Somerset County
Planning Board

Somerset County
Preservation Plan

May
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Somerset County Preservation Plan

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SOMERSET COUNTY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY MASTER PLAN – PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT

WHEREAS, In accordance with the provisions and spirit of the New Jersey Planning Act, N.J.S.A. 40:27-2 et seq., the Somerset County Planning Board (the Board) has prepared a Preservation Plan Element of the Somerset County Master Plan to serve as a guide for the County's preservation (open space, farmland and historic) planning efforts and investment decisions; and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with the foregoing, a public hearing was held by the County Planning Board as required at a Special Meeting on March 30, 2022 concerning the proposed replacement and succession of the previous Open Space and Recreation Master Plan Element, the Farmland Preservation Plan contained within the Somerset County Master Plan and the creation of the first Historic Preservation Plan Element; and

WHEREAS, heretofore, as part of the process for the development of the aforesaid Preservation Plan, the Somerset County Planning Board conducted an extensive public outreach process from 2019 until 2022 in the form of municipal reviews, numerous meetings with municipal officials and stakeholder groups, presentations on drafts of the Preservation Plan at Planning Partners Forums and at regularly scheduled meetings of the Somerset County Planning Board held throughout from 2019 to 2022, and four public meetings in late 2021 in order to obtain public input; and

WHEREAS, based upon the foregoing, the Somerset County Planning Board has taken into due consideration the public comments and communications presented to the Board throughout this process; and

WHEREAS, the various committees of the Board, including the Master Plan, Land Use, and Environment and Utilities Committees have reviewed and provided their comments at various stages throughout the development of the Preservation Plan Element.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Somerset County Planning Board hereby formally adopts the Preservation Plan Element as an element of the Somerset County Master Plan; and does so in support of the implementation of the Somerset County Investment Framework and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Somerset County adopted by the Somerset County Planning Board as amendments to the County Master Plan in 2014; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Somerset County Planning Board declares its intent to periodically review these documents and up-date them appropriately so that same remain relevant and valuable tools for county and local planning; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT electronic copies of the Preservation Plan Element shall be made available to the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners, the municipalities of Somerset County, the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission, the Somerset County Parks Commission, the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board, adjacent counties, the New Jersey Highlands Council, the New Jersey Office of Planning Advocacy and the Somerset County Business Partnership.

I, Matthew D. Loper, Secretary of the Somerset County Planning Board, County of Somerset, in the State of New Jersey do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution adopted by said Planning Board of Somerset at its regularly convened meeting on May 17, 2022.

Matthew D. Loper, Secretary
Somerset County Planning Board

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Maps

(Image courtesy Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House)

Chapter 1. Introducing Somerset County's Preservation Plan

Somerset County is unique in New Jersey. Its distinctive terrain, the use of the land over 350 years, and the forces of history, culture, and technology – especially transportation – have resulted in an exceptional landscape. Today this beautiful, historic county with its prosperous regional economy is enjoyed by more than 325,000 county residents.

Attractive, healthy landscapes like Somerset County's, however, no longer happen unintentionally. In the last hundred years, the county's landscape has evolved from one dominated by farms and forests to one in which just over half is urban or suburban. Yet, much of the county's natural legacy is still in evidence, farmers still plow their fields, and fine, well-kept buildings and landscapes reflect the county's many decades of history.

A. Introduction

The level of preservation in Somerset County has come about through the leadership and determination of county residents. Somerset County's park system is among the earlier county park systems founded nationwide (established in 1956), and the county and its municipalities have taken great advantage of the state's Green Acres program to protect open space (established in 1961) and the Farmland Preservation Program (bonds first approved by New Jersey voters in 1981). Somerset County received its first Green Acres grant for the purchase of acreage for Colonial Park in 1965 and preserved its first farm in 1987, the Baron Farm in Branchburg Township.

Just over one quarter of the land in Somerset County is now permanently protected from development. Roughly speaking, with not quite a quarter of the county in open space or farmland protection, and half the county already committed to urban and suburban development, there is not much land left to protect, and what is available is becoming more expensive with every passing year. Somerset County and its municipalities and partners must therefore consider contending strategically for every acre still uncommitted to development. Land conservation specialists in New Jersey consider that every acre will be committed by 2050.

In addition, the county's economy and its location near – but not too near – several urban centers have enabled enough wealth and demand to maintain the many fine historic buildings that reflect hundreds of years of county growth. Owners' decisions to preserve these buildings are now also guided by ordinances at the municipal level along with municipal regulations for the development of land into residential, commercial, or industrial uses.

This Somerset County Preservation Plan represents the next evolution of county residents' understanding of the work and collaboration it will take county-wide to maintain and continue the preservation of open space, farmland, and historic resources. It is based on the premise that it is possible for Somerset County to look forward to continued prosperity not only through growth, but also because of the preservation and conservation of the county's many assets associated with its natural resources, recreational opportunities, farms, and history.

Indeed, without this plan and its implementation in the coming years, Somerset County could lose its competitive edge and conditions for sustainability. Buyers, investors, visitors, and others that the county must continue to attract for the sake of its prosperity now expect the places they seek to highlight, treasure, and explain their significant assets and heritage. If this plan is successful, it will contribute to wise decisions about growth and change – and preservation – that will promote the county's long-term prosperity.

B. Appreciating Somerset County – Its Past and Its Future

The earliest European visitors to Somerset County – traders – encountered the land's original inhabitants, Leni Lenape people who spoke an Algonquin language and whose names appear on a few early deeds. Their words (e.g., Raritan, Watchung) still mark the landscape, and some roads in the county follow native paths that shaped colonial settlement.

Conveniently located on the northern side of the state's middle region and centered east-to-west, with rich soils and forests and plentiful water, Somerset County was a favored location early in the colonial era. Seventeenth-century Dutch farmers found their way inland to the level southern reaches of the county from places settled earlier, such as Long Island, joined by Palatinate Germans and French Huguenots. Their large farms led some to hold African Americans as enslaved workers, into the early nineteenth century when New Jersey banned slavery. English, Scottish, and Scots-Irish settlers gravitated to the high ground in the county's north and established smaller farms and modest industrial works such as mills and tanneries they could manage with family members and hired workers.

Towns formed slowly; only a few small village centers existed in Somerset County in the eighteenth century, including Bound Brook, Pluckemin, and Millstone. Millstone was known at the time as Somerset County Court House, the county's second seat after a short-lived location at Six Mile Run in Franklin Township – then known as Eastern Precinct. Somerville became the county seat after the American Revolution.

Agriculture to this day is an essential feature of Somerset County's landscape. Nearly one-fifth of county land remains in agriculture and farming remains an integral part of the county's heritage and culture. Even residents who are not part of the regional agricultural industry identify farmland as critical to Somerset County's desirability as a place to live and work and now eagerly seek locally grown foods and on-farm visits for entertainment and education that are increasingly available.

Farming laid down the earliest land use patterns still discernable across Somerset County's present-day landscape. Transportation shaped these patterns, from early bridge crossings to the adoption of new technologies. The Delaware and Raritan Canal and multiple railroads encouraged farming and manufacturing prior to the Civil War. The railroads

also stimulated more town growth and, late in the nineteenth century, the remarkable landscape of the Somerset Hills, home then and now to wealthy property owners whose homes were designed by some of the finest architects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The arrival of the automobile, highways, and suburbanization over the course of the twentieth century further marked and transformed the landscape.

Today, changes in climate, demographics, and demand for close-by access to nature and trails and locally produced food present new challenges and opportunities. Among local responses, increasing expertise in forming partnerships among county, state, and local governments and nonprofit organizations offers good prospects for successful collaborative projects.

About half of the county's landscape as of 2020 consists of urban or suburban development. Not quite a quarter of the remaining area is permanently preserved, counting both open space and farmland acreage preserved by the county along with land protected by municipalities, the state of New Jersey, nonprofits, and the federal government. That leaves a great deal of land area in play that is likely to be committed to either development or preservation in the next twenty to thirty years.

C. The Somerset County Preservation Plan

This plan is designed as a component of the larger Somerset County Master Plan, which is a series of critical elements of county planning that are periodically updated.[1]

The 1,300-seat Brook Theater in Bound Brook opened as a vaudeville movie house in 1927. Funds for its restoration have come in part from the Preservation Trust Fund. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

At the heart of this Preservation Plan are three individual plans: an Open Space Preservation Plan and a Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan – both of which are updates to longstanding plans and required to qualify for state funding to support land preservation – plus a completely new Historic Preservation Plan. Together, these three elements are intended to provide comprehensive and integrated strategies for land use, funding, and partnerships affecting preservation across all three topics in Somerset County.

[1] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/master-plan

North Branch Greenway. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

Thus, Somerset County's new Preservation Plan:

- Establishes guidelines for the county's further preservation of open space in patterns that will enhance and provide greater access to greenways, trails, natural areas, and parks;
- Encourages county policies to reinforce farming as an economic activity along with protecting farmland as the economic base; and
- Supports county initia-tives to maintain county-owned historic properties, inspire greater preservation of privately owned properties and the telling of the county's history, and step forward to lead the celebration of the county's significant place in the history of the Revolutionary War as the war's 250th anniversary approaches.

This overall plan also includes other chapters that are common to each of the individual plans. One chapter describes the county's cultural landscape and its evolution over time, including its natural, agricultural, and historic qualities; another explains the basics of the existing land use regulatory context and the county's Preservation Trust Fund. Moreover, two other chapters describe activities that are common to all three types of resources and which can benefit from a combined approach: tourism (eco-tourism, agri-tourism, and heritage tourism); and story-telling ("interpreta-tion"), public outreach, and public education.

Critical to Somerset County's ability to preserve all three kinds of resources has been the county's Preservation Trust Fund. Commonly called the "Open Space Preservation Trust Fund" because of its origins for the purpose of saving open space lands, and formally the Somerset County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, the simpler "Preservation Trust Fund" is used in this plan because the fund today applies to all three of the resources this plan addresses.

A basic idea lies behind the novel approach of creating a holistic Preservation Plan: Somerset County should spend its preservation funding as much as possible to achieve *multiple* benefits in pursuing open space, farmland, and historic preservation goals. Trails adjacent to permanently protected farmland are scenic and popular. Lands that expand parks and natural areas protect the landscape context of historic farms and other historic sites. Protecting and providing connections to all of these resources provides a well-rounded experience of recreation and nature for county residents and encourages visitation from beyond the county – gaining economic benefits on top of many others. Protecting farmland serves the local farm economic

base and also minimizes conversion of farmland to development that contributes to flooding and degrades the water quality of Somerset County's many beautiful streams and rivers.

All three plans also emphasize partnerships and fully acknowledge the importance of municipal action and collaboration with and among the county's 21 townships and boroughs. While this is a plan for Somerset County and not its municipalities, through its own policies and actions the county seeks to encourage municipal efforts to shape development and preserve key resources. The county's direct preservation of farmland and open space, in fact, is a critical tool for the county to influence the direction of growth county-wide. The intentions of the county and its municipalities in shaping growth are laid out in Somerset County's 2014 Investment Framework.

The three plans employ a common approach and format, as well. All preservation planning, boiled down to its most basic steps, involves (1) understanding the resources involved; (2) analyzing the issues that must be addressed to protect and enhance those resources; (3) formulating goals and strategies that will make the most of the county's capacities; and (4) setting priorities. Each plan offers an introductory chapter that summarizes the points made in the plan itself and concludes with a "moving forward" chapter that organizes detailed strategies and actions by the goals set by each plan. The Open Space Preservation Plan and Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan each map and explain the level of preservation achieved to date and set acreage-protection goals; the Historic Preservation Plan also provides maps but recommends spending and land use policies instead of acreage goals.

Passaic River outing with the Environmental Education Center, Lord Stirling Park. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

D. The Planning Process

This planning effort advances the implementation of the Somerset County Investment Framework and the county's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that were both adopted as part of the County Master Plan in April of 2014.

The overall planning process was led by Somerset County's Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development working in close coordination with a team of consulting experts led by Heritage Strategies, LLC. Planning staff and the consulting team (collectively called the "planning team") engaged municipal partners, non-governmental organizations, private property owners, and other stakeholders to ensure that this plan comprehensively addresses the unique characteristics, similarities, and differences among the three preservation programs and the varied regions and communities within the county.

The planning process included the participation of a Steering Committee that included representatives of the Somerset County Park Commission, the Open

Space Advisory Committee, the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board, the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, and the Somerset County Business Partnership (with both economic development and tourism interests represented). The Steering Committee assembled at key moments during the planning process and was charged with guiding planning across all topics of the Preservation Plan. Committee members' input was critical to the process.

Public involvement has also been a critical and desired part of the planning process. Public outreach was multi-faceted and included well-attended meetings and roundtable workshops, a public survey (for the historic preservation plan), emails, and paper mailings. Most of the public involvement took place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Formal public workshops (for all three plans combined) took place on January 30, 2018 (introduction), June 20, 2018 (findings), June 26, 2019 (proposed goals and actions) and a presentation of the final plan following a period of public review and comment of the document online in the spring of 2021. Public participation in all four of these events was considerable, with robust discussion of all three planning topics and strong support for the planning team's insights and direction. Concerns expressed included stewardship of undeveloped public lands and of county-owned historic sites, farming challenges in a suburban landscape, water quality and flooding, and the need for greater recognition of and interpretation of the county's role in the Revolutionary War.

Participants also expressed interests in a wide variety of site-specific situations, most of which are not addressed directly in this plan (many of which are under the purview of municipalities), but which shaped the overall thinking of the planning team about how to influence conditions so that such interests are addressed.

Spooky Brook Golf Course is a "Ground-water Guardian Green Site" and, along with the County's Green Knoll, Neshanic Valley, Quail Brook, and Warrenbrook golf courses, certified as "River Friendly." (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)


Washington Valley Park includes two reservoirs; pictured at left is the western, larger lake, Washington Valley Reservoir. The Second Watchung Ridge in Warren Township contains an old quarry. Both are part of the First and Second Watchung Ridge Greenways. Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

E. How Do the Preservation of Open Space, Farmland, and Historic Resources Differ?

For all their commonalities, there are also significant differences among these plans that are fundamental to their approaches and goals.

Open Space: Public Ownership Is Critical

Preserving open space by Somerset County has always been a matter of buying natural lands outright and retaining ownership. Some of those lands are converted to parks and trails; other lands – almost three-quarters of the county's holdings – remain natural. This same approach is also undertaken by municipalities and nonprofits. Very few natural lands in Somerset County are protected by the most common alternative, conservation easements, whereby the original owner makes a deeded agreement to forgo most kinds of development and otherwise retains all rights to the land.

Farmland: Farmers Promise not to Develop but Retain Ownership

Easements, however, are the primary tool for farmland preservation. Unlike natural lands, where the county needs full ownership to manage, control, and develop them for recreational access, it is best for farmland to remain in the hands of its owners. (Those owners are either farmers or those who lease their land to farmers.) Easements simply remove the development rights and leave the management and decision-making over time (and the costs of landowning) to the owners themselves. Not only does the county minimize its outlays in preserving farmland in this way, but the land remains on local tax rolls.

This approach, however, is revealing a singular challenge in the 21st century. With all of the pressures on agriculture nationwide, and especially in a state such as New Jersey where half the state is already urban or suburban, it is becoming urgent to assure that not only the farmland but the farmers themselves remain in the business of farming. Next-generation farmers must be attracted to operate the protected farmland, or it will revert to the natural state of land in America's east – forested. As farms become fewer, there will be less support for businesses that are needed by farmers, a vicious cycle that further reduces farmers' ability to farm. The profitability of farming is therefore a critical factor in preserving the farm economy. Local governments used to be able to ignore the farm economy as a "given" in their pursuit of economic development.

Cabbage and broccoli thriving on a vegetable farm near Blawenburg, Montgomery Township. Annual sales of vegetables in Somerset County were reported to total $2.4 million in the 2017 Agricultural Census, increasing more than five-fold from $0.43 million in 2007. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

Now, *agricultural* economic development must be part of the county's work to manage the farmland base it has protected.

Historic Resources: Owners Retain Control, with Local Government Assistance and Regulation

For historic preservation, even easements are usually ill-advised in the work to encourage owners to protect their historic properties. Preserving historic property is not simply a matter of removing development rights; owners must make a positive effort to keep their properties in good order. Anyone who owns a building knows maintenance is a continual requirement.

Moreover, if anything, preservationists have less of a handle on influencing the economics of historic preservation than for agriculture. Thus, for the most part, local government involvement in historic preservation is simply two-fold: regulating owners' treatment of their historic properties, and educating those owners and the general public about the value of preservation.

Somerset County, since it has a limited role in land use regulation (boroughs and townships govern land use in New Jersey), is fortunate to have the "power of the purse" in its ability to deploy grant funding through the Preservation Trust Fund. The fund's impact on the preservation of publicly accessible historic properties across the county over the past two decades has been substantial, and this plan recommends increasing the proportion of funding devoted to preservation. This approach, however, is limited to capital improvements for historic sites open to the public that are owned by local governments or nonprofits.

Otherwise, to stimulate more historic preservation, Somerset County must employ its powers of persuasion – public education, training, information-sharing, technical assistance, encouraging partnerships, endorsing grant requests made to others, etc. The county may also lead by example, in caring for the historic properties in its possession (in parks or otherwise, such as the Court House Green in downtown Somerville). It can also build public appreciation for the county's historic character through programs and events that highlight the county's history and historic places. Finally, it can help residents and visitors find their way around such a large historic county and complex landscape by creating more wayfinding signage, outdoor interpretive markers, tourism information, and multiple components of a "Cultural Heritage Trail."

All in all, however, most of the historic buildings, lands, and communities that grace Somerset County are in the hands of private owners. Few incentives exist in New Jersey to help these owners meet the costs of preservation; a major one, the federal tax credit for

preservation projects, affects only commercial properties listed in the National Register. Thus, it falls to the municipalities to support preservation through regulatory action – principally delay or denial of demolition and design review of changes to buildings in designated historic districts. The level of this kind of regulation – usually accompanied by endeavors by volunteer boards to provide much kindly guidance as well – varies considerably among the county's 21 municipalities. Fortunately, most private property owners, particularly homeowners, are aware of the value of their historic buildings and are careful to preserve that value. The problems of saving old buildings and other historic places most often arise when buildings are located in the path of new development. The Somerset County Historic Preservation Plan highlights the need for advance municipal planning that can minimize such conflicts and encourages employing the rich opportunities for collaboration, education, and enjoyment that lie at the heart of the historic preservation movement everywhere.

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Below are executive summaries of each of the plans at the heart of this overall Preservation Plan, presented in this plan as Chapters 4 (Open Space), 5 (Farmland), and 6 (Historic). The complete plans are presented alongside this Preservation Plan as Volumes 2 (Open Space), 3 (Farmland), and 4 (Historic).

F. The Open Space Preservation Plan

Since 1956, most residents would agree that Somerset County and its Park Commission have built one of the finest park systems in New Jersey. Residents now have expectations, however, that did not exist in the 1950s – or even as late as the early 1990s, when major trail-development funding first began coming on line thanks to enhanced

A classic early twentieth century dairy barn now provides retail space for a specialty lavender farm in Skillman, Montgomery Township, on preserved acreage. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

transportation funding that began with the 1992 federal highway bill. Within the past thirty years, trail development across the country has exploded and demand continues to rise.

As Somerset County's park system has matured and demands and demographics have evolved, the role of the Park Commission, as steward of county open space, is also progressing beyond providing traditional regional-scale recreation opportunities. The opportunity now exists for the county to enhance its open space system and maximize benefits for county residents through creative initiatives, partnerships, and coordination with the county's agricultural preservation and historic preservation programs.

The new, critical metric this plan establishes for the success of Somerset County's open space system is the desired outcome of ***open space access for all county residents within a ten-to-fifteen-minute walk from home***. As an indicator for public health, this measure is more meaningful in the long term and requires not simply acquiring open land of any kind, but acquiring land strategically to achieve more

Black-capped chickadee (Poecile atricapillus) seen in the Millstone River valley. Of 486 species of birds of natural origin found in New Jersey, 304 have been recorded in Somerset County. (Photo by Ron and Pat Morris)

recreational access and the best distribution of that access. This outcome also suggests the importance of enhancing the network of parks, greenways, and trails linking the key nodes established in this system in the decades leading up to this point. Ecosystem planning has shown that such a network is also valuable for maintaining healthy populations of desirable species, both plants and animals, allowing corridors for migration, breeding, and gene flow; and it will also contribute to watershed protection, with its many benefits.

From protecting large blocks of land and creating parks, the county will therefore now turn to a focus on critical properties that will help to leverage public access to already-protected greenways and parks. The land protection work of the future in Somerset County will be tactical – filling gaps in natural systems and recreational access. The pursuit of open space in the future, therefore, is not one of maximizing acreage, but of identifying critical parcels of any size, no matter how small.

Partnerships will be important in making sure that the final push for putting in place an excellent system of parks, greenways, natural areas, and trails is made as efficiently and effectively as possible. Not only can local governments – both the county and its municipalities – step up to this challenge, but so can nonprofit conservancies or land trusts devoted to the public welfare. When key parcels come on the market in desirable locations, the county will need to have the means and support to move as quickly as possible to respond to opportunities for acquiring properties. Sometimes nonprofit land trusts can move even faster. All of these parties can collaborate to maximize state and federal grants and seek donations from foundations and private donors.

Goals in the Open Space Preservation Plan

Facts presented throughout the Open Space Preservation Plan indicate considerable investment and years of effort among many governmental and nonprofit agencies, often in partnership, resulting not only in a great deal of open space in general, but also much public access and many public recreational facilities. While it can safely be said that the work will never be finished, all involved can be proud of the platform from which added achievements can be made.

Goals for the updated Open Space Preservation Plan are adopted in their entirety from the Somerset County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update of 2000. They were tested against information and insights gathered during the process of creating this plan and found to be valid for the decades ahead. Three additional goals, more operational in nature, are added to complement the broader goals expressed in 2000; they address consideration of changes in the administration of the Preservation Trust Fund and encourage even greater use of partnerships to accomplish the goals of this plan:

Goal 4.1: Create an open space system preserving lands of county-wide significance.

Goal 4.2: Preserve open space to protect critical environmental resources of Somerset County.

Goal 4.3: Provide open space for a diverse mix of high-quality recreational experiences appropriate for a county park system.

Goal 4.4: Provide county parks and trails where they will most easily serve the greatest population concentrations in Somerset County.

Goal 4.5: Provide open space in order to enhance the quality of life in Somerset County.

Goal 4.6: Leverage the Somerset County Preservation Trust Fund.

Goal 4.7: Preserve historic sites on Somerset County-owned open space land.

Goal 4.8: Cultivate partnerships.

G. The Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan

The farming industry remains an important component of Somerset County's local economy. In 2017, agricultural income totaled $20.1 million. While this may only be a small part of the county's overall economic output, the ripple effects of the agricultural industry are felt throughout other businesses, contributing to a diverse and thus more sustainable economy.

Half of the county's land – including what is no longer in agriculture – is considered prime farmland, which needs less fertilizer and irrigation to be highly productive. More than 80 percent of the county's land is prime, of statewide importance, or of local importance. Such soils are a valuable natural resource and in fact, geologically speaking, such richness is rare worldwide. As the region's population grows and transport of food from beyond the region becomes more costly in energy and environmental terms, Somerset County's farms are well-positioned to produce food well beyond what the immediate community might require.

Somerset County's Master Plan in 1987 set as a goal the retention of the remaining agricultural regions in the county, as a means of (a) preventing sprawl that leads to the inefficient provision of resources; (b) economic development related to agricultural jobs and products; and (c) protecting natural

Mountain biking is a popular activity in Somerset County's Washington Valley Park in Bridgewater Township.

resources and preserving the open character of the county.

Saving Farmland in Somerset County

In 2017, New Jersey as a whole had the second-highest farmland values in the nation; Somerset County's farmland is among the most expensive in the state. Prior to 2000 the average cost per acre of preserving farmland in the county was below $9,200. Costs since 2010 have averaged more than $25,000 per acre.

As the cost of buying farmland continues to rise, farmers who have not sold agricultural easements may yet be squeezed out. A bad year – too much rain, or drought – could spell temptation to sell and retire. Younger farmers to replace those who are retiring may find it difficult to buy unprotected farmland at market rate. It is more likely that developers will snap that land up unless Somerset County itself can compete on behalf of the farm economy.

A preserved horse farm in the Neshanic Station area, Branchburg Township. Somerset County's agriculture is especially distinguished by its equine sector. To be eligible for right-to-farm protection, such complementary activities as clinics, open houses, demonstrations, educational camps, farm events, competitions, and rodeos must specifically be related to the marketing of horses on the farm and in compliance with municipal requirements. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

There are two basic ways out of this bind, and both are needed, urgently, to ensure that Somerset County's farming can endure:

- Step up governmental efforts to buy agricultural easements, and
- Work on a community-wide basis to strengthen conditions for farm profitability.

The Challenge of Agricultural Development

It is surprising, but encouraging, that to date protecting only a quarter of the county's current land base for agriculture has apparently helped to stabilize the industry. Over more than thirty years, the farmland-protection share of the Preservation Trust Fund has been directed toward sustaining the land base of the agricultural economy and encouraging farmers seeking to remain in business in ever more challenging economic conditions.

Current trends for farmland loss, farm profitability, and an ageing farmer population in Somerset County are worrisome, however. If they continue, current estimates suggest the county could see roughly 4,000 acres of farmland converted to other uses by 2030. Therefore, simply preventing that loss over the next ten years itself would be an achievement for Somerset County, probably one less determined by the success of the county's farmland preservation program than the community's ability to encourage the success of farming in general.

The greatest challenges, however, may be ahead. Many factors can be expected to bring more change to this region – population growth, economic shifts in markets and consumer demand, wage requirements, new technologies, evolving transportation. Simply "holding our ground" can no

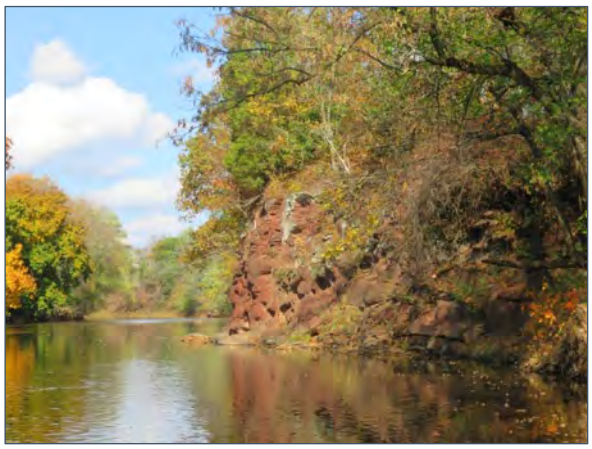
longer be the only strategy for supporting a resilient agricultural industry – farmers, farms, businesses, advisors, buyers, consumers – capable of thriving in the years ahead with a deep level of community support.

The Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan recognizes considerable investment and years of effort among many governmental and nonprofit agencies, often in partnership. The public's investment in farmland is an important, leading-edge strategy in supporting Somerset County farming. This investment and leadership in what the county itself can accomplish, however – protecting farm-land – must be regarded as an ongoing catalyst for a greater, community-wide determination to make the most of Somerset County farming. This gets back to the challenge of profitability described earlier.

Without continued profitability, farmers will not continue in farming long enough for the county to arrive at its preservation goal over time and sustain a stable industry over the long term. Without profitable farming, the temptation for farmers with unprotected land to sell for development can be the most logical individual choice. Without profitable farming, where will new farmers come from, who will want to farm the protected land? And without enough farmers, how will the farm economy support those nearby services needed by farmers? And finally, without enough local farmers to provide safe, healthy, local food, will Somerset County be able to improve its food security?

The Benefits to All Somerset County Residents of Protecting Farmland

It should not be up to the farmers, alone, to make the changes and choices to keep Somerset County's long-standing farm economy alive and vibrant for future generations. Voters have long supported farmland preservation out of a consciousness of the importance of that heritage to their quality of life, resulting in a Preservation Trust Fund program that has given Somerset County considerable maneuverability in the marketplace of land protection.



The 2000 Open Space Plan rated the South Branch of the Raritan River as one of Somerset County's most significant natural features. (Photo by Tom Boccino, courtesy Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development)

Today, those voters must be enlisted in the effort to support farmers willing to produce food for local consumption, by making such foods widely available and accessible. Somerset County residents making their meals at home, restaurant patrons, and the many whose meals are provided in institutions are all eager for fresh, locally grown food. They are often willing to pay the premium that makes such production possible. For those who prepare their own food, knowing who has grown and made their ingredients is an added social benefit.

Goals in the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan

Long ago, just before the middle of the 19th century when McCormick's reaper brought a technological

Funding from the New Jersey Highlands Council, the NJ State Agricultural Development Committee, and Somerset County enabled the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Lamington Conservancy to protect 49 acres of farm and forest land along the Lamington River in Bedminster Township in 2019. (Photo by Norm Goldberg, courtesy New Jersey Conservation Foundation)

revolution to farming and railroads changed markets for farm products, groups of neighboring farmers worked together to figure out how to prosper in the emerging conditions of a wholly new way of farming. In more recent times, about a hundred years ago, the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression, and rural electrification presented challenges that required new forms of governmental and cooperative agencies that still benefit farmers today. Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District, for example, both come out of those solutions.

Today, all concerned have yet another challenge, to figure out how to collaborate with as many partners as possible to protect and maintain farmland, Somerset County's farming heritage, and a high quality of life in a suburbanizing landscape where farming and local food security are not favored by modern economics.

The Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan presents a way to move forward to meet such a challenge and create a new and renewed system of vibrant connections among all who have a stake in Somerset County's success in preserving farms and farming. It sets the following goals:

Goal 5.1: Build community awareness and support for local farming and local foods.

Goal 5.2: Build partnerships to preserve farmland.

Goal 5.3: Aggressively pursue efforts to preserve farmland in Somerset County.

Goal 5.4: Increase economic opportunity and food security in Somerset County through farming.

Goal 5.5: Increase the number of next-generation farmers available to undertake farming in Somerset County.

Goal 5.6: Direct county resources where possible to increase farmland preservation and encourage agri-cultural economic development.

H. The Historic Preservation Plan

Far Hills Train Station in the Borough of Far Hills. The Renaissance Revival-style station was built in the second decade of the twentieth century of concrete, newly in use by the railroad because of its large-scale need to address extensive track elevation and depression work along the line.

Somerset County has worked over many years to maintain long-term policies to support historic preservation, working through the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission and its partners and the county's varied municipalities. The Historic Preservation Plan, the county's first, is intended to identify key strategies and priorities for action.

Guiding Principles

The Historic Preservation Plan is based upon the following guiding principles:

- **Building vibrant communities through historic preservation:** Using historic preservation to build better communities – to increase community economic vitality and the quality of life for residents;
- **Placemaking:** Recognizing and maintaining Somerset County's unique character and sense of place, and connecting residents and visitors to that sense of place;
- **Looking forward:** a focus not on bringing back the past, but on integrating it into the present and future;
- **Preserving historic resources owned by Somerset County:** leading by example in protecting the valuable historic assets acquired on behalf of the public by the Board of County Commissioners.
- **Education and involvement:** providing opportunities for community residents to learn, know, and care about their irreplaceable historic and cultural resources. Historic sites open to the public in particular play a vital role in history education – including for new citizens who want to know and understand the history of their new home.

Goals in the Historic Preservation Plan

Three goals of the Historic Preservation Plan are based on best practices in preservation planning – thorough documentation of historic resources; enlistment of many partners; and strategic use of the county's abilities to encourage preservation, both directly and through other county planning actions. A fourth and final goal is designed to build on the county's great treasures and stories from the American Revolution.

Re-enactors along River Road (part of the Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway) portray the story of the movement of the Continental Army and French troops through Somerset County on their way to their fateful encounter with the British at Yorktown. (Photo by Ron and Pat Morris)

Goal 6.1: Identify and promote Somerset County's unique historic resources, including communities, neighborhoods, landscapes, buildings, and traditions.

Goal 6.2: Promote coordination and consensus in the preservation of historic resources among a wide variety of interested parties across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Goal 6.3: Pursue and coordinate incentive programs and protection measures to preserve Somerset's historic and archeological resources. Strategies under this goal are grouped under the following topics: (a) expand county support for historic preservation; (b) encourage municipal preservation action; (c) encourage the use of rehab tax credits; (d) coordinate with open space and farmland preservation; and (e) support historic preservation through land use planning practices.

Goal 6.4: Position Somerset County to be a prominent part of the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution as led by the New Jersey Historical Commission and the United States Semiquincentennial Commission and beyond.

I. Conclusion to the Introduction

Somerset County will continue to grow and change in future years as it has in the past. A fundamental tenet of this preservation plan is preserving the irreplaceable resources that are central to community character while addressing the need to accommodate change. The plan provides a foundation for long-term action by the county, municipalities, and many partners in collaborating to preserve and promote Somerset County's open space, farmland, and historic resources.

Chapter 2. Landscape Context & History

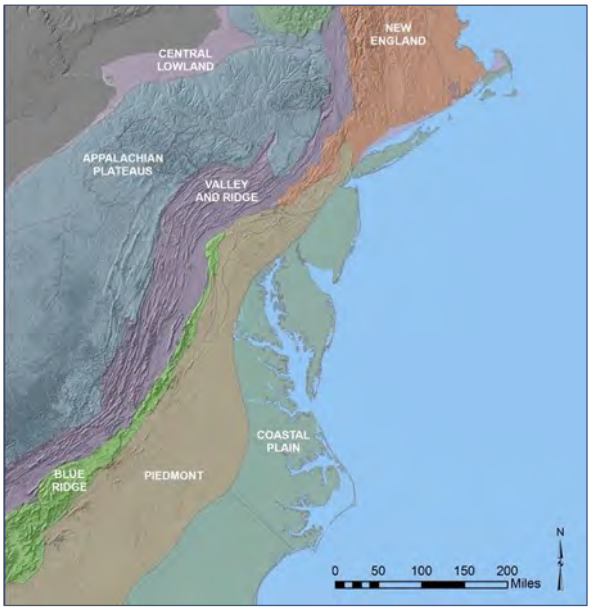
Somerset County has developed and changed over the past three centuries in response to large-scale national trends that have played out within the regional landscape. The region's native landscape provides the context influencing how and where the broad sweep of the nation's economic, social, and demographic changes has been manifested locally. The influence on central and northern New Jersey and Somerset County of the New York metropolitan area and its intensive growth and development over successive historical periods cannot be overstated. Today, Somerset County's character and regional role continues to be influenced by its position within the larger metropolitan area.

A. Introduction

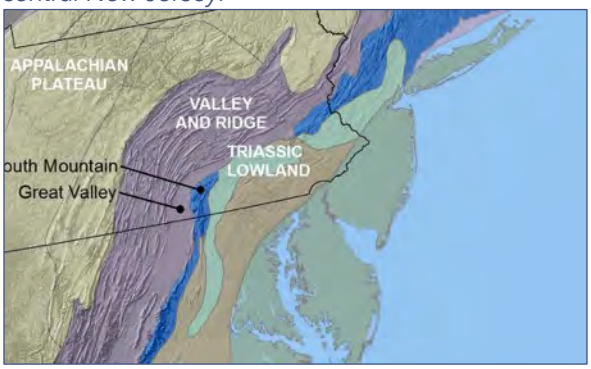
The physical evolution of Somerset County and its twenty-one individual municipalities can be tied to a series of broad historic contexts involving natural, economic, and social patterns at a local, regional, and national level. Historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site can be understood and its meaning within made clear. This chapter provides an overview of the Somerset County landscape as it has evolved in response to historical forces and the resulting impact on communities, agricultural patterns, and conservation lands. The broad historic contexts that have been used in this discussion include:

- **The Native Landscape:** The setting of natural geological, ecological conditions and their impact on Somerset County's historical development;
- **Pre-Columbian cultures:** Recognition that human cultures have been present, evolving, and influencing the landscape within the region for more than 12,000 years;
- **The 18th and 19th Century Agricultural Landscape:** The uses and patterns laid upon the landscape by the region's agricultural development, especially from early settlement through the mid-19th century;
- **Regional Industrial Center:** The impact of the railroads in the formation and growth of industrial communities in Somerset County in the mid- and late-19th century;
- **Suburban Expansion:** The landscape patterns and impact of Somerset County's location relative to growth and change within the New York Metropolitan area, from the Great Estates, to the railroad suburbs, to the automobile suburbs.

The Historic Preservation Plan, Section 6.2, Somerset County History, provides additional details and images.



The Piedmont Province is a physiographic region extending from Alabama northward through central New Jersey.



The northern portion of the Piedmont Province through New Jersey is composed of the Triassic Lowland geological formation.

B. The Native Landscape

The landscape we know today in Somerset County has formed over millions of years. Since the retreat of the last glaciation from northern New Jersey about 20,000 years ago, the climate has steadily warmed and the ecology and plant communities have changed accordingly. These changes provided increased sustenance to human populations that have physically moved and culturally evolved to the point that there was an established Native American presence occupying the land at the time Europeans began to settle North America. The pre-settlement, native landscape is the foundation for the historical development of Somerset County.

Geology and Landforms

Somerset County is largely located within the Piedmont Physiographic Province in central New Jersey. The Piedmont Province extends from Alabama northward through central New Jersey and is set between the Coastal Plain on the east and the mountainous Blue Ridge and Ridge and Valley Provinces on the west. Nearly 300 miles wide in North Carolina, the Piedmont Province is about the width of Somerset County as it extends through New Jersey. A 16 square mile area in the northern part of the County is within the Highlands Region.

Geologically, the Piedmont Province in New Jersey is comprised of the Triassic Lowlands formation, an area of low rolling topography that blends into the Coastal Plain at the fall line. The Triassic Lowland is a rolling plain comprised of red shale, sandstone, and conglomerate rock types that break down into reasonably workable soils attractive to agriculture. Intruded into and laid over its sedimentary rock formations, however, are areas of volcanic diabase and basalt that are resistant to weathering, poor for farming, and form wooded ridges and uplands that are prominent features in the landscape. Sourland Mountain, for example, is a diabase intrusion.

The Triassic Lowlands were formed about 200 million years ago when the North American and African plates began to separate. In the early stages of separation, crustal stretching and tension occurred that was most intense in the area that would eventually become the Piedmont region. The stretching caused fracturing of large blocks of the earth's crust in a line east of the Blue Ridge, Ridge and Valley, and New England Provinces from North

Carolina to Massachusetts. Great linear blocks along this line subsided, creating wedge-shaped basins into which layer upon layer of sediments poured from the adjacent eroding mountains. In addition, lava flowed up through the fractures and injected itself horizontally between and over top of the sediments. These sediments and volcanic flows formed the rocks we now see in the Triassic Lowlands, including Somerset County. (Van Diver 1990:34; Miller 1995:22;35-36; Tobiassen: 4-5).

Triassic Shale/Sandstone

The rocks of the Piedmont's Triassic Lowlands are comprised of shales, sandstones, and conglomerates, easily recognizable due to the red color of both the rocks and their soils. The predominant rock formation in Somerset County is Brunswick Shale, which formed from red iron-rich muds and dark gray shales deposited in the late Triassic and early Jurassic periods. Brunswick Shale devolves into three broad soil associations comprising the agricultural soils in the county, further discussed below.

Jurassic Diabase and Basalt

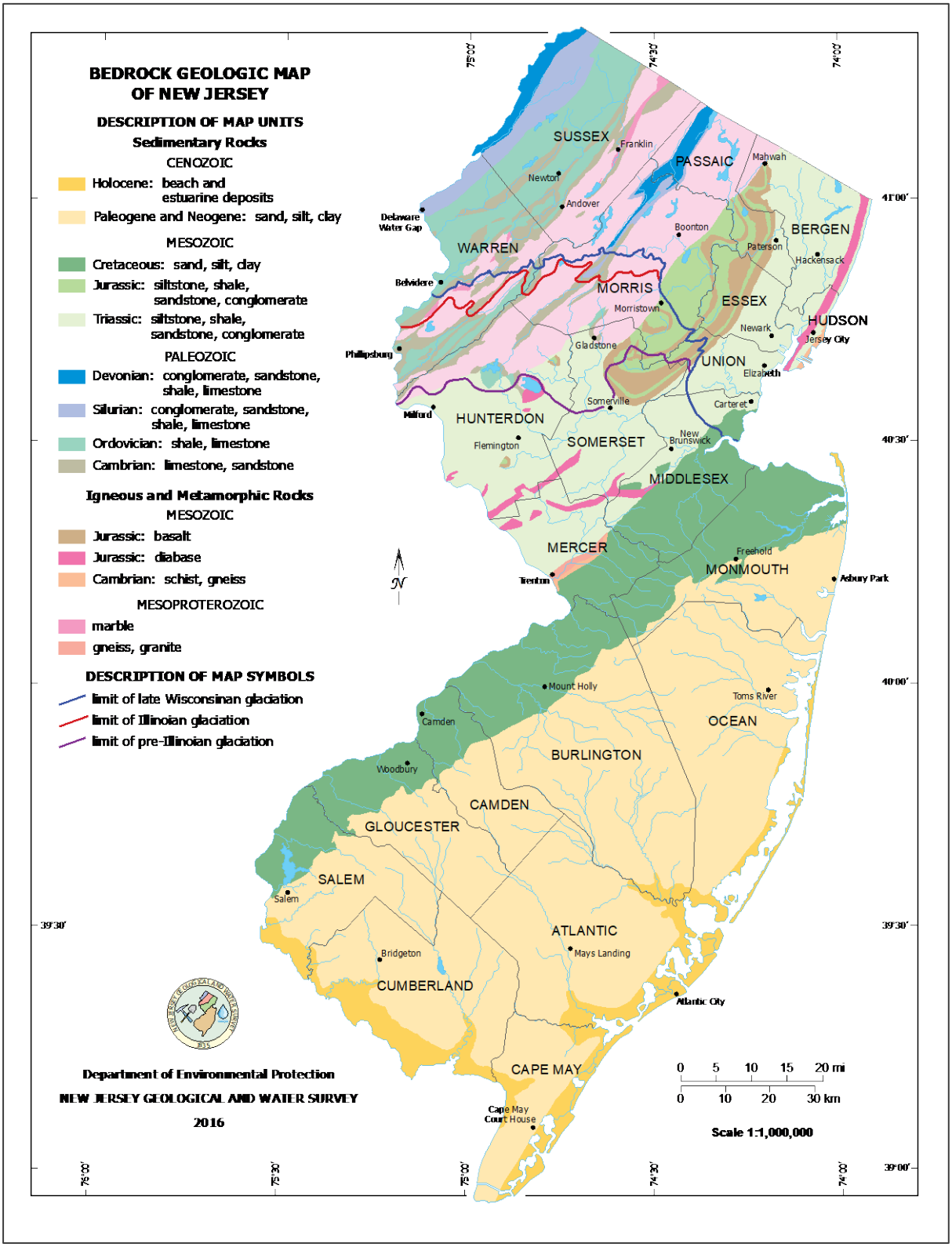
Throughout the Triassic Lowlands, volcanic rock interacted with the shale and sandstone sediments in two ways, by intrusion from below between layers of sediment and by flowing over exposed sediments at the surface. Both are prominent identifiable rock types, features, and landforms in Somerset County.

Volcanic rock that was intruded from below during the period of faulting and rock movement formed the central core of the Sourland Mountains in the southwestern portion of the county and the low ridges of Rocky Hill landforms in Franklin Township. Both formations extend westward into Mercer County.

Standing above the adjacent rolling agricultural lands, this intruded volcanic rock is known as diabase and is highly resistant to weathering. It is not suitable for cultivation. The Brunswick Shale adjacent to locations into which the diabase was intruded was heat-altered into harder, denser, and less porous material than the surrounding Triassic Lowlands and is itself also resistant to weathering. The degree of hardness in the nearby sediments increases closer to the diabase. The diabase and related landforms tend to be steep-sloped uplands and in woodlands or pasture with many rock outcroppings. They have been a focus for land conservation efforts due to the unique ecosystems that have evolved in association with this geology; their very unsuitability for agriculture has encouraged their survival since settlement. (Miller 1995:19,35; USDA 1967:3; USGS 2007).

Somerset County's three parallel Watchung Mountains were formed during the Early Jurassic period from three successive fissure eruptions

Somerset County's three parallel Watchung Mountains were formed during the Early Jurassic period from three successive lava flows. The resulting rock formation is basalt, highly resistant to erosion. This unused quarry in Warren Township shows the characteristic vertical stair-like or columnar shape of basalt. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)



Source: https://www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs/enviroed/freedwn/psnjmap.pdf

causing lava to flow at the surface over a portion of the recently deposited Brunswick Formation. The resulting rock formation is basalt and, like the diabase of the Sourland Mountains, is highly resistant to erosion. Following the lava flows, continued erosion from the adjacent ancient Appalachian Mountains laid new sediments over the basalt. Sediment depositions of 600 feet and 1500 feet were laid over the first and second flows separating the three rock formations. Today, the erosion resistant basalt rock formations of the First, Second, and Third Watchung Mountains are the highest points and most steeply sloped landforms in the county. (Tobiassen:5)

The Highlands

The northern tip of Somerset County, about 16 square miles in area, is located within the New England Physiographic Province of northwest New Jersey. Known as the Highlands, this area consists predominantly of flat-topped ridges underlain by highly resistant Precambrian igneous and metamorphic rocks. The valleys of the Highlands are underlain by less resistant Paleozoic limestone. (Tobiassen: 1; Green 2010: 12-16)

The resistant rocks of the ridges within the Highlands were initially igneous rock and sedimentary rock formed from sand, lime, and mud. Deeply buried by later sediments and subject to intense pressure, both rock types were subsequently altered by metamorphism, transforming them into granites and gneisses. The resistant rocks were later exposed due to up-thrusting and long periods of erosion. Only a few exposures of the thick accumulations of the later sediment that were deposited over these rocks remain—Hardyston Quartzite (formed from sand and gravel) and Kittatinny Limestone (carbonate materials deposited in shallow seas). These deposits indicate that New Jersey had a tropical or subtropical climate 500 million years ago. (Tobiassen: 2.3; Green 2010: 12-16) Today, historical evidence of human use of this limestone is found in the lime kilns that dot this region.

Erosion and Glaciation

A long period of relative tectonic stability followed the Triassic faulting as the North American and European/African continental plates continued to separate and the ancient Appalachian Mountains eroded away. By about 13 million years ago, the mountains are believed to have been reduced to a broad low plain with meandering drainage to the southeast. A period of gradual uplift later occurred in areas north of Somerset County creating an increase in stream gradient, increasing the erosion of softer, less resistant material, forming ridges and valleys, and

Moses Craig, a farmer in Peapack, joined the manufacture of burnt lime when he built these kilns in 1860 to process the abundant limestone of the area. According to the Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, which received the limekilns as a donation in 1999, "Burnt lime revolutionized and revived northern New Jersey's agriculture in the 19th century." Pulverized limestone replaced burnt lime in the 20th century and the kilns ceased production after 1934. (Photo courtesy VisitSomersetNJ)

exposing many of the rocks that are visible today. (Tobiassen 1978:6; Miller 1995:24,36; Cuff 1989:12)

More recently in geological terms, the Pleistocene epoch, approximately 2.6 million years ago to 11,700 years ago, saw repeated cycles of glaciation in northern latitudes. The continents were essentially in their present positions on the earth during these times. Why the climate fluctuated between glacial and interglacial conditions is an active area of research.

Glaciers covered the northern portion of New Jersey during the two most recent glaciations. The most recent glacier advanced to its terminus 25,000 years ago during the Wisconsinan stage of the late Pleistocene (125 to 11 ka2) and retreated from New Jersey about 20,000 years ago. South of the glacial limit in mid-Morris County, glacial outwash deposited sediment to the southeast, including in Somerset County. Most of this glacial sediment has since eroded from the surfaces of county except in the vicinity of the Raritan River near Bound Brook.

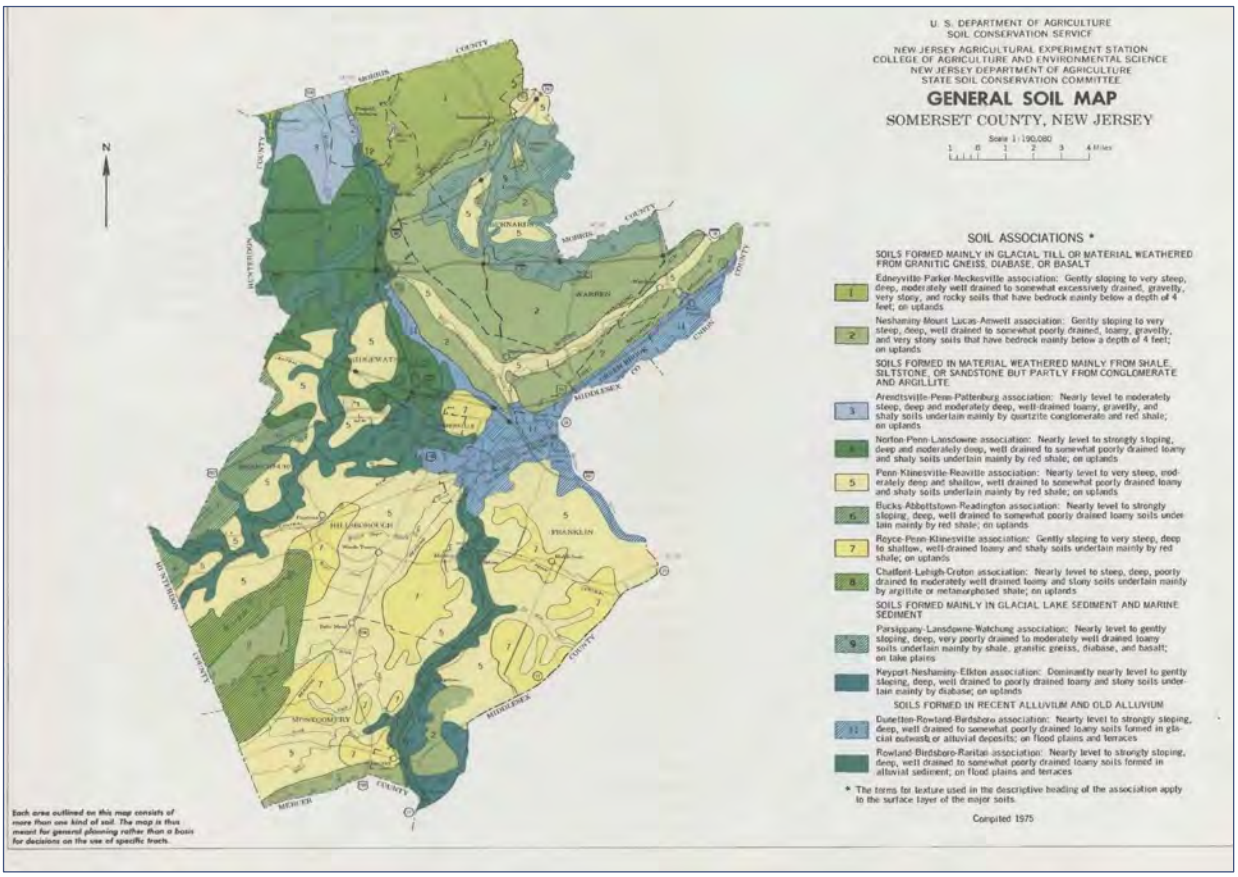
Moggy Hollow, the dramatic geological landscape setting for Somerset County's Leonard J. Buck Garden, was carved by the waters of the deepest stage (and greatest extent) of Glacial Lake Passaic that found an outlet at a low point in the Watchung Mountains. It is believed that the ridges of the Third Watchung formed a chain of islands during that stage. Moggy Hollow today is a National Natural Landmark. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

During the last glacial advance, a lobe of ice blocked the northeastern passage of the Watchung Mountains and glacial meltwaters accumulated in front of the ice within the Watchung valley, creating Glacial Lake Passaic. After the Wisconsinan glacier retreated, the regional climate warmed. Forests regrew within the region by 15,000 years ago. Peat, silt, and clay accumulated in the shallow lakes and ponds left by the glacier to form freshwater wetland deposits. Today, a prominent low-lying marshy area, the Great Swamp, remains in the vicinity of the former Glacial Lake Passaic, a small portion of which is in Somerset County just east of Basking Ridge. (DEP 2016; Tobiassen 1978: 2,6)

Soils

The geological rock formations exposed today in Somerset County have broken down to form the soils upon which the historic agricultural economy of the county has depended. Most of these soils were derived from the Brunswick Shale of the Triassic Period that is beneath most of Somerset County. These soils are identified in seven different soil associations with differences in type, slope, and composition, but are largely similar. Their associated landforms are undulating and low rolling uplands. They are dissected by the county's rivers and their tributaries. Somerset County's primary farming areas are located in these Triassic-derived soils.

[2] Ka is an abbreviation for *kilo annum*, a unit of time meaning a thousand years.



General Soils Map of Somerset County (USDA 1976)

In the northwest corner of the county, in the vicinity of Bedminster Township, the soil associations are derived from quartzite conglomerate as well as red shale. These soils tend to be droughty due to their gravelly nature and are only moderate in fertility. Their gently sloping lands are used for general farming, especially horse farms, while steeper slopes tend to be in woodland.

In the large central portion of the county southwest of the Watchung Mountains, the soils derive exclusively from the red shale of the Brunswick formation. Reddish like the rock they are derived from, the soils are moderately deep, well drained shaly silt loam. Soils derived from reddish shale are usually only slowly permeable. Historically, these are the county's primary agricultural soils and have supported the agricultural economy of general farming and dairying. The Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan notes that these include soils classified as (a) Prime Farmland soils, (b) Soils of Statewide Importance, and (c) Soils of Local Importance within this area. The soils of these three classifications are intertwined, with the Prime Farmland tending to be on the more level uplands while the soils of state and local importance are more sloping and, consequently, eroded. (For more discussion, see Section 6.2.D. of that plan.)

As discussed above, soil associations of the Highlands, Watchung Mountains, Sourland Mountains, and Rocky Hill area are derived from granite/gneiss, basalt, and diabase respectively and tend to be gravelly and stony with numerous rock

outcroppings. Many of the areas are steeply sloped and are in woodland. Characteristically, soils in these areas are thin and may be absent altogether.

Stony, non-acidic, fine-textured soils with a heavy clay subsoil are common over diabase (Sourlands and Rocky Hill). These soils are hard to till and are best suited for forest or pasture. Well-drained to xeric (very dry) conditions are common, but some poorly drained sites occur in depressions and on flats. On steep ridges, soils derived from basalt (Watchungs) or diabase are often unstable. They tend to creep downslope, creating shallow, ledgy soils on upper slopes and deeper, sticky, waterlogged soils on lower slopes near the bases of ridges.

In the Highlands, slightly acidic soils derived from underlying metamorphic granites and gneisses are common. Gneissic soils are typically nutrient-poor, clay- and iron-rich, and are typically well-drained to xeric.

Surrounding the diabase-derived soils of the Sourlands are soils derived from argillite and metamorphosed shale of the Brunswick formation. These soils tend to be clayey, stony, and poorly drained and to have hardpans in their lower horizons. Most of the areas with these poorly drained soils are wooded and are considered to be part of the Sourland uplands. They include a significant band of wetland along the north side of the Sourland Mountains, and their potential for cultivation is severely limited.

Along the county's primary rivers, soils have developed in alluvial sediments and floodplains. At the base of the Watchung Mountains in the vicinity of Bound Brook, the soils have formed in glacial outwash and are used for farming and urban development. Along the north and south branches of the Raritan River, floodplain soils have been cleared and are used for farming or pasture. Frequent flooding and high water table place limitations on their use. In recent years, some floodplain areas have been allowed to revert to wetland. (USDA 1976; USGA 2007)

Ecoregions and Plant Communities

Vegetation and native plant communities reflect the vegetative context in which Somerset County is located and the climate, geology, topography, soils, and other natural features that influence local variations. Northern and central New Jersey are located within the Appalachian oak section of the Mesophytic (middle) Eastern Deciduous Forest (Dyer 2006: 346). Native forests on the broad ridges of the Highlands and the rolling hills of the Triassic Lowlands are dominated by red oak-white oak-hickory, hemlock-mixed hardwood, and maple-beech-birch (USDA 2008: 4-5).

Both natural and human disturbance have had an enormous impact upon the vegetation of central New Jersey in terms of the vegetation that is present and the plant communities that develop naturally. With respect to natural disturbance, for example, this area was originally classified as the Oak-Chestnut Forest Region in Lucy Braun's landmark 1950 publication *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*. However, the American chestnut that was once a dominant feature of this landscape was virtually eliminated by the chestnut blight fungus introduced to North America in 1904. Other forms of natural disturbance including insects, animals, and storms are ongoing agents of change. Though termed "natural," some of these agents of change are actually an unintended impact of human activity.

The introduction of a considerable number of non-native species by humans over the last three

centuries which have since naturalized into the landscape has had a significant impact upon the region's plant communities. Some of these naturalized species are considered invasive and negatively impact the diversity and health of plant communities.

Overall, human activity has been the dominant factor in determining the vegetative character of the landscape of the Somerset County over the past 350 years. Before about 1660, most of this area is believed to have been forested, even though impacted for thousands of years by Native American peoples. Most of the forest cover had been cleared for agricultural development during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

With the decline of agriculture and the increase of suburbanization, woodlands and tree growth have substantially increased within the region from their levels during the mid-to-late 19th century. In suburban areas, succession to native woodland has occurred along waterways, on land fragments, and where former agricultural fields have been let go. Larger areas of native woodland have developed in the rocky upland areas of the Sourlands, Watchung Mountains, and Highlands, where agriculture and development have been limited and woodland conservation efforts have been concentrated. Nonetheless, Somerset County and the Triassic Lowlands in general have significantly less native woodland than other portions of New Jersey due to the combined impacts of agriculture and development.

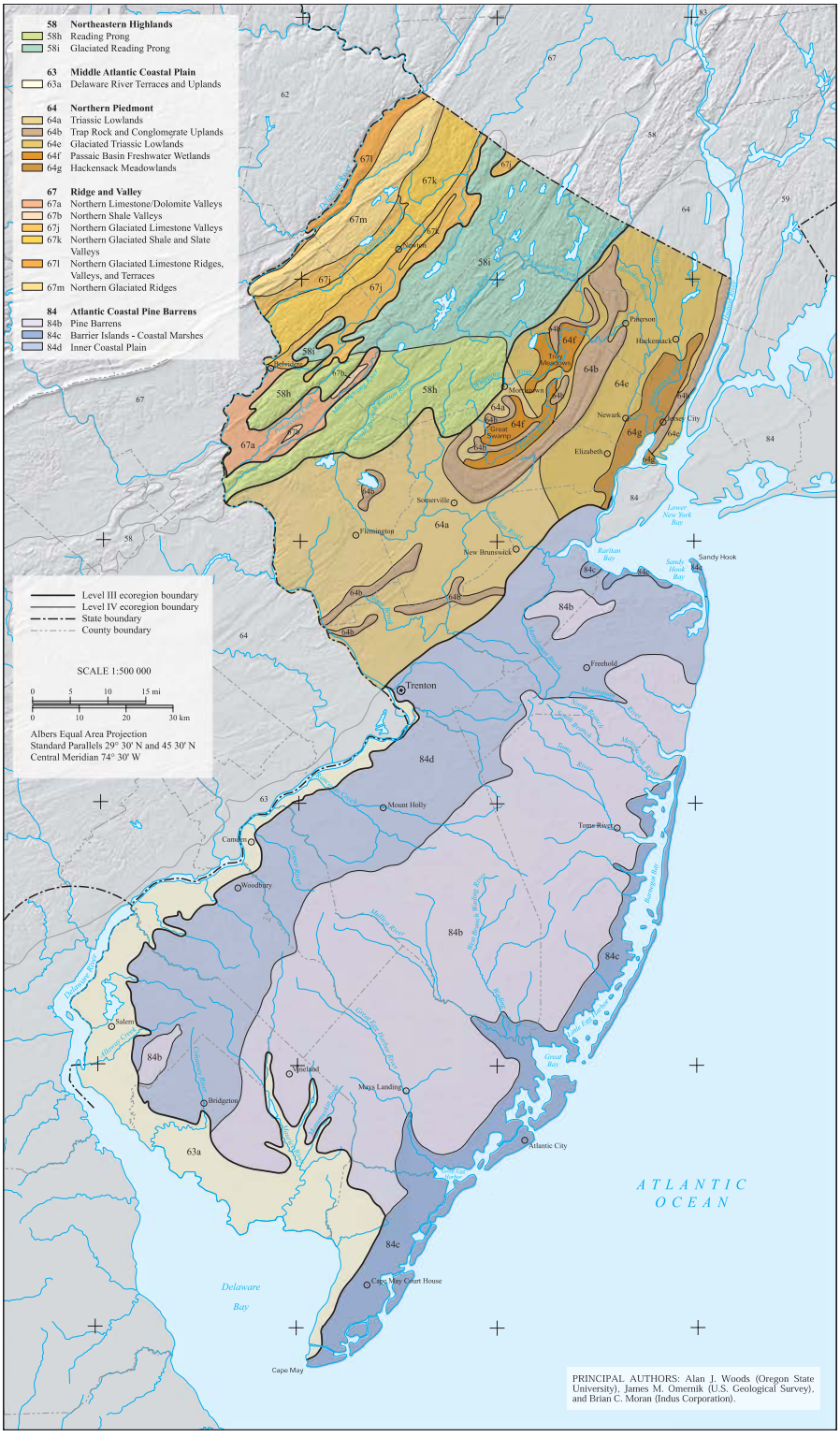
Ecoregions

The federal government and state agencies have collaborated in identifying a national system of ecoregions that denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources present. Prepared to inform the understanding, monitoring, and management of natural resources, the ecoregion system uses geology, physiography, climate, soils, vegetation, wildlife, and land use to identify areas of common character. It is organized into four levels with Level IV being the finest grain, used in understanding of local ecosystems and plant communities.

Ecoregion 64 is the Northern Piedmont and corresponds to the Piedmont Physiographic Province discussed above. Within New Jersey, Ecoregion 64a is the Triassic Lowland, corresponding to the areas underlain by Triassic sandstone and shale, while 64b is named the Trap Rock Ridges and Palisades and includes the diabase geology of the Sourlands as well as the basalt formations of the Watchung Mountains. The Highlands are located generally within Ecoregion 58, the Northern Highlands, and more specifically within Ecoregion 58h, which is named the Reading Prong due to its extension through New Jersey from the vicinity of Reading, Pennsylvania.

