

## Section V. Future Farmland Preservation

The types of agriculture and traditional practices utilized by agriculture in the county are changing. Farming will continue to offer opportunities for direct marketing and value-added agriculture such as fruits, vegetables, vineyards, nursery plants and tree farms in adjacent urban areas if these areas can be maintained as agricultural lands.

Private and public sector cooperation will be needed to curb activities that negatively impact agriculture in the County to ensure farming remains a viable economic activity. Just as important as remaining economically viable, the rights of the agricultural sector and individuals who chose to establish residences and/or commercial enterprises in a predominantly agricultural area must be balanced.

Areas of agricultural activity that currently exist on prime farmland which are viable due to microclimates or are concentrated in a certain geographical area, should be considered for protection. No single program or tool may achieve farmland protection goals in the County. A protection program should be in accord with the desires of the community and its landowners, the status of farming in the area, and a clear strategy on which farmlands to preserve and how to do so. Farmland preservation should be focused not simply on saving land from development but ensuring that agriculture is a profitable venture that enhances the local economic base.

### A. Preservation Goals

Millstone Township set an ambitious goal to preserve 2,500 acres of farmland by 2018. However, approximately 500 acres were preserved between 2008 and 2020. The Township has preserved 1,286 acres, reaching 52 percent of the 2008 goal.

The following Preservation Goals have been updated to reflect more recent trends over the past 10 years.

Preservation Goals	
One Year Target:	200 acres
Five Year Target:	600 acres
Ten Year Target:	1,000 acres

Since the 2008 plan was adopted, the Township has preserved nearly 500 acres of farmland. However, the majority of these farms were preserved in 2008. It is recommended that the Township extend their preservation goals. Although Monmouth County's Land Preservation Trust Fund has become more competitive, an average of 100 acres per year would be feasible for the Township.

### B. Project Area Summaries

The Township has established four project areas in which to focus its farmland preservation efforts. For each project area, an analysis was completed to identify the amount and density of preserved farmland, soils and size of the area. More specifically, the following information was determined for each project area:

- The size of the total project area (in acres)
- The total acreage of preserved farmland in the project area

- The total acreage of pending applications for farmland preservation in each project area
- The acreage of publicly held open space in each project area, and
- The total acreage of prime soils, soils of statewide importance, and unique agricultural soils in each project area

The four established project areas were developed by applying the minimum criteria to the potential farms and by examining the areas for wetlands, steep slopes and soils. Whenever an application is received, the Township will conduct a site assessment to verify compliance with the standards.

There are approximately 7,863 acres total acres of farmland located within the project areas that are shown on the "Agricultural Development Areas" map. Approximately 1,280 acres have been preserved and another 3,200 acres are targeted to be preserved. The Township continues to take strides to ensure farmland continues to be preserved.

