

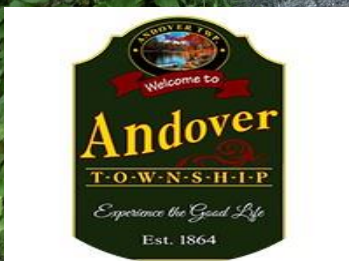
**Open Space and
Recreation Plan
Update**

For

**Township of
Andover**

County of Sussex

*Compiled by
H2M Architects and
Engineers
with the
Township of Andover
Environmental and Open
Space Commission
December 2023*



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Executive Summary

The Township of Andover is a rural community located in northwestern New Jersey that has a wide variety of natural resources including lakes, watersheds, forests, and ridgelines. Andover has a long history of open space preservation and environmental protection. The Township has an Open Space Trust Fund and last adopted an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) in 2008. Andover Township now intends to prepare an updated OSRP in 2022.

This OSRP builds upon the 2008 OSRP. Additionally, the Plan was prepared utilizing updated datasets from County, State and Federal resources; reviewing Township and County planning documents; and gathering public opinion of Township residents through an online survey and an in-person community workshop. These methods and site visits to the Township helped to identify the trends and changes that have occurred in the Township to ensure that the updated version of the OSRP can meet the current and future needs of residents.

An analysis of the trends and public opinion formed the basis of the recommendations made in this Plan. The recommendations focus on three major areas in order to meet the Township's Open Space goals and objectives: 1) Open Space Preservation, 2) Farmland Preservation, and 3) Trail Expansion. In addition to these strategies, the OSRP also makes recommendations for improving the facilities and recreational opportunities provided at the Township's existing parks and open spaces. The implementation of the Plan's recommendations over the short-, medium-, and long-term will result in multiple greenways throughout the Township that will preserve large, continuous tracts of land that can ensure the protection and integrity of natural habitats for current residents and future generations. The Township's rural community offers a high quality of life through its open space and natural beauty, and the 2022 OSRP intends to preserve the value provided by these resources and enhance the Township's environment for the future.



Introduction

Andover Township is located in the southeastern part of Sussex County. This rural community is in the northwestern corner of New Jersey. The Township is bordered by Sparta and Byram Townships to the east, Lafayette and Hampton Townships to the north, Newton and Fredon Township to the west, and Andover Borough and Green Township to the south. The Township has a wealth of natural resources including large, forested hills, lakes, wetlands, and other unique natural habitats. Kittatinny Valley State Park is located in the center of the Township and provides a wide range of recreational opportunities for Township residents including hiking, mountain biking, walking, fishing and many others. The various recreational opportunities located in the Township draw visitors from around the area, acting as a catalyst for economic development in addition to the benefits afforded to Andover residents.

Parks, recreation, and open space facilities are essential to communities as they not only improve the quality of life for residents by creating diverse amenity-rich environments, but they also improve water quality, guard against flooding, and maintain scenic views. Andover Township's unique location within the New Jersey Skylands Region and adjacent to the Highlands makes preservation of sensitive environments a top priority for the Township and the region. Providing for parks, recreation and preserving open space is therefore not only essential to the Township's local quality of life, but also to regional environmental benefits. Here are some of the wide- ranging beneficial impacts of open space:

1. Quality of life
 - a. Retains existing residents & businesses
 - b. Provides for a venue for neighborliness
2. Economic benefits
 - a. Enhances property values
 - b. Promotes environmental tourism
 - c. Prevents costly environmental degradation (i.e. loss from flooding, erosion, pollution)
3. Ecological benefits
 - a. Improves water quality
 - b. Guards against flooding
 - c. Naturally filters pollutants & stormwater run-off
 - d. Preserves species & habitats
4. Transportation connections
 - a. Trails offer alternative transportation routes



5. Cultural awareness and community identity
 - a. Preserves historic sites, districts & landscapes
 - b. Contributes to local identity & creates a sense of place
6. Public health
 - a. Contributes to mental & physical health of residents
 - b. Offers opportunities for active lifestyles
7. Education
 - a. Provides opportunity for “hands-on” environmental classrooms
 - b. Brings awareness to environmental issues (i.e. water quality)

Planning for open space and recreation is a key component for improving the quality of life for any municipality. The development of an OSRP indicates the Township’s commitment to open space and gives Andover Township the ability to receive funding to implement the goals and recommendations of the Plan. This OSRP represents an update to the 2008 OSRP that the Township Planning Board adopted in March of 2008. Several important trends and changes have occurred since the previous OSRP, and this Plan intends to update the goals and recommendations to orient the Township towards addressing these different trends and challenges.

The most significant trend occurring over the past decade-plus is the statewide development trend away from the far western regions of the State back to the more urban counties of New Jersey. Andover Township has felt this change more acutely than others. In the four-year period prior to the adoption of the last OSRP in 2008, the Township issued an average of about 36 C.O. building permits per year while the Township has issued an average of about 2 building permits per year between 2017 and 2020.¹ As a result, the Township’s population has seen a decline of about 6% between 2010 and 2020 based on the ten-year Census data. This marks a significant change from the time period when the previous OSRP was written where the Township was experiencing significant development pressures, having grown by 11% in the decade between 1990 and 2000 and by 5% between 2000 and 2010. While the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the public’s desire for larger lots and open spaces, it is unlikely that the Township’s growth pattern will return to what it was in previous decades. The underlying demographic and development trends will be an important guide to the Township’s goals and recommendations with regards to open space. A more detailed discussion of the demographic trends in Andover Township will be discussed in the **Existing Conditions** section of the Plan.

Another important context for this update to the OSRP is the actions that the Township has taken from the previous Plan that have expanded the recreational capacity of the Township as well as the number of preserved lands. Andover has implemented many aspects of the 2008 Plan, which has greatly expanded the trail network and the amount of preserved land in the Township. Consequently, this Plan builds upon those previous efforts and analyzes what more the Township can do moving forward.

¹ Data from NJDCA “Development Trends Viewer” updated on July 12, 2021.



Goals & Objectives

1. Protect and restore environmentally sensitive areas, such as wildlife habitats, steep slopes, wetlands and surface water quality.
2. Enhance and expand the Township’s trail system through upgrades to existing facilities and the development of new trails.
3. Ensure all park facilities are in a state of good repair and well maintained.
4. Promote the health and welfare of the Township of Andover residents through high quality open spaces and recreational facilities and programs.

The Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-5) defines open space as: “Any parcel or area of land or water essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment or for the use and enjoyment of owners and occupants of land adjoining or neighboring such open space, provided that such areas may be improved with only those buildings, structures, streets, and off-street parking and other improvements that are designed to be incidental to the natural openness of the land.”

Historic Development

Andover Township is a historic and bucolic community that has a strong rural character. Defining characteristics of the Township include its natural features, with forest as its predominant land use. Andover was originally settled by the Lenni Lenape Indians, and later by German settlers who were drawn to the region’s natural resources. The discovery of iron led to permanent European settlement, with the development of mines and iron processing facilities. Iron remained a primary industry for the Township through the 19th century, after which iron mining tapered as other high quality iron supplies in the nation became more available. Andover reverted to an agricultural community, and later experienced residential growth as New York metro area residents moved westward. As a result, the existing development pattern remains relatively rural with pockets of suburban tract development scattered throughout the Township, primarily located off the area’s major roadways.



Community Engagement and Public Participation

The Open Space Plan cannot be written, nor recommendations made without input from the people who live, work, and visit Andover. Without variable public input, this document will not accurately represent the wants and needs of Andover residents. Throughout the Open Space Plan process, the Township and its consultants, H2M (the “Open Space Plan Team”), worked hard to obtain ideas,

opinions, feedback, and concerns, using online engagement and a community workshop. This collaborative approach provides community insight on the future of open space in the Township of Andover.

Key to the success of this community outreach initiative was the partnership between the Township and the consultants developing this OSRP. Without the Township promoting the project by tapping into its existing communication tools such as its social media accounts and Township website, and through the individuals that believed in the project and became “ambassadors” of the plan, this project’s community engagement outreach would not have been as successful.

The following section describes the public outreach process in the development of this OSRP.

Master Plan Sub-Committee

At the launch of the project, an Open Space Plan Sub-Committee comprised of members of the Township’s Land Use Board and Environmental Commission. Advisory Committee members include:

- Paul Messerschmidt, Land Use Board Chairman
- Eric Olsen, Environmental Commission Representative and Land Use Board Member
- Suzanne Howell, Land Use Board Member
- Joshua Osowski, Environmental Commission Member

Online Engagement

The Open Space Plan Team established an online presence of the Open Space Plan through a project-specific webpage (<https://publicinput.com/andoveropenspace>). The website contained a wide range of information regarding the project, including a flyer describing the project, frequently asked questions, the workshop date and location, summary report of the workshop and survey results, and links to an online survey. Andover also promoted the workshops and the project through announcements on the Township’s website and social media pages.

Surveys

To gain valuable feedback in the most convenient format for project participants, an Open Space Plan Survey was developed for an online format. Survey responses were collected for approximately three months. During the survey period, 166 respondents completed the survey and provided 347 individual comments. A summary of the survey results can be found in **Appendix A**.

Public Workshop

The Open Space Plan Team hosted the open space plan community workshop on October 26, 2021. The Team engaged with residents at the meeting, which was held from 5PM to 7PM at the Andover Township Municipal Building. The community workshop summary was posted online on the project website for public viewing.

A detailed explanation of the workshop’s format and comments received can be found in **Appendix B and C**.

Open Space Sub-Committee Interim Check-ins

The Consultant Team had interim check-ins with the Open Space Sub-Committee throughout the planning process. These meetings were intended to provide updates to the committee members to



ensure that the Plan was moving forward and to gather feedback from members on how various aspects of the plan and the public outreach process should be presented.

The Open Space Plan Team then gave a presentation on the draft version of the OSRP to the Land Use Board on May 3, 2022, to gather comments from Board members. The presentation used at this meeting can be found in **Appendix B**.

Summary of Public Outreach Results

The Public Outreach for the OSRP focused on three general areas around the topic of open space: (1) Park Utilization, (2) Facility Improvements, and (3) Future Open Space. These three areas in addition to a visioning for the future of open space in Andover Township helped residents to formulate a cohesive sentiment of how the Township should focus its future open space efforts in the coming years.

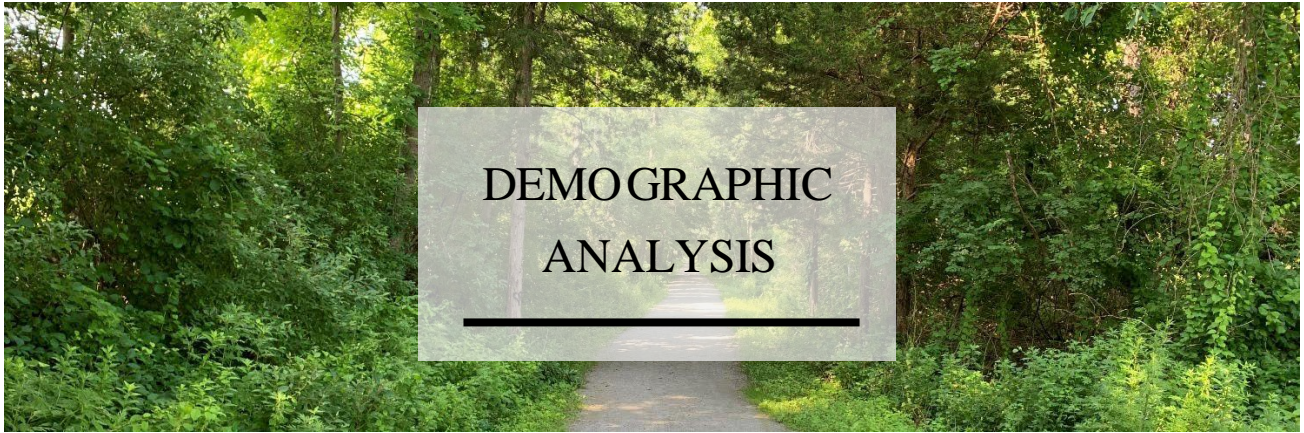
Andover residents actively use the parks and open space facilities afforded to them in the Township with most residents utilizing the parks/open space at least twice a month. The most popular locations visited were Kittatinny Valley State Park, Hillside Park, and the walking/biking trails. Two of the top three locations generally provide more passive recreation (i.e. hiking walking, bike riding) compared to more active recreation (i.e. basketball, baseball, organized sports). When considering future open space acquisitions and improvements, residents wanted the Township to prioritize walking/hiking/biking trails and natural areas of the Township. Residents throughout the survey placed great emphasis on environmental protection and wanting to see prioritization towards the protection of the environment and the natural resources through these enhancements and potential acquisitions.

The responses received in the public outreach portion of the Open Space Plan process form the basis of this Plan. A larger summary of the public outreach results can be found in **Appendices A and B**.

Draft Plan Review

The draft OSRP was thoroughly vetted and reviewed by the Open Space Plan Advisory Committee, Land Use Board, and the public. In compliance with New Jersey State statute, the Land Use Board held at least one public hearing for the draft Open Space Plan. During the 10- day notice period, the draft was posted online for public review.



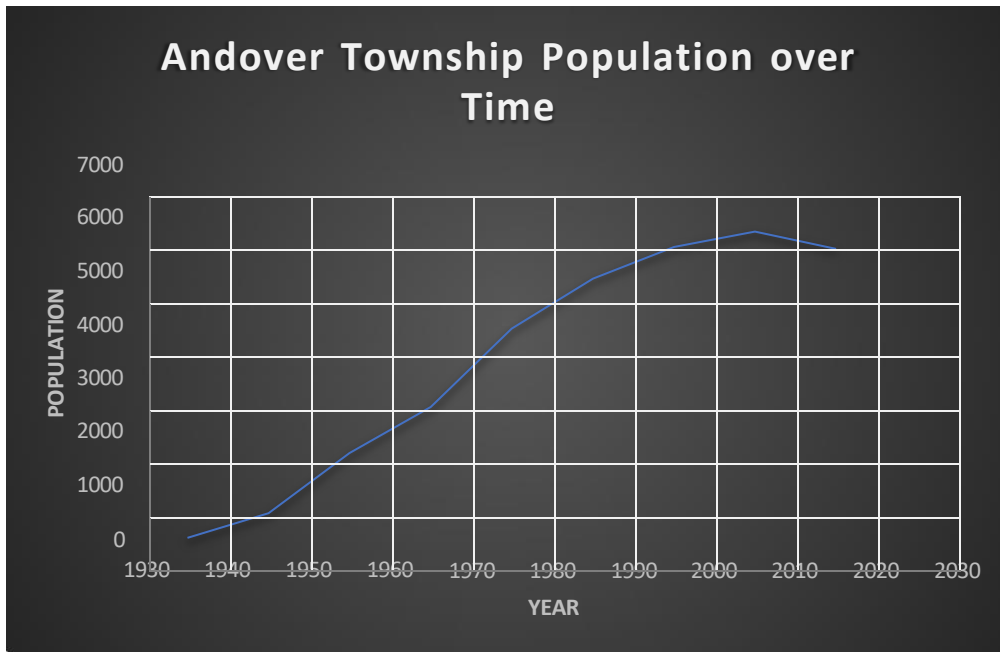


Demographic Analysis

Since the preparation of Andover Township's last Open Space Plan, there have been significant changes to population demographics and other factors that impact how people live, work, recreate, and utilize open space. It is important to understand demographic conditions and population trends in order to better reflect the lifestyles of Andover residents. Doing so helps identify and address growing needs or potential areas of concern which can help to comprehensively plan for future open space and recreational opportunities in the Township.

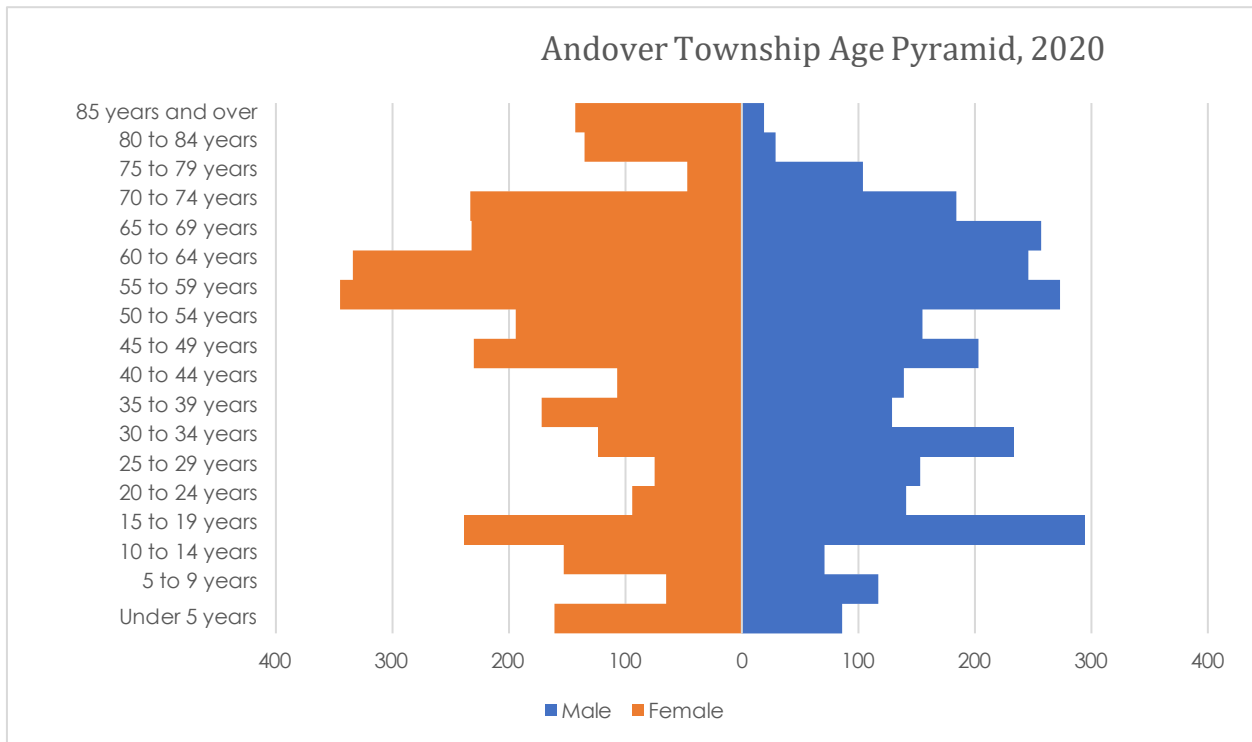
Population

- Since 1940, Andover's population has grown by 915% from 591 to 5,996 in 2020.
- The largest increase was between 1950 and 1960, where the township grew 107% from 1,052 to 2,117.
- Since 1960, the Township's growth rate has declined, with a negative growth rate between 2010 and 2020. The Township's population declined by 5.1% and 323 people during this time period.
- The current population of Andover Township is 5,996 per the 2020 decennial census.
- The Township has a land area of 19.96 square miles and a population density of 300.4 persons per square mile, less than one fourth the density of New Jersey, which has a population density of 1,263.83 persons per square mile.



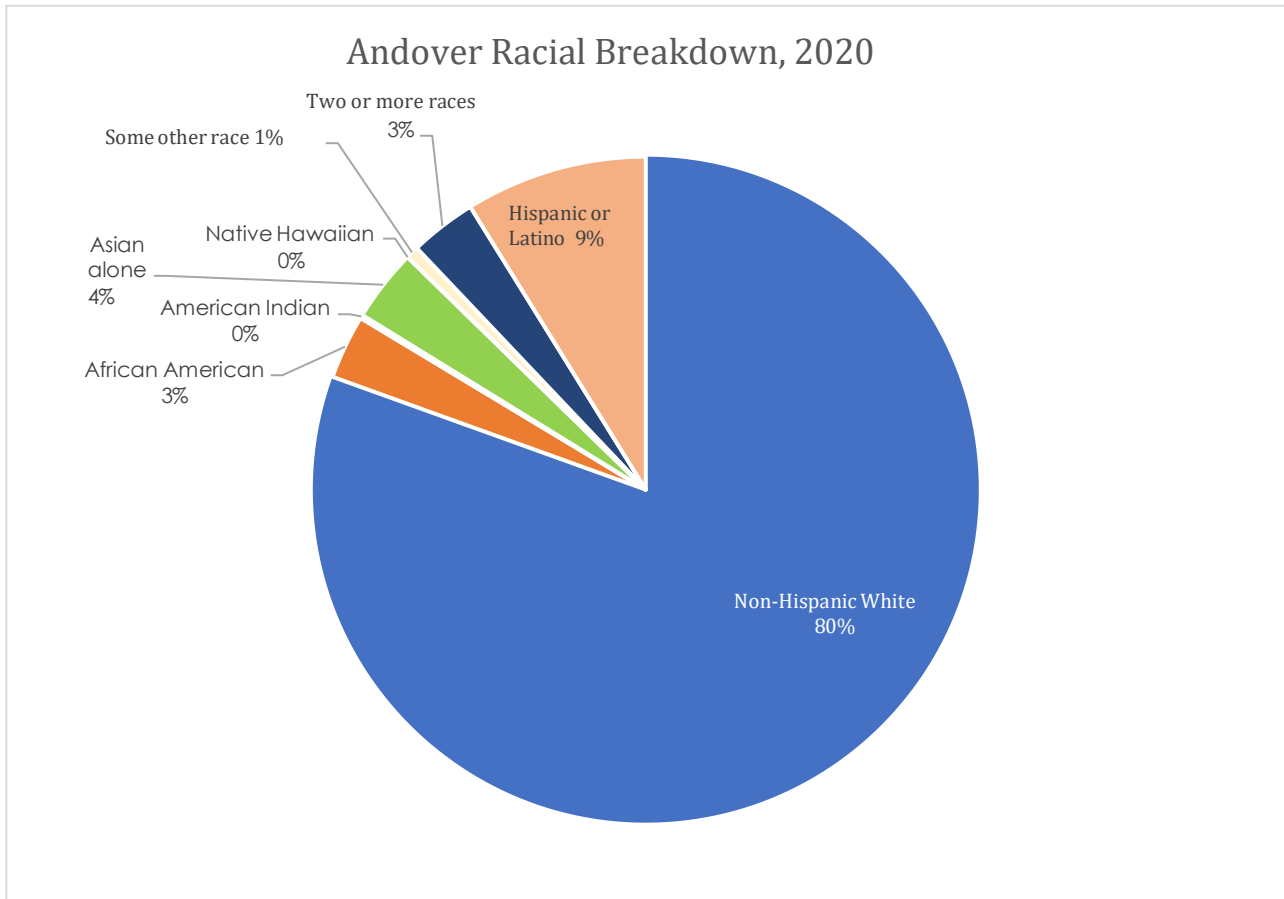
Age

- Census data indicate that Andover has an aging population; Andover’s median age was 43.8 in 2010 and 47.9 in 2019.
- Baby Boomers (ages 55-74) are the largest age cohort in the Township, comprising 35.2% of the population. 16.93% are under 18 years of age and 34.64% are 60 years and over.



Race and Ethnicity

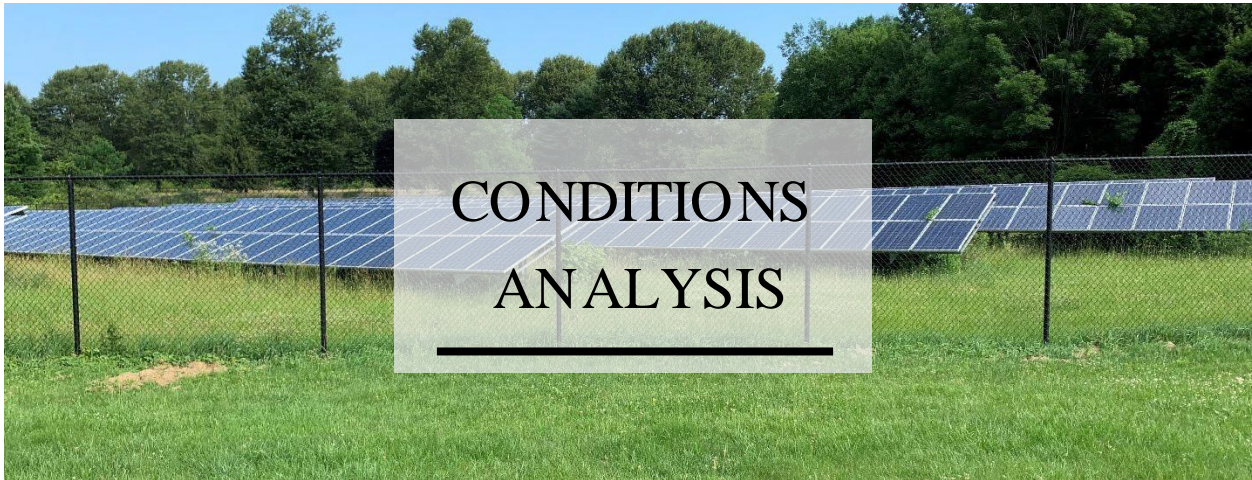
- Andover Township’s population is less racially diverse than the state as a whole. 2020 census data indicate that the largest racial group is non-Hispanic white (83.1%), followed by Hispanic or Latino of any race (8.8%) and two or more races (6.8%).
- Growing populations in the Township include two or more races, other, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian.



Income and Poverty

- Andover Township is a relatively wealthy municipality with a median household income of \$92,838 in 2019.
- 6.4% of the population was below the federal poverty line.

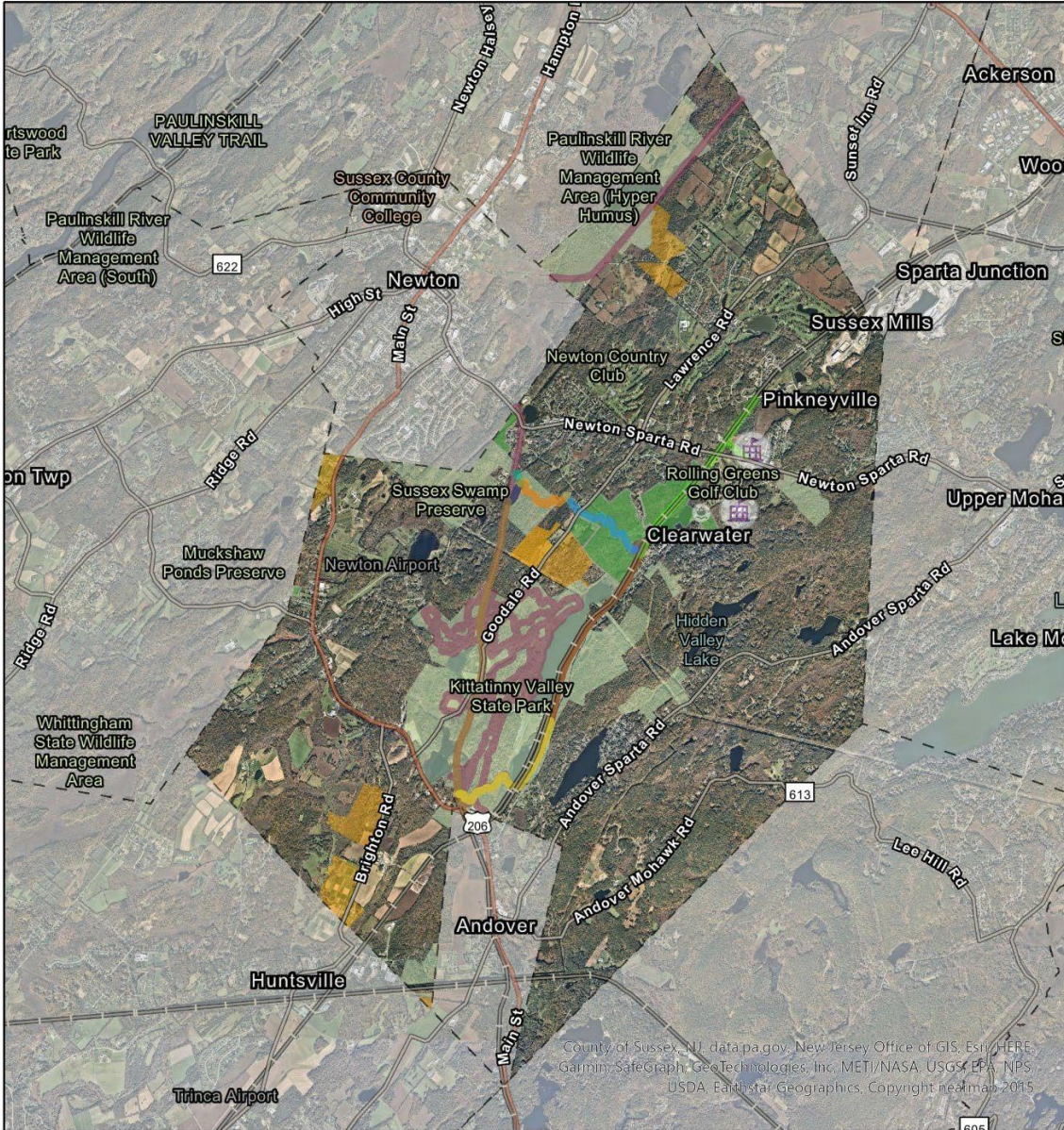




Conditions Analysis

The conditions analysis is intended to give the Township an understanding of the current inventory of open space, preserved land, and recreational facilities. This inventory will then help to provide a guide for how Andover Township will move forward in the coming years based upon its current assessment and the Open Space Plan’s goals and objectives for the Township. The analysis is based on the data collected from various state and local sources as well as the feedback received by residents and the sub-committee to ensure that the analysis provides useful resources on the gaps present in the Township and the steps that can be taken to move forward.

The **Preserved Lands Map** shows the Township’s established parks and other publicly accessible open space and recreational facilities (i.e. school fields). Collectively, these resources provide a wide array of amenities from kayaking and mountain biking to court and field games. Seventy- eight percent (78%) of survey respondents said they go to a park in Andover at least two times per month, with 48% reporting they go multiple times per week. While residents are frequent patrons of the large parklands in Andover, they would like to see additional recreational spaces and preserved lands in their Township. The public survey that accompanied this Open Space Plan highlighted Andover Township residents’ desire to preserve the Township’s open spaces and natural lands. These spaces are one of the main reasons that people move to Andover and represent the Township’s major asset. Survey respondents believed that the Township’s top priority with the preservation of land should be to preserve areas that help to create linkages and access points between residential areas and natural areas. Essentially, Andover residents love the areas natural beauty and want to be able to preserve it for the public good. This belief by residents helps to form the basis for both this analysis and the recommendations made in the Open Space Plan. The existing conditions in the Township highlight the need for the Township to work with its partners at the State and County levels to ensure its future success. The following sections describe the open space and farmland in the Township.



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Legend

- Sussex Branch To Luccettway Line
- South Loop 2 Airport Sussex Branch Line
- Lake Iliff Trail Line
- Hillside Park To 14 Luchetti Way
- Cutoff Trail To Hillside Park Line
- Airport To Lake Iliff Line
- Andover Loop Ridgeline Line
- State Park Trails
- Andover Loop Sussex Branch
- ROSI Parcels
- Preserved Open Space
- Preserved Farmland
- Andover Parcels
- School Properties
- Boat Launch

0 0.38 0.75 1.5 Miles

**Andover Township
Preserved Lands
Map**

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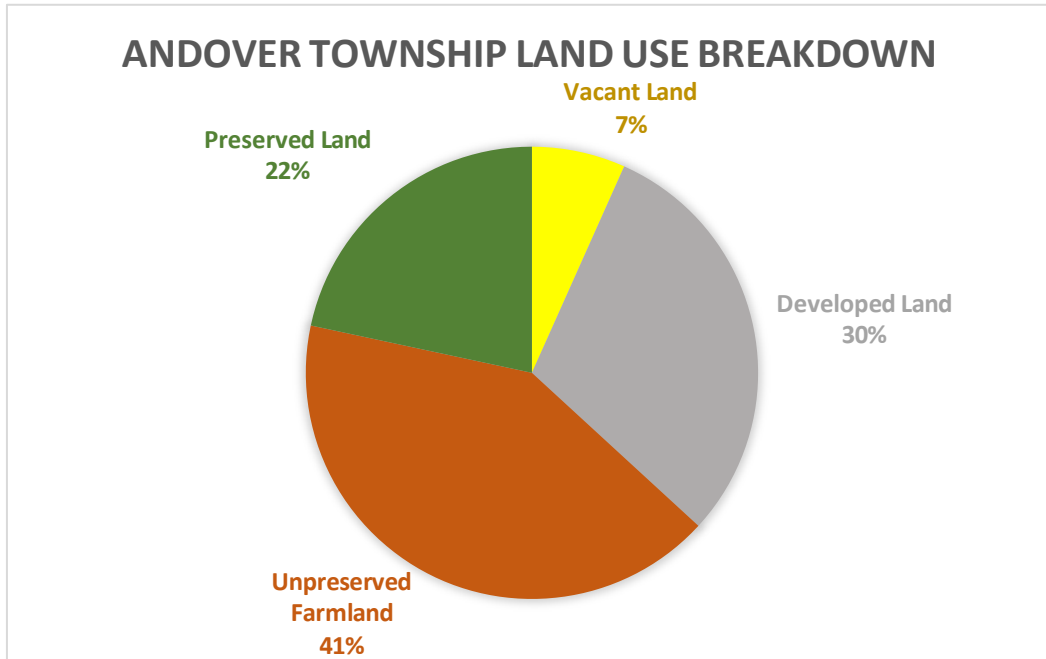
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Existing Land Use

As a part of the existing conditions analysis, the H2M team conducted an analysis of all land uses in Andover Township. The results of this analysis using 2021 property tax data are shown in the graph below.



As shown, a plurality (41%) of the land area is classified as unpreserved farmland while 30% is considered developed, 22% is preserved land, and 7% is vacant land. Consequently, about 48% of the land area in Andover has the potential to be developed as about 52% of the Township is either already developed or considered preserved. Details of the existing preserved areas are discussed in the following sections.

Existing Parks, Open Space and Historic Resources

State Owned Preserved Open Space

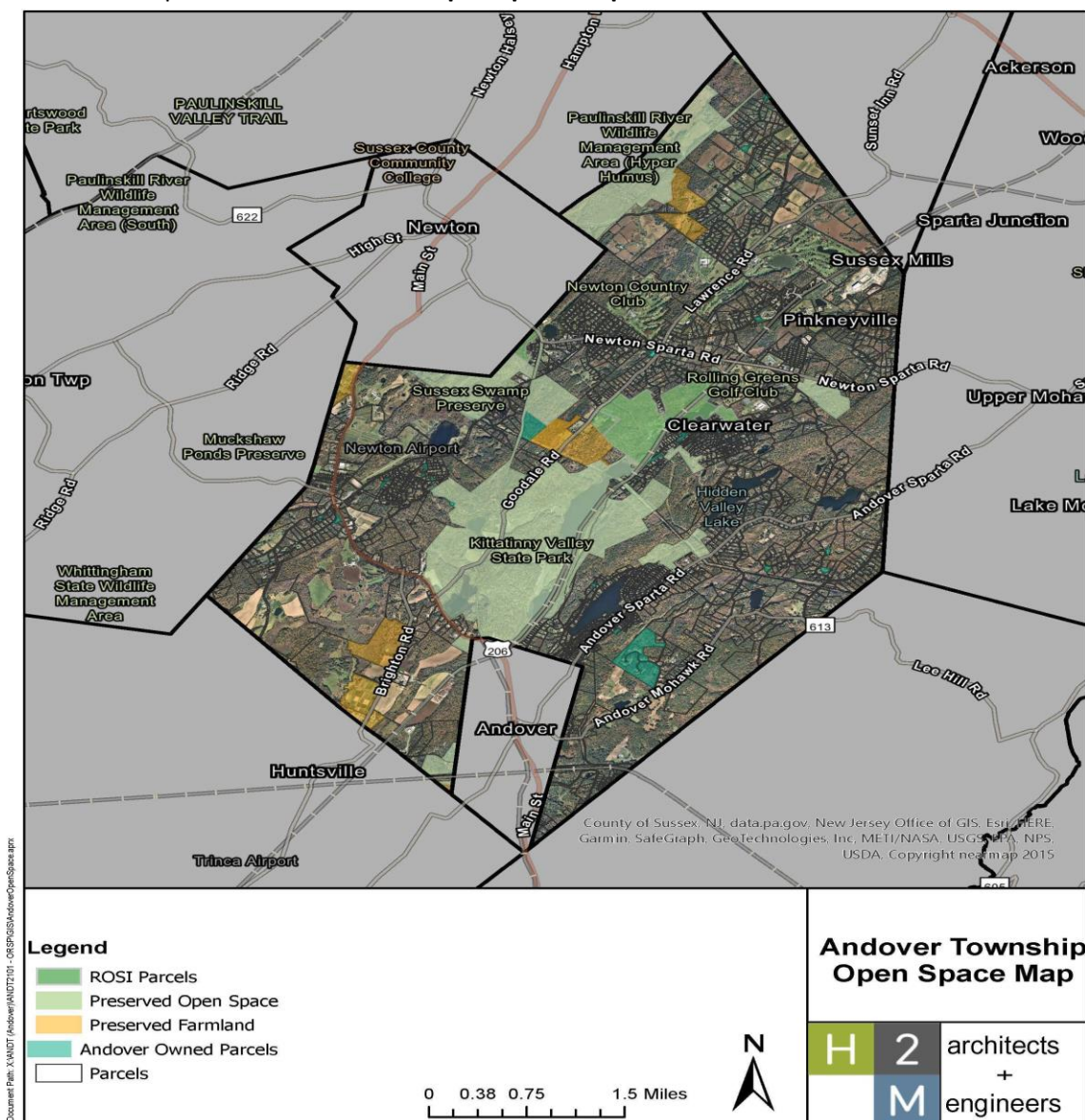
The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) owns a total of 1,993 acres of land in the Township. The overwhelming majority of this is part of Kittatinny Valley State Park, which is 1,166 acres of land in the Township. Additionally, the NJDEP owns 330 acres that is part of the Paulinskill River Hyper-Humus Wildlife Management Area, 156 acres for the Sussex Swamp Preserve, 28 acres for the Sussex Branch Trail, 65 acres covering other abandoned railways, and 248 acres of other lands. Discussion of the land and facilities owned and maintained by the State will be found throughout the Plan. Understanding which parcels in the Township are owned by the NJDEP will ensure that the Township is able to work with partners at the state level for improvements on state-owned properties that ensure Andover meets its preservation and recreation goals as stated in the Open Space Plan.

Township Open Space



Andover Township owns a large number of parcels that are utilized for a variety of uses. Several of these parcels are included in the New Jersey Green Acres program and are included in the Township’s Recreation and Open Space Inventory, or ROSI. ROSI parcels have specific restrictions that ensure that parcels are permanently preserved. Hillside Park, which is included in the ROSI, is the Township’s only major park with roughly 500 acres in total area. Hillside Park is widely used by Township residents and area visitors due to its size and facilities. Access to Hillside Park is from the main entrance off Lake Iliff Road and from the rear entrance off of Goodale Road. A larger discussion of the facilities at Hillside Park are discussed in the **Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space** section.

In addition to the Township parcels that are permanently preserved, there are various parcels throughout Andover that the Township utilizes for a variety of purposes. Most of these parcels are utilized for municipal functions such as the police and fire stations and the municipal building. However, the Township owns some parcels that have the potential to be preserved for open space. Discussion of these parcels can be found in the **Future Open Space** section of this Plan while the locations of these parcels is shown in the **Open Space Map** below.



Andover Regional School District

















Andover Regional School District owns two parcels within the Township. Florence M. Burd Elementary School is located on Newton Sparta Road and occupies 10.4 acres of land. The school property has an existing playground area and fields around the school that can be used for recreational purposes. In recent years, the Township has worked to develop a connecting trail from the school property to the Lake Iliff trail.

Long Pond Middle School is located on Limecrest Road and occupies 29.8 acres of land. The property is located adjacent to the ROSI parcel that contains the Township public access point to Lake Iliff. The school property has ball fields on the property and an existing path that leads to the rear of the former Rolling Greens Golf Club.











Township Parks and Recreation

The following section provides an analysis of the Township’s existing park facilities.

Table 2: Andover Twp Existing facilities

	Amenity	State Park	Township Park	Total
		Kittatinny Valley State Park	Hillside Park	
	Baseball Fields	0	2	2
	Basketball Courts	0	2	2
	Benches	X	X	X
	Bike/Walking Trails	15	4	19
	Boat Launches	2	1	3
	Community Garden	0	0	0
	Cricket Field	0	0	0
	Disc Golf	0	0	0
	Dog Park	0	0	0
	Fresh Water Fishing	4	0	4
	Horseshoe Pits	0	0	0
	Lacrosse	0	0	0
	Nature Areas	1	1	2
	Nature Trails	15	4	19
	Pavilion	0	1	1
	Picnic Area	1	1	2



	Playground	0	1	1
	Restrooms	4	1	5
	Roller Hockey	0	1	1
	Sand Box	0	0	0
	Skate Park	0	0	0
	Soccer	0	2	2
	Softball Field	0	2	2
	Splash Park	0	0	0
	Tennis Courts	0	2	2
	Volleyball	0	1	1

Hillside Park

500 acres, 146 Lake Iliff Road



Description

Located along Lake Iliff Road and Goodale Road in the center of Andover, Hillside Park is the Township’s largest owned park that provides a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities. Hillside Park also acts as the Township’s largest community gathering space. The park is equipped with sport fields, tennis courts, volleyball court, basketball courts and a skating rink with lights. Various sports teams and recreation leagues utilize the various ball fields and other recreation facilities. There is also a playground

and picnic area. The Township has also developed trails in recent years that connect Hillside Park to Lake Iliff trail and other trails along utility powerlines. Hillside Park Hall and House are also available to the public for rental for the public. The Township is also considering renovating or rebuilding the Barn at Hillside Park.

When asked in the public survey, two-thirds of respondents believed the best option is to renovate the existing building. About 15% of respondents wanted to see the existing building torn down and a new structure with a similar recreational use to replace it.

Existing Facilities

- Ballfields
- Tennis courts
- Volleyball court
- Basketball court
- Skating rink
- Playground
- Picnic area
- Banquet hall
- Meeting facilities
- Trails

Recent & Current Scheduled Improvements

- Barn at Hillside Park

Opportunities

- Paved walking trails around park
- Improved restrooms
- Handicap accessibility
- Improved linkage to Lake Iliff Trail
- Boat access on Lake Iliff
- Trail connection to Kittatinny State Park

Non-Profit Open Space

In addition to public ownership, open space parcels are permitted to be owned by non-profit entities. The Foodshed Alliance, a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote sustainable farming and locally grown, fresh, healthy food in northern New Jersey, owns approximately 27 acres of land in Andover Township. These lands cover the Muckshaw Ponds Preserve and a preserved farmland parcel.

Historic Resources

In addition to environmental and recreational resources, Andover Township is fortunate to have a number of historic resources that add to the quality of life that Township residents enjoy. The New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) establishes historic districts, adds buildings to the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places and aids with other historic preservation activities in New Jersey. Inclusion in the National Register provides income tax benefits for significant rehabilitation of historic buildings. The State of New Jersey provides matching grants and low-interest loans to incentivize the rehabilitation of buildings include in the State Register. The New Jersey Historic Preservation Office identifies two historic sites in Andover Township:



Pequest Fill (DL&W Cutoff)
(SHPO ID#4691)

The Pequest Fill is the largest fill in the Lackawanna Cut-Off and is considered one of the largest man-made embankments in the world. The cut-off is currently a deactivated railbed.



Slater Homestead (a.k.a. Aeroflex House and Barn)
(SHPO ID#5421)

SHPO Opinion: 3/16/2015 Location:
265 Limecrest Road

The Slater Homestead house was built in 1874 and is currently located in Kittatinny Valley State Park. The house has been restored and houses the offices for the State Park.



Existing Farmland

Andover Township, being a rural community, has an extensive amount of farmland. As stated earlier, roughly 41% of the Township is classified as unpreserved farmland. There are ten parcels in Andover Township that are preserved farmland parcels. The total area of these parcels is 347.57 acres. This is an increase from 2008 when there were six preserved farmland parcels that totaled 316 acres.

Table 1: Andover Township Preserved Farmland Parcels

Preserved Farm Name	Acreage	Location
Withey	38.0	Northern; Adjacent to Hyper Humus wetland
Frungillo	78.94	Southern; between CR-603 and Pequest River
Krueger (2 parcels)	17.08	Southern; Brighton Road (CR-603) along Green Township border
Foodshed Alliance	23.94	Western; West of U.S. Route 206 along Newton, Fredon Township border
Elwood	46.0	Western; South of CR-611 along Fredon, Green Township border
Pattison (2 parcels)	110.0	Central; Goodale Road between Kittatinny Valley State Park and Hillside Park
Fritz	31.56	Northern; off CR-663 (Warbasse Junction Road)
Washer	2.05	Southern; along Green Township and Andover Borough border
Total	347.57	

According to 2021 property tax records, the Township has 151 existing farmland parcels that are currently unpreserved. These existing non-preserved farms are located throughout the Township with large clusters located in the southwestern corner of the Township south of U.S. Route 206, the



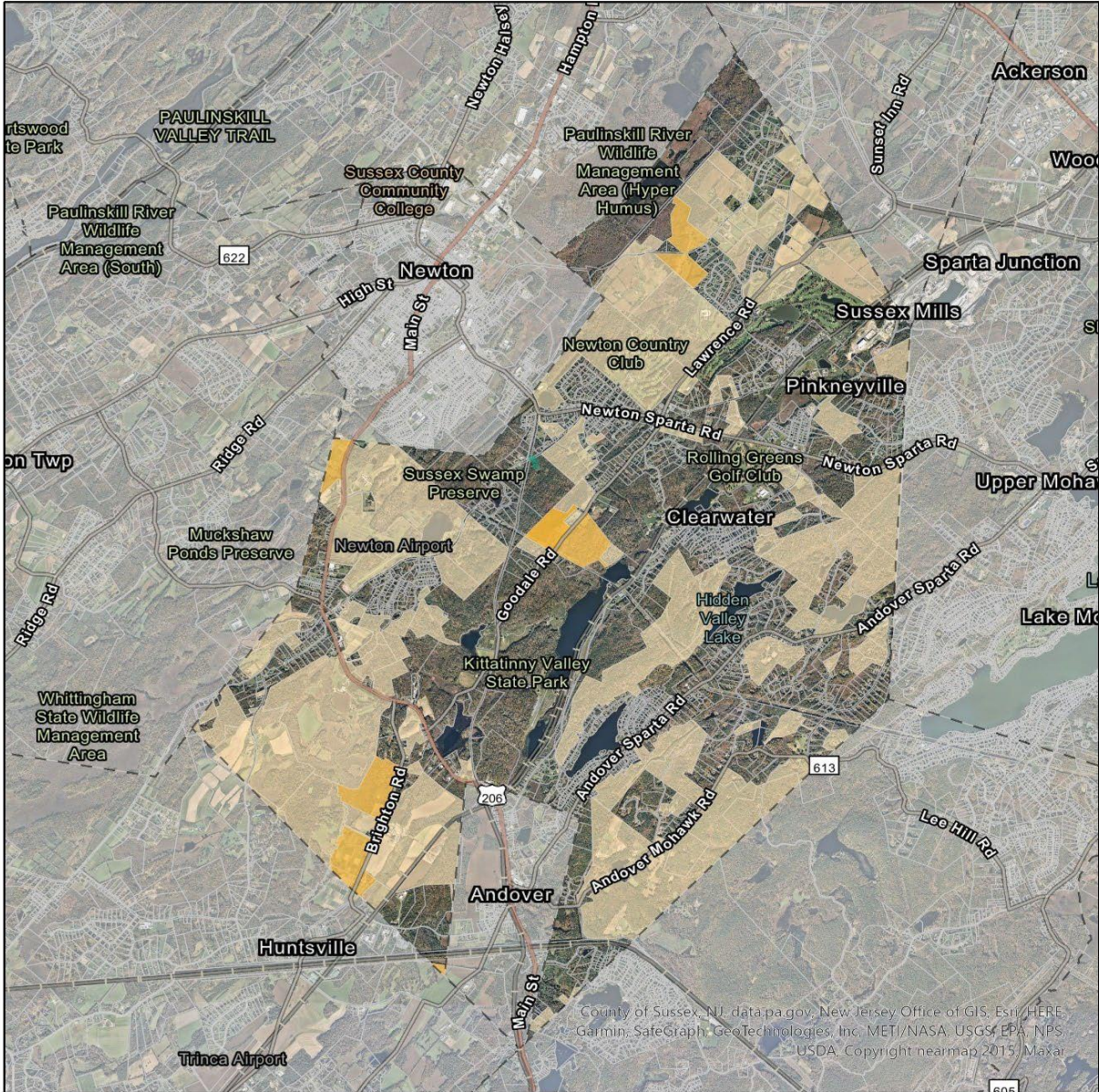
northwestern corner near the Paulinskill River WMA, and the area near Sparta Township along Andover-Sparta Road.

The Sussex County Farmland Preservation Plan, last updated in 2008, identifies a number of “candidate” farms that are potentially eligible for preservation in Andover Township. Most of the Township’s candidate farms are located near U.S. Route 206. In the fourteen years since the original Open Space Plan, none of these farmland parcels have been preserved.

Based on property tax data, the Township has experienced an increase in the number of farm assessed land since the 2008 OSRP. In 2008, there were 141 properties totaling 4,388 acres of farm assessed land in the Township. Today, there are 151 properties totaling 5,103 acres of farm assessed land. It should be noted that a change in property tax classification does not necessarily mean that a farm was lost to development. Rather, it could simply signify a change in how the properties were assessed at the time for tax purposes. However, it is important that the Township understand the dynamic that has caused the number of farmland assessed properties to increase during the time period between the OSRP.

This trend may point towards the need for greater preservation of the remaining farmland in Andover. While the Township may not be experiencing the development pressure that it was experiencing at the time of the last OSRP, the existing large farmland parcels still have the potential to be subdivided and developed. Subdividing farmland for residential development would have a significant impact on the environmental conditions and community character in Andover Township. The Farmland Preservation program in New Jersey offers many benefits to both the owners of these farms and the Township. Andover may want to strategically target which farmlands would make the most sense for preservation and approach those specific property owners. The intention would be to highlight the benefits of the Preservation program and work on potential agreements such as easements that would achieve various open space goals such as expanding trail opportunities. Those efforts are discussed in greater detail in the **Future Open Space** section.





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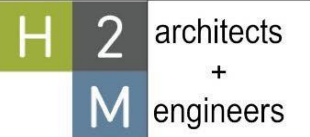
County of Sussex, NJ, data.pa.gov, New Jersey Office of GIS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, Copyright nearmap 2015, Maxar

Legend

- Preserved Farmland
- Farmland Assessed
- Andover Parcels



**Andover Township
Existing Farmland
Map**



Environmental Resources

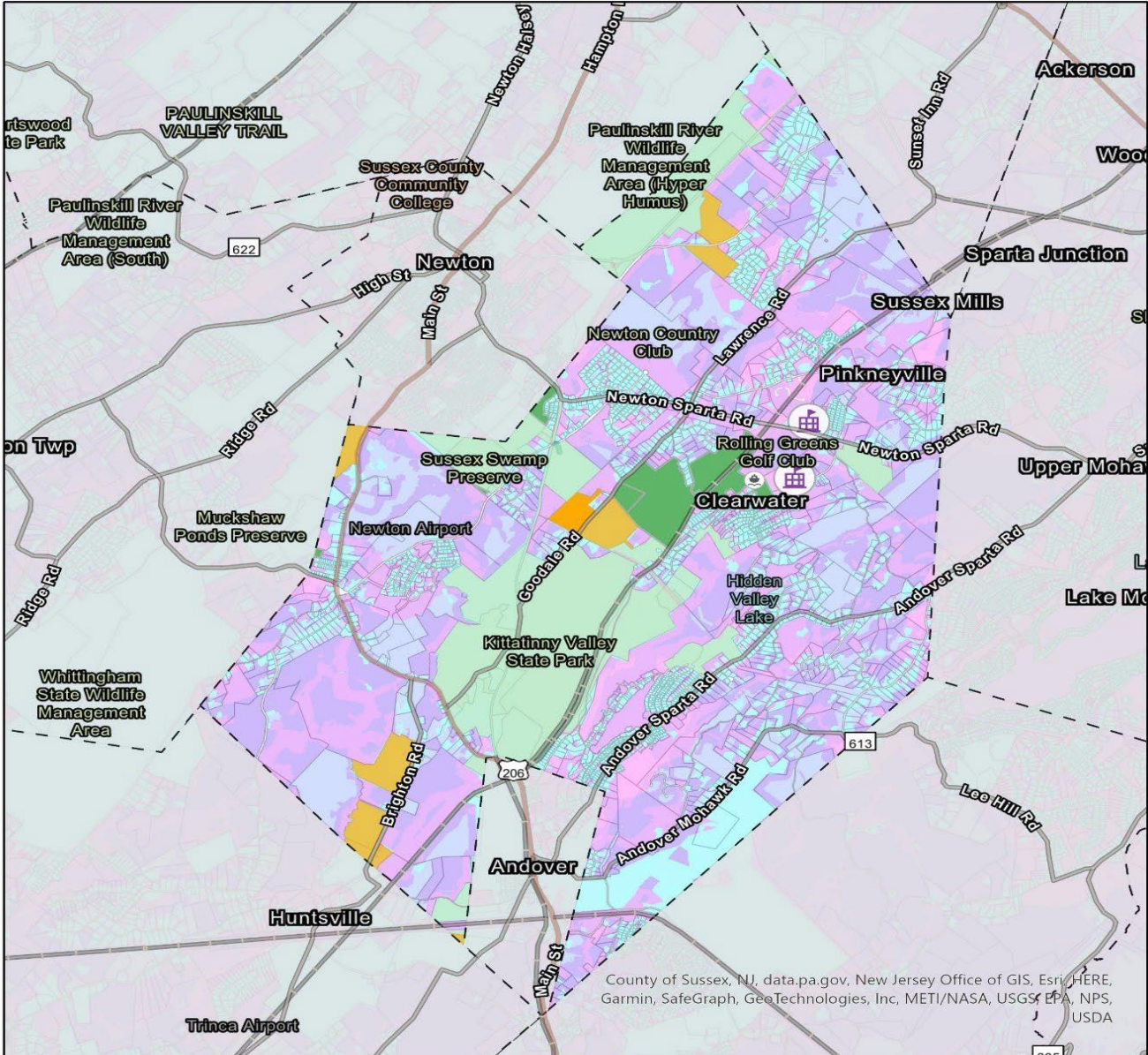
Andover Township's location in New Jersey provides the Township and residents with a wealth of environmental resources including pristine lakes, large, continuous wooded areas, and steep ridgelines. The public outreach efforts made clear the public's desire to protect these resources as about 90% of survey respondents agreed that environmental protection should be an important goal for the Township. Protection of environmental resources and ecosystems are also aligned with regional and state policies. Based on the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), Andover Township is located in the PA-4 Rural Planning Area and PA-5 Environmentally Sensitive Area. The focus of both planning areas is the protection and enhancement of natural habitats and agricultural lands. Protection and maintenance of environmentally sensitive areas is key to the future of Andover.

Protection of Ecosystems Prioritization

Given budgetary and development constraints, it is important for Andover to prioritize currently unpreserved areas of the Township that should be preserved to meet Andover's conservation goals. The ecosystems to protect model was developed by New Jersey Conservation Blueprint to prioritize and accelerate land acquisition efforts in New Jersey around key indicators of ecologically important lands. New Jersey Conservation Blueprint is an interactive mapping tool that was made in the partnership of The Nature Conservancy, Rowan University, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. The mapping project uses publicly available data to create a ranking system that identifies land as more or less ecologically significant based on scores that factor in the presence of ecologically significant features within the categories of water, rare species and natural communities, climate change resilience, and habitat connectivity. The result is a spatial data set that gives higher scores to more ecologically significant lands while less ecologically significant lands have lower scores.

These priorities can be seen in the **Preservation Priority Areas Map** for Andover where the Township's residential areas receive lower scores while wooded slopes around the Township receive higher scores. Areas within Andover that have large areas of high priority levels for conservation include the area south of Route 206, the ridgelines on either side of Andover Sparta Road, and the northwestern area of the Township. As the map highlights, many of the highest priority areas have already been preserved through the various mechanisms detailed earlier. However, the gaps in several high priority areas indicates the need for continued preservation efforts. This data is included in the Open Space Plan to help inform the Township to prioritize land acquisitions as higher scoring lands offer the greatest potential for benefits and are top priorities for open space preservation. The **Future Open Space** section of the Plan uses the data set as one of several factors that should influence decisions about the prioritization of lands to preserve.

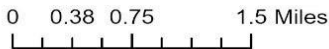




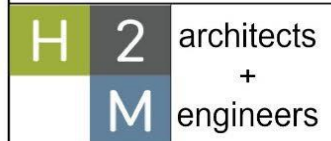
County of Sussex, NJ, data.pa.gov, New Jersey Office of GIS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA

Legend

- ROSI Parcels
 - Preserved Open Space
 - Preserved Farmland
 - Andover Parcels
 - School Properties
 - Boat Launch
- Ecosystems to Protect**
- Priority level**
- Low
 - Medium-low
 - Medium
 - Medium-high
 - High



**Andover Township
Preservation Priority
Areas Map**



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Recreational Level of Service

In addition to the need for the preservation of the natural environment, Andover’s open space is intended to provide recreational opportunities to residents. The Open Space Plan intends to provide the Township with an assessment on how current recreational facilities meet the needs of Township residents. The latest national guidelines published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) encourages each community to create its own custom standards to determine whether it is providing adequate open space to its residents. Below is an initial list and subsequent analysis of common land-use related metrics to determine the open space needs for Andover Township:

1. **Acres per capita** – to determine if community has enough parkland.
2. **Facilities per capita** – To determine if a community has enough recreation facilities such as athletic fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, swimming pools, etc.
3. **Building square footage per capita** – To determine if a community has enough indoor recreation space such as recreation centers, community centers, senior center, or gymnasiums.
4. **Access distance/time (bike, pedestrian, car, transit)** – To determine if parkland and facilities are easily accessible to residents via preferred modes of transportation including driving, transit, bicycling, or walking.
5. **Quality of facilities and experience** – To determine if park facilities and geographies are consistent.¹

Several criteria regarding costs and revenues are not listed above but could be considered by the Andover Township Land Use Board and Recreation Committee. They include *operating expenditures per acre managed, operating expenditures per capita, revenue per capita, and revenue as percentage of operating costs.*

A secondary analysis of criteria #1-3 can also determine if parkland is equitably distributed based on population and geography and can be a strong consideration on any future decision by the Township to expand and improve upon its existing inventory. Open space opportunities and future potential acquisitions are discussed in the **Future Open Space** section of the Plan.

Acres per Capita

Based on the New Jersey “Balanced Land Use” Standards and the NRPA Standards discussed in the call-out boxes below, both of which use an *acres per capita* measurement, Andover Township has a surplus of parkland. Today, Andover currently has 2,407 acres of open space open for recreational purposes.

This number includes parcels owned by the State but does not include school fields owned by the Andover Regional Board of Education, or other open space easement or conservation agreements with private property owners. It should also be noted that this does not include the private recreational opportunities, primarily golf courses, due to the membership requirements that are normally required to play on them.

¹ American Planning Association, PAS Memo, “Alternatives to Determining Parks and Recreation Level of Service” May/June 2016



Facilities per Capita

Calculating *facilities per capita* helps determine if a community has enough recreational facilities. First-tier facilities are those that are municipally owned. Second-tier facilities include publicly accessible school athletic fields and other intermittent publicly accessible facilities such as homeowners' association pools, golf courses and playgrounds. Generally, the Township enjoys a mix of first- and second-tier recreational facilities. Again, the State, County, and Township collectively own over 1,389 acres of first tier facilities. There are an additional 478 acres of second tier facilities in the Township. As a result, Andover residents are well served by park and open space facilities.

Building Square Footage per Capita

Calculating *building square footage per capita metric* helps determine whether there is sufficient indoor recreational space for Township residents. Similar to the *facilities per capita* standard, facilities are categorized as first-tier and second-tier. Andover's only municipally owned park, Hillside Park, provides the Township's only first-tier indoor recreation space. This facility is known as the Barn, which is an historic structure that provides indoor space for recreation and special events. Second-tier facilities include public schools that are more limited in their accessibility to residents as access is likely restricted during school hours.

Access Distance/Time

The *access distance/time* criterion is expressed as distance or amount of time spent to travel to a park or facility. Generally, parks are accessed by those living within a half-mile distance from a park. The types of park facilities include walking and hiking trails, Township parks and State parks.

Walking and hiking trails are likely to be preferred for more frequent use as they provide an opportunity for light- to moderate- exercise. This is especially true for Andover Township, which has a significant network of trails that are located within the existing parks and connected to them. A quarter-mile buffer from these trails is intended to highlight the number of residents who live close enough to the trail network where these trails can act as connectors to other parts of the Township. Township Parks are generally smaller and draw users from neighborhoods that are adjacent and generally within

While there is no universal standard, there are two accepted sets of guidelines used to determine whether the Township is providing adequate open space to its residents:

- **New Jersey Balanced Land Use Concept**

According to New Jersey's 2013-2017 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the state embraces the "Balanced Land Use Concept", which recommends at least 3% of a municipality's developed and developable area be *the minimum amount of land that should be permanently dedicated as public open space and available for appropriate, direct public recreation uses*. According to the concept, land that is protected for environmental purposes and do not permit direct public access do not count toward the public recreation land supply figure.

Andover's developable land area that does not include water bodies or roads is 12,746.4 acres. To meet the 3% minimum standard for dedicated open space, the Township would need to have at least 382.4 acres. Currently there is a total of 2,407 acres of dedicated open space lands.

- **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards**

According to the NRPA, "*the typical park and recreation agency offers one park for every 2,266 residents served, with 9.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.*" With a 2020 population of 5,996 residents, Andover should have around 57.6 acres of parkland. In comparison to the 3% standard used in the New Jersey Balanced Land Use Concept, in the context of the Township, the NRPA standard would equate to a nearly 3.0% minimum of dedicated open space. Andover has 2,407 acres of parkland, nearly 19% of the Township's land area (not including roadway or waterbodies).



walking distance of the park. As a result, the analysis had half- mile buffers from Township or State open spaces, which equates to about a ten-minute walk.

Quality of Facilities and Experience

While the above four criteria measure the Township’s open space needs as a whole, the *quality of facilities and experience* criterion determines whether individual parks and facilities are meeting the design and maintenance criteria established by the local community. Community- set design or maintenance criteria may include established park design guidelines including acceptable planting and material palettes. Other community-set criteria may include frequency of maintenance, safety inspections, or cleanliness. The Township should periodically conduct a community survey to help identify community-set criteria before analyzing how each park measures up.

NRPA offers maintenance standards in its “Commission for the Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CPARA) Standards” Fifth Edition, (2014) and “Management of Park and Recreation Agencies”.

A recommended design criterion for the *quality of facilities and experience* is diversified amenities that meet the needs of park users of all ages and all abilities. It is anticipated that Andover Township may experience a shift in recreational preferences towards passive recreation needs and a possible trend away from typical youth activities such as team sports and court games as there has been slight population decline in Andover since 2010 and an aging of the population. An aging population may also mean greater adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Universal Design Standards. Identifying these gaps in park amenities can help to increase park usage and quality of life for Andover residents.

Universal Design Standards –

Inclusive play is the promotion of interaction between individuals and families of all ages and abilities. Playgrounds that support inclusive play provide opportunities for emotional, social, physical, and development with materials, structures, and experiences that are accessible for everyone. This may include children with special needs, older adults with mobility challenges, or adults with physical challenges that impact their ability to interact with their children at play. The integration of these characteristics in a playground support a more inclusive society and allow all participants to grow and experience what parks have to offer a community.

Providing for park amenities with varying degrees of physical activity (sedentary, moderate or vigorous) ensures diversified park use by people of all ages and abilities. Walking loops, for instance, increase park use by 80% including twice as many seniors, according to a 2018 study from the National Study of Neighborhood Parks. With increasing populations of senior citizens, this population will likely demand less physical activities and demand more wellness and fitness related recreation programs, educational programs and historic and environmental interpretive programming, according to the 2018-2022 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).²

The National Study of Neighborhood Parks also found that for every play element added to a playground park use increases by 50%, which is of particular importance since a common reason for going to a park is taking children. Survey respondents listed children’s play areas and playgrounds as

² 2018-2022 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), page 17



amenities that should be added/improved at Andover Township parks. Fitness Zones should also be considered. Equally important are what amenities are provided, the Township should also consider why users may not be using the parks, such as a lack of amenities like permanent restrooms.³

The 2018 study from the National Study of Neighborhood Parks also found that nothing increases park use as much as programming and on-site marketing (i.e. banners, posters, signs) and online outreach has proven effective at increasing park use. Andover Township's Recreation Committee should analyze its programming and marketing efforts to increase park use.

An analysis of the existing facility inventory (Table 2) indicates that Kittatinny Valley State Park provides the most facilities of any park in Andover Township. The number of facilities provided by Kittatinny Valley State Park is the reason why it is considered a regional park that residents are willing to drive to. An analysis of the Township's park facilities show that park facilities tend towards passive recreational opportunities such as trails and natural areas. Given the rural nature of the Township, it makes sense that Andover's recreational amenities favor more passive recreational opportunities to showcase the Township's environmental aspects. The analysis also shows that there is a need for the following types of facilities:

- Paved walking loops
- Dog Park
- Splash Park
- Pickleball Courts

These types of park facilities are a mix of passive and active recreational opportunities that have grown in popularity in recent years. Facilities such as pickleball courts and walking loops have become increasingly popular among older populations. These additions would recognize the aging trend of the Township's population. Amenities such as paved walking loops also address potential accessibility issues by allowing for those in wheelchairs smooth surfaces that are easily rideable.

Parks in the Township do provide a good number of biking/walking trails as well as nature trails. These trails are the most frequently used and most popular recreational types among survey respondents, and these survey respondents have indicated that they would like to see an expansion and improvement upon the existing trail system. A discussion of potential trail expansions can be found in the **Future Open Space Plan** section. Additional amenity improvements to the Township's existing parks are discussed in the **Township Parks Recreation** section.

Assessment Summary

Andover is a unique place and warrants additional criteria to those discussed above. To indicate park facility progress towards connectivity and walkability goals, the following criteria could be considered as well:

- Percentage of walkable commercial centers near to parks
- Scenic view locations
- Miles of trails

³ Active Parks, Healthy Cities: Recommendations from the National Study of Neighborhood Parks". City Parks Alliance. 2018. https://www.cityparksalliance.org/storage/documents/active-parks-healthy-cities.pdf?mc_cid=61d75a1173&mc_eid=b8edc2e40f



- ADA accessibility
- Multimodal bike/pedestrian access
- Satisfaction Surveys

Based on the existing conditions analysis, the greatest needs for Andover's parks, recreational facilities and open space overall include:

- Walking/biking connections to existing Township parks and open spaces
- Supportive facilities at existing parks (i.e. parking, restrooms)
- Facilities that support a range of ages and abilities (i.e. ADA accessibility, Universal Design)
- Walking and biking trails around parks and open space
- Active recreational facilities (i.e. basketball courts, tennis/pickleball courts)
- Modern playground amenities

Level of Service Updates

The Level of Service (LOS) criteria outlined in this section should be reviewed and calculated annually and updated every five years to ensure that they remain reflective of the Township's needs, values, and goals. They should be reviewed by staff, user groups, key stakeholders, the general public, and elected officials to build consensus. Testing and updating these criteria regularly ensures that park and open space facilities are truly meeting residents' needs and generating the greatest benefits to its users.





Future Open Space, Parks and Recreation

Andover Township has several opportunities for future preservation efforts and recreational expansion efforts whether through willing sellers, public or private partnerships, acquisition, blue acres or green acres programs, farmland preservation programs, or conservation easements. The overall strategy for future preservation and enhancement is encompassed within three general categories: 1) Open Space Acquisition, 2) Farmland Preservation, and 3) Trail Expansion. These strategies are intended to fulfill the goals and objectives as stated on page 4 of this Plan.

Open Space Acquisition

The below criteria and the subsequent list potential properties were developed and identified using the following: input from the Open Space Plan Sub-Committee, the identified gap in the types of facilities Andover Township currently offers (conducted on pages 25-26), the results from the publicinput.com survey and community outreach workshops and events, and areas of ecological importance not yet preserved. It should be noted that the list of potential open space properties is not comprehensive. It is the intention of the OSRP that the criteria for future open space acquisition is utilized if the Township is presented with opportunities for property acquisition. As such, the criteria and properties listed should form a guide for how the Township considers future open space acquisition.

Criteria for Future Open Space Acquisition

1. Environmental sensitivity
 - a. Andover Township has large areas of the Township that are environmentally sensitive. These are in the form of steep slopes, wetlands, streams, lakes and other environmentally sensitive areas. The protection of watersheds is of critical importance as the Township's watersheds provide an integral role in water quality and flood protection. With the increasing intensity of rain events, protection of the Township's floodways is a growing necessity to protect the Township's environment. In the same vein, the maintenance of steep slopes and ridgelines is critical both as scenic vistas and from a flood control perspective.
2. Potential Linkages
 - a. Parcels that are located adjacent to existing open space lands offer the potential for the efficient use of land for the maintenance of the open space.

- b. Connected open spaces provide greater protection for the natural environment and helps to prevent broken natural areas that can threaten habitats for native plants and animals.
- 3. Relationship to natural and undeveloped open space
 - a. Preservation desires are critical to put in context with nearby natural and undeveloped open spaces. Even open space acquisitions with the intention of developing parkland can allow for the conservation of large portions of the parcel that can maintain the integrity of the natural environment as evidenced by Hillside Park.
- 4. Use-specific size
 - a. Prior to determining whether the size of a potential open space parcel is adequate for prioritization, the Township should assess what it anticipates using the open space for. Smaller open space parcels, those generally under ten acres, may be appropriate for active recreational uses such as playgrounds and ball fields. Passive recreation generally requires much larger tracts of land. If the Township intends to use the parcel as preserved open space, larger areas of land are preferred in order to maintain the integrity of the natural area. However, the Township should examine the potential use on a case-by-case basis and not overlook parcels that have potential based on size.
- 5. Cost of Acquisition
 - a. 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 protect an environmentally sensitive area should be prioritized over a more expensive property of equal open space value. Parcels that are donated to the Township don't incur a cost to the municipality. The cost of maintenance and operating expenses must also be considered. Generally, open space parcels without facilities or facilities for only passive activities are less costly to maintain. The Township can avail of Green Acres funding through the NJDEP.
- 6. Location near Population Centers
 - a. Potential open space parcels that are located near large residential areas should be prioritized. This would create easy access for those living in the residential developments into the potential open space and also have the potential to serve as a flood control effort.

Potential Future Open Space Parcels

Based on the criteria for parcels to consider for open space acquisition, the H2M team developed a list of parcels for the Township that could be targeted. The **Future Open Space Map** shows how these parcels relate to the Township's existing open space as well as current and future preserved farmland parcels. These parcels could be acquired through a myriad of entities and strategies, some of which are detailed below. Additionally, the recommendations table provides a list of potential funding sources and strategies for how these parcels could be acquired.



It should be noted that Block 114, Lots 3 and 4 are recommended to be acquired by the NJDEP to expand the existing wildlife management area that is owned and maintained by the NJDEP. In a similar manner, the Township may try to work with the NJDEP to acquire Block 60, Lot 4.06 through Block 71, Lot 5 as these parcels are located adjacent to the NJDEP parcels that make up the Kittatinny Valley State Park. Acquisition of these parcels would also create a continuous stretch of preserved open space from Lake Aeroflex to Clearwater Lake.

In addition to these parcels, Andover Township currently owns multiple parcels that are not preserved as open space. While most of these serve a municipal function of some sort, two larger parcels (Block 7, Lot 10 and Block 129, Lot 3) are larger parcels that are owned by the Township but do not serve a public function. These parcels present the Township an opportunity for preservation of existing open space without the need to acquire new parcels. Block 129, Lot 3 is strategically located adjacent to both preserved open space and preserved farmland. The permanent preservation of this parcel as open space would ensure the continued stretch of undeveloped natural habitat. Block 7, Lot 10 (Ballantine Woods Way) also presents an opportunity for the preservation of open space, particularly in conjunction with the recommended acquisition of Block 6, Lot 9 though Block 7, Lot 11. This would help to preserve the environmentally sensitive ridgeline east of Andover Sparta Road. A coordinated preservation strategy with the understanding of the ownership of various preserved and unpreserved parcels can help to ensure that Andover Township can make progress towards the goals and objectives of this Open Space Plan.

Farmland Preservation

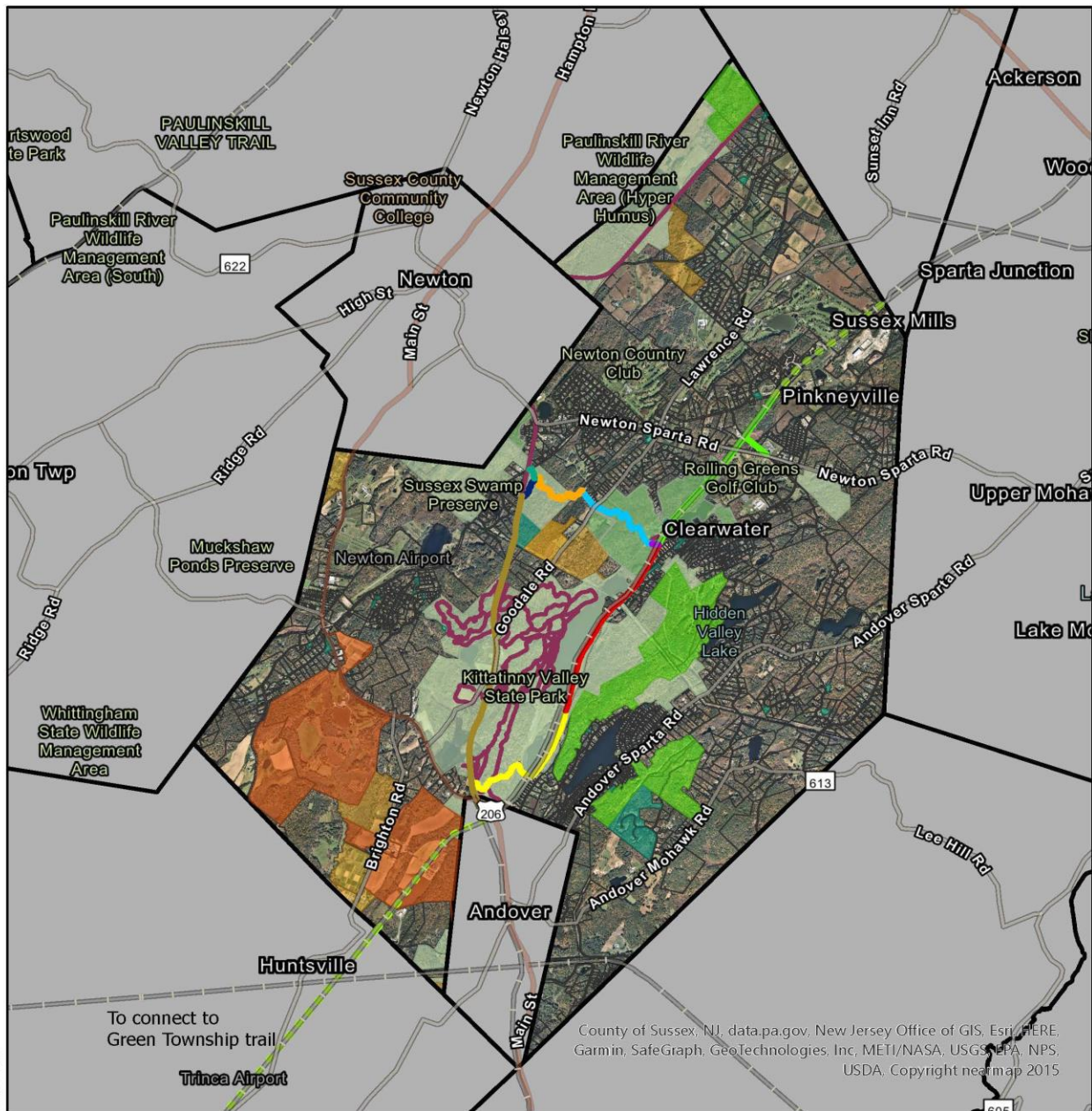
Farmland Preservation is another excellent tool that Andover Township could utilize to further the desire to preserve land and natural resources. Within the farmland preservation program, there are four options for how farm owners and public entities can agree to preserve eligible farmland:

- 1) Easement purchase: Landowners sell the development rights on the land to either a County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) or the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC). The property owner retains ownership of the land and may receive certain benefits and protections offered through the Agriculture Retention and Development Act.
- 2) Easement donation: The landowner donates a partial or full development easement to either the SADC, CADB, or a non-profit in exchange for similar benefits and protections granted through the easement purchase process.
- 3) Fee simple: The farm is acquired in fee by the SADC or the CADB based on the fair market value or a negotiated value of the land.
- 4) Eight-year program: The landowner voluntarily restricts non-agricultural development on their farm for a period of eight years in exchange for grants and other benefits and protections.

In each of the different options, it is either the CADB or the SADC that is the public entity who is responsible for working with the property owners of eligible farm properties. As such, it is important that Andover Township maintains a good relationship with the Sussex County Agricultural Development Board in order to achieve its preservation goals. The farmland parcels recommended for preservation that are provided to the Township come from the Sussex County Farmland Preservation Plan to ensure consistency with the goals of the Sussex CADB. It is recommended that the Township work with the



CADB and the property owners to ensure that the farmland parcels can be preserved for future generations.

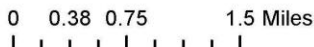


Legend

ROSI Parcels	Andover Annex Trail
Preserved Open Space	Airport To Lake Iliff Line
Preserved Farmland	Airport To Lake Iliff Line
Sussex Branch To Luccettiway Line	State Park Trails
South Loop 2 Airport Sussex Branch Line	Andover Owned Parcels
Lake Iliff Trail Line	Parcels
Hillside Park To 14 Luchetti Way	Potential Trail Expansions
Cutoff Trail To Hillside Park Line	Future Preserved Farmland
Andover Loop Sussex Branch	Future Open Space
Andover Loop Ridgeline Line	

**Andover Township
Future Open
Space Map**

**H 2
M** architects
+
engineers



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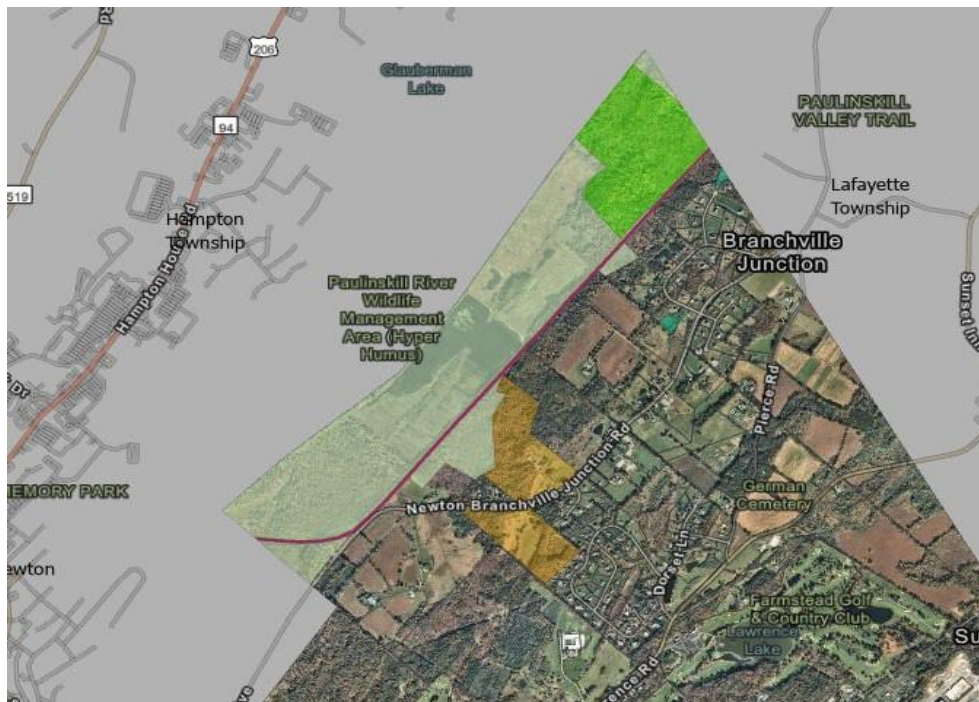


Potential Greenways

Paulinskill River Greenway

The future Paulinskill River Greenway would be focused on the northwestern area of the Township, which has the ecologically significant Paulinskill River. This area has a large number of preserved lands, farmland and trail systems in nearby Townships. The intention of this greenway is to ensure the large, continuous tract of preserved land that can be accessible to the general public. The greenway largely focuses on the Wildlife Management Area, would likely require the Township to work with NJDEP to acquire additional parcels that are adjacent to the existing WMA. Given that the NJDEP has parcels on either side of the currently unpreserved land, there is a good chance that further expansion of the WMA through acquisition by the NJDEP is possible.

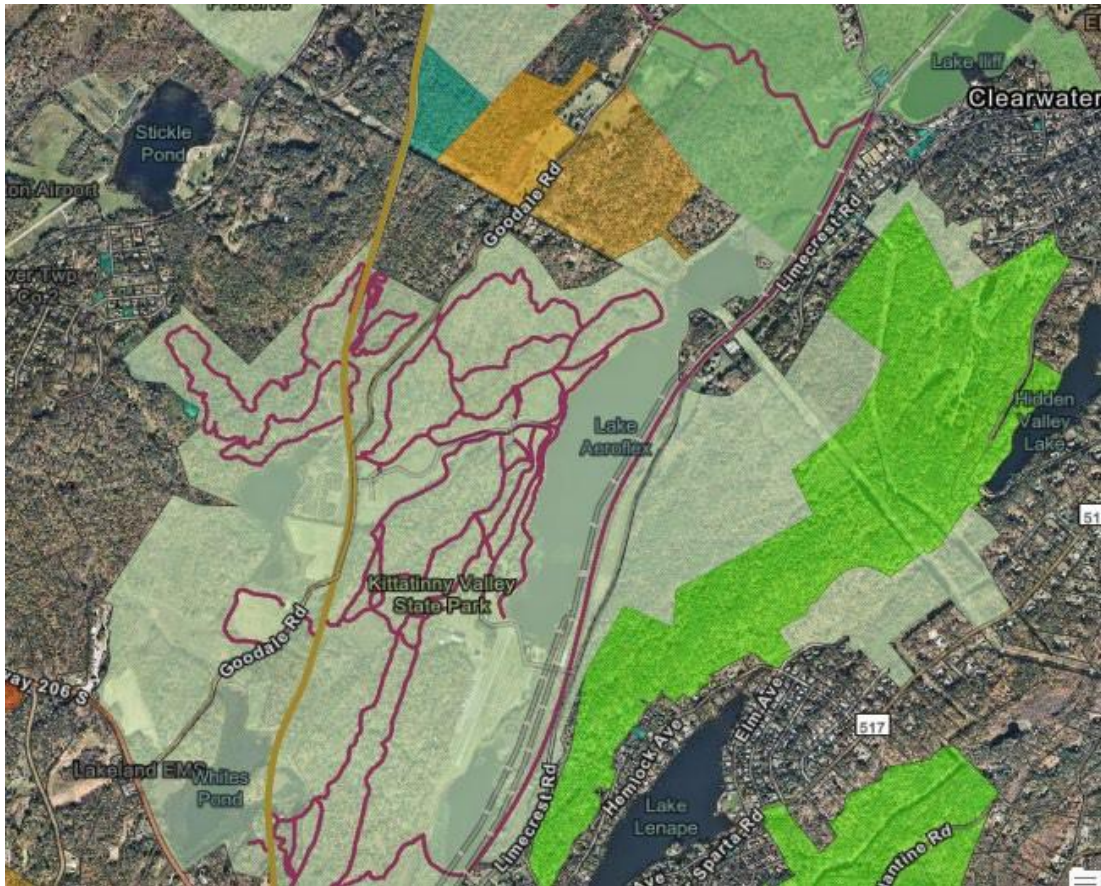
Paulins Kill Greenway map



Kittatinny Valley Greenway

The proposed greenway would preserve a significant amount of undeveloped land adjacent to Kittatinny Valley State Park, which would ensure a large continuous area of preserved land in the center of Andover Township and could potentially add to Township residents' recreational opportunities. The connection effort is aided by the fact that the land in between the areas currently owned by the NJDEP is broken into only a few parcels, meaning that acquisition would only have to occur with a small number of landowners. Additionally, the land that is proposed to be preserved has very steep slopes that are a part of the ridgeline that is east of Limecrest Road. Ensuring the preservation of the ridgeline will also help to prevent runoff that could impact current residents in the area during heavy rainfall events. It is recommended that the Township work with NJDEP about the potential expansion of the State Park east of Limecrest Road.

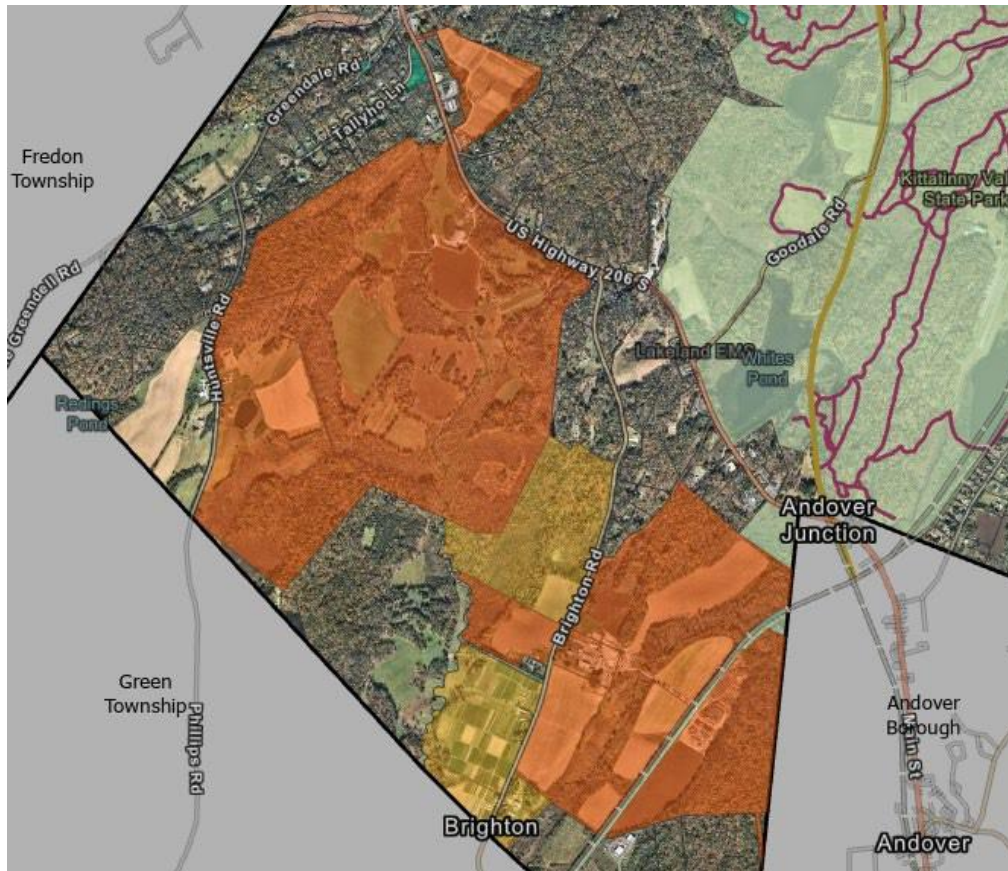
Kittatinny Valley greenway map



Pequest River Greenway

The Pequest River cuts through the southwestern area of Andover Township, crossing under Route 206. Much of the land in the area around the River is utilized as farmland, including multiple preserved farmland properties. The two unpreserved farmland parcels that the proposed Pequest River Greenway goes through are Block 157 Lot 7 and Block 157 Lot 3.02. The Township should work with Sussex County Agricultural Development Board to approach the property owners about participation in the Farmland Preservation program. The benefit of doing so would be to permanently preserve the farmland and to ensure a large, connect area of land in this area that can be preserved as farmland. Additional changes that could come to this area of the Township is the County Connector trail which is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Pequest River Greenway map



Ballantine Greenway

The Ballantine Road area currently has very little land that is permanently preserved as either open space or farmland. While there is some residential use in the area, much of the land is still undeveloped, including a large parcel of land that the Township owns. In addition to the Township owned parcel, there are a few large adjacent parcels that create a potential opportunity for further preservation in this area. The parcels recommended for preservation in this area also have very large slopes, which create a higher priority for preservation. Preserving the Township owned parcel as well as the adjacent parcels would ensure the preservation of the ridgeline and large tracts of natural habitat.





Potential Trail Expansion County Connector Trail

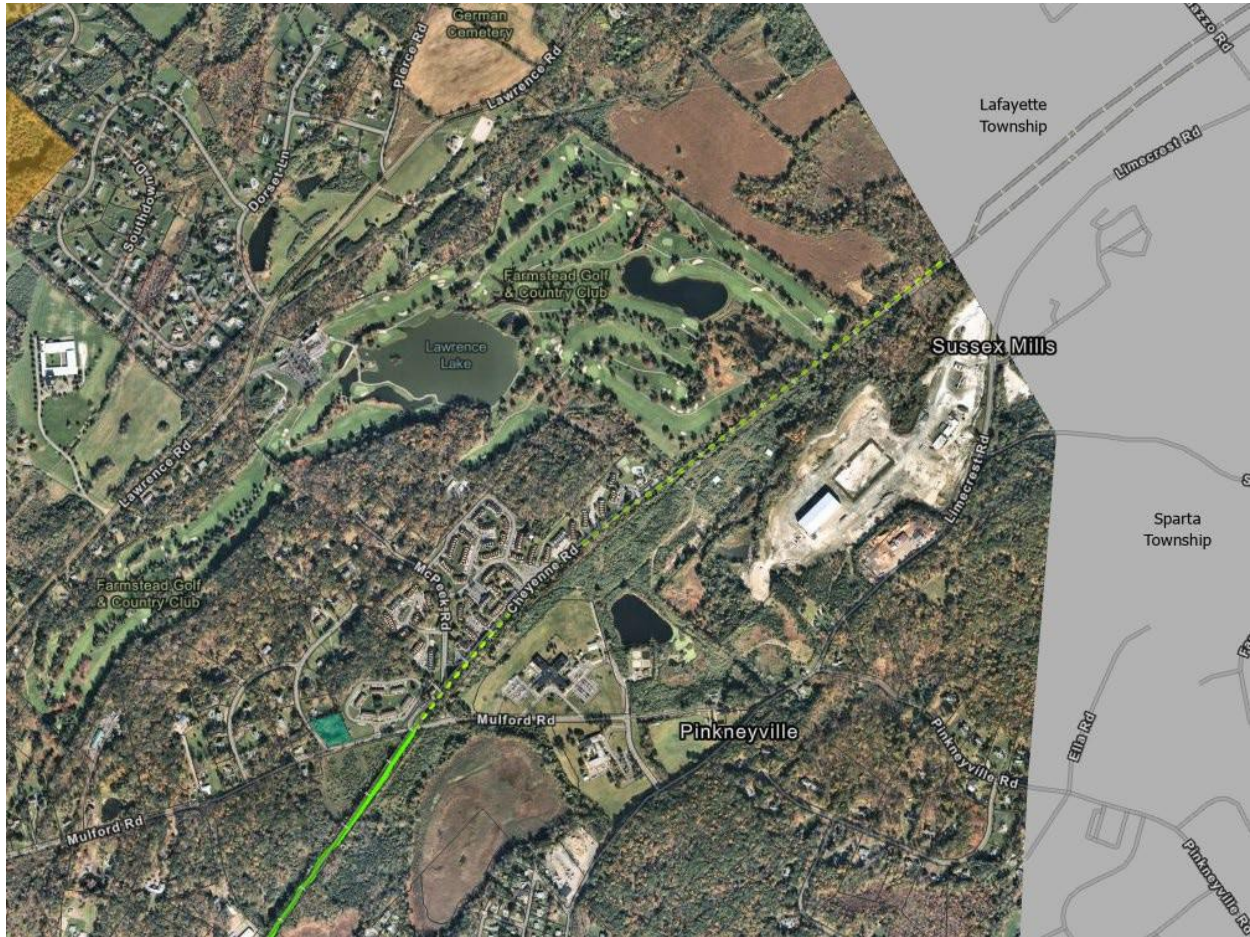
The Sussex County 2016 OSRP recommends as a Preservation Priority for Andover Township to “Connect Andover Township and Kittatinny State Park to Allamuchy Township via a new rail trail”. The trail would go along the former Lehigh & Hudson River Railway and be able to connect to the existing Sussex Branch Trail in Andover Borough which runs through and connects to the trail system in Kittatinny State Park (see map below). A portion of this trail is already built in Green Township called the County Connector Trail, which connects to the Township’s Evergreen Park. The portion of the former railway that is located in Andover Township is owned by the NJDEP. Green Township has taken the initiative on this trail by building a paved trail on the former railbed and has reached out to other Townships needed to coordinate this effort, including Andover Township. Andover Township should join Green Township to further develop this trail which would come in along the southwestern section of the Township.



Lake Iliff Trail Expansion

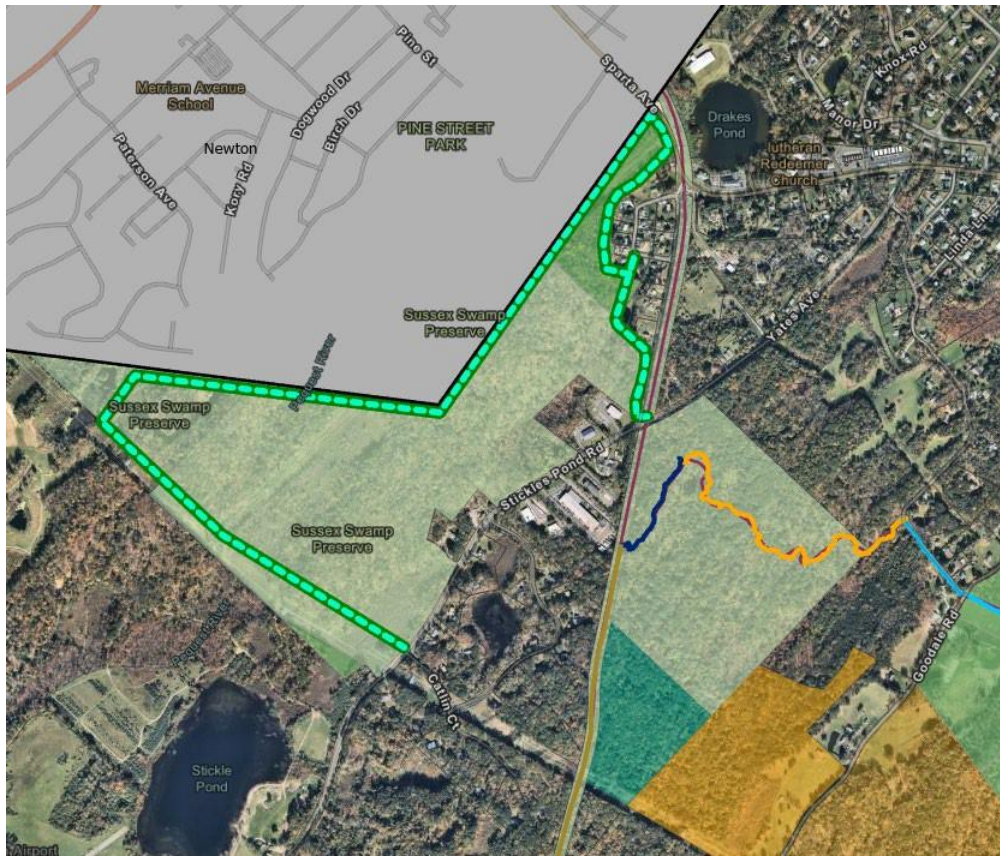
In recent years, the Township has made efforts to expand the Lake Iliff trail north to Mulford Road, where the trail currently terminates. There is an opportunity to expand the trail further north along the former railbed to where the railbed become active again near the Township border with Lafayette Township.





Sussex Swamp Preserve

The Sussex Swamp Preserve consists of several preserved parcels of Open Space that is owned by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection with the intention of preserving the important environmental features. The area around the Preserve also includes several of the existing trails in Andover, including the Sussex Branch Trail. The Preserve currently doesn't have a trail network within the Preserve. However, the residents of both Andover and Newton would benefit from a greenway trail through the Preserve that could be connected to other trails within Andover. The trail system would still preserve the environmental integrity of the area while granting residents additional access to its natural beauty. Andover Township should work with the NJDEP in an effort to create a greenway trail around the Sussex Swamp Preserve.



Implementation

Andover Township is financially invested in its existing and future parks, recreation facilities and open spaces by way of the Open Space Trust Fund, established in 2005. The trust fund is funded by the dedication of an amount determined annually by the Township Council, not to exceed \$0.015 per \$100.00 of assessed value. As of the 2021 budget, taxes collected to date under the program exceed \$2.8 million dollars and have resulted in 16.88 acres of preserved land. In addition to the Open Space Trust Fund, there are a multitude of state, county and non-profit sources that Andover Township can tap into to fund some of the improvements to open space, acquisitions and trail expansions that have been detailed in this Plan.

It should be noted that many of the recommended actions that the Township takes to implement the Open Space Plan involves partnerships with property owners and other entities that would not result in the Township spending large amounts of money. The Township should commence dialogues with strategic partners immediately to gauge interest in making these improvements and agreements to ensure that these actions are feasible and could be quickly implemented.

Open Space, Parks and Recreation Sources

While open space, parks, and recreation activities are typically funded through the Township's Operating Budget, other funding sources (i.e. grants, programs) are available to support activities related to the outdoors.

State Resources

NJDEP Recreational Trails Grant

Receiving assistance from the Federal Highway Administration's Trails Program (RTP), the state of New Jersey awards grants to counties, local governments, and non-profit agencies for motorized, non-motorized and diversified use trail projects. There is a maximum grant award of \$24,000 for non-motorized projects for the construction of new trails, maintenance or restoration of trails, development and rehabilitation of trailhead facilities and trail linkages for trails (i.e. parking, signage, shelters, sanitary facilities), and the purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment. Trail feasibility studies are not eligible for funding. This grant includes a local match up to 20% of the grant. The NJDEP's Green Acres Program administers the program in New Jersey. Applications become available in March with a mid-May deadline and a notification date of December.

NJDEP Green Acres

The Green Acres Planning Incentive Program funds the acquisition of open space for recreation and conservation purposes, and the development of outdoor recreational facilities. Applications are considered on an annual basis, typically with a deadline in the first quarter of the year. To qualify to participate in many of the funding programs, the Township must have an open space trust fund and a Green Acres approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

County Resources

Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund

The Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund supports open space preservation, recreational development, and historic preservation. The trust fund program is used to acquire open space land and develops recreational facilities and programs in partnership with its constituent municipalities. Originally established in 2000, the Trust Fund was expanded in 2005 and dedicates \$0.035 per \$100 of the total equalized assessed valuation in the County tax rate to support open-space preservation, recreational development, and historic preservation.

Other Non-Profit and Organizational Resources

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

The NRPA is a national non-profit professional organization that promote the funding and improvements of recreational facilities, parks, and open space for health and wellness, conservation and social equity. The organization advocates and educates on the importance of open space in the community while providing resources and partnerships to municipalities and stakeholders. The NRPA also provides grants and hosts information on funding opportunities for parks and open space.





OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN STRATEGY

Open Space, Parks and Recreation Plan Strategy

Directions

“Check off” a completed Strategy and mark the year of completion as a way to measure progress. **Short:** complete in 1-2 years; **Medium:** complete in 3-5 years; **Long:** complete in 10+ years.

Strategies		Implementing Party	Priority Level	Funding Source
General				
1	Continue the Open Space Trust Fund.	Township Committee; Open Space & Environmental Commission	Ongoing	Open Space Fund
2	As the opportunity arises, consider expanding the use of the Trust Fund beyond land acquisition.	Township Committee; Open Space & Environmental Commission	Ongoing	Open Space Fund
3	Seek grants to supplement the cost of open space projects.	Township Committee; Township Administrator	Ongoing	
Open Space				
4	Strategically reach out to farm owners about the Farmland Preservation program and potential easement agreements.	Township Administrator; Township Committee; Sussex CADB	Short to Medium	Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program
5	Utilize the Criteria for Future Open Space Acquisition (pages 32-33) when considering acquiring parcels	Open Space & Environmental Commission	Long	Sussex County Open Space, Open Space Trust Fund, Green Acres Program

6	Consider converting Township owned parcels (Block 7, Lot 10 & Block 129, Lot 3) to open space parcels.	Township Committee; Open Space & Environmental Commission	Short to Medium	Sussex County Open Space, Open Space Trust Fund, Green Acres Program
7	Work with NJDEP to acquire parcels adjacent to the Paulinskill Valley Wildlife Management Area.	Open Space & Environmental Commission, NJDEP	Medium	New Jersey Trails Program, Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund
8	Work with NJDEP to acquire parcels adjacent to Kittatinny Valley State Park.	Open Space & Environmental Commission; NJDEP	Medium	New Jersey Trails Program, Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund
9	Consider acquiring undeveloped parcels along Ballantine Road for open space	Township Committee; Open Space & Environmental Commission	Medium to Long	Sussex County Open Space, Open Space Trust Fund, Green Acres Program
10	Work with Sussex CADB to expand the number of preserved farmland parcels in the Township.	Open Space & Environmental Commission; Sussex CADB	Medium to Long	Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program
11	Reach out to property owners of Block 157 Lot 7 and Block 157 Lot 3.02 about participation in farmland preservation program in an effort to create the Pequest River Greenway.	Open Space & Environmental Commission; Sussex CADB	Medium to Long	Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program
Trails				
12	Ensure that trails are always in adequate shape for trail users.	Department of Public Works; Open Space & Environmental Commission	Ongoing	Sussex County Trails Grant Program, New Jersey Trails Program, National Recreation Trails Program
13	Work with Green Township and Andover Borough to ensure development of the County Connector trail.	Township Administrator; Township Committee, NJDEP	Short	National Recreation Trails Program, USDA Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program, New York- New Jersey Trail Conference



14	Rehabilitate the boat launch with a paved trail that could be connected to the residential neighborhood.	Open Space & Environmental Commission; Township Committee	Medium	New Jersey Trails Program, Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, USDA Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
15	Work with the NJDEP to create a greenway trail around the Sussex Swamp Preserve.	Open Space & Environmental Commission; NJDEP	Short to Medium	New Jersey Trails Program, Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, USDA Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program, Sussex County Trails Grant Program
16	Work with the property owner of the preserved farmland property that would connect the Hillside Park trail and the Kittatinny Valley State Park through an easement agreement.	Open Space & Environmental Commission; NJDEP	Short	Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund
Parks				
17	Work with neighboring municipalities to ensure that the Township's recreational facilities that are utilized by regional organizations have adequate funding for proper maintenance.	Township Administrator; Recreation Committee	Ongoing	Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Sussex County Trails Grant Program
18	Periodically conduct a community survey to help identify community- set criteria about the performance of park facilities.	Township Administrator; Recreation Committee	Medium	Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program
19	Review programming and marketing efforts.	Recreation Committee	Short to Medium	Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program
20	Add recreational amenities highlighted on page 25.	Township Committee; Recreation Committee	Medium to Long	Sussex County Open Space, Recreation, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, USDA Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
21	Utilize the additional metrics as detailed on page 26 to plan for additional improvements.	Recreation Committee	Medium to Long	Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program



22	Periodically review Level of Service analysis.	Recreation Committee; Township Administrator	Medium to Long	Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program
23	Explore potential to create public access to Lake Iliff near Hillside Park.	Open Space & Environmental Commission	Short	Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (technical assistance), USDA Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
24	Implement and improve parking signage at Goodale Park.	Department of Public Works; Open Space & Environmental Commission	Short	USDA Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
25	Improve parking and direction signage at Hillside Park and explore the potential for boardwalk installation.	Department of Public Works; Open Space & Environmental Commission	Short	USDA Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program



Appendices

Appendix A: Andover Township Open Space Plan Public Survey Report

Appendix B: October 26, 2021 Andover Twp. Open Space Plan Workshop Presentation

Appendix C: Andover Township Open Space and Recreation Plan Outreach Report Community & Public Participation
Summary for the October 26th Andover Community Workshop

Appendix D: October 26th Open Space Plan workshop flyer