64a Triassic Lowlands

As has been discussed, Somerset County's Triassic Lowlands ecoregion is a low, rolling plain underlain by Brunswick Shale. Most of the landscape has sufficient local relief to prevent ponding, but impeded drainage sometimes occurs on broad flats due to its slowly permeable soils. The native vegetation of this mesic (containing a moderate amount of moisture) upland is mixed oak forest. Red oak, white oak, black oak, hickory, and chestnut were originally abundant. On the wet, poorly drained, clayey soils with hardpans around the Sourlands that were derived from argillite, native vegetation is a mosaic of red maple, swamp



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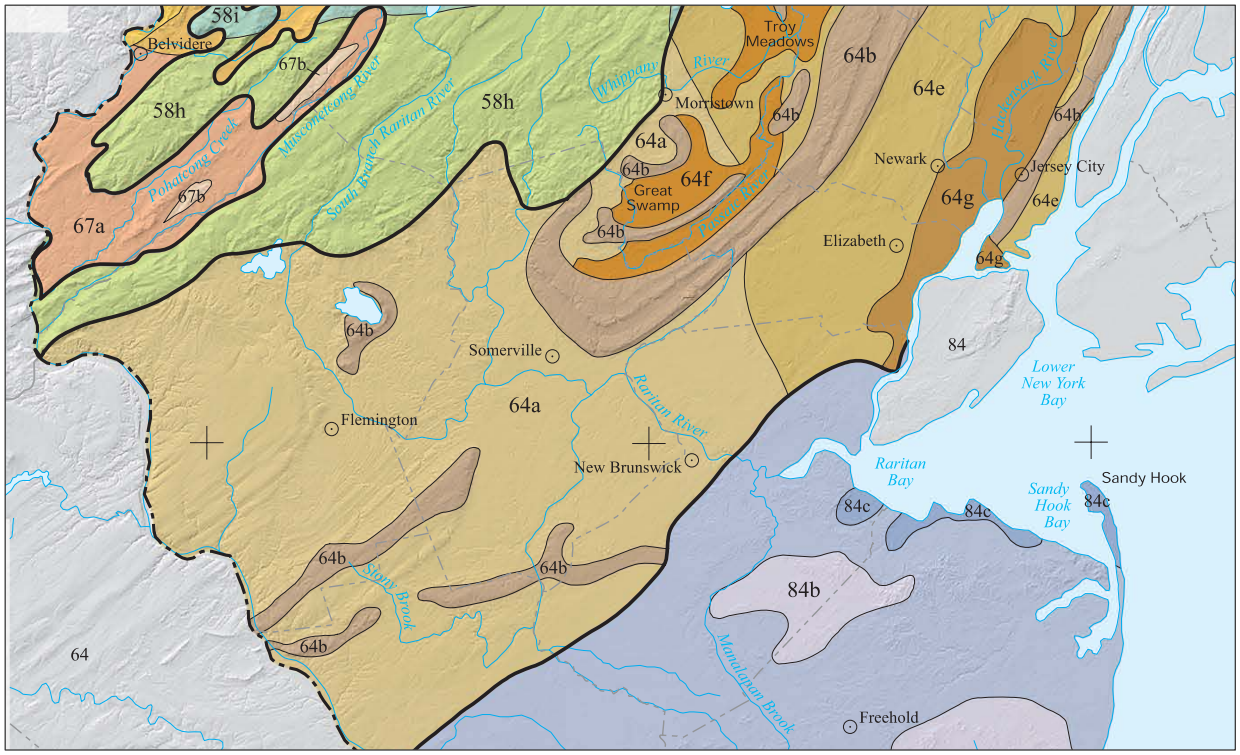


Ecoregions across central New Jersey, including Somerset County. Ecoregion 64a is the Triassic Lowland. 64b is Trap Rock Ridges and Palisades. 64f is the Passaic Basin Freshwater Wetlands. 58h is the Reading Prong. (EPA 2007)

hardwoods, and mixed oaks, including pin oak. Today, a mosaic of farms and suburban development have largely replaced the native vegetation throughout the lowlands. (EPA 2007)

64b Trap Rock Ridges and Palisades

The highly resistant diabase and basalt of Ecoregion 64b rise above the surrounding Triassic Lowlands topography to form prominent hills and ridges of the Sourland and Watchung Mountains. Outcrops of highly weathered rock are common. Lithology, woodland density, topography, and land use are distinct from the surrounding lowlands.

On diabase and basalt ridge slopes, mixed oak forests are found. Red oak, white oak, and black oak are most common, and sugar maple, chestnut oak, black birch, white ash, and tulip tree occur. Higher ridgetops and upper slopes support chestnut oak forests where chestnut oak and red oak are dominant. In ravines and on steep, lower, north-facing slopes, hemlock-mixed hardwood forests occur. The native vegetation is distinct from the lower, immediately surrounding areas.

Black birch, tulip tree, white ash, basswood, sugar maple, and shrubs are most common on north-facing slopes, whereas dogwood is most abundant on south-facing slopes. Everywhere, trees are larger on north-facing slopes than on drier south-facing slopes. Acid loving plants are absent from diabase and basalt areas. (EPA 2007)

64f Passaic Basin Freshwater Wetlands

As noted above, a small portion of the Great Swamp extends into the northeast corner of Somerset County north of the Third Watchung Mountain. This area is a large, nearly flat, former glacial lake

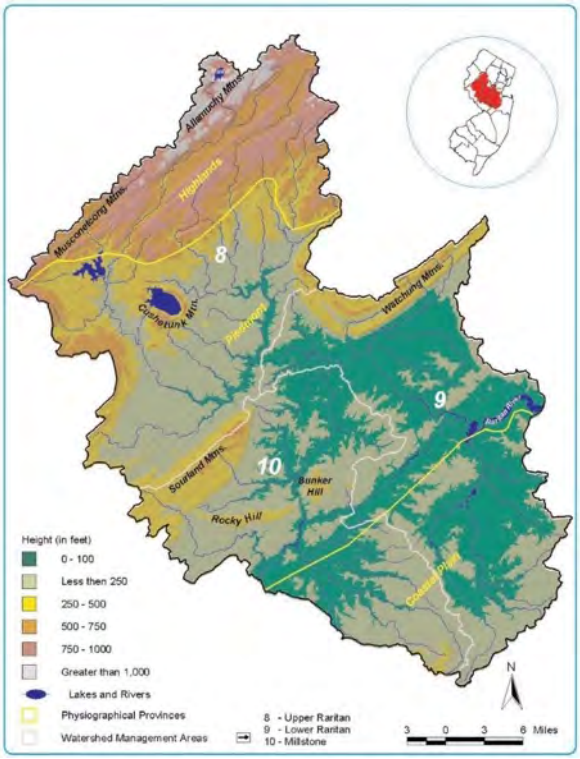
containing freshwater marshes, swamps, and peatlands. It is composed of slowly permeable soils of clay, sand, and till where high water tables, frequent flooding, sluggish streams, and swampy conditions are common. The swamp is physiographically, lithologically, and botanically distinct from the Triassic Lowlands (64a) and Trap Rock Ridges and Palisades (64b).

In the Great Swamp, red maple is quite common, and American elm, pin oak, swamp white oak, sour gum, sweet gum, white ash, and silver maple are abundant. Reeds and sedges also occur. Yellow birch is less common, and pin oak, swamp white oak, and silver maple are common.

58h Reading Prong

Part of the Northern Highlands ecoregion, the Reading Prong ecoregion includes the Highlands of Somerset County and northern New Jersey. Consisting of low mountains and high hills of gneissic rocks, elevations are higher, terrain is more rugged, and forests are more extensive than in other areas of the county.

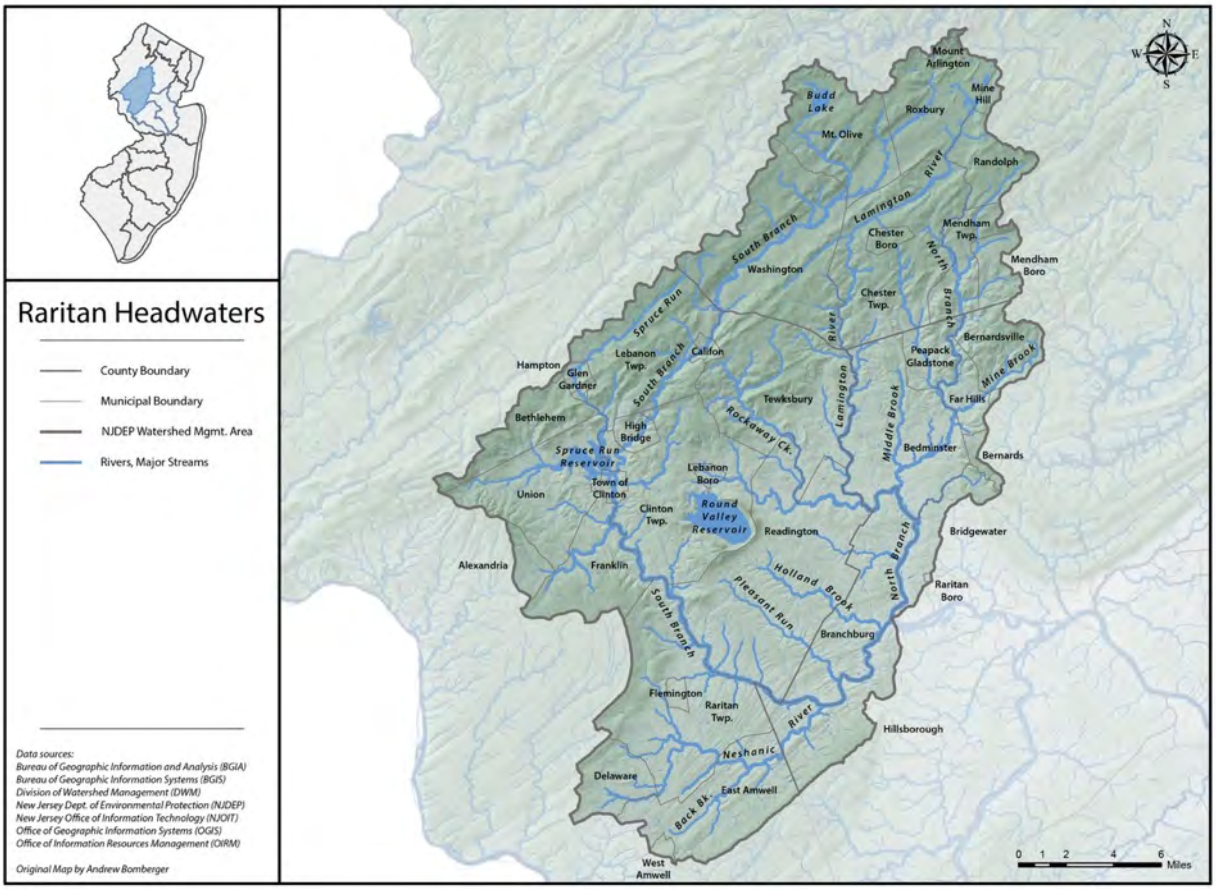
Mixed oak forest is native to the area. On slopes underlain by gneiss, red oak predominates along with white, black, scarlet, and chestnut oaks. On drier, high elevation slopes and ridgetops, both pitch pine-scrub oak and chestnut oak forests occur, and often intergrade. On moister sites, hemlock-mixed hardwood forest grows in ravines and on lower, north-facing steep slopes over gneiss. On more fertile sites, sugar maple-mixed hardwood forest occurs. Today, forest is common on more rugged, stony, or elevated sites. Elsewhere, general farmland, woodlots, and rural residential development occur. Forest is now less dense than in the Trap Rock Ridges and Palisades (64b). (EPA 2007)



The Raritan River Basin (NJWSA 2002:7)

The Raritan River Basin

Upon first view, the river patterns in Somerset County seem complex and illogical. It is only when one steps back to view the entire watershed of the Raritan River Basin that the logic of its organization becomes evident. The Raritan Basin encompasses 1,100 square miles of land drained by the Raritan River into Raritan Bay and is just about the size of Rhode Island. The basin extends from Hunterdon County's border with Warren County on the northwest to mid-Monmouth County on the southeast and from mid-Mercer County on the southwest to portions of Morris, Union, and Middlesex Counties on the northeast. On the northwest and southwest, the Raritan Basin borders the Delaware River Basin; on the northeast, it borders the Passaic River Basin; on the southeast, it borders the Atlantic Coastal Basin. (NJWSA 2002: 4-5)



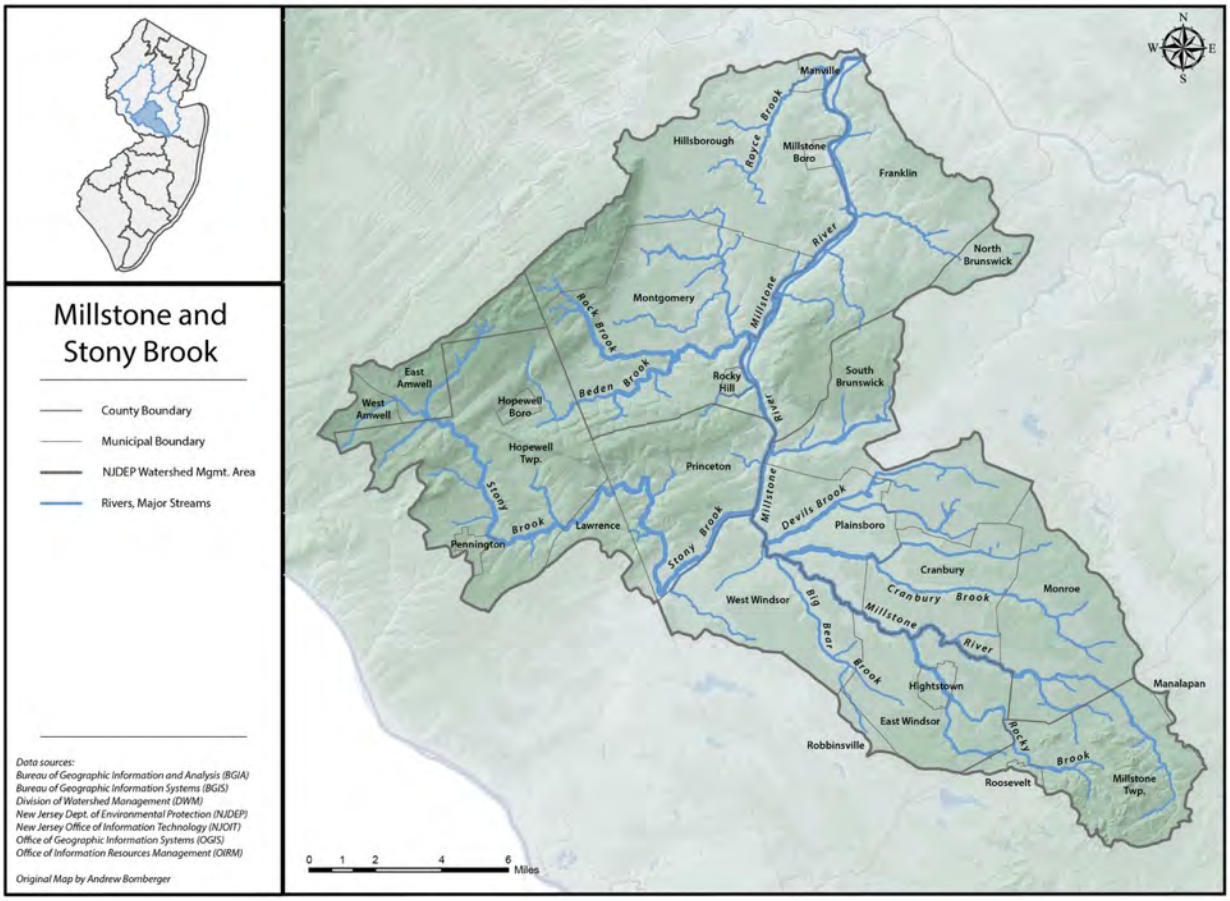
The Upper Raritan River, New Jersey Watershed Management Area 08 (Rutgers 2018)

Geologically and physiologically, the Raritan River Basin includes portions of the Highlands/New England Province, Triassic Lowlands/Piedmont Province, and Coastal Plain. Topographically, waters flow from the basin's edges inward to a point near Bound Brook and then eastward toward Raritan Bay. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has divided the basin into three watershed management areas (WMAs): the Upper Raritan River in the northwest (WMA 08), the Millstone River in the south (WMA 10), and the Lower Raritan River on the east (WMA 09).

The forests of the Upper Raritan River provide habitat for 23 threatened and endangered species and 120 resident bird species and support large populations of small mammals, butterflies, moths, and dragonflies. This Pearl Crescent butterfly (Phyciodes tharos) was spotted in the Sourland Mountain Reserve, part of Somerset County Parks. (Photo by Tom Boccino, courtesy Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development)

The Upper Raritan River (WMA 08)

The Upper Raritan River consists of the Raritan River's North Branch and South Branch and their



The Millstone River, New Jersey Watershed Management Area 10 (Rutgers 2018)

tributaries and includes large parts of Somerset, Hunterdon, and Morris counties.

The North Branch Raritan River has its headwaters in the valleys of the Highlands in Morris County and flows south in several tributaries through Bedminster Township to join the South Branch just west of Somerville and Bradley Gardens.

The South Branch Raritan River also has its headwaters in the valleys of the Highlands in Morris County, wrapping west and north around the North Branch, and flows south through Hunterdon County before being forced to turn back north by the Sourland Mountains to join the North Branch west of Bradley Gardens.

The South Branch in Somerset County is closely related to the agricultural areas of Hunterdon County to its north. Separated from the Somerset County's urban areas and transportation corridors by the Sourlands and less subject to development pressure, it has become a primary area for farmland preservation. Its historic land use has been mostly agricultural, but suburban and industrial development have been on the increase.

The North Branch's land use is primarily rural, woodland, and agricultural with scattered areas of commercial and residential development. Intense development is concentrated along the major road corridors of Routes 24 and 206 and interstate highways 22, 287, and 78. Over the past twenty

years, development has grown more diffuse and sprawling throughout the area.

With respect to water quality, consistent with the overall trend of New Jersey, the decline in farm activity and rapid increase in suburban non-point sources contributes to excessive loading of nutrients and sediments to the waterway through stormwater runoff and seasonal flooding.

WMA08's forests provide habitat for approximately 23 threatened and endangered species and 120 resident bird species. The forests also provide critical nesting habitat and migration corridors for migratory songbirds and other bird species. Wetlands, lakes, and streams provide habitat for endangered and threatened species, like the bog turtle and wood turtle. The region also supports large populations of small mammals, butterflies, moths, and dragonflies. (Rutgers 2018)

The Millstone River (WMA 10)

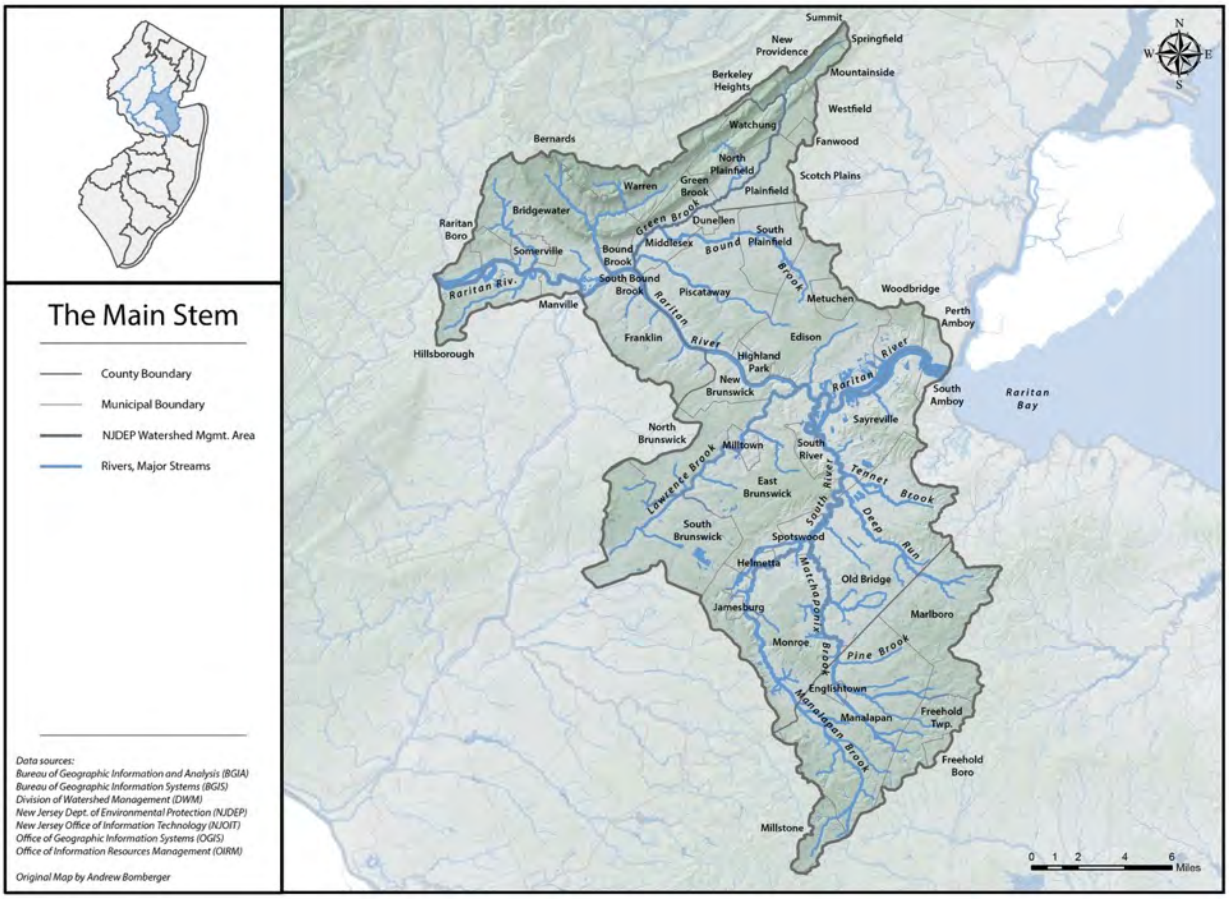
The Millstone River is a tributary of the Raritan River with its headwaters in the Coastal Plain, southeast of Somerset County. The Coastal Plain Physiographic Province is divided into three parts: Inner Coastal Plain, Pine Barrens (Outer Coastal Plain), and Barrier Islands (see the Ecoregions map on page 27). The headwaters of the Millstone River are located along a ridgeline at the eastern edge of the Inner Coastal Plain in Monmouth County, with water on the west of the ridgeline flowing westward to the Raritan River and water on the east flowing to the Atlantic Ocean.

While counterintuitive when thinking about Somerset County in relation to the Atlantic shoreline, the presence of this ridgeline accounts for the westward course of the Millstone River and its northward turn when confronted by the Sourland Mountains to its juncture with the Raritan River at Manville, just south of Somerville.

Land use within the larger Millstone River watershed is primarily suburban development with scattered agricultural areas. The historic road corridors of Route 27, Route 1, and the New Jersey Turnpike run along high ground at the eastern edge of the Triassic Lowland, just east of the Somerset County border, resulting in development pressure throughout the region. Since the 1930s, the overall area of agricultural lands in the watershed have diminished, while urban areas have increased. Only the wettest lowlands, most of which are in the Inner Coastal Plain (outside of Somerset County) still retain extensive tracts of natural vegetation.

Despite this shift to urbanization, as of 2002 the overall Millstone watershed had experienced only a

Opossum Road Bridge, Montgomery Township, over Bedens Brook, tributary to the Millstone River. Built in 1822, this bridge is among the earliest surviving in Somerset County and is listed in the National Register. The county features a number of early bridges thanks to its natural resources, for multiple reasons: the many streams with terrain unfavorable to fording for wagons, and the wealth built from farming excellent soils in a well-watered climate. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)



The Lower Raritan River, New Jersey Watershed Management Area 09 (Rutgers 2018)

2 percent loss of wetland and 5 percent of forested habitat. Many water quality issues have risen from the surge in urban and suburban development, including runoff from increased impervious cover, construction sites, suburban surfaces, storm sewers, and roads. Septic systems are believed to be a potential pollution problem throughout the watershed. In some areas, this poses a severe threat to the groundwater.

Despite continuing suburban development, there is still considerable wildlife habitat and a strong native biodiversity in the region. More than 89 species of birds are present in the watershed, including Owls, Yellow-Breasted Chat, Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, a variety of Woodpecker species, Warblers, and the Northern Mockingbird. The watershed also provides habitat for a variety of mammals, such as the Meadow Jumping Mouse, Eastern Cottontail, White-Tailed Deer, Coyote, Red Fox, Eastern Red Bat, and Black Bear. A wide variety of reptiles, amphibians, and butterflies also live within the region. (Rutgers 2018; EPA 2007)

The Lower Raritan River (WMA 09)

The Lower Raritan River includes the main stem of the Raritan River extending from the joining of the North and South Branches west of Bradley Gardens to the Raritan Bay at Perth Amboy. From New Brunswick east, the Raritan River is in Middlesex County, including its South River and Lawrence Brook tributaries, which are both within the Inner

Coastal Plain portion of the watershed as described above.

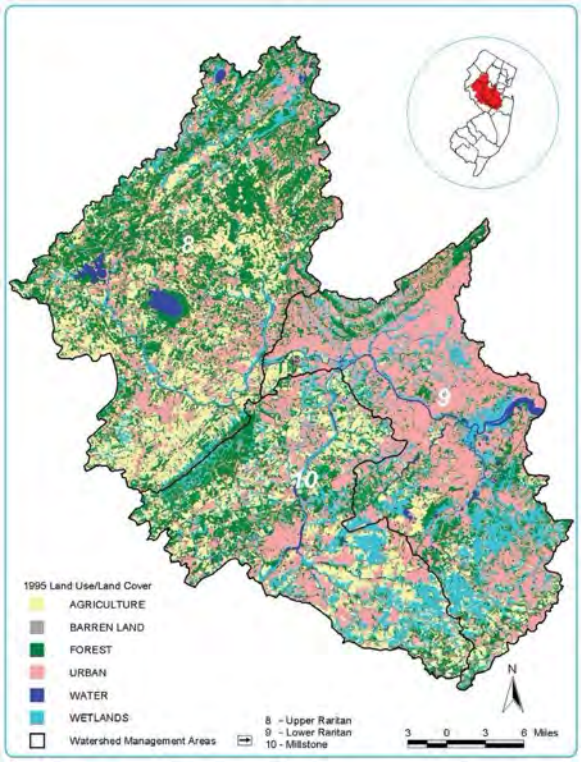
Land use within the Lower Raritan River watershed is primarily urban and suburban, with industrial and commercial centers throughout. This is particularly true along the Somerset County portion of the river, although significant agricultural lands remain in the vicinity of the Duke Farms south of the towns of Raritan and Bradley Gardens.

Construction activities, increased use of impervious surfaces and stream bank modification have all contributed to silt loads and local flooding within the watershed. There is an increasing amount of runoff from urban services, roads, and storm sewers. These conditions have reduced water quality and fish habitat.

Wildlife along the Lower Raritan River can be characterized by its wide variety of bird species, including the American Oystercatcher, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, and a wide range of gulls. A s had fishery is developing in the Raritan, fostered by dam removals. Improvements in water quality have brought the return of many fish populations to the lower Raritan, including largemouth and smallmouth bass, carp, yellow perch, sunfish, catfish, and American eel. (Rutgers 2018)

C. Pre-Columbian Cultures in New Jersey (12,500 BP – 1600)

After advancing southward to central Morris County, Wisconsinan glaciers retreated from northern New Jersey about 20,000 years ago. By 15,000 years ago forests are believed to have begun re-establishing themselves within the state. As the climate warmed, plant communities adapted to warmer regions moved northward, bringing more diverse and



Land use within the Raritan River Watershed (NJWSA 2002:7

abundant species upon which human populations could live. (DEP 2016; Tobiassen 1978:2,6)

It is important to recognize that humans have lived and evolved in the northeastern United States, including New Jersey, for thousands of years. Archeologists believe that the ancestors of Native Americans, known as Paleo-Indians, may have been present as early as 12,500 years ago, and there is solid evidence that they were present by 8,000 years ago. (Stansfield 1998: 556; Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-3; Greene 2010:7)

Paleo-Indian archeological sites are rare and suggest that the people of this period were hunter-gatherers living in small nomadic bands and were practiced in hunting, as evidenced from the tools found. The climate was significantly colder than today, featuring spruce, pine, and birch with abundant wildlife

including many species of large animals that are no longer present today.

During the Archaic Period, 8,000 to 3,000 years ago, environmental conditions moderated. By about 6,000 years ago, the climate had adapted from forests and landscapes similar to today's boreal forests in Canada to a climate more closely resembling present conditions. With these gradual changes came changes in human technological and social adaptation, including indications that smaller and more diverse game was being procured and processed. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-4; Greene 2010:7)

The timeframe from about 3,000 to 350 years ago is known as the Woodland Period, during which the environmental conditions were virtually the same as today with only small variations, such as a slightly lower sea level. The Woodland Period was characterized by the population's shift to a more sedentary way of life that included the making of pottery, domestication of plants, and a progressively more settled village existence. The introduction of horticulture was one of the most important developments of the period, and it brought about technical and social changes reflecting a diverse range of new activities evidenced through artifacts that have been uncovered. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-5)

The Lenape

The Woodland peoples occupying central New Jersey by the time of first European contact about 1500 are believed to have migrated here from the north only a few centuries before. They are associated with the Algonquin-speaking peoples of coastal New England. The peoples directly north of the Raritan River-Delaware Water Gap zone spoke a language known as Munsee, while the peoples south of that zone, presumably including Somerset County, spoke Unami. Both languages are dialects of Algonquin. The Unami referred to themselves as Lenape, which name came into common use and also came to apply to the Munsee. The Europeans referred to both groups as the Delawares. (Stansfield 1998:56; Greene 2010:7)

Little direct evidence about the Lenape in the Raritan Valley at the time of contact is available. The tribe was loosely organized, and different, largely independent groups are believed to have inhabited different areas of the county (Havens 1990:12). Nonetheless, their influence upon the landscape was of significance. At the time of contact, it is estimated that a population of between 6,000 and 12,000 Lenape were present in New Jersey, with 8,000 being the most commonly used figure. This represents a relatively low density of habitation given the large area. (Stansfield 1998:56)

The Native American Landscape

The most lasting significance of the Lenape was their influence on the natural landscape, particularly upon vegetation, establishing the landscape context found and occupied by European settlers. The Lenape had cleared land for agriculture, practicing a cycle of clearing, planting, abandonment, and returning to plant again that influenced the plant communities present in different areas of the landscape. The best land for agriculture (both then and today), especially fertile floodplains along river courses, may be presumed to have been cleared and then abandoned to successional growth by the time European settlers first entered this landscape. The Lenape had already prepared the best lands for agriculture and made European occupation easier.

Additionally, the Lenape are believed to have practiced the burning of woodlands in order to drive game for hunting, facilitate travel, and encourage

vegetative growth on the forest floor and at forest edges that was preferred by deer and other small game. Lenape agriculture and woodland management had a significant impact upon the types of plant communities present across the landscape at the time of European contact. (Stansfield 1998:57)

Pre-Columbian Archeological Resources

Despite low population densities, the sheer amount of time that Native American groups occupied the landscape results in there being many physical traces of their presence remaining today, especially the presence of artifacts such as points, flakes, and tools wherever soils have not been badly disturbed. The most significant archeological finds often occur in close proximity to water resources such as rivers, ponds, and wetlands. The survival of native American settlement sites and transient camp sites are important when they can be found. The same places preferred by Native Americans, however, are also places preferred, settled, and developed by Europeans. Thus, the extent of development that has occurred in central New Jersey has obliterated many potential Native American site locations.

Investigations required by federal and state compliance projects for public and publicly supported projects are the most important means through which Native American sites are identified today. However, the places where current projects are undertaken are not necessarily the places where sites are most likely to be found.

The soils of many woodland conservation properties, such as in the Sourlands, are often minimally disturbed and may be most intact for archeological potential. Farmland, though extensively plowed and often eroded, still has the potential to yield important archeological finds. Walking recently plowed farm fields with eyes on the ground looking for artifacts that have been turned up is a fruitful way of identifying potential Native American sites. Known pre-Columbian archeological sites are identified in the files of the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office but are not made public for their preservation and protection from looting.

The plant communities that make up today's natural woodlands and successional growth are derived in part from the ecology and seed stocks that were present during Native American eras, before contact and settlement by European peoples, and in part from a wide variety of plants brought into the region from the colonial period onward. (Photos courtesy Somerset County Park Commission; left, Passaic River Greenway; right, Little Brook Preserve.)

Native American Trails

Among the most significant landscape resources derived from Native American occupation was the network of trails that were present at the time of European settlement, many of which became early colonial roads. Native American trails tended to follow ridgelines and drainage divides so that the pathways were dry and walkable, avoiding wet areas and minimizing stream crossings. They tend to follow topography and can be winding – not necessarily the most direct route. The points chosen for stream crossings avoided wetlands and favored places with firm footing in the stream beds. Trails tended to converge at these preferred crossing points. Early European settlers sought the same characteristics

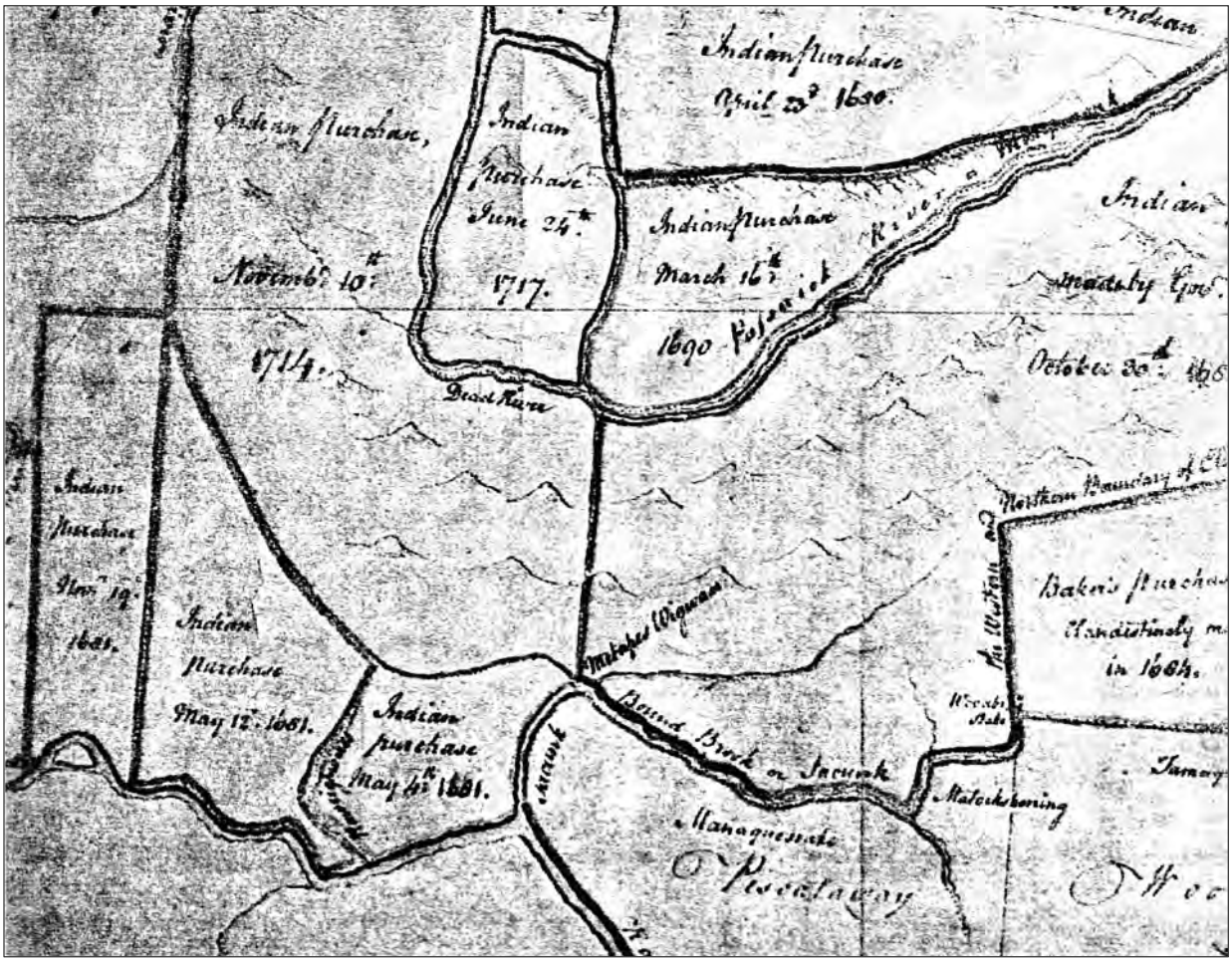


Figure 2.A. Proprietors' map showing Indian purchases, 1671 to 1717. Of particular interest is a point on the map (at center) identified as Metapes Wigwam. Chief Sachems Metapes of Toponemose was a signatory of many Indian purchases in that period. His wigwam was located at the intersection of Sebring Mill Road and Rt. 22. The site is two miles upstream from the Raritan River at the confluence of Bound Brook and Green Brook, where King George Road crosses the stream before heading North over the first Watchung ridge. King George Road, which runs between Metapes Wigwam and the confluence of the Dead River and the Passaic River, was the dividing line between two of the tracts. The selection of that line suggests that the road may have been an important Indian trail connecting the Raritan and the Passaic Rivers. (Image and caption information courtesy Green Brook Historical Society, source http://www.gbhsnj.org/maps)

and used many Native American trails and crossings for early travel.

Best known in central New Jersey are the Old Dutch Trail, Old York Road, and their linkages. The Old Dutch Trail connected the vicinity of Elizabeth and the Hudson River with the vicinity of Trenton at the Delaware River, passing through the New Brunswick area. Over time, it has been transformed into today's Route 27. Like today's adjacent Route 1 and I-95, it follows the high ground at the southeast edge of the Triassic Lowlands just west of the Inner Coastal Plain (which has extensive wetlands and is impassible). The narrow area of upland topography and dry soils located between New Brunswick and Lawrence Brook, both just south of the Somerset County line, has been the preferred area for transportation corridors linking the Hudson River to the Delaware River from pre-Columbian times to the present.

The trail that became the Old York Road connected the vicinity of Elizabeth with the vicinity of Lambertville on the Delaware River. Within Somerset County, it passed through Bound Brook and Somerville before crossing the North Branch Raritan River and turning southwest. Today, its route can be traced along a number of smaller roads in western Somerset County and in Hunterdon County, traveling northwest of the Sourland Mountains. Even where improved these roads are more winding and closely following the topography than newly constructed roads are likely to be. Other probable trails are identifiable as roads on early colonial maps, some of which remain today in more rural areas. (Figure 2.A)

Contact and Decline

The end of the pre-Columbian period in Somerset County can be approximated as 1600, by which time the Lenape began to have substantial contact with European culture. In 1609, Henry Hudson explored the Hudson River as far north as Albany. Dutch traders are believed to have entered Bergen and Hudson Counties by 1615. In 1624, the Dutch established Fort Amsterdam on Manhattan. In 1626, attempts were made to establish outposts on Burlington Island and along Big Timber Creek along the Delaware River. In 1638, the Swedes established trading posts in the Delaware Valley. (Stansfield 1998:63,71)

Contact with European fur traders dramatically disrupted traditional Lenape and other Native American life-ways. The Native Americans sought items produced by European technology, such as metal blades and utensils, that had not been available to them before. Their turn to extensive hunting for furs to trade for European goods changed the cycles of community life. Complex relationships and competition between the various Native American tribal groups, the fur traders, and the governing authorities, including wars and raids between 1640 and 1666, led to a complete disruption of Lenape life in central New Jersey and elsewhere. Most devastating, between 1620 and 1640, as much as 90 percent of the Lenape population in central New Jersey died as a result of European diseases, clearing the landscape of inhabitants and opening the land for European occupation. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-3; Stansfield 1998:63)

D. The 18th and 19th Century Agricultural Landscape (1680 – 1860)

From early settlement through the mid-19th century, a mature agricultural landscape was established in Somerset County. Most prominent in the low rolling hills and moderately fertile soils of the Triassic Lowlands and part of the central landscape corridor

connecting the population centers of New York and Philadelphia, agriculture in Somerset County prospered and helped establish New Jersey as the Garden State. Though this two-century era included many historical changes and events, this long period of development was consistent in (1) the dominance of agriculture as the primary economic force within the region, (2) its dependence upon wagon and water for transportation, and (3) its dependence upon water power as a source of energy for industrial activities. Many of the distinctive landscape patterns that were established in the county during this period are still clearly evident in the landscape today.

Vail-Trust House, Green Brook Township, a fascinating story in wood for architectural historians. The east (right) end, according to its National Register listing, "is a fine example of the process of 18th century acculturation in northeastern Somerset County as depicted in its architecture. The one-and-a-half-story, single-pile East Jersey Cottage and its double-pile version known as a "deep" East Jersey Cottage reflect an amalgam of Dutch and New England influences, a combination of traditions that has been previously identified in the vicinity north of the Raritan River, which experienced concurrent English and Dutch in-migration and rapid acculturation between the groups…. Almost all of the surviving one-and-a-half story houses have interior end chimneys, another Dutch influence that gained favor over the central chimney common to New England dwellings." The central Italianate section was built in 1870 and the final, west section is an example of early 20th century Colonial Revival. (Courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

Initial settlement of the area of central New Jersey that became Somerset County occurred in the 1680s, though political machinations for the establishment of provinces here had been underway since England wrested control of the territory from the Dutch in 1664. Large parcels of land became available for sale in Somerset County after 1681. Many of the early settlers in the southern portion of the county, in the vicinity of the Raritan River, were second and third generation Dutch families who had moved from Long Island, attracted by the prospect of larger land holdings. A wave of English settlement occurred predominantly in the northern portion of the county between 1685 and 1700. Like the Dutch, these early English families relocated from other portions of the colonies, primarily New England. By 1693, however, Somerset County was still thought to be too sparsely populated to be divided into townships. (Havens 1990:19-20; Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-8–II-10)

Settlement and population growth in the county increased in the early 18th century, with additional Dutch migration from Long Island after 1700 to about 1738 and Scots-Irish migration from overseas after 1720. The Dutch continued to concentrate in the low rolling hills south of the Raritan River, where farms tended to be larger. In 1737, the average size of a Dutch-owned farm was 80 acres, though many Dutch landowners owned 200 or more acres. By contrast, the average size of English-owned farms in the county was 40 acres. The population of Somerset County in 1726 was 2,271. By 1737, it had increased to 4,505, and by the end of the 18th

century the population was 12,815. Today, the population of Somerset County is approximately 330,000 residents. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988; II-9—II-11; Havens 1990:22-23; Ross 2018)

The character of Somerset County's agricultural landscape was significantly influenced by native landscape conditions that were present as well as by the dependence upon wagon transportation and water power. The low rolling hills of the Triassic Lowlands south of the Raritan River, the area of early Dutch concentration, provided the best soils and least rocky, most gentle topography, and most easily cultivated lands. The earliest landowners established their farms on the fertile lands adjacent to streams and rivers, but as settlement increased in the early 18th century, farms were laid out across the landscape.

Network of Wagon Roads

The network of early wagon roads used to access farms became a prominent feature of the landscape and continues to be a character-defining feature of the landscape today. A 1781 British map of portions of Somerset County shows the network of roads with considerable accuracy for the time (Figure 2.B). The locations of residences and farmsteads, many along the river roads, are also shown.

Figure 2.B. 1781 British map of portions of Somerset County. North is to the right. Wagon roads between the Raritan and Millstone Rivers are shown on the left portion of the map. Roads north of the Raritan River within the Watchung Mountains are shown on the right. (Library of Congress)

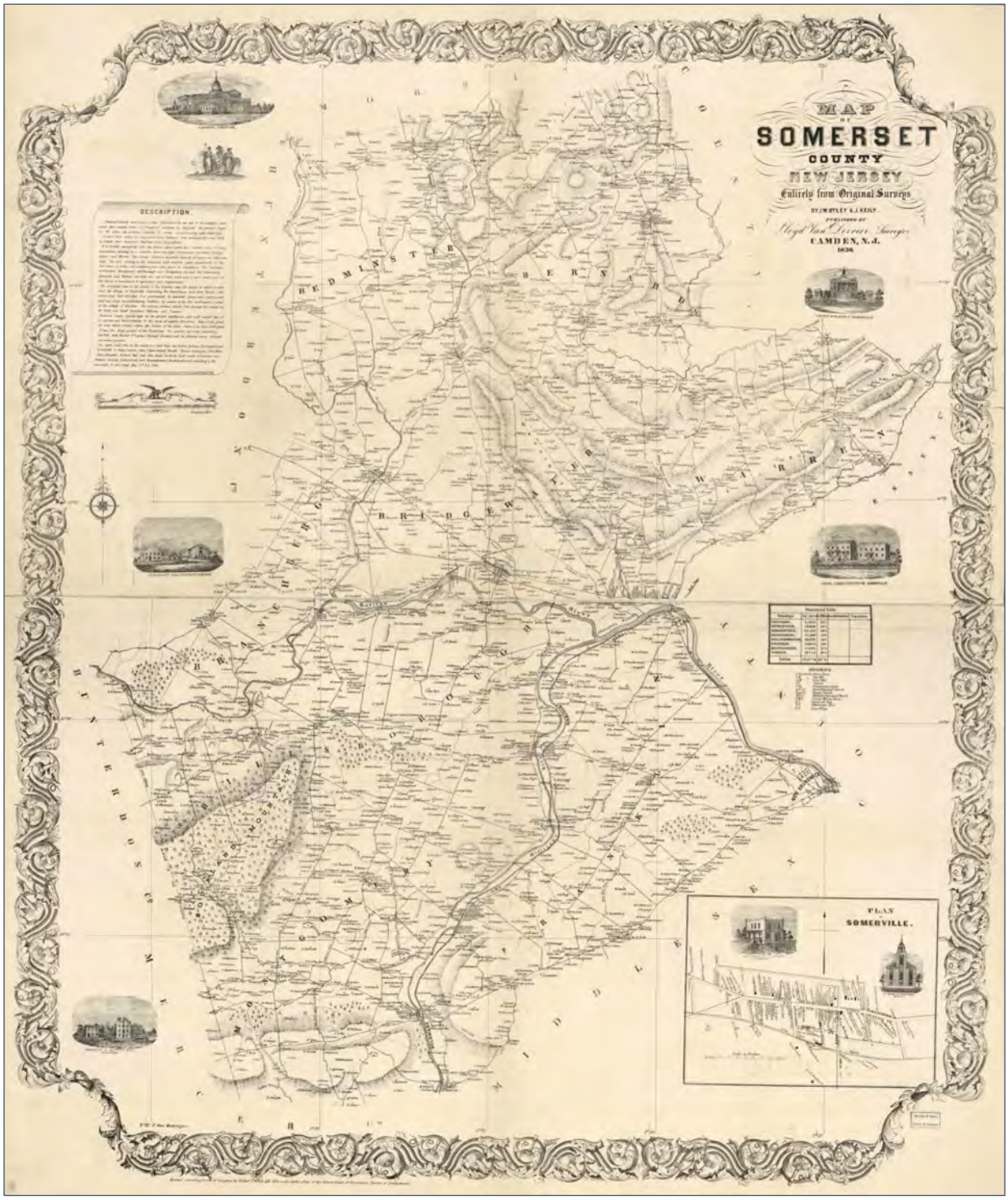


Figure 2.C. 1850 map of Somerset County (Library of Congress 1850)

The full development of wagon roads during Somerset County's agricultural era is shown in an 1850 map of the county (Figure 2.C). In the southern portion of the county, roughly north/south wagon roads follow the banks of the Raritan and Millstone Rivers as well as both sides of the base of Sourland Mountain. Additional north/south roads cut through the middle of the low rolling agricultural areas between Sourland Mountain and the Millstone River and between the Millstone River and the Raritan River.

Roads crossing east-west are regularly spaced connecting the north-south routes, often set on the higher topography between creeks such as Six Mile Run, Ten Mile Run, and Simonson Brook. Most of these crossing roads are straight and roughly parallel with each other, indicating that the mild topography was not overly influencing their course. Turns are often at right angles, suggesting that they were laid out along property lines and the field lines of farms.

In the northern portion of the county, wagon roads follow the varied topography more closely, such as along the valleys between the Watchung ridges and the cuts that provided access over the ridges.

The 1850 map shows the distribution of farmsteads across the landscape in relationship to the wagon roads, lacking only property lines and the layout of fields in depicting the agricultural landscape. Crossroads villages are shown in addition to the locations of mills, tanneries, bridges, blacksmith shops, wheelwright shops, churches, taverns, hotels, schoolhouses, and graveyards. The business and social texture of the physical landscape can be gleaned through their depiction.

The limitations of wagon transport by horse or oxen required that the services needed by farmers be accessible locally in nearby crossroads villages that wagons could reach. The distribution of crossroads villages is clearly shown on the 1850 map. Stores, taverns, and mills in many of the villages are noted. Additional services, such as the various types of craftsmen necessary for rural agricultural life, were undoubtedly present as well. Blacksmith shops, wheelwright shops, and schoolhouses are shown distributed at locations across the landscape, not only in villages.

Early Industry

Early industry was an integral part of the agricultural landscape, located in proximity to available water power and raw materials. In the case of sawmills, the needed raw material was trees. In the case of gristmills, it was the produce of surrounding farms. A few distinctive types of local industry are shown on the 1850 map, such as earthenware manufactories,

Vosseller's Tavern (c. 1768), Bridgewater Township. The National Register listing explains, "Recognized as a landmark on Robert Erskine's 18th century map [1780, for the Continental Army], this house is one of the best preserved pre-Revolutionary commercial buildings in the Somerville area. In the 18th century, it was a general store and tavern; in the 19th century, a tavern serving stage travelers on the old Pluckemin Road (Peapack Road) until a new road diverted traffic; a farmhouse until World War II; and a residence thereafter."(Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

stone quarries, and lime kilns, but the lack of substantial types of other raw materials within the region limited the number and range of industrial sites that developed.

Gristmills, sawmills, and other types of mills were essential to agricultural life and are depicted across the 1850 map. All were dependent upon the potential for water power for their location. The North and South Branch Raritan Rivers and the Millstone River and its tributaries, especially to the west between the river and Sourland Mountain, appear to have provided the best locations.

Canal, Railroad, and Turnpikes

Construction of the Delaware and Raritan Canal was completed in 1834 and connected the Delaware River near Trenton and Bordentown with the Raritan River near New Brunswick. In Somerset County, its route parallels the Millstone and Raritan Rivers. The 1850 map shows its route and features associated with it, such as locks and basins. Villages along the Millstone River, including Rocky Hill, Griggstown, Blackwells, Johnsville (East Millstone), Millstone, and Bound Brook, were among the largest in the county, but were still small and rural compared to later towns.

In addition to the transportation of goods from end to end, the canal served the agricultural countryside in its vicinity. It allowed farmers to ship their grain to markets outside of the region and gave them access to needed materials such as lime, fertilizer, and machinery. Lime kilns in several villages along the canal suggest that limestone was among the

Figure 2.D. Detail of the 1850 map from Sourland Mountain on the left to Middlebush on the right showing the layout of wagon roads, farmsteads, and villages across the landscape. (Library of Congress 1850)

commodities transported, as there is no limestone geology within the vicinity. Limestone would have been converted to lime at the kilns for use by farmers on their fields. By 1866, 83 percent of the canal's business came from transporting coal from Pennsylvania to the New York area. The canal was running at a loss in 1892 due to competition from recently constructed railroads, and it ceased operation in 1933. It was taken over by the state as a water source thereafter and was designated as a state park in 1974. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-19; Haven 1990:37-38; Ross 2018)

Simultaneous with the development of the canal, and under shared leadership, the Elizabeth and Somerset Railroad was chartered in 1831 and constructed from Elizabeth to Somerville between 1834 and 1843. The railroad went bankrupt in 1846 but was taken over by new investors and extended east to Jersey City and west to Phillipsburg on the Delaware River by 1852. The railroad was renamed the Central Railroad of New Jersey and became highly profitable, a linchpin of the region's railroad development in the late 19th century. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-20—II-21; Haven 1990:38-41; Ross 2 018)

The route of the Central Railroad through Somerset County is shown on the 1850 map, and its benefit to the early development of Bound Brook, Somerville, and Raritan is evident. In the 1850s, the railroad was also beginning to benefit county farmers in the same way as the canal by providing access to regional markets.

The 1850 map also shows the routes of turnpikes that were developed in Somerset County during the early 19th century. Turnpikes were constructed by authorized investment companies and were paved with macadam (crushed stone) and crowned for

The confluence of Peapack Brook and the North Branch of the Raritan River became a rural industrial center during the 18th century when a saw mill, grist mill, tannery, and bark mill were located nearby. The Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District, eligible for the National Register, includes five houses, several outbuildings and mill structures that reflect the industrial and agricultural development of the area, ca. 1750-1900. Shown here is Elm Cottage, a mid-18th-century residence with extensive mid-19th-century additions and alterations. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

drainage, providing a straight and dependable dry surface for regional wagon transport. Several turnpikes that were developed in the early 19th century served the agricultural community in Somerset County, providing efficient routes for wagon transport of grain and produce to markets outside of the region.

Most prominently, in 1806 the New Jersey Turnpike (not today's highway) was chartered, and it was constructed by 1809 east-west through Somerset County from New Brunswick, through Bound Brook and Somerville, and west to Easton, Pennsylvania. The 1850 map shows the turnpike extending from North Branch at the west end of the county through Somerville and Bound Brook and eastward paralleling the railroad. It does not show the extension south to New Brunswick, which may have

become obsolete. The turnpike, railroad, and canal were the first manifestations of the extensive regional transportation network that developed in the county in the late 19th century and transformed its economy. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-18; Haven 1990:36)

In addition to the canal and railroad, one indication of change from a rural, wagon-dependent agricultural landscape to an emerging industrial landscape is a steam sawmill shown in Hillsborough Township on the 1850 map. Steam-powered sawmills marked a technological advance that freed mills from the need to be located at sources of water power. Burning coal to produce steam that drives the saws, steam-powered mills could be located anywhere. It is not clear why the mill shown in Hillsborough was located where it was – it is not particularly close to either the canal or the railroad from which it could easily access supplies of coal. Perhaps coal was shipped by wagon from the railroad at Raritan or Somerville. But its presence shows the changes that were taking place that helped transform the industrial landscape in the late 19th century.

Landscape Character

The most dramatic change brought about by the development of an agricultural landscape was to the vegetation across the region. By the 1830s to the 1850s, that change had reached its peak through the clearing of woodlands for farms and rural industrial uses. By the early 19th century, after more than a century of agricultural development, Somerset County, like most of the northeast, was almost devoid of trees and woodlands. The forests that had existed before settlement when the Lenape occupied the land were cleared away, dramatically altering the ecology of the landscape.

Clearing of the forest wiped out native plant communities and the wildlife that depended upon them. Grazing livestock compacted soils with their hoofs and killed off native plants by eating them down to their roots. At the same time, European farmers introduced non-native plants to the landscape, both intentionally and unintentionally. These non-native species competed with native plants within plant communities, often out-competing and replacing them. Many types of new weedy plants that had not been here before were introduced and thrived, altering the regional ecology. (Stansfield 1998:64-66)

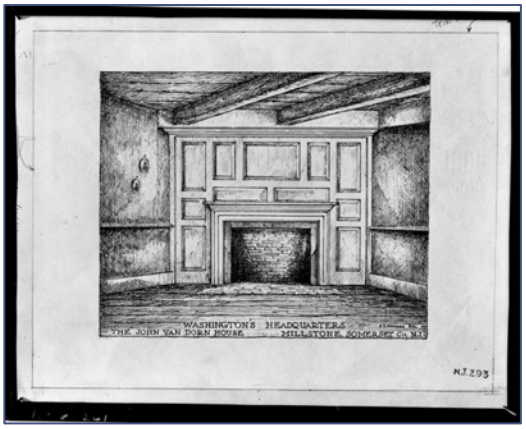
The lack of trees throughout the landscape resulted in a lack of shade, raising soil temperatures and decreasing soil moisture. Microclimates throughout the landscape became hotter and drier. Surface runoff from rain events dramatically increased causing increased soil erosion. Creeks became deeply eroded, the effects of which can still be seen today. Ponds created for water powered-mills silted in and, when eventually abandoned, became dry flat areas that were easily eroded. (Stansfield 1998:66-69)

The environmental degradation caused by the dramatic changes to the agricultural landscape peaked in the mid-19th century period depicted in Somerset County's 1850 map. Its evidence remains in the landscape today. Though the 1850 map depicts areas such as the diabase ridges of Sourland Mountain and the Rocky Hill vicinity as wooded, it is likely that these "wooded" areas were rough successional growth of shrubs and young trees that had been extensively and repeatedly cut in earlier years. It is interesting that the map does not show woodlands along the steep ridges of the Watchung Mountains.

In the late 19th century, landscape devastation led to the birth of national conservation movements and the beginnings of professional forestry, the purchase of devastated lands for public parks and forest preserves, tree planting in local communities, and private land protection efforts. These beginnings have evolved into today's extensive park and conservation programs. Forest fires on vacant successional land and the increasing need for large volumes of public water for developing urban areas, such as in eastern and northern New Jersey, became serious public issues and eventually helped drive governmental action and investment in land conservation.

Key attributes of Somerset County's 19th century agricultural landscape remain clearly evident today and continue to be significant character-defining features. The county's 19th century network of early agricultural roads remains today and continues to be the primary network of roads for local and regional travel within the county. In the 19th century, these roads were one-lane dirt tracks, and wagon or carriage travel was slow. Today, most of these roads are two-lane local connectors, and automobile speeds are fast. Some early roads, such as Routes 22 and 206, have been straightened and improved as major thoroughfares, but the majority of 18th and early 19th century roads in the county retain their overall rural character despite modern travel improvements.

Today's speed of travel on these roads makes it difficult to appreciate many of the historic building and landscape resources that remain along them. Many of the historic homes and farmsteads depicted on the 1850 map still exist. Historic crossroads villages remain as important features in the landscape and are a focus of historic preservation efforts. The close proximity of some historic residences to roads with high volumes of traffic and fast speeds is a preservation issue. Agricultural landscape features such as field lines, farm lanes, mill pond sites, and other features are evident in many places.



The Van Doren House in Millstone (rear view) is mapped in the 1850 map of Somerset County seen enlarged at Figure 2.D. George Washington made it his temporary quarters on his march to winter encampment at Morristown, January 3 to 4, 1777. This important rendition of a Dutch-style house (c. 1755) was drawn and photographed in 1937 by Historic American Buildings Survey architects and photographers employed in the Depression-era Works Progress Administration. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission; drawing, Library of Congress)

Somerset County's Existing Preserved Lands and Priority Preservation Investment Areas as mapped in the County Investment Framework are closely related to the 19th century agricultural landscape. Primary areas include: (1) the Bedminster/Peapack-Gladstone Townships vicinity, where the 19th century agricultural landscape is fairly well preserved (in large part by the establishment of later estates); (2) the diabase uplands of Sourland Mountain and the Rocky Hill area – areas of poor agricultural soils and topography; and (3) agricultural lands in the vicinity of South Branch Raritan River and Six Mile Run that retain much of their agricultural character. These areas continue to be the focus of today's farmland and natural landscape conservation efforts.

E. Regional Industrial Center (1870 - 1930)

In the late 19th century, an extensive network of railroads was constructed throughout the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions altering the previous agricultural development patterns of the landscape. Whereas the rural agricultural landscape of the early 19th century emphasized patterns of farms, mills, villages, and small industries more or less evenly dispersed across the countryside, railroads enabled the concentration of raw materials, people, and industrial activity in new industrial centers.

During the agricultural era, industry depended upon close proximity to raw materials and locations where water power could be harnessed. With railroads, raw materials and energy in the form of coal could be

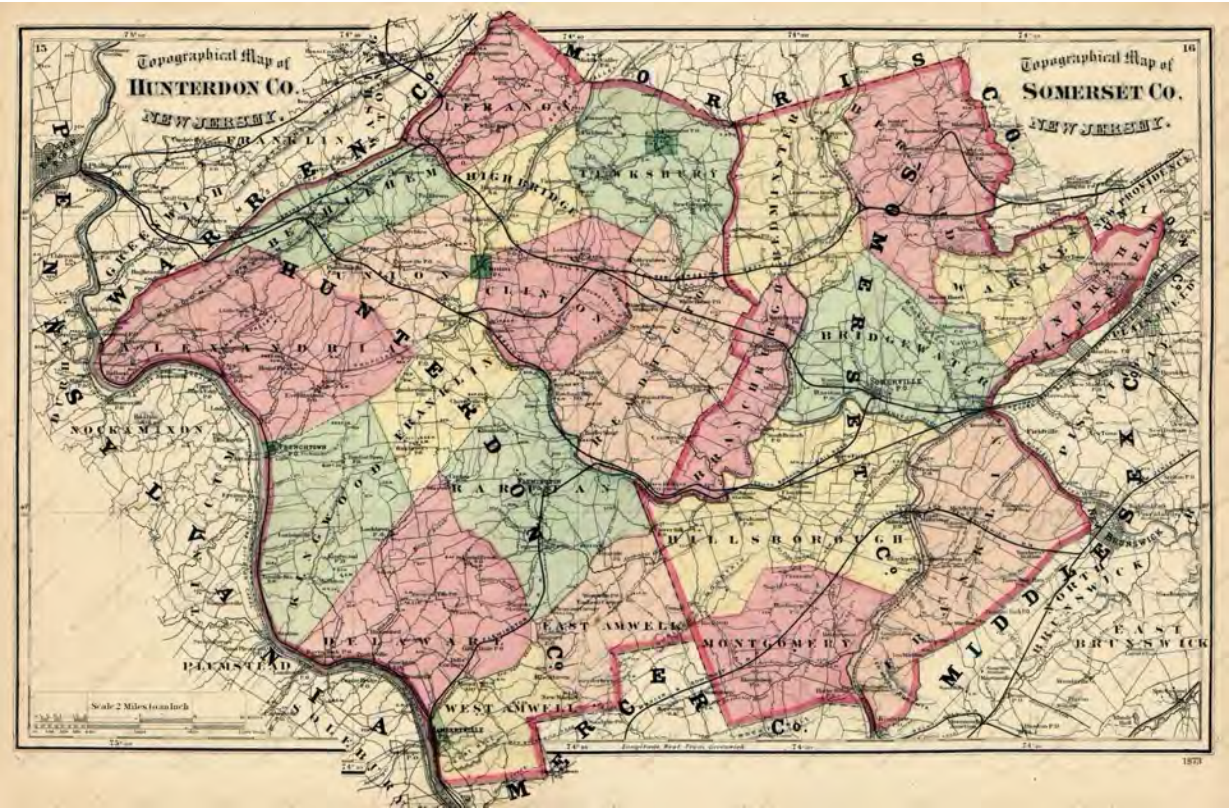


Figure 2.E. 1872 map of Somerset and Hunterdon Counties showing the routes of railroads that had been developed as of that date. (Courtesy RU Special Collections, at http://mapmaker.rutgers.edu/1872Atlas/Hunterdon_Somerset_1872.jpg)

shipped to industrial centers where manufacturing enterprises could be built, grouped, and expanded; the workforce could be concentrated; and finished products could be shipped regionally and nationally.

Industrial towns and cities grew throughout the northeast, including northeastern New Jersey. Major industrial centers such as New York and Philadelphia expanded rapidly and exerted economic influence upon their surrounding regions. Major railroads connecting these centers were developed through Somerset County, and this period saw the growth of what would become the county's urban core, centered on Somerville, Raritan, and Bound Brook.