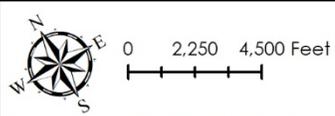
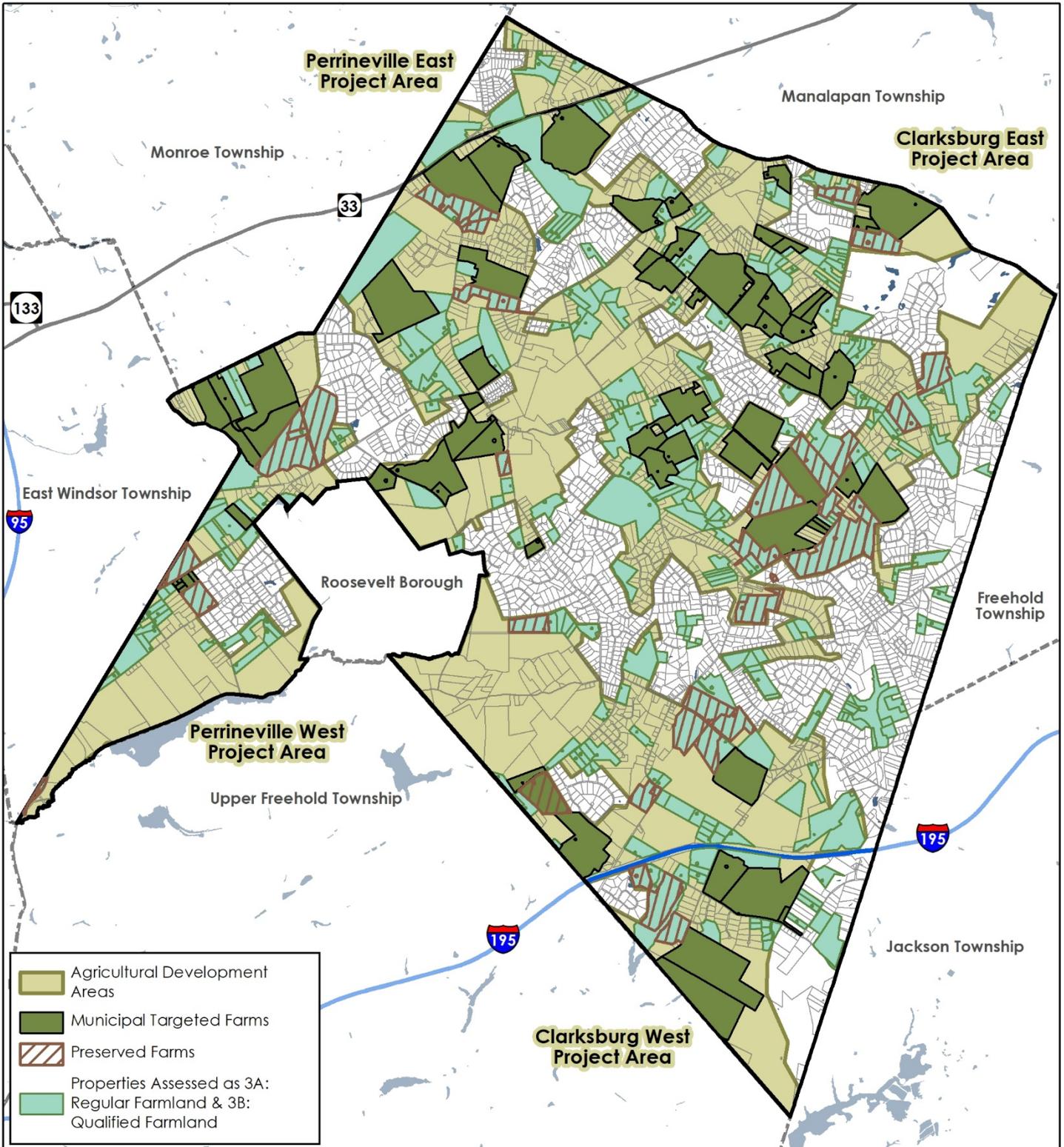
#### Millstone Township Project Areas

The **Perrineville East Project Area** encompasses a 2,224-acre area with a density of 19 percent and a soil productivity of 76 percent. This project area is situated south of Route 33 and east of the Hickory Drive preserved open space and is bounded by Baird Road and Millstone Road to the west, Sweetmans Lane to the south, and by Route 527 to the east. The project area contains approximately 800 acres targeted for farmland preservation. There is currently one farm preserved in this project area, consisting of approximately 25 acres, which closed in 2008.

The **Perrineville West Project Area** consists of 4,126 acres with a density of 51 percent and soil productivity of 89 percent. This project area is situated south of Route 33 and west of Millstone Road, north of the New Jersey Equine Clinic and Witches Hollow Road, and east of Disbrow Hill Road. It includes the agricultural lands within the vicinity of Battleground Road between Moto Industrial Park and Prodelin Way. Approximately 960 acres are targeted for preservation, consisting of fifteen farms. There are currently eight preserved farms totaling approximately 370 acres in the project area, which were preserved from 1997 to 2008.

