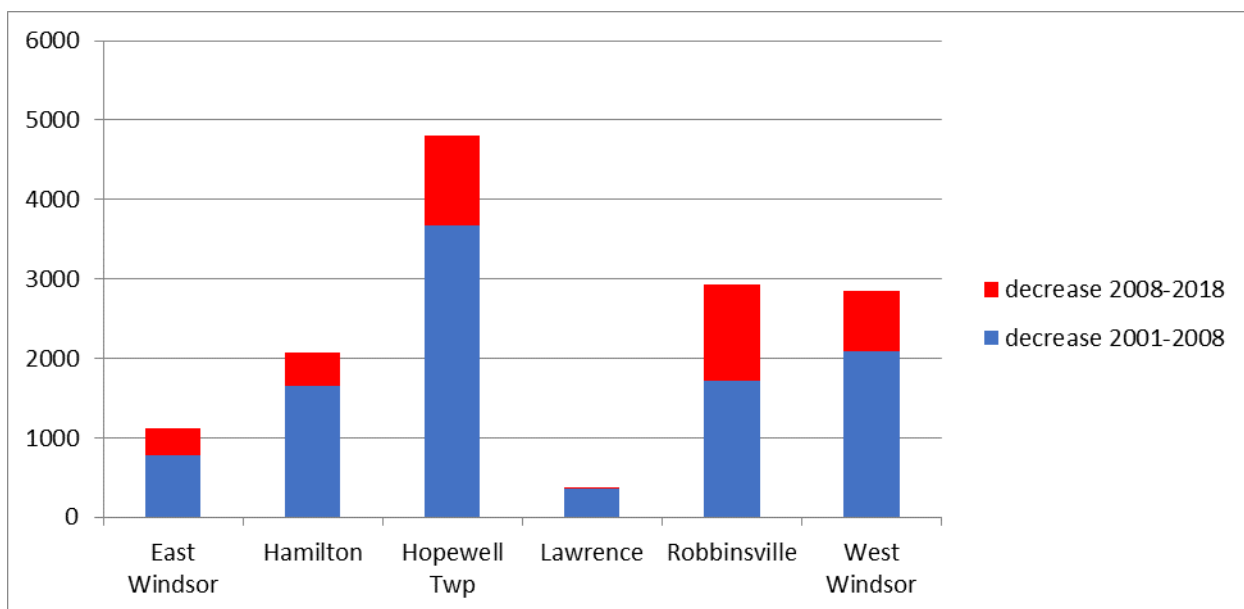
When taken as a whole, as depicted in Figure 8 (this chapter), and Tables 5 & 6 (Chapter 1) it is clear that development continues to steer the arc of land usage toward the ‘urban’ in Mercer County, and away from the agricultural. The following two graphs serve to illustrate a couple of trends that support the overall summary that this arc toward the urban is largely accomplished at the cost of farmland.



Graph A. Annual average number of new residential permits issued, comparing 2001-2008 and 2008-2018 (derived from Table 11, this chapter).



Graph B. Acres of Assessed Farmland lost in Mercer County, comparing 2001-2008 and 2008-2018 (derived from Table 6, Chapter 1).



The clearest overall trend when looking at these graphs is that since 2008/2009, across the County the rate of residential development has slowed, as has the rate at which land assessed as “farmland” has been



otherwise assessed. None of the six municipalities had as many residential building permits issued in 2009-2018 as they did in 2000-2008 (calculated per year, in order to normalize the data), and likewise none of these municipalities had as much land re-assessed as other than farmland in 2009-2018 as they did in 2000-2008. However, the rate at which municipalities lost land assessed as “Farmland” is fairly consistent with the rate at which they issued new residential building permits. Two municipalities that are somewhat outliers in this respect are West Windsor and Lawrence, which appear to show a slower rate of agricultural loss in the current time frame than one might expect based on the rate of new building permits. It is only once we dive into the municipal level data, and further, do we see that these two municipalities are almost unique in this time period in that a majority of the building permits that were issued were for multi-unit developments, which should in theory result in less acreage of “farmland assessed” property lost to other uses.

G. Discussion of Municipal and Regional TDR Opportunities

1. Municipal TDR Opportunities

As identified in Table 13, ‘Innovative Planning Techniques,’ no Mercer County Townships have TDR programs that meet State TDR Act requirements (40:55D-137). However, Lawrence Township does have a specific program referred to in their zoning code as “TDR”, which is designed to preserve agricultural acreage. West Windsor Township’s zoning code mentions “TDR” as a method by which the Sarnoff Woods may be preserved, this is not specified for agricultural use. Non-contiguous clustering options can serve very similar purposes and have similar outcomes as TDR programs. Of those indicated in Table 13, Hopewell and Robbinsville Townships have the most potential to assist in the preservation of agricultural land.

Hopewell Township

Has a process for transferring density from the VRC and MRC zones to village centers in the VRC zone as a non-contiguous cluster option. As of this date, this tool has not been used.

Lawrence Township

Has a process for transferring density from a rural agricultural zone (Environmental Protection 1 and EP 2) to increase floor area ratios within the Regional Commercial zone (Quakerbridge Mall area).

Robbinsville Township

Has a process for transferring development rights from a rural zone (Rural-Agriculture) to an existing Town Center zone. As far as we are aware, this tool has been used only once by the Township and development rights on 143 acres were transferred. However, although the sending area land was, and continues to be, farmed, the municipality has not restricted it to agricultural use and indeed, is considering some of the land for playing fields. Interestingly, the procedures as followed by the Township were determined to be a misuse of the State’s TDR enabling legislation.

2. Regional TDR Opportunities

Within Mercer County, the Sourlands Conservation and Open Space Plan may identify areas as potential TDR sending zones while areas along a proposed Rt. 1 Bus Rapid Transit line could provide receiving zones (RPP EnvElementMercerMP12 08 05.doc Chapter 10.2.5).



Chapter IV: Mercer County Farmland Preservation Program- An Overview

- | A. Agricultural Development Area (ADA)**
- | B. Farmland Preserved to Date by Program and Municipality**
- / C. Term Farmland Preservation Programs - Eight Year Programs**
- | D. Coordination with Open Space Initiatives**
- | E. Farmland Preservation Program Funding Expended to Date by Source**
- | F. Monitoring of Preserved Farmland**
- | G. Coordination with TDR Programs**



Chapter IV: Mercer County Farmland Preservation Program – An Overview

Mercer County preserves farmland through fee and easement purchase using funds from the County's Open Space Trust Fund and the State Agriculture Development Committee's (SADC) Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) program. Participation in the SADC's program requires the development of a comprehensive farmland preservation plan to identify priority areas for preservation through the designation of Agricultural Development Areas (ADAs), Project Areas and Targeted Farms. The program also requires the formation of a County Agricultural Development Board (CADB), made up of farmers and members of the public, which is overseen by the County's Planning Department staff. The County's preservation efforts and the SADC's program are described in more detail below.



Gallo/Sciarotta Preserved Farm, Hopewell Twp.; Dan Pace

A. Agricultural Development Area (ADA)

1. Designation Criteria

ADAs serve as the general focus for the County's preservation efforts. They are areas in which agriculture is the preferred land use. With just a few exceptions, farms must be in an ADA to be eligible for the SADC's PIG program. In addition, any public body or public utility which intends to exercise the power of eminent domain for the acquisition of land within an ADA, or which intends to advance a grant, loan, interest subsidy or other funds within an ADA for the construction of facilities serving non-farm structures, must file a notice of intent with the CADB and the SADC at least 30 days prior to the initiation of this action. This notice must contain a statement of the reasons for the action and an evaluation of alternatives which would not include action in the ADA.

According to statutory guidelines, ADAs must encompass productive lands, not conflict with municipal zoning ordinances, be free of commercial or suburban development, and comprise no more than ninety percent of a county's agricultural land base. Agriculture must be considered a permitted use or a non-conforming permitted use in the local zoning code for land within ADAs. In addition, each county can also define its own more specific criteria. (See Appendix: CADB Policies/ "ADA Criteria" and MCADB Resolution 2007-06: Application Ranking)

Following the adopted criteria, Mercer County's first ADA map was adopted in 1985. The map was revised in 1990 and again in 2006 (using the "Exception" provision of Mercer County's ADA Criteria)



for the purpose of preserving two farms important to the County.

In 2007, as part of its first Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan, the Mercer CADB completely revised the 1985 map and developed a new map that accurately reflected the current agricultural conditions within the County and the areas with potential for agricultural development.

The 2007 ADA map excluded:

- SDRP Planning Areas 1 and 2;
- Most Sewer Service Areas;
- Developed Areas;
- Significant woodlands;
- Significant Green Acres Open Spaces; and
- Areas not zoned for farming (except where allowed as a non-conforming use)

In addition, in keeping with the regulations governing ADAs, no more than 90% of the agricultural land mass of the County was included within the ADA. Using Farmland Assessment (FA-1 Form) Acreage as that indicator, the 2007 ADA encompassed 30,259 acres – or 87% of the Total FA-1 Form acres.

In 2009, the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan was again revised to reflect the most current U.S. Census of Agriculture and New Jersey Farmland Assessment data. 2008 Tax Year data revealed a County-wide decrease in Total FA-1 acres to 33,459 acres. Thus, pursuant to the 90% regulation identified above, the ADA could only encompass 30,113 acres and a revision of the ADA was required. The MCADB proceeded to revise the ADA accordingly with a draft map dated September 2009 resulting in the mapping of 25,954 acres.

For this 2020 update, the most current New Jersey farmland assessment data are again being used and 2019 Tax Year data in ArcGIS show Total FA-1 acres to be 27,959, which means that no more than 25,163 (90%) of the County's agricultural acres can be in the ADA. Again, using the 2019 Tax Year data, approximately 18,877 acres within the 25,954-acre ADA are farmland assessed, well below the 90% threshold. For comparison, we also looked at the 2012 NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover data, which shows 24,266 acres of agricultural land in Mercer County, 16,676 of which are within our ADA.

The County's Project Areas and Targeted Farms will continue to be updated annually as part of the County's application to the SADC's PIG program, mentioned above and explained in more detail in the next section. The ADA map with Project Areas and Targeted Farms is shown on the next page and in the Appendix.



2. GIS Mapping / Current Location Map

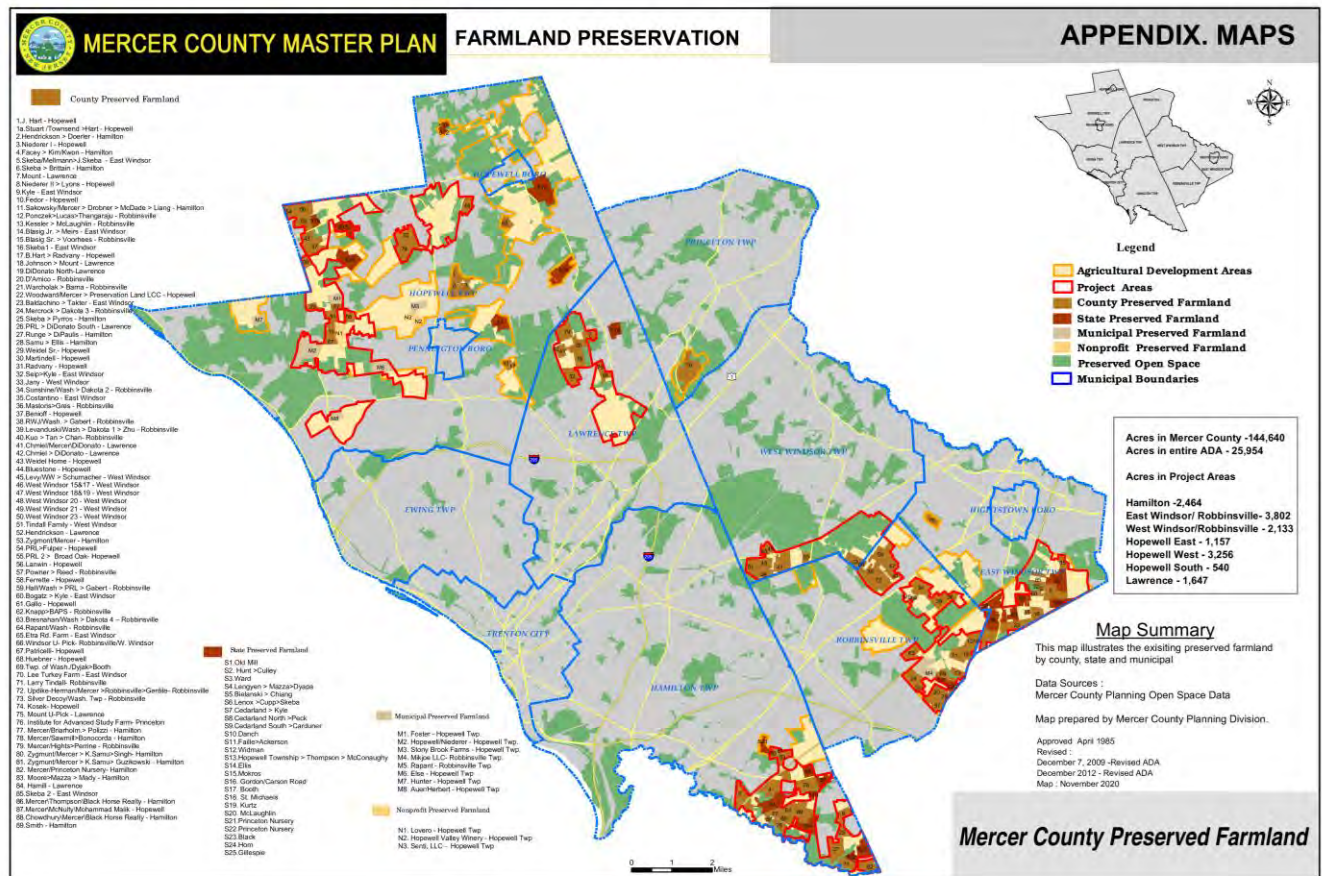


Figure 12. Mercer County Farmland Preservation Map, 2020. See Appendix for larger version and separate Project Area maps.

B. Farmland Preserved to Date by Program and Municipality

1. County Easement and Fee Purchase for Farmland Preservation

For a farmland preservation easement purchase, the County pays a landowner for the value of the development rights on a property, as determined by appraisals. The landowner retains ownership and an agricultural easement is placed on the property. This permanent deed restriction ensures the land will not undergo non-agricultural development in the future. The cost to purchase the easement is shared by the State and County and can include financial participation by the municipality, non-profit groups and the private sector.

In the case of a farmland preservation fee purchase, the County purchases a property outright from a landowner and then places an agricultural easement on the property after ownership is transferred. The County may retain ownership for a number of years, while leasing the property to a farmer. When possible, the County retains the farmer present at the time of purchase. When feasible, the County then sells the property at public auction with the easement in place. This returns the property to private ownership and ensures that the property is preserved for agricultural use. The value of the property is much less with the agricultural easement in place because most of the development rights have been extinguished. Thus, these auctions are an affordable way for farmers to purchase land in Mercer



County.

In 1988, Mercer County's first farm – the 142-acre Hendrickson farm in Hamilton Township – was preserved through the Mercer County Farmland Preservation Program. As of this writing, Mercer County has preserved 5,443 acres of farmland on 89 properties (See Appendix).

2. County Planning Incentive Grants (PIG)

The SADC's annual County PIG program is intended to protect and preserve large areas of contiguous farmland through the purchase of development easements. As mentioned above, in order to qualify for a PIG, the County must create an agricultural advisory board (the CADB serves this role) and must also maintain a dedicated funding source to purchase farmland easements. This Farmland Plan is also one of the requirements for PIG program participation; through this Plan, the County must designate an ADA, with Project Areas and Targeted Farms within it. Targeted farms are the County's priority list for preservation based on their size, location, tillable acreage and soil quality.

Prior to the 2007 establishment of new rules and regulations by the SADC governing the agricultural easement purchase cost-share program, the County chose not to participate in the Planning Incentive Grant program, thus, there are no County preserved farms under the old PIG program. The County now participates in the PIG program and preserves priority farmland as opportunities become available. The current PIG program typically provides the County with up to 60% of the cost of a property's fee or easement acquisition, as determined by two appraisals. Per 2:76-6.11, the state cost-share can be more or less than 60% depending on the cost per acre.

3. Municipal Planning Incentive Grants (PIG)

The Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program has similar requirements to the County PIG program. Municipal PIGs require the adoption of a Farmland Preservation Plan, an Agricultural Advisory Board, a Right to Farm ordinance consistent with the SADC model and a standing commitment for preserving farmland. Grants for a municipal PIG are provided by the SADC to purchase development easements. There is one municipality in Mercer County – Hopewell Township – that has a SADC-approved Planning Incentive Grant. At this time, the Township has approximately 512 acres preserved through their PIG program. Township and County staff work together to preserve farmland – either through partnering on projects or referring interested landowners to the appropriate program. The County takes the lead on its Targeted Farms, while the Township focuses on its own priority farms. Figure 13 shows the Township's Project Area and Targeted Farms.



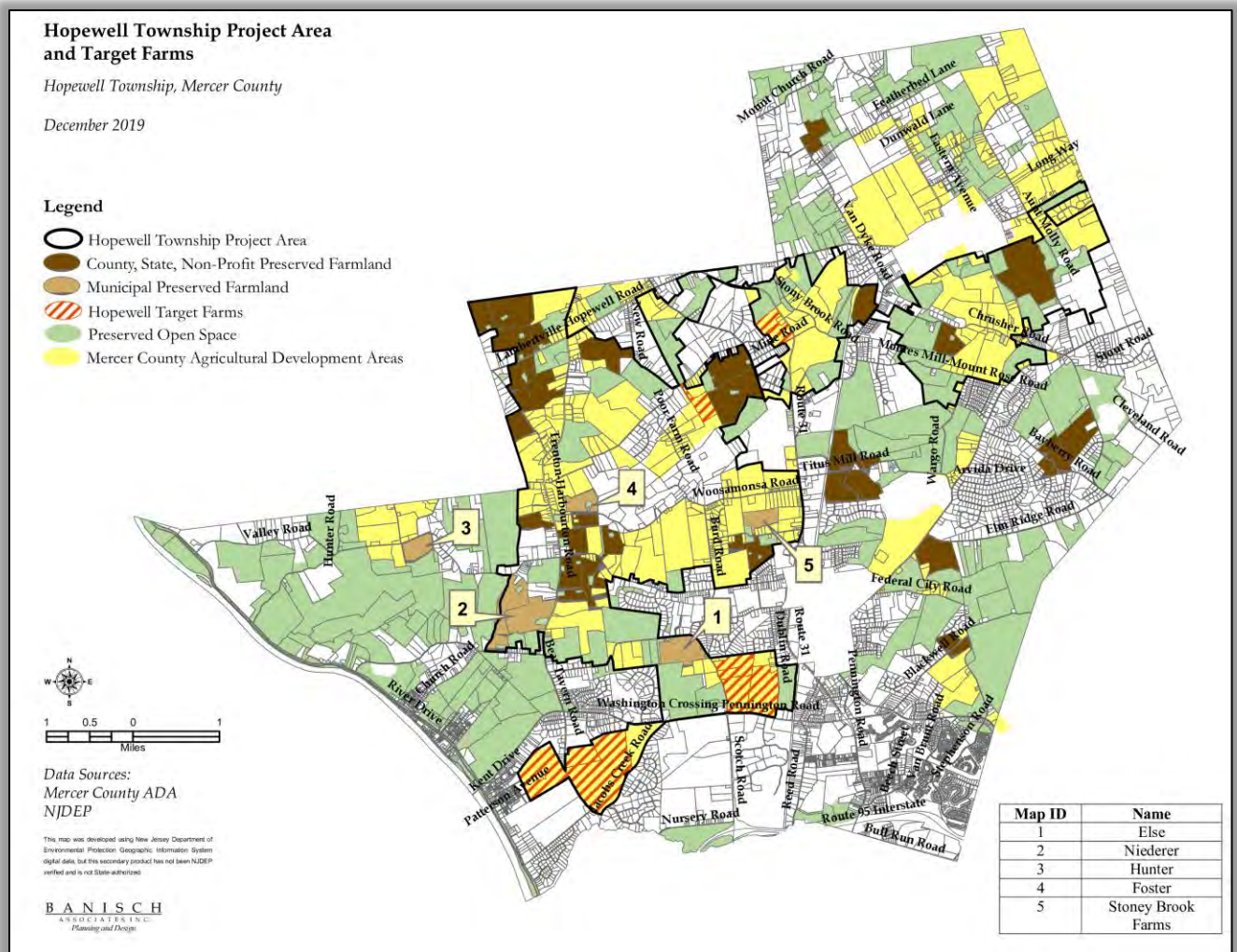


Figure 13. Hopewell Township Project Areas and Targeted Farms.

4. and 5. SADC Direct Easement and Fee Simple Purchases

Other options for farmland preservation are the SADC Direct Easement and Fee Simple Programs.

The SADC can purchase farms and development easements directly from landowners. Landowners do not have to be within an ADA if they are making an application directly to the State. The Direct Easement is similar to a County or municipal easement purchase, but the SADC fee simple acquisition program involves the purchase of a property outright by the state.

In this way, a landowner sells all of their ownership interest instead of placing an easement on the property. The SADC negotiates a purchase price subject to recommendations of two independent appraisers and review by a state review appraiser. Once owned by the State, an easement is put in place so that the land is permanently preserved for agriculture. In this type of acquisition, the landowner does not retain any rights and like the County's fee purchases of farmland, the property is resold by the SADC at auction for agricultural use.

The SADC has been active in Mercer County. As shown in Figure 12 and in the Appendix, 25 farms



(approximately 1,925 acres) have SADC easements.

In addition, the New Jersey Department of Corrections' Division of Operations "AgriIndustries" operates six dairy and crop farms as well as three food processing plants statewide. These supply Corrections, Human Services, Distribution Center, and Agriculture with milk, beef, turkey, pork and vegetable products. Two of these farms (Jones and Knight Farms) totaling nearly 630 acres are located in Ewing Township, Mercer County and are deed restricted by the State of New Jersey. Given the nature of these "farms" however, they were not included in the ADA or in the State preserved farm table.