The trend toward industrialization began with the successful expansion of the Central New Jersey Railroad in the 1850s, discussed above. The regional

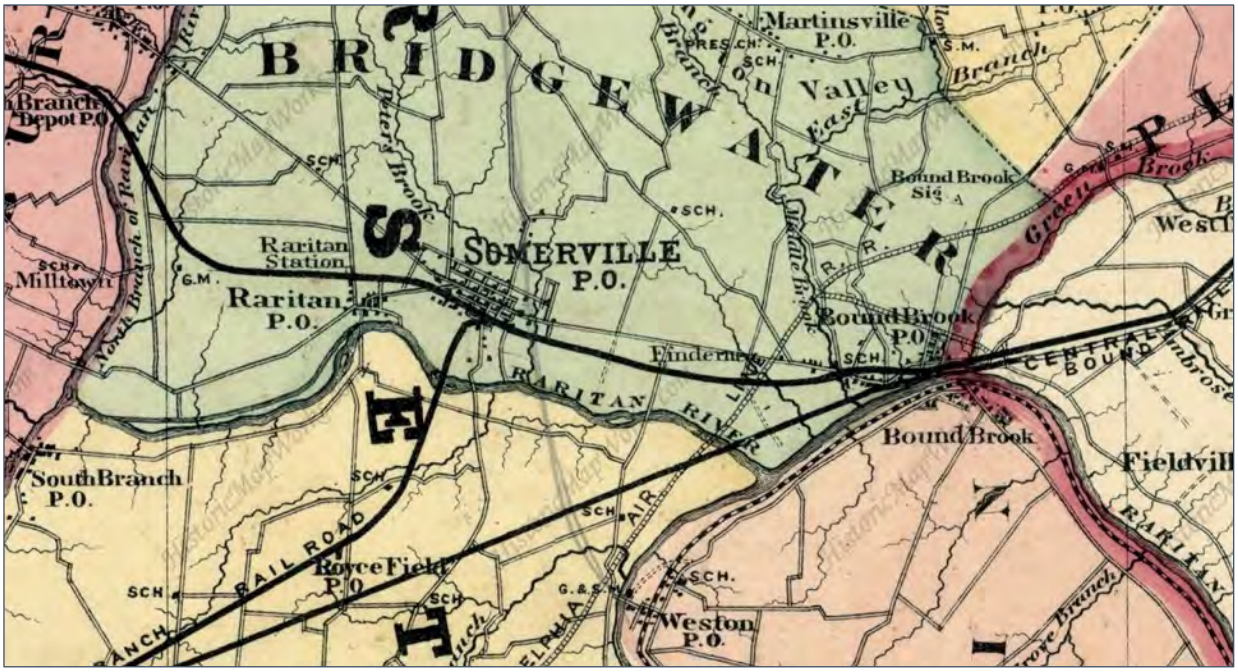


Figure 2.F. Raritan, Somerville, and Bound Brook in 1872 (Courtesy Rutgers University Special Collection)

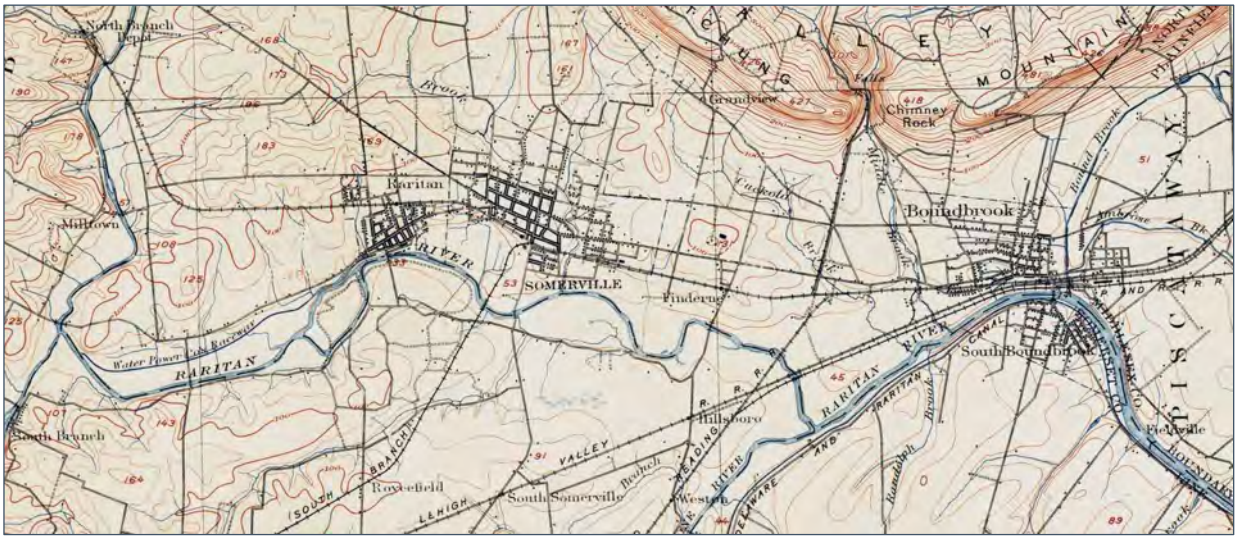


Figure 2.G. Raritan, Somerville, and Bound Brook in 1910 (USGS 1910)

network of railroads grew and matured in the late 19th century – particularly between 1870 and 1890 – and became an integral part of the nationwide network (Figure 2.E).

Early mid-19th century railroads were envisioned as local enterprises, wherein a group of local investors connected two promising locations, such as the early Elizabeth and Somerset Railroad Company. These small railroad lines were absorbed into larger competing networks that provided nationwide access in the late 19th century. Railroads through Somerset County linked the rapidly expanding New York and northern New Jersey industrial region (Elizabeth, Newark, Perth Amboy) with Easton (providing access to Pennsylvania coal) and Trenton and Philadelphia, which were growing manufacturing centers. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988: II-20—II-23)

The routes of most of the railroads constructed in the late 19th century have been widened and remain active today. The 1872 map of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties shows the railroad lines in the midst of their development. The Central Railroad of New Jersey, running east-west from Jersey City to Easton through Bound Brook, Somerville, and Raritan, was the county's dominant line from the late 1850s into the 20th century for both passengers and freight. A branch was extended south from Somerville toward Lambertville, Trenton, and Philadelphia and is shown on the 1872 map. This branch crosses the Raritan River, runs along the South Branch Raritan River through Neshanic Station and Three Bridges (north of Sourland Mountain) before turning south. An additional branch was later added from Bound Brook Junction running along the south side of Sourland Mountain directly to Trenton.

A second major railroad was completed in 1875 connecting Easton and Perth Amboy. This line runs south from Easton to Three Bridges and Neshanic Station along the South Branch Raritan River before turning northeast to Bound Brook and then east to Perth Amboy. It is also shown on the 1873 map.

In the northern portion of the county, a branch of the Central Railroad was extended east in the 1870s and 1880s along a portion of the North Branch Raritan River eventually connecting through Bernardsville to Union County and with a branch to Morristown.

In addition to connecting the industrial region of northeastern New Jersey and New York with Pennsylvania and the national network, these railroad lines created regional industrial centers in Somerset County. In the late 19th century as a result of the railroads, Raritan, Somerville, and Bound Brook began to expand and became significantly larger and more urban than the rural agricultural communities in the north and south portions of the county. A diverse range of industrial facilities were established on lands adjacent to the railroad. In Bound Brook, they included plants producing woolen products, lubricating oils, hose, paint, compressed air pumps, car heating apparatus, and dyestuffs and chemicals. In Somerville they produced building brick, clothing, pipes and fitting, and packed pork. In Raritan they produced woolen products, cloth, metal foundry products, machinery, and agricultural implements. Urban residential and commercial areas developed around these industrial facilities. As a result of this industrial growth, the county's population increased by 65 percent between 1870 and 1910. Somerset County's central east-west corridor became a regional industrial center. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-27, II-30)

In 1912, the Johns-Manville Company moved to Somerset County from Brooklyn, establishing itself on 300 acres of farmland in Hillsborough Township at the junction of the Millstone and Raritan Rivers, just south of Somerville. Both the Central Railroad and Easton and Perth Amboy Railroad cross through the company's site. The company planned to employ 2,000 workers at its plant, manufacturing asbestos. At its peak in 1948, it employed more than 3,000 workers (Havens 1990:81). To that point, the largest companies in the county employed in the range of 300, 400, and 600 workers. Speculators bought up land around the John-Manville site and subdivided it into lots for sale to the Eastern European immigrants employed by the company. In 1929, the company site and the surrounding town that had developed around it became the independent borough of Manville.

A second large company within the region was the Calico Chemical Company, which produced dyestuffs and chemicals. It operated on a 400-acre site along the Raritan River from 1915 to 1927, employing more than 1,000 workers. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:11-28—II-29; Ross 2018)

F. Suburban Expansion (1870 – Present)

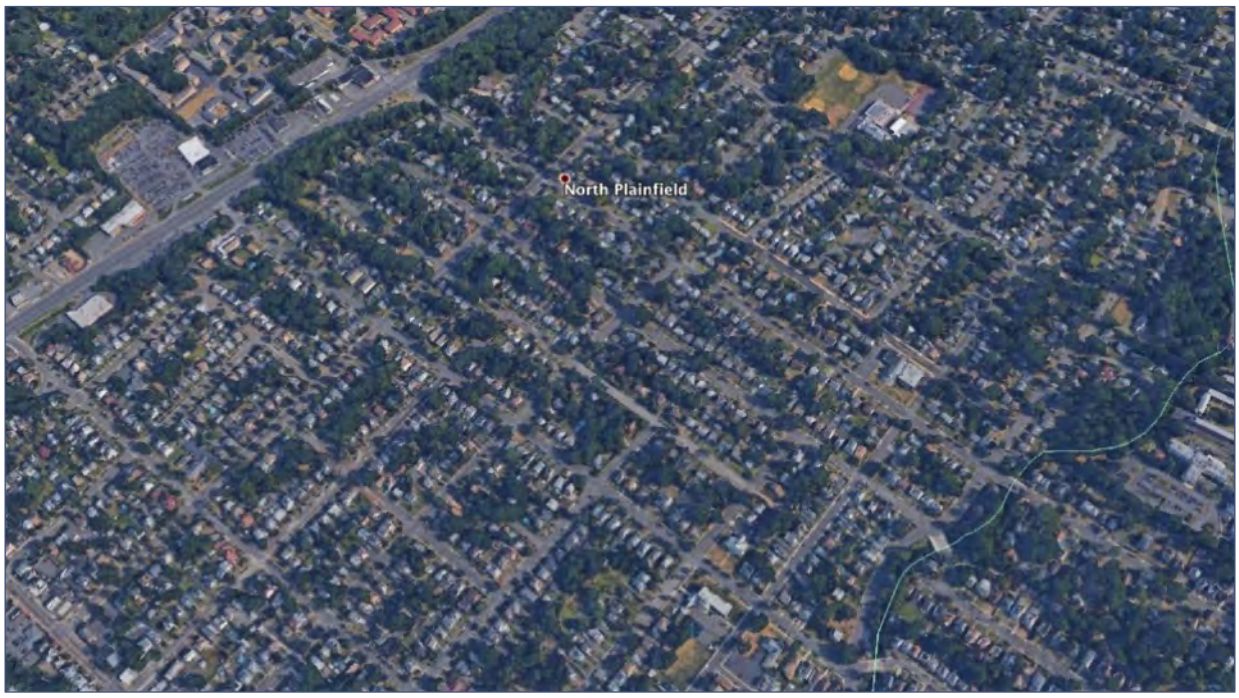
The most dramatic change to the landscape of Somerset County since the establishment of agriculture in the 18th and early 19th centuries has occurred with the spread of suburban residential and commercial development, especially since World War II. This change is laid over earlier landscape patterns that still retain relevance. The changes took place in two successive waves, the first related to commuter railroads and the second related to the subsequent dominance of the automobile, which continues to be the dominant force in determining development patterns today.

Commuter Railroad Suburb

The establishment of a real estate company by the Central Railroad of New Jersey in 1868 can be cited as the beginning of marketing for suburban residential development in Somerset County. The Central Railroad's real estate company was formed to encourage residential development along its route through the sale of land owned by the railroad and by serving as an agent for other landowners along its right-of-way.

The development of Somerset County as a commuter railroad suburb was concentrated along the railroad's central east-west corridor in the communities of Raritan, Somerville, Bound Brook, and North Plainfield. It occurred between 1870 and 1930, the railroads' heyday. Raritan, Somerville, and Bound Brook were already experiencing growth as regional industrial centers, but additional growth in the form of suburban residential neighborhoods and associated commercial, social, and civic infrastructure during these years was dramatically increased by the role of the railroad as a commuter service, connecting to New York and its northern New Jersey satellites. The development and growth of North Plainfield, which was incorporated in 1885, was due solely to the influence of the commuter railroad. This central corridor has remained Somerset County's most densely populated urban core to the present. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-20,II-31, II-32)

Somerset County's population increased by 65 percent between 1870 and 1910, from 27,510 to 38,820 persons. It then increased by another 68 percent to 65,132 by 1930, which was effectively the end of the railroad era as marked by the Great Depression. The county benefitted from its central



Rectangular street grids and closely spaced residential lots are characteristic of the urban/suburban commuter railroad neighborhoods of North Plainfield and elsewhere (Google Earth).

New Jersey location, approximately 40 miles from both New York City and Philadelphia, making it a desirable location. Oriented primarily toward New York, the county was close enough to be conveniently reached by commuter rail but far enough to be "in the country" and not excessively overwhelmed by metropolitan development, as were many North Jersey communities along the corridor closer to New York City.

Most of Somerset County's urban/suburban population growth during this 1870-1930 period was concentrated within the railroad communities and was a marked contrast with the prior two centuries where population growth was distributed broadly across the landscape. Outside of the central urban/suburban core, Somerset County remained predominantly rural and agricultural during the early 20th century.

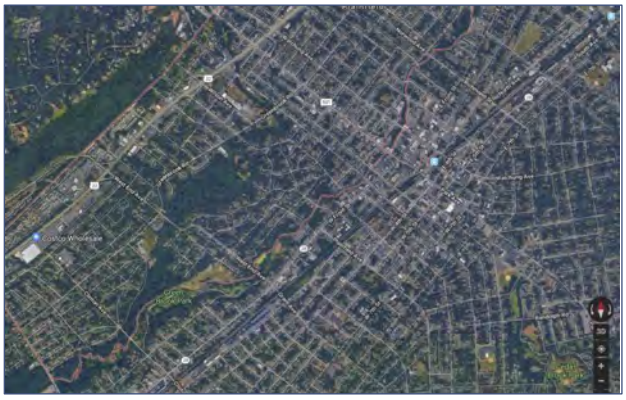
The historic landscapes associated with Somerset County's commuter railroad suburbs are primarily characterized by the residential neighborhoods developed in the towns along the rail corridor. Occurring simultaneously with the area's growth as a regional industrial center, the neighborhoods range in type and degree of affluence, but almost all have an urban/suburban layout of rectangular streets lined with residential lots and homes marketed and built by real estate developers. (An exception is the National Register-listed historic district of Washington Park in North Plainfield, one of the earliest railroad suburbs in the United States, whose "picturesque winding streets" and park-like landscape design are an expression of the romantic ideal first popularized in New Jersey. (See images, opposite page.) The neighborhoods specifically related to the commuter railroad tend to be larger and more substantial.

Active commercial and business downtown cores continued to grow in the historic centers where the communities were first established, with new residential neighborhoods expanding around them. Social institutions – churches, schools, and others – were intermixed with the neighborhoods, serving as local landmarks.

Somerset Hills

In the northern portion of the county, known as Somerset Hills, railroad access led to the expansive development of affluent country estates. Construction of the Passaic & Delaware Railroad after 1870 connecting New York City to Peapack-Gladstone made it possible for wealthy New Yorkers to commute to summer or year-round homes set within the area's rolling hills.

First exposed to the region as a summer resort destination and with railroad access established, wealthy New York City businessmen, bankers, and industrialists bought up farms, assembling large estates and constructing elaborate mansions with luxurious landscapes. Each estate had its stables, dairy, gardens, and greenhouses, pasturing its fields with horses, cattle, and sheep. Somerset Hills became an enclave of the late 19th-century Gilded Age, continuing with construction of estates from the early 20th century Country House Era. While the overall population of the area did not increase dramatically, an increase in service people and tradesmen to support the extravagant lifestyles of the estates altered the character of local communities. Specialists in estate management activities were imported and increased the region's foreign-born population.



North Plainfield itself, however, features the Washington Park historic district, whose curvilinear streets are plainly visible at the center of the satellite image at left. The second such planned suburb built in New Jersey, dating from 1868, according to the National Register nomination, it is "chronologically in the middle of a trend that would make New Jersey a leader in the evolution of the American suburb." The nomination continues, "Washington Park is a planned railroad suburb that embodies the interplay of picturesque architecture and landscape design typical of late-19th-century taste. Its eclectic housing stock survives in a remarkable state of preservation, reflecting middle-class aspirations of the post-Civil War period….Cradled between the Stony and Green Brooks, the Park's streets seem to take inspiration from these natural features, rather than imposing man-made strictures on them. Thus Washington Park is a provincial expression of the Romantic landscape theory promoted by A.J. Downing and perfected by Frederic Law Olmsted." (Images courtesy Google Earth, left; and the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, right)

Bernards Township's municipal building is a repurposed 1912 mansion in the English Tudor or "Jacobethan" style. The Somerset Hills region of Somerset and Morris Counties displays many fine estates from the Gilded Age through the early 20th-century Country House Era. (Photo courtesy Bernards Township)

Peaking in the early 20th century, the estates era ended with the Great Depression, after which many estates were subdivided and sold. Nonetheless, a number of large estate properties remain, contributing to the area's sense of preserved rural landscapes. In part due to the estate era, northern Somerset County has established a reputation as an affluent and desirable place to live. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-32; Havens 1990:58; Greene 2010:8)

Automobile Suburbs

Beginning in the early 20th century and fully established by the end of World War II, automobiles replaced railroads as the primary influence upon development patterns in Somerset County. Automobile access made it possible for individuals to commute to a great variety of places at any given time, creating the potential for expansive new development in many places where it had not been possible before. After World War II the nation experienced a long period of prosperity. Commuter railroads continued to attract residents to Somerset County's urban centers, but the automobile facilitated the period's mass exodus from the city to the suburbs. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-32; Ross 2018)

In the mid- to late-20th century, Somerset County had two major periods of rapid suburban growth: 1940 to 1970 and 1980 to 2000. In the three decades between 1940 and 1970, the county's population increased by 167 percent from 74,390 to 198,372 persons. After a slowdown during the 1980s, population increased again by 46 percent over two decades to 297,490 persons. Since 2000, Somerset County's population has continued grow, by a steady but more modest 12.8 percent to 335,432 people, estimated as of July 2017. Over the roughly seventy years of suburban growth since World War II, the population of Somerset County has increased by three and one-half times or 350 percent. (US Census: 2018; Wikipedia 2018)

Suburban growth has been facilitated by extensive road construction throughout northeastern New Jersey over this period. In addition to the improvement of regional connectors such as U.S. Routes 1, 22, 202, and 206, major interstate highways were constructed through Somerset County, influencing development much like the railroads almost a century earlier. Announcement of the planned construction of Interstates 78 and 287 occurred in 1959. Interstate 287 (north-south/east) was opened in 1966 and Interstate 78 (east-west)

was opened in 1968. Their intersection was near the historic village of Pluckemin, about four miles north of Somerville, though the interchange constructed did not provide direct access to local roads.

U.S. Route 1 and the New Jersey Turnpike have become major routes just south of Somerset County's southern boundary, influencing development in the southern portion of the county. Planning for construction of I-95 through Franklin, Montgomery, and Hillsborough Townships connecting to I-287 was thwarted by local opposition. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-32; Havens 1990:90-94; Ross 2018)

Unlike growth related to the commuter railroad, growth during the suburban expansion of the late 20th century was not concentrated. It occurred across the landscape, reducing the area of remaining rural agricultural landscape county-wide.

In the decade following World War II, industry continued to be a primary employment factor in Somerset County. Older large industrial companies such as Johns-Manville and American Cyanamid (Calco) continued to be leading employers in the county, but they were joined by other major manufacturers seeking large, open suburban sites with access to major roads, relocating from cramped locations in older industrial centers. New industrial employers moving to the county's suburbs in the late 1940s and 1950s included Johnson & Johnson, Lockheed Electronics, RCA, and Mack Truck. Other smaller employers established themselves in new campus-style locations created by developers with shared infrastructure and facilities. By 1960, more workers were commuting into Somerset County than out of the county. (Havens 1990:92)

The largest development impact in the county during the rapid growth in the three decades following World War II was residential. During this period, Somerset County became increasingly residential as new residential subdivisions were constructed throughout the formerly rural landscape, with a consequent loss of farmland. The mass exodus from the city to the suburbs between 1945 and 1960 fueled the growth of ranch house and split-level developments set in former agricultural fields. The network of former agricultural wagon roads was improved to provide efficient access to the new suburban developments .

Townships such as Warren, Bernards, Branchburg, Bridgewater, Franklin, Green Brook. Hillsborough, and Watchung that had remained largely agricultural into the mid-20th century doubled and tripled in population and transformed from rural to suburban. Today these communities continue to develop with increasing density and have become the county's designated Alternative Growth Investment Areas. (Cultural Resources Survey 1988:II-32; Havens 1990:90; Ross 2010)

In the 1970s and into the late 20th century, industry and manufacturing began to decline nationally, including in Somerset County. Industrial and manufacturing companies in the county scaled back in size, relocated, or closed entirely.

New business development continued, however, with the introduction of campus-style office centers. Most notable was the establishment of AT&T's new headquarters campus on 150 acres in Basking Ridge in 1974. Other prominent companies moved their offices to the region as well. In addition, extensive new business campuses and office centers with access to major roads and the interstates were developed, providing space where companies could construct

Suburban development with curving streets and cul-de-sacs on former agricultural fields set within a framework of former agricultural wagon roads, now widened, paved, and serving as local connectors. (Google Earth)

their own offices buildings or rent space in buildings developed by others. During the decade of the 1970s, 15,000 new jobs were added to the county, an increase of 52 percent. This increase continued to spur new residential development and its companion commercial and institutional construction throughout the region. (Havens 1990:99-103)

Today's Suburban Landscape

Somerset County's landscape today is one of mature late 20th century suburban growth with a hierarchy of fast-moving roads accommodating a considerable amount of traffic serving a large population. Despite its growth, earlier layers of historic landscape patterns remain visible and relevant to the county's character and quality of life. The county's urban core, developed east-west along its railroad lines in the county's center, preserves the urban forms of its historic regional industrial center and commuter railroad suburbs. Still connected to New York City and other northern New Jersey employment centers, the county's urban communities continue to attract both residents and new investment due to their character and their convenient commuter access.

Affluent suburbs north and south of the urban core have matured and continue to attract new development, increasingly dense but continuing to feature a sense of suburban spaciousness that echoes their former rural nature. Perhaps most significant in terms of landscape is the increase in trees, woodlands, and successional vegetative growth that has occurred with the transformation from an agricultural landscape to a suburban landscape. Unlike the agricultural era, today's suburbs are dense with trees, woodland fragments, and vegetative edges that have softened the character of the landscape, created smaller outdoor landscape spaces,

and reduced the visual impact of the extensive suburban development that has occurred. Trees and woodlands are strong positive character-defining elements enhancing suburban appeal.

Intense suburban development has resulted directly in the reduction of farmland. Somerset County's role as a strong regional agricultural center is in the past. Potential conservation lands in the County

Commercial corridor along a major roadway. (Google Maps)

Major campus style office park in Somerset County. (Google Maps)

Investment Framework are located in places where suburban development has yet to reach. Conserved natural landscapes are located primarily on the rocky diabase uplands that have not been conducive to either agriculture or suburban development as well as along stream corridors. Potential farmland preservation lands are concentrated in the portions of the Triassic Lowlands farthest from suburban development pressure – Bedminster in the northwest corner of the county and Branchburg in the western portion, beyond Sourland Mountain. Franklin Township is also a concentration for farmland preservation due to its diabase hills and areas reserved under state ownership for a previously planned reservoir.

G. Conclusion

Given its fortunate location along transportation routes that continue to serve the county and connect it to economic centers across a large region, Somerset County will continue to develop in the future. Without determined planning and growth policies, and the necessary governmental investment to shape growth pressures, ever-increasing densities will lead to continued loss of farmland and open space, and continued pressure on environmental resources. A strong ongoing program of natural land and farmland conservation is necessary to preserve the landscape characteristics that give the county's suburban landscapes their considerable appeal and enhance quality of life for residents. These include the significant historic, natural, and farmland resources addressed in this combined preservation plan.

Chapter 3. Land Use Planning Context

Agriculture laid down the first land use patterns discernable across Somerset County's present-day landscape, as described in detail in Chapter 2, Landscape Context. The next large change, hundreds of years after European colonization in the 17th century, was caused by the arrival of the automobile, highways, and suburbanization over the course of the 20th century. In the last hundred years, the county's landscape has evolved from one dominated by farms and forests to one in which just over half is developed. Yet, much of the county's natural legacy is still in evidence, farmers still keep their fields, and fine, well-kept buildings and landscapes reflect the county's many decades of history and prosperity.

The loss of land to development, however, in Somerset County and across the state has led the State of New Jersey and Somerset County and its municipalities to undertake a number of land use planning initiatives aimed at improving quality of life. This section provides an overview of these land use planning initiatives.

A. Introduction

The pages that follow introduce land use trends in the county, including population growth; statewide and regional planning initiatives affecting open space, farmland, and historic preservation in the county; major aspects of Somerset County's extensive planning system; and municipal planning. Each of the major plans that form the basis for the Somerset County Preservation Plan provides additional details.

B. Overview of Land Use and Trends

As suburban development has spread throughout the county, it has had both positive and negative consequences for open space in general and both the agricultural industry and historic resources in particular.

Open Space

For open space, first, Somerset County's growing wealth over the decades since the turn of the 20th century gave it the wherewithal to tackle the challenges inherent in preserving open space. This wealth is, ironically, thanks in part to the county's location in northern New Jersey, which has favored population growth and the commercial, industrial, and urban development that goes along with that growth. Second, residents' persistent affinity for the land and the rural landscape in the face of many changes induced Somerset County to recognize the threats to open space earlier than many other suburbanizing communities and take significant steps to address them.

The county's Park Commission was founded in 1958, and when state legislation allowed for increased local funding for open space preservation, the county and many of its municipalities were early to take advantage of the option to set up preservation trust funds. The Open Space Preservation Plan that is a part of this Somerset County Preservation Plan (described in Chapter 4 here) analyzes trends and describes the results of decades of effort to create a park system, encourage greenways, and protect other special environmental resources, work that continues with this new plan and the 2019 WalkBikeHike Plan.

Somerset County is rich in ecological diversity. The county's important environmental lands range from core forests (blocks of forest lands that offer significant interiors as habitat for species that need such spaces, such as some songbirds), to wetlands and vernal pools (seasonal pools of water that provide habitat for distinctive plants and animals such as salamanders), to headwaters, groundwater recharge areas, and floodplains.

Farmland

For farming, on the one hand the increased local population at close proximity provides those farmers who have changed with the times with a larger consumer base for niche agricultural products, such as locally grown foods, organic goods, and equine services. On the other hand, conversion of land for development has led to a loss of productive agricultural land and sometimes conflicts between farms and residential areas. The Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development Plan that is also a part of this Preservation Plan (described in Chapter 5) analyzes trends and describes Somerset County's continuing response to the threats to the farmland base and farm economy that remain. Unlike open space preservation, which generally has involved government ownership and management, farmland preservation involves the farmers themselves as partners with government in creating long-term protection for farm acreage through conservation easements. The farmers remain responsible for farming – and thus need economic conditions that will help to keep them in business.

Historic Resources

For historic resources, the picture has also been mixed. Many resources have survived in the hands of private, nonprofit, and governmental owners, but the changes natural to the development that has occurred across the county have also led to losses of individual resources and historic landscapes, both urban and rural. The Historic Preservation Plan that is a part of this Somerset County Preservation Plan (described in Chapter 6) analyzes trends and describes the county's continuing efforts to encourage the survival of historic resources.

Like farmland preservation, historic preservation involves a partnership with property owners who remain responsible for property management, but where government is even more at a disadvantage. Although "preservation easements" are known in the field of historic preservation, a combined system of recognition and education programs, incentives, and regulatory approaches is generally involved in preserving most historic properties, unless owned by governmental agencies or nonprofit organizations to allow public access and education. While the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission carries out an important matching grants program with funding from various sources and conducts other programs encouraging recognition and education related to historic preservation, New Jersey's contribution to the county's financial resources for historic preservation is much less compared to open space and farmland preservation.

Land Use Trends

While the landscape of Somerset County was dominated by agriculture a century ago, today most of the county has become suburban in nature. Map 3.1 displays county land use by category and Table 3.1 shows county land use trends over the past thirty years. Table 3.2 shows 2017 land use information by municipality. Between 1986 and 2017, agricultural land decreased from 24 percent of the county to 14 percent, while developed land rose from 33 percent to 46 percent. Note that the agricultural land in these numbers differs in definition from the farmland that will be discussed in Chapter 5, excluding the barren, forest, and wetland portions of farmland parcels. That is, Somerset County has more land designated as agricultural than indicated here.

Map 3.1 and Table 3.2 show that most of the remaining agricultural land in Somerset (from a land use perspective) can be found in its western half. Significant concentrations of agricultural land remain within the Neshanic Valley in Hillsborough, in Bedminster, and along the Millstone River between Franklin and Hillsborough townships. Bernards, Bridgewater, Franklin, Hillsborough, and Montgomery all contain a large quantity of developed land, each with more than 8,000 acres. The municipalities with the highest percentage of developed land are Bound Brook, Manville, North Plainfield, Raritan, Somerville, and South Bound Brook, all at more than 70 percent.

Development Pressures and Population Growth

New Jersey's draft Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2018-2022 (SCORP) states that Somerset County is now considered the tenth most densely settled county in the state, at a density of 1,110 people per square mile.[3] With the next U.S. Census in 2020, countywide growth countywide was originally estimated to grow at about 3 percent, or fewer than 10,000 people. However, as of the 2020 Census the county's population was 345,361,, a 6.7 percent increase from the 2010

Table 3.1 Somerset County Land Use, 1986-2017

	1986		1995		2002		2007		2017	
	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%
Agriculture	47,404	24%	36,949	19%	30,396	16%	28,790	15%	27,358	14%
Barren Land	3,907	2%	3,321	2%	3,166	2%	2,315	1%	2,195	1%
Forest	51,459	26%	51,459	26%	50,503	26%	48,542	25%	48,654	25%
Developed	65,097	33%	73,449	38%	82,483	42%	87,141	45%	89,215	46%
Wetlands	24,915	13%	27,702	14%	26,332	13%	25,753	13%	25,111	13%
Water/Other	2,384	1%	2,286	1%	2,286	1%	2,625	1%	2,633	1%
TOTAL	**195,166**		**195,166**		**195,166**		**195,166**		**195,166**	

Source: Somerset County Data, 2017

[3]https://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/pdf/2018_draft_SCORP.pdf, Table 7, p. 15.

Table 3.2 Somerset County Land Use by Municipality, Acres, 2017

Municipality	Agriculture	Barren Land	Forest	Developed	Wetlands	Water	Total
Bedminster Township	5,817	26	6,173	3,587	1,053	223	16,879
Bernards Township	498	163	3,607	8,318	2,837	149	15,573
Bernardsville Borough	572	16	3,833	3,612	162	71	8,266
Bound Brook Borough	0	5	21	883	150	26	1,084
Branchburg Township	2,425	30	2,367	6,638	1,273	239	12,973
Bridgewater Township	269	390	4,194	12,851	2,640	360	20,704
Far Hills Borough	583	10	1,420	830	254	53	3,150
Franklin Township	4,937	516	5,912	13,289	4,811	440	29,904
Green Brook Township	6	14	632	1,689	464	15	2,821
Hillsborough Township	7,300	594	9,056	12,593	5,324	421	35,288
Manville Borough	0	8	40	1,213	251	56	1,568
Millstone Borough	81	0	60	190	105	8	444
Montgomery Township	3,898	154	5,268	8,805	2,484	183	20,793
North Plainfield Borough	3	2	36	1,620	123	22	1,805
Peapack-Gladstone Borough	677	13	1,522	1,371	62	52	3,697
Raritan Borough	2	26	146	1,050	45	29	1,298
Rocky Hill Borough	45	0	46	285	16	5	397
Somerville Borough	0	12	83	1,241	142	24	1,501
South Bound Brook Borough	1	4	5	346	59	37	451
Warren Township	237	52	3,146	6,366	2,705	70	12,576
Watchung Borough	8	160	1,088	2,438	149	25	3,868
SOMERSET COUNTY	**27,358**	**2,195**	**48,654**	**89,215**	**25,111**	**2,633**	**195,166**

Source: Somerset County Data, 2017

Census. Somerset County is projected to grow at 13.6 percent overall between 2010 and 2030, the third-highest projected percentage for the state. The SCORP projects approximately 45,000 more residents by 2034, from 333,751 in 2016 to 378,700 in 2034. [4] Table 3.3 shows the municipalities in Somerset County by area, population, and percentage of open space preserved.

Somerset County is a highly desirable place to live and work, and that has led to a strongly growing population and to the development of land to support this population. Development pressures in the area of northern New Jersey means that land use in the county is increasingly trending toward development. Table 3.4 shows trends in population

[4] Ibid., Table 9, p. 18.

Map 3.1 Land Use/Land Cover with Preserved Farmland and Open Space

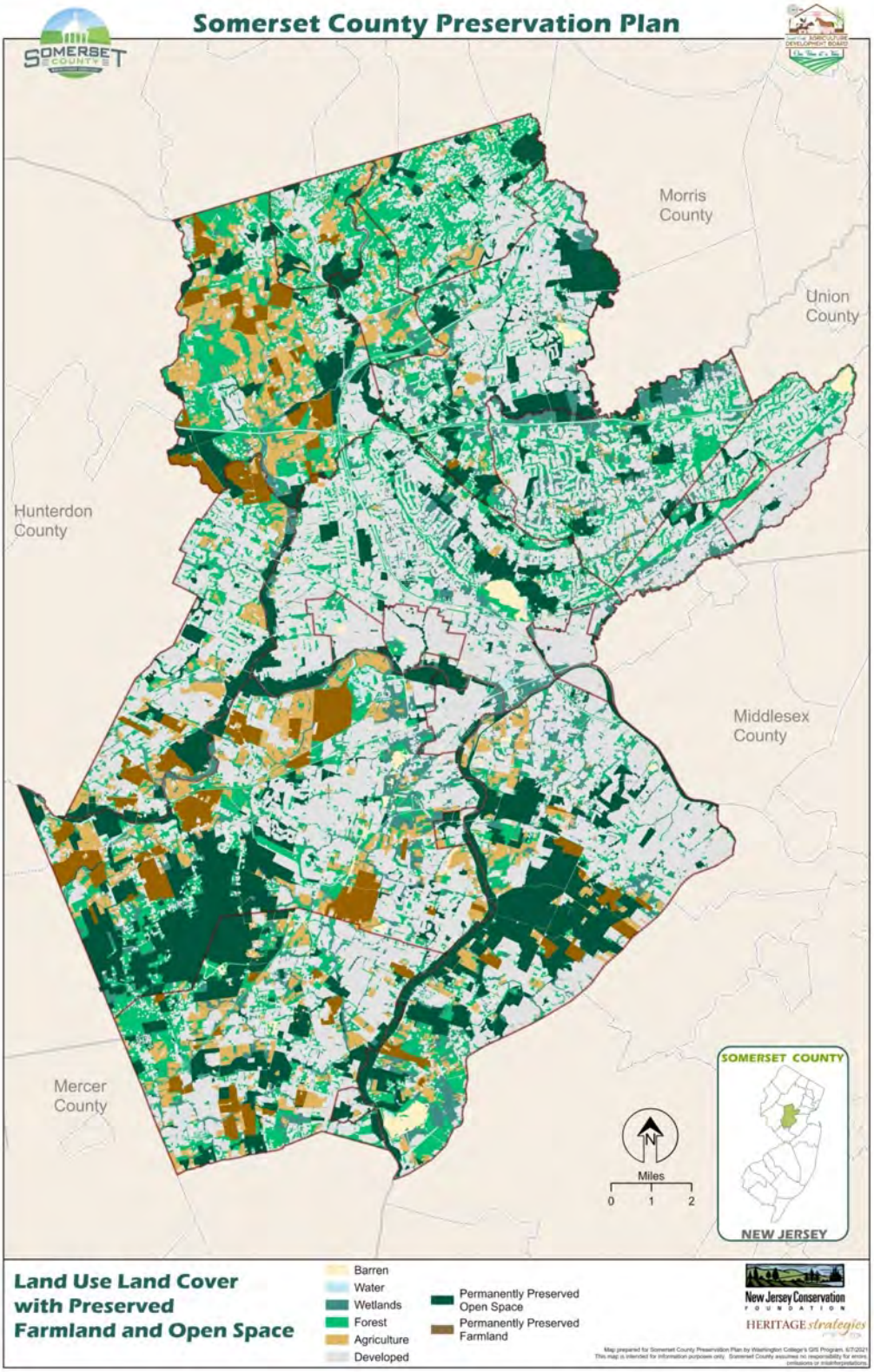


Table 3.3 Area, Population, and Preserved Open Space in Somerset County by Municipality

Municipality	Area (sq mi)	Population (2010)	Population (2018)	Pop. Growth (actual)	Pop. Growth (%)	Preserved Open Space**	Open Space***
Bedminster	26.3	8,165	8,244*	79	1.0%	15%	23%
Bernards	24.06	26,652	27,032*	380	1.4%	15%	21.5%
Bernardsville	12.98	7,707	7,686	-21	-0.3%	12%	8%
Bound Brook	1.69	10,402	10,289	-113	-1.1%	4%	9%
Branchburg	20.28	14,459	14,683*	224	1.5%	15%	32%
Bridgewater	32.51	44,464	45,336*	872	2.0%	14%	15%
Far Hills	4.88	919	911	-8	-0.9%	5.5%	na
Franklin	46.85	62,300	65,999*	3,699	5.9%	26%	35%
Green Brook	4.48	7,203	7,210*	7	0.1%	4%	13%
Hillsborough	55	38,303	39,712*	1,409	3.7%	20%	32%
Manville	2.45	10,344	10,234	-110	-1.1%	15%	na
Millstone	0.76	418	412	-6	-1.4%	30%	na
Montgomery	32.48	22,254	23,059*	805	3.6%	19%	36%
North Plainfield	2.81	21,936	22,092	156	0.7%	6%	na
Peapack and Gladstone	5.85	2,582	2,591	9	0.3%	7%	20%
Raritan	2.04	6,881	7,758	877	12.7%	5%	6%
Rocky Hill	0.62	682	677	-5	-0.7%	31%	33%
Somerville	2.36	12,098	12,234	136	1.1%	8%	11%
South Bound Brook	0.75	4,563	4,572	9	0.2%	17%	na
Warren	19.64	15,311	15,998*	687	4.5%	17%	na
Watchung	6.05	5,801	6,055	254	4.4%	2.6%	3%
SOMERSET COUNTY	**305.5†**	**323,444**	**331,164††**	**7,720††**	**2.9%**		

Sources: Population, U.S. Census Bureau; Open Space, Somerset County Preservation Plan data
**2018 Population Estimate not available; used 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Population Estimate.*
*** Refers to permanently preserved open space.*
****Acreage may include farmland and open space without permanent protection.*
† Somerset County Government official land area and not additive from the column above.
†† U.S. Census Bureau data, American Community Survey and not additive from the column above.
na=not available

Table 3.4 Somerset County Population by Municipality, 1930-2020

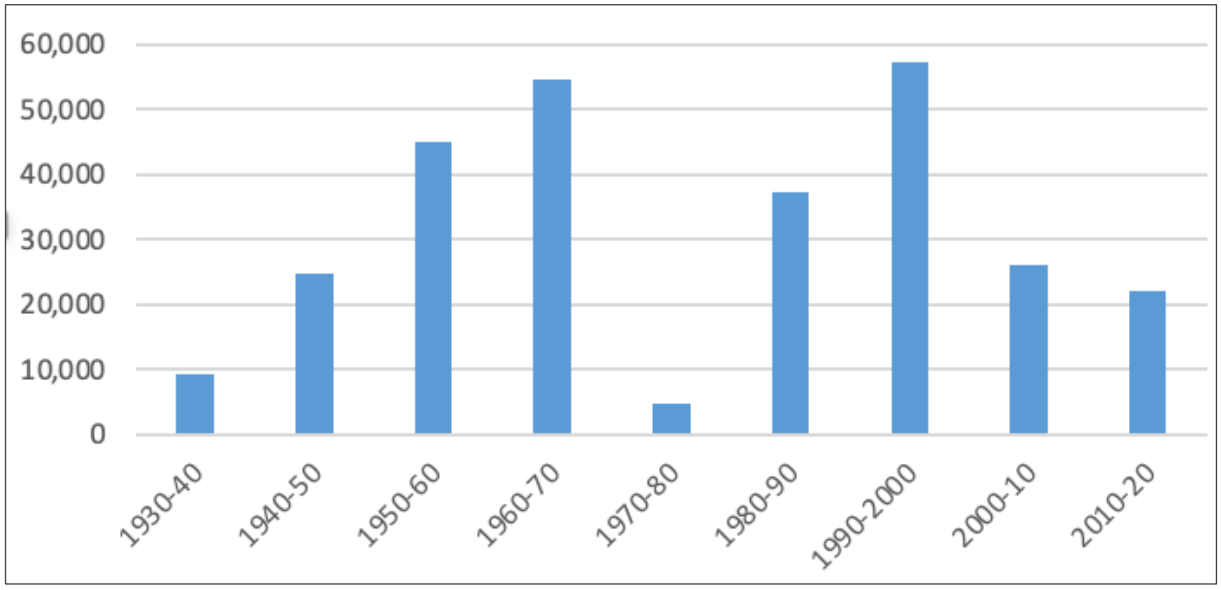
Municipality	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Bedminster	1,374	1,606	1,613	2,322	2,597	2,469	7,086	8,302	8,165	8,272
Bernards	2,293	4,512	7,487	9,018	13,305	12,920	17,199	24,575	26,652	27,830
Bernardsville	3,336	3,405	3,956	5,515	6,652	6,715	6,597	7,345	7,707	7,893
Bound Brook	7,372	7,616	8,374	10,263	10,450	9,710	9,487	10,155	10,402	11,988
Branchburg	1,084	1,231	1,958	3,741	5,742	7,846	10,888	14,566	14,459	14,940

Table 3.4 Somerset County Population by Municipality, 1930-2020, cont'd

Municipality	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Bridgewater	3,352	4,934	8,234	15,789	30,235	29,175	32,509	42,940	44,464	45,977
Far Hills	560	574	600	702	780	677	657	859	919	924
Franklin	6,039	6,299	9,601	19,858	30,389	31,358	42,780	50,903	62,300	68,364
Green Brook	544	763	1,155	3,622	4,302	4,640	4,460	5,654	7,203	7,281
Hillsborough	2,283	2,645	3,875	7,584	11,061	19,061	28,808	36,634	38,303	43,276
Manville	5,441	6,065	8,597	10,995	13,029	11,278	10,567	10,343	10,344	10,953
Millstone	187	252	289	409	630	530	450	410	418	448
Montgomery	2,648	3,360	3,819	3,851	6,353	7,360	9,612	17,481	22,254	23,690
North Plainfield	9,760	10,586	12,766	16,993	21,796	19,108	18,820	21,103	21,936	22,808
Peapack-Gladstone	1,273	1,354	1,450	1,804	1,924	2,038	2,111	2,433	2,582	2,558
Raritan	4,751	4,839	5,131	6,137	6,691	6,128	5,798	6,338	6,881	7,835
Rocky Hill	512	404	537	528	917	717	693	662	682	743
Somerville	8,255	8,720	11,571	12,458	13,652	11,973	11,632	12,423	12,098	12,346
South Bound Brook	1,763	1,928	2,905	3,626	4,525	4,331	4,185	4,492	4,563	4,863
Warren	1,399	2,139	3,316	5,386	8,592	9,805	10,830	14,259	15,311	15,923
Watchung	906	1,158	1,818	3,312	4,750	5,290	5,110	5,613	5,801	6,449
SOMERSET COUNTY	**65,132**	**74,390**	**99,052**	**143,913**	**198,372**	**203,129**	**240,279**	**297,490**	**323,444**	**345,361**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 3.1 Somerset County Population Change by Decade, 1930-2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

growth in the county over the past nine decades, broken down by municipality. Figure 3.1 further displays countywide population growth by decade. Overall, the county's population has grown more than 400 percent since 1930, with the fastest growth seen first in the 1940s through 1970s, then in the 1990s and 2000s.

Since 1990 alone, Somerset County's population has risen by 37 percent or 88,415. The municipalities with the largest growth are Bridgewater, Franklin, Hillsborough, and Montgomery, all with an increase of more than 10,000 residents in that time. As Table 3.5 displays, these are also the four municipalities with the largest number of residential building permits issued during that time, each with more than 3,000 issued. Of these jurisdictions, Franklin Township has seen both the largest population growth (over 21,000 since 1990) and the largest number of building permits issued.

Also of note, the period where the county saw the largest drop in farmland in the last 25 years, 1997-2002 at more than 12,000 acres, was also the period with the largest number of residential building permits issued since 1990. This supports the

Table 3.5 Somerset County Residential Building Permits Issued, 1990-2016

Municipality	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010-14	2015-16	TOTAL
Bedminster Township	330	270	28	17	9	5	659
Bernards Township	790	1,657	433	91	83	27	3,081
Bernardsville Borough	98	117	91	44	28	8	386
Bound Brook Borough	33	20	14	242	712	458	1,479
Branchburg Township	864	478	109	70	22	30	1,573
Bridgewater Township	1,838	2,003	451	289	126	3	4,710
Far Hills Borough	45	40	26	6	1	0	118
Franklin Township	1,233	1,768	3,584	1,462	1,800	463	10,310
Green Brook Township	174	496	339	50	17	4	1,080
Hillsborough Township	1,040	1,135	346	517	487	423	3,948
Manville Borough	41	60	35	37	22	7	202
Millstone Borough	0	0	0	1	2	1	4
Montgomery Township	799	2,248	1,497	70	230	194	5,038
North Plainfield Borough	15	16	13	5	1	18	68
Peapack-Gladstone Borough	43	63	13	22	21	9	171
Raritan Borough	95	161	34	725	821	447	2,283
Rocky Hill Borough	6	0	1	1	2	0	10
Somerville Borough	18	10	14	38	11	173	264
South Bound Brook Borough	4	7	13	484	296	194	998
Warren Township	619	436	424	178	253	60	1,970
Watchung Borough	50	76	408	84	52	22	692
SOMERSET COUNTY	**8,135**	**11,061**	**7,873**	**4,433**	**4,996**	**2,546**	**39,044**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Manufacturing & Construction Division, 2017

analysis in "Transportation Choices" prepared by the Somerset County Planning Board, which noted that much of the development in the county has tended to be on large lots in rural areas. This development pattern has thus resulted in increased suburban sprawl, with open space and farmland converted to new residential, commercial, retail, and office areas. As analysis provided elsewhere in this plan shows, however, both the county and its municipalities, with assistance from state, nonprofit, and federal resources, have responded vigorously in pursuit of protected land that is a part of the quality of life in Somerset County.

Land Value Trends

In addition to (and related to) mounting development pressures in Somerset, land values have also grown in the county. While such data is not available at the county level, Figure 3.2 shows how farmland values have trended both in New Jersey and in the United States as a whole, and indicates not only similar, proportionate increases in residential land values, but the rising costs of governmental and nonprofit acquisitions to preserve farmland and open space in the county. In the past 20 years, the cost of purchasing a development easement on farmland in New Jersey has grown from an average of $7,100 per acre to $12,800 per acre. In Somerset County, the cost is even greater: prior to 2000 the average cost per acre of preserving farmland in the county was below $9,200 while costs since 2010 have averaged more than $25,000 per acre While values have declined since their peak prior to the Great Recession that began in 2008, they are still 80 percent higher than values in the 1990s. In 2017, New Jersey actually had the second-highest values for farmland in the nation.

C. New Jersey Land Use Planning Context

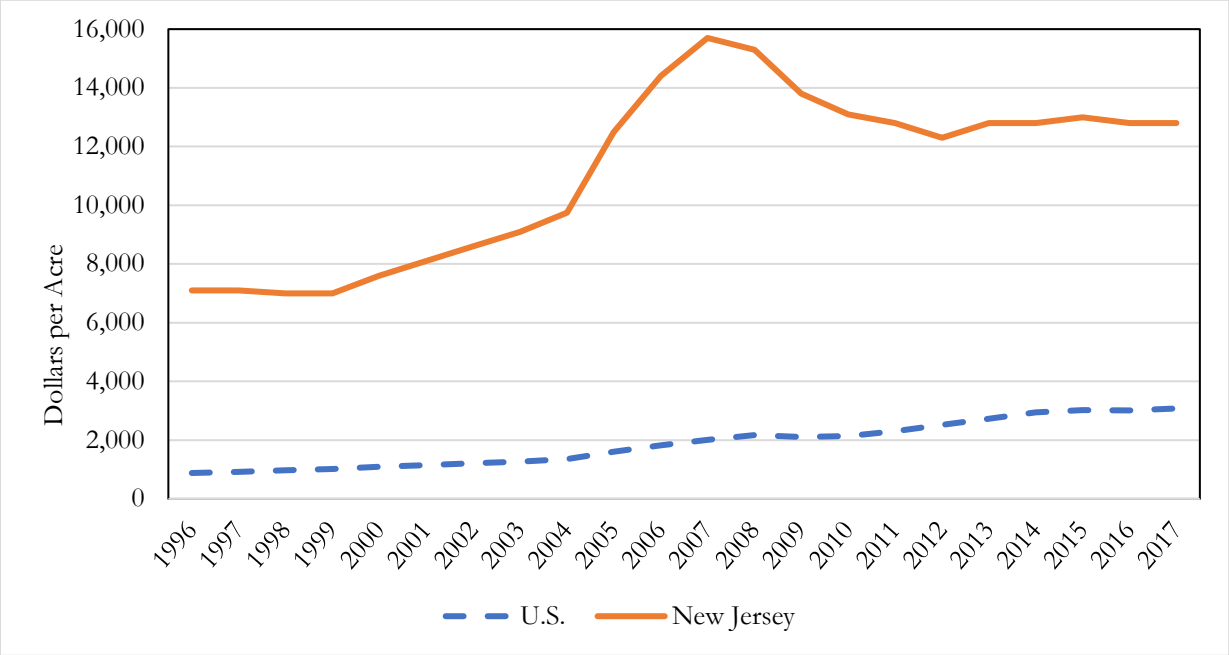
When considering land use planning techniques to encourage preservation of all three kinds of resources addressed by this Somerset County Preservation Plan, it is important to consider the levels of government at which these techniques would be adopted. Under the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL; NJ Rev Stat § 40:55D-70 (2013)), land use and zoning oversight is largely in the hands of municipalities. It is at this level where the power to enact detailed master plans and zoning ordinances resides. At the county level, planning efforts are broader, dealing with issues that span municipalities and providing municipalities with general guidance and support, including comments in Somerset County Planning Board land development review reports. Finally, the state provides more general guidance and oversight on issues regarding mass transit, regional natural resources, highways, and the state economy. All levels of government seek to align these planning efforts.

State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), adopted in 2001, is the most recent adopted land use plan for the State of New Jersey.[5] The SDRP serves as a guide for municipal, county, and regional planning, as well as state agency functional planning and infrastructure. It is intended to enable cooperative planning across New Jersey to support municipal planning authority under the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL; NJ Rev Stat § 40:55D-70 (2013)). A key goal in the state plan is to "preserve and enhance areas with historic, cultural, scenic, open space and recreational value."

[5] https://www.nj.gov/state/planning/spc-state-plan.html

Figure 3.2 New Jersey and U.S. Average Farm Real Estate Value, 1996-2017



Source: USDA, Economics, Statistics, and Market Information System, 1996-2017

The SDRP is structured around five principal Planning Areas, each with its own set of goals and guidelines outlining what type of development activities are to be desired. Planning Areas include Metropolitan, Suburban, Fringe, Rural, and Environmentally Sensitive lands. The SDRP also identifies Designated Centers into which the state and its local jurisdictions should direct future development and redevelopment. What follows is a more detailed list explaining each type of Planning Area and Designated Center as well as the prevalence of each in Somerset County. Map 3.2 displays the state plan's policy map for Somerset County, and Table 3.6 summarizes the acreages found in each across the county.

SDRP Planning Areas

- Metropolitan Planning Areas (PA 1) are the regions with the most concentrated development in New Jersey, with densities higher than 1,000 persons/sq mile and land area greater than one square mile. SDRP goals for these areas focus on revitalizing existing cities and towns by encouraging compact growth and redevelopment. Metropolitan Planning Areas are identified by the plan as the most appropriate locations for future development in the state. Somerset County has 20,536 acres in PA 1. Most of Somerset's Metropolitan Planning Areas are located toward the county's eastern border and are more or less in the central part of the county, specifically in Watchung Borough, North Plainfield Borough, Green Brook Township, Bound Brook Borough, South Bound Brook Borough, and northeastern Franklin Township. Manville Borough and the Somerset County Regional Center in Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville also fall within the Metropolitan Planning Area.

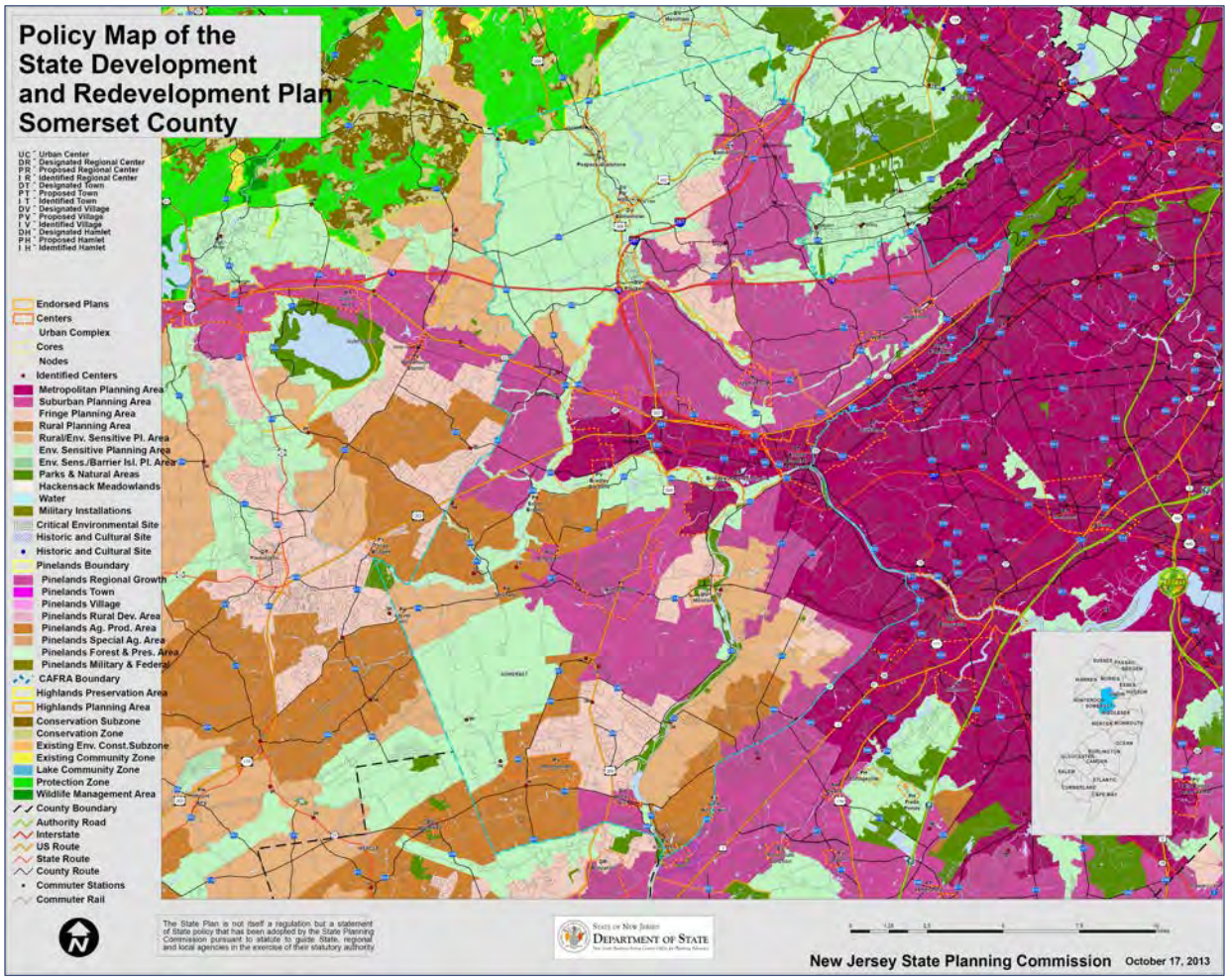
- **Suburban Planning Areas (PA 2)** are mostly located immediately outside of Metropolitan Planning Areas, with densities less than 1,000 persons/sq mile but with existing or planned infrastructure with capacity to support development. These areas are where the SDRP promotes most new development, complementing the redevelopment of metropolitan areas. Suburban Planning Areas are the most common category in Somerset County, with 70,515 acres of the county designated as such. PA 2 is mostly located along the eastern and central parts of Somerset, indicating their proximity to the even more populous areas to the county's east. In addition, almost all of Bridgewater, Bernards, Warren, Watchung, Green Brook, and northern Branchburg fall within Suburban Planning Areas.
- **Fringe Planning Areas** (PA 3) are the interface between the suburban land use of PA 2 and the rural areas characterized by PA 4 and PA 5. While they are less densely developed than metropolitan and suburban areas, they are served by roadways and utilities. As such, PA 3 is under the most pressure by urban sprawl. The SDRP stresses carefully planning these areas to restrict development and instead direct growth to PA 1 and PA 2. In Somerset County, 13,385 acres are designated as Fringe Planning Areas, scattered throughout the county.
- **Rural Planning Areas** (PA 4) primarily consist of farmland, woodlands, or other vacant land. SDRP goals for PA 4 concentrate on sustaining the agricultural industry and restricting development. Rural Planning Areas comprise 19,705 acres of Somerset County, located in the southern region in portions of Franklin Township, Montgomery Township, and areas along the South Branch of the Raritan River between Hillsborough and Branchburg townships.
- **Rural Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas** (PA 4B) are a subcategory of PA 4 but contain environmentally sensitive features that would also warrant classification in PA 5. Somerset County has 12,640 acres in PA 4B, including portions of Franklin, Hillsborough, and Branchburg townships.
- **Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (PA 5)** make up 55,842 acres in Somerset County, and are lands with significant environmental features that are prioritized for protection. Development should be avoided in PA 5. Features in PA 5 include trout production/maintenance waters, pristine non-tidal watersheds feeding Category 1 waters, threatened and endangered species habitat, coastal wetlands, slopes, ridgelines, unique ecosystems, and prime forest.

Designated Centers

The SDRP also identifies Designated Centers into which the state and its local jurisdictions should direct future development and redevelopment. These centers are categorized as Urban Centers, Regional Centers, Towns, Villages, and Hamlets based on size, regional location, population, residential and employment densities, and available housing stock. Table 3.7 summarizes the criteria for each.

- **Urban Centers** are the largest and most densely populated centers in the state. They offer a diverse mixture of industry, commerce, services, residences, and cultural

Map 3.2 Somerset County Policy Map of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan



Source: New Jersey State Government website. Retrieved from:
https://www.state.nj.us/state/planning/assets/docs/maps/somersetcountymap.pdf

Table 3.6 Somerset County Acreage in Planning Areas Designated by New Jersey's 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan

Area	Acres (2001 SDRP)	Percentage of County
Metropolitan Planning Areas (PA 1)	20,536	10.7%
Suburban Planning Areas (PA 2)	70,515	36.6%
Fringe Planning Areas (PA 3)	13,385	6.9%
Rural Planning Areas (PA 4)	19,705	10.2%
Rural Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (PA 4B)	12,640	6.6%
Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (PA 5)	55,842	29.0%
Totals	192,623	100.0%

Source: NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2001)

facilities. There are no Urban Centers in Somerset County.

- **Regional Centers** are smaller than Urban Centers, yet are still significant enough in activity and scale to warrant public transportation. There is one Regional Center in Somerset County, the Bridgewater-Raritan-Somerville Regional Center.
- **Towns** are smaller than the first two – generally less than two square miles in size – but serve as a local concentration of commerce and government activity. They offer access to goods and services for surrounding residential neighborhoods. Somerset County contains five designated Town Centers, including Bernardsville, Bound Brook-South Bound Brook, Manville, North Plainfield, and Warren.
- **Villages** are small, generally less than one square mile in size, but still have access to some local commercial and public facilities. There are six designated Villages in Somerset County, including Bedminster, Pluckemin (Bedminster Township), Far Hills, Millstone, Rocky Hill, and Watchung.

  Hamlets are the smallest and least densely populated of the centers. They consist of residential development oriented around a focal point, such as a house of worship or general store. There are no designated hamlets in Somerset County.

Special Resources

The SDRP accommodates the designation of Critical Environmental Sites (CES) and Historic & Cultural Sites (HCS) as protected areas on the State Plan Policy Map (Map 3.2), which identifies all of the population centers, designated Planning Areas, parks,

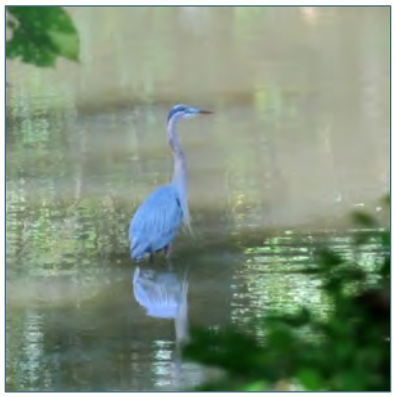
Table 3.7 Criteria for Center Designation in the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2001)

Criteria	Urban	Regional Center, PA 1, 2	Regional Center, PA 3, 4, 5	Town	Village	Hamlet
Area (sq. miles)	No specification	1 to 10	1 to 10	<2	<1	<100 acres with or 10 to 50 acres without community wastewater
Population	>40,000	>10,000	>5,000	1,000 to 10,000	<4,500	25 to 250
Gross Population Density (people/sq. mile)	>7,500	>5,000	>5,000	>5,000	>5,000	3,000
Housing	No specification	4,000 to 15,000	2,000 to 15,000	500 to 4,000	100 to 2,000	10 to 100
Gross Housing Density (dwelling units/acre)	>4	>3	>3	>3	>3	>2
Employment	>40,000	>10,000	>5,000	>500 to 10,000	50 to 1,000	No specification
Jobs: Housing Ratio	>1:1	2:1 to 5:1	2:1 to 5:1	1:1 to 4:1	.5:1 to 2:1	No specification

Source: New Jersey Department of State website. https://nj.gov/state/planning/state-plan.shtml . *Accessed November 2017*

military installations, and Pinelands management areas in the state. CES and HCS are used to designate features of small (less than one square mile), irregular areas to be preserved in future development, including natural systems and cultural sites. The designation of a CES or an HCS allows for the linkage of spaces with environmental and historic significance, such as landscapes, trails, open space, historic sites and districts, archaeological sites, scenic corridors, threatened wildlife habitats, and other significant areas.

The historic preservation section of the SDRP encourages the integration of historic resources into local zoning and development strategies through the use of ordinances, historic resource surveys, rehabilitation projects, archaeological investi-gations, and public interpretation.



Great blue heron (Ardea herodias). (Photo by Ron and Pat Morris)

Endorsed Plans

In order to ensure that municipal, county, and regional plans and accompanying development regulations are consistent with the state plan, New Jersey has a plan endorsement process overseen by the State Planning Commission. If the commission finds a local plan to be in line with the state plan, that locality is eligible for priority assistance and incentives that will aid in implementing the endorsed plans. Examples of such assistance include technical support, preferential interest rates, prioritized status for state grants, and state capital investment. Somerset County has two endorsed plans, Raritan and Somerville, both as part of the Bridgewater-Raritan-Somerville Regional Center (as of October 16, 2013).

D. The 2012 Draft State Strategic Plan

In 2012, the draft of a new State Plan was released, titled the *State Strategic Plan: New Jersey's State Development & Redevelopment Plan*. This draft plan eliminates the Planning Areas and instead establishes "Investment Areas" for growth or preservation policies and funding, determined by a series of criteria applied during funding decisions rather than by a state map. The state held hearings on the revised plan throughout 2012 but it was never finalized and approved. Therefore, the 2001 plan remains in effect. However, the draft plan did have an impact on the Somerset County planning process as similar ideas formed the basis for the county's Investment Framework (discussed later in this chapter).

E. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

New Jersey's Green Acres Program produces the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) every five years in response to a mandate of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578). The most recent version remained in draft as of the completion of this plan and covers 2018-2022.