The **Clarksburg East Project Area** consists of 3,990 acres with a density of 41 percent and soil productivity of 90 percent. This project area extends south of Sweetmans Lane, east of Millstone Road, north of Stage Coach Road and west of Route 527. The project area contains 690 acres targeted for preservation. Currently, thirteen farms consisting of roughly 700 acres have been preserved or deed restricted.

The **Clarksburg West Project Area** consists of 4,136 acres with a density of 64 percent and soil productivity of 78 percent. Clarksburg West lies between the western municipal boundary line and Route 571, south of Roosevelt and north of Route 537. This project area targets seven farms consisting of roughly 450 acres targeted for preservation. One farm is under contract and is expected to close by the end of 2020. A total of seven farms containing 378 acres have already been preserved.



Source: NJOGIS, NJGIN, NJDEP, NJDOT

### Agricultural Development Areas

Millstone Township, NJ  
Farmland Preservation Plan



The following chart shows the total, unpreserved and preserved qualified farms (QFARM) in each of the project areas:

Project Area	Total QFarm Parcels		Unpreserved QFarm Parcels		Preserved QFarm Parcels	
	# of Parcels	Acreage	# of Parcels	Acreage	# of Parcels	Acreage
Perrineville East	70	988.89	69	965.44	1	23.45
Perrineville West	57	1,472.15	45	1,109.27	12	362.88
Clarksburg East	90	1,974.96	79	1,456.16	11	518.80
Clarksburg West	58	1,162.18	47	787.17	11	375.01

Source: 2019 Tax Assessment Data, NJGIN Statewide Composite Parcel Data

### C. Municipal and County Minimum Eligibility Criteria Coordination

Minimum Eligibility Criteria are based upon the SADC adopted (May 21, 2007) rules for farmland preservation and project eligibility. In order to be eligible for preservation the site must be developable, have soils capable of supporting agriculture or horticultural production and meet minimum tillable standards (N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20). Millstone Township has adopted the following minimum eligibility requirements as established by the State:

Lands less than or equal to 10 acres:

- Production of agricultural/horticultural products of at least \$2500/year;
- 75% or 5 acres (whichever is less) is tillable;
- 75% or 5 acres (whichever is less) has soils capable of supporting agriculture; and
- Land must exhibit development potential.

Lands greater than 10 acres:

- 50% or 25 acres (whichever is less) is tillable;
- 50% or 25 acres (whichever is less) has soils capable of supporting agriculture; and
- Land must exhibit development potential.

Lands less than 25 acres:

- Cannot contain more than 80% of soils that are classified as freshwater wetlands or modified agricultural wetlands (as identified by NJDEP); and
- Cannot contain more than 80% of soils with slopes in excess of 15% (as identified by USDA).

While Monmouth County has established some additional criteria for the County Planning Incentive Grant program, the County has agreed to cost share on Municipal PIG projects using the State criteria as adopted by Millstone Township. However, in general, properties that meet the State's criteria, but not the County's criteria, will be preserved via the Municipal PIG program. All other properties may be considered under either the Municipal PIG or County PIG Programs. Applications will be accepted throughout the year. The Township will continue to provide regular communication with Monmouth County. In the event that the Township and County target the same property at the same time, the two entities will work together to determine which program is in a better financial position to complete the transaction.

Millstone Township's Ranking Site Assessment (see Ranking Criteria Used to Prioritize Farms described more fully below) includes all of the same minimum criteria used by Monmouth County,

including the size of the farm, tillable acres, soils, development potential and slopes. Farms must receive a minimum score in order to be considered for preservation.

#### **D. Municipal and County Ranking Criteria Used to Prioritize Farms**

Farmland Preservation is a voluntary program and landowner applications are accepted all year. After receiving an application, members of the OSFPC make an appointment to visit the farm, interview the landowner and complete the Farm Site Assessment Form.

