

**2021**  
**TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON**  
**OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN**



**Left Photo: New pickle ball courts at Veterans Park, Kuser Road**  
**Right Photo: Farmland/open space preservation, Crosswicks-Hamilton Square Rad**

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**DRAFT: JULY 7, 2021**

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# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Township of Hamilton has long demonstrated a major concern for fulfilling the open space, recreation, and historic preservation needs of its residents. This concern, evident in the numerous existing municipal parks, historic sites, and the extensive recreational programs and facilities sponsored by the Township, is a response to a wide range of recreational needs and interests of Hamilton Township residents.

The Hamilton Township Open Space and Recreation Plan was initiated as a result of the need, recognized by Township officials, to reserve and develop a supply of open space and recreation resources to serve the current and future population. The background of existing recreation facilities and policies in Hamilton provided a basic reference point for plan preparation, while the continuing rapid development of remaining vacant land in the Township lent an urgency to the planning effort. This plan articulates the local government's vision of open space for the community.

The general goals of the open space and recreation are the acquisition of undeveloped land and the preservation of farmland in order to:

- address the diverse interests expressed by Township residents and officials
- accommodate projected population growth
- make best use of the considerable natural resources of the Township

The Township of Hamilton has developed this Open Space and Recreation Plan to articulate the local government's vision of open space and recreation for the community.

This plan is also necessary for Hamilton Township's full participation in the Green Trust Planning Incentive category of the State Green Acres Program. To this end, the Township has already passed a bond ordinance in 2017 providing \$9 million for the issuance of bonds to acquire open space. This bond will provide a stable source of funding for open space and recreation acquisition. The funds established by this bond can be combined with State, County, private, and non-profit programs to properly implement the open space and recreation needs of the community in concert with other land development goals.

The plan is to be used as a guide for fulfilling the open space and recreational needs of the Township. This is a long term plan which we would project to be implemented over a 20 year period of time. It is unrealistic to expect that this plan be implemented at once.

Hamilton Township by far has one of the most extensive park systems and recreational facilities within Mercer County and the State. With a total of 36 Township owned parks and 668 developed park acres, few municipalities can match this extensive system which ranges from active parks to passive gardens and arboretums. This park system includes such notable parks as Veterans Park, Sayen Gardens, and Kuser Farm. The facilities at these parks include traditional active sporting fields such as soccer and baseball fields as well as more specialized facilities such as skateboard park, street hockey court, and the newest addition – pickleball courts at Veterans Park.

Hamilton Township has actively pursued the acquisition of stream corridors. The plan also recommends the preservation of 21 miles of stream corridors that lie within Hamilton. Preservation of stream corridors helps to preserve water quality and also allows for the opportunity to create hiking and/or biking trails.

The Action Plan (section VI) proposes both acquisition and development projects. Acquisition is proposed for almost 75 acres of land to be used to create parks for active and passive recreational uses. Farmland is also proposed to be included in the Farmland Preservation Program.

There are approximately 2,110 acres of undeveloped land in the Township. The goal of this open space plan is directed towards preserving the majority of this land where possible.

Based upon our analysis of standards suggested by the National Parks and Recreation Association, we find that approximately 344 acres of additional park land may be needed to continue this fine recreational tradition. This would enhance the approximately 1,991 acres of undeveloped open space which is made up of wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, irregular parcels, and small lots.

## II. GOALS AND POLICIES

The aim of this proposal is to promote the highest quality of life for our residents, especially our youth, by providing ample recreational fields and facilities for our diverse recreational youth leagues, parks for our families to enjoy, with access by all age and user groups, farms to preserve the more rural areas of our community and open space that provides preserves of natural habitat areas, with walking and hiking trails for the enjoyment of our residents and the preservation of nature.