6. Non-profits

Non-profit organizations have also been able to help achieve farmland preservation goals. Grants can be obtained from the SADC to fund up to 50% of the fee simple or development easement values on farms. As with the State Direct, County and Municipal farmland programs, SADC non-profit grants are obtained through an application process in which the land is valued by independent appraisers. SADC-funded non-profit farmland easements have the same restrictions and use the same model as State, County and Municipal farmland easements. Non-profits in Mercer County focus more on open space fee acquisitions and conservation easements than farmland preservation. Depending on the nature of the property to be preserved and the desired public access objectives, non-profits in Mercer County sometimes utilize conservation easements which permit continued agricultural use, but which do not require it.

Mercer County is fortunate to have a large number of local non-profit land preservation organizations operating within its boundaries. They include: Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FOHVOS); Friends of Princeton Open Space; Friends of West Windsor Open Space, and Lawrence Township Conservation Foundation. All of these groups have preserved open space in cooperation with their respective municipalities and with Mercer County. At least one, FOHVOS also permits agriculture on their preserved land. For example, Honey Brook Farm in Hopewell Township is leasing land that was purchased in fee, then deed restricted by FOHVOS as open space. Although farming is being allowed by FOHVOS, the land is not solely dedicated to agriculture use as with an agricultural deed of easement.

The D&R Greenway Land Trust, one of the premier land conservancies in the state, is the largest land preservation non-profit located in Mercer County and the County works closely with D&R on farmland and open space preservation projects. D&R Greenway has assisted on several County farm preservation projects by, most notably, acting under contract to the County to negotiate with landowners who are sometimes wary of governmental officials.

The County and D&R Greenway (as well as the State, Hopewell Township and Hopewell Borough) also worked cooperatively on preservation of the 400-acre St. Michaels Orphanage property in Hopewell Township in 2010, now known as the St. Michaels Farm Preserve. St. Michaels includes a farmland preservation component through the State Direct Easement Purchase Program. Other non-profit land conservation organizations operating regularly in Mercer County are the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) and The Watershed Institute.

7. Transfer of Development Rights

The transfer of development rights (TDR) is a growth management tool that transfers development rights from one location, a preservation area, to another, an identified growth/receiving area. The transferred development rights allow for development at a higher density than what the previous zoning of the receiving area allowed.



Mercer County does not utilize a TDR program. The only Mercer municipality that has utilized TDR is Robbinsville Township and it has done so on only one farm property. (See Chapter III, Paragraph G for additional information)

8. Other Programs and Partnerships

Two Mercer municipalities, West Windsor and Robbinsville Townships, have been very active in preserving farmland through the purchase of development rights or fee-simple acquisitions and then selling their agricultural easements to the County. Table 14 identifies farmland that Mercer municipalities have preserved in fee or by easement purchase and then have sought cost-sharing for through the County farmland preservation program.

In addition, the County, municipalities, and non-profits have preserved farms by partnering with each other, the SADC, or the state's Green Acres program in creative ways. One example is the 71-acre Ruggieri farm in Hopewell Borough and Hopewell Township whose preservation was initiated by the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space and then completed by the execution of a Mercer County conservation easement which, "purpose is to assure that the property will be retained forever in its natural and undisturbed condition and for agricultural purposes...". Ruggieri is one of only two County-owned conservation easements (the other is Jusick in Lawrence) with farming specifically allowed.

Table 14. Municipally Preserved Farms with Easements Later Sold to Mercer County.

Township	Name	Block and Lot	Address	Acreage	Year
East Windsor	Thompson	B. 31, L. 10	Etra Rd.	38.95	2005
Robbinsville	Booth (Dyjak)	B. 44, L. 20	New Street	47.99	2006
Robbinsville	Dakota 1 (Levandowski)	B. 19, L. 6	300 Perrineville Rd.	78.83	2001
Robbinsville	Dakota 2 (Sunshine)	B. 20, L. 14	279 Perrineville Rd	100.57	1999
Robbinsville	Dakota 3 (Mercrock)	B. 42, L. 1; B. 43, L. 1	Gordon Rd, Washington	83.37	1999
Robbinsville	Dakota 4 (Bresnahan)	B. 22, L. 4	Bresnahan Rd.	75.85	2005
Robbinsville	Gabert (Robert Wood Johnson)	B. 10, L. 56.01	169 Edinburg-Windsor Rd.	50.96	2001
Robbinsville	Rapant	B. 19, L. 2.02	Perrineville Rd.	9.76	2005
West Windsor	Jany	B. 32, L. 2, 22, 23, 24	Windsor Rd.	54.44	2000
West Windsor	Schumacher	B. 29, L. 7, 11	1393 Old Trenton Rd.	27.68	2003
West Windsor	Thompson	B. 29, L. 3, 2.01	37 Rear Cubberley Rd.	76.42	2003
West Windsor	Thompson	B. 30, L. 4, 5	1627 Old Trenton Rd	112.59	2003
West Windsor	Thompson	B. 23, L. 42	1500 Old Trenton Rd.	25.35	2003
West Windsor	Thompson	B. 23, L. 40, 57, 63	1550 Old Trenton Rd.	25.73	2003

C. Term Farmland Preservation Programs - Eight Year Programs

There are two types of eight-year farmland preservation programs available, both of which involve an agreement with the landowner to keep the farm in active agriculture for a period of at least eight years. Both programs are voluntary and neither results in any payment to the landowner or permanent restriction on the use of the land. In return, the landowner is eligible to receive 50% cost-sharing on soil and water conservation projects approved by the State Soil Conservation Committee. The "Eight-Year Program" is a restrictive covenant, placed on the land for a period of eight years. The landowner is eligible to apply for the aforementioned soil and water conservation funding and is eligible for other benefits and protections of the Farmland Preservation Program. The second program is termed the "Municipally Approved Eight-Year Program", which requires a municipal ordinance endorsing the landowners' enrollment in the program, and provides greater protection from eminent domain takings, zoning changes, and emergency



fuel and water rationing. It is important to note that an owner who wants to sell the farm while enrolled in an eight-year program must provide the SADC with an executed contract of sale for the property. The SADC then has the first right and option to match the conditions of that contract and purchase the property itself.

At this time, the County has no farms enrolled in term preservation. The most recent enrollment was an 8-year municipally approved program on Cherry Grove Farm, a 280-acre farm in Lawrence Township. This farm is within a Project Area and is also targeted by the County for preservation.

D. Coordination with Open Space Initiatives

The same County Planning Department staff work on the County's Open Space and Farmland Preservation programs. Thus, the programs are integrally linked together. While the protection of natural resources, and ecologically sensitive land, such as wetlands, wildlife habitat, waterways, slopes, mature woodlands, large stands of forests and ridge lines in their natural state is the primary goal of the Mercer County Open Space and Recreation Plan, when properties preserved for open space have portions that are actively farmed, the county continues to allow farming where feasible. Farm leases are permitted strategically on open space parcels, with the County's short and long-range ecological and recreational needs in mind. As of this writing, there are 11 active farm leases on 479 acres. The open space program also places a priority on the preservation of lands along stream corridors to create green connections that protect natural resources and provide passive recreational opportunities. To create greenways, the open space program often works with the farmland preservation program to preserve stream corridors that are adjacent to farmland while allowing the farmer access to the water for farmland irrigation.

One out of five acres (or over 28,000 acres) in Mercer County have been preserved through the coordination and partnership of state, municipal and non-profit farmland and open space initiatives. While much of the funding for these preservation efforts has been through the County Open Space Trust Fund, the County has worked closely with its partners to maximize the leveraging of Garden State Preservation Trust Funds (SADC and Green Acres funding) by often combining municipal and non-profit funding sources to facilitate a single acquisition. Examples of this type of preservation include large natural lands such as Baldpate Mountain, Curlis Lake Woods, and land in the Abbott Marshlands. These properties are preserved for predominantly ecological and recreational resources and do not contain significant agricultural land.

Figure 12 in this Chapter illustrates all preserved farmland and open space in Mercer County.

E. Farmland Preservation Program Funding Expended to Date by Source

The Mercer County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund was initially established by voter referendum in 1989 and set at one cent per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation. Again by public referendum, the Trust Fund was increased to two cents in 1998 and to three cents in 2004, though the County has never collected more than two-and one-half cents. Up to 70% of the Trust Fund may be utilized for open space and farmland preservation, 20% for park development and historic preservation, and 10% for land stewardship. There is no annual allocation between open space and farmland preservation acquisitions. As noted in Chapter V, the County's Trust Fund is currently generating in excess of \$11 million a year.

As of September 2020, Mercer County has expended approximately \$81,000,000.00 on 89 farm projects totaling approximately 5,443 acres. Cost-share funding from the SADC exceeds \$41,000,000 (see Appendix). The County does not require local contributions and in the very few situations where they



have occurred, the amounts are insignificant. There have also been only two farms with federal preservation funding received through the SADC and that too is insignificant to the overall funding picture. In total, funding from other sources (not County, not SADC) has been 1% of the total expenditures.

F. Monitoring of Preserved Farmland

CADB members and staff conduct annual monitoring of farms on which the County holds the Agricultural Deed of Easement as required both statutorily and by the Easement. The purpose of monitoring is to prevent violations of Deed of Easement restrictions and to remedy any violations. This on-site visit also provides an important opportunity to meet with the farmer and/or landowner, gather information about plans for the farm and share information about resources available to assist the farmer/landowner.

The SADC and non-profit organizations monitor farms on which they hold the Agricultural Deed of Easement. There are currently no municipally held agricultural easements.

The restrictions on areas covered by the agricultural deed of easement (the “Premises”) typically are:

Any development of the Premises for nonagricultural purposes is expressly prohibited.

The Premises shall be retained for agricultural use and production in compliance with N.J.S.A. 4:1C-11 et seq., P.L. 1983, c.32, and all other rules promulgated by the State Agriculture Development Committee, (hereinafter Committee). Agricultural use shall mean the use of the Premises for common farmsite activities including, but not limited to: production, harvesting, storage, grading, packaging, processing and the wholesale and retail marketing of crops, plants, animals and other related commodities and the use and application of techniques and methods of soil preparation and management, fertilization, weed, disease and pest control, disposal of farm waste, irrigation, drainage and water management and grazing.

No sand, gravel, loam, rock, or other minerals shall be deposited on or removed from the Premises excepting only those materials required for the agricultural purpose for which the land is being used.

No dumping or placing of trash or waste material shall be permitted on the Premises unless expressly recommended by the Committee as an agricultural management practice.

No activity shall be permitted on the Premises which would be detrimental to drainage, flood control, water conservation, erosion control, or soil conservation, nor shall any other activity be permitted which would be detrimental to the continued agricultural use of the Premises.

The construction of any new buildings for agricultural purposes is permitted. The construction of any new buildings for residential use, regardless of its purpose, shall be prohibited except to provide structures for housing of agricultural labor employed on the Premises or to construct a single-family residential building anywhere on the Premises in order to replace any single-family residential building in existence at the time of conveyance of this Deed of Easement.

No historic building or structure located on the Premises may be demolished by the grantor or any other person without the prior approval of the State Agriculture Development Committee. Historic building or structure is a building or structure that, as of the date of this Deed of



Easement, has been included in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places established pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.128 et seq.

G. Coordination with TDR Programs

The State of New Jersey facilitates the implementation of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs in many ways. The New Jersey State TDR Bank offers Planning Assistance Grants to municipalities looking to establish municipal TDR programs, and directly funds some purchases of development credits. The State TDR Bank also provides financial backing on loans secured using development credits as collateral, and keeps records of all development credit transfers within the State.

The New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy (previously the Office of Smart Growth) had offered Smart Future Planning Grants to municipalities in order to help them plan for and implement TDR programs. Robbinsville Township was the recipient of one of these grants and TDR was used on one occasion within the Township when credits were purchased from one landowner and transferred to a Town Center. However, as noted in Chapter III, this TDR was found to not be representative of the State's TDR program objectives.



Chapter V: Future Farmland Preservation

- | **A. Preservation Goals**
- | **B. Project Areas**
- | **C. Minimum Eligibility Criteria**
- | **D. County Ranking Criteria**
- | **E. County Policies Related to Farmland Preservation Applications**
- | **F. Funding Plan**
- | **G. Farmland Preservation Program/CADB Administrative Resources**
- | **H. Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation**



Chapter V: Future Farmland Preservation

A. Preservation Goals

The County of Mercer has preserved 5,443 acres of Farmland as of December 2020.

In its 2007 Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan, the County proposed goals of:

One year: 100 acres

Five years: 500 acres

Ten years: 1,000 acres

This 2020 Plan retains those goals.

Mercer County is 144,640 acres in size. In tax year 2018, total farm assessed land (FA-1 Form, Table 1) was **29,227 acres**. This is the “agricultural base” used by the County for determining its ADA. To determine a “pool” for possible farmland preservation, **7,880 acres** of farmland preserved by the State, County and Hopewell Township (1,925 State, 5,443 County and 512 Hopewell) are subtracted from the “agricultural base” leaving approximately **21,347 acres** of available farmland. However, it is important to note that this “pool” of farmland is not entirely suitable for preservation. For example, size of parcel, tillable acreage, soils, and development restrictions through local zoning all have an effect on preservation potential. Thus, given these constraints plus limited financial resources at the State and County levels, **the County of Mercer will pursue the preservation of 2,396 acres of Targeted Farms utilizing its adopted criteria and standards for application solicitation, review, and funding.**

Preserving these Targeted Farms would represent an approximately 40% increase in the amount of farmland Mercer County has already preserved. This Plan’s annual goal reflects the program’s lifetime average of 170 acres per year (the first farm in the County program was preserved in 1988), less the realities identified throughout the Plan such as: 1) an agricultural base that has lost over 17,000 acres over the past 30 years – a rate that could result in the specter of “build-out” less than 20 years from now; 2) median farm size decreasing (now 18 acres) making fewer farms suitable for preservation because of County and State criteria – especially where local zoning limits residential developability and value by creating large minimum lot sizes (e.g., the Hopewell MRC zone with 14-acre lots); and, 3) economic constraints.

As this Plan notes, historically cooperative efforts between the County, State, non-profits and municipalities will likely result in additional farm preservation (e.g., the former St. Michael’s orphanage in Hopewell Township with approximately 400 acres of open space and farmland). As of this writing, the County is under contract to preserve an additional 460 acres of farmland in Hopewell Township.

B. Project Areas

The Mercer CADB has identified seven distinct Project Areas within the County’s Agricultural Development Area. These Project Areas are identified in the “Project Area Maps” found in the Appendix of this Plan. There are 14,999 acres of land within Project Areas and naturally, not all are appropriate for farming or preservation.

Project Areas contain Targeted Farms. As defined by N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.2 – County Planning Incentive Grant Definitions, a Targeted Farm is “a specific property contained within an approved Project Area that a county may seek to solicit for preservation through the county planning incentive program.” There are 2,396 acres of Targeted Farms identified in this Plan.



Each Project Area conforms to the statutory requirements of the ADA and to the statutory definition (N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.2) so that each Project Area “consists of the following lands and lands that are within one mile of any of the following lands”:

- Targeted farms located within an ADA;
- Lands from which an application for the sale of a development easement has been granted final approval by the municipality, county and/or SADC;
- Lands from which development easements have already been purchased;
- Other land permanently deed-restricted for agricultural use;
- Lands enrolled in an eight-year farmland preservation program or municipally approved farmland preservation programs; or
- Other permanently preserved lands dedicated for open space purposes that are compatible with agriculture.

In addition to these statutory requirements, Project Areas were also demarcated using aerial photography showing tillable and non-tillable lands, farmland assessment data and Board members’ knowledge of the land. It is important to note that the ADA criteria identified in Chapter IV further restricts the land eligible for identification as a Project Area.

The seven project areas in Mercer County are: Hamilton, East Windsor/Robbinsville, West Windsor/Robbinsville, Lawrence, Hopewell East, Hopewell West and Hopewell South (see Appendix).

C. Minimum Eligibility Criteria

Amended Minimum Eligibility Criteria for Targeted Farm preservation State Cost-Share grants were adopted by the CADB on October 1, 2007 based upon the SADC’s newly adopted rules for farmland preservation and project eligibility. So, in addition to the CADB’s original criteria of:

- 1) Site location within the ADA, and
- 2) Minimum 25 acres of land, unless adjacent to a preserved farm and farmland assessed,

Each targeted farm must also 3) be developable, have soils capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production, and meet minimum tillable land standards, all as per N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20. See Policy 2 in the Appendix.

For all lands less than or equal to 10 acres:

- The land must produce at least \$2,500 worth of agricultural or horticultural products annually;
- At least 75% or a minimum of 5 acres of the land (whichever is less) must be tillable;
- At least 75% or a minimum of 5 acres of the land (whichever is less) must consist of soils capable of supporting agriculture or horticulture; and
- The land in question must exhibit development potential as defined by the SADC (based upon zoning, ability to be subdivided, less than 80% wetlands, less than 80% slopes greater than 15%), OR, the land must be eligible for allocation of development credits pursuant to a Transfer of Development (TDR) credits program.

For lands greater than 10 acres:

- At least 50% or a minimum of 25 acres of land (whichever is less) must be tillable;
- At least 50% or a minimum of 25 acres of land (whichever is less) must have soils capable of



- supporting agriculture or horticulture; and
- The land in question must exhibit development potential as defined by the SADC (based upon zoning, ability to be subdivided, less than 80% wetlands, less than 80% slopes greater than 15%), OR, the land must be eligible for allocation of development credits pursuant to a Transfer of Development (TDR) credits program.

In addition, the application also is subject to qualification as an “eligible farm” if SADC funds are requested (N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.2). Eligibility is determined by averaging individual farm application “quality scores” (determined through SADC Policy P14-E) over the previous three years of applications, then requiring each new application to be at least 70% of that average. Counties can request a waiver of this minimum standard.

It is important to note that these Minimum Eligibility Standards must be met in order for the State to provide matching funds on a farmland preservation project. The County may proceed without State funding on projects that do not meet these Minimum Eligibility Standards.

D. County Ranking Criteria

There is no independent Mercer CADB policy regarding ranking for County Easement Purchase Cost-Share Applications; however, as required by 2:76-17.4(b)5, the Mercer CADB did adopt by resolution #2007-06 the state’s ranking criteria found in N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.16 as the basis for calculating individual farm rankings and SADC “eligible farm” qualification. The CADB also utilizes its ability through 2:76-6.16(h) of assigning the top rank (and 10 extra quality score points) to a farm application it “recognizes as encouraging the survivability of the program in productive agriculture” in order to enhance that application’s cost-share funding competitiveness when more than one application is being evaluated.

E. County Policies Related to Farmland Preservation Applications

The Mercer CADB follows the SADC’s policies regarding housing opportunities, division of premises and exception areas and has adopted Policies on its own that either supplement SADC Policy or implement new ones. The CADB Policies are:

1. Approval of Housing Opportunities

a. Agricultural Labor Housing – This housing must be approved by both the SADC and CADB. The CADB is guided by the Deed of Easement (see Appendix: Adopted CADB Policies: Deed of Easement Housing Section) and has also promulgated a labor housing policy (same section Appendix). The SADC does not have a policy but recognizes the importance of labor housing and does have an application form that the CADB also utilizes. The SADC is guided by its staff review of the request.

b. House Replacement – Replacement housing must be approved by both the SADC and CADB. The CADB is guided by Deed of Easement paragraphs 13a and 14 and also its House Size Policy (See Appendix: as above). The CADB considers the impact of a relocated replacement house on the agricultural operation in the course of evaluating an application. The CADB’s House Size Policy is also applicable to new house requests. The SADC is guided by its staff review of a house replacement request.

c. RDSO allocation – Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSO’s) are potential housing prospects located within a deed-restricted farm. These prospective residential units can only be allocated to parcels that are at least 100 acres in size. An RDSO, if allocated, is not firmly located until such time as the landowner applies to exercise it. The CADB, municipality, and SADC each have a role in the process of



locating an RDSO. The residential unit must be for agricultural purposes and “at least one person residing in the residential unit shall be regularly engaged in common farm site practices.” The Mercer CADB does not encourage the use of RDSO’s and the simple fact is that with a median farm size of 18 acres, there are few opportunities in Mercer County to use this tool. The SADC has a policy that provides a basis for reviewing a request to exercise a residual dwelling site opportunity and ensures that the construction and use of the residential unit is for agricultural purposes.

d. House Size – The SADC does not have a specific house size policy but has utilized house size restrictions in its recent auctions of deed-restricted farms with housing opportunities. The Mercer CADB initiated a policy in 2001 and incorporated special language in the Deed of Easement to enforce it. (See Appendix for the CADB Policy.)

2. Division of Premises

A landowner who wishes to divide a permanently preserved farm may apply to the CADB for a division of the premises. The division must meet criteria set forth in the SADC's policy and the resulting parcels must be agriculturally viable and have an agricultural purpose. The request must be approved by both the CADB and the SADC. The CADB utilizes SADC policy as well as the SADC Division of Premises application for its review. The CADB focuses on the agricultural viability and purpose of the resulting parcels. The SADC Policy can be found at: <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/postpres/>.

3. Approval of Exceptions

Exceptions are defined by the SADC as “acres within a farm being preserved” which are “not subject to the terms of the deed of easement.” When an exception is made, the landowner does not receive any compensation for the excepted area. The Mercer CADB strongly encourages the use of Exceptions for residential use and for farm markets. Staff spends time with each landowner discussing exceptions, reviewing their future plans, particularly as they may relate to family housing needs. There are two types of exceptions that can occur: severable and non-severable.

Severable: A severable exception is defined by the SADC as an “area which is part of an existing Block and Lot owned by the applicant which will be excluded from the restrictions of the Deed of Easement and may be sold as a separate lot in the future.” A severable exception is made “if a landowner wants to be able to sell the excepted area separate from the deed-restricted farm.” The Mercer CADB allows severable Exceptions but encourages the landowner to separate the lot before deed restricting the Premises. Mercer County has utilized severable exceptions for stream corridor open space preservation purposes.