The farm is ranked and given points considering all the following factors: proximity to other preserved farms and open space; size of property; percentage of property actively farmed; stewardship (e.g. existing Farm Conservation Plan, enrollment in the 8-year program, etc.); boundaries and buffers; soils; tillable acres; distance to conflicting uses; and development potential. Other factors that the OSFPC may consider are: historic significance, landowners willingness to enter into a "bargain sale", accept Installment Purchase Agreements (IPA) or other creative finance arrangement; willingness to sell an easement for a trail; estate; foreclosure; willingness and ability of county and state to cost share; and expected cost.

Applications will be ranked and prioritized by the Township. When funding becomes available, the OSFPC may make a recommendation to the Township Committee for further consideration. If the property remains under consideration, the landowner would be required to sign a one-year option agreement during which time the SADC will authorize the Township to proceed with appraisals. The appraisals are reviewed, and a market value is certified by the SADC. The Township can then extend an offer to the landowner. If the landowner does not accept the offer of certified market value, they are not permitted to reapply until two years from the date of the original application.

Additionally, the State of New Jersey permits municipalities to consider the historic significance of a farm for ranking farmland applications. There are at least four farms targeted for preservation in Millstone Township that have historic significance. Each is listed on the Monmouth County Historic Sites inventory. The following descriptions are based on preliminary research with the NJDEP Office of New Jersey Heritage Individual Structure Survey.

##### **Block 31/ Lot 25 (26 Rising Sun Tavern Road)**

This site is one of the best remaining late 19th century farmsteads in Millstone Township due to the number and condition of the barns remaining standing and the survival of the farm site acreage and setting. The property, which was preserved in 2006, measures approximately 29 acres in area.

##### **Block 23/Lot 25 (54 Baird Road)**

Despite recent renovations, this is a good example of farmsteads in Millstone during the early 19th century. The original portion of the house has been incorporated into the new structure. The late 19th century barn and 53-acre site contribute to the historic rural landscape. Samuel Wetherill, who is listed as head of household on the 1850 Federal Census, may have been the original owner and builder of the house.

##### **Block 57/Lot 26 (42 Olde Noah Hunt Road)**

This large Greek Revival dwelling retains its original form and a number of its original design features. It is a good example of the sizable farmhouses built by prosperous farmers in western Monmouth County during the mid-19th century. The house was built by Noah Hunt

who developed the property and is shown as the owner of the property on maps dating back to 1851.

**Block 23/Lot 2.02 (25 Millstone Road)**

Hom House was built in 1821 as recorded on a beam in the attic. The house was built on the site of an earlier house and was located in a settled community with a tannery across the road, a dam (the remains of which are still evident), a mill pond, and a gristmill that was operated by Peter Bergen.

**Block 23/Lot 8 (505 State Highway 33)**

The Showplace Farms property was historically known as The Elias C. Clayton Farm. The property measures 143 acres in size and featured a historic Greek Revival house which was built in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This property was an equine-related service in the Perrineville East Project Area which was targeted for preservation. However, the property is now included in the Township's Housing Element and Fair Share Program and is currently proposed to be developed with a warehouse facility.

There are several other examples of historic properties in Millstone Township that may be eligible for farmland preservation but will require further research. Other properties that appear on pre-1900 maps of Millstone Township include Perl Acres (Block 55/Lot 2), and the Horzepa property (Block 42/Lot 11.01), both of which are within the Monmouth County Agricultural Development Area. The Horzepa property abuts the westerly boundary of Perrineville East and may be candidate for inclusion in the Project Area in the future. The Perl Acres Property is located near the easterly boundary of the Township, within the Clarksburg West Project Area; however, it has not yet been identified as a target for farmland preservation.

**E. Municipal and County Policies Related to Farmland Preservation Applications**

Millstone Township largely follows the Monmouth County and the State Agricultural Development Board guidelines and policies regarding housing opportunities, division of premises and exception areas.

