

**TOWNSHIP OF CRANBURY**

**RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE STATUS REPORT ON THE OPEN SPACE  
AND RECREATION PLAN INCLUDING THE RECREATION AND OPEN  
SPACE INVENTORY (ROSI)**

WHEREAS, the Township Committee requested a status update on the 2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan and ROSI; and

WHEREAS, the update includes guidance for future improvements in and acquisition of township recreation and open space.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Cranbury, that this report and ROSI be used as a roadmap for boards and commissions to use when recommending improvements to township recreation and open space and for the Township Committee to use when evaluating whether to acquire or make improvements to recreation and open space.

**CERTIFICATION**

I, Debra A Rubin, Clerk, hereby certify that this is a true copy of a resolution which was adopted by the Township Committee at a meeting held on December 11, 2023.

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Debra A. Rubin, RMC  
Township Clerk

**STATUS REPORT ON  
THE TOWNSHIP OF CRANBURY, NJ  
2008 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN  
&  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS IN AND ACQUISITIONS OF TOWNSHIP OPEN SPACE**

*Prepared for:*

The Cranbury Township Committee

*Prepared by:*

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**December 2023**

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# **I INTRODUCTION**

## **A. Intent and Purpose**

The following report provides a status update on the Township's Open Space and Recreation Plan ("OSRP") adopted in 2008 ("2008 Plan"). The purpose of this effort is not to undertake a full-blown OSRP as had been done in 2008, but rather to look at the 2008 Plan and provide any updates on the inventory of open space and recreation facilities in the municipality, any changes in the community's needs regarding open space and recreation, as well as any efforts to acquire or provide additional open space and recreation facilities in Cranbury. Finally, the report provides a proposed "roadmap" for the Township Committee to use when evaluating whether to acquire additional open space or make additional open space and recreation improvements.

## **B. What is an OSRP?**

Broadly speaking, an OSRP is a comprehensive guide for open space protection and preservation in a municipality. It examines a community's needs and goals for open space and recreation, analyzes its existing inventory of open space and recreation, and lays out a set of priorities and strategies for preservation. It is also a "wish list" that articulates the community's vision of its future in terms of open space and recreation. It typically contains text, maps, tables, aerial photos and other materials. Ideally, an OSRP helps guide a municipality in allocating its financial and land resources towards investments that offer the most benefits to the community and the environment. Cranbury adopted OSRPs in 1993, 2000, and 2008.

## **C. Methodology**

In April 2023, the Township Committee directed the formation of an Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Subcommittee (the "Subcommittee") consisting of Township Committee person, Eman El-Badawi, Township Engineer (Thomas Decker, PE, PP, CME of Van Cleef Engineering), and the Borough Planner (Elizabeth Leheny, AICP, PP of Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes LLC). The Subcommittee had regular monthly meetings to discuss the progress and direction of this report.

Additionally, the Board Planner conducted informational interviews with the following stakeholders:

- Ken Jacobs, Cranbury Recreation Director
- Brendan Hanson, Co-Chair Cranbury Parks Commission
- Kathy Easton, Chair Cranbury Shade Tree Commission
- Barbara Rogers, Township Committee Liaison to Environmental Commission
- Michael Golisano, Scout Master
- Wayne Wittman, Chair Cranbury Planning Board

The Subcommittee's work, informed by the stakeholder interviews, provided direction on policies, highlighted needs and priorities, and identified opportunities and constraints related to existing programs and resources.

#### **D. Scope and Organization of the Report**

This report is divided into the following chapters: the second chapter provides definitions for "open space" and the various types of recreation; the third chapter discusses the funding of open space in the Township; the fourth chapter provides an inventory of the open spaces listed in the 2008 OSRP; the fifth chapter identifies changes to the 2008 OSRP inventory of open space and lists the current inventory; the sixth chapter discusses the status of the recommendations for active recreation facilities in the 2008 OSRP and discusses any updates; the seventh chapter discusses the status of the recommendations for passive recreation facilities in the 2008 OSRP and discusses any updates; the eight chapter identifies issues impacting open space planning in 2023; and the ninth and final chapter discusses the adequacy of the Township's open space resources and provides a recommendation for criteria to be used by the Township Committee in evaluating whether to acquire or make improvements to open space.

## II OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION DEFINED

### A. Open Space Definition

The 2008 OSRP noted the definition of open space in the Municipal Land Use Law (the “MLUL”) which is,

*“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 or support its use for recreation and conservation purposes.”*

The 2008 Plan noted that the MLUL definition for “open space” was broader than the definition in the Cranbury Land Development Ordinance (“LDO”) which is,

*“Any parcel or area of land or water essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated or reserved for agricultural uses or passive recreation.”*

In other words, the Township definition for “open space” was limited to “agricultural uses or passive recreation” and did not include land reserved for active recreation purposes. The 2008 OSRP recommended the Township adopt the MLUL definition. This recommendation remains valid and open space in this report refers to spaces for both active and passive recreation.

### B. Recreation Definition

#### 2008 Definition

Neither the MLUL nor LDO define “recreation.” As such, the 2008 Plan provided definitions for three subsets of “open space,” as follows:

- **Active Recreation.** Leisure-time activities, where some level of physical exertion is required, and occurring in a formal, organized manner, on spaces designed and improved for specific active recreational pursuits. Active recreation typically involves organized sports, requiring the use of equipment and occurring in prescribed places such as fields, courts, or in designed facilities such as soccer, baseball/softball, football, lacrosse, basketball, volleyball, tennis, hockey and golf.
- **Passive Recreation.** Leisure-time activities that are relatively inactive or requiring less physical exertion. Passive recreational activities are typically more self-directed, whether for individuals or groups, and usually occur within more natural environments and relatively undisturbed open spaces, such as walking, picnicking, nature- or bird-watching, dog walking, fishing, kite-flying and community gardening.

- **Alternative Recreation.** Leisure-time activities, also involving some degree of physical exertion, but occurring in a more informal and less organized manner. Alternative recreation is also typically individually-oriented and occurs on open fields or along walkways, paths or streams, such as hiking, biking, jogging, skating (inline skating, roller skating and skateboarding), Frisbee and canoeing.

The 2008 Plan noted that, “While there is some degree of overlapping of recreational activities across these three definitions, and while most parks and open spaces provide for two and sometimes all three forms of recreation within a single space, nevertheless the distinctions were felt to be useful to ensure proper planning and inclusion within the Plan.”

### 2023 Proposed Definitions

Based on Cranbury’s existing inventory of open spaces, as well as current professional practice, it is suggested that the above definitions for recreation be revised and simplified, where possible. References to “physical exertion” should be removed from all definitions. as well as the entire definition for “alternative recreation” since Heritage Park, the only park in this category, also meets the definition of “passive open space.” For the purposes of this report, active and passive recreation will include outdoor facilities only.

This report uses the following definitions for recreation:

- **Active Recreation:** Open space reserved for individual or team activities that require the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment including, but not limited to, playgrounds; athletic fields; outdoor basketball, tennis, volleyball, and other sports courts; and skate parks. This includes public and privately owned parcels and facilities.
- **Passive Recreation:** Open space reserved for observing and photographing nature, scenic vistas, and/or historic resources; relaxation; picnicking; boating; fishing; strolling; dog walking; hiking; biking; camping; cross-country skiing; and informal play (kite flying, frisbee throwing, tag, etc.). This may include seating areas, picnicking areas, greenways, paths, unprogrammed lawn areas, gardens, and publicly accessible natural areas. Passive recreation facilities may or may not be publicly accessible. This includes public and privately owned parcels.

## **C. Preserved Farmland Definition**

The 2008 OSRP did not discuss preserved farmland. However, there are Township owned parcels that are “preserved farmland,” i.e., restricted for agricultural use that were categorized as “passive recreation” spaces in the 2008 OSRP. Categorizing these parcels as “passive recreation” is not appropriate as many of these lands are still working farms. Parcels permanently preserved for farmland are included in the 2023 open space inventory tables in the following chapters so that the Township Committee can get an idea of how much land in the Township is deed restricted from development. This report does not make any recommendations as to future efforts for farmland preservation as that is best left to a

Farmland Preservation Plan which is adopted by the State Agricultural Development Committee ("SADC"). A distinction is made in this report between parcels owned by the Township and/or non-profit entities, and parcels that are privately owned.