Non-severable: Non-severable exceptions are defined by the SADC as “area which is part of an existing Block and Lot owned by the application that will not be subject to the restrictions of the Deed of Easement but cannot be sold separately from the remaining premises.” Unlike a severable exception, a non-severable exception is “always attached to the protected farm.” The Mercer CADB strongly encourages the use of non-severable exceptions for residential use and for farm markets. The CADB requires that the applicant perform septic suitability tests on the exception prior to preservation and as stated earlier, places house size restrictions on houses to be located within residential exceptions. The County will limit the number of exceptions by taking into account the individual application conditions. The location and configuration of each exception, as well as proposed access to each exception, are also given considerable attention in the application phase. For all exceptions, severable and non-severable, the CADB considers the impact on the remaining agricultural lands, particularly ensuring that areas are not “orphaned” from the larger fields.



The Mercer CADB follows SADC policy with regard to access to exception areas. For example, access exclusively for non-agricultural purposes to a non-severable exception must be included within the exception. Activities within exception areas are also governed by applicable local, state and federal regulations.

4. Mowing

The Mercer CADB has been concerned about the interpretation of and implementation of the Deed Restriction (DOE Paragraph 2) which reads, “The Premises shall be retained for agricultural use and production...” The CADB recognizes that there is nothing in the deed which requires that the property be actively farmed, but further recognizes that a farm that lies fallow will eventually be overtaken by invasive species and, later, succumb to forest succession. In order to maintain the land base for agricultural use and protect the public’s investment in farmland preservation, the CADB adopted a policy on February 6, 2006 entitled, “Mowing to Manage Non-Agricultural Woody Species or Second Growth Invasion on Preserved Farms.” This policy is two pronged – it establishes a Restrictive Covenant to be recorded concurrently with every successive Deed of Easement which calls for annual mowing. It also establishes an annual mowing policy which applies retroactively to every farm preserved by Mercer County. The Policy is found in the Appendix under Adopted CADB Policies.

5. Conservation Plan Release

Paragraph 7 of the Deed of Easement provides one year within which a landowner must obtain a farm conservation plan approved by the local soil conservation district. In the past, when the Mercer CADB tried to get copies of these plans, it found that the plans are held as confidential by the Soil Conservation District and NRCS. In order to obtain copies of the plans, both from the landowner and, if necessary, from the Soil Conservation District, Mercer County has developed an “Authorization to Obtain and Release of Soil Conservation Plan” release form. This document is executed by the landowner concurrently with the Deed of Easement. A sample release form is found in the Appendix.

6. Easement Violation

In June 2020, the Mercer CADB adopted a policy outlining the steps it would take if and when an easement violation is identified. Staff will first contact the landowner by telephone and then send a letter to memorialize the conversation. The landowner then has 10 days to provide an explanation for the violation. If the violation is not a temporary situation that can be summarily remedied to the satisfaction of the CADB, then further action will be taken. A certified letter will be mailed notifying the landowner of all violations that require remediation. The owner will then have 30 days from receipt of the letter to remedy or remove the violation. At the end of the 30 days, the CADB or staff will inspect the site. If any violations remain, the local zoning officer or other appropriate local official will be notified, along with state and/or federal officials if appropriate. If necessary, the CADB will exercise its power under Paragraph 16 of the Deed of Easement to institute a court action. A copy of the policy can be found in the Appendix.

F. Funding Plan

1. Description of County Funding Sources

Prior to the establishment of the dedicated Trust Fund in 1989, Mercer County funded farmland preservation through overall Capital Projects bonding.

Five farms were funded, in whole or in part, through this bonding (Hendrickson, 1988; Hart and



Townsend, 1991; Niederer, 1992 and a portion of Facey, 1994) for a total bonded amount of \$1,197,065. The Niederer acquisition was the first use of installment purchase in the State of New Jersey and it resulted in statutory changes to make installment purchase the valuable option that it is for New Jersey counties and local government today. The Niederer acquisition represented two other firsts for Mercer County – neighboring Mobil Corporation donated \$250,000 towards the purchase and the County acquired public access easements along the Stony Brook, enabling the County to achieve farmland preservation, stream protection and recreation goals in one acquisition.

Since the 1990 tax year, residents of Mercer County have contributed \$211,109,063 towards the County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. As is its practice, the County leverages these tax dollars by selling bonds to fund open space and farmland acquisitions. The “Open Space” tax receipts pay the debt service on those bonds

As of this writing, Mercer County’s 89 farm easement purchases, totaling approximately 5,400 acres, exceed \$81 million, with approximately \$41 million received in State cost-share grants.

The following graph (Figure 14) summarizes the collection of open space tax by the County of Mercer. The tax rate was \$0.01 per \$100 of equalized assessed value in 1991 and was increased in 1999 to \$0.02 and in 2005 to \$0.03 by voter referendum, although the County has never collected more than \$0.025 to date.

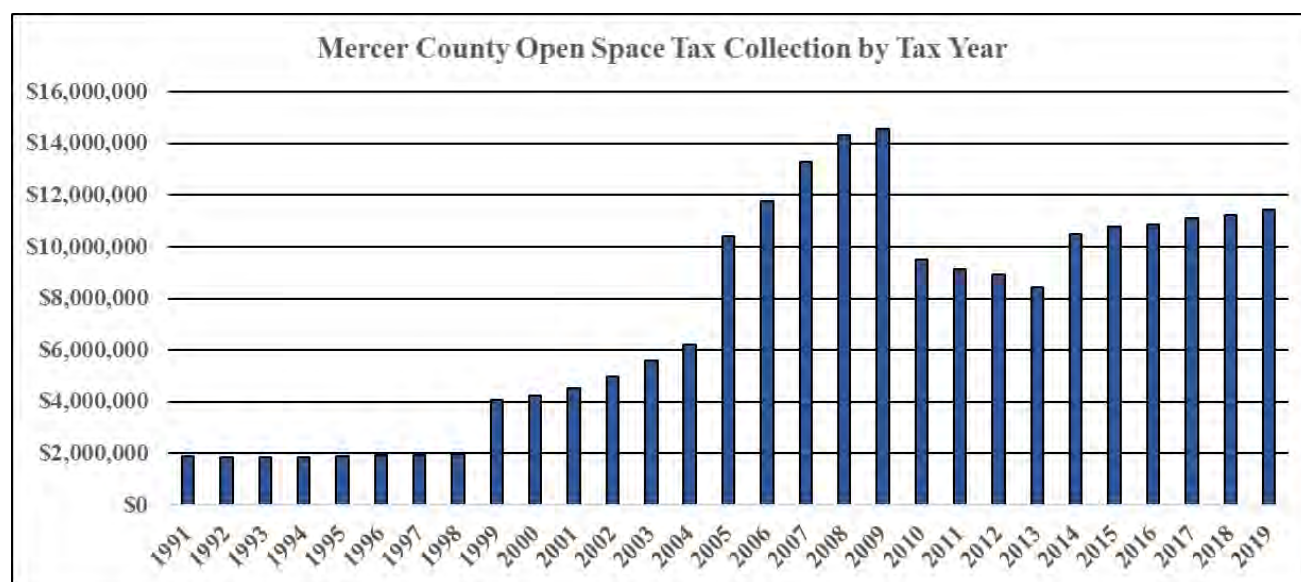


Figure 14. Mercer County Open Space Tax Collection by Tax Year. (Source: County Tax Levy Apportionment Analysis, County Board of Taxation webpage)

Up to 70% of the Trust Fund may be utilized for open space and farmland preservation acquisitions; there is no annual allocation between open space and farmland. In addition, up to 20% of the Trust Fund may be utilized for historic preservation and recreational development, and up to 10% may be utilized for land stewardship.

2. Financial Policies Related to Local Cost-Share

Mercer County does not require its farmland preservation partners or applicants to contribute funds towards farm preservation. Likewise, Mercer County has not contributed to the one Municipal PIG program in



the County — Hopewell Township's. The County believes that Hopewell's PIG program provides the municipality with the opportunity to acquire properties of local importance that are not otherwise identified by the County.

To its credit, Hopewell Township regularly convenes discussion groups to coordinate and strategize on all types of preservation acquisitions in the Hopewell Valley – farmland and open space. The County is an active and regular participant in these meetings.

As early as 1995, the County was pre-purchasing easements and farmland in fee, in anticipation of, but without a guarantee of, State cost-share reimbursement. Although State cost-share always materialized, the County has acquired easements without State funds in the past and may continue to do so in the future.

As indicated above, Mercer County was the first in the State to utilize the innovative technique of installment purchase, resulting in amendments to State law that significantly simplified the process for everyone that followed. Nonetheless, the County has only made four purchases in this way (Niederer, 1994; Sakowsky, 1995; Johnson, 1998 and Lee Turkey Farm, 2006). At one time, every applicant for easement purchase in Mercer County was offered the option of installment purchase, but few found the benefits compelling enough to agree. Where installment purchase is beneficial, few options can compare. For example, the benefits to one landowner were significant enough for them to pay in excess of \$100,000 in set-up costs to achieve that first installment purchase agreement. Unless installment purchase is institutionalized by the County as the preferred or required purchase method, the associated set-up costs for implementation on a case-by-case basis are significant. Another farm acquisition, valued at \$9,838,800, was only possible as an installment purchase. Not only did the landowner see installment purchase as the only method by which they could keep the farm from a tax perspective, but the set-up costs were very small as a percentage of the overall acquisition. The County will entertain the idea of installment purchase on a case-by-case basis, but does not actively promote it to all applicants.

3. Cost-Projections and Funding Plan Associated with 1, 5, and 10 Year Goals

Between 2007 and 2019, Mercer County preserved 16 farms totaling approximately 702 acres. Easement cost varied widely by farm. In 2013, one farm was preserved for approximately \$13,500 per acre, while in 2016, two farms were preserved for approximately \$9,000 per acre and in 2018, two farms were preserved for approximately \$10,000 per acre. In contrast, other easement prices during this time period varied from \$26,000 to \$114,000 per acre. Easement appraisals obtained in the last two years have ranged from \$8,500 to \$12,400 per acre, for a current average of \$10,450 per acre. We believe this average is more useful to predict prices going forward than an average of the last 10 years because of the wide variability of prices and relatively few data points (i.e., preserved farms) per year. It is also important to note that there is a lot of variation in land and home values between municipalities in Mercer County, so individual values may differ significantly from the average and there is a lot of variability in the development potential of individual properties.

The SADC typically provides a cost-share with the County at an approximate 60% State to 40% County ratio. The ratio can change with very high or low per acre values, per 2:76-6.11. Impermanent funding sources made the availability of state preservation grants uncertain in the past. However, new legislation in 2019 made the funding source for New Jersey's Garden State Preservation Trust permanent, allocating funds for open space (Green Acres), farmland (SADC) and historic preservation from a corporate business tax. The SADC's County PIG program provides base grants and once they are spent, counties can apply for competitive funding. As of this writing, Mercer County has a base grant of \$1,243,861 and available competitive funding is as follows: Fiscal Year 2017, \$3.7 million; Fiscal Year 2018, \$7 million; and Fiscal Year 2020, \$10 million. For FY 2017 funds, the maximum grant award is \$5 million (although



only \$3.7 million is actually available), and for FYs 2018 and 2020, the maximum grant amount is \$2 million. It is critical to note that funding levels may be lower for the foreseeable future because of the Covid-19 public health crisis.

Assuming that SADC cost-share funding will continue at 60% and following the goals identified at the beginning of this Chapter, Table 15 estimates future acquisition costs using a 10% annual increase in per acre values from the current average easement value of \$10,400 per acre. It may be that land values will stabilize or decrease in the future following Covid-19 or due to other factors, but we believe a 10% increase is a useful conservative number for planning purposes.

Table 15. Easement Acquisition Cost Projections, Mercer County.

Year	Preserved Acreage Goal	Projected Avg Easement Cost/Acre	Projected Total Cost	40% County Share	60% State Share
2021	100	\$11,440.00	\$1,144,000	\$457,600	\$686,400
2022	100	\$12,584.00	\$1,258,400	\$503,360	\$755,040
2023	100	\$13,842.40	\$1,384,240	\$553,696	\$830,544
2024	100	\$15,226.64	\$1,522,664	\$609,066	\$913,598
2025	100	\$16,749.30	\$1,674,930	\$669,972	\$1,004,958
2026	100	\$18,424.23	\$1,842,423	\$736,969	\$1,105,454
2027	100	\$20,266.66	\$2,026,666	\$810,666	\$1,215,999
2028	100	\$22,293.32	\$2,229,332	\$891,733	\$1,337,599
2029	100	\$24,522.66	\$2,452,266	\$980,906	\$1,471,359
2030	100	\$26,974.92	\$2,697,492	\$1,078,997	\$1,618,495
Total	1000		\$18,232,414	\$7,292,965	\$10,939,448

4. Other

Eight of Mercer's twelve municipalities have open space trust funds (see Table 16). Hamilton and East Windsor do not have a dedicated tax but strive to set aside a portion of their property tax for open space. It is interesting to note that even Pennington Borough, with no farmland or appreciable open space within its one square mile border, has contributed from its fund to 70-acre (Hanson) and a 39-acre (Wright) agricultural and open space easements purchased by the D&R Greenway Land Trust in adjacent Hopewell Township.



Table 16. Locally Funded Open Space/Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Programs, Mercer County.

	2019 Tax ¹	Year Approved	2019 Revenue
Mercer County ²	\$0.03	1989/90=.01; 1998=.02; 2004=.03	\$11,449,709
East Windsor ³	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hamilton ⁴	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hopewell Boro	\$0.01	2000	\$31,690
Hopewell Twp	\$0.02	1998=.02; 2002=.03; 2004=.04; 2008=.02	\$1,189,431
Lawrence	\$0.03	1999=.01; 2001=.03	\$1,387,769
Pennington Boro	\$0.01	1998	\$50,387
Princeton	\$0.02	1997=.01; 2000=.02	\$1,214,106
West Windsor	\$0.02	1993=.01; 1995=.02; 1998=.07; 2005=.05; 2008=.03	\$1,198,435
Robbinsville	\$0.065	1998=.01; 2000=.05; 2016=.065	\$1,690,450
Total			\$18,211,977

Source: County of Mercer Taxation Division webpage: “2019 Monies and Ratable Synopsis”

¹ \$ per \$100 assessed property value dedicated to open space

² Mercer County currently collects \$0.025, although \$0.03 was approved by voter referendum

³ East Windsor Township dedicates a portion of its property tax revenue to open space but does not have a voter-approved tax levy. No revenue information is readily available.

⁴ Hamilton Township dedicates a portion of its property tax revenue to open space but does not have a voter-approved tax levy. No revenue information is readily available.

G. Farmland Preservation Program / CADB Administrative Resources

1. Staff Resources

The Mercer County Planning Department oversees Mercer County’s open space and farmland preservation programs. The farmland program is overseen by one staff planner, with assistance from the Planning Director and GIS staff.

2. Legal Support

Legal support for the farmland and open space preservation programs is provided primarily through the Department’s contract with the law firm of Parker McCay. At times, legal support is also provided by the County Counsel’s office.

3. Database Development

The Mercer County Planning Department maps all farmland preservation projects in ArcGIS. Project Area maps are updated annually for the County’s SADC Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) application. Acreage and acquisition cost information for every preserved farm is maintained in an Excel database. Baseline and monitoring photos, beginning in 2004, are taken and kept digitally.

4. GIS Capacity and Staff Resources

The Mercer County Planning Department has one full-time staff person devoted to GIS and several



planners who are proficient in GIS applications and techniques. The Department is the primary provider of Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping for the County.

H. Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation

1. Funding

The rate of farmland preservation by Mercer County is directly related to the availability of State funds and the financial ability of the County to leverage those funds. New legislation in 2019 made the funding source for New Jersey's Garden State Preservation Trust permanent, allocating funds for open space (Green Acres), farmland (SADC) and historic preservation from a corporate business tax. Mercer County's Open Space Preservation Trust Fund tax is the source of funds that the County uses for open space and farmland preservation, park development, historic preservation and land stewardship. Assuming that both the State and County funding sources remain stable, funding is not a limiting factor for the County's preservation program. It is critical to note that funding levels may be lower in the foreseeable future due to the Covid-19 public health crisis.

2. Projected Costs

As the amount of available developable land steadily decreases in the County, land values are likely to increase. Therefore, when combined with the potential challenge of decreased funding levels due to Covid-19, cost may be a limiting factor for the County's farmland preservation program in the future. However, it has not been a limiting factor in the past.

3. Land Supply

As illustrated in Chapter I, Table 5, the amount of farmland in Mercer County has been rapidly decreasing – and continues to do so. As the pool of farms decreases, so does the pool of possible farmland preservation acquisitions.

4. Landowner Interest

Applications are decreasing as the number of available unpreserved farms diminishes in Mercer County, but, interest within that diminished pool of farms is still relatively strong due in large part to relatively high easement values.

5. Administrative Resources

One staff planner is assigned to administer the farmland preservation program and its related responsibilities with assistance from the Planning Director and GIS staff. Administrative resources are not a limiting factor for farmland preservation in Mercer County.



Chapter VI: Economic Development

| **A. Consistency with N.J. Department of Agriculture Economic Development Strategies**

/ **B. Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion and Recruitment Strategies**



Chapter VI: Economic Development

A. Consistency with N.J. Department of Agriculture Economic Development Strategies



Trenton Farmers Market Web Site Image

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture's 2007 Economic Development Strategies (<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/conventions/2007/strategies.html>) identifies and proposes methods to expand and enhance various sectors of the agriculture industry in New Jersey, including produce, horticulture, dairy, livestock and poultry, field crops, organic, equine, wine, and agritourism.

The County of Mercer supports these strategies. Although not all sectors are found in Mercer County, those that are prevalent: produce, horticulture, field crops, organic, equine, wine, and agritourism, are important to the agricultural industry of Mercer County.

1. Produce

As illustrated in Chapter II, Table 8, the acreage in fruits and vegetables for Mercer's agriculturally assessed lands has remained relatively constant over the past 20 years and continues to be an important agricultural sector in the County. Local produce is very popular with consumers, as evidenced by the large numbers of farmer's markets and CSAs in the area. The Trenton Farmer's Market, open year-round, has been serving as an outlet for local farmers at its same location since the mid-20th century. For a look at its history, including photos, see their website at: <http://www.thetrentonfarmersmarket.com/>. This large market is supplemented by many other local community farmer's markets as described later in this chapter. The County also has other local markets operated by single producers, such as Terhune Orchards, Windsor Farm and Market, Little Acres Farm Market and Blue Moon Acres. And, numerous seasonal farm stands can be found along roads throughout the County's farming municipalities.

Strategies for strengthening the produce sector include:

- Encourage traditional field crop farmers, whose acreages have been declining, to venture into this growing field with the assistance of Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service resources.

2. Horticulture

Nurseries continue to be an important agricultural sector for the County (Chapter II, Table 8). This is also reflected in County preserved farmland where 17 of 89 preserved farms (nearly 20%) are predominantly involved in nursery, sod, or greenhouse operations.



Strategies for strengthening the horticulture sector include:

- Explore the feasibility of more farmers diversifying a portion of their output into this sector, including ways to deal with the challenges of irrigation needs/expenses, wildlife management, and increased labor demand. Utilize the resources of the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service.
- Promote the State-sponsored deer fencing program to help protect product in the field.

3. Field Crops

Field crops of corn for grain and soybeans, although still by far the largest acreage of assessed farmland in Mercer County, have been steadily declining since the 1980s. However, this sector continues to have the greatest number of preserved farms (50%) and the greatest acreage.

Strategies for strengthening the field crops sector include:

- Encourage diversification of crops to meet new markets.
- Continue to expand the County's deer management programs on County-owned parks and open space, and support deer management by farmers leasing County open space.

4. Organic

Mercer County is the home of several organic farms including the reputed largest membership Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm in the country – Honey Brook Organic Farm.

CSA's and organic farming are very popular among consumers in and around Mercer County. In addition, there are two preserved farms, Cherry Grove Farm in Lawrence and Beech Tree Farm in Hopewell, advertising grass-fed animals and selling to the general public. The Local Harvest website at <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/> can provide further information about these farms.

Strategies for strengthening the organic sector include:

- Educate growers about organic and natural regulatory and certification requirements and about the availability of federal funds to help offset certification costs. NOFA-NJ and Rutgers Cooperative Extension are important resources.
- Support membership growth and expansion of Community Supported Agriculture.

5. Equine

Equine is a growing sector in Mercer County's agricultural economy (Table 8). Although farmland assessment data in Chapters I and II indicates that the acres devoted to equine in the County are relatively low, by definition, these farmland assessed acres are dedicated solely for "boarding, rehabilitating or training livestock". More representative figures for equine related farm acreage come from a 2007 study by the Equine Science Center at Rutgers. In it, Mercer County is identified as having 2,300 equine related acres – far greater than the 116 acres reported in 2008 and the 278 farmland assessed acres in 2007. Indeed, just within the County's farmland preservation program, four farms totaling approximately 350 acres are breeding facilities while several hundred more acres on other preserved farms have equine as ancillary to other agriculture production.

Strategies for strengthening the equine sector include:



- Promote and create general awareness of the development of the Equine AMP (Agricultural Management Practices), which was adopted by the State Agriculture Development Committee in 2008, to allow for increased right to farm protection for New Jersey's equine industry.

6. Wine

Mercer County is the home of three of the State's 60 wineries: Working Dog Winery in Robbinsville Township, Hopewell Valley Vineyards in Hopewell Township and Terhune Orchards in Lawrence Township. All three wineries are well known throughout the State's wine circuit and produce award-winning wines. Working Dog and Terhune Orchards are preserved through the County's program.

Strategies for strengthening the wine sector include:

- Encourage additional operators to diversify into grape growing to provide product to existing wineries.
- Encourage the use of winery facilities for hosting small events through the County Economic Opportunity Office.
- Explore expansion of re-sale marketing.