Agricultural Labor Housing

Agricultural labor housing is not currently protected under the Right to Farm Act in the State of New Jersey. The New Jersey Farm Bureau Policies, adopted on November 19, 2013, encourages the SADC to include agricultural labor housing to the State's Right to Farm Policy. Agricultural labor housing applications are reviewed by the State Agricultural Development Committee and the County Agricultural Development Board.

Labor housing and house replacement requests are forwarded to the MCADB for consideration. After the applicant completes that process, if approved, they proceed to the building department for permits.

Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities

Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSOs) are lingering potential housing prospects located within a deed-restricted farm.

By designating an area as an RDSO, the landowner is implying that the land will be used for a residential unit or other structure as referred to in N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.17. These prospective residential units can be allocated to parcels that are at least 100 acres in size. The purpose of the building in

question must be for “single-family residential housing and its appurtenant uses... The resident of the dwelling must be regularly engaged in common farmsite activities on the premises” (SADC Appraiser Handbook 2013).

To qualify as an RDSO, the SADC requires that the use of the residential unit be for agricultural purposes and “at least one person residing in the residential unit shall be regularly engaged in common farm site practices.”

Millstone currently has one (1) RDSO. When Millstone receives an application for a RSDO, it would forward the request to MCADB who would follow Policy P-31. The intent of Policy P-31 is to provide for the limited future construction of a residential unit(s) for agricultural purposes on permanently preserved farms in order to accommodate agricultural flexibility in the future.

#### Division of Premises

The goal of the State Agricultural Development Committee is to preserve large tracts of farmland and, therefore, a division of the premises is not an encouraged practice; however when division occurs it must be for agricultural purposes and must result in agriculturally viable land parcels. A landowner wishing to divide permanently preserved farmland must submit a written request. This request must be approved in writing by both the State Agricultural Development Committee and the CADB.

Millstone Township received a Division of Premises in 2008. If granted, the owner of a preserved property would be permitted to subdivide an agricultural easement and sell one or more resulting farms. The Township forwards these requests to MCADB. The AAC may offer an opinion to the MCADB and SADC for their consideration.

#### Approval of Exceptions

Exceptions are defined by the SADC as “acres within a farm being preserved” which are “not subject to the terms of the deed of easement.” When an exception is made, the landowner does not receive any compensation in the excepted area. There are two types of exceptions that can occur; severable and non-severable.

**Severable:** A severable exception is defined by the SADC as an “area which is part of an existing Block and Lot owned by the applicant which will be excluded from the restrictions of the Deed of Easement and may be sold as a separate lot in the future.” (SADC Appraiser Handbook 2013) A severable exception is made “if a landowner wants to be able to sell the excepted area separate from the deed-restricted farm.”

**Non-severable:** Non-severable exceptions are defined by the SADC as “area which is part of an existing Block and Lot owned by the application that will not be subject to the restrictions of the Deed of Easement but cannot be sold separately from the remaining premises.” (SADC Appraiser Handbook 2013) Unlike a severable exception, a non-severable exception is “always attached to the protected farm.”

Exceptions made to farmland have the potential to impact the value of the property. When an appraisal occurs, both severable and non-severable exceptions are considered in the determination of the restricted/after value of the property.

Non-Severable Exceptions are areas of a farm that are specifically delineated so they will not be subject to the deed restrictions. While the Township considers requests on a case-by-case basis,

for all cases the size and location of exceptions may not negatively impact the farming operation. An exception often depends on the presence of nonagricultural uses on the site, future plans for the farm (such as a veterinarian clinic), or whether the project is a joint project with the municipality or county to buy a trail or a portion of the property is purchased for open space.

The Township, by ordinance, has permitted the request of local farmers for one residential building lot opportunity after the farm is preserved, provided the acreage is delineated prior to preservation and that no payment was taken on that acreage. The severable exception may be no less than two acres in size, which is smaller than the minimum lot size required in the RU-C (6 acres) or RU-P (10 acres) zoning districts.