**GOAL ONE:** To preserve adequate open space for the current and future needs of Township residents.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Acquire land which would help meet perceived needs for future recreational opportunities.
- B. Acquire lands for environmental protection and to satisfy open space objectives such as farmland and/or rural preservation. Lands in need of environmental protection would be wetlands, steep slopes, stream corridors, floodplain, floodways, aquifer recharge areas, and the like.
- C. Acquire as much open space as possible in the near future, while such open space is still largely undeveloped.
- D. Foster the acquisition of open space by private donations.
- E. Supplement Hamilton Township Municipal Open Space Funding with other funding sources such as State, County, and non-profit programs including but not limited to: State Green Acres Program; Mercer County Trust Fund Tax Acquisitions; and the State Farmland Preservation Program; the Infrastructure Trust Monies for stream corridor acquisition; and non-profit agencies.
- F. Explore the potential to integrate Township farmland with State and County preservation efforts.

**GOAL TWO:** To develop adequate open space and recreational facilities to meet the needs of Hamilton Township now and in the future.

### **Objectives:**

- A. Expand park lands with active recreational facilities to meet the present and future needs of Hamilton Township. Develop linear linkages between parks, historic properties, and from residential neighborhoods which promote alternative transportation.
- B. Promote recreational activity with appropriate and adequate access by all age and user groups throughout the Township.

- C. Foster continued cooperative use of facilities and open space with the Hamilton Township Board of Education.
- D. Foster continued and expanded cooperation with private commercial landowners and residential communities to utilize open space for shared recreational activities.
- E. Periodically review and update the recreation inventory and needs analysis to evaluate and provide for Estimated needs.
- F. Explore modifications of the Township Open Space Plan to achieve symbiosis with State, County, non-profit groups, and adjacent Community Greenway Plans, and to include passive recreational activities (i.e. limited public access, nature trails, picnicking).

**GOAL THREE:** To preserve and enhance the social and ecological environment for the inhabitants of Hamilton Township.

**Objectives:**

- A. Preserve Township critical lands to maintain the remaining limited sustainable natural ecosystems.
- B. Preserve farmland.
- C. Acquire land for recreational facilities for both active and passive activities and all user age groups to maximize social interaction, community pride, and leisure activities.
- D. Minimize the clearing of woodland and trees for recreational development by situating facilities in open areas and incorporating woodlands into the design.
- E. Integrate and connect historic sites with the various networks of recreational and natural open space.
- F. Encourage the acquisition of historically significant properties for preservation.

**GOAL FOUR:** To balance the provision of open space with other land uses.

**Objectives:**

- A. Reinforce the planning efforts of the Township, County, and State Master Plans.
- B. Balance open space and recreational facilities throughout the Township relative to neighborhoods to provide adequate access and opportunity to all people of the Township, and enhance the welfare of residents.
- C. Foster cooperative efforts to preserve regionally significant areas with the State, County, and adjacent municipalities.

D. Promote the development of mini-parks within neighborhoods.



### III. INVENTORY

The following chart provides a detailed analysis of the present status of open space and recreational areas available in Hamilton Township:

**Hamilton Township Open Space & Recreation Inventory**  
**Gross Acreage by Ownership & Use**  
**Hamilton Township Total Acreage = 25,600 Total Acres**

Owner/Designation	Acreage (Approx.)	Percentage of Total Township Acreage
State of New Jersey	269	1.00%
State of New Jersey (farmland)	518	2.00%
Mercer County	1,174	5.00%
Mercer County (farmland)	1,077	4.00%
Township Parks (Developed)	668	3.00%
Township Open Space (Township owned or deed restricted as Greenbelt, Farmland or Open Space.)	1991	8.00%
Non-Profit Lands	25	5.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,722</b>	<b>22.00%</b>

#### IV. NEEDS ANALYSIS

The table below was developed in coordination with the Township’s Department of Health, Recreation and Senior Citizens. This table provides an inventory of existing recreational facilities as well as an estimate of facilities which may be needed to accommodate the future growth of the Township over the next 20 years.

##### A. Active Recreation

The following table provides a list of the existing and needed recreational facilities, and the amount of land needed to accommodate these facilities including areas for seating and off street parking:

**TABLE I**

The land area includes both areas for seating and off-street parking.