The definition of "preserved farmland" based on the State's definition is as follows:

- **Preserved Farmland:** Farms or development easements that are acquired through the State's Farmland Preservation Program are protected for agricultural use in perpetuity. Landowners who have sold their development rights still can sell their land at any time. Deed restrictions prohibiting non-agricultural development run with the land, so future owners of preserved farms also would be required to comply with the deed restrictions. The sale of development rights does not make farmland public property. The public has no right to access or use a deed-restricted farm without the landowner's consent.

### III FUNDING FOR OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS

The Township has acquired open space parcels through a variety of sources detailed below.

#### A. Municipal Resources

The Township has used municipal revenue and bond ordinances to purchase various open space parcels.

#### B. Private and Non-Profit Sources

Funding for open space and recreation projects can also come from both the for-profit and non-profit private sectors. Private sources typically include developers, corporations and residents. Developers of large-scale properties and corporations based in Cranbury may voluntarily deed land over to the Township as part of their site plan approvals.

The Township also accepts gifts given in honor of an individual or organization. In an attempt to help maintain park structures and grounds, 10% of donations are applied to the Cranbury Parks Trust. The interest of the Fund is used in perpetuity for the betterment and maintenance of Cranbury's parks. The gifts can be in the form of cash donations, securities, life insurance, annuities, bequests, or charitable trusts.

Another source of monies is the Cranbury Trophy Golf Tournament which is held annually to benefit the township's Recreation Department. Proceeds go towards projects that exceed the Recreation Department's budget.

Additionally, the Township has acquired open space in partnership with the Delaware & Raritan Greenway Land Trust ("D&R Greenway") which is a land conservation non-profit organization.

#### C. Green Acres Program

The Township has also made use of State programs including the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection ("NJDEP") Green Acres program which provides grants and low interest (up to 2%) loans to municipal and county governments to acquire open space and develop outdoor recreation facilities.

##### Green Acres Restrictions

The determination of how parkland can be utilized and developed by a municipality in New Jersey is dependent to a large extent upon the Green Acres regulations which are promulgated by the State—even in those cases where the municipality has acquired or developed such parkland without Green Acres funding. Properties which fall under the purview of the Green Acres program rules are subject to the following encumbrances:

- **Green Acres parkland must be publicly accessible to all NJ residents.** The municipality that owns the land must ensure that the parkland is open and provides reasonable public access to all New Jersey residents, not just local residence.

- **Green Acres parkland must only be used for recreation and conservation.** Lands acquired or developed with Green Acres funds may be used solely for recreation and conservation purposes in perpetuity. These parcels cannot be disposed of or diverted to another use without the approval of NJDEP Commissioner and the State House Commission.
- **Green Acres parkland must get approval to change to a different recreation or conservation purpose.** A municipality may change the recreation and conservation purpose or use for parkland is being used to another recreation or conservation purpose or use only after a duly noticed public hearing at least 90 days prior to the final approval of the change in purpose or use. The municipality must then obtain written approval from NJDEP.

A change in recreation and conservation purpose or use of parkland includes:

- The construction of recreation and conservation facilities, such as athletic fields or playgrounds, on undeveloped parkland or an undeveloped portion of parkland;
- The conversion of buildings originally acquired or constructed in support of recreation and conservation purposes to indoor recreation uses or purposes; and
- The imposition of restrictions, through regulation, ordinance or other legal mechanism, intended to prohibit the development or use of parkland for one or more recreation purposes.

A change in recreation and conservation purpose or use of parkland does not include:

- The replacement of existing recreation and conservation development or facilities with development or facilities for another recreation and conservation purpose or use, or the renovation or repair of existing facilities, as long as such replacement, renovation or repair involves less than one-quarter acre of additional permanent disturbance of parkland;
- The use of an existing structure for another recreation or conservation purpose, as long as no expansion of the structure is proposed;
- The construction of additional support structures, such as bleachers, concession stands, picnic shelters or lighting towers, within the boundary of an existing developed recreation area, in order to enhance the existing purpose or use of that area;
- Use of undeveloped parkland for short-term events such as festivals, carnivals or parades;
- Implementation of natural resource management techniques and activities on parkland, such as deer management, fishing controls or invasive species controls; or

- The construction of recreation and conservation facilities identified by the local government unit or nonprofit in an approved application for Green Acres funding for acquisition or development of parkland.

#### Planning Incentive Program

Green Acres initiated a grant funding category for land acquisition, the Planning Incentive Program "PIP". PIP provides grant and loan funding to local governments (municipalities and counties) that have enacted an open space tax and have adopted an open space and recreation plan. Cranbury adopted an open space tax in 2000 that assessed three cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value of real property. In 2006, the assessment was reduced to two cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value. The funds are placed in an interest-bearing trust fund and can be used for the following purposes:

- Acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes
- Development of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes
- Maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes
- Acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes
- Preservation of historic properties, including the acquisition of such properties for historic preservation purposes, or
- Payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred by a local government for any of the purposes stated in the above bullets.

#### ROSI

Each municipality is required to prepare a recreation and open space inventory ("ROSI") as a condition of applying for and receiving Green Acres funding. The ROSI is the master list of Green Acres-encumbered properties in each municipality. Table 1 below lists the properties on the ROSI as of November 2023. These are the same properties listed on the ROSI in 2008.

**TABLE 1: PROPERTIES IN CRANBURY LISTED ON THE ROSI**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (ACRES)
Cranbury Brook Preserve	Cranbury Brook and Wynnewood Drive	23	95	15.4
Frosztega Property	North Main Street	25	60.01	30.8
Unami Woods	Wynnewood Drive	23	135	2.8
Village Park	Maplewood Avenue	33	64	13.1
Village Park	Maplewood Avenue	33	65	5.7
<b>Total</b>				<b>67.8 acres</b>

*Source: NJDEP Office of Transactions and Public Land Administration; accessed online November 2023.*



## IV INVENTORY OF OPEN SPACE IN CRANBURY IN 2008 OSRP

Tables 2 through 5 list the open space facilities inventoried in the 2008 OSRP. Table 6 provides a summary of the open space facilities inventoried in the 2008 OSRP.

**TABLE 2: INVENTORY OF TOWNSHIP OWNED ACTIVE RECREATION OPEN SPACE IN 2008 OSRP**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)
Millstone Park	Old Trenton Road	21	8.18	12.8
Village Park	Maplewood Avenue	33	64	13.1
Village Park	Maplewood Avenue	33	65	5.7
West Property Soccer Fields	Adjacent to Cranbury School	23	70.02	7.2
Total:				38.8 acres

**TABLE 3: INVENTORY OF NON-TOWNSHIP OWNED ACTIVE RECREATION OPEN SPACE IN 2008 OSRP**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)
Cranbury Swim Club	Old Trenton Road	21	9	3.8
School Fields	Adjacent to Cranbury School	23	70.02	~9
Total:				12.8 acres

**TABLE 4: INVENTORY OF TOWNSHIP OWNED PASSIVE RECREATION/CONSERVATION OPEN SPACE IN 2008 OSRP**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)
Barclay Stream Corridor	Cranbury Brook	23	12.02	7.7
Barn Park	Cranbury Neck Road and Liedike Drive	21	4.11	0.9
Cranbury Brook Preserve	West Property	23	70.02	20.0
Cranbury Brook Preserve	Cranbury Brook and Wynnewood Drive	23	95	15.4
Fischer Property	Old Cranbury Road and South Main Street	19	11 and 12	53.6
Frosztega Property	North Main Street	25	60.01	30.6
Hagerty	Old Cranbury Road	20	14	21.6
Memorial Park	South Main Street	23	72	0.5
Millstone River	East Barclay Stream Corridor	22	7	9.2
Millstone River	Shadow Oaks Stream Corridor	20.06	41.02	46.6
Millstone River and John White Road	Millstone River Corridor	22.01	2	8.8
Unami Woods	Wynnewood Drive	23	135	2.8
Village Green/Wright South	Bunker Hill Road	23	14.03	14.2
Total Acreage:				231.9 acres

**TABLE 5: INVENTORY OF TOWNSHIP OWNED ALTERNATIVE RECREATION OPEN SPACE IN 2008 OSRP**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>BLOCK</b>	<b>LOT</b>	<b>SIZE (acres)</b>
<b>Heritage Park</b>	South Main Street and Old Trenton Road	18	44.01	13.5
<b>Total:</b>				<b>13.5 acres</b>

**TABLE 6: SUMMARY OF OPEN SPACE IN CRANBURY, NJ IN 2008 OSRP**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>SIZE (acres)</b>
<b>Township Owned Active Recreation Open Space</b>	38.8
<b>Non-Township Owned Active Recreation Open Space</b>	12.8
<b>Township Owned Passive Recreation/Conservation Open Space</b>	231.9
<b>Alternative Recreation Open Space</b>	13.5
<b>Total:</b>	<b>297.0 acres</b>

## V INVENTORY OF OPEN SPACE PARCELS IN 2023

### A. Changes in Open Space Inventory Since 2008

#### Inclusions of (Inadvertent) Omissions in 2008 Inventories

Not included in the list of open space parcels in the 2008 OSRP were Brainerd Lake (including the benches and water fountain at Brainerd Dam), and the third tax lot comprising Village Park. These three parcels are listed in this chapter's inventory.