## **F. Funding Plan**

### Description of Municipal Funding Sources

The Millstone Township Open Space and Farmland Preservation program primarily relies on revenue from the Township's dedicated open space and farmland preservation tax to preserve open space and farmland. The six-cent tax generates approximately \$1,000,000 in revenue annually. According to the Township's 2019 budget, the municipal open space tax generated \$1,126,302.73. Over the years, Millstone Township has adopted multiple bond ordinances related to open space and farmland preservation.

The Open Space and Farmland Preservation Council and the Agricultural Advisory Board generates additional funding for preservation purposes through community supported fundraising. In addition, the Township aggressively seeks several hundred thousand dollars in additional grant opportunities for preservation including NJDEP Green Acres, NJ SADC and Monmouth County open space grants. The governing body has reached a consensus to maximize the preservation capacity of this revenue by issuing bonds to fund the preservation of farmland and open space.

### Financial Policies Related to Cost-Share Requirements Among County and Municipal/Other Funding Partners/Installment Purchases

Using the Planning Incentive Grant program, the Township follows the cost-share guidelines set forth by SADC; the SADC contributes 60 percent, Monmouth County 24 percent and the Township 16 percent.

The Township also entertains the option of preserving land and purchasing easements through installment purchase agreements (IPA) with the farmer. In those instances, the tax revenue from the dedicated tax would be applied towards making the annual interest payments to the IPA holders, with State and County matching funds being utilized to fund the purchase of the zero coupon bonds for the IPA. To date the farmers have indicated a preference for cash purchases.

The Township has developed relationships with non-profit groups that assist with preservation projects. These organizations include D&R Greenway Land Trust and Monmouth Conservation Foundation. These organizations could be useful in working with the Township to purchase annuities for landowners who wish to structure a payment schedule over time. Installment purchases have not yet been used in the Township.

### Cost Projections and Funding Plan Associated With 1, 5, and 10 Year Preservation Goals

Millstone Township develops a capital budget estimate each year to help plan for future acquisition spending. Millstone Township plans to preserve several properties each year.

It is anticipated that Millstone will have to advance significant sums beyond the traditional 16 percent to cover shortfalls in available funds for cost sharing from the State and County PIG. If additional State and County funds do not become available for cost share in future years, the ability of the Township to preserve additional farmland will be seriously hampered beyond the next 1-3 year period once the expected \$12,000,000 debt capacity has been reached. Meeting the projected cost for 5- and 10-year preservation goals are dependent upon State and County funds becoming available.

#### Any Other Financial Information as Appropriate

Millstone Township would like to pursue creative mechanisms to preserve farmland and open space, and the Township will continue to pursue the use of option agreements, installment purchases and encourage donations for permanent development easements, and also will seek out other options as deemed necessary and appropriate. Partnerships with local nonprofit land trusts and conservancy groups are critical to the success of the Township's efforts to preserve farmland. The ability of these groups to obtain donations of development rights and their flexibility in structuring land transactions can play a key role in land preservation.

#### **G. Farmland Preservation Program & Administrative Resources**

Farmland preservation efforts are led by the five-member Millstone Township Committee as the governing body for the Township. Open space and farmland preservation projects are referred by the Open Space & Farmland Preservation Council (OSFPC) and the Agricultural Advisory Council (AAC) to the Township Committee for its consideration to purchase the development rights, pathway easement or the property in fee simple. Four affirmative votes of the Township Committee are required to authorize the issuance of either a Bond Anticipation Note or a Bond for preservation projects.