	Name	Existing Township Owned Facilities	Existing Board of Education Owned Facilities*	Existing Private Facilities *	Future Needs	Square Feet Required Per Facility	Total Area in Square Feet	Total Seating/ Surrounding Area in Square Feet	Additional Acreage Needed in Acres
1	Softball	3	4	1	3	90,000	270,000	480,000	17
2	Small soccer fields	0	0	0	4	45,000	180,000	520,000	16
3	Full Sized Soccer fields	4	26	6	3	117,000	351,000	534,000	21
4	Indoor Soccer (Full sized fields)	0	0	2	0				
5	Football fields	1	9	0	4	93,600	374,400	700,000	25
6	Baseball fields	2	10	0	5	129,600	648,000	920,000	36
7	Swimming pool complex								
	Indoor	0	3	2	0				
	Outdoor	0	0	3	0				
8	Lacrosse	1	0	0	2	130,000	260,000	277,200	12
9	Skateboard Park	1	0	0	1	14,400	14,400	13,760	1
10	Track (For track and field events)	0	3	0	1	320,652	320,652		7
11	Full Basketball court- Outdoor	15	12	1	3	6,000	48,000	84,000	3
12	8 Sets of 2 Tennis courts	47	0	5	0				
13	Quoit Courts	4	0	4	0				

14	Outdoor Volleyball court	4	0	2	0				
15	Picnic groves with pavilion and outdoor cooking	14	8	6	0				
16	Ice skating rink	0	0	2 (indoor)	0				

	Name	Existing Township Owned Facilities	Existing Board of Education Owned Facilities*	Existing Private Facilities *	Future Needs	Square Feet Required Per Facility	Total Area in Square Feet	Seating/ Surrounding Area	Additional Acreage Needed
17	Street hockey rink	2	0	0	0				
18	Field Hockey	0	1	0	0				
19	Half Court Basketball	4	14	0	0				
20	Little League Baseball	15	0	2	4	90,000	360,000	640,000	<b>23</b>
21	Baseball/Softball	3	4	1	0				
22	Practice Football	0	2	0	3	93,650	280,800	170,000	<b>10</b>
23	Playground	32	17	1	0				
24	Fishing	2	0	0	0				
25	Lawn Bowling	2	0	0	0				
26	Bocce	3	0	6	0				
27	Shuffleboard	2	0	3	0				
28	Miniature Golf	1	0	0	0				
29	Fitness Equipment	2	0	0	0				

**Total 171**

We also note that the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA) recommends that a park system be composed of a core system of up to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population.

The 2020 US Census population estimated for Hamilton township is 86,722 people, down from a 2010 Census count of 88,464 people (-1,742). Using the NPRA recommendations, a total of up to 910 acres of lands developed for recreational use would be recommended.

The Township currently has approximately 668 acres of lands developed for recreation, leaving us with a projected need for 242 acres of land for recreational use (this would include the 171 acres of projected needs suggested in Table I).

### **B. Passive Recreation**

Passive recreation generally includes activities that do not require developed playing fields. Included but not limited in this category are walking, jogging, hiking, picnicking, boating, fishing, hunting, kite flying, horseshoe throwing, informal bocce, and pass and catch activities such as baseball, Frisbee™, lacrosse, football, and the like.

Many of these activities can be pursued at existing facilities, including those that are provided in County and State parks, in addition to the Township facilities.

### **C. Environmental Education**

There are numerous natural features within Hamilton Township that few of our citizens use or know about. These areas include the Great Bear Swamp, the Abbott Marshlands, Crosswicks Creek, the wetlands restoration on Duck Island, and the Delaware River to mention but a few. In the Fall of 2014, the Mercer County Park Commission opened the Tulpehaking Nature Center on Westcott Avenue – a new center for environmental education - located on the outskirts of the Abbott Marshlands.

### **D. Greenways**

Greenways and pedestrian/bicycle trails, linkages, trails, and stream corridors effectively tie the park system together to form a continuous park environment. The areas could be developed for one or more modes of recreational travel, i.e. walking and canoeing. Greenway trails offer tremendous opportunity for alternative means of transportation to and from parks and neighborhoods, for integrating historic sites into the park system, and for significant local and regional recreation. Greenway areas often include lands that preserve natural resources.