The SCORP maintains the state's eligibility for funding from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund administered by the National Park Service. In 2020, Congress permanently authorized funding for the program, a highly important step that will permit greater planning for

land conservation using federal dollars in New Jersey. According to the national Land and Water Conservation Fund Coalition that led the national campaign for the authorization, "New Jersey has received approximately $346 million in LWCF funding over the past five decades, protecting places such as the Garden State's five national wildlife refuges, the Highlands Region, Morristown National Historic Park, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail."[6]

According to the SCORP, New Jersey has 1,573,467 acres of preserved land comprising 34 percent of the state. (p. 1) It further states that Somerset County has 27,065 acres of preserved open space acres.[7] The SCORP indicates that the state of New Jersey will observe the following policies:

- Continue to preserve land to protect water resources, biodiversity, historic resources and provide statewide public recreation. (p. 32)
- Continue the funding of resource based recreation facilities on State open space and recreation areas and to provide funding to local government and conservation organizations for park and recreation projects. (p. 34)
- Continue the protection of State Resource Areas through land preservation, land use planning, participation in regional projects, and continued funding and planning assistance to local governments and conservation groups. (p. 38)
- Promote greenway and trail planning and implementation. (p. 40)
- Provide stewardship funding and continue stewardship planning. (p. 44)

The SCORP lists specific actions to accomplish these policies, all of which are consistent with Somerset County's plans, making the county eligible for land acquisition funding and planning assistance. Specifically, the plan describes funding and programs available to protect Natural Heritage Priority Sites, preserve historic sites, promote ecotourism, support greenway and trail projects, increase public access to open space and recreation areas, and support environmental education facilities and programs.

F. The New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan

The current New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, developed by the NJ Historic Preservation Office, was adopted in 2013 and extends through 2019.[8] This plan establishes goals and objectives to inform the actions of agencies and individuals involved in historic preservation efforts across New Jersey. Of the plan's six goals, the first is to "use historic preservation as a tool to strengthen and revitalize New Jersey's state and local economies in a sustainable manner." Furthermore, the plan addresses such issues as increased cooperation among the various agencies and organizations involved in historic preservation, financial incentives to promote job growth through rehabilitation projects, the alignment of the preservation and environmental advocacy

[6] https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58a60299ff7c508c3c05f2e1/t/5b33c328aa4a994dde72fd26/1530118953178/New+Jersey+fact+sheet+6.13.18.pdf, p. 1.

[7] The SCORP does not count some acres as preserved that are mapped as such by this Somerset County Preservation Plan.

[8] http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/Index_HomePage_images_links/hpo_plan%202013_2019/hpoplan2014.pdf

communities in New Jersey, the marketing of preservation success stories and examples of sustainable development, and the efficiency of the regulatory review process.

Although the New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan is not a regulatory document, it outlines strategies for the implementation of effective municipal historic preservation plans. The plan includes a discussion of current opportunities and challenges for historic preservation in New Jersey, especially in terms of New Jersey's economy, infrastructure, and stakeholders' needs. Additionally, the plan makes a series of recommendations for federal and state agencies, community organizations, and individual actors seeking to participate in and strengthen historic preservation efforts in New Jersey. It also identifies the economic and sustainability benefits of preserving existing buildings, citing community support and enthusiasm for preservation among citizens of New Jersey. As a framework for further preservation activity, the plan includes a compilation of resources and action steps for stakeholders to become involved in historic preservation.

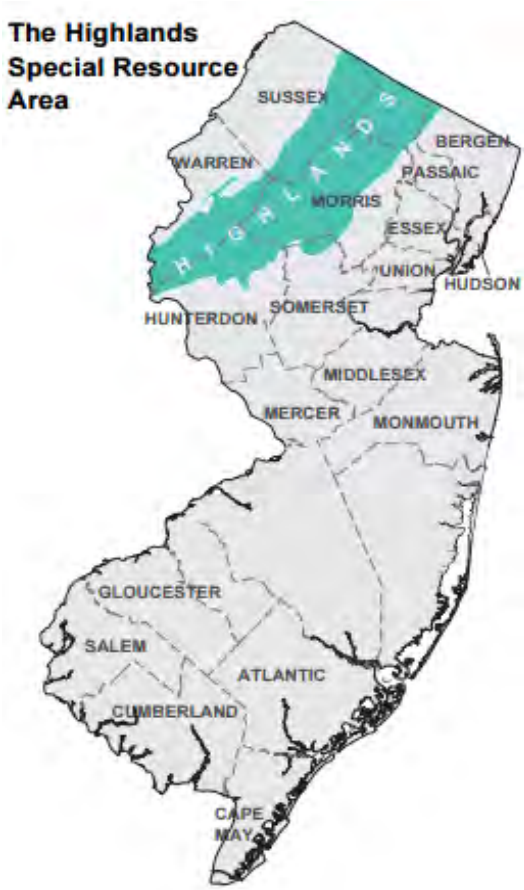
As of early 2022 the NJHPO was undergoing an update to the New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan.

The Historic Preservation Plan that accompanies this Somerset County Preservation Plan (summarized in Chapter 6) covers many more state-level agencies and programs in detail.

G. Sustainable Jersey

Other statewide nonprofit organizations are described in the individual plans provided with this Somerset County Preservation Plan. Sustainable

Map 3.3 The Highlands Region



Source: State Development and Redevelopment Plan, p. 172

Jersey, however, addresses resources in this plan across the board, quite thoroughly, encouraging communities to reduce waste, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and improve the environment in many other ways. Categories or activities related to this preservation plan include wildlife interaction, a natural resources inventory, local foods, farmland preservation, creative assets, a historic preservation element, and placemaking. Sustainable Jersey promotes sustainable practices by connecting communities with grants. Municipalities that pursue

sustainable practices may register for the Sustainable Jersey certification.[9]

H. Regional Planning

New Jersey's Highlands Region

According to the SDRP, a Special Resource Area is "an area or region with unique characteristics or resources of statewide importance which is essential to the sustained well-being and function of its own region and other regions or systems – environmental, economic, and social – and to the quality of life for future generations." (p. 171) The single designated Special Resource Area in Somerset County is the portion of the county located in the Highlands Region.

Shown in Map 3.3, the Highlands Region in northern New Jersey serves as the drinking water source for more than half of the state. This combined with the area's sensitive natural resources and natural beauty led the Governor to establish a Highlands Task Force in September 2003, charged with studying how best to promote conservation efforts, smart growth, regional planning, and water resource protections in the Highlands Region. The result was the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, signed into law in August 2004 (Highlands Act, P.L. 2004, c. 120). The Master Plan includes a Historic, Cultural, Archaeological, and Scenic Resource Protection element, with programs aimed to protect and enhance these resources. The plan includes an inventory of 618 historic and cultural resources.[10]

Preservation and Planning Areas

Under the act, the Highlands Region is divided into Preservation and Planning Areas. In the Preservation Area, development, water use, and other activities that impact water quality are subject to strict land use controls overseen by the State Department of Environment Protection and the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council. Specifically, the act expands mandatory buffers around the area's streams and water bodies, sets limits on impervious coverage for individual properties, and requires master plans for local governments within the Preservation Area to conform to Highlands regulations. Regarding farms, if an agricultural operation in the Preservation Area seeks to increase impervious cover by three percent or more of its total land area it must develop and implement a "farm conservation plan" approved by the local Soil Conservation District (SCD). If the operation seeks to increase impervious cover by nine percent or more, then it is required to prepare and implement a "resource management systems plan."

Table 3.8 details, by municipality, the land area in Somerset County that falls within the Highlands region. Only a portion of Bedminster Township falls within the Preservation Area and thus is susceptible to increased land and water use regulations. In total, 47,555 acres or approximately 24 percent of the county is in the Highlands region.

Regional Master Plan and Land Use

The Highlands Act required that the Highlands Council create a Regional Master Plan (RMP) order to ensure the act's implementation. On July 17, 2008, the council adopted the Highlands RMP. The RMP establishes a framework for future land use that directs development away from environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands. Highlands land uses are defined using seven zones. Map 3.4 displays the RMP Land Use Zones in Somerset County's Highlands Region:

[9] http://www.sustainablejersey.com/; and http://www.sustainablejersey.com/actions-certification/actions

[10] http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/master/

Table 3.8 Somerset County Acreage in the Highlands Region by Municipality

Municipality	Planning Area	Preservation Area	Total
Bedminster Township	15,866	1,009	16,875
Bernards Township	15,570	0	15,570
Bernardsville Borough	8,265	0	8,265
Far Hills Borough	3,149	0	3,149
Peapack-Gladstone Borough	3,696	0	3,696
Total	46,546	1,009	47,555

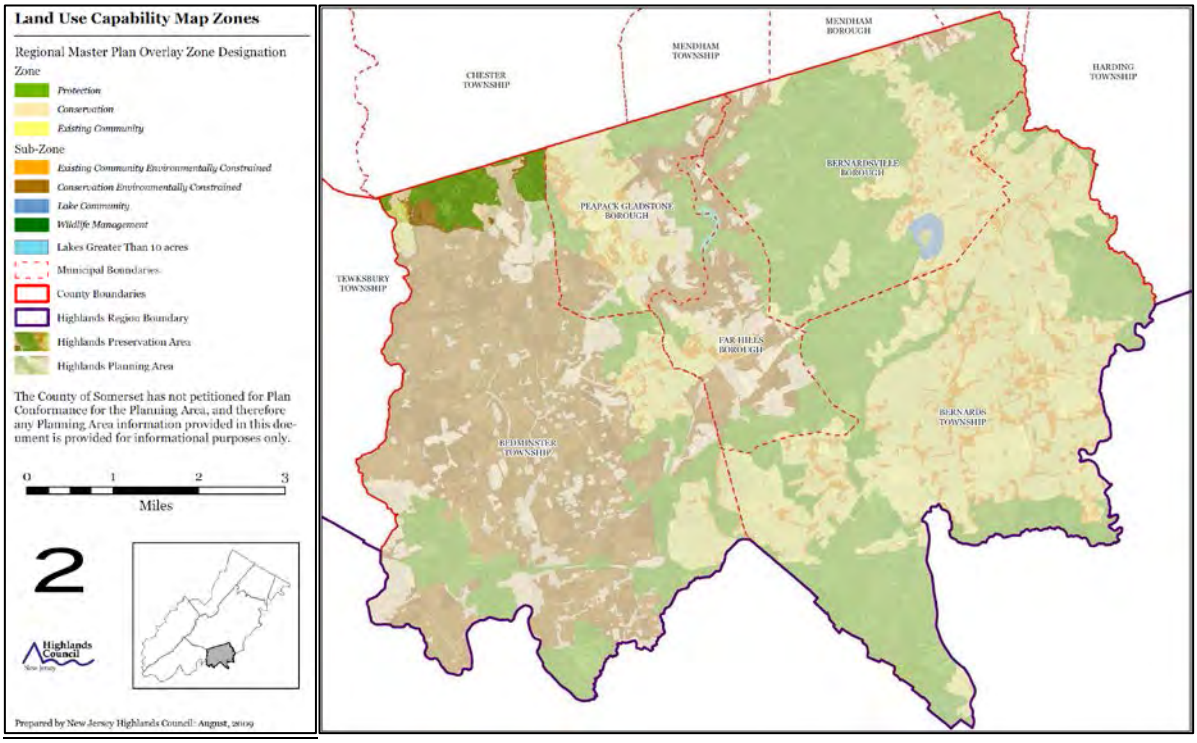
Source: Highlands Regional Master Plan Addendum A, January 4, 2011, p. 3.

- The **Protection Zone** consists of lands with the highest quality resource value, where preservation should be prioritized and development severely limited.
- The **Wildlife Management Sub-Zone** within the Protection Zone includes (a) areas managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System and (b) the Wildlife Management Area System administered by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Division of Fish and Wildlife's Bureau of Land Management.
- The **Conservation Zone** is intended primarily for agricultural use and includes lands of agricultural importance as well as natural resource lands that are next to agricultural land. Development is to be limited in this zone.
- The **Conservation Zone – Environmentally Constrained Sub-Zone** consists of particularly significant environmental features within the Conservation Zone.
- The **Existing Community Zone** includes areas that are already developed, have comparatively few natural resource constraints than the other zones, and are currently served or will be more easily served by public infrastructure. This zone is an area of opportunity for future growth and development.
- The **Existing Community Zone – Environmentally Constrained Sub-Zone** consists of particularly significant environmental features within the Existing Community Zone, including critical habitat, steep slopes, and forested lands. They are not appropriate for significant development and should be preserved where possible.
- The **Lake Community Sub-Zone** is made up of community development within 1,000 feet of lakes. This zone is to be managed to prevent degradation of water quality, watershed pollution, and harm to lake ecosystems, and to promote natural aesthetic values within the larger Existing Community Zone.

Conformance

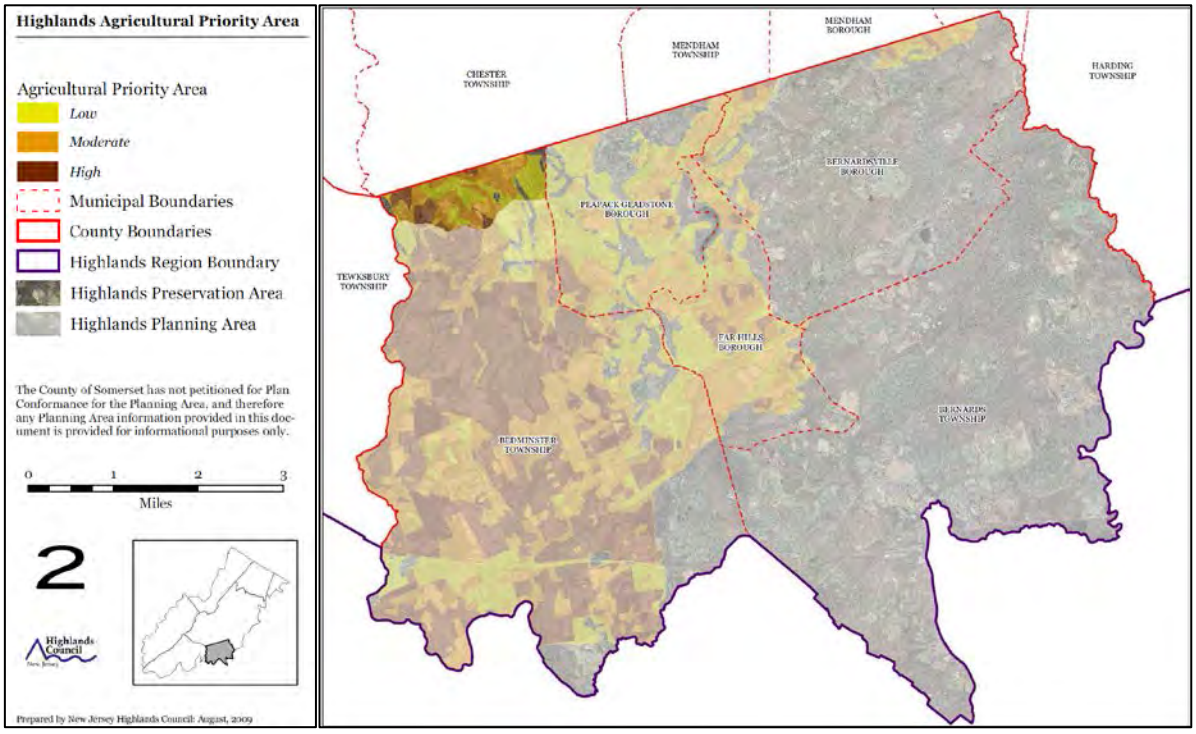
The Highlands Act requires that each county located wholly or partially in the Preservation Area must submit revisions to its county master plan and associated regulations – as applicable to the development and use of land in the Preservation Area – in order to conform with the RMP. Somerset County and Bedminster Township have both submitted petitions for plan conformance, and those petitions were approved by the Highlands Council in 2011. Conformance is voluntary for the other municipalities, as they are located entirely within the Planning Area.

Map 3.4. Highlands Regional Master Plan Land Use Zones in Somerset County



Source: New Jersey Highlands Council Environmental Resource Inventory, 2011.

Map 3.5 Highlands Regional Master Plan Agricultural Priority Areas in Somerset County



Source: New Jersey Highlands Council Environmental Resource Inventory, 2011.

Farmland Preservation in the Highlands

Of note for this plan, one of the RMP's primary objectives is preservation of farmland and the farming industry, as explained in detail in the Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development Plan, Section 5.3, Land Use Planning Context. In general, the RMP contains the following farmland preservation-related goals:

- Goal 3A: Protection and enhancement of agricultural resources and the agricultural industry in the Highlands Region.
- Goal 3B: Protection and enhancement of agricultural sustainability and viability of the agricultural industry within the Highlands Region.
- Goal 3C: Minimize construction of non-agricultural development-inducing water and wastewater infrastructure in Agricultural Resource Areas.
- Goal 3D: Protection and enhancement of surface and ground water quality and natural resources in the Highland Region and Agricultural Resource Areas.
- Goal 3E: Conforming municipalities and counties include agriculture retention/farmland preservation plan elements in their master plans and development regulations.

The delineation of an Agricultural Resource Area (ARA) within the Highlands Region is central to the implementation of the RMP. In the ARA, non-agricultural uses are limited to those that support the preservation of farmland, avoid conflicts with agriculture, maintain and enhance the sustainability and continued viability of the agricultural industry, protect Important Farmland Soils, and meet the resource management and protection requirements of the RMP. Where it is not feasible to preserve agricultural lands, residential development in the ARA is subject to mandatory clustering. Portions of the ARA are further delineated into three Agricultural Priority Areas (APA) ranked either Low, Moderate, or High to indicate the prioritization for preservation activities. Map 3.5 shows the APA in the county (the outer boundary is coterminous with the ARA). Somerset County contains 22,418 acres of Agricultural Resource Areas, of which 20,493 acres are Agricultural Priority Areas. Large concentrations of high-priority APAs are located throughout Bedminster Township, with smaller areas located in Peapack-Gladstone and Far Hills.

Together North Jersey

Together North Jersey (TNJ) was created in 2011 to help develop a regional plan for North Jersey.[11] TNJ brought together a coalition of nearly 100 diverse partners – counties, municipalities, educational institutions, nonprofits, businesses, and other groups – to develop the first comprehensive plan for sustainable development for the 13 northern New Jersey counties: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren. The goal of the plan is to create a more competitive, efficient, livable, and resilient North Jersey region. The plan is comprehensive, including a broad range of topics such as housing, economic development, education, land use, energy, water, historic preservation, the arts, stewardship, and transportation. The plan specifically supports "agricultural businesses, urban farming and agritourism" in Strategy 3.4[12] as further described in the Farmland Preservation and Agricultural

[11] https://togethernorthjersey.com/

[12] Ibid., p. 45

WalkBikeHike Somerset County: Connecting Vibrant Communities Plan (2019)

Somerset County benefits from a rich, diverse, and scenic natural heritage. Moreover, it features an abundance of parks and open space and vast tracts of preserved lands with numerous trails and trail segments that traverse the county. In 2019, Somerset County completed a study to support the development of a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, trails, and greenways across Somerset County – providing an alternate means to travel between places throughout the county. This recent plan advances the Somerset County Circulation Plan Update (adopted 2012), which proposed a robust multi-modal transportation network and infrastructure and policy initiatives that included bicycle and pedestrian circulation as well as scenic corridors and greenways.

As demonstrated by interviews with and surveys of park managers across Somerset County, and discussed in the Open Space Preservation Plan, demand since the last iteration of the plan has increased considerably among county residents for trails of all kinds. The Somerset County WalkBikeHike Plan will help create an integrated network of multi-use trails and paths that serve a variety of transportation needs and connect users of all ages and abilities to the many opportunities, services, and destinations in the region. The Open Space Preservation Plan is a companion plan, focusing primarily on opportunities for the protection of open space that will support the rich network envisioned in the WalkBikeHike Plan.

Source: https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/walk-bike-hike-plan

Development Plan, Section 5.3, Land Use Planning Context.

The TNJ region has received Preferred Sustainability Status (PSS) from the Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities, which makes jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations in the region eligible for two "bonus points" when applying to certain U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) competitive grant programs and "priority consideration" when applying to some grant and technical assistance programs administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

I. Somerset County Planning

Somerset County's Master Plan

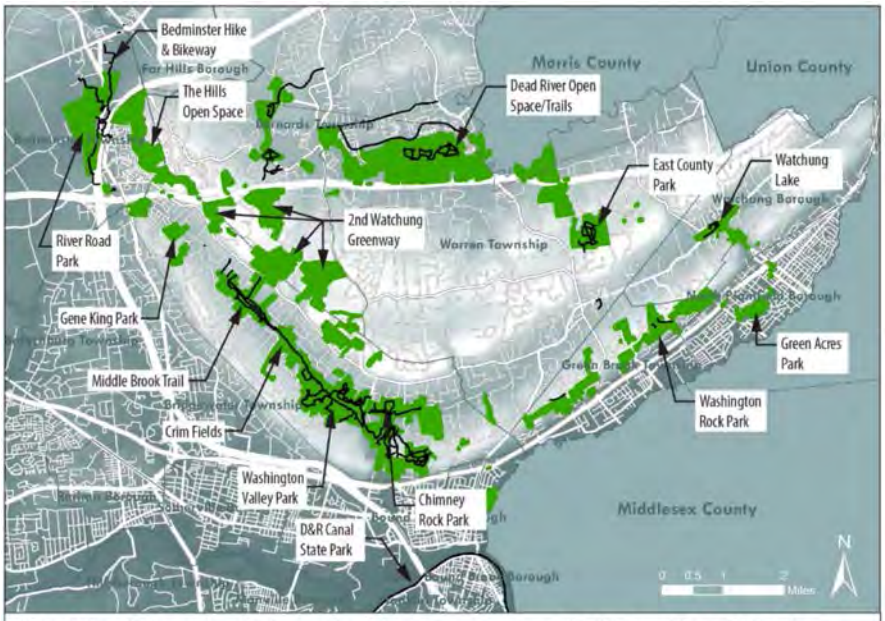
The New Jersey County and Regional Planning Enabling Act requires county planning boards to adopt master plans to guide the physical development of their county. Somerset County's Master Plan was adopted in 1987 and, while portions of the plan have been updated in the years since, it continues today as the primary document guiding the county's future. The following elements of the Master Plan have since been updated:

- WalkBikeHike Somerset County: Connecting Vibrant Communities Plan (adopted July 2019; see sidebar at left and Figure 3.3);
- Somerset County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (adopted July 2019);
- Housing Element (adopted 2017);
- County Investment Framework, which replaced the Land Use Management Map, discussed below (adopted 2014);
- Trends and Indicators Report, adopted as a background element of the Master Plan in 2014.

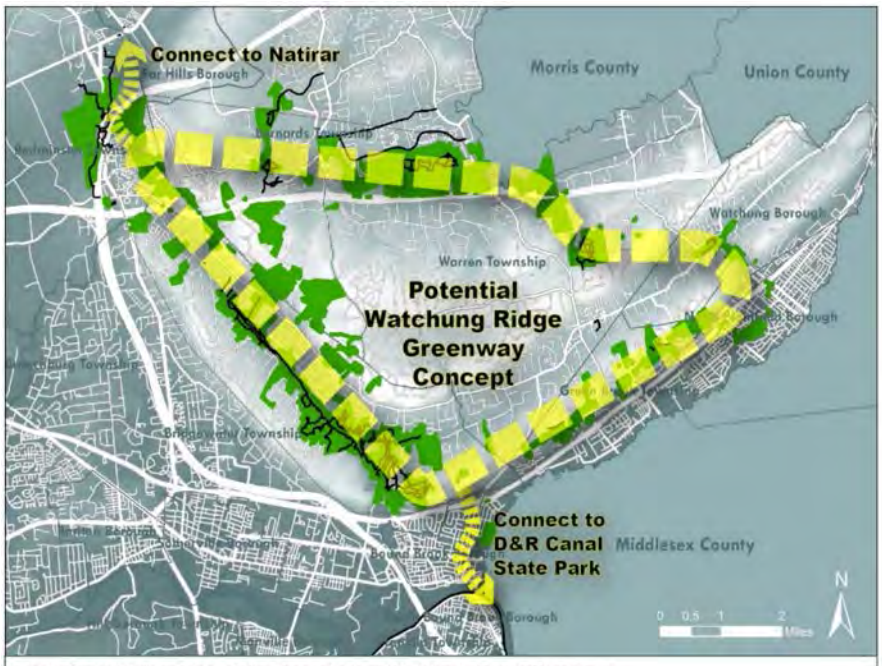
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (adopted 2014);
- Circulation Plan (adopted 2012);
- Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan Update (adopted 2008; this Preservation Plan is the update);
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (adopted 2000; this Preservation Plan is the update);
- Somerset County Cultural Resource Survey (1992)
- Somerset County Metal Truss Bridge Survey (1992)

Somerset County's Master Plan and Farmland Preservation

The 1987 Master Plan sets as a goal the retention of the remaining agricultural regions in the county. The plan states that agricultural preservation is a means of (a) preventing sprawl that leads to the inefficient provision of resources, (b) economic development related to agricultural jobs and products, and (c) pro-tecting natural resources and



Map of Class 15C parcels with key parklands forming a ring around the First and Second Watchung Mountains. (Data Source: Tax Parcels of Somerset County, New Jersey, Revised April 2018)



Long-Term Vision Concept for the potential Watchung Ridge Greenway

Figure 3.3. Maps from Somerset County's 2019 Walk, Bike, Hike study

(pp. 3-34 and 3-36) demonstrate the level of analysis carried out to refine concepts for the county's longstanding greenway system. (Credit: WSP Global Inc., https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/walk-bike-hike-plan)

preserving the open character of the county. The plan further identified four Rural Preservation Areas where preservation should be targeted: the Millstone Valley, Sourland Mountain, the Neshanic Valley, and the Upper Raritan Watershed. Planning strategies include preserving prime agricultural land and essential support facilities through municipal planning and zoning efforts and county agricultural districts and purchases of development easements; discouraging the construction or extension of centralized sewerage systems and water supply into areas deemed inappropriate for intensive development; and encouraging municipalities to integrate new development into rural areas through clustering and special site design techniques "so that the values and heritage of the rural countryside and existing villages are preserved and enhanced." (The Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development Plan, Section 5.3, Land Use Planning Context, provides more details.)

County Development Regulations

New Jersey's County Planning Act gives county planning boards the authority to review and approve subdivision and site plans that affect county road systems and stormwater facilities. The Somerset County Planning Board has a land development review process in place for this review and approval. The New Jersey County and Regional Planning Enabling Act, which requires the development of master plans, also states that land development in the state should be in conformance with the policies in related master plans. As part of its review process, the Somerset County Planning Board outlines inconsistencies with the Somerset County Master Plan, and these comments are submitted in a development review report for consideration by the municipality and applicant. Reviews by the county consider open space, farmland, and historic resources.

Finally, any applicant for a "major" plan submitted to the county, defined to mean three or more new lots or a nonagricultural site plan of 20,000 square feet or greater, is required by the Planning Board to prepare an Agricultural Impact Statement if any part of the site is within 1,000 feet of a farm currently preserved or under contract. The county provides this Agricultural Impact Statement to the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board for review and comment.

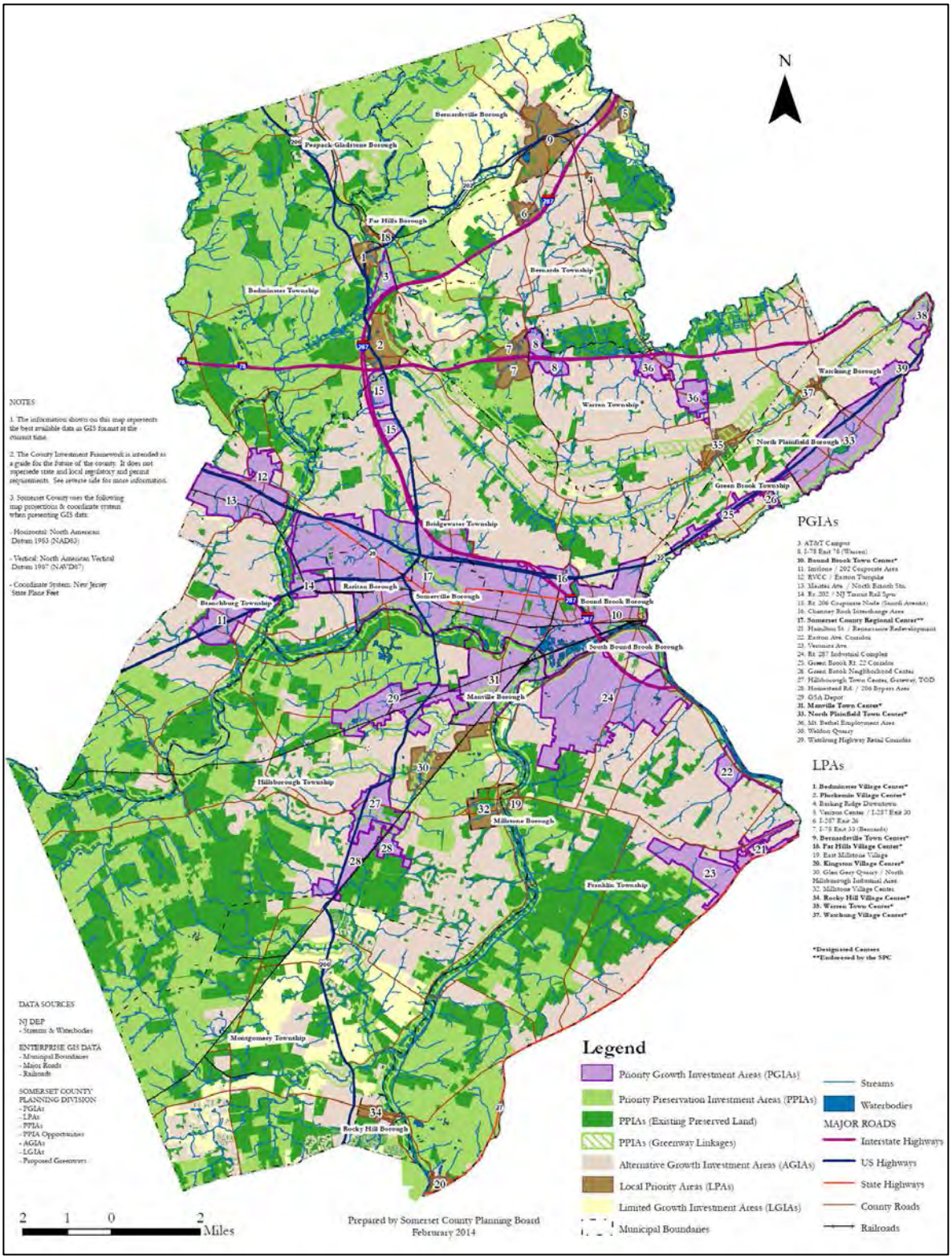
Somerset County Investment Framework

The Somerset County Planning Board adopted the Somerset County Investment Framework (SCIF) as an element of the Master Plan in October 2014, replacing the 1987 Land Use Management Map.

The SCIF serves to coordinate land use planning efforts at the state, county, and municipal governmental levels. Municipalities participated extensively; conformance is voluntary but high. The SCIF map is shown in Map 3.6. The SCIF defines the following four categories of land use:

- Priority Growth Investment Areas (PGIAs): These areas are the primary locations for economic growth and community development in the county. PGIAs already contain concentrations of development and infrastructure assets, and therefore they are ideal locations for the development of mixed-use, walkable communities. PPIAs make up 22,600 acres or 12 percent of the county. Although mapped as growth areas, it is assumed that municipalities will provide for open space, parks, and trails as their areas develop.
- Priority Preservation Investment Areas (PPIAs): PPIAs consist of agricultural land

Map 3.6 Somerset County Investment Framework



Source: Somerset County Planning Board, 2014

and environmentally sensitive natural resources, where farmland and open space preservation is preferred. PPIAs total 97,600 acres, or about half of the county.

- Alternative Growth Investment Areas (AGIAs): These are quieter residential areas within existing sewer service where large-scale growth is not desired. Instead, they are to be prioritized for investments that enhance the livability and neighborhood character of the community.
    - Local Priority Areas (LPAs) are a subset of AGIAs and are distinct small town and village centers which have limited growth opportunities due to their scale, historic character, environmental and access constraints, and municipal preferences.
- Limited Growth Investment Areas (LGIAs): LGIAs consist of existing low-density, residential commmunities that are not served by sewer service. They are areas that support lifestyles with strong connections to the natural environment. Investments that restore and protect environmental resources, strengthen open space linkages, and enhance quality of life are preferred in LGIAs.

Since the adoption of the SCIF in 2014, the county and its municipalities have been at work to implement the land use designations contained therein. In April 2015, the *Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County: Phase I Study* was published. This study included data and trends analysis supporting development and redevelopment scenarios for all 24 PGIAs designated by the SCIF. The Phase II study was published in July 2015, and it delved further into the local needs, goals, and visions of seven of the PGIAs. The Phase III study was released June 2017 and included specific plans for seventeen PGIAs and Local Priority Areas.

While all three studies centered on the development and redevelopment of PGIAs as opposed to the preservation of PPIAs, directing growth towards growth-designated areas of the county will help the preservation areas to remain rural. More PPIA-specific strategies related to SCIF implementation include:

- Providing a coordinated framework for all levels of government as they carry out policies, programs, and investments intended to preserve and enhance open space, agricultural lands, and other environmentally sensitive areas;
- Encouraging private organizations, non-profits, and the public sector to coordinate and leverage resources towards preservation;
- Reinforcing government open space and capital improvement plans; and
- Promoting best management practices (BMPs) for land management.

Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

In 2014, Somerset County adopted a new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy entitled *Investment Somerset: A Collaborative Blueprint for Economic Growth.* Of nine priorities for action, five are related in some way to this Preservation Plan:

- Re-use of significant properties (office complexes and industrial facilities)
- Hazard mitigation (stormwater management and flood mitigation)
- Quality of life (diversity of housing options, communities, cultural amenities; green

infrastructure; economic revitalization and restoration of environmentally sensitive areas)
- Tourism
- Agriculture development

The CEDS is described further in the Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development Plan, Section 5.8, Agricultural Economic Development (summarized in Chapter 5), and Chapter 8, Tourism Development.

Sewer Service Areas / Public Water Supply Service Areas

Sixty-six percent (129,349 acres) of Somerset County is served by public water, and 46 percent (90,675 acres) is covered by sewer service areas (not all of which are completely served); Map 3.7 shows public water and sewer service areas in the county. Wastewater planning is an ongoing, iterative process in the State of New Jersey, as required by the New Jersey Water Quality Planning Act (N.J.S.A. 58:11A-1 et seq) and Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act. This planning process ensures that federal, state, regional, and local water resource protection, regulations, and land use planning goals are all considered together in a holistic, collaborative process. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is tasked with overseeing this process, and has delegated Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) development to county boards of commissioners. These county WMPs project the long-term wastewater treatment needs of the residents of their jurisdiction, offer solutions for capacity constraints, and are an opportunity for expanding or altering any planned sewer service areas.

In 2016, the DEP adopted new rules for water quality management planning, necessitating that counties adopt new WMPs. Somerset County completed the first phase of its own WMP update process in 2013 by adopting a revised countywide Wastewater Service Areas Map. This map delineates the assigned sewer service areas associated with existing domestic and industrial wastewater treatment facilities located within the county. The Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development began the second phase in early 2017, updating the remaining components of the WMP, working with the municipalities, sewer authorities, and other stakeholders to complete the necessary analyses and develop recommendations. Somerset County's long-standing policy is to coordinate land use and sewer planning so they reinforce each other, avoiding unwanted extensions of public sewers into the ADAs and specifically into land targeted for farmland preservation.

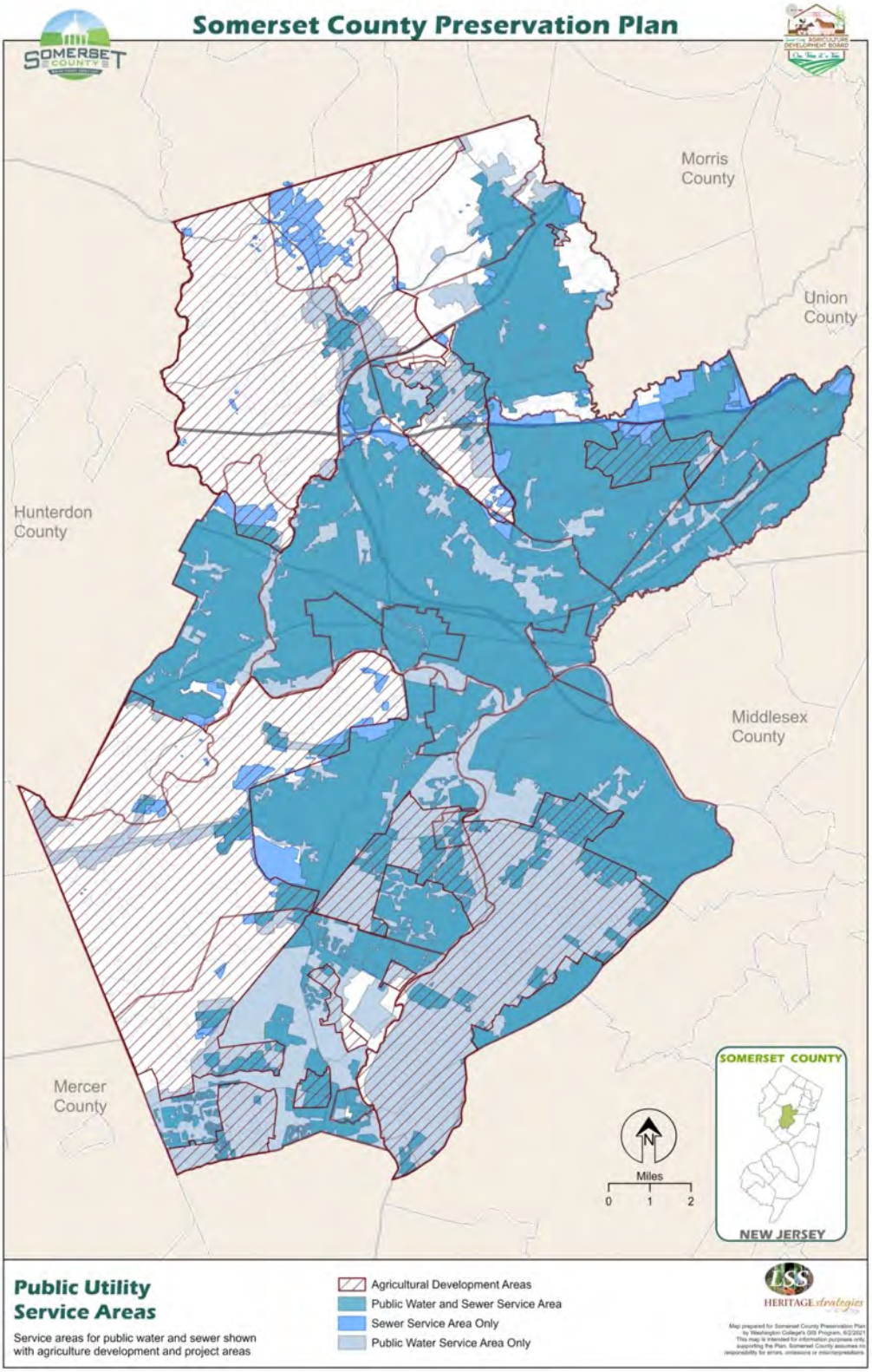
Commitment to Climate Change

In November of 2021, the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolution R21-1288 which outlines the County commitment to four major goals in response to Climate Change. These goals include:

- End Emissions
- Cool Back Down
- Minimize the Pain
- Create a Fairer Environment

The goals broadly outline actions such as achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emission targets, implementing carbon sequestration strategies, addressing the job losses from decarbonization of the economy and mitigating environmental and climate change impacts in low-income communities. The goals outlined in this resolution are highly consistent with many of the goals, policies and

Map 3.7 Public Utility Service Areas



strategies contained in the overall Preservation Plan as well as all three individual master plan elements.

Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan of 2019 was created as an update of the 2014 Somerset County Hazard Mitigation Plan (itself an update of a 2008 plan). This plan was created by Somerset County, all 21 municipalities, and the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority in response to the requirements of the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (P.L. 106–390); it was prepared in accordance with state and federal standards and approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

In order to participate in this multi-jurisdictional plan, a municipality is required to designate a Hazard Mitigation Plan Coordinator, establish a Municipal HMP Committee, and adopt a municipal resolution which endorses and adopts the plan. If a municipality participates in this plan, it becomes eligible for FEMA hazard mitigation grant funds. These grants include the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program. Some of the recommendations in the plan call for the county and towns to state whether they have open space plans and funding sources to acquire lands in flood areas.

Preservation and Hazard Mitigation processes will inform each other and be coordinated.

Somerset County Scenic Corridor and Roadway Study

The Somerset County Scenic Corridor and Roadway Study of 1992 developed a set of designation criteria which the county uses to evaluate potential scenic

Griggstown Lock of the Delaware and Raritan Canal (Photo by Ron and Pat Morris)

The Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway

The America's Byways® website operated by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, describes the Millstone Valley byway – one of 150 nationally designated scenic routes across the United States and one of only six in New Jersey – as follows:

Located in the narrow Millstone River Valley in north central New Jersey, the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway offers you a glimpse into the past where well-preserved pieces of the canal era, the revolutionary war era, and early Dutch and American heritage live on. In addition to the major Revolutionary War troop movements and military campaigns that took place along the byway corridor, there are a remarkable number of intact historic districts, historic sites, and villages associated with each of these eras. The nearby Delaware and Raritan Canal and towpath are popular for canoeing, jogging, hiking, bicycling, fishing, birding, and horseback riding. The Millstone Valley is a haven of historical sites, recreational sites, and natural beauty.

Source: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/byways/2462

roadways and corridors.[13] In the study, the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway plus an additional 15 county roads and 14 corridors were recommended for scenic designation and preservation. These scenic corridors and greenways can be used to help achieve Somerset County's sustainability goals by protecting environmentally sensitive areas and important cultural and historic resources.

Noteworthy roadway corridors may be designated as State Scenic Byways by NJDOT. After receiving state designation, a corridor found to be significant to the country's heritage can be designated as a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration. Benefits of scenic byway designation include increased tourism, technical assistance, managed growth and protection planning, and eligibility for federal grant funding. Scenic Byway designation strikes a balance among conflicts in preservation and mobility while providing important opportunities for improved mobility and safety, particularly for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Since its designation as a scenic byway by the state in 2001, the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway went on to earn national recognition in 2009 as a vital linkage for the natural, historic, and cultural assets along its 27.5-mile length in Kingston, Franklin Township, and Hillsborough Township. Scenic byway designation comes with certain design stipulations, including regulations regarding signage, landscaping, striping, etc. (More discussion of scenic byways is found in the Historic Preservation Plan, Section 6.4, Preservation Framework.)

Key Somerset County Agencies Related to Planning

Somerset County Planning Board

The mission of the Somerset County Planning Board is "to positively influence the process of growth and change in the County so that it provides the optimum living and working environment for our residents and employers, builds balanced communities, promotes regional awareness and cooperation, protects the natural environment and preserves our rich history, farmland and natural beauty."[14] Planning Board members are appointed by the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners. The Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, part of the Office of the County Administrator, operates under the guidance of the Planning Board and:

- Is responsible for land development review and the preparation of the Somerset County Master Plan and its various elements.
- Oversees transportation projects, economic development, open space, farmland and historic preservation, wastewater management, and sustainability initiatives.
- Reviews and provides assistance and technical guidance regarding legislation, housing, demographics, mapping, and much more.[15]

Somerset County Park Commission

The Somerset County Park Commission is responsible for 14,701 acres of county parkland visited by two million park users each year. County parkland includes stables, golf courses, swimming pools, trails, forests, and a number of historic

[13] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/home/showdocument?id=15618

[14] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/planning-board

[15] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning

resources. [16] In 2005, the Park Commission commissioned a study of the park system's capital facilities to "develop a long-term prioritized plan based on an assessment of maintenance needs of existing facilities and the future development of parks and recreation facilities to meet current and future demands." The resulting twenty-year Capital Improvement Plan includes improvements to existing parks and development of new special use facilities.[17]

A cornerstone in previous county land preservation plans has been the creation of greenways along major rivers and ridgelines. Throughout history, the county's rivers have brought economic prosperity to the county and shaped development. As the lifeblood of the county, rivers literally directed traffic within and through the county landscape and shaped settlement patterns. The ridgelines along the Watchung Mountains were the scenes of historical events that shaped the nation.

An important recent study by the Park Commission is a needs assessment completed in 2019 and based on considerable outreach to the county's residents. The work of the Park Commission is discussed further in the Open Space Preservation Plan included in this Somerset County Preservation Plan.

Somerset County Agricultural Development Board

The Somerset County Agricultural Development Board preserves farmland in the county and offers services and resources for farmers.[18] The board has preserved nearly 8,400 acres. It works in concert with the State Agricultural Development Committee. For more, see the Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development Plan within this Somerset County Preservation Plan.

Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission

The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission (SCC&HC) was created by the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners in 1983 with the charge to "promote public interest in local and county history, in the arts and in cultural values, goals (and) traditions of the community, State and Nation." The SCC&HC currently comprises nine county commissioner-appointed responsible for promoting local cultural and historic programs and maintaining a comprehensive survey of all historic sites in Somerset County. It administers a number of grant programs to promote historic preservation, history, and the arts. The commission is described further in the Historic Preservation Plan.[19]

The Somerset County Business Partnership and Somerset County Tourism

The Somerset County Business Partnership is "a Chamber of Commerce serving the businesses and residents of Somerset County." The Somerset County Business Partnership, a 501(c)(3) organization, follows a strategic plan that encourages partnerships among the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.[20] It was a major participant in the creation of the county's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) described above.

Somerset County Tourism is a division of the Somerset County Business Partnership and the official NJ Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Somerset County, a 501(c)(3)

[16] http://www.somersetcountyparks.org/
[17] http://www.somersetcountyparks.org/genInfo/history/history.html
[18] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/agriculture-development-board
[19] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/cultural-heritage
[20] http://www.scbp.org/

organization, and. The office's mission is to advance the local economy by sustainably promoting the area's outstanding travel products and experiences, and to offer a variety of useful services to residents, business travelers, and leisure visitors. Tourism expenditures in 2018 in the county were estimated at $1.2 billion.[21]

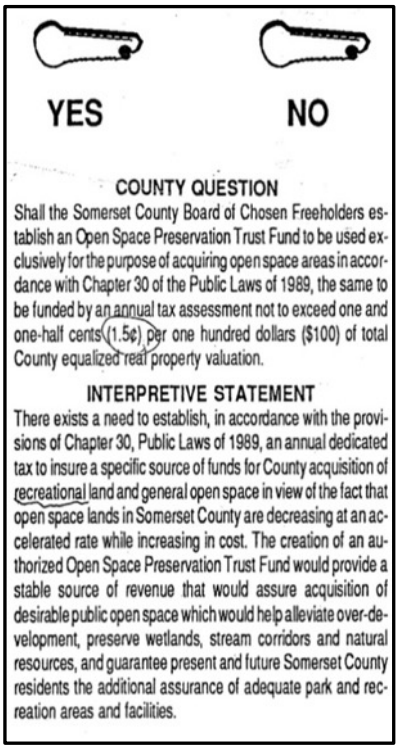
J. Somerset County's Preservation Trust Fund

Critical to Somerset County's ability to preserve its open space, farmland, and historic resources has been the county's Preservation Trust Fund. Commonly called the "Open Space Preservation Trust Fund" because of its origins for the purpose of saving open space lands, and also known as the Somerset County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, this plan uses the simpler "Preservation Trust Fund" because the fund today applies to all three of the resources addressed by this plan.

The Preservation Trust Fund has proven to be a highly effective tool that has formed the basis for much of the county's preservation efforts over the last thirty years. One of the benefits of having the Preservation Trust Fund available is the ability to use its funding to leverage other funds. Federal, state, municipal, and nonprofit funding streams have also supported open space, agricultural preservation, and historic preservation.

Background

On February 17, 1989, the State Legislature approved an amendment to Title 40 of the Revised Statutes that enabled counties to establish a



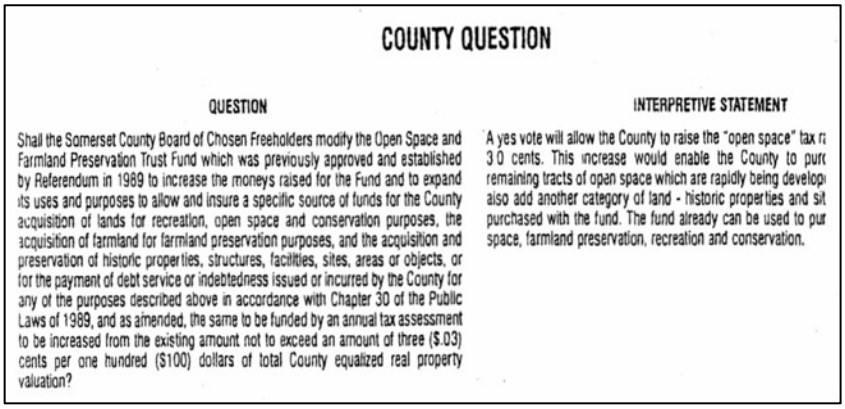
YES NO

COUNTY QUESTION

Shall the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders establish an Open Space Preservation Trust Fund to be used exclusively for the purpose of acquiring open space areas in accordance with Chapter 30 of the Public Laws of 1989, the same to be funded by an annual tax assessment not to exceed one and one-half cents (1.5¢) per one hundred dollars ($100) of total County equalized real property valuation.

INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT

There exists a need to establish, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 30, Public Laws of 1989, an annual dedicated tax to insure a specific source of funds for County acquisition of recreational land and general open space in view of the fact that open space lands in Somerset County are decreasing at an accelerated rate while increasing in cost. The creation of an authorized Open Space Preservation Trust Fund would provide a stable source of revenue that would assure acquisition of desirable public open space which would help alleviate over-development, preserve wetlands, stream corridors and natural resources, and guarantee present and future Somerset County residents the additional assurance of adequate park and recreation areas and facilities.



COUNTY QUESTION

QUESTION

Shall the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders modify the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund which was previously approved and established by Referendum in 1989 to increase the moneys raised for the Fund and to expand its uses and purposes to allow and insure a specific source of funds for the County acquisition of lands for recreation, open space and conservation purposes, the acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes, and the acquisition and preservation of historic properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas or objects, or for the payment of debt service or indebtedness issued or incurred by the County for any of the purposes described above in accordance with Chapter 30 of the Public Laws of 1989, and as amended, the same to be funded by an annual tax assessment to be increased from the existing amount not to exceed an amount of three ($.03) cents per one hundred ($100) dollars of total County equalized real property valuation?

INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT

A yes vote will allow the County to raise the "open space" tax r 3 0 cents. This increase would enable the County to purc remaining tracts of open space which are rapidly being develop also add another category of land - historic properties and sit purchased with the fund. The fund already can be used to pur space, farmland preservation, recreation and conservation.

County ballot questions offered in 1989 (left) and 1997 (above), when voters doubled the 1989 tax from 1.5 cents to 3 cents per one hundred ($100) dollars of assessed property value. The interpretive statement for 1997 was over-cropped in the original; it states that "this increase would enable the County to purchase remaining tracts of open space which are rapidly being developed and also add another category of land – historic properties and sites purchased with the fund. The fund "can already be used to purchase open space, farmland preservation, recreation and conservation."

[21] https://visitsomersetnj.org/somerset-county-tourism-continues-annual-growth-as-revealed-in-2018-economic-impact-report-on-statewide-tourism/

dedicated trust fund for open space acquisition. In early 1997, Governor Whitman signed into law P.L. 1997, Chapter 24 (N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.1 et seq.), which revised laws related to the establishment of dedicated taxes for various open space purposes. The new law standardized what were two separate statutes, one for municipalities and one for counties, and expanded the purposes for which dedicated taxes can be used.

In August of 1989 the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners authorized a referendum on establishment of a preservation trust fund to support protection of open space. The question was placed on the November 7, 1989, general election ballot and passed by a 69 percent vote. The commissioners consequently established the Open Space Preservation Trust Fund to further land preservation in Somerset County. Funds collected for the trust fund from county property owners at the time was one and one-half cents ($.015) per $100 of assessed property value.

In November of 1997, Somerset County voters passed a ballot question expanding the allowable uses of the trust to include the support, acquisition, and/or maintenance of historic sites. The question also doubled the collection of dedicated tax dollars to three cents ($.03) per $100 of assessed property value, as it remains in 2019. Nearly two-thirds of Somerset County voters supported the measure.

Purposes

Funds from a local government's preservation trust fund (county or municipality) established by voters can only be used for purposes outlined in the state enabling legislation. Somerset County's program embraces the purposes allowed by law:

- Acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes;
- Development and stewardship of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes;
- Acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes;
- Historic preservation of historic properties, structures, facilities, sites, areas, or objects, and the acquisition of such properties, facilities, sites, areas, or objects for historic preservation purposes; and
- Payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred by a county or municipality for any of the purposes set forth above.

To establish a dedicated tax program, the governing body of a county or municipality may ask voters to authorize a fund dedicated for any or all of these purposes. The law requires a referendum, initiated by the governing body or through a petition submitted by 15 percent of the voters, held at a general or special election. A fixed tax rate or specific tax levy are the options for funding the program, and proceeds are set aside in a dedicated trust fund. Changes to the rate or tax levy must be authorized by referendum.

The referendum question can provide that the revenues will be proportionally allocated for any of the permitted purposes. If funds are not allocated through the referendum, the governing body may allocate them after conducting at least one public hearing on the subject. A 2005 referendum permitted up to 25 percent of the funds collected to be used for development and improvement of park and recreation facilities.

In practice, the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners allocates a certain amount of

The rural setting of the Boudinot-Southard-Ross Farmstead in Basking Ridge as well as the historic house and outbuildings were protected by county acquisition employing the Preservation Trust Fund and New Jersey Green Acres funding. The property today is managed by the Park Commission; the buildings are leased to the nonprofit Friends of the Boudinot Southard Ross Estate. http://rossfarm.org/the-friends/

funding each year during the county's annual budget process for programs that support the purposes of the Preservation Trust Fund: open space and greenways (including matching grants for recreational development to municipalities); agricultural preservation; and historic sites. The county also sets aside funding for debt service ; none has been needed in recent years, but the possibility of incurring debt, through issuance of General Obligation Bonds backed by the Preservation Trust Fund, remains if a significant purchase opportunity were to present itself, as happened most recently with Natirar.

In addition, in 2012, the Board of County Commissioners established the Somerset County Municipal Flood Mitigation Funding Program to assist municipalities with buyouts of flood-prone residential properties. The program was initially established as the required match for state or federal buyout programs. In 2016, the commissioners expanded the original program to also provide assistance when Somerset County takes the lead in funding the project and funds from other federal or state sources are not used. The following paragraphs explain the Preservation Trust Fund as it is focused on open space and recreation, agricultural preservation, and historic preservation.

Open Space and Recreation

Municipalities and the Somerset County Park Commission are the only eligible recipients of county trust fund grants for open space acquisitions. Somerset County acquisitions have addressed county-wide priorities, such as greenways along major rivers and ridgelines, additions to county parks, and new county parks. This land has become county-owned golf courses, parks, greenways, and other natural and recreation areas.

Agricultural Preservation

Before the establishment of the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board and the dedicated Preservation Trust Fund, Somerset County funded farmland preservation through general county capital funds. As of October 2020, there are 116 farms in Somerset County preserved by the county, municipalities, or the state. In all cases, funds from the

Somerset County Preservation Trust Fund contributed to this protection; roughly half of the farms have been directly protected by the county.

Historic Preservation

For more than two decades, every year the Preservation Trust Fund has provided approximately $900,000 in bricks-and-mortar construction funding through the Historic Preservation Grant Program. Grants are offered to the Somerset County government, municipal governments, and nonprofit organizations whose purpose includes historic preservation. Emergency stabilization and acquisition of historic properties, which need not follow the standard review schedule, are also permitted. The program has also funded National Register nominations, historic structures reports, landscape plans, and archaeological reports. The county will also fund a preservation plan for a property to enable an applicant to better plan for construction interventions prior to undertaking the work.

Somerset County and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (HPO) have executed a Memorandum of Understanding which permits the county to retain qualified professional staff to review funded projects for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Public access to all properties funded through this program is required.

Applications are reviewed by an Advisory Committee, county planning staff, and the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission, before forwarding recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners who have the ultimate decision on any county grant award. If the property has not already been listed, any applicant receiving funding must list the property in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places.

K. Municipal Planning

In the State of New Jersey, control over land use largely rests at the municipal level. Each municipality is authorized to have its own separate zoning regulations aligned with its master plan, giving it a high degree of control when directing development in its community. The MLUL permits a municipal governing body to "promote the conservation of historic sites and districts, open space, energy resources and valuable natural resources ... and to prevent urban sprawl and degradation of the environment through improper use of land."

Open Space and Farmland

Of the land in Somerset County, 41 percent is zoned for densities between one and five acres per development unit. When combined with lots smaller than one acre per unit, a full 56 percent of Somerset County is zoned for lot sizes of five acres or smaller. These lower- to mid-level densities are indicative of a subdivision-based, suburban development pattern that leads to loss of undeveloped land. Notably, three out of the four municipalities with the most agricultural land – Hillsborough, Franklin, and Montgomery townships – have more than 40 percent of their land zoned in five acre or smaller lots.

Regarding larger lot zoning intended to preserve natural resources, 21 percent of the land in the county is zoned for lots above five acres up to 10 acres in size. Only Hillsborough Township has land zoned for lots larger than 10 acres in size, representing 6,740 acres in the Mountain Conservation zone in the Sourland Mountains. Table 3.9 displays the current mix of zoning densities in Somerset County.

Table 3.9 Somerset County Zoning Densities, Acres per Unit

	Non-Residential	Small (<1 acres)	Medium (1 to 5 acres)	Large (>5 to 10 acres)	Very Large (>10 acres)
Bedminster Township	1,983	624	496	13,772	0
Bernards Township	4,761	2,471	8,423	0	0
Bernardsville Borough	169	703	4,406	2,987	0
Bound Brook Borough	224	861	0	0	0
Branchburg Township	2,907	130	5,520	4,413	0
Bridgewater Township	5,740	3,367	11,473	7	0
Far Hills Borough	0	69	83	2,998	0
Franklin Township	4,681	10,537	2,846	11,931	0
Green Brook Township	1,052	1,466	303	0	0
Hillsborough Township	6,843	2,978	18,708	0	6,740
Manville Borough	465	1,102	0	0	0
Millstone Borough	194	89	160	0	0
Montgomery Township	4,565	538	13,622	2,063	0
North Plainfield Borough	251	1,544	11	0	0
Peapack-Gladstone Borough	381	232	1,420	1,662	0
Raritan Borough	668	630	0	0	0
Rocky Hill Borough	167	95	136	0	0
Somerville Borough	477	1,024	0	0	0
South Bound Brook Borough	168	306	0	0	0
Warren Township	1,024	1,209	9,267	1,100	0
Watchung Borough	553	310	3,004	0	0
Grand Total	37,273	30,285	79,878	40,934	6,740

Source: Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, 2018

Beyond standard zoning density categories that require larger lots and deter development in rural areas, municipalities in Somerset County have employed a number of innovative planning techniques to promote the preservation of farmland and open space. Table 3.10 lists the municipalities and which strategies they employ. Note that the techniques described are all voluntary as currently implemented by municipalities in the county. However, mandatory options are available such as requiring clustering of lots should any jurisdictions choose to implement them in the future. The Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development Plan describes each technique and provides specific examples of their use in the municipalities listed in Table 3.10.

Historic Preservation

Under New Jersey's Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), a municipality can include a historic preservation element as part of a municipal master plan. In 1985, the MLUL affirmed the ability of local governments to zone for the protection of historic resources. Additional MLUL amendments in 1992 outlined a specific planning process regarding the creation of local historic districts and the review

Table 3.10 Innovative Preservation Planning Techniques Used by Municipalities with Agricultural Land in Somerset County

Municipality	Cluster Zoning	Non-Contiguous Cluster Zoning	Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)	Lot Averaging
Bedminster Township	-	-	-	Yes
Bernards Township	Yes	-	Yes	-
Bernardsville Borough	-	-	-	-
Branchburg Township	Yes	-	-	-
Bridgewater Township	Yes	-	-	-
Far Hills Borough	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Franklin Township	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
Green Brook Township	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hillsborough Township	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Millstone Borough	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montgomery Township	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
Peapack-Gladstone Borough	Yes	-	-	Yes
Rocky Hill Borough	-	-	-	-
Warren Township	Yes	-	-	Yes
Watchung Borough	-	-	-	-

Note: The planning team was unable to determine use of these techniques by Far Hills, Green Brook, and Millstone. The following communities include no agricultural land: Bernardsville Borough; Bound Brook Borough; Manville Borough; North Plainfield Borough; Raritan Borough; Somerville Borough; and South Bound Brook Borough.
Source: Land Stewardship Solutions, 2018, compiled from most recent municipal master plans, the 2008 Farmland Preservation Plan, and surveys of municipal staff.

of development activity within the districts. The preservation programs pursued by the county's municipalities are an integral part of what should be viewed as an overall preservation program in the county, but they are separate and apart from the county's role.

Preservation planning for historic buildings has environmental, social, and economic benefits and has been proven to sustain and revitalize communities across the country. By creating a Historic Preservation Element (HPE) as part of its municipal master plan, a municipality can guide land-use decisions and provide the basis for ordinances addressing historic preservation and land use issues. This in turn enables municipalities to control sustainable development and foster a higher quality of life for their residents. Communities that are committed to historic preservation will have more tools available to them by adopting an HPE, since the Municipal Master Plan creates the foundation for the local zoning and land use ordinances that govern development and redevelopment within a community that often affect historic resources.

Municipal Ordinances and Commissions

While historic districts recognized by the National Register incentivize investment in rehabilitation, local preservation ordinances remain the only way to regulate privately owned historic properties. A municipal ordinance provides a "Statement of Purpose" with detailed criteria and legal steps for local designation of historic properties and districts. The crucial first step in drafting an ordinance is to identify which properties are resources worthy of municipal protection. Identification is usually performed through an architectural survey based upon specific criteria and according to an informed statement of significance.

The opening of the Delaware and Raritan Canal in 1834 in the Millstone River Valley caused a cascade of land use changes and economic development across Somerset County in the early nineteenth century. (Photo, "Autumn on the Canal," by Ron and Pat Morris)

The ordinance establishes and lists actions reviewable by the municipality's Historic Preservation Commission (e.g., permit applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness) and specifies review procedures (e.g., does the HPC report to the Construction Official directly or to the Planning Board?). An effective ordinance addresses demolition controls, property maintenance, legal challenges, and code enforcement provisions. Properly implementing these concepts can qualify a municipality's historic preservation commission as a Certified Local Government, thereby becoming eligible for up to $25,000 in annual grants administered by the NJ Historic Preservation Office.[22] (More details are in the Historic Preservation Plan, Section 6.4, Preservation Framework.)

L. Conclusion

This chapter is an introduction to the land use planning context that shapes each of the plans encompassed by this Somerset County Preservation Plan. Each of those major plans has its particular context. For example, historic preservation relies on a tight local-state-federal system where the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office is the interface, the National Register of Historic Places is a critical program, and municipalities remain important influencers for what happens on the ground. Funding programs are more extensive for open space and farmland preservation and have made a great deal of difference in the county's ability to moderate the impacts of development pressures and shape growth through land preservation. Taken together, the preservation of Somerset County's open space, farmland, and historic resources is vital in supporting the county's quality of life and is integral to the county's planning overall.

[22] https://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/3preserve/clgguides8_07.pdf

Chapter 4. Introducing the Open Space Preservation Plan

Since its inception in 1956, the Somerset County Park Commission has developed one of the finest park systems in New Jersey and indeed one of the best in the U.S.

—Clifford W. Zink, Natural Beauty: Somerset County Parks *(Somerset County Park Foundation, 2013)*

More than 60 years later, most residents would agree that Somerset County has built one of the finest park systems in New Jersey. Residents now have expectations, however, that did not exist in the 1950s. Changes in climate, demographics, activity demand, and partnerships among the county, state, and local governments and private providers present new challenges and opportunities.