7. Agritourism

Agritourism is alive and well in Mercer County. The County's Howell Living History Farm in Hopewell Township is a destination for residents of central New Jersey, nearby Pennsylvania, and points beyond. Many other farms throughout the County provide:

- Fall activities like hay rides, pumpkin picking, and apple festivals;
- Wine festivals;
- School visitations;
- Equine activities like horseback riding and stabling; and,
- Pick-your-own fruits and vegetables, roadside stands, and Christmas trees

Strategies for strengthening the Agritourism sector include:

- Promoting the state's Agricultural Management Practice (AMP) for on-farm direct marketing facilities, activities and events.
- Marketing Agritourism through the hospitality sector.

One strategy to promote economic development in all sectors will be to educate producers and municipalities about the State's Special Occasion Events (SOE) proposal that may allow non-agriculture related events, such as weddings, on preserved farms to supplement farm income. As of this writing, the proposal has not been formally adopted. Check the SADC's website for the latest information.

Covid-19

It should be noted that farmers in Mercer County and across the country (and globally) are facing serious economic challenges that began, in New Jersey, in March of 2020 because of the Covid-19 public health crisis. Farming was declared an essential service in New Jersey, so spring planting was able to occur, but there have been numerous challenges for farmers during the 2020 season. Farms that rely on migrant and/or seasonal workers have faced obstacles finding the workers they need. Grain prices have fluctuated and hay/straw sales to racetracks have slowed as those facilities were closed.



Necessary physical distancing guidelines and retail store closings have impacted sales at farms that rely on agritourism through public events and on-farm stores. However, public interest in local farm products has remained strong during the crisis and local farmers have worked hard to adapt their retail models to accommodate the health guidelines. For example, Terhune Orchards increased the diversity of products offered, created an online store and home delivery option, and created a system for “curbside” pick-up at their farm store. Honey Brook Organic Farm created a home delivery service for their own and other local farm products for local residents. Chickadee Creek Farm created an online ordering system for their farmer’s markets – and all farms with a presence at farmer’s markets have had to adapt to new guidelines to keep themselves and their customers safe. Some farmers have reported record-breaking sales, but there is uncertainty going into the colder months when outdoor events and markets will be less feasible.

B. Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion, and Recruitment Strategies

1. Institutional

a. Farmer Support – Mercer CADB staff are available to lend assistance to existing and prospective farmers. Staff promotes the resources of the Department of Agriculture’s website to those in search of information (e.g. Farm Link, RTF, deer fencing, commercial farm buildings, and farmland assessment) and also directs inquiries to the local Rutgers Cooperative Extension office (e.g. agricultural water use permits and farm vehicle license plates). Specific requests regarding organic farming are directed to the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA). When pertinent electronically sent information is received by staff, it is forwarded to farmers with email addresses on file.

b. Marketing / Public Relation Support – The Mercer CADB supports the State’s efforts in this regard and staff guides inquiries to the various Department of Agriculture websites. In particular, The Department’s website at <https://findjerseyfresh.com/> for *Jersey Fresh* and *Jersey Grown* labels is very useful. The website identifies listings for community markets, roadside markets and pick-your-owns as well as Jersey Fresh recipes and tips for choosing produce. In addition, these important branding programs work closely with the industry to market *Jersey Fresh* produce to the hotel, restaurant, educational, supermarket, and institutional food service industries.

c. Community Farmer’s Markets – Community farmer’s markets enable farmers to sell their products directly to the public. The NJ Department of Agriculture maintains a website at <https://findjerseyfresh.com/> which provides statewide information on a number of markets.

- The Trenton Farmers Market: As mentioned in Chapter II and at the beginning of this Chapter, the Trenton Farmer’s Market is the granddaddy of markets having been in operation at the same location on Spruce Street since the 1930’s and open all year long.
- Local and Seasonal Farmer’s Markets: There are local and seasonal farmers markets, large and small, spread throughout the County nearly every day of the week during the growing season and aside from fresh products, many of the vendors offer value-added items such as baked goods and jams. The largest community markets are in Hopewell Borough, Lawrenceville, Princeton, West Windsor, Trenton and Pennington. West Windsor also has a winter market and Robbinsville has a new hydroponic farm operation offering greens and herbs for sale.

d. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA): With a CSA, the consumer pre-pays for a season’s “share” and receives a weekly supply of produce. A list of CSA’s operating in and near Mercer County can be found on the Local Harvest website (<https://www.localharvest.org/>). The largest CSAs in the County are Honey Brook Farm and Chickadee Creek Farm in Hopewell, and Cherry Grove Organic Farm in Lawrence. Honey Brook, founded in 1991, is by far the largest, with 3,200 members and is the oldest



and largest certified organic CSA in New Jersey.

e. Agricultural Education and Market Research Coordination: The Mercer County office of the Rutgers Cooperative Extension is a sponsor of workshops and a very helpful resource for local farmers. There is a full-time Agriculture and Natural Resources County Extension Agent and the Mercer office's programming focuses on commercial agriculture and horticulture, environmental and resource management issues, farm business development and marketing, pesticide safety and training, integrated pest management (IPM), farm food safety and farm risk management. The Mercer CADB and Agent work closely together to monitor the farms in the County's preservation program and answer questions from the farming community.

2. Businesses

a. Input Suppliers and Services – Within Mercer County, there are few support services for the agricultural industry. When asked where they get agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizer, chemicals, etc.) local farmers indicate that they go to Grow Mark in Burlington County, Farmers Brokerage and Supply in Monmouth County, and the Plant Food Company in Middlesex County.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Salem County had a very good website for farmers to find suppliers, services and many other resources at <http://salem.rutgers.edu/greenpages/index.html>. As of this writing, this website no longer exists, but an update is in progress.

b. Product Distributors and Processors – When asked where they bring their agricultural products, growers of the vastly predominant field crops (see Table 9) like corn for grain, soybeans, and wheat indicate that they go to Perdue in Salem and Cumberland Counties and also into Pennsylvania. Vegetable farmers, of which sweet corn and pumpkins are the dominant products, sell direct to the consumer from their farms, or to Hunts Point Market in New York, and also to local supermarkets and roadside stands. Tri County Auction in East Windsor, a traditional auction house that hosts a produce auction three nights a week, is the only existing wholesale market support for the industry in Mercer County. In addition, the Trenton Farmers Market provides a daily year-round direct marketing outlet for farmers – as it has been doing since the 1930's. However, the number of participating farmers is limited by the Market's member's rules.

In 2008, a Lawrence Township entrepreneur, Mikey Azarra, (formerly with Northeast Organic Farming Association) initiated a small business called Zone 7 that on a weekly basis, links farmers who have product to sell—typically herbs, fruits, and vegetables—with restaurant chefs who desire such products.

Finally, there are several farm operators in the county that process their own product. For example: DiPaola farm and Lee Farm grow and process turkeys; Terhune Orchards manufactures cider and baked goods from their farm product; several horticultural nurseries do direct sales to consumers; and the wineries process their own grapes.

3. Anticipated Agricultural Trends

a. Market Location: Mercer County is centrally located in a large metropolitan area and has a substantial home-owning, mobile, affluent, and well-educated population. As identified earlier in this Chapter, many farmers take advantage of this population by marketing directly to the consumer either from CSAs, on-site farm stands or from local seasonal markets (for descriptions of these farm markets, see the beginning of this Chapter). Organic and grass-fed animal farms also take advantage of this population. Some sweet corn growers sell direct to local supermarkets while farmers growing Asian products transport their product to the north Jersey/New York City area.



b. Product Demand: As evidenced in Chapter II, Table 8, the fruit and vegetable sectors continue to be strong in the County. The grape sector grew in the last 10 years, reflecting the success of the three wineries in the County. This reflects a market described above that is well suited to various forms of niche farming (e.g. wineries), roadside produce stands, and organic farming/CSAs. Equine boarding and riding operations increased over the last 10 years and while nursery acreage decreased somewhat, the sector has remained relatively stable over time. Although traditional field crops continue to decline, equine operations (need for hay and straw) and the continuing strong market for field corn and soybeans aid that sector.

4. Agricultural Support Needs

a. Agricultural Facilities and Infrastructure: Support for the agricultural industry is important to Mercer County. However, at this time the County does not intend to play a lead role in new agricultural facilities and infrastructure. Other counties do so to some extent (especially south of Mercer) and we would also encourage the State of New Jersey to do so.

b. Flexible Land Use Regulations: Mercer County's six municipalities with substantial farmland (East Windsor, Hamilton, Hopewell Twp., Lawrence, Robbinsville, and West Windsor) all have Right to Farm Ordinances and all but West Windsor require a subdivision approval notification clause that runs with the land stating that farming is adjacent and a protected use. However, there are other areas where municipal sensitivity to the land use needs of agriculture can be helpful. They are:

- Setting specific buffering standards for non-farm development adjacent to working farms that help to limit trespassing and littering and also protect the residential landowner from dust and spray materials spread during farming activities, thus minimizing potential Right to Farm conflicts;
- Exemptions for certain farm structures from building height restrictions;
- Allowing additional principal dwelling units on farms in order to meet the needs of farmers for additional housing for their children or for farm managers;
- Exemptions from setback requirements when farmers seek to expand an existing nonconforming structure;
- Flexible fencing ordinances that make allowances for types of fencing on farms that might not be desirable in residential zones, in consideration of the farmers' need to prevent wildlife damage; and
- Permit fee reduction for agricultural buildings.

c. Agriculture Representation in Economic Development Organizations: We are not aware of any specific representation by the agricultural industry in any local economic development organizations.

5. Agricultural Support Implementation

The County of Mercer supports its agricultural industry primarily through farmland preservation and Right to Farm laws. As mentioned previously, the County also leases some preserved open space to farmers and has a growing deer management program on its parkland. While it recognizes that infrastructure support is important, the County does not have the resources to comprehensively pursue this.



Chapter VII: Natural Resource Conservation

- | **A. Natural Resource Protection Coordination**
- | **B. Natural Resource Protection Programs**
- | **C. Water Resources**
- | **D. Waste Management Planning**
- | **E. Energy Conservation Planning**
- | **F. Outreach and Incentives**



Chapter VII: Natural Resource Protection



Google Images; Stream Corridor

A. Natural Resource Protection Coordination

The Mercer County Agriculture Development Board recognizes that conservation of natural resources is a necessary part of farming and farmland preservation. Annual Deed of Easement Monitoring visits are utilized as an opportunity to talk to individual farmers and landowners about their Conservation Plans and resources and programs available from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, NJDA, NRCS, FSA, and other related agencies. Materials are enclosed with pre-monitoring letters and as monitoring handouts. The CADB also provides information to landowners via e-mail where possible.

The following organizations are valuable resources for coordinating natural resource protection in Mercer County:

1. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA)

These two agencies of the federal government are two of the most important organizations serving the local agricultural community. With offices in neighboring Monmouth County, staff from these agencies provide invaluable assistance and funding to Mercer's agricultural community towards protecting and conserving agricultural resources. There are numerous programs supported by these agencies and they are both promoted and well received throughout the agricultural community.

The NRCS, "provides assistance to private landowners (including farmers) in the conservation and management of their soil, water, and other natural resources. Local, state, and federal agencies and policymakers also rely on (its) expertise." The NRCS provides technical assistance suited to the natural resource issues that are specific to a farmer's needs, with ample opportunity for cost shares and financial incentives (<http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov>).

The local NRCS and FSA offices serving Mercer County are located at the Monmouth Agriculture Building, 4000 Kozloski Road, Suite D, Freehold, NJ. Mercer County farmers may utilize this local NRCS office for assistance. NRCS will also reach out directly to landowners if they know of a farmer who is in need of technical assistance, or can use the guidance of the NRCS staff.



The local NRCS office also helps to prepare Conservation Plans for Mercer County farmers. These Conservation Plans include strategies to conserve soil and water, and may also include conservation practices for flora, fauna, and clean air. If all five elements are included, they are referred to as Resource Management Plans.

Within one year of selling their development easement, owners of preserved farms are required to enter into a Conservation Plan. The Plans are also a prerequisite to apply for natural resource conservation program grants such as the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

The local NRCS office administers these conservation program grants, which offer financial incentives to support conservation projects, including stream riparian buffers and wildlife habitat.

Administration of these grant programs includes field visits to prepare the Conservation Plans, preparation of grant program contracts, assistance with installation of contract conservation practices, and inspection of farms to verify contract conservation practices are implemented and maintained. It should be noted that the Mercer County Soil Conservation District gives final approval on all Conservation Plans and program contracts, and the USDA, Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists NRCS in administration of an additional natural resource conservation program entitled Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

The phone number for the local NRCS office is (732) 462-0075, and the District Conservationist is Clare Flanagan. Ms. Flanagan and her staff can be contacted by Mercer County farmers for assistance and for more information on the availability of NRCS programs in the County (<http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/>).

An additional resource for Mercer County farmers is the “*Field Office Technical Guide*” (Guide), which is published by NRCS. It contains technical information about the development and implementation of soil, water, air, flora, and fauna resource conservation practices, and is used to develop Conservation Plans. Each state has its own Guide, which lists and discusses conservation practices particular to a state. These conservation practices improve water and soil quality, improve plant condition, and in some instances can improve air quality.

2. The Mercer County Soil Conservation District

This is another valuable resource to the agricultural community. The district reviews and approves natural resource conservation and assistance program grants. It also assists in agricultural conservation planning, agricultural conservation cost-sharing program grants, application of organic materials on agricultural land, agricultural water supply and management, soil erosion and sediment control, storm water discharge authorization, and soil surveys.

The District is one of 15 local soil conservation districts which are coordinated and supported by the State Soil Conservation Committee. Their programs “provide engineering services and regulatory guidance to soil conservation districts, homeowners, engineers, planners and virtually all development activities. The Division provides technical standards applicable to construction and mining sites regulated by the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act program ...” (<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/anr/nrc/soil.html>).

The Mercer County SCD office is located at 508 Hughes Drive, Hamilton Square, NJ and the District Director is Paul Schiariti. He and his staff are available to provide assistance to farmers. The phone number is (609) 586-9603. The Mercer County SCD is involved in review of Conservation Plans and



grant program contracts, and must give final approval to both (<http://mercercsd.org/>).

3. Rutgers University

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) provides both field and technical research which is focused on best management practices for farmers, to ensure that the natural resources upon which it is based are protected.

Relative to natural resource conservation, the RCE offers the Agriculture and Natural Resource Management program. This education program provides “non-biased, research based educational programs and services for both homeowners and commercial producers. Services offered by extension personnel include soil testing, insect identification, plant disease diagnosis, and pest management recommendations for agricultural operations”, as well as “educational publications covering a wide range of agricultural topics”. Mercer RCE employs a full-time Agriculture and Natural Resources County Agent, Meredith Melendez. Ms. Melendez provides technical assistance to farmers and farm employees. Mercer RCE also employs a full-time Horticulturist, Margaret Pickoff. Ms. Pickoff provides science-based information to homeowners and coordinates the Mercer County Environmental Stewards Program. All of the resources of RCE, including the Agricultural and Natural Resources Extension Agents, can be accessed by contacting RCE of Mercer County. The RCE of Mercer County is located at 1440 Parkside Avenue, Ewing, NJ. The office can be reached at (609) 989-6830 and the website is: <https://mercercnjaes.rutgers.edu/>.

B. Natural Resource Protection Programs

1. SADC Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) provides these cost-share grants to farms that are permanently preserved, or are enrolled in a term eight-year or 16-year preservation program, with funding priority given to preserved farms and then to farms in the 16 and eight-year programs. The purpose of the grants and program is to provide funds for soil and water conservation practices and the SADC provides up to a 50% cost-share

The types of soil and water conservation projects funded by SADC include soil erosion and sediment control systems (terrace systems), control of farmland pollution (stream protection; sediment retention, erosion or water control systems; animal waste control facilities; and agri-chemical handling facilities), the impoundment, storage and management of water for agricultural purposes (diversions; water impoundment reservoirs; irrigation systems; and, drainage systems), and management of land to achieve maximum agricultural productivity (land shaping or grading).

Landowners initially apply to the Mercer County Soil Conservation District and then applications are forwarded to the NJ State Soil Conservation Committee for approval and recommendation to the SADC, who provides final approval. Many of the County’s eligible farms have availed themselves of this program. The latest details about the grant program can be found on the SADC’s website at: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/postpres/>.

2. SADC Deer Fencing Grant Program

The SADC’s Deer Fencing Grant Program provides 50% matching grants, up to \$200 per acre or a maximum of \$20,000, for deer fencing on permanently preserved farms to protect against crop losses. The grants cover materials and installation and require participants to attend a training session or watch a training video on proper installation, as well as use SADC-approved materials. The fencing must be



maintained for a minimum of 10 years. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. The latest details about the grant program can be found on the SADC's website at:

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/postpres/>.

3. Federal Conservation Programs

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018

The 2018 Farm Bill directs U.S. farm and food policy through 2023 and continues to provide funding for all previously authorized federal agricultural conservation programs, albeit with some changes. For example, it reauthorizes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the two largest working lands programs, with amendments and with less funding than the previous Farm Bill. It also reauthorizes and expands the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the largest land retirement program. These and some of the other commonly used programs are described in more detail below. All programs are voluntary and are designed to provide farmers with financial incentives for practices that protect soil and water resources. They are administered by the local NRCS office and Soil Conservation District. More information and application instructions can be found by consulting the NRCS website at

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/>.

Working Lands Programs: EQIP and CSP

These two programs account for more than half of all conservation program funding in the 2018 bill. EQIP is a conservation program in which farmers receive financial and technical assistance with structural, vegetative and land management conservation practices that address soil, water, and grazing land concerns. As of this writing, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) no longer exists, but elements of it were rolled into the EQIP program. CSP provides technical and financial assistance to farmers to maintain and improve existing conservation systems. The 2018 authorization includes a new grassland conservation initiative.

The Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) program is a subprogram under EQIP. The aim of the CIG program is to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches and technologies which are innovative, in conjunction with agricultural production. Funds are awarded as competitive match grants.

Land Retirement and Easement Programs: CRP, CREP and ACEP

Through the CRP and one of its subprograms, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), agricultural producers voluntarily retire land to protect environmentally sensitive areas, decrease soil erosion, provide and restore wildlife habitat, and protect ground and surface water. Examples of conservation practices include riparian buffers and filter strips for water quality, and contour buffer strips to reduce soil erosion. These programs provide annual rental payments to farmers for the land taken out of production.

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) is the replacement for the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). ACEP provides financial and technical assistance through agricultural land easements (ALE) that limit non-agricultural uses or wetland reserve easements (WRE) that protect and restore wetlands. ACEP ALE easements are the federal equivalent of New Jersey's SADC easements and can be used to match SADC funding. See the NRCS website for more information at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/nj/programs/easements/acep/>.



(Source: Congressional Research Service report titled, “The 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334): Summary and Side-by-Side Comparison”, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45525>)

4. New Jersey’s Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)

The NJ LIP was a federal grant program created by Congress in 2002; according to the state’s website, the last appropriation was in FY 2007 and funds had to be expended by 2015 (https://www.njfishandwildlife.com/ensp/lip_prog.htm). LIP provided technical and financial assistance to private landowners interested in conserving threatened and endangered plant and animal species on their property. Project examples included vernal pool restoration, prescribed burns, and stream fencing. The State was particularly focused on grassland within regional priority areas and lands adjacent to Wildlife Management Areas and other permanently protected areas.

C. Water Resources

1. Supply Characteristics

Bedrock geology and soil types determine groundwater yields, surface and aquifer recharge capabilities, septic suitability and agricultural suitability. To the north of Route 1, the County is largely located within the rolling hills of the Piedmont Physiographic Province (dominated by shale and sandstone). South of Route 1, the County falls into the flatter Coastal Plain (composed of gravel, sand, silt and clay). The soil types in the County generally are level, gently rolling, well-drained loamy and shale soils underlain by red shale. The soils have been historically well-suited for field crops, hay, pasture for livestock, and vegetables and fruits in areas with adequate water holding capacity.

Groundwater supplies streams with base-flow to keep them flowing during normal periods without rain. In Mercer County there are eight main aquifer formations supplying wells and stream base-flows. Significant streams that are or can be sources of water supply for farms within Mercer County’s existing farm areas are: the Stony Brook and Jacobs Creek in Hopewell Township; Crosswicks Creek and Doctors Creek in Hamilton; Assunpink Creek in Robbinsville and West Windsor; and Cedar Swamp Brook in East Windsor.

2. Agricultural Demand and Supply Limitations

The dominant field crops in Mercer County are corn, soybean and hay. These crops rely on rain and some groundwater for water needs. However, the sectors of nursery and greenhouse, sod, and vegetable farming are more dependent upon reliable surface and ground water sources. As non-agricultural water demands increase in a suburban county such as Mercer, the negative impact on groundwater levels intensify. Many of the streams identified above undergo very low flow conditions in late summer and although wells on farms do not as yet seem adversely impacted, it may be just a matter of time given suburban growth and climate change.

Mercer County Extension Service has indicated that farmers are not having difficulty with obtaining water allocation permits issued by the Bureau of Water Allocation, Division of Water Supply, NJDEP. This Bureau is responsible for ensuring that surface and ground water diversions do not exceed the sustainable yield of available water resources and do not adversely impact existing users of that resource.

3. Conservation and Allocation Strategies

Water conservation strategies should be maximized where possible. Many of Mercer’s nursery farmers already implement conservation strategies such as drip irrigation. Some other possible strategies are



watering crops in the cooler parts of the day and reusing rain water from roofs - something that is being explored by at least one greenhouse operator in the County. At least one of Mercer's several cattle operators (a preserved farm owner) utilizes automatic watering troughs.

D. Waste Management Planning

Some of Mercer's equine and livestock owners already work with the NRCS to develop manure management plans, while others have put in place their own reasonably effective means of waste management. During its annual monitoring visits to preserved farms with animal operations, the CADB inquires about and observes the way waste is handled. In addition, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture has animal waste regulations and farms that meet the minimum animal weight and manure criteria must prepare formal plans for the NJDA. More information can be found at:

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/agriassist/animalwaste.html>.

The County's recycling program, under the direction of the Mercer County Improvement Authority, does not accept agriculture related products (nursery plastics, plastic mulch, tires, etc.) for recycling at this time. However, nursery and greenhouse film can be recycled at the Occupational Training Center in Mount Holly, Burlington County.