In viewing the Township, it may be seen that it is traversed by approximately 44 miles of streams and creeks. Many of these run through undeveloped areas while some are within more developed areas.

These streams provide an excellent opportunity to establish trails. In doing this, the Open Space and Recreation Plan seeks to promote the creation of greenways along most creeks and streams in the Township. The protection of stream corridors would serve a dual purpose: 1. They would help maintain water quality by filtering water run-off entering the streams and helping to maintain moderate temperatures in those waters. 2. They would provide areas to hike and/or bike and essentially enjoy the outdoors in a passive setting. Moreover, these stream greenways will afford the Township the ability to preserve historic properties and structures which often were developed along streams.

To this end, we have set a goal of acquiring approximately 21 miles of corridors along our streams. With an average width of 200 feet, these corridors would occupy approximately 500 acres of land.

The Township, County and State control 23 miles along stream corridors in Hamilton. This equates to approximately 1,806 acres.

### **E. Farmland Preservation**

The value of farmland to the community at large can be categorized in three ways: environmental, economic, and aesthetic. Farmland reduces the storm water runoff associated with residential or commercial development, provides wildlife habitat, reduces traffic congestion, interrupts the monotony of urban sprawl, and typically returns more in tax revenue than the cost of services provided. The State of New Jersey has sponsored and funded a program of farmland preservation for several decades. This program has thus far succeeded in establishing a farmland base that constitutes roughly 5% percent of the State's present agricultural land. State purchase of development rights to farmland properties is expected to accelerate rapidly as a result of the open space referendum that was adopted in November, 1998.

Hamilton Township has a significant amount of farmland, a vast majority of which is located primarily in the southern portion of the Township east of Route 130. All farmland encompasses approximately 3,340 acres, of which only 1,223 acres have been placed in Farmland Preservation. This represents 37% of the total farmland. There is a need to continue this preservation process.

## **V. RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**

Hamilton Township has been active in its efforts to preserve and develop open space for recreation. The preceding inventory and analysis have articulated the need to continue to promote these efforts. The following is a brief discussion of those public and private land and water resources that have potential for providing open space or recreation opportunities to address these deficiencies.

Presently there are 2,110 acres of private undeveloped land in Hamilton Township. Our needs analysis identified that at least 171 acres of land are recommended for active recreation. It also identified that at least another 500 acres of land is recommended to establish greenways along our twenty-one (21) miles of creeks and streams.

Given the vacant land noted, it is quite clear that there is presently sufficient land remaining in the Township that can supply the needed acreage identified in the needs analysis.

A considerable amount of vacant land is still available along our 20 miles of waterways. Much of the land that could be developed for active recreation may be found on various parcels throughout the Township. Land for farmland preservation is primarily found between Route 130 and the Crosswicks Creek, which forms the borders between Hamilton and towns in Burlington County.

Many of the vacant parcels are situated over aquifers, so that obtaining such lands for recreational use will serve a dual purpose in providing both recreation and protecting our water supply. Similarly, lands purchased as part of greenways will help protect both streams and rivers, and also preserve forest lands and historic sites.

The Township has significant natural features such as the Great Bear Swamp and the Hamilton Marsh, and is adjacent to the Delaware River, Assunpink Creek, and the Crosswicks Creek. Therefore, the potential exists for obtaining lands that will give us greater access to these areas and develop an environmental education center.

There are some parcels within the Township that are currently shown as developed on the inventory that are partially developed or are currently in a land use that may be consistent with protection as open space (one example are nurseries). Under a redevelopment or subdivision scenario, some or all of these parcels may be of high potential for protection as open space. The Township includes these parcels in the plan by reference.

## VI. ACTION PLAN

This section identifies land parcels that would significantly address our Open Space and Recreation needs and goals based upon the opportunities presented and fiscal constraints for the time period from 2002 to 2022. Actions are divided into the general categories utilized throughout this report, and estimated costs are given. The letters in parentheses key to parcel location on the Green Acres/Open Space Inventory Map.