#### Changes in Open Space Inventory

Since 2008, there have been several changes to the Township's open space inventory including the following:

- **D&R Greenway Parcel:** In 2015, the Delaware and Raritan Greenway, Inc. ("D&R Greenway") approached the Township regarding a 6-acre parcel of land on Old Trenton Road (Block 20.17, Lot 1). A land developer donated the parcel to D&R who then donated the parcel to the Township. The Township accepted the donation to enhance its greenway network along the Millstone River. The site was free from environmental contamination and is mostly wetlands, although trails may be constructed through it. This increases the Township owned passive recreation inventory by **+6-acres**.
- **Pin Oaks Property:** In 2010, Cranbury Housing Authority ("CHA") CHA conveyed two parcels of property totaling **3.2 acres** to the Township. The properties are on Old Cranbury Road adjacent to the 21.6-acre Hagerty tract. Per Ordinance No. 04-10-05, the intention of the conveyance was to make the two parcels part of the larger open space parcel, i.e., the Hagerty property.
- **Reinhardt Track:** In 2010, the Township acquired 61-acres from the Estate of Clifford R. Reinhardt using Green Acres and County funding. Approximately 1.35-acres were reserved for Plainsboro Road right-of-way areas leaving **59.8 acres** restricted to open space, preservation, conservation, active or passive recreational or other similar use and/or activity by a Conservation Restriction Agreement.
- **The West Property:** The Township acquired the 58-acre West Property (Block 23, Lot 70.02) in the 1980s. Of the 58 acres, 20 acres were designated for conservation and passive recreation as part of Cranbury Brook Preserve and 38 acres were reserved for general municipal use including, but not limited to, school expansion. Two soccer fields were created on approximately 7 acres of the 38-acres reserved for general municipal use. In 2004 by Ordinance No. 11-04-28, 14 of the 38 acres for general municipal use were designated for conservation and passive recreation as part of the Cranbury Brook Preserve leaving 24 of the original 58 acres available for general municipal use (including the 7 acres of soccer fields. In 2008 by Ordinance No. 08-08-19, the remaining 24 acres

were designated for active and passive recreation and conservation purposes only. This 24 acres includes the 7-acres of soccer fields and fields used by the school. That said, it has been indicated that a separate agreement between the Township Committee and the School Board allowed a portion of the remaining acres to be carved out for any school uses or expansion.

- **Wright South Property:** In 2000, the Township acquired Wright North and Wright South. Wright South is a 50-acre parcel adjacent to the School (Wright North is a parcel on the North side of Plainsboro Road). The Township then sold off Wright North and a 35-acre portion of Wright South for deed-restricted farmland leaving 14 acres remaining on Wright South. The land was set aside for public purposes including a public library (completed in 2022), town green (plans prepared but never executed)<sup>1</sup>, expansion of the school parking lot (completed circa 2003), and active recreation (Babe Ruth field completed circa 2010). The 2008 OSRP did not list the Wright South property in the Township's open space inventory. The 2023 Update includes the Wright South property as follows:
  - **Babe Ruth Field on Wright South Property:** The Babe Ruth field on Wright South was completed circa 2010. The field takes up approximately **4 acres of the 14.189 parcel**. These 4 acres have been added to the active open space inventory and subtracted from the 14.189 acres in the passive open space inventory.
  - **Cranbury Library on Wright South Property:** The ±12,000 square foot Cranbury Library opened in 2022 on roughly **1.75 acres** of the Wright South parcel. This 1.75 acres (in addition to the 4-acre Babe Ruth field) has been subtracted in the inventory from the 14.189 acres for the Village Green.
- **Cranbury Swim Club:** The Cranbury Swim Club was privately owned but listed in the 2008 OSRP as part of the Township's active recreation inventory. The club closed circa 2015 and was located at 32 Ancil Davison (Block 21, Lot 9) on a 3.8-acre parcel abutting Millstone Park which remains in private ownership. The Cranbury Recreation Department used the pool as part of its summer camp programs. The club included a wading pool, main pool, diving area, basketball court, tot lot, grills, and picnic areas.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2002 the Township hired the firm of Brown & Keener (landscape architects, urban designers) to conduct a community "charrette." The charrette was concluded with a broad consensus among stakeholders and residents that the Wright South parcel should be used for the following purposes: a regulation baseball field; land designated for a library/community center; an open town green; and land designated for additional vehicular access and parking.

## B. Tables of Open Space Inventory, 2023

Tables 7 through 12 list the open space facilities inventoried for this 2023 OSRP Update. Notes on when the parcel was acquired and for what purpose are listed for each parcel. Table 13 provides a summary of the open space facilities inventoried for this report.

**TABLE 7: 2023 OSRP UPDATE INVENTORY OF ACTIVE RECREATION**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)	NOTES ON ACQUISITION AND DEEDED PURPOSE (if applicable)
Millstone Park	Old Trenton Road	21	8.18	12.8	Town acquired in 1998 from the developer of Shadow Oaks. Per the deed, the land is to be used for "parkland, recreation purposes and stormwater detention basin."
Babe Ruth Field on Wright South	Adjacent to the Library	23	14.03	~4	Completed circa 2010 on 4 acres of the 14-acre Wright South parcel reserved for public use. <b>(Not in 2008 OSRP inventory of active recreation)</b>
Village Park	Maplewood Avenue	33	57	0.5	Village Park land was purchased in two transactions, one in 1964 and a second in 1967. Lot 57 was conveyed to the Township by the Lions Club in 1989. <b>(Lot 57 was not listed in the 2008 OSRP.)</b>
Village Park	Maplewood Avenue	33	64	13.1	
Village Park	Maplewood Avenue	33	65	5.7	
West Property soccer fields	Adjacent to Cranbury School	23	70.02	7.2	This 7-acre portion of the West Property is part of the 24-acres reserved for active or passive recreation and conservation in 2008.
<b>Total Acreage: 43.3 acres</b>					

**TABLE 8: 2023 OSRP UPDATE INVENTORY OF TOWNSHIP OWNED FARMLAND**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)	NOTES ON ACQUISITION AND DEEDED PURPOSE (if applicable)
Fischer Farm	South Main Street	19	11	0.72	The Township acquired the Fischer Property in 2002 for the purposes of preserving the property as productive farmland. The Township leases the parcel for agricultural use. It is located on the north side of the Millstone River and forms part of the Millstone River Greenway. The property is considered to be a gateway property to historic Cranbury Village, since it is one of the first properties seen when entering the Village along Main Street from the south.
Fischer Farm	South Main Street	19	12	52.9	
Frosztega Farm	North Main Street	25	60.01	31.2	The Frosztega Property is jointly owned by the Township, the State of New Jersey's Green Acres Program and the Delaware and Raritan Greenway, Inc. Pursuant to a Management Plan entered into by the joint owners, the Township is responsible for either farming or mowing the fields located on the property. It is located on the Cedar Brook, which is a tributary of the Millstone River. The Township leases the property to farmers for agricultural use.
Udike Agricultural Lot	Cranbury Neck Road	21	4	32.7	The Sharbell Corporation developed the single-family homes on Liedtke Drive circa 2006-2008. As part of the Developer's Agreement, the Township would take ownership of two parcels on Block 21: Lots 4 and 4.11. Lot 4.11 is improved with the Barn Park. Lot 4 is reserved for agricultural land. As part of the Developer's Agreement, active recreational facilities may be constructed <u>on a portion</u> of the Agricultural Lot, provided that the Township (a) installs a 200' wide dense landscape buffer between any such facilities or parking lots serving such facilities and the property lines of any of the lots on Liedtke Drive, (b) does not install lights (c) prohibits any and all night-time recreational activities, and (d) prohibits the use Liedtke Drive as a means of providing access to the recreational facilities, which prohibition shall be perpetual.
<b>Total Acreage:</b>				<b>117.5 acres</b>	