The Agricultural Advisory Council (AAC) is composed of five resident volunteers. The majority of the members must be farmers and own land in Millstone Township. The powers and duties of the Council are:

1. To maintain an inventory of all land within the Township currently used for farming and/or agricultural related purposes.
2. To analyze how the Township can best protect the continuance and preservation of farmland.
3. To determine existing and future problems facing farmers and the farming community and to recommend reasonable and desirable solutions to the Township Committee.
4. To promote appropriate farming and agricultural related activities.
5. To encourage existing farmers to continue their farms in active operation.
6. To recommend to the OSFPC lands for farmland preservation.
7. To assist in minimizing conflicts between farming/agricultural uses and adjacent or nearby residential and commercial uses.
8. To promote the Right to Farm Act (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-1 et seq.), including educating the community about the Act and assisting in mediating right to farm issues.
9. To make an annual report to the Township Committee setting forth the activities and operations of the Board during the preceding year.

10. To keep the Township Committee informed of developments in the farming community.
11. To respond to any ordinances introduced by the Township Committee that may have an impact on the farming community.
12. To advise the Township Committee with respect to pending legislation at the county or state level that may impact on the farming community.
13. To keep the farming community informed of any municipal, county, or state legislation which may impact on the farming community.
14. To advise the Planning Board of its findings and recommendations on land use, land management, and farmland preservation.

The Open Space & Farmland Preservation Council (OSFPC) is comprised of seven resident volunteers, two of whom are alternates, one Planning Board member and one Township Committee member. The powers and duties of the Council are:

1. To foster and promote the preservation of open space and farmland within the Township;
2. To work cooperatively with the County and State Offices of Farmland Preservation;
3. To assist interested parties with processing applications for farmland preservation with applicable County and State Offices;
4. To help create and disseminate information promoting farmland and open space preservation;
5. To assist the Millstone Township Economic Development Council in promoting the agricultural industry, as well as promoting the benefits which result from preserving farm operations; and,
6. To assist in obtaining grants for open space and farmland preservation for the Township.

The OSFPC and AAC Secretary performs administrative duties relating to the Agricultural Advisory Council and the Open Space & Farmland Preservation Council and maintains the database for preserved and potential farmland.

Several other professionals assist with preservation, including the Township Engineer who provides lot-yield calculations for the appraisals, survey review, and maintains the Geographic Information System database and prepares mapping; a consulting Environmental Engineer who performs grant writing, investigates suspected wetlands, and conducts Phase I Environmental Site Assessments; the Township Planner who ensures consistency with farming related ordinances and coordinates the farmland plan with the Township Master Plan; and the Township Attorney who provides legal counsel on matters relating to acquisitions and enforcement, reviews contracts and conducts the real estate closings.

The Township Tax Assessor supplies database for municipal property tax assessment, specifically farm properties, and the Township Tax Collector informs the OSFPC regarding pending sales of properties resulting from a municipal property tax lien.

General guidance is provided by the Monmouth County Planning Board and the County staff assists with the appraisal review, surveys and contracts and providing general guidance. Municipal officials coordinate preservation projects with the County staff, and the County closes on municipal PIG easements.

There are two regional nonprofit organizations, the Monmouth Conservation Foundation and the D&R Greenway Land Trust, which also provide technical and financial assistance to the Township. In addition to these regional organizations, NJDEP Green Acres has also provided assistance.

Millstone Township encourages participation on joint projects with all preservation groups. The OSFPC and the AAC maintain good communication between the groups regarding inventory of land used and available for agriculture and identification and prioritization of farms to be preserved. Millstone Township OSFPC maintains good communication with Monmouth CADB by fostering open conversations regarding farmland preservation of targeted farms, coordination of preserved open space, trail easements on farmland, and other concerns as needed. Millstone Township works closely with two local non-profit organizations: Monmouth Conservation Foundation and the D & R Greenway Land Trust. The goal of Millstone is to preserve as much land in the Township as possible.

#### **H. Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation**

Challenges to the farmland preservation program include the available supply of farmland, the cost of purchasing that land, the potential limitations of the preservation program once the land is preserved, and the infrastructure to support farming operations into the future. Flexibility in funding and preservation programs will enhance and sustain the farmland preservation program in Millstone Township.