### A. Active Recreation

1. Purchase of Block 2726, Lot 15 (15 acres) (AR-2)

This lot has access from Mill Street.

This property, located just off Mill Street in the North Crosswicks area, may be used for both active and passive recreation. It forms part of the Crosswicks Creek Linear Path System and is home to a historic mill and dam site. It therefore would create a unique recreational corridor along the Creek. This lot is 15.7 acres in area.

The estimated cost to purchase this property is \$65,000.

### B. Passive Recreation/Environmental Education

1. Purchase of Block 2405, Lot 2 (P/E E-1)

This property is located at the end of Bunting Avenue in Deutzville.

This lot, which is to the east of Lot 1, is a missing link needed to create a continuous greenway that will connect to the historic Bowhill Mansion and further onto Roebbling Park. The property consists of 9.52 acres.

The estimated cost of this is \$117,600.

2. Purchase of Block 2405, Lot 1 (P/E E-2)

This property is located at the end of Bunting and Deutz Avenues in Deutzville.

The front area consisting of approximately 2.5 acres would serve for active recreation. Roebbling Park, adjacent to the east is basically a passive park. That is why this front portion of the lot, which is devoid of significant features should be developed for active recreation and as a westerly entrance to the marshes which are contained in Roebbling Park.

The estimated cost of this is \$225,000.

3. Purchase of Block 1656, Lot 67 (P/E E-3)

This lot has access from Nebraska Avenue.

This 9.90 acre wooded lot is adjacent to Klockner Woods (a 51.57 acre wooded parcel) previously preserved by the township. Existing trails within Klockner Woods could extend into this undeveloped parcel creating a larger trail network.

The estimated cost of this is \$75,000.00.

4. Purchase of Block 1656, lot 5 (P/E E-4)

This lot is landlocked, but is immediately adjacent to Klockner Woods.

This 13.49 acre lot is also immediately adjacent to Klockner Woods to the east and borders Interstate 295 to the east. Another opportunity to extend the trail network while preserving the natural habitat of the wooded acreage.

The estimated cost of this is \$148,000.

5. Purchase of Block 1656, Lot 1 (P/E E-5)

This lot has narrow frontage on Nebraska Avenue.

This 10.47 acre lot is yet a third lot adjacent to Klockner Woods and is partially wooded and wet and has a driveway that served a former dwelling central to the lot. This is another great access point for the Klockner Woods parcels and another opportunity to connect via trails.

The estimated cost of this is \$115,000.

6. Purchase of Block 2663, Lot 17 (P/E E-6)

This lot has frontage on South Broad Street and Groveville-Yardville Road.

This 13.25 acre undeveloped wooded lot is bisected by Doctors Creek and could be a lot added to Hamilton's stream corridor parcels.

The estimated cost of this is \$99,000.00

### **C. Farmland Preservation**

1. Purchase of Block 2739, Lot 4.02 (FP-1)

Acreage: 19.24 acres

Ownership: Elma Katz

Estimated cost: \$346,000.00

2. Purchase of Block 2739, Lot 9 (FP-2)



Acreage: 49.93 acres  
Ownership: Slivonik V., Ossowski G. & E.  
Estimated cost: \$898,740.00

3. Purchase of Block 2739, Lot 4.01 (FP-3)  
Acreage: 9.62 acres  
Ownership: Bridget Leake  
Estimated cost: \$173,160.00
  
4. Purchase of Block 2715, Lot 1, 2 and 10 (FP-4)  
Acreage: 85.36 acres  
Ownership: Princeton Research Lands  
Estimated cost: \$1,536,480.00
  
5. Purchase of Block 2715, Lot 12 (FP-5)  
Acreage: 33.58 acres  
Ownership: 601 Corridor, LLC  
Estimated cost: \$402,960.00
  
6. Purchase of Block 2714, Lot 26 (FP-6)  
Acreage: 65.50 acres  
Ownership: 601 Corridor, LLC  
Estimated cost: \$786,000.00