About half of the county's landscape today consists of urban or suburban development. Not quite a quarter of the remaining area is permanently preserved, counting both open space and farmland acreage preserved by the county along with land protected by municipalities, the state of New Jersey, nonprofits, and the federal government. That leaves a great deal of land area in play, and likely to be committed to either development or preservation in the next 20 to 30 years.

A. The Need for Open Space Preservation

Somerset County began working to protect its open space in the 1950s with a plan to create a county-wide park system. From an original goal set in 1958 of protecting 2,250 acres of recreational open space, today the system includes 14,701 acres, of which almost three-quarters is undeveloped. The system includes 27 park areas; developed recreation facilities exist with 13 of these areas and many miles of trails are within parks and greenways that follow river corridors and ridgelines. (See Maps 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3)

From protecting large blocks of land and creating parks, the county can now turn to a focus on critical smaller properties that will help to leverage already-protected greenways and parks into providing even more protected ecosystems with more access to natural areas; longer, more connected environmental corridors with more trail access; and more recreational opportunities.

The basic concept behind this Somerset County Preservation Plan is that projects using Somerset County funding that accomplish multiple benefits – supporting open space, farmland, and historic preservation goals – should be prioritized whenever

The Benefits of Open Space

Open space provides benefits that ensure that Somerset County remains a healthy, safe place to reside and work. Many of these are what are described as "ecosystem services," the free benefits provided by natural resources that would be costly to provide in other ways:

For humans -

- Health and happiness
- Recreation
- Social unity
- Community character
- Scenic vistas
- Economic vitality
- Economic development
- Transit options
- Drinking water

For nature -

- Water quality
- Resiliency
- Natural diversity
- Carbon storage
- Air quality
- Flood mitigation

Duke Island Park on the Raritan River in Hillsborough Township, acquired in 1958, offers both active recreation opportunities and simple enjoyment of natural surroundings. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

feasible and appropriate to maximize benefits for residents. Trails adjacent to permanently protected farmland are scenic and popular. Lands that protect the historic landscape context of historic resources and serve park and open space purposes also yield multiple benefits.

As Somerset County has matured, the role of the Somerset County Park Commission, as steward of county open space, is also maturing beyond providing traditional regional-scale recreation opportunities. The opportunity now exists for the County to enhance its open space system and maximize benefits for residents through creative initiatives, partnerships, and coordination with the County's agricultural preservation and historic preservation programs. Protecting these resources and creating connections among as many as possible are actions that provide a well-rounded experience of recreation and nature for county residents. A well-designed system can also encourage visitation from beyond the county, which offers economic benefits on top of many other benefits.

B. The Importance of Partnerships

Somerset County has long availed itself of partnership opportunities in the quest to save open space and expand parks, greenways, and natural areas, and the County is regarded as an important partner by other local governments and organizations discussed throughout this plan. As the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan and the Historic Preservation Plan have also recognized, when key parcels come on the market in desirable locations, the County will need to have the means and support to move as quickly as possible to respond to opportunities for acquiring properties. Sometimes nonprofit land trusts can move even

Leonard J. Buck Garden in Far Hills opened in 1977 and is home to one of the most beautiful rock garden displays in the northeastern United States. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

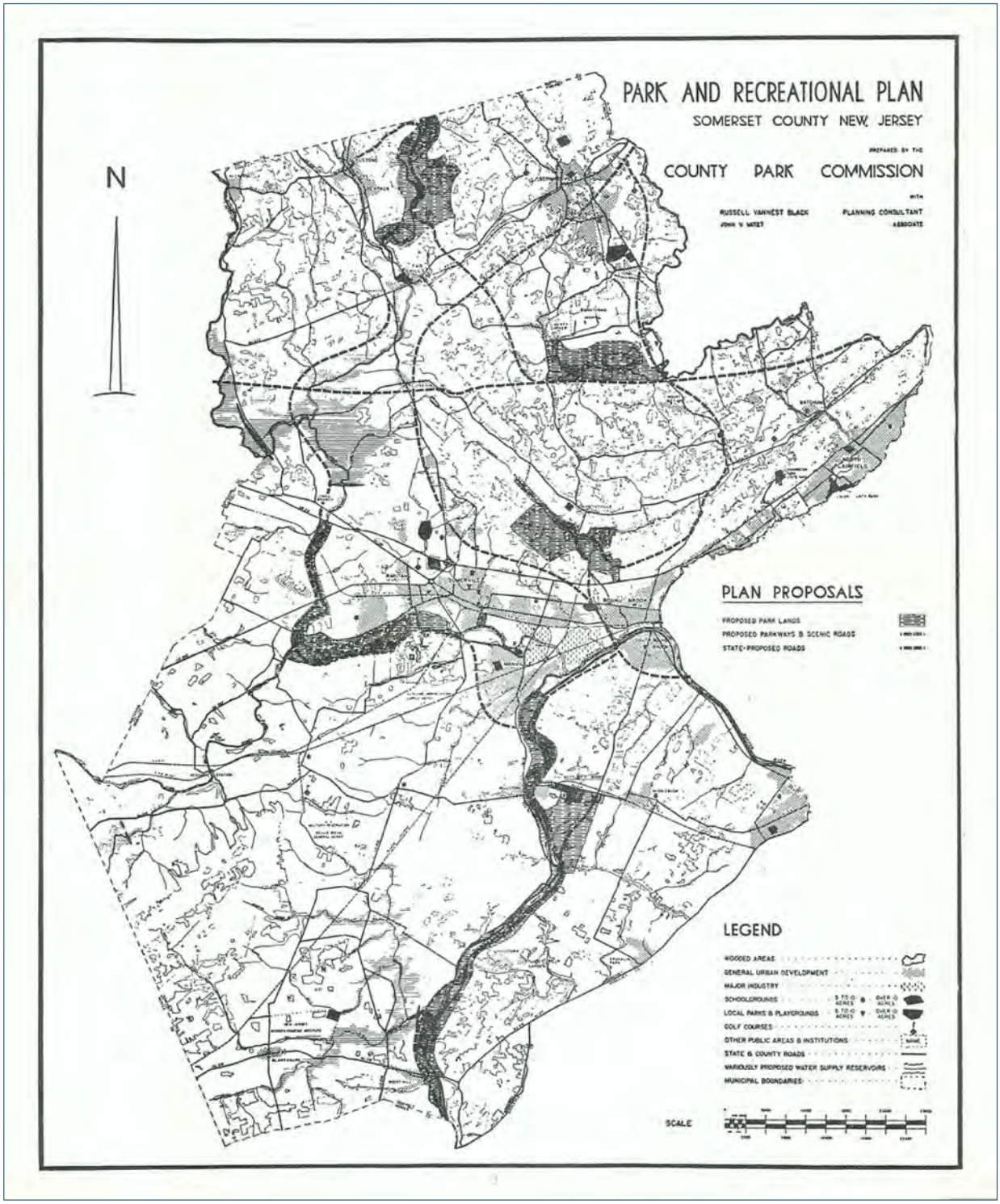
faster, as long as they know the County and other partners are backing the transaction to cover the costs the land trust cannot carry.

The Open Space Preservation Plan, therefore, is meant to support the ongoing dialogue and coordination needed among all potential partners in the shared goal to preserve Somerset County's open space and protect its environment – including stakeholders in other related plans as described in Chapter 3, Land Use Planning Context. Many partners are needed to build upon the successes all have enjoyed to date.

Partnerships will be important in making sure that this new work to improve an already-excellent system of parks, greenways, natural areas, and trails is made as efficiently and effectively as possible. Not only can local governments – both the County and its municipalities – step up to this challenge, but so can nonprofit conservancies or land trusts devoted to the public welfare. In addition, historic preservation organizations can also assist in the preservation of historic sites on open space lands. All of these parties can collaborate to maximize state and federal grants, as well as seek donations from foundations and private donors. Moreover, even lands that remain in private hands may be managed for public benefit, through cooperative management and the education of property owners.

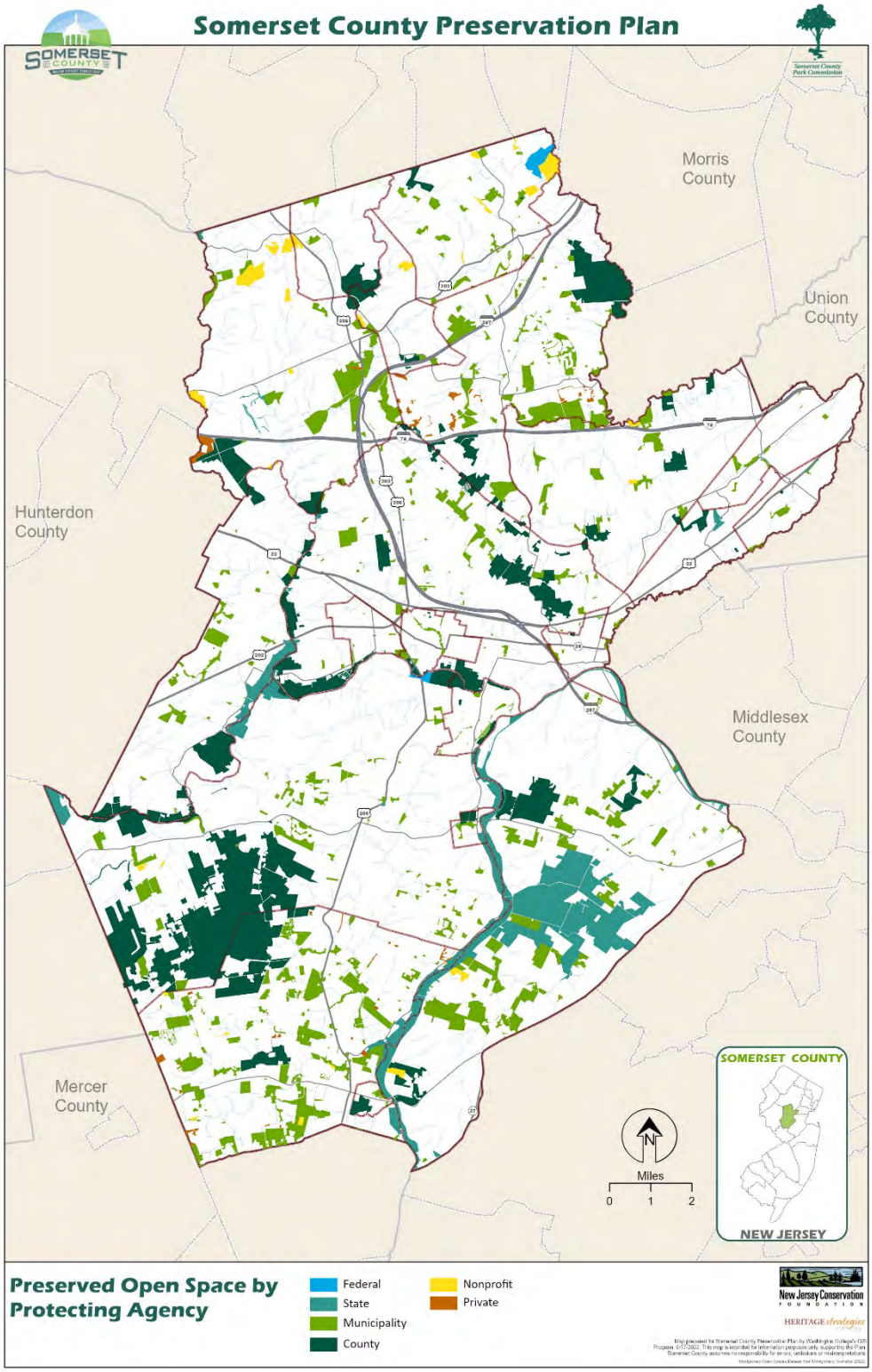
C. Open Space Preservation by the Numbers

As of December 31, 2018, 22 percent (43,150 acres) of Somerset County is preserved as open space or farmland, as shown in the next chapter in Map 5.2, Permanently Preserved Open Space and Farmland.



The original plan for Somerset County's parks from 1958. Darkest areas are "proposed park lands." The plan also identified "proposed parkways & scenic byways." (Image courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

Map 4.1 Preserved Open Space by Protecting Agency



Open Space Preserved in Somerset County by All Parties

Open space acres permanently preserved by Somerset County:

- 14,701 (7.5% of Somerset County)

Other open space acres permanently preserved: 18,835 (9.6% of Somerset County):

- Municipalities: 10,883 acres
- State: 6,588 acres
- Nonprofits: 1,095 acres
- Federal: 223 acres

Open space preserved in Somerset County by all parties: 34,170 acres (17.5% of Somerset County)

The figure for "open space preserved by all parties" does not include the acreage currently preserved as farmland in Somerset County, 8,373 acres (see Chapter 5 and Map 5.1).

The bulk of the preserved land consists of open space, 17.5 percent (34,170 acres) of the county's land area. The remaining 4.5 percent (8,373 acres) of the county's preserved land area is permanently preserved farmland, land to be used for agricultural purposes in perpetuity.

Municipally owned preserved open space (10,675 acres) consists of nearly a third of the permanently preserved lands in the county. All 21 municipalities in Somerset County have preserved open space within their borders. The State of New Jersey owns 6,588 acres in Somerset County, comprising 19 percent of the preserved open space in the county. State-owned lands include the magnificent Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park and various other protected areas as described in the Open Space Preservation Plan, Section 4.2., Existing Open Space and Recreational Resources. Finally, a total of 1,095 acres (3 percent) of preserved open space in Somerset County is owned by nonprofit organizations dedicated to preserving open space and farmland.

Future Acreage Acquisition

The Open Space Preservation Plan calls for Somerset County to achieve major open space benefits by preserving an additional 9,300 acres, for an overall goal of 24,000 acres. This total breaks down as follows:

- To add environmentally important lands to existing parks: 4,500 acres
- To fill gaps in county greenway initiatives: 3,000 acres
- To protect forests in the Millstone Valley (South Franklin Initiative) and to protect Natural Heritage Priority Sites (see Section 4.5): 1,800 acres. (Other natural resource sites are included in the greenway analysis.)

Not all of these acres necessarily need to be acquired by Somerset County. In fact, to date, as noted above more land has been protected in Somerset County by all other partners than by Somerset County as the owner of record. Having identified more than 9,000 acres should be protected, the County can now proceed to identify mutually beneficial strategies for ownership, funding, and management among the various potential partners that can help bring this desired level of permanent protection to fruition. Thus, success need not be defined simply by the number of acres Somerset County itself comes to own, but the level of protection achieved for the lands in which the County has a specific interest in protecting.

Opportunities to create new parks and trails to meet recreation needs may arise due to redevelopment, with opportunities for providing natural and

recreational amenities to support new development as land is repurposed and reused. In addition, the county may choose to purchase large, developed landholdings that have become obsolete or abandoned, in order to meet recreation needs, particularly in the more densely developed parts of the county. Such acreage is not predicted in the breakdown provided above for the base goal of 9,300 additional acres for the county's system of parks, greenways, and trails.

D. A New Measure of Success in Open Space Preservation

The land conservation work of the future in Somerset County, as described in this plan, will be strategic conservation to fill gaps in natural systems and recreational access. The Open Space Preservation Plan emphasizes the importance of configuring further acquisitions of open space in order to maximize quality-of-life and ecological benefits. The pursuit of open space in the future, therefore, is not one of maximizing acreage, but of identifying critical parcels of any size, however small.

The critical metric this plan establishes for the success of Somerset County's open space system is the desired outcome from preservation of open space access for all county residents (regardless of which jurisdiction has ownership) within a 10- to 15-minute walk from home. As an indicator for public health, this measure is more meaningful in the long term and requires not simply acquiring open land of any kind, but acquiring land strategically to achieve The best distribution of recreational access (and providing more access, period). This outcome also suggests the importance of enhancing the network of parks, greenways, and trails linking the key nodes established in this system in the decades leading up to this point. Ecosystem planning has shown that such a network is also valuable for maintaining healthy populations of desirable species, both plants and animals, allowing corridors for migration, breeding, and gene flow; and it will contribute to watershed protection, with its many benefits.

The critical metric for judging the success of open space preservation in Somerset County is whether all county residents have access to a greenway, park, or natural area (regardless of ownership) within a 10- to 15-minute walk from home. This requires acquiring land strategically to achieve the best distribution of recreational access. This outcome also suggests the importance of enhancing the network of parks, greenways, and trails linking the key nodes established in this system in the decades leading up to this point.

E. Open Space Preservation Goals

Goals for the Open Space Preservation Plan are adopted in their entirety from the Somerset County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update of 2000. They were tested against information and insights gathered during the process of creating the plan and found to be valid for the decades ahead.

Three additional goals, more operational in nature, are added to complement the broader goals expressed in 2000; they address consideration of changes in the administration of the Preservation

The Sourland region, 90 square miles, includes the largest contiguous forest in Central New Jersey. According to a 2010 comprehensive management plan for the Sourlands produced by the nonprofit Sourlands Alliance, "The expansive mature deciduous forest in the Sourlands, with its many important habitat types, is a unique ecological treasure. The size, shape and composition of the relatively unfragmented forest and adjacent land use make the Sourlands a haven for scores of woodland bird species." (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

Trust Fund and encourage even greater use of partnerships to accomplish the goals of this plan:

- **Goal 4.1:** Create an open space system preserving lands of county-wide significance.
- **Goal 4.2:** Preserve open space to protect critical environmental resources of Somerset County.
- **Goal 4.3:** Provide open space for a diverse mix of high-quality recreational experiences appropriate for a county park system.
- **Goal 4.4:** Provide county parks and trails where they will most easily serve the greatest population concentrations in Somerset County.
- **Goal 4.5:** Provide open space in order to enhance the quality of life in Somerset County.
- **Goal 4.6:** Leverage the Somerset County Preservation Trust Fund.
- **Goal 4.7:** Preserve historic sites on Somerset County-owned open space land.
- **Goal 4.8:** Cultivate partnerships.

F. Trails in Somerset County

A key enhancement in the update to the Open Space Preservation Plan is a strong focus on greenways and trails. The county first began advancing the idea of developing greenways along key natural features – rivers and ridges – in its *Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan* published in 2000. More work remains, as presented in both the Open Space Preservation Plan and the County's recent study, *WalkBikeHike Somerset County: Connecting Vibrant Communities* (July 2019).[23] (See Maps 4.3 and 4.4)

Somerset County's wealth of trails includes three well-known long-distance trails (Map 4.4): the East Coast Greenway; the September 11th National Memorial Trail; and the Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail (hundreds of miles from Rhode Island to Virginia followed in 1781 by the Continental Army and French troops leading to the defeat of the British at Yorktown). Critical to all of these routes is the towpath of the Delaware and Raritan Canal.

G. Conclusion for the Open Space Preservation Plan

Facts presented throughout this Open Space Preservation Plan indicate considerable investment and years of effort among many governmental and nonprofit agencies, often in partnership, resulting not only in a great deal of open space in general, but also much public access and many public recreational facilities. While it can safely be said that the work will never be finished, all involved can be proud of the platform from which added achievements can be made.

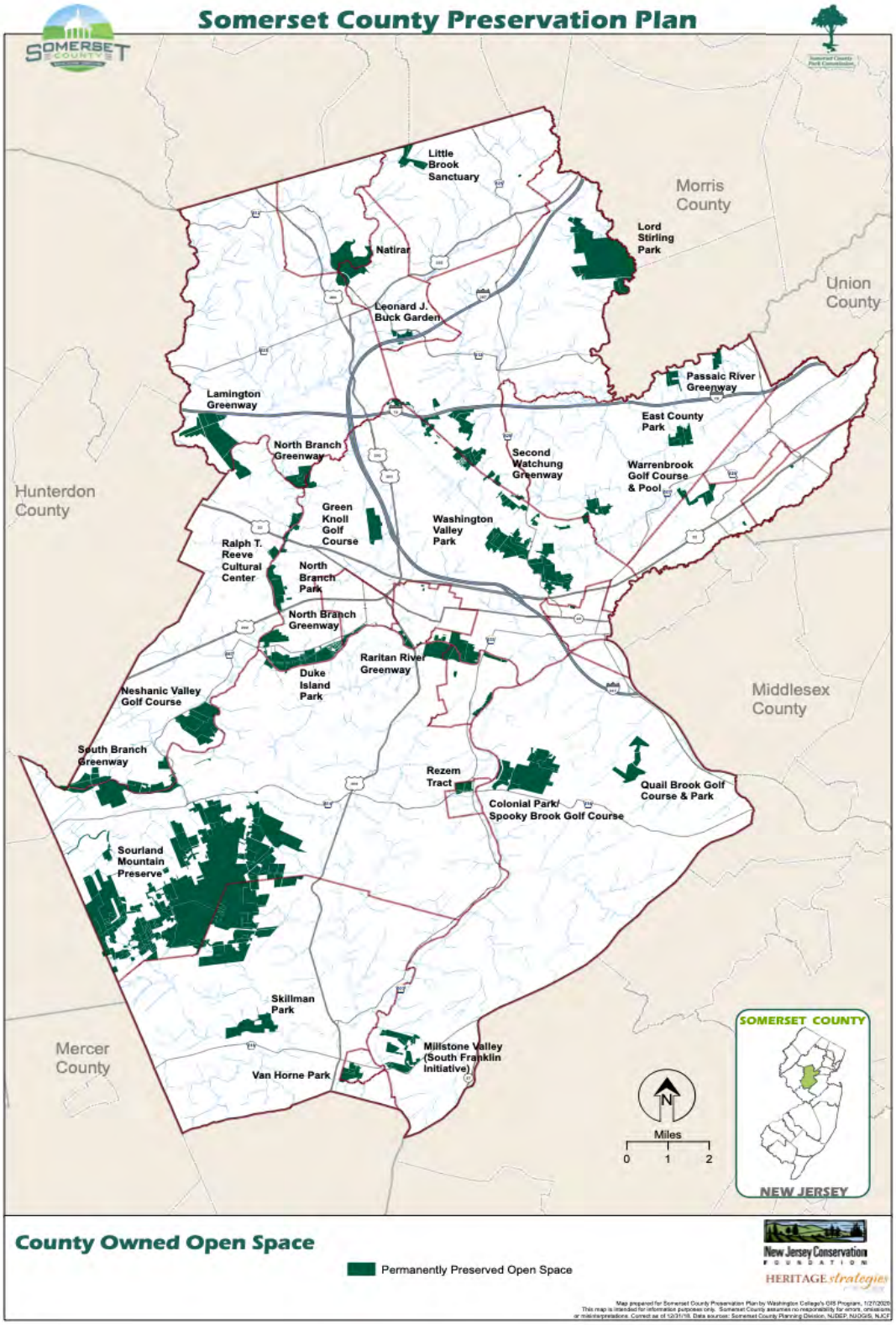
The Somerset County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund – the Preservation Trust Fund – has been critical to the growing level of preservation achieved by Somerset County, with partners and property owners, over 30 years. Furthermore, it will remain vital in the years ahead, in providing not only the financial resources, but also the leverage and flexibility to stimulate creativity on the part of administrators and partners in expanding the number of open space acres acquired and improved on behalf of the public.

Somerset County has built a large, richly endowed park system, and along with it, a community culture that values that system highly. The county is well-positioned to respond to new expectations and modern challenges. Success will result in enriched, vibrant connections, and a universally available and high-quality system that draws county residents together in shared, healthy, and varied experiences.

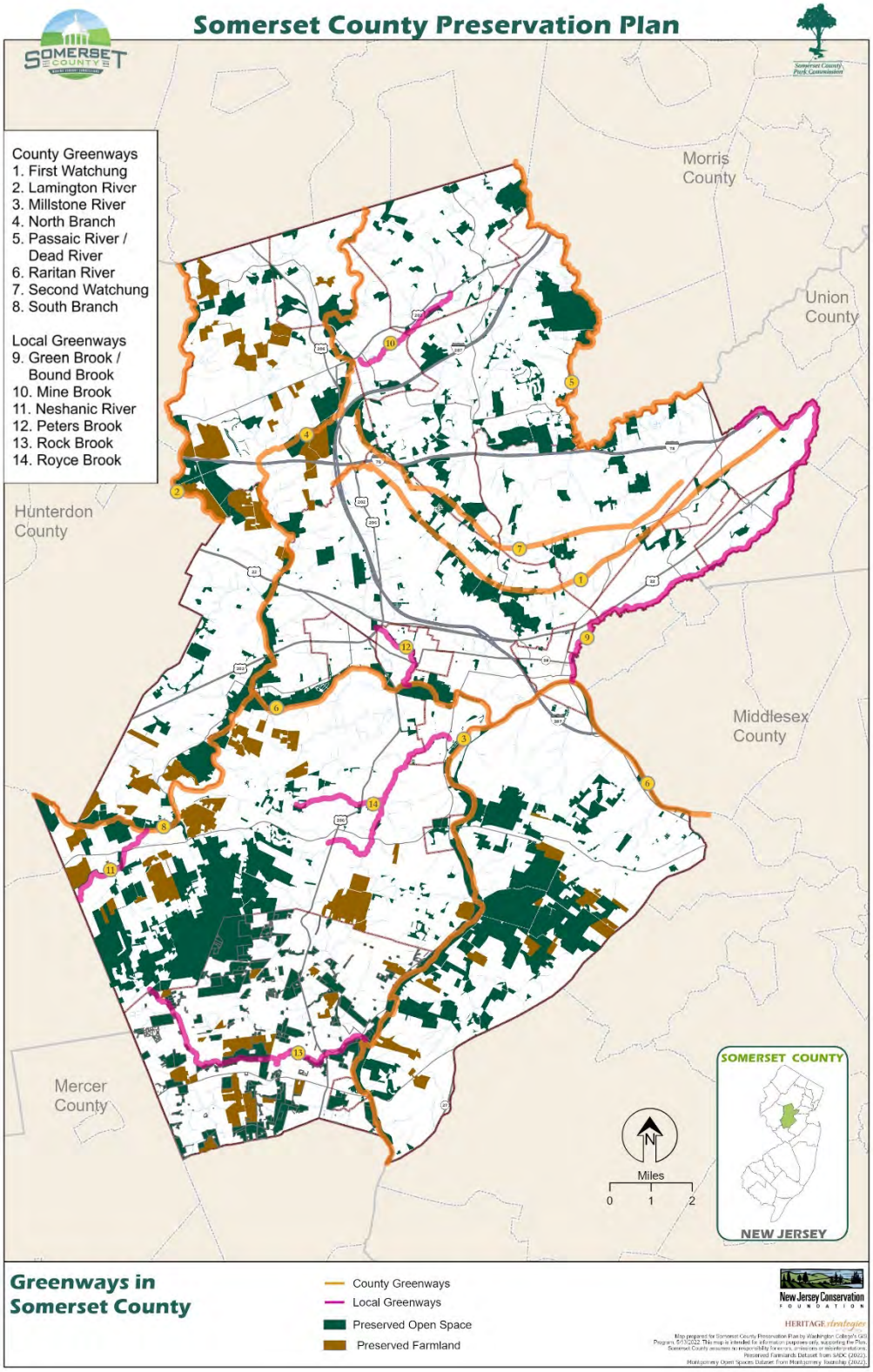
East County Park in Warren Township offers trails, playing fields, a leash-free dog area, a picnic pavilion, a historic farmstead, and ponds. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

[23] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/walk-bike-hike-plan

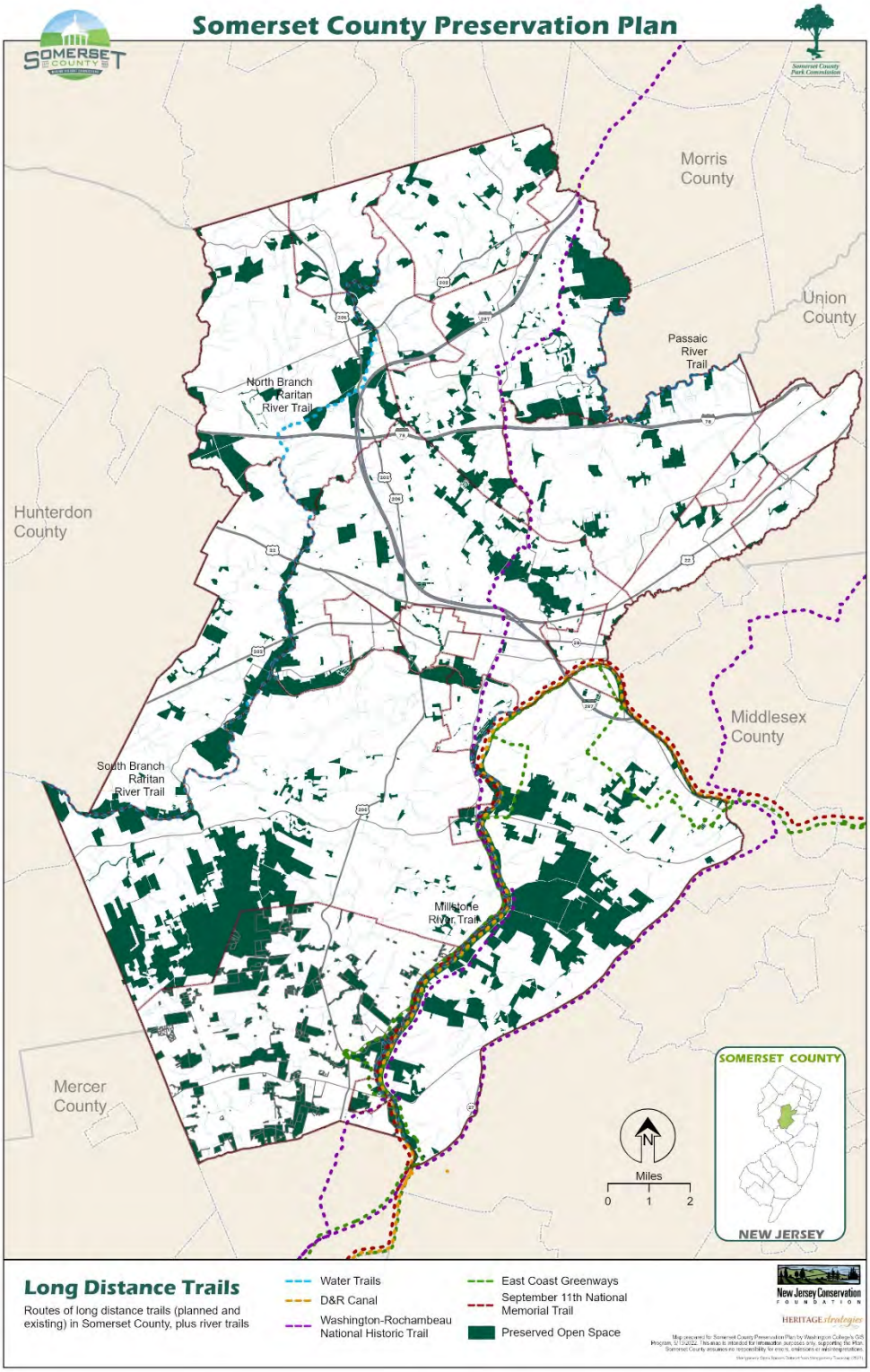
Map 4.2 Somerset County Parks and Open Space



Map 4.3 Greenways in Somerset County



Map 4.4 Long Distance Trails in Somerset County



Chapter 5. Introducing the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan

Agriculture is an essential feature of Somerset County's landscape. Nearly one-fifth of the county remains in agriculture nearly 350 years after colonial settlement. Farming remains an integral part of the county's heritage and culture, and residents who are not part of the agricultural industry identify farmland as critical to Somerset County's desirability as a place to live and work.

Farming laid down the earliest land use patterns discernable across Somerset County's present-day landscape. The next large change was caused by the arrival of the automobile, highways, and suburbanization over the course of the twentieth century. In the last hundred years, the county's landscape has evolved from one dominated by farms and forests to one in which just over half is urban or suburban. Yet, farmers still plow their fields, much of the county's natural legacy is still in evidence, and fine, well-kept buildings and landscapes reflect the county's many decades of history.

A. The Need for Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Development

While the landscape of Somerset County was dominated by agriculture a century ago, today most of the county has become suburban in nature. This has had both positive and negative consequences for the agricultural industry. On the one hand the increased local population provides those farmers who have changed with the times with a larger consumer base for niche agricultural products, such as locally grown foods, organic goods, and equine services. On the other hand, conversion of land for urban development has meant that farmland has grown increasingly scarce and expensive, and that more conflicts between farms and adjacent communities are likely to arise.

The preservation of farmland and open space is a key tool for the County in influencing the direction of growth county-wide, since regulation of land use itself is divided among the county's 21 townships and boroughs. In addition, the farming industry remains an important component of Somerset County's local economy. In 2017, agricultural income totaled $20.1 million. While this may only be a small part of the county's overall economic output, the ripple effects of the agricultural industry are felt throughout other businesses such as the stores, equipment suppliers, and veterinarians who need commerce with farms. Moreover, half of the county's

Why Preserve Farmland?

Farms feed us. They provide a host of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits. They are also threatened. In recent decades, residential and commercial development has decimated America's agricultural lands. Nationwide, almost 31 million acres of farmland was lost due to development and expanding urban areas between 1992 and 2012, 11 million acres of which was the best quality agricultural land. New Jersey saw its farmland reduced by more than 300,000 acres over the last forty years (although the number of acres in farming has rebounded slightly as measured in the 2017 Ag Census, thought to be caused by the capture of more hobby farms whose incomes, perhaps partly through inflation, qualified them to be counted). This loss of farmland is essentially permanent. It takes natural forces millennia to build richly productive soils; bulldozers can destroy fertile farmland in minutes. Government farmland preservation programs and many private land trusts work to preserve the resource that feeds us, providing a variety of other public benefits:

Benefits to the Agricultural Community:

- Promotes farming and supports the agri-business system. The agri-business system is a very complex network of producers, processors, sellers and supporting services.
- Ensures that no development unrelated to agriculture will occur on the land thus providing security to the landowners, and leading to greater capital investments.

(Continued on page 108)

land – including what is no longer in agriculture – is considered prime farmland, which needs fewer inputs and less irrigation to be highly productive. More than 80 percent of the county's land is prime, of statewide importance, or of local importance. Such soils are a valuable natural resource and in fact, geologically speaking, such richness is rare worldwide. As the world's population grows – or indeed, as the region's population grows and transport of food from beyond the region becomes more costly in energy and environmental terms – Somerset County's farms are well-positioned to produce food well beyond what the immediate community might require.

Accordingly, Somerset County's Master Plan in 1987 set as a goal the retention of the remaining agricultural regions in the county, as a means of (a) preventing sprawl that leads to the inefficient provision of resources, (b) economic development related to agricultural jobs and products, and (c) protecting natural resources and preserving the open character of the county.

B. The Somerset County Preservation Plan

As Somerset County has matured, the opportunity now exists for the County, operating through the Somerset Agricultural Development Board, to maximize its farmland preservation system and provide benefits for county residents through creative initiatives, partnerships, and coordination with the County's Open Space Preservation and Historic Preservation Programs. The Farmland Preservation & and Agricultural Development Plan is a part of the overall Somerset County Preservation Plan that addresses open space and historic resources along with farmland. Protecting and providing connections to all of these resources provides a well-rounded experience of recreation, nature, history, and farm businesses for county residents and encourages visitation from beyond the county, which offers economic benefits on top of many other benefits.

C. The Importance of Partnerships

When key parcels of farmland come on the market in desirable locations, the County will need to have the means and support to move as quickly as possible to respond to opportunities for preserving them. Sometimes a nonprofit land trust can move even faster – a point also emphasized in the Open Space Preservation Plan as described in the preceding chapter here.

Partnerships will be important in making sure that next phase of protecting the county's farmland is accomplished as efficiently and effectively as possible. Not only can local governments – both the County and its municipalities – step up to this challenge, but so can nonprofit conservancies or land trusts devoted to the public welfare.

D. The Particular Challenge of Saving Farmland in Somerset County

In 2017, New Jersey as a whole had the second-highest farmland values in the nation. Somerset County, owing to its location straddling North Jersey and Central Jersey – influenced by both the NJ-NY-CT metro region to the north and the Princeton-Trenton-Philadelphia metro corridor to the south – possesses farmland that is among the most expensive in the state. Prior to 2000 the average cost per acre of preserving farmland in the county was below $9,200. Costs since 2010 have averaged more than $25,000 per acre. While values have declined since their peak prior to the 2008 recession, they are still 80 percent higher than values in the 1990s.

Two of the most important reasons Somerset County still has a farming community in the face of this challenge are the productivity of the land itself and the talents of its long-time farming community.

(Continued from page 107)

- Provides landowners the opportunity to improve or expand their operations.
- Allows the farm to be passed between generations.

Benefits to the General Public:

- Secures a local food base.
- Stabilizes the local tax base. (Residential development increases taxes in order to provide services such as schools, police, fire, and utilities.)
- Improves water quality and provides for groundwater recharge.
- Preserves the scenic environment.
- Preserves wildlife habitat.
- Preserves the historical integrity of the area.
- Preserves the quality of life that residents have come to expect.

Sources: Introduction adapted from https://conservationtools.org/guides/147-why-preserve-farmland#_edn2, updated with data from the American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat Study," https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/farms-under-threat-the-state-of-americas-farmland/; New Jersey data gleaned from "Farming Flourishes in the Garden State," NJ Spotlight and NJTV News, https://www.njfarmland.org/, subsection, New Jersey's Farmland Revival, "Farmers are working more acres, but profitability can still be elusive." Benefits statements drawn from the website of the Berks County, PA, Department of Agriculture, https://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/DeptofAg/Pages/How-and-Why-is-Farmland-Important.aspx.

Anyone who remains in farming and who has withstood development pressures throughout the county has figured out a way to make farming pay even in the face of steep costs in this particular regional farm economy. For those who own considerable acreage and are not farmers but who

The Somerset County Agricultural Development Board preserved its first farm in 1987: Baron Farm, Branchburg Township. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development)

lease it to those who will farm it, a third reason is the local property tax incentive for non-farming landowners to keep their privately owned open space in farming.

It is safe to say, however, that a fourth reason Somerset County's farming community survives is that the county's farmers and leaders determined almost three decades ago to access funds from the state's farmland preservation program and deploy local companion programs to fund the purchase of agricultural conservation easements. In effect, farmland protected in this way has had development pressures removed – encouraging farmers to remain on the land. Other than letting the land revert to nature (ultimately forest in this climate), in fact the only use for this protected land is farming. Together with farmers in surrounding counties – particularly to the west in Hunterdon County – those who have remained in farming in Somerset County so far have proven to be sufficient to provide the all-important "critical mass" of demand that allows the farm support system of the region to survive. Without tractor dealers, veterinarians, feed suppliers, and other farm-related businesses, it would be difficult if not impossible for farming itself to continue.

As the cost of buying farmland continues to rise, farmers who have not sold agricultural easements may yet be squeezed out. A bad year – too much rain, or drought – could spell temptation to sell and retire. Younger farmers to replace those who are retiring may find it difficult to buy unprotected farmland at market rate. It is more likely that developers will snap that land up, unless Somerset County itself can compete to buy it outright to maintain as open space. (Sometimes, such publicly owned land is temporarily leased for farming, until needed for open space purposes, but it is by far better for farmland, under easement or not, to remain in the hands of private owners who can properly care for and invest in it.)

There are two basic ways out of this bind:

- Step up governmental efforts to buy agricultural easements; and
- Work on a community-wide basis to strengthen conditions for farm profitability.

Both are needed, urgently, to ensure that Somerset County's farming can endure. Hence, this plan is not only about farmland preservation, but also about agricultural development. Section 5.9 of this plan

provides a thorough and lengthy examination of the many ways Somerset County can continue its focus on ways to enable farmers to make a profit and adapt as economic conditions for farming continue to change.

E. Farmland Preservation by the Numbers

As shown in Map 5.1.1, Permanently Preserved Farmland and Open Space, 42,543 acres are permanently preserved in Somerset County, almost 22 percent of the county's land area of 195,520 acres. The bulk of the preserved land consists of 34,170 acres of open space, 17.5 percent. The remaining 8,373 acres of the county's preserved land area is permanently preserved farmland, to be used for agricultural purposes in perpetuity.

Since the County's 2008 agricultural preservation plan, which reported 6,710 protected acres, Somerset County has protected an additional 1,663 acres, an increase of 25 percent. In total, governmental partners have spent $139.7 million to preserve agricultural land in the county, with Somerset County providing $33.6 million or 24 percent of the cost.

F. Where Farmland Is Being Preserved: Somerset County's Agricultural Development Area

The 8,373 acres of preserved farmland – and farm acres in general – are not evenly spread throughout the county. In 1983, the New Jersey State Legislature passed the State Agriculture Retention and Development Act, which resulted in the creation of the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC). The SADC administers state funding for farmland preservation programs, establishes farmland preservation policy statewide, and operates the program in general. In April of 1983, the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders created the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (SCADB), which oversees the preservation program in the county.

Mission of the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board

- Preserves farmland in Somerset County in perpetuity for our future generations.
- Works with existing preserved farmers to resolve stewardship matters and assist in the implementation of these resolutions.
- Assists in Right-to-Farm matters and mediates where possible, so that residents and farmers can peacefully co-exist.
- Advises the Somerset County Board of Commissioners on all agriculturally-related matters.
- Reviews and comments, where applicable, on pertinent legislation relating to the agricultural industry or the New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program.
- Disseminates information to farmers on pending legislation, Best Management Practices, and new technology in the industry.
- Educates the public on the importance of agriculture in Somerset County, and the necessity for not only preserving it, but enhancing and supporting this industry throughout the State of New Jersey.
- Encourages healthy lifestyles by promoting locally-grown agricultural products to our residents.

Source: https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/agriculture-development-board.

A horse farm on preserved land in Neshanic. Somerset County farming is distinguished by the extent and variety of its equine industry. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

Under the act, county agricultural development boards are tasked with designating Agricultural Development Areas (ADAs) in their jurisdictions. An ADA is an area that has the potential for long-term agricultural viability. The Somerset County ADA is largely located in the northwestern and southern portions of the county where there are concentrations of high-quality farmland. One additional section of the ADA is located in Warren Township where there is another pocket of farmland. While there are other individual farms that can be found throughout the county, the ADA generally excludes isolated farms or those closer to areas of development. Portions or all of Bedminster, Bernards, Bernardsville, Branchburg, Far Hills, Franklin, Hillsborough, Millstone, Montgomery, Peapack-Gladstone, and Warren are included in the ADA, which is divided into 10 separate regions for administrative purposes . (See Map 5.2)

Of the jurisdictions participating in Somerset County's ADA, Hillsborough at 3,498 acres has the most farmland preserved. Bedminster follows at 1,864 acres preserved, then Branchburg with 1,089 acres and Montgomery with 919 acres. However, it is Branchburg that has the highest percentage of its tax-assessed farmland preserved, 43 percent. Hillsborough follows at 36 percent preserved, then Montgomery at 22 percent and Bedminster at 18 percent.

G. Funding for Farmland Preservation

Somerset County's direct source of funding to accomplish farmland preservation is the Preservation Trust Fund. Commonly called the "Open Space Preservation Trust Fund" because of its origins for the purpose of saving open space lands, and formally known as the Somerset County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, this plan uses the simpler "Preservation Trust Fund" because the fund today is dedicated to all three of the resources addressed by the Somerset County Preservation Plan. The fund, described thoroughly in both Section 5.6 of this plan and Chapter 3 of the Preservation Plan, benefits from a modest property tax approved by county voters ($.03 per $100 assessed value) that has enabled the County's

purchases of agricultural conservation easements. Additionally, outside the fund the County pays for certain operational expenses of the County, principally staffing, needed to acquire those easements. Although such expenses could be supported by the Preservation Trust Fund, the commissioners' longstanding policy is to devote the entirety of the spending on the capital expense of acquiring the easements – to invest in acquisition of long-term assets on behalf of the county's residents.

A major benefit of having the Preservation Trust Fund is that it enables the County to use its funding to leverage other funds. Federal, state, municipal, and nonprofit funding streams have also supported agricultural preservation, so much so that to date only about 30 percent of the cost of purchasing agricultural conservation easements in Somerset County has accrued to the County itself.

H. Farmland Preservation Goals

As of the latest Agricultural Census, conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and most recently issued in 2017, Somerset County had 35,862 acres in agriculture, about 18 percent of total land in the county. Protected acreage totals 8,373 acres, leaving roughly three-quarters of that 18 percent unprotected, more than 27,000 acres.

With this plan, Somerset County restates its strong commitment to farmland preservation, setting a goal of reaching 16,000 acres preserved, or a little less than half the current amount of farmland in Somerset County. To accomplish this goal, as much action as possible must be taken within the next 10 years, by 2030. Roughly speaking, with not quite a quarter of the county in open space or farmland protection, and half the county already committed to urban and suburban development, there is not much land left to protect, and what is available is becoming more expensive with every passing year. Somerset County and its municipalities and partners must therefore consider contending strategically for every acre still uncommitted to development. Land conservation specialists in New Jersey consider that every acre will be committed by 2050.

With this plan, Somerset County restates its strong commitment to farmland preservation, setting a goal of reaching 16,000 acres preserved, or a little less than half the current amount of farmland in Somerset County. Due to multiple challenges – primarily rising costs and limited funding – this goal should not be regarded as achievable in one short decade.

Section 5.6 delves into the potential for funding to support the farmland preservation goal. Major challenges in reaching the goal include (1) projections of less funding from other partners; (2) the demands on the Preservation Trust Fund also to meet open space and historic preservation needs; (3) development pressures from the expected rate of growth in northern New Jersey and Somerset County; and (4) the inexorable rise in the cost of land and therefore easements that accompanies those development pressures. Finally, even if sufficient funding were to be-come available, (5) the program depends on willing easement sellers; 18,186 acres are currently identified as candidate farms eligible for farmland preservation, so theoretically many farmers are willing to limit their development rights through easements.

Hereford beef cattle grazing on a preserved farm in Hillsborough Township, which is among Somerset County municipalities with the greatest amount of preserved farmland. While the pleasing land use patterns on display across Somerset County may have evolved from deep colonial roots, today those patterns are retained, or altered, in part through the actions of municipal planning boards. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

The goal of 16,000 acres of preserved farmland, therefore, should not be regarded as completely achievable in one short decade. An equal emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the long-term prosperity of the agricultural industry, as described in Section 5.9, Economic Development, is needed in order to keep farming sustainable enough to justify protecting it over a much longer period.

I. Saving Farmland with or without Agricultural Easements

It is surprising, but encouraging, that to date protecting only 25 percent of the county's current land base for agriculture has apparently helped to stabilize the industry. Current trends for farmland loss, farm profitability, and an ageing farmer population in Somerset County are worrisome, however. If they continue, current estimates suggest the county could see roughly 4,000 acres of farmland converted to other uses by 2030 (see Section 5.6, Table 5.6.1). Therefore, simply preventing that loss over the next 10 years itself would be an achievement for Somerset County, probably one less determined by the success of the County's farmland preservation program than the community's ability to encourage the success of farming in general.

This element of the preservation program gets back to the challenge of profitability described earlier. Without continued profitability, farmers will not continue in farming long enough for the preservation program to expand protection sufficiently to sustain a stable industry over the long term. Moreover, as loss of profitability discourages current and new farmers,

replacement farmers will not be available to keep farming the preserved farmland. The preservation program needs a continued supply of farmers to own/lease and thus manage the preserved land and contribute to the health of the farm economy – thereby keeping enough land in farming for the County to arrive at its preservation goal over time.

> In addition to farmland preservation, an equal emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the long-term prosperity of the agricultural industry is needed in order to keep farming sustainable enough to justify protecting it over a much longer period.

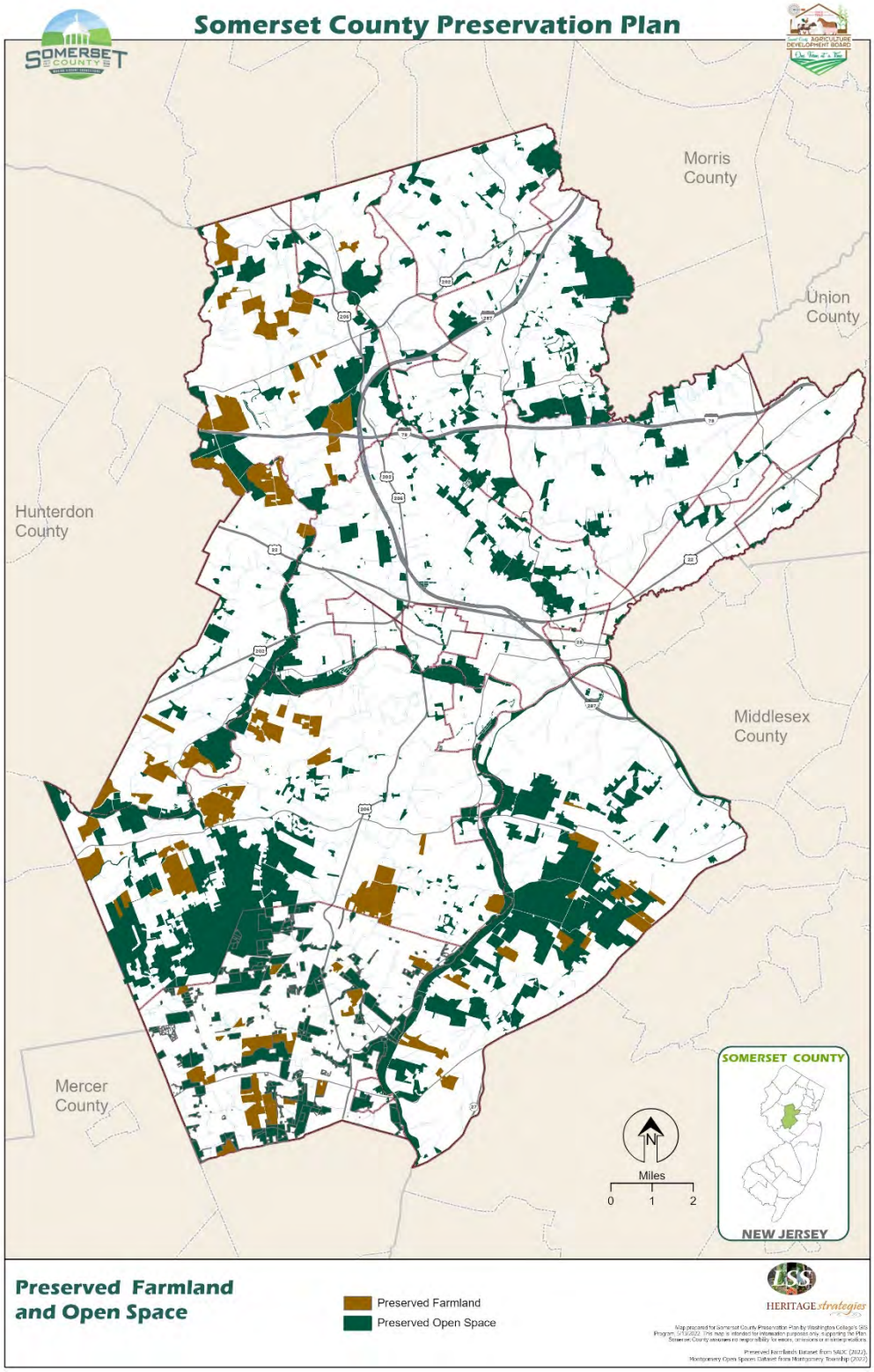
J. Conclusion to the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan

The Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan recognizes considerable investment and years of effort among many governmental and nonprofit agencies, often in partnership. The public's investment in farmland is an important, leading-edge strategy in supporting Somerset County farming.

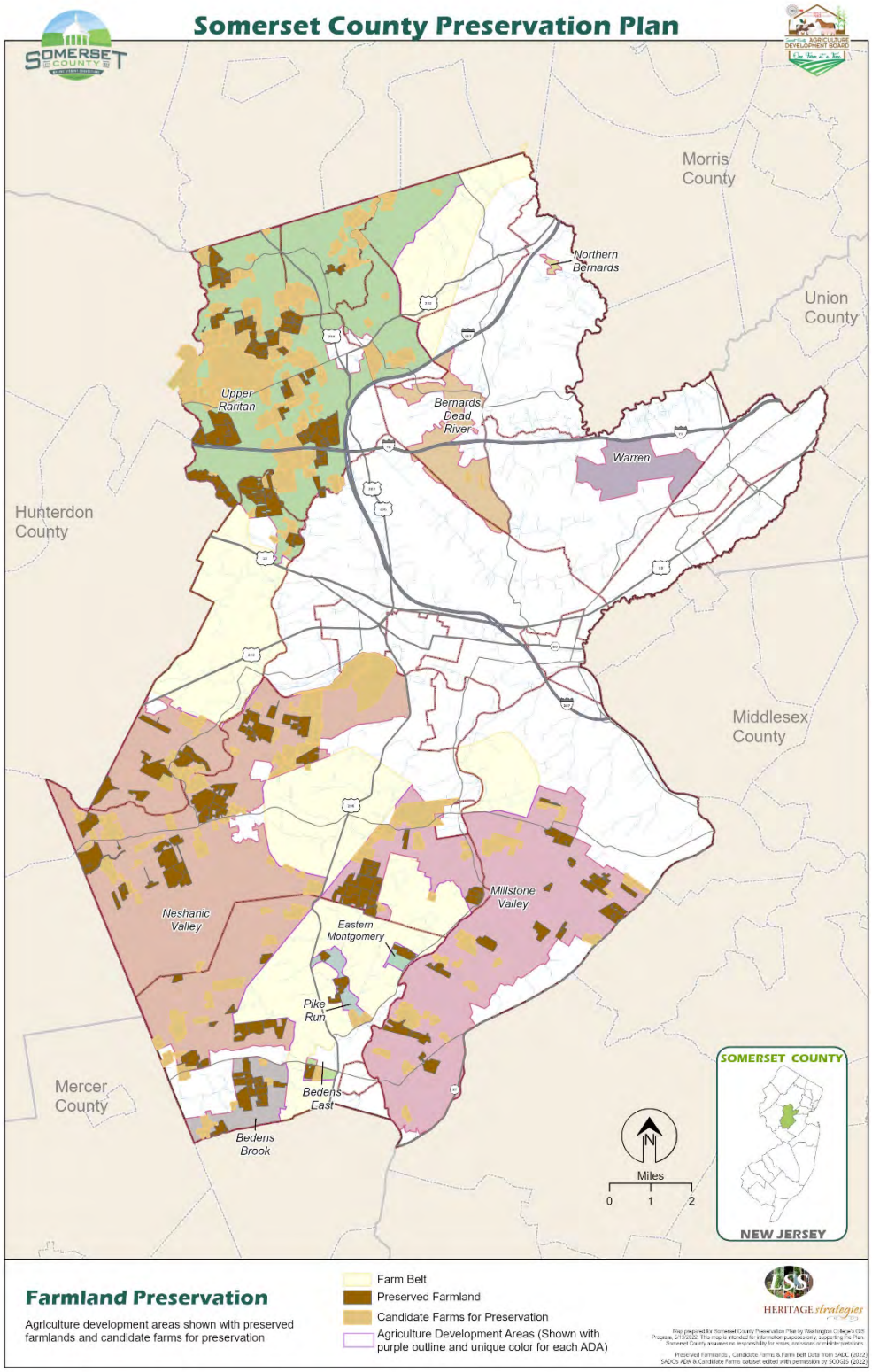
Over nearly 30 years, the Somerset County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund – the Preservation Trust Fund – has been critical to helping to sustain the land base of the agricultural economy and give encouragement to farmers seeking to remain in business in ever more challenging economic conditions. The greatest challenges, however, may be ahead. Many factors can be expected to bring more change to this region – population growth, economic shifts in markets and consumer demand, wage requirements, new technologies, evolving transportation. Simply "holding our ground" can no longer be the only strategy for supporting a resilient agri-cultural industry – farmers, farms, businesses, advisors, buyers, consumers – cap-able of thriving in the years ahead with a deep level of community support. Somerset County's investment and leadership in what the County itself can accomplish, protecting farmland, should be regarded as an ongoing catalyst for a greater, community-wide determination to make the most of Somerset County farming.

Agritourism is a way for some farmers to capture more dollars 'behind the farm gate' instead of finding off-farm employment – and a part of the experiences non-farming county residents can enjoy on protected farmland. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

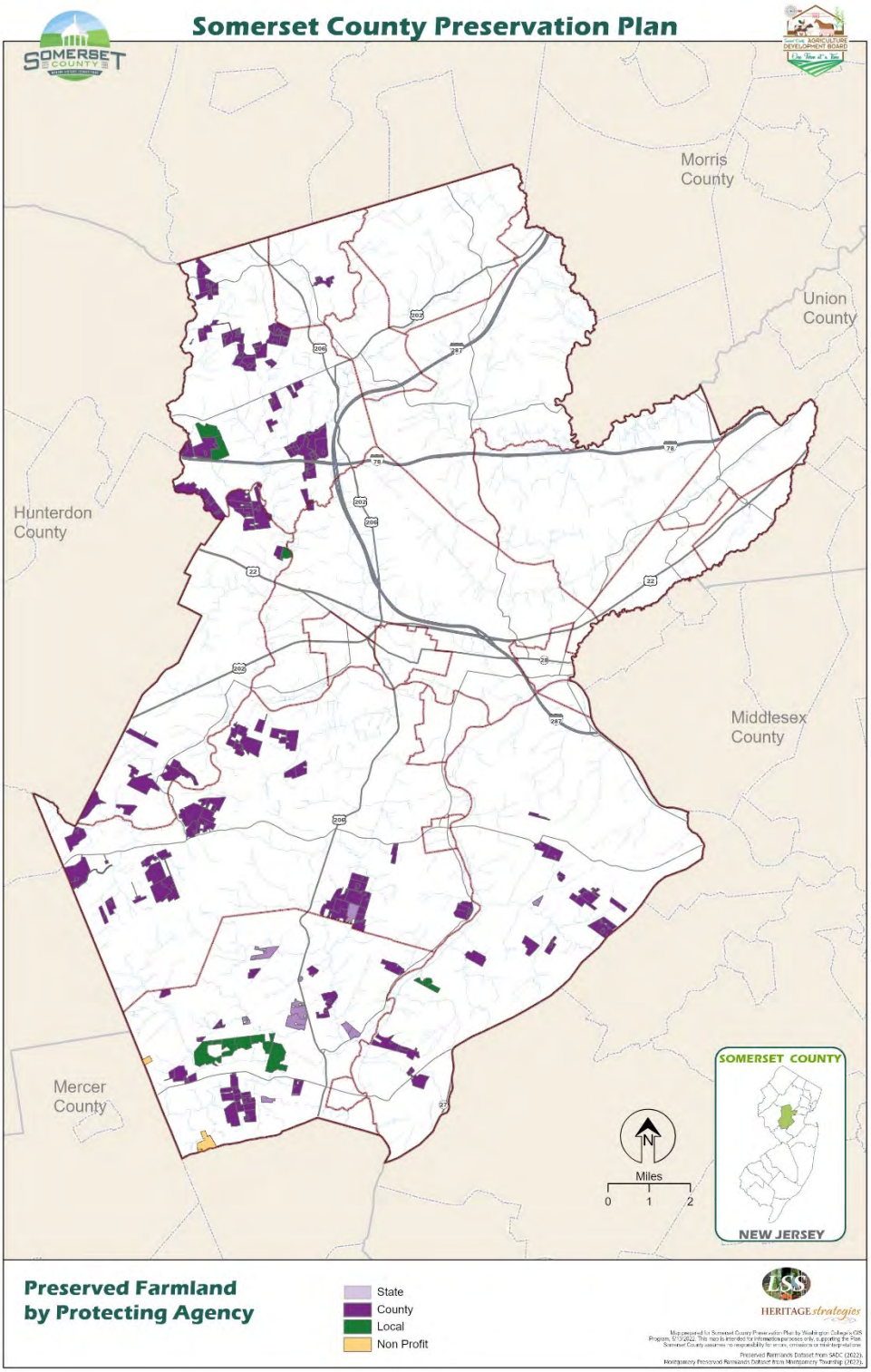
Map 5.1. Preserved Farmland and Open Space



Map 5.2 Somerset County Agricultural Development Area by Project Area



Map 5.3 Permanently Preserved Farmland by Protecting Agency



Chapter 6. Introducing the Historic Preservation Plan

Somerset County is a vibrant area in the heart of New Jersey, attractive to residents, owners of a wide variety of businesses, and investors. An undeniable part of this success is thanks to the attractive historic character of the county's communities and landscapes.

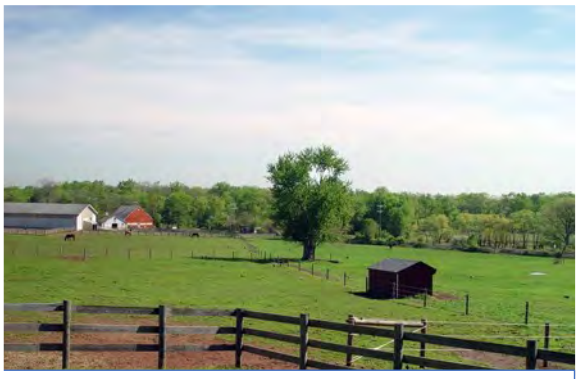
Somerset County's historic places and stories are important to preserve for their contribution to contemporary quality of life and economic value. They are valuable for what they can reveal about the past, but also for the light they shed on ways to build a better future. Preservation and enhancement of existing communities are central to the concepts of sustainable development, environmental protection, and strong community centers. It is possible for Somerset County leaders, local governments, and residents to look forward to prosperity based not only on growth, but also on the preservation and conservation of the county's most important and unique assets – historic resources.

A. Introduction

The Historic Preservation Plan, Somerset County's first, provides an overview of Somerset County's historic contexts and describes the significant historic resources associated with the county's historical development. The use of the land over time and the forces of history and technology have resulted in Somerset County's unique landscape. The Historic Preservation Plan also outlines the benefits of preservation; issues associated with preserving historic resources, communities, and landscapes; and goals and strategies for a collaborative approach for promoting the stewardship of historic resources. This chapter provides critical ideas drawn from the full plan that is a part of the project that produced this Somerset County Preservation Plan.

Somerset County's preservation initiatives are led by the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission (SCC&HC). Historic preservation, however, requires shared stewardship. Both public and private, nonprofit entities have limited resources and limited capacities – whether at the state, county, or local level. Only through mutual support can broad community objectives be achieved. This preservation plan, therefore, requires an array of community stakeholders to pursue the ideas articulated here. These ideas provide a foundation for long-term action by the county, municipalities, and many partners in preserving and promoting Somerset County's historic resources.

As primarily a product of grassroots initiative fostered by many decades of interest and effort by



The Millstone Valley Agricultural District is a prosperous farming region south of Millstone Village and west of the Millstone River in Hillsborough. It developed along River Road, in existence as early as 1737 (pictured lower left, now the Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway). The solid, often richly detailed buildings indicate that the region was preferred farmland settled by relatively wealthy farmers. Pictured, top, one of the rare Dutch barns found across southern Somerset County, indicative of the earliest settlers. At center left, a mid-nineteenth century Italianate farmhouse, spelling the prosperity of farming after the canal improved access to markets. (Photos, upper right by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development; lower left, "Deer on River Road," by Ron and Pat Morris. Other photos courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

private citizens, historic preservation requires a collaborative approach. Governmental entities play a critical role in identifying and protecting community-wide interests, but in doing so they directly reflect the interest, values, and perspectives of residents. Most actions affecting historic resources are undertaken in the day-to-day decision-making of private property owners.

Consequently, this plan recognizes that most community-based decisions about historic preservation and community character are undertaken at the municipal level. The county's role is to work to assure that local decision-makers, both govern-mental and private-sector, have the information, tools, and resources necessary to make informed and responsible decisions in their communities' best interest. Additionally, the county's role is to make sure that county-led actions provide regional leadership and support the broad interests of local communities.

Although the Historic Preservation Plan includes information on municipal historic preservation

responsibilities, because the county has limited involvement in the land use planning and regulatory functions of the municipalities, this plan aligns more with such funding tools as the Preservation Trust Fund and such policy tools as the Somerset County Investment Framework (as explained in Chapter 3, Land Use Planning Context).

The Open Space Preservation Plan, summarized in Chapter 4 of this overall Preservation Plan, concerns open space acquisition, accomplished through the Somerset County Park Commission and its administration of the county's extensive park system and growing trail and greenway system. The Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, summarized in Chapter 5, addresses acquisition of conservation easements to preserve farmland, led locally by the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board. Both approaches also have the potential to reinforce the natural and farmland contexts of Somerset County's historic resources. Overall, the Preservation Plan addresses key methods not only to preserve historic resources, but also historic landscapes, especially the remaining evidence from the highly significant farm heritage that extends back to the county's founding in New Jersey's colonial era and the many surviving resources that were present during the American Revolution.

B. An Obligation to the Future

Important events have shaped Somerset County over hundreds of years. Evidence of this rich history is found across the county's landscape, including remarkable survivals from the county's significant participation in the American Revolution. These assets contributed to the development of the county's identity across generations.

This heritage is not simply to be enjoyed by the current generation alone, but a legacy to be passed on to future generations. Community officials and organizations who are leading the effort to assure widespread preservation, the voters and donors who support them, and the owners and stewards of historic properties – are responsible for seeking the preservation of these resources for future generations to use and enjoy.

Somerset County has worked over many years to maintain long-term policies and work through the SCC&HC and its partners and the county's varied municipalities to support historic preservation. Rarely is there a broad enough wingspan in a community to lift up everything that deserves preservation, however. The shared efforts among county and municipal officials, public property managers, developers, nonprofit organizations, and private property owners can be large, but they cannot cover all needs and

Lord Memorial Fountain, Court House Green, Somerville. Erected in 1910, it was designed by John Russell Pope, one of America's great Neoclassical architects. He also designed the Jefferson Memorial and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Somerset County is the custodian of a considerable number of fine historic sites such as the Courthouse Green. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

opportunities that might exist across Somerset County.

Given the extent of this challenge, when historic and cultural resources are preserved as part of a larger plan for a community, they are more likely to survive, in better shape and with more resources to support their preservation over the long term. This plan affirms the value of historic preservation and the principle of encouraging informed and thorough conversations about the importance of historic and cultural resources affected by the forces of change across the county, in order to consider the impacts and costs of change and achieve preservation whenever possible. It aims to enhance the climate to support historic preservation, especially to strengthen the existing collaboration among Somerset County, its municipalities, and the many stakeholders who can influence the course of preservation.

C. Why Preserve?

Historic preservation can contribute considerably to smart community strategies in several key ways. First, communities with a recognizable and attractive sense of place frequently attract economic activity and population growth and enjoy higher than average property values.

Somerset County and its twenty-one municipalities are fortunate to possess a strong sense of place that has evolved over many, many decades. Today, they must build a knowledge base, strong planning, and public support in order to keep it that way. Literally hundreds if not thousands of decisions, public and private, are made on a yearly basis that can affect a community's sense of place. A strong sense of the value of historic preservation as a key part of community planning helps to shape a community's ongoing growth and development in ways that allow that community to retain its individual character. This, in turn, sends messages to prospective residents and investors that quality matters, contributing to a virtuous cycle as they recognize resulting benefits and take further thoughtful action.

Second, historic resources have a well-documented impact on local economies, because historic preservation efforts can positively impact property

The Jacobus Vanderveer House in Bedminster is now the Jacobus Vanderveer House and Museum, headquarters of General Henry Knox during the winter of 1778-79 and the only surviving building associated with the Pluckemin Artillery Cantonment, America's first military academy. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

General Henry Knox commanded the Pluckemin Artillery Cantonment, America's first military academy; today it is an archeological site. (Photo lower right, British Royal Artillery Belt Plate and Flints found at the site; images courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

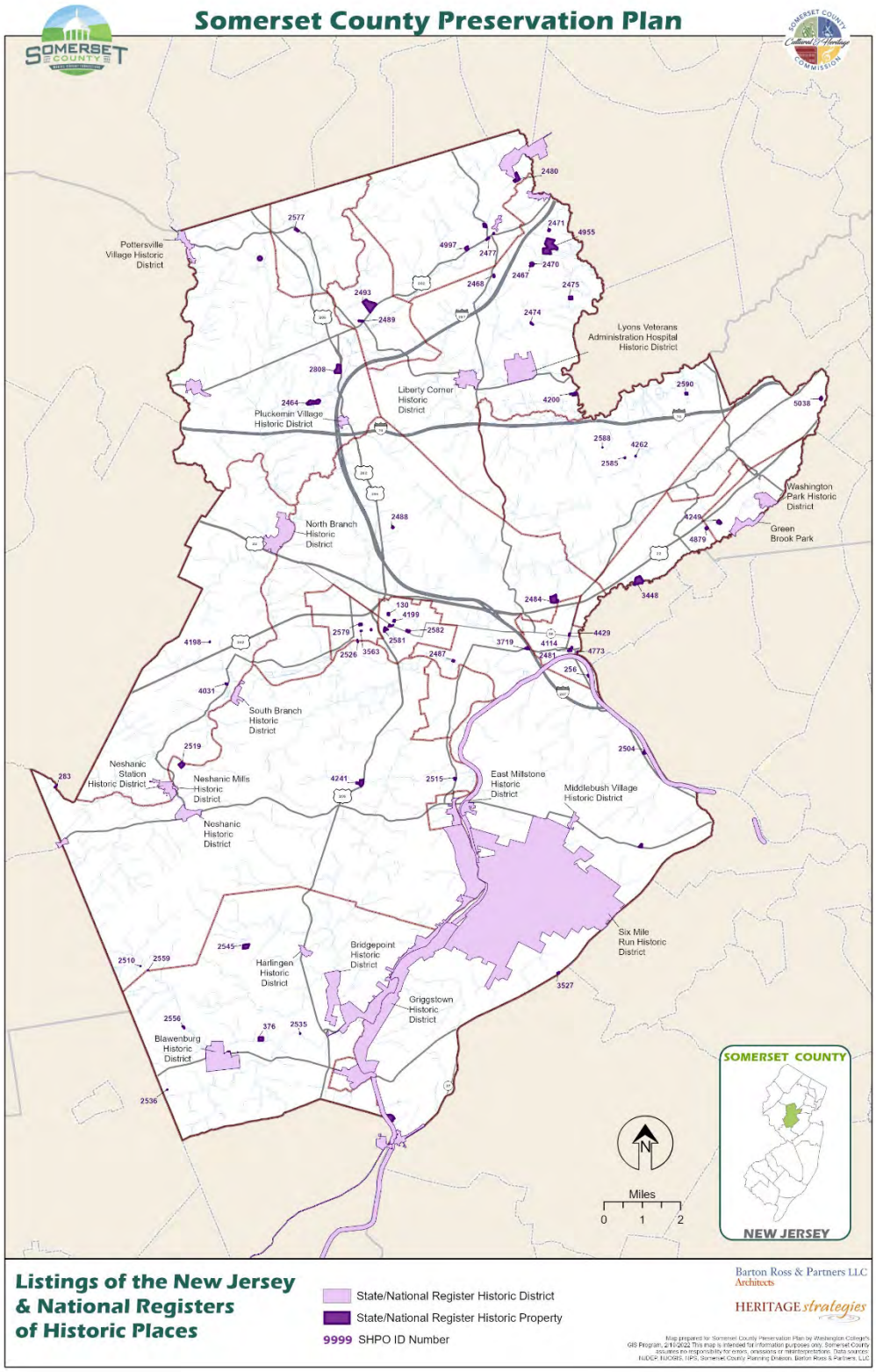
values, business income, downtown revitalization, tourism activity, job creation, and tax revenue generation. The number of jobs associated with historic preservation is generally higher than with new construction; given equal dollar value, a historic preservation construction project typically requires 60 percent labor and 40 percent materials, whereas it is the reverse with new construction.

Third, older structures contribute a sense of identity, community, and permanence by embodying the stories of a community's past, its aspirations, and the people who built it. Historic preservation provides strategies and tools for those who value the cultural identity or character of physical places and wish to promote a sense of local pride and stewardship for future generations.

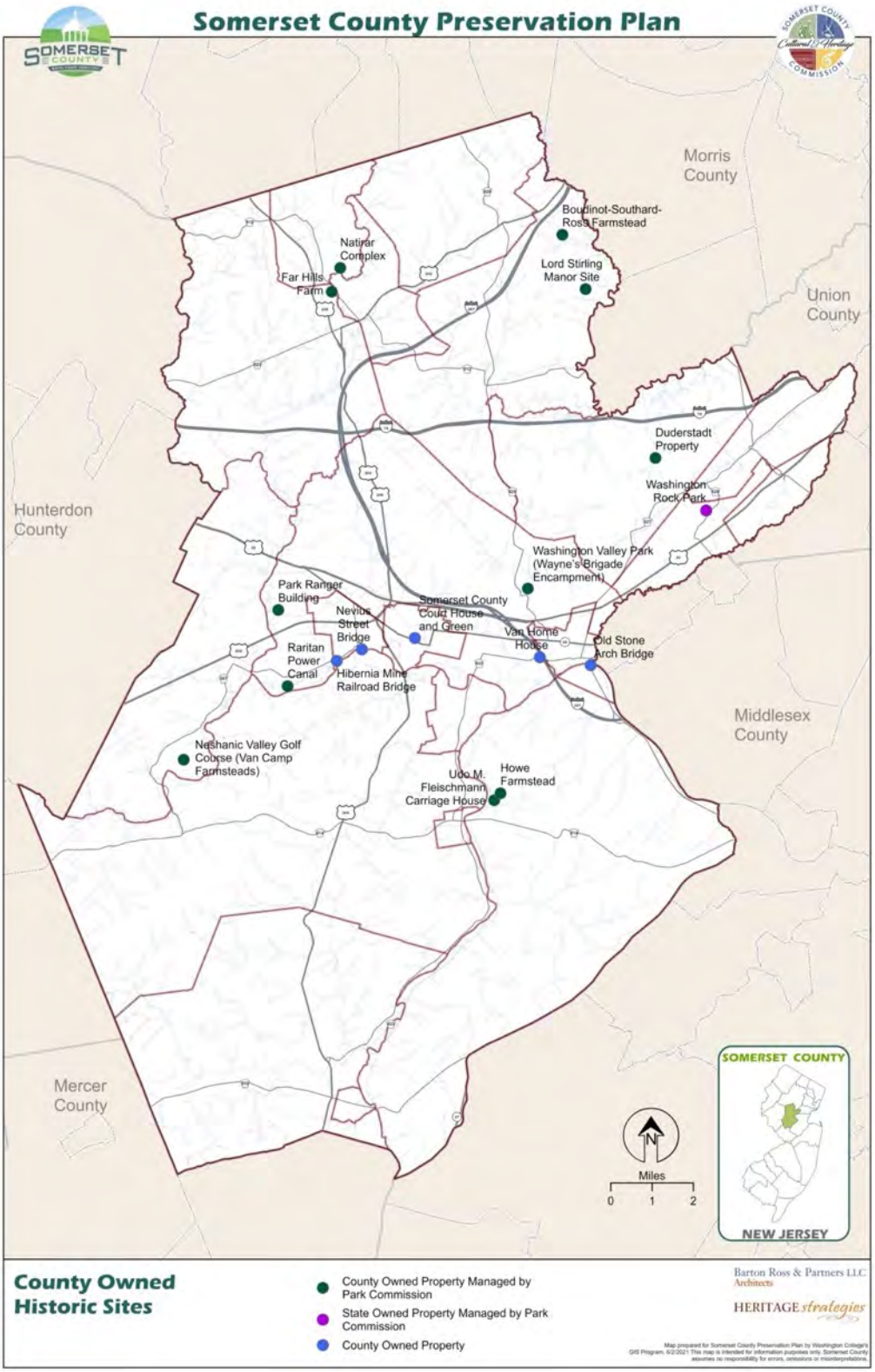
Historical events live in books and in the imagination, but heritage resources offer tangible sites, buildings, activities, and landscapes that can be interacted with physically. Through these resources, people share space and tradition with earlier generations. Communities and landscapes communicate their cultural value through the layers of physical change that illustrate how they have evolved over time, demonstrating the large-scale historic forces that have been in play. The preservation and interpretation of these places and spaces is an invaluable approach for historical and cultural education.

Finally, the preservation of existing buildings contributes to environmental sustainability. By focusing investment and development in and around existing community centers and by preserving and

Map 6.1 Historic Sites and Districts Listed in the New Jersey and National Registers



Map 6.2 Historic Sites Owned by Somerset County



utilizing existing building stock, communities can enhance walkable historic neighborhoods and commercial centers, curb suburban sprawl, preserve open space, reduce landfill waste, and gain Sustainable Jersey points.

D. The Need for Public Education

This Preservation Plan also includes Chapter 7, on public outreach and educational programs. It will be important, in creating conditions for successful implementation of the goals of the Historic Preservation Plan, for the SCC&HC to (1) build a community-wide knowledge base for preservation action, and (2) educate residents and advocacy groups about their heritage, its value, and the variety of tools available for protecting historic resources.

The Historic Preservation Plan is intended to be a resource especially for Somerset County's local governments, which have large influence over individual property decisions through their land use powers. Many may find themselves in a reactive mode when a local historic resource is threatened, searching for solutions when time is of the essence. The plan introduces a wide variety of preservation tools and resources that can and should be pursued by municipalities across the county, including economic development measures, regulatory measures, best practices employed by local public and private preservation groups, and public education.

In terms of public education, an involved public will result in more effective action. Too often, however, it is difficult to involve residents in heritage preservation unless and until a nearby or high-profile resource is in danger. The education and public outreach initiatives described in Chapter 7 can be key to changing this tendency. Citizens who understand that preservation is not simply saying "no," but is instead a way to blend the past into the present, and who understand that preservation is an economic development tool and a significant contributor to quality of life, are citizens who will support their local heritage resources in a variety of ways.

E. Historic Preservation Goals & Strategies

While there is much that Somerset County can do in its own right, historic preservation is unique among the three major topics addressed by the Somerset County Preservation Plan in requiring a great deal of municipal land-use leadership and independent action by private (including nonprofit) owners. Moreover, historic preservation is woven into many kinds of governmental action – from public works affecting public-domain resources (such as bridges), to land conservation, to farmland preservation, to place-making (e.g., Main Street), economic development (e.g., rehab tax credits), and cultural heritage tourism (encompassing agri-tourism and eco-tourism as well as enjoyment of historic attractions). Thus, the number of strategies in the Historic Preservation Plan is large, addressing complex ideas. Four goals provide structure for organizing the strategies, as listed in Chapter 9, Moving Forward.

Goal 6.1: Identify and promote Somerset County's unique historic resources, including communities, neighborhoods landscapes, buildings, and traditions.

Many creative efforts have been made by many parties over decades to protect and promote Somerset County's historic resources. This plan identifies ways to continue and enlarge Somerset County's work and to enlist and encourage the efforts of the many individuals and groups that support this goal. Surveying the location and extent of the county's cultural resources will provide a

knowledge base that will enable allow the county and other stakeholders to better recognize and promote them, and under Goal 6.3, to protect them. Strategies involving recognition through National Register listings, encouragement of historical research, expanded efforts to interpret the county's history and historic places, and outreach through public education also support this goal. Strategies include:

- A comprehensive update of the county's 1988 survey, including but not limited to historic bridges and cemeteries (Strategies 6.1.A-C);
- A strategic needs assessment to evaluate the condition of county-owned historic resources, estimate costs, and make recommendations in priority order (Strategy 6.1.D);
- Continued support for the preparation of nominations to the National Register of Historic Places (Strategy 6.1.E);
- Continued leadership in preservation of county-owned bridges (Strategy 6.1.F);
- Continued installation of historic markers (Strategy 6.1.G);
- Support for local research (Strategy 6.1.H);
- Marketing and promotion of Somerset County's historic interpretive sites through Somerset County Tourism (Strategy 6.1.I)

Goal 6.2: Promote coordination and consensus in the preservation of historic resources among a wide variety of interested parties across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Communities that succeed in communicating the broad community benefits of historic preservation and enlisting a wide variety of private property owners and investors, nonprofit groups, and governmental bodies are more able to harness the power of preservation to improve community quality of life in many ways. Strategies in the Historic Preservation Plan present steps to strengthen existing collaboration, focusing on: (1) partnerships with statewide entities; (2) partnerships among local historical commissions, planning commissions, and other entities addressing historic preservation; and

An image from a color slide made of the streetscape of Rosalie Street in Manville for the SCC&HC's six-volume historic resources survey of 1989. The form of these simple workers' houses dates from the nineteenth century and reflects the Greek Revival style with its front-facing pedimented gable – a useful style for narrow city lots. (SCCRS 18-11-4 Streetscape North side of Rosalie)

Neshanic Mills Historic District, Hillsborough Township, features a water-powered roller mill built in 1876 on the site of an earlier mill plus two bridges over the South Branch of the Raritan River. The rare Elm Street Bridge (top image) is 285-foot double-span bridge built in 1896 and employs a lenticular, or parabolic, truss. The other bridge once carried the Central Railroad, a heavy-duty Pratt truss. The mill operated until the late 1940s and is now a private residence. (Top and bottom photos courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission; middle photo by Jerrye & Roy Klotz, MD under a Creative Commons license, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en.)

(3) partnerships among those responsible for the study and stewardship of historic sites.

Goal 6.3: Pursue and coordinate incentive programs and protection measures to preserve Somerset's historic and archeological resources.

The information generated by the county from renewed surveying of historic resources, directly addressed by Strategy 6.1.A, is to be integrated into planning, development, and environmental-review decisions before the county on an equal basis with other kinds of information needed to support such decision-making, with municipalities similarly encouraged to consider historic resources. Sometimes called "parity," this approach does not mean that the preservation of historic resources necessarily outweighs other considerations, simply that historic resources be fairly considered along with all other concerns. Making such an approach simple for all parties is a key outcome for this plan. Strategies under this goal address county grant-making, suggest encouragement to municipalities pursuing historic preservation initiatives, encourage the use of the federal rehabilitation tax credits, offers ways to consider historic resources in the preservation of open space and farmland and incorporate historic preservation into local planning and development review, and supports maintaining expertise at the county level to sustain these strategies.

The Historic Preservation Plan considers that providing continued funding support to the many historic sites across the county that are owned and operated in the public interest is essential. Strategy 6.3.A in particular calls for devoting additional resources to preserve historic resources under county management

Goal 6.4: Position Somerset County to be a prominent part of the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution as led by the New Jersey Historical Commission and the United States Semiquincentennial Commission and beyond.

Somerset County has preserved, cultivated, and promoted its significant historic sites for years. Place-based interpretation and storytelling engages residents and visitors with a richer, in-depth experience that reinforces the identity and quality of life of Somerset County's communities. Such programming supports historic preservation by highlighting historic buildings and landscapes, encouraging their recognition and appreciation, and building support for their stewardship and care.

The year 2026 will mark a major milestone in this country's ongoing history, the 250th anniversary of the start of the American Revolution. The programs to be operated by the state and federal governments and the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area in commemoration of this anniversary are described in Sections 6.4.B and 6.4.C (the latter is also reproduced in part in the sidebar, "New Jersey's Revolutionary War Commemoration"). Chapter 9 of the Somerset County Preservation Plan addresses tourism in the county, advocating taking interpretation of the county's historic resources up to a higher level that will allow them to be consistently marketed and visited by residents and visitors. That chapter provides an overall, long-term approach; strategies here are designed to supplement that approach with ideas for how to focus specifically on

The Van Horne House in Bridgewater Township, circa 1750. During the first Middlebrook encampment of the American Revolution, 1777, it served as the headquarters for General Benjamin Lincoln. During the cantonment of 1778-79, it served as the headquarters for General William Alexander, Lord Stirling. (Photo by Zeete, Creative Commons license https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Horne_House#/media/File:Van_Horne_House,_Bridgewater_Township,_NJ_-_looking_northwest.jpg)

The Van Veghten House in Bridgewater Township, circa 1725, overlooks the floodplain of the Raritan River. During the Middlebrook cantonment of 1778-79, it served as the headquarters for Quartermaster General Nathanael Greene. It now houses the Somerset County Historical Society, including a museum and library. Like the Van Horne House, it is located on the early eighteenth-century Old York Road that connected New York City to Philadelphia. (Photo by Zeete, Creative Commons license https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Veghten_House#/media/File:Van_Veghten_House,_Finderne,_NJ_-_looking_east.jpg)

the American Revolution theme and prepare over just a few short years for the anniversary commemoration.

Somerset County is committed to working to make the most of this major opportunity to highlight the many stories and sites from the American Revolution to be found across the entire county. The county, however, cannot achieve success alone; public and private institutions and agencies must also muster the necessary local leadership, volunteers, funding, and action. Success will mean that local interpreting organizations will build audiences, historic sites will enjoy greater public support for their preservation and enhancement, and the county will grow its tourism correspondingly.

Liberty Corner Historic District in Bernards Township. Somerset County's great wealth in the second half of the nineteenth century is on display in the beautiful public and private buildings that can be seen across the county, such as this Presbyterian Church (1868-69) (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

Fortunately, an excellent base of resources is already preserved. Over the years the county's grants for historic preservation to publicly accessible sites from Somerset County's Preservation Trust Fund have enabled an admirable, widespread level of maintenance and restoration by organizations and municipalities. The greatest immediate need is for enhanced interpretation of the rich Revolutionary War stories the county's many historic sites can offer.

Major opportunities afforded by the impetus of this anniversary included initiating the Somerset County Cultural Heritage Trail (described in Chapter 7 and 8) with an emphasis on providing planning, digital media, and wayfinding signage focused on Revolutionary War sites and experiences (Strategy 6.4.D); and a new park: setting and interpretive exhibits for an excavated and restored Old Stone Arch Bridge in Bound Brook (Strategy 6.4.E).

F. Conclusion to the Historic Preservation Plan

The vision for historic preservation outlined in this plan recognizes the significance of the county's historic resources and the central role they play in the quality of life of its communities. Somerset County will continue to grow and change in future years as it has in the past. A fundamental tenet of this preservation plan is preserving the irreplaceable historic resources that are central to community character while addressing the need to accommodate change.

Chapter 7. Public Outreach & Education

Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection.

—Freeman Tilden, writing in his classic work for the National Park Service, Interpreting Our Heritage *, 1957, 1st ed., p. 38*

The primary plans in this Somerset County Preservation Plan summarized in the preceding three chapters – the Open Space Preservation Plan, the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, and the Historic Preservation Plan – all rely in part on continued public outreach and educational initiatives to build the appreciation of county residents for the natural, recreational, agricultural, cultural, and historic resources of the county.

These programs can also inform the county's residents about opportunities for saving open space, farms and farmland, and historic resources and furthermore build and engage a united constituency to support county preservation programs. This chapter assembles actions and ideas for program development in one location, focusing on public outreach and education across the board.

A. Introduction

This is the first of two chapters involving all three planning topics, both designed to encourage collaboration and efficiencies and to seek maximum value for the effort involved. This chapter focuses on public outreach and education; the following chapter concerns tourism related to open space, farmland, and historic resources. Both of these chapters acknowledge the importance of building and serving audiences and cultivating local supporters.

The discussion that follows focuses on programming to convey messages and information and engage residents. This includes interpretation that can educate the broader population of residents (and visitors). Chapter 8, Gaining Tourism Benefits from Somerset County's Preserved Assets, aims to enable the county and stakeholders to capitalize on the economic benefits of bringing visitors to the county. Somerset County has already invested considerably over the years in the good things that visitors enjoy as much as residents.

B. The Benefits of Public Outreach and Education

There are three levels to designing programs for public outreach and education. A basic, first level in

promoting the significance of preservation in Somerset County is that every Somerset County resident should, at some level, be aware that their tax dollars support (1) the county's system of parks and trails, and the associated open space; (2) the county's efforts to preserve farming; and (3) the county's leadership in historic preservation. Somerset County leaders and agency staff will continue to take every opportunity to make sure that residents and taxpayers know this, through publicity, word-of-mouth, reports, and public meetings and events. A goal in such messaging is that residents also come to know the "why" of preservation – why it is wise to budget the funds needed to maintain the county's quality of life through preservation.

The next level is to treat residents as customers, informing them about how to access parks and trails, local farms, and historic properties and to help shape their behavior in taking advantage of these resources. There are some very real public health needs to be met through encouraging residents to experience the outdoors, take walks along various trails, and seek out fresh local produce. Farmers, especially, would benefit greatly from increased demand for their products, and a standing request from farmers is that the public – especially their neighbors – understand the rights of farmers under New Jersey's right-to-farm law. Historic properties open to the public are eager for more public visitation. Ensuring that Somerset County residents are knowledgeable users of the protected resources created by county preservation programs (and their tax dollars) is good business.

A third level provides even greater benefits: educating various audiences about the benefits of creating parks, trails, and preserved natural areas and open space; of saving farms and farmland; and of preserving evidence of Somerset County's storied past. Using a variety of educational programs tailored to many audiences, it is possible to create a high level of engagement with audiences, and from that engagement, build allegiance and support for the county's preservation work.

Aiming for high engagement includes teaching K-12 students about the county's environment, farming, and history – which prepares them to be good citizens of the county and exposes them to learning about various dimensions of their world that can lead to productive careers and lifetime leisure interests. K-12 programming has the further benefit of also reaching entire families, not simply the students and their teachers. Offering adult education programs can have similar results, and furthermore creates social opportunities that can cultivate "social capital," a fundamental building block of a functioning society involving such concepts as shared sense of identity and shared values and norms that enable trust and cooperation. Seeking deeper engagement with county residents creates a virtuous cycle, whereby county residents enjoy the learning and activities associated with county resources and return the favor by supporting further preservation.

C. Existing Conditions

There is one advantage described in the next chapter on tourism that does not exist for public outreach and education. That is, coordination of tourism overall in Somerset County has a recognized leader, Somerset County Tourism, an office that is a part of the Somerset County Business Partnership.

Public outreach and education have no such over-arching coordination; instead, they are recognized responsibilities of the Somerset County Park Commission, the Somerset County Agricultural

In 2017, the Park Commission's Environmental Education Center in Lord Stirling Park opened a permanent, interactive, educational exhibit, The Great Swamp Experience, that highlights historical and ecological information about the Great Swamp, one of Somerset County's great environmental treasures. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

Development Board (SCADB; along with Rutgers Cooperative Extension, RCE), and the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission (SCC&HC). Collaboration among these agencies happens on a casual basis. For example, the SCC&HC hosts an annual event, *Journey Through the Past*, that sometimes includes historic sites found in county parks – some of which are also related to the county's farming heritage). SCADB has collaborated with the SCC&HC on student art exhibits celebrating agriculture.

The following is a brief description of public outreach and educational programming pursued by each agency.

Parks and Open Space

The Somerset County Park Commission works diligently to make sure the public is aware of the park system's many and varied offerings, through publicity, an extensive website, and such periodic publications as an annual report and a park guide. These offerings include a great deal of programming associated with trails, athletic facilities, gardens, and such natural resources as the Sourland Mountain Preserve. In addition to publicizing parks and recreational experiences in general, the commission works to market garden and golfing destinations that are major features of the park system and collaborates with Somerset County Tourism on highlighting park system sites, programs, and events.

At the Park Commission's headquarters, a staff member and a visitor enjoy gardening. The Park Commission's programs include therapeutic recreation dedicated to providing year-round recreation and leisure opportunities for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

Regular participants in ranger-led programs throughout the park system can build their awareness of natural resources across Somerset and furthermore develop closer relationships to the sites where they enjoy these programs. Similarly, recreational lessons (golf, tennis, swimming, riding, paddling, fishing) provide opportunities for learners to maximize their use of the park system's facilities. Programs include therapeutic recreation dedicated to providing year-round recreation and leisure opportunities for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

The Park Commission operates the Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Basking Ridge with the goal of improving environmental literacy in Somerset County and beyond. The EEC is situated within 500 acres of the thousand-acre Lord Stirling Park, part of a large, protected region that includes the adjacent Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. A variety of habitats including swamps, rivers, marshes, meadows, ponds, and forests provide homes for diverse plant and animal populations in this environmentally sensitive park. The EEC's educational programs include naturalist-led programs, school field trips, festivals, nature exhibits, a resource library, and science and conservation research. In 2017, the center opened a permanent, interactive, educational exhibit, *The Great Swamp Experience*, that highlights historical and ecological information about the Great Swamp. The exhibit's description states that "children can crawl into a beaver lodge, feel animal fur, or explore the toddler area. Adults can enjoy viewing habitat vignettes, archeological artifacts, and learning about hydrology, sustainability, and the park's geographic location."[24]

A number of other environmental education opportunities exist within Somerset County that are operated outside the park system; these are described in Chapter 8, Tourism, notably Fairview Farm Wildlife Preserve in Bedminster Township and New Jersey Audubon's Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary in Bernardsville.

Farms and Farming

This chapter presumes that the extensive training opportunities for farmers called for in the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan are addressed more directly in relevant chapters in that plan, but it is important to note that this more focused form of education, together with individualized technical assistance, is an important part of the work of both the SCADB and RCE.

[24] http://www.somersetcountyparks.org/parksFacilities/eec/EEC.html

Working with interns through the Raritan Scholars Program at Rutgers University has proven to be a highly beneficial experience for both students and SCADB. The program enables undergraduate students to spend at least 125 hours directly involved in a project that benefits the Raritan River Basin[25] and has added to the county's capacity for providing technical assistance to county farmers. For example, one intern, working in cooperation with the Somerset County Business Partnership, helped three farms enroll in the New Jersey Sustainable Business Registry, which recognizes such sustainable business practices being implemented as stormwater management; recycling/composting; fuel savings; erosion control; and use of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. The program provides registered businesses with use of a logo, access to consulting hours, marketing materials, and advertising space on not only registry's website but also the Somerset County Business Partnership's website.[26]

Other internship projects have included researching emergency preparedness for farms and creating a template for the "Making Farmers Markets More Accessible" action item under Sustainable Jersey's program encouraging local governments to take multiple steps toward greater sustainability (see the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, Section 5.10.B, Natural Resource Protection Coordination).

The 2008 Farmland Preservation Plan envisioned creating a farm for public education events. Although that never happened on behalf of the county, in 2012, in Hillsborough Township along the Raritan River at the center of the county, Duke Farms opened as a major environmental education and farming program that is now a regional destination. It is further described in Chapter 8, Tourism.

Publicity and educational programs promoting agriculture more generally include National Agriculture Month and farm-to-school events.[27] Recent public outreach and education activities undertaken by the SCADB, generally in relation to National Agriculture Month (March) or National Agriculture Day (mid-month in March), have included:

- A multigenerational public art project (2016);
- A gallery exhibit, Agriculture in Art (month of March 2016);
- A roundtable discussion with the New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture (2016);
- Library displays at various branches of the Somerset County Library System (2013-2015);
- A meeting devoted to Right-to-Farm and Agritourism for municipal officials and staff (2015);
- A "Reading and Art" project focused on potatoes for children at the Bound Brook Library (2015);
- A beekeeping presentation to seniors at the Franklin Senior Citizens Center (2015); and
- A "Reading and Learning" event to teach children how to plant a seed, held at the Bound Brook Library (2014).

[25] http://raritan.rutgers.edu/raritan-scholars-looking-for-internship-proposals/

[26] http://registry.njsbdc.com/

[27] https://www.farmtoschool.org/

Freeman Tilden's Six Principles for Interpretation

Freeman Tilden wrote the landmark book *Interpreting Our Heritage* in 1957, still widely read for its detailed discussion of the following six principles identified by Tilden:

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are not entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

History and Historic Resources

A major role of the SCC&HC is to present periodic workshops, conferences, and roundtable sessions led by history and historic preservation professionals. Through the County History Partnership Program, the SCC&HC also receives and distributes grant funds from the New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) to support the operations of local history organizations and other groups meeting NJHC criteria, as well as history programming and services offered by these local organizations.

Like the SCADB, the SCC&HC provides technical assistance where feasible (especially professional development and networking opportunities to benefit cultural organizations' staff and board members, as well as individual artists). Its public outreach and educational programming, however, as listed in the following paragraphs, enables the SCC&HC to cultivate its widest audiences. (The work of the SCC&HC is described more completely in the Historic Preservation Plan, Section 6.4.G, Somerset County Organizations.)

As examples of its public outreach, the SCC&HC routinely presents:

- A biennial Historic Preservation & History Awards program to increase public awareness of historic preservation, and publicly recognize and commend individuals and organizations for their contributions in preserving Somerset County's sense of history.
- A biennial Excellence in the Arts Awards Program to celebrate and publicly recognize leadership and vision of those who have increased the visibility and viability of the Fine & Performing Arts in Somerset County.
- Public resource directories, including its *Guide to Somerset County Fine & Performing Arts Organizations* and its *Guide to Somerset County to History & Preservation Organizations*.

As examples of its educational programming, the SCC&HC routinely presents:

- The annual Somerset County Teen Arts Festival, an arts education program offering master classes and critique sessions led by professionals in seven artistic disciplines and benefitting more than 1,300 teens each year.
- Somerset County's *Journey Through the Past*, an annual countywide collaborative heritage tourism program (described in detail in Chapter 8, Tourism).

Additional information about SCC&HC programs can be found on the County's website, www.co.somerset.nj.us.

D. Interpretation

If there are three basic levels of public outreach and education, as presented earlier in this chapter, interpretation represents a fourth, much higher level of effort to engage and offer learning opportunities to willing audiences.

Freeman Tilden, who is considered to have originated study of the practice of interpretation, defines it as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information." (2nd ed., 1967, p. 8)

Tilden's most famous quote, however, found on page 38 of his 1957 book that first defined interpretation, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, might be a motto for this chapter: "Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection."

Although Tilden's many followers often think first of "personal" interpretation (by docents or rangers), interpretation can also be conveyed by other media.

Key Characteristics of Interpretation

In 2003, Dave Smaldone wrote a smart, short piece on interpretation for the National Park Service entitled "A Crash Course in Interpretation," excerpted here to further define interpretation and explain the kinds of audiences for which it is best designed:

Interpretation: 1) is a process, 2) serves to connect the visitor to something (the resource) on both an emotional and intellectual level, and 3) is more than mere information (i.e., involves more than just reciting facts, dates, lists, etc.).

Generally, people coming to interpretive programs are doing so in their leisure time, in other words for fun…. Contrast this audience with students in a class who are motivated by grades, employees attending a training seminar who are motivated by higher pay or further certification, and so on…. Non-captive audiences expect an informal and non-academic style of interaction….

Finally, good interpreters are also able to portray multiple points of view, rather than simply skewing the story to be one-sided. You should be able to acknowledge and discuss different sides to the stories you share, and doing so shows respect for the diversity of opinions and beliefs that are inherent in your audiences.

Source: https://www.nps.gov/grte/learn/management/upload/interp.pdf

These can range from the familiar, simple indoor or outdoor interpretive signs most people encounter routinely when they visit various kinds of sites (museums, parks, historic houses, etc.), to arts installations designed to highlight a theme and offer an emotional, impressionistic experience to help connect an observer to a resource or place. Digital media (websites, apps) and a wide variety of printed material also are used routinely to interpret sites;

temporary programs – events, lecture series, etc. – are also often interpretive in nature.

Interpretive planning identifies the audiences and the themes, information, and relevance to be conveyed to audiences, and then determines the best methods and media to be used in providing interpretation.

Chapter 8, Tourism, offers a description of experiences of Somerset County's landscapes that hints at the idea of interpretation. To truly bring those landscapes alive for residents and visitors alike takes planning and investment to convey information about those places, by design. Individual sites – natural, agri-cultural, historic – more commonly employ techniques of interpretation, but interpretive methods can be applied and linked across an entire landscape, or an entire county for that matter. In landscape interpretation, interpretive planning also must account for ways that audiences will circulate from site to site and make connections from one place to another.

(Photo courtesy Raritan Valley Community College, raritanval.edu)

There are many opportunities to experience interpretation of Somerset County resources. Map 6.1, Historic Sites Open to the Public, catalogues sites providing public history experiences. Parks in Somerset County's park system frequently provide interpretation, and the Environmental Education Center as described earlier offers an extensive interpretive experience involving natural resources (along with formal environmental education for schoolchildren). Farms and other businesses welcoming customers often provide some interpretation of the story of how the farm (or restaurant, or gallery, etc.) was founded and has evolved over time.

Somerset County is fortunate to be among nine entire counties served by the fourteen-county Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, designated by Congress in 2006. The program is described further in Chapter 8. With the approach of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2029, New Jersey along with a national commission have begun programs encouraging greater preparation for Revolutionary War-related interpretive sites to support the greater visitation that comes with such commemoration.

E. Other Educational Resources

Academic institutions readily available to Somerset County include both Rutgers University and Raritan Valley Community College, a bi-county institution serving Somerset and Hunterdon County residents and offering more than 90 associate degree and certificate programs to a student body of 8,200. In addition, the college offers professional development and personal enrichment courses, corporate training, and small business assistance. Both institutions can be sources of student interns (see description of the Raritan Scholars program in the preceding discussion of SCADB outreach programs); interested faculty who can help design or present engaging programs; and organized classes and training programs to reinforce Somerset County's preservation programs.

F. Moving Forward: Goals and Strategies for Public Outreach and Education

Goals

The following are goals for Public Outreach and Education:

- GOAL 1: Unite those with a stake in the county's natural, recreational, agricultural, historic, and cultural assets in working to expand public outreach and education in Somerset County.
- GOAL 2: Convey systematic messages designed to encourage public participation in and support for preserved sites.
- GOAL 3: Identify sustainable funding to enable the major programs envisioned here.

A Strategy to Encourage Collaboration

Most of the interpretation in Somerset County is casual, responding to the particular needs or opportunities of the various sites that have chosen to offer interpretation. Only the county's parks are organized as a system where a multi-site, broad approach to interpretation is possible. To enlist historic sites (which at least expect to provide interpretation) and farms and farm-based product sellers (which generally do not) in a systemic approach to improving would first take organizing a collaborative network where operators have the opportunity to learn more about possibilities.

Ideally, a collaborative network supporting the development of a more systematic approach to education and public outreach would include both nonprofits and government agencies that work to share information about each other's initiatives and programming. Although the strategies in the following section are organized according to the individual topics of open space, farming, and historic preservation, it is worth bearing in mind that the more that individual sites and programs from among these concentrations can share resources, experiences, and program development, the more effective all can become over time. The first challenge is convening such a group – after which, the next challenge would be finding a way to support it over time.

Strategy E.1.1. Encourage a multi-interest collaborative network, working first to support an interpretive initiative based on the upcoming 250th anniversary commemoration of the American Revolution starting in 2026.

Timeframe & Responsibility: SCC&HC to coordinate early meetings; Board of County Commissioners and county agencies to become involved as appropriate with many other organizations.

Discussion: Fortunately, there is a natural theme in the upcoming 250th anniversary commemoration of the American Revolution starting in 2026, and this may draw candidates for collaboration together to identify mutual benefits and next steps for such an engaging moment in the life of the nation. Following the convening of one or two meetings to begin dialogue about possibilities, project-based action is likely to be more successful than simply meeting for the sake of meeting.

In addition, partnering among multiple, self-selected partners for tourism is described in Chapter 8, and essentially the same partnering would be needed for expanded interpretation implemented on a site-by-site basis drawn from parks, farms, and historic sites. Here, this plan records long-range ideas that have emerged from various sources where cross-disciplinary approaches could be crafted, among

leaders in history, the arts, agriculture, and parks, trails, and outdoor recreation – all or in selected combinations as appropriate:

- The 2008 Farmland Preservation Plan advocated for organizing interpretive farm tours as part of the fall heritage tours that were just emerging at that time; or creating a farm tour as a separate event. An "On the Rails" event scheduled for November 2007 provided a model, where tour participants rode "the rails and learn[ed] all about the role railroads played in our County's history in this fun-filled intergenerational program." (p. 6-14)
- This plan's Chapter 8, Tourism, suggests creating a preservation bicycling tour event (with things to do for the non-bicycling general public) modeled after successful "tour de farms" events in Warren and Sussex counties and winery tours in southern New Jersey. (Strategy T.3.11)
- In addition, Chapter 8 suggests a careful examination of ways to expand the Business Partnership's VisitSomersetNJ website to include categories for "ecotourism," "nature lovers," and/or "trails" modeled on the website's existing birding itinerary (more specialized than the existing and more general "parks and recreation" category). The website could also add a super-category "Learn and Experience" (on the same level as "Play") to introduce such history topics as the American Revolution and American Country House Era. (Strategy T3.8)
- Finally, Chapter 8 observes that incorporating the arts into all forms of tourism is an important opportunity in Somerset County given the position and experience of the SCC&HC and breadth of the arts community. This would widen the appeal of events and programs to more audiences. Every activity developed in this new focus on enlarging the county's tourism to support outdoor recreation, farming, and historic sites should ask, how can we enlist local arts, artists, and galleries? Specific events to incorporate the arts even more directly should also be possible. For example, the SCC&HC might create a novel arts event to encourage visitors to get out into the countryside – such as a temporary artistic lighting event or lighting competition for selected historic bridges or other historic structures; or a temporary "arts trail" with installations on participating farms.

Strategies for Public Outreach and Education to Support Open Space

Any park system is oriented to informing and educating its users, potential users, and community supporters, both official and "friends of." Otherwise, the fine facilities and programs developed by parks and recreation professionals would be under-utilized. Somerset County's park system enjoys more than two million visitors each year, so clearly it is doing much to make sure that county residents can readily access its offerings.

Strategy E.2.1. Continue existing communications programs and strive to expand partnerships.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Ongoing, by Park Commission staff.

Discussion: In the general area of public outreach, the Park Commission will continue its strong communications efforts in order to publicize its parks,

programs, events, and special offerings (such as gardens, golfing, and the Lord Stirling Environmental Education Center) to Somerset County residents. This includes the commission's website, annual reports, guide to county parks, and publicity related to special events. Annual work programs will include an examination of opportunities for partnerships.

Strategy E.2.2. Consider eco-tourism and marketing initiatives that can assist with outreach to Somerset County residents.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Short- or mid-term, by Park Commission and Somerset County Tourism.

Discussion: This Preservation Plan's Chapter 8, Tourism, includes Strategy T.3.9 calling for creation of a "Birding & Wildlife Observation Network" throughout Somerset County, modeled after the "trail" approach pioneered in the state by New Jersey Audubon but which has not been applied in Somerset County.[28] This would be an added, system-wide means of attracting visitors who may be especially interested in experiencing one of the great features resulting from Somerset County's open space preservation. Owing to the wide range of ecosystems across the county's diverse terrain and extensive open space, the county is especially well known for its diverse bird populations. Since most sites within the park system have the necessary facilities to receive visitors who would seek out sites within such a network, such an initiative would be a matter of planning largely to develop marketing and promotion with some modest wayfinding signage.

Northern red-bellied cooters (Pseudemys rubriventris; photo by Ron and Pat Morris)

Strategy E.2.3. Undertake interpretive evaluation and further planning to support both park user programming and out-reach to educational institutions.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Short- or mid-term, by Park Commission and Somerset County Tourism.

Discussion: The Park Commission already engages in considerable interpretation. At this point in the park system's development, a beneficial activity to enhance this interpretation would be to undertake a system-wide inventory and evaluation of the messages, themes, and media in use. This would allow staff interpretive planners (a consortium of educators and staff working in individual parks and as commission headquarters staff) to consider how interpretation might be improved to provide learning opportunities to park and trail users and inform county residents about the value of open space preservation. In particular, as the commission begins collaboration on the next phase of trail development countywide as contemplated in Somerset County's recent Walk-Bike-Hike Plan[29], a plan for interpretation to enhance existing and new trails could confer efficiencies over the longer term by establishing a vision and priorities for further interpretive development. An additional benefit of such planning would be to undertake a robust

[28] To see the results of years of work by Texas on such a program, which originated the idea of creating a network of birding and wildlife viewing locations, see https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wildlife/wildlife-trails/. Another robust, long-term model is found in Colorado: https://coloradobirdingtrail.com/resources/printed-guides/.

[29] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/walk-bike-hike-plan

examination of support for K-12 and higher education institutions.

Strategies for Public Outreach and Education to Support Agriculture

The 2008 Farmland Plan, of which this Preservation Plan and its associated plan, the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, are an update, strongly states its support for public engagement:

> Over the last 50 years, Somerset County and New Jersey have transformed from a largely rural and agricultural landscape to a more urban and suburban landscape. However, farming remains strong and viable in many portions of the state, including Somerset County. If the County's remaining agricultural areas are to survive and prosper, the non-farming public needs to be aware of, and be financially supportive of, the continuing economic, cultural, scenic, and agricultural contributions made by Somerset County's farmers. Public education and outreach will increase the recognition of the farm industry's importance to the non-agriculture resident, and should be continued and expanded whenever possible. Agritourism is one form of public outreach that exists in Somerset County, as is the annual 4-H Fair, and educational programs at schools. These should all be expanded wherever possible, and other public outreach mechanisms should be explored and instituted when feasible. (p. 8-7)

The overarching economic approach needed to improve the viability of farming as an industry in Somerset County relies on enhancing farmer access to consumers, as discussed in detail in the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, Section 5.9, Agricultural Economic Development. Among the strategies for the SCADB recognized in that plan are many that rely on training farmers on how to market their products, coordinate more on agritourism, and improve their connections to heritage and ecotourism planning.

Agricultural development in Somerset County must take advantage of sales of farm products that benefit from the proximity to high densities of people in a suburban environment, such as horticulture, equine, farm-to-table, and direct sales of local foods. Expansion of local food source partnerships with restaurants, schools, and service industries and of local food retail products and outlets is a critical strategy. For example, encouraging farmers to provide value-added products to the marketplace, such as preserves and sauces (through RCE training), would help to expand the availability of local food products. Thus, the updated Farmland Plan calls for a great deal of training for farmers, called out in Section 5.12, Strategy 5.4.A, which states the objective of educating existing and new farmers on methods to enhance profitability, with reliance on RCE as the primary responsible actor. RCE's mission is to provide such education. Related ideas discussed in the plan's Section 5.9, Agricultural Economic Development, include:

- Enhancing farmers' knowledge of business management;
- Providing training on marketing;
- Making farmers are aware of the extensive, helpful educational information available on the NJDA, USDA, and Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) websites; and
- Training farmers about managing safety risks.

Enhancing farmers' capacity to compete in the changing environment of farming in a suburban setting and in the 21st century, however, is only half of the equation. Somerset County residents themselves must be regarded as a major audience for public outreach and education about the county's farmland preservation program, the county's farmers and farms, and opportunities to enjoy both.

Strategy E.3.1. Carry out publicity and reports to the public.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Ongoing, by SCADB supported by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development staff.

(Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

Discussion: The SCADB will continue to hold (and publicize) annual meetings and publish periodic reports to update partners on progress in meeting this plan's preservation and policy goals. SCADB will also continue to carry out the actions prescribed in the original 2008 plan, which also identify target audiences:

- Educate county residents about local farming, and work with municipalities in order to minimize right-to-farm conflicts (p. E-3);
- Educate municipalities about building agricultural retention elements and regulations supportive of agritourism into their master plans and ordinances (p. 6-13);
- For farmers, include hospitality training, marketing strategies and other, issue-specific workshops such as liability, grants, traffic, signage; offer a forum for farmers getting into agritourism to interact with those who already are involved; and publicizing state outreach programs that educate farmers about government grants and services (including technical support services for those entering into new agribusiness with value-added agricultural commodities (pp. 6-13, 14, 17); and
- For K-12 students and other farm visitors, identify and compile farm-related curriculum for different grade levels; provide opportunities for farmers to participate in school programs (on their farms or in the schools); develop "fast facts" to educate farm visitors; and acting as a clearinghouse or coordinating link between schools and available farmers (pp. 6-14,15).

As stated in the 2008 plan, "Many of the ideas suggested here require manpower as much as dollar power and the SCADB is seeking to expand its staff, which should help in its ability to provide outreach to farmers, municipalities, event organizes, business organizations and individual citizens to expand marketing efforts and awareness and acceptance of agriculture as a valuable contributor to the economy and quality of life in Somerset County." (p. 6-33) This need is further recognized in the 2008 plan's update, Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan update, Section 5.12, Strategy 5.6.A ("Supplement available administrative resources for preservation and agricultural industry promotion efforts"), which states that "the county will explore opportunities to expand the staffing of the Office of

Planning, Policy and Economic Development related to agricultural promotion and preservation and supporting the staffing needs of the SCADB.... spending on staffing to support the many ideas in this plan to support the local agricultural industry can also result in more profitable farms and greater food security."

Strategy E.3.2. Undertake agri-tourism and marketing initiatives that can assist with outreach to Somerset County residents.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Ongoing, by SCADB supported by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development staff and Somerset County Tourism.

Discussion: This Preservation Plan's Chapter 8, Tourism, includes Strategy T.2.7 encouraging the development of a marketing program of consistent messaging and up-to-date, accurate information regarding local food opportunities in the county to both local audiences and visitors, including using events such as fairs and festivals to market the local farming community's products and benefits. A major new initiative for consideration in this regard, and in follow-up to the conference and exhibit, is creation of a booklet, map, website, or other "farm tour/local foods" guide product that would enable local consumers to find local foods, visit local farms, and understand their role in supporting the county's agricultural community.

Strategy E.3.3: Create a Somerset County farmland preservation forum.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Short-term and ongoing by the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board with assistance from the Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE), the Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District, the Somerset County Green Leadership Hub, the Somerset County Business Partnership (with Somerset County Tourism), and Healthier Somerset.

Discussion: A grant writer experienced in research may be able to pair this idea with existing governmental grant funding for marketing and farmer education[30] and community health initiatives related to food access.[31]

Because of the breadth of recommendations and the holistic approach needed to both bolster Somerset County agriculture and enhance farmland preservation, the county will convene its first forum in 2022 or 2023, with enough lead time for the planning and marketing this concept entails. Such a periodic event – going well above and beyond the traditional and well-regarded county fair and to be held after the farming season – has the potential over time not only to showcase agricultural preservation strategies, programs, and products, but also to attract non-farmer residents and perhaps even visitors from beyond the county. The primary focus for early forums, however, will be to encourage networking and collaboration among county-based organizations, agencies, and businesses.

To be organized by the SCADB as assisted by county staff, Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE), and the Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District, this gathering's design will include multiple actors involved in this plan's recommendations. The agenda

[30] For a starting point, see https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/farm-bill-programs-and-grants/.

[31] For a starting point, see http://thefoodtrust.org/centerforhealthyfoodaccess.

might include presentations and breakout groups with experts on topics ranging from preservation issues to enhancing farm profitability. The Somerset County Green Leadership Hub, with its focus on helping local government entities succeed in implementing sustainability best-management practices, including supporting local agriculture, and Healthier Somerset, with its concern for access to healthy affordable food, are excellent candidates to provide added coordination, presentations, and exhibits for the conference. Somerset County Tourism and the Somerset County Business Partnership can help to market this event and advise on shaping it into an economically impactful gathering.

Strategies for Public Outreach and Education to Support History and Historic Sites

Somerset County, like many New Jersey counties, has a longstanding Cultural & Heritage Commission (SCC&HC), which has fostered a robust set of local historic sites, encouraged capital investment in those sites, and provided broad service to the arts community. The combining of history and culture under one commission has also served the county well, leading to innovative partnerships that also have on occasion included open space and farmland programming.

The SCC&HC's approach for providing public outreach and education is founded on its strong, widespread existing programs. As tourism is also concerned with serving and expanding audiences that would enjoy the sites and programs supported by the SCC&HC, new initiatives focus on recommendations in Chapter 8, Tourism.

Strategy E.4.1. Continue a broad range of educational programs and events.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Ongoing, by SCC&HC supported by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development staff.

Discussion: The SCC&HC will continue to present (and publicize) periodic workshops, conferences, and roundtable sessions led by history and historic preservation professionals and encourage local-history organizations to do the same, through coordination, technical assistance, and grants. The SCC&HC's various programs for awards and recognition attract wide public interest and encourage the work of local history and arts leaders and will continue. Directories providing information to the public on accessing historic sites and history and preservation organizations, plus fine and performing arts organizations, will also remain a continuing form of public outreach. The SCC&HC will also continue its sponsorship of the annual Somerset County Teen Arts Festival and the countywide *Journey Through the Past* (described in detail in Chapter 8, Tourism).

The SCC&HC will additionally explore providing educational resources to local municipalities to highlight the benefits of incorporating historic preservation practices into municipal plans, regulations, and projects. This could include information on adaptive reuse of historic sites for bed and breakfast use.

As also noted in Chapter 8, Tourism, like parks, trails, and natural areas in Somerset County, a wide array of experiences of history and historic sites is available to the county's residents. Unlike outdoor recreation sites, however, where public access and learning opportunities are usually assumed and often built into the planning for a site from the beginning, access

for visitors is a key problem for historic sites. Most are operated by all-volunteer organizations and are not open with regular hours; they rely on making themselves "open by appointment," a barrier to greater access.

As discussed elsewhere in this Preservation Plan, Somerset County has a wealth of local volunteer groups that save buildings; preserve archives; tell stories; and present tours, events, and other programming. Its many publicly accessible historic sites could participate in a coordinated county-wide interpretive presentation by telling their own stories within a county-wide context. Most of the county's historic organizations have been in existence for many years and have considerable experience in the programs they offer. They range in size and capabilities. Most focus on narrow slices of the county's story and they have limited capacity in either visitor programming or promotion. The county-wide interpretive presentation envisioned here proposes a significantly increased level of coordination and collaboration among these sites.

In general, historic sites should pursue more interpretation. A key need is for the county and its leading partners to provide the interpretive context within which the stories of individual sites and communities fit. At present, individual sites may interpret an individual, a building, or objects with interesting stories. It is often difficult, however, for visitors to understand how these stories fit into the larger sweep of county and national history and why they are significant. Creating a county-wide interpretive presentation is dependent upon effective communication of the broad themes and storylines associated with the county's history, giving individual sites, exhibits, and presentations the context in which to continue to convey their own significance as fascinating illustrations and vignettes within the larger stories.

There are three steps to this process: (1) developing the county-wide themes and storylines and identifying regions where it is possible to create concentrations of sites and stories (perhaps ultimately to guide a county-side signage system); (2) determining how participating sites fit in and how they will relate their stories; and (3) creating a menu of exhibit types, publications, and online content for interpretation. Implementation of each of these steps can be undertaken in phases.

Themes and Storylines

Interpretive themes are the central concepts or ideas that are important about a place, subject, or resource and that give it meaning and significance. Themes help visitors connect individual stories with broader concepts and help them understand what they mean and why they matter. Themes are also used to provide linkage among the varied stories associated with different sites.

Themes need to be broad and comprehensive enough to represent the experience of the entire county, yet specific enough to provide context, focus, and meaning for many different individual stories. Every site and community within Somerset County should be able to identify with the county's themes. The stories of individual sites are used to illustrate the themes.

Storylines are a means of telling a regional story from site to site, consciously linking the individual stories of each site. For example, Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area has identified fourteen storylines that together tell the story of the Revolutionary War. Somerset County and its

Gladstone Train Station on New Jersey Transit's Gladstone Line is the original 1891 wooden building. It is listed in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

resources are associated with five of these storylines, including:

- **Retreat across the Jerseys:** The retreat of Washington's army from Fort Lee to Trenton, including the southern portions of Somerset County;
- **Road to Morristown:** The withdrawal of Washington's army up the Millstone River toward Morristown after the Battle of Princeton;
- **The Forage Wars:** Competition for forage in the winter and spring of 1777 between the British and American armies in the no-man's-land of the Raritan Valley in Somerset County;
- **Middlebrook and the Defense of New Jersey:** Role of the Middlebrook encampment and defensive line during the spring of 1777; and
- **Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route:** The march of American and French troops from Newport, Rhode Island to Yorktown, Virginia in the summer of 1781; multiple routes converged in Somerset County and are now part of a National Historic Trail designated by Congress and managed by the National Park Service.

Of these five storylines, The Forage Wars and Middlebrook and the Defense of New Jersey are most directly and exclusively related to Somerset County. It is recommended below that the county undertake the implementation of these two storylines in partnership with and with support from Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area. With the upcoming 250th anniversary commemoration of the founding of the United States in 2026, New Jersey is devoting additional funds to such interpretive initiatives, to be administered by the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, the coordinating entity for the national heritage area. Similarly, promotion and federal funding may become available through the American Battlefield Trust, which is the official

nonprofit partner of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission.[32]

With respect to themes, it is recommended that theme statements be developed for interpretation of distinct periods of the county's historical development, including:

- Somerset County's Natural History and Ecology;
- The Revolutionary War Landscape;
- The D&R Canal and Agricultural Landscapes;
- The Gladstone Line and Somerset Hills "Country Houses";
- Industry and the Railroads; and
- Suburban Somerset.

Several of these periods are discussed in the Somerset County Preservation Plan's Chapter 8, Tourism. Four periods are recommended as priorities (in no particular order, although the first two are the most richly developed already and as already noted there are major resources associated with commemorating the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution):

- Somerset County's Natural History and Ecology should be the focus of interpretation at county parks and such conservation sites as Duke Farms;
- The Revolutionary War Landscape should be the focus of the county's Revolutionary War historic sites using the Crossroads storylines The Forage Wars and Middlebrook and the Defense of New Jersey and also promoting the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail;
- The D&R Canal and Agricultural Landscapes should take advantage of the state park to focus on the story of the county's mid-nineteenth century agricultural landscape and history, of which the canal was a central feature; and
- The Gladstone Line and Somerset Hills "Country Houses" can package several attractive publicly open sites in the vicinity of the county's unique Gladstone line, and can emphasize the county's equestrian and golfing attractions in northern Somerset County.
- Additional themes to be explored include untold and inclusive histories and stories.

Strategy E.4.2. Foster greater collaboration on more multi-site events.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Ongoing, by SCC&HC and individual partners supported by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development staff and Somerset County Tourism as appropriate.

Discussion: Some organizations in the county already have significant experience in presenting multi-site programs that appeal to residents and attract visitors. The all-volunteer Heritage Trail Association offers occasional special tours and the once-a-year Five Generals Tour. The professionally staffed SCC&HC sponsors the county's premier historic-site event every fall, the county-wide ***Journey Through the Past***, which is widely known, well regarded, and very well attended. Its great success and the high demand for the Five Generals Tour are both indicators that

[32] https://www.battlefields.org/america-250

demand for more such experiences already exists. Chapter 8, Strategy T.312 recommends that the SCC&CH and its collaborators undertake a planning exercise to identify readily achievable expansions of selected current multi-site interpretive programs and events, or new ones, in order to enlarge collaboration among historical societies, historical museums and sites, and other partners celebrating Somerset County's heritage.

The recommendation is also to focus on the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in order to build readiness to respond to planning, funding, and programming opportunities from the New Jersey Historical Commission, the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, and the United States Semiquincentennial Commission. Longer range, Chapter 8, Strategy T.4.15 anticipates that ultimately the county would determine whether and when it would be opportune to undertake a tourism economic development plan to support interpretive, recreational, and agricultural sites and programs as well as historic sites and history programs – once momentum is established through the greater collaboration required to expand or develop new events as discussed here and through the wayfinding strategy described in the next strategy.

Strategy E.4.3. Begin a phased approach to a county-wide interpretive presentation organized around the concept of a "Cultural Heritage Trail."

Timeframe & Responsibility: Ongoing, by SCC&HC and individual partners supported by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development staff, Somerset County Business Partnership/Somerset County Tourism, SCADB, and the Park Commission as appropriate, seeking collaboration with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and other regional/statewide partners as appropriate.

Discussion: A program to expand available outdoor interpretation and weave it into a network or trail can welcome and inform spontaneous visitors without requiring that participating sites be open more frequently. Strategy T.3.6 in Chapter 8 recommends that the county design and implement a wayfinding strategy, using physical signage, digital applications, and delineation of county areas as "cultural heritage districts" with distinct identities to be explained to visitors and residents. This would also include creating an ambitious alternative transportation network of trails, building off the recommendations from the Walk, Bike, Hike Study, to enable pedestrian and non-motorized access to nodes of historical and cultural sites within each of the "cultural heritage districts" delineated under the wayfinding early action. Moreover, this planning should be complemented with an assessment of how designated marker sites relate to the themes and storylines developed for the county, which of these can be included in storyline tours, and whether additional interpretive exhibits at sites are desired and/or feasible.

This large idea can be implemented in phases but would require additional, dedicated funding (including more staff) and broad cooperation among the multiple partners listed in the Timeframe & Responsibility note above. A model for this program is the Indianapolis Cultural Heritage Trail, which is a mixed-media approach combining outdoor interpretive exhibits, a lively website and social media outreach, and extensive programming. The concept is further described in the Somerset County Preservation Plan's Chapter 8, Tourism (where a sidebar features a case study of the Indianapolis trail).

The purpose of the program is to provide the county with coordinated self-guided interpretive experiences it can promote on an ongoing basis to engage both residents and visitors. Sites that are interested and capable of coordinated self-guided interpretation should be recruited and organized to create the interpretive presentations. Media to support the Cultural Heritage Trail should include (1) a foldout county-wide map showing tour routes and sites; (2) individual foldout brochures for each individual theme or storyline; (3) a set of potential onsite exhibit formats that can be installed at participating sites for self-guided interpretation; and (4) website presentation to promote and provide information on the Cultural Heritage Trail (coordinated with the availability of an app as a second-phase step).

The centerpiece of the interpretive presentation should be a **county-wide exhibit program** managed by the SCC&HC and implemented in partnership with local sites. It is suggested that the program be designed and implemented under the guidance of an interpretive committee of professional and experienced interpreters recruited from visitor sites and programs within the county, such as the D&R Canal, Wallace House, Rockingham, Duke Farms, the Jacobus Vanderveer House, the Abraham Staats House, the Heritage Trail Association, and others.

On-site exhibit panels should use a common graphic format developed as part of the storyline program's graphic identity. Participating sites should collaborate with the SCC&HC 's interpretive committee in developing interpretive content that relates the site's individual story to the larger themes and storylines and other associated sites. The SCC&HC and its interpretive committee would be responsible for quality control. It is recommended that standard National Park Service exhibit carriers and panels be used in the exhibit program to simplify the design process, reduce costs, ensure consistency, and achieve a high-quality product.

Strategy E.4.4. Establish a community interpretive program in which interested local communities participate and are assisted in presenting self-guided interpretation of their sites and stories. Focus the program specifically on the county's developed centers, from large communities such as Somerville and Raritan to smaller villages such as Basking Ridge.

Timeframe & Responsibility: Ongoing, by SCC&HC and individual communities supported by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development staff and Somerset County Tourism as appropriate.

Discussion: A separate but related aspect of the county-wide Cultural Heritage Trail in Strategy E.4.3 should be the interpretation of individual communities. Any municipality or community within the county could participate, but the primary recommended focus is on communities where there is a density of historic buildings and sites where interpretation could be presented. The county's most developed communities could focus on the suggested storyline Industry and the Railroads. With the SCC&HC 's support and guidance, interested participating communities should outline the story they wish to present, identify the sites where coordinated stories can be told, and identify the media appropriate to each site. Interpreted sites within a community may be historic buildings through which a theme or story can be presented, parks and other public spaces, businesses located within historic buildings, historic neighborhoods, and others. Self-guided exhibits could be located along sidewalks within the public way.

The program should also promote "small doses" of history through creative interpretive materials,

displays, and exhibits in places that attract other audiences – places like shops, restaurants, offices, parks, streets, and entertainment venues – as part of community interpretation. Local businesses and organizations should be encouraged to tell the stories of their sites in as many ways as possible. Such storytelling helps engage audiences that are there for other reasons and helps promotes historic preservation to the general public.

Communities that wish to be marketed by the county as visitor destinations in support of local businesses and downtown revitalization should consider participation in the community interpretive program. Proposed presentations should meet the criteria and guidelines to established by the SCC&HC for consistency and quality control. Presentations should support historic preservation and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings in communities as part of their interpretation.

Strategy E.4.5. Prepare a county-wide interpretive plan that identifies how a county-wide interpretive presentation can be implemented over time using the Cultural Heritage Trail concept as a backbone.

Timeframe & Responsibility: SCC&HC and individual communities and organizations supported by Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development staff and Somerset County Tourism as appropriate. Timeframe: Given the considerable experience of the SCC&HC and the county's individual historic sites, the community interpretive presentation in Strategy E.4.4 could be implemented in phases without the initial preparation of a county-wide interpretive plan. This should particularly be the case for the Revolutionary War anniversary, which needs action sooner rather than later. Alternatively, it may be desirable to either begin with preparation of a county-wide interpretive plan or to prepare a county-wide plan after initial experimentation with the development of selected presentations.

Discussion: A county-wide interpretive plan might include the following components:

- Introduction: Outline the background and purpose of the plan.
- Themes and Storylines: Present the county's key themes and storylines as discussed above.
- Overview of Existing Interpretation: Describe sites that currently offer interpretive programming within the county. Prepare a brief summary characterizing current conditions and create a matrix listing (a) each existing interpretive site/attraction; (b) organization and contact information; (c) days and hours open to the public; (d) staffing summary – recognizing that many sites are volunteer-run; (e) available facilities; (f) theme(s) to which the sites relate; and (g) summary of programs offered. Organize the matrix by the capabilities of the sites, beginning with sites that have professional staff and are fully open to the public and ending with sites operated solely by volunteers and are open only by appointment.
- County-wide Interpretive Presentation (the "Cultural Heritage Trail"): Outline how county-wide themes and storylines can be presented to residents and visitors as discussed above with respect to the cultural heritage trail concept. Consult with partners and determine how best to phase

coordinated interpretation. Determine how visitors will be oriented to the presentation.

- Interpretation at Sites: Working with the sites, determine how individual interpretive sites should participate in the county-wide presentation. Based upon the matrix prepared above, identify the key storylines that sites are capable of presenting. Determine how sites can work together to tailor their interpretation as part of a broader storyline for presentation to residents and visitors. Determine which storylines are visitor-ready and which have gaps and will need further development. Consider what support can be provided to assist sites in their presentations.
- Community Interpretation: Working with communities, determine how they can be encouraged to prepare their own interpretive plans and tell their own stories in coordination with the county-wide plan. Identify the themes and storylines associated with individual communities. Determine how phased interpretation can be implemented in participating communities.
- Implementation: Prioritize the ideas and actions outlined above. Begin with those that are fundable and most likely to achieve momentum and results. Identify resources to support coordinated implementation over time.

G. Conclusion to Outreach & Education Planning

This chapter has taken a careful look at existing public outreach, educational, and interpretive programs, and sketched ways to examine opportunities holistically, both within the individual efforts to support open space, farms and farmland, and history and historic sites, and also across these planning topics. It concludes that existing programs are robust and commendable, but there are opportunities to enhance them. As always, such enhancements will require adequate staffing, investment, and collaboration among stakeholders – not simply by the Board of County Commissioners, Park Commission, SCADB, and SCC&HC, but also operators of other natural sites, farm owners, and local-history organizations. Building a knowledgeable and enthusiastic constituency, however, is well worth the effort, for such outreach and education can result in greater public goodwill and support for Somerset County's preservation objectives.

Chapter 8. Gaining Tourism Benefits from Somerset County's Preserved Assets

The primary activities addressed by this Somerset County Preservation Plan – open space preservation, farmland preservation, and historic preservation – provide value to the county's residents in many ways, including building the county's potential for tourism.

Over many years, Somerset County has invested considerably in its heritage assets as public goods – defined for the purposes of this plan as parks, trails, recreational opportunities, and open space; agriculture and farmland; and historic and cultural resources. This investment has come in the form of not only public support managed by the Board of County Commissioners, the municipal governments of Somerset County, and the State of New Jersey, but also extensive efforts of nonprofit organizations, private property owners, both individual and corporate. This chapter identifies strategies for capitalizing on this investment and supporting Somerset County's economic development through tourism.

A. Introduction

The magnitude of the undertaking of the leaders and citizens in Somerset County and its municipalities to develop and maintain a highly desirable quality of life is considerable. Voters' support for these activities through the county's Preservation Trust Fund has remained high through repeated authorizations to support them. Moreover, of the county's 21 municipalities, eleven have also created trust funds.[33]

Thus, this chapter endeavors to maximize such investment by addressing three topics at the same time that are often considered separately: agritourism, ecotourism (including outdoor recreation), and cultural heritage tourism, as defined and discussed further in their own sections below. It is not, however, a fully developed plan for Somerset County tourism. As a planning document, this chapter identifies gaps and opportunities and identifies needs and potential programs that sites and businesses that could benefit from engaging in tourism find difficult to tackle individually. It suggests ways that collaboration among these sites might help to capitalize on their existing programs and build more audiences and local support. Possible next steps are presented at the end of this chapter. Overall, this chapter is designed to inspire the many leaders, organizations, and businesses with a stake in

[33] Bedminster, Bernards, Bernardsville, Branchburg, Franklin, Green Brook, Hillsborough, Montgomery, Peapack-Gladstone, Warren, and Watchung.

improved tourism to begin the process of building an organized effort to lead the county's tourism to the next level of productivity and investment.

There is considerable overlap between the thinking in the preceding chapter on education and public outreach and the approaches considered here. Both of these chapters acknowledge the importance of building audiences and cultivating local supporters. Chapter 7, however, focuses on messages, interpretation, and programming; this chapter suggests opportunities for branding, marketing, advertising, promotion, and collaboration.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the economic benefits of tourism, answering the question "why invest in, why promote tourism?" After sketching the leadership structure involved in Somerset County tourism, it then reviews the status of tourism as it applies to agriculture, open space and recreation, and cultural heritage. Finally, it recommends strategies for action to improve conditions for tourism, including enlisting collaboration among local tourism stakeholders to consider the needs of the entire system.

B. Tourism Leadership in Somerset County

This chapter builds on the efforts of the Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP), which is responsible for tourism marketing on behalf of the county through its division Somerset County Tourism, working with its Tourism Council, which meets bimonthly. In 2018, the SCBP published its most recent of a continuing series of analyses of the county's tourism industry. That document, *Tourism's Economics Impact on Somerset County, May 2018*, summarizes 2017 data, the most recent available, and states, "Without tourism, each household in Somerset County would have to contribute an additional $1,211 annually to maintain the current level of government services." The report further states, "The tourism sector sustains 6.1% of all private sector jobs and 3.3% of all private sector income in Somerset County."[34]

An important long-term guiding document for both the SCBP and the county is the county's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), *Investment Somerset: A Collaborative Blueprint for Growth*, completed in 2014. A fulfillment of a grant from United States Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (USEDA), the report:

- Provides a demographic and socio-economic snapshot;
- Defines the vision and goals of the community;
- Identifies issue areas and opportunities for sustainable, effective change;
- Prioritizes strategies to accomplish goals, and identifies projects and steps for implementation; and
- Provides for evaluation and updates.

For tourism, the CEDS states (p. 62):

> Although tourism is an industry that has been valued at well over a billion dollars in Somerset County for years [35], tourism assets have traditionally been under-valued.

[34] https://www.scbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2017-SC-Tourism-Economic-Impact-Study.pdf, pp. 4 and 6.

[35] $1.2 billion in the most recent year for which data are available; see preceding citation.

Recently, the County implemented efforts to leverage tourism-related assets that include hotels and motels … significant catering facilities, historic sites, extensive parks and recreation facilities (including the County Parks system and Duke Farms), and major annual events, such as the Tour of Somerville Bicycle Race and the Far Hills Race Meeting. The County is fortunate to be home to the US Golf Association and the US Equestrian Team. These assets, as well as historical features dating back to colonial times, present opportunities to increase tourism-related eco-nomic activity in the region.

From August through November, birders from all over the northeastern United States observe thousands of hawks, falcons, and eagles flying overhead, sometimes just over the treetops, at the Hawk Watch Area in Somerset County's Washington Valley Park. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

CEDS goals and objectives are:

- Deploy resources necessary to manage attendance and visitation to high attendance events, thus reducing community road and highway impacts.
- Implement targeted tourism promotional activities to leverage local hospitality industry assets and to increase regional economic activity.

The report includes tourism among its nine focus areas, although it recognized a consensus among participants "that economic development implementation activities of the organization would focus on Business Resources, the Re-use of Significant Properties, and Reducing the Regulatory Burden." (p. 8) The CEDS also includes "agriculture development" among its nine focus areas (as also discussed in the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan that is a part of this Preservation Plan) and calls for efforts to "enhance agri-tourism business opportunities for preserved farms to help ensure long-term use of these properties consistent with public investment."

C. The Economic Benefits of Tourism

A community with amenities attractive to visitors is often more attractive to new residents and many other kinds of new businesses searching for a high quality of life for their owners, executives, and workers. Thus, tourism supports other economic development strategies.

For existing residents, visitors' dollars often stimulate delivery of amenities and a level of creativity their own dollars cannot support alone, from white-tablecloth dining and art galleries to parks and trails. For a place like Somerset County, which already supports many amenities on its own, tourism is a

natural extension of the County's economic development strategy to maximize existing investments as recognized in Somerset County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy described above.

Every dollar invested in tourism is a dollar that can benefit the community over the long term – tourism assets cannot move to other economies in search of minimizing labor costs, for example. And while service industry sectors like tourism provide many jobs that may not support a one-earner family, tourism jobs can offer interesting opportunities and flexible arrangements for such workers as students, first-time workers, parents of small children, and retirees.

Moreover, consider that tourism is among the world's largest industries comprising small, family-owned or independent businesses. A large proportion of those engaged in the small businesses that make up the majority of the businesses in tourism (subtracting industry giants like airlines and cruise lines) are self-employed owners, creative entrepreneurs, and community-based franchisees. They are more likely to be passionate about their communities, as well as community leaders, even though the demands of running tourism businesses are considerable. Even for low-wage workers in this industry, it is a relatively easy industry to enter and a natural incubator for new entrepreneurs – once hired, workers learn valuable lessons about customer service, business management, and community relations. Moreover, while tourism is often more vulnerable to the ups and downs of the economy, tourism adds diversity and thus resilience to a community's economic mix.

In sum, while tourism may be a small proportion of the mix of economic ingredients that includes such sectors as manufacturing, construction, finance, education, medicine, and government, it can make an out-sized difference in the quality of life and economic diversity in the community.

Equally important, in Somerset County the nonprofit and governmental attractions that provide the experiences that heritage travelers seek are an important means to stimulate greater visitation in the recreation and leisure sectors, which are smaller than the business travel sector in the county. Somerset County's focus on preservation of agricultural, natural, and cultural heritage assets reinforces growth in recreation and leisure travel. Growing the audiences for these attractions boosts the tourism traffic that will ultimately lead to community economic returns from public and private tourism investment.

New Jersey Tourism Status

Tourism of any kind encompasses a wide variety of economic activities in any given economy. While this chapter focuses on tourism based on Somerset County's agricultural, open space, and cultural heritage assets, it is worth starting with tourism's economic benefits overall. Tourism is big business in any economy, even in New Jersey's high-value economy where, unusually, tourism is not the first, second, or third-ranked economic activity as is the case in most economies world-wide. Tourism is typically defined, as it is in New Jersey, to include both leisure and business travel, both domestic and international, and both day and overnight visits. In New Jersey, thanks in large measure to its many beaches, leisure spending makes up more than 90 percent of all visitor spending.

In its report on the impact of tourism in 2019 in New Jersey, the consulting firm Tourism Economics provides this overview of the state's economic benefits from tourism:

Peony's Envy is a nursery and catalog seller in Bernardsville offering a seven-acre garden that displays one of the most extensive collections of peonies in the Northeast. It is open to visitors during the spring bloom season and again in the fall for bare root sales. (Photo courtesy Peony's Envy, http://peonysenvy.com/about.html)

Our analysis of tourism's impact on New Jersey begins with actual spending by visitors, but also considers the downstream effects of this injection of spending into the local economy. To determine the total economic impact of tourism in New Jersey, we input visitor spending into a model [....to calculate] three distinct types of impact: direct, indirect, and induced.

1. **Direct Impacts:** Visitors create direct economic value within a discreet group of sectors (e.g., recreation, transportation). This supports a relative proportion of jobs, wages, taxes, and GDP within each sector.
2. **Indirect Impacts:** Each directly affected sector also purchases goods and services as inputs (e.g., food wholesalers, utilities) into production. These impacts are called indirect impacts.
3. **Induced Impacts:** Lastly, the induced impact is generated when employees whose wages are generated either directly or indirectly by visitors, spend those wages in the local economy.[36]

[36] *Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey, 2019*, published first quarter 2020, p. 20; https://www.visitnj.org/sites/default/files/2019-nj-economic-impact.pdf.

The impacts on business sales, jobs, wages, and taxes are calculated for all three impacts in the annual review of tourism's economic impacts conducted under the leadership of the Division of Travel and Tourism in New Jersey's Department of State (VisitNJ).[37] Following are a few choice facts from the 2017 report, on statewide benefits, indicating that tourism is big business indeed in New Jersey:

- **Jobs and economic power:** Visitor spending in New Jersey supported 342,937 jobs and nearly $20 billion in state GDP in 2019, accounting for 3.0% of total New Jersey GDP.[38] Employment directly supported by visitor spending increased by 9,000 jobs – the largest increase this decade. Tourism supported a total of 540,501 jobs when indirect and induced impacts are considered. This represents 9.6% of all jobs in the state – or nearly one out of every ten jobs in New Jersey.
- **Dollars:** In 2019, 116.2 million visitors spent $46.4 billion in New Jersey. Visitor spending increased 3.8% – 2019's visitor spending growth marks ten straight years of growth.
- **Visitors:** New Jersey welcomed 116.2 million visitors to the Garden State in 2019. Visitation grew by 4.9% in 2019 – an increase of 5.4 million person-trips over 2018. Visitation has increased by 50 million person-trips over the past decade, an increase of 75% during this economic expansion.
- **Taxes:** Visitors generated $5.1 billion in state and local taxes, which is equivalent to $1,580 in tax savings for every household in New Jersey. (*Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey, 2019*, pp. 4, 8, 21, 30)

Somerset County Tourism Status

Somerset County has been among the significant beneficiaries of tourism across the state, even though it is not among New Jersey's shore counties, where leisure spending is traditionally high. The county has seen a rise in visitation from 2.8 million in 2015 to 3 million in 2019, and a rise in visitor spending from more than $1.1 billion in 2015 to $1.26 billion in 2019. (*Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey, 2019*, pp. 44-45)

In 2019, Somerset County collected $173.8 million in state and local tax receipts related to tourism, about 3.4 percent of the total collected by the state's 21 counties, tying for 10th; peer counties were Union and Burlington (both 3.7 percent) and Mercer (3.4 percent). (*Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey, 2019*, p. 50) In 2017, Somerset County reported that tourism contributed $1,211 in taxes per household.[39]

Somerset County's tourism employment in 2018 was 11,360 jobs directly attributable to tourism, 4.4 percent of the state's total nongovernmental employment that year. Counties that had similar

[37] https://www.visitnj.org/

[38] "Tourism GDP is the value added of those sectors directly interacting with visitors. The narrow definition of the tourism industry counts only tourism consumption, which excludes capital investment and general government support of tourism. This definition is consistent with economic accounts." (*Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey, 2019*, p. 21)

[39] https://www.scbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2017-SC-Tourism-Economic-Impact-Study.pdf, p. 4.

direct employment were Mercer (13,362) and Camden (9,473). When the total impact of tourism on employment (including indirect and induced – that is, the cascading effects when employment causes further employment) is considered, Somerset can claim 20,869 jobs related to tourism (8 percent of the state's total). Peer counties in total tourism impact on employment are Mercer (8 percent) and Union (7.4 percent). (*Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey, 2019*, p. 49)

As of the state's 2019 figures, Somerset County ranks 13th in the state in terms of visitors' overall direct spending. The county is 10th in lodging, 13th in recreation; 13th in food/beverage; and 18th in retail and transport. (*Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey, 2019*, p. 47)

Readers interested in more details about how Somerset County compares to other counties and its general performance in tourism are urged to refer to the Somerset County Business Partnership's comprehensive report in 2014 on the economic impact of tourism in the county, discussed below, as well as its most recent report using 2017 figures, cited here. New Jersey's annual tourism report provides comparative information about counties' performance in visitor spending, tourism employment, and tax collection.

D. Defining Tourism that Supports Somerset County's Preservation Achievements

Tourism as a whole breaks down into different kinds of markets. Business travel is quite different from the specific sector of leisure tourism to which this chapter is devoted, technically known as cultural heritage tourism. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has defined cultural heritage tourism as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present."[40] Cultural heritage travelers enjoy cultural, historic, scenic, and natural resources, recreation, agriculture, and the arts.

Enhancing Somerset County's capacity for promoting and developing cultural heritage tourism is a strategy that can have real economic impacts.

Washington Rock Park in Green Brook Township is managed by the Somerset County Park Commission by agreement with the State of New Jersey, which owns this spectacular site. It features a scenic overlook used by General George Washington in 1777 to monitor the Continental Army. The modern rock work is from the early 20th century. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

[40] http://culturalheritagetourism.org/what-is-heritage-tourism/

The cultural heritage traveler is among the most desirable of tourism markets today, tending to stay longer and spend more per party. This market was identified more than two decades ago, when studies began under the leadership of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Trust had recognized cultural heritage tourism as an important economic opportunity for communities engaging in historic preservation and Main Street revitalization. According to Mandala Research, LLC, a long-time collector of data on the cultural heritage tourism market, in 2013 the cultural and heritage traveler was "the most productive travel segment of the travel industry, generating over 90% of the economic benefit of all U.S. leisure travelers." In one notable statistic, Mandala found that 65 percent of these travelers say they seek experiences where the "destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their historic character."[41]

Cultural heritage travelers want to experience authentic places. They are more likely to be willing to travel to remote or little-known places. Even these intrepid travelers, however, need assurance that there will be enough to see and do, of enough variety, to make their trip worth their while. Moreover, they want a complete experience, expect high quality, and like to linger in the restaurants and other places where residents tend to gather. They want to learn about a place and combine their visits to interpretive sites with recreation in nearby natural areas, especially trails, and interesting dining and shopping opportunities in historic commercial areas.

E. State and Regional Tourism Context

New Jersey Tourism

As introduced above, the leading governmental agency in tourism statewide is VisitNJ, the marketing name for the Division of Travel and Tourism in New Jersey's Department of State. A variety of statewide nonprofit tourism industry support groups also exist to advocate for their elements of the tourism sector (e.g., casinos, lodging, etc.).

Spending state funding for marketing is a key activity of VisitNJ, both directly and through cooperative marketing grants with local marketing entities. As explained by *New Jersey Business* in 2016, VisitNJ's primary source of funding is a hotel/motel occupancy tax collected statewide (6.625% in 2018[42]):

> The industry is self-funded through the hotel/motel occupancy tax. A portion of the money raised goes toward tourism (at least $9 million), the New Jersey State Council on the Arts ($16 million), the state's Historical Commission ($2.7 million), and The Cultural Trust ($500,000). If the Legislature and governor, through the annual budget process, diverts the occupancy tax money below the "poison pill"

[41] http://mandalaresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/press-release-2013-cultural-and-heritage-traveler-study.pdf; and Mandala Research, LLC. The Cultural and Heritage Traveler, 2013 Edition. Free summary at http://mandalaresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/free_download_CH_2013.pdf.

[42] Some municipalities add a local-option occupancy tax to support their local marketing and destination management activities, up to 3 percent on lodging subject to the state sales tax; counties currently are not allowed to impose a hotel/motel occupancy tax. The tax is charged at a lower rate for certain Jersey Shore destinations that had already established a tax before the statewide tax was created. https://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/hotelmotel.shtml

> levels for other budget purposes, the tax will no longer be paid or collected.[43]

The guaranteed tourism funding was established in 2003, and it was anticipated at the time that the fixed dollar amount was the "floor" of funding that should have risen over time. Unfortunately, even as the revenues from this tax have risen with the increasing number and cost of rooms taxed, the state has long insured only that the fixed dollar amount goes to the intended recipients – just enough to avoid the "poison pill" rule and keep the tax in place. Professor Tyrell, writing in his 2014 report for the Somerset County Business Development Partnership on tourism's economic impacts in the county, comments that

> While all of New Jersey's Destination Marketing Organizations have collectively and individually helped to raise the profile of New Jersey as a tourism destination, the funding for tourism in New Jersey still has a long way to go to be considered both sufficient and stable. The $1.5 million of the state hotel tax that funded regional DMOs equates to only a 1.6% reinvestment of $92 million in total occupancy tax. By contrast, in Destination Marketing Association International's 2011 national survey an average of 55% of room tax (hotel/motel occupancy tax) is dedicated to DMO funding. Further to this, the 1.6% does not even consider the additional roughly $50 million that visitors were charged on a hotel stay in 2014, revenue that remains with the local municipality.[44]

Until 2020, the tourism industry (as well as the arts and cultural organizations also served by this tax) had not been able to advocate successfully for a fair increase. New Jersey's 2020 budget included a small increase and the budget proposed for 2021 beginning in July has an additional increase.

New Jersey's Support for Agritourism

For agritourism, in addition to VisitNJ's promotion of agritourism, at the state level the New Jersey Department of Agriculture is working to support to farmers seeking to engage in agritourism:

> With farmers facing rising costs and stagnant commodity prices, agritourism offers an important opportunity to generate additional farm income and keep farms economically viable. To assist in the development of the agritourism industry, the Department will be focusing on three major objectives: developing strategic partnerships, consumer promotion and industry education.[45]

The department also offers considerable support for promotion of local foods. With Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, and the New Jersey Farms Direct Marketing Association, the department support-ed creation of the website www.visitnjfarms.org where farmers can post their operations and what goods and activities are available at the farms. Furthermore, it has developed a popular brand, Jersey Fresh

[43] Anthony Birritteri, "NJ Tourism Brings in Record Dollars," New Jersey Business, https://njbmagazine.com/monthly-articles/nj-tourism-brings-record-dollars/.
[44] Brian J. Tyrrell, The Economic Impact of Tourism in Somerset County New Jersey: 2014 Results, published by the Somerset County Business Development Partnership, 2014, https://visitsomersetnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Full-Study-Low-Res.pdf, p. 3.
[45] https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/

(https://findjerseyfresh.com/), and also Jersey Grown (for nurseries, gardens, and arboretums; https://www.jerseygrown.nj.gov/). For more information see the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, Section 5.9, Agricultural Economic Development.

New Jersey's Support for Ecotourism

For open space recreation and ecotourism, which are well-developed tourism activities and robustly promoted to the traveling public, VisitNJ is a primary marketing outlet. There are also many other websites and promotional organizations focused on particular activities (e.g., hiking, biking, birding, equestrian, etc.).

Guiding New Jersey's Heritage Tourism Program

For cultural heritage tourism, in addition to marketing by VisitNJ, the New Jersey Historic Trust was responsible for publication in 2010 of a cultural heritage tourism development plan and in 2013 for a report on the tourism impacts of cultural heritage tourism. The 2013 report states:

> Detailed analysis – including a survey of heritage attractions in New Jersey, a survey of visitors to the state, and government industry statistics – indicates that heritage tourism generated nearly 11 million visits in 2012, resulting in $2.8 billion in visitor spending. The $2.8 billion in visitor spending resulted in direct GDP impacts of $1.3 billion. This direct GDP impact generates additional economic impacts as spending ripples through the state economy....Heritage tourism generated a total statewide economic impact of $2.6 billion in 2012, representing nearly 8% of the GDP impact of the entire New Jersey tourism industry. Heritage tourism's GDP impact of $2.6 billion included $1.5 billion in labor income, supporting nearly 38,000 total jobs.[46]

In 2010, a task force convened by the New Jersey Historic Trust issued a heritage tourism master plan, "Linking Our Legacy to a New Vision," to "help New Jersey become a competitive and successful heritage tourism destination." (p. 38) The plan described the mission of heritage tourism in New Jersey:

> New Jersey's heritage sites and places provide quality educational programming, activities and experiences that attract residents and visitors of all ages to spend time and money in the state. In partnership with the tourism industry, government agencies, civic groups and the private sector, heritage sites offer compelling experiences that tell the stories of New Jersey's past, demonstrate the relevance and importance of the state's heritage today, and provide a foundation for future generations.[47]

The plan's vision for heritage tourism in New Jersey states:

> Tourism is essential to the economic well-being of New Jersey as travelers and

[46] Tourism Economics, *The Economic & Fiscal Impacts of Heritage Tourism in New Jersey,* 2013 (2012 data), p. 3 (footnote and figure omitted). Retrieved from https://www.njht.org/dca/njht/touring/NJHT%20-%20TE%20Oxford%20report%2007-12-2013.pdf

[47] *Linking Our Legacy to a New Vision: A Heritage Tourism Plan for New Jersey,* by New Jersey Heritage Tourism Task Force. New Jersey Historic Trust, June 2010, p. 19. Retrieved from https://www.njht.org/dca/njht/touring/NJ%20Heritage%20Tourism%20Master%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%206-4-10.pdf

residents visit heritage sites and towns to enjoy authentic, valued, and engaging experiences, that:

- Enhance the image of New Jersey as a desirable destination with a rich history that played a vital role in our nation's growth,
- Improve the state's economy through visitor spending, and
- Contribute to the stewardship and sustainability of New Jersey's unique historic, cultural and natural assets.[48]

The plan also provides a statement of principles, which are tailored to New Jersey from the basic principles established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in its earliest research on heritage tourism, which have stood the test of time:

Collaborate: Partnerships are an essential part of every successful heritage tourism plan. Partners must set aside individual agendas, seek shared goals and work together toward a common purpose. The elements in this plan should be implemented as a cohesive whole, not as separate components carried out by individuals or individual organizations. Partnerships will begin with the New Jersey Inter-agency Heritage Tourism Council, which represents state agencies and nonprofit cultural and heritage organizations. The Council will reach out to partners across the state, including New Jersey's 566 municipalities. County governments will be engaged through the Cultural and Heritage Offices or other agencies involved in cultural heritage preservation and tourism promotion. Other key partners include the state's 19 Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), Main Street offices and chambers of commerce. In addition to government and nonprofit agencies, the partnership of private businesses will be sought to invest in heritage tourism through business development and financial support of heritage destinations with sponsorships and grants.

Make Sites Come Alive: Heritage sites and cultural destinations understand the responsibility of hosting visitors and meet these expectations with exceptional hospitality and engaging delivery of meaningful experiences.

Find the Fit Between Your Community and Tourism: Sharing New Jersey's heritage with visitors can increase community pride and provide an economic stimulus for local townships. However, communities must balance the benefits of tourism with the impact on local residents and resources:

- Understand carrying capacity for heritage sites and towns so that visitation does not negatively impact resources or infrastructure.
- Identify and protect "sacred places" that are off-limits to visitors.
- Evaluate and communicate the benefit of heritage tourism so that residents appreciate and welcome visitors.
- Collaborate with local partners to ensure heritage tourism is valued

[48] Ibid.

as an important economic development strategy.

Focus on Authenticity and Quality: New Jersey's heritage will be interpreted and marketed authentically and accurately to attract visitors through high quality experiences, encouraging year-round and repeat visits. The New Jersey Historic Trust's 20-year record of requiring heritage sites that receive grants to meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for restoration of historic properties sets an example that can be followed by all historic site preservation projects.

Preserve and Protect Irreplaceable Resources: Managers of heritage sites and places recognize the importance of preserving and protecting the state's significant, authentic assets. With the support of residents, visitors, government, civic groups and private business, heritage site managers can enact pro-active stewardship policies so that sites may be experienced by future generations. New Jersey's heritage will be commemorated, celebrated, and showcased so that residents recognize and appreciate the state's important legacy to the nation and future generations.[49]

Regional Approaches to Tourism Affecting Somerset County

For tourism purposes, Somerset County is a part of at least three major regions according to various strategies for breaking down the state in order to focus marketing, resources, and policies (Figure 8.A, opposite page).

First, the county is considered part of the Skylands tourism region by VisitNJ, which in addition to enjoying promotion on the state site also has its own website.[50] Second, Somerset is part of "North Jersey," best represented by Together North Jersey, a consortium of many regionally oriented entities and county representatives which in June 2015 produced a "Regional Plan for Sustainable Development," including tourism and the arts, under a U.S. Economic Development Administration grant for a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).[51]

And finally, Somerset County is among nine entire counties served by the 14-county Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, designated by Congress in 2006.[52] The region under this program spans northern New Jersey from Fort Lee overlooking New York City in the vicinity of the George Washington Bridge to a redoubt opposite Philadelphia. It is designed to support the many partner sites and organizations in that region that are concerned with the history of the American Revolution, and is more a tourism planning and development program than one established simply for tourism marketing and promotion. Crossroads is currently spearheading planning for the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution beginning in 2026, supporting the New Jersey Historical Commission under state legislation passed in 2019, a program further described in the Historic Preservation Plan, Sections 6.4 and 6.6.

[49] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[50] http://www.njskylands.com/index.

[51] https://togethernorthjersey.com/ceds/

[52] https://revolutionarynj.org/

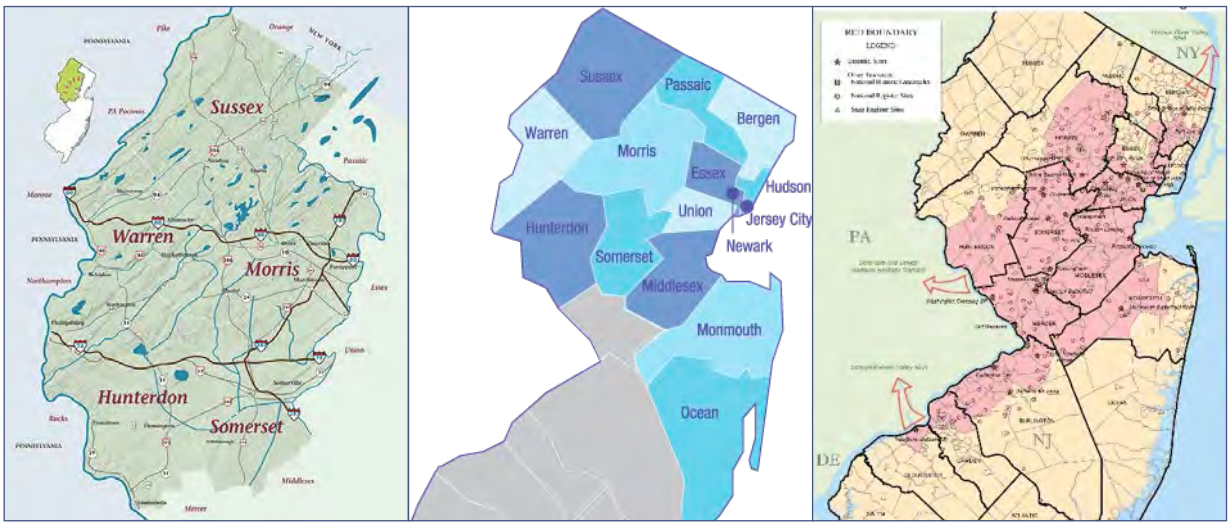


Figure 8.A. Somerset County shares regional approaches through at least three different programs affecting tourism marketing. From left: The New Jersey Skylands Region, map of major towns and roadways (http://www.njskylands.com/maps/map1); counties in the North Jersey region, from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (http://www.njtpa.org/About-NJTPA/Who-We-Are/Subregions.aspx); and counties and sites in the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area (official map from the National Park Service feasibility study, 2002).

F. Somerset County Tourism Context

The Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP), a 501(c)(3) chamber of commerce organization, sponsors Somerset County Tourism, which operates the county's tourism programs, including its principal tourism website, https://visitsomersetnj.org, with support from the Board of Commissioners. Such organizations as Somerset County Tourism are designated as Destination Marketing Organizations in New Jersey, or "DMOs." Somerset's DMO is responsible for marketing to and answering inquiries from potential visitors; managing and promoting a county calendar of events; and developing other ideas to serve the traveling public, such as special events and itineraries focused on particular topics. As described earlier in this chapter, the SCBP also supports tourism through the county CEDS.

Somerset County Tourism also works with the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board (SCADB), the Somerset County Park Commission, and the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission (SCC&HC).

Funding for marketing by Somerset County's DMO comes from a competitive state grant program managed by VisitNJ, a total of $1.4 million dedicated from the $9 million guaranteed to the state from the statewide hotel/motel occupancy tax. In 2020, the SCBP received a three-year grant award of $128,000; the required 25 percent match ($32,000) was provided by the Board of County Commissioners. This represents all funding devoted to marketing the county to travelers, primarily through web and social media, with an annual printed destination guide plus a monthly digital newsletter to tourism industry businesses based in Somerset County. The SCBP contributes staff and overhead on top of the marketing budget.

The considerable economic returns through tourism described above are achieved by a quite modest level

of county and SCBP investment, suggesting it should be possible to leverage even more returns through a boost in marketing. It is a truism in the tourism industry that marketing is critical – states such as Pennsylvania and Florida, which cut their tourism marketing in the aftermath of the 2008 recession, offer recent experience in seeing visitation numbers drop in direct proportion to the drop in their marketing expenditures.

Tyrell, writing in his 2014 report for the SCBP on tourism's economic impacts in the county, makes the particular point that New Jersey's miserly sharing of its statewide occupancy tax requires Somerset County to step up its efforts, without specifying exactly how:

> For Somerset County Tourism to continue to thrive in its efforts at attracting tourism, it should not be struggling to find resources on an annual basis. For that, a strong stable source of funding should fervently be pursued. While the struggles faced in local, regional, and statewide budgets over the past few years are clearly evident, tourism provides an opportunity to help relieve municipal budgets through the development of jobs, income and taxable expenditures. An investment in the long-term future of Somerset County Tourism such that the advances of the past several years that this report revealed can continue.[53]

G. Somerset County's Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism

Somerset County's highly varied terrain, geology, and natural habitats offer much of interest to discerning eco-tourists and visitors simply seeking outdoor recreation – whether hiking, biking, paddling, riding, birding, or simply enjoying the great outdoors through picnicking, photography, or a family outing. The county is acknowledged as a leader in New Jersey in terms of the size and scope of its county park system, supplemented by an enviable array of municipally maintained parks supporting local recreation and sports, plus natural sites maintained by nonprofits. There are many other outdoor recreation sites in the county together with "superb equestrian centers and country clubs [and] highly rated and popular golf courses," both public and private.[54]

The Open Space Preservation Plan, part of this overall Somerset County Preservation Plan, provides details on the many parks, facilities, natural areas, and trails managed by the Somerset County Park Commission [55] , municipalities, and nonprofit organizations. In addition, one of the largest (and longest) state parks in New Jersey traverses much of Somerset County north-south, the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, together with Six Mile Run Reservoir Site to the east in Franklin Township with additional miles of trails (and also listed in 1995 in the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places as the state's largest rural historic district).[56] The D&R Canal's towpath and its parallel companion

[53] Tyrell, *op. cit*, p. 23.

[54] https://visitsomersetnj.org/play/parks-and-recreation/

[55] http://www.somersetcountyparks.org/parksFacilities/ParksFacilities.html

[56] https://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/drcanal.html; and https://www.dandrcanal.com/about-d-r-canal-state-park/points-of-interest/six-mile-run; and National Register nomination, https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/efded016-ca92-4bf0-af70-f1c44359b74f.

A mown trail at Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary. (Photo by Chris Neff, courtesy NJ Audubon Society)

route, the Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway[57], are among the most popular off-road and on-road bicycling destinations in the state.

Nonprofit Outdoor Reserves

In addition to the many parks maintained by the Somerset County Park Commission and municipal recreation and parks agencies through the county, the county is home to three sites maintained by nonprofit organizations where residents and visitors can enjoy a wide variety of outdoor pursuits:

- Duke Farms (Hillsborough), .which consists of a thousand acres devoted to "an ongoing exploration – of native species, preservation and sustainability efforts, and of the area's natural beauty"[58];
- Fairview Farm Wildlife Preserve (Bedminster), a 170-acre former dairy farm that is home to Raritan Headwaters Association and a "living classroom"[59]; and
- Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary (Bernardsville), 276 acres of woodland, field, and floodplain habitats and site of New Jersey Audubon's Hoffman Center for Conservation and Environmental Education.[60]

Birding in Somerset County

Somerset County's surprising diversity of birdlife surpasses many larger areas with its expanse of parks, open green spaces, and wide variety of distinct habitats. Located in the Piedmont Plains Region of the state, the county is home to three Important Bird

[57] http://www.millstonevalley.org/
[58] https://www.dukefarms.org/
[59] https://www.raritanheadwaters.org/preserves-map-page/fairview-farm/
[60] https://njaudubon.org/centers/scherman-hoffman-wildlife-sanctuary/

& Birding Areas (IBBA)[61] with locations that provide essential habitat for a variety of bird species and contribute to the long-term viability of native avian populations in New Jersey:

- Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park;
- Duke Farms; and
- The Sourland Mountain Region, central to which is the county's Sourland Mountain Preserve.

Additionally, Somerset County is home to New Jersey Audubon's Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary (described above). Another birding favorite, especially in fall, is Somerset County's Hawk Watch Area platform located in Washington Valley Park.

Other Recreational Resources in Somerset County

The county also offers a unique botanical and rock garden regarded as a premier East Coast destination, the Leonard J. Buck Garden maintained by the Somerset County Park Commission[62]; two arboretums, Wagner Farm (a Warren Township property)[63] and Hutcheson Memorial Forest, which includes one of New Jersey's three remaining old-growth forests (a Rutgers University property and a National Natural Landmark)[64]; a county-operated environmental center at Lord Stirling Park[65] (and another environmental center at the Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary described above); and the Sourland Mountain Preserve, a county park preserving a unique natural and geological area.[66]

Moreover, Franklin Township features two native grassland preserves providing habitat for meadow birds and butterflies, the Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve and the John Clyde Memorial Native Grassland Preserve.[67] The Raritan River (North and South Branches and the main stem) offers water trails[68] and a focus for driving tours linking multiple sites and sights.[69]

While this chapter focuses on outdoor recreation, the county offers many other recreational opportunities. In additional to the parks and facilities described in the Open Space Preservation Plan that is a part of this Somerset County Preservation Plan, there are nine private golf courses, clubs, or centers; two YMCAs; six sports complexes or centers or fitness centers (including a tennis center and an ice center); and at least two equestrian facilities, one of which is the US Equestrian Team Foundation's headquarters in Gladstone.[70]

Planning for Eco-tourism in Somerset County

All of these sites provide a solid foundation for creating next-generation 21st century outdoor

[61] https://njaudubon.org/wp-content/ibba/www.njaudubon.org/SectionIBBA/IBBASiteGuide.html

[62] https://visitsomersetnj.org/fun-somerset-nj/leonard-j-buck-garden/

[63] https://www.wfafnj.org/

[64] http://www.njskylands.com/pkhutch

[65] http://www.somersetcountyparks.org/parksFacilities/eec/EEC.html

[66] http://www.somersetcountyparks.org/parksFacilities/sourland/SourlandMtPreserve.html

[67] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/FacilityDirectory/FacilityDirectory/64/2554; and https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/FacilityDirectory/FacilityDirectory/34/2554

[68] https://www.raritanheadwaters.org/water-trail/

[69] http://www.njskylands.com/tnrarsb3; and http://www.njskylands.com/tour-lamington-river

[70] https://visitsomersetnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Full-Study-Low-Res.pdf, p. 25.

recreation experiences as laid out in the Open Space Preservation Plan. With more planning and organization these experiences can readily be promoted as ecotourism opportunities to visitors as well as residents. Among other strategies, the Open Space Preservation Plan calls for creation of a county-wide network of greenways, many intended ultimately as trail corridors as well as to protect natural areas and streams. The plan also calls for creating more access to greenways and natural areas even in the most highly populated parts of the county.

H. Agritourism in Somerset County

As explained in the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan (especially Section 5.9, Agricultural Economic Development) that is a part of this Somerset County Preservation Plan, the overarching economic approach needed to improve the viability of farming as an industry in Somerset County relies on enhancing farmer access to consumers. That plan provides considerable detail about the trends and advantages of agritourism.

The National Agricultural Law Center provides a thorough explanation of agritourism[71]:

> Simply stated, agritourism could be thought of as the crossroads of tourism and agriculture. Stated more technically, agri-tourism can be defined as a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism in order to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining and/or educating the visitors and generating income for the farm, ranch, or business owner. Regardless of the exact definition or terminology, any definition of agritourism should include the following four factors:
>
> - combines the essential elements of the tourism and agriculture industries;
> - attracts members of the public to visit agricultural operations;
> - is designed to increase farm income; and
> - provides recreation, entertainment, and/or educational experiences to visitors.
>
> The term "agritourism" is often used interchangeably with "agri-tourism," "agrotourism," "farm tourism," "agricultural tourism," or "agritainment."

Note that strictly speaking, this definition expects the visitor to be attracted to visit a farm or other agricultural business by special activities offered by the farm. Direct sales of farm products to consumers, as found at such operations as the Griggstown Farm Market, farmers' markets, or CSAs (community-supported agriculture, often on commercial farms), are measured differently by census-takers monitoring the agricultural economy (although "u-pick" operations count in both categories). Direct sales to retail/restaurant/institutional buyers, which in turn provide local foods to their customers, are also measured differently. For all practical purposes, however, an orientation of local farms to selling their products to local consumers reinforces the general receptivity of the farm sector to engaging with visitors. Encountering local foods on the menu in a downtown Somerville restaurant can encourage visitors to regard their experience as supporting the

[71] http://nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/agritourism/

The Economic Impacts of Agritourism

It will benefit farmers to connect to consumers through agritourism – and such a connection also benefits Somerset County's regional economy. According to a Rutgers information bulletin published in 2011, New Jersey at the time was among the first states "to have comprehensively measured the extent of farmer participation in agritourism activities and associated farmgate revenues." The bulletin detailed the economic impacts as measured in 2006:

IMPLAN®, a widely used input-output modeling system, was used to measure the economic linkages between agritourism and the rest of the New Jersey economy. Modeling found that for every dollar in agritourism sales generated at the farmgate level, an additional $0.58 of sales activity was created in other businesses; everything from gas stations to restaurants, and insurance providers to pallet and packaging manufacturers. This translates into an additional $33.3 million in revenue in other predominantly non-farm businesses throughout New Jersey. Therefore, in total, agritourism was responsible for generating $90.8 million in revenue statewide in 2006. In addition, associated state and local taxes raised as a result of agritourism activity were estimated to be on the order of $8.1 million.

Source: https://sustainable-farming.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-Economic-Contributions-of-Agritourism-in-New-Jersey-e333.pdf

beautiful agricultural landscapes they see as they tour the more rural parts of Somerset County. Moreover, evidence is strong that farms in the Northeast that are engaging in direct sales, especially meat and dairy products, are more profitable. [72]

Diversifying farm operations through agritourism and direct sales, therefore, is critical in any strategy to improve the viability of farming as an industry in Somerset County.

Twelve farms offer agritourism activities in Somerset County according to Map 5.3.1 in the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan (listing businesses offering agritourism opportunities in Somerset County at the time of the plan's production). VisitSomersetNJ offers approximately 50 entries classed as agritourism, a more varied set of offerings that includes but is not limited to farms.[73] The Farmland Preservation Plan emphasizes the need for (1) technical assistance and training for farmers to help build more agritourism businesses, and (2) adaptability in local ordinances to encourage on-farm businesses that include agritourism as well as food processing and direct sales.

Somerset County as the Heart of a New Region Celebrating Local Foods?

Tourism promotion to support agriculture in Somerset County must be included among the county's strategies that will build an agricultural economic base for the twenty-first century. A healthy and diverse agricultural economy featuring local foods next door to heavily populated northern New Jersey and New York City is not just possible – it has already been done.

The Somerset County Courthouse is just 45 miles or so from one of the nation's first modern farmers' markets, Greenmarket at Union Square in New York City – a drive of approximately an hour and a half, depending on day of the week and time of day. Greenmarket was established in 1976 with the goals

[72] https://aese.psu.edu/nercrd/publications/what-works-2014-proceedings/expanding-direct-marketing-opportunities-through-farm-shops/view

[73] https://visitsomersetnj.org/play/agri-tourism/

of conserving farmland and ensuring "a continuing supply of fresh, local produce to New Yorkers."[74] Roughly the same distance north, to Cold Spring, NY, deep in the Hudson River Valley opposite the United States Military Academy at West Point, is a vibrant scene of local foods stimulated by the markets generated first by Greenmarket and now by many others in the city, together with an increasing demand for locally sourced food at restaurants, grocery stores, and other consumer outlets. Among the leaders in a second-wave movement to support local foods that began around 2000 is the Glynwood Center in Cold Spring, which operates a CSA and engages local farmers throughout the Hudson River Valley to support direct sales and train "the next generation of sustainable farm businesses."[75]

Somerset County farmers and farmers in nearby counties – Middlesex, Mercer, Hunterdon – have the land base and the nearby markets (not to mention a large population of consumers in their own backyards) to support a healthy and diverse agricultural system, just as the Hudson River Valley has done. They also have an analog to the Glynwood Center, Duke Farms in Hillsborough Township at the center of the county and one of the county's top destinations[76] plus nearby access to the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers, which among other benefits to farmers offers training and research in agritourism.[77]

I. Tourism and Somerset County's History and Arts

Even if Somerset County were not the location of celebrated sites and events of the Revolutionary War,

Advice for Agritourism Start-ups

New Jersey's Department of Agriculture and Rutgers Cooperative Extension both offer considerable support to the state's farmers on taking advantage of agri-tourism. Here's a sample advisory from the NJ Department of Agriculture.

Is Agri-Tourism Right for You?

Agri-tourism is defined as a commercial enterprise at a working farm that is conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental farm income. The three basics of agri-tourism are that you should have something for visitors to see, to do, and to buy! How well you relate these three things will determine the success of your agri-tourism business. Things to see and do are often free; but there's a lot of money to be made in retail sales. Tourists mainly buy food, beverages, and souvenirs.

There are many examples of agri-tourism. Retail sales opportunities exist for PYO's, farm and urban markets, garden centers, and

(Continued on page 171)

[74] https://www.grownyc.org/greenmarket/faq

[75] https://www.glynwood.org; quotation is from https://www.glynwood.org/file_download/inline/9b181b45-ee39-4321-8dc5-b9cb70b4ef7b

[76] http://dukefarms.org/making-an-impact/agroecology/

[77] http://agritourism.rutgers.edu/training/

(Continued from page 170)

ag-related foods, crafts, and gifts. Educational experiences include farm tours and agri-related classes on things like gardening, flower arranging and cooking. Festivals could have a food or agricultural theme. Living history farms are popular. You could consider offering hospitality services such as farm stays and B&B's. You could offer entertainment such as special events, mazes, and petting zoos. Outdoor recreational activities such as horseback riding, fee fishing/hunting, wildlife viewing, and camping are in demand.

There are "pros" to starting an agri-tourism business. It's a "clean" form of economic development that requires relatively less capital outlay for infrastructure development. Agri-tourism also yields benefits to recreational, hospitality, and other businesses in the community. It creates employment opportunities for family members and supplements farm income. Your business should create new networking contacts and forge stronger links within your community. Agri-tourism provides farmers with the ability to show and tell people what agriculture is about.

Source: https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/index.shtml

its cultural heritage scene would be the envy of many jurisdictions working to promote their arts and history. Its landscape and communities exhibit excellent examples of architecture and community-building from every era since colonial settlement by Dutch families from Long Island in the mid-seventeenth century. In terms of community-building, the county boasts a major collection of bridges from the early eighteenth century onward along with many public buildings from every era.

The county is further enriched by many local volunteer groups that save buildings, preserve archives, tell stories, and present tours, events, and other programming. Two county-wide organizations have undertaken multi-site programs that attract visitors, including the all-volunteer Heritage Trail Association, which offers occasional special tours, and the professionally staffed Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission. The SCC&HC sponsors the county's premier historic-site event every fall, the countywide *Journey Through the Past*. There are so many sites across the county that not all are included every year – site operators compete to be included by SCC&HC staff who curate, plan, and promote the program. (See sidebar, above.)

Somerset County Tourism's website lists more than 70 historic sites and museums (both historic and otherwise). Museums include a Children's Museum in Bridgewater, firehouse museums in both Raritan and Somerville, and a museum with more than 800 antique cameras in North Plainfield. The United States Golf Museum (described below) is housed in an important historic site representing the Country House Era in the Somerset Hills.

Publicly accessible historic sites across the county range from historic barns and mills, an 18th century forge, and several schools (from an 1830 Gothic one-room gem, to a classic little red (Victorian) schoolhouse), to grand mansions, an arts center housed in a multi-story 1912 schoolhouse, and another arts center in one of only eight surviving vaudeville houses, dating back to 1927. Several train stations and many stone and truss bridges still in use are also historic sites. The SCC&HC regularly publishes a catalogue-style booklet describing sites and districts listed in the National and New Jersey

Registers.[78] Publicly accessible historic sites in Somerset County are shown on Map 6.4.2 in the. Historic Preservation Plan that accompanies this Somerset County Preservation Plan.

In addition to individual historic sites, numerous historic communities and neighborhoods – many listed in the National and New Jersey Registers – attract visitors to their retail districts, special events, and multiple historic sites. Guided tours, walking tours, and driving routes are available for some sites, districts, and landscapes in the county.

Touring such a place as Somerset County would take days, even with a focus just on history. Following are a few of the interesting highlights to be enjoyed in the county.

The Revolutionary War Landscape

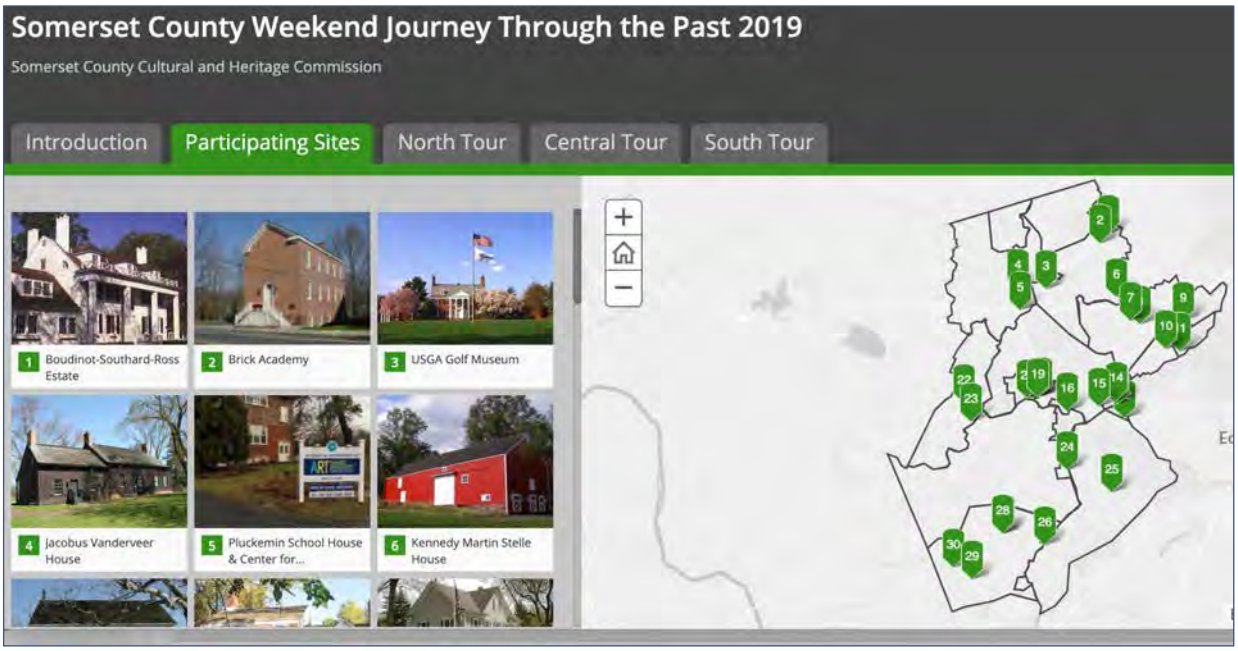
Thanks to long colonial occupation, well over a hundred years, on rich land where farmers prospered and made well-built houses and farms, Somerset County was well-developed by the time of the American Revolution. In the Revolution, Somerset County provided the perfect location for military occupations and movements thanks to its terrain – the Watchungs have been likened to a fortress by military historians. After the war, Somerset was close enough to markets in population centers to the north, east, and south for the county to prosper, yet far enough away to avoid the overwhelming urbanization that happened in both north Jersey and to the county's south by the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, conditions were ripe for survival of more intact historic resources from the American Revolution than most communities from that era,

Arts Activities Sponsored by the SCC&HC

- One annual arts grant program, the NJ State Council on the Arts State/County Partnership Local Arts Program Grant.
- The Somerset County Teen Arts Festival, an arts education program offering professionally led master classes and critique sessions in seven artistic disciplines generally benefitting more than a thousand teens.
- An array of Arts Outreach programs, including an ongoing public art project, Gallery 24/7: Art on Traffic Control Boxes, to broaden and diversify public access to the arts; expand exhibition opportunities for New Jersey's visual artists; and enliven Somerset County's tourism experience.
- A biennial Excellence in the Arts Awards Program to celebrate and publicly recognize leadership and vision of those who have increased the visibility and viability of the fine and performing arts in Somerset County.
- A directory, Guide to Somerset County Fine & Performing Arts Organizations.
- Professionally led workshops, periodic conferences, and roundtable sessions to provide technical assistance, professional development, and networking opportunities to benefit cultural organizations' staff and board members, as well as individual artists.
- Public gallery exhibition space for county artists in Somerset County's Cultural & Heritage Gallery, Student Gallery @ 40 North Bridge, and 3-D display cases public exhibitions, often on a monthly basis, plus special-initiative exhibitions.
- The SCC&HC also provides information, suggestions, and referrals in response to public inquiries and maintains a reference library available for loan or in-house use to local non-profit organizations.

For more information: https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/cultural-heritage

[78] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/home/showdocument?id=8104



Somerset County's annual Journey Through the Past, held one weekend each fall since 2006, makes a "vibrant connection to history." Recognized with a national award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) in 2021, the 2019 event featured 30 historic sites open to the public free of charge. Participating historic sites were grouped into three convenient tours by location: Northern, Central, and Southern. Promotional products included a guidebook, an activities brochure, a two-minute promotional video, and a web-based interactive map. In 2018 the event's sponsor, the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, also began creating trading cards, available only during the event. In 2019 Somerset County Tourism sponsored a drawing for tickets to local events (and a complete set of those trading cards); visitors had to collect passwords from at least three sites and enter them into an online survey to participate in the drawing. (Current website accessible at www.SCHistoryWeekend.com; a Virtual Journey Story Map site launched in 2020 is available at https://somerset.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=b7308518f9d74983a663e8569fceb7eb)

forming a rare, visible layer in the landscape revealing a critical moment in American history.

"George Washington slept here," the cliché of the heritage tourism promoter, happened in Somerset County again and again. Washington also established a lookout over the Raritan plain toward New Brunswick and Newark to monitor movements of the British; he held one winter's encampment at Middlebrook; he established the novice nation's first military training academy at Pluckemin; and he sent his troops, with French troops led by the comte de Rochambeau, to thread their way through this landscape on their way to their final battle in the Yorktown Campaign. During the Middlebrook Cantonment of 1778-79, Washington and four of his generals resided in houses that still stand. [79] Another building still extant from the

[79] Heritage Trail Association on its Middlebrook Five Generals Tour: "You will visit all five existing houses where George Washington, Henry Knox, Baron Von Steuben, Nathaniel Greene, and Lord Alexander [William Alexander, Lord Stirling] were headquartered during the Middlebrook Cantonment of

Revolutionary War, the Cornelius Van Liew House (1752), was present during the British encampment in Somerset Courthouse (Millstone/East Millstone) during June of 1777. In Kingston, on Somerset County's side of its boundary with Mercer County, Washington conferred on horseback with his generals, deciding not to push on with his exhausted troops after the battles of Trenton and Princeton to attack New Brunswick.[80] Finally, at Rockingham, his final wartime headquarters and now a state historic site, Washington wrote the immortal words of his *Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States*.

The feasibility study for the Congressionally designated Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area noted that Middlebrook Encampment Park, the Millstone River, the Pluckemin Historic District and the Jacobus Vanderveer House, and the Wallace House are critical interpretive sites in Somerset County. [81] Further, the heritage area's management plan listed these Somerset County places as "legacy communities" that existed during the Revolution: Somerset, Basking Ridge, Bullion's Tavern, Pluckemin, Somerset Court House (now Millstone Borough), Somerville, Rocky Hill, and Vealtown (now Bernardsville). [82] Moreover, locally sponsored monuments – many now historic in their own right – commemorate stories of the American Revolution throughout Somerset County. To quote from the

John Parker Tavern, Bernardsville, one of the county's many eighteenth-century sites that figured in stories of the American Revolution. Listed in the National Register in 1978, it was a regular stopping place for Continental troops moving between Pluckemin and General Washington's headquarters in Morristown.

New Jersey Governor's executive order that endorsed the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, "the National Register of Historic Places lists more than 250 buildings and sites in the State of New Jersey that are associated with the period of the American Revolution; [and] portions of the New Jersey landscape important to the strategies of the British and Continental armies, including waterways, mountains, farms, wetlands, villages, and roadways retain the integrity of the period of the American Revolution."[83]

1778-79. Abraham Staats House, Jacobus Vanderveer House, Wallace House, Van Veghten House and the Van Horne House are on the tour."
(https://revolutionarynj.org/events/fivegeneralstour/)

[80] http://www.revolutionarywarnewjersey.com/new_jersey_revolutionary_war_sites/towns/kingston_nj_revolutionary_war_sites.htm; and
https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=33194)

[81] *Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area Management Plan*, Part 1, Table 3-44, p. 3-139; available at https://revolutionarynj.org/about-crossroads-of-the-american-revolution/management-plan/.

[82] *Ibid*, Part 1, Table 3-1, p. 3-11)

[83] Governor's Executive Order No. 48, August 5, 2005

Musicians entertain visitors to the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park at the Canal House in Griggstown. The park is a popular location for boating, fishing, hiking, and biking. (Photo by Ron and Pat Morris)

The Delaware and Raritan Canal and Agricultural Landscapes

Soon after the Revolution, Somerset County's landscape began to change. As detailed in the history section provided in the Historic Preservation Plan that is a part of this Somerset County Preservation Plan, in 1834, the opening of the Delaware and Raritan Canal altered the Millstone River Valley (a route of the Washington-Rochambeau troop movements). Today, this entire historic landscape is protected and interpreted through the Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway and the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

One of the largest historic districts in the state to be listed in the National and New Jersey Registers, the Six Mile Run rural cultural landscape, some 6,000 acres, is situated to the east of the canal in Franklin Township. It contains 149 contributing buildings, five contributing sites, and 44 contributing structures, many of which were erected in the era of prosperity that followed the opening of the canal and greater access for farmers to markets. Also within the district is the 2,000-acre Six Mile Run Reservoir Site, administered as a part of the D&R Canal State Park.

The entirety of the southern and western regions of Somerset County strongly retains an agricultural character stemming from the county's earliest settlement by Europeans. These beautiful areas could readily host greater interpretation through driving tours and further development of existing publicly accessible historic sites.

The Gladstone Line and the Somerset Hills Country Houses – with Golfing and Horses

After construction of the Delaware and Raritan Canal, just as troops once crisscrossed Somerset County back and forth among urban destinations during the Revolution, railroads began crossing the county. They permanently altered the landscape and, even more than the canal, triggered new and larger settlements. A main line now operated by CSX survives from this era to bisect the county southwest to northeast;

other routes are abandoned, with at least one identified as a potential long-distance east-west rail-trail in the Open Space Preservation Plan.

The elaborate Georgian Revival mansion (1919) in the Somerset Hills that houses the United States Golf Association Museum and Arnold Palmer Center for Golf History was designed by John Russell Pope. Later, the architect became known for his monumental architecture in Washington, D.C., including the Jefferson Memorial. The site is one of the most prominent among the Somerset Hills Country Houses. (Photo courtesy United States Golf Association)

The commuter rail line serving Gladstone, Pea-pack, Far Hills, Mine Brook, Bernardsville, and Basking Ridge to New York City survives substantially intact from its earliest construction just after the Civil War. It is now electrified and a part of the NJ Transit system. The single-track line served wealthy indus-trialists who built mansions in the county's part of the Highlands known then as the Mountain Colony and now as the Somerset Hills. The Bernardsville, Far Hills, Gladstone, and Lyons stations are listed in the National Register and the entire line itself is considered eligible for listing. (See Map 6.5.2 in the Historic Preservation Plan.)

The Somerset Hills of northern Somerset County (and Morris County), the landscape served by the Gladstone Line, is the subject of a thematic nomination to the New Jersey Register of Historic Places, entitled the Somerset Hills Country Place Era (1870 to 1940) and encompassing Bedminster, Bernardsville, Bernards Township (Basking Ridge), Peapack-Gladstone, and Far Hills. In the days before this railroad, only a few pioneer wealthy industrialists could afford country houses, especially the time required for travel. The railroad changed travel time, and with it the landscape.

In addition to supporting early golfing – several golf courses are still found in the area – the owners of mansions in the Somerset Hills also favored equestrian pursuits, from fox hunting to steeple-chases and race meetings to carriage drives (four-in-hand road coaches) to riding competitions, even Olympic training. Many equestrian events and the business of raising horses are still important features of Somerset County life.

Visitors to this remarkable cultural landscape can enjoy three publicly accessible historic sites from the era (like the fabled "cottages" of Newport, the modesty of the term "country house" belies their

Somerset County is filled with historic neighborhoods that delight the eye of the wanderer. Pictured is Washington Park in North Plainfield, one of the nation's earliest planned railroad suburbs in the Romantic style. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the district contains 112 contributing buildings built between 1868 and 1917. (Photo by Elizabeth Watson, Heritage Strategies, LLC)

collection of suburban houses representing a wide variety of late Victorian American architecture. This diversity is harmonized by the uniform setback of houses along winding, tree-shaded streets edged with bluestone sidewalks." Its period of significance is 1868 to 1917.

The entire central part of Somerset County was highly influenced by the railroads and could readily host greater interpretation of the growth and identity of the boroughs at the county's heart.

splendor): Natirar, the mansion associated with what is now a large county park also known as Natirar, open as a resort, restaurant, and spa[84]; Hamilton Farm, home to the USET Foundation in an elaborate 54-stall horse barn built by a New York City financier in 1913[85]; and the Frothingham-Sloane House, home to the United States Golf Association Museum and Arnold Palmer Center for Golf History. The museum exhibits the world's premier collection of golf artifacts and memorabilia.[86]

North Plainfield and Central Somerset County

Railroads also influenced the establishment of North Plainfield in 1872 as a township at the eastern-most edge of central Somerset County; North Plain-field became a borough in 1885. Washington Park is at the heart of North Plainfield and is listed in the National and New Jersey Registers. The nomination states that the district is a "remarkably well preserved

J. Developing Tourism in Somerset County

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that Somerset County has the basis for an even more robust tourism economy. Many high-quality "tourism products" – experiences, events, sites, etc. – are available. Some are already regional destinations in their own right, such as the county's own Leonard J. Buck Garden.

Somerset County clearly has many gems. It is time, however, to create a system out of the county's many excellent parts, and by so doing create a sum that can be much greater than those parts.

After decades of study by tourism researchers and promotion by advocates, most DMOs understand that cultural heritage travelers are among the most

[84] http://www.natirar.com/

[85] https://www.uset.org/the-history-of-hamilton-farm/

[86] https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/usga-golf-museum.html

valuable of any tourism market and have been so for many years. They are well worth the hard work it will take to design and implement strategies and enlist wide collaboration among the many businesses and sites that must be involved to make a next-level system of tourism effective.