The NJDA has an Agricultural Recycling Program. More information is available at their website,

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/nrc/recycling.html>.

E. Energy Conservation Planning

The SADC has a formal policy, adopted in 2010, for energy generation on farms, available on their website at: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/postpres/#8>. It regulates the installation of biomass, wind and solar energy generation systems on preserved farms and sets criteria for farmland assessment and Right to Farm protection for preserved and unpreserved farms related to these energy systems. Preserved farms can install these systems if they do not interfere with the agricultural use of the property and are used to provide energy for the farm or reduce its energy bill. Landowners must get SADC permission before installing systems. See the SADC's website for the application and more details.

1. Solar Energy

Solar energy can be harnessed via the installation of solar panels. This harnessed or stored energy can then be used to create electricity and provide heat. If excess electricity is generated, it can be sold back to the electric grid for a profit. The overall use of solar panels has greatly increased in New Jersey. EQIP does provide some funding for solar panels, and farmers interested in using this alternate energy source can contact the local NRCS office for more information.

At least two of Mercer County's farmers have installed solar power systems on barn roofs to make electricity. Note that per SADC regulations, preserved farmland cannot be used for commercial solar farms.

Other programs available to help agricultural producers take advantage of this technology include U.S. Department of Energy, "Solar Energy Technology Program", <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/solar-energy-technologies-office> and the "Solar Energy for New Jersey Agriculture" work and information sheet at <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/pdf/solarenergyguide.pdf>. Solar energy is one of the fastest



growing sectors in the alternative energy market, and more Mercer County farmers should take advantage of this energy and money saving technology.

2. Wind Energy

The power of a strong, consistent wind can be captured by turbines or windmills, turning such power into electricity. Expanding and evolving technology is making this option more attractive to farmers as a way to cut energy costs. As far as we are aware, there are no farms with electricity generating wind turbines in Mercer County, although the County has ample and consistent enough wind power to make turbine energy feasible. One possible roadblock to use of wind turbines is that few, if any, municipal ordinances allow the use of wind turbines. If this is indeed the case then the Mercer County CADB should work with the County Planning Department, and local towns, to study and approve wind turbines as an allowed use.

3. Ethanol & Biodiesel

Ethanol is a renewable fuel made by distilling the starch and sugar in a variety of plants. It can then be blended into gasoline as an “oxygenate”, reducing air pollution. Its use may also reduce dependence on foreign oil, and the harmful environmental effects of oil drilling. Also, unlike the gasoline additive MTBE, ethanol will not contaminate groundwater.

Petroleum diesel is an emitter of sulfur emissions, a major air pollutant. Biodiesel, made from the oils of soybeans, is an alternative to petroleum diesel. This organic fuel can be blended and used in diesel engines without modification. The result is a significant reduction of the harmful fumes produced by pure petroleum diesel. The dominance of field crops in the County could position Mercer farmers to financially capitalize on ethanol-blended fuels and biodiesel.

F. Outreach and Incentives

The NJ Department of Agriculture (NJDA) provides the following information on renewable energy grant programs, which can help encourage the use of these energy sources. More information is available on the NJDA’s website at: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/grants/energy.html>.

New Jersey’s Clean Energy Program: Administered by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, this program provides financial incentives to install clean energy systems, including fuel cells, solar energy, small wind and sustainable biomass equipment. Financial incentives are in the form of rebates for 30% – 70% of system costs.

Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program: This is a grant and loan guarantee program for agricultural producers and rural small businesses. It provides funds to purchase renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements.

Biomass Research and Development Initiative Grants: The United States Departments of Agriculture and Energy support development of biomass energy. Grants are available for research, development, and demonstrations on bio-based products, bio-energy, biofuels, bio-power and additional related processes. In the recent past, grants have focused on development and demonstration projects that lead to greater commercialization.

New Jersey SmartStart Building: Through this program, utilities pay up to 50% of the cost of an energy audit up to \$10,000, with the goal of reducing energy costs through building renovations or incorporating energy savings into a new building project from its inception



Chapter VIII: Agricultural Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion

| A. Existing Agricultural Industry Support

/ B. Other Strategies



Chapter VIII: Agricultural Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion



Lee Acres Preserved Farm, East Windsor; Dan Pace



SADC Image



Terhune Orchards Preserved Farm, Lawrence (website)

A. Existing Agricultural Industry Support

1. Right to Farm and Agricultural Mediation Programs

a. Right to Farm Law

The Right to Farm law protects farmers from nearby residents who complain about normal farming operations such as noise, odors, and dust. It also protects farmers from unnecessary municipal ordinances or regulations that may restrict farming operations, as long as the operations are conducted in accordance with best management practices. The State of New Jersey adopted the Right to Farm Act in 1983 and amended it in 1998. The Act protects, “commercial farm operations from nuisance action, where recognized methods and techniques of agricultural production are applied, while, at the same time,” acknowledges, “the need to provide a proper balance among the varied and sometimes conflicting



interests of all lawful activities in New Jersey.” The Act stipulates the types of activities a farm may engage in as well as the steps for various agencies to follow in reviewing disputes regarding any farm activity. See the SADC’s model Right to Farm ordinance in Appendix V.

The SADC works to maximize protections for commercial farmers under the Right to Farm Act by developing best management practices for agricultural activities, called Agricultural Management Practices (AMPs), tracking Right to Farm cases, offering a conflict resolution process, and reviewing rules proposed by other state agencies for the impact they may have on agriculture. As of this writing, the SADC has 12 AMPs specifying standards for apiary, poultry manure, food processing by-product application, commercial vegetable and tree fruit production, natural resource conservation, on-farm compost operations, fencing installation for wildlife control, equine activities, aquaculture, solar energy and on-farm direct marketing. The Mercer CADB believes it would be beneficial for the SADC to adopt an animal processing AMP. There is a need for more facilities in the County and it is a land use that may be controversial. The CADB also believes that an AMP for value-added products would be useful, as County farmers often process the output of a different farm and then sell it. In addition, it will be important for the State to provide clear guidance about the rules for hemp and marijuana production and processing. A New Jersey Hemp Farming Act was adopted in 2019 and it is possible that marijuana may be legalized in the state soon.

In order to qualify for Right to Farm protection a farm must meet the definition of a “commercial farm” in the Right to Farm Act; be operated in conformance with federal and state law; comply with AMPs recommended by the SADC, or Site Specific AMPs (SSAMPs) developed by the local CADB at the request of a commercial farmer; must not be a direct threat to public health and safety; and, must be located in an area where agriculture was a permitted use under municipal zoning ordinances as of December 31, 1997, or thereafter; or, must have been an operating farm as of December 31, 1997.

All Right to Farm complaints or issues that can be brought before the CADB are first handled with fact finding, and efforts to resolve differences between the parties. The mediation can be informal or, if the parties agree, the SADC will provide mediation or conflict resolution at no cost to the participants through its Agricultural Mediation Program. If a formal complaint is filed with the CADB, a determination as to whether the farm falls within the parameters established by the Act for Right to Farm protection is made. Once eligibility is determined, additional fact finding and technical review occurs and the issue is given a public, quasi-judicial hearing at the county level. After all information has been considered, the CADB will make a determination as to whether the agricultural activity is protected by the Right to Farm Act or whether changes to the operation will be required. If the issue is not resolved by the CADB determination, either party in the dispute may take the matter for a subsequent appeal and determination to the New Jersey Office of Administrative Law.

The following table identifies the six municipalities which have Right to Farm ordinances. No other municipality in Mercer County has significant farmland or a Right to Farm ordinance.



Table 17. Right to Farm Ordinances, Mercer County. (Source: Municipal websites)

	Notification Clause*	Adoption Year	Ordinance Number/Section
East Windsor	Y	rev. 1996	Sect. 26-1
Hamilton	Y	1991	Ord. 91-007, Sect. 550-136
Hopewell Township	Y	1993	Ord. 93-957, Sect. 22-1
Lawrence	Y	1983, rev. 1986	Ord. 1046-86, Sect. 152-1
Robbinsville	Y	1985, rev. 1999	Ord. 99-14, Sect. 98-1
West Windsor	N	1982, rev. 1999, 2006	Ord. 82-52, Sect. 200-146

*Right to Farm notification imposed and running with the land on new subdivision lots adjacent to existing farms.

All the ordinances identified above, except for West Windsor Township, are nearly identical and appear to follow a model ordinance circa 1985. West Windsor’s ordinance generally reflects the same rights to certain farming activities as the other ordinances but does so in an abbreviated way. This early model ordinance is generally consistent with, but not as comprehensive, as the current State Model Ordinance, which is available on the SADC’s website at: <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/>. Municipalities should continue to update their ordinances as new guidance is available from the state. The County plans to host a Right to Farm workshop for its municipalities to ensure that local officials understand its implementation.

b. Site Specific Agricultural Management Practices (SSAMP)

In addition to AMP’s promulgated by the SADC as described above, the Right to Farm law allows CADB’s to promulgate SSAMP’s for individual farming operations. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 2:76-2, “Site specific agricultural management practice” means a specific operation or practice which has been recommended by the appropriate board, or in a county where no board exists, the Committee, to constitute a generally accepted agricultural operation or practice.”

A SSAMP provides additional protection to a farm operation by preemptively protecting the operation from nuisance complaints. In addition, New Jersey courts have ruled that under certain conditions, a SSAMP can also preempt local land use law:

Initial Decision (2007 N.J. AGEN LEXIS 239) adopted, which affirmed a county agriculture development board’s approval of construction of a barn where the permit applicant, who operated a commercial farm pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 4:1C-9, was engaged in an accepted agricultural operation or practice and consequently had a legitimate agriculturally based reason under the Right to Farm Act for preemption of municipal land use authority. Application of the municipal ordinance would have entirely precluded applicant’s ability to construct the barn, not merely restrict it, and moreover no testimony was offered to remotely suggest that fire or other emergency vehicles would be unable to reach the applicant’s property, as access to the property was identical whether or not a barn would be built. In re Petty (Appeal of Resolution Issued by Warren County Agric. Dev. Bd.), OAL Dkt. No. ADC 05370-06, Final Decision (June 28, 2007).



c. The Agricultural Mediation Program

As described on the SADC website (see <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rtfprogram/>), the State's Right to Farm Program has established an informal conflict resolution by mediation process in recognition of the following:

- That the formal process can sometimes seem adversarial and leave relationships strained, and
- That there are benefits to resolving conflicts in a less formal fashion, such as forging better relationships and preventing additional conflicts in the future.

To use the mediation program, both parties must voluntarily request mediation. Each mediation session is facilitated by a trained, impartial mediator whose job is not to impose a solution but to rather facilitate discussion. The mediator helps disputing parties examine their mutual problems, identify and consider options, and determine if they can agree on a solution. Because the mediator has no decision-making authority, successful mediation is based on the voluntary participation and cooperation of all the parties.

d. Farmland Assessment

Farmland Assessment is a tax incentive which reduces local property taxes on actively farmed land. This tax incentive is made possible by the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964, N.J.S.A. 54:4-23.1 et seq.

As of this writing, the most significant elements of the law are:

- Land must consist of at least five contiguous farmed and/or woodland management plan acres;
- Land under or adjoining a farmhouse is not counted towards the minimum five acres;
- Except for land managed under a Woodland Management Plan, gross sales of products from the land must average at least \$1,000 per year for the first five acres, plus an average of \$5.00 per acre for each acre over five. Farms under a Woodland Management Plan must average at least \$500 per year for the first five acres, plus \$0.50 per acre for each acre over five;
- The land must be actively farmed for the two years preceding the tax year being applied for; and
- Homes, barns and other farm structures are not farmland assessed.

As illustrated in Chapter I, Table 2 (Municipal acreage column) and Table 6 (total acres ag use row), the six municipalities in Mercer County (East Windsor, Hamilton, Hopewell, Lawrence, Robbinsville, and West Windsor) with significant farmland have a total municipal acreage of 116,800 acres, of which, 26,291 acres, or 22.5%, are Farmland Assessed. Again, it is important to note that these six municipalities have **97%** of all farmland assessed land in Mercer County.

B. Other Strategies

1. Agricultural Vehicle Movements / Routes

Mercer County farmers need to move heavy, slow moving agricultural equipment over local, county and sometimes state roads to access unconnected fields and barns. It is their usual practice to do this very early in the morning to avoid conflicts with other vehicles as much as possible. The County and municipalities could consider posting more agricultural vehicle signage at key locations along roads and at bridge crossings.



2. Agricultural Labor Housing and Training

a. Labor Housing

Many sectors of the agricultural industry that are important in Mercer County are those in which an adequate or specialized labor supply is integral to the operation, namely fruit and vegetables, equine, wineries and nursery. The CADB has acted on several labor housing requests for these sectors and has been guided during its review by the Deed of Easement and its own policy for agricultural labor housing (see Appendix: CADB Policies). As with a replacement housing request on the farm Premises, the CADB considers, among other things, the size, number and type of laborers to be housed, and impact on the agricultural operation. After the CADB acts, the request is forwarded to the SADC whose staff then reviews the request using their criteria.

b. Training

One special educational source for training Mercer County agricultural land owners and operators is the Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Its programs and outreach efforts focus on commercial agriculture and horticulture, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental and resource management issues, farm business development and marketing, pesticide safety and training, integrated pest management (IPM), and other related subjects.

3. Wildlife Management Strategies

Wildlife management is very important for the retention of agriculture. Crop losses to birds, deer and other animals can be significant. Netting, fencing, hunting, air cannons and other techniques are all employed by Mercer County farmers to deter crop depredation. The Mercer County Park Commission runs a deer management program on Baldpate Mountain, Mercer Meadows and Mercer County Park. Their goals are to improve the ecological health of the parks, reduce deer pressure for farmers and improve community health by reducing car-deer collisions and tick populations. All three parks are in close proximity to preserved and unpreserved farmland and the hundreds of deer taken by hunters in the parks over the past few years has been beneficial to these farms. During the 2018-19 season, hunters removed 298 deer from the parks. The Park Commission also performs spotlight deer surveys, trail camera studies and forest health vegetation monitoring annually to track the deer population in the County. Data from 2019 indicate the population continues to be very high: results from the Mercer County Park spotlight survey were 50-74 deer per square mile compared to the 10-25 deer per square mile benchmark for ecological health. Mercer County also allows farmers who lease land from the County to hunt during the regular state deer season and obtain state depredation permits to reduce the pressure on their crops. As of this writing, there are 11 leases on 479 acres of land.

4. Agriculture Education and Promotion

Farmland preservation must go beyond the purchase of development easements and make the effort to ensure that the agricultural industry remains not only a viable component of the County's economy, but a major part of the County's character and lifestyle.

Education and training for farmers promotes a more efficient and productive business environment. Rutgers Cooperative Extension Offices in Mercer County, and throughout the State, are actively doing just that.

The County of Mercer supports the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's commitment to promoting agritourism through the New Jersey Office of Travel and Tourism, the *Jersey Fresh* website, the



distribution of printed materials, and other forms of advertisement.

Mercer County farmers are very active in the “Farmers Against Hunger” food rescue program to distribute produce to organizations dedicated to helping people who are hungry.

Several Mercer County farmers open their farms to elementary and middle school student groups to educate them about agriculture.

The Mercer County 4H has a growing group of young people interested in equine activities. They meet in Hopewell Township at Howell Living History Farm – a popular County facility dedicated to its donor’s vision of:

“a (turn of the century) Living History Farm, where the way of living in its early days could not only be seen but actually tried by the public, especially children - milking a cow, gathering eggs in a homemade basket- helping to shear sheep, carding wool, spinning and weaving...”

More information about Howell Living History Farm can be found at: <http://www.howellfarm.org/>.



Howell Farm, Hopewell; Dan Pace

APPENDICES

- | **I.** **Farms with Agricultural Easements Held by County of Mercer**
- | **II.** **Farms with Agricultural Easements Held by State of New Jersey**
- | **III.** **Preserved Farm Acreage by Municipality: County and State-held Easements**
- | **IV.** **Adopted CADB Policies**
- | **V.** **Model Right to Farm Ordinance**
- | **VI.** **Mercer County Farmland Preservation and Project Area Maps**



Appendix I. Farms with Agricultural Easements Held by County of Mercer

Name	Municipality	Easement Acres	Exception Acres	Year Preserved	Easement Purchase Price ¹		State Cost-Share ²
Doerler (Hendrickson)	Hamilton	121.82	0.00	1988	\$926,242.40		\$463,121.20
Hart, Jr.	Hopewell	15.01	0.00	1990	\$1,289,065.88		\$1,031,252.70
Hart, Jr. (Stuart)	Hopewell	58.82	0.00	1990			
Lyons (Niederer)	Hopewell	63.22	0.00	1991	\$1,360,872.00		\$777,610.00
Niederer	Hopewell	80.09	0.00	1991			
Kim (Facey)	Hamilton	142.43	0.00	1994	\$566,420.40		\$368,173.26
Skeba (Skeba-Mellman)	East Windsor	106.26	0.00	1994	\$329,406.00		\$214,113.90
Liang (Sakowsky)	Hamilton	62.48	0.00	1995	\$294,798.10	*	\$201,872.34
Mount	Lawrence	52.36	1.30	1995	\$471,204.00		\$282,722.40
McLaughlin (Kessler)	Robbinsville	38.78	0.00	1996	\$190,022.00		\$129,519.00
Thangaraju (Ponczek)	Robbinsville	55.62	0.00	1996	\$137,278.75		\$105,567.36
DiDonato (PRL)	Lawrence	65.66	2.00	1997	\$798,786.73		\$443,861.60
Institute for Advanced Study	Princeton	223.00	0.00	1997			
Meirs (Blasig, Jr.)	East Windsor and Robbinsville	136.95	0.00	1997	\$484,578.49		\$328,495.76



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres	Exception Acres	Year Preserved	Easement Purchase Price ¹		State Cost-Share ²
Voorhees (Blasig, Sr.)	Robbinsville	43.13	0.00	1997	\$222,813.09		\$149,822.59
Mallesch (Warcholak)	Robbinsville	31.15	2.00	1998	\$189,365.25		\$122,708.68
D'Amico	Robbinsville	87.88	2.00	1998	\$458,739.34		\$308,456.33
DiDonato	Lawrence	83.57	3.45	1998	\$822,002.75		\$534,301.66
Kosek (County of Mercer)	Hopewell	132.94	2.88	1998			
McBride (County of Mercer)	Hopewell	91.62	2.00	1998	\$2,053,936.25	*	\$1,335,058.56
Mount (Johnson)	Lawrence	65.34	0.19	1998	\$637,067.93		\$414,094.15
Skeba	East Windsor	57.59	2.00	1998	\$410,307.38		\$256,981.99
Brittain (Skeba)	Hamilton	52.54	2.00	1999			
DePaulis (Runge)	Hamilton	118.52	2.00	1999	\$647,614.12		\$430,274.82
Ellis (Samu)	Hamilton	100.64	0.00	1999	\$599,939.64		\$389,900.77
Pyrros (Skeba)	Hamilton	39.59	2.00	1999	\$584,054.72		\$374,846.32
Radvany	Hopewell	23.18	0.00	1999	\$392,296.48		\$254,992.71
Takter (Baldochino)	East Windsor	96.81	2.00	1999	\$698,837.63		\$454,244.46



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres	Exception Acres	Year Preserved	Easement Purchase Price ¹		State Cost-Share ²
Weidel	Hopewell	36.64	0.00	1999	\$322,542.00		\$225,779.40
Wojcik (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	81.37	2.00	1999	\$406,850.00		\$276,658.00
Wojcik (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	99.57	1.00	1999	\$1,115,056.00		\$669,033.00
Ginsberg/Kutzer-Rice (Constantino)	East Windsor	9.00	0.50	2000	\$81,000.00		\$29,763.00
Gris (Mastoris)	Robbinsville	37.89	2.00	2000	\$207,988.65		\$138,083.66
Jany (Twp of West Windsor)	West Windsor	54.44	0.00	2000	\$631,640.10		\$410,566.07
Jingoli (Martindell)	Hopewell	42.85	0.00	2000	\$478,228.32		\$286,936.99
Kyle (Seip)	East Windsor	17.55	1.00	2000	\$105,145.80		\$68,344.77
Radvany	Hopewell	17.40	0.00	2000	\$192,295.20		\$115,377.12
Benioff	Hopewell	99.91	0.15	2001	\$932,631.10		\$568,718.44
Chan (Kuo)	Robbinsville	39.01	2.00	2001	\$218,447.60		\$144,328.33
DiDonato (Mercer Chmiel)	Lawrence	29.40	0.00	2001	\$1,200,000.00	*	\$476,721.00
DiDonato (Chmiel)	Lawrence	12.57	6.00	2001			
Gabert (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	50.96	2.44	2001	\$222,764.52		\$154,041.67



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres	Exception Acres	Year Preserved	Easement Purchase Price ¹		State Cost-Share ²
Zheng and Zhu	Robbinsville	78.83	0.00	2001	\$414,211.70		\$278,060.31
Fedor	Hopewell	57.63	1.50	2002	\$409,837.05		\$245,902.23
Kyle	East Windsor	21.00	0.00	2002	\$107,640.00		\$72,450.00
County of Mercer/Zygmunt	Hamilton	56.12	0.00	2003	\$1,014,075.50	*	
Hendrickson	Lawrence	95.57	0.00	2003	\$889,270.73		\$578,026.45
Schumacher (Levy)	West Windsor	25.68	2.00	2003	\$346,653.00		\$207,991.80
Skolnick (Bluestone Farms)	Hopewell	61.82	0.00	2003	\$871,645.08		\$522,987.05
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	112.59	0.00	2003	\$2,251,880.00		\$1,351,128.00
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	76.42	0.00	2003	\$1,520,777.90		\$912,466.74
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	31.08	0.00	2003	\$612,216.90		\$367,330.14
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	25.73	0.00	2003	\$591,951.00		\$355,170.60
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	25.35	0.00	2003	\$501,989.40		\$301,193.64
Tindall	West Windsor	79.72	3.00	2003	\$2,779,108.90		\$1,667,465.35
Weidel, Jr.	Hopewell	57.84	3.00	2003	\$435,707.91		\$261,424.75