**TABLE 9: 2023 OSRP UPDATE INVENTORY OF TOWNSHIP OWNED PASSIVE RECREATION**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)	NOTES ON ACQUISITION AND DEEDED PURPOSE (if applicable)
<b>Barclay Stream Corridor</b>	Cranbury Brook	23	12.02	7.7	Conveyed to the Township from the Barclay family in 2003 for "the purpose of creating a stream ramble right-of-way for public access along Cranbury Brook." The Barclay Stream Corridor runs along the north side of Cranbury Brook to the west of the Cranbury Brook Preserve.
<b>Barn Park</b>	Cranbury Neck Road/ Liedike Drive	21	4.11	0.9	The Barn Park was originally part of the larger Updike property. Three barns remain from the former Updike farm. A paved pathway provides access to the park from Cranbury Neck Road, and from the subdivision on Liedtke.
<b>Brainerd Lake</b>	Brainerd Lake east of Route 130.	7	24	13.0	<b>These parcels were inadvertently left off the 2008 OSRP inventory.</b>
<b>Brainerd Lake</b>	Brainerd Lake west of Route 130.	33	68	11.7	
<b>Cranbury Brook Preserve</b>	West Property	23	70.02	20.0	This was the initial 20-acre portion of the total 58-acre West Property that the Township, after purchase, reserved for passive recreation and conservation. It is located on the north side of Cranbury Brook.
<b>Cranbury Brook Preserve</b>	West Property	23	70.02	14.3	This was the 14-acre portion of the total 58-acre West Property that the Township reserved for passive recreation and conservation in 2004. It is also located on the north side of Cranbury Brook.
<b>Cranbury Brook Preserve South</b>	Cranbury Brook and Wynnewood Drive	23	95	15.4	The Township acquired this parcel in 1965 from Wynnewood at Cranbury, Inc. developers of Wynnewood Drive. The deed for the land indicates it is to be used for a "public purpose."
<b>D&amp;R Greenway Parcel</b>	Old Trenton Road	20.17	1	6.0	Conveyed to the Township from D&R Greenway in 2015. It is located along the Millstone River and is mostly wetlands. The deed does not specify its intended use, but the Township Committee intended to provide trails along the river. <b>Parcel was acquired since 2008 OSRP.</b>



NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)	NOTES ON ACQUISITION AND DEEDED PURPOSE (if applicable)
Hagerty	Old Cranbury Road	20	14	21.6	The Township acquired this parcel from K. Hovnanian in 2005 as part of the Four Seasons Development. The parcel borders the Millstone River to the south and Old Cranbury Road to the east. (It is located across the road from the Fischer property.) The land was dedicated to the Township for "any and all lawful public purposes including but not limited to open space preservation."
Heritage Park	South Main Street and Old Trenton Road	18	44.01	13.5	Conveyed to the Township in 1994 from the developer of Cranbury Greene. The entire conveyance encompassed 17.9 acres and was to be used "for public purposes and no other purposes whatsoever and shall not be sold by the Township of Cranbury except to an entity organized for the purpose of constructing affordable housing." Subsequently, 13.5 acres was devoted to Heritage Park and the balance was developed for affordable housing owned by Cranbury Housing Associates. <b>This was listed as "Alternative Recreation" in the 2008 OSRP which is a term recommended to be removed.</b>
Memorial Park		23	72	0.5	Shares the parcel with the fire house. It contains memorials for Cranbury war veterans of the Civil War, WWI, WW2, Korean, and Vietnam wars.
East Barclay Stream Corridor	Millstone River	22	7	9.2	The entirety of Block 22, Lot 7 is preserved farmland. It totals 87.5 acres. The 9.2 acre portion adjacent to the Millstone River is an easement for access and conservation. Per the easement's deed, the area "shall be used solely for a nature preserve, conservation of natural resources, preservation of open space, protection of wildlife, nature study and recreation consistent with such uses (known as "passive recreation"), such as walking, jogging, bird watching, fishing and enjoyment of nature generally. "
Shadow Oaks Stream Corridor	Millstone River	20.06	41.02	46.6	Acquired by Township in the 1980s from the developer of Shadow Oaks. Land was to be used for "parkland, recreation purposes and storm water detention."
Pin Oaks Property	1-7 Pin Oaks Drive	20	11	0.9	Acquired in 2010. Property deed indicates



NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)	NOTES ON ACQUISITION AND DEEDED PURPOSE (if applicable)
Pin Oaks Property	Old Cranbury Road	20	12.01	2.4	that the land can be used "for any and all lawful public purposes including but not limited to open space preservation." <b>Parcels acquired since 2008 OSRP.</b>
The White Property	Millstone River Corridor	22.01	2	8.8	Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc. ("D&R") acquired the Kiesler farm (Block 22, Lot 11) to preserve it as deed-restricted farmland. D&R also acquired Block 22.01, Lot 2 with In 2004, by Ordinance No. 12-04-31, the Township agreed to contribute money towards purchase of the Kiesler Farm in return for a permanent right of public access to and use of Lot 2 for passive recreation and conservation purposes. When D&R purchased the Kiesler Farm, they established a public accessway easement along the Millstone River on Block 22.01, Lot 1.
Unami Woods	Wynnewood Drive	23	135	2.8	The Township acquired this parcel in 1967 from Wynnewood at Cranbury, Inc. developers of Wynnewood Drive. It is located on Wynnewood Drive adjacent to Cranbury Brook Preserve South and is accessed from Wynnewood Drive.
<b>Total Acreage:</b>				<b>195.3 acres</b>	

**TABLE 10: 2023 OSRP UPDATE INVENTORY OF TOWNSHIP OWNED OPEN SPACE WITH A TO BE DETERMINED PURPOSE**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)	NOTES ON ACQUISITION AND DEEDED PURPOSE (if applicable)
West Property	West Property	23	70.02	17.0	This is part of the 24-acre portion of the total 58-acre West Property that the Township reserved for active or passive recreation and conservation in 2008. Seven of the 24-acres are already improved with two soccer fields. <b>Not included in 2008 OSRP because it was uncertain if it would be dedicated to open space (rather than school use).</b>
Reinhardt Preserve	178 Plainsboro Road	24	4	59.9	Conservation Restriction Agreement states that the parcel shall "remain as open space for the preservation and conservation of open space and natural features... with the exception of the construction of ancillary structures to aid in the use of the subject property as active and/or passive recreational open space." <b>Parcel was acquired since 2008 OSRP.</b>
Wright South	Adjacent to the Library	23	14.03	~8.0	Remainder of Wright South property that is not improved with the Babe Ruth Field nor the Cranbury Library
<b>Total Acreage:</b>				<b>84.9 acres</b>	

**TABLE 11: 2023 OSRP UPDATE INVENTORY OF NON-TOWNSHIP OWNED ACTIVE OPEN SPACE**

NAME	LOCATION	BLOCK	LOT	SIZE (acres)
School Fields	Adjacent to Cranbury School	23	70.02	~9
School Tennis Courts	Adjacent to Cranbury School	23	63.011	3 courts
<b>Total:</b>				<b>~9.0 acres</b>

**TABLE 12: 2023 OSRP UPDATE INVENTORY OF NON-TOWNSHIP OWNED PASSIVE RECREATION**

BLOCK	LOT	LOCATION	SIZE (acres)
23	2.02	Plainsboro Road (Rear)	6.8 (owned by NJDEP along Cranbury Brook)
<b>Total:</b>		<b>~6.8 acres</b>	