Landowner interest remains high and applications continue to be submitted to the Township. Millstone Township prides itself on innovative partnerships, which can be seen by the popularity and success of the municipal PIG program and the local conservation projects with local nonprofit groups, including the Monmouth Conservation Foundation and the D&R Greenway. It will take the effort and teamwork of landowners, government officials, nonprofit organizations and local residents to ensure that the farmland preservation program remains popular, supported and successful.

Project Areas in Millstone Township were designed with sound planning and both existing and proposed land uses in mind. Developed areas of the Township and those earmarked for development are excluded from the Project Areas. The agricultural preservation program is targeting those farms that represent productive, viable farms, with the resources available to support them. Focusing on preservation will result in a sustainable supply of agricultural land for farming to continue into the future.

The rising cost per acre is the most significant factor limiting farmland preservation in Millstone Township. Land values have increased rapidly, and the Township finds that developers are able to offer more per acre than the farmland appraises for under the current State guidelines. The only items limiting farmland preservation in Millstone Township is funding and cost. The Township has over 6,000 acres currently farmed or undeveloped. Many active farms are interested in entering the preservation program and the existing municipal outreach projects continue to increase farmer interest each year. It is anticipated that the interest in preservation will exceed the funds available for preservation at the county and municipal level.

#### Funding

Funding for preservation comes from several sources including the municipal open space tax, various state funding programs including the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC)

and Green Acres, Monmouth County, non-profit organizations and partnerships with conservation buyers. The Township has an open space tax of six cents that generates approximately \$1 million annually. The Township uses this money to pay down debt and to preserve additional open space and farms. To date, the Township has spent approximately \$3.7 million to preserve farmland.

The Township received approval in 2001 from the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) for participation in the Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) program. Using this program, the Township has preserved over 1,200 acres, using over \$14.2 million in State funds and \$3.8 million in County funds to date.

#### Projected Costs

The residents of Millstone Township remain firmly committed to land preservation. The dedicated open space/farmland preservation tax has been increased three times and is presently at six cents. This level of municipal commitment to preservation is striking considering the municipal property tax rate is currently \$2.37.

However, financial projections indicate that once those farms presently under contract are preserved, the Township will be limited to preserving, at most, an additional 1,000 acres at **\$30,000 per acre** over the next twenty years. As the cost per acre increases, the number of acres that can be preserved will decrease accordingly. Further, while the cost of future development will continue to increase the revenues generated from the open space tax, a one to two cent increase may also need to be presented to the voters within the next five years to support further preservation.

#### Landowner Interest

A greater factor limiting preservation will be landowner interest, attitudes toward government sponsored programs, time factors associated with preserving farms, prices paid for easements, restrictive covenants in the agreements and long term funding at the State level. It is recommended the Farmland Preservation/Open Space Committee reach out to the local farmers to continue to receive support in the farmland preservation program, rather than selling the land to developers.

#### Cost of Community Services

Costs of Community Services (COCS) are studies that help local decision makers evaluate the fiscal impacts and contributions of existing local land uses. COCS studies are a form of fiscal impact analysis that evaluates costs versus revenues for each type of land use to understand the relationships between residential and commercial growth, agricultural land use, and their cost impacts on community services. A new house on a formerly vacant property will typically generate more total revenue than agricultural production lands; however, this does not provide insight into cost impacts on community services. Agricultural production lands may generate less revenue than residential, commercial or industrial properties, but they require little public infrastructure and few services.

COCS studies conducted in Monmouth County, New Jersey by the American Farmland Trust in 1998 have shown that agricultural lands generate more public revenues than they receive back in public services. Their impact on community coffers is similar to that of other commercial and industrial land uses.

New Jersey American Farmland Trust Report (AFT) 2020

According to the 2020 New Jersey American Farmland Trust (AFT) Report, New Jersey ranks as third on the list of the 12 states with the most threatened agricultural land; however, New Jersey currently ranks in first place on the list of 12 states with the most proactive policy responses to farmland protection. The Township of Millstone is well-positioned to help slow the spread of farmland conversion within New Jersey.

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