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres	Exception Acres	Year Preserved	Easement Purchase Price ¹	State Cost-Share ²
Fulper II (PRL)	Hopewell	46.71	3.31	2004	\$317,613.04	\$200,843.54
Gabert (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	107.22	2.00	2004	\$525,386.82	\$358,120.81
Kyle (Bogatz)	East Windsor	25.24	0.00	2004	\$148,940.19	\$97,189.79
MacQueen (Ferrette)	Hopewell	40.61	2.00	2004	\$511,644.42	\$306,986.65
McBride (Lanwin)	Hopewell	107.06	2.00	2004	\$728,039.96	\$460,378.21
Reed (D&R Greenway)	Robbinsville	49.53	2.00	2004	\$725,089.94	\$361,462.50
Sciarrotta (Gallo)	Hopewell	46.89	1.00	2004	\$691,218.00	\$414,730.53
Solanki, Patel, Joshi (Knapp)	Robbinsville	68.13	0.39	2004	\$211,188.12	\$153,962.95
Weidel, Jr. (PRL)	Hopewell	80.58	4.00	2004	\$652,732.02	\$398,891.79
East Windsor Twp.	East Windsor	38.95	0.00	2005	\$409,837.05	\$245,902.23
Kalinowski and Keris (Windsor Farm)	W. Windsor and Robb.	49.13	3.00	2005	\$2,600,000.00	\$1,498,759.78
(Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	9.76	0.00	2005	\$144,580.43	\$86,748.27
Wojcik (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	71.84	2.00	2005	\$359,200.00	\$244,256.00
Booth (Dyjak)	Robbinsville	47.99	2.19	2006	\$724,395.51	\$434,637.50



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres	Exception Acres	Year Preserved	Easement Purchase Price ¹		State Cost-Share ²
Huebner	Hopewell	55.30	2.04	2006	\$821,249.55		\$492,749.73
Lee	East Windsor	53.51	0.08	2006	\$9,838,800.00		\$3,319,456.79
Patricelli	Hopewell	25.69	1.30	2006	\$518,958.20		\$311,374.92
Tindall	Robbinsville	56.90	1.00	2006	\$2,548,000.00		\$786,268.50
Gentile (County of Mercer)	Robbinsville	141.74	1.50	2008	\$10,900,000.00	*	\$4,516,048.45
Mount	Lawrence	26.12	1.50	2009	\$701,585.00		\$420,950.70
Working Dog Winery (Perrine and McIntyre)	Robbinsville	12.00	4.27	2010	\$390,000.00		\$234,000.00
Perrine (County of Mercer)	Robbinsville	26.86	2.00	2010	\$2,550,000.00	*	\$1,121,162.23
Polizzi (County of Mercer)	Hamilton	29.80	2.00	2010	\$3,400,000.00	*	\$1,473,182.43
Bonacorda	Hamilton	44.60	2.00	2011	\$3,250,070.40	*	\$1,607,433.45
Guzikowski (County of Mercer)	Hamilton	11.58	2.25	2011		*	
Singh (County of Mercer)	Hamilton	28.98	2.00	2011		*	
Mady (Moore)	Hamilton	48.02	3.04	2013	\$645,909.35		\$328,477.32
Hamill	Lawrence	33.53	2.00	2014	\$301,806.00		\$181,083.60



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres	Exception Acres	Year Preserved	Easement Purchase Price ¹		State Cost-Share ²
Skeba	East Windsor	18.57	2.00	2014	\$168,987.00		\$92,850.60
Mady (Mercer PRL)	Hamilton	147.62	1.00	2016	\$2,503,369.00		\$1,102,208.82
Malik (Mercer McNulty)	Hopewell Twp.	27.57	2.10	2017	\$720,000.00	*	\$264,643.20
DiDonato (Mercer Chmiel 3)	Lawrence	29.40	6.00	2018			
Mady (Mercer Chowdhury)	Hamilton	31.55	0.00	2018	\$321,779.40	*	\$193,067.64
Smith	Hamilton	15.33	1.73	2018	\$156,345.60		\$93,807.36
Totals (89 easements)		5,335.25	113.67		\$81,913,928.69		\$41,859,577.36

*Indicates fee price.

¹Blank easement purchase price means a property was subdivided after preservation and purchase price is included in another row.

²Blank state cost-share means either state funding was not sought or a property was subdivided after preservation and cost-share is included in another row.



Appendix II. Farms with Agricultural Easements Held by State of New Jersey

Property Name	Municipality	Acres
Batog	East Windsor	24.71
Bielanski	East Windsor	48.86
Black	East Windsor	62.43
Cedarland /Krystal	East Windsor	77.60
Cedarland1	East Windsor	73.75
Cedarland2	East Windsor	96.95
Holzman	East Windsor	65.16
Lenox/Cedarland	East Windsor	123.98
Princeton Nursery	East Windsor	116.41
Ward	East Windsor	71.86
Danch	Hamilton	21.33
Ellis	Hamilton	91.94
Hunt	Hamilton	43.06
Lengyen	Hamilton	130.01
Faille	Hopewell	39.65
Gillespie State Farm	Hopewell	130.17
Hopewell/Martin	Hopewell	161.80
Kurtz State Farm	Hopewell	32.69
Mokros	Hopewell	91.73
Old Mill Road	Hopewell	92.72
St. Michaels	Hopewell	221.51
Widman	Hopewell	11.97
Gordon	Lawrence	66.40
McLaughlin	Robbinsville	29.02
Total		1925.71



Appendix III. Preserved Farm Acreage by Municipality: County and State-held* Easements

*State-held easements are shaded gray

Name	Municipality	Easement Acres
Skeba (Skeba-Mellman)	East Windsor	106.26
Skeba	East Windsor	57.59
Takter (Baldochino)	East Windsor	96.81
Ginsberg/Kutzer-Rice (Constantino)	East Windsor	9.00
Kyle (Seip)	East Windsor	17.55
Kyle	East Windsor	21.00
Kyle (Bogatz)	East Windsor	25.24
East Windsor Twp.	East Windsor	38.95
Lee	East Windsor	53.51
Skeba	East Windsor	18.57
Meirs (Blasig, Jr.)	East Windsor and Robbinsville	136.95
Batog	East Windsor	24.71
Bielanski	East Windsor	48.86
Black	East Windsor	62.43
Cedarland /Krystal	East Windsor	77.60
Cedarland1	East Windsor	73.75
Cedarland2	East Windsor	96.95
Holzman	East Windsor	65.16
Lenox/Cedarland	East Windsor	123.98
Princeton Nursery	East Windsor	116.41
Ward	East Windsor	71.86
	TOTAL	1,343.14
Doerler (Hendrickson)	Hamilton	121.82
Kim (Facey)	Hamilton	142.43
Liang (Sakowsky)	Hamilton	62.48
Brittain (Skeba)	Hamilton	52.54
DePaulis (Runge)	Hamilton	118.52
Ellis (Samu)	Hamilton	100.64
Pyrros (Skeba)	Hamilton	39.59
County of Mercer/Zygmunt	Hamilton	56.12
Polizzi (County of Mercer)	Hamilton	29.80
Bonacorda	Hamilton	44.60
Guzikowski (County of Mercer)	Hamilton	11.58



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres
Singh (County of Mercer)	Hamilton	28.98
Mady (Moore)	Hamilton	48.02
Mady (Mercer PRL)	Hamilton	147.62
Mady (Mercer Chowdhury)	Hamilton	31.55
Smith	Hamilton	15.33
Danch	Hamilton	21.33
Ellis	Hamilton	91.94
Hunt	Hamilton	43.06
Lengyen	Hamilton	130.01
	TOTAL	1,337.96
Hart, Jr.	Hopewell	15.01
Hart, Jr. (Stuart)	Hopewell	58.82
Lyons (Niederer)	Hopewell	63.22
Niederer	Hopewell	80.09
Kosek (County of Mercer)	Hopewell	132.94
McBride (County of Mercer)	Hopewell	91.62
Radvany	Hopewell	23.18
Weidel	Hopewell	36.64
Jingoli (Martindell)	Hopewell	42.85
Radvany	Hopewell	17.40
Benioff	Hopewell	99.91
Fedor	Hopewell	57.63
Skolnick (Bluestone Farms)	Hopewell	61.82
Weidel, Jr.	Hopewell	57.84
Fulper II (PRL)	Hopewell	46.71
MacQueen (Ferrette)	Hopewell	40.61
McBride (Lanwin)	Hopewell	107.06
Sciarrotta (Gallo)	Hopewell	46.89
Weidel, Jr. (PRL)	Hopewell	80.58
Huebner	Hopewell	55.30
Patricelli	Hopewell	25.69
Malik (Mercer McNulty)	Hopewell	27.57
Faille	Hopewell	39.65
Gillespie State Farm	Hopewell	130.17
Hopewell/Martin	Hopewell	161.80
Kurtz State Farm	Hopewell	32.69
Mokros	Hopewell	91.73



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres
Old Mill Road	Hopewell	92.72
St. Michaels	Hopewell	221.51
Widman	Hopewell	11.97
	TOTAL	2,051.62
Mount	Lawrence	52.36
DiDonato (PRL)	Lawrence	65.66
DiDonato	Lawrence	83.57
Mount (Johnson)	Lawrence	65.34
DiDonato (Mercer Chmiel)	Lawrence	29.40
DiDonato (Chmiel)	Lawrence	12.57
Hendrickson	Lawrence	95.57
Mount	Lawrence	26.12
Hamill	Lawrence	33.53
DiDonato (Mercer Chmiel 3)	Lawrence	29.40
Gordon	Lawrence	66.40
	TOTAL	559.92
Institute for Advanced Study	Princeton	223.00
McLaughlin (Kessler)	Robbinsville	38.78
Thangaraju (Ponczek)	Robbinsville	55.62
Voorhees (Blasig, Sr.)	Robbinsville	43.13
Mallesh (Warcholak)	Robbinsville	31.15
D'Amico	Robbinsville	87.88
Wojcik (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	81.37
Wojcik (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	99.57
Gris (Mastoris)	Robbinsville	37.89
Chan (Kuo)	Robbinsville	39.01
Gabert (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	50.96
Zheng and Zhu	Robbinsville	78.83
Gabert (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	107.22
Reed (D&R Greenway)	Robbinsville	49.53
Solanki, Patel, Joshi (Knapp)	Robbinsville	68.13
(Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	9.76
Wojcik (Twp of Washington)	Robbinsville	71.84
Booth (Dyjak)	Robbinsville	47.99



Name	Municipality	Easement Acres
Tindall	Robbinsville	56.90
Gentile (County of Mercer)	Robbinsville	141.74
Working Dog Winery (Perrine and McIntyre)	Robbinsville	12.00
Perrine (County of Mercer)	Robbinsville	26.86
McLaughlin	Robbinsville	29.02
	TOTAL	1,265.18
Kalinowski and Keris (Windsor Farm)	West Windsor and Robbinsville	49.13
Jany (Twp of West Windsor)	West Windsor	54.44
Schumacher (Levy)	West Windsor	25.68
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	112.59
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	76.42
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	31.08
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	25.73
Township of West Windsor	West Windsor	25.35
Tindall	West Windsor	79.72
	TOTAL	480.15
	OVERALL TOTAL	7,260.96



Appendix IV. Adopted CADB Policies

Policy 1:

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AREA (ADA) CRITERIA

For an area to be considered part of an Agricultural Development Area (ADA) it must meet all of the following Criteria:

1. Shall satisfy the statutory criteria established by the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) as follows:
 - a. Encompasses productive agricultural lands which are currently in production or have a strong potential for future production in agriculture and in which agriculture is a permitted use under the current municipal zoning ordinance or in which agriculture is permitted as a non-conforming use;
 - b. Is reasonably free of conflicting residential, commercial or industrial development;
 - c. Compromises not greater than 90 percent of the agricultural land mass of the County.
2. Shall be located within MCADB's established boundaries as defined on the proposed Mercer County ADA map.
3. Should be designated as agricultural, open space, or limited growth areas on comprehensive and special purpose County plans, which are recognized as requiring interpretation regarding specific area boundaries.
4. Shall be eligible for Farmland Assessment in accordance with the New Jersey "Farmland Assessment Act" (L.1964, c.48).
5. Shall be consistent with current local ordinances and regulations.

Exceptions

In instances where lands have been excluded from the defined ADA, yet may contribute to the success of agricultural preservation in Mercer County, a special review by the Mercer County Agricultural Development Board may be requested for its consideration and inclusion into the ADA as an exception. Said areas must meet points 1, 4, and 5 of the stated ADA criteria and in addition must meet all the following criteria:

- a. Shall have landowner signup.
- b. Shall currently be a commercial farm as defined in the New Jersey "Right to Farm" Act (L.1983, c.31).
- c. Shall be free of pending non-agricultural development.

Jamie DiIorio
Secretary

ADOPTED: April 10, 1985



Policy 2:

Res. No. 2007-06

MERCER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD RESOLUTION

FARMLAND PRESERVATION ELIBIBILITY AND RANKING CRITERIA

WHEREAS, the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) adopted new rules that became effective July 2, 2007, and which required the Mercer County Agricultural Development Board (MCADB) to select the type of farmland preservation cost-sharing program it would participate in, and

WHEREAS, the MCADB selected the County Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) Program, and

WHEREAS, the new PIG rules at N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.4 require adoption of minimum eligibility criteria for the county to solicit and approve farmland preservation applications, and

WHEREAS, the new PIG rules at N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.4 require adoption of ranking criteria that the county will use to prioritize farms for county farmland preservation funding, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the MCADB adopts the following application eligibility criteria:

1. Application must be within the County Agricultural Development Area
2. Application must be of land with farmland assessment
3. Application must be of at least 25 farm acres – lesser acreage acceptable if adjacent to a preserved farm
4. Application must meet minimum requirements of N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20
5. Application also subject to qualification as an “eligible farm” if SADC funds are requested, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MCADB adopts the criteria at N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.16 for use as its ranking criteria that the county will use to prioritize farms for county farmland preservation funding.

Date adopted: October 1, 2007

MCADB Secretary: Daniel Pace



Policy 3:

AGRICULTURAL LABOR HOUSING POLICY

Purpose:

To establish procedures for the approval of agricultural labor housing on permanently preserved farmland.

Policy:

1. The landowner may construct any new buildings for housing of agricultural labor employed by the agricultural operation, but only with the approval of the Mercer CADB, and the SADC (if SADC funding was used to purchase the development easement).
2. The agricultural labor housing shall be subject to municipal and other governmental approvals as applicable.
3. All agricultural labor housing units shall be utilized for laborers employed by the agricultural operation. The agricultural labor housing unit shall not be used as a rental property.
4. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.15(a)14i, Agricultural labor housing “shall not be used as a residence for Grantor, the Grantor’s spouse, the Grantor’s parents, the Grantor’s lineal descendants, adopted or natural, the Grantor’s spouse’s parents, the Grantor’s spouse’s lineal descendants, adopted or natural.

Adopted:	Effective:	Revision #:	Last Revised:
04-01-02	04-02-02		



Policy 4:

HOUSE SIZE LIMITATIONS ON PRESERVED FARM POLICY

Purpose:

To establish procedures for the review and approval of new, reconstructed, replaced, or modified non-labor housing on farmland permanently preserved through the Mercer County Agricultural Development Board (MCADB).

Background:

On May 7, 2001, the MCADB adopted a policy to restrict new houses built on Exceptions to 4000 square feet of livable space. In the case of an existing house that exceeded 4000 square feet and needed reconstruction due to fire or other disaster, the MCADB would review the request and approve or deny it. This policy only affected farms preserved from the 2002 Round forward (see Attachment A) and the policy would be reviewed every three years. It was not made retroactive. “Livable Space” was defined as all areas of the house commonly lived in. This would not include an unfinished attic, porch, basement, garage or other ancillary structures (sheds, pool, tennis court, etc.).

Residential Dwelling Site Opportunity (RDSO):

Although there are three preserved farms in Mercer County with RDSO’s, the MCADB does not normally utilize this form of housing opportunity. These three farms are not subject to this policy; however, should a future preserved farm utilize an RDSO, that landowner must also adhere to the size restrictions of this policy.

Policy:

In an Exception on a preserved farm, where the Exception contains a residential structure or the right to construct such a structure, the landowner may construct, reconstruct, replace, or add-on provided the structure ultimately contains no more than 4000 square feet of livable space without the approval of the MCADB. For an existing house that exceeded 4000 square feet prior to the agricultural easement and needing reconstruction due to fire or other disaster, the MCADB will allow reconstruction up to the prior size provided it is rebuilt in the exact same footprint.

Where an Exception does not exist on a preserved farm, the landowner may reconstruct in-place, or add-on to an existing residential structure provided the structure ultimately contains no more than 4000 square feet of livable space. For an existing house that exceeded 4000 square feet prior to the agricultural easement and needed reconstruction due to fire or other disaster, the MCADB will allow reconstruction up to the prior size provided it is rebuilt in the exact same location. Any new construction as per an RDSO, reconstruction, or addition creating a residential structure with more than 4000 square feet of livable space will require CADB and possibly SADC approval.

This policy applies only to farmland preserved from the 2002 Round forward (as identified in Attachment A) except that a request to replace a residential structure not located within an Exception regardless of the Round requires MCADB and SADC approval and will be subject to this Policy. In addition, each farm’s Agricultural Deed of Easement will further guide MCADB implementation of this policy.

Proof of compliance is the responsibility of the landowner.



Attachment A

2002 Round Farms:

- Bogatz, East Windsor (B30, L25&26)– Existing residence, no Exception
- Costantino, East Windsor (B35, L5.02) – Existing residence on Exception
- Ferrette, Hopewell Twp. (B50, L15.02) – Existing Residence on Exception
- Gallo, Hopewell Twp. (B50, L13.01) – No existing residence, Res. Exception
- Thompson (formerly Twp. of Wash/Hall) B14, L22 – No existing residence, Res. Exception (residence limited to 3500 square feet of heated living space as per Township agreement with landowner)
- Mercer (formerly Chmiel), Lawrence Twp. B7301, L32.01– No existing residence, No Exception
- Chmiel, Lawrence Twp. B7301, L36.01– Existing residence on Exception
- West Windsor Parcels 15&17 (B29, L2.01&3), 18&19(B30, L4&5), 20(B23, L42), 21(B23, L40&57&63), 23(B30.03, L2)– No Existing residences, no Exceptions

2003 Round Farms:

- Dakota (formerly Twp. of Wash/Bresnahan) B22, L4 – No existing residence, Res. Exception
- Rapant, Wash Twp. (B19, L2.02) – No existing residence, no Exception

2004 Round Farms:

- Huebner, Hopewell Twp. (B20, L12) – Existing Residence on Exception
- Patricelli, Hopewell Twp. (B62, L2.011) – No Existing Residence, Res. Exception

2006 Round Farms:

- Twp. of East Windsor, Etra Rd Farm (B31, L10) - No existing residence, no Exception
- Tindall Family Partnership, West Windsor (B29, L4.01&5) – Existing Residence on Exception
- Booth – (formerly Twp of Wash/Dyjak). Existing Residence on Exception.

2007 Round Farms:

- Lee Turkey Farm, East Windsor (B68.02, L82.01), Two existing residences, 0.08ac Exception area around farm market only.
- Windsor Farm, Robbinsville Twp and West Windsor Twp., Existing residence on Exception

2008 Round Farms:

- Tindall Greenhouses, Robbinsville Twp, (B47, L13, 14, 14.01, 18), Two existing residences not on Exceptions. One residential Exception with no existing house.

2009 Round Farms:

- Mercer (formerly Hights), Robbinsville Twp (B.43; L5) – No Existing Residence, Res. Exception
- Mercer (formerly Briarholm), Hamilton (B2739; L1) – No Existing Residence, Res. Exception
- Mercer Sawmill farm, Hamilton (B2730; L p\o9) – No Existing Residence, Res. Exception

Adopted:	Effective:	Revision #:	Last Revised:
05-07-01	05-08-01	2	02.07.05



Policy 5:

MOWING TO MANAGE NON-AGRICULTURAL WOODY SPECIES OR SECOND GROWTH INVASION ON PRESERVED FARMS

Purpose:

To establish policy and procedures for the annual mowing of “cropland pastured” and “permanently pastured fields” (as defined by the Farmland Assessment Act) on all deed restricted farmland preserved through the Mercer County Agricultural Development Board (MCADB) easement purchase program in order to retain those fields for agricultural use and production.

Background:

At its regular meeting on October 3, 2005, the MCADB agreed that a Restrictive Covenant would be executed with each new Agricultural Deed of Easement to require annual management of cropland pastured and permanently pastured fields in order to insure their retention for agricultural use and production as provided for in the Deed of Easement. The Board requested that policy and procedures be developed that would also impose this requirement on existing deed restricted farms.

Policy:

The Agricultural Deed of Easement dictates that the Premises be retained for agricultural use and production. The MCADB does hereby require that all farms preserved by the MCADB be managed to insure this dictate utilizing the Procedures outlined below.

Procedures:

Landowners must annually clear cut or mow, or have clear cut or mowed, those pastured or permanently pastured fields not under cultivation or in Federal Programs on the Premises (the Premises being described in the preserved farm’s Deed of Easement) in order to prevent non-agricultural woody species or second growth invasion. The mowing must occur annually before December 31st and should occur after July 15th, if possible, to protect nesting birds.

In the event that the MCADB determines that the cutting or mowing has not been performed, the landowner will be given written notice and a direction that it be completed within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt of the notice or, at the discretion of the MCADB, a mutually agreed upon date.

In the event that the cutting or mowing is still not completed after the implementation of paragraph 2, then the MCADB may bring a legal action as provided for in the Deed of Easement. Or, the MCADB may hire somebody to do the cutting or mowing. The person, firm, or corporation hired shall have the right to enter the Premises and do the work without notice to or interference by the landowner. The landowner shall pay for the work and all costs and expenses of the MCADB in arranging for it to be performed.