**TABLE 13: 2023 OSRP UPDATE INVENTORY OF NON-TOWNSHIP OWNED PRESERVED FARMLAND**

BLOCK	LOT	LOCATION	SIZE (acres)
14	3	38 Brickyard Road	57.6
14	4.02	1 Wyckoff Mills Road	105.6
16	4	12 Brickyard Road	64.4
21	1.03	6 Applegate Court	25.0
21	6.01	Old Trenton Road	206.5
21	6.12	Ancil Davison Road	8.1
21	6.13	12 Ancil Davison Road	25.4
21	8.19	Old Trenton Road	28.7
22	1	John White Road	18.3
22	2	97 Cranbury Neck Road	80.9
22	3	87 Cranbury Neck Road	119.2
22	4	75 Cranbury Neck Road	58.3
22	6	15 Ancil Davison Road	112.4
22	7	23 Ancil Davison Road	87.5
22	8.01	29 Ancil Davison Road	70.9
22	10	119 John White Road	48.3
22	11	John White Road	22.9
22	14	81 John White Road	61.4
23	1.01	199 Plainsboro Road	79.0
23	2.01	193 Plainsboro Road	116.5
23	3	Plainsboro Road	182.8
23	8	171 Plainsboro Road	37.2
23	11	153 Plainsboro Road	180.2
23	12.01	147 Plainsboro Road	120.1
23	13	5 Wheatfield Road	24.8
23	99	74 Cranbury Neck Road	77.5
23	100	80 Cranbury Neck Road	42.5
23	102.01	120 Cranbury Neck Road	129.9
23	103	104 Cranbury Neck Road	19.5
23	104.01	35 George Davison Road	47.6
23	114	Plainsboro Road	1.2
24	1	192 Plainsboro Road	132.0
24	9.01	60 Petty Road	7.7
25	3	Dey Road Rear	69.6
25	4	256 Dey Road	7.7
25	19.01	North Main St	62.4

BLOCK	LOT	LOCATION	SIZE (acres)
25	31	328 Plainsboro Road	80.1
25	40	150 Plainsboro Road	104.4
25	42.02	160 Plainsboro Road	35.9
25	71	258 Dey Road	0.4
25.01	72	Orchardside Drive	0.4
<b>Total Acreage:</b>			<b>2,760.5 acres</b>

**TABLE 14: 2023 OSRP UPDATE SUMMARY OF OPEN SPACE INVENTORY IN CRANBURY, NJ**

NAME	SIZE (acres)
Township Owned Active Recreation Open Space	43.3
Township Owned Preserved Farmland	117.5
Township Owned Passive Recreation Open Space	195.3
Township Owned Open Space with A To Be Determined Purpose	84.9
Non-Township Owned Active Recreation Open Space	9.0
Non-Township Owned Preserved Farmland	2,760.5
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3,210.5 acres</b>

A map of Cranbury's open spaces is provided in the Appendix. Please note that a portion of the West Property and the Wright South Property are coded as "undefined open space." This categorization is because these lands have not been designated as "active" or "passive" recreation. Additionally, the remainder of the Wright South Property not improved with the Babe Ruth Field or Library may not even be used for open space but for some other public purpose.

## **VI INVENTORY OF ACTIVE FACILITIES/IMPROVEMENTS, 2023**

### **A. Status of Active Recreation Recommendations Since 2008 OSRP**

The following provides the status of recommendations regarding active recreation in the 2008 OSRP:

- **Make minor changes and improvements to existing facilities to improve field conditions and optimize their utilization.** This has been done on an as-needed basis.
- **Make All Fields More Multi-Purpose.** This recommendation applies to soccer/lacrosse/field hockey fields and included not installing permanent goals, etc. so fields can be adapted for different uses. This has been done where possible.
- **Add Irrigation to Existing Fields.** Irrigation systems have been added to the West Property fields, the school fields, and the Babe Ruth regulation size baseball field on Wright South.
- **Institute a Field Use Priority List.** In 2011, the Township implemented a permit and fee system for active recreation facilities which charged higher fees to non-resident and adult leagues than Cranbury youth leagues. Additionally, the Township limits the number of games per season on various fields.
- **Install an ADA Compliant Path in Village Park.** Such a path was completed in summer 2023.
- **Make Improvements to Millstone Park.** The 2008 OSRP made the following recommendations which were all subsequently implemented:
  - Realign entry driveway to be located directly opposite Washington Drive for safety, expansion of the parking lot, and to free up space for additional multi-purpose fields.
  - Replace T-ball/Minors field with a Little League which would be properly oriented (its orientation at the time of the 2008 OSRP limited the field's use to certain times of the day when the sun was not directly in players' eyes) and free up space for additional fields.
  - Lower speed limits on Old Trenton Road. In response to requests from the Township, the County lowered the speed limit on Old Trenton Road from 50 mph to 35 mph for the safety of pedestrians walking to and from Millstone Park.
- **Outdoor Lighting Should Not Be Permitted.** This policy has remained in place.
- **Add a Track to the West Property.** This was not implemented. This was not listed as a pressing recommendation in the 2008 OSRP but a recommendation that could be

implemented to meet the needs of the Cranbury School track and field teams and older residents looking for a place to exercise.

- **Add New Active Recreation Fields on Updike Property.** The 2008 OSRP looked at the potential of putting active recreation fields on either Updike, Hagerty, or Fischer properties. Updike was chosen because it is a relatively large parcel, level and cleared of vegetation, free of any major environmental constraints, absent any critical environmental resources, and relatively accessible to Cranbury's residents by virtue of its location. This was not implemented and the Updike Property remains active farmland.

## **B. Changes in Inventory of Active Recreation Facilities Since 2008**

- **Village Park:**
  - **Installation of Sand Volleyball Court.** A sand volleyball court was installed in Village Park in 2022 north of the basketball court. It replaced what was identified as a T-ball/Minors field (Schanck Field) that was at that location in the 2008 OSRP.
  - **Refurbishment of Basketball Court Surface.** The surface of the basketball court was replaced in 2022.
  - **Construction of Walking Trail.** A half-mile, permeable walking trail was completed in August 2023.
  - **Striping Pickleball Lines and Purchase of Pickleball Nets.** Pickleball lines and movable nets were added to the tennis courts to create 2 pickleball courts.
  - **Construction of an Inclusive Playground.** The Township received \$300,000 in 2023 for the installation of an inclusive playground.
  - **Donation of Bike Repair Station.** A bike repair station was donated by the Princeton Freewheelers and installed by the park rules sign.
  - **Creation of Rain Garden.** A 600 square foot rain garden was installed in 2014 next to Brainerd Lake. It includes a 6 to 8 inch depression to intercept and collect stormwater runoff before it enters Brainerd Lake.
  - **Other Notable Decision/Issues.** In 2011, the Park Commission approached the Township Committee about installing a sculpture in the park adjacent to Brainerd Lake which would frame views of the Brainerd Dam and the gazebo. The Township Committee did not accept the proposal for the statue stating that the statue would impede views of the lake.
- **Millstone Park:**

- **Relocation of 1713 East Jersey Cottage/Bodine House.** The historic home was located at 87 Old Trenton Road. The home, one of the oldest in New Jersey, was to be demolished and the Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society acquired and moved the home to Millstone Park. Millstone Park was chosen because the land the park is on was in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries part of farmland tracts on which the historic home was originally located. The home is proposed to be used as a “seasonal style museum”. It has no utilities. The home was positioned in a clearing parallel to Old Trenton Road and away from the playing fields.
- **Replacement of Playground Equipment.** The playground equipment was replaced in 2014.
- **Installation of Rain Garden.** A rain garden was installed adjacent to the 1713 East jersey Cottage.
- **Enlargement of Little League Field.** In 2012, the Little League field was enlarged to accommodate the Cranbury Plainsboro Little League travel team.
- **Installation of Soccer Fields.** Reports that non-residents were using the Millstone soccer fields during the winter prompted the installation of fencing around the fields to protect the turf during the winter.
- **Other Notable Decision/Issues.** In 2019, it was reported at a Township Committee meeting that people were playing cricket on the Millstone fields regularly. Concerns were raised about permits and insurance.
- **West Property and Wright South:**
  - **Installation of Irrigation System.** The 2008 OSRP reported that the West Property soccer fields were not irrigated. An irrigation system was installed circa 2010. This system also irrigates the Wright South regulation baseball field and the school soccer fields. Irrigation of these facilities was a major recommendation of the 2008 OSRP.

## C. Table of Active Recreation Facilities, 2023

Table 14 lists the active recreation facilities inventoried for this 2023 Update.