Approach

As this Preservation Plan has already noted elsewhere, the word "preservation" common to each major topic obscures the basic fact that agriculture, open space and recreation, and heritage each need quite different approaches. Open space is well-protected and well-funded for acquiring future open space; and managed under public ownership. The new focus there is addressing need for smart, but often challenging, acquisitions by the county to support the protection and development of trail and stream corridors and other greenways. Agriculture needs an economic future as much as the assurance of a permanent land base through easements. Historic preservation must find more ways to encourage private property owners, including but certainly not limited to the comparatively few nonprofit-owned sites, to treat their historic properties well. Municipalities are more in control of the future of historic properties than the county itself.

"Tourism" is also common to each of these important topics – "agritourism," "ecotourism," and "cultural heritage tourism." Each also requires different approaches:

- Ecotourism already has the sites and experiences, undoubtedly, and at least among north Jersey residents, Somerset County should be well-regarded for its interesting outdoor experiences. It would be possible for visitors wishing to enjoy the outdoors and experiences of nature to spend weeks in the county without repeating an outing, although those without equipment or in need of guides might run out sooner. Marketing would most certainly boost demand by enabling visitors to understand the variety and breadth of the county's many offerings. Such marketing can be designed to cultivate repeat visitors – the most valuable kind of tourists, who get to know the county well and therefore can minimize their negative impacts – and encourage them to seek out the county's many experiences and thus spread out visitor impacts.
- Agritourism needs more attention to product development – more sites and more local food experiences, both of which need more farmers and other business owners pursuing opportunities in agri-tourism and local foods. This is a key strategy in boosting more local consumption of local and value-added products and therefore more profitability in farming. As explained further in the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, without success in this regard, agriculture as an industry may not survive – although beautiful hayfields owned by wealthy owners might if they can find farmers to keep them in production. More local marketing to educate local consumers would help support the growth of agritourism, but only if there is more to market – a classic conundrum of product development (which cannot succeed without demand) versus marketing (which cannot succeed without something to market). One obstacle to solving this problem is that state tourism funding is not currently available to support to marketing agritourism (or any tourism) locally, as the requirement is that state-

Ecotourism opportunities are well-developed in Somerset County. Here, visitors to the Sourland Mountain Preserve enjoy bouldering among the park's spectacular outcroppings and boulder fields. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

supported tourism marketing be designed to attract overnight visitors.

- Like ecotourism for Somerset County, cultural heritage tourism also has a wealth of experiences. Unlike parks, natural areas, and outdoor recreation sites, however, where public access is usually assumed and often built into the planning for a preserved site from the beginning, access for visitors is a key problem for historic sites. Most are not open with regular hours; they rely on making themselves "open by appointment," a barrier to the free-and-independent leisure travelers common among the cultural heritage tourism market who desire spontaneity and discovery. One way to address this problem is even greater collaboration on more mutual events. Demand for more such experiences already exists, as indicated by the popularity of the SCC&H 's Journey Through the Past, currently held only one weekend each year, and high demand for the Five Generals Tour sponsored by the Heritage Trail Association, currently available only once a year. In addition to finding ways to expand these events (or the number of events like them), development of outdoor inter-pretation would help to welcome and inform spontaneous visitors without requiring that sites be open more frequently.

- For both agritourism and cultural heritage tourism, sites must collaborate not only on events, but on shared messages about the rich Somerset County tourism experience. Visitors are more likely to venture to a place with scattered sites if they understand they can expect variety, quality, and accessibility – and at least a day's worth or weekend's worth of activities. Each business owner or docent should engage customers about where they are headed and advise them on other businesses and experiences to seek out nearby. This is the non-competition advantage: it counts as the all-important word-of-mouth advertising so necessary in these kinds of tourism, but by design, not by accident, through interaction with a local expert – the business owner or docent. Even without immediately taking that advice, the visitor who engages with the business or site experiences the memorable personal touch

that can make all the difference in building the county's reputation as a great place to visit over the long run. Ecotourism sites – parks, natural areas, environmental education centers, etc. – where there are rangers and guides available, can also help to encourage their visitors to range beyond their own sites and experience more of the community.

- For cultural heritage tourism, collaboration among sites and organizations on shared messaging must get beyond a "did you know?" conversation to the next level, conveying the unifying themes embedded in Somerset County's stories of its past, as illustrated by various sites. How are they linked? How are they different? What can visitors learn at each site that will enrich their experience at the next, or on the long drive on the way to the next site? This is moving into the world of interpretation, discussed in the previous chapter, but it is important to recognize that interpretation is about telling stories well – and so is marketing. The themes identified in Chapter 7, Public Outreach & Education, are:
    - Somerset County's Natural History and Ecology;
    - The Revolutionary War Landscape;
    - The D&R Canal and Agricultural Landscapes;
    - The Gladstone Line and Somerset Hills "Country Houses";
    - Industry and the Railroads; and
    - Suburban Somerset.
- Incorporating the arts into all forms of tourism is an important opportunity in Somerset County given the strong arts community combined with the position and experience of the Somerset County Culture & Heritage Commission. Making sure to include the arts whenever possible will broaden the appeal of events and programs to more audiences. Every activity developed in this new focus on cultural heritage tourism should ask, how can we enlist local arts programs, artists, and galleries? Consider creating a novel arts event to encourage visitors to get out into the countryside – for example, a temporary artistic lighting event or lighting competition for selected historic bridges or other historic structures.
- Recognize opportunities for collaborators to learn about different sectors of tourism. Ecotourism,, agritourism, and heritage tourism each have different kinds of leaders and advocates (e.g., park directors vs. farmers vs. volunteer-run historic sites). As collaborative planning for county tourism and events advances, teaching one another can be a powerful learning experience. As each group absorbs the others' knowledge, "cross-disciplinary" observations and discoveries provide valuable, diverse insights that can strengthen the overall effort.

Goals

Goals for tourism in Somerset County based on agriculture, open space and recreation, and cultural heritage are the following:

- GOAL 1: Unite those with a stake in the county's agricultural, natural, historic, and cultural assets in working to expand tourism in Somerset County.
- GOAL 2: Create an engaging visitor experience based on county assets and stories.

- GOAL 3: Build local pride in Somerset County and its assets and stories, and thus a local constituency willing to support greater investment in improving those assets and stories. Residents who observe visitors enjoying themselves should take special pride in their communities' ability to foster a satisfying experience for guests. Such pride can be a rewarding feeling that reinforces public support for heritage development activities across the region.
- GOAL 4: Identify sustainable funding to enable the major program envisioned here.
- GOAL 5: Identify sensitive sites that should not be promoted because added visitation would impair the experience or the resource.

K. Moving Forward: Strategies and Priorities for Tourism in Somerset County

Moving cultural heritage tourism to the next level in Somerset County over the next ten years is a process that requires three phases: readiness, planning, and execution of early actions that will build capacity and experience among stakeholders for greater collaboration and further planning.

"Tourism" should be understood to include not only the usual marketing and promotion of existing cultural heritage tourism offerings (known as "products" among tourism marketers – programs, experiences, attractions, etc.). It should also include planning and development to enable those involved in tourism to ensure that potential markets are well-served and identify other long-range investments that will serve visitors and residents alike.

This chapter sketches out this process and provides basic recommendations organized by phase, in order to encourage further, more in-depth planning that will build the justification for further investments – on the basis of the economic value that the heritage traveler brings to the region.

The year 2026 is the 250th anniversary of the formal start of the American Revolution with the reading of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. New Jersey, as an important theater throughout the war and a source of many of its leaders, plans to be a major participant in the commemoration and has begun assessing sites and their readiness for the promotion and marketing to come. (This initiative is described in more detail in the Historic Preservation Plan that is a part of this Somerset County Preservation Plan.) The coming commemoration offers Somerset County a significant opportunity to boost its recognition as a location that is critical to New Jersey's Revolutionary War story. Thus, the year 2026 presents a reasonable time-frame by which to organize the ideas recommended below.

Readiness: Collecting Cultural Heritage Tourism Data

Among planners, a mantra is, "What gets measured, gets managed." In-depth measurement of existing visitation would reveal numbers of heritage travelers and their travel and spending patterns. This in turn would enable more insightful decisions on how to serve these audiences. From this information, it is possible to set objectives for developing the cultural heritage audience and determine the steps that are needed to achieve the objectives. Access to data on cultural heritage travelers for the Somerset County is limited, and information about visitors to individual sites and attractions is uneven and not compiled. These are typical obstacles for any cultural heritage tourism initiative's startup phase. It is possible, how-

ever, to take simple steps to begin addressing data-gathering needs in the near term, working with sites and other tourism partners. When Somerset County and its partners are ready for the major work of advancing cultural heritage tourism to the next level, the necessary data would then be available at that time.

The eighteenth-century English barn on the Kennedy-Stelle Farmstead, owned Bernards Township. It is leased to Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead, Inc., which operates the Farmstead Arts Center, offering year-round classes and performances in "the fine, performing and practical arts." (Photo courtesy Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission)

In general, there are four readily measurable data points that would enable tourism planners ultimately to set objectives for enhancing cultural heritage tourism's economic impact on communities in Somerset County:

- The number of visitors;
- Visitors' average length of stay;
- Average expenditure per person (or per party); and

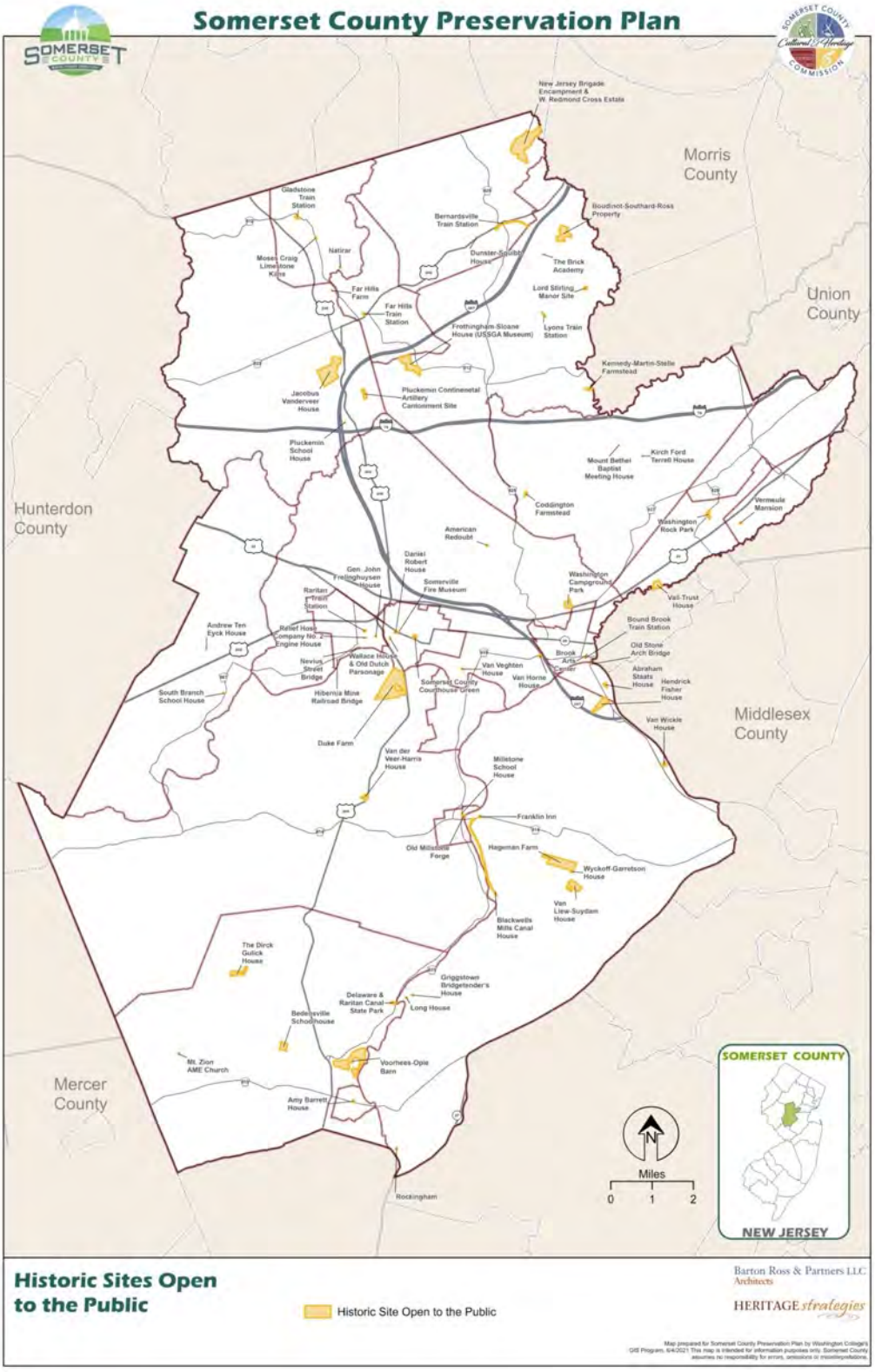
  Amount of economic leakage of tourism expenditures in the region (addressed, for example, by "buy local" campaigns that keep more dollars in the hands of local businesses instead of national franchises or large corporate retailers).

In addition to collecting baseline data, and then measuring data points over time to measure progress, it is also possible to collect additional information. More information would help to shape programs in order to deliver what visitors want and provide market analysis to identify appropriate ways to promote and advertise. Data collection could help to answer such questions as:

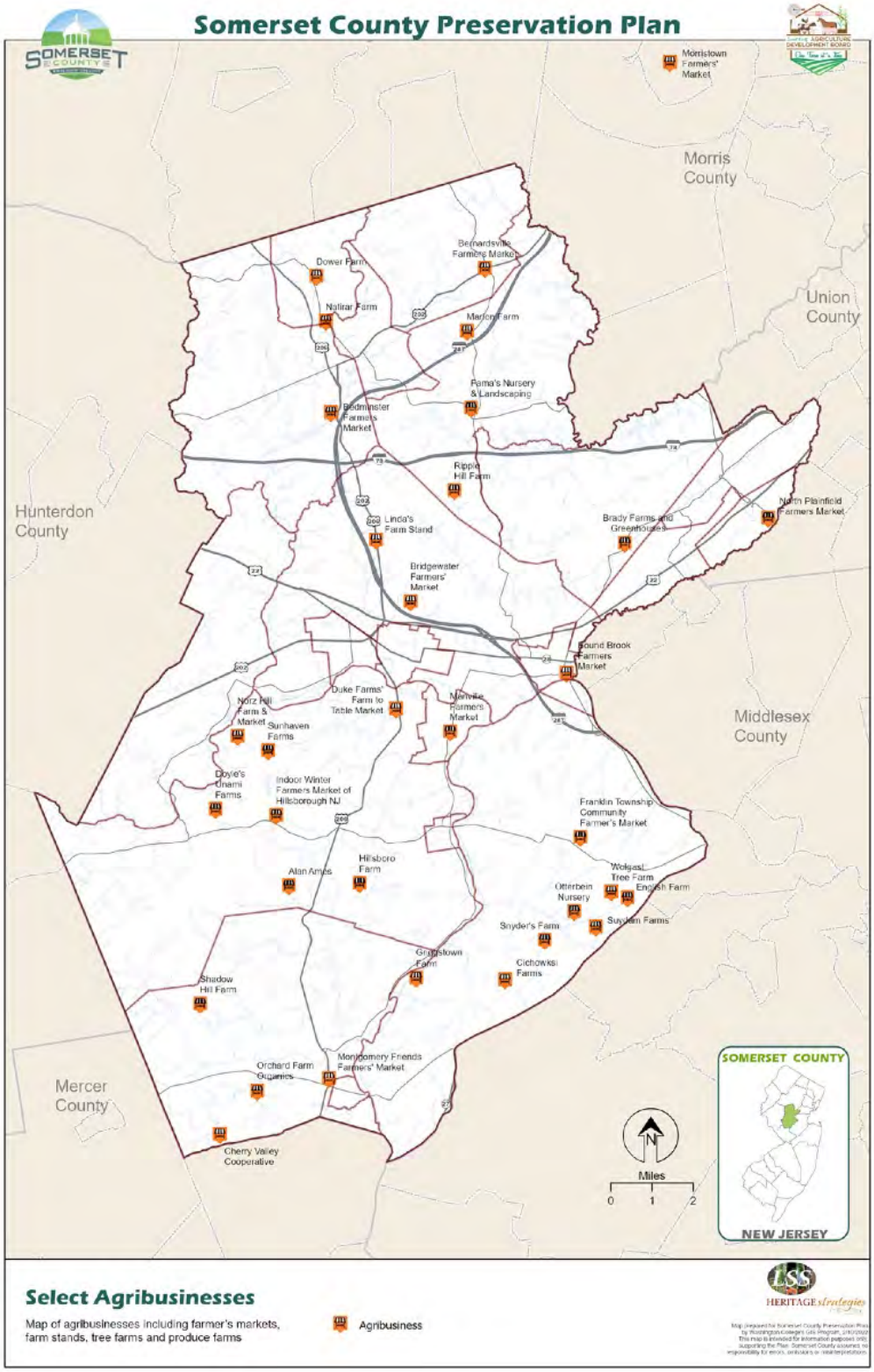
- Where are visitors coming from?
- How did they learn about the county or the particular attraction that drew them?
- What other places did they encounter after their destination?
- What are they looking for?
- What do they like to do?
- Where else have they visited and how does the county compare?
- What does Somerset County offer that other places do not?

As the county's support for cultural heritage tourism organizations increases, it can also encourage those

Map 8.1: Somerset County Historic Preservation Plan – Publicly Accessible Historic Sites



Map 8.2: Somerset County Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan – Agritourism Sites



Lessons from the Indianapolis Cultural Trail

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail is a nationwide model for urban placemaking through the arts, interpretation, and recreation. Inspired in part by the route of an early nineteenth-century canal in the heart of downtown Indianapolis, the project recreates part of the canal (enjoyed by users of a wide variety of non-motorized watercraft) and an eight-mile pedestrian pathway connecting museums and other attractions, historic buildings, and five themed cultural districts in the heart of Indianapolis.

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Inc. (ICT, Inc.) manages tours, events, and marketing for the program and works to ensure that the trail is "a world-class public space for residents and visitor of Indianapolis." Its website states, "The Indianapolis Cultural Trail seamlessly connects neighborhoods, cultural districts and entertainment amenities while serving as the downtown hub for central Indiana's vast greenway system."

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail is a route for pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles; most networks like it that are created for large places like Somerset County are more reliant on automobile touring, "trail" being an attractive promotional name.

Indianapolis created its themed cultural districts first, in 1999, long before the trail connection was designed and completed in 2013. The districts today partly support wayfinding – each district offers outdoor interpretation with color-coded maps and

(Continued on page 186)

organizations to build their individual capacity to measure the size of their audiences and understand their needs.

Strategy T.1.1: Establish a region-wide baseline attendance at attractions and events: Require or encourage grantees and other participants in the county's programs to establish and maintain an ongoing method to measure visitation or attendance as accurately as possible over time.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Immediate and ongoing action of the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission (SCC&HC), SCADB, and the Park Commission, supported by Somerset County Business Partnership/Somerset County Tourism (SCBP-Tourism).

Strategy T.1.2: Support matching grants to partners to enable them to participate in the "Visitors Count" program of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH; https://aaslh.org/programs/visitorscount/).

Timeframe and Responsibility: Immediate and ongoing action of the SCC&HC (and the Park Commission as appropriate), supported by SCBP-Tourism.

Strategy T.1.3: Undertake a formal tourism marketing study (of all categories of tourism) and business plan in order to determine optimal county investment in marketing that would accelerate the county's tourism-based economic gains.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early action of SCBP-Tourism in consultation with the Somerset County Board of Commissioners with support as needed from the SCC&HC, SCADB, and the Park Commission in consultation with regional/statewide partners.

Strategy T.1.4: Conduct visitor research periodically (preferably annually or biennially) to measure the county's effects on the region's cultural heritage tourism.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Mid-term and ongoing action of SCBP-Tourism in consultation with the SCC&HC, SCADB, and the Park Commission in consultation with regional/statewide partners (especially **Crossroads of the American Revolution Association and Jersey Fresh!**).

Planning: Building Partnerships

Partnerships among farmers, advocates for natural heritage, open space, and recreation, and operators of historic sites are needed not simply for tourism. Tourism, however, could become an important end by which the success of collaboration among these partners could be measured. As with many worthwhile activities, the means alone has its benefits. Collaboration enables partners to gain insights from one another, build on the unique qualities of Somerset County, and find ways to share resources and reduce costs.

Just as with data collection, the challenge of building partnerships need not be addressed by the Somerset County Business Partnership/Somerset County Tourism and the SCC&HC alone. These two leading organizations – together with other interested agencies, especially the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board and the Park Commission – may need to help potential partners to understand the opportunities for cultural heritage tourism inherent in Somerset County. Those partners, however, should ultimately take part in providing the energy and leadership such an initiative requires.

A restored, re-imagined canal is now a recreational water feature at the heart of Indianapolis and a centerpiece of the city's Cultural Heritage Trail.

(Continued from page 185)

design (see image of the trail's key provided with this sidebar).

Indianapolis aggressively sought major federal funding to support the project, winning a $20.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation through its Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant. Local philanthropy also provided funding for the total budget of $63 million.

The local government of Indianapolis did not simply design and build the system. The city also stimulated the creation of an independent nonprofit in charge of programming to activate and enliven it, which emerged with the assistance of innovative members of a special Cultural District Commission. In effect, ICT, Inc., is a combination DMO and site operator, with the charge of being self-supporting. Sources of funding include fundraising from various kinds of donors and foundations, operation of tours and events, and operation of a bikeshare program. In addition, the ICT website is a model for the kind of presentation that can support the overall program.

Source and images: https://indyculturaltrail.org/

Selection of one partnership-building project, perhaps designed in phases, such as a county-wide cultural heritage trail modelled after downtown Indianapolis's program, would begin this process (see sidebar beginning on page 36).

In Somerset County, many multiple long-distance trails and greenways are already in existence, emerging, or planned that can offer extended biking and hiking trips. With its 2019 study, *WalkBikeHike: Connecting Vibrant Communities*, Somerset County is now well-positioned to consider an innovative network that combines automobile touring to cover long distances with actual on-the-ground trails.[87] Moreover, the study has excellent potential to stimulate alternative transportation connections throughout the county and provides the backbone for seeking recreation and transportation grants.

Somerset County, as might be understood from the landscape descriptions offered earlier in this chapter, already has distinctive large "districts" that could be reinforced in a county-wide design that covers all areas of the county. Signage, interpretation, and public art installations to support and highlight these districts might be phased.

The Historic Preservation Plan suggests a first phase for a Somerset County Cultural Heritage Trail in the near term that would focus on preparing for visitors interested in the Revolutionary War. The Revolutionary War theme covers the entire county and would have the added advantage of the power of regional, state, and national commemoration efforts just getting underway in time to celebrate the start of the war 250 years later, in 2026.

A first emphasis on this theme could include directing some grants to historic sites to help improve their interpretation and visitor services and expanding the county's historic marker program.

Similarly, the strategy suggested immediately below, T.2.5, of creating a collaborative structure to build partnerships, could initially be focused on the coming commemoration of the American Revolution (a collaboration that need not be limited to historic sites). And the commemoration could serve as the focal point of the "one region-wide partnership-building project" suggested in Strategy T.2.6.

Strategy T.2.1: Organize a collaborative structure to support cultural heritage tourism: Encourage sub-groups to focus on eco-tourism, agritourism, and heritage tourism, but develop communications and representation that helps to maintain a sense of the entire cultural heritage tourism program among these subgroups.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early and ongoing action of SCC&HC and SCBP-Tourism in consultation with local/regional/ statewide partners.

Strategy T.2.2: Identify one region-wide partnership-building project as an early action to encourage consensus, focus, learning, and momentum.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early action of SCC&HC and SCBP-Tourism in consultation with local/regional/statewide partners.

Strategy T.2.3: Develop a local food marketing program of consistent messaging and up-to-date, accurate information regarding local food opportunities in the county aimed at both local audiences and visitors, including using events such as

[87] https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/walk-bike-hike-plan

The Annual Battle of Bound Brook Living History Weekend is held each spring to commemorate the actual Battle of Bound Brook that took place April 13, 1777, during the American Revolution. The two-day event features eighteenth-century street battles, military drills, and camp life, portrayed by living history reenactors as American and British troops, camp followers, sutlers (merchants selling goods) and others of that period. The battle was the first major offensive operation of the spring campaign in 1777 by the British army in New Jersey directed specifically at the American army. In a surprise attack, an advance column led by Hessian Jaeger scouts fighting for the British were pinned down by Colonial soldiers who put up a spirited resistance at the Old Stone Arch Bridge located near the Queens' Bridge. The skirmish bought precious time for the bulk of the American force in Bound Brook as British forces poured into the area. When a second column of 1,000 British soldiers charged over the Queen's Bridge to attack, the Colonials retreated, escaping the trap. (Photos and caption courtesy Friends of Abraham Staats House, Inc., https://www.staatshouse.org/events/battle-of-bound-brook/)

fairs and festivals to market the local farming community's products and benefits.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early and ongoing action of SCBP-Tourism and SCADB in consultation with local farms and agribusinesses.

Execution: Taking Early Action

As already noted in the discussion above on approaches to cultural heritage tourism (including agritourism and ecotourism), Somerset County has many opportunities for visitors as well as residents to enjoy the best of the county's heritage through public access, events, and interpretive programming, and, in the case of agritourism, more business development related to local foods. There are a few obvious, early to mid-term actions to recommend here that would either benefit all attractions and events or reinforce a few in ways that will build the overall market and encourage the growth of partnerships and further planning.

A particularly important early action here is tied to the 250th anniversary commemoration of the American Revolution, beginning in 2026.

Actions presented here are in priority order. However, as different groups of partners are expected to take on responsibility for implementing different actions, they may be pursued in parallel.

Strategy T.3.1: Expand VisitSomersetNJ website categories for all elements of cultural heritage tourism: In particular, create one or more "ecotourism" or "nature lovers" categories modeled on the existing birding itinerary and more specialized than the general "parks and recreation" category; and a "trails" category. Consider adding a super-category "Learn

and Experience" (on the same level as "Play") to introduce such history topics as the American Revolution and American Country House Era.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early and ongoing action of SCBP-Tourism in consultation with SCC&HC, the Park Commission, state parks, and other local/regional/statewide partners.

Strategy T.3.2: Create a Birding & Wildlife Observation Network throughout Somerset County, modeled after the "trail" approach pioneered by New Jersey Audubon but which has not been applied in Somerset County. Since most sites have the necessary facilities to receive visitors who would seek out sites within such a network, development should not require much if any construction; rather, this idea is a matter of marketing and promotion with some modest wayfinding signage.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early and ongoing action of the Park Commission in consultation with SCBP-Tourism, state parks, and other local/regional/statewide partners.

Strategy T.3.3: Expand the local foods marketing program in Strategy T.2.7 by pursuing a USDA planning grant under https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early action by SCADB, the Somerset County Business Partnership, Rutgers Extension, Jersey Fresh!, and local businesses/farmers and nonprofit partners.

Strategy T.3.4: Create a preservation bicycling tour event modeled after successful "tour de farms" events in Warren and Sussex counties and winery tours in southern New Jersey, including parks and natural areas, farms, and historic sites. For tours where shorter distances are desired, consider creating tours focused on specific regions and themes identified in the planning for a "cultural Heritage Trail (see Strategy T.3.6). Include activities for the non-bicycling general public.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early action by SCADB, SCBP-Tourism, Rutgers Extension, Jersey Fresh!, Ridewise, and local businesses/farmers and nonprofit partners.

Strategy T.3.5: Undertake a planning exercise to identify readily achievable expansions of selected current multi-site interpretive programs and events (e.g., the Five Generals tour, Journey), or to create new ones, in order to enlarge the collaboration of partners celebrating Somerset County's heritage. Focus on the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in order to build readiness to respond to opportunities from the New Jersey Historical Commission, the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, and the United States Semiquincentennial Commission.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early action of SCC&HC and SCBP-Tourism in consultation with local/regional/statewide partners.

Strategy T.3.6: Begin a phased approach to a county-wide interpretive presentation organized around the concept of a "Cultural Heritage Trail." Design and undertake a wayfinding strategy, using physical signage, digital applications, and delineation of county areas as "cultural heritage districts" with distinct identities to be explained to visitors and residents. Digital applications and promotional maps can precede physical signage as a first phase.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Early or mid-term action of SCC&HC and SCBP-Tourism in consultation with local/regional/statewide partners.

Strategy T.3.7: Explore the feasibility of establishing a county visitor center, cultural hub, or museum. Undertake a feasibility study to determine the viability of establishing a visitor center, cultural hub, or

museum as the gateway to heritage tourism within the county.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Mid-term or long-term action of SCC&HC, Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development in consultation with the Somerset County Board of Commissioners along with other local/regional/ statewide partners.

Future Action: Planning to Take Somerset County's Tourism to the Next Level

To unite the county and its supporters around a long-term case and further actions for cultural heritage tourism, the county needs a formal plan. Call it the Tourism Economic Development Plan, perhaps aiming for it to become a separate Tourism Development Element for Somerset County's Master Plan. If preceding strategies are pursued successfully, it would be time to undertake such a plan about five to seven years from the approval of this preservation plan. Such a plan should identify strategic tourism development opportunities based on input from community, government, businesses, and stakeholders, especially needs assessments from interpretive and outdoor recreation attractions.

Such a plan should include the following activities or elements:

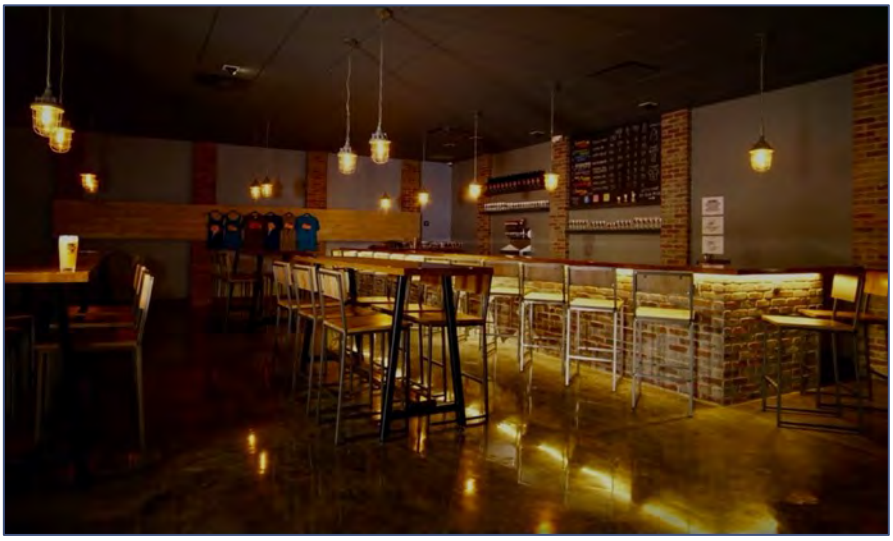
- A branding strategy for cultural heritage tourism that supports and builds upon the county's existing branding;
- Advertising advice to support formal development of a marketing strategy as an implementation step, based on insights from early actions and the planning process;

The Raritan River Greenway incorporates 8.1 miles of the river's main stem from the confluence of its north and south branches at Duke Island Park to its confluence with the Millstone River. It includes an 1886 truss bridge moved by the Park Commission to carry the trail at the heart of the greenway over the historic Raritan Power Canal. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission)

- Identification of strategic investments for implementation;
- Improvements to management structures for regional collaboration and progress reporting; and
- Reporting and evaluation mechanisms.

Strategy T.4.1: Create a fully developed Somerset County Cultural Heritage Trail to encourage greater visitation to all historical and cultural sites, including farms, gardens, and parks, and the creation of an ambitious alternative transportation network of trails to enable pedestrian and non-motorized access to nodes of historical and cultural sites within each of the "cultural heritage districts" delineated under Strategy T.3.6.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Mid-term action of the Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, SCC&HC, and SCBP-Tourism in consultation with other local/ regional/statewide partners (especially the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority).



The tasting room for the Jersey Cyclone Brewing Company opened in Somerset in May of 2019. The company was founded by two friends (residents of Manville and Rocky Hill) who began home brewing after Hurricane Sandy. (Photo courtesy Jersey Cyclone Brewing, https://jerseycyclone.com)

Strategy T.4.2: Evaluate the need for a Tourism Economic Development Plan.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Long-term action of SCBP-Tourism in consultation with the Somerset County Board of Commissioners, the Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, SCC&HC, the Park Commission, and SCADB along with other local/regional/statewide partners.

L. Conclusion to Tourism Planning

Somerset County has invested heavily in its heritage assets, which contribute to the quality of life for county residents. This chapter argues that it is also possible to advance the county's tourism economy based on this support, as well. To do this successfully will require more planning, collaboration, and investment specifically to support high-quality tourism growth and capitalize on the county's many preservation efforts.

The ideas in this chapter, however, cannot be advanced without funding. County and state funding have been quite limited for spending to support tourism marketing, planning, and development. The Somerset County Preservation Trust Fund is not appropriate for nor designed for tourism support. Therefore, parties who collaborate on building Somerset County tourism as suggested here must come to grips with the need to identify added, sustainable funding, perhaps combined with targeted support for creative placemaking, the arts, and historic preservation planning at the municipal level. Stakeholders who make common cause to find ways to support a broad initiative that addresses both quality of life and tourism programs are more likely to succeed.

Chapter 9. Moving Forward: Implementing Somerset County's Preservation Plan

Each of the primary plans in this Somerset County Preservation Plan, as summarized in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 – the Open Space Preservation Plan, the Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development Plan, and the Historic Preservation Plan – and the two preceding chapters on outreach, education, and tourism provide a series of strategies for action, organized by the goals set for each topic. This chapter summarizes those strategies and provides an estimate of the timing when pursuit of these strategies should be emphasized. As such, it constitutes a final implementation plan and offers a simple means of tracking action over time on the primary strategies.

A. Introduction

This plan is ambitious. It asks Somerset County's leaders and residents to take on a range of important ideas that, if implemented strategically and well, will help to assure great future for the county's economy and quality of life. To tackle the concepts described in just one of the plans comprising the County's unified Preservation Plan would be an important achievement – let alone what is effectively five plans.

This plan would therefore be a daunting challenge to undertake, except that this is a county that has been working toward such a plan for more than 60 years when it comes to open space preservation (1956 for the Park Commission's founding), more than 50 years for historic preservation (1966 for the start of the state system around which every New Jersey county's "HP" work revolves), and more than 30 years for farmland preservation (1987 for the county's first farm easement). In all three areas, Somerset has been among the leading local governments working toward preservation in New Jersey.

Staffing, funds, and administrative resources have thus been deployed consistently and efficiently for decades in Somerset County. Without that foundation, the strategies described in this plan would be nearly impossible to achieve. But because that foundation does exist, there is every reason to assume that this Preservation Plan defines the way forward for decades to come.

B. Measuring Progress

How will the County measure progress on this plan? Evaluation should take into account that in many cases Somerset County must depend on partners and other stakeholders/leaders to assist with putting a program or policy in place or taking on a particular project. Thus, the level of collaboration through partnerships among the many stakeholders committed to these ideas will be one important indicator of progress ahead. Strategies involving

The Lamington River travels 12 miles in Somerset County in Bedminster and Branchburg Townships. Much of the river is bordered by farmland and preserved open space. Its corridor is a county-designated greenway. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Park Commission

"Canal House Porch and Flag," Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park, by Ron and Pat Morris.

The Van Doren Barn in the Millstone River valley (c. 1755), displaying the distinctive broad gable end of a Dutch-built barn. (Photo by Ron and Pat Morris)

municipal action in particular imply only technical assistance from Somerset County, as municipalities are in charge of land use and related regulatory action. Many other partners and stakeholders are expected to participate in many of the initiatives identified here; see discussion in the plans themselves, at the particular strategy identified (page numbers are provided), for listings of potential actors and, in some cases, potential funding sources. Increases in resources devoted to preservation activities would be other measures of progress, certainly – funds, staff time, attention from elected leaders, and other resources will be critical inputs.

Best of all, however, will be the measures of end results suggested in greater detail in the open space, farmland, and historic preservation plans – acres and habitats saved, more and closer access to nature and local foods provided to residents (and visitors), more miles of trails and greenways threading a well-maintained landscape of towns and country, suburbs and farms, more water access. The county's people, wildlife, streams, and environment as a whole will all benefit. This is a vision for vibrant connections well worth working toward, through the considerable effort summarized in the following tables.

C. User's Guide

In the following tables, a check mark in the "Ongoing" column means that this is a core, existing activity, and/or that enhancements should be attended to immediately. A second (or even a third) check mark would mean that sometime during or by the end of the period(s) indicated, an effective program or policy should be in place. "Short Term" items are those strategies for earliest action and attention, either because of high priority or because conditions exist for the program effectively to begin or expand within that time frame.

D. Goals & Strategies

Ref #	OS Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Open Space	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
		Goal 1: Create an open space system preserving lands of county-wide significance.				
4.1.A	148	**Complete greenways:** Somerset County will continue to pursue filling gaps in county-wide greenways, especially those along rivers and ridgelines and will encourage municipalities to do the same as they also seek to develop locally designated greenways.	✓			
4.1.B	148	**Preserve landscapes complementing historic sites:** The Park Commission will continue to pursue preserving landscapes complementing historic sites that support stories about Somerset County's role in history; and the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission will continue to encourage such interpretation by not only the Park Commission but also municipalities and nonprofit organizations. Examples include sites that contributed to events in the Revolutionary War and corridors used as trails.	✓			
4.1.C	148	**Incorporate open space throughout the built environment:** Somerset County will seek opportunities to interweave natural areas throughout the county and the Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development will encourage municipalities to do so in its reviews of local development.	✓			
		Goal 2: Preserve open space to protect critical environmental resources of Somerset County.				
4.2.A	150	**Treat parks as ecosystems by adding lands of high ecological value to existing parks:** Environmentally important lands are often adjacent to existing county parklands. By adding lands of high ecological value to existing parks, the county is protecting core forests and habitat and preserving genetic diversity.	✓			
4.2.B	150	**Undertake strategic conservation to fill gaps in greenways and ecologically important areas:** The county will continue working to fill gaps in greenways along rivers and ridgelines and seek permanent preservation for critical headwaters lands, habitat lands, and core forests. Application of a variety of preservation tools beyond land acquisition to protect these sensitive resources will advance this goal.	✓			

Ref #	OS Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Open Space	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
4.2.C	150	**Actively manage natural areas in park holdings:** Most of the acreage owned as county parklands is undeveloped and consists of wetlands and floodplain, not suitable for facility development. Park management plans will propose appropriate stewardship activities to protect the integrity of natural resources and identify areas that would benefit from habitat restoration. A category entitled "natural lands stewardship" will be added to the Park Commission's area management plan policy to address the sustainability and health of natural resources within each park classification. The commission will furthermore review existing county-wide stewardship policies for completeness and adequacy and perform this review periodically to evaluate effectiveness.	✓	✓		
4.2.D	150	**Protect the Sourlands through cooperative long-term planning:** Undertake a long-term management plan with New Jersey, adjacent counties (Hunterdon and Mercer) and municipalities, and nonprofit land managers to address stewardship and enriched trail access and the enhanced funding needed to protect this unique ecological region.			✓	
4.2.E	150	**Provide greater access to natural lands:** Where appropriate, the Park Commission will develop paths, wildlife viewing aids, and other minimal facilities that invite and enhance visitor experiences within natural settings.	✓			
4.2.F	150	**Assure staffing for natural lands stewardship in the park system:** The Park Commission will dedicate funding and staff toward natural lands stewardship commensurate with additional budgetary support provided by the Board of County Commissioners for this purpose.	✓			
4.2.G	151	**Enlist partners in stewardship activities:** The Park Commission will expand the engagement of the public and partner groups to assist with stewardship activities in natural areas. Engagement inspires appreciation and learning about how natural systems work and builds public support for dedicating resources toward natural lands.	✓			

Ref #	OS Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Open Space	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
4.2.H	151	**Recruit property owners to undertake environmentally friendly stewardship practices:** The Park Commission will continue to seek opportunities to educate, engage, motivate, and recognize residents and corporate owners who adopt environmentally friendly stewardship practices in their backyards and other natural areas. The environmental center, recreation programs, volunteer activities, and social media are appropriate venues for delivering these messages.	✓			
		Goal 3: Provide open space for a diverse mix of high-quality recreational experiences appropriate for a county park system.				
4.3.A	152	**Create parks for all:** The Park Commission will continue to develop strategies to appeal to the interests of the wide variety of populations in the county, both existing and new. Much of this work can be achieved with municipal partners as their recreation managers also work to meet the needs of an increasing diversity of residents.	✓			
4.3.B	153	**Provide water access:** In greenways related to rivers and streams, the Park Commission will undertake a systematic approach to providing boating facilities, such as kayak/canoe launches, and related public access amenities, such as bird blinds and fishing platforms, including options for special populations to enjoy and experience rivers. Water trails will be considered part of the cross-county trail network as it continues to be developed.	✓			
4.3.C	153	**Expand greenways along major rivers:** The Park Commission will enhance public access to waterways. Extension of the Passaic River Greenway in Warren Township will help satisfy a deficit of natural areas in this highly populated region of the county.	✓			
4.3.D	153	**Encourage people and park connections:** The Park Commission will create greater opportunities for park visitors to share their experiences and stories in parks and will work to engage the public and volunteers in citizen science and stewardship activities.	✓			

Ref #	OS Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Open Space	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
4.3.E	153	**Expand Park Commission marketing in partnership with Somerset County Tourism:** The county's dedicated website for tourism (https://visitsomersetnj.org) is an excellent means for communicating with county residents with an interactive map showing many attractions – shopping, restaurants, farms, museums, parks and recreation sites, and others. The Park Commission will work with Somerset County Tourism to highlight parks, trails, and activities and events in parks at that website as well as at its own website.	✓	✓		
4.3.F	154	**Promote the values and benefits of recreational and natural lands to healthy lifestyles:** Somerset County will play a strong role in communicating the values and benefits of recreational and natural lands to the health and well-being of Somerset County residents. The Park Commission will continue to participate with Healthier Somerset and the public health community on wellness initiatives, such as the Park Rx program (http://www.parkrx.org/parkrx-toolkit), which engages doctors in directing their patients to park programs and facilities for enhancing health and wellness.	✓	✓		
		Goal 4: Provide county parks and trails where they will most easily serve the greatest population concentrations in Somerset County.				
4.4.A	155	**Ensure a greenway, trail, park, or natural area within a 10- to 15-minute walk of every residence in Somerset County:** This green infrastructure will promote public health objectives – physical activity, stress relief, community cohesion. Somerset county recognizes that while its leadership is required in advocating for and pursuing this goal, it can only be fully realized through partnerships with other public-trust land managers (municipalities, conservancies, state parks, etc.).	✓			✓

Ref #	OS Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Open Space	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
4.4.B	155	**Provide leadership in development of a cross-county trail network that includes accessing county parks through multimodal transportation routes and coordination with municipal trail plans:** In the surveys conducted for this plan, municipalities seek leadership and direction from the county to create more pedestrian and bicycling trails. Somerset county's new study, *WalkBikeHike: Connecting Vibrant Communities*, provides specific direction for creating this network. Ideally, connections will be off-road, but in some cases there may need to be coordination of pedestrian options on sidewalks and bicycling options on public roads.	✓			✓
4.4.C	155	**Pursue creative conservation funding as redevelopment takes place:** The county will continue to examine opportunities in redevelopment regions fostered by the county to develop new sources of funding for related recreation and park developments.	✓			
		Goal 5: Provide open space in order to enhance the quality of life in Somerset County.				
4.5.A	155	**Recognize open space as infrastructure:** The county will continue to ensure that the value of open space is recognized in infrastructure plans developed for the county.	✓			
4.5.B	155	**Build partnerships to enhance economic conditions through open space:** Somerset County will cultivate partnerships with developers and investors working to improve economic opportunity in the county.	✓			
4.5.C	156	**Build a county constituency that is "open space conversant":** Somerset County will work to enhance residents' knowledge about how investment in open space leads to economic sustainability, public health and wellbeing, and adaptive capacity and resiliency as climate and weather patterns change. It will furthermore advocate for use of county open space funding for the purchase of smaller, yet critical lands, and seek to build a wide variety of partnerships to foster open space investments.	✓			

Ref #	OS Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Open Space	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
4.5.D	156	**Build Somerset County's reputation as a place with a highly desirable system of open space:** The leaders and staff of the county, Park Commission, and Somerset County Tourism will continue to highlight park and recreation resources as tourism opportunities and help to package these experiences to appeal to a variety of leisure interests. Similarly, along with the Somerset County Business Partnership, these partners will promote the existence of extensive open space and recreational opportunities as contributors to Somerset County's high quality of life to those considering commercial and other investments in the county.	✓			
4.5.E	156	**Defend existing open space:** Somerset County will closely examine the "undetermined open space" discovered during the mapping done to support this preservation plan, in order to determine if these acres are contributing to the county's open space system, and if they are, will seek ways to permanently preserve these lands. The county will continue to submit an annual or regular recreation and open space inventory (ROSI) to the state to ensure permanent status of lands added every year.	✓	✓		
		Goal 6: Leverage the Somerset County Preservation Trust Fund.				
4.6.A	157	**Maintain Somerset County's eligibility to apply for Green Acres stewardship funding:** Top priorities to accomplish with this funding are: (1) a county-wide trail system and (2) natural resource improvement projects in parks. The county also intends to continue the flood mitigation program to enable municipalities to mitigate flood-prone areas and to leverage state and federal funds for this purpose.	✓			
4.6.B	157	**Expand eligible uses of the county's Preservation Trust Fund:** Somerset County will consider including (1) trail development, (2) limited support for maintenance and stewardship, perhaps targeting natural lands protection and restoration, and (3) limited recreation facility development that complement municipal facility offerings or fill a recreation service gap.	✓	✓		

Ref #	OS Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Open Space	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
4.6.C	157	**Expand eligible recipients of the county's Preservation Trust Fund grants:** Somerset County will consider expanding eligible recipients of county trust fund grants for open space acquisitions from municipalities and the Somerset County Park Commission to include nonprofit land trusts or conservancies.	✓	✓		
		Goal 7: Preserve county-owned historic sites.				
4.7.A	158	**Devote additional resources to preserve historic resources under county management:** Allocate additional funding as a special set-aside from the Preservation Trust Fund, to be shared as appropriate among the Park Commission and other agencies responsible for management of county-owned historic properties.	✓	✓		
4.7.B	158	**Conduct a strategic needs assessment to evaluate the condition of county-owned historic resources,** estimate costs, and make recommendations in priority order.		✓		
		Goal 8: Cultivate partnerships.				
4.8.A	159	**Cultivate a wide variety of partnerships:** Somerset County will continue its partnerships and will seek to include still more partners to support the development of a robust system of parks, trails, and natural areas across the county. This includes partnerships with nonprofit and municipal historic preservation organizations where they can assist the county in caring for and curating important cultural landscapes and historic sites found throughout the county's portfolio of open space.	✓			

Ref. #	AG Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
		Goal 5.1: Build community awareness and support for local farming, local foods, and local food security.				
5.1.A	207	**Create a Somerset County farmland preservation roundtable.**	✓	✓		
5.1.B	208	**Explore ways to improve the local food system** and access to healthy, affordable, local food for all county residents, to attain greater local food security and support wellness.	✓	✓		

Ref. #	AG Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
		Goal 5.2: Build partnerships to preserve farmland.				
5.2.A	210	Coordinate preservation efforts with local land trusts.	✓		✓	
5.2.B	212	**Identify new partnering opportunities** and grant funds.	✓		✓	
5.2.C	212	**Encourage the use of innovative municipal preservation planning techniques.**	✓		✓	
5.2.D	214	**Encourage the revision of municipal ordinances to support local agricultural operations.**	✓		✓	✓
		Goal 5.3: Aggressively pursue efforts to preserve farmland in Somerset County.				
5.3.A	216	**Expand the number of Candidate Farms.**	✓			✓
5.3.B	217	**Increase availability of Preservation Trust Fund monies for farmland.**	✓	✓		
5.3.C	218	**Increase the availability of publicly owned open space for long-term farm use.**		✓	✓	
5.3.D	218	**Investigate the feasibility of establishing one or more Agricultural Enterprise Districts** to reinforce the county's Agricultural Development Area.	✓		✓	
5.3.E	218	**Continue to expand Agriculture Management Practices (AMPs).**	✓			
5.3.F	219	**Provide ongoing marketing, coordination, training, and technical expertise** to stakeholders in the preservation program.	✓			
5.3.G	220	**Carefully evaluate farm properties for impacts of farmland preservation on opportunities** for historic preservation, trail access, alignment with greenway corridors, and open space conservation.	✓			
		Goal 5.4: Increase economic opportunity and food security in Somerset County through farming.				
5.4.A	220	**Educate existing and new farmers on methods to enhance profitability.**	✓			
5.4.B	222	**Expand the number of farmers' markets in Somerset County.**	✓		✓	
5.4.C	222	**Develop linkages in the business community** between local food sources and retailers.	✓		✓	
5.4.D	223	**Enhance coordination of local food marketing and agritourism opportunities** in Somerset County.	✓		✓	
5.4.E	223	**Establish regional food preparation and transportation infrastructure.**				✓

Ref. #	AG Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Farmland Preservation & Agricultural Development	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
5.4.F	223	**Support the equine industry** in Somerset County.	✓	✓		
5.4.G	224	**Ensure Somerset County farmers' access to adequate water for farm operations.**		✓	✓	
5.4.H	226	**Provide educational and technical assistance opportunities to farmers** to encourage them to conserve energy.	✓			
5.4.I	226	**Coordinate Somerset County and municipal agritourism opportunities.**	✓			
5.4.J	227	**Support state policy improvements for liability exposure in agritourism.**		✓	✓	
		Goal 5.5: Increase the number of next-generation farmers available to undertake farming in Somerset County.				
5.5.A	227	**Provide training for new farmers.**	✓		✓	
5.5.B	228	**Link potential new farmers to available land** in Somerset County.	✓		✓	
		Goal 5.6: Direct county resources where possible to increase farmland preservation and encourage agricultural economic development.				
5.6.A	228	**Supplement available administrative resources** for preservation and agricultural industry promotion efforts.	✓	✓		

Ref. #	HP Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Historic Preservation	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
		Goal 6.1: Identify and promote Somerset County's unique historic resources, including communities, neighborhoods, landscapes, buildings, and traditions.				
6.1.A	141	**Undertake a comprehensive update of the county's 1988 historic resource survey** to identify historic resources for use in land use planning and growth management decisions, both county and municipal. Make information available in GIS format for planning purposes.		✓		
6.1.B	142	**Undertake a comprehensive update of the county's surveys of historic bridges** and their conditions of ownership and maintenance. Make this information available in GIS format for planning purposes.		✓		

Ref. #	HP Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Historic Preservation	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
6.1.C	142	**Undertake a survey to identify historic cemeteries and graveyards** and their conditions of ownership and maintenance. Make this information available in GIS format for planning purposes.		✓		
6.1.D	143	**Conduct a strategic needs assessment to evaluate the condition of county-owned historic resources**, estimate costs, and make recommendations in priority order.		✓		
6.1.E	144	**Encourage and support the preparation of nominations to the National Register of Historic Places** by communities, organizations, and individuals, to document significant historic resources throughout the county.	✓			
6.1.F	145	**Continue Somerset County's leadership in preservation of county-owned bridges** and support the preservation of state-owned and railroad bridges.	✓			
6.1.G	145	**Continue to implement the county's Historic Marker Program** by installing markers at participating historic sites throughout Somerset County.	✓			
6.1.H	145	**Facilitate and support local research** through interaction with local historians, historical societies, and historic sites.	✓			
6.1.I	146	**Market and promote Somerset County's historic interpretive sites** to visitors and residents through Somerset County Tourism.	✓			
		Goal 6.2: Promote coordination and consensus in the preservation of historic resources among a wide variety of interested parties across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.				
6.2.A	147	**Provide a biennial report on Somerset County's progress in implementing the Historic Preservation Plan,** highlighting historic preservation leadership and action by both the county and other preservation stakeholders.	✓			
6.2.B.	148	**Build statewide partnerships--**Maintain close working relationships with the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJHPO) and Preservation New Jersey (PNJ), representing the interests of local municipalities, facilitating NJHPO and PNJ support, and encouraging local participation in their statewide programs.	✓			
6.2.C	149	**Support the preservation of historic resources on New Jersey state-owned properties.**	✓			

Ref. #	HP Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Historic Preservation	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
6.2.D	150	**Provide, develop, and enhance programming for historical societies, historic sites, cultural organizations, and other local partners** that builds capacity, promotes our diverse history, facilitates communication, provides training, recruits volunteers, and enhances communities.	✓			
6.2.E	151	Partner with the Somerset County Business Partnership and other economic development interests in Somerset County to **leverage historic resources to support economic development activities.**	✓			
6.2.F	152	**Build partnerships to educate young people** about Somerset County history and historic resources.			✓	✓
		Goal 6.3: Pursue and coordinate incentive programs and protection measures to preserve Somerset's historic and archeological resources.				
		Expand County Support for Historic Preservation				
6.3.A	153	**Devote additional resources to preserve historic resources under county management** – allocate additional funding as a special set-aside from the Preservation Trust Fund, to be shared as appropriate among the Park Commission and other agencies responsible for management of county-owned historic properties.	✓	✓		
6.3.B	155	**Continue and enhance funding made available for capital preservation grants under the Somerset County Preservation Trust Fund.**	✓	✓		
		Encourage Municipal Preservation Action				
6.3.C	155	**Encourage and support municipalities in becoming designated as Certified Local Governments** (CLGs) in order to receive special technical assistance and grant support from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office.	✓			
6.3.D	156	**Support historic preservation commissions to implement best practices** in planning and historic preservation at the local level.	✓			
6.3.E	157	**Encourage the designation of local historic districts by municipalities** as a preservation and revitalization tool.	✓			
		Encourage the Use of Rehab Tax Credits				

Ref. #	HP Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Historic Preservation	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
6.3.F	157	**Encourage property owners and developers to make use of historic tax credits for rehabilitation projects** when possible. Publicize the effectiveness of the use of historic tax credits in community revitalization.	✓			
		Coordinate with Open Space and Farmland Preservation				
6.3.G	158	**Establish and maintain ongoing relationships with organizations and interests involved in farming and farmland preservation** in Somerset County.	✓	✓		
6.3.H	159	**Establish and maintain ongoing relationships with organizations and interests involved in land conservation** in Somerset County.	✓	✓		
		Support Historic Preservation through Land Use Planning Practices				
6.3.I	160	**Provide technical assistance to local municipalities** in the preparation of planning, zoning, and land use documents, encouraging use of best-practice policies and techniques that incorporate historic preservation.	✓			
6.3.J	161	**Continue to assure that historic resources identified in the county survey are a necessary part of county review of land development.**	✓			
6.3.K	162	**Support efforts to mitigate the impacts from flooding on historic resources.**	✓			
		Provide Expert Support in Historic Preservation				
6.3.L	163	**Increase the historic preservation knowledge and skills of existing staff members and/or make support services from consultants available.**	✓			
		Goal 6.4: Position Somerset County to be a prominent part of the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution as led by the New Jersey Historical Commission and the United States Semiquincentennial Commission and beyond.				
6.4.A	165	**Celebrate Somerset County's heritage. Provide support for ongoing interpretive activities and events and continue to organize and promote tours and events** that present and interpret Somerset County's significant historic resources, with an **early-action focus on the Revolutionary War.**	✓	✓		

Ref. #	HP Plan Pg. #	Goals & Strategies for Historic Preservation	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
6.4.B	166	**Establish a funding mechanism** to encourage and support Somerset County's communities and publicly accessible interpretive sites as they seek to raise matching funds for grants.		✓		
6.4.C	167	**Plan interpretive programs, events, and public outreach to be undertaken directly by Somerset County in support of the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War** as led by the New Jersey Historical Commission and the United States Semiquincentennial Commission.		✓	✓	
6.4.D	167	**Initiate the Somerset County Cultural Heritage Trail** with an emphasis on providing planning, digital media, and wayfinding signage focused on Revolutionary War sites and experiences.		✓		
6.4.E	168	**Excavate and restore the Old Stone Arch Bridge in Bound Brook** and provide it with a park setting and interpretive exhibits.		✓		

Ref #	Pres. Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Public Outreach & Education	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
		GOAL 1: Unite those with a stake in the county's natural, recreational, agricultural, historic, and cultural assets in working to expand public outreach and education in Somerset County.				
		GOAL 2: Convey systematic messages designed to encourage public participation in and support for preserved sites.				
		GOAL 3: Identify sustainable funding to enable the major programs envisioned here.				
		A Strategy to Encourage Collaboration				
E.1.1	138	**Encourage a multi-interest collaborative network,** working first to support an interpretive initiative based on the upcoming 250th anniversary commemoration of the American Revolution starting in 2026.	✓	✓		
		Strategies for Public Outreach and Education to Support Open Space				
E.2.1	139	**Continue existing communications programs and strive to expand partnerships.**	✓			
E.2.2	140	**Consider ecotourism and marketing initiatives** that can assist with outreach to Somerset County residents.		✓	✓	
E.2.3	140	**Undertake interpretive evaluation and further planning** to support both park user programming and outreach to educational institutions.		✓	✓	
		Strategies for Public Outreach and Education to Support Agriculture				
E.3.1	142	**Carry out publicity and reports to the public about farmland preservation and agriculture.**	✓			

Ref #	Pres. Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Public Outreach & Education	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
E.3.2	143	**Undertake agritourism and marketing initiatives** that can assist with outreach to Somerset County residents.	✓			
E.3.3	143	**Create a Somerset County farmland preservation forum**	✓	✓		
		Strategies for Public Outreach and Education to Support History and Historic Sites				
E.4.1	144	**Continue a broad range of educational programs and events to support history and historic sites.**	✓			
E.4.2	147	**Foster greater collaboration on more multi-site events.**	✓			
E.4.3	148	**Begin a phased approach to a county-wide interpretive presentation organized around the concept of a "Cultural Heritage Trail."**		✓	✓	✓
E.4.4	149	**Establish a community interpretive program in which interested local communities participate** and are assisted in presenting self-guided interpretation of their sites and stories.			✓	
E.4.5	150	**Prepare a county-wide interpretive plan** that identifies how a county-wide interpretive presentation can be implemented over time using the Cultural Heritage Trail concept as a backbone. (Re timeframe, given the considerable experience of the SCC&HC and the county's individual historic sites, the community interpretive presentation in Strategy E.4.4 could be implemented in phases without the initial preparation of a county-wide interpretive plan. This should particularly be the case for the Revolutionary War anniversary, which needs action sooner rather than later. Alternatively, it may be desirable to either begin with preparation of a county-wide interpretive plan or to prepare a county-wide plan after initial experimentation with the development of selected presentations.)		✓ **(opt)**		✓ **(opt)**

Ref #	Pres. Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Tourism	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
		GOAL 1: Unite those with a stake in the county's agricultural, natural, historic, and cultural assets in working to expand tourism in Somerset County.				
		GOAL 2: Create an engaging visitor experience based on county assets and stories.				
		GOAL 3: Build local pride in Somerset County and its assets and stories, and thus a local constituency willing to support greater investment in improving those assets and presenting stories.				
		GOAL 4: Identify sustainable funding to enable the major program envisioned here.				
		GOAL 5: Identify sensitive sites that should not be promoted such that added visitation would impair the experience or the resource.				
		Phase 1 - Readiness: Collecting Cultural Heritage Tourism Data				
T.1.1	185	**Establish a region-wide baseline attendance at attractions and events:** Require or encourage grantees and other participants in the county's programs to establish and maintain an ongoing method to measure visitation or attendance as accurately as possible over time.	✓	✓		
T.1.2	185	**Support matching grants to partners to enable them to participate in the "Visitors Count" program** of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH; https://aaslh.org/programs/visitorscount/).	✓	✓		
T.1.3	185	**Undertake a formal tourism marketing study** (of all categories of tourism) and business plan in order to determine optimal county investment in marketing that would accelerate the county's tourism-based economic gains.		✓		
T.1.4	186	**Conduct visitor research periodically** (preferably annually or biennially) to measure the county's effects on the region's cultural heritage tourism.	✓		✓	
		Phase 2 - Planning: Building Partnerships				
T.2.1	187	**Organize a collaborative structure to support cultural heritage tourism:** Encourage subgroups to focus on ecotourism, agritourism, and heritage tourism, but develop communications and representation that helps to maintain a sense of the entire cultural heritage tourism program among these subgroups.	✓	✓		
T.2.2	187	**Identify one region-wide partnership-building project** to encourage consensus, focus, learning, and momentum.		✓		

Ref #	Pres. Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Tourism	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
T.2.3	187	**Develop a local food marketing program** of consistent messaging and up-to-date, accurate information regarding local food opportunities in the county aimed at both local audiences and visitors, including using such events as fairs and festivals to market the local farming community's products and benefits.	✓	✓		
		Phase 3 – Execution: Taking Early Action				
T.3.1	188	**Expand VisitSomersetNJ website categories for all elements of cultural heritage tourism:** In particular, create one or more "ecotourism" or "nature lovers" categories modeled on the existing birding itinerary and more specialized than the general "parks and recreation" category; and a "trails" category. Consider adding a super-category "Learn and Experience" (on the same level as "Play") to introduce such history topics as the American Revolution and American Country House Era.	✓	✓		
T.3.2	189	**Create a Birding & Wildlife Observation Network throughout Somerset County,** modeled after the "trail" approach pioneered by New Jersey Audubon but which has not been applied in Somerset County. Since most sites have the necessary facilities to receive visitors who would seek out sites within such a network, development should not require much if any construction; rather, this idea is a matter of marketing and promotion with some modest wayfinding signage.	✓	✓		
T.3.3	189	**Expand the local foods marketing program** by pursuing a USDA planning grant under https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp.		✓		
T.3.4	189	**Create a preservation bicycling tour event** modeled after successful "tour de farms" events in Warren and Sussex counties and winery tours in southern New Jersey. Include things to do for the non-bicycling general public.		✓		
T.3.5	189	**Undertake a planning exercise to identify readily achievable expansions of selected current multi-site interpretive programs and events** (e.g., the Five Generals tour, Journey), or to create new ones, in order to enlarge the collaboration of partners celebrating Somerset County's heritage. Focus on the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in order to build readiness to respond to opportunities from the New Jersey Historical Commission, the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, and the United States Semiquincentennial Commission.		✓		

Ref #	Pres. Plan Pg #	Goals & Strategies for Tourism	On-going	Short Term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-7 years)	Long Term (8-10 years)
T.3.6	189	**Begin a phased approach to a county-wide interpretive presentation organized around the concept of a "Cultural Heritage Trail."** Design and undertake a wayfinding strategy, using physical signage, digital applications, and delineation of county areas as "cultural heritage districts" with distinct identities to be explained to visitors and residents. Digital applications and promotional maps can precede physical signage as a first phase.		✓	✓	
T.3.7	189	**Explore the feasibility of establishing a county visitor center, cultural hub, or museum.** Undertake a feasibility study to determine the viability of establishing a visitor center, cultural hub, or museum as the gateway to heritage tourism within the county.			✓	✓
		Future Action: Planning to Take Somerset County's Tourism to the Next Level				
T.4.1	190	**Create a fully developed Somerset County Cultural Heritage Trail** to encourage greater visitation to all historical and cultural sites, including farms, gardens, and parks, and the creation of an ambitious alternative transportation network of trails to enable pedestrian and non-motorized access to nodes of historical and cultural sites within each of the "cultural heritage districts" delineated under T.3.6.			✓	✓
T.4.2	191	**Evaluate the need for a Tourism Economic Development Plan.**				✓

One of the farms most recently preserved by Somerset County, protecting some of the beautiful lands in Hillsborough Township east of the South Branch Raritan River. (Photo courtesy Somerset County Agricultural Development Board)

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