

Executive Summary

Located in the heart of Morris County, Morris Township is home to the headwaters of the Whippany River, the rolling hills surrounding Washington Valley, the rich forests of county parks and trails, and community recreational facilities. Located within the Great Swamp watershed, Morris Township has had a long and productive history of working with local, county and state organizations to preserve land throughout their Township. There are **492 acres** of preserved municipal land in the Township. Combined with county parkland and watershed land (**1,395 acres**) and the federally owned Morristown National Historic Park (**74 acres**), nearly **20%** of Morris Township is permanently preserved for watershed protection, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

In 1991, 66% of the Morris Township voters approved the establishment of a local open space trust fund. Since the establishment of the trust fund in 1992 the Township has purchased 214 acres of land. In October 1997 the Township produced an Open Space and Recreation Plan to help guide their open space program and prioritize land acquisition in the Township. The Township has been following the recommendations outlined in this Plan and as part of its continuing effort to identify the needs for preservation and recreation, the Township has produced this 2004 update to the original 1997 Plan.

As part of 2004 update, the Township Committee hosted a public hearing in the fall of 2003 to listen to Township residents and members of the Township's recreation programs to help determine the priorities for municipal open space acquisition. Based upon the Township's 2000 Master Plan, public input and the recommendations of the Township's Open Space Committee, the following goals will guide the open space program in Morris Township:

- Protection of water recharge areas and water supply lands;
- Protection of environmentally sensitive areas;
- Encourage preservation of the Township's remaining farmland;
- Identification and protection of scenic views and vistas in the Township;
- Acquisition of lands for both passive and active recreation;
- Incorporation of innovative maintenance and management of current recreational facilities to maximize field usage; and
- Creation of an interconnected trail and greenway system in the Township, including the Morris County's Patriots' Path.

Based upon a broad inventory of land in the Township, slightly more than **25%** of the Township is potentially available for open space preservation. The Township has been successful in partnering with local land trust organizations, Morris County and the State of New Jersey to purchase property in the Township for preservation. As part of this update, the Township has identified several greenway corridors and possible trail routes to connect local neighborhoods to their beautiful natural areas and recreational facilities. Using this plan and its accompanying maps as a guide, the Township can continue to chart a course of preserving its community treasures and unique environmental resources for current and future residents to enjoy.