**TABLE 15: INVENTORY OF ACTIVE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN CRANBURY TOWNSHIP IN 2023**

Recreational Facility	Village Park	Cranbury-Millstone Park	West Property	Wright South	Cranbury School	Total
<b>DIAMOND SPORTS</b>						
Regulation Little League Fields <sup>1</sup>	1					1
Regulation Babe Ruth Field <sup>2</sup>				1		1
Softball Fields	1	1			1	3
T-Ball/Minors Fields <sup>3</sup>						
<b>PICNIC/GATHERING FACILITIES</b>						
Barbecue Grills	X					
Picnic Tables	X	X				
Pavilion	X					
Gazebo	X					
<b>PLAYGROUNDS</b>						
Tot Lot (0-5 years old)	1					1
Playground for Older Children (5-12 years old)	1	1			2	4
<b>RECTANGULAR FIELDS</b>						
Small Sided Soccer Fields		1				1
Large Sided Soccer Fields			2		2	4
Practice Fields for Soccer		2				2
<b>SPORTS COURTS</b>						
Basketball Court	1				1	2
Tennis/Pickleball Courts	2					
Tennis Court					3	3
Volleyball Court	1					1
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>						
Bike Path	1					1
Bike Maintenance Station	1					
Dirt Mountain	1					1
Dock	1					1
Walking Paths	1					1

<sup>1</sup>The regulation Little League field has 60-foot baselines, a pitching distance of 46 feet, and an outfield fence 200 feet from home plate.

<sup>2</sup> Babe Ruth plays on regulation baseball fields, the same size used by high schools, colleges and the pros. It is 90 feet between the bases and 60'6" from the pitchers rubber to home plate.

<sup>3</sup> T-Ball/Minors fields have 50-foot baselines, and a pitching distance of 35 feet.



## **VII INVENTORY OF PASSIVE FACILITIES/IMPROVEMENTS, 2023**

### **A. Status of Passive Recreation Recommendations Since 2008 OSRP**

The following provides the status of recommendations regarding passive recreation in the 2008 OSRP:

- **Identify all of the easements owned by the Township to inform citizens of where they exist for the common use and enjoyment of the community.** In 2009, and pursuant to this recommendation in the 2008 OSRP, the Parks Commission recommended that all Township owned easements be marked in some way on the curb or in the street adjacent to the easement. A public hearing was held in 2010 and was met with opposition from residents, particularly of Shadow Oaks. The developer of Shadow Oaks gave 46 acres of land to Cranbury Township along the Millstone River. Shadow Oaks created five “walkway easements” on properties located along Washington Drive to provide access to the 46 acres (Block 20.06, Lots 5, 12, 16, 18, and 21-22). The easements are all on private property. The Township Committee appointed an Easement Subcommittee to discuss the issue and make recommendations. The subcommittee recommended the Shadow Oak easements be marked. Residents opposed the recommendation, and the Township Committee did not proceed with marking the easements. One recommendation of the Easement Subcommittee was that the Township Committee could consider in the future a “punch-through” roughly 10 to 20 feet long and 3 feet wide through overgrown brush to connect a grassy area on Township land with a large, open area (roughly 10-15 acres). The markers were not installed on any of the easements including those owned or leased by the Township which provide access to parks or open space. See below tables from the Easement Subcommittee’s recommendations memo.

Township Land to Parks/Open Space						
Tax Map Sheet	Block	Lot	Location	Nature/Purpose of Property	Description of Property	Comments
5	21.01	8,18	Parkview Road	Township owned land connecting Parkview Road in Shadow Oaks North to Millstone Park	A sidewalk between two residential lots	Shadow Oaks gave property to Cranbury when property was developed.
8	23.01	95	Wynnewood Drive	connecting Main Street Fire House and sewer road to Wynnewood Drive	Gravel trail from Pump House between two residential lots	Township placed gravel trail on narrow strip, which is maintained by adjacent property owners.
10	33	26	Maplewood Ave.	Woodchip walkway on CHA owned land connecting Maplewood Avenue to Village Park	CHA Owned Land	We understand a rental agreement exists between CHA and Cranbury Township, which allows public access to Village Park next to Paw Paw tree.

Easements/Township Lands Connecting Neighborhoods						
Tax Map Sheet	Block	Lot	Location	Nature/Purpose of Easement	Description of Easement	Comments
3.02	18.07	29-30	Chamberlin Court to Old Trenton Road	Pedestrian access connecting street in Cranbury Greene to Old Trenton Road	10' wide pathway easement. A sidewalk between two residential lots.	Easement was created when development was built.
3.03	18.03	7-8, 25-6	Handley Court to McKnight Court	Pedestrian access connecting streets in Cranbury Greene	easement. A sidewalk between two residential lots.	Easement was created when development was built.
3.05	21	4,11	Liedtke Drive to Cranbury Neck Road (through Barn Park)	Township owned strip of land	A sidewalk between two residential lots.	Land was given to Cranbury Township when development was built.
3	21	4	Liedtke Drive to Cranbury Neck Road	Township land	easement from Cranbury Township to Homeowner's Association	Township owns strip of land that leads to large open space tract. Township gave 50' access easement to Homeowners Association from Cranbury Neck Road to Liedtke Drive when development was built.
5.01	20.05	14-15, 6-7	Shadow Oaks	Connects Adams Drive and Washington Drive	Unimproved drainage, utility and walkway easement	Easement was created when the development was built. Easement connects to Walkway Easement on Washington Drive, which allows pedestrian access to Township owned open space.
5.03	20.01	13	Shadow Oaks	Connects Old Trenton Road and Washington Drive	Unimproved drainage, utility and walkway easement	Easement was created when the development was built. Easement connects to Walkway Easement on Washington Drive, which allows pedestrian access to Township owned open space.
9.01	26.01	29,22-.23	Griggs Road to Silvers Lane	connecting Cranbury Walk with Cranbury Estates	A sidewalk between residential lots	Tax map states "Area to be dedicated to Cranbury Township for future road". It is believed Township now owns the land.

Source: Final List of Easements, December 13, 2010.

- **Extend Walking Path Along Cranbury Brook in the Cranbury Brook Preserve** through the Barclay property to make a loop with existing path. Cranbury Brook Preserve has several trails but none of the trails are on the former Barclay property (Block 23, Lot 22.02).
- **Mark the easement to Unami Woods from Pump House Road.** In 2020, the trail between Pump House Road and Unami Woods was completed connecting Unami Woods to downtown.
- **Create a curb cut at the existing easement on Wynnewood Drive into Unami Woods.** A curb cut is located at the easement on Wynnewood and Woodview Drives to demarcate and facilitate an entrance into the park at this location.
- **No bikepath should be established through Unami Woods.** No bikepath has been established in Unami Woods.

- **Adopt a Stream Conservation Corridor Zone Ordinance which would restrict development within 150 feet of the bank of a stream.** In 2015, the Township adopted a Riparian Zone Ordinance restricting development within 150 feet of a surface water body. The zone is increased to 300 feet wide along Category One water bodies.
- **Acquisition of land or easements, or obtaining, via deed, public access along the entire length of the Cranbury Brook corridor.** Much of the land along north side of Cranbury Brook is deed restricted. However, public access is not permissible on much of the corridor.
- **Do not pave any greenways through passive parks.** No pathways in passive parks have been paved.
- **Bikepaths.** The 2008 OSRP deferred recommendations regarding bike ways and bike paths to a future planning effort. A Bicycle Network Plan was completed in 2021 which made recommendations for future bike connections in the Township.
- **Better publicize open space resources** by creating a directory and map to be available in the municipal building and on the Township website. The Township has done this.
- **Enhance ADA accessibility.** The Township has done this on a case-by-case basis with trails and playground equipment.

#### **B. Changes in Inventory of Passive Recreation Facilities Since 2008**

- **Unami Woods:** A loop trail approximately one-half mile in length was created in 2015.
- **Reinhardt Preserve:** The preserve was acquired in 2011. Approximately 2 miles of unpaved trails have been created.
- **Pin Oaks.** The one-mile Pin Oaks Loop Trail was created in May of 2016. The loop trail links with another short trail that connects Pin Oaks Drive to Farmstead Way.
- **Heritage Park:**
  - **Public Art Installation.** Three kinetic wind sculptures were installed in the park in 2022 to celebrate the Township's 325<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
  - **Walkway Improvements** to alleviate stormwater concerns was conducted.
  - **Playground.** A new ADA-compliant playground was installed.
- **Brainerd Lake.** In 2021, the lake was dredged to remove sediment in order to maintain the lake's physical features and ecological health.
- **Geocaching Open Space Resources.** Geocaching is when participants use a GPS to hide or find containers called "caches". The contents of caches vary, but they typically contain a logbook, instructions for the finder, and little toys or trinkets for trading.