Adopted:	Effective:	Revision #:	Last Revised:
02.06.06	02.06.06		



Policy 6:

**AUTHORIZATION TO OBTAIN AND RELEASE OF
SOIL FARM CONSERVATION PLAN**

WHEREAS, upon the terms and conditions of that certain Contract to Sell Development Rights dated _____, _____ and all subsequent amendments thereto (the “Contract”), executed by and between _____ (“Seller”), as Seller, and The County of Mercer (“County”), as purchaser, the Seller has agreed to sell and the County has agreed to purchase the development rights pertaining to property owned by the Seller and located at _____ (the “Property”). The sale and purchase shall be evidenced by a Deed of Easement (“Easement”) which shall be recorded immediately following the consummation of the transaction contemplated by the Contract; and

WHEREAS, the Seller is required under the terms of the Easement to obtain a farm conservation plan (“Plan”) approved by the local soil conservation district; and

WHEREAS, the Easement grants to the County the right to assure compliance with the terms of the Easement; and

WHEREAS, the Seller acknowledges that the County shall be entitled to confirmation that the Seller has entered into the Plan.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the payment of the purchase price paid by the County for the Easement and as a material inducement to the County to enter into the transaction contemplated by the Contract and evidenced by the Easement, the undersigned Seller hereby covenants and represents to and for the benefit of the County, its successors and assigns as follows:

1. Pursuant to the terms of the Easement, the Seller agrees to obtain, within one year of the date of the Easement, a farm conservation plan approved by the local soil conservation district.

2. Seller agrees that the County and the State Agricultural Development Committee (“SADC”) shall be provided with a copy of the Plan within ten (10) days of completion of same. In the event that the Seller fails to provide the Plan to the County and/or SADC as provided herein, the County and SADC are authorized to obtain from the local soil conservation district, and the Seller hereby specifically authorizes the local soil conservation district to release to the County and SADC, a copy of the Plan.

3. Seller acknowledges that the failure to comply with the terms of this Agreement shall constitute a violation in the terms and conditions of the Easement, entitling the County and/or SADC to take all actions permitted by the Easement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned Seller has caused this Agreement to be duly executed and delivered as of this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Signed, sealed and delivered in
the presence of:

SELLER:

Name:

Title:



Policy 7:

MERCER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD

DEED OF EASEMENT VIOLATION POLICY

Purpose:

To establish a process enabling the Mercer County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) to enforce the Deed of Easement restrictions in place on preserved farmlands.

The intent of the CADB is to prevent violations of Deed of Easement restrictions. Therefore, the CADB has established a process to enforce the restrictions of the Deed of Easement on preserved farmland.

POLICY:

Once a possible violation has been identified by the CADB, through its staff or an administrator, the following process will be initiated:

1. The CADB administrator will first contact the landowner by phone to discuss the possible Deed violation and will then send a letter to memorialize the conversation.

2. Within ten (10) days of being contacted by the CADB administrator, the landowner shall provide an explanation to the CADB concerning the possible Deed violation. If the violation is not a temporary situation that can be summarily remedied to the satisfaction of the CADB, further action shall be taken.

3. A letter will be mailed, certified mail, return receipt requested, which notifies the property owner of all violations cited that require remediation. The owner of the property will then have thirty (30) days from receipt of the letter to remedy and/or remove the violation(s) or further action will be taken. The landowner may request a meeting with the CADB or staff to discuss the matter, however such meeting must be requested by the landowner and scheduled promptly following receipt of the letter.

4. At the end of the thirty (30) day period, the CADB, through staff or its administrator, will conduct a site inspection. If any violation(s) exist (new or remaining) the CADB will notify the Zoning Office and/or other appropriate officials of the municipality in which the property is located advising that the property owner may be in violation of municipal ordinances, and requesting the Zoning Officer to enforce all applicable municipal ordinances. In addition, any applicable Federal or state agency may be notified, if appropriate.

5. The CADB may pursue all remedies available to enforce the Deed of Easement including those contained in Paragraph 16 of the Deed of Easement, which states, the CADB:

“may institute, in the name of the State of New Jersey, any proceedings to enforce these terms and conditions including the institution of suit to enjoin such violations and to require restoration of the Premises to its prior condition.” Further, the CADB does “not waive or forfeit the right to take any other legal action necessary to ensure compliance with the terms, conditions, and purpose of the Deed of Easement by a prior failure to act.”

Date adopted: June 1, 2020



Appendix V. Model Right to Farm Ordinance

STATE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MODEL RIGHT TO FARM ORDINANCE

A. As used in this ordinance, the following words shall have the following meanings:

“Commercial farm” means:

1. A farm management unit of no less than five acres producing agricultural or horticultural products worth \$2,500 or more annually, and satisfying the eligibility criteria for differential property taxation pursuant to the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964, N.J.S.A. 54:4-23.1 et seq.; or
2. A farm management unit less than five acres, producing agricultural or horticultural products worth \$50,000 or more annually and otherwise satisfying the eligibility criteria for differential property taxation pursuant to the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964, N.J.S.A. 54:4-23.1 et seq.

“Farm management unit” means a parcel or parcels of land, whether contiguous or noncontiguous, together with agricultural or horticultural buildings, structures and facilities, producing agricultural or horticultural products, and operated as a single enterprise.

“Farm market” means a facility used for the wholesale or retail marketing of the agricultural output of a commercial farm, and products that contribute to farm income, except that if a farm market is used for retail marketing at least 51 percent of the annual gross sales of the retail farm market shall be generated from sales of agricultural output of the commercial farm, or at least 51 percent of the sales area shall be devoted to the sale of the agricultural output of the commercial farm, and except that if a retail farm market is located on land less than five acres in area, the land on which the farm market is located shall produce annually agricultural or horticultural products worth at least \$2,500.

“Pick-your-own operation” means a direct marketing alternative wherein retail or wholesale customers are invited onto a commercial farm in order to harvest agricultural, floricultural or horticultural products.

B. The right to farm is hereby recognized to exist in this [Township, Borough, City] and is hereby declared a permitted use in all zones of this [Township, Borough, City].

This right to farm includes, but not by way of limitation:

- (1) Production of agricultural and horticultural crops, trees, apiary and forest products, livestock, poultry and other commodities as described in the Standard Industrial Classification for agriculture, forestry, fishing and trapping.
- (2) Housing and employment of necessary farm laborers.



- (3) Erection of essential agricultural buildings, including those dedicated to the processing and packaging of the output of the commercial farm and ancillary to agricultural and horticultural production.
- (4) The grazing of animals and use of range for fowl.
- (5) Construction of fences.
- (6) The operation and transportation of large, slow-moving equipment over roads within the [Township, Borough, City].
- (7) Control of pests, including but not limited to insects and weeds, predators and diseases of plants and animals.
- (8) Conduction of agriculture-related educational and farm-based recreational activities provided that the activities are related to marketing the agricultural or horticultural output of the commercial farm and permission of the farm owner and lessee is obtained.
- (9) Use of any and all equipment, including but not limited to: irrigation pumps and equipment, aerial and ground seeding and spraying, tractors, harvest aides, and bird control devices.
- (10) Processing and packaging of the agricultural output of the commercial farm.
- (11) The operation of a farm market with attendant signage, including the construction of building and parking areas in conformance with [Township, Borough, City] standards.
- (12) The operation of a pick-your-own operation with attendant signage.
- (13) Replenishment of soil nutrients and improvement of soil tilth.
- (14) Clearing of woodlands using open burning and other techniques, installation and maintenance of vegetative and terrain alterations and other physical facilities for water and soil conservation and surface water control in wetland areas.
- (15) On-site disposal of organic agricultural wastes.
- (16) The application of manure and chemical fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides.
- (17) Installation of wells, ponds and other water resources for agricultural purposes such as irrigation, sanitation and marketing preparation.

Commercial farm operators may engage in any other agricultural activity as determined by the State Agriculture Development Committee and adopted by rule or regulation pursuant to the provisions of the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L. 1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).



C. Commercial farm operators are strongly advised to adhere to generally accepted agricultural management practices that have been:

(a) Promulgated as rules by the State Agriculture Development Committee;

(b) Recommended as site-specific agricultural management practices by the county agriculture development board;

(c) Approved by the local soil conservation district in the form of a farm conservation plan that is prepared in conformance with the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), revised April 20, 1998, as amended and supplemented; or

(d) Recommended by the Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station.

D. The foregoing activities must be in conformance with applicable Federal and State law.

E. The foregoing practices and activities may occur on holidays, weekdays and weekends by day or night and shall include the attendant or incidental noise, odors, dust and fumes associated with these practices.

F. It is hereby determined that whatever nuisance may be caused to others by these foregoing uses and activities is more than offset by the benefits of farming to the neighborhood community and society in general.

G. Any person aggrieved by the operation of a commercial farm shall file a complaint with the applicable county agriculture development board, or the State Agriculture Development Committee in counties where no county board exists, prior to filing an action in court.

H. To help parties resolve conflicts involving the operation of commercial farms, the State Agriculture Development Committee has also established an Agricultural Mediation Program. Mediation is a voluntary process in which a trained, impartial mediator helps disputing parties examine their mutual problems, identify and consider options, and determine if they can agree on a solution. A mediator has no decision-making authority. Successful mediation is based on the voluntary cooperation and participation of all the parties.

I. An additional purpose of this ordinance is to promote a good neighbor policy by advising purchasers and users of property adjacent to or near commercial farms of accepted activities or practices associated with those neighboring farms. It is intended that, through mandatory disclosures, purchasers and users will better understand the impacts of living near agricultural operations and be prepared to accept attendant conditions as the natural result of living in or near land actively devoted to commercial agriculture or in an Agricultural Development Area, meaning an area identified by a county agriculture development board pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A.4:1C-18 and certified by the State Agriculture Development Committee.



The disclosure required by this section is set forth herein, and shall be made a part of, the following disclosure form:

REAL ESTATE TRANSFER DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

This disclosure statement concerns the real property situated in the [Township, Borough, City] of [] described as Block _____, Lot _____. This statement is a disclosure of the conditions of the above described property in compliance with Ordinance No. _____ of the [Township, Borough, City] of []. It is not a warranty of any kind by the seller(s) or any agent(s) representing any principal(s) in this transaction, and is not a substitute for any inspections or warranties the principal(s) may wish to obtain.

I. Seller's Information

The seller discloses the following information with the knowledge that even though this is not a warranty, prospective buyers may rely on this information in deciding whether and on what terms to purchase the subject property. Seller hereby authorizes any agent(s) representing any principal(s) in this transaction to provide a copy of this statement to any person or entity in connection with any actual or anticipated sale of the property. The following are representations made by the seller(s) as required by the [Township, Borough, City] of [] and are not the representation of the agents, if any. This information is a disclosure and is not intended to be part of any contract between the buyer and seller.

The [Township, Borough, City] of [] permits the operation of generally accepted agricultural management practices within the municipality. If the property you are purchasing is located near land actively devoted to commercial agriculture or in an Agricultural Development Area, meaning an area identified by a county agriculture development board pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A.4:1C-18 and certified by the State Agriculture Development Committee, you may be affected by these agricultural activities or practices. The effect of these activities or practices may include, but are not limited to: noise, odors, fumes, dust, smoke, insects, operation of machinery (including aircraft) during any 24 hour period, storage and disposal of manure and compost, and the application by spraying or otherwise of fertilizers, soil amendments, herbicides and pesticides. One or more of the effects described may occur as the result of any agricultural operation which is in conformance with existing Federal and State laws and regulations and accepted customs and standards. If you live near an agricultural area, you should strive to be sensitive to the needs of commercial farm operators, as their presence is a necessary aspect of an area with a strong rural character and a strong agricultural sector. The State Agriculture Development Committee has established a formal complaint process as well as an informal Agricultural Mediation Program to assist in the resolution of any disputes which might arise between residents of the [Township, Borough, City] of [] regarding the operations of commercial farms.



Seller certifies that the information herein is true and correct to the best of seller's knowledge as of the date signed by the seller.

Seller _____ Date _____
Seller _____ Date _____

II.

Buyer(s) and seller(s) may wish to obtain professional advice and/or inspections of the property and to provide for appropriate provisions in a contract between buyer and seller(s) with respect to any advice/inspections/defects.

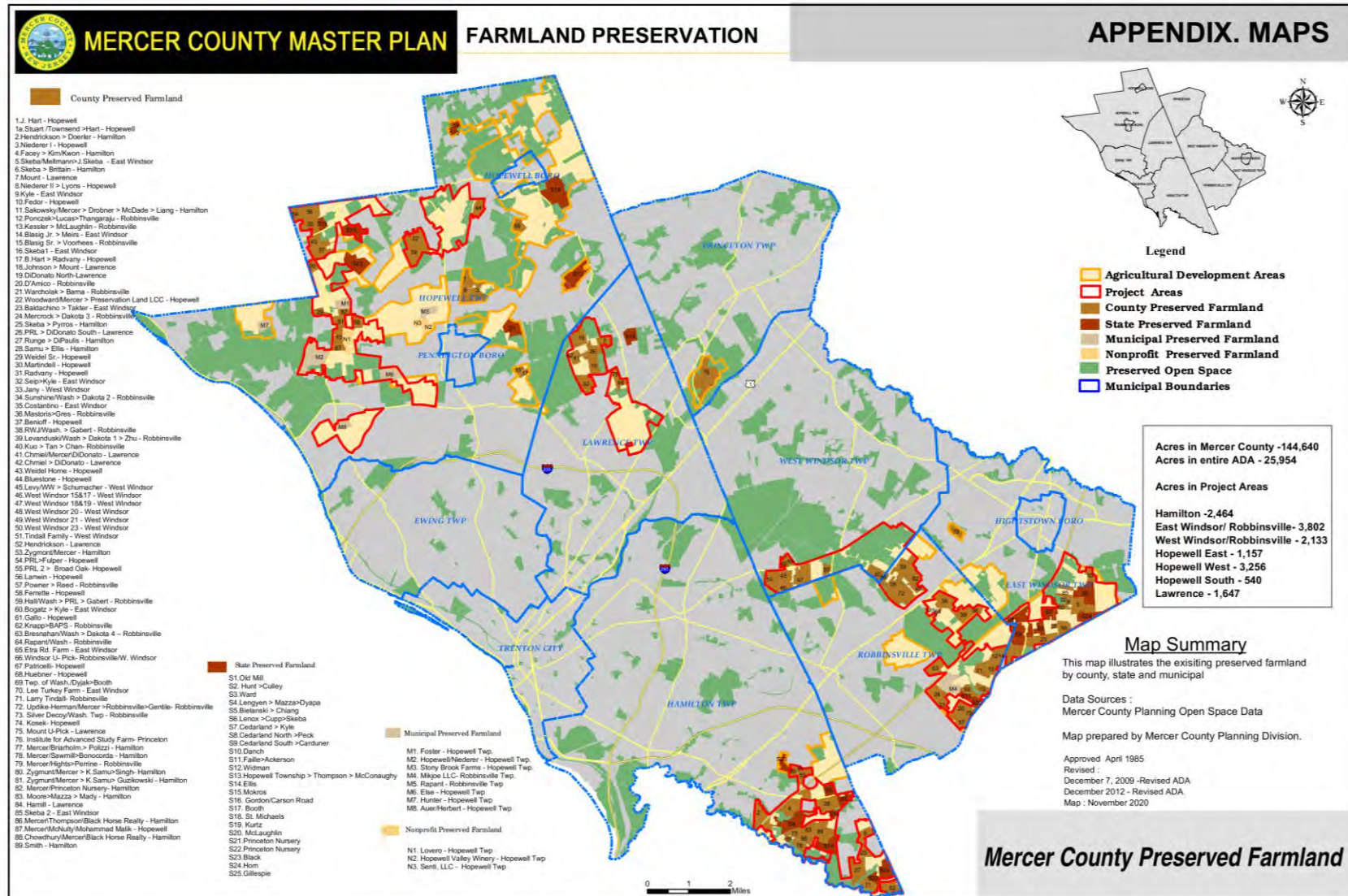
I/We acknowledge receipt of a copy of this statement.

Seller _____ Date _____ Buyer _____ Date _____
Seller _____ Date _____ Buyer _____ Date _____

Agent representing seller _____ By _____ Date _____



Appendix VI. Mercer County Farmland Preservation and Project Area Maps

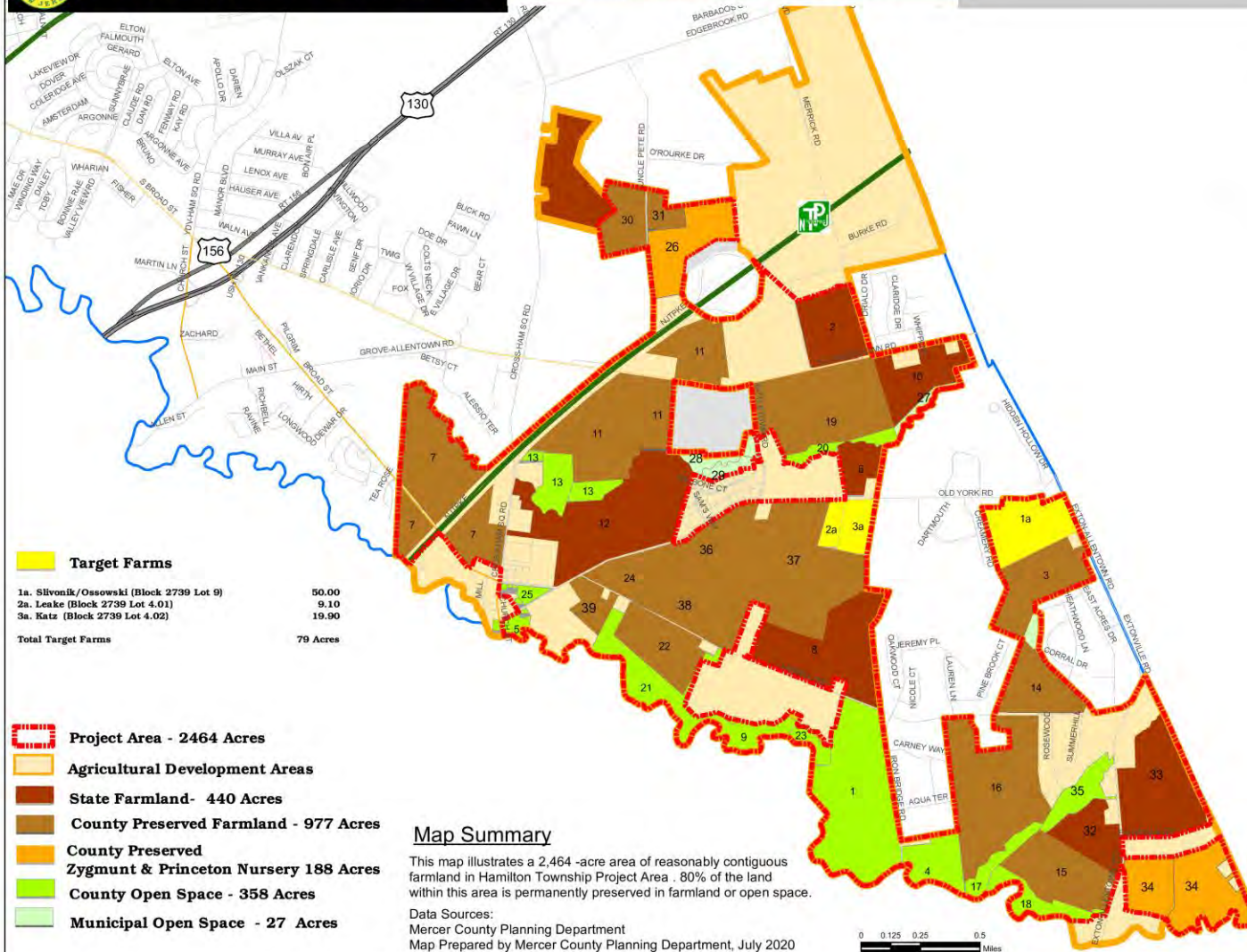




MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

APPENDIX. MAPS



Preserved Lands

1. Banner Farm	132.06
2. Bielanski	48.86
3. Brittain	54.54
4. Camp Meta	30.30
5. Crosswicks	6.58
6. Danch	21.33
7. Doerler	121.82
8. Ellis	91.94
9. YMCA	21.89
10. Hunt	43.06
11. Kim	142.43
12. Lengyen	128.56
13. Nami	32.00
14. Pyros	41.59
15. Liang	62.48
16. DePaulis	122.52
17. Runge Stream	14.80
18. Sakowsky Stream	18.00
19. Ellis (Samu)	100.74
20. Samu Trail	17.00
21. Sawmill	45.07
22. Bonacorda	47.03
23. Tall Cedars Mercer	9.01
24. Sawmill LLC	32.95
25. Village Green	10.00
26. Mercer / Zygumt	56.42
27. Hamilton Hunt Stream	6.90
28. Hamilton Twp	13.00
29. Hamilton Twp	7.00
30. K. Samu	30.98
31. K. Samu	13.83
32. SADC (Princeton Nursery)	33.37
33. SADC (Princeton Nursery)	73.20
34. Mercer (Princeton Nursery)	86.66
35. Pleasant Run Stream	21.24
36. Mazza	51.06
37. Mercer/PRL	149.94
38. Chowdhury	31.80
39. Gaskill	17.00
Total Acres	1988.96

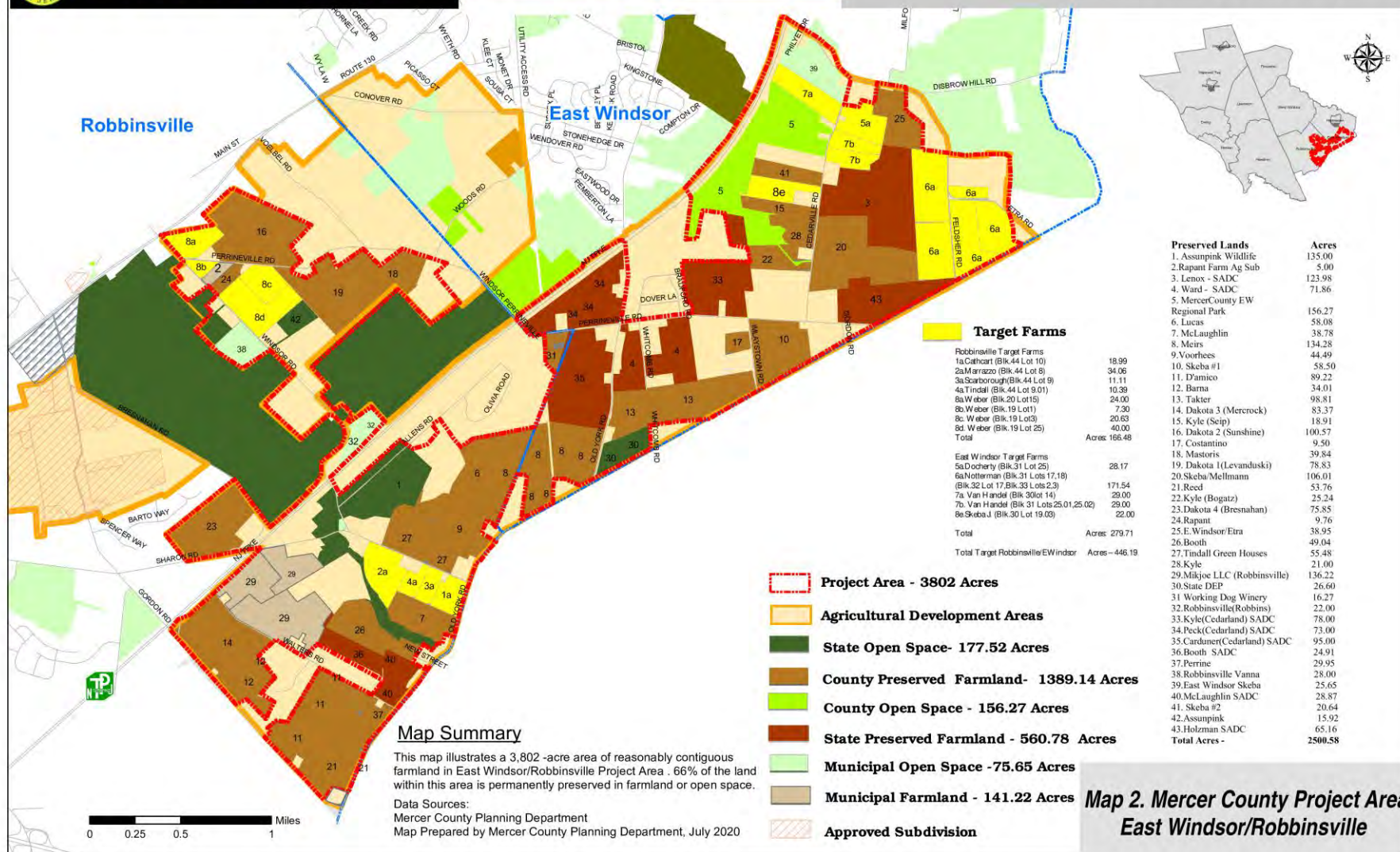
Map 1. Mercer County Project Area Hamilton



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

APPENDIX. MAPS

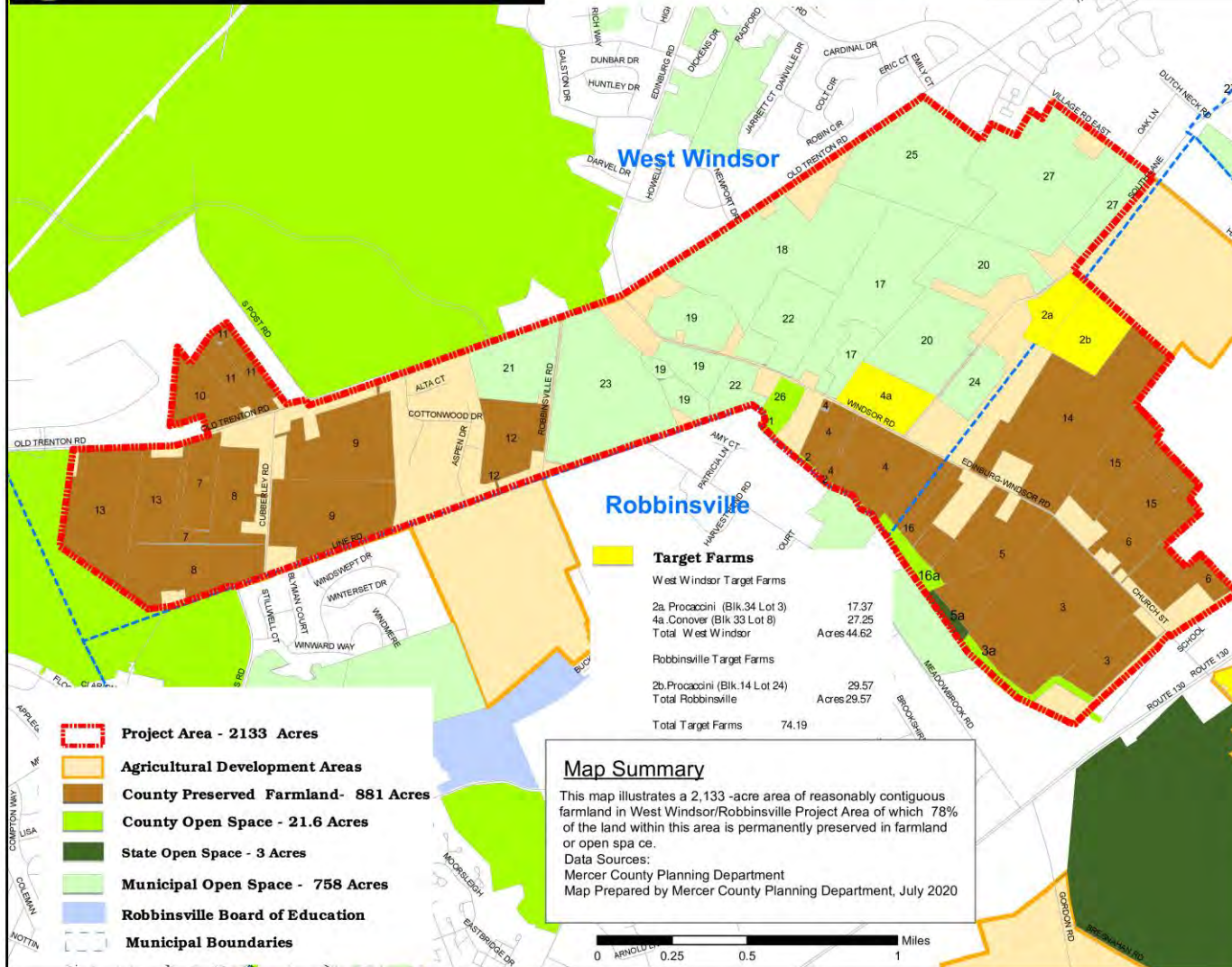




MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

APPENDIX. MAPS



Preserved Land	Acres
1. Mercer Cty Pietriferro	6
2. Mercer Cty Jany Stream	6
3. Gentle (Herman Updike)	133
3a. Updike/Herman Stream	3
4. Jany	54
5. Gabert	51
5a. Gabert Stream	3
6. Tan	41
7. Schumacher	28
8. WW15&17	76
9. WW18&19	113
10. WW20	25
11. WW21	26
12. WW23	31
13. Tindall	83
14. Thompson	109
15. Knapp	69
16. Windsor U- Pick	42
16a. Windsor U-Pick Stream	1.6
17. W. Windsor (Blyman)	89
18. W. Windsor (Thompson 10)	107
19. W. Windsor (Herman)	58
20. W. Windsor (Thompson 5)	88
21. W. Windsor (Thompson 7)	35
22. W. Windsor (Olenickzak)	58
23. W. W. (Thompson/Olenickzak)	94
24. W. Windsor (Cox)	18
25. WW Open Space	84
26. County (Olenickzak)	5
27. W. Windsor (Hall)	127
Total	1663.60 Acres

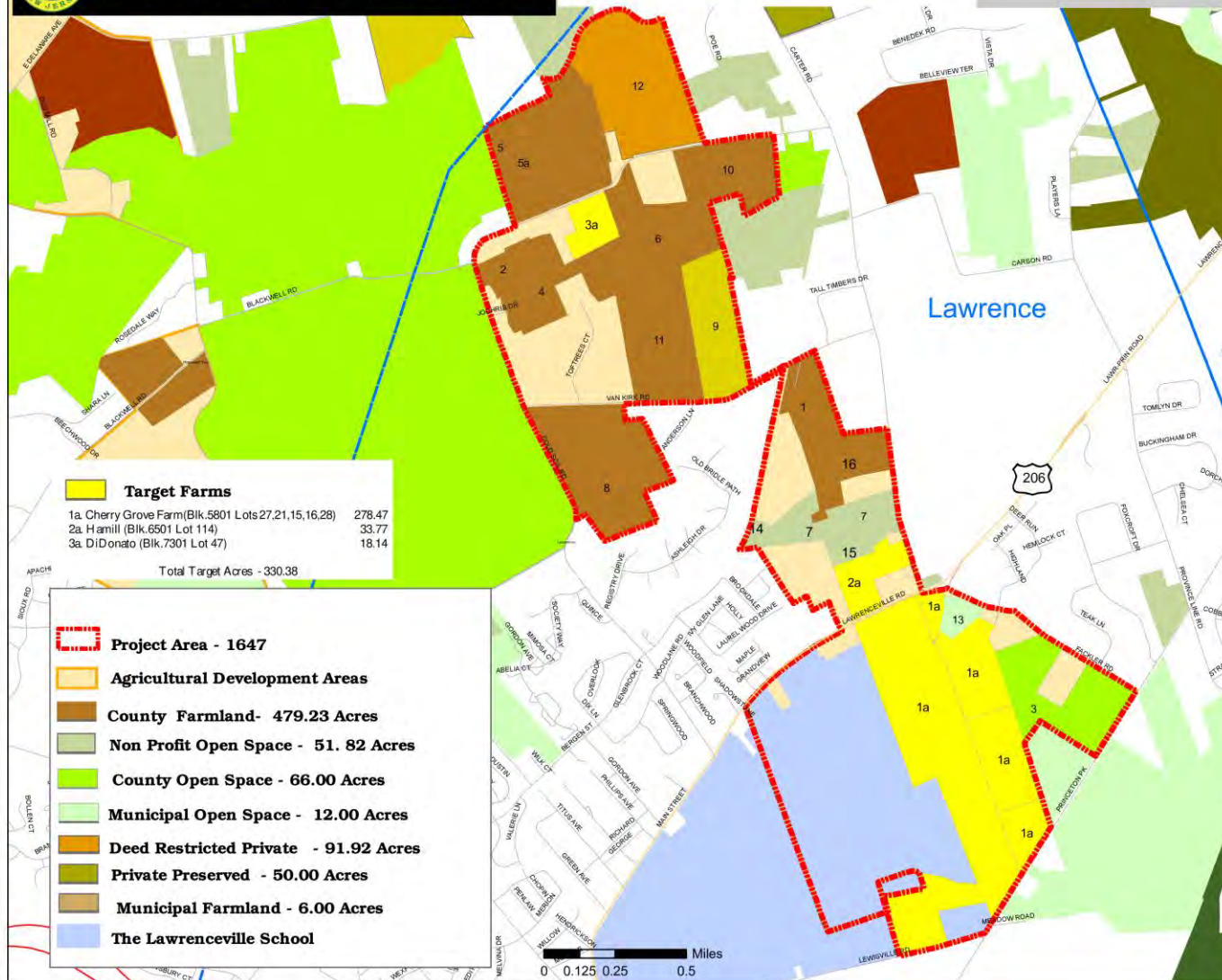
Map 3. Mercer County Project Area West Windsor/Robbinsville



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

APPENDIX. MAPS



Preserved Land	Acres
1. Mount Farm	26.44
2. Chmiel	18.54
3. Mercer County (Fackler)	66.00
4. Mercer County (Chmiel)	29.36
5. DiDonato North	87.07
5a. DiDonato North/Lawrence	6.00
6. DiDonato South	67.66
7. Hamill / D&R Greenway	37.72
8. Hendrickson	95.57
9. Jusick	50.00
10. Mount/Terhune Orchards	53.66
11. Mount (Johnson)	65.43
12. Transco	91.92
13. Lawrence Twp/Fackler Rd.	12.00
14. Mills /D&R Greenway	3.00
15. Cherry Grove/D&R Grway	11.10
16. Hamill, S	35.50
Total Acres	756.97

Map Summary

This map illustrates a 1,647 - acre area of reasonably contiguous farmland in Lawrence Project Area of which 46% of the land within this area is permanently preserved in farmland or open space.

Data Sources:
Mercer County Planning Department
Map Prepared by Mercer County Planning Department, July 2020

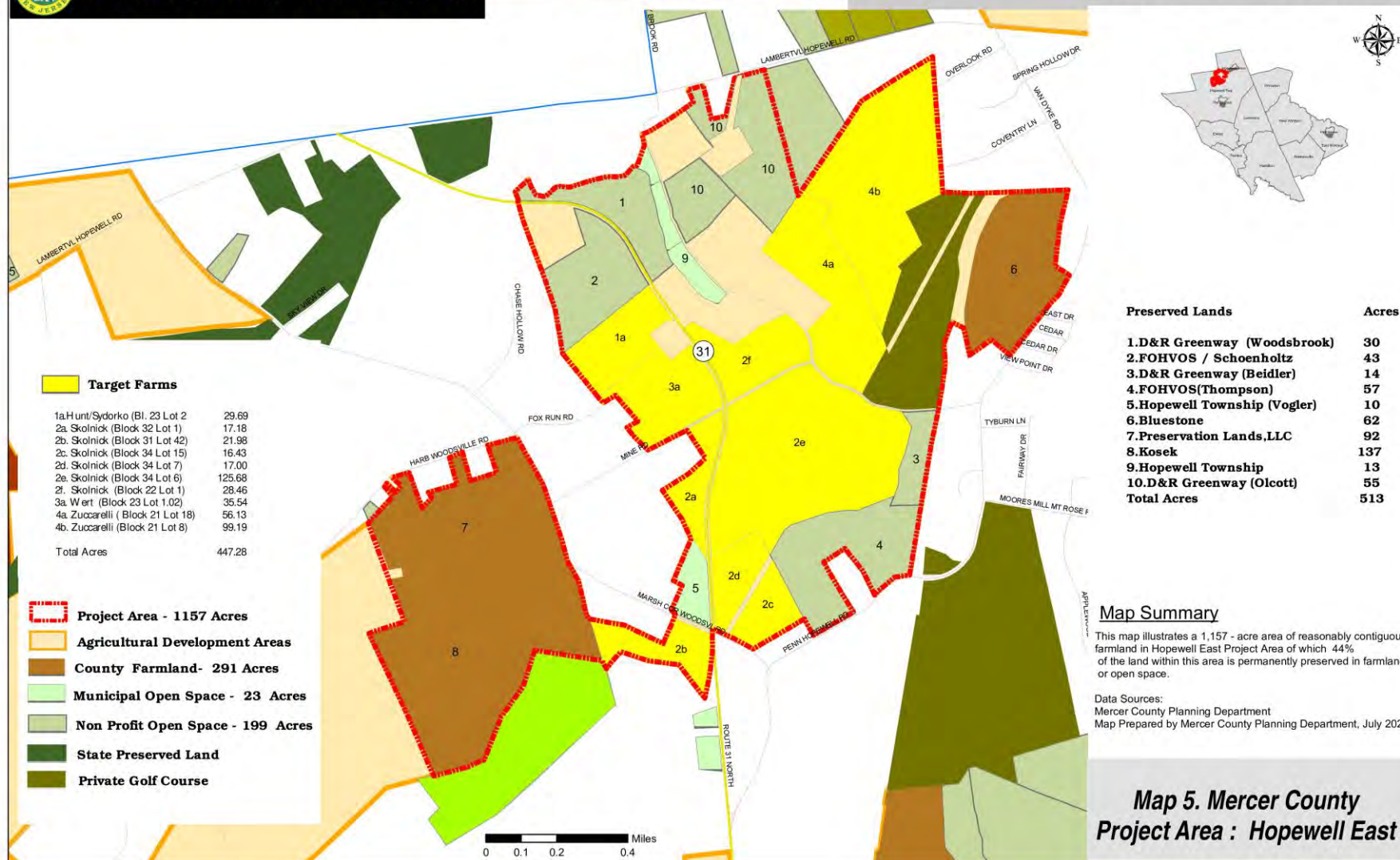
Map 4. Mercer County Project Area : Lawrence



MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

APPENDIX. MAPS





MERCER COUNTY MASTER PLAN

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

APPENDIX. MAPS

Target Farms

1a. Patricelli (Block 62 Lot 3)	95.76
1a. Patricelli (Block 62 Lot 2.02)	34.84
2a. Hoyer (Block 51 Lots 2,26,48)	81.00
3a. Chowdhury (Block 92 lots 1,1.04)	46.00
4a.Hoch (Block 89 Lots 12.02, 12.04,12.05)	100.00
5a Hoffman (Block 89 Lot 12.01)	120.00
6a.Cifelli Farm (Block 50 Lot 7)	51.00
7a. Carcagno Farm (Block 50 Lot 6)	86.00

Total 614.60 Acres



Project Area - 3256 Acres



Agricultural Development Areas



County Farmland- 694 Acres



State Preserved Farmland - 124 Acres



Non Profit Preserved Farmland - 70 Acres



State Preserved Land - 88 Acres



Municipal Open Space - 77 Acres



Municipal Preserved Farms - 370 Acres



Non Profit Open Space - 118 Acres



County Open Space - 10 Acres

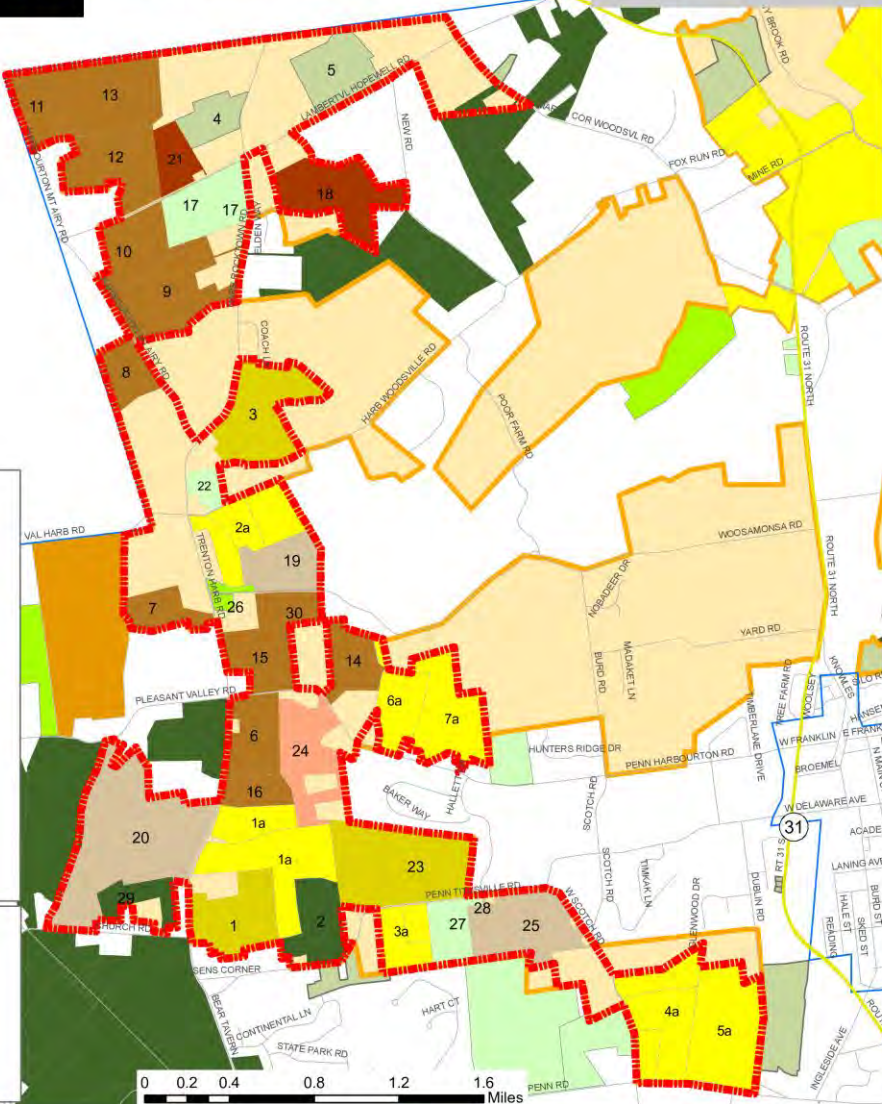


Conservation Easement - 332 Acres

Map Summary

This map illustrates a 3,256 - acre area of reasonably contiguous farmland in Hopewell West Project Area of which 58% of the land within this area is permanently preserved in farmland or open space.

Data Sources:
Mercer County Planning Department
Map Prepared by Mercer County Planning Department, October 2020



Preserved Lands

Acres

1.DEP/ Smith	79
2.DEP (Blackwell)	55
3.DEP/Orlando2	109
4.FOHVOS(Arena)	28
5.FOHVO /Nayfield	57
6.Fedor	59
7.Weidel Sr.	37
8.Martindell	43
9.Benioff	100
10.Weidel Home	64
11.Fulper	49
12.Weidel Jr.	85
13.Lanwin	109
14.Ferrette	43
15.Gallo	48
16.Patricelli	27
17.Twp of Hopewell/Gomez	58
18.SADC/Mokros	94
19.Foster	53
20. Niederer	225
21.SADC/Kurtz	30
22.TwpHopewell/Harbourton	14
23.FOHVOS/Batcha	144
24.NJCF/Lovero	70
25.Else	92
26.McNulty	10
27.FOHVOS/Pennington-Brown	33
28.Hopewell Open (Else)	5
29.DEP State	33
30. Mercer/ McNulty	30

Total Acres

1,883

**Map 6. Mercer County
Project Area : Hopewell West**