Geocaching has been implemented for Reinhardt Preserve, Pin Oaks Loop Trail, Unami Nature Preserve, Heritage Park, and Cranbury Brook Preserve.

## VIII ADDITIONAL ISSUES IMPACTING OPEN SPACE

The following are issues which have impacted the open spaces in Cranbury in recent years:

- **Invasive Species.** Non-native insect and plant species have adversely impacted the Township's trees and natural landscaping. This includes the Spotted Lanternfly, Emerald Ash Borer Beetle, and the Tree of Heaven, among others. Open space trees have been lost due to disease from these species throughout the Township.
- **Climate Change Related Impacts.** Climate change has resulted in more frequent severe storms which impact the Township's open spaces which have experienced flooding and storm damage in recent years. Furthermore, as the climate changes, what is considered native species may change as plants and other wildlife may start to migrate northward from more southern locales.
- **Changing Approaches to Open Space Planning.**
  - **Balancing Habitat and Recreation Activities.** In the years since 2008, there has been a greater emphasis in open space planning on the conservation and/or restoration of native landscape, fauna, wildlife and wildlife habitat areas. A balanced system of habitat and recreation lands and facilities is now considered a "best management practice" towards a livable and sustainable community. Passive recreational activities place minimal stress on a site's resources; as a result, they can provide ecosystem service benefits and are highly compatible with natural resource protection. These include trails through nature preserves and/or along stream corridors.
  - **Stormwater Management.** An added benefit to unimproved, or lightly improved, open space is its role in stormwater management which is an ever-increasing concern in Cranbury and the State of New Jersey as a whole. Green infrastructure is a term acknowledging the value of functions provided by open spaces and natural areas, as well as by trees, vegetation and other green features within the city. Such areas and features help to clean air and water, reduce flooding, while enhancing livability and providing recreation opportunities. Green infrastructure includes planting trees and vegetation along streets, and on public properties, as well as utilizing sustainable stormwater and building practices.
- **Demographic Changes.** The Township's population in the 2000 Census was estimated to be 3,227 persons. The Township's population in the 2020 Census was reported as 3,842 persons. It will likely continue to grow as new developments are constructed particularly those needed for the Township to comply with its affordable housing obligation. The Township's population is getting older. The median age in 2000 was 39.1 years old. The

median age in 2023 was 47.2 years old. There may be benefit from researching this population's needs further.

- **Changes in Preferences.** At the time of the 2008 OSRP, lacrosse was one of the growing sports teams at Cranbury School and recommendations were made to increase the potential to create lacrosse fields in the Township. In 2023, the school does not have a lacrosse team. Likewise, pickleball was not mentioned once in the 2008 OSRP but is now the fastest growing sport in the county. Additionally, a review of Parks and Recreation Committee meeting minutes indicates that in recent years, consideration has been given to adding bocce courts, a zip line, a roller rink with ice and hockey boards, a Ninja Warrior climbing structure, a skate park, and an open-air theater, among others. None of these uses was contemplated in the 2008 OSRP.
- **Regional Facilities.** The expansion of active recreation facilities in neighboring towns has placed less pressure on Township owned facilities for certain sports.
- **Affordable Housing.** Cranbury has satisfied its Third Round (2015-2025) affordable housing obligation with 20 credits to apply to the Fourth Round (2025-2035) which begins July 1, 2025. The Fourth Round obligation remains unknown but the one certainty is that the Township will have to fulfill some obligation. Future affordable housing obligations may impact open space planning in several ways including potentially having to reserve Township-owned land for affordable housing; as well as planning for additional residents that will use the Township's open spaces.
- **Underutilized/Outdated Facilities.** There are some recreation improvements that are either underutilized, outdated, or in disrepair. Consideration should be given as to the future of these facilities, i.e., the Township Committee should decide if they should be upgraded, repaired, repurposed, or removed. For example, the scoreboard in Village Park has not worked for an extended period of time.

### **XIII. OPEN SPACE PLANNING**

Cranbury has a long history of being proactive and progressive with regard to the preservation and programming of its open space resources. However, what improvements to make to existing open space properties, and deciding whether additional open space should be acquired has been a question contemplated as far back as the 2000 OSRP. The following sections attempts to provide an approach for the Township Committee to assess potential

#### **A. Goals and Objectives of 2008 OSRP**

The following are the goals and objectives of the 2008 OSRP. This report does not provide any updates to these goals and objectives but think it is important for the Township Committee to be aware of what these goals and objectives were and note that they were very much consistent with the 2000 OSRP goals and objectives.

1. To provide a sufficient number and variety of facilities to meet the present and future active and passive recreational needs of all segments of Cranbury Township's resident and employee populations.
2. To provide parks and recreational facilities in locations that are easily accessible to Township residents (especially to children, seniors and persons with special needs), and to employees.
3. To provide active recreational facilities while preserving environmentally-sensitive areas and opportunities for passive recreation, including scenic vistas and historic structures.
4. To utilize existing Township-owned land for expanding recreational opportunities before acquiring additional property.
5. To utilize the Township's scarce resources in a cost-effective manner, which provides the widest range of benefits to all residents.
6. To maximize the utilization of existing recreational facilities before developing new facilities.
7. To develop recreational facilities being cognizant of impacts on adjacent land uses.

#### **B. What is the Right Amount of Open Space?**

##### Active Recreation

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) provides information on typical national standards regarding active recreation facilities per population size. The standards are not differentiated by the nature or size of the community (suburban versus urban, cities versus towns, etc.), and thus only provide a general framework within which to judge the adequacy of the provision of various active recreation activities. The ratios are based upon the number of residents within a community. The following table provides national standards for 2023 for municipalities of less than 20,000 people. Cranbury's existing facilities fall well within the range of acceptable facility ratios determined by the NRPA for facilities. However, it should be noted that there is no set standard for how many active recreation facilities or what type of active recreation facilities should be in a municipality. The NRPA data can be used as a guideline but nothing more.

**TABLE 16: STANDARDS FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES PER POPULATION SIZE, 2023**

Recreational Facility	Population Per 1 Facility in Populations Under 20,000 Persons	Need for a Population Cranbury's Size (3,842 persons)	Existing Resources
Number of Parks	1,225	3+	3 (devoted to active recreation. Not including the school facilities)
<b>DIAMOND SPORTS</b>			
Baseball Field – Youth	3,114	1+	2
Softball Field – Adult	5,800	-1	0
Softball Field – Youth	5,079	1+	1
<b>SPORTS COURTS</b>			
Basketball Courts	3,729	1+	1
Tennis Courts (Outdoor)	2,805	1+	2
Multiuse Courts – Basketball, Volleyball	5,093	-1	0
Pickleball (Outdoor)	3,252	1+	0
Multiuse Courts – Tennis, Pickleball (Outdoor)	4,868	-1	2
<b>RECTANGULAR FIELDS</b>			
Multipurpose	3,859	1	2
Soccer Field – Youth	3,600	1	3
Football Field	8,637	-1	0
Lacrosse Field	9,786	-1	0
Field Hockey Field	18,000	-1	0
Multipurpose Synthetic Field	9,518	-1	0
<b>PLAYGROUND</b>			
Playgrounds	2,014		3
Totlots	5,816	-1	3
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
Dog parks	11,100	-1	0
Community gardens	8,178	-1	0
Swimming pools (outdoor)	9,745	-1	0
Skate parks	10,726	-1	0
Regulation 18-hole courses	9,587	-1	0
Ice rinks (outdoor)	8,045	-1	0

Source: 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review.



### **C. Potential Criteria for Open Space Acquisition and Recreation Improvements**

As there are no set standards for how much open space or active or passive recreation is appropriate in a community, the Township will have to rely on a qualitative analysis of potential projects on a case-by-case basis. Below are potential criteria the Township Committee could employ in making decisions about future acquisition of open space parcels. These are not necessarily in order of importance.

#### Active Recreation Facilities

1. Does it fulfill a recommendation of the 2008 OSRP?
2. Does it meet a goal or objective of the 2008 OSRP?
3. What segment of the Cranbury population will be served by the facility?
4. How often is this facility expected to be used?
5. Does the Township have this type of facility currently?
6. If the facility were not installed in Cranbury, where would Cranbury residents go for these types of facilities?
7. How many people live within ½ mile (walking distance) of the proposed facility?
8. Can the facility be accommodated on (shared with) an existing facility?
9. Is the proposed facility compatible with surrounding land uses?
10. Will the proposed facility cause any overloading of existing active recreation facilities?
11. Will the proposed facility have any adverse impacts on environmentally sensitive lands?
12. Can the open space accommodate any stormwater impacts that the new facility might cause?
13. Will any hardscape improvements throw off the balance with the landscape in the park?
14. What will the aesthetic impacts be on the existing open space or view sheds from/off existing open space?
15. What will be the cost of the project in total?
16. What will be the cost to Cranbury taxpayers?
17. Is grant funding available? Preference should be given when money is available from other sources, if possible.
18. How does the costs for the proposed facility compare to any costs related to maintenance or enhancements of existing facilities?
19. What is the overall benefit to the community?

#### Passive Recreation Parcels/Facilities

1. Does it fulfill a recommendation of the 2008 OSRP?
2. Does it meet a goal or objective of the 2008 OSRP? Is the parcel contiguous with an existing open space parcel (either active or passive open space)?

3. Is there imminent pressure to develop the parcel? If development were to occur, can an easement be provided for conservation and/or public access?
4. Would acquisition of the parcel provide a link in a greenway and/or storm corridor?
5. Would the parcel provide opportunities for public access in terms of trails?
6. Would preservation of the parcel protect a scenic vista?
7. Would preservation of the parcel protect environmentally sensitive resources and habitats?
8. Will the acquisition have any impacts on the privacy of neighbors?
9. Would the acquisition accomplish more than one objective? For example, a parcel that allows farmland preservation, preserves a viewshed and provides more stream corridors or greenways is more valuable than a parcel that just provides only one of these benefits.
10. Would the acquisition be suited for another public use (aside from passive open space) including active recreation, another public purpose, or private development? For example, if a parcel is more or less surrounded by development, close to services, and is served by public water and sewer, it probably should be developed. Additionally, open space acquisition should be viewed in terms of 10 to 20 years in the future. If the parcel may be needed for a new school or other municipal facility in the future, it should not be irrevocably set aside for permanent open space.
11. What will be the cost of the project in total?
12. What will be the cost to Cranbury taxpayers?
13. Is grant funding available? Preference should be given when money is available from other sources, if possible.
14. How does the costs for the proposed facility compare to any costs related to maintenance or enhancements of existing facilities?
15. Is the acquisition cost effective? More land for the dollar makes sense. In other words, the more expensive land may not be worth the expenditure.
16. Would preservation of the land protect a cultural or historical resource?

As stated above, there is no one standard or set criteria for which to evaluate a potential open space or recreation project. It must be done on a case-by-case basis using qualitative and quantitative analysis (where possible) to evaluate the benefits to Cranbury's residents both present and future.

## **APPENDIX: MAP OF CRANBURY TOWNSHIP'S OPEN SPACES**

# Open Space & Recreation Plan

## Township-Owned Active Recreation

1. Village Park
2. Wright South Baseball Field
3. West Property
4. Millstone Park

## Township-Owned Passive Recreation








- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A. Cranbury Book Preserve  | M. Shadow Oaks Stream Corridor |
| B. Cranbury Brook Preserve | N. E. Barclay Stream Corridor  |
| C. Cranbury Brook Preserve | O. The White Property          |
| D. Unami Woods             | P. Heritage Park               |
| E. Froszttega Property     | Q. Brainerd Lake               |
| F. Barclay Stream Corridor | R. Memorial Park               |
| G. Memorial Park           | S. Pin Oaks Property           |
| H. Brainerd Lake           | T. Reinhardt Preserve          |
| I. Barn Park               | U. D&R Greenway Property       |
| J. Updike                  |                                |
| K. Fischer                 |                                |
| L. Hagerty                 |                                |

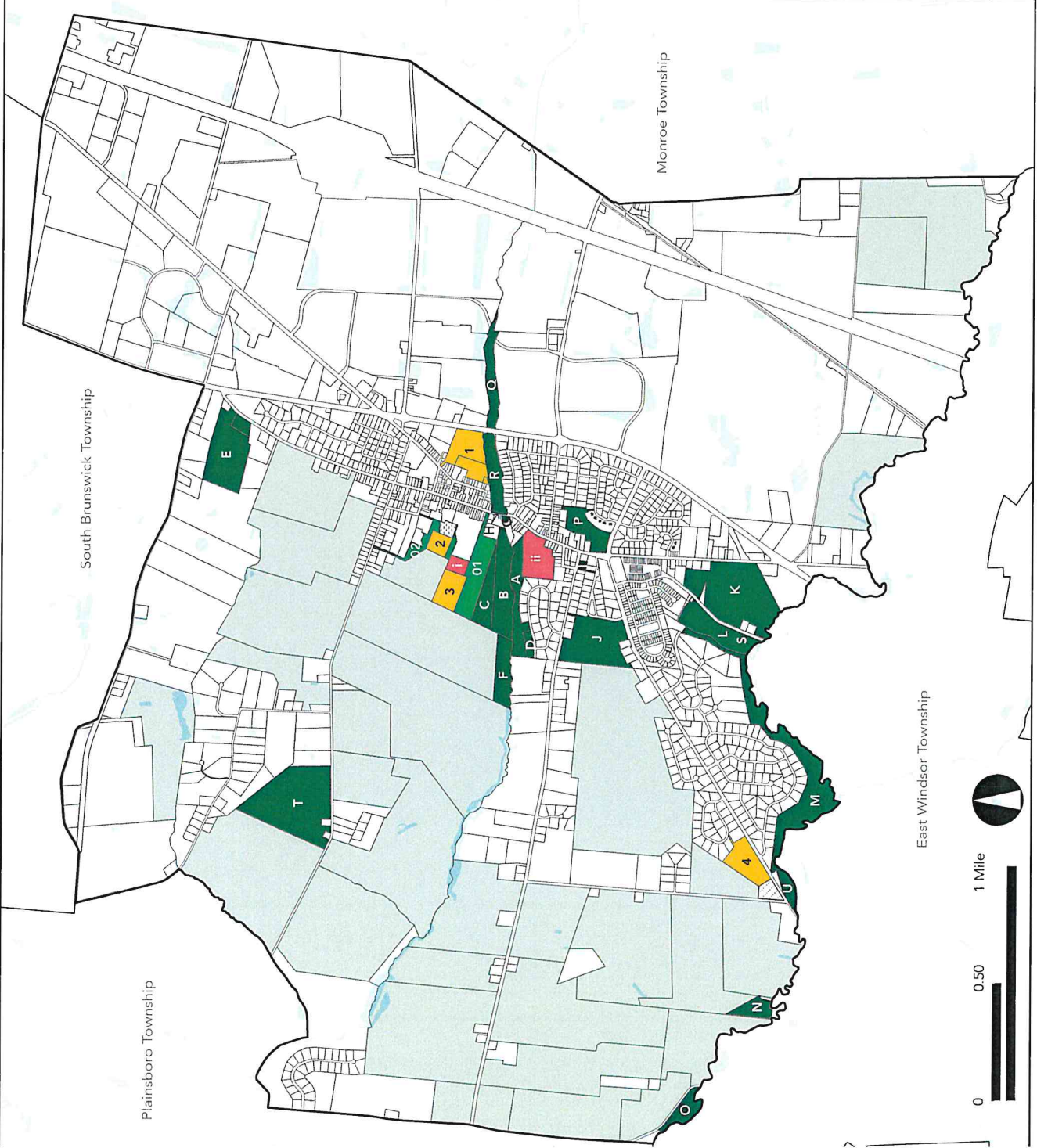
## Non-Township-Owned Open Space

- i. Cranbury School Fields
- ii. Cemetery

## Undefined Open Space

01. West Property
02. Wright South

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
|  | Township-Owned Active Recreation   |
|  | Township-Owned Passive Recreation  |
|  | Non-Township Owned Open Space      |
|  | Undefined Open Space               |
|  | Preserved Farmland                 |
|  | Cranbury Public Library            |
|  | Former Cranbury Swim Club Property |



Sources: Massar, NODIS, Cranbury Township Tax